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GEIDAR ALIEV

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FOREWORD

Chance is often described as blind. There is even a set phrase in Russian–a blind chance. However, it is not blind at all. Blind are those people who don't notice signs of fate.

On November 27, 1944, General De Gaulle, leader of "Fighting France" movement, head of the Provisional Government of the French Republic and future President of the country, stopped in Baku on his way to Moscow where he was going to have negotiations with Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, Chairman of the Soviet of People's Commissars. This eminent–in direct and figurative meanings–guest was welcomed as the leader of the allied state. In his two-week journey throughout the Soviet Union Alexei Nikolayevich Kosygin, Deputy Chairman of the Sovnarkom accompanied him, on Stalin's personal instructions. Many years later Alexei Kosygin, Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, came to Paris on an official visit. Contrary to all rules of the diplomatic protocol President De Gaulle personally arrived at the airport to meet the Soviet Premier. But it is another case and another story...

In Baku the General received all the prescribed honors. There were flags. Anthems. Guard of honor... Among the duty-bound welcoming people there was a young man by name of Geidar Aliev, a junior lieutenant of the State Security, in a civil coat and a fashionable hat. As later Geidar Alievich said, for a moment he met De Gaulle's eye... That evening the famous Frenchman listened to opera "Keroglu", and the very next day a train took him away to Stalingrad; planes didn't fly because of bad weather.

Political destinies of these two people have much in common. At one time they both found themselves out of job after many years of successful state service. The Paris exile was said to leave as a prophet who had lost his voice, who had failed to make him heard.

In Gorbachyov's Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee nobody wanted to listen to Geidar Aliev either. And he chose to leave.

In May 1958 General De Gaulle, being summoned by France, came back to Paris from his seclusion at the Colombee estate.

In July 1990 Geidar Aliev, summoned by Azerbaijan, returned to Homeland from his Moscow seclusion.

They were both 67 years old. People usually take care of grandchildren and write memoirs at this age. But cuddly family cares and memoirs had to be put aside. They returned at a critical moment to save their Fatherland. One was to guarantee unity and independence of France, the other–to ensure integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan.

As a politician Geidar Aliev was developing and moulding in the Soviet system of values. Words about internationalism were never just a standing phrase for him. At the end of the 20th century he opened for himself anew Charles de Gaulle's idea about priority of the national factor over all other ideas, theories, slogans and principles. Yes, history proved that the national idea was more tenacious of life than many others. A realist politician could draw only one conclusion from it: rescuing the state was rescuing the nation at the same time.

...Karlovy Vary. Quiet Sadovaya Street. A hundred metres away from famous Mlinskaya (Mill) Colonnade there was "Bristol" sanatorium, a favorite resort among the Soviet functionaries. An elderly gardener, sprinkling roses, says that he saw Kosygin, Aliev, Shcherbitsky, and Marshal Konev there...

From the high ground you can see blue domes of the Russian church in the distance–its chimes might be heard from there; the other side offers a panorama of the popular resort with its numerous sanatoriums and hotels.

A chance talk with the elderly man, his kind "agoy", which means "bye", might have been forgotten at once, but later that evening in a Moscow TV program there were suddenly shown faces of those he remembered of with such warmth. The program was dedicated to the memory of Alexander Bovin, a political correspondent with the *Izvestiya* and the Central television, a diplomat, and a former Central Committee of the CPSU consultant, one of the trusted assistants to the two General Secretaries–Brezhnev and Andropov. There were photos of different periods and TV newsreel...

There's Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov at a large festive table, Aliev on his right, Gromyko and Gorbachyov on his left... A nice joke seems to have been just told; Geidar Alievich and Yuri

Vladimirovich are laughing in a catching manner, even stern Gromyko, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, called Mister "No" in the West, is smiling. A smile appears for a moment on Gorbachyov's face too, an "ordinary" Politburo member yet, not even the second person in the CPSU: after Brezhnev's death Konstantin Sergeyevich Chernenko was destined to be the second to Gorbachyov's envy.

On those April days in 2004 Czech newspapers triumphantly wrote about Big Europe: the Czech Republic and nine more countries were to enter the European Union on May 1. Here we are 455 million people, reported the *Dnes* newspaper (formerly known as *Mlada Fronta*) to its readers, our territory is 3.9 million sq. km., there are 25 states...

At night, sharp at twelve, a salute rattles over Karlovy Vary, the sky is tinted with bright, multicolored fireworks. Czechia is celebrating. Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovenia are celebrating too... Europe wipes away its borders. Or to be more accurate it pushes them further to the East.

In the new political map of the world there are neither countries of Socialist Commonwealth, nor states of the Warsaw Treaty Organization or the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, which accounted for a fifth of the world production by 1980s. There are 25 countries of the European Union in this map; there are new states in this map, which used to make up the Soviet Union–including Azerbaijan.

Two thousand years ago a prophet remarked: God let us not live in times of changes. This concern of a common man is understandable at all times. He would like to hide under the roof of his house (fanza, izba, saklya, hut) and wait till the tempest is over.

In nature lots of signs betoken a tempest, which any a little bit observant person can notice. For example, before a heavy rain a dusty whirlwind often gets up. The same holds for big politics as well–but in this sphere a few are able to foresee forthcoming thunderclaps...

These shots of Andropov, Gromyko, Aliev, Gorbachyov were taken not earlier than November 1982 and not later than 1983, when Yuri Vladimirovich fell ill. It is marvellous that one of us saw these shots exactly on April days in 2004, when we conceived to write this book.

It is often said that history does not know the conjunctive mood. But this fact does not prevent one from reckoning upon various scenarios: how events might have developed. What would have happened to the Soviet Union, if... The range of options was

the widest. The general conclusion–the Soviet Union was not doomed. Under sound reforms and provided that tendencies in the society development had been properly taken into account it could, renewing itself, evolve further. But unfortunately at the time the power was strongly held in the hands of dogmatists, whose lives' major rule was to blindly follow mossy like sea boulder formulas that were nearly one hundred years old. Upon becoming the General Secretary, Gorbachyov promised renovation and acceleration to the society, to the country. Then the scale of his own immense and boundless state seemed insufficient to him. He proposed his (?) new thinking concept not only to the Soviet Union, the Commonwealth of Socialist States, but also to the whole world. While the situation within homeland was getting worse and worse. The leader chattered over everything he took up and rejected those who had courage to object to him.

There were shrewd politicians who could see that the Union state was drawing near its disintegration, and Geidar Alievich Aliev with his extensive administration experience, political intuition and understanding of human soul impulses certainly was among them. One could already hear phrases about carriages that Russia had to unhook. They meant the Union Republics, the peoples that Russians, the citizens of Russia, had been living together in one state for one, two, three centuries and even longer. In any other country any politicians calling for the country's disintegration were doomed to end up in a court, but in the Soviet Union muddled crowds made heroes of them.

Separatist mood was gathering force in the republics. On the one hand, local elite that was striving for power and property roused it. On the other hand, let's say it directly; impaired national interests also prompted people to action. In fact though having their own flags, anthems and constitutions the republics had very little independence. All top positions were filled from Moscow. It gave awards, brought to power and dismissed, put to death or spared. And then all of a sudden it turned out that it was possible to make some decisions without it. But to what extent? How far was Moscow going to slacken its reins?

Various forces got involved in the struggle for power: those fattened by foreign benefactors, populists and a bit disguised black capital. In each Union Republic–Moldavia or Georgia, Ukraine or Azerbaijan–there was its own specific. At the same time a lot of other factors–historic, social and those of foreign policy–were at action as well. In Moldavia, for instance, activity of pro-Rumanian forces was quite evident. In Lithuania anti-Russian "Sayudis" ruled the ball. In Ukraine muddled miners were put into political

actions–they were expected to overthrow the Soviet power in a ram attack. In Azerbaijan under the orders from Moscow Aliev was got even with, though he had been away from the Republic for a long time. Or it's better to say he was not there yet. Anarchy reigned in the Republic.

The role of personality in history, man and power–these topics are of interest for people at all times. Sometimes it is just narrow-minded interest in "anointed sovereigns", leaders, those details of their private life that are concealed from public for the time being. But more often it is a desire to understand why some leaders can rule the "fate of events" and surmounting unfavorable circumstances raise their nations, their countries like Peter the Great, Franklin Roosevelt, Atatürk, Stalin, Churchill, Gandi, De Gaulle, while others are carried away by similar events like powerless flinders by the impetuous stream. Then crowns fall down as it was with Russian Emperor Nicholas II, Austrian Emperor Franz-Joseph...

For fourteen years Geidar Aliev was the head of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party–according to the Soviet political system he was the leader of the Republic; for five years he was the second person in the Soviet Government and a member of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee; his name was associated with foundation and formation of independent Azerbaijan in the post-Soviet epoch, he headed it for over ten years. His return to big politics reminds of General De Gaulle's return to power in crashing down France. Comparison of these two historical personalities, considering all the differences of political atmosphere and circumstances under which they acted, makes the essential evident: in their actions they were guided solely by interests of their countries. By the way, it was on Aliev's direction that in March 1999 a memorial plaque was placed on the house where De Gaulle stayed in 1944. The inhabitants of Baku are well aware of this massive building in Oilmen's Prospect with the Maiden Tower, an architectural monument of the 12th century just behind it. The epochs come together in this way.

Talent and will are key features of Aliev's personality, as well as supreme self-discipline and exactingness–first of all towards himself–and ability to listen and hear an individual and to understand aspirations of all men who are united in a capacious notion of the "people", the "nation". A sage's foresight of a great politician was combined in him with bravery of a military leader. His other qualities were deep knowledge and natural aesthetic

sense. Being magnanimous and indulgent he could forgive those who made occasional mistakes, but ignoramuses, weak-willed, profit-seeking people could not expect leniency from him…

At birth he was given the name of Geidar. It means a forward-going person, a leader. We are going to tell you, how he was growing, how the world was opening to him first in his native Nakhichevan and then throughout Azerbaijan–from the Caspian sea to the mountains– in a big country that was called the Soviet Union, how he became a politician and a statesman, a national leader. The leader of his people.

Chapter 1
"I WAS BORN IN NAKHICHEVAN…"

May 10, 1923, Nakhichevan

"I, Geidar Ali Rza ogly Aliev, –he wrote in his autobiography, –was born in Nakhichevan on May 10, 1923..." Whenever he carefully wrote these lines–in Baku, Leningrad, Moscow–an image of a quiet and nice town over the Araks River always recurred to his memory. The days of May in this town of hundreds and thousands years long history are clear and bright like a spring sky over a mosque, and radiant like a hope that a newborn child brings to parents.

On one of such spring days a fourth child appeared in the family of Ali and Izzet Alievs. The boy was named Geidar in memory of Izzet-khanum's brother who perished during the exodus of Azerbaijanians from Zangezur. That Geidar will always remain twenty-three... Years later the novel *Zangezur* by Ayub Abasov passed from hand to hand in the Aliev family. After reading two thick volumes Shafiga told her elder brothers that their mother had told just the same.

– You are not mistaken, Shafiga, –Gasan responded, –The man, who had written this book, conveyed the pain of exile very truthfully.

"Andronik Uzunyan's soldiers entered the village from the lower side. At the foot of the slope a few houses were set on fire. Djomard demanded all the people to leave for the mountain taking as much of their possessions as possible.

Cries of horror, women are weeping, children's wailing filled the village. Even rocks seemed unable to remain calm in the face of the tragedy that was spreading on the land of Zangezur. Horsemen, loaded mules, bulls and cows bellowing with fright–everything got confused. The only people left in the village were some old men distraught with grief who could not conceive a life without their homes."

Those tragic events left a bitter trace in Izzet-khanum's soul. Though she tried to conceal her sorrow from the children, her

daughters (they are usually more sensitive than sons) noticed more than once that their mother was crying stealthily.

If they had held beauty contests in Nakhichevan of that time, Izzet might have been a winner. But strict rules of female piety customary in that region did not allow such liberties. Izzet-khanum like her parents Djafargulu and Sarabeim as well as their parents' parents lived under the rules of the Coran. Even her sons never saw her bareheaded.

Once Shafiga was brushing her mother's hair in the room. There was a knock on the door. "It must be Geidar coming back," –Izzet said and covered her head hurriedly with her favorite scarf, kelagai.

At home as is usual in a large family, be it in Azerbaijan, Russia or Ukraine, the mother did most of household chores. The father, upon his return from Baku oil fields, worked at the railway. On the occasion of Geidar's birth one of Alirza Aliev's old friends, a steam locomotive driver, let a deafening whistle out of his iron machine. Innocent sheep grazing on the slopes in fear nearly plummeted into the Araks. Following long-standing tradition the relations were invited to pilaw and sherbet.

The tiny squealer, whose voice resounded throughout the yard, had two elder brothers–Gasan and Gusein–and sister Sura. Then of Allah's will four more were born–Agil, Djalal, Shafiga and Rafiga. Five boys and three girls all in all.

A Day in History

May 10, 1923... What was that seemingly far away from us day like in the world, in the Soviet Union, in Azerbaijan? Let's look through Baku and Nakhichevan newspapers and see what they said about that day.

In Germany there were workers demonstrations. Americans protested against immigration of the Russian White Guards into the USA. In Moscow "late Professor Timiryazev was commemorated". Throughout the Union money was collected "for strengthening the Air Forces". In Baku workers of private sewing workshops handed over 22 million 280 thousand roubles in banknotes (there were millions, "lemons" current at that time. 16 billion roubles in banknotes were stolen from the pocket of a citizen Alexei Markovich, and household items for 45 billion roubles from the flat of a Zeiba Mamed kyzy.) And again about the Air Forces–thanks to comrades Tsybelman, Eidelstein and Oganezov for three five-rouble bonds; one more similar bond was

handed over by a party group of the Azizbekov hospital. By the end of the year Azerbaijan handed over to the aviators two planes constructed with the funds collected throughout the Republic. One was called “Red Baku”, the other one–“26” in memory of the Baku commissars shot by Englishmen.

One hundred and ten students of Baku Soviet party school studied basics of Marxism; their goal was to “advance into the masses of proletariat and peasantry and bring thousands and thousands of working people to class conscience and enlightenment.”

Mill-plant district party committee (of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, there were no others by the time) published a list of comrades it was going to accept to its ranks and asked everyone who had any objections in reference to the foregoing to send their communications to the district committee. The list is short and is worth citing:

“The following people are going to be accepted as party candidates: comrade G.P. Kazakov, the Schmidt Plant group, L.G. Krasnoyarskaya, the Fur Workshop group, I.O. Zakharov, the Azneft Construction Department, M.F. Fedotov, S.I. Fafonov, V.T. Zalin, the “Proletariy” group, A.A. Akopov, D.T. Filatov, S.G. Khachiyants, K.I. Stepin, the Azneft Chernogorodsky Department group, I.G. Kasparov, A.A. Muratov, Rope Factory No. 2, Djafar Gazanfar Abulfaz, the group of Akhmedly village...”

The Azerbaijan People’s Commissar of Education, the Deputy People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs and the People’s Commissar of Justice signed the instructions, prepared on the basis of a resolution of the Soviet of People’s Commissars of April 22, 1923: “No work of art can be allowed for public performance or demonstration without the Azlit repertoire committee’s permission.”

Posters invited residents of Baku to the Navy (former Pel-Myule) Theatre to see “Love of Hussars”; to “Satir-Agit” State Freedom Theatre, where Rostov group of Armenian actors was giving “Silva”; to the concert of I.V. Yershov, an actor of the Petersburg Academic Theatre (former Mariinsky theatre)...

The newspapers also invited to the grand opening of the market in the village of Surakhanakh–“no payment will be charged for sale and for a place in the market”, to the reopened first-class restaurant “Teatral”, informed about auctions and “a tender for lease of a buffet, a billiards hall, a hairdresser’s...”

The Baku representative office of the Ural Mining Syndicate was closed and the Regional office was opened instead, which

was going "to operate throughout Caucasia, Transcaucasia, Turkestan, area of the former Bukeev Horde and Persia."

The Azerbaijan Division of the representative for the Transcaucasian People's Commissar of Labor started publishing "local market prices of a basket of goods and necessities". Reports were published four times in a month–on the 1st, 8th, 15th, and 22nd day of each month...

Ali Rza (or Alirza) Aliev used to bring these newspapers from the depot after they had changed many hands and told his wife, "Well Miss, let's compare".

Parents' House

Alirza Aliev as an udarnik (a good worker) of the railways was granted a land plot. The work in the garden and the kitchen garden went on rapidly and merrily. Everyone did their best on the vegetable beds and tending sheep. Everyone earned their daily bread by their own sweat and blood since early childhood. Nakhichevan did not like idlers.

Izzet-khanum seemed to know everything about flowers, trees, herb. Her neighbors used to come to her for her jam recipes.

In the yard lovely almost ten-meter-high mirabalan looked graciously down at cherry and apple-trees. It broke into blossom in March and in July-early August it tempted with its greenish-pink and light-red fruit, which look like cherry plums, but were not so sour. Gasan engrafted a plum twig on it. For many years the Nakhichevan mirabalan brought joy to local kids.

The first owner of the Alievs' house brought a pear graft from Persia at the beginning of the past century.

– It brought marvellous fruit, –remembers Shafiga-khanum. – Until first snow we did not touch them. Then we tore them off and hung in the house. Each pear was 300-500 grams and could remain fresh throughout the winter.

One more childhood memory Shafiga recalls with warmth is their Nakhichevan yard.

…It is early morning, or chesht, as aksakals, zealots of local customs, call it. Izzet with scissors and a sieve goes to the rose bushes that border the yard. It is not easy to reach them because of the thorns! But their petals are most delicate. Having put her sieve down, Izzet cuts them off. Then she spreads the petals in the baking tray, where sugar syrup is poured to prevent them from withering. Then Izzet adds cinnamon and white ginger to the petals mixed up with sugar powder. This broth was considered

indispensable potion for curing colds and stomachaches, which no family can avoid.

Some part of petals the mistress of the house dried in the shade and then spread them among dresses, skirts and veils. Shafiga remembers her mother's white skirt and a blouse of the same white-snow color with pink shining flowers.

– When Mother washed this pair and pressed them with the iron heated with coals, I was standing nearby staring. After pressing every single crease she would put the skirt together with the blouse into the trunk and intersperse them with rose petals. When putting on a veil she would always sprinkle it with rose water. In autumn Mother would put some quinces into the trunk and their delicate aroma would saturate our clothes like kindness permeated her nature. You would never hear a sharp word from her: she just stopped talking to a market-woman, who uttered a curse: "Seni gerum ochagyn sensun" (that means, "Let your hearth die out!") on her partner.

Of course the girls were the first to take over their mother's rituals. But the boys also took note of some things. Elegance of Geidar Alievich's clothes, taste and neatness–they all came from his parents' house.

On the third year of the Soviet power–it came to Azerbaijan later than to the other Republics of the Union–some signs of a new way of life turned up in Nakhichevan. Next to the mausoleum of Momine-khatun ("High-ranking lady") a kindergarten appeared, where Gasan used to take Geidar and later Geidar in his turn accompanied Djalal and his sisters. Seven and a half centuries passed since the great architect Adjemi Nakhichevani erected his work over the burial-vault of Atabeck Muhammed Djakhan Pekhlivan's wife. Its wall had seen and remembered so much that nothing could surprise them.

Getting older Geidar and his classmates liked to come to the old mausoleum to draw its contors turned to the skies. The whole Nakhichevan is like a live history book: its other famous mausoleum of Yusuf ibn Kuseyir designed by Adjemi; its bridges over the Araks beyond which was Iran; the remnants of caravanserais and the Thälmann club–the leader of the German proletariat could not imagine that a plaque with his name would appear at the entrance to the rebuilt chapel. (So far reached the echo of demonstrations in Munich and Hamburg and such was a response to the wellknown "Rot front" call and gesture!) In Nakhichevan a House of Pioneers was opened as well–even now Geidar Aliev's brother, Agil Alievich, a prominent scientist-

economist, a Corresponding Member of the National Academy of Sciences, remembers it with warmth:

– Everything was organized perfectly there. We would come home after school, eat something and make for the House of Pioneers–everyone could find an interesting occupation there.

It is beyond doubt that Geidar Aliev's deep interest in the national culture, architecture; theatre was born under the wholesome influence of the environment he grew in.

The eldest of the Aliev brothers and sisters, Gasan, loved the nature since childhood; he would wander about the picturesque surroundings for hours. He might be called "a charmed wanderer". But romantic soul of the eldest Aliev was in harmony with a strict muse of science as well. Later he graduated from the Agricultural Academy, became a scientist, a party worker–the Central Committee Secretary for agriculture. He is remembered with great warmth in Azerbaijan.

In the Aliev family humanitarians and technicians spread equally. Gusein was involved in brushes, paints, and pencils since childhood. His childish dream brought him to the Leningrad Academy of Painting. He did not part with the easel till the end of his days. Sura preferred journalism, Agil chose economics–he became eminent both in scientific sphere and in business circles. Djalal is a well-known biologist, an Academician of the Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences. He grew some new varieties of wheat. Shafiga and Rafiga became teachers.

Geidar like Gusein dreamt of arts. According to his contemporaries' recollections he painted a lot and well, made decorations for school performances and loved theatre.

The whole native place–Nakhichevan–opened up to Geidar and his brothers like a huge museum under the open sky. Childish curiosity pulled them to magary–so the old caves were called–and to hills, where one could find pieces of ancient pottery that survived many centuries. A spearhead reminded of brave warriors, who protected the native land from foreigners. Somewhere far away in the dark depth of times there was hiding Midia-Atropatena, the oldest name of Azerbaijan known to science. Later at the college, their history teacher explained to them how it had been changing: ancient Persians had a set phrase "Aderbadagan", Arabs said "Azerbaijan" and "Azerbaijan", which means "a country of fire".

But about the fire Azerbaijanian boys knew well without the teacher's stories, as there was such a fire in every house: oil was burning in every hearth. Frozen oil, kir, was used to cover roofs.

Kerosene was poured in lamps and those paunchy glass bulbs were treated with extreme caution.

…Dim light of the kerosene lamp snatched from the dark figures of the children busy with something. Shafiga was playing with her doll, Gusein and Geidar were drawing. The elder brother was more interested in landscapes and liked to depict nearby mountains covered with bluish mist... While Geidar's imagination drew him to far-away times, where brave warriors blocked the strangers' advancement. Images of heroes revived under his pencil: Babeck, a leader of the 9th century liberation war, who bequeathed his son: "it is better to live a single day as a free man than forty years as a slave"; Keroglu, a leader of rebels, who opposed the Ottoman invaders at the beginning of the 17th century; legendary characters from "Shakhname"–Rustam-Zal hero, Siyavush... At the school drama group Geidar mostly performed roles of his favorite heroes. The pupils and students staged plays of national and world classics–Mamedkulizadeh, Shakespeare, Griboyedov... At the Thälmann club films were shown. The most important art was silent yet, but this fact did not prevent the boys from watching their favorite films for three-four times. Then they rode their bicycles that were very popular in Nakhichevan. Geidar, Agil and Djalal also had one such fast self-made "machine" on bearings.

Geidar Aliev's generation entered life in the epoch of historical calamities. First the Tsarist Empire crashed down. It was soon followed by the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, which had just enough time to proclaim its existence. Azerbaijan became a Soviet Socialist Republic and in the structure of the Transcaucasian Federation (Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia) together with Ukraine, Byelorussia and Russia formed a new state–the Soviet Union. Dreamers and history-makers that believed in a better destiny and were going to make the whole world happy created it.

Why is it so that some encounters are remembered for the whole life, while others are washed away like water out of melted snow in spring?

– It depends on whom you meet, –answers wise Dovlat Geidarovich, as his Russian fellow-soldiers, veterans of the Great Patriotic War, call him. Dovlat Geidar ogly Mamedov, an honorary teacher of Azerbaijan, gave all his life to children. There was only one long "break" in his life–the four-year-long Great Patriotic War that took lives of his three hundred thousand compatriots.

Once in the hot August of 1936 Dovlat went to the neighboring village of Geidere to his father's friend Zeinalabdin. There

chanced to be a guest from Nakhichevan–a young good-looking fellow.

– Geidar, –he said, holding out his hand.

The host explained:

– It is my nephew, a son of Alirza, and my brother from Nakhichevan.

So they got acquainted and soon became friends, when they both entered Nakhichevan Teacher's College that very August.

A bit later we were lucky to meet one more person, whose memory kept alive those far-away years. It was an old teacher Lyatif Guseinzadeh. He taught the native language to Geidar, Dovlat and children of the same age. This meeting seemed unbelievable until the very moment when we rang the doorbell of his flat in an ordinary five-storey building without a lift with rather dirty entrance and split ajar post-boxes. But behind the door there was a neat hall and in the study there were books to the ceiling–in Azerbaijani, Russian, Farsi, Turkish–and a computer. Our interlocutor has a wonderful memory, only hearing sometimes lets him down and then his son Rufat, a professor, comes to help.

By centenary of his teacher, which was in 2003, Geidar Alievich sent Lyatif-muallim, the country's oldest teacher, a warm letter of congratulation and awarded him, the first among the teachers, with the Order of Independence ("Istiglal").

– His father then, brought Geidar, who was thirteen,, and it's necessary to note that only the fourteen-year-old or older were allowed to enter the pedagogical school. My son longs to be a teacher, –remembers Lyatif Guseinzadeh. –I was Director of Studies at that time. "Well, let's have a talk," –I said to the youth.

Geidar answered all questions with confidence and the Director of Studies took him to the School Director Kazym Talybly. "This lad knows Azerbaijan literature and history well, speaks and reads well and I suppose he will make an excellent teacher". The Director suggested having an additional interview in mathematics. The mathematics teacher Tofik Bektashi, by the way, a graduate of the Moscow State Lomonosov University (after Nakhichevan he taught theoretical mechanics in Baku), was also satisfied with the applicant.

– Geidar became one of our best students from the first days of studies, –continues Lyatif Guseinzadeh. –Even our self-assured graduates treated him with respect calling him "General" openly and behind his back as if they foresaw his future position.

At school, as many graduates remember, there were well-equipped classrooms and laboratories, a military-sports complex

and a film-projector. The students spent all their spare time going in for sports–jumping, running, exercising on the horizontal bar, playing volleyball, shooting in the shooting gallery. The youths were proud to receive the "Voroshilov marksman" badge in front of the line. Geidar Aliev also got the first award in his life then. He managed to find time for military training, and sports, and drawing in Shamil Kaziev's group. The young artists' works were displayed at the town exhibitions.

The army was one of the most favorite topics. "All of us were getting ready to defend the USSR, –remembers Dovlat Mamedov. –In our pictures you could see flying planes with red stars and advancing Soviet tanks."

The remote area of the country shared concerns with the whole big country. In the Nakhichevan Republic, in Djulfa, a mining and smelting plant was being constructed. The youth considered it as important for the Soviet country as Dneproges, Magnitka or Uralmash. They were proud of the achievements of the Republic's cotton-growers and Baku oilmen. They looked forward to electricity coming to Nakhichevan, where no electric bulbs had been seen and there were only a dozen of telephones for the whole town.

But the Thälmann club applauded ardently to Ibragim and Zarosh Gamzaevs, future people's artists of Azerbaijan. The film projector widened their horizon and they saw Baku and Moscow, and Leningrad and far-away Komsomolsk-on-Amur... Frontier guards–Russians, Azerbaijanians, Ukrainians, and Armenians... frequently visited the college. The boys envied them and saw them off to the frontier post. It was then that Geidar felt and kept for his whole life special respect for frontier guards. The state frontier of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics was quite near–at a distance of a stone's throw as it is said in such cases.

The bridges over the Araks did not unite but separated different riverbanks at that time. But people started pondering over the fact–both on the one and on the other bank–only many-many years later. First the entire surrounding world had to change. Or being more accurate–the people had to change it.

Decades would pass; epochs would change–and Geidar Aliev would tell some zealous "renovators" of the history, "It won't do to cross out the years lived for the sake of somebody or something.

AzSSR

XALQ MAARIF QOMISSARIATЬ

ATTESTAT

Bu attestat 1923 ildə doğulmuş Hüjer

Hüjdər Hirza oğlunа

Naxçıvan şəhər internasional

Pedaqoji məktəbi müvəffəqiyyətlə bitirdiyinə görə Əla ixtisas

və aşağıda göstərilən müddətdə attiqdiği üçün vəsiqəsi

Ana dili	Əla
Ana dilinin tədrisi metodikası	Əla
Ədəbiyyat	Əla
Azərbaycan dili	—
Rus dili və ədəbiyyatı	Əla
Rus dili tədrisi metodikası	Əla
Ariflmetika	Əla
Ariflmetika tədrisi metodikası	Əla
Algebra	Əla
Geometriya	Əla
Triqonometriya	Əla
Təbiiyyat	Əla
Təbiiyyat tədrisi metodikası	Əla
Tarix	Əla
Tarix tədrisi metodikası	Əla
Coğrafiya	Əla
Coğrafiya tədrisi metodikası	Əla
~~Fizika~~	Əla
Kimya	Əla
Pedaqogika	Əla
Məktəb gigiyenası	Əla
SSRİ Qanunvericiliyi	Əla
Xarici (Fransız) dili	Əla
Rəsm	Əla
Rəsm tədrisi metodikası	Əla
Rəsmxətt	Əla
Fizkultura	Əla
Fizkultura tədrisi metodikası	Əla
Nəğmə və musiqi	Əla
Hərbi iş	Əla
Məktəbdə praktika	Əla

Vətəndaş Hüjer Hüjdər Hirza oğlu

(Familiyası, adı və atasının adı)

1938-ci ilin tədris planı üzrə müəyyən edilmiş tələbləri ödədiyi üçün, tətbiqi məktəbdə, tam olmayan orta və orta məktəbin I-IV siniflərində müəllimlik hüququna malikdir.

„25" iyun — ununcu 1939

№ 2027

Pedaqoji məktəb direktoru:

Директор педучилища:

AzSSR
PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT OF EDUCATION

CERTIFICATE

This certificate is issued to *Geidar Alirza ogly Aliev* born in 1923 to certify that he has finished the complete course of the School Department of the *Nakhichevan International* Pedagogical School and with *excellent* behavior demonstrated the following knowledge:

Native language.....*excellent*
Native language teaching methodology.....*excellent*
Azerbaijanian literature.....*excellent*
Russian language and literature.....*excellent*
Russian language teaching methodology.....*excellent*
Arithmetic.....*excellent*
Arithmetic teaching methodology.....*excellent*
Algebra.....*excellent*
Geometry.....*excellent*
Trigonometry.....*excellent*
Natural science.....*excellent*
Natural science teaching methodology.....*excellent*
History.....*excellent*
History teaching methodology.....*excellent*
Geography.....*excellent*
Geography teaching methodology.....*excellent*
Physics.....*excellent*
Chemistry.....*excellent*
Pedagogics.....*excellent*
School hygiene.....*excellent*
USSR Constitution.....*excellent*
Foreign language (French).....*excellent*
Drawing.....*excellent*
Drawing teaching methodology.....*excellent*
Calligraphy.....*excellent*
Physical culture.....*excellent*
Physical culture teaching methodology.....*excellent*
Singing and music.....*excellent*
Military training.....*excellent*
School practice.....*excellent*

Citizen *Geidar Alirza ogly Aliev* upon meeting all the requirements set forth in the academic plan for the year 1938/39 is entitled to teach in a primary school, 1-4 forms of incomplete secondary and secondary schools.

Teachers: *(signatures)*

As they, whether good or bad, make up history, and nobody is entitled to cross out history." It was his response to his opponents and a piece of advice from the man who grew wise with experience. Neither he nor his generation has to be ashamed of their youth–student, komsomol, wartime one.

In 1939 he graduated from the Pedagogical School, as it was called then, with honors. "Citizen Geidar Alirza ogly Aliev upon fulfilling all the requirements set forth in the academic plan for the year 1938/39, –the certificate said, –is entitled to teach at a primary school, at 1-4 forms of an incomplete secondary and secondary school." The document was issued in two languages– Azerbaijani and Russian–and now it is kept with solicitude in Geidar Aliev's Nakhichevan museum.

On the stand next to it there is a group photograph: students and their teachers. Certainly first there are Lenin and Stalin's profiles, then the teachers in traditional ovals–Imanov, Guseinov, Zemanov, Abbasov, Israfilov, Bektashi, Iskender (died in the Great Patriotic War), Akhundov, Grigoriev, Mikrtychyan, Gaziev... The surnames under the dim photos show that people of different nationalities taught the students, but certainly most of them were Azerbaijanians.

The 1930s, both glorious and bitter, were coming to the end. There were top-priority construction projects and "Black Marias" at nights... Gusein Djavid's lines disappeared from newspaper pages. Entire columns were occupied with reports of frenzy rallies: "Baku workers unanimously approve of the USSR Supreme Court Military Panel's verdict to the fascist gang of Trotskist bastards. The marchers are carrying over their heads thousands of portraits of Stalin and his comrades-in-arms, banners and transparencies. Ugly mugs of Trotsky and the convicted men are looking from caricatures, where these foul dogs are pictured together with their fascist bosses" (*Molodoy rabochy, a newspaper of the Central Committee and the Baku City Committee of the Azerbaijan Leninist League of Communist Youth. February 2, 1937*). Samed Vurgun wrote first chapters of his *Komsomol Poem*, introducing an attractive image of Geraibeck, though according to ideological standards he was a representative of the "hostile class". Only years later such novels as *We* by Zamyatin, *Foundation pit* and *Chevengur* by Platonov would reach the reader. It goes without saying that our hero could not realize all subtleties of the total levelling of ideas. But young Geidar Aliev could not fail to know about the campaign against the tar, a national musical instrument (in Russia there were attempts to reject even the violin); but he recited inspired lines of

“Twangle my tar!” by Mushfik. The black year of 1937 broke these strings too.

Decades later Geidar Aliev, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, would defend Bakhtiyar Vagabzadeh and his poem “Gyulistan”, which despite all bans contained lines about Azerbaijan’s dismemberment.

At the same time Khalil Rza wrote “seditious” lines:

I don’t want freedom
Gram by gram,
I want to break fetters
Tying my legs and arms!

When Azerbaijan gained its independence, President Geidar Aliev decorated Bakhtiyar Vagabzadeh, Khalil Rza Ulutyurk, and Mamed Azra, a poet of penetrating talent, with one of the highest awards of the country.

But back in the 1930s Geidar Aliev graduated from the Pedagogical School with honors, received a deed of praise and a schoolteacher’s qualification. However, he did not get a chance to work at school...

Dovlat Mamedov was drafted to the army. He returned to the eight-year school of Bananiyar village of Djulfinsky District after demobilization clinking with his battle awards. Geidar Aliev’s younger brother Djalal started teaching at this school.

But Geidar had his own frontline. And he had to keep silent about it for the time being.

Chapter 2
HERE IS A FRONTLINE TOO

June 22, 1941, Nakhichevan

The frontier-guards of Nakhichevan detachment hummed a song about the Far-Eastern border over which storm-clouds were gathering, which was popular before the Great Patriotic War, in their own manner:

> Over the Araks storm clouds are gathering,
> The severe land is filled with silence…

In this sunny land storm clouds were certainly mentioned in the figurative meaning. Because every day, every night along this thousand-kilometer-long river, most of which was a state border, an alarm was expected. From the contiguous side gangs cut their way and robbed peasants and drove the cattle away. Smugglers were engaged in their business. Iranian (it was called Persian at that time) and Turkish frontier-guards fired at Soviet duty details. "At 10.30 on July 27, 1931, in the area of the Karaguluk frontier post of the Nakhichevan frontier detachment, –reported the Deputy Head of the Main Department of the OGPU Frontier-Guards and Troops Bobryshev, –a Persian airplane violated the border and flew over it to our territory. Flying over our territory the airplane headed for south-east (along the border) and in the area of the Bezbashi frontier post returned back to Persia."

Well before the fascist Germany's attack on a USSR the map "The New Administrative and Territorial Division of the State of Iran" was issued in Teheran. "The borders of Iran, –the commentaries to the map issued pursuant to the Mejlis resolution read, –are not officially settled, except those with Turkey." In fact our neighbors made claims for the Soviet–in their formulation– Caucasian Azerbaijan, for the Republic's capital Baku, which even in their official correspondence appeared under its ancient Persian name of Bad Kube. And according to plan Iran itself was being converted into an anti-Soviet base. The "German Legion" was becoming a kind of Werhmacht detachment in the territory of

that country – says *History of the Second World War*. –In the northern regions of Iran bordering the USSR, Hitlerites made warehouses for weapons and explosives; subversive and terrorist details were formed to be transferred into the Soviet Union, first of all into the areas of Baku oil-fields and Turkmenistan."

In other words at the southern border as well as at the western one there was a smell of gunpowder in the air.

In Nakhichevan railway workers were the first from civilians to learn about the war. They were put on martial law and were told that they were equal to soldiers since then. So Alirza Aliev got the words of the depot's party leader, who mixing Russian and Azerbaijanian words, shouted at the rally that there was a frontline there too and it went along the Araks, the border river. The party leader, a recent steam engine stoker, was not far from the truth. He threw words, which were furious and burning like coals in the furnace of his hot machine.

– Remember, comrades, Hitlerite armies are getting ready for an attack on the opposite bank of the Araks; they are out to get our oil fields.

In that summer as usual the pioneer camps were opened throughout the Nakhichevan Republic. They were to be evacuated urgently; the children were to be sent home immediately. A few groups of strong lads were sent from Nakhichevan to assist the camp workers and pioneer leaders. According to the veterans' recollections eighteen-year-old Geidar Aliev was in one of such groups. It was then that he got a chance to get acquainted with future eminent geologist Farman Salmanov.

Farman was gaining strength in a pioneer camp in the mountains. On the twenty-second of June the pioneer leaders promised to take the children hiking. But on that tragic day at the camp parade the dismayed camp chief suddenly substituted their energetic and cheerful physical trainer. She announced in a trembling voice that a war broke out, the Hitlerite Germany treacherously attacked the Soviet Union, and so the camp was to be closed. Everyone had to return home at once.

But how to do that? The only bus was broken. The road down the slope was about twenty kilometers long and very steep. Such way was beyond most of the children's strength. "I was carried on the shoulders by a strong Armenian youth, –Farman Kurbanovich remembers. –Now I do not even remember what he did in the camp, but he carried children in turn all along that very long and hard way."

In the memoirs of Farman Salmanov, a prominent scientist, the Lenin prizewinner, the Hero of Socialist Labor, one of the

discoverers of the Tyumen oil, such expressive episodes are scattered in abundance. He can notice details and estimate a person's true worth. On the pages of the book his grandfather Suleiman, who was sent for insubordination to authorities to Siberia for twenty years, is described as alive, his wife Olga, a Siberian woman, was named Firyuza in Azerbaijan, where she returned with her husband. Farman's younger sister–was given her name Amura after the Far Eastern River Amur in memory of this remote land...

Nobody chooses either Motherland or parents. Caucasia is a joint home for Azerbaijanians and Armenians, Georgians and Ossets, Daghestans, Chechens, Ingush, Abkhazians... Is it possible for children to meet such a pioneer leader as that Armenian youth in this multinational house now? Or are there other instructors in demand nowadays, those whose eyes are full of hatred? But it is a separate topic.

...After the start of the war, there was a significant increase in the number of servicemen and military equipment in the streets of Nakhichevan. Even people far from army matters could understand something serious was going to happen.

In the early hours of August 26, 1941, the Soviet troops entered Iran. This was done pursuant to the Soviet-Iranian Treaty of 1921. The Shah's army did not resist for long: in some sectors just till 1 p.m. of August 26. At the same time southern areas of Iran were occupied by the troops of Great Britain. At the beginning of September English and Soviet detachments entered Teheran. In the south of Iran about 30 thousand American soldiers took their stand...

Until recently those events in Iranian Azerbaijan* have been described in a remote and vague way. As if kind of liberation movement headed by the Azerbaijan Democratic Party was spreading there. The name of this party's leader, the head of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, Djafar Pishevari, was often "forgotten" even by academic editions.

The national government of South Azerbaijan, established at the end of 1945, lasted for a year only. There worked thousands of Soviet engineers, geologists, builders, teachers and workers in the

* In modern Azerbaijan this region of Iran is called South Azerbaijan. After Soviet and English troops entered Teheran on January 29, 1942, the English-Soviet-Iranian Treaty was signed. The USSR and Great Britain's actions, as historians write, prevented the involvement of Iran in the war against the countries of the anti-Hitler Coalition and ensured its cooperation with them in the war period.

field of culture in the territory under its control. Doctor of Sciences (History) one of the most profound explorers of this topic Djamil Gasanly describes their assistance as unselfish and self-sacrificing. *South Azerbaijan–Beginning of the Cold War* is the title of his book, covering events of 1941-1946. Events developing around South Azerbaijan immediately influenced Geidar Aliev's life.

...On May 10, 1941, his friends congratulated him on his birthday. The session was ahead, then summer holidays and somewhere in the distance there was September and the third year at the Institute. But on September 1, the Institute found many of its students missing. Some of them went to work, replacing their fathers drafted to the army, others were assigned to military schools, still others like Aliev, were called to local military registration and enlistment offices. It was already on June 23 that Geidar registered the documents in the secret division of the NKVD archives department of the Nakhichevan ASSR.

He returned home late at night frequently. Steps resounded loudly in deserted streets of Nakhichevan. Sometimes out of darkness a military patrol emerged, "Your documents!"

In the yard some trestle-beds were scattered spaciously–people of Nakhichevan following a long-held custom slept in the open air in summer, as it was rather stuffy inside. Beds, plates and dishes were taken outside. Izzet-khanum bent over kerosene stove, and then laid the table for Geidar. He was the eldest at home by the time: Father spent almost all his time in business trips, Gasan was in the army, Gusein was in Baku... It was to him, Geidar; Djalal came to get advice when he had learned that it was necessary to pay for studies–150 roubles a year. This was a great amount of money for the Aliev family. At the family council Djalal was advised to go to the preparatory department of the Pedagogical Institute. Education was free there and what is more 50 grams of bread were given every day.

– Today Djalal has brought his bread home, –Izzet told Geidar with quiet pride.

– Thank you, Mother, –responded the latter. –I'll have only tea.

Izzet-khanum poured some water from the jug on his hands, held out a piece of washing clay "gyul-abi", which substituted both toilet and laundry soap for Azerbaijan families in the war years.

Once at dawn when the sky was just tearing off from the earth, weeping from the neighboring yard waked the Alievs. Khurshid-khanum's family lived there. The husband was at the front and she

lived with five children–one younger the other. Izzet-khanum hailed her neighbor:

– What can I do for you?

– The children cannot get asleep because they are hungry!

Izzet called Geidar:

– Help me, Son...

They collected some bread, cheese, sugar, and preserves and gave everything to Khurshid. Both mothers burst out crying.

Falling asleep Geidar saw Mother sitting on the edge of the sofa clutching her head in despair. Evidently she did not have a moment's sleep that night pondering over her bitter thoughts. On waking up by the birds' singing he saw her sitting on the same sofa. Izzet-khanum roused herself:

– Son, I'll cook breakfast for you right away!

The same day he decided to try his luck again at the military registration and enlistment office, maybe this time he would be able to get permission to go to the front. Similar scenes took place all over the country at that time. Military commissars, who wrote applications to their chiefs themselves with request to send them to the Army in the Field, fought off applicants tiredly.

– You are needed here (variants: on the border, in militia, at college, in the mine) too.

Practically the same happened to Geidar Aliev at the Nakhichevan military registration and enlistment office that time again, when an officer on duty said to him:

– It is a frontline here too. The Transcaucasian front. When it gets necessary we will draft you too.

Soviet Mission in South Azerbaijan

By that time 3,816 civilians were mobilized in Azerbaijan to be sent to Iran. (Djamil Gasanly has collected Statistics.) According to his findings there were 82 party workers, 100 employees of different Soviet organizations, 200 chekists, 400 militiamen, 245 railway workers, 42 oilmen-geologists. Aziz Mamed Kerim ogly Aliev, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, headed the «Soviet Mission in South Azerbaijan».

The decision on the Mission and its head was made in the Kremlin. Aziz Mamedovich was approved as a member of the Military Council of the 47th Army; it was dislocated in ancient Tebriz, the capital of South Azerbaijan. The Mission worked from July-August of 1941 to the summer of 1942, when the events at

the Soviet-German front overshadowed all others. In addition the Soviet Union received military strategic aid from its allies through Iran at that time. The supplies were transported from the Persian Gulf throughout Iran to the Caspian Sea and further along the Volga or by railway.

The First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party Mir Djafar Bagirov was one of the most active organizers of the campaign to South Azerbaijan. He was said to draw an analogy with the Red Army liberation campaign to Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia in 1939, when Ukraine and Byelorussia enlarged their territories due to restitution of the areas previously seized by Austria-Hungary and Poland.

In order to get better knowledge of the situation in South Azerbaijan, Bagirov went secretly to Tebriz through Nakhichevan. The border with Iran was transparent for people like him. Djamil Gasanly cites his recollection about this trip. "While in Nakhichevan I went to Tebriz for 3-4 hours... In Tebriz I came across groups of boys and girls several times. When I wanted to have a talk with them and asked the driver to stop the car they took to their heels. Then I told them in Azerbaijani: "Come here." Hearing my words, they came up to me... The land of South Azerbaijan is our true Motherland. People living along our Republic's border were separated from their relatives for a long time... –Then he stopped near the map on the wall and said: – When the Iranian Government divided the country into regions, it set aside a territory for Azerbaijan like that (he showed it in the map). But it is a lie. Azerbaijan is located from here to there (he showed in the map again). Frankly speaking, Teheran should also be included in Azerbaijan's territory."

At one of the meetings at the Central Committee, a comrade, who came back from a business trip, said that they were passing the village of Turkmenchai. Bagirov remarked:

– In this village the big Azerbaijanian people was divided into two parts...

In the hot summer of 1827 during the war between Russia and Persia, General Paskevich's troops besieged Erivan (Yerevan), and then took by storm Abbas-Abad fortress ten versts away from Nakhichevan. The peace negotiations started. On the instruction of the Russian Army Commander in Transcaucasia Alexander Sergeyevich Griboyedov, Court Counsellor of the Russian Empire's Foreign Collegium and a famous poet led them.

From Griboyedov's report to Paskevich on the negotiations with the Persian Shah Abbas-Mirza:

"…I had to say that I was not authorized to analyze what had preceded the war, it was not my affair."

– All of you say: It's not my affair. –But is there not justice in this world!

– Your Highness, you appointed yourself as judge to your own affairs and chose to solve them with arms. Without underestimating either your prudence, or your bravery or strength, I have to underline just one thing–the one who unleashes a war can never tell what it will end up with.

– That's true, –he said.

– Last year Persian troops suddenly and rather far penetrated into our domains on this side of the Caucasus. Now after seizing Erivan and Nakhichevan regions we are standing on the Araks and took hold of Abbas-Abad, where I came from right now.

– You took hold! You seized! My son-in-law, a coward, surrendered Abbas-Abad to you and he is a woman, worse than a woman.

– Do what we did against any fortress and it will surrender to Your Highness.

– No, you will die on the wall, there will be no one left alive. My people were not able to do that; otherwise you would have never taken hold of Abbas-Abad.

– Anyway, in present state of affairs the General received a proposal of peace from you three times by now, but neither of your three communications contained the conditions our party is ready to start peace negotiations on. Such is the sovereign's will... At the end of each war that is treacherously unleashed against us we remove our bounds and the enemy as well who might dare to step over them. That's why in this situation it is required to yield Erivan and Nakhichevan regions. Money is also a kind of weapon; nobody can wage a war without it. It is not bargaining, Your Highness. It is not even compensation for the incurred losses: Demanding money we deprive our enemy of the opportunity to harm us for a long time."

Under the Turkmenchai Treaty the border between Russia and Persia was drawn along the Araks. The Shah yielded two regions to Russia and agreed to pay great money contribution convincing the Tsar's ambassador in eternal friendship with his state. On passing these words Griboyedov remarked: "Later, however, the observations made not only by me proved to be true, that there was a constant discord between the Persians' words and deeds." Although it is necessary to note that these territories always attracted rapt attention of the English, and various conflicts and unpleasant incidents might have been provoked by them as well.

In Nakhichevan there is still preserved the governor-general's house (now it houses the wonderful Carpet Museum), where the great Russian poet and diplomat stayed in July 1827. It opened a gorgeous sight at the valley from here. "…I often looked up from my papers and directed my spyglasses towards the battlefield. I saw the enemy's cavalry galloping in all directions and swimming across the Araks in order to separate Muravyov and two hundreds of his cossacks. He perfectly got out of this scrape. There were no serious encounters and he came safe and sound back to us, though he was not able to see what he wanted."

A little over a year later the enraged crowd smashed the Russian Emperor's Mission in Teheran. 37 people were killed, Alexander Griboyedov among them. He was carried to the place he was going to rest in peace in Tiflis, where his young pregnant wife Nina Tchavchavadze was staying, along the road he just recently rushed along southwards with a very important state mission. They passed Nakhichevan, the governor-general's house; on June 11 (Old Style) near the fortress of Gergery Pushkin came across the squeaky bullock cart. You certainly remember the lines from his "Journey to Arzrum":

"I crossed the river. Two bullocks, harnessed in a bullock cart, were going up a steep hill. A few Georgians accompanied the bullock cart.

– Where are you coming from? –I asked. –"From Teheran." – What are you carrying? –"Griboyed." –It was a body of the dead Griboyedov that was transported to Tiflis."

One more century flew over the Araks. There was a red flag over the governor-general's house, from where the Russian poet looked through the spyglasses at the unknown distance and grieved over "scarcity of knowledge about this land". At the local theatre his characters–Chatsky, Molchalin, Skalozub...–talked in Russian and Azerbaijani to the world. At his friends' request Geidar Aliev, a student of the Pedagogical School, painted the posters for the performance.

Geidar knew by sight Aziz Aliev, the man bearing the same surname, a short man with orders on his soldier's blouse. But could he imagine how the fate would bring them together?

By the end of 1942 the Soviet Mission in Iran was practically wound up; only railway workers were on permanent watch day and night... On May 10, 1943, Father managed to get home to congratulate Geidar on his twentieth birthday, and a week later he fell ill–it was emaciation. On May 20 they buried Alirza Aliev. It

was the first loss in the Aliev family. It can be rightfully described as a war loss.

Moscow got busy again with South Azerbaijan in spring 1944. On March 6 the Council of People's Commissars considered the issue "On Measures to Strengthen Cultural and Economic Assistance to the Population of South Azerbaijan". The outcome of the Great Patriotic War was already evident, though the victory was thousands of versts away, the Crimea and Sevastopol, which had been repulsing fascists' attacks for 250 days, a large part of Ukraine, Byelorussia, Baltic states, Europe had to be liberated, destroyed cities and villages to be restored. In the mad whirl of affairs, wartime and peaceful, Stalin did not forget about South Azerbaijan. It may be that Stalin's interest in this problem was triggered by his youthful impressions of Baku and his personal treatment of the problem of Caucasia in general? It may be that the Teheran Conference brought on new solutions? We leave these questions without answers, since looking for them could take us far away from the major subject of the book.

The program approved by the Union's Council of People's Commissars provided for a ten-year Azerbaijan school to be opened, a model agrotechnical station to be set up and a knitting factory to be built in Tebriz... On June 10, 1945, Stalin signed a secret resolution "On Establishing Soviet Industrial Enterprises in North Iran". Soviet specialists participated in setting up subsidiaries of Azerbaijan mills and plants there. "The USSR Sovnarkom Resolution of June 10" –notes D. Gasanly, –betoken of uniting Iranian Azerbaijan with the Soviet Azerbaijan in the near future." On June 21 of the same 1945, I.V. Stalin signed GKO Resolution No. 9168 "On Oil Exploration in North Iran". Oilmen went as employees of hydrogeological party, attached to the headquarters of the Soviet troops in Iran. In other regions of Iran the English were also looking for oil and ore under the pretext of search for water.

The Azerbaijan Democratic Party (ADP) was also formed on coordination with Moscow. Bagirov suggested that Mir Djafar Pishevari, the editor-in-chief of the Teheran newspaper *Azhir*, be appointed as head of the ADP. (In some documents he is also referred to as Seid Djafar.)

Here is the characteristic of this outstanding person from Bagirov's letter of July 6, 1945, addressed to Molotov, Beria and Malenkov:

"Pishevari, native of South Azerbaijan, a former member of the Communist Party, held high party and state positions in the Soviet Azerbaijan for many years. In 1927 Komintern sent him to

Iran, where he was arrested by Shah Reza's government and spent 10 years in prison, he was set free in 1941 after the Soviet troops came to Iran. His two brothers live in the Soviet Union. One of them serves in the Soviet Army as a captain of medical service."

Pishevari, as D. Gasanly reasonably reported, saw no political prospects in gaining national independence by Azerbaijan within the state of Iran. He was hoping to establish the Azerbaijan People's Democratic Republic like that of Mongolia under the aegis of the USSR and later reunite it with Azerbaijan. It was not his fault that the international situation spoiled his game.

...An endless stream of cars, machines, books–in Azerbaijani and Farsi–and records with Azerbaijanian songs made for South Azerbaijan. And weapons as well–not have the Soviet manufacture but of many other brands, including Italian and Czech.

On October 21, 1945, the Commander of Baku military district, the Army General I.I. Maslennikov and M.Dj. Bagirov reported to Beria:

"In order to execute the Central Committee of the VKP (b)'s Resolution of October 8, 1945, on Iranian Azerbaijan and North Kurdistan we have undertaken the following:

"21 experienced operation officers of NKVD and NKGB of the Azerbaijan SSR have been assigned to organize liquidation of persons and organizations preventing the development of the movement for autonomy in Iranian Azerbaijan. The same comrades are to organize armed partisan groups from the local population."

On October 2, 1945, at the first Constituent Congress of the ADP, Mir Djafar Pishevari was elected Chairman of the Party Presidium. On December 12, 1945, the first session of the Azerbaijan Milli Mejlis (the National Assembly) formed the national government. Pishevari became the Prime Minister.

At the same time 80 operation officers-chekists, after completing a special course of training, were transferred to South Azerbaijan.

In Washington a new issue of *Time* magazine was devoted to the events in Iran. Shah Mohammed Reza's portrait was on the cover. There was a caption: "Iran's Shah. His influential friends want his oil." On the map published in the magazine South Azerbaijan was encircled by a sickle with a handle pointing at Baku.

The National Government of South Azerbaijan suggested an extensive program of political and social reforms. Azerbaijani became the state language. The State University was opened in

Tebriz. Teachers were sent from Baku. Children's homes–two for boys and two for girls–were opened for orphans and homeless children.

However, all these plans could succeed only under conditions of support from Moscow. But Moscow could not ignore Washington and London's will. The post-war world was actually multipolar. The Soviet Union started withdrawal of its military forces from Iran.

The soldiers were leaving. There were many Azerbaijanians among them.

– We will be near, just on the other bank of the Araks!

– Let the Araks dry out to the bottom! –was the response.

But the Araks carried its fast waters like centuries ago and it was its fate to divide one people into two countries again.

Moscow made attempts to protect its allies, but to no avail: Iran was bringing *its* troops into the northern areas of *its* country. The detachments of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic had "4 guns without shells and 2 mortars without mortar bombs" left. Azerbaijan was ready to fight, but Moscow promised only moral support.

On December 11, 1946, Pishevari and his colleagues received a cipher message from Stalin.

"Kavam as Prime Minister is legally entitled to send troops to any part of Iran and Azerbaijan in particular, so any further resistance is inexpedient, unnecessary and useless. Declare that you have no objections against the entry of government troops to Azerbaijan to keep order during the elections. Motivate your actions with interests of Iranian people's integrity, its freedom and independence."

It was done so. And so was it motivated.

...Over three thousand people were shot in seized Tebriz within a few days. Azerbaijan textbooks and books were burnt on fires. The Azerbaijan University, the National Theatre, the Philharmonic Society and museums were closed. The monuments to national heroes were demolished. The authorities put the region to Constitutional order.

After intense requests from Bagirov the Kremlin allowed to open frontier points at Djulfa, Khudaferin, Bilasufar and Astar. Within two days 5,295 people crossed the Soviet border.

A group of party leaders headed by Pishevari remained in Nakhichevan for a while. Then Pishevari settled in Baku. He wrote to Moscow, sent new proposals to Bagirov. "In May 1947 to calm him down a special secret committee was set up allegedly to arrange groups of fedais to be sent to South Azerbaijan, –writes

D. Gasanly. –But there was no need to send anybody. On July 3, 1946, Pishevari's car had an accident on the 14th km of Yevlakh–Gandzha motorway. A few hours later he died in a district hospital."

The indefatigable political expatriate was buried near his country house in Buzovny in the suburbs of Baku. Flowers were planted over his tomb to conceal his burial place. Only in March 1960 Pishevari's remains were transferred to the Alley of Honorary Burials, set up before the war in the 1930s. The Azer 21 Movement led by Pishevari (December 12,1945) purposed to achieve democratic reforms. A National Government in South Azerbaijan was established under his leadership. The movement targeted to free the Azerbaijan Turks from the yoke of serfdom and feudal oppression, and groaning under the weight of the then unjust regime in Iran. Right a year later – on December 12, 1946 the Shah army mercilessly punished and suppressed democratic forces; thousands of patriots were killed, sent into exile, emigrated from the country. Pishevari is the great son of the Azerbaijan people. Here on this holly soil lays his body.

All – what he lived on, what troubled him, what racked his thoughts and soul – now have become things of the past, the common property of the people through making history.

The wind from the sea is driving fallen leaves. A bit lower there are monuments to heroes of the Karabakh war. On the first, second, third–there are red ribbons. In that way citizens of Baku marked out the tombs of the Republic's leaders, who perished in 1991. The Secretary of State, Academician Tofik Ismailov, the Minister of Internal Affairs, General Magomed Asadov, the Prosecutor General Ismat Gaibov, the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers Zulfi Gadjiev... They died in the helicopter brought down by Armenian separatists.

"We will never be able to dissolve our military forces, –insisted Pishevari. –We have to preserve all our military strength and take care of it."

"In my opinion your evaluation of the situation inside the country and in the international arena is incorrect, –answered Stalin. –First. You want to see all demands of the revolutionary Azerbaijan met immediately. However, the present situation makes realization of this program impossible...

"Second. It goes without saying that if the Soviet forces were still in Iran; you could hope to achieve success in your struggle for revolutionary demands of the Azerbaijan people. But we cannot keep them in Iran, as, first of all, dislocation of the Soviet troops in Iran undermines our liberation policy in Europe and Asia. The

English and the Americans tell us: If the Soviet troops can remain in Iran, why cannot the British troops remain in Egypt, Syria, Indonesia and Greece, and the Americans in China, Iceland and Denmark. We have made a decision to withdraw our troops from Iran and China in order to deprive the English and the Americans of this weapon and fostering the expansion of liberation movement in colonies make our liberation policy better grounded and more useful. As a revolutionary you certainly understand that we cannot do otherwise."

There was also third–concerning political situation in Iran–and fourth...

"As it has transpired you said that at first we had raised you to the skies and then dragged you to the precipice and discredited you in that way. If it is true it makes us wonder. What happened in reality? We used a common revolutionary device, known to every revolutionary. Under the conditions which exist in Iran in order to ensure realization of fixed minimum demands of the movement it is necessary to encourage this movement proceeding from minimum demands and pose a threat to the government, creating circumstances under which the government will be glad to grab at the opportunity to make concessions. Without forestalling events, in the present situation in Iran you would not be able to get an opportunity to achieve satisfaction of the demands, the Kavam Government has to agree to now. This is a law of revolutionary movements. Of course there is not a shade of disgrace for you in this situation. It is rather strange if you think that we would let you be disgraced. On the contrary, if you behave reasonably and manage with our moral support to achieve satisfaction of your demands, which will actually legalize the current status of Azerbaijan, then you as a pioneer of progressive-democratic movement in the Middle East will be blessed by both the Azerbaijanians and Iran."

Alas, moral support for "satisfaction of demands, which will actually legalize the current status of Azerbaijan", that is autonomy within the boundaries of the single state, was obviously insufficient. Stalin could not fail seeing it.

Defeat of the National Government, break-up of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic echoed in the Soviet Azerbaijan as well. Thousands of people helped their brothers across the Araks–teachers and doctors, oilmen and builders, geologists and actors, party workers and servicemen...

It was Covered with Silence

Closeness to these events greatly influenced young Geidar Aliev's sensitive soul. One of his foreign biographers, Alexander Adler, editor-in-chief of French magazine *Courrier Internationale*, wrote about "regular reconnaissance operations in Turkish territory", carried out by Soviet chekists. "A young lieutenant Geidar Aliev by name considerably stood out" among them.

"Then Geidar Aliev served in Tebriz, –goes on Adler, –where he witnessed tragic events, the essence of which he realized very well,–in rather difficult conditions the Shah's troops seized South Azerbaijan. He was greatly impressed by... communist ideas defeat in Azerbaijan, defeat of the ideas the Azerbaijan people pinned their hopes on at that time."

National enthusiasm–such were the feelings, which people experienced in the Soviet Azerbaijan, especially in the areas near the border. Then the pendulum swung in the opposite direction–a tragedy in South Azerbaijan, which all Azerbaijanians perceived as a national calamity. Nobody wrote openly about it at that time, but it was said and it was considered as such by many people.

There is Geidar Aliev's testimony to this effect as well, which Djamil Gasanly, deputy of the Milli Mejlis, told us about:

– When my book was published, Geidar Alievich called to congratulate me and said, "I am glad there is such a scientist in Azerbaijan. You wrote about the things that were covered with silence in the Soviet period." Then he asked about my age. I answered that I was 50. "I am surprised. You described the events that I witnessed myself. I thought you were 70-75 and you had witnessed these events yourself too... Among other historical facts you say about Bagirov and Pishevari's meeting. I served in Nakhichevan at that time and this meeting took place before my eyes as we stood guard during that meeting..." At the end of our conversation he thanked me again and said that, in his opinion, history should be treated in this way–without prejudice, sincerely and objectively.

We should note to complete the picture that the scientist represents the People's Front of Azerbaijan, the opposition, in the Parliament. He started our talk with these words, as he might have thought that we used to meet only with Geidar Aliev's followers. But no, we listened to everyone–his friends and his opponents. The more valuable were those evidences, where the people appraising Aliev could put aside their political predilections:

– He was a great politician of Azerbaijan and of the whole modern world. He was building an independent state and brought Azerbaijan in line with the countries of developed democracy. He opted for balanced development of Azerbaijan's international relations–with Russia, the USA, countries of the West and the East. I was pleased that he read my monograph–regardless of being very busy and of old age–and considered it necessary to make a call.

The first edition of the monograph by Doctor of Sciences Gasanly was published in Azerbaijani. The second one–on his initiative–was in Russian.

– I did it as a token of respect to Russia, –he said.

We asked him if he came across the surname of Aliev in the lists of people sent on business to South Azerbaijan in those years.

– No, –answered the scientist. –I didn't.

Yes, in those lists you won't find the name of our hero. Then where? We are looking for an answer in vague expanse of time, comparing known facts and adding new data to them.

...In May 1945 State Security Colonel Volkov, working under cover of the vice-consul position in Istanbul, decided to leave for the West. He got in touch with the British intelligence and promised to hand over some secret documents and names of the Soviet secret agents in Turkey in exchange for political asylum. But not only in Turkey–in Great Britain as well as earlier he worked in the English department. The report of the English from Kabul got into hands of Kim Philby, Head of the Secret Intelligence Service Department in London... Kim Philby, whose contribution into the work of the Soviet Intelligence Service cannot be estimated in ordinary measurements. The same day Philby informed a staff member of the NKGB station in London about the development of events–as a prelude to the future catastrophe. Philby was sent by British Intelligence to Istanbul to look into the matter on the spot. But the traitor was already transported to Moscow. Kim Philby had to wash off–in the literal meaning of this word–British secret agents working in Turkey in the eyes of the command. In his report he "wrote off" this failure to the fact that Volkov "must have given himself away by his behavior or by drinking and chattering too much".

At that time Mikhail Matveyevich Baturin worked as the Chief of Soviet Intelligence Service in Turkey. His son, a cosmonaut and a scientist Yuri Mikhailovich Baturin, wrote a book about his father. Here is what he told a journalist from the *Tribune* newspaper about those events:

– So, who saved whom in the end–did Mikhail Baturin save Kim Philby or did Kim Philby save Mikhail Baturin? –The correspondent of the *Tribune* newspaper Sergei Maslov asked him.

– It is a common knowledge–our world is interconnected in a marvellous way, –answered Yuri Baturin. –But we know very little about it. We see only superficial interdependencies. And when deeper ties are revealed we are ready to get excited and surprised. You see, secret ties between two intelligence officers–neither was able to see it clearly–could paralyze if not kill both of them like electric shock. But could save them as well. Everything depended on circumstances as well as on efficiency of the one and the other. If Mikhail Matveyevich acted a bit less efficiently, Kim Philby would be exposed. And blame for exposure of the entire "Cambridge five" might have been laid on the Soviet intelligence officers. Then a significant part of Intelligence Service history and some part of International Relations history would have been written otherwise.

But it is quite possible that Philby saved my father. As he also acted very efficiently. Intelligence officers–regardless of the place of their work–see themselves as a part of the system. A secret agent is aware of his responsibility not only for himself and his contacts. He is also responsible for people he does not know and will never know. Both intelligence officers who knew nothing or at least nothing specific about each other tried to act as swiftly and accurately as possible. And they did everything perfectly.

And in conclusion Yuri Mikhailovich gave one more–quite small–example of unnoticeable interrelations, which have an effect many years afterwards.

– If Konstantin Volkov managed to leave for the West, Geidar Aliev's life and career would have developed in quite another way as he was one of Volkov's subordinates, and consequently history of one of the contemporary states would have been a bit different as well.

Geidar Aliev continued his service and judging by his first awards it was rather successful–he was decorated with "Labor Valour" medal, "For Service in Battle" medals and "Red Star" order for "success achieved in the sphere of the USSR State Security".

"According to his abilities he was more apt for international work, –Igor Sinitsyn, assistant Chairman of the USSR KGB, wrote about Geidar Aliev in his book *Andropov at Close Scrutiny*,

–he worked in the KGB stations in Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan. He reached a high position of the Chief of the Station in one of these countries. This modest, serious and delicate intelligence officer was sent to strengthen security bodies in Azerbaijan..."

Chapter 3
GEIDAR AND ZARIFA

Through centuries Oriental poetry has brought legends about gentle, pure and faithful love. Takhir and Zukhra... Khosrov and Shirin... Leily and Medjnun... Everything–intrigues, threats, envy–gave up under force of their fidelity to each other.

> And however restrained they may be,–
> Idle gossip and idle talk will never stop.
> As if the wind blowing in the morn
> By the edge slightly lifted yashmak
> From the face of love. They were patient–
> As only two of them knew the secret.
> But why suffer and keep silent
> When the veil of secrecy is taken away?

These are lines–in a key translation–from the poem written by great Nizami. Geidar Aliev knew them in Azerbaijani since his youth and more than once recited them to his Zarifa.

In the middle of the enlightened 20th century the fate had in stock a few tests for the love of Geidar Aliev and Zarifa Alieva's–who were not a husband and a wife yet, but just a pair of lovers sharing one surname by chance. We are sure their story is worth of a description as talented as that devoted to Leily and Medjnun's feelings. One day it may be told on the big screen or the big stage.

Though thanks to the talented director Vagif Mustafaev, who gave a memorable description of Geidar Aliev's confession with sincere tact, we have the documentary film "Story of Great Love". With the author's gracious permission we will refer to Geidar Aliev's recollections of his meeting with Zarifa-khanum, his destiny, how they fought for the right to build their family by themselves, which were recorded by Vagif Mustafaev.

In his youth Geidar Aliev was a handsome boy and an attractive man at a mature age and even later–who is seen from his photos; beauties in Baku and also in Leningrad and Moscow did

not try to conceal their admiration of him. But he, as many people who knew him well say, never gave grounds for flirting with him.

– And I've realized why, –remarks an old teacher Lyatif Guseinzadeh. –He was a man of one love. He loved his wife very much. It must have been that rare case when two halves found each other.

Great, sincere feelings are not usually displayed. They are often concealed from the eyes of strangers. But what will two old friends–now married women with children–ask each other about when they meet?

– Are you happy Zarifa?

Zinochka, so she was called at home, Azizbekova remembered how they shared their sacred thoughts after they had read Stephan Zweig's story "A Letter from an Unknown Woman".

– Could you love like that? –asked Zinochka her friend. – Would you be able to devote yourself and give everything to your beloved one?

– If I fall in love, I will carry this feeling through my whole life, be it hard or joyful.

Geidar Aliev could have said the same.

"I will never forget anything from what she told me about her happiness, her big, deep, faithful reciprocal love, fine qualities of her partner in life. It is typical that after this meeting, years later, more than once she said in the same invariably warm and particularly enthusiastic way about her female, family happiness and found wonderful words that unfortunately cannot be confided to paper."

Each of us might have chanced to see a blind man. Here he goes clattering with his stick against the edge of the pavement and stops at a crossing... In most cases there is usually a compassionate person who will take him across the street and rush to mind his own urgent business. And for someone such a meeting may become the greatest emotional shock for the whole life. That happened to Zarifa Alieva.

During the Great Patriotic War dozens of military hospitals were located in Baku. Over 500 thousand people went through them. One of such hospitals was situated in the University building. Schoolgirls and female students looked after the wounded, cleansed their wounds, gave water and spoon-fed those who could not move. Zina recited poems, Zarifa played the accordion.

"I remember there was a pilot, who had very bad burns and numerous compression fractures, lying immovably on his back. He refused to take food, practically did not open his eyes and was

utterly indifferent to everything that was going on in the ward. Zarifa stayed at his bedside for a long time, asked him about his family and told him news from the front. It turned out that he had daughters like us at home and he did not want to become a burden for his family and so he had not informed them of his condition. Some time later he dictated his first letter to his wife to Zarifa and we took it to the post-box together. So she received one more "speciality" in the ward–she wrote letters dictated to her by the wounded and sent them to their relatives."

Her acute sense of responsibility, her readiness to come to rescue immediately must have come from that time.

Once, after a shift at the hospital she and Zinochka ran home. They saw a beautiful young woman going in the opposite direction. Her back was unnaturally straight and her head was raised high. She tried to walk close to the wall.

"Zarifa gripped my hand convulsively, put a finger to her lips and following the doleful retreating figure with her gaze asked me, 'Did you see? She is blind. You know, long ago I decided to become a doctor. Everyone is a doctor in our family–Father and Mother, elder sister and Tamerlan. I want to be an oculist and try to give people back the eyesight–this great and priceless gift."

Years went by. Zarifa Alieva became a well-known ophthalmologist, a specialist recognized in medical circles and what is more important among patients. At one of large congresses she met Azizbekova, an academician, a prominent historian.

– Do you remember that blind woman from 1944, Zarifa?

– Yes, I remember everything, –answered Zarifa Azizovna. – And all my operations... And our meeting on the Day of Victory...

From early morning on that day all citizens of Baku went to Primorsky Boulevard. The entire city seemed to be gathered there. Later Academician Azizbekova, a granddaughter of one of the 26 Baku commissars, remembered that day:

"It was like the whole Baku came to the sea at that time. Strangers hugged and congratulated each other, cried together and remembered their relatives and friends. We made our way to our favorite tree; it is still there opposite the Puppet Theatre. And there Zarifa came to an abrupt stop near a woman in a black dress and a black kelagai–Azerbaijanian women's mourning headgear–covering almost all her grey head. Zarifa, usually very shy with strangers, came resolutely to her and embracing her said softly, "Ana-djan, take this mourning scarf off, it is a holiday today." The woman started crying. Zarifa, cuddling her closer, asked: "Husband?" – "No, sons... three my dear sons."

A tall young man stopped near them.

"Don't cry, Mother," –he said quietly and tenderly."

In Baku people told us the story of Zarifa and Geidar's first meeting like a legend. We would like to believe in this beautiful story, but alas, our heroes just could not meet on that day. Geidar Aliev met Zarifa only in 1947, it was in Kislovodsk. Here is his own recollection of this meeting:

– My elder brother was going to Kislovodsk for rest and invited me to join him... I did not know anyone and my brother had a lot of acquaintances there. Once I set my eyes on a girl, later I get acquainted with her. And it turned out that my elder brother knew her family and knew her father rather well. Though our acquaintance was short, in a way this girl won my heart...

Soon after this meeting senior lieutenant Aliev as a promising officer was sent to Leningrad to study at the School for Executive Staff of the USSR Ministry of State Security. In letters to his elder brother he asked as if by chance about their Kislovodsk acquaintance, how she was and what she did. Gasan did not keep him in suspense, especially as he knew from Tamerlan, Zarifa's brother, about first steps of doctor Alieva.

After completing the course of intelligence science with honors Geidar Aliev was assigned to the Ministry of State Security of the Azerbaijan SSR as Head of Branch of the Second Department. Let make it clear for outsiders–it is counter reconnaissance. And let us remind you that the Head of the Branch was only 27 then. His relatives pressed him: It is time to have a family.

– I was thinking of starting a family myself, –remembered Geidar Alievich. –It is natural. And according to Azerbaijanian customs Mother and relatives arrange some kind of bride-show. There were nice, pretty girls among those I was offered to marry. But my feelings for Zarifa must have been so strong that I wanted to see her again.

Fortunately Geidar met Tamerlan whom he called from time to time. Once they wandered along the embankment of the Caspian Sea and Tamerlan invited his friend to drop in at their house.

– I'll introduce you to my father. He has been in your parts more than once.

The name of Aziz Mamed Kerim ogly Aliev will tell nothing to a contemporary reader in Russia and even in Azerbaijan. However, he, a medical practitioner, Doctor of Medicine, even in his lifetime, was respectfully called the Healer of the society. In the 1930s he was the People's Commissar of Healthcare in Azerbaijan, then at the beginning of the Great Patriotic War he headed the Soviet Mission in Iran, we had already talked about,

and was Secretary of the Daghestan Regional Party Committee... By the time when Tamerlan introduced his friend to his father Aziz Mamedovich, the recent Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic, was out of job. He welcomed the guest heartily, as it was customary in this house. He offered some tea saying with a smile that Zarifa would come soon...

Aziz Aliev was one of the most educated people in the Republic. He had professional knowledge of medicine, culture and music... It was not just esteem of high positions that made many people favor him with their affection, including composers Uzeir Gadjibekov and Muslim Magomayev, by the way a grandfather and a namesake of the singer Muslim Magomayev, who was very popular throughout the Soviet Union, Abulfaz Karayev, Rector of the Azerbaijan University, legendary Samed Vurgun, Mirasadul Mirkasumov, a prominent scientist, the first President of the Republic's Academy of Sciences. Narkom Aziz Aliev, contrary to some of his colleagues, was not frequently seen on the rostrum. He did not like "making speeches". He did concrete things like establishing new medical services, writing textbooks for medical educational institutions in Azerbaijani, looking for talented youths and sending them to the leading higher educational institutions of the Union.

Rasul Gamzatov remembered as Aziz Mamedovich Aliev suggested him going to Moscow to study at the Gorky Literature Institute. "You should necessarily continue your education." Rasul Gamzatov's great talent flourished in Moscow even more.

Years later this story, heard at Aziz-mualim's house, might give Geidar Aliev the idea to send talented young people from remote places of the republic to Moscow institutes, or he might arrive at this idea by himself. Anyway they both had common strategy. Nowadays in some countries Soviet and Russian degrees are declared invalid. But such situation will not last for long... The essentials remain intact–schools in their large and deep meaning such as Academician Landau's school, who by the way was also from Baku, or Academician Ioffe's or Academician Alferov's schools. In the Soviet Union the best higher educational institutions were open–free of charge–for a boy from a miners' settlement in Donbass, for his coevals from a mountain village in Azerbaijan or from a god-forsaken kishlak in Uzbekistan...

The Father's, Aziz Mamedovich's, life was the best example for his children. Three of them–Lyazifa, Tamerlan and Zarifa became Doctors of Medicine. Zarifa Azizovna, one of the most competent ophthalmologists of the Union, was elected as Academician of the Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences.

Some of you, reading these lines, may remark: Why don't become an academician having such a father and such a husband?! We know how these thing are done...

We won't argue. In disputes like this, facts, not emotional outbursts, have effect. So did Zarifa-khanum use her father or husband's authority?

Just imagine a scene. Two Deputy Ministers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Poland with their families come to Baku for rest. Filipp Denisovich Bobkov, the KGB Deputy Chairman, accompanies them. Under the protocol the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Republic's Communist Party Aliev should welcome eminent guests. But he is on a business trip abroad. Zarifa Azizovna shows the city to the guests. According to the program they should visit one of the district party committees. She takes the guests to the place and remains sitting in the car.

– I'll wait for you here. I am neither a party worker nor the Central Committee representative.

It is a very didactic example of human ethics. In her relations Zarifa-khanum was guided by medical ethics, which she gave a lot of thought to.

"Devotees are needed like the sun" –was the title Zarifa Alieva gave to one of the chapters in the book dedicated to medical ethics. "Use of one of Chekhov's phrases," –writes Fatima Abdullazadeh, –was predetermined by her attitude towards Russian culture in general. She carried love for Chekhov and Rakhmaninov through her whole life."

But we put the cart before the horse.

Geidar and Zarifa's meeting came on the period when Aziz Aliev was out of favor. "What these young people–a daughter of a politician in disgrace and a youth, one of the most promising officers of the State Security System–had to suffer in order to be forever together will remain their private secret," pointed out Fatima Abdullazadeh.

Fortunately, Geidar Aliev did not take this secret with him. And we have to thank Vagif Mustafaev again for recording these moving evidences in the summer of 2001.

– My feelings for Zarifa were getting stronger and stronger. And I felt love on her part as well. So I made up my mind to connect my fate with her.

At work it was of course known that Geidar Aliev was seeing a daughter of a politician out of favor. At the urgent request of almighty Bagirov, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, Aziz Mamedov was dismissed from the Council of Ministers. Dark clouds were gathering over his

family too. Leily Gadji Djabbar kyzy, Aziz Mamedovich's wife, was elected a delegate to the 13th Congress of the Republic's Communist Party. In the morning smartly dressed she went to the Congress and suddenly came back soon. At home they wondered:

– What's happened? Can the Congress be over so soon?

– No, the Congress is going on, but Bagirov drove me away, – Leily-khanum found strength to smile. –He told me to hand in my mandate and leave."

Rumors about of this incident adorned with fantastic details spread throughout Baku. Acquaintances, friends and even relatives tried to keep as far away from Aziz Aliev's family as possible. The phone in the house rang rarer and rarer.

Geidar Aliev remembered:

– A few days later I met Zarifa-khanum. She told me that we could not see each other any more. I asked her: "Why?" She replied: "You know well that my father was dismissed from his post. And you work in security organs and may suffer. I think we should break up." I objected: "Our relations cannot depend on where someone may be working. They depend neither on your father nor on my place of work...

"Our relations were deep and sincere. She loved me very much. And I loved her dearly. So I told her not to worry. She answered that her concerns were not about herself, besides her father had already lost his job. 'I worry about you. It may so happen that it will have negative effect on your service'."

Geidar Aliev knew about the situation better than Zarifa did. Her father was being followed. Their telephone was tapped day and night. It was clear that Geidar's calls and his talks with Zarifa were recorded. So it did not come as a surprise when Geidar was summoned to the Minister of the State Security of the Republic Yemelyanov.

– We had a short conversation about work. Then he asked me: "Do you see such a girl?" "Yes", –I answered. "And are you aware that her father Aziz Aliev was dismissed from his post?" – "Yes, I am." –"Comrade Bagirov thinks badly of him." –"I don't have such information."

The boss recommended the young officer to break up with Zarifa Alieva as it could spoil his career. At the end of the meeting he threatened, "Otherwise you may forget about a job in the security bodies."

Discharge from the state security bodies was similar to being blacklisted. A person with such a note in his workbook or service card will be given no job. Geidar Aliev could lose more than just the job he liked; as he was a breadwinner in the family–he had to

provide his mother and his younger brothers and sisters who did not earn their living yet.

– But I still adhered to my opinion. I did not break up with Zarifa. At that time in Baku there was not much outdoor lighting so we were able to find some secluded nooks, which were away from strangers' eyes. –Geidar Alievich smiled archly remembering about it. It was obvious that he was glad to return to his youth.

They mostly met in the Governor's Garden, which was previously called the English Garden. In this old park, which was laid out in the 19th century, there were lots of dark alleys, where young lovers could hide from curious stares.

– At the entrance to the park there was a trolley-bus stop. I arranged to meet at this stop. I was young and brave and afraid of nothing. I had a pistol on me as it was prescribed by my service. Zarifa was a young and very attractive girl. And you know how beautiful girls attract attention; some guys might even make passes... I came to the trolley-bus stop and waited for her. Then we went to the garden.

However no tricks of the young chekist saved him from another summons to General Yemelyanov.

– Why don't you fulfil our demands? –asked the owner of the office, where Aliev would be working only a dozen years later.

– You see, –replied Geidar after a long pause, –there is a job and there is a private life. I like my job. And as I know you consider me to be a good worker. There is no reason for concerns here. But the second part of my life, which may be of greater importance for me, includes my family, my feelings, my affections. I love this girl. And she loves me. How can I part with her? I told her that it is beyond my understanding. I have to explain the reason to her or should say that I don't love her or that she has some defects I can't put up with and that's why I should break up with her. I just cannot say that I have to split with a person I love in order to keep my job in security organs.

Yemelyanov was a smart person and as it seemed to Aliev understood his position. But one thing was a senior comrade Yemelyanov who had children of Geidar's age and the Minister of the State Security was quite another thing. His voice got firmer:

– We'll have to make a decision on your job. Most probably you'll lose it...

It would have happened so. Aziz Aliev could have been sent to the cold parts, later followed by all his relatives, his sons and daughters' friends... But in the early hours of March 1, 1953, invisible forces turned over that page of history. In Moscow at the

Blizhnyaya mansion the person who ruled the Soviet Union and half of the world lost conscience. When his guardsmen dared to enter his private room he hardly breathed. On March 5 it was announced that Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin died. Four months later Beria was arrested and convicted, and then his protégés from the republics followed him. In Azerbaijan Bagirov was convicted, then the Minister of the State Security Yemelyanov and his deputies.

Geidar and Zarifa did not have to conceal their relations any more.

– Our meetings got legalized, –Geidar Alievich remembered with obvious pleasure the word from the intelligence officers' professional jargon. –We were both happy... And now when know you all this, tell me if I need to prove how deep the roots of my love are?!

Our love lived through hard times. They wanted to separate us. But we did not give up. Neither she nor I... My belief in strength of true love was confirmed. And we had thirty years of happy life together afterwards. I have two nice children–daughter Sevil and son Ilkham... But unfortunately Zarifa-khanum died too early.

Later we will return to that tragic April day of 1985 in Moscow drenched in cold rain, but let us stay in Baku for a while, where Geidar and Zarifa invited friends to the wedding tea-party. They treated their guests with "Mishka na Severe" ("Bears in the North"), the most delicious and most expensive candies of that time. They bought a kilogram of them to saleswomen's great surprise.

Once meeting Zinochka Azizbekova, Zarifa inquired after her mother's health.

"I answered that because of diabetes she was losing her eyesight very rapidly. It was a kind of non-committal answer. A couple of days later answering the doorbell I did not believe my eyes. It was Zarifa standing at the threshold. 'On my way to work I remembered your words about your mother's eyes. You should excuse me, as I have very little time, yet I'd like to have a look at Izzet-khanum's eyes'. (She had the same name as Geidar Alievich's mother. –*Auth.*) It is surprising that her mother, who did not see Zarifa for years, recognized her by her voice: "Fancy meeting you, sweetheart?" Zarifa-khanum did everything in her power for the old woman just by the call of her kind heart.

In 1977 Zarifa Alieva defended her thesis for a Doctor's degree "State of Workers' Organs of Vision at Some Enterprises

of Chemical Industry in Azerbaijan" at the Helmgolts Moscow Scientific Research Institute of Eye Diseases. She thoroughly studied occupational eye pathology. The industry opened new enterprises but how do they affect the workers' health?

Mikhail Krasnov, Academician of the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences, Director of the Scientific Research Institute of Eye Diseases, defined this problem with utter accuracy. Here are his words:

– In the sphere of our science that attracted Zarifa Azizovna most of all the situation was developing a bit paradoxically. Work made Man but it also created special life conditions at work where Man spends a third of his conscious life. All of this seems to be self-evident, concerning eyes and vision in particular. Nowadays the eyesight state is not only of great importance for efficient work, in modern society requirements for it grow each year. However there are no generalizing scientific works on this topic so far. One should possess Zarifa Azizovna's social flair to put one's talent at the service of this extremely hard, difficult, noble and not always gratifying task. Due to Zarifa Azizovna's efforts there was organized a scientific research laboratory for looking into occupational eye pathology.

It is possible to gather a few pages on professional part of the issue from specialists' reviews. They stress not only medical aspect of the research but also huge social significance of Zarifa-khanum's works as well as her personal human qualities.

"I'm happy with an opportunity to meet Zarifa Azizovna for many years in business, family and friendly surroundings," wrote K.V. Trutneva, Director of the Helmgolts Moscow Scientific Research Institute of Eye Diseases. "My late husband, Professor Ivan Ivanovich Shcherbatov got acquainted with the Aliev family before me. And from him I heard warm words about Zarifa Azizovna, Geidar Alievich and their small children–Ili and Seva."

Professor O. Dobromyslova remembered a lot of such small but characteristic details.

...Her husband, also a professor, and she had a rest at a sanatorium near Baku. They were invited to Aliev's house.

"At the agreed time we came to the house and I saw Zarifa Azizovna for the first time. Not tall, very active she immediately aroused liking for her. Her slim figure was wrapped in a simple silk dress, her small feet in open-toe sandals. Her large black Oriental eyes glittered with kindness."

This friendly meeting lasted for long, Dobromyslova's husband played Rakhmaninov and then they talked about their grown-up children...

"It was rather late when after dinner we were going to leave. At this moment Zarifa Azizovna's husband came from work. Tall and slender, he resolutely strode into the room. His face betrayed his exhaustion. We bustled to take our leave. But Zarifa Azizovna went towards him with a lovely smile. On coming to him she stood on her tiptoes, as her husband was much taller than she, kissed him tenderly on the cheek and whispered something in his ear. She must have informed him who their guests were. After greeting us graciously, the host persuaded us to stay a bit longer for a talk with him and a cup of Azerbaijanian tea. This time the entire family gathered around the table and the role of the small hostess skillfully conducting the whole family became especially evident."

A couple of days later Zarifa Azizovna went with her family to Bulgaria. Then the Dobromyslovs' holidays came also to the end. Older people remember how difficult it was to get air and railway tickets. In sanatoriums and holiday homes they were sold according to the lists and "dikari" (non-organized holidaymakers–*Translator's note*) had to queue up at ticket-offices at night. Zarifa Azizovna made a call to her acquaintances in Baku from Bulgaria to make sure the tickets for the Dobromyslovs would be booked and they would be seen off.

Academician N. Puchkovskaya remembered a purely female detail. At the Congress of Ophthalmologists one of its participants sprained a leg. He was taken to one of the best Baku hospitals, of course, and most competent doctors were invited for consultations, in addition Zarifa Azizovna brought "some things from home to the man who fell ill far from home to make his long stay away from his relatives less uncomfortable for him".

Zarifa Azizovna is kindly remembered by everyone who knew her. "I saw her when I visited the Aliev family in Baku and Zagulba, –tells Alexander Sergeyevich Dzasokhov. –Zarifa-khanum was known for her great kindness. She actually lived in full conformity with her scientific degree–Doctor of Medicine. They made a happy married couple. Unfortunately Geidar Alievich lost his spouse in April 1985 in Moscow. I saw how this tragedy shocked him. I can say assuredly that Zarifa-khanum played a huge role in the Aliev family, in bringing up their wonderful children–daughter Sevil, a scientist-orientalist and son Ilkham who is well worth of his father and who now continues Geidar Aliev's cause as the Head of sovereign Azerbaijan, which has friendly relations with Russia."

...She treated her mother-in-law Izzet-khanum like her mother. And she worried sincerely when in spring 1956 Geidar Alievich's mother fell seriously ill. In the next ward there was Samed Vurgun. It was mostly Rafiga who stayed near Izzet-khanum. But Geidar and Zarifa and her brother Tamerlan came to visit her almost every day.

Once they saw the door to the ward where Izzet-khanum was lying, which was usually slightly ajar, closed tightly. It turned out that Samed Vurgun died at night and the doctors did not want Izzet-khanum to know about it.

Shafiga worked as a teacher in Lenkoran at that time. She was sent a massage: "Mother longs to see you." With a three-year-old daughter in her arms Shafiga hurried to the bus... But she did not take her daughter to hospital, left her at the friends' house. Geidar, Djalal, Agil and Rafiga were already in the ward.

– Where is the child? –Her mother asked.

When she learned where the granddaughter was she got anxious:

– Take her, Shafiga! Be quick. They have flu and the child may get the infection... Go, Shafiga, hurry up.

They did not see each other any more.

"I saw her every night in my dreams for a month, –remembered Shafiga later, –she was lively and healthy... She wiped my tears..."

Chapter 4
"I CHOSE THIS PROFESSION IN MY YOUTH"

December 21, 1980, Baku

On this day there were no dances at Dzerzhinsky Club, which female students from the Pedagogical Institute used to visit to see a film or to dance, escaping from a gloomy building on the opposite side of the street. In the monumental building with columns known to the entire Baku the 60th anniversary of the Republican ChK-KGB services was celebrated. Black Volga cars pulled up to the entrance bringing the authorities. Learned people said comrade Andropov's greeting had been delivered from Moscow and Geidar Alievich Aliev was going to make a report himself.

And so it happened. The greeting of the Politburo Member of the CPSU Central Committee, Chairman of the USSR KGB, the Army General Yu.V. Andropov was read aloud. Yuri Vladimirovich wished "to steadfastly increase political vigilance in relation to enemy intelligence services and other alien elements' subversive activities". Then the floor was given to the Candidate Member of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party G.A. Aliev.

Geidar Alievich visited this building with a ceremonial portico of the Corinthian order many times and was very proud when he first received an invitation–it was printed on a thick quarter of the paper with Dzerzhinsky's profile on it... How much water has flowed under the bridges since then, how many changes have happened even in the names: ChK-OGPU-NKVD-MGB-KGB...

He went to the rostrum, looked habitually round the large conference room seating one thousand and two hundred people and said:

– Dear comrades! In this April workers of our Republic together with fraternal peoples of the country celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Azerbaijan SSR and formation of the Azerbaijan Communist Party. Recently on December 20 we

celebrated the 63rd anniversary of the USSR VChK-KGB organs. And today we have gathered at the grand meeting dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the ChK-KGB organs of our Republic, which were established on the very next day after the victory of the Soviet power in Azerbaijan.

He habitually "shaped up" his speeches almost until the last moment. This time again he was looking through the pages prepared by his assistants, added something, made some phrases more accurate, trying to choose the only suitable words.

– The VChK organs were set up on the initiative of our leader and teacher V.I. Lenin, who paid great attention to their role in defending the achievements of the Great October Socialist Revolution. On Ilyich's proposal, F.E. Dzerzhinsky, one of his faithful companions-in-arms, was appointed Head of the VChK. At that unforgettable time under V.I. Lenin's guidance the glorious chekist traditions were born... And today with a sense of great satisfaction one may say that these wonderful, genuinely Leninist traditions of "Iron Felix" live on and are used in practical activities of the state security organs of the country.

The year of 1980 and the tenth five-year plan were coming to an end. It was not the best five-year plan in the history of the country. The economy was going to pieces. But it was not just the economy. On the same day, December 23, Moscow buried Alexei Nikolayevich Kosygin, the man who was at the head of the country's Council of Ministers for 16 years and whose name was associated in the society with the so much promising reform. That autumn he was dismissed from his post.

In big politics it was common to play under established rules. Which meant to express feelings of "sincere gratitude to our great party, its Leninist Central Committee headed by the prominent political and state leader of the present day comrade L.I. Brezhnev for the wise Leninist internal and external policy."

These words and phrases as well as entire turns–like monolithic cohesion of the party and the people, the party as driving and leading force of the Soviet people, its leaders, each of them a faithful successor of Lenin's cause–were perceived as an inevitable ritual and they usually flew by without touching anybody's mind. But they had to be said. The honorary Presidium headed by the faithful Leninist, the true leader had to be elected... And then you had to stand up and applaud loudly.

Behind the walls of meetings, plenary sessions and congresses another life was going on–with queues, anecdotes, everyday cares and common talks... In them "Iron Felix" was applied to a safe–

but such a wag would have been thrown out of this conference room.

– In this room today I see representatives of almost every generation of Azerbaijanian chekists. –Aliev did not look into the pages lying in front of him.–People who began their work in the state security organs in the fiery 1920s, who actively worked in the 1930s, who took part in the Great Patriotic War, who provided security at the internal front. Here are also those who came to the security organs in the post-war period and a young generation of chekists. And I would like to give all of you both my personal congratulations and the best wishes.

In the conference room there were also some people Geidar Aliev worked with in his time in NKVD-MGB-KGB–he spent a quarter of the century in intelligence and counter-espionage agencies and was at the head of the Republican State Security Committee for five years–as the first Deputy Chairman and then as the Chairman. These people took the baton from the hands of the first chekists of Azerbaijan and passed it further to new generations. Geidar Aliev with his keen interest in history suggested publishing a collection of documents and materials dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the Republic's ChK-KGB organs. The book also included a unique historical document "Brief information report on the activity of the Azerbaijan Emergency Committee (May 1921-May 1922)". This document was handed over to the delegates of the Second All-Azerbaijan Congress of Soviets. Let us at least cast a glance at its pages.

"On the very first month of the Soviet power, the enemies of the Revolution provoked illiterate masses for protest actions in a number of areas of the AzSSR. Revolt in Gandzhinsky, Karabakhsky, Zakatalsky, Nukhinsky and other districts of Azerbaijan Province are examples of foul White-guard-khan reaction that used backwardness, timidity and ignorance of people for their wicked goals of exploitation."

As you can understand from the further narration, the new power set free all its defeated enemies. Incidentally in the same way the leaders of the Great October set free all tsarist generals after the Revolution. The latter pledged their word of honor that they would not fight against the working people. Their word of a gentleman turned out to be very cheap. The generals went to the Don region where they started forming the White Army. The same happened in Azerbaijan. "The counterrevolutionaries that were left free, –says the brochure further, –used our kindness to fight against us." The Red Army detachments had to be summoned in order to put down a rising.

But as soon as one calamity was over, the next one was at the door. “The united counterrevolutionary forces settled firmly in Menshevik Tiflis did not want to give in and continued to organize and sent across the borders of the AzSSR and other Soviet Republics a lot of its emissaries, weapons, money and the like in order to foment the fire of a bloody civil war and to completely ruin the much-suffered population.”

Does the present day reader know what “uchtro” stood for? It was a district emergency committee consisting of three people. They were formed to fight with bandits, robbers (they are called “kochi” in Azerbaijan), who robbed people on the roads. Severe punishment of bandits helped to change the situation dramatically. In August 1921 the troikas were liquidated. It became quieter on the roads. But fright settled in Baku. “There was no night without a few robberies in flats in different districts of the city. Peaceful citizens were in terror and were scared to leave their houses at nightfall.” Chekists arranged a round up. “Only after 52 bandit chieftains were shot, peace came to Baku and its surroundings.”

Not only bandits threatened the Republic. Former Turkish officer Khalil Shakir-zadeh settled down in Baku set up a party called “Ittikhad-Islam”. This pan-Islamic party, as it is characterized in the book, formed its groups in every corner of the Republic and was involved in preparation of a new rising. It’s been intended “to kill prominent leaders of the Soviet Azerbaijan–Turks, spreading general panic and provoking a rising all over the Republic. The plan of the rising was ready as well as a list of the comrades doomed to death.” Fortunately the conspiracy was revealed. In the early hours of July 2, 1921, the chekists arrested the conspiracy leaders.

Aliev is a surname rather common in Azerbaijan. And there was a worker-Bolshevik Baba Ali Yeldash ogly Aliev among first chekists. His baptism of fire he got during the Baku strike of 1907. The tsarist police set some hired bandits at workers. The city RSDRP Committee sent its Muslim comrades to help the workers. Baba Aliev was among them. After the revolution he became a chekist.

A lot of nice people who believed in the workers’ cause went to the ChK–Azerbaijanians and Russians, Armenians and Georgians, Ukrainians–as people of all nationalities lived in Baku. Years later in Azerbaijan people still remembered the Deputy Chairman and the Operative Department Chief of the Azerbaijan ChK comrade Gaberkorn.

Sergei Mironovich Kirov, while working in Leningrad, wrote in one of his notebooks the following characteristic of his

comrade, German by nationality: “The person submitting this document, comrade Gaberkorn, is an old party member, a good worker, worked in the Office of Public Prosecutor, etc., in Caucasia–Baku, Tiflis... I repeat that he is a very good worker.”

There is a “House on the Embankment” in Baku as well as in Moscow. In Moscow it is a gloomy building described by Yuri Trifonov in his story of the same title. Most of those who lived in that once prestigious house with a view to the Kremlin became victims of repressions in the 1930s-1940s.

Baku citizens called the KGB building, where Geidar Aliev worked for nearly a quarter of a century, “House on the Embankment”. But even before he came there, ill repute enveloped the house. The State Security system necessary for any country, severely suppressing dissidence more than once slid down to repressions. Numerous publications, declassified documents and memoirs tell about it. Azerbaijan was not an exception, of course.

In 1956 in Baku open court proceedings were arranged. The people who were guilty of repressions in Azerbaijan in 1937-1938 were tried. The proceedings were called open but entrance to the court was only by “special permits”, as Geidar Aliev remembered. He, Chief of the Counter-espionage Department at that time (appointed at the end of 1953), had such a permit. In court confessions, frightful in their frankness, were heard and the documents concealed until then in the archives were disclosed. Then they were concealed again, under pretext that “how long can one and the same be told and retold?” But people wanted to know the truth, to restore the names of all the illegally convicted, tormented to death relatives and friends. Given enough courage and wisdom to settle all the cases right, now there would have been no myths about dozens of millions of people perished in the camps.

At the memorable December meeting in late 1980 Geidar Aliev could not tell everything he had in his heart of hearts either. Years had to pass...

July 15, 1997, Baku

– At that time as a young specialist studying archives documents, in particular the materials of 1937-1938 and later periods, –I asked myself: who were in those anti-Soviet, nationalist groups, that attempted to throw down the Soviet

power? Some of them were arrested or shot or perished in the distant Siberia. However, the other part was not arrested. But in the archives materials their names were among those listed as members of anti-Soviet nationalist groups, detachments and organizations. I thought at that moment: why were they left at large if they were members of anti-Soviet, anti-revolutionary organizations? And if they were not members of such organizations, why were their names in these lists?" There were so many fabricated unjust cases that to make it out was very difficult.

These words look like diary notes, a bitter confession of a person who encountered great injustice and tried to look into the mass of contradictions, causes and consequences. It was so in fact... As the President Geidar Aliev tried to set everything right– only not alone but together with listeners–officers of the Azerbaijan National Security organs. In 1997 by his decree he declared March 28 as a Day of professional holiday of employees of the National Security organs of the Azerbaijan Republic. It was on that day in 1919 that the state security organs of the independent AzDR were formed. And now on the day of their professional holiday he addressed his colleagues, workers of the National Security organs, "the people of the profession which has been very dear and interesting for me from the very young age". He thought aloud, opened his heart and called for joint consideration and action.

– One of the greatest mistakes of the former NKVD was limited thinking of most people working there. Nothing except discipline interested them. Most of them were far from culture, literature. Without good knowledge of literature, culture, music, history people cannot be professional security workers. You see a security worker is not just a member of some investigation group. He has to possess high culture, be able to communicate with a poet, composer, writer, scientist or a common citizen. Otherwise he won't be able to tell white from black, bad from good, mistake from crime.

...In 1950 young chekist Geidar Aliev tried to find materials concerning the case of the prominent Azerbaijanian writer and scientist Salman Mumtaz. One of the old NKVD workers told him that he saw how the guardsmen burnt books from the libraries of Salman Mumtaz and Gusein Djavid in the inner yard, where there was a prison at that time, by the way. He could not stop that barbarity.

– Of course, –went on Geidar Alievich, –how could these people know what was the value of these rare books from Salman Mumtaz's collection... Could those who carried out investigation of the cases of Gusein Djavid, Akhmed Djavad, and Mikail Mushvig rise to their level? No! Because most of them were illiterate...

You know, there is one more reason why I remember this, because nowadays there are some people, our contemporaries with very limited thinking ability, they might be rude and far from culture. They think that their high office gives them everything. However position gives nothing to a person besides power. Everything else depends on his intelligence, knowledge and culture. If he possesses all this he will be able to fulfil his official powers in the interests of the state. If he doesn't he won't and he will simply maim the people.

Such citizens "with very limited thinking ability" once and again suggested the Chairman of the Republican KGB to bring pressure on dissidents, to arrest a poet, and send some others to faraway places... Aliev didn't allow doing that. He saved many talented people from persecution and now Azerbaijan is proud of them.

Let us remember what zeal was shown at that time in persecution of dissidents in Moscow and Leningrad and in persecution of "nationalists" in Kiev... We can only regret that unlike his Azerbaijan colleagues no protector or friend could be found for talented poet Vasil Simonenko, for example. There men of arts, including even Oles Gonchar, were made to march in step, here–attempts were made to understand their ideas, to suggest something in a friendly way, to give some advice...

In 1969 on Geidar Aliev's proposal Azad Sharifov, a correspondent of the *Izvestiya* newspaper in Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan, was appointed Chief of the Culture Department of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party.

– Azad, you were not called to Baku by chance, –Geidar Alievich told him at their first meeting. –Culture Departments are being organized at the Republican Central Committees, and we considered candidatures for a long time before we made our choice in your favor. You were raised in a theatrical family; you have two degrees in music and literature. Moreover, I know you have good relationships with Mirza Ibragimov, Rasul Rza, Suleiman Rustam, and Imran Kasumov. You are close with Kara Karaev, Fikret Amirov, Niyazi and Tofik Kuliev, Tair Salakhov. All of them, thanks God, are at the height of their fame and

adequately represent our people on a global scale. Your task will be to encourage development of our young gifted creative youth...

A wonderful generation of writers, composers, artists and theatrical agents is coming to the fore. For example, the Ibragimbekov brothers, Anar, Elchin Yusif Samedoglu, Fikret Godja, among composers–Arif Melikov, Khayam Mirzazadeh, the conductor Rauf Abdullaev, director Eldar Kuliev, movie and theatre actors. They are the people who need our help, which means that books of writers and poets should be published, the playwrights' plays staged, young artists' works displayed at the exhibitions, young actors promoted to play leading parts in films and at the theatres. This is your task and we have confidence in you.

For ten years Azad Kerimovich worked in the Central Committee of the Republican Communist Party, then at Aliev's urgent request he became the Head of Azerbaijan Goskino. In his memoirs Sharifov, Professor at Higher Diplomatic College, writes about those memorable years in detail. We will quote only one but very typical episode from them.

The well-known Azerbaijan playwright Anar wrote the comedy entitled "Summer in Town". He made fun of bribe-takers from higher educational institutions of the Republic in it.

"The Glavlit (Major Literature Agency–*Translator's note*), Soviet censors were against its staging, –remembers Azad Kerimovich. –They demanded to soften criticism. However neither the author nor the director agreed to that. The day of the first night came, tickets had been sold out, but there was no permission from the Glavlit. To make the situation worse the Chief of this organization, we had always managed to come to mutual understanding, was away from the city then. What were we going to do? Then Kheirulla Aliev, Chief of Literature Section at our Department, and I made a decision to take responsibility on ourselves and give permission for the first night without Glavlit's consent. The performance was a success. A few days later Geidar Alievich asked me in a telephone conversation: "What happened at the Azerbaijan Drama Theatre?" I explained the situation and invited him to the next performance.

"Geidar Alievich and his wife came to the theatre. After the performance he went to the backstage as was his habit, where actors were waiting. Anar and I followed a minute later and suddenly saw that the actors smiled and started applauding. It turned out that Geidar Alievich had smiled at them. He congratulated warmly the author, the producer and the entire collective on the success of the performance, which criticized shortcomings of our life. Then he turned to me and said that the

play should be translated into Russian for Russian-speaking Baku citizens to be able to see it too."

Azad Sharifov is at a loss even now when he is asked what Aliev liked most of all–literature, theatre, cinema, music or painting. Perhaps literature, as a word was a primary element. However, he was a keen theatregoer, Zarifa-khanum and he visited all premiers at Baku theatres. After the performances he talked to actors and producers.

Within that period the Ballet and Opera Theatre and the Drama Theatre were reconstructed, and the Musical Comedy Theatre and the Theatre for Young Spectators were built anew, theatres in Sheki, Sumgait and Agdam were also restored...

"In addition I'd like to say what importance Geidar Alievich attached to development of Azerbaijan film industry, –continues Azad. –It was with his support that such films as "In a Southern City" and "Interrogation" made their way to the screens all over the Soviet Union, though some people in Baku and in Moscow put obstacles in their way. Under his support and assistance the film studio "Azerbaijan-film" made popular historical films "Babek", "Nasimi" and "Long Life Accords" about Uzeir Gadjibekov. Even now these films are very popular."

– Nowadays I can say with pride that when I held leading positions in the State Security organs and was the Head of the Azerbaijan Republic no measures were taken that were contradictory to national interests of the Azerbaijan people.

So said Geidar Aliev at a memorable meeting in Baku, when the professional holiday of the National Security workers of the Republic was celebrated for the first time.

There are many legends about his work in the NKVD-MGB-KGB. We heard that Aliev was in Hungary during the notorious events of 1956 and allegedly got acquainted with Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov there. It is a myth, we explain. Their first meeting took place in 1967. At that time Aliev acted as the Chairman of the Republican KGB succeeding Semyon Tsvigun who got a new appointment as a Deputy to Andropov. Aliev was approved to take up his post. By that time he was well known in chekist circles as a strong-willed leader, who had organized some brilliant intelligence and counter-espionage operations. Among them: an agent's counter-recruiting ("Duel"), exposure of American pilots who baled out of "Douglas" aircraft over Azerbaijan and a few missions in some foreign countries...

These are established facts. And here is another story we heard from Aliev's "chroniclers", which is also a myth. In brief retelling it is as follows:

– Once an order came from Moscow. Young captain Geidar Aliev was assigned to carry out this order. In this verdict there were names of five thousand Azerbaijanians who allegedly deserted the army or left their positions at the frontline. They had to be found. The young captain faced a difficult choice–between duty and conscience... He put a lot at stake, when he risked introducing some alterations into the obviously biassed and in essence anti-Azerbaijan resolution. Many names were crossed out from the list, substituted with other names; a part of the listed people was defined as "missing" and thus hundreds of people were saved from repressions...

Army General Filipp Denisovich Bobkov, former First Deputy Chairman of the USSR KGB, who we asked to comment on this story, laughed heartily:

– Can you imagine this? There are five thousand deserters and an officer who is going to make them out. It looks more like Khlestakov's hundred thousand couriers. If there were actually so many of them, which I greatly doubt, as I heard a lot of good words about Azerbaijan soldiers at the front, then the Narkomat of Internal Affairs should have dealt with them. I am sure that senior lieutenant Aliev; he became captain later, honestly carried out his soldier's duty. A deserter was a traitor in his opinion. And what should be called a person who according to the author of this story faked the document? –asks the General. –The only possible answer: traitors and betrayers' accomplice. Such actions were punished severely under the martial law.

It is true that many actions, which he couldn't have done, were ascribed to young officer Aliev. Although he was able to dissuade a person from the erroneous step, try to make him change his mind. It means the activity which then and later chekists called preventive job and which was aimed at helping people who had taken a false step to put the thing right and not to commit a crime. In the 1960s-1970s such activities saved lots of our citizens from criminal prosecution.

Among those young scientists, men of arts, literature, whom Aliev, Chairman of the Republican KGB, saved from criminal punishment was Abulfaz Elchibei, future President of Azerbaijan. He was famous for his radical nationalism in the Soviet times. Years later heading the sovereign republic he got entangled in a complicated and contradictory world of big politics.

But it would all happen later. It was late 1950s then. Aliev was the Head of the Second Department (counter-espionage) of the Republican State Security Committee. It is obvious that decisions on such appointments were made in Moscow.

Around this time Geidar Aliev got acquainted with Filipp Bobkov, who was the Deputy Head of the Second Chief Administration of the USSR KGB. Filipp Denisovich was only two years younger than Aliev; the difference quite immaterial at a mature age. He went to the front as a volunteer like his father, a private, an anti-tank rifleman; they fought together in Siberian volunteer division. Denis Bobkov perished in battle before his son's eyes near a village of Bolshiye Grivny in Pskov region. Sergeant-major Bobkov saw the Victory at the age of nineteen in Kurland decorated with the 3rd degree Order of Glory on his soldier's blouse. The same year of 1945 he was assigned to the Leningrad School of Counter-espionage "SMERCH". The name was invented by Stalin; it is easy to decode, "Death to spies". He spent forty-five years in the State Security organs!

Geidar Aliev and General Bobkov established good, kind relation at once.

– First meeting quickly turned into real fellowship, –recalls Filipp Denisovich. –I'd like to admit frankly that our relationships were far from familiarity. But we got along quite well until his last days.

Bobkov was the Deputy Head of the Union Counter-espionage; Aliev was the Head of the Second Department of the Republican KGB, he often went on business to Moscow. Together they planned operations.

– What operations exactly, Filipp Denisovich?

Our interlocutor does not give an immediate answer to that direct question.

– Could there be anything relevant to this matter in your home archives? –we try to come from the other side. This question is answered instantly like a rapier strike.

– All business papers are kept in the KGB. I can only tell you from my memory.

The window of the study, where the Counsellor to the Board Chairman of the Russian Information Agency *Novosti* Bobkov works, looks on Sadovoye Koltso. There is such uproar outside that we have to close the window, otherwise the dictaphone will record nothing but noise. And there are loads to be recorded.

– In late 1950s-early 1960s we had to deal with absolutely new problems, –says Filipp Denisovich. –At Soviet higher educational institutions, including those in Baku, students from many countries of the world got their education. Of course, American Intelligence immediately tried to use this opportunity. At the very first stage we found out some people who were specially sent to our institutes. They studied the environment and gathered

information which intelligence service might be generally interested in. Besides, they had a task to organize excesses, disorders that would create an outward appearance of danger for those who came to study in the Soviet Union. The matter was serious so our interest in Azerbaijan increased along this line as well. Aliev and I met frequently, discussed how to deal with this situation in a better way, how to create an atmosphere that would make studies in our country popular. To make the long story short, counter-espionage played not the last part in this matter.

By the way, Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University had been already opened by that time. Practically immediately we detected three agents who worked directly with the embassies' residents in Moscow and prepared provocations among the students.

Naturally we were responsible for security of the strategic units, security in industry, on transport, protection of secrets in economics, prevention of emergencies.

I'd like to point out at once that I saw an experienced professional in Aliev. Geidar had authority in our circle–many other colleagues share this opinion of mine. Among them I can name Oleg Mikhailovich Gribanov, a serious member of counter-espionage, Head of the Soviet intelligence service, a respected chekist, who highly valued Aliev as a professional and the Head of the Republican Counter-espionage Apparatus; Fyodor Alexeyevich Shcherbak, First Deputy Head of Counter-espionage Service, first-class member of counter-espionage with a long work record and huge professional knowledge, who treated Aliev with great respect. I can give other names as well, but it is clear from what I said–Aliev was a highly respected man at the State Security Committee. This respect was displayed when his candidature was approved for the post of the First Deputy Chairman of the Republican KGB. It happened in 1964. And Geidar Aliev showed himself from the best side at this very important post. Our relationships strengthened even more as Aliev was responsible for the very matters I dealt with in the Centre. They were national relationships, religion and foreign tourism.

He was one of a few leaders of the republican level who treated international matters delicately and tactfully. I appreciated that.

Bobkov and Aliev conceived and carried out extensive sociological research concerning the complex of international relationships. At the Institute of Socio-Political Research, which was being set up at that time, the Secret Department for Sociological Research was organized with Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov's support.

– Were such studies printed in one copy?

– Of course, not, –Bobkov appreciated the joke. –We submitted them to the Central Committee of the CPSU, but unfortunately not all of our proposals gained support.

...In one of the documents submitted by the USSR KGB to the Party Central Committee, "hostile activity of nationalist elements" was analyzed. Note S. Bannikov, Deputy Chairman of the USSR State Security Committee, signed No. 2/9-299 of January 17, 1966.

"In some areas of the country, especially in Ukraine, Transcaucasia, in Baltic republics and some republics of the Central Asia we can observe stirring up of hostile activity of bourgeois nationalists," the report said. "Bourgeois nationalists focus on recruitment and retention of people, ideological indoctrination of politically unstable people, especially among intelligentsia and youth, spreading nationalist literature and slanderous concoctions concerning our party's national policy. Nationalist elements started extensive use of so-called "legal opportunities", for example, meetings with young poets and writers, readings, jubilees of national writers, poets and composers, circles for amateur art activities with the aim of indoctrinating politically unstable people in the spirit of anti-Soviet nationalism, ideological training of accomplices and attracting new people to their side."

Then followed the entire load of examples–Ukraine, Estonia, Armenia, Azerbaijan...

"In 1965 anti-Soviet nationalist group, which called itself 'Committee for Protection of the Azerbaijani Language' was discovered in Baku as well. About 70 people at the age of 20-27 were involved in the group activity; there were 6 CPSU members and over 20 Komsomol members among them. Under pretence of the Azerbaijani language protection, the group leaders expressed the idea of creating independent state, which provided for withdrawal from the USSR and expulsion of Russians and Armenians from the territory of the Republic.

"The group members considered it necessary to seize the radio station and the television centre with the aim of broadcasting an appeal to the Azerbaijanian people to support their demands. They also intended to go on a demonstration on November 7, 1965, or on May 1, 1966, with the relevant slogans and in case of derangement of their demonstration they planned to start armed struggle against the existing social order.

"It is only natural that the organized hostile activity of the most active nationalists, who conscientiously chose the path of struggle against the Soviet power, was stopped by the KGB organs by arresting them. As for majority of the people who expressed nationalist ideas under the influence of bourgeois propaganda and anti-Soviet elements due to the lack of political maturity and misconception of the essence of the Soviet State's national policy, preventive measures were taken in their respect" *(The Russian State Archives of National History. F. 5. Op. 33. C. 235. Pp. 62-65).*

– When Aliev was appointed the Chairman of the Azerbaijan KGB, he asked for Vitaly Krasilnikov to be appointed his deputy, – Bobkov says. –The latter was under my command. He was a reliable and very good person. I agreed. I was the Head of the Fifth Administration by that time, but our relation remained very good. When Geidar Alievich came to Moscow he always visited me.

Chekists were obliged to protect the constitutional order, stop activities of those who chose the path of armed struggle and strove to seize the power. But quite often it was they, the chekists, who had to correct what party committees; the entire enormous ideological apparatus had failed to do. Geidar Aliev spoke about this anxiously.

"In 1967-1968 a considerable increase in the activities of foreign Armenian nationalist organizations, especially "Dashnaktsutyun" was evident in the republic. Magazine and newspaper articles with different demands and appeals of nationalist nature were sent to the address of some Soviet organizations and the editorial offices of some republican newspapers from a number of capitalist countries. Dashnak circles abroad exposed certain facts from the life of the republic in a distorted way" (*an excerpt from the speech at the Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party on August 28, 1968*).

Day after day mass media reiterated over and over again unity of the party and the people, inviolable friendship of peoples, but latently problems accumulated in the society, they became more and more numerous. What was going on in the society? What was the cause for mass unrest in a number of cities–Murom, Temirtau, Novocherkassk? What political processes were brooding in the country? What part did ideological adversaries of the Soviet power play in them? The new Directorate for Struggle against Subversive Ideological Activity, which was called the Fifth, was specially set up to find answers to all these questions.

Wishing Bobkov success in “the Fifth”, Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov said there was a real ideological war and the stake in it was–who would defeat whom.

– We are set to strengthen the Soviet State and our ideological adversaries do their best to destroy it, –reasoned Andropov that late evening in his large study in Lubyanka. The meeting began at 22:00; the clock hands were approaching 23:00 at the moment. Yuri Vladimirovich showed with all his appearance that the meeting was informal: he was without a jacket and from time to time thoughtfully pulled at his braces. –We have to know their plans and work methods, see the processes going on in the country and be aware of public sentiments. It is crucial. We need to use different sources–legal institutions, sociological institutes and information from the press as well as our security services data. Besides phenomena that are on the surface there are secret springs... It is essential to learn to identify and understand thoroughly inner, deep-laid processes...

Decade and a half later Andropov, then the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, would say that it was high time to answer the question: “What kind of society we live in?”

The same words may be found in one of the letters, addressed to the Central Committee: “First, it is necessary to find out what country we live in...” It’s an amazing coincidence, isn’t it?

What Country We Live In

At the very end of 1965, the Party Central Committee–a new one, post-Khrushchev–commissioned the editorial offices of *Pravda*, *Komsomolskaya pravda* and *Literaturnaya gazeta* to send summary reports of letters of “specific character” to the Central Committee.

On January 7, 1966, the editor-in-chief of *Literaturnaya gazeta* A. Chakovsky and the editor-in-chief of *Komsomolskaya pravda* B. Pankin sent excerpts from the letters that “contained wrong ideas concerning our state and public life” to the Central Committee. On January 11, *Pravda* sent its report. On first pages there were similar notes: “The facts described in the information have been studied. The material has been used during preparation of the CPSU Central Committee’s document on increasing Soviet people’s political vigilance.” Below follow signatures of the instructor, the Head of the Sector, the Deputy Head of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the CPSU Central Committee… The directive: “To the archives” and the stamp:

"Confidential. Special file." We greatly doubt that anyone else read these piercing lines in the Central Committee–at the top!

FROM LETTERS TO *PRAVDA*

Moscow. Anonymous.

"Since Lenin's death the Communist Party has gone too far to the right and it cannot get out of this quagmire.

We have neither justice nor criticism. Stalin's rule is still in effect. Swindlers hold administrative positions. All the party members enjoy privileges while common people are in the position of Johns who should only work like serfs.

Trade unions have lost their significance; they don't protect working people.

The Supreme Soviet has also lost its importance. The Supreme Soviet Presidium has the right to confer decorations only upon those indicated by the Party. The entire Party has become one big cult. The Party allowed huge injustice in the Pension Law. Why is it so that some people receive enormous pensions while others don't have enough to live on? Isn't it high time we resumed the Lenin's path? Trade unions and the USSR Supreme Soviet should perform their functions.

Public control should be on guard then crooks won't sneak in leading positions."

Kaluga. Anonymous.

"It is a shame to write on the newspaper pages about culture and about lofty matters... Give people least normal conditions for life. "Man is a friend to man", but in reality people are beaten and killed... One is willing to curse anyone who approves the laws that defend bandits. I am writing from Kaluga, where just within one week from December 10 to December 17 there were so many foul barbarous robberies, Soviet youth's violence manifested itself in open expressions of their ideas concerning everything in an absolutely unrestrained manner, while people are made to re-educate these brutes.

Look, what the "city of Cosmos" has been turned into; it is a disgrace to everyone. Who will help people to walk in the streets freely, without fear?"

Leningrad. Anonymous.

"I guess that I express the opinion of majority. Who needs this comedy with election of Judges for People's Courts? And our entire election system is all lie and deceit. Who doesn't feel repulsed with electing those who have been already selected? That's why at the sessions they always sit like dummies and approve everything they are suggested. Nowadays there are no pure, lucid people infinitely devoted to the cause of the working class any more like those that were annihilated by thousands in the Stalin epoch with tacit consent of those living now.

Our situation on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary (*of the Soviet power–Auth.*) is not brilliant at all. The people know, see it and nothing can be done with it."

Voronezh. P.I. Zamkov.

"Why do our scientists and writers silence Lenin's historical decree on the NEP (*New Economic Policy–translator's note*)? It gave a great boost to the country's industry in the post-revolutionary period, especially in agriculture. At the time of NEP a live hog-bull cost just 12-13 roubles in private markets and presently (in old rouble nomination) you won't buy even a cock for this money.

It is beyond my understanding why the Stalin collective farm system is being praised now. It has not proved to be correct. If all this modern machinery were in hands of grain-growers of old training we would leave all capitalist countries behind. It is no point praising and embroidering the collective farm system that has proved to be a poor success."

Chimkent, the Kazakh SSR. M.F. Vubov.

"I have read the article Law and Justice by Doctor of Law R. Rakhunov in the *Pravda*. It is the first such publication after Lenin's death, yet it also contains some dark spots–some ends are concealed under water. The author didn't mention bad work of justice. Speaking about infringers of the law it is necessary to reveal causes that engender crime in the USSR.

From the 1930s the slogan "All Power to the Soviets" has lost its significance. The Stalin dictatorship has substituted it. All power has turned up in the hands of the Communist Party. It rules the country though it is not accountable to the people. All democratic liberties have fallen.

The Constitution of 1936 legalized such situation and it also destroyed the system of elections, which was set up by Lenin. V.I. Lenin set the party maximum payment of 225 roubles. He got 215 roubles himself.

In 1930 Stalin cancelled the maximum set by the leader and high salaries emerged. At present the maximum is 700 roubles and the minimum is 40 roubles. What is it called in the language of Marx, Engels and Lenin–an inside-out revolution?

Let me ask, "Where are fraternity and equality? What has happened to those who discharge grab-alls and robbed the state, those that are infected with greed and haughtiness? Where is civil conscience and high communist morale? Lenin said that we did not have specialists, we did not hire them but bought them and paid them much, but they had to work honestly and if they caused any damage they would be punished. Stalin bought communists with public money and they (communists) made God of Stalin.

Stalin's rule caused complete decline to the agriculture. The peasantry worked for sticks and lived like serfs for 20 years. What justice could there be under such circumstances? At that time some really Draconian laws appeared–those of August 7, 1932 and June 4, 1947 (10-15 years of imprisonment or camps were adjudged for a single spikelet brought from the field or for a kilogram of bread). From 1930 to 1953 millions of such verdicts were passed–majority of them without guilt. They, not heritage of the past, are the actual causes that gave and still give rise to crime. It is impossible to be born under the new order and then to degenerate into the old.

The CPSU does everything it wants in the country and never asks the people. The people are debarred from the country's rule. The people that produce all the values of the state have nothing.

The subsistence minimum is very low. What did our learned men take account of when they set this minimum of 40 roubles? I wonder if they had no conscience at all.

The socialist revolution brought nothing to these people and this is another cause of crime.

The 23rd CPSU Congress has to demonstrate if there are enough healthy forces, wise and sound minds to clear up this bog and return to genuine Marxist-Leninist positions."

Donetsk Region. Anonymous.

"We came across the issue of the *Pravda* newspaper of 1919, where Lenin wrote that this newspaper would help people to gain understanding of what was going on in our country. The average

wage of most workers is 60-70 roubles. Is it possible to support a family with this money? That's why we have theft and bribery all around. People suffer from hunger and the country has launched 100 satellites into space–it is millions of roubles. We ask to cut food prices and leave wages at their present level. We ask you to create a better life on the land not in space. Workers and peasants are forced to steal. 80% of people are thieves and swindlers. Everyone takes bribes."

Krivoy Rog. Anonymous.

"Yes, the political system has been changed in the USSR but exploitation has remained. Who should I give my voice to? To Party functionaries? What do they do?

They pay 7 roubles instead of 5. They steal from workers, get bonuses themselves, and drive in Volgas and the workers get a fig's end. Isn't it exploitation? And if you dare complain you will be sacked at once or even sent to prison. Where is it, freedom of speech? This intelligentsia–our exploiters–is Soviet bourgeoisie.

We are driven towards communism like calves to the slaughterhouse; and it is being built on workers' bones.

In the USSR workers spend 65% of their wages on food, while in the FRG–only 34% and in the USA–only 18%, that is why you jam foreign radio broadcasts (the BBC and Radio Liberty) for the workers not to hear the truth. I graduated from the Institute of Foreign Languages. But I went to work in the mine to earn more. I need much money, as I like restaurants, bars. I am only 25 and I want to live. I want to run away as a tourist to the USA."

Samarkand Region, Uzbekistan. I.S. Gulyaev.

"We have bais, shamans and mullahs' descendants in power. There are robbers, saboteurs. That's why every year in Uzbekistan cotton is let rot, public property is destroyed on purpose and nobody cares. Who steals and destroys more gets awards. In 1963 over half cattle and poultry were destroyed, all cotton was spoiled and the region received the order of Lenin. They reported the plan fulfilled, gross out put and so on. Paper figures and hurrah!

We don't have the Soviet power any more, there are capitalists on the top, and their chieftains sit in the Kremlin."

FROM LETTERS TO *KOMSOMOLSKAYA PRAVDA*

Anonymous. No address.

"In the issue of the *Trud* newspaper of June 20, 1965, I read the article "For whom the Sun Shines" with title "For Elite", which says: "In the bourgeois West people also have a rest, the sun shines there too. But for whom?"

In the picture there are a few private yachts, whose owners are sunbathing, having fun on private beaches, where working people are not admitted. They, the rich, don't worry how and where millions of their countrymen would spend their holidays.

And I wondered what the difference was like between the West and the USSR. My conclusion: no difference at all."

Leningrad. Anonymous.

"Ordinary people of the country have been severely exploited for decades. Judge yourselves, what living can be provided with 50-150 roubles, considering crushing prices... And how "happy" are members of collective farms in their servile life deprived of rights? They are all even deprived of the Yuryev Day... They cannot leave their collective farm to work on production, they don't have passports, they cannot receive any references and nobody will hire them anywhere."

Moscow. Anonymous.

"The principle of socialism–one, who doesn't work, doesn't eat". However we have lots of people who just rob and they live better than those who work honestly. That means that our principle is only on paper... The situation is so bad that even in the capital of the state striving to build communism it is dangerous to leave home at night and even late in the evening, while we point out to America. The question arises. If the problem cannot be solved at the top, forming self-defence squads will solve it from below. We will eliminate everything that impedes our construction work and life. We are workers–the ruling class. It's enough, our Soviet State is nearly 50... It is time to call to order 'gilded youth', they are turning into parasites."

FROM LETTERS TO *LITERATURNAYA GAZETA*

Novosibirsk Region. V. Babin.

"...Here we all think together, jointly discuss our party's policy. I undertook to write. If managers have salaries higher than

those of workers, there inevitably will be bureaucratism and careerism, moral degradation, degeneration, prostitution and exploitation. Consequently, salaries of all managers, junior and senior, all officials, all representatives should not be higher than salaries of workers...

…Under Stalin there was not only the personality cult created. Stalin created an entirely new class–socialist bourgeoisie. He created a dictatorship of socialist bourgeoisie. Our people are against egalitarianism, they are against bourgeoisie too.

...There are honest forces in our party and they tried to fight. It had effect partially after Stalin's death. However it turned out to be just a forced concession on the part of bourgeois forces. It is obvious now that cult of Khrushchev's personality emerged in an artificial way through the fault of the entire Central Committee. It is clear that shortcomings were not just Khrushchev's guilt, but also the entire Central Committee. It was beneficial for our bourgeoisie to implement its policy through one person's authority. And collective wisdom of this bourgeoisie was realized through this single personality. At present there is danger that our country will become even more bourgeois that a new period of repressions will start, Stalin and Beria times. Why didn't honest forces in our party achieve their complete and final victory? Because Stalin's denunciation was weak, bourgeois salaries were only slightly cut. Because these matters were decided in secret without involving the party or the people; no support was sought from the party and the people.

...Presently the Party Central Committee's concern to improve people's life is carried out as follows: directors' salary will be increased from 300 to 600 roubles a month and rank-and-file members of collective farms will get from 30 to 40 roubles a month. Nowadays our people don't have any communist enthusiasm. Our people have a longing for genuine socialism. Unfortunately, no fresh air is felt after the 20th Congress yet. There is no democracy yet. Highly paid representatives of our authorities–in fact they are representatives of rich class, bourgeoisie, not of the entire people. And decisions that they make are in interests of their class–bourgeoisie...

...how many mistakes the present Central Committee made? And all of them were scientifically proved. There were lots of mistakes, but it is not a major problem. The problem is that the people see that there is no conscience in the Party Central Committee. No need to subtilize how to keep and justify bourgeois dishonest policy. It is necessary to change the whole policy. Now you see that the Central Committee has nothing

sacred, nothing communist. We used to consider the Central Committee members to be the best communists, the most pious people, but then we found out that they were the richest people of the country... The people think that a communist should be a very honest person without a grain of selfishness, a person that loves his people and strives to give them happiness, a person that is close to the people. And what about the first, leading communist? Should he be like Lenin, Dzerzhinsky...? Lies and repressions will disappear only when there is no socialist bourgeoisie, when there are no the rich and the poor, superiors and inferiors."

Dnepropetrovsk. V. Prikhodko.

"I have an opinion that either there is a new political crisis in the country or a new policy which is near our gates will bring back some methods of Stalin's rule. Neither of these is good for the Soviet people. We need a brand-new approach towards reality analysis; we need to reconsider some truths that have become dogmas.

First, we have to find out what country we live in, we should never forget our Constitution that is the basis of our state. Freedom of conscience protects my views, freedom of speech first of all means publication in the press, giving publicity to all events that take place in our country rather than idle talk. It is clear we must not savor mishaps in the country, but concealing them is just the other side of the medal: it causes rumors resulting in distrust to information in the newspapers, to the government, to the party. And this is bad. But little attention is paid to such trifles. The crowd remains the crowd. But we use the abstract word "people" too frequently, both appropriately and inappropriately.

...A few words about the CPSU. At present it has 10 million people in its ranks. Once Lenin warned against an excessive growth of the party and even after the victory of October Revolution the doors to the party had never been opened wide, except on a few occasions. When the Red Army could not hold up the White Guards' onset and the ring was getting tighter around the Soviet power a special enlistment in the party was declared. At that time to sign a party membership card was equal to signing the death sentence to one. At such times only true communists joined the party. It was hardly a luring prospect for rogues.

...There are 10 million people in the Party now, not 600 thousand. This figure is so high that I will believe in its content only in case one zero disappears. We have forgotten about the requirements that V.I. Lenin made for a communist. Present day

could hardly slacken these requirements. Many people join the Party because of benefits but not their views. It may be good that increasing the party will involve the majority of the country's population and it will lose its original significance after having fulfilled its role. But quantitative growth not accompanied by qualitative has never been considered appropriate.

...Very many miscalculations and mistakes have been made both in external and internal life. The CPSU has lost its authority as the vanguard of the world communist movement. Its constant arguments with China show vain efforts of the two parties to impose their slogans on each other. The party leaders were not able to find that common core which should exist, but savored each other's shortcomings instead with a satisfaction of two quarrelsome neighbors. It is getting frightful. If representatives one and the same world cannot understand each other how can two diametrically opposite systems coexist? Doesn't our party have more or less strong theoreticians of Marxism-Leninism who would be able to find the only correct Leninist path for our further development, the only correct Leninist view on the present day? Moreover, mere adjusting of Lenin's formulas to suit the present day won't do, a much more difficult way of further development of Leninist principles should be taken.

...Nowadays various groupings in communist, working and liberation movements play with Lenin's name and each one considers itself right. And what does a worker, an ordinary Soviet worker (be it a party member or not–which does not matter in fact) think? The worker says, "Existence determines consciousness". So give me what I need for life, provide such conditions as will set my mind free of those urgent concerns for the next day, as will remove the necessity for our wives and mothers to spend most part of their "free" time rushing from one store to another... It is then and only then my consciousness will rise to the level when I will start pondering on the matters like whether I was right eating a piece of white bread and butter, when children die of hunger on the other side of the planet. Here is what the worker says. And he is not happy with our excessive "kindness". We worry so much about our "friends" that often forgets about ourselves. We build hundreds of enterprises in other countries, grant very favorable loans, and sign all trade agreements that we are offered. At the same time we don't refuse the loans borrowed from the Bank of England, working for capitalists in a way. The standard of living is low in our country as compared to other countries and we cannot put the blame only on to bombs and rockets.

...Our Soviet people are able to understand all the responsibility for the mission laid upon their shoulders. But if an ordinary citizen of the USSR has to possess such high morale how much higher the requirements should be for people who have power over us in their hands...

...If everything remains, as it is the danger of repeating our old mistakes will be a permanent threat as well. We should be a bit more modest, we should be less loud crying about our merits. We should not conceal our shortcomings so much and should not pay so much attention to our leaders.

I am not a communist, not even a komsomol member. But I want neither our words to conflict with our deeds, nor disappearance of "personalities" amidst us, nor coup d'etats. We have perfect collective organs of management that can rule the country, don't we?"

Kiev. N. Kiselyova.

"I think with fear what to say to my children when they ask me, –Are you a communist, tell me? What shall I answer? Take tram 30 in Kiev and go to the stop "Kopylenko". You will see the "Grocer's shop". It is not an ordinary "Grocer's shop". "Ordinary people", as it is customary to say in our country, call it "Leftovers". The leftover foodstuffs that have been sold to party functionaries are sold there. The Central Committee members buy them at other prices, for next to nothing. There are special hospitals and chemists', and even hotels. This is appalling!"

Moscow. Gromov.

"All our existence and privileged state according to various aspects–social, party and other–in fact have caused our society's division. We haven't been able to take people from cellars even here in Moscow for 47 years whereas "leading figures" live in such spacious flats that create a rather high average housing standard of about 10 square metres for a person... "People" are offered to join cooperative societies whereas "leading figures" get flats free in mansions... People push their way with their sides and arms from Medvedkovo-Mazilovo on a public transport to work places, whereas "leading figures" drive in state cars from one street to another in the city centre... 95% of our people spend their holidays in an unorganized way without any medical treatment (as the All-Union Central Trade Union Council provides only 5-7 % of workers with vouchers), whereas "leading figures" get

vouchers free and relax on empty beaches, where they are taken by lifts (Upper and Lower Oreanda, sanatorium "Ukraine" and others)."

These letters to the editorial offices of the three popular newspapers were sent to the Party Central Committee at the beginning of 1965. It was the very start of Brezhnev's epoch, Kosygin reforms. People still believed in changes. And they demanded–mind it! –"To make clear what country we live in".

Years later this idea was repeated almost word for word by Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov, when he became General Secretary, "First, we have to make clear what country we live in..." He didn't have enough time to do that, and his successors– Chernenko, Gorbachyov–were busy with other things.

...Every twentieth day of a month the people received salaries in the Azerbaijan KGB. Some wags called this long-awaited day the Day of Chekists. On the same day communists paid their dues at the party committee. The secretary of the party committee Bystrov decided to come to the new Chairman of the KGB Geidar Aliev himself.

– Comrade Bystrov, –Aliev told him, when he found out the purpose of his visit, –communists have to bring their dues themselves to you. Go to your office, I will come to you."

Chapter 5
AT THE HEAD OF THE REPUBLIC

July 14, 1969, Baku

Minutes No. 16 of the Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party (in the original document all the words are written with a capital letter) of July 14, 1969. There are seven typewritten pages with the stamp "Top Secret". The agenda: "Organizational issue. About the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party".

It is obvious that such an organizational issue couldn't be discussed without an eminent guest from Moscow. Ivan Vasilyevich Kapitonov, Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee arrived in Baku. He was the first to be given the floor.

– You know, –Kapitonov addressed the audience, –that for the last ten years comrade Veli Yusufovich Akhundov has been working as First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party. Comrade Akhundov did his best and gave a lot of effort to develop the republic's economy and culture, to improve party-organizational and ideological work. Lately the condition of comrade Akhundov's health has got worse and he understands that it has become hard for him to carry out an important and difficult job of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party. On this account he applied the CPSU Central Committee with a request to transfer him to a scientific work.

The request of the Doctor of Medicine and the Academician of late was satisfied. The same day, on the eve of the Plenary Meeting, he was elected Vice-President of the Republican Academy of Sciences...

– Naturally, –continues Kapitonov, –releasing comrade Akhundov from the duties of Secretary and Bureau Member of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party gives rise to another issue. –We have to name his successor now. –A lot of candidatures have been considered for the post of First Secretary

of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party and it is quite understandable, quite natural, as there are many competent people in the republic and of course there is a wide choice if we may say so.

After thorough "and comprehensive studies and consideration of this issue we made our choice in favor of comrade G.A. Aliev, who presently works as Chairman of the State Security Committee of your republic..."

This information was hardly a surprise for anyone present. Veli Akhundov has really been ill; he has been getting treatment in Moscow for about three months. During his meeting with Brezhnev, when he asked to be transferred to a scientific work, he even produced a medical certificate; spoke about "pangs of remorse" for inability to pay proper attention to the problems of the republic. Of course, Akhundov mentioned names of his potential successors. But this time the choice was not his.

At the beginning of 1969, as Geidar Alievich remembered later, he received a call from his old friend from Moscow. He was one of those who are said to know everything. He told Aliev: "Geidar, you are the only candidate for the post of First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party!" It was unexpected news for Aliev: "It is impossible. I don't think I may be offered such a position. Why am I unaware of this?" – "The time will come and you'll know. And now, Geidar, get ready for a new job!"

In about three months time after this conversation Geidar Aliev was invited to Moscow for a meeting with the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee. Here are his recollections of these turn-point events in his life:

"I went to the Kremlin to Brezhnev's working office. Leonid Ilyich welcomed me with an open smile. The following conversation took place between us:

– Comrade Aliev, we have come to a decision to offer your candidature for the post of First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party.

– I consider it to be a great honor to me, comrade Brezhnev. But I don't want this position.

– How can it be that you don't want?! –Brezhnev was surprised, switching from official to a friendly form of address. – We entrust such an important post to you.

– It is not easy to be First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Republic's Communist Party. That is why I don't want it.

But Leonid Ilyich didn't pay heed to my objections. It was obvious that he had made up his mind. And having discussed my

candidature the Politburo came to an agreement that only Aliev would be suitable in the present state of the Republic."

These lines were written many years after the memorable conversation in the Kremlin. Recollecting it Aliev noted that among his advantages were "work in the KGB, clear personal records, trust gained by me, and love on the part of the Azerbaijanians. To be more exact I supposed so..."

Moscow made its choice. It was clear that Baku would approve it. But what reservations would be made? It is interesting to read a farewell speech of the leaving first secretary to his successor:

"Comrade Aliev has all the qualities–political and business–to become a good first secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party. He is well-educated and has enough overall training to cope with a considerable volume of work in a short period, he is true to the party spirit and is unbiased to all party cadres, and the cadre issue is a crucial one in Azerbaijan, taking into account the past and the present; we know him as on honest, trustworthy communist" *(The Central State Archives of Political Parties and Movements. AR.F.1.Op.56.D.4.L.5).*

And here is what Geidar Aliev said right after being elected as First Secretary:

"I am aware of the responsibility in connection with assuming this office, I understand complexity and difficulty of the task that are ahead and I would like to assure that I will do everything in my power to justify this great and high trust. Moreover, I rely and hope to receive support and assistance of the entire Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, Members of the Central Committee Bureau, all leading party, Soviet and executive personnel of our Republic. I suppose that active joint friendly work may be the guarantee of our future success" *(Ibid. F.1.Op.56.D.4.L.16).*

Aliev's election aroused a great response in Azerbaijan, throughout the Soviet Union, and abroad as well. It was not a year yet since the notorious events in Prague, when Soviet tanks put an end to the short history of "Prague spring". The Kremlin ideologists turned screws tight in all directions. And transfer of Chairman of the KGB of a large republic to the party hierarchy (everyone saw how and why it was done) was a clear signal both to the party cadres and to the liberals.

Since then Geidar Aliev has more than once repeated as a joke that in his biography, in his personal calendar there is his own Bastille Day. Of course the analogy with Paris events of 1789 is conventional. The hero of our narration did not storm bulwark of power. The new position (and new large-scale responsibility)

always came to him as a deserved recognition of what he had already done, as confidence in the fact that this person of inborn talent was able to cope with greater deeds.

Summing up his recollections of the meeting with Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev and subsequent election to the post of First Secretary, Geidar Aliev said that this change in his destiny gave him "opportunity to serve better to his own people, his nation".

Filipp Denisovich Bobkov was the first whom Aliev met after the visit to Brezhnev. The Army General remembers that bygone meeting in all details until now.

"All of a sudden, without a call, Aliev comes to me. It is quite evident that he is embarrassed with something.

– Filipp, can I ask you for a private talk without anybody's interference?

– Of course, –I answered and disconnected all telephones.

Geidar said that he was just from Brezhnev. There was a proposal to elect him, Aliev, as First Secretary of the Party Central Committee of the Republic.

– I came just to have a talk, to get advice. I don't want to go anywhere else. Though I have already agreed to it.

At this moment Semyon Kuzmich Tsvigun, Deputy Chairman of the USSR KGB, got connected on the direct line. Before his transfer to Moscow he headed the State Security Committee of Azerbaijan and was considered to be Brezhnev's close friend–they worked together in Moldavia in the post-war period.

– Listen, Filipp Denisovich, have you seen Aliev lately?

– Why?

– Well, they reported from the control post that he had come to the Committee and I cannot find him.

Geidar pleaded with a gesture: "Don't tell him I am here."

– I will tell him to come to you if I see him, –I replied.

And we continued our tête-à-tête conversation. "Surely I couldn't reject Brezhnev's offer, –said Aliev, –it is great trust." He was thinking over what to start with: to overcome the republic's lagging behind was impossible without the most severe struggle against corruption that corroded the whole society."

"Tell me, is he an honest man?"

They met again a couple of years later in Baku. To Bobkov's question, if he had managed to defeat corruption, Geidar Alievich said the following: "I can only guarantee that nobody takes bribes in the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party."

And what about the CPSU Central Committee? It is a naive question. The same Bobkov in his book *KGB and the Power* wrote about unimaginably expensive presents to Brezhnev–in Georgia, for example, dear Leonid Ilyich was presented with a golden samovar, in Uzbekistan dear Andrei Pavlovich Kirilenko, a Politburo member, Secretary and Ilyich's intimate friend received "fur-coats for his wife and daughter made of unique astrakhan of special currying" from the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Republic Sharif Rashidov.

Everybody or almost everybody accepted presents. The exceptions among the top authority in assessment of such an informed person as the First Deputy of the KGB Chairman F.D. Bobkov were few–A.N. Kosygin, Yu.V. Andropov... Prominent organizers, morally pure and decent, grouped around them. There were quite a few such people in republics, areas and regions: Vladimir Vasilyevich Shcherbitsky and Alexander Pavlovich Lyashko in Ukraine, Peter Mironovich Masherov in Byelorussia, Geidar Alievich Aliev in Azerbaijan, Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov in Sverdlovsk, Vladimir Ivanovich Dolgikh in the Krasnoyarsk Territory, Vladimir Kuzmich Gusev in Saratov. They were party and state leaders of a new formation, who considered service to the people's interests not as a hackneyed phrase or a political stock phrase, which set everybody's teeth on edge, but primarily as high service, life devoted to others.

On becoming Head of the Republic Geidar Aliev already knew its cadres in general. He saw which segments should be strengthened–or using the party language–which should be get rid off. His favorite question when discussing a new appointment was, "Tell me, and is he a decent man?" Then it was followed by questions about his business qualification, ability to work with people and many many others.

But first of all–the candidate's decency? Honesty? Otherwise it was impossible to break the vicious cover-up of thieves and bribe-takers. Here is a typical for Azerbaijan of 1960s (and not only of Azerbaijan) story: a state farm director is released from his job for bribes and is immediately given the same post in another region. Communist Ramiz Tagir ogly Tagirov wrote to the CPSU Central Committee:

"I ask you to read my short story, which is very important for our state, our people and our party due to the ideas set forth below." This non-indifferent person wrote with pain about a perished vineyard, spoilt apricot garden and about smart dealers who "plant melons and water-melons on 20-30 hectares every

year and then sell them for their own profit. This is deceit of the state, the party and the people."

In another region collective farmers rejected the candidature of a chairman that had been caught stealing. The Secretary of the District Party Committee summoned militiamen to the meeting. People cried, "All of us read newspapers and magazines! Now nobody elects the collective farm chairman under threats and with militiamen." It reminded of habits that ruled in the times of Sephevid State (16th century), when a word of mouth passed from man to man in Azerbaijan: "Who is a burden to your region?" Who is a burden and not who rules...

…Nazim Ibragimov was quite a successful scientist and production worker. He headed a geological party, defended a thesis for a candidate's degree, wrote a thesis for a Doctor's degree, and gave time to social work and to sports. He saw his future in science, in industry but not in a full-time party activity. However the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Republican Communist Party Geidar Aliev knew better. In his opinion people of such turn of mind, young and energetic, highly qualified and undoubtedly decent were needed in party committees. In short in January 1971 Nazim Sadykovich Ibragimov was invited for a talk to the City Party Committee, then to the Central Committee–he was recommended for the post of First Secretary of Oktyabrsky District Party Committee.

The conversation of the First Secretary of the Central Committee with the young scientist-communist lasted two hours. Nazim was 35 at that time. Even now at 70 he remembers that cordial dialog-parting words. Aliev pointed out main directions of work of one of the largest party organizations of the capital, which included scientific research institutes, higher educational institutions, industrial corporations, and warned:

– Bear in mind that the district party committee secretary is always in the spotlight–everyone pays attention to how he speaks to people, how available he is, even how he gets into the car... Try to remain an ordinary man but not a party functionary even in the position of the secretary.

At that time there were ten districts in Baku, so there were ten district party committees.

– Later Geidar Alievich was reproached for nominating only people from his native town of Nakhichevan, –says Ibragimov. – But there was no one among us, first secretaries, from Nakhichevan. For example, I was born in Baku; a Russian comrade headed Karadag district committee; Kirov district by an Armenian, one colleague was invited from Shemakhi... No, clans

have nothing to do with it. All of us came from science or industry and worked like hell...

Communists of Oktyabrsky district of Baku elected Nazim Ibragimov as their leader three more times. The First Secretary of the Central Committee frequently visited his district; he seemed to know everything about his nominee, but before every new election conference he always invited him to his office for as long a conversation as the first one. He was interested in his plans, suggestions and worries.

– I was an absolutely free person, –sighed Ibragimov, –I didn't even suspect that someone would write anonymous letters about me.

– Ibragimov, remember one thing, –told me Aliev then. –You should live in such a way that all these conjectures would never be confirmed. –And he put his hand on the file that was close at his hand.

Later on Aliev's recommendation Ibragimov became Head of the Republican State Publishing Committee. The First Secretary did not set going anonymous letters against those people whose he was sure of. Probably he expected similar attitude towards himself. However, when in his Moscow period the Central Committee and the Council of Ministers were flooded with anonymous letters and denunciations against the First Deputy Chairman of the Union Government, only Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov was wise enough to believe Aliev but not to fabricated papers. But it is not time for this story yet.

Giving advice to Aliev his predecessor recommended, "treating all our cadres equally..." In principle it is a correct wording. It may mean to be objective, appraise people according to their attitude towards work... Or according to their personal loyalty to the previous leader? The new First Secretary very soon let everyone understand that he would not be "equal towards all our cadres", that there was no more place for bribe-takers, scroungers and smart dealers in the leadership of party organizations, ministries and agencies, enterprises and higher educational institutions.

In the archives we looked through dozens, hundreds of cases that were considered in the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party–equal requirements, strict and based on principle, regardless their positions. In the assessment of Igor Sinitsyn, an assistant Chairman of the USSR KGB, Geidar Aliev

was very close to Andropov in respect of his business qualities and his hatred of corruption.

"Checkup of the received letters and signals established that Deputy Head of Organizational Party Work Department of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party D.N. Bagirov committed some unworthy actions that are compromising for a party worker and a communist.

"Bagirov lived beyond his means and in order to conceal that fact he committed various machinations. For instance, he bought a car, received a land plot in the countryside and built a mansion, a swimming-pool and a garage built in it in dummies' names... There are no vouchers for most of the construction materials.

"For actions undermining the title of a communist, in particular use of official position for selfish ends, moral degradation and insincere behavior Djamal Nasreddin ogly Bagirov, a CPSU member from 1961, party card No. 02800043 is to be relieved from his post of Deputy Head of the Organizational Party Work Department of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party and expelled from the ranks of the CPSU."

...In Shemakhinsky district facts of mass bribery have been discovered in the Pedagogical School, and of abusing official status by some functionaries, and of thefts in large volumes... The Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party dismisses First Secretary of the Shemakhinsky District Party Committee comrade S.A. Sailov from his position and proposes, "to consider the question of his party responsibility in connection with the results of the complex check up of the work of the Shemakhinsky District Party Committee".

There were similar cases in the Kirovabad and Khachmassky District Party Committees, the Republican Trade-union Committee of Construction Workers and Construction Material Manufacture, the Azerbaijan State Institute of Arts named after M.A. Aliev and the Republican Office of Public Prosecutors... Yes, there were no untouchables. The First Secretary of the Central Committee believed that only in this way, in an open struggle it was possible to cope with vice, though both in Moscow and his colleagues in other republics criticized him for glasnost that had not become fashionable yet.

– I remember as in 1975 we dismissed a first secretary of a district party committee from his post, expelled him from the Party and handed his case to court, and everything about this case was published in our newspapers, on two columns, one of the first

secretaries from some other republic asked me during our meeting: "Why did you do that?"

"He said that some first secretaries of district party committees came to him and complained that Aliev compromised the institute of first secretaries of district party committees. And I asked him, 'Do you agree with this?' He said, 'I don't agree with it. But why should we make it available to the public?' I replied, 'If they compromised themselves, in what way do I compromise them? I punish one, two, three people for their serious misdemeanors or even crimes, not merely for mistakes, and make it available to the public of Azerbaijan to save others to prevent them from following this way" (*From a talk with Russian and Scandinavian journalists on March 11, 2001, Baku*).

...In early 1970s Aliev got acquainted with Boris Pastukhov, who was Second Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Leninist Communist League of Youth. Boris Nikolayevich came to the Congress of the Republican Komsomol. Assessing Aliev's first steps at party work he emphasized his keen attention to the youth.

First of all a call to work with the youth Aliev addressed to himself. The talented mathematician Fatima Abdullazadeh was among first republican grant-receivers sent to Moscow. Neither she, now Dr. Sc. (Physics and Mathematics), nor the country President forgot about it. Here are the results of Aliev's care for the youth that years and decades later are still obvious.

– We were present at the Congress of the Azerbaijan Komsomol together with cosmonaut Patsaev who later perished during the flight together with Dobrovolsky and Volkov, – remembers Boris Pastukhov. –I was astonished with how curious Aliev was, how he was attracted to this cosmonaut, how he questioned him; there was nothing formal, official in it. I felt for the first time then that this man could e carried away, in a word, he was not lazy and apathetic.

Years passed and Boris Nikolayevich became First Secretary of the Central Committee of the VLKSM. Once he came home from work, sat down to have some tea in the kitchen. The phone rang. It was Aliev from Baku.

– I am talking to a candidate-member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party from my kitchen, –tells Pastukhov. –He asks me about Vagif Guseinov, a Secretary of the Central Committee of the VLKSM: –Tell me, if he is an honest person, please?

I see that it is a matter of cadre promotion and ask Geidar Alievich about his plans.

– We want to call him back and appoint him First Secretary of Baku City Party Committee.

Baku, the capital of the Republic, has a large party organization... My first reaction was as follows: Of course, he is a trustworthy person and, Geidar Alievich, I'm sorry to say, but I will sin against my conscience if I won't. This promotion seems rather bold to me. He is a journalist and a humanitarian... Aliev listens then repeats his question again:

– I only need to know, if he is an honest, decent man.

– As far as I know him, –I answer, –this is a trustworthy, honest person; he works a lot; he is modest; he is bright and talented; but will he be able to cope with that hard work...

– This is another question. You just tell me for sure, if he is an honest man or not. –And he finished our conversation with the phrase: –All right, I'll have consultations with the CPSU Central Committee secretaries tomorrow and later I'll call you back.

The next day he called me and said: "We have discussed thoroughly your opinion as well, but still we've made a decision to give way to the young!

Feeling of Fulfilled Duty

On March 30, 1971, the 24th CPSU Congress started its work in Moscow. On April 1 at the morning meeting Aliev made a speech–he was on the Congress rostrum for the first time. He behaved with confidence and told about "triumph of all-conquering Marxist-Leninist ideas", about approaching of our "communist tomorrow", about Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev's indefatigable activity... But it was just a prelude common for all speakers.

But the rest of his speech was to the point: on the ways of overcoming lag in the development of productive forces in the republic, on carrying out the resolution of the CPSU Central Committee and the USSR Council of Ministers "On Measures for Further Development of National Economy and Agriculture of Azerbaijan SSR" approved a year ago in 1970.

– During the current five-year period Azerbaijan plans to put over 100 new enterprises into operation–almost twice as many as during the previous five-year period, –said First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party. –Modern machine-building branches of industry are to be created in the

Republic, oil-refining industry and railway transport are to be reconstructed and accelerated development shall be ensured in chemical, food and some other branches of industry.

Comrades, let me on behalf of the party organization and all the working people of the Republic ardently and cordially thank the Central Committee of our Party for its care and great help provided for the Azerbaijan SSR and assure you that we will put our gratitude into particular deeds.

Five years later on the rostrum of the 25th CPSU Congress he had the right to say:

– With a feeling of fulfilled duty we report that the tasks set forth for Azerbaijan have been successfully put to life. Long-standing lag in economy has been overcome, there has been achieved a radical turn in its development. For the first time in many years the five-year plan has been fulfilled according to major economic indexes and moreover it has been fulfilled ahead of time! Azerbaijan has achieved such high rate of economic growth, as we never had before.

In May 2000 President of Azerbaijan came to Gandzha; one of the meetings was with workers and specialists of the alumina manufacturing plant. It manufactured its first products in 1969. It was obvious that Geidar Alievich was pleased to remember that great event–not only in the republican scale.

– In 1969 I was elected as Head of Azerbaijan. At that time this plant was in a difficult situation. As, on the one hand, there were some construction-installation works under way–many shops had not been put into operation yet. On the other hand, the plant had started operation, –said the President at his meeting with the plant's working collective. –At that time I discussed the progress of work at the plant construction practically every day... The process was going on very slowly. It is good you have such a great collective of engineers, technicians, highly qualified workers, and specialists now. But then it was not so... We did not have cadres necessary to ensure production. We had to invite most people from Russia and other regions of the USSR."

It is amazing that three decades later Geidar Aliev even remembered the surname of the first director of the plant–Yamov.

The plant was put into operation and immediately some problems emerged nobody thought of at the stage of design, or even if they were discussed, it was decided to economize as purifying structures were put into operation at that time much later. In short, day after day dust fell from the skies on the city, its

surroundings, the mausoleum of great Nizami Gandjevi (1141-1209), whose creations were connected with Gandzha. The workers of culture sounded the alarm. They remembered the philosopher's behests:

"Consider love for this land as your duty. Don't be ungrateful."

– I remember, –continued Geidar Alievich at the meeting in Gandzha, –poet Rasul Rza, composers Kara Karaev and Fikret Amirov, poet Suleiman Rustam and a number of others addressed a letter to me personally. They expressed their concern in connection with the fact that the mausoleum of Nizami was in such poor condition. Since the plant had been erected and it was impossible to move it to some other place, they saw the way out in moving Nizami's tomb to a place where it would not be made dirty... I remember that we were put before an option: either to move Nizami's tomb or to destroy the plant. Such plants can be erected and put down, but Nizami is such invaluable treasure for us, that it can be compared with nothing else. So transferring Nizami's mausoleum–from the moral point of view–would be a crime on our part, we just were unable to do that...

The problems of the plant could not be solved on the spot. So the First Secretary of the Central Committee applied to Moscow for help. Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers Alexei Nikolayevich Kosygin received him. He said from the start:

– If you started something, you should carry it to the end. But you come and complain each time–something got covered with dust in one place, something else broke down in another place.

Kosygin reminded Aliev of the case with the Kirovabad plant.

...In early 1950s First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Republican Communist Party Bagirov came to the reception with Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin with a sample of alunite, excavated in Dashkesan. He reported with great pride that alumina could be made of it, and, as it is known, it is impossible to manufacture any aluminium, so called flying metal, without alumina. In world practice alumina is made of bauxites, but there was no enough bauxite in the Soviet Union, there is no enough of it in Russia either; export supplies are used.

In general Stalin supported Bagirov's suggestion to set up a strategically important alumina manufacture in Azerbaijan and assigned Kosygin, his deputy in the Council of Ministers at that time, to "see to this matter".

– And I saw to it, –Alexei Nikolayevich told Aliev, –the project was prepared, specialists were sent. And now you come to me with one or another complaint.

Recollecting this bygone event, President of Azerbaijan questioned the correctness of their decision: “Didn’t we make a mistake?” Then he answered assuredly:

– No. Alunite is actually very useful mineral wealth, a gift of the nature, and we have to utilize it. But we should use high technology in order to manufacture quality produce and don’t spoil and pollute the environment.

At the suggestion of the First secretary of the Central Committee, a special competent committee was set up that consisted of leading scientists and industrialists of the Republic. Finally we managed to “reconcile” the great classic of our national literature with his industrial surrounding. Now alumina is delivered for processing to Russia and Tajikistan and the plant has perfect prospects–including new jobs, which the Republic needs so much.

In Maydays of 2000 President of Azerbaijan visited the instrument-making plant “Djikhaz” as well. Among others they produce meters for hot and cold water there. And again Geidar Alievich remembered the 1970s.

– In 1975 we approved a very significant resolution on developing instrument-making industry in Azerbaijan, in fact the resolution was not our initiative, the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union initiated it. On the basis of that resolution we set up many instrument-making enterprises in Azerbaijan. The resolution provided for development of this plant in particular... The plant has a brilliant future... It makes me happy as I did a lot for its development and modernization at that time. Today I am certain that our efforts were not in vein; they have yielded fruit. Nowadays Azerbaijan and external market need this plant very much.

The Soviet epoch was more than once painted in black colors. I remember Sadovoye Ring in Moscow in November 1990 crowded by confused people. The fooled people carried transparencies in which the number “73”–the age of the Soviet power–was crossed with a black cross. Though very soon they got sober–when their scientific research institutes had been closed and junior and senior scientific workers, candidates and doctors of sciences had been thrown out. Know your place in the market: line up near metro stations and sell cigarettes, clothes, bread and kefir...

Geidar Aliev never renounced the past that means himself. Assessing 70 years of the Soviet history of Azerbaijan he states with confidence:

– Within these years science, education, culture and economy of Azerbaijan developed in a headlong way. The appearance of Azerbaijan changed, our republic got stronger and huge intellectual potential was created in Azerbaijan.

It is really so. There were seventy years of the Soviet power and for the period of fourteen years within it Geidar Aliev was at the Head of the Republic. He managed to push significantly forward economy, science, and education, to help to the revival of the people's spiritual memory. Here is impartial statistics: during the period of his rule in Azerbaijan 1,155 libraries, 1,316 clubs, 849 schools and 44 museums were opened. His name is associated with setting up a boarding school with military specialization in 1971, which was first, such educational institution in the republic. Now it is a military lyceum named after Djamshid Nakhichevansky, military leader well known in Azerbaijan. He was decorated with St. George's cross and awarded silver armor for bravery during the First World War and commanded a division in the Soviet times. Geidar Aliev followed the formation and development of the lyceum, according to him, like it was his own child. And it was also a reserve for the future–preparation of its own officer cadres.

In October 1975 there were Days of Soviet Literature in Baku. Most popular poets and writers from all over the large country came to the capital of the Soviet Azerbaijan. They had meetings with readers, participated in grand opening of Samed Vurgun's Memorial House–Geidar Alievich recited his poems since his young years. At the initiative of the First Secretary of the Central Committee a monument to the other great poet Djafar Djabarly was opened on March 23, 1982. A bit earlier Aliev visited snow-covered town of Shusha and cut a ribbon at the opening of Molla-Panakh Vagif's mausoleum, where he made an excited speech...

Could anybody imagine then that just a decade later a war cannonade would roar over the blessed Shusha and' sub-machine gun fire of "liberators' would cleave the monument to the great humanist?!

Fourteen years at the head of the Republic... We happened to hear idle talks of whether the leader of the Republic had a concept for the development of Azerbaijan or being guided by his flawless intuition solved emerging tasks one by one. I think there is no ground for arguments. Planned economy determined prospects of Azerbaijan in a single economic complex of the Union. By late 1960s the Republic lagged behind the All-Union indices in most spheres of national economy. It was necessary to develop new industries, create new jobs. But first of all it was essential to take

oil industry out of crisis. By late 1960s oil production decreased by 1.3 million tons and gas production by 659 million cubic meters a year.

Oil, gas and coal were of special importance in the Government of the Union. The Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers Kosygin dealt with energetics sector personally. Speaking about this period in Aliev's activity let us quote the fundamental study "Azerbaijan Oil in World Politics". Its authors Ilkham Aliev and Akif Muradverdiev notice that the First Secretary of the Central Committee disclosed "actual causes for long-lasting lagging and tension in this important sector of industry".

What was going on in the industry, which the republic had been always proud of? Geological prospecting lagged behind. The resources were scattered. There were more and more accidents. Oil wells fell out of operation. Moreover, for ten years (1960-1970) "about 45% of all capital investments in the republican industry was allocated to development of oil industry". Yet from 1966 oil production fell year after year. Aliev met many specialists–scientists and industrialists, engineers and first class foremen. It was generally agreed that the major flaw was the condition of the drilling operations.

In the period of 1966-1970 the volume of the well drilling dropped by a million meters. 31 percent of the drilled wells did not reach the design depth. Half of the work time was lost due to accidents and downtime. We cite these figures and facts from the monograph mentioned above.

After thorough preparation the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party called a republican meeting of oilmen and scientists working in the industry. It was a great council with the people who knew everything about oil. Addressing them Geidar Aliev said: "We demand from engineers and technical workers, geologists of Kaspmorneft and Azneft, from chief executives of both amalgamations to carry out measures necessary to stabilize oil production in old fields through improving geological prospecting and drilling works especially in Mesozoic formations in order to increase resources which will enable us to achieve growth of oil and gas production in future. We should focus especially on developing offshore oil and gas fields."

Geidar Aliev never was an office party functionary. Of course, due to evident reasons the First Secretary had to spend quite a lot of time at his desk. He was regularly seen at the oil fields, in the shops of the oil-refining plants and in scientists' laboratories. And

they were not visits of a dabbler or a high-ranking visitor. He did not restrict himself to ask to repeat what even now seems extraordinary, to listen attentively to well-known scientists–Azad Mirzadjaizadeh, Arthur Rasizadeh, to read to the works of Yusif Geidarovich Mamedaliev, the deceased great scientist-chemist, Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences, Academician of the Republican AS. Such people are said to burn at work. During the wartime he designed a method of producing high-quality additives to aviation fuel and received the Stalin prize that was given the name of the State prize later.

Figures are often called boring matter. But one cannot do without them speaking about production. The Azneft amalgamation fulfilled the ninth five-year plan in relation to gas production for three and half years and in relation to oil production in 4 years and 8 months.

Then new goals were to be achieved. In 1974 on Geidar Aliev's initiative, the CPSU Central Committee and the USSR Council of Ministers approved a resolution on significant increase of pace and volumes of works aimed at prospective drilling in deep structures of the Caspian Sea, designing and introducing into production new technical means for drilling, developing and operating deep offshore wells.

Intense work of hundreds of people yielded good results. New oil and gas producing facilities were put into operation; the existing oil refining plants were modernized. The gas-processing plant achieved its full capacity–it was the only enterprise of such profile put into operation in 1961. In 1986 after reconstruction, its production capacity reached 6.5 billion cubic meters of gas.

The new plant for production of home conditioners was originally planned to locate in Zaporozhe, which Brezhnev treated with affection. There at Zaporozhstal he spent his days and nights in first post-war years, rising up the plant from ruins. The Union Ministers certainly knew about it and insisted on the plant's location in Zaporozhe.

Aliev, backed by Baibakov, went to Brezhnev. Leonid Ilyich considered his arguments. So Zaporozhe plant became a Baku one. Japanese equipment and technology were bought for it and thousands of conditioners sold all over the Soviet Union and for export.

On December 25, 1975, the plant was put into operation. At a meeting the First Secretary said with pride, "The history of Azerbaijan industry is rich in numerous achievements of the working class. But today we can bravely state that never such a

labor feat had been witnessed in the industrial history of our country..."

Let us remember other new construction projects of that period: the electrical device plant Ulduz, Baku factory of champagne wines, Baku plant of deep-sea substructures (it was originally planned in Astrakhan, the equipment was bought for 500 million dollars), Electroterm plant, shoe factories, Lenkoran tinned food factory. New enterprises were built in all regions of Azerbaijan: in Nagorny Karabakh and Gandzha, Baku and Nakhichevan...

For ten years 22 million m^2 of housing were put into service in Azerbaijan. Modern architectural ensembles made Baku more beautiful: the building of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic, the Moscow, Apsheron, Gandzhlik hotels, Gyulistan palace, the Institute for Space Research, the House of Arts in Shuvelyany, railway and sea stations...

"They were the best years, –President Aliev remembered later. –Sometimes after finishing work I didn't leave for home, I thought, made new plans to improve our republic's state. I thought of ways to use the opportunities provided by my post for benefit of my people. There were two things necessary for that: to successfully lead the Azerbaijan Communist Party and to increase gradually my authority. I suppose I have succeeded in both."

The Central press called Aliev the leader of a new type. It was really so. Assessing his work at the Central Committee of the Republican Communist Party, Geidar Alievich could rightfully say, "For 14 years of my leadership in Azerbaijan we, together with my party comrades, performed great deeds for Azerbaijan."

Aliev was appreciated in Moscow. But what is even more important–his countrymen appreciated him.

– In our Djulfinsky district we sowed wheat year after year, – remembers Dovlat Mamedov, –though we gathered a scanty yield–three centners per hectare. Notwithstanding our protests we could not prove anything. We were just told one thing: "Plan!" But as soon as Geidar Alievich Aliev became First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, comrade "Plan" turned out to be not so powerful. On Aliev's initiative in Nakhichevan, including our district, we started developing viticulture. It was better for both the Republic and people. We supplied with grape the northern regions of the Union. In my native village 64 families bought cars, many built two-story houses and bought nice furniture.

Nakhichevan was changing very quickly. There appeared the modern hotel Tebriz, the Hydroelectric Power Station on the

Araks, a new textile industrial complex was put in operation and the Palace of Culture was opened...

This is only one example, even not the largest one.

The archive documents will add more. This mosaic will let you see the range of the First Secretary's responsibilities, his aspirations and concerns.

...Since 1970 in Azerbaijan there was introduced compulsory study of the Russian language from the first form. Two years later the Central Committee approved a number of measures aimed at further improvement of the Russian language teaching at secondary schools of the Republic.

...On March 13, 1973, the Central Committee Bureau discussed a plan of actions to prepare and celebrate the 600th anniversary of the great Azerbaijan poet Imadeddin Nasimi.

...It approved a resolution on opening a monument to the Hero of the Soviet Union Mekhti Guseinzadeh in Baku on May 9, 1973.

...It discussed the work progress on the third Baku water-pipe system.

Since January 1975 in Baku was started the broadcasting of the second republican television program–this also thanks to the First Secretary's will and energy, as well as setting up of the State Drama Theatre in Sheki and the Construction Engineering Institute in Baku.

On March 25, 1978, the Central Committee Bureau approved the resolution "On Further Development of the Space Research of the Natural Resources at Academy of Sciences of the Azerbaijan SSR".

And so day after day, week after week–economics, culture, science, education; urgent tasks and strategic goals; problems of the youth and veterans; commerce and services; construction of the Baku underground system; outstanding countrymen's jubilees and the festival "Melodies of the Soviet Transcaucasia".

In March 1976 at the 25th Party Congress Geidar Aliev was elected as candidate-member of the CPSU Central Committee Politburo. For the first time a representative of Azerbaijan became a member of the staff of the Party, but in fact the entire Soviet Union. This new stage in Aliev's career provided more opportunities to solve the problems of the Republic–economic, social and national ones.

– Of course, he was an outstanding personality, –an opinion expressed by Academician Primakov about Aliev in our conversation. –Geidar Alievich did very much for Azerbaijan. He and Shevardnadze, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the

Georgian Communist Party, had a private competition. In this competition Aliev was a winner, so was Azerbaijan, as its leader was better organized and better prepared.

– I met Aliev rather frequently, –continued Yevgeny Maximovich Primakov, now President of the Russian Chamber of Commerce. –Once I even had a rest in his country-house in Mardakyany for three days. We went into the sea and talked...

– It was hardly a talk about the sea element or how waves ran from Baku to Makhachkala...

– Of course, not, –smiles Yevgeny Maximovich, who is not alien to poetry himself. –It was a conversation about people, the destiny of the state; we talked about the country in general and about Azerbaijan in particular...

One can understand why Primakov and Aliev chose the sea as a place for their frank talk. In Azerbaijan there is a saying "every wall and every door has a pair of ears". But the Caspian Sea will never report nor betray.

– Even then Geidar Alievich certainly did not express his ideas on everything openly, but we exchanged our views rather sincerely. Aliev was a progressive man. This craving for progress combined with tough exactingness. It is right. I don't doubt it. Democratic principles, on the one hand, and need for strict order, on the other hand, were mixed up in him. During his rule Azerbaijan underwent great changes–economic and social. Of course everything was done on the basis of planned economy, not on the market principles.

Yevgeny Maximovich remembers how he was once surprised at a meeting that Aliev chaired. Once he summoned the Central Committee Bureau members to the Baku airport before leaving for a business trip.

– An amazing clearness in setting objectives–without any shouting, reprimanding, scolding, though there were those present who should have been scolded. But he was very reserved in this respect. Yet at the same time he could be demanding. Two words before parting: "I'll come and check". An try not to obey...

Let Justice Prevail

On November 18, 1981, *Literaturnaya gaseta* published a long interview with the candidate-member of the CPSU Central Committee Politburo, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party Geidar Aliev "Let Justice Prevail…" This issue of *Literaturnaya gazeta*, one of the most

popular newspapers of that period, was passed from hand to hand; many local periodicals reprinted this interview.

– I think that readers of *Literaturnaya gazeta* are interested in restoring and strengthening legality in the Republic in its wide meaning, –Geidar Aliev answered a question of the journalist Antonina Grigo. –Although we had sensational denunciations and severe punishments of people, whose names seemed untouchable and unavailable for law for many years. By the way bourgeois commentators are mostly interested in these particular cases. Ten days after the August 1969 Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee, when we told the working people of Azerbaijan frankly and honestly about serious shortcomings in the life of our Republic, the bourgeois press raised a clamor and got expectant of sensations of criminal character.

I would like to stress–pronouncing the word "legality" we mean the Moral Code of our society rather than the Criminal Code. And from that point of view violation of law themselves and their prevention are not only a matter of law. Social and moral aspects are also involved, as first of all, we speak of the struggle for man, about respect of rights, protection of dignity and honor of the Soviet man, about bringing him up with best civil qualities and high moral principles.

This approach is the basis of work of the Azerbaijan party organization and was ardently approved by the working people, and absolute majority of them are guided by these principles in their lives and work. But in the conditions of abuse of official status, corruption, bluff and lack of respect for honest work it was inevitable that the initiative of the masses decreased, moral anxiety in the society increased, which later was replaced with depression and apathy in many layers of population. All this caused chronic lag of the Azerbaijan economy behind the average Union indices. We had to help our people to believe in justice, in firmness of Leninist norms of life of the socialist society and its rule. This is the core of the many-sided restoration work; it is the very link laying hold of which we could take out the whole chain. The process was hard and complicated. I say, "was" not because today the situation is ideal but because the irreversibility of this process became a reality.

It is proved by fast rise of economy, culture, and social development for the last decade.

...I have already said that we would not have been able to change anything if we had not believed and had not been convinced many times that the overwhelming majority of people lived and worked honestly. It is another point that very frequently their work was wasted because of wastefulness, negligence and

bluff. In most cases men of principle, honest cadres could not be promoted or achieve positions that fitted their abilities.

We are paying special attention to cadre training. So it is not accidental that simultaneously with establishing order in economic and social-moral spheres we paid much attention to higher educational institutions. The active interference of the Central Committee of the Communist Party into the activity of higher educational institutions was prompted by widely spread facts of bribery, protectionism and nepotism among the teaching staff. This fact caused great harm to the preparation of cadres with higher education as well as enormous moral damage to the upbringing of the youth.

We faced with cases when some teachers of higher educational institutions, leading figures tried to place their children in higher educational institutions according to "parents'" specialities. We had to restrict such actions and today children of executives of administrative bodies are not allowed to enter the Law Faculty of the State University."

– Even so! But, Geidar Alievich, though there is a saying that God takes a rest on children of geniuses yet there have always been and there should be hereditary intellectuals. We have just started accumulating generations of Soviet intelligentsia. Is it bad when a child that has grown up in the atmosphere of family spiritual interests continues the cause of his grandfathers and fathers?

– We speak about different things. Let us make clear the subject of our discussion. What characterizes an intellectual first of all? A diploma of higher education? A diploma of a Candidate or a Doctor of Sciences? I don't think so. The key feature of an intellectual man is *selfless devotion* to service to the society. The history of Russia, by the way, is full of examples of intelligentsia's dramatic destinies when class prejudices prevented them from free service to people and to have talented successors to their cause. They did their best to overcome these obstacles. Risking their lives they went "to people", went to the remotest parts of the country, to tsarist national outskirts with a civilizing mission. They were happy if their children possessed an ability to continue their cause. *Cause!* And if they were incapable to do so, they encouraged them to realize their personal abilities to their own benefit and to the benefit of the people. Because they cherished their family honor and protected their children from the inferiority complex, speaking in a contemporary language.

But now when all barriers to free service to the society and to the interests of the state of workers and peasants have been

eliminated, we sometimes witness emergence of Philistines with diplomas that use the people's confidence and money towards their own selfish ends.

How can we call intellectuals those professors and even academicians who place their own children, grandchildren and other relatives in their department, laboratory or institute and moreover create special conditions for preparation of a thesis, for promotion in scientific work regardless of the fact whether they possess necessary abilities or not?

As for the Law Faculty, our decision here was also connected with morbid tendency. We found out that overwhelming majority of the students accepted to this faculty were children of representatives of militia, procurator's office, courts, law faculties, party and Soviet bodies. We were worried by the existing situation, which was often connected with abuses, and even more so by harmful consequences, danger of spreading nepotism and "inheritance" in administrative organs.

When I opposed these distortions, first I heard arguments like: What do we need such severe measures for? We had hereditary doctors, teachers, lawyers, scientists–a grandfather, a father and a son. Why is it prohibited now? My answer is as follows: Yes, we had and we may have but only on the basis of high morale and by vocation. As for me I deeply respect and highly appreciate dynasties of hereditary miners, oilmen, steel-makers, and grain-growers. Heredity based on honest attitude to work forms genuine culture in generations, be they menial or manual workers.

From everyone–according to abilities, to everyone–according to work. This is the law of socialism. But since we have these distortions we should take extreme measures to improve the situation. It is not family intellectual traditions that are under threat, but nepotism, protectionism and clans that are supported by frankpledge. "You give me–I give you". We will put an end to it. This is a good example of class treatment of the problem, if you like...

– But this phenomenon is not of local nature at all. Striving "to take care of your kin and kith" by placing them in a prestigious institute or by securing "a warm place" is typical of many parents even when they are aware of their offsprings' inability to work hard. This is a phenomenon. Such young people are called "fatherschildren". It is written as one word. Maybe some general requirements of a stricter character should be worked out...

– It is a phenomenon I talk about. It is some kind of line. What do we need additional rules for? As it was said at the 26th Congress we have got enough good laws, the point is to observe

them in most accurate and mandatory way. Any law lives only in case everyone and everywhere observe it–.

We have the Constitution and we have the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism; there is the civil duty and there are moral principles of the Soviet way of living. Concrete practice emerges on the basis of all this.

For example, we had to prohibit our party functionaries and state officials to build country houses, purchase personal cars and defend theses for obtaining scientific degrees...

– Excuse me, Geidar Alievich, we are speaking about legality! And this is, to put it mildly...

– Don't look for mild expressions. Yes, it is a volitional decision. As First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party I suggested it and my colleagues agreed to it.

In 1960s construction of country houses was set on a large scale in Baku. Who built country houses? Mostly executives, intelligentsia. And what did it end up in? In many cases there were abuses: illegal use of machinery, means of transport, construction materials, work force from enterprises and construction sites. Moreover, construction of country houses causes recurrence of proprietary psychology, individualism and leads to neglecting the public duty. We had to severely punish some executives to the extent of expelling them from the party. But nobody suffered from our ban on construction of country houses while the society gained. Instead of a plant director's country house we have now a rest home or a dispensary for the entire collective of the enterprise. These are our motives. A lot of such rest homes have been built, including those for executives, for the last years. Our measures have gained public approval in the republic.

A ban on purchase of personal cars is connected with facts, which are getting more and more frequent, of profiteering on car sales. We had to punish some top executives for such actions as well.

I am far from recommending somebody to copy our experience blindly. We made such decisions under the influence of the crisis situation we had at that moment. Even a shadow of suspect should not fall on top officials.

– What about scientific degrees? We constantly talk about necessity to govern the society on the basis of scientific approach. And if a party functionary or a minister is a scientist at the same time...

– I suppose you know rather cynical but true rephrasing of some poet's lines: "You may not be a scientist, but you must be a candidate". We cannot do without science now. And everyone who is involved in management has to master basis of science,

especially of social sciences. Moreover, they have to contribute to science through their practical work, must be able to analyze events taking place in the society, and take final not hasty decisions. We are for the situation when every top executive possesses such qualities. There is Head of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party Afrand Firidunovich Dashdamirov sitting opposite you. He is under 40 but he is Doctor of Philosophy, professor. He came to the Central Committee staff as a scientist and combines his party work with scientific one. And it yields good results. There are justified exceptions from every rule. Otherwise a rule will turn into a dogma.

But it was impossible to consider as a norm the situation when a former First Secretary of Sumgait City Party Committee Balakishiev received a scientific degree of a Candidate of Technical Sciences. Since he had not done any scientific research before becoming a party functionary, he had never performed an engineer's duties or worked in production. That's why the inspection results were not surprising. They confirmed our doubts–Balakishiev was not the author of his thesis, he used someone else's work. Under decision of Higher Certification Commission of the USSR of August 12, 1981, Balakishiev was deprived of that scientific degree for the actions that are incompatible with the title of the Soviet scientist. Earlier Balakishiev was dismissed from his post for numerous shortcomings in his work and assigned to ordinary job.

But it was not a single case. In the 1960s a craving for scientific degrees became fashionable among top executives. We have come to the conclusion that there is no actual benefit either for science or party and state activity from this. But it can be harmful; it might cause enormous moral damage. Some executives abused their position, while the ranks of scientists became "littered". Here is an explanation of this ban.

The examples of such moral taboos may be unexpected. But existence of a moral taboo in a work collective is not a rarity at all. It is characteristic of socialist concepts of honor and decency and gets particular forms under certain conditions. Special requirements are imposed upon a head of a collective. Moral image of a leader, moral examples are of great importance in educating people. If, for example, from a rostrum a leader holds up to shame recurrences of petty-bourgeois psychology but in his private life he abuses his position, indulges in purchasing, buys up gold, speculates, he is a hundred-fold more dangerous than a person who doesn't know other values in life besides things and money.

– I have an impression that bribery provokes greater disgust in you than any other type of crime. And poet Fikret Godzha says as follows: "Bribe is a knife plunged into one's back... Why bribery in particular?

– Because bribe is a universal crime. Other vices turn around it. A bribe-taker doesn't sell a sheepskin coat from under the counter; he sells state interests... The poet's aphorism is not an exaggeration. All of us, even those who are honest and those who despise the people who take and give bribes, carry blame for tenacity of this malicious vestige of the past. Personal integrity and personal squeamishness are not civic merits in themselves. Civic consciousness presupposes active life, ability and desire to struggle against the evil.

– One prominent lawyer said: "A person who lives on unearned income will always be able to buy a certificate of the "earned" income."

– Well, it is easily checked. And both parties involved should be punished. Then, and it is the main aspect, concrete measures of suppressing the evil are not an end in them. They should be a part of the harmonious system of general intolerance towards violation of law. A publication in a newspaper is one of the examples of manifesting an active life position. There cannot be any active life position without an actual deed. Elaboration of the active life position is the backbone of all ideological work of our time.

– In the film "Interrogation" made at the Azerbaijan film studio, which, by the way, greatly impressed Muscovites, the investigator Seifi does everything to expose the real criminals–top executives. The filmmakers–scriptwriter Rustam Ibragimbekov and director Rasim Odzhagov as journalists the principle: "A law is a law for everyone." But to make this principle triumph the major character of the film had not only to withstand pressure and threats, he had to neglect some case investigation judicial procedures. We can guess that the retribution is unavoidable for him. A law is a law for everyone! A poet said, "Good should possess fists". But justice also has a fist.

Or there is an old but non-aging movie, as we draw our examples from art, –"Watch out for a car" by Eldar Ryazanov. Fighting away their sympathy the judges and assessors pronounce their sentence on Yuri Detochkin who is so unselfish that even the woman who loves him calls him an idiot. There are examples of different attitude towards such "infringers", especially among those who stand guard over the law. One lawyer expressed his regret that Smoktunovsky made a charming character out of "an anarchist".

– As for me, I sympathize with Yuri Detochkin! Of course, he makes a mistake, acting alone. But evidently he cannot act otherwise. Neither could Seifi. A live person can make mistakes. Everything depends on what moral principles he sticks to.

The filmmakers drew public attention to the necessity to struggle against swindlers and showed new types of their mimicry. Thanks to characters like Detochkin and Seifi the struggle against negative phenomena goes on more successfully. We need more such people, even despite the fact that they make mistakes choosing forms and methods of struggle, rather than indifferent ones.

In conflict situations writers, poets, cinematography workers show discrepancies between the fast-changing life and existing laws. This doesn't only concern jurisprudence, but habitual ideas, inert customs, seemingly unshakeable state of affairs. So creating brilliant works of art they perform deeds and show their civic position.

I can only regret that literature, I mean the Azerbaijan writers first of all, am behind the times. We have few works so far that would reflect the present struggle of Azerbaijan communists against antipodes of communist morale or where modern knights without fear and blemish would act. Though there are lots of them in our real life!..

We are not idealists; we don't assert that we'll achieve ultimate triumph of Good over Evil. But it is possible and necessary to achieve the situation where justice, law and ideals will tip the scale.

– Geidar Alievich, I'd like to express my wish for your success through poetic lines:

"Let justice always prevail,
Let oppression be disgraced,
Let generosity triumph
And the kind-hearted be glorified,"

as Nizami said.

– "Be modest. Throw wealth and pride
to fire, burn them!
...If you wish to gain your freedom
from perplexing passions
Burn all tiresome nonsense in a single,
fiery breath!" –

as great Azerbaijan poet of the 12th century Nizami Gandzhevi said.

December 2, 1982, Baku

– And now we are to discuss the organizational issue. You know, comrades, that I have been appointed as First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers and at the Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee Politburo I was transferred from Candidate-Member to Member of the CPSU Central Committee Politburo, –with these words Geidar Aliev opened the meeting of the Central Committee Bureau of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, the last meeting which he chaired by the right of First Secretary. At that time it was necessary to elect his successor. –And consequently, we have to make a decision today concerning First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party... –Geidar Alievich read out the documents approved in Moscow and continued, –I think on the basis of the foregoing we have to make a decision on "Relieving G. Aliev from duties of First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party and Member of the Central Committee Bureau of the Azerbaijan Communist Party'. But before we put this issue to a vote I would like to say a few words. –Geidar Alievich looked at his comrades. –First of all I would like to say that the decision made by the CPSU Central Committee Politburo and the 7th Session of the USSR Supreme Soviet on electing comrade Aliev as Member of the CPSU Central Committee Politburo and appointing him as First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers is enormous trust to the Azerbaijan Communist Party, our republic and our people. I guess we are unanimous in considering this fact first of all as appreciation of the activity of the Azerbaijan party organization, successes of the working people of our Republic and the whole Republic in construction of communism, and appreciation of the activity of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party and the Central Committee Bureau. Great trust has been put upon me. I am aware of the meaning of this trust and great responsibility connected with it. And I would like to assure that I would try to do my best to justify this trust and this new assignment of our Party, the Central Committee and the Politburo.

Today I recollect July 14, 1969, when... I was elected as First Secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party. And it is almost thirteen and a half years we have been working together and I have been carrying out these duties. And now... after such a long time and so much work this new appointment on the Party and State lines obliges me and sets very large and crucial tasks before

me. I see a lot of difficult and hard work ahead. I hope that in this new job I'll remain the same as I have been until now and I'll try to justify this trust, in particular in the Azerbaijan party organization and the Central Committee of our Republican Communist Party.

I will yet have an opportunity to express my ideas in a more detailed way at a Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, but now I would like to say that... the Central Committee Bureau, the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party work in an efficient, well-organized, successful and fruitful way. During this period a lot has been done, our republic has achieved great successes. We have managed to eliminate our long-standing lagging. The Republic has made fresh advances on the All-Union scale. The Republic has been among the winners of the socialist competition for twelve years running; it has been awarded Red Banners of the Motherland. During this period the Republic has been awarded three orders of the Soviet Union–the order of the October Revolution, the order of Friendship of Peoples. For early fulfilment of the tenth five-year plan–the order of Lenin that Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev presented to us quite recently. There is perfect, healthy moral-political and moral-psychological atmosphere and work spirit in the Republic. Spirit of friendship, internationalism and brotherhood. In other words, comrades, our Republic has risen and risen quite high.

And all this is first of all the result of the activities of the Central Committee, the Central Committee Bureau and the Central Committee Secretariat of the Azerbaijan Communist Party. Everything that has been done since July 14, 1969, has been prepared, worked out, outlined and set forth here at the meetings of the Central Committee Bureau of the Azerbaijan Communist Party. Our every step–large and small,–every event, every big deal, which all together have ensured the republic's success, are results of our collective work, collective efforts, collective mind of the Bureau and collective activity of the Central Committee Bureau. So today I have the absolute right to say that the Central Committee Bureau of the Azerbaijan Communist Party has been adequate to the Party demands, the decisions of its congresses, plenary meetings and all the requirements of the CPSU Central Committee.

And today, when I'm parting with you, at this last meeting of the Central Committee Bureau I consider it necessary to say about this with a feeling of great satisfaction and a feeling of great gratitude.

I would like to thank first of all the members of the Central Committee Bureau of the Azerbaijan Communist Party for our joint fruitful active and fundamental work during all these years. I would like to thank you, my dear comrades, for your constant support, for help and understanding as well as for the fact that acting according to our principles, taking tough decisions, sometimes very painful, we have always been driven by high principles of the Party, State, by interests of our Republic and interests of our Country...

We have solved a lot of hard matters of principle. Sometimes there were various opinions, judgments, but we always found the most correct solutions and always acted in a well-organized way, always acted in a friendly manner. Our major joint achievement is creation of healthy business-like atmosphere in the work of the Central Committee Bureau and the Central Committee Secretariat of the Azerbaijan Communist Party. In the past our Republic suffered a lot because of lack of business-like atmosphere and business-like relationships in the work of the Bureau, in the work of the Secretariat and in the activity of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party. Personal interests often gained the upper hand. There prevailed mercantile approach, intrigues, squabbles, groupings and other negative phenomena. We put an end to all this very soon and every month, every year we moved towards this healthy, business-like spirit that should prevail in the work of the Central Committee Bureau. And we have achieved this due to establishing principles of collective leadership in the work of the Central Committee Bureau.

And today, I repeat, the Central Committee Bureau works in a very efficient, well-organized and purposeful way on the basis of healthy party principles and I think this is a guarantee of further successful and fruitful work of the Central Committee. That is why I express my gratitude to you again and again and appreciate the work of every member of the Central Committee Bureau, every candidate-member of the Central Committee Bureau, every secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party. The heads of the Central Committee departments, leaders of some party organizations and ideological institutions often participated in the meetings of the Bureau and the Secretariat of the Central Committee and today I would like to thank the Central Committee staff (I will probably say about it separately at a meeting with the workers of the Central Committee staff), heads of the Central Committee departments, all other comrades who worked with us during all these years to make the activity of the Central Committee Bureau fruitful, efficient and successful.

Thank you very much, comrades. And finally, I don't doubt that on the basis of accumulated broad experience, firm and stable business-like traditions in the activity of the Central Committee Bureau and the Central Committee Secretariat the work will proceed and continue and every member of the Bureau and every leading party, Soviet, production worker will try to multiply the achieved results, to enrich the accumulated experience and to develop everything that has been created. And I am sure that the basis, the foundation is so strong, so firm, that in future in our Azerbaijan party organization there will never be again any negative phenomena that existed for a long time until 1969.

I would like to wish all of you, my dear friends, comrades, companions-in-arms, new great successes in putting to life the decisions of the 26th Congress of the CPSU, objectives set forth by the November (1982) Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee, decisions of the 30th Congress of the Azerbaijan Communist Party and Plenary Meetings of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party. That is what I wanted to say.

A meeting of the Party Bureau, whether it is small or large, is not a place where you can hear applause. But that time without previous arrangements everyone present in the room clapped their hands loudly. Then it was necessary to arrange formal voting by raising hands... But first someone had to say a few words–Second Secretary of the Central Committee Yuri Pugachev took the initiative. His speech was a bit muddled but sincere. He said about great confidence, how they would be missing Geidar Alievich as a chairman, assured... And he sounded the name of a new chief–during "extensive studies of the opinion of people, communists, members of the Central Committee and members of the Central Committee Bureau... a final opinion was formed that was reported to the CPSU Central Committee, Secretariat, Politburo and personally to comrade Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov. It was considered expedient to recommend comrade Kyamran Mamedovich Bagirov, who at that moment worked as Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, to this post."

By that time Kyamran Bagirov had gone through all interviews in Moscow and visited the General Secretary. The Politburo recommended him for the post of First Secretary. Actually the decision was made in Moscow but there were procedure requirements yet to be met–so the members of the Bureau voted, so did the Plenary Meeting.

– I am well aware, –said Kyamran Mamedovich Bagirov, – what it means to be at the head of such republican party organization that has such glorious revolutionary traditions. If the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party does me the honor I promise to use all my forces and abilities and in joint work together with the entire Central Committee to do everything in order to cope with the duties of the First Secretary...

The next day, on December 3, 1982, in Dzerzhinsky Club a Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee took place. The Plenary Meeting relieved Geidar Aliev of the duties of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Republican Communist Party and elected Kyamran Bagirov to this post. Aliev wished Kyamran Mamedovich "success in this high, very hard–know from my own experience–and responsible post, and, of course, strong health and all the best for all our expectations to come true".

Just a few years later, the 1970s would be called the years of stagnation. But a question arises: "Who was in a state of stagnation?" Is it possible to stick an offensive label to the epoch and millions of workers? There was no stagnation at the construction of the Baikal-Amur Main Line, at the West Siberian and Caspian oil fields, at Donbass, Kuzbass and Karaganda mines... There was no stagnation dampness smell in Azerbaijan. For incomplete decade and a half of Geidar Aliev's rule per capita national income increased twofold, gross volume of production grew 2.5 times; increase in national income was equal to its entire volume in 1969. The industrial production almost tripled; labor productivity doubled; consumer goods production tripled as well. The volume of industrial products manufactured in those years was equal to the volume of the previous 50 years. 250 large plants, factories, workshops were built, over two million people improved their living conditions. Within that period practically second Baku was erected.

Azerbaijan gained one of the leading positions in the country in terms of production of petroleum products, oil equipment, steel pipes, non-ferrous metals, synthetic rubber, electric engines, construction materials, home air conditioners, automobile tyres, chemical fertilizers, earthenware products, carpets and carpeting. 350 types of products manufactured in Azerbaijan were exported to 65 countries of the world. New industries emerged in the Republic such as machine-building, electronic industry; oil-refining enterprises underwent large-scale reconstruction and the Baku underground system was built.

People all over the world, especially in the countries of the Middle East, Africa and Latin America, were interested in Azerbaijan's experience, achievements of this original republic, its extraordinary leader. On the eve of the 60th anniversary of the USSR's formation (1982), Chairman of the Soviet Committee for Solidarity with Countries of Asia and Africa Alexander Dzasokhov suggested a large international forum to be held in Baku devoted to the Soviet Union's role in political, diplomatic and practical assistance to national liberation movement of young independent states of the post-colonial world. Large delegations from fifty states and leaders of national liberation movements came to the conference. As Alexander Dzasokhov remembers their meeting inspired eminent guests with Geidar Alievich Aliev, acquaintance with Baku, a city of many nations and many confessions, a city where ancient history was marvellously combined with modern forms of community life, with developed industry and science.

Aliev strove for Azerbaijan to obtain a decent place in the state, for representatives of the republic to be promoted to different positions of the All-Union scale, of course in conformity with their organizational abilities and personal qualities. For example, when after death of the outstanding Tajik poet and public figure Mirzo Tursun-zadeh there arose an issue of who would stand at the head of the Soviet Committee for Solidarity with Countries of Asia and Africa, it was on Geidar Aliev's initiative that Mirza Azhdarovich Ibragimov, the great scientist and the person of encyclopaedic knowledge, the author of numerous wonderful novels, Aliev's countryman, was recommended and unanimously elected to this post and then successfully worked there.

But how much filth was poured on those years, how many attempts were made to discredit deeds and people by the "foremen of perestroika" and their yes-men who did not drive a single nail themselves for the whole life. Equipped with the figures Aliev opposed those who "took the path of indiscriminate running down of the past, the activity of the Republic's party organization and achievements of its working people in the 1970s".

– How to prove that the figures you are talking about are real? –Andrei Karaulov, a journalist and a TV commentator, asked Aliev.

– All the figures that I quoted are from official sources. In order to disprove official statistics some other data should probably be quoted. But there are no such data. They do not exist

and there cannot be any other figures. Because everything I say is the truth.

– OK, have you come across upward distortions, let's say, in the activities of ministries, enterprises, and districts?..

– Before me and during the period of my work in Azerbaijan there were upward distortions in different spheres of economy–as well as all over the country... We started our work with launching active struggle against all negative phenomena, including eyewash. Have they disappeared? No. They were still revealed. We worked to reveal them. They took place within the entire district, in the work of enterprises, construction projects, collective and state farms. All facts that the Central Committee got to know were discussed at the Bureau. We thought that in that way we could prevent executives of various levels from unlawful actions... We worked on the problem of utmost elimination of negative phenomena. And I will tell you frankly that we did not accept any compromises.

The documents we studied during our work on this book prove Aliev's words.

Chapter 6
"THE WHOLE UNION NEEDS YOU, GEIDAR!"

The Last Visit of the General Secretary

In the Crimea from the end of July to the last days of August of 1982 Brezhnev received foreign visitors–leaders of the Countries of the Socialist Commonwealth: Gustav Gusak (Czechoslovakia), Erich Honecker (the German Democratic Republic), Wojciech Jaruzelski (Poland), Yumzhagiyn Tsedenbal (Mongolia)...

On September 24 the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, the Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium flew to Baku. According to the newspapers he "had to take part in celebrations devoted to awarding the order of Lenin to the Azerbaijan SSR, which it received for great success achieved by the workers of the Republic in the tenth five-year in the manufacture of industrial and agricultural products". Azerbaijan was awarded two years before and the award could have been handed long ago, but Aliev insisted on Leonid Ilyich coming to hand over the award. And finally he succeeded.

Four days of the intensive program could have been a heavy burden even for a younger man let alone the old and sick General Secretary who vaguely perceived what was going on around! Though he might have remembered how about ten years ago he, hale and hearty, stepped on the platform, how accompanied by the thunder of applause and greetings he entered the square near the station which was crowded with people and after looking around handed bunches of flowers to two black-eyed beauties and enjoyed the warmth of this city. Now the Russian television never shows such Brezhnev. Several generations have only the image of a bloated and helpless old man imprinted in their minds.

Let us look through the newspapers that told about "comrade L.I. Brezhnev's visit to Azerbaijan" and speak to the witnesses to get a better idea what this great four-act performance was like.

...At the stairway comrade L.I. Brezhnev was heartily welcomed by the Candidate-member of the CPSU Central

Committee Politburo, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party G.A. Aliev, the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijan SSR K.A. Khalilov, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic G.N. Seidov, Members of the Central Committee Bureau of the Azerbaijan Communist Party. The Guard of Honor Chief reported to comrade Brezhnev. Then the anthems of the USSR and the Azerbaijan SSR were performed.

According to the national traditions the dear guest was given gifts of Azerbaijan land. Pioneers handed him flowers.

All along the way from the airport to the city in streets, prospects and squares decorated with transparencies, pictures, slogans Leonid Ilyich were welcomed by hundreds of thousands of Baku citizens.

It was written so in the newspapers on the next day, September 25, 1982, and it was the truth. The capital of Azerbaijan did not stand out with pomp of its welcome against the background of commonly accepted procedures. Similar pompous welcoming took place when the General Secretary came to Kiev, Tbilisi, Tashkent–it was a typical style of the epoch of "developed socialism". But let us follow the motorcade that reached the large and beautiful square that had the name of Lenin.

Journalists telling about the solemn manifestation hardly checked their emotions.

...With great fanfare the assembled crowds cheer comrade L.I. Brezhnev and the Republic Leaders, then with storm of applause and welcoming speeches in honor of the Communist Party and its Leninist Central Committee. Comrades L.I. Brezhnev, G.A. Aliev, K.A. Khalilov, G.N. Seidov and other leaders of the Republic make for the Government Platform, where there are prominent people of Azerbaijan.

The resolution of the Baku City Soviet of People Deputies is announced–expressing the will of all the working people of the capital of the Soviet Azerbaijan as a token of infinite love and deep appreciation for constant concerns for development of the city economy, culture, science and arts the Soviet of People Deputies conferred the rank of Baku Honorary Citizen to Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev. There are ovations, words of greeting heard over the square.

The People's Artist of the USSR, the Hero of Socialist Labor R. Beibutov and the Chief Executive of the Drilling Rig, the Hero of Socialist Labor S. Nagiev decorate Leonid Ilyich's breast with the medal of the City Honorary Citizen and hand him the diploma. Young pioneers bring him flowers.

Comrade Brezhnev is heartily congratulated on receiving the honorary rank by representatives of industry, agriculture, intelligentsia and the youth. Masters of arts and collectives of amateur art activities perform national dances and songs that praise friendship and brotherhood of the people of our multinational Motherland.

It is the end of the TASS correspondents' report on the first day of the General Secretary's visit to the lit-with-warm-September-sun Baku. We hope the reader will excuse us for long quotations as they help to set more vividly the atmosphere of those days and to see the hero of our narration from different points of view. They were certainly special hours and days for him, the host of the meeting, and the host of the place.

"Guest after guest bring elation to the host –says a Russian proverb. An Azerbaijani one sounds practically similar: "If one guest is a joy for another guest, they are not a burden on the host". The Azerbaijanians traditionally give all the best to their guest. Alirza and Izzet Alievs brought up their children in such traditions. If a family, even a large one, had only two rooms, one of them was reserved for a guest. The best bed linen, blanket and pillows were also for a guest. Once small Geidar and his brother came from Nakhichevan to the village to see their relatives. "We were received and fed in the hall and we were not let into that room, –remembered Geidar Alievich. –Who is this room for? It is for guests. There was a bed, a fine silk blanket and pillows there, while they did not have even a carpet themselves. Well, I thought. A guest may come once, twice or three times a year and the room remains empty the rest of the time while the family live here all the time and have to huddle together in such conditions. What psychology! But it must be connected with our people's character: all the best to the guest."

Years later one of the interviewers reminded Aliev of "too frequent Brezhnev's visits to Baku and too pompous receptions in his honor".

– What nonsense! –Geidar Alievich replied in temper. –What was wrong in visits of the country's first person? What is wrong in the fact that we, the Azerbaijanians, are very cordial and hospitable by nature? What was wrong in the fact that all the world, all the television- and radio-broadcasting satellites were aimed at Baku? And after all what was wrong in the fact that in connection with the General Secretary's visits we were able to get some money for our new construction projects?

We have to give the hosts' due: even during that last Brezhnev's visit they did not content themselves with the standard

program–wreaths to the monument to V.I. Lenin and to the Eternal Flame, a customary approach to veterans. Leonid Ilyich was taken to "Shelf-2", a rig designed to drill deep-sea oil wells, to the plant manufacturing home air conditioners, where a beauty with naked shoulders gave flowers to the guest. Remembering his youth the guest caressed her tenderly. And on Sunday Brezhnev handed the order of Lenin over to Azerbaijan. Let us cite the TASS report again

...Opening the grand meeting comrade G.A. Aliev warmly and cordially greeted Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev. He said that comrade Brezhnev's visit on the eve of the 60th anniversary of the USSR formation, a great holiday of internationalism and brotherhood of the Soviet people, was enormous honor and great joy of all the people of the Republic. Comrade Aliev emphasized that sincere cordial feeling of Baku citizens during their meetings and talks with Leonid Ilyich as well as solemn festive atmosphere in this auditorium–all this is manifestation of ardent love and infinite gratitude of the workers of Azerbaijan towards Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, and of unanimous approval of the internal and external policy of the Communist Party and the Soviet State.

The Honorary Presidium of the Meeting is elected unanimously (by the way, did anyone in the auditorium question the purpose of this virtual icon?) consisting of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee headed by comrade L.I. Brezhnev. The floor is given to comrade L.I. Brezhnev. All the present stand up and greet Leonid Ilyich with long ovation.

A corpulent man with five golden stars stumbled to the rostrum. Then he spread sheets with notes:

– Dear comrade Aliev!

Dear comrades!

Yesterday we conferred the highest award of our Motherland–the order of Lenin–to your Republic but now we have to discuss with all the party frankness...

Brezhnev spoke slowly and stumbled every time on the difficult for his false teeth word "Azerbaijan". In the country that for a long time had been telling anecdotes about its leader people got used to the defects of his speech, though; some geniuses mimicked Ilyich in a rather talented way. However that time a slight noise flowed over the auditorium: something unexpected had happened. The General Secretary was reading the speech, which he was supposed to make *on the next day* at the Central Committee... The General Secretary's assistant Alexandrov-Agentov rushed from the second row to the rostrum. The speaker paid no attention to him. The confused assistant came back to his

seat. And then Aliev came up to Brezhnev, whispered something to him and took the *tomorrow* text away.

– Well, anything is possible, –said the General Secretary calmly, and the audience that worried for him as well burst into applause. Further on Ilyich went on smoothly, just once said "Afghanistan oil" instead of "Azerbaijan oil".

– We would like to point out with great satisfaction that Azerbaijan was again the first among the Union Republics to fulfil its socialist obligations for corn sale to the state. Receive, dear comrades, cordial appreciation of the Central Committee of the Party and the Government for this great labor victory. What is the key to this success? –asked the speaker. And looking the audience over his thick eyebrows he returned to the sheets with unusually large letters. –First of all it is the fact that the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party and its Bureau headed by our dear comrade Geidar Alievich Aliev put the line of the Party into life in a consistent and energetic way based on principles.

It was the fourteenth year since Geidar Aliev headed Azerbaijan. A big period was coming to the end both in his life and in the life of the Republic and he, as a man of honor, did not separate these two notions. He deserved the right to be proud. Azerbaijan fulfilled and exceeded its state plans for economic and social development year after year. In the Republic new plants and factories were put in operation one after another. The oil production grew to 14 million tons a year and its two thirds were extracted from the bottom of the Caspian Sea. Social programs were put to life.

On Monday after the meeting with the Members of the Central Committee Bureau of the Azerbaijan Communist Party and reading out the appropriate speech Brezhnev left for Moscow. The time was counting last days of his life.

On November 5 he sat in the Presidium of the Grand Meeting devoted to the 65th anniversary of the Great October Revolution at the Kremlin Palace of Congress. Dozing he listened to a long speech of Viktor Grishin, the Member of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee, the First Secretary of the Moscow City Party Committee. Viktor Vasilyevich did not spare colors for the Chairman–the General Secretary:

– In his brilliant reports, speeches and works he enriched Marxist-Leninist theory with fundamental generalizations and conclusions. With his name the Soviet people justly associate a dramatic turn in our country's economy towards numerous

objectives connected with the wellbeing of the people and great organizational work of the party towards this end. Firm loyalty to Lenin's maxims...

Comrade Grishin did his best, it goes without saying, but he was far behind his colleague Shevardnadze. Eduard Amvrosievich introduced an amendment towards geography. With his proud statement that the Georgian sun raises in the north, in Russia, he exceeded everyone–ashugs and akyns, bandurists and bards.

On November 7 Brezhnev stood in Red Square greeting the parade and the demonstration. At the reception at the Kremlin Palace of Congress he made a short speech and offered a multi-storey toast:

– To our Leninist Party! To the Great Brotherhood of Peoples–the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics! To Happiness and Wellbeing of every Soviet family! To long-lasting Peace and Friendship between Peoples! To health of the everyone present here!

This was the last toast in his life. On Friday, November 12, 1982, the first columns of the Soviet newspapers were in mourning frames.

...The genuine successor of Lenin's great cause, ardent patriot, prominent revolutionary and fighter for peace, for communism, the outstanding politician and statesman of nowadays Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev finished his days.

The medical certificate of decease and the cause of the death...

The notice from the commission on arranging the funeral: Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev's funeral will take place in Red Square at 12:00 on Monday, November 15.

On November 12 the Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee was held; it elected Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov for the post of the General Secretary. The same day the Plenary Meeting participants went to the Hall of Colomns to bid farewell to Brezhnev. In the middle of a large photograph there are Andropov and Tikhonov, on the left there are Shevardnadze, Aliev, Kuznetsov, the First Deputy Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet at that time.

It was high time for a change in the rule of the CPSU–and automatically of the Soviet State. At the reigns in the great country there were old men who hardly understood what they did. To be more exact it was not them who ruled but their surrounding who "surrounded the thrown" shoulder to shoulder.

Brezhnev got very ill in 1974 during his journey to the Far East. The condition got worse and worse. At minutes of clear

conscience he realized himself that it was time he retired. But his surrounding insistently dissuaded him from this step.

Andrei Pavlovich Kirilenko was in complete prostration. He was still in the lists of the Central Committee Secretaries and the Politburo Members but he had not attended meetings for a long time. Chernenko was seriously ill. Ustinov and Gromyko were over seventy both... It was an excellent team!

A couple of years before Leonid Ilyich's death another old Bolshevik left for a better world. It was Mikhail Andreyevich Suslov, person No. 2 in the Party hierarchy, the "grey cardinal" who spent about a half century in Staraya Square. Stalin himself took his opinion into consideration. He was one of those who during the Kremlin struggle for power after Stalin's death helped Khrushchev to push Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich and "sided with them" Shepilov off power (such was a formulation in the party documents that leaked to public). In April 1964 when Khrushchev was 70 Suslov was most enthusiastic among those proposing toasts to dear Nikita Sergeyevich's health. Ten years later he denounced Khrushchev with the same enthusiasm and party fury and eulogized Brezhnev. In general the country needed renovation like air. And it was Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov who spoke it out, resolutely and definitely. He was the Chief of the USSR KGB for almost two decades, was the Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee for last two year, chaired the Politburo meetings and was trusted to "keep the house" as he was much more aware of the real state of affairs than the others.

It is difficult to say if Andropov had a detailed program for the country's renovation. Here is what Aliev said about it: "Andropov had a lot of plans he did not disclose to anyone, these plans remained unknown." But first it was necessary to determine what "the society we live in" was actually like.

Scientists excelled in formulas devising new names for the system–real socialism, mature socialism, developed socialism... But even such fruit needed improvement. Prosaic, everyday problems multiplied in the country: to feed and dress the people, to give them housing, education and get out of the war in Afghanistan.

November 22, 1982, Moscow

The next Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee discussed the report made by the Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers Nikolai Konstantinovich Baibakov "On the

State plan for Economic and Social Development of the USSR for 1983" and the report made by the USSR Minister of Finance Vasiliy Garbuzov "On the State Budget of the USSR for 1983".

The official report also mentioned the organizational issues that were discussed at the Plenary Meeting:

"The Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee transferred comrade G.A. Aliev from the Candidate-member to the Member of the CPSU Central Committee Politburo.

The Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee relieved comrade A.P. Kirilenko of his duties of the Member of the CPSU Central Committee Politburo and the Central Committee Secretary at his personal request.

The Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee elected comrade N.I. Ryzhkov the Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee."

We would like to add that both Aliev and Ryzhkov were appointed on Andropov's proposal. On the eve of the Plenary Meeting on Sunday (for a long time Yuri Vladimirovich considered Sundays as working days while he worked both in the KGB and in the Central Committee) he met them in the Kremlin. As it was appropriate the newspapers published a photograph of the new Member of the Politburo and a short profile.

"Comrade G.A. Aliev was born in 1923 in the family of a worker. He is the CPSU member since 1945. He graduated History Faculty of the Azerbaijan State University named after S.M. Kirov.

He worked as the Head of the Department of the Soviet of People Commissars of the Nakhichevan ASSR. Then he worked in the State Security Services where he went a way from a rank-and-file operative to the Chairman of the KGB under the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR.

In July 1969 he was elected the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party.

At the 24th, 25th and 26th Congresses of the CPSU he was elected the Member of the CPSU Central Committee. Since March 1976 he was the Candidate-Member of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee.

He is the Hero of Socialist Labor. He is the Deputy of the USSR Supreme Soviet for several terms.'

According to the choice expression of the historian and publicist Roi Medvedev "a new rising star emerged in the Kremlin sky". Years later Andrei Gromyko, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, one of the most influential figures in the Soviet governing bodies, expressed his view of those days. He admitted that he

thought to himself that it was necessary to have such a young and ambitious person to rule the Soviet Union. It is a pity Andrei Andreyevich did not express this right idea at the crucial moment when after Andropov and Chernenko's deaths it was time to determine a new leader.

Outside everything looked like it used to be. But it was only outward appearance. Brezhnev was still praised and the Central Committee, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet and the Council of Ministers approved resolutions "On Immortalizing Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev's memory"–to name after him towns and districts, plants, collective farms, institutions, schools and squares as well as the training tank division where Leonid Ilyich served in 1930s...

But in the country the course correction started and–for the first time!–people could hear the word *acceleration* that later Gorbachyov tried to pass as his own idea.

The new General Secretary Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov told about accelerating the economic development rate, raising the gross national income increase, volumes of industrial and agricultural production, retail commodity turnover. It was only the end of the second week after Brezhnev's death. His very first words were not about achievements but what it was necessary to achieve. We will mention only a few major points.

Yuri Andropov drew his comrades' attention to "the fact that the plans for the first two years of the five-year were not fulfilled in relation to some indices". "Somebody" the General Secretary said, "may just not know how to deal with it. It is necessary to think what help should be provided to such comrades". And again they heard the key work–*acceleration*. It was necessary to accelerate work on improving the whole sphere of economy governing–management, planning, economy mechanisms.

The General Secretary considered it necessary to "create such conditions–economic and organizational–that would stimulate quality, productive labor, initiative and enterprise". But there were no ready recipes for solving existing problems. The solutions were to be found by "summarizing domestic and world experience, accumulating knowledge of best practical workers and scientists".

The General Secretary thoroughly analyzed the focal problems in development of basic spheres of industry–fuel and energy complex, non-ferrous metallurgy and railway transport. The situation with railroads was dramatic–and it was exactly the sphere Geidar Aliev was going to be responsible for, among many other spheres, in the Council of Ministers.

Immediately after the Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee the session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR was held. It was the seventh session of the tenth convocation.

On the same day, November 23, at the same time, 16:00, at the Grand Kremlin Palace the first meeting of the Soviet of Union was opened and at the conference-room of the Supreme Soviet Chambers–the first meeting of the Soviet of Nationalities. At the Grand Kremlin Palace, according to the newspapers, deputies and guests greeted comrades G.A. Aliev, M.S. Gorbachyov, V.V. Grishin, A.A. Gromyko, D.A. Kunaev, G.V. Romanov, N.A. Tikhonov, D.F. Ustinov, K.U. Chernenko, V.V. Shcherbitsky, P.N. Demichev, V.I. Dolgikh, T.Yu. Kiselev, M.S. Solomentsev, I.V. Kapitonov.

This sequence was dictated to the press in Staraya Square: in alphabet order–first, of course, the Politburo Members, then Candidate-members and finally the Central Committee Secretaries. It was quite a logical scheme. But it did not satisfy everyone. Why! The list started with Aliev and Gorbachyov was only the second. It was infringement, Mikhail Sergeyevich!

There is no complete history of the Politburo (the Political Bureau) even now, though it is already the second decade since the CPSU together with the Soviet Union sank into oblivion. At the Party Congresses delegates elected the Central Committee and at its Plenary Meetings the Central Committee elected the Politburo, the executive power that knew everything, made all decisions and guided everyone. In the PB (let us call this structure so for short) a kind of core, as they said, in fact a small group of especially trusted people formed around the General Secretary. At the last years of Stalin's rule they were Malenkov, Molotov, Beria, Khrushchev; Brezhnev made no decision without consultations with Ustinov, Gromyko, Andropov a bit earlier with Suslov; Gorbachyov trusted Yakovlev, Shevardnadze, Medvedev most of all...

The members of the PB left some memoirs. In Soviet times nobody was allowed inside this kitchen where very spicy dishes were cooked, in post-Soviet times it did not get much more open. The Politburo archive is practically unavailable for researchers. New authorities prefer to decant themselves what the public is worth, in their opinion, knowing. Yet the curtain rises, though slowly.

...The PB was established in March 1919–it included 5 members of the Central Committee; its functions were specially

set forth “to make decisions on matters that brook no delay”. Here is the first five members of the PB: Lenin–the Chairman of the Soviet of People Commissars, Trotsky–the People Commissar of Military and Navy Affairs, Krestinsky–the People Commissar of National Affairs, Kamenev–the Chairman of the Moscow Soviet. In the opinion of the historian Yuri Zhukov the list of the Politburo evidenced that it was narrow leadership of the country, a state authority rather than a party body. Stalin continued along the same line, achieving by mid 1930 “complete merger of recently existed, though formally, two branches of power–party and Soviet ones”. The PB remained in that way until Gorbachyov’s perestroika that made a discussion club out of the all-powerful Politburo.

Being elected for new posts at the same Plenary Meeting Ryzhkov and Aliev turned out to be a kind of party godchildren. They were congratulated by comrades. They exchanged a firm handshake. For Aliev it was a logical step in his successful party career. But Ryzhkov later admitted that he had never seen himself as a party functionary: “I am industrialist.”

Of course, they had a nodding acquaintance for a long time, they met at different meetings, Plenary meetings, sessions at the USSR Gosplan, where Ryzhkov, a former Chief Executive of the well-known Uralmash, worked for the last four years. There was finance, resources at the hands of the First Deputy Chairman of the Gosplan and the Leaders of the Republics often dropped in on him.

Nikolai Konstantinovich Baibakov headed the USSR Gosplan from the pleiad of the outstanding People’s Commissars of Stalin’s times. Nikolai Baibakov was born in Baku; there he became an oil engineer who was a well-known professional in this sphere. When he was under thirty he headed a trust in the Volga region and then the whole oil industry, later he run the RSFSR Gosplan. In Khrushchev’s times for disobedience he was sent to Krasnodar to manage Sovnarkhoz; he was called back to Moscow later, though. After Khrushchev’s dismissal Brezhnev and Kosygin suggested him running the USSR Gosplan. But wherever Nikolai Konstantinovich worked he never forget his place of birth.

– Baibakov’s attitude towards Azerbaijan was always very good, –noted Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov. –For many years he represented the Republic in the USSR Supreme Soviet. When in Moscow Geidar Alievich always visited Baibakov.”

The Chairman of the Gosplan always invited the first of his four Deputies–Ryzhkov–to these meetings.

Then after that memorable for them Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee Aliev and Ryzhkov harnessed themselves in the same team. In the Central Committee Ryzhkov was responsible for economy, Aliev became the First Deputy Chairman of the Government.

We chanced to hear that Geidar Aliev did not leave any documents after himself and that in his biography everything was rewritten, even his place of birth and his parents' origins. We cannot agree with this version. Andropov's Department "x-rayed" its personnel better than any x-rays themselves. We are sure: the General Secretary knew everything about the person he took with himself to the Politburo: the person's origin way back to the tenth generation, his relationships and surrounding, habits and state of health, personal qualities, interests... By the way, in the references his intellectual potential and morale were appreciated to the highest degree: unpretentious and ascetic in private life. The Chairman of the Council of Ministers Nikolai Alexandrovich Tikhonov remained in this position from Brezhnev's times. Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov preferred not to replace him but assigned Aliev as his First Deputy. Is it possible that he saw the successor to the second post in the state in him? It is not just our guess. Such supposition was expressed by many of our interlocutors, connoisseurs of the Kremlin kitchen.

– I am sure that Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov saw the other person in the post of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers but not Tikhonov, –expresses his point of view Nikolai Semenovich Konarev who now heads one of the largest forwarding companies in Russia, *Intertrans* Closed Joint-Stock Company but who was the USSR Minister of Railways for nine years–appointed on Andropov's proposal in November 1982. – The Council of Ministers was to be headed by a more powerful, flexible, experienced executive and politician. In addition a national aspect was evidently considered too–the Government of the multinational state should not consist of people of Russian nationality only. Yuri Vladimirovich knew the personnel better than many others. And analyzing his personnel policy then and now I have come to the conclusion that Aliev was appointed with far-fetching prospects. It is a pity that the fate doled out so few years to Andropov...

Tikhonov was obviously far from pleased with this appointment. Once he was himself the First Deputy to Kosygin and methodically moved towards his lifelong goal pushing aside the Premier with his natural authority. The aged Tikhonov considered Aliev as his more energetic rival, who enjoyed

absolute trust on the part of the General Secretary and could replace him any moment; Nikolai Alexandrovich was not afraid of his other first deputies–Baibakov and Arkhipov were his peers and they were never close to the Party top leadership. Only two people in the Council of Ministers–Tikhonov himself and Aliev were the Members of the Politburo; it seemed logical that Aliev should have been the first among the other first Deputies when Tikhonov went on holidays or on business trips, but he never left Aliev to substitute himself. Of course it hurt Geidar Alievich but he managed never to give a sign of it.

He spent five years in the Kremlin, in the Council of Ministers, the five years that contained the whole epoch–from Andropov to Gorbachyov with faceless Chernenko in between.

Our paths constantly crossed, –remembers Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov about those years. –Aliev was responsible for transport, light industry and a number of other industries and I, as the Secretary of the Central Committee, supervised the work of the Gosplan, the Goskomtsen (The State Committee for Pricing–*the Translator's note*) and other structures. We started to work in close contact from the very first days in our new positions. We met in the Central Committee and in the Council of Ministers, occasionally worked together at some documents, discussed current and prospective business.

I liked Geidar Alievich then for his–as I would call it–solidity. He was a very sociable person, very sociable. He was never reserved, unsociable or arrogant. He was calm, sometimes with humor. As a human being he was easy to work with.

The Sovmin–Workday Routine

The working routine of the Sovmin and the First Deputy Chairman of the Government and in addition the Member of the Politburo or more exactly it was first of all! What was it like? Let us look through news items of the first months of 1983.

On January 3, 1983, Monday, the Soviet delegation is leaving for Prague to participate in work of the PCC (the Political Consultative Council of the countries–members of the Warsaw Treaty.) Besides Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov, the head of the delegation, there is N.A. Tikhonov, the Chairman of the Sovmin, A.A. Gromyko, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, D.F. Ustinov, the Minister of Defence, and K.V. Rusakov, the Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee.

The departure is organized in full conformity with the protocol. The newspapers, as it was prescribed, enumerate all those who came to see the delegation off–from Aliev to Ryzhkov. He is the last on the right in the obligatory photograph. Two years later Nikolai Ivanovich would make it to the centre. Aliev is in his "Olympic overcoat" behind Tikhonov. Nikolai Alexandrovich tries to rule. There is no Gorbachyov in this photo. He might have been on holiday. In the same issue of the *Socialist Industry* there is a map of the major construction projects of the year: five (!) blocks at Nuclear Power Stations, three Hydro Electric Power Stations, new sectional elevations in Yakutia and the Krasnoyarsk Territory which would give 20 million tons of coal, gas pipelines Urengoi-Uzhgorod (4.5 thousand km), Urengoi-Novopskov (1.5 thousand km); new capacities for manufacturing steel, rolled stock, the largest world blast-furnace at the Cherepovets metallurgical plant that is called "Severstal" now... And this is only heavy industry. And there were sugar-refineries, meatpacking plants, confectionery plants, textile manufactures, construction of housing, outpatient clinics, sanatoriums... And tasks that were thrown in by life itself, like manufacturing domestic video tape-recorders.

The CPSU Central Committee, as remembered Filipp Denisovich Bobkov, set up a special commission as long ago as in 1980. The comrades assembled a few times and everyone was resolutely against the idea. "We don't need it. Let customs and the frontier guards do their work–withdraw videocassettes at the border"–it was common opinion including those of the USSR Minister of Communications V.A. Shamshin, First Deputy of the USSR Minister of Culture V.I. Popov, the Chairman of the USSR Gosteleradio S.I. Lapin. The KGB suggestion for setting up manufacture of video equipment was supported only by the First Deputy of the USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs G.M. Kornienko and–with some limitations–by the Chairman of the Goskino F.T. Yermash.

Two years passed. On the day following Andropov's election for the post of the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee the Commission gathered again. This time the decision to pass the matter of video equipment manufacture to the USSR Council of Ministers was taken. Geidar Alievich Aliev chaired the meeting of the Sovmin. The Soviet industry started manufacturing video equipment.

On April 9, 1983, the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee considered the draft of the Energy Program of the USSR for long prospects until the year of 2000. As usual when

significant matters were discussed Aliev expresses weighed thought-out ideas.

On April 12 the Council of Ministers and the VTsSPS (All-Union Central Soviet of Trade Unions) submitted an Act on Labor Collectives and increasing their Role in Managing Enterprises, Institutions and Organizations to the Supreme Soviet of the country. And this–new for the country's social life–document there was also Aliev's idea, it contained his thoughts and certain suggestions.

On April 18 the All-Union Meeting devoted to the development of agriculture and fulfilment of the Food Program.

On 22nd of the same April the Politburo considered the Measures for Further Development of the fuel-energy base in the Regions of Transbaikalia and the Far East in 1983-1985 and for the period till 1990.

In the evening at the Kremlin Palace of Congress there was a grand meeting in honor of 113th anniversary of V.I. Lenin's birthday. In the Presidium there was the entire Kremlin array. Gorbachyov made a speech. He did not spare vivid epithets for Lenin and Leninism, the Communist Party and the Soviet State. There were only eight years left before the General Secretary would repudiate from his party and from the ideals he vowed fidelity to. Who could think it possible then?

Rereading that speech you notice banal remarks here and there. There was a glimpse of the idea about the human factor in economy but it got lost behind standing turns like "to strengthen disciple is everybody's cause", accurate references to the new General Secretary–as comrade Andropov points out...

– We are sure, –warbled Gorbachyov, –that in the struggle of ideas the final victory will be on the part of the truth and humanism, on the part of Marxist-Leninist ideology. We, communists, are entrusted by history the most precious property the mankind possesses–ideological heritage of thinker-geniuses and revolutionaries Marx, Engels and Lenin.

...On the tenth of May 1983 Geidar Aliev was 60 years old. He was decorated with the second Golden Medal of the Hero of Socialist Labor. The newspapers published warm greetings on behalf of the CPSU Central Committee, the Supreme Soviet Presidium and the USSR Council of Ministers. Among those who came to congratulate Aliev in the Kremlin there was Filipp Denisovich Bobkov. He remembered, "With what pride Geidar Alievich showed Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov's greeting. It must have been the highest sign of appreciation."

Behind this pride, which may look a bit boyish, there is a characteristic feature. Many years later at one of important meetings the President of Azerbaijan said that everyone wishes for their work to be appreciated and "I have always longed for it".

We have to note in this respect that Geidar Aliev, in opinion of those who knew him well, was not from the breed of ambitious men who according to Dahl "strive for ranks, awards, glory, praises and so act not in conformity with moral principles but according to these goals". He worked all his life not for praises. But who would not be pleased with a word of appreciation for his deeds?

In Aliev's work calendar railway transport took more and more time. It was Andropov's personal assignment. The General Secretary liked repeating while looking at the map of the Soviet Union that in our country the railways fulfilled many roles– economic, strategic and national, as they united the peoples of our state into a single whole. Yet during the last years the railways worked worse and worse. The Minister of Railways Pavlovsky was invited to the Politburo Meeting–he could not say anything intelligible, some others were to blame. "We have nothing to do with such Minister," –Andropov summarized.

On November 29–a week after the meeting–Nikolai Semenovich Konarev was appointed a new Minister of Railways. Such people are said to grow up at the railway. He worked and studied, studied and worked and always considered efficiency and integrity as essentials. First the Chief Executive of the Railway Department, then the first Deputy of the Chief Executive of the Railway and the Chief Executive of the Southern Railway (Kharkov), then the Deputy Minister, the First Deputy Minister... In this position he was invited to Andropov.

In the office there are almost all the Members of the Politburo– except comrades from the Republics.

– Comrade Tikhonov reported me on your consent to stand at the head of the Ministry of Railways, –said Andropov. –So we approve this decision. On behalf of the Politburo comrade Aliev will be responsible for matters of transport. Do you have any questions to us?

– Yes, I do, –answered Konarev. –I have one question. If the railway transport is further treated like it is treated now, by 1990s we will materially hinder the whole economy.

And then Nikolai Semenovich cited some figures. In 1970 the railway networks received 80 thousand new cars, in 1980–only 70 thousand. The workload increased by 25% and the car fleet decreased by 15%. "How can we provide transportation?" The

situation with locomotives and rails was no better. In early 1950s investments in railway transport were 11% of the budget and in 1982 they were just 4.2%. “Of course it is necessary to develop nuclear electric power and other industries but what would happen if the railways are not able to cope with transportation?”

The Chairman of the Gosplan Nikolai Konstantinovich Baibakov also participated in that discussion. It was he that Andropov addressed his final words about the 12th five-year plan, which he must have thought out and weighed before: It is to be the five-year of transport development, the transport five-year!

A few days later Aliev invited Konarev to his office–not through his assistants, he called himself. The Minister expected to return in one and a half–two hours and so he informed his deputies.

– But our meeting lasted for four hours and fifteen minutes! – exclaims Nikolai Semenovich.

Yes, for over four hours they “went through” page after page, problem after problem all the railway economy, all it’s closely connected to each other services. And only first three-four minutes did Aliev allow himself to remember that he was from the family of a railway worker himself, his father worked as a foreman at the station pumping-house in Nakhichevan and worried about every steam locomotive...

The meeting with the Deputy Chairman of the Gosplan Viktor Yefimovich Biryukov, one of the best connoisseurs of the railway transport and transport in general in the country, was similarly well organized and business-like.

One episode from our present Russian reality comes to mind in connection with it. The Premier Kasyanov was receiving the head of one of the Central Departments. The latter had a lot of questions, so he reported briefly, knowing that every day of the Government Chairman was scheduled up to a minute. Suddenly from the rest room emerged one of those who are called oligarch in Russia and said, “Misha, I am in a hurry, let’s go!” The boys with shining eyes were in a hurry to make money. They had no time for industries, regions, and the whole economy! They were interested only in what yields profit. Dough. The time of dough. It did not matter for them what to run–Russian oil or Russian coal, Russian sky or its seas. And everyone who was not with them were doomed to retirement or dismissal or as they used to say about steam locomotives to dregs!

When Nikolai Semenovich Konarev still worked as the Deputy Minister once on Sunday he was on duty at the Ministry. There was a telephone ring.

– Kosygin. Good morning. How are the things?

– Everything is fine, Alexei Nikolayevich. It's OK.

– It is not OK. When are you going to complete removal of the corn from Riga port?

The ports did not cope with unloading dry cargo ships with imported corn and they remained for days in their roadsteads in Riga, Leningrad, and Murmansk. There were not enough cars.

– Take the necessary measures and report me in two days, – Kosygin finished the conversation.

Two days later carrying out the Premier's assignment Konarev dialled Kosygin's reception and found out that Alexei Nikolayevich was on holiday and called the Ministry of Railways from Latvia. He could not forget about his work even being on holiday.

One more occasion got imprinted into Konarev's memory. In the West Siberia the oil production was increasing. In order to send it for export the country carried out parallel construction of high-capacity oil pipelines and new railways and put in operation new diesel locomotives. The engines for them were designed in Kolomensky and Kharkovsky plants. The State Commission chose Kolomensky diesel engine but it failed. After all the matter reached Kosygin. The Minister of Railways Pavlovsky sent Konarev to the meeting at the Sovmin. Nikolai Semenovich after preliminary consultations with his specialists came to the conclusion that Kolomensky diesel engine was not ready. The railway workers testing it in the field were of the same opinion.

– How can it be that it is not ready? –the Deputy Chairman of the Government Kirillin interfered the young Deputy Minister. – Here is the act with eight signatures, including that of the Minister of Railways Pavlovsky.

By the way, sending his Deputy to the meeting at Kosygin's office Pavlovsky did not warn him that he had signed the document. His directive was as follows: "Do not agree to Kolomensky diesel engine."

– Alexei Nikolayevich, –Kirillin raged meanwhile. –How can it be that the Minister has signed the document but his Deputy does not agree to it!

Silence hung in the large meeting-room.

Kosygin looked at Konarev, at Kirillin, then turned up the corners of his mouth in a barely perceptible smile.

– You see, comrade Kirillin, it is not the matter of who has signed and what has been signed. The truth only matters. Let us listen to the Chief of the Depot in Tomsk.

In that way Kosygin looked for the truth. So worked Aliev, Konarev, Biryukov...

They thoroughly analyzed the situation with the railway transport in those four hours.

– In Aliev, –says Konarev, –I did not only meet an interested listener but smart state figure with large-scale thinking as well. He clearly distinguished between the major and the minor, he could find the link upon finding which, according to one classic, you would be able to take out the whole chain. I felt that he was a man of bright mind. He did not get involved in technical problems solely, he could see people behind them..."

Nowadays few people know that until late 1980s the railway workers were not considered to be participants of the Great Patriotic War. Under bombs and shells they drove trains to the front-line, they sent special trains with equipment to evacuation from fiery encirclement rings...

– I set a goal to publish a book that will become a monument to the war railway workers, –says Konarev. –And such book has been issued. It is called "Railway Workers in the Great Patriotic War". It tells about the people who fought standing at the rudder, at the right fender of the steam locomotive. Pointsmen, car inspectors–what heroic work they did! Just imagine–20 thousand attacks at stations and junctions, 115 thousand kilometers of restored railways. I was glad to give this book to Geidar Alievich as a present...

And it took some more years for the railway workers who worked in special units to receive the status of the Great Patriotic War participants.

In the Government among other responsibilities Aliev ran the Sovmin Commission on Urgent Matters, its abbreviation–the CUM. At the meeting of this Commission there frequently was present Yuri Petrovich Batalin, the First Deputy Minister of Enterprise Construction for Oil and Gas Industry, who later headed the USSR Goskomtrud and was the Deputy Chairman of the USSR Government.

– At the Commission most various issues were discussed, which required as it is seen from its name urgent interference, quick solutions, –remembers Batalin. –Under the Commission's special control there was the gas industry development, construction of the five largest gas pipelines from Western Siberia to the Centre as well as construction of the export gas pipeline Urengoi–Pomary–Uzhgorod.

The major objective of the five-year–so these construction projects were attributed in the Party documents. Batalin, as the First Deputy Minister of Enterprise Construction for Oil and Gas Industry, dealt directly with them.

– To the meetings of the CUM which took place every week the Minister usually sent me, –continues Yuri Petrovich. –When Aliev started chairing these meetings I was surprised with the way he did it. He did it in an efficient and well-organized way. He listened to different points of view, compared them and made decisions then. You could feel large experience and extraordinary intuition in his manner.

A lot of issues concerning various industries were discussed at the CUM meetings. It was often impossible to assess them immediately. Then a special group was set up to look for a compromise. But more frequently there was no time for it. For example, supply of some pipes is delayed to the spot. Why? Does the plant foil the plans? Or the railway? Where is the cause for delay? Where is the truth?

One of the issues the CUM constantly dealt with was "jams" in gas pipelines and oil fields. The sections of the railway from Sverdlovsk to Tyumen and from Tyumen to Tobolsk were permanently overloaded. The second rails were laid; the station rails were widened... Still there were enough problems. Then the old best practice was made use of–they arranged for dispatcher's monitoring–a kind that was used for wartime military trains–over special trains that carried pipes and other cargo for oil and gas construction projects. And Aliev took an active part in it. And since then the Ministry of Enterprise Construction for Oil and Gas Industry had no problems. Aliev could find a correct solution due to his patience and being well organized, his ability to see and appreciate who worked and who just created the appearance of activity. I would also add his great psychological skills and ability to see the essence behind the words.

The Chairman of the CUM as a rule made definite and clear decisions. Self-control and logic distinguished him. He suppressed any bursts of emotions. It was obvious how thoroughly, deeply and seriously Geidar Alievich prepared for the meetings of the CUM. It was typical of his style.

– I was also present at the meetings that Aliev chaired under his responsibilities in the Sovmin or on the instruction of the Government, –continues Yuri Batalin. –Some financial problems got to the Goskomtrud where I worked. We needed funds to solve them. For example, it was necessary to set forth regional

coefficients, to stimulate development of some or other manufactures or areas or to increase teachers' salary.

But where can we obtain money? The Goskomtrud suggests something, the Minfin rejects. In particular we had such a conflict in relation to increase of salaries for teachers. The Goskomtrud prepared its proposal on the basis of the Central Committee and the Sovmin resolution on School, taking into account the point of view of teachers, but the Minfin objected: they require too much. I went to the Minister of Finance Garbuzov, to the Gosplan, to various meetings. I tried to assert our position, as it was deeply reasoned, checked-out, discussed with teachers in the Republics and at the Academy of Pedagogical Science, in party and Soviet authorities. The requirements were high, but in my opinion we found an optimal decision. Yet for the Minfin they turned out to be too enormous again.

At one of the next meetings that Geidar Aliev chaired emotions became heated. I was making a report on the Goskomtrud proposal when without asking for Aliev's permission Garbuzov started criticizing me in a very tough way. In fact he did not have any reasonable arguments and in such cases people usually become personal. "You understand nothing on the topic, such proposals can be submitted by dilettants only!"

After a pause Batalin continued his speech. There was no stopping Garbuzov and again he interrupted Yuri Petrovich. Still Batalin managed to check himself. But when the Minister of Finance interrupted him for the third time, saying that it was necessary for him to learn from older and more experienced people before climbing such a high rostrum, Batalin responded with:

– Learn? Who from?

– From me, for instance, –replied the Minister.

– What shall I learn from you? Your rudeness, impudence and temerity? –Garbuzov did not expect such charge. And Batalin poured out his heart: –If you want to teach–teach but not impudence. Because it is not for the first time. –In fact feeling the might of money behind his back and having great power Garbuzov could afford talking to petitioners in a haughty manner, to put it mildly. –Don't you understand that as the Member of the Party Central Committee you should set an example for us?!

Everyone was frozen in the room, just exchanging glances. Garbuzov sprang to his feet.

– Comrade Garbuzov, take your seat, please, –Aliev said in a quiet manner. But the Minister went on raising his tone. –You'd better sit down and listen. If you have counter arguments you will

speak them out. And if you don't have arguments it is not worth getting outraged then.

The meeting was over. Batalin came back to his office. And soon there was a call from the direct line.

– You did right when you silenced Garbuzov, comrade Batalin, –said Aliev. –He behaved incontinently. But I recommend you not to get excited yourself when you rebuff someone.

Batalin remembered this call because it was also a lesson that the Politburo Member who preferred not to give in public.

And here is one more Batalin's observation: Aliev always tried to find accurate balance between the treasury possibilities and the needs of an industry, a department or a person.

Batalin got to know Aliev better when he became the Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers himself. He was responsible for construction projects and a number of other directions. At that time Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov was the Chairman. According to Batalin's recollections Aliev always reasoned his position at the meetings of the Government Presidium. He could not say, "I think it is wrong..." and stop at it as some other party functionaries used to do relying on the authority of their office. No, Aliev usually went on, "Because..." and built a clear system of reasoning.

Since his youth Geidar Alievich appreciated efficient people who possessed thorough knowledge of the subject they dealt in. And at that moment he appreciated the expertise of Batalin-builder. If they were to consider issues concerning construction matters at the meeting of the Commission for Urgent Matters he was likely to ask Batalin to take part: "Yuri Petrovich, may I ask you to be in person. Together we will find a reasonable solution."

At the end of May in 1983 the Politburo discussed Additional Measures on Improvement of Studying the Russian Language at Comprehensive Schools and Other Educational Institutions of the Union Republics. It was a matter of great importance. From Estonia and Georgia, Kirghizia and Latvia young people that could hardly speak Russian went to the army. The situation was slightly better in Azerbaijan and, of course, in Ukraine and Byelorussia. By the way, Geidar Alievich knew the Russian language perfectly, which surprised more than once his experienced assistants and everybody else he met.

– I was amazed to know how deep his knowledge of the Russian Language was, –remarks Viktor Yefimovich Biryukov. – While working together at some document, he read very

attentively every phrase as if he weighed it: “Here it would be better to use a misrelated participle.” He did his work with great diligence and I would add with talent.

The Politburo had to deal with the Russian language, as it was the language of international communication, a must in the multinational Soviet Union.

Once in troubled times of Khrushchev’s decade a story spread all over Ukraine and farther on.

At the Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the Ukraine Communist Party one of the delegates started his speech in Russian. At once Nikita Sergeyevich graciously interrupted him:

– Don’t you know the Ukrainian language? You work in Ukraine, don’t you?!

The First Secretary threw this remark in chase of cheap popularity with “samostiiniks”. He did not think that half of the republic population was Russian and the Russian language was the language of international communication for all the citizens. Similar story took place in Baku. In the Azerbaijan subsidiary of the Marxism-Leninism Institute attached to the CPSU Central Committee the scientists were discussing “History of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan”. There were about 200 people present all in all–from Baku and Moscow, colleagues from Turkmenistan and Georgia, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan... Considering such wide diversification of the audience the discussion was carried out in the Russian language. The participants spoke out a number of serious remarks. The authors of “History” in their opinion treated some historic documents in a rather free way, including those written by Lenin. They varnished and embroidered activity of the local party organization, the level of social and economic development of Azerbaijan especially of Azerbaijan village in late 19th-early 20th centuries. It was noted that the book did not cover the struggle against bourgeois-nationalistic parties and groups broadly enough; “activity of party officials is described lubberly and in some instances in a very deliberate way. Instead of demonstrating certain revolutionary and party work of Bolsheviks the authors constantly (appropriately and inappropriately) gave the whole lists of their surnames. At the same time in the book there is scarce information about the activity of such people as Dzhaparidze, Ordzhonikidze, Stalin, Shaumyan who played a key role in formation and guidance of the party organizations in Azerbaijan.”

One of the local scientists made his speech in the Azerbaijan language and his speech was not translated. He said, “The book

describes the situation in such a way that Azerbaijan could join either Russia or Iran. Couldn't Azerbaijan have its own independent path of development?" For that period it was rather a seditious formulation! The Academician Sumbat-zadeh translated a part of this rebellious speech in order to correct this erroneous and harmful performance, as it was classified in the information note for the CPSU Central Committee. The meeting ended in a large scandal. The Deputy Head of Marxism-Leninism Institute under the CPSU Central Committee N. Shatagin and two of his colleagues scribbled a 15-page memorandum to the Central Committee. They reported on a meeting with the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Republican Communist Party Mustafaev and how they asked the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party to respond to the incorrect statements. Mustafaev gave a promise. But "as it is evident from his report about the meeting published in issue of the newspaper *Bakinsky rabochy* of December 30, 1958, in which there was no self-criticism at all, the erroneous performance of comrade Kurbanov at the meeting has not received the appropriate assessment so far."

Of course, it was not a private case. Neither was it just the matter of personal incontinence and rudeness of the Head of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party Kurbanov. This ideologist threw such remarks to his colleagues: "What Narimanov's cult? Didn't he do enough? And who liberated you, Kirghizes?"

On November 1, 1983, Aliev was in Vietnam as the head of the CPSU delegation. In that journey Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov who highly appreciated Aliev's work as the head of the delegation accompanied him. In Vietnam the long-term program for economic and scientific-technical cooperation of our countries was signed.

On November 20 Aliev participated in work of the Politburo Commission on Guidance and Supervision over the designing "Complex Program for Development and Production of Consumer Goods and System of Services for Population".

On December 3 the Politburo approved the measures "On Establishing the USSR United System of Air Communication Control", that was set up by the Government in order to fulfil the provisions of the USSR Air Code. Geidar Aliev took an immediate part in preparation of this document.

On December 26 the Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee was scheduled. Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov was expected to get out of hospital by that date. Alas! The text of the General Secretary's speech was handed over to participants of the Plenary Meeting. On the next day it was published in newspapers under the following heading "The text of the speech of the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee comrade Yu.V. Andropov".

"To my great disappointment according to temporary circumstances I will not be able to attend the Plenary Meeting. But I have studied thoroughly all the materials that the plan for the following year is based upon... I submit the text of my speech."

Aliev reread this farewell speech with anxiety and bitterness. Everybody perceived it as the will. Here it was as if Yuri Vladimirovich gave Aliev his approving regards:

"The work of transport requires unremitting attention on the part of economic, party and Soviet bodies. Of course, some positive tendencies have been seen here. But in transport sphere there are more than anywhere else reserves and unutilized opportunities that may be put into operation in short terms."

Two incomplete months later the Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee elected the new General Secretary–Konstantin Sergeyevich Chernenko.

– Comrades, Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov was measured a very short, offensively short period to work at the head of our Party and the Government.

Who could know that the fate measured even a shorter period for his successor?!

Yuri Vladimirovich was buried under a salute of salvoes. Plants, riverboats and sea ships honked–for three minutes!

During those sad days Geidar Alievich remembered more than once their meetings–starting with the first one, in 1967. How long ago it seemed! Andropov was quite young just over fifty and Geidar was only forty-four, they were both tall, strong...

"After Brezhnev's funeral, –remembered Geidar Alievich, – Andropov and I met in private. –"I need you and want you to start work in Moscow." I responded with refusal to Yuri Vladimirovich as I did before to Brezhnev. I could not imagine myself without Azerbaijan; I was just unable to part with Azerbaijan, with my native area. But Andropov objected: "Azerbaijan is already small for you" and smiled softly. When I refused again he repeated in a firmer manner, "The whole Union needs you, Azerbaijan is too small for you, Geidar. You voted for my election to the post of the General Secretary and now you don't want to help me."

Of course the Azerbaijanians were proud of their own man in the Kremlin! Besides other duties Aliev was responsible for the Soviet Union relations with countries of the Islam world where he was treated with accented respect. He had to visit Egypt, Libya, Pakistan, Jordan, and Iraq with important diplomatic missions.

"In 1984 I was promptly sent to Damask," remembered he. "In Syria, according to the KGB report, there was a conflict between Hafez Assad and his brother Rifat who headed the Syrian Secret Information Service.

"The Kremlin did not want to allow the change of the regime or the leader in Syria. I made for Damask without delay. I met with Hafez Assad who was recovering after illness. Despite of his decease our meeting lasted for eight hours. Shortly after that he sent his brother Rifat to Spain. The problem was solved in that way and the Politburo had a sigh of relief."

For some years Alexander Dzasokhov worked as the Ambassador of the Soviet Union in Syria, now he is the head of North Ossetia. "I heard a lot of kind words from the President of Syria Hafez Assad about Aliev," Alexander Sergeyevich told us.

Someone Else's Children

Aliev, the First Deputy Chairman of the Government, supervised work of two dozens Ministers and Departments. Besides transport, he had to deal with book-publishing, and material and technical basis of cinematography, and healthcare, and children's homes–it was Chernenko's direct assignment in connection with the note of writer Likhanov. And it was also the case when an official mission and a personal interest were in utter coincidence.

Geidar Alievich first encountered with the problem of orphans, homeless children whom the war drove into streets in years of his chekist youth. He was in children's homes in Nakhichevan and in Baku. He knew that on September 20, 1945, the Deputy Chairman of the USSR Sovnarkom N.A. Voznesensky signed the decree "On Children's Homes Attached to Industrial Enterprises". There were children's homes attached to collective and state farms earlier; often they were built with peasants' money. It was so, for example, in Azerbaijan. At every Town or Region NKVD Department there was a Section for Combating Children Homelessness and Neglect. Komsomol helped children's homes–in 1946 the Azerbaijanian youth gathered 92 chairs, 348 plates, 275 spoons, 1,725 books, 305 copybooks for them. The young

people shared not from wealth, sometimes they gave the last. There were Aliev's copybooks among those three hundreds.

As the time passed the country coped with homelessness. But about orphans it should be admitted it forgot. Among Party, Komsomol, Soviet functionaries there were not many of those who looked into this abyss of despair. They might have been afraid to hurt their placid conscience. Visiting children's homes and homes where old people lived out their last days was as usual for the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party as visiting oil fields or cotton plantations. Depressed by a perfunctory look of these establishments once he invited architects to the Central Committee and asked them to design the draft of such a building where children could feel cozy and warm.

The writer, the Board Chairman of the Russian Children Fund Albert Anatolyevich Likhanov devoted without exaggeration all his life to protecting childhood, orphans, and homeless children. Among Chernenko's assistants there was Viktor Pribytkov, a good acquaintance of Likhanov from his Komsomol days. He shared Likhanov's worries and suggested writing a note to the name of the General Secretary.

Two days later Likhanov brought his paper. He wrote about the destiny of a small child who got in trouble at the very beginning of his life. He urged that problems of upbringing should be shared by society. He required significant support for orphans. He suggested a system of actions that consisted of 45 weighed points. At the very first point he referred to Azerbaijan experience.

"While construction of schools is well under way in the country there is no construction of children's homes. The children homes we have are housed in old buildings, many of which were built before the Revolution. There is no science-based concept of the modern children's home. Upon its creation, in my opinion, we should start building new children's homes. A single such unique example is set by the city of Baku where under comrade Aliev's personal supervision a new model children's home was built a few years ago.

In my point of view existence of children's homes in large industrial centers and in remote countryside areas is an ill turn for children There are not enough efficient pedagogic personnel in remote villages while in large cities there is unhealthy microclimate created by parents who have been deprived of their parental rights.

It seems that an ideal children's home–school (boarding-school of a new type) should be located 50-100 kilometers off a large centre (with good roads) which will allow to bring children up in the atmosphere of half-rural surrounding without isolation from big culture at the same time."

Albert Likhanov finished his letter at a high note: "During the years of the war some secretaries of district party committees started their day with a visit to a children's home. It was understandable. There lived the children of the people's tragedy. Now it is other time. And the tragedy of the present day little orphans has different resonance. But it sounds in a different way for us, adults, only, which understands everything. For a child a tragedy is always the bitterest regardless of its cause.

The Party was always the first to come to children's support. I believe that it will solve this particular problem as well."

A week later Pribytkov, the General Secretary's assistant, called Likhanov and said that resolution had been approved. Konstantin Sergeyevich assigned Aliev to deal with this problem. The General Secretary may have paid attention to the example with the children home described in the letter or may have remembered Aliev's insistence while he tried to arrange quotes for applicants or a boarding school with military specialization in the Central Committee... According to Likhanov's recollections the events developed further as follows:

"A few more days later Lubov Kuzminichna Balyasnaya, the Deputy Russian Minister of Education, called and said approximately the following:

– Thank you for your letter to the Central Committee, it will be of great help...

I will not conceal that it was a pleasant call, yet I asked:

– Lubov Kuzminichna, tell me, please, if the Ministry itself could not do the same.

– Of course, not! –exclaimed she. –Our paper would have been considered as one more bureaucratic document but you are a writer and act as if on behalf of the society!

Of course, thank this woman for the attempt to explain at least theoretically the existence of such situation; I smiled as I did not believe much in such formulation and I turned out to be right and to be wrong at the same time.

Some more days passed and I was invited to Geidar Alievich Aliev at the meeting in the Kremlin. He was the First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers then. At the long table in his office there were people. They seemed to know each other; they exchanged remarks in an animated manner. Aliev was

at his desk and had a telephone conversation. His assistant brought me to his desk and introduced me. Aliev smiled kindly, shook hands with me and addressing the others introduced me: “It is a writer such and such I ask you to treat him with respect.”

I sat down to the common table, nodding and greeting to the right and to the left; people I saw for the first time examined me with curiosity. I never participated in the Kremlin meetings before, and though I was the editor-in-chief of the magazine and knew many people in Moscow very well, there was no one I knew here–there was another world in front of me, the world of the Sovmin, and frankly speaking I did not know how to behave in it.

I should admit that Aliev helped me greatly. His speech–brief and rather tough–started exactly as Balyasnaya forecast. He referred to me and my letter many times, emphasizing that I was a writer and an independent person in that way, but he continued, disproving the second part of our conversation with her, with the words that it was a pity that the Departments responsible for orphaned children did not raise and did not solve these quite obvious problems themselves.

He said that the General Secretary commissioned the Government to prepare the Draft Regulation on Support of Orphaned Children. He named some people, identified some details of organizational character. He repeated for about three times: consult with the author of the letter, agree all the details with him and finally asked me:

– When will you be able to attend our next meeting?

I did not expect such turn of events: my role was that of a petitioner. And here I was asked such a question. It seems I spent some time pondering over my answer and Aliev added to make the situation clearer:

– Here are the officials and they will come any time you choose while you are a busy person and you have other things to do–So when will you find time?

– Any day, –muttered I. –Thank you!

Yet as the saying goes the fairy-tale is told fast but the deed is made slow. I cancelled all my trips, expecting a call–which would it, be from, I wondered–but there was silence, and I did not dare call Aliev myself. This strange slack lasted for two months, not less, and I did not know what to do. Pribytkov reassured me: “If Aliev deals with it, don’t worry.”

At last there was a call from the Kremlin: “We have a meeting today at such time, come, please.” I came a bit earlier; they give me a draft of the resolution. I started reading and gasped. There was practically nothing left of my ideas. I got covered with sweat

and felt unwell. I told to the secretary, “Ask Geidar Alievich if I can see him before the meeting.”

I was ushered inside. I started from the door: “It is horrible! Everything has been cut out–it is a shame. It is impossible!”

Aliev smiled and said something like “Don’t worry. Let’s sit at the table. I will give you the floor and we will do everything, as it should be.

The meeting begins. First we listen to three Deputy Ministers, then the First Deputy Minister of Finance. They smile to their big boss and everyone as in accord states that they have prepared quite an extraordinary draft of the most wonderful resolution that will turn upside down the whole orphanage system, will make it better, will humanize it and so on...

Aliev lets all of them speak out and then says:

– Now let us listen to the author of this petition to the Central Committee, –and he looks smiling at me.

Appeasing deceitful speeches of my predecessors enraged me finally. Among the nonsense they talked there was, for example, the statement that it will be enough to increase the food budget by 20 kopecks a day per a child. The reasoning was like that: there are many children in one establishment and if in the common pot food for 20 kopecks for each capita is added–it will be more than enough! Who did these people economize for? Who did they cut off from? What for? I cannot understand even now. Could it be a demonstration of the official’s–for the sake of the state treasury–zeal? Only their zeal was a sham as the matter concerned the state children–in the full meaning of this word. Moreover I had a conclusion of independent dieticians–experts in small children nourishment–my trump card against callousness. Besides porridge it contained vitamin, fruit and juice consumption rates and all the other serious argumentation necessary to make such a decision. It concerned nutrition of hundreds of thousands of abandoned children–who would come to their defence if not the authority? And how should it, the authority, behave if it assumed responsibility for these little people? Can it be a miser? Can it protect interests of the budget that impersonal thing which belongs to no one knows whom? But this budget that is everybody’s talk until now–add a head and a belly to it and you’ll see a kind of a bed-bug got drunk on people’s blood–actually and primarily belongs to such youngsters. First feed the orphaned and crippled and don’t forget the old–then divide all the rest, spread the balance among all the other numerous needs–it seems such should be thoughts and actions of the Fatherland that is responsible to its citizens.

Alas! Not only now but at that time when people did not hear too often this depressing word–budget–as well this invisible blood-greedy bed-bug was surrounded by Cerberuses that saw their duty solely in barking off and guarding something from someone.

To cut the long story short, I managed to provide 1 rouble 20 kopecks instead of 20 kopecks for a child and two hundred roubles instead of meager 10 roubles for a cotton dressing-gown for practical training at the children's home or the boarding-school–as majority of orphanage institutions were–and still are–situated in rural places, where children had practice not in light and warm workshops but in fields and near tractors, where they need a quilted jacket, warm trousers, a fur hat, fur long-boots and mittens let alone a shirt...

And so item-by-item under Aliev's supervision I managed to insert back everything that the officials sitting around the table had crossed out. And Aliev supported me on every point except one. As far back as in 1984 I suggested to restore the Children Fund named after V.I. Lenin.

The Deputy Minister of Finance that just then did not want to give money for orphans' quilted jackets immediately ventured:

– What will they say abroad? Can't we provide for our own orphans?

It seemed that the word "charity" I used in my speech fell bad on their ears.

Aliev said in an apologizing tone:

– We don't seem to be ready for this yet...

But I was happy with what I have achieved and frankly speaking I was afraid that the issue of the Fund would be transferred to the sphere of ideology which meant it would be beyond the Sovmin and Aliev's powers. It was clear that if the idea of reviving a charity fund, even for children, and even under Lenin's name, and even not foundation but just restoration of the existed under the Soviet power organization, which was closed, though, got to the hands of a party boss like Suslov, the resolution on orphanage could have been cancelled at all. So triumphing over what I managed to get, I gave up on this point.

It must have been to prevent me from wandering along the corridors of power and to prevent the officials from depriving the children Geidar Alievich entitled me to sign all new versions of the resolution. And–Oh, Wonder! –in 1985 the resolution was approved and published. I rejoiced.

Using the modern language the economic situation of orphaned children changed dramatically. They got more food,

clothes. Previously dressed in grey the children from the children's homes changed miraculously. Their coats, dresses, overcoats, and shirts–everything they wear became new and lovely–like those of happy "home" children. The salary of the personnel rose. In general the orphanage that had been ashamedly unmentionable before suddenly got in the limelight. The matter developed in such a way that there was nearly a queue of those who wanted to become orphanage institutions' sponsors–plants, collective farms, institutes, theatres, everyone wanted to sponsor, to mend roofs, to help with food and money, to take children to theatres and museums–moreover such children could get there free of charge since then.

The Central Committee approve one more of my ideas and decorated many educators, doctors, teachers, nurses, cooks and, of course, heads of the children homes with medals. It certainly raised prestige of the people who devoted their lives to rescuing children."

Months passed. Gorbachyov took the office of the General Secretary. Ryzhkov replaced Tikhonov, sent to long-deserved retirement. In endless train of business of the Sovmin the latter marked for himself the problem of childhood as an important one. On one of Saturdays he invited Likhanov to his office. Let us cite some more lines from Albert Anatolyevich's notes.

"I armed myself with a thick file of papers; in each of them there was one or other problem set out, some of them had photographs attached to them. Besides I wrote a summary note on the problem of childhood.

Ryzhkov met me in his Kremlin residence, he was not alone, his wife Lyudmila Sergeyevna was present. He told me that it was the famous Stalin's office, where everything was preserved as it used to be. The host and his with sat at one side of the table for convenience and I was offered a seat at the other side.

Naturally, at first I was a bit nervous–I had never had such a rendezvous in my life before, –and there would not be any in future; the matter is easily explained by the character of Nikolai Ivanovich–his utmost integrity and restrain.

He immediately said that he read my articles about childhood and besides Geidar Alievich Aliev, his First Deputy told him about me. So Ryzhkov was aware of my letter of 1984 and the relevant resolution of the Government.

That memorable meeting lasted amazingly long–three hours and forty minutes. Gradually my speech before two listeners turned into a talk. Nikolai Ivanovich told as being a teenager he started working during the war, how he lived in poverty, how

became a student. Lyudmila Sergeyevna also told about her childhood. They spoke in a reserved modest manner–it was then that I felt we were people of one generation.

It seemed nothing clouded relationships between Gorbachyov and Ryzhkov so far and as I learned much later, on the very next day Nikolai Ivanovich told the General Secretary about me and they agreed to attract me to drafting a new resolution on orphanage and form a small team of specialists from the Sovmin in order to avoid delays. The leading part was assigned to Viktor Ivanovich Vlasov, Geidar Alievich Aliev's Sovmin Deputy at the Bureau on Social Matters and me."

The Russian (previously Soviet) Children Fund, founded in 1987, operates until now. Lots and lots of kind deeds, mercy actions, thousands of saved lives are credited on its account... The only pity–there are more and more orphans. And there are no authorities in Russia now, whose souls would be hurt by a child tragedy like it happened to Chernenko, Aliev, and Ryzhkov...

BAM Remained in His Heart

The railway transport was renovated day after day. The construction project was going on at the Baikal-Amur Main Line, one of the largest construction sites of the 20th century. 3,150 kilometers of the second line towards the Pacific Ocean, new towns and settlements, stations and mines, forestries and mills that were built by the entire country.

On July 5, 1984, the Politburo of the Central Committee "listened to comrade G.A. Aliev on some issues connected with construction of the Baikal-Amur Main Line. It was noted that in general the main line construction was going on at high pace. In severe nature-climatic conditions a large volume of work was done, many bridges, tunnels and other facilities were built. In inhabitable places new settlements emerged. All this was the result of purposeful efforts of workers, technicians and engineers, local party, Soviet, trade-union, Komsomol organizations, sponsor support of working people from many republics, regions and areas."

In that year, 1984, the construction collectives were going to finish laying of the main railway line–by the holiday as it was customary–by the 67th anniversary of the Great October, and to open traffic all along the main line a year in advance of the scheduled term.

Let us attract your attention: a year before the schedule that means in November 1984. It was already July! Meanwhile as the Politburo noted according to Aliev's report on the route "there are delays in construction of locomotive and car facilities, engineering systems of the main line, housing, children's institutions, hospitals, trading enterprises, public catering establishments". The Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party suggested that the Heads of Ministries and Departments took measures to ensure timely putting the planned objects of the Baikal-Amur Main Line in operation.

On September 30 of the same year, 1984, the newspapers reported on joining that took place at the BAM. "There is a railway from Baikal to the Amur!" exclaimed the "Socialist Industry". "Crowning titanic work of the collective of the All-Union Top-Priority Komsomol Project, yesterday–a year before the scheduled date–the line assembling brigades of Alexander Bondar and Ivan Varshavsky, moving towards each other from the west and the east, joined 3,159-kilometer-long track of the BAM near Balbukhta halt."

The reporter did not lie. Actually the rails joined in this taiga clearing. The operators showed the "golden link" being laid. But nobody said that the Severo-Muisky tunnel was not ready; a bypass was being built there. There was a mistake on the part of prospectors and designers–they directed the route across the break. The subterranean river blocked the builders' progress.

Severo-Muisky tunnel must have been the only tunnel in the world that saw so many big bosses. Ministers, Party officials, scientists came there. Geidar Alievich Aliev, the Minister of Railways Nikolai Semenovich Konarev, the Deputy Chairman of Gosplan Viktor Yefimovich Biryukov came among the first as soon as it was known about the accident on the drifting... Biryukov was 72 then but his younger companions hardly kept pace with him, who was still tall and strong.

It is two decades since that memorable trip. Biryukov is over ninety but he is still sharp-sighted and accurate in details and his assessments. They went from Irkutsk to the Severo-Muisky tunnel on the special train. One carriage was for Aliev, as the Member of the Politburo, the other–for the rest part of the delegation. In early morning Biryukov in his tracksuit ran out of the carriage.

– Yesterday the grass was green and today it is somehow silver. Oh dear! It is snow. In August! –exclaimed he with youth ingenuousness.

From the neighbor carriage also in a tracksuit Aliev jumped down.

– Geidar Alievich! –Biryukov shouted so loudly that echo resounded in the distance. –Catch up!

– I will!

And they ran along the path, two strong healthy men filled with happiness because of the shining grass turning green under the first sunrays and because of primeval taiga silence.

Then followed three kilometers inside the tunnel where on the left and on the right slightly tamed torrent was thundering. Later Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov got there–twice!–and gave picturesque definition to the place: "It is like going inside a waterfall."

In Aliev's salon-carriage first the suggestion sounded: it is necessary to build a by-pass, otherwise we won't be able to join the track. Returning to those days in his memory even now Nikolai Semenovich Konarev gets anxious:

– The sharpest feeling was what a pity that such thing had happened. Some drift miners perished... Work of thousands of people was wasted. And another feeling–it is necessary to find the way-out immediately... Do you know what "twelve-thousand" means for railway workers? It is the up gradient, –explains Konarev this special term. –It was the maximum grade level permitted according to the standards of that time. The grade of the by-pass for Severo-Muisky tunnel was 18 meters. We sanctioned it as an exception.

After gaining the essence of the problem on the spot, Aliev backed up Konarev's proposal to construct a by-pass. But the final decision was to be made by the Government. Considering the scale of works Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov chose to see the site himself. He also was for building a by-pass. And the tunnel was being "completed" for two more decades.

Taking leave from the builders of the tunnel the passengers of the special train rolled off to the East. New stations, clearings, hills covered with purple. Wild rosemary twigs during meetings-partings.

Under one of the photographs taken during that journey there is a short inscription: "BAM. Acquaintance with Urgal station. G.A. Aliev, the First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR. 1984". Geidar Alievich is in the middle; there is a deputy badge on the lapel of his jacket. General Kogatko, the Chief of the Railway Forces hands over a large album to Aliev. It might have contained the photos of Urgal how it was when everything was just starting there. Konarev applauds–he is in a railway uniform, some other people also clap their hands. In the background there is a passenger carriage...

Ten years before the train under the name “Donbass” pulled up to the unknown then station from Donbass. Five more trains followed it. They brought trucks and cranes, prefabricated elements and construction materials, a boiler-house and an electric power station, a bathhouse and a club. According to the railway documents there were thirteen thousand tons on the trains. It was a future town on the wheels. The panels would be assembled into houses and they would make a street... The first street would be named after Artem as it was in Donetsk.

According to official documents it was called the Ukrainian workers’ sponsorship over construction of Urgal Station. Unofficially Ukraine built a railroad terminal, a station and a town. For these purposes “Ukrstroi” trust was set up. “Donbass” Detachment was the principal one in the trust, its base.

Hardly anyone of “Donbass” workers heard of Urgal. They looked up in the Large Soviet Encyclopaedia. The LSE, volume 44, informed about Urga, told about Urgench. There should have been Urgal between them. But when this edition of the LSE was being prepared Urgal’s hour did not come yet.

We move along our life and are absolutely unaware of and even cannot imagine, –noted Konstantin Paustovsky, –how many great tragedies, perfect human deeds... have happened and are happening in that tiny plot of land, where we live... Yet acquaintance with every such tiny plot of land my bring us to the world of people and events that are worth of a place in the history of the mankind or in annals of great unfading literature.

The same may be applied to Urgal, a taiga station in the branch line from the Transsib to the BAM, where one of us, then a journalist with the *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, got almost simultaneously with the first train from Donbass. But the very first special train arrived at the station on the seventh of November 1941. There was a military parade on that day in Moscow. From Red Square the troops marched to the front-line that was near the capital then. But here, far from Moscow the railway construction was the front-line. The tanks thundered across the major square of the country and the first honk of the steam locomotive scattered over the unknown settlement and over the astonished taiga...

From Urgal a live thread of the railroad stretched farther to the East towards Komsomolsk-on-Amur... That BAM the Far East citizens called the old one. On the site they published their own newspaper that, of course, was named “Bamovets”. On November 7, 1932, “Bamovets” told about the work of the builders:

“The general meeting of the communication workers unanimously approved the decision–to complete the construction

of the railway works by the 15th anniversary of the Great October. The wood-finishing brigade suggested a counter-plan–to complete all woodwork by November 1. Today we can report that all assumed obligations have been fulfilled in full."

"Bamovets" reminded about quite recent then fights with interventionists. "Now in those places where the partisan detachments acted the route of the Baikal-Amur Main Line is being laid. A few years more and instead of deserted partisan huts there will be rails along the paths known to the partisan scouts and smoke will be seen from steam locomotives, plant and mill chimneys of the Great Socialist country."

The near future, which was seen from the scaffoldings of the first five-years was pushed further ahead by the Great Patriotic War. The rails were taken off the new railroad up to the Transsib. Stalingrad needed them.

Time smoothed away the old embankment. And now only old residents could notice that "crossroad of history"–the old BAM.

Once Gleb Maximilianovich Krzhizhanovsky, the well-known power engineering scientist, remarked that struggle against the North was, first of all, struggle against space. It was impossible to win in this struggle without roads. The entire history of developing the Far East may be represented as the history of building roads. As long ago as in 1857 count Muravyov-Amursky, the governor of Eastern Siberia, assigned the military engineer Romanov to design "the draft of the wheel road" from Cape of Joy on the right bank of the Amur, where the town of Sophiisk was laid to De-Castri Gulf. This road, according the Muravyov's plan, should have been constructed in such a way that it would be possible to convert it into a railroad without large difficulties afterwards. After completing his prospecting works engineer Romanov printed the brochure "Sophiisko-Alexandriiskaya Railroad".

The project was ahead of its time, though–the country was not ready for such grand construction yet. Only decades later the first metres of the Great Siberian Railroad were laid. One French newspaper compared the significance of Transsib construction to that of discovering America or the Suez Canal construction. Laying the second railroad to the ocean turned out to be along the same line.

Take a good look–in the eastern section of the BAM the town of Urgal is marked with a circle. Next to it the railroad crosses the Bureya.

I remember how we made our way from Urgal to the Bureya in the "Uazik". The eternal taiga sided the road. It made just a slight

retreat but it was ready to join tree-crowns and engulf without a trace a narrow human track–a road, as soon as people let themselves slacken their efforts.

All of a sudden the trees gave way. Pure light of the river blinded the eyes. There was blue ice and over it there was again black blank taiga wall on the far other bank.

On this spot they planned to erect a bridge over the willful Bureya. But so far on the bank there was only a hut made of logs knocked together –the headquarter of transport builders vanguard detachment and a bit farther down the Borodins' farmstead, the only one for dozens of kilometers around. Mikhail Matveyevich went hunting and his wife Pasha at the age of seventy-eight kept the house.

...Far from this place there are rivers with villages and towns beaded on them like glass-beads, where they say like that: "the Dnepr flows from Kiev to Cherkassy, from Kremenchug to Dnepropetrovsk and Zaporozhye..."

Here the hostess may drop by chance:

– The river flows from Mikolai Ivanych.

Here rivers flow not from town to town but from person to person. With her vivid word Baba Pasha made the map alive, helped to look behind statistical reports and see man who drudged alone in his personal square kilometer.

When ten years later Aliev went along the BAM he could see settlements every now and then. Every republic built one, many regions and territories did the same. Niya was built by Georgia, Olekma by Tajikistan, Eterkan by Moldavia, Dugda station by the Volgograd region... Of course, Azerbaijan had its own BAM address as well–Ulkan station was situated on the 210th kilometer of the western section of the railroad. There in taiga area on the bank of the fast Kirenga a new settlement rose–beautiful houses, a school, a kindergarten and a day nursery, a first-aid station and a trading-cultural centre... Aliev supervised this construction site while he worked in the Central Committee of the Republican Communist Party. It was he who advised to use elements of Azerbaijan architecture in decoration of the railway station and the other buildings. And now in this many-day and difficult business trip Geidar Alievich felt enthusiasm. Yes, there was much to do yet, but what was already done gave raise to quite natural pride for personal involvement in such a great deed.

The delegation left for Moscow from Vladivostok. The Member of the Politburo was supposed to have a private salon on board IL-62 as well. But Geidar Alievich is not of those who seek

for quietude of the exalted rank. He invited his companions to his salon and asked to lay the table.

– So, friends, let me be the master of ceremonies today. –And according to Viktor Yefimovich Biryukov, he found warm kind words for everyone.

...A decade and a half passed. In the capital of Azerbaijan there was a large international conference of the railway department heads–from 24 countries. The President of Azerbaijan received the Minister of Railways of Russia Nikolai Aksenenko. They discussed joint projects, the Minister told about the situation on the Russian Railroads and mentioned the BAM... What do you think Aliev asked about when he heard about the Baikal-Amur Main Line? Of course, about the notorious tunnel.

– Did they finish the tunnel at the BAM?

– On March 30, –answered Nikolai Aksenenko, –they joined the two sides (the meeting took place in July 2001–t*he Author's note*), everything has been tested and by the end of the year we plan to open service traffic. It is also a remarkable event as it is 25 years since the start of work.

– I was there, –said Geidar Aliev. –I came both ways: from the East and from the West. At that time only three-four kilometers of the total 15 kilometers were drifted on one side and approximately the same distance on the other side that was less than a half of the whole tunnel. I went on foot–there was no motorway there–three kilometers in water up to the knee both from the East and from the West... This is one of the most difficult places of the route. What do 15 kilometers of drifting mean? It is nothing. Look when the construction of the BAM started in 1974 the term was set for 10 years. And in 1984 ten years later I went to the BAM for ten days: first from Moscow to Bratsk by railway, then from there to Vladivostok and to Nakhodka I went and inspected all the stations. 15 kilometers is not a large distance for a tunnel. But there are very difficult geological conditions there. I summoned the special Commission many times. It included many academicians, specialists, and seismologists. Some of them persuaded to stop the construction, as it is a zone of high seismicity. "If we complete the tunnel construction it may crumble one day."

– This construction was a kind of school for the whole world, – pointed out Nikolai Aksenenko. –Specialists from all over the world came there–from America, from Japan... A unique technology has been developed for this drifting. We have coped with this task.

– My congratulations. There is a grain of my work there too.

Happy is a person who can say this about such roads, such construction sites: There is a grain of my work there too. It is the right of makers. And the world, as Geidar Alievich liked to say, lives and develops due to creation.

We could also tell in detail about other spheres Aliev dealt with alongside transport, education, and healthcare–for example, development of cinematography. It was also Andropov's assignment.

"I tend to delve in every detail so in order to do something, to prepare something I have to gain a thorough understanding of the sphere. With this assignment I did not only have to know cinematography itself, I had to know the situation in this sphere, its possibilities and so on. I had a lot of meetings with great representatives of cinematography and jointly we prepared a document–a draft resolution," remembered Geidar Alievich his "cinema epic". "I told Yermash, the Chairman of the Union Goskino to summon the most outstanding filmmakers to his department and I would come to the meeting with them. It was 1984. And we talked for a few hours... As a result we worked out a fundamental for that time document–the program for development of cinematography of the Soviet Union."

Such "delving in every detail"–let us use Aliev's own definition–was his typical approach to any work. The Russian word with this meaning, according to Dahl–originated from "very accurate, typical of a master, a skilled and experienced craftsman". The Kremlin lacked such masters. "We saw Aliev's new abilities, his enormous potential"–this assessment of Geidar Alievich's Kremlin period was given by the President of North Ossetia Alexander Dzasokhov, who also went through thick and thin of the Kremlin chambers.

Light of the Dead Star

And now, our dear reader, we have to tell about one of the darkest days in Geidar Alievich's life. On April 17, 1985 he, Ilkham, Sevil, their relations and friends bid farewell to Zarifa Azizovna.

After election to the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee and appointment to the Sovmin Geidar Alievich went alone to Moscow at first. Zarifa Azizovna stayed at home to finish her research.

In faraway pre-war years she saw Moscow earlier that Geidar–the capital of the Union seemed something unattainable for him, a

boy from Nakhichevan. Zarifa's parents had more opportunities and they sent their daughter to some friends in Moscow. She came back overwhelmed with new impressions and there was an Uzbek embroidered skullcap barely perched on her beautiful hair. She was sixteen then–the whole life was waiting ahead.

– I went to discover Moscow then, –Zarifa told her husband with a joke, –now it is your turn.

"I will remain in Baku for a while, –she wrote to O.P. Dobromyslova in Leningrad, –I don't want to leave my work, my creation–the laboratory, which carries out very useful and interesting work... I have to finish many things in Baku."

And here is one more letter.

"I am in Baku so far. I think it is necessary to complete the year here and then leave. The whole family is already there. I miss children and my granddaughter very much."

On January 30, 1985, from Moscow:

"I am in Moscow now. I was received very well. I have many appealing offers. But I have not made a decision yet... But I have some time to think everything over." She had only two and a half months left.

Z.M. Skripnichenko, the Professor, the Doctor of Medicine, was a person Zarifa Azizovna was going to make a research together with. One of their meetings took place in winter 1984 at the country-house. "My heart shrank at the sight of her sickly look. Although nothing in her mood and her entire behavior suggested threatening worries. She told with enthusiasm about the new research carried out at the Baku plant manufacturing home air conditioners... Zarifa Azizovna's introducing members of her significantly increased family to me frequently interrupted the animated talk. At such moments there were exceptional warmth and love in her words and in her face. The affectionate Sevil gave birth to a son in addition to her charming Zarifochka and Ilkham's wife made them happiness by giving birth to a granddaughter. Sevil with the baby in her arms looked at her Mother with moving tenderness and tried to conceal anxiety in her eyes and small Zarifa did not leave her granny's side. On returning from Moscow Ilkham first of all tenderly and affectionately greeted his Mother. Yes, you could sense anxiety in the house but it was not tense to despair."

They planned to meet on the next day to continue their discussion. But the next day Zarifa-khanum was taken to hospital. So it turned out that meeting was their last one.

Professor Skripnichenko came to Zarifa Alieva to the cemetery.

– At her tomb I thought with grief: –Life tried to make me used to the largest tragedy–losing friends–very early; it was at the front during the Great Patriotic War. But it is impossible to get used to–with years you feel the pain of each new loss even more severely.

Since those front-line years I am always ready –in case of a friend's death–to take up and complete what my friend did not have time to accomplish. As a must my heart assumed the last request of Zarifa Azizovna, who I hold in high respect and love, to complete the book we started together and I considered it as my duty to do everything in my power to ensure this work publication for her thoughts to become available for a wide circle of specialists."

Professor Skripnichenko kept her promise.

– As a doctor, Zarifa, of course, understood how dangerous her decease was. Doctors know better than anyone else how illness changes everything in a person. One may retire into their own shell; others can talk about nothing but their illness; still others become capricious and even cruel to the surrounding people. Zarifa Azizovna remained herself. Her major worry was caused by impossibility to spare her relatives from anxiety.

She is said to have been sent to the oncological center. Academician Blokhin examined her and said, "I wish you had come at least two weeks earlier!"

Would it have helped or not, but Zarifa Azizovna left us offensively early–she was 62. The funeral took place on April 17, 1985. It was raining. People carried wreaths to the House of Scientists in Kropotkinskaya Street.

In the morning Boris Pastukhov called the entire Secretariat of the Central Committee of the All-Union Leninist Communist League of Youth: "Those who want will go, those who don't–won't." All of us went.

– We were among the first to arrive, –Boris Nikolayevich recollects that sad day, –when it is such a moment there are doubts if people will come or not. And then almost the entire Bureau of the Komsomol Central Committee came. Geidar Alievich never mentioned the fact, but I am sure he did not forget the moment when these young people came and it was already beginning of the period which turned out to be hard for him."

Zarifa's wide-opened eyes looked from the portrait at the people gathered at the House of Scientists. Many of those who saw Zarifa-khanum noted her "marvellous expressive black eyes". Professor Dobromyslov from Leningrad said, "The unusual gaze of her oriental black eyes distinguished her... Her eyes questioned,

asserted, excited, laughed and sometimes they rendered surprise, disagreement and irreconcilability but never did they express indifference. Zarifa Azizovna had ‘speaking eyes’.” Professor Shulpina remembered “... large, literally penetrating into your soul, dark and expressive eyes”. And in her first child photo, taken as early as in 1924, her eyes are notable. A toddler with an accurately cut fringe is cuddling a teddy bear to her breast. Her enormous eyes look straight at you from unthinkably far time distance, like some light of a dead star.

Exactly a week after the funeral Geidar Alievich had to make a speech at the Grand Meeting devoted to the 115th anniversary of Lenin’s birthday. Gorbachyov, the third for the several recent years General Secretary, proposed him to refuse, saying that he might make a speech in the following year.

– No, –said Aliev, –I will cope.

The Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee elected the new General Secretary on March 11, 1985. Everybody was present, except Vladimir Vasilyevich Shcherbitsky, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Ukraine Communist Party, who was on his way back from the business trip to the USA. Gromyko pointing out “indomitable creative energy” and a number of other Gorbachyov’s merits proposed to elect him for the post of the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee. There were no objections. Tikhonov said, “He is the first of the Central Committee Secretaries who is good at economics”. Grishin, First Secretary of Moscow City Party Committee said, “He is a well educated man.” Kunaev said, “... wherever the discussion turns the communists of Kazakhstan will vote for election of Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachyov for the post of the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee.”

The work record of the Politburo meeting (“a single copy”!) saved Geidar Aliev’s words as well. “Election of the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee is a matter of great importance. In my opinion the candidature of Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachyov is quite worthy.” Geidar Alievich appreciated his comrade’s experience, modesty and simplicity. “It gives us possibility to say with confidence that he will cope with responsibilities of the General Secretary. So I completely agree with the submitted proposal...”

Aliev did not participate in backstage distribution of portfolios, which was arranged by Gorbachyov skillfully. Although due to his business qualities, extensive experience and the organizer’s gift he

was quite able to become the General Secretary. “I wish he had not believe to those who excluded such possibility,” stated Artem Borovik, a popular publicist of 1980s-1990s. Artem said about Tikhonov in particular, who thought that Aliev was not suitable for this major post in the Soviet Union because of his “nationality and belief”. “But I think,” continued Borovik his idea, “that Aliev would have defended Russia’s national interests better than the others. Look, what Gorbachyov did to the Soviet Union, what Yeltsin did to Russia. Aliev would have preferred the path of thought-out reforms and the country’s destiny would have been another.” Let us remind that Gromyko also considered Aliev as the leader of the Soviet Union scale. But having accepted the post of the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, he surrendered to Gorbachyov.

April 22, 1985, Moscow

In the Soviet calendar April 22, was always a special day as it was Lenin’s birthday. There were grand meetings, wreaths to the Mausoleum, festive concerts. At the grand meeting devoted to the 115th anniversary of V.I. Lenin’s birthday the Member of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee, the First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers G.A. Aliev made a report “Historic Correctness of Lenin’s Ideas and Cause”.

It was his first speech of such scale in the capital. It is clear that the report was perceived as the document of the Central Committee, of the Politburo, it contained both directives for listeners in our country and signals for our colleagues and partners abroad... But there should have been certainly something from him, Aliev’s something! Geidar Alievich asked his assistants to dig thoroughly Lenin’s works and find some unhackneyed provisions. But it happened so that looking through the blue volume taken from the shelf he drew himself their attention to the idea that touched him on the raw:

– Look, Lenin said, that Bolsheviks were always good at “scrutinizing carefully new historic conditions and analyzing why life developed in one direction instead of some other...”

Of course, quoting this phrase one could discuss why life goes in another direction so often, but it would have been premature for the rostrum of 1985. At that time all Lenin’s phrases were to be considered absolutely correct and it was necessary to prove them with examples, using Vladimir Ilyich’s theoretic and political heritage as foundation for our achievements.

Rereading Aliev's report years later it was obvious that he did not refuse many of his views even after the change of epochs. With great warmth and respect Geidar Alievich spoke of the Great Russian people, the Russian language that enriched languages of other nations and nationalities of the Soviet Union and "opened the widest world horizons to the peoples of our country. Millions and millions of people of dozens of nationalities got acquainted with the mankind culture and give their own original contribution to it through the Russian language."

On becoming the President Aliev did not reject his attitude towards Russia, the Russian people and the Russian language.

Business people noticed long ago–those who carry more are loaded more. It was so with Aliev too. Besides responsibilities assigned to him in the Council of Ministers and in the Politburo he received more and more assignments from Gorbachyov and Ligachev, the second person in the Central Committee at that time. One of them was connected with notorious anti-alcohol campaign. The drafting of the document was entrusted to Ryzhkov, Aliev and Solomentsev, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR.

– We did a lot of preparation work on this document, –says Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov. –The document was approved at the meeting of the Central Committee Secretariat that was chaired by Gorbachyov.

According to Ryzhkov Gorbachyov was urged to start struggle against drunkenness by Solomentsev and Ligachev. The urgency of problem itself is out of question. Drunkenness caused great damage to the society. Families broke apart. There were understandable and justified concerns. But the saying–make a fool pray hard he will split his forehead–was not born in vain. The struggle for sober lifestyle got into that rut. Ryzhkov supposes that Gorbachyov and his surrounding might have been more interested in political dividends received from that campaign than in soberness itself. The campaign seemed all-winning at first sight and was doomed to public support.

But alas! The fighters for soberness as any fanatics did not possess a sense of proportion. Those who did not see lines at the wine stores at the period of perestroika, would not believe–"tails" were kilometers long, the store were taken by storms. In towns and villages production of home-brew throve. Sharp-witted people

rushed to buy out cheap cologne and lotion. And bulldozer blades cut grapevines at that time.

Evidence of Alexander Timofeevich Gavrilov adds a specific touch to this plot. Once he, Aliev's assistant, was visited by his old friend–the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Moldavia Ustiyan, he knew him since the time of the Virgin-soil Upturn, and pleaded:

– Sasha, do something! The grapevines we have been cherishing for centuries are cut down. Go to your chief, tell him.

– I screwed up my courage or, maybe, impertinence, – remembers Gavrilov, –and went to Geidar Alievich. He listened to my soliloquy without interrupting me and only threw up his hands in response, which meant there was nothing he could do.

It is known now that anti-alcohol campaign was planned in the Central Committee a few years before this frenzied attack. And originally this assignment was given to Pelshe–there was such a Member at the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee, he was the Chairman of the Party Control Committee attached to the Central Committee. Arvid Yanovich was known as a tough, but careful and prudent person. He understood that it was impossible to leap before looking.

– For some years after Pelshe's death the Anti-alcohol Commission was not summoned, –Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov tells, –And then it was reanimated. Inwardly we understood – something was wrong.

Once Ryzhkov, he was the Chairman of the Sovmin, asked Aliev to come to him. Geidar Alievich apologized, "I am at the meeting; in about thirty minutes I will come."

When Aliev entered the office, Ryzhkov asked what so urgent kept him busy.

– We had a debate over the question if kefir is a hot drink, – answered Aliev. –Ryzhkov knew–it was Ligachev's task. By the way, the second task of the second person of the Party.

It seems funny now but it was not so funny then, though.

– My attitude towards Anti-alcohol campaign was rather critical, –admits Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov in out conversation. – But as the Member of the Politburo I had to comply. The Politburo took a decision–I had to carry it out. I liked working with Aliev, –continues Ryzhkov. –Both when I was in the Central Committee and when I came to the Sovmin. In foreign trips, in contacts with different people a person may open himself sometimes from the most unexpected side. Here I got assured: Aliev was a sociable and benevolent man, an acute politician. He was easy to work with.

In September 1985 I was appointed the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers. And at the very first meeting, knowing that Tikhonov allowed injustice in his attitude towards Aliev–in the Sovmin as in any other structure, there were groupings–leaving for holidays or business trips Tikhonov never left Aliev to substitute himself; he left Arkhipov, his other first deputy, who was not even the Member of the Politburo, by the way. I understood how Geidar Alievich was hurt with it. So at the very first meeting during distributing responsibilities I said: "Since this day whenever I am absent Geidar Alievich will perform the duties of the Chairman."

– Did you tell him beforehand?

– No.

– What was Aliev's reaction?

– I sensed he felt greatly relieved. Some slight lack of trust that surrounded him in the Sovmin disappeared.

What can I say about his work in the Sovmin? He worked well, very well. Aliev possessed a systematic approach, he did not dissipate his energies, and in his work there was no inconsistency, unreliability that was typical of some top officials. Thoroughness was his nature. He was a very well organized man, I would say. If some task was assigned to him and there were many such assignments he would necessarily fulfil it.

We did not have any conflicts, any inward aversion. It happens sometimes that you sit with your colleagues at one table, it seems you know everyone well, but behind their back you may hear what God alone knows. We did not have familiar relations in the Sovmin, did not drink vodka together, did not make family friends–there were no such habits in the Sovmin... I did not have a single small glass of vodka in my office for all the five years. But we had good business-like relationships. And I was completely satisfied with Aliev's work..."

In the Central Committee there were some cases known when General secretaries returning from their holidays rewrote some decisions made by those who ruled in their absence. There were no such cases in the Sovmin. If something debatable, problematic was being considered, Geidar Alievich contacted me: "Nikolai Ivanovich, we are discussing such questions.... What do you think?"

It is interesting to compare actions of Aliev and Gorbachyov. Let us make this with the help of one particular example and see how each of them dealt with serious economic problems.

Farman Salmanov, the former Chief Executive of the Main Tyumen Geological Department, the Lenin prize laureate, the Hero of Socialist Labor, remembers:

"After Gorbachyov's coming to power people expected much of him, but unfortunately their hopes were not justified.

There was no proper mechanism of choosing and training personnel and promoting to leading positions. Business qualities still were of minor importance, while personal devotion, good contacts of people from same area, relative and friendly ties remained major criteria. How many "excellent" people were promoted from the Stavropol territory, as well previously from Dnepropetrovsk Region and Moldavia!

I often remember a funny occasion when in September 1985 Gorbachyov came to the Tyumen Region. Before his visit a few railroad cars of chocolate had been brought there. And all of a sudden the sale of that chocolate was banned. Why? It turned out the chocolate was called "Mishka in the North" and local functionaries played safe, being afraid of possibility that sale of these sweets during the General Secretary's stay in Tyumen could be considered as a personal offence by him.

In general Gorbachyov's visit to Tyumen left unpleasant after-taste, which I described in detail in my diary.

On September 5, 1985, at Nizhnevartovsk airport a large group of people: V.I. Dolgikh, B.N. Yeltsin, N.K. Baibakov, B.E. Shcherbina and others–arrived for the meeting. The plane with M.S. Gorbachyov and R.M. Gorbachyova landed. A.N. Yakovlev and G.P. Razumovsky arrived with them. On the previous day the plane from Moscow delivered a Japanese bus especially for the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee as if the General secretary could not go by our homemade bus.

In the evening in the Nizhnevartovsk City Committee there was a meeting. The Secretary of the City Committee S.I. Denisov and the Secretary of the Regional Committee V.A. Churilov made short reports. Then Gorbachyov gave floor to me–the Chief Executive of the Main Tyumen Geological Department. I told about state and prospects of geological exploration works, cited some figures in relation to preparation of raw material resources for further development of oil and gas industry. Gorbachyov interrupted me many times, tried to criticize Baibakov and Dolgikh for poor assistance to geologists.

At the end Gorbachyov took the floor himself: "Geologists assured me of broad prospects of this area in terms of geological

exploration. I sensed these prospects and I am satisfied with the geologists' work, thank you. But this sphere needs support."

Such appreciation inspired us.

At night we flew to Urengoi. With what joy the people in the streets of Urengoi met the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee on the next day. The weather was fine and sunny. In the city centre where there was a crowd of several thousand citizens the motorcade stopped. M. Gorbachyov went out of the car and talked to people. One elderly woman asked him a question: "What is the situation like with allocating the citizens of the North housing facilities on the mainland?" When I heard the answer I was stricken. Mikhail Sergeyevich answered dead seriously: "What for do you need flats on the mainland? Look what a marvellous climate you have here. Build more flats here..."

Didn't he know that Urengoi is situated near the polar circle? People who came to work in the Far North from the European part of Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia, Azerbaijan and other less severe regions can not live and work here on a permanent basis. There is a zone of tundra with low abundance of oxygen in the air, where no normal forest or grass can grow.

On the following morning Gorbachyov and his retinue returned to Tyumen. What was going on in the airport! Four ZIL's were delivered from Moscow to carry the General Secretary and his spouse about. The roads were blocked. The traffic along Republic Street was turned back to front. It was the work of our local 'window-dressing masters'–they did not want the General Secretary to see old rickety wooden houses so they brought him through the outskirts. All this made my blood boil. A.N. Kosygin, the second person in the state visited Tyumen many times. But there were neither Japanese bus nor government ZIL's delivered from Moscow. Everything was organized in a simple and business-like way.

But this time one could not help wondering. It was only 4 months since Gorbachyov became the General Secretary and he already demonstrated such high-and-mighty manners: a wife with him on a business trip, such tendency for window-dressing and for being in the limelight.

In the evening Gorbachyov made a speech at the meeting of the party-administrative activists in Tyumen. When I listened to his speech I did not believe my ears. It was quite opposite to what he said in Nizhnevartovsk two days ago. I was very upset. After long contemplation I made a conclusion: Gorbachyov merely read the report compiled for him by the bureaucratic apparatus in Moscow. He paid no heed to what I reported in Nizhnevartovsk.

He just read what he was handed over. I remembered Brezhnev's visit to Baku when he mixed up sheets and read the speech without any understanding what he said and Aliev had to change the sheets with his speech during his performance.

Having spent a night in musing I came to the conclusion: the new General Secretary was a great talker with contradictory statements and poor economic knowledge and big ambitions and many negative traits. With such personal qualities he was hardly able to run the country wisely and we would hardly be able to achieve any success under his rule.

It happened exactly as I thought: the economy declined year after year, the industry started losing pace and the oil industry was the first to emit the signal of alert, when the level of oil production, achieved at the cost of the whole country's great strain, started plummeting.

I can say only one: to live well and abundantly our people should have intelligent and skilled leaders."

Wise Farman is right. The only problem is to get it clear–why in any system–totalitarian or democratic, socialist or capitalist–citizens that should not be allowed to come near authorities turn out to be in power time and again? There are lots of examples–in recent Russian history and in post-Soviet history of Azerbaijan, as well as in other peoples' chronicles.

August 31, 1986, Novorossiysk

At 22:10 on the thirtieth of August 1986, near Novorossiysk the passenger motor vessel "Admiral Nakhimov" and the dry cargo ship "Pyotr Vasev" collided. There are victims. The salvage operations are being carried out...

At night on August 31 similar information was sent to the following authorities: the CPSU Central Committee, the USSR Council of Ministers, the KGB, and the Navy Ministry... Rumors spread information about this disaster all over the country before the Soviet radio and television gave official information about it. As usual 'foreign voices' were the first.

Ryzhkov called Aliev at midnight:

– Geidar Alievich, you are appointed the Chairman of the Government Commission. Choose people...

Aliev hardly slept that night. If he knew that there were fifteen sleepless nights ahead he might have taken a nap. But he did not want to. He remembered his first business trip of such kind –to the Volga, three years before. There near Ulyanovsk the passenger

motor vessel “Alexander Suvorov” full of tourists ran into the bridge footings. In the cinema-hall they showed a comedy at this moment. Many people came with children. Laughter from the screen mixed with groans and cries. The vessel was carried farther by the current–without the upper deck, without the cinema-hall. As it was ascertained on the spot the disaster was caused by drunkenness! There Aliev saw a child foot in a stylish trainer–there was no blood on it, it was carried away together with its small owner by waves. Together with mother and father.

Aliev usually came to the Sovmin at about nine. That morning he came much earlier. He assigned to his assistant on matters of transport Vladimir Sergeyevich Ukhov to draft the Sovmin order on the members of the Commission and notify all of them.

– You go with us.

Ukhov did not have time to come home–he only called: ‘I will be back in a dozen days!’ He dropped in at the GUM (Central department store in Moscow–*the translator’s note*)–to buy a shirt and some small things necessary in a business trip. At night from 31 August to 1 September the government plane left ‘Vnukovo-2’ airport for Novorossiysk.

For three years of work for Aliev Ukhov got to know his boss well.

– I guessed even beforehand, –told us Vladimir Sergeyevich, – that he was a decisive man. But on the Volga, at the crushed “Alexander Suvorov” I understood that his character was revealed in full measure under critical circumstances where one needs to screw up ones will, and emotions, and thoughts–and act in wise, tough and assertive way. It even seemed to me that in calm everyday atmosphere it was not enough room for Aliev, he had to give vent to enormous energy so he loaded himself with work from nine in the morning till nine in the evening.

Sometimes he took up assignments which in our, the workers of his secretariat’s, opinion seemed irrelevant to our department. But you’d better not tell him: ‘It is not our problem, Geidar Alievich’. He supposed that the Chairman of the Government, the General Secretary could give any assignment, as they knew whom they were able to rely upon. And his duty was to carry it out!

...According to provisional data, there were about 1,234 people on board “Admiral Nakhimov”: 888 passengers and 346 crewmembers. The vessel sank in 7-8 minutes after the collision. Only 836 people were saved. What about the others?

Two weeks of Novorossiysk trip were an abyss of black tragedy. Day after day we meet people who lost their relatives and friends; salvaging ‘Admiral Nakhimov’s prisoners from the sea

floor–79 for the first three days, 116–by the fourth of September. Dozens of problems interlaced into a tight knot.

Geidar Alievich was suggested leaving only general guidance to himself. As there were enough authoritative people–the Navy Minister, the Deputy Chairman of the KGB, the Chief of the Transport and Communication Department of the Central Committee–they could ascertain details and receive people.

– No, –answered Aliev, 'I will meet people daily. And the members of the Commission will do–on matters of their competence.

The Government Commission had two meetings every day–at 10:00 and at 17:30. "And every evening at 19:00 its Chairman G.A. Aliev met the relatives of the victims,"–wrote the newspaper *Trud* in its report from Novorossiysk, "to tell them about what was done for a day, effectively solving all the emerging problems on spot."

At the Black Sea line where "Admiral Nakhimov" was registered, they did not even know exactly how many people were on board when the vessel left for the sea. It was considered as a normal situation. Captains, like cabmen, agreed between themselves how their vessels would pass each other, which was against all the regulations. After two-three-four days in seawater especially in hot weather the buoyed bodies decayed very fast. So some railroad car-freezers were brought. The coffins were made.

– Aliev demanded very strictly from everyone, –remembers Ukhov. –He relieved the Deputy Navy Minister of his post for failure to fulfil one of the assignments. It served as a good lesson for everyone.

The greatest ordeal was to listen to those who could not identify their relatives among the victims and waited when they would be able to bid their last farewell to husband, wife, brother, sister or children who went on their honeymoon.

Risking their life the cameramen took an underwater survey. Here the camera closes the vessel and comes to the head of a woman that stuck in the partition wall. Due to the underwater current her long hair moves as if swaying in the breeze. It seems she would look up instantly and the young man who did not divert his eyes from the screen would recognize his Natasha.

– Will you buoy her? –asks he at last in a muffled tone.

– We'll try... If it does not put divers –lives at risk,–he is answered. –One diver has already perished.

"We are absolutely sure, –said Geidar Alievich Aliev at one of the meeting of the Commission, –that the collision happened as a result of culpable negligence and irresponsible attitude towards

their job responsibilities on the part of the captains of the dry cargo ship "Pyotr Vasev" and the motor vessel "Admiral Nakhimov"."

Aliev regularly reported to Ryzhkov on work progress and the results of the investigation. According to Ukhov Gorbachyov called two-three times and even intended to come.

Though few believed in such possibility. Would the General Secretary interrupt his holiday! In May he did not screw up enough courage to visit Chernobyl, in September–Novorossiysk, a year later–and only after Ryzhkov's persistent advice–he went to Spitak, destroyed by the earthquake. It is a convenient position–to live beyond somebody's grief. Though poets with their vulnerable, sensitive souls are sure that 'there is no somebody's grief' (Konstantin Simonov's words). And genuine politicians–not peanut politicians–think the same. In that summer Gorbachyov had a rest from 20 August to 20 September. Before returning to Moscow he visited Kuban and Stavropol regions where he communicated buoyantly with electorate. Meanwhile Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov and a group of leaders from Ukraine and Byelorussia visited the Chernobyl zone; and Geidar Alievich Aliev carried the burden of the Novorossiysk tragedy...

...In January of nineteen forty-two in blockaded Leningrad Alexei Nikolayevich Kosygin saw two youngsters carrying a sledge along a cold street with a body of a brother or a neighbor on it. Those days it was a typical sight. Dead people were carried in that way from all over the city. Something urged Kosygin to stop at this doleful procession and ask whom they were carrying for burial. Before the boys had time to answer Alexei Nikolayevich noticed that an eyelid winced in the face of the boy lying on the sledge. Through the swoon in those last moments of his leaving life he might have heard a voice that sounded like his father's. Alexei Nikolayevich took the child in his arms and the latter started coming to his senses. Kosygin instructed to warm up the boy, to feed him and evacuate him together with his brothers from Leningrad.

Under the assignment of the State Committee of Defence Kosygin was to evacuate 500 thousand of Leningrad citizens, machines, cranes, motors and entire plants that were needed in the Mainland. It was huge and hardest state objective and an occasional meeting... The destiny of the blockaded city and the destiny of a single man... Kosygin did not differentiate between them.

Aliev was similar. Most various people evidence it, including his assistants that daily reported to the First Deputy Premier, jotted down his instructions, went on business trips with him.

– What, in your opinion, –we asked Ukhov, –impressed Aliev most of all in Novorossiysk?

– Firstly, the fact of collision itself. It could not, should not have happened. There were no prerequisites for this collision. The sea was still. The sky was starlit. The passenger vessel was all lit with light–on-board lights, stoker lights. There were modern navigation devices. Leaving the port the vessel received the information from the traffic control service on the dry cargo ship going in the opposite direction. The same service warned the captain of "Pyotr Vasev" of "Admiral Nakhimov"'s route; the dry cargo ship was to allow the latter to follow its route without hindrance. The dry cargo ship did not do that. The captains started to agree how to pass–contrary to the regulations. The third mate to the captain of the dry cargo "Pyotr Vasev" warned: "We'll collide soon!" –I see everything, –answered the captain looking at the radar screen. –We'll pass. Everything is under control..." Presumption and irresponsibility of the two captains led to the irretrievable tragedy.

Unprecedented lack of order shocked. It caused 'Admiral Nakhimov's wreck and huge human grief... And there was lack of order on the shore again–there was no full list of passengers and the crew; it was necessary to restore it from various evidences.

Aliev practically did not sleep there; neither did his assistant Ukhov. Vladimir Sergeyevich worked at the minutes till two-three in the morning–who do what and when–and in the morning everything began anew. By nine in the morning Aliev went from the hotel to the headquarters that were situated in the Sea-line office building...

On the fifteenth day Gorbachyov ordered Aliev to hand the Commission over to Pasternak, the Chief of Transport and Communication Department of the Central Committee, and come back to Moscow:

– We consider the matter of "Admiral Nakhimov" at the Politburo meeting.

What gave rise to this command? Was it simply the fact that other things were waiting for Aliev in Moscow and the rest could do without him in Novorossiysk? We have doubts on this point. Here is the reason why. Gorbachyov planned a trip to the Krasnodar Territory, meetings, and speeches. Aliev with his Novorossiysk matters, the whole accident with "Admiral Nakhimov" impeded Gorbachyov. The General Secretary arrived

in Krasnodar on August 17 and from the airport he went to one of the districts of the Territory. “On the way he stopped at stanitsa Novotitarovskaya and had a talk with its citizens”, –the TASS correspondents reported. The sunburned General Secretary asked people if they were happy with “what we do in the country now”. The journalists recorded the buzz: “Happy”.

...On October 30 Geidar Aliev reported at the Politburo meeting on the findings of the Government Commission concerning the investigation of the causes of ‘Admiral Nakhimov’s accident. On the previous day some maps and schemes were hanged on the walls of the conference-room–as visual support. Against such background they first discussed the plan and the budget for the following year, then listened to the report of the Party Control Commission attached to the CPSU Central Committee on consideration of appeals submitted to attention of the 27th Congress of the CPSU... At last Gorbachyov gave floor to Aliev. Geidar Alievich reported in a brief and clear manner. Everything was obvious: the both vessel captains’ culpable negligence, gross violation of the seafaring safety rules.

The Politburo resolution said that the families of the victims received the necessary state assistance. The immediate culprits of the catastrophe–the captains of “Pyotr Vasev” and “Admiral Nakhimov” were arrested and put on trial. The Chief Executive of the Black Sea line S.A. Lukyanenko was expelled from the Party and dismissed from his position. The Deputy USSR Navy Minister A.V. Goldobenko and the Board Member and Chairman of All-Union Association “Moreplavanie” B.S. Mainagashev were dismissed from their positions and severely punished along the party line. The Deputy Minister of the USSR Navy B.A. Yunitsyn was called to the party account. The Board of the USSR Navy Ministry was suggested taking measures for dramatic improvement of seafaring safety, discipline and order in work of navy transport.

Assistants are observant people. They see what their bosses don’t even suspect. Here is the detail both Gavrilov and Ukhov remembered without agreeing.

– You come to Aliev’s office and immediately see from Geidar Alievich’s face that he is deep in thought, pondering over something.

The assistant’s entrance brings him back to current concerns.

– Vladimir Sergeyevich, I have a meeting today with the Chairman of Yugoslavia Government. You are to prepare: first..., second... Why don't you write down?

Ukhov is embarrassed to admit that when summoned he was at the reception and his favorite notebook was left in his office. Such notebooks were handed over to every captain who first went along the Kiel Canal. Vladimir Sergeyevich, a recent cargo vessel captain, cherished it very much.

– I will remember, Geidar Alievich!

– Will you?

Having an amazing memory, Aliev always without fail made himself notes in the notebook. And he always controlled if the task had been fulfilled accurately.

The workers of Aliev's apparatus usually had holidays simultaneously with their chief. Vladimir Sergeyevich Ukhov remained on duty. His colleagues envied him: Now you will have a rest!

– Aha! –answered Ukhov. –Don't you know how Geidar Alievich has a rest...

They knew. They already got used to it. Aliev went on holiday to Azerbaijan. But he did not have a day's rest. The first call in Moscow Ukhov received at ten in the morning:

– Aliev. Good morning, Vladimir Sergeyevich, what has been done?

A brief report followed.

– There is not decision on this issue yet, Geidar Alievich.

– Call me back at three o'clock.

There was one more call at 6-7 o'clock in the evening. Sometimes the telephone operator warned that there was no 'protection in this area'. It meant that Aliev was in some very remote place where it was impossible to discuss all the issues through unprotected communication lines.

He Could Appreciate Kindness

There is such a term in technology: fatigue of metal. Metalware can take load to a certain extent. Then bridges or bridge girders or bridge floor must be changed. Special devices can exactly ascertain fatigue of metal. How can fatigue of a person be ascertained? There are no such devices so far.

After one of the meetings at Ryzhkov's office Yuri Petrovich Batalin went up to his office on the second floor; cast a glance upon Ivanovskaya Square overcrowded with cars as usual; took

some papers. At that moment Aliev entered. Batalin was surprised: the First Deputy, the Member of the Politburo came in person instead of inviting to his own office. What happened?

Geidar Alievich told about the construction of the BAM, about a great number of problems that were still to be solved at the site, about how difficult it was for a non-specialist to make a decision on validity of one or the other variants. And he asked Batalin to take up consideration of matters concerning the BAM.

Batalin objected that it would be difficult for him too to make out all these matters.

– Yet it will be easier for you; taking into consideration your professional experience, specialists will treat your judgments with more respect.

This conversation that only its participants knew about seems very significant to us. How often in the ancient and recent history men in power thought that possession of power in itself made them connoisseurs in all fields: from agriculture to linguistics, from space travel to ballet and fine arts. In the Soviet Union they are responsible for poor destiny of genetics and cybernetics, the program for transfer of the North Rivers to the south, etc.

This talk of Geidar Alievich Aliev with a person who was lower than him in party hierarchy was certainly a courageous step.

– I would like to ask you to make me a favor to take up this matter,–Aliev finished this talk. Nobody ever talked in this way here.

Batalin agreed remarking that Ryzhkov should approve the matter. Nikolai Ivanovich also understood Aliev's reasoning. So Batalin headed the Government Commission on the BAM and Severo-Muisky tunnel.

Among the departments and ministries that Aliev supervised there was the Goskomizdat. Boris Nikolayevich Pastukhov headed it.

– I referred to Geidar Alievich on different matters more that once, –he tells, –and I have to say, that Aliev treated the problems of this neglected sphere very attentively and creatively. We have to develop or it would be better to say set up on the up-to-date basis polygraphy, manufacture of paper and colors... He solved crucial problems. He took weighed decisions...

– Can you give any examples?

– Aliev provided us with his full support on development of printing industry; he was one of those who backed up one of our utterly unusual ideas. We made a decision to open unlimited subscription for Pushkin works, then for Lermontov's. This subscription for Pushkin's three volumes of collected works

brought over 10 million requests. And where could we get so much paper? We expected there would be 5 million requests at maximum, but when they exceeded ten million, we had to scratch our heads: either to apologize to the subscribers and return the money or to die but find resources. We did the latter. And there was one more interesting fact, –continues Boris Nikolayevich. –It was my fiftieth jubilee. There was a tradition to decorate Commission Chairmen, Ministers with awards. But I had been awarded the order of Lenin not long before and according to normative acts a certain period should have passed before the following award. In my case I was short of a half year. So the Government awarded me a precious gift, –smiles Pastukhov. –It was a picture in a rustic style. I was invited to the Kremlin and Aliev as the First Deputy Chairman and my supervisor together with Smirtyukov, the executive officer of the Sovmin were going to hand me over this picture. Aliev's office (there is no this office any more) looked onto the Moskva River. It was October, rather cold...

They hand over the picture, joked...

– Of course, Boris Nikolayevich you are worthy of an order, but the order is above all, you will yet receive orders for sure, but you will hardly get such a picture again.

I thanked him and made one of the best speeches in my life.

– What difference what you are awarded, your work is appreciated and that matters. Excuse me, Geidar Alievich, but it is what I want to say. I grew up across this river, in Zamoskvorechye... My Mother was a worker, Father perished in 1942 and here I am standing in front of you, the man, who represents the Government of the country. And it is the greatest award for me, a boy from Zamoskvorechye that kicked his heels with his buddies, missed lessons at school to see a new film at "Udarnik" cinema-house, to enjoy the honor of standing here in front of the two such celebrated people. Thank you!

Boris Nikolayevich left with the presented picture.

Lots of years passed. Pastukhov arrived in Baku as the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia. Meetings, negotiations... Aliev amazed the guest with his fantastic memory– he remembered the Congress of Komsomol where they got acquainted. He remembered everything.

– He remained the same until the last days of his life–he remembered everything: what happened a day ago and what happened twenty years ago. I was astonished.

"Do you remember your 50th birthday? –Geidar Alievich asked Pastukhov. –How Smirtyukov and I handed you a picture?

"Yes, I do..."

"Do you want me to repeat what I told you then? You will yet receive orders, but you will hardly receive such a picture, Boris Nikolayevich..."

– This picture hangs at my country-house now and makes the room much better, –moved Pastukhov comments. –Early spring, Russian birches... Now whenever I look at this picture and remember Geidar Alievich Aliev. He could appreciate kindness...

What is Your Hobby?

Ryzhkov, Batalin, Biryukov, Konarev, Pastukhov are people of Aliev's circle. How do subordinates remember him? For three years Alexander Timofeevich Gavrilov, a journalist, scientist, publisher, worked as an assistant to Aliev, the First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers. Before meeting Gavrilov Aliev got acquainted with a dozen of candidates chosen by specialists of the Administrative Department–with some of them even without seeing them only through their resumes but meeting others in person. It came Gavrilov's turn then.

On getting information on invitation Alexander Timofeevich decided to ask advice from an old pressman who knew Aliev well. Here is how Gavrilov retells this conversation of 1984 now:

"Bear in mind that he is a man of the East and the East as it is well known is a delicate matter. The second: he is a man from the KGB; it is useless trying to twist him round your finger or dodge with him, and what for after all? He possesses knowledge of human psychology, extensive work experience in a very serious establishment and in the Central Committee. And third piece of my advice: in no circumstance if he praises one particular man take into your head the idea of joining these praises. –"Who is that man?" –"Eduard Amvrosievich Shevardnadze."

With such farewell wishes Gavrilov went for an interview with Aliev to the first floor of the Kremlin building of the Sovmin to the office where previously Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov worked. At the reception the secretary met him with a smile: "Geidar Alievich asks for apology, he is in a meeting now and he will see you immediately as it is over." Less than ten minutes passed and Gavrilov was showed to the office.

– Later I get assured many times: utmost punctuality and accuracy are characteristic of Aliev. The same he demanded from others.

Aliev came from behind his desk and held his hand out:

– Please, take a seat, Alexander Timofeevich. What are you interested in, what is your hobby?

– You see, Geidar Alievich, I don't have any hobby, – Gavrilov answers.

– What about fishing, does it interest you?

– No.

– And hunting?

– No.

– Do you probably collect stamps?

– No.

– Yet, what do you like doing?

– I like reading. I like writing.

– So do I. I like reading and writing, –responds Aliev. –You must have read my speeches, didn't you? –Gavrilov nods. –How would you characterize my style very briefly?

– Publicism, –Gavrilov found the term.

– Exactly!

But it was not the end of the interview.

– I don't know you practically, –continued Geidar Alievich. – And making you my assistant I risk a bit.

– But I also take a risk, –Gavrilov answers in unison. –If I don't cope with the job, I will have to make up myself.

Aliev liked this answer. He commented that he never abandoned the people he worked with. Even when he had to part with someone he did it in such a way that the person would not lose on anything.

– I can promise you that.

– Geidar Alievich, it is all right with me. And life in general is a risky thing.

– Well, then go to settle the formalities, –Aliev smiled, –and get down to job.

Gavrilov worked with Aliev for three years. He kept kindest feelings towards his boss. He is sure: Aliev could do much more useful things for the country.

At the end of their first meeting Aliev stressed, 'everything I assign to you should be between us. If you consider it necessary to report on something to me in person, report, please.' Unfortunately not everybody in the First Vice-Premier's Secretariat liked it–there is always a kind of struggle between officials for access to the boss's office, there are always envious people. What to do with them?! Envy is as ineradicable as treachery, duplicity, and wickedness... Neither Christian morals nor Communist morality could do anything. After all, are there

any special communist morals or religious ones? It is very unlikely. There are just morals. Or there are not.

By the way, don't think that Geidar Alievich asked all his employees about their hobbies just for no particular reasons. It was his key question. He was sure that if a person is keen, for example, on fishing, starting with Monday morning he thinks about nothing but fishhooks, worms, baits... And that distracts him from work. Of course, one could argue with Aliev that it did not always interfere with business and give a lot of examples, but he stood his ground.

– At 8.45 he was always at work, –tells Gavrilov. –Except those day when he met or saw off somebody in conformity with the protocol. I came at eight. I looked through mail, reports of the information agencies, other materials, underlined anything that required attention.

On weekdays 9.15 was an official start of the day–calls, receptions, meetings, and talks. Aliev planned his work hours very punctually. Of course, life introduced amendments, but in general everything was taken into account and that allowed keeping that large business in a well-organized and efficient way. We respected and were a little afraid of our boss. He neither applied any severe sanctions to anyone, nor shouted at anybody. Yet everyone knew that it was impossible to fail to fulfil any of his assignments.

Azerbaijan colleagues invited Gavrilov more than once to visit the Republic: "Alexander Timofeevich, come for a rest..." Gavrilov neither refused them, nor went, realizing that such trips usually ended up with some obligations and he, as a squeamish person, did not want to be indebted to anybody.

Through some channels Aliev learned that his assistant avoided visits to Azerbaijan. He invited Gavrilov.

"Listen to me, Alexander, –it was one of those rare cases when his boss called him by first name, –I am informed that you don't want to go to Baku for a rest. Is it really so?

Gavrilov found an excuse that doctors recommended his wife central Russia. Aliev looked at him in an inquisitive manner. He most likely guessed about genuine reasons, but he did not start speaking about them.

"It's a pity you don't go to Baku–there is such a wonderful sea there... –And he cited almost a poem about the Caspian Sea. –I have been to many countries, have swum in many seas, but believe me, there is not a single one better than the Caspian. It is a salubrious sea! Go for a rest, Alexander...

– I promised, –Gavrilov remembers that memorable for him conversation, –but I could not go, though. And now I understand

that Aliev took offence for Azerbaijan: how it can be that a person is sincerely invited and he does not go, hurting the hosts' feelings.

Gavrilov cannot forget joint trips with Aliev about the country: Altai, Chuvashia, Volgograd... They were purely business trips. But Aliev always added something from himself to a standard set of a speech at the Party Activists Meeting, a talk at the Regional Party Committee, a visit to some plant workshops. For example, he liked to drop in on a market, to find out prices, to taste something from the counter. At the dinners on occasion of their arrival or departure, as Gavrilov remembers, his boss did not have more than one–maximum two glasses of cognac. He never sat at a table like a bugaboo beyond reach; he participated in conversations and was radiant with humor. And here is one more distinguishing detail: he did not accept gifts, so nobody offered him presents. It was known. Such characteristics spread instantaneously.

Once we came to a village in Altai, had a look at the school. The guest was welcomed very warmly and given large bunches of flowers. Such a big authority came to their god-forsaken place for the first time. There was a talk at the teacher's staff room. How are you doing? What about the salary? And teaching load?

– Do pupils give you flowers? –asks the guest.

– Of course. On September 1, March 8 and at the end of the academic year.

– Don't you think it looks like a bribe?

After a long pause one of the teachers replied coldly:

– Maybe in Moscow you consider it as a bribe; probably flowers cost much there, but here–look around–all the yards are in flowers. Excuse me, but from commercial point of view these flowers cost nothing. It is one side. There is another, the moral one. If I were not given flowers on such a day, I would quit at once. It would mean I have authority neither among pupils nor their parents. By the way we gave flowers to you also as a token of our respect.

Geidar Alievich listened attentively. But he preferred not to develop this topic any more.

In Moscow literary circles at the time when Aliev still worked in Baku a story was passed as once coming in the capital Geidar Aliev recited Pushkin by heart at the Union of Writers–his lyrics and his poem 'Eugenie Onegin'. The writers that listened to the guest were stunned, to say the least. Aliev bewitched them with his knowledge of Pushkin's poetry. (By the way, years later in

Baku at Aliev's initiative a monument to the Great Russian poet were erected.) A couple of days later the entire literary Moscow knew that Aliev recited by heart Pushkin, Lermontov, let alone classics of the Azerbaijanian literature–Nizami, Fizuli, Djavid...

Recalling this episode Gavrilov notes that Aliev had a very developed aesthetic taste. He professionally assessed architecture, understood fine arts and theatre. That is why prominent artistic people always surrounded him: Kara Karaev, Niyazi, Muslim Magomaev, and Tair Salakhov. By the way, Salakhov, the Vice-President of the Russian Academy of Arts, painted a nice portrait of the Azerbaijan President.

Alexander Gavrilov remembers an interesting story in connection with it. He went to the performance 'Two on the Swing'–as an ordinary spectator with a ticket bought at the theatre box-office, not with an invitation. In the morning there was a call:

– Good morning, Alexander Timofeevich, it is Tabakov.

– Good morning, Oleg Pavlovich.

– I am not acquainted with you, but I called to ask if you liked the performance.

Pondering over the possible reasons of the master's call Gavrilov answered, that he liked the performance as a spectator, but he was not ready to give official assessment, which his caller was probably eager to hear.

– Did you tell Geidar Alievich about your impressions? –asked the audience's favorite ingratiatingly.

– No, he did not ask me about it. But if you insist I can tell him.

– Oh yes-yes, it would be very interesting to know Geidar Alievich's opinion.

When he was given a chance, Gavrilov retold this conversation to his boss. Aliev burst into laugher:

– And if he calls you again, what will you tell? –and without waiting for my answer, he continued: –Tell him that I did not see this performance, so I will not express any negative emotions.

Workers of arts expressed their emotions, though. Aliev wanted to stress, that he did not want to participate in the punishment of the theatre.

Cultural workers knew about it and often applied Aliev for help, although he did not deal in culture directly. Repertoire policy, creative activities were the other department's responsibility. The Sovmin was responsible for material side of culture–Aliev together with Ryzhkov dealt with problems of the Bolshoi Theatre, with developing book printing, cinematography...

Once in the mail a letter of the famous film star Armen Djigarkhanyan turned up: he asked to help him with accommodation. Aliev sent the letter to the Mossovet Chairman Promyslov; not just threw over, but sent–with request to help.

Two months later Armen Borisovich called Gavrilov: please, give Geidar Alievich my greatest gratitude.

In the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee

Now with the help of Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin let's have a look at the Politburo's "kitchen" that was strictly forbidden for everyone except the initiated. What was going on there?

"The meetings usually started in the following way. The Members of the Politburo assembled in one room. The Candidates as the second category of the Politburo and the Secretaries of the Central Committee as the third category, lined up, waited at the conference-room for the General Secretary's entry. All the other Members of the Politburo followed him according to their rank.

...Here, on the top, at the Party Olympus as it were, castes were respected rigorously.

So, the meeting of the Politburo was declared open. Gorbachyov hardly ever asked if anybody had any objections concerning the agenda. Starting the meeting he could share some recollections, where, what he saw, in particular in Moscow. During the first year of my work as the First Secretary of Moscow City Party Committee there was not such a habit, but during the second year he more and more often started with such questions: something is wrong in Moscow, something is bad–he wound me, if I may to say so, to the necessary emotional degree.

Then discussion of some issue began. For example, personnel, appointments of Ministers, sometimes Gorbachyov had a preliminary interview with them and sometimes he did not, so a future Minister was summoned directly to the Politburo meeting.

...Discussion of any item started with acquaintance with materials relevant to the agenda of the Politburo meeting. But, in my opinion they were handed over a bit late. Sometimes it was done a week before the meeting, but more often it happened a day–a couple of days in advance and for such period it was practically impossible to study thoroughly the issue that concerned crucial matters of the country's life. It was necessary to consult with specialists, to discuss it with those who possessed complete understanding of the problem in question. But too little time was

given for this either on purpose or just because of poor organization.

...Usually Gorbachyov made an introduction, he always did it in an extensive manner, sometimes he quoted some letters that were prepared for him beforehand to prove some of his ideas. This entire prelude usually predetermined the results of discussion of the draft resolution, compiled by his assistants. So it turned out that his administration ruled everything. The Members of the Politburo participated in discussion of the issues in a strictly formal way.

...Let's say inanity of our meeting was not so noticeable at first; but the further the more evident it became that our activity was inefficient. Gorbachyov mostly indulged in narcissism and enjoyed his speeches–he can and likes speaking smoothly and it was obvious that power fascinates him, he loses the sense of reality, and living in illusion that perestroika actually develops in width and depth and rapidly involves new territories and people. But in fact it was far from that in reality.

I don't remember any occasion when anybody would try to speak out his or her negative attitude in a sharp form. Yet I made attempts from time to time..."

Such is his assessment of the Politburo meetings. It was given after all the events, in the period when Yeltsin was without power. His hurt feelings are clearly seen for he, Yeltsin, was got round, rejected. He is not a little bit worse than Gorbachyov, other members of the Politburo, but they consider him to be a man of the second category, don't let him to the sacred room, keep him in the common room... It is also interesting to read Yeltsin's personal characteristic of each Politburo member. They slightly remind Gogol-Chichikov's assessments of landowners from 'Dead Souls'. Do you remember Sobakevich, Nozdrev, and Plyushkin?

Andrei Andreyevich Gromyko, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet at that time, according to Yeltsin, existed only 'as if'. He 'did something, met somebody, made speeches, but in fact there was nobody who kind of needed him... Gromyko was like someone transferred into the present from the very far-faraway past. Moreover, naturally he hardly realized what was going on around him, what they talked about.'

Neither did the critic find any good words for the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers Ryzhkov, the Chairman of the Party Control Committee Solomentsev, the Chairman of the KGB Chebrikov, Lukyanov: "He cannot manage non-standard situations, he possesses the complete set of party-bureaucratic

features–inflexibility, lack of inner freedom, spaciousness of mind."

"V.I. Dolgikh. Unfortunately for him Grishin entered Dolgikh on his list of close companions-in-arms, intended to offer him the Politburo Membership and nominated him for the post of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

...He must have been one of the most professional efficiently working Secretaries of the Central Committee.

D.T. Yazov, the Minster of Defence. This was a genuine soldier, sincere and diligent. He could be entrusted with commanding the circuit or the headquarters, but he was not prepared for the post of the Minister of Defence. He was narrow-minded, absolutely unable to accept criticism...

V.V. Shcherbitsky, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Ukraine Communist Party. Gorbachyov is afraid to touch him, as once he did not want to solve the problem with Aliev.

V.A. Medvedev, the Secretary of the Central Committee, the Member of the Politburo. His major merits are obedience and lack of new thoughts and ideas."

Characteristics like those Yeltsin gave to his colleagues. According to him, only ungifted people climbed the Party Olympus. It was they who could not appreciate Boris Nikolayevich. And it was they, typical representatives of the Soviet State machine, who in Yeltsin's opinion ruined Gorbachyov.

There is much to be argued about in evaluations given by the first President of Russia. In particular, with negative assessment of Aliev, Ryzhkov, Shcherbitsky... As well as with his statement that only Yeltsin "made attempts" to interfere at the meeting of the Politburo, while the others kept silence. Frequently it was quite opposite–it was he, who kept silence.

But the major objection is another. According to exact remark of the assistant to the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee Valery Ivanovich Boldin "struggle for rescuing the country long ago turned into struggle for Gorbachyov's survival and popularity". First an assistant then the Head of the USSR President's Administration he knew what he talked about. He was a present at the most close sitting at the office of the General Secretary-the President.

According to numerous evidence, Gorbachyov was able to impress people when he wanted to. 'But many others and I' wrote Boldin, "knew other sides of his character, his habits: he could be rude, could offend and humiliate his interlocutor." It happened even with close comrades, companions-in-arms if to use the

elevated party style. Valery Boldin even questions: 'How could it happen that these people allowed the General Secretary to accuse them of being unfaithful to the chosen course, to disgrace them? Everyone is free to have their own vision, their own point of view and no shouting or verbal whip whistling should as it seems change their standing.'

No, not everyone nodded to Gorbachyov. Ryzhkov, Aliev, Slyunkov, Maslyukov bravely defended their opinions.

Yuri Petrovich Batalin pointed out how independently Aliev behaved at the meetings of the Politburo.

– When the Government introduced some issue at the Politburo meeting, the situation was aggravated on purpose. I noticed, –Batalin tells, –that Aliev, seeing the scenario of such meetings, some or other Politburo Members' behavior, always spoke out firmly, sometimes even in a tough manner to defend the Government's position.

I remember someone made a remark, it seems to have been Gorbachyov: "Geidar Alievich, you don't behave as a party man here defending the economy interests while you are the Member of the Politburo." He was never at a loss for words. And that time he answered properly and with dignity. I, he said, defend proposals that have been thoroughly discussed together with leading specialists in the Government. We have a clear position. And if it is accepted it will answer the party interests as well.

In a word, he defended the position of the Government very firmly, convincingly and decisively. I remembered that.

There were antagonisms between him and Gorbachyov rather frequently. It must have been one of the reasons behind Gorbachyov's decision to dismiss him.

– Does it mean Gorbachyov saw a rival in him?

– Rival? It is unlikely, –answered Batalin, –but strong opponent, that's possible. Gorbachyov did not like that Aliev did not nod to him, but stood his ground.

One of characteristic examples was attitude towards Chernobyl catastrophe.

– On that day, although it was Saturday, I was at work, – remembered Geidar Alievich, –by the way, I worked every Saturday. I heard of the explosion at the Nuclear Power Station but did not know the details. I asked the Head of the Administration of the Sovmin Smirtyukov: What has happened? I, the Member of the Politburo, the First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers knew nothing about it. He answered that there was an accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station. The conversation took place at the end of the day.

On Sunday I did not work. Naturally I could not find out anything. On Monday morning Gorbachyov summoned the Members of the Politburo. And he held the meeting in his private office. I received a call between 10 and 11 and was invited. Only very brief information was provided.

Sweden, Poland, Germany, other European countries spread information on radioactive emission. In fact the entire world was aware of the Chernobyl catastrophe. At that moment Gorbachyov held a meeting... We sensed there was a tragedy; some measures should have been taken. In my opinion the measures stipulated for such cases were not enough. I don't want to make a hero of myself now, get me right. I took the floor and said that in connection with situation we had to provide immediate communication. And it should be true. Everybody should know what happened, because the entire Europe already knew the essence of the accident. At that moment Ligachev interrupted me sharply: "What do you want? Which information do you want?" I said: "Which information can it be? I want people to get authentic information. We cannot conceal such a fact."

Then Alexander Nikolayevich Yakovlev joined me and said the same. Later on we met and he complained about Ligachev's actions. He told me: "You see, only you and I were for the idea of providing complete information. But Ligachev was an influential person at that time. So it happened in that way...

"It is a very important detail, –thinks the Deputy of the Ukraine Supreme Rada Boris Oleinik, the well-known poet. – Gorbachyov was afraid to go to Kiev. When Shcherbitsky intended to cancel the Parade on the First of May and tried to evacuate at least children from the zone of the tragedy, Gorbachyov threatened him, saying that it was going to spread panic among population. Geidar Aliev actually made Gorbachyov admit that a wide-scale catastrophe had happened in Ukraine. We remember and appreciate Geidar Alievich Aliev's position."

According to Valery Boldin's evidence, at one of the Politburo meetings the General Secretary 'uncontrollably smashed G.A. Aliev to pieces, which caused the latter to be taken to hospital with extensive myocardial infarction and he could not recover properly for two years. Of course, there were reasons to criticize Aliev, but why he was derogated in such violent manner at the meeting, where spirit of camaraderie and deferential critic should supposedly have reigned? He was sent to retirement, at the Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee M.S. Gorbachyov spoke highly of him and his work, but these words were cut off when the shorthand report was printed."

How can such actions of the General Secretary, seemingly a great moralist, be assessed? He cared very much about his reputation among contemporaries and descendants. Here is one little but very typical of him example.

On August 23, 1985, there was a large meeting chaired by the General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachyov at the CPSU Central Committee. They discussed plans for the USSR economic and social development for 1986 and for the twelfth five-year. The Chairman of the Gosselkhoztekhnika V. Yezhevsky, the Minister of the Soviet Union made a speech. He told about the necessity to cut down weight of agricultural machines.

– Decreasing weight by one tone, –he addressed it directly to the General Secretary, –saves 900 kilograms of diesel fuel a year, Mikhail Sergeyevich. Moreover lighter machines condense the soil to a less extent and consequently don't destroy fertile layer. Thus usage of effective structural stock gives a double effect here.

Gorbachyov interrupts: "Wait a minute. Did you hear what Kolpakov said addressing all the workers of machine building industry and other metal users?"

The USSR Minister of Non-ferrous Metallurgy Seraphim Vasilyevich Kolpakov, one of the best specialists of the industry, said something sensible. But it is not production of structural stock and lighter machines that we would like to attract your attention to. We speak about business ethics. The Party Leader, in the Soviet Union he was the Country Leader as well, addresses the Minister, the person much older that him, in a familiar manner. But this detail should not have get to history. So the shorthand record was corrected–to make his remarks more respectful. It is a nuance, but it is characteristic.

Comparing recollections of the people who knew Gorbachyov rather closely and it seems sometimes that they speak about different persons. Boldin portrays an unrestrained person to say the least. But another assistant, Georgy Khosroevich Shakhnazarov, makes a good soul of him:

"Gorbachyov's treatment of people is even and well disposed. I have never heard him shout at anyone. Sometimes in a chafe he could raise his voice, but he recollected at once, smiled or shook his hand as if offering to forget this unpleasant episode. He parted without any sentimentality with those who disappointed him as workers or who let him down, but he did not hold grudge against them. He was not vindictive: no one of his adversaries was brought to grave, or sent to prison, or deported, or dismissed."

It is a portrait of an angel. Readers can make their own judgment on how much of it is the truth or what a great actor was

the person that to the greatest misfortune of the large country turned out to be at its head. By the way, Andrei Andreyevich Gromyko, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the First Deputy of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers and undoubtedly the most authoritative member of the Politburo at that time, was the first to admit his mistake. It was he who recommended the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee to elect Gorbachyov for the post of the General Secretary after the third funeral (Brezhnev–Andropov–Chernenko). Gorbachyov's messengers promised the Politburo veteran quiet old age in the non-demanding post of the Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium in return for supporting his candidature.

Quite soon discernment dawned on the other colleagues of the General Secretary, this man of integrity according to Shakhnazarov's estimation who was "let down by natural carelessness and fanatic belief in his star destiny". The announced perestroika did not bring any yields. In fact it just could not–as it was a set of incoherent actions. The key impression of those years was the country got drowned in words. The goals changed nearly every day: acceleration of scientific technological progress and anti-alcohol campaign, state certification and struggle against speculation, hopes for cooperative movement and free elections, fire to bureaucracy and returning power to Soviets; countless peaceful initiatives... Shakhnazarov was right in his conclusion: 'Nearly every following step of the authorities was aimed at cancelling the previous one or at least at smoothing over its consequences. It looked like it knocked blindly at the wall, trying in vain to find a way out onto the right path."

Still the right path would not be found. Among people irritation increased. There were queues all around, it was impossible to buy anything, and 'to procure' became the most popular word. People procured coupons for furniture, shoes, clothes, and foodstuff. In oil fields and in mines the trade-union leaders divided one cyanotic chicken between two happy coupon holders.

In a number of republics, in particular in Kazakhstan, national relations started getting aggravated due to personnel appointments made in a hurry. According to authoritative evidence of the Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbaev (in his letter to the authors) "Geidar Aliev was the only member of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee who tried to dissuade Gorbachyov from hasty decisions on the threshold of Alma-Alta events of 1986. He insisted on incorrectness of the decision to put "imported" leader at the head of Kazakhstan instead of retiring

D. Kunaev, it was necessary to nominate a local candidate. However they did not listen to him. And what could have been prevented happened–outraged people went into the streets and squares, which ended up in a bloody conflict.

The same was repeated when he started criticizing the Kremlin leaders for shortcomings in their national policy, in particular in Transcaucasia, and raised alarm in connection with imminent Karabakh crisis. It became the drop that exasperated their patience and he was sent to retirement."

Yes, it is true. At the Politburo meeting when the matter of Kolbin was considered everybody kept silence. After the meeting Aliev came to Gorbachyov. Here is Geidar Alievich's recollection of this conversation:

"You see, Mikhail Sergeyevich, I did not want to say anything at the meeting, because there was not appropriate environment there. But I would like to tell you that I know national psychology of people to some extent. You have made a mistake. Kolbin is a good person. He can be a good first secretary. He was the First Secretary of the Ulyanovsk Region and he seemed to work well although he was involved in bluff. It is well known. I want to say that you could appoint him to the largest Party Organization of Russia. He would work. But Kolbin is not a suitable person for Kazakhstan. Mind it you have made a mistake. Looking at me with annoyance and anger Gorbachyov said: "OK, we'll see." So I think I have performed my duty."

Remembering his Moscow period later Aliev said that he, as a sober politician, could not agree with the reforms that were not calculated and tested in scientific experiments or in reality. "At the meeting of the Politburo I often spoke against adventurous plans and I have to say that sometimes I managed to prevent Mikhail Gorbachyov from some unreasoned decisions. But I was unable to dissuade Yegor Ligachev, my major opponent, from his anti-alcohol campaign that did so harm to the republics which cultivated grape, including Azerbaijan: the entire plantations were rooted out, the plants were stopped."

Aliev behaved in an independent manner, he did not adjust to the General Secretary's changeable mood, and he stood his ground if he was sure of its correctness and so he turned out to be useless for Gorbachyov and his surrounding.

Among activities that Aliev suggested in the frames of the International Year of Youth, there was a contest of works made by the technical school students. The exhibition of these works was

opened at the VDNKh (The Exhibition of the National Economy Achievements–*the Translator's note*). During the preparation period they received Ligachev's directive: the event should be held under the aegis of the Central Committee. Alexander Timofeevich Gavrilov recollects:

– It was the opening of the exhibition. Yuri Petrovich Batalin made a speech... At that moment Aliev decided to add something... Ligachev turned to him with something like–'why do you interfere? Batalin is a speaker; we don't need any other speakers. One of the Politburo Members to the other... In public... When I heard this remark of Ligachev (I don't give it here in exact wording, but the sense is rendered exactly, I promise), I was ashamed. Anyway Aliev was the Member of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee like himself, the First Deputy Chairman of the Union Government! Even if he had not had all these posts?! What wrong could be done if had added Batalin's report with some words?

– They must have already condemned Aliev in the Politburo? – we asked Gavrilov.

– Yes, must be so, –he answered with confidence. – Gorbachyov, Ligachev and Yakovlev did it...

Alexander Timofeevich remembers one rather specific episode connected with his own biography. The Head of Aliev's Secretariat did not like Gavrilov's independence and the fact that he had a direct access to the boss omitting him, the head. In general sparkles–taking into account all Gavrilov's tact– sometimes flashed out between them. Alexander Timofeevich even asked his friends to find another job for him. Yakovlev heard the rumors of it and he asked Gavrilov:

"How are you there? How do you get on with him?"

"We get on well with him, –Gavrilov answered, realizing that his interlocutor tried to avoid names. –I have troubles with his surrounding."

– I sensed that Yakovlev did not like my answer, –Gavrilov tells on. –He must have expected to receive a bad response about Aliev from me. But I had good business-like relations with him and I did not intend to speak low of him.

"Don't worry, –Yakovlev finished the conversation. –We will find a place for you in the sphere of ideology."

Then the events developed as follows. Gavrilov was offered the post of the Sector Chief at the Propaganda Department of the Party Central Committee, but.... Yakovlev told Gavrilov that he did not want to call *him* (Aliev): 'You will submit your resignation and leave and we will take you then.'

"I will not do that, –Gavrilov answered.

We have a talk at his small office on the fourth floor of the *Rossiyskaya gaseta*. On the desk covered with books and page-proofs of new issues there is hardly place for two cups of coffee.

– I think, –continues Gavrilov. –Aliev came at Brezhnev's times, but by Andropov's recommendation. He was Brezhnev's favorite as well as Shevardnadze. But what is more important the choice was made by Andropov. He was immediately assigned to transport like Dzerzhinsky at his time, to bring order to the industry. He paid transport exclusive attention and got on with the Minister of Railways Konarev very well. They had very good camaraderie even friendly relationships. Gorbachyov, Ligachev, Yakovlev did not need such people. It was a terrible situation…

Once Winston Churchill compared political struggle in the Soviet Union with some bulldogs fighting under the carpet. Gorbachyov and Yakovlev formed their own team by the methods that were comprehensible for them. And Ligachev–most likely– was produced some documents discrediting Aliev and he joined the strong.

– I think that Aliev played a very positive role. He followed rigorously administrative moral norms and he never tried to trip up Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov. They worked hand in hand."

The attack against Aliev was prepared gradually. And as it happens most often in big politics it was done with somebody else's hands. And it was disguised with outwardly noble impulses.

At the beginning of 1987 one the authors of this book worked in the newspaper *Socialist Industry*. Once on returning from the meeting in the CPSU Central Committee the editor-in-chief summoned the editorial team: we are given a task to find out what is going on in Baku, in Azerbaijan (Aliev was the Member of the Politburo yet, but the attack was being prepared.) There was a series of critical publications in the Party press. Among them there were some materials in the *Socialist Industry*. It was an indirect strike at Aliev although the newspaper printed reasonable articles on social problems of the big city and gave true worth estimation to the USSR Soviet of Minister's decree "On Further Development of the Baku City Economy for the Period of 1985-1990" adopted at Aliev's initiative.

The tenth of May 1987 was a Sunday. On Monday the workers of his Secretariat congratulated Geidar Alievich on his birthday. Yet they felt a bit at a loss congratulating him. As there were no letters or telegrams from Gorbachyov or the Politburo among the correspondence. Nobody called from Staraya Square.

– I thought to myself, –tells Alexander Gavrilov, –well, they have decided to get rid of him. But it was his birthday! He is a human being, your comrade and even companion-in-arms as you say. You have been together for so many years; he is the Member of the Politburo, the First Deputy Chairman of the Government. But Gorbachyov did not send his congratulation and the surrounding kept silence. Konarev was the first to congratulate him on that day, an exceptional man. However, later when we passed him some documents Aliev mentioned as if by chance that Gorbachyov called him to his car phone on the previous day and congratulated. But it is very likely that there was no such call, we will never know the truth now.

On that Monday Geidar Alievich felt unwell. The doctor came, checked him and said it was necessary to take him to hospital at once. Aliev refused.

– I have no right not to take you to hospital. You have your responsibilities–I have mine. I vigorously insist on your hospitalizing.

Geidar Alievich attempted to walk to the ambulance car himself, but gave up in the corridor. He was carried farther on the stretcher.

In hospital the leaders of Azerbaijan–Bagirov, Seidov, visited Aliev. The Minister of Railways Konarev dropped in. What about his companions-in-arms from the Politburo? Were they not acquainted with common human feelings? Was their world ruled by gains exclusively? It seemed to be the case. Only Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov came to see Aliev in the hospital. He remembers:

– Years later Aliev confessed to me: To my shame I thought that Nikolai Ivanovich came only to make my pill a bit sweeter. I remember that I saw off someone of foreign Premiers, called the hospital to find out if there were no medical procedures at that time and decided to come. He was very glad and later confessed that misjudged my intentions.

Gorbachyov set a goal: to clear up the room around himself. And Ligachev helped him actively. They smoothed the ground step by step. It was not good. It was dishonorable.

Nikolai Ivanovich has a story that got stuck in his mind.

– The flat for Aliev's son or daughter was necessary. I hardly knew his family, I met his wife a couple of times, my wife, Lyudmila, knew her better. In short, someone, either his son or his daughter needed a flat. And we made a decision–to give a flat in

the new house next to the current “President” hotel, it was “Oktyabrskaya” hotel earlier. It was the Central Committee house, the Central Committee Administration and the Sovmin exchanged flats and generally worked together in this sphere. In a word, the flat was allocated and suddenly Aliev came to us: “We got the refusal”. I called Kruchina to the Central Committee Administration: “Nikolai Ivanovich, what are you doing?” He was confused. “Listen, it is dishonorable. Aliev was the Member of the Politburo only yesterday, he is still the First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and his family has already packed to move. We came to Moscow together with you, together worked in the Central Committee.” “Of course, Nikolai Ivanovich, I understand, don’t I?” “What then?” I immediately called Smirtyukov. In the end the matter was settled...

– It must have been someone besides Kruchina and Smirtyukov that put obstacles.

– Surely... There was one more occasion. It was after Aliev’s dismissal, we sat for three hours and talked in a very candid manner. I said, that there were some papers in my safe... I looked through them...

– Nikolai Ivanovich, I know who wrote them. You have such papers, so does Gorbachyov, and Yakovlev... It is revenge of dishonest people.

During that long and warm conversation over cups of tea Nikolai Ivanovich asked his interlocutor about that famous ring. Everybody who saw TV report from Baku on the last visit of the General Secretary remembered how Leonid Ilyich admired the ring.

– Geidar Alievich, there were rumors that you handed over a ring with a diamond to Brezhnev. He sat in the Presidium and twisted this ring. All the spotlights were on him and we saw shining rays.

– Nikolai Ivanovich, it is gossip, –Aliev answered. –What did I need it for? – He took out a magazine. In the cover there was Brezhnev’s plane. Geidar, Brezhnev and other officials walked off the stairway. Behind them there was the head of the security, the General. –I entered the plane as it was customary for the host, invited Brezhnev: “Leonid Ilyich, come, please.” It was a tradition then. Do you really suppose that I thrust a ring to him inside the plane? Look carefully: the ring was already on Brezhnev’s finger. He arrived with it. Could I be as idiotic as to invite the guest to step on Azerbaijanland, thrusting a gift on him at the same time?

– In general the conversation was very frank, –concludes Ryzhkov. –I believed him, and a couple of days later I went to Gorbachyov with this file. We met almost every day, occasionally two-three times a day. The General Secretary saw the file and said cheerfully: "I have the similar one." "Mikhail Sergeyevich, I talked to Aliev." –"Well?" –"I think we should put these papers in the furthest corner and forget about them." I did so to my file–I did not have any actions taken on them. I don't know what Gorbachyov did to his file.

The General Secretary did not forget about these papers. A big case was prepared. 'The trial will be better than that on Rashidov,' Gorbachyov's assistant Chernyaev quotes his words. There was no trial. There could not be any trial, as "the facts turned out to be nonsense." Yakovlev came to this conclusion after numerous inspections and commissions. Pugo, the Chairman of the Party Control Committee, reported to him: 'there are no grounds to take institute proceedings.

Alexander Nikolayevich Yakovlev eagerly calls upon Bolsheviks to recant for their real or supposed sins in public. But he does not recant himself for his sins, for example, for harsh treatment of Aliev and his family, as if he had nothing to do with it.

"You see, Artem, I am glad that Zarifa did not witness the disgrace I was forced to suffer when I was dismissed from the Politburo."

Geidar Alievich said this to Artem Borovik, the talented journalist that died in the air crash. Vagif Mustafaev recorded Artem's evidence. In the same film Borovik told as Geidar Alievich called Shevardnadze (the MGIMO (the Moscow State Institute of International Relations.–*Translator's note*), where Ilkham worked, was under his command as the Minister of Foreign Affairs) and asked: "Leave the man alone. Why do you bludgeon him on the head?" "Yet Ilkham was dismissed," continued Artem Borovik. "And he supported the father and the family at that time. This is family that has been beaten and suffered a lot.

...After Aliev's dismissal the journalists inquired Ryzhkov:

– You worked with him; he was a bad man, wasn't he?

– And if I tell that he was a good man, will you not write that? You are not interested in it, are you? I told everyone then and I will repeat again that I will not throw stones at this person. Yes, we worked together. And he worked well.

Ryzhkov remembers one episode at the 'Vnukovo' airport:

– I was sitting over a cup tea waiting for departure. A strange Azerbaijanian man came to me: "Nikolai Ivanovich, let's have a glass of Champaign. I would like to have a drink with you to our Geidar. You are the only person who did not throw a stone at him, did not follow the other's example."

But this meeting took place much later. Meanwhile Gorbachyov shuffled his cards–he changed his surrounding for the second or for the third time.

Once it was turn of Yevgeny Maximovich Primakov, the Member of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee, and later of the Presidential Council. The Academician occupied the same office in the Kremlin that was previously occupied by Aliev. Telling about the events of 1991, Primakov writes:

"After the 28th Congress of the CPSU I focused on work at the Presidential Council. I did not only deal with external economic activity but supervised some issues that were beyond its frames. My relations with Mikhail Sergeyevich were perfect, I could raise rather sharp problem before him, which, in my opinion, required solution. But raising those issues created certain tension. I will admit that I was mostly worried, even irritated, with lack of determination when it came to strengthening the power of law." But let us emphasize that it was the very essence of Gorbachyov. To Primakov's considerations he responded in a way like that "in the hard period of transition to a new society he wanted to avoid civil commotion–they could have been provoked by decisive measures aimed at bringing order to the country as a whole." Primakov thought that Gorbachyov's words were true only partially: "Or to be more accurate the intentions were justified but nor the possible results of refusing to take such actions, which finally was proved by the putsch arranged by the GKChP (The State Commission on the State of Emergency–*the Translator's note*.)'

This tense conversation between them Gorbachyov finished with the phrase: "I feel that you don't fit into the mechanism."

Many years before Stalin uttered Gorbachyov a similar phrase about his recent companions-in-arms: they fell out of the cart at the steep turning point... Those fell out, these did not fit... It was Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin in particular that Mikhail Sergeyevich did not want to look like for the world. However considering all the difference of their characters and actions both of them got rid of their opponents. Though those of Stalin's

finished their lives in camps at best, while those of Gorbachyov's– were merely caught by infarctions like Aliev or Ryzhkov.

Nikolai Ivanovich met Gorbachyov face to face many times, trying to persuade him that his economic course was ushering the country towards the dead-end.

– At the last meetings of the Politburo shouting and dirty words were heard, –remembers he. –We stood wall against wall. We cursed each other to the face. After one such meeting I called Gorbachyov: it cannot go on that way. The invited people come to the Politburo meetings, they spread rumors all over Moscow, how we seize each other's breasts here. We are humans and it is impossible to get to sleep after such Politburo meetings. Mikhail Sergeyevich suggested meeting on the following day, on Saturday. Though I always worked on Saturdays, he did not. So we met... When we finished our talk I understood that Raisa Maximovna was in the next room.

– I got assured that our positions conflict on the principle basis. Medvedev was with him, Yakovlev was with him... They were the people who did not do anything in their life, they did not even read the books that were signed by their names, and they did not drive a rusty nail."

Geidar Alievich Aliev, as our interviewees suppose, coped– and coped well!–with all the huge work load that he carried on in the Sovmin and in the Central Committee. Two golden stars of the Hero of Socialist Labor (the second in Andropov's time) were adequate evaluation of his work. He often quoted Chekhov's words: 'Work is essential all the rest will get enclosed.' And in hospital as soon as he felt better he resumed work. He invited Ministers, Heads of Services that he supervised to the meetings. His assistants jot down his assignments and returning to the Sovmin they noticed their colleagues' sympathetic looks.

– We were looked at like the drowned, –Alexander Gavrilov inferred.

Filipp Denisovich Bobkov saw anything during his long life in securities and in big politics; he knew how liking and disliking were formed at the Olympus, which complicated conspiracies and which unions were designed–who made friends against whom, who was drowned or according to modern terminology–was got wet. His opinion on Gorbachyov's attitude towards Aliev is flat:

– It was absolutely negative attitude. Utterly! In contrast to Andropov's attitude towards Aliev, which was very nice. Andropov was not afraid of strong people with independent mind,

he appreciated them and promoted. While Gorbachyov was scared with such people and tried to get rid of them–Aliev, Romanov, Yeltsin, Ryzhkov, Batalin...

After Yeltsin's excommunication from the Politburo Gorbachyov offered him the post of the First Deputy Chairman of the Gosstroi–a Minister post. Yeltsin did not expect such a gift–the USSR Minister! And he agreed at once. Gorbachyov remarked: "But I will not let you in politics again." He considered himself to be all-powerful yet: 'I will not let!' He moved people like chessmen on the chessboard. But he was losing the country at that moment.

Did he think about the country, though? Yet he liked to repeat the words from a popular song: "Long live the native country..."

...Yuri Petrovich Batalin recollects one of his last meetings with Aliev in Moscow:

– It was after his dismissal in hospital in Michurinsky Prospect. We exchanged warm greetings as usual, started talking. Geidar Alievich's sight was far from the best at that time–he got much thinner and looked exhausted. We went aside and took seats. He uttered a phrase that I remembered. I cannot quote it exactly but the meaning was as following: they haven't done with me, I've managed to survive and I'll get out. By the way he spoke it, it was clear that he did not only mean his physical condition. According to rumors they intended to dispose of him, but could not.

It is time to wonder: Whom did Aliev hinder so much even after his dismissal? Moscow arbiters of our fate? Aliev saw Gorbachyov and Yakovlev's genuine guises and opposed them. But in their case the matter was most likely limited to unobtrusive control of security services: listening-in and some similar things. Might it be forces that strove for power in Azerbaijan? Aliev often told, including his Armenian friends in Moscow–in particular, the Deputy Minister of Construction Enterprises for Oil and Gas Industry Arakelian: "If I were in Azerbaijan at that time, neither Karabakh nor Sumgait would have happened."

– That is true, –adds Yuri Petrovich Batalin. –I am sure of it. Aliev was able to stop the war in Karabakh. The negotiations started. I can understand how difficult those negotiations were. But regardless of how long they were they were better than the war.

The writer Albert Likhanov turned out to be in hospital in Michurinsky Prospect at the same time with Aliev.

– The connoisseurs of political relations considered it dangerous for themselves to contact Aliev then, –tells Albert

Anatolyevich. –But I decided to see him. Ilkham was with Geidar Alievich at the moment and he seemed disappointed with something. Ilkham stood up and left tactfully and we started talking and gradually got so involved in the conversation that talked till late evening.

Likhanov was stunned with the ward, where Aliev was put ("tiny ward" in his words), it was very small and miserable.

– Even I had a better ward. And one of the ruling authorities that I also dropped in had a luxurious suite with its own kitchen and buffet. I got very offended on Aliev's part.

In that long winter evening Aliev was very openhearted.

– He remembered Nakhichevan, his family, how he began, how he made his life. It was obvious how these recollections carried him along, –remarks Likhanov. –Then we came to the current events... Aliev said, that he was delivered a blow and named Gorbachyov immediately. He said, how he, Aliev, was betrayed, which was characteristic of our whole history, though... He spoke fearing nothing without any reservations although, of course, there were listening devices there.

After that talk we arranged going for a walk in the evenings. I remembered him shocked by injustice, but undefeated... Geidar Alievich was a very strong person, a brilliant organizer.

All his life he was faithful to the cause, to the Party. And he was offended for no reason. He worked with total devotion.

One of the tsars of Alexandria asked Euclid if there was an easy way to learn geometry.

"There is no tsar path in geometry", –answered Euclid.

– There is no tsar path in governance either, –Aliev liked to add. –It is necessary to study. And the one whose ambitions exceed his knowledge and abilities always suffers a defeat.

Chapter 7
"I AM NOT A STONE OR IRON, I AM A MAN"

October 19, 1987, Moscow

In the Kremlin the session of the USSR Supreme Soviet opened. In the Presidium there were heads of the Supreme Soviet Chambers, the Government, the Members of the Politburo.

"From time to time someone might come in, someone might go out, –remembered Geidar Alievich about that day. –Gorbachyov sat in front of me. I saw him stand up and go out. A bit later Ligachev stood up, nodded to Ryzhkov to follow him to the room of the Presidium. We used to gather before the meeting and have some tea in intervals there. Some time later they invited me.

Gorbachyov started the conversation with me, saying that in his opinion I had to leave the Politburo and the Sovmin. I answered that I didn't see any reasons why I should leave and that I didn't think it was right. But if they considered it necessary I would not object. "Then you have to get us know if you leave by your own will or due to illness."

During the interval I went home. My son and daughter were at home. I explained the situation to them. They were very kind! They said: "Father, don't worry, it's life..."

In the evening I came to Gorbachyov to say that I was leaving. 'Yes, I am leaving and you may say that I am leaving because of the condition of my health. He stood up, embraced me, kissed and said: 'Thank you very much, Geidar Alievich!'

They knew each other for nearly two decades by that time. They met at the Plenary Meetings of the Party Central Committee, at the sessions of the Supreme Soviet... In 1972 Geidar Alievich had a rest with his family in Pyatigorsk. Once out of the blue Gorbachyov called and said he would like to visit him, to see how he enjoyed his holiday. He came and invited him to Karachaevo-Cherkessia. The First Secretary of the Stavropol Territory Committee of the CPSU did not endow with such attention all the Secretaries and Ministers who came for rest in his patrimony.

Special attention to the top authorities, of course: Brezhnev, Andropov, and Kosygin... Once Mikhail Sergeyevich said as if by chance a phrase that he prepared long in advance:

– It is impossible to form the Politburo of elderly people exclusively. Any good forest should have undergrowth.

Andropov liked this flattering image with a hint. And when Gorbachyov–not without his help–was elected to the Politburo, congratulating his new colleague, Yuri Vladimirovich remembered the saying:

– Well, "undergrowth" goes ahead!

And Aliev supported this choice of Andropov: "I had a positive opinion of Gorbachyov. Although, –continued Geidar Alievich, –after election for the post of the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee he changed very much. It was not only my opinion, many other Members of the Politburo thought the same". But it was a long way to this election yet.

During that trip to Karachaevo-Cherkessia they get to know each other better, made friends. "I liked Geidar Alievich", – remembered Gorbachyov the start of their acquaintance. –He was a very intelligent person who could carry out a dialogue both at the very high level and at the very simple. And I was fond of such approach too. So we hit it off." "It was beginning of our friendship and our kind relations", –added Aliev.

...The Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee followed the session of the Supreme Soviet. On October 22 the newspapers published the communication: "The Plenary Meeting satisfied comrade G.A. Aliev's request to relieve him of the duties of the Member of the Politburo and let him retire because of the condition of his health."

It was not a surprise for those who were consecrated to the Kremlin secrets. Aliev like Kosygin a few years before was "cleansed" by the doctors: Geidar Alievich, you'd better retire, the health doesn't allow you to experience such pressure any more. Very tactful by nature the patient could not bear their pressure any more: Your task is to treat me and how I will live further, if I will work or nor is no concern of yours!

On leaving hospital he gradually returned to the working rhythm. He studied materials of the Teachers' Congress that was conceived with his participation; he sent his notes for the Meeting of the Central Committee devoted to the radical transformation of the economy management. At the end of June the radical transformation (less could not become these leaders' objective) was discussed at the Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee. Kunaev was removed from the Politburo; Zimyanin

was relieved of the duties of the Secretary of the Central Committee. Alexander Nikolayevich Yakovlev was elected the Member of the Politburo. Aliev just hemmed: What a pace! In January he was elected the Candidate-member of the Politburo, half a year later–the Member...

In early September Aliev came back to work. There was everyday routine–meetings in the Central Committee and in the Council of Ministers. On September 18, the Members of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee G.A. Aliev, N.I. Ryzhkov, and N.N. Slyunkov visited the exhibition "Chemistry-87". Aliev noticed by various details how Gorbachyov's attitude towards him changed. "I felt it was changing gradually, –he said in the documentary film "Story of One Envy" by Vagif Mustafaev. –Before that we had warm relationships.

Story of One Envy

Gorbachyov stated in this film, candidly looking in the camera, that Aliev's resignation "was connected with the condition of his health. And I have to say it was a great pressure of the republic. Great pressure... By his position, being in Moscow, he was a hindrance for the republic. And I came to this conclusion.

I don't think that there was any bloodthirstiness or squaring of accounts, which was even less possible. We treated him very kindly. Nobody trampled him down or humiliated. I am not interested in and it is not my business what is said around. I am sure my conscience is clean."

The reader is already aware how Aliev was dismissed. Having read how he was dealt with you can make your own conclusion on whose conscience is clean and whose is not. First question that Mikhail Sergeyevich asked Mustafaev was how many series he was going to make about Aliev.

– Twelve.

– Twelve! –the ex-General Secretary and the ex-President marvelled. –Gensher (the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the FRG. –*Auth.*) and I shot only one film about me.

– It is your problem, –replied the film director tiredly.

He pressed Gorbachyov for three years to get his agreement to participate in shooting. At last he received a call from Moscow: 'Mikhail Sergeyevich has given consent. He waits for you. You have ten minutes for shooting.'

Mustafaev and his cameraman made for Moscow immediately. He hardly left the plane when there was a call on his mobile telephone: “Mikhail Sergeyevich can not meet with you.”

Can you imagine the film director’s feelings... He approached the Azerbaijanian Embassy when at the monument to Nizami one more calls reached him: “Mikhail Sergeyevich has consented!”

...We entered the building of ‘Gorbachyov-fund’ in Leningradsky Prospect not far from the city air station. The aquarium caught the eyes.

– Here we will shoot, –said Vagif.

In the first stills it is reserved and even impassive conversation on topics of general interest. But then Mustafaev directly asks why the General Secretary removed Aliev. “Gorbachyov gets nervous, –remembers Vagif, –anxiety passes to the cameraman, and camera starts shaking in his hands... And there are lots of questions we have to ask yet.”

One of them was connected with Ilkham, Geidar Alievich’s son, the lecturer at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (the MGIMO). He was forced to resign. Gorbachyov said, that he first heard of that.

“Story of One Envy” was shown at the cinema festival in Yekaterinburg, the film received the Grand Prix. When Gorbachyov said that he first heard about this episode in the MGIMO, a loud female voice sounded all over the auditorium: ‘He lies everything, this Gorbachyov!”

And fish behind his back fawned and fawned.

According to the Head of his Personal Security General Medvedev the General Secretary was characterized with weak will and inconsistency. He constantly shuffled his political surrounding, abandoning both the left and the right. And Geidar Alievich got in that stonemill.

Vladimir Medvedev was the General of the USSR KGB, for many years he was the Head of L.I. Brezhnev’s (for 14 years) and M.S. Gorbachyov’s (for 6 years) Personal Security, for two years and a half he served at the Reserve Department of the Ninth Directorate of the KGB that was responsible for security of heads of high-ranking delegations. In this capacity he twice prepared Geidar Aliev’s visits–the first was to Vologda and Cherepovets, the second–to Vietnam.

Of course, Aliev remembered Vladimir Timofeevich from their previous encounters, including the one in Baku where the General came together with Brezhnev. On listening to the protocol report on the visit preparation, he asked in a friendly way, how he was doing and how he liked his new job.

"I knew that Aliev was in good standing with Brezhnev, – remembers General Medvedev. –I also knew that he was elected to the Politburo of the Central Committee by Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov's recommendation.

Aliev was going to visit the metallurgic plant in Vietnam. Vladimir Medvedev was the first to go along the route of the Head of the Soviet delegation. In the pile of scrap metal near the open-hearth furnace he noticed some shells. The hosts refused to take them away, saying they were not dangerous.

"When Geidar Alievich arrived, –tells Medvedev, –I certainly reported him on the shells and asked if it was possible to cancel the visit to the plant. But it is not in Aliev's character to cancel anything. "It is out of the question, –he answered. –People are waiting for us there, we have to go." He was always like that. By the way his attitude towards his own security was–I would not call it careless with bravado, no–it was of minor importance to him."

It will be interesting to give here one more evidence of this kind–that of the journalist Elmira Akhundova. Among the others she accompanied the President in one of the foreign business trips. Shortly before in July 1995 only the lucky chance saved the plane in which Aliev returned after visiting Bulgaria and Rumania. Some people were openly afraid of a new terrorist attack. And then right in the salon of the plane when he had answered Elmira's questions, Geidar Alievich added: "Don't get scared, nothing will happen to me. Allah saves me because he knows–my people need me yet."

It is pity that even Allah could not protect this man from the Party crafty designs.

We have yet to tell how deeply and accurately Geidar Aliev's personality was assessed by Nursultan Nazarbaev, to remember how grew ripen and exploded Karabakh... But now let us turn back to the 27th Congress of the CPSU, where Geidar Aliev, the personal pensioner of the national standing, was elected the Member of the Central Committee. The biography profile listed his party and state positions up to the last one (by that time): "From October 1987 to November 1988 the Counsellor of State at the USSR Council of Ministers."

It was a post of honor. The forces came back. He as usual came to work by 8:30 to his small office but he felt more and more acutely: no one needed his advice there.

He remained the Counsellor of State at the USSR Sovmin and the Member of the CPSU Central Committee for a short time. Then he was relieved of these "loads" as well. In the opinion of the authoritative and wise politician Alexander Sergeyevich

Dzasokhov, the President of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania: “Aliev was treated unfairly.”

Once after the dismissal Geidar Alievich asked the Head of ‘his’ Secretariat to select some materials for him. In reply he heard an abusive phrase: “ You don’t work here any more.”

Then Alexander Gavrilov volunteered to sort out the necessary papers. But the vigilant Head was on him at once:

– Who do you prepare that for?

– For Aliev.

– Remember: he does not work here any more!

Yet Alexander Timofeevich disobeyed his boss. ‘It would be inhuman otherwise,’ he judged.

It was a small touch of decency against the background of grovellers’ baseness.

He had to move to another country-house–“it was some wooden hut”, –Likhanov remarks angrily. –Well, Geidar Alievich did not provide for his own mansion, so he had to settle down in “a wooden hut”. The security was withdrawn–never mind. But why did they call off the housemaid that cleaned and cooked–he was after the infarction, after the wife’s death. They humiliated him abominably, pettily.

A noteworthy situation at the Kremlin Palace of Congress comes to my mind. Party Secretaries, Ministers, big Military Bosses flooded the lobby during the interval... They formed small groups, greeted one another loudly, embraced the ones they did not see for a long time. But they carefully bypassed one person diverting eyes from him. It was Geidar Alievich Aliev, not the Member of the Politburo, not the First Deputy Chairman of the Sovmin any more. Only yesterday this public twisted around to pay their respect, to fly by as if by chance before the eyes, to remind of themselves: there is such Dobchinsky-Bobchinsky.

Having seen enough of this humiliating scene, Viktor Polyanichko could not bear it any more and invited one of the authors of this book:

– Vitya, let’s go and have a talk with Geidar Alievich.

We came to him and saw how his eyes flashed gratefully.

That occasion at the Palace was just a beginning of estrangement, just a prelude of baiting Aliev had to go through yet. Then he did not know yet, that his pupils would betray him, promotes, and friends from the closest circle. “I think the most frightening thing that can happen to a person is to get deceived in people, –he told. And the following phrase escaped his breast: –... You know, there was much injustice performed in relation to me. But I am a human being, I am neither a stone nor iron, I am a man!”

It was the emotional outburst, maybe, a single one for years of severe and unjust disfavor, when his wounded soul opened itself. Geidar Alievich told nobody else about it. The strong have to hold their grief inside, burning their hearts out. And only cardiograms know what megawatts of will these picks and curves have been paid with.

Repeating time and again about new thinking in fact Gorbachyov acted in a traditional way: he had done with his predecessors. Khrushchev overthrew Stalin, Brezhnev–Khrushchev, Gorbachyov –Brezhnev... Every leaving epoch received a black mark: cult of a personality, voluntarism, and stagnation... Yes, it was necessary to reject some old practices, learn lessons from the past in order to prevent new mistakes. But to destroy everything indiscriminately–it is too much.

Harsh Treatment

In the Soviet times there was a popular Stalin's formula: the personnel decides everything. Gorbachyov started to get rid of the personnel–Kunaev, Aliev, Shcherbitsky, and then in April 1989 he removed over a hundred comrades from the Central Committee and designated, as it was revealed very soon, renegades in their places.

In Baku Bagirov was dismissed–only because once Aliev recommended him. He recommended him exclusively due to Kyamran Mamed ogly's business and personal qualities. He had an extensive work and party experience: a mechanic, an engineer, a Dean, a Deputy Chief Executive of the Trust, the Head of Construction and Utility Department of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR, the First Secretary of the Sumgait City Party Committee, the Secretary of the Central Committee... In general opinion, he was an honest, decent man of firm principles. He would not allow himself to offend Aliev even with suspicion. But Aliev recommended him. And the case was being fabricated against Aliev.

Inspired articles from the central press were immediately reprinted by Baku periodicals–in the Russian and Azerbaijani languages. In spite of the widely proclaimed glasnost and pluralism of opinion it was no way to reply to accusation and libel. In Baku Aliev's brothers–Gasan, Agil and Djalal were persecuted. Agil Aliev, the Head of the Political Economy Chair of the Medical Institute, the Doctor of Economy, was sacked from the Institute on the day of his birthday, on 10 December 1988. A

couple of years before Agil Aliev was honored at the same Institute, many kind and respectful words were said and memorable addresses were handed over. Now they are kept in his office as a good reminder of honor and disgrace. For two years the well-known scientist, the author of numerous scientific articles, researches and treatises could not find a job.

Academician Djalal Aliev, the outstanding biologist, wrote in his book, published in 1999:

"The last decade ploughing the field of our life with a heavy plough made me an old and experienced man absolutely certain of how ephemeral our ideas may turn out in relation to stability of the society whose integral part we are and in relation to inevitability of the truth's victory over the lie, and certain of how fragile people and the peoples" wellbeing is, if due to their folly, flippancy or naivety they entrust their destiny to adventurers and hypocrites who are ready to sacrifice anything for the sake of their own gain and vanity.

As many others I was involved in politics without any intention to deal in it. Now I have realized the justice of the statement that if you are not going to deal in politics it will deal with you.'

Politics got the Academician in the laboratory, reached him in the experimental field where he together with his colleagues cherished new sorts of wheat. The scientist courageously came to defence of his brother's honor, of the entire family's dignity. He sent dozens of letters to all the authorities–to the General Office of Public Prosecutor of the USSR and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, to editorial offices of central and republican newspapers, to the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party, to the CPSU Central Committee, to the Politburo...

In return he received just formal replies. Only *Smena* magazine (No. 19, 1988) apologized before Geidar Aliev.

"The article "...And One Night" (*Smena*, No. 15, p.18) said that being in Baku L.I. Brezhnev accepted a luxurious ring from Aliev. As the editorial office does not possess any documentary evidence concerning this episode, we bring apology to G.A. Aliev and our readers."

Karabakh

On February 18, 1988, Gorbachyov appointed Georgy Khosroevich Shakhnazarov, a political scientist, for the position of his new secretary. Practically on the same day Armenian writer

and publicist Zoriy Balayan forced himself to be received by him. "I knew him by interesting articles in the *Literaturnaya gaseta*, – Shakhnazarov writes in his book "Price of Freedom", –so I responded with pleasure to his suggestion of a meeting, without suspecting that he would speak about Karabakh. But my guest was worried only with this. Looking closely into a thin tanned face with narrow extraordinary black–even for a man from the South– eyes, one could understand that reunification of Karabakh and Armenia became for this man not just a dream but the cause of his life and death.

Further Shakhnazarov complains: "Nothing could persuade them of the necessity to strive for compromise decisions. The hour struck, now or never! –This slogan rendered the task formulated by the national self-consciousness, whose spokesmen were Balayan, Ter-Petrosyan and their companions-in-arms."

Doesn't it concern the assistant to the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, "Russian Armenian from Karabakh, born in Baku" as he wrote about himself? Doesn't he have to be among the first to make his countrymen "to strive for compromise decisions"? No, he gave the General secretary Balayan's request to receive him together with the woman-poet Silva Kaputikyan. "This meeting took place on February 26 and was of great importance for the subsequent events", –points out Georgy Shakhnazarov.

In Azerbaijan as well as all over the country people knew about this meeting from TV news. They expected that the General Secretary would receive the representatives of Azerbaijan intelligentsia as well. But he did not do that. General Bobkov was in Karabakh at that time. He tells:

– I assured myself how much Aliev did for development of the Autonomous Region, for strengthening national relations. And even the first outbursts did not end up in a conflict. I will give two simple examples.

On 22 February 1988 I had to be on the road from Stepanakert to Agdam. There was a crowd of instigated people. An old woman met them halfway and threw an Azerbaijan scarf under their feet. They stopped. They turned back. What does it say about?

The second example. On the same day in the same district Armenians shot two Azerbaijan men. Just imagine what could have happened if people in surrounding places had known about it? We addressed Azerbaijan people, assembled the most respected people. "Let's', –I say, –step over this sorrow, over this loss." They agreed with us. They buried the perished without inflaming sparkles of hatred out of this accident.

In Stepanakert during one of the rallies some instigators brought coffins. An actress of the regional theatre, an Armenian, unfortunately I don't remember her name now, was standing next to me. She stood against those instigators with desperate bravery. The provocation did not work.

It most likely was Knarik Pogosyan–she was written about in reports from Karabakh. At the same tine the 'Socialist Industry' told about the fact when the workers of the aluminium plant in Sumgait saved their comrades-Armenians from pogrom-makers. The Chief of the plant security Ismail Aliev brought entire families of workers and specialists to the plant–there they were under secure protection. Among those saved in that way was uncle Kostya with his family–at the plant everyone called master-caster Konstantin Aikazovich Martirosyan so. And he called Ismail his own brother.

Karabakh came out on the first pages of central newspapers and on the television screen in February 1988. The authorities of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region made a decision to withdraw from the Azerbaijan SSR. It turned out to be a fuse that put on fire a whole chain of ethnic conflicts.

"Demographic Encyclopaedic Dictionary" issued in Moscow in 1985 (the first year of Gorbachyov's rule and the last peaceful year in the Soviet Union) represents the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region as follows:

"It is situated in the south-east part of the Little Caucasus in the Azerbaijan SSR. The territory is 4.4 thousand sq. km. The population was 170 thousand people by 1983. The centre is the town of Stepanakert." (Renamed in 1923 in honor of Stepan Shaumyan, the member of the RSDRP since 1900, the Chairman of the Baku Soviet of People's Commissars, executed by shooting among the 26 Baku Commissars.)

Since the middle of the 18th century, the dictionary reminds, this territory, previously being under different Turk powers, became a part of the Karabakh khanate, founded in the territory of the central part of Azerbaijan. In 1805 the Karabakh khanate got under the authority of Russia. By the time when the conflict started alongside with Armenians, many Azerbaijanians, Russians and people of other nationalities lived in Nagorny Karabakh.

Economy, social infrastructure, culture of the Autonomous Region developed together with those of Azerbaijan. Plants and factories, water reservoirs were built, the Pedagogical Institute with teaching in the Armenian language was opened. In general the Autonomous Region exceeded Azerbaijan and Armenia in term of social-economic indices. Of course, there were problems

like everywhere else but they were solved to mutual consent of all the people living there. For example, two airlines were opened Stepanakert-Baku and Stepanakert-Yerevan and by the initiative of the First Secretaries of the Central Committees Aliev (Azerbaijan) and Demirchyan (Armenia) they were served in turn by Azerbaijanian and Armenian pilots.

June 28, 1988, Moscow

At the height of summer heat the 19th All-Union CPSU Conference opened in Moscow. Exhausted after their addresses, the delegates looked for some rest in the shade of the Kremlin's white birch trees, smoked and did not mince words in criticizing the General Secretary. The country was in turmoil while that conceited wood grouse could not stop commenting on "how to deepen and make the revolutionary perestroika irreversible…" He regarded the three previous years as a turning point of sorts–but what for? "Owing to the efforts of the party and the working people we've managed to stop the country's slide to crisis in the economic, social and spiritual spheres. The people have now a more clear understanding of their past, present and future." The General Secretary turned a deaf ear to those who had different opinion.

Speaking from the same rostrum on the following day, Yuri Bondarev compared perestroika to an airplane that had been launched having no idea whether there was a landing field at the point of destination or not. And that was exactly the case.

"It's only accord that will help us to build a landing field at the point of destination," Yuri Bondarev went on. "Only accord. However, just recently I heard the following reply of a young mechanic to my question about any changes in his life. "Has anything changed–you ask me? There is a kind of new thinking we have in our state farm: 'Who was a fool has now grown wise–shouting slogans; those who were clever seem to have become quite stupid–keeping mum, going in fear of newspapers. D'you know now the difference between man and a fly? You can kill both by striking with a newspaper. I said so–and they say I'm an enemy of perestroika." In this extremely venomous grassroots humor I could feel the man's irritation and anger disenchanted as he was by fictitious reforms at his work and I could also feel that a part of our press used perestroika as a means to destabilize the situation, revise our convictions and our morals. Abdurakhman Vezirov, the newly-elected first secretary of the CC of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, also spoke at the conference on

the same day saying that perestroika of Azerbaijan involved great difficulties what with the holdovers of the past.

– Distortions in the personnel policy, with promotion of its clan and area privileges, subservience, abuse of power have had an eroding effect on the socio-political and moral situation in the republic."

You could clearly feel Gorbachyov's political line in the first secretary's speech. Geidar Aliev would like to give a rebuff to the opponents, but who would offer him an opportunity to address the audience? Who would offer him to take control of the situation? No one. They hoped to put things to order by tightening the screws.

Now, let's have a look at the following three documents which were once top secret.

First, a memo to the CPSU CC "On Urgent Measures to Establish Law and Order in the Azerbaijan SSR and the Armenian SSR".

"*The development of events in the Azerbaijan and Armenian Union Republics around Nagorny Karabakh acquire an increasingly dangerous nature. Strikes are growing in scale and the number of unsanctioned meetings and demonstrations shows an upward trend. The speeches and actions of their participants are growing increasingly more aggressive and uncontrolled, and transform into popular unrest.*

"In the obtaining situation it is impossible to put an end to these anti-social actions by available legal measures.

"In this connection it would be necessary as a temporary measure to adopt a Decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet offering the opportunity to the forces entrusted with the maintenance of public order to isolate the organizers, instigators and active participants in such illegal actions.

"The draft resolution of the CPSU CC on this matter is appended.

"November 23, 1988

A. Yakovlev
V. Chebrikov
G. Razumovsky
A. Lukyanov"

In his sprawling handwriting Gorbachyov wrote on the letter: "In favor" (RGANI, f. 89, op. 4, d. 5, pp. 1-5).

The second document has the same date, November 23, Resolution of the CPSU CC "On Urgent Measures to Restore Public Order in the Azerbaijan SSR and the Armenian SSR": "To

approve the Draft Decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet on This Matter (Appended)" (RGANI, f. 3, op 102, d. 1058, pp. 22-26).

And finally, the draft Decree on Urgent Measures the motley foursome insisted on:

"*1. To grant the right to the officials of the bodies of internal affairs and of the internal troops, authorized by the USSR Minister of Internal Affairs to detain for a period of 30 days in administrative order in the areas or populated localities where curfew has been imposed persons inciting by their actions national strife or provoking disruption of public order or encouraging anti-social actions and also creating obstacles to individuals and officials to exercise their legitimate rights and discharge their duties.*

"2. To establish that persons detained in accordance with Article 1 of the present Decree are be kept according to the rules, introduced in keeping with the law for special reception centers of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs or in other premises determined by the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs.

"This Decree shall take effect from November 24, 1988."

So the draft became a Decree.

One of us, a Baku resident had a first-hand experience of these events; another flew from Moscow to Baku for a visit. Here are a few pages from his diary

Baku Diary

November 28, 1988.

Never before have I flown on a business trip across my native country with such an oppressive feeling. Never before have they seen me off like that at the editorial office. In the editorial office of a newspaper arrivals and departures are only natural. "Flying again, old boy?", they would drop in passing. "Where to?" And rush along without waiting for an answer. While now–it's different. Those who have visited the conflict zone regard it as their duty to share their impressions, while others are eager simply to talk "about Karabakh".

I try to put through a call to Baku in the minutes left before the departure. What is taking place there? My acquaintances among journalists, party activists whom I was lucky to talk to on the phone are at a loss: it's something unprecedented. Hundreds of thousands throng the square day and night. The plants are on strike. Djavanshir Melikov, *Socialist Industry* correspondent in

Azerbaijan, who flew to Baku a day before, adds: the oil refining complex is operating. The troops have been brought into the city.

At first sight everything is calm at the airport.

– Will you perhaps have a look at the departure hall? – Djavanshir who has met me asked.

The hall is filled to capacity. Women, children and old people. Bundles and bags. And–silence, stunning for such a multitude of people. Sullen silence–ready to explode. What makes these people depart? I don't know. So far I feel that I'm not in a position to ask them. I must see for myself what has happened with the city I like so much in the past year. Why did Kyamran Bagirov, who has set about his work so energetically, leave abruptly his post? What sensitive points are sore now? What new troubles have surfaced?

Knots, especially such sensitive ones as national, should be untied very carefully, with caution. The more so in the lands where the old and recent squabbles look like fires under a thin layer of ashes. If someone tries to revive the almost extinguished fire–it will flare up again.

They say that some four hundred or five hundred people have converged on the vast square. You can feel even physically that they catch eagerly every word uttered from the rostrum. The square is a barometer of sorts of public opinion. They urge the people to protect forbidden Topkhana where the Armenians are planning to build holiday-inns and apartment houses. To stand by Karabakh. Everybody should go on strike. In the evening I also often heard the words addressed to the Party Committee:

– Shame on the Nariman District Party Committee, which has forbidden the people to go on strike.

And the crowd echoes it loudly: "Shame! Shame! Shame!" Well, I should study first hand the situation at the District Party Committee, which received such publicity on the square.

November 30.

– I regard these appeals as approval of our work, –V.Kasumov, first secretary of the Nariman District Party Committee said to me.

Vagif Kasumov has been active in the past 12 hours. In the morning he stood at the entrance checkpoints of the electrical engineering plant. As a former worker and an experienced manager he decided to address the people on his own. He tried to convince some of them and make others feel confident once more and help still others to separate the truth from lies, to see the light amid the avalanche of rumors.

– An extraordinary situation shows at once the people's real value, –Karimov says. –In a few days you'll learn who is who.

Over 50 enterprises of the Nariman District, one of the Republic's largest, have launched the housing construction. And now all this has to be suspended.

The reasons are quite understandable. The Azelectromash production association, whose products are supplied to thousands of consumers across the USSR and in 40 foreign countries, has lost a million rubles of profit and it will lose another million rubles in fines. And the losses will increase by tens hundreds of times on the scale of the entire district and city. The social development fund of the Nariman District has lost 400,000 rubles, which means that 20 less apartments will be assigned to those on the waiting list.

It's eight o'clock in the evening. Members of the bureau of the District Party Committee, party committee secretaries and directors of enterprises have gathered at the first secretary's office. Not for any reports or briefings–they analyze the situation as they see it, exchange their observations and discuss tendencies. The picketers, who were trying to block the way to the plants, were given a rebuff. All enterprises in the region have resumed operation, true, not always at full capacity.

December 1.

I have an appointment today to be received by Viktor Petrovich Polyanichko, second secretary of the CC of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan. He has arrived in Baku quite recently, less than a month ago, and prior to that he spent four and a half years in Afghanistan. We met some thirty years ago, in our student days when we lived in the student hostel in Stromynka Street as students of the department of journalism of Moscow State University. I remembered him as a tall and energetic lad wearing his old military-type blouse. A superior man always attracts interest, and you try not to lose sight of him. That was how I felt about Polyanichko. I heard about his work in Orenburg, at the construction of the ore-dressing complex, described as a shock construction project, he supervised the work of the Komsomol headquarters sometimes from Moscow and at other times from Chelyabinsk… We met again in Ural when he held the post of first secretary of the Regional YCL (Young Communist League–Komsomol) Committee and I acted as *Komsomolskaya pravda*'s own correspondent. It's a pity that there were not many such Komsomol and party workers as he was.

It was 10:30 p.m. when the meeting participants left the office of the second CC secretary. Viktor appeared at the door and nodded to Djavanshir and me saying "Come in, boys." Leaving

his big table with heaps of paper, files and newspapers, he sat next to us and treated us to tea and candies. We had no time for recollections that evening, we switched at once to the current situation, as they used to say in old times.

– The situation is difficult but we are in control. The problems of Karabakh and of the rally on the square will be a thing of the past, while we Communists will have to face the people. That's what should be explained to everybody.

A sharp long-distance call interrupted the conversation.

– Dashkesan? Listening, Rauf Velievich. Thank you! That's the best information I've got today.

Viktor returned to the table and paused.

– Would you like some more tea?–I caught some hidden thought in his eyes, and suddenly he added vehemently quite out of context: I had no vacations for the past four years and a half, I even can't imagine how they are vacationing now. If I have a minute to spare I get into a corner and read a book. Not about war, of course. I am fed up with war…

We were silent for some time for fear of breaking this moment of sudden confession, well aware that it wouldn't have happened in a different situation…

The door creaked. Afrand Dashdamirov, head of the CC propaganda and agitation department, entered the office.

– Boys! Have a pity on Viktor Petrovich!

There were a lot of problems to resolve, urgent and very urgent among them. But Viktor was in his element talking about the funeral of an Afghan comrade, a party worker, in Herat. Nadjibullah spoke at his grave to the accompaniment of explosions, with the mines landing ever closer. Viktor asked Nadjibullah to retire under cover, but he would not agree. And as soon as the funeral ceremony was over and the cars drove away for some 100-200 meters, the next mine hit the grave. He will never forget those years.

– Well, what are the news, Afrand Firidunovich, –Polyanichko asked rising to meet Dashdamirov.

– The refugees are arriving in droves. It's the most important thing today.

As we drove from the CC building to the hotel the car was stopped by military patrols five times. At the last post, having inspected my editorial certificate, the young lieutenant asked me:

– Please, tell the truth, boys.

December 2.

"Refugees", this word seemed to have come from the old uneasy wartime reports to our days. Azerbaijanians are leaving

Armenia. Armenians are leaving Azerbaijan. Long lines are formed in Baku at Aeroflot ticket offices; the airport and the railway station are crammed with people. The whole families with all their belongings are fleeing and sometimes they even have no time to collect what they need. And ever more absurd rumors are spread outstripping them.

I came up to the Aeroflot ticket offices the day before. A small square space was fenced in at the entrance, with a military and a militia patrolmen and voluntary controllers inside it. The lists are with multi-digital numbers. Just like everywhere in Baku in these days, as soon as you start a conversation with somebody people surround you. There is tension in the air but the people try to speak calmly keeping in check those who get excited.

Who makes these people leave their homes? Who is spreading rumors? Threatens them?

The people are fleeing not from a natural disaster. The disaster, which makes them break friendly ties, is even more terrible than caused by nature.

– That's our common grief, –is the way the situation was assessed by Alexander Stepanovich Skorobogatov, a Russian turner from the Volga area for whom Azerbaijan has become a second native land. Next to him sitting in the administrative office were engineer A. Sukyasov, head of administration T. Eminov, and turner P. Kiselev...

– In wartime a Russian and an Armenian, an Uzbek and a Tatar were fighting in the same ditch. –Skorobogatov said. –We had the same enemy–the Nazis. And what's happening now? Someone would like us to regard one another as enemies. Who wants it? Is it I? Or you? You know, our work collective has rejected strikes. We are working just as before. But I take it to heart so much that I don't even want to go home. Just look at the workers' faces–they look so depressed. I take to heart these refugees' affairs as if they were my relations–Armenians and Azerbaijanians, all of them. This stupid migration agitates the people here and there. And the way out, I believe, is only this: let our authorities say firmly: comrades, stop, look back! There is no need for you to divide anything. Think about your children who will live on this land. Next to each other.

M. Manucharov, one of the leaders of the Krunk movement, who is director of the Stepanakert Building Materials Plant, was arrested in Nagorny Karabakh. Ten of his associates were arrested together with him.

– These people have transformed the Building Materials Plant and the Civil Services Bureau into a source of unearned income, –

said A.F. Katusev, deputy Procurator General of the USSR. –The degree of each man's guilt will be determined by court. We have now enough proofs for arraigning them on charges of misappropriation. I must stress that Manucharov and his associates made money on the people's grief by stealing expensive building materials, by taking bribes for the installment of monuments. This was their amoral credo: "If you wish to become rich make use of the people's grief."

So can you measure in terms of money the refugees' tears and grief? Whom shall we present this bill to?"

The USSR Supreme Soviet urges the working people of Armenia and Azerbaijan to show wisdom and self-control, to put aside their mutual complaints and accusations.

Will people heed these words? Will Kubinka* heed them?

December 3.

A narrow dirty street. Low poor houses, poor vision windows, annexes, and superstructures. Some of them are propped by piles overhanging the pavement, like big wooden boxes for starlings. Steep stairs lead to the "wooden box for starlings" from the street.

Children are bustling near almost every wicket gate.

– Who wants churek (unleavened bread)? Want churek?

Warm press cakes, right from the stove, are on hand packed in a cardboard box, in paper sackcloth.

–D'you want Marlboro? Want Vodka? –another small boy, obviously of preschool age, shouts after passersby. On hearing "No", they rejoin their friends light-hearted as ever until another passerby appears.

– Want beer? Want Marlboro?

The children play and work carefully fulfilling the assignment of the adults. Does the city realize the consequences of this open lesson offered every day by Kubinka? Small crowds of young people gather and dissolve; unkempt persons are loafing about at the crossroads… What kind of buyers are they waiting for? What are they offering?

Strikes, as we know, are staged abroad. We've heard about the staunch British miners, French longshoremen and how the authorities broke the resistance of American aircraft dispatchers… Of course people went on strike also in our country. But that was in old times. The textbooks of history tell us about the strike by workers of Morozov's enterprises. And as a result of the strike in

* A district in the central part of Baku.

Baku early in the 20th century the widely known "Fuel Oil Constitution" was adopted which protected oilmen's rights.

"After the October Revolution which created a proletarian state there was no longer any sense in going on strike as a means of fight to uphold the interests of the working class," asserted a certain encyclopedia. "A strike is one of the basic forms of class struggle of proletariat in capitalist countries representing collective refusal to continue work on the previous terms," adds another.

But whose interests were upheld in the process of the 1988 strike in Baku? And what nature it had according to the scientific classification–political or economic? Was it partial or general? And probably it was "a strike of crossed arms" or was it a strike of "diligence"? Life has defeated conceptual systems.

…The people converged on Lenin Square as if for a work shift. Here and there one could see poles with the names of plants, factories and institutions of higher leaning. People gathered according to these inscriptions. At the height of the working day the works were empty, while the square was overcrowded.

– Why have you come here? –I asked them.

Sometimes they refused to answer. But more often than not they talked. Reminded of their constitutional demands–Nagorny Karabakh, the demonstrative confrontation between the authorities of the autonomous area and the republican authorities, unlawful construction carried out in the preserve of Topkhana. They were well aware of the number of refrigerators (air conditioners, lamps, boring valves, shoes, etc.) their plant had failed to manufacture. They spoke easily about it and it occurred to me that such people could not care less about our calculations of the lost millions of rubles. But what was their goal when they spent nights around their fires scanning the slogans of Karabakh and the Topkhana preserves, which were predominating at the start. Gradually other voices were added to them. There were over 200 items on one of the lists of demands received by the CC of the Republic's Communist Party such as assignment of apartments, admission to institutions of higher learning, measures to improve ecology. The workers of the Azelectromash association expressed their protest against the fact that the chief engineer acted as chairman of the work collective council. But they have elected him themselves quite recently… Or had they been probably pressed to do so? Now a worker has been appointed to the post. The post office workers on strike demanded that their dining room operate in the second shift too. It's quite simple, isn't it? Should you throw down the postbag to attain this goal? Couldn't their chiefs, trade unions,

public control, party committees and, finally, the people themselves think about the people's vital needs? Or could someone have made a clever use of the real difficulties, national sentiments, and patriotism?

They told me at the machine-building works named after Lieutenant Schmidt about two workers, known for their honest attitude to their work. They both had big families, so they sometimes worked overtime and, as a result, their earnings were 100-200% higher than average. In the period of the strike both of them *feared* to turn on the machine tool. Their earnings were 200 rubles less as a result. And the workers at the plant lost 213,000 rubles in terms of their wages. If we deduct the losses from the funds of social development and material incentives, fines for disrupted deliveries, we get the final result of the strike for just one work collective: they lost 1,370,000 rubles and 91 apartments. Meanwhile there were 750 people on the waiting list.

Forty-nine enterprises with continuous production process as a rule operate in Baku on Sundays. But on this Sunday over 100 of them operated. A part of their earnings the work collectives transferred to the refugee fund. The people everywhere collect clothes, footwear and crockery, with scores of collection centers operating in Baku.

One of them is located in the builders' House of Culture. Tables laden with apples, tangerines, sandwiches line the walls of the lobby. On the second floor voluntary assistants are sorting children, men's and women's clothes. Obviously their assistance is a manifestation of compassion and charity.

A thin young woman, Aziza by name, is holding packages close to her breast. She, her husband Fazil and their children fled from the Masiss District in Armenia. A five-year-old boy and a three year-old girl are clutching at their mother's skirt.

– Will you go back as soon as the situation improves?

– Iokh, Iokh, Iokh, –No, no, no, –Aziza Ismailova said tremulously.

December 5.

In the workshops I could see lists of people who transferred their money for refugees–Azerbaijanian, Russian, Armenian and Ukrainian family names.

Yesterday all enterprises started operating early in the morning. However, in the afternoon the situation in the city again deteriorated. Crowds of people stopped the traffic. Suddenly meetings and clashes began cropping up. I saw two Russian soldiers together with an Azerbaijanian militiaman lead away an

elderly Armenian woman from the enraged crowd. She was offered a seat in the hall of the Baku hotel and there she sat as if made of stone with hear head lowered in dismay. I saw unshaven young people raving at the entrance to the shoe factory, but soldiers blocked their way. I saw columns of people marching under black flags, with passersby rushing away from them and cars clinging to the edge of the pavement… Our car did the same, I must admit. Earlier we tried to pass through several lanes–but did not succeed. Crowds everywhere. Finally, Akif, the driver of the car belonging to the correspondents' center, resigned and stopped the car. A taxi stopped behind us. Its driver was at once drawn outside. "Why haven't you joined the strikers?"–they asked and hit him on the face. His fashionable cap dropped to the ground. A tousled unshaven lad ran up to our "Volga". Akif told him something in Azerbaijani and the lad ran on.

Why has this angry crowd come out in the streets? Why did they raise these black flags?

On Sunday night the authorities proposed that the participants in the unsanctioned meetings leave the square. No reply. The entreaties were followed by orders to remove the tents from the square, for small groups of young people stayed there round the clock. No arms were used in the process. There were neither victims nor wounded.

Nevertheless, the rumors of some victims spread across the city. Processions carrying black flags were formed at the crossings, ministries, at the building of the CC CP of Azerbaijan.

But who and how helped the people to learn the truth on that difficult day? The "envoys" in work collectives were taken to the place of the developments: you say that you have seen with your own eyes four cadavers at the neighboring plant? Let's go, show them to us. You say that the Lenin Square is strewn with dead bodies? Let's drive there together and have a look…

The troops carried great responsibility. They did their utmost to avoid conflicts, to avert a great disaster.

Those who tried to occupy the plant grounds or stop motor transport were given a rebuff today. More often than not by the workers themselves with militiamen. That was how Monday, December 5, came to a close when Baku streets and squares were astir, when the Baku television broadcast concerts of classical music and old films, when the plants operated…

December 7.

As was agreed the day before, at three o'clock, D. Melikov and I arrived at the Azelectrosvet production association. At the same

time our colleagues in Yerevan were due to arrive at the Luis plant. Those were fraternized enterprises and we planned to hold a joint reporting on their contacts.

– Let's start with a telephone call to Yerevan, –General Director V. Djalilov proposed, –let's talk with our old friend Veniamin Akopovich Tumasyan. He is an excellent man, a Hero of Socialist Labor; he often paid visits to us.

We ordered a telephone call to Luis plant. Several minutes later the General Director's secretary told us that there was no telephone communication with Yerevan, they say an earthquake had occurred there…

At first I thought that it was a bad joke. But one can hardly joke like that. Soon after we received confirmation: that was a bitter truth.

However, we knew nothing about the details. We talked about the life of the Azelectrosvet work collective in those days, about the way it regenerated the work rhythm overcoming the demagogues' resistance. Ali Azizov and Ivan Pakhomov, top-class vacuum turners, masters of natural gifts, were among those who went on with their work. In due course they had assembled an automatic system to which they referred jokingly as "an iron woman". As a result, no manual operations were necessary for the complicated and hazardous process. Their Armenian colleagues showed interest in the system and sent their specialists to Baku. Azizov and Pakhomov spent two weeks explaining the details to them.

Ali Azizov and Eldar Shiriyev, secretary of the Azelectrosvet party committee, made a telephone call to the *Sotsialisticheskaya industriya* correspondent center early in the morning on Thursday with a request to describe in the newspaper columns how stunned their work collective was by the disaster, which had hit the fraternal people. "A telegram of condolence has been sent by the plant to our Armenian brothers", –Shiriyev added. "We start collecting funds for assistance to them. We won't leave them in the hour of trial!"

"The people of Azerbaijan are ready to give every assistance to you for overcoming the perilous consequences of the earthquake," said the telegram of the CC CP of Azerbaijan, Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the Council of Ministers of the Republic sent at the address of the CC CP of Armenia, Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the Council of Ministers of the Armenian SSR. The morning newspapers carried the telegram. And in the late hours when they were printed, a trainload of fuel was sent from the Baku railway station to Armenia, for they were in dire need of it at that time.

Azerbaijan construction workers sent a column of machinery. They were in a hurry to help, but they had to return. Why? This is what the workers said.

Mikhail Areshev, a Tatra driver:

– A column of cranes and heavy-duty trucks was formed in Azerbaijan on the border of the two republics. We were driving in the rear. We were escorted by an armored personnel carrier, which drove in front, with militiamen and road-traffic inspectors at the sides. Why they had sent such an escort became clear after we entered the territory of Armenia. The drivers of the cars, which outdistanced us, threatened and insulted us and shook their fists at us. It took a whole night to reach Leninakan. The road between Spitak and Leninakan had collapsed, so our column stopped: we had to let pass the approaching cars. Suddenly unknown thugs with spade handles in hand attacked us–get out of here to Azerbaijan, we don't need your assistance. As luck will have it, our column drove on soon after.

– In the morning the column approached Leninakan, –gas-cutter welder Vladimir Lozovan went on with his story. –The cranes were at once taken away. We were told to wait. But as soon as the military left, thugs in cars surrounded our vehicles. By the numbers of our plates they could see that we had come from Azerbaijan.

"If you start work we'll kill you!" One of them said to me: "You're lucky to be Russian, if you do not work we will do you no harm."

We asked a militiaman to show the way to the commandant's office. He joined us in the car and we drove on. But as soon as he learned that we were from Baku, he asked us to stop:

"I must get out here…"

We stopped and a crowd surrounded us. We said: "Dear people, we've come with an open heart to you, we're carrying containers with fuel and there are welders among us. They are badly needed here, you are in trouble, aren't you?" But they would not listen–something wrong in their heads. They snatched sticks and stones… So we drove back.

– I can't figure out, –welder Rafik Kuzakhmedov ads, –how it's possible to try and profit from such a disaster! Can't they see that all their hatred is nothing as compared to the breath of one rescued Armenian child?

One more attempt of Azerbaijanians to help the Armenian people in the hour of trial ended in tragedy. An Il-76 military transport plane crashed on December 11, 1988, on its flight to Leninakan airport (Armenia) and nine crew members and

78 passengers who were going to take part in the elimination of the earthquake consequences died. All of them were Azerbaijanians.

Regrettably, nationalism is blind. We often recollected Hertzen's wise words in those days: exclusive sense of nationality will never do you any good. The outstanding Azerbaijanian writer Akram Ailisli expressed the same idea when he pondered on the developments in the two republics, with the squares in Baku and Yerevan packed with people demonstrating their ardent "patriotism".

"Many of us realize", he said, "that patriotism is a good thing, but it is wrong to demonstrate it. It's absurd, amoral and very dangerous. But what's to be done if many, even prominent figures of science and culture here and there very often in the era of glasnost (openness) are busy exclusively in shedding bitter tears in connection with their great love for their people? They compete in lecture halls and in the press, in TV programs trying to outdo one another in paying compliments to their nation. There are embittered losers and quite prosperous figures among them. At this time of trial for Armenia my heart also aches for the people who have lost their lives there. It would be terrible for me to know that even one of them bore a grudge in his wounded heart against someone of my nationality and has taken it to the place no one ever returns from. Grief has united us. Let us go together even after we bring to life the destroyed cities by our joint efforts."

December 31.

The gate creaked and it was quiet again. The wind blowing from the close mountain spurs was whirling dry leaves in the yard and swung the lone clothes peg on the clothes-rope. It seemed as if the mistress of the house had just removed dried blouses and would come back. The washstand on the veranda was full of water as if had been just filled; a toothbrush and soap lay on the shelf. A stick is propping the gate. And where is the master of the house? I read about him and his house in *Vyshka*, a Baku newspaper.

"Movsesyan Gaik Andreyevich, my brother, just like myself, is a veteran of the Great Patriotic War, he fought at the front. He resides in the Shirvanzadeh village of the Shemakha District," Nina Andreyevna Movsesyan wrote. "He suffered from an accident early this year: due to a disrepair of electric wires his two-story house was burnt down and all his property was gutted by the fire. It's a disaster. You can't put it otherwise. But my brother is not alone in his misfortune. Arshak Grigoryan, his neighbor who is a disabled war veteran, invited his family to share

his house for the next three months. Garib Rashidov, another neighbor, did his best to help my brother. In less than three months my brother's family moved in a new house built free of charge."

The author of the letter described kind assistance of I. Iskenderov, first secretary of the Shemakha District Party Committee, V. Airapetyan, Chairman of the Dimitrov State Farm and S. Grigoryan, Chairman of the Village Council.

"I express gratitude to all these people for their genuine friendship," N. Movsesyan wrote in conclusion. "I believe that the new house built in my brother's village will serve for ever as one more monument to our life together."

It happened in the summer of 1988, we were eager to believe that quarrels and disagreement would become a thing of the past and a new friendly life would continue, joint work will go on both at the construction of a new house for Gaik Movsesyan and in the vineyards in the vicinity…

Black burnt trusses can be seen under the fence and the impressive house built of age-old durable stone looks with its broad windows at the vistas in front of it. But the house is empty behind them. The master of the new house is absent. All Armenian yards are empty.

What force has separated the neighbors? What was the bone of contention between them and Garib Rashidov, his brother Abdurakhman? They have nothing to divide. They have lived on this land ever since their birth–and used it in common, the graves of their grandfathers are nearby. One of the monuments bears the names of war veterans who fought at the front and fell in battle, Azerbaijanians and Armenians among them. Of course they divided work, did not only their own work but also that of their comrades. Their worn hands with blackened fingers knew no rest, no bast will wash them clean with the earth left in their skin. These hands built walls, laid a roof. The neighbors came regularly as if for a shift to build a new house for a war veteran, their compatriot.

When will light be put on again in it? When will they come back to their native villages, cities and settlements, these Azerbaijanian and Armenian migrants? There are as many answers as destinies, I believe.

The residents of the Shirvanzadeh village, it seems to me, have found the answer. Without looking back at their mutual grievances, they take care of the empty houses and the livestock like good neighbors looking forward to their future life together.

Rashidov brothers and I are making way to the memorial. Photographs from family albums have been carefully fixed in the wall of memory. You can see open faces under forage caps, military-type blouses with peg-tops. Samed Rashidov and Abdul Rashidov are also here, two of the seven brothers who fought at the front and fell in battle. There are 37 names on the obelisk, both Azerbaijanian and Armenian. They fought for their Motherland side by side.

– I wish all who have left would come back, –Garib Rashidov sighed sorrowfully. –Here it is, we've found the telephone number of Gaik and Violetta, our director. Call them, please, you, too, and tell them that the whole of our village asks them to come back.

They say in Azerbaijani "garib akhsham"–meaning evening in foreign parts. I can feel in these words age-long sorrow of the people who have left their native land. There are probably such words in Armenian too. No matter how you try to decorate the migrants' house, it is alien to them.

Where are you going to see the New Year in, Gaik Andreyevich Movsesyan? I could not contact you on the phone. But if you happen to read these lines, you must know that six families have already come back to your village. Violetta Airapetyan and Sergei Grigoryan have come back. I. Iskenderov, first secretary of the Shemakha District Party Committee, told me over the phone that they were met very cordially. Buses have been sent to various districts in Armenia to bring back your other compatriots. And the Azerbaijanians who have moved to Shemakha gradually inclines to the idea of going back home. Children's voices are heard at the school. Light is put on in the windows of your neighbors' house, and the stove for bread baking–tendir–is probably warm enough. I saw this tendir when it was cool, but carefully cut dry twigs lay next to it, prepared by Rashidov brothers. The hearth will begin to burn, you will take out soft bread and its aroma will warm your heart. And you will break the loaf together.

That was how the 1988 diary closed–with hope. Regrettably, it was a vain hope.

The country was sliding into an abyss…

"I Spared No Effort to Be Received by Gorbachyov"

Geidar Alievich Aliev, a personal pensioner of All-Union importance (there was such an official formula) still was a member of the CPSU Central Committee. Practically dismissed

from affairs, he nevertheless was trying to prompt something to the authorities, give advice, and share his recommendations.

– I spared no effort to be received by Gorbachyov, but he did not receive me. At that time I was already a pensioner. His assistants told me that they had reported about my request to him but he was busy. They always said the same: he is busy, we have reported, so you should wait for his invitation. I waited for a day, two, a whole month–nothing. I made one more telephone call. Of course, he did not receive me. I tried to contact Ligachev. He did not wish to receive me either, but one day I simply paid a visit to the CC very early in the morning and took my seat in his reception room–that is, I simply came there and sat down. Ligachev arrived. I told him in detail about the situation in Nagorny Karabakh as I saw it. He listened to me for a long time but I did not receive any sensible answer–all my efforts to be of some use were in vain.

– Did you offer a concrete plan of action to Ligachev?

– Well, in general I told him about the situation … that most drastic measures should be taken. "And we are taking measures," he said. And that was it. That is, there is no need in my participation or in my advice. Then I went to Razumovsky. Incidentally, he was in no hurry to receive me, though I was a Politburo member, and he was only CC secretary. I spoke at length, he seemed to be listening but I could not say whether my advice had been brought home or my efforts were fruitless (*an abstract from dialogues with TV anchor Andrei Karaulov).*

"Top Secret.

"CPSU CC.

On Measures in Connection with the Exacerbation of the Situation in Nagorny Karabakh and around It.

"The developments in Nagorny Karabakh and around it may lead to mass-scale armed clashes between the Azerbaijanian and Armenian population in the Nagorny Karabakh Autonomous Area, the Nakhichevan Autonomous SSR and throughout the territory of Azerbaijan. Measures to be taken for ensuring public order and the population's security by the internal forces and militia units may prove insufficient.

"In this connection even now an opportunity should be envisaged to use Soviet Army units for protection of the population. In case of such a disastrous turn of events, it would be expedient to prepare proposals also on introducing an emergency situation in separate localities of Azerbaijan and Armenia.

"In this connection it would be expedient to entrust the USSR Ministry of Defense (comrade Yazov D.T.), the USSR Ministry of

Internal Affairs (comrade Bakatin V.V.) and also the Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet (comrade. Lukyanov A.I.) with the task of preparing in advance respective proposals for submitting them, in the procedure established by the law, for consideration by a USSR Supreme Soviet session.

August 29, 1989

N. Slyunkov
V. Chebrikov

In another memo to Gorbachyov's address, the CPSU CC Secretary and the KGB Chairman proposed that "automatic and sniper arms be removed from militia district and city departments and precincts in Azerbaijan and Armenia … that anti-hail and anti-aircraft guns and rocket installations, located on the territory of Azerbaijan and Armenia, be accepted for maintenance by Transcaucasian Military District units." They proposed many others, in general, reasonable measures such as "revelation and neutralization of nationalist and extremist armed formations created for aggressive actions" (*RGANI*, F. 89, Op 10, D. 42, pp. 1-4).

By that time over 300,000 refugees had fled from the two republics. The Kremlin was no longer able to manage the events in the Union. The General Secretary counted only on the army.

January 21, 1990, Moscow

Excited people were gathering near the building of the Permanent Mission of the Azerbaijan SSR in Moscow, Leontyevsky pereulok, from morning. They had been attracted by the news from Baku: troops had been brought in the city; there were victims among the peaceful population. What's happened? Most of the people distrusted official information. All of them were waiting for some kind of reasonable explanation. It was then that Geidar Aliev proclaimed his stand for everyone to know. He arrived at the mission from Barvikha where he was undergoing a course of treatment: "There is no time for it now!" He was no longer silent.

Aliev's address was recorded by scores of TV cameras and microphones.

"Dear Comrades, Ladies and Gentlemen!

"As you know, I have stood for many years at the head of Azerbaijan's party organization, was elected a CC CPSU Politburo member, was first deputy of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers. I've been a pensioner for over two years, I

have survived an extensive infarction and retired on pension for health reasons. In December 1982 I left for Azerbaijan and today it is the first time I have crossed the threshold of the Permanent Mission of the Azerbaijan SSR in Moscow after that. The tragedy, which occurred in Azerbaijan, has made me to come here. I learned all about it yesterday evening and naturally I could not feel indifferent toward it. I've come here, to the Permanent Mission, which is a small islet of Azerbaijanian land in Moscow, to express my condolences to all Azerbaijan people in connection with the tragedy, which involved immense victims. Second, I'd like to express my stand on this matter. I would like Zohrab Ibragimov, Azerbaijan's permanent representative in Moscow, to convey my words, my deep sorrow and sincere condolences to the Azerbaijan people. Regrettably I have got no other opportunity now.

"As to the developments in Azerbaijan, I regard them as illegal, alien to democracy, utterly contradicting the principles of humanism and construction of a law-governed state in our country. There are certain reasons behind the current situation in Azerbaijan. I shall not dwell in detail on them that would require a lot of time. The conflict between the two nations, i.e., between Azerbaijan and Armenia, has been in progress in the past two years, it flared up in connection with the developments in Nagorny Karabakh and around it. A sufficiently long period for the political leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia, the country's top party and government leader to settle the issue and put an end to the internecine strife, conflicts between the nations and to provide conditions for each person to lead a free life regardless of his nationality in our common federative Union of SSR.

"However, I believe that in the past two years no sufficient measures were taken in this sphere. If the required measures had been taken, primarily by the country's top party political leader at the start of complications in Nagorny Karabakh, we would not have observed the escalation of tension and losses on both sides in the past two years or the military action which was taken in the early hours of January 20, 1990, which involved human losses."

Aliev pointed out that there were opportunities in Azerbaijan for a political settlement of the situation. "However, they were not used, and large contingents of Soviet Army and of the troops of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs were brought in Baku. Now we are well aware of the move's tragic consequences. I believe that the logic of the people who have made this decision was politically erroneous. A gross political error was made. They were simply ignorant of the real situation in the republic or of the

Azerbaijan people's mentality; they did not maintain sufficient contacts with various strata. They could not imagine that all this would lead to such a tragedy.

"They should have foreseen this and taken the necessary measures, calculated what's more important and necessary. Meanwhile, it was reported that there were considerable losses among the servicemen. After all, was the Russian lad to blame if he had been sent on the basis of an erroneous decision to suppress the so-called riot in Azerbaijan?

"A large contingent of troops has been brought in Azerbaijan. Incidentally, I know the exact number of the troops deployed in Azerbaijan. Even before quite a considerable number of troops were stationed there: the 4th Army, the Caspian Navy, a paratrooper division, anti-aircraft troops, internal troops of the Ministry Internal Affairs. Was it necessary to bring in more troops? If necessary, the troops stationed there could be used. The Azerbaijanian leaders who have adopted such a decision should be brought to account for it, primarily Vezirov who fled from Azerbaijan. Those who have supplied false information to the country's top political leadership should also be brought to account. I believe that the country's top political leadership did not have sufficient and objective information at their disposal in due time. The country's leadership was misled and such decision was adopted as a result.

"All those who are behind this tragedy should be punished."

On the same day Geidar Aliev sent a telegram to the address of the CC of the CP of Azerbaijan, to the Supreme Soviet and the Council of Ministers of the Republic:

"*To the people of Azerbaijan!*

"It is with great sorrow that I learned about the tragedy which befell our people in connection with bringing in Baku of a large contingent of Soviet troops which resulted in many human losses. In these tragic days for us I express profound condolences to the families and near and dear ones of the deceased, to all Azerbaijanian people.

"I condemn this action, regard it as anti-human, undemocratic, illegal. In this hour of trial I urge you to show discretion, solidarity and unity.

"Please, publish my telegram in the republican press, broadcast it over the radio and television and read it out at the funeral meeting.

Geidar Aliev

January 21, 1990, Moscow"

Pravda Fires a Shot

Two weeks later, on February 4, 1990, a day before the opening of the plenary meeting of the CPSU CC, *Pravda* fired a shot at him in the form of an article headlined "Aliev at His Worst, or Lamenting for a 'Sweet' Life". Again nothing but lies and falsification.

On the same day Aliev sent telegrams to the address of the CPSU CC and to the *Pravda* editorial board: "I feel deep indignation in connection with the article entitled "Aliev at His Worst, or Lamenting for 'Sweet' Life", which is of an openly slanderous and provocative nature. Please, make it incumbent on the newspaper's editorial board to give me an opportunity to come out with refutation."

What refutation?! Glasnost was only for one-way traffic. Even regardless of the fact that V. Efendiyev, Dr. Sc. (Medicine), who signed the article, actually did not write it. Telegrams to this effect were sent to the addresses of the CPSU CC, *Pravda* and G. Aliev:

"Dear Geidar Alievich!

"*The article carried by* ***Pravda*** *on February 4, 1990, and signed by my name* (italicized in the original.–*Author's Note*.), which is of a purely political nature and reflects the developments of the end of January 1990, *is not known to me, not written by me, nor is it signed by me (*italicized in the original.–*Author's Note*.). Certain theses referring to public healthcare, medical personnel training and the socio-economic situation in the country in the period of stagnation, outlined by me in its time, have been used in it.

"Sincerely yours,

V.M. Efendiyev
Dr. Sc. (Medicine)

05.02.90"

Pravda carried the article signed by Efendiev's surname on February 4. On February 5, a plenary meeting of the CPSU CC was opened. The date of publication was naturally selected with an obvious purpose: the delegates will have time to read it and have their say. Albert Belyaev, editor-in-chief of *Sovetskaya kultura* newspaper, who had served as a CPSU CC functionary for two decades, was quite eloquent. The article "Alievshchina", he said, "stunned everybody. It is such people who undermine trust in the party." Belyaev proposed to put down that the plenary meeting believed that the party leaders' haughty behavior; rudeness with

respect to their comrades and use of their position for selfish goals was incompatible with party membership.

Hear, hear. The more so as the similar or other words were used in the party statute to express precisely the same idea. The requirements of the statute the people undertook to meet when they joined the party, with Aliev, Belyaev and those who had recommended to the latter to condemn "the Aliev style" among them. Aliev did not accept Gorbachyov's economic, social and national policy, and that is why no efforts were spared to crush him morally.

– As first deputy of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, –Geidar Aliev explained to me, –I received photographs of the people queueing for wine in Moscow. A nightmare! As we received information about the people's mood and the content of their conversations in these lines with criticism of the country's leadership, we informed Gorbachyov and Ligachev about them, but they only laughed softly and said that all this was only for the time being, they will stop talking in this way eventually. They simply ignored this! No reaction.

The period that followed 1985 was marked by a destructive trend in the economy and social sphere. The people's living standard deteriorated, their life became worse than ever. The moral and psychological atmosphere was extremely complicated, conflicts between nations were an everyday occurrence, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was on the brink of collapse, entangled as in was in ungovernable processes. And all this Gorbachyov wished to present as perestroika. Now it was "at a sudden turning point", later "at a turning point", then "at a special turning point" and, finally "perestroika has entered the stage of serious trials", and so on.

What can one say? I can recall that in the postwar period it was only on one occasion that there were difficulties with bread supplies–under Khrushchev's rule. And now bread is in short supply. And where? In the capital. I can't recall any time when tobacco was in short supply in the postwar period. Now they are probably trying to explain the situation with tobacco shortage. How can this be explained? The fact is that the country produced considerably less tobacco before, but there was no crisis.

…Relations between nations are currently extremely complicated. Gorbachyov and his associates are trying to put the blame on the past, on Stalin, on the period of stagnation, but they keep mum about the errors of the past two-three years, although

it's quite clear that all conflicts between nations cannot be attributed to past history alone–that's unobjective and dishonest. There were of course errors in the period of Stalin's rule and later, but if you are to count them in each concrete period, there were certainly more of them in the past few years…

And Gorbachyov is all the time contradicting himself. In his report of February 5 (1990. *–Author's Note.)* at the plenary meeting of the CPSU CC he dwelt at length (although the report was not so long) about the developments in the NK Autonomous Area. Again no clear-cut ideas were suggested apart from the fact that this time, you see, he was firmly convinced that the issue of the autonomous area should be settled with Azerbaijan preserving its integrity. But why didn't he say so two years ago, one may ask. Consequently, he was of a different opinion then, somewhere in between–in favor of neither side, the implication being this: you are free to fight and we'll wait and see who wins. Is that a proper stand? If we have a federation, a union state, then it is the union state that should have at once expressed its opinion. That was one more error in the national policy. But you should bear in mind that before perestroika there were no problems whatsoever in relations between Armenians and Azerbaijanians in Trans-Caucasia; in the 14 years of my work as first secretary of the CC of the CP of Azerbaijan I visited Nagorny Karabakh every year, and sometimes even on several occasions, and not a single resident of this autonomous area had ever raised the question of the area's separation from Azerbaijan with its transfer to Armenia. No one, you see?! Certain nationalist moods were sometimes expressed in Armenia, with some individuals hatching such plans, but they were not supported by the area's population (*abstracts from dialogues with TV anchor Andrei Karaulov*).

Could Geidar Aliev have presented a slightly overoptimistic picture in asserting that there were no problems in relations between Azerbaijanians and Armenians before perestroika?

– There were no conflicts between nations in Azerbaijan in those years, –Army General Philipp Bobkov asserts, and he must know, for at that time he held the post of first deputy KGB Chairman, so he was informed even about the facts which were never mentioned in the press.

We read once more that old report Aliev referred to with the General Secretary's verbiage about the conflict around Nagorny Karabakh, about attempts to "cut this tight knot". Really, nothing of substance, just talk about indefinite "certain forces in both republics and the NK Autonomous Area", about shadow economy dealers, anti-perestroika, corrupt forces which had managed to

snatch leadership and steer the deluded people in the destructive direction. So what steps were taken by the authorities to extinguish the fires and save the country?

In line with his old habit, Geidar Aliev started his day with looking through newspapers. He read the speeches made at the plenary meeting, underlined the lines of interest to him.

Korniyenko, first secretary of the City Party Committee in Kiev read out extracts from a letter sent by a communist worker to Gorbachyov's address: "Where are we going? Isn't it high time for you, Mikhail Sergeyevich, and for the country's leadership as a whole, before it's too late, to ponder on the destiny of the socialist state, on the working people's destiny and take urgent measures?"

"The people's distrust in the party leadership is not yet at its peak, but we are already not far from a fatal point," Yuri Arkhipov, secretary of the Party Committee of the Leningrad production association "Izhorsky zavod", sounded the alarm.

Soviet Ambassador to Poland Brovikov spoke about "hypertrophied-ambitiousness and personal errors of our party and state leaders, with the proclamation of the society's total democratization in the absence of discipline and order in the country. Discipline will survive without democracy, while democracy is unthinkable without discipline, for it will be inevitably transformed, to be more precise will degenerate, into socio-political chaos.

One must be deaf not to hear these voices of anxiety, Aliev thought. But may be they–Gorbachyov and Yakovlev–simply do not wish to hear them?

Moscow Blockade

On May 17, 1990 Nakhichevan communists elected Geidar Aliev as a delegate to the 32nd Congress of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, which was due to open on June 8. Geidar Aliev bought an air ticket for June 1 in order to pay a visit to his native city of Nakhichevan before the congress…

"Hardly had I made a reservation for the Moscow-Baku flight," he recollected, as telephone calls started. First called Slezko and Gerasimov, Pugo's deputies in the Party Control Committee under the CPSU CC, with recommendations to discard the idea of the trip by referring to strained situation in Azerbaijan, and my arrival would only add oil to the fuel. Next, they started bargaining. They had, they asserted, certain compromising material about Aliev at the Committee. If he agreed not to make a

trip to Baku, they would hand the material over to the archives, but if he does, they would be used… On May 30 Pugo himself made a telephone call exactly for the same purpose. My answer was: 'Isn't it strange enough–for a long period of time you never thought about me, although these were hard times for me when I was sick and underwent treatment at the hospital, and now that I'm well again and wish to visit my native town all of a sudden–here you are. You have no right to forbid this trip to me."

In Baku Geidar Aliev was going to stop at the place of Djalal, his younger brother who had always stood at his side.

Djalal Aliev recollects:

"On May 29 a person widely known in the republic contacted me on the telephone and said he wished to see me. We met at the appointed time in a small garden near the Academy of Sciences and he warned me about the danger threatening Geidar Aliev if he went on that trip. "Make an urgent telephone call to your brother. Tell him not to go to Baku, otherwise he will be assassinated at the airplane's gangway", –he said without mincing words. If someone else had said so, my reaction would have been different, but a man who was quite influential at that time, so I could not exclude the possibility of such an outcome supplied the information about the threat. I was in a difficult situation as the life of my dear man depended on the decision to allow or prevent his coming to Baku. I had to make decision instantly and made a telephone call to Azhdar Khanbabayev, director of Azerneshr Publishers, to agree on our meeting.

"On the next day, May 30, at 10:00 a.m. we put through a telephone call to Moscow having discussed the issue at his office. We had to wait for quite a long time. Now I realize that it was not accidental. It was only after numerous attempts by Azhdar in the course of four hours to contact Moscow on the "hot" line and his appeals to high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Communications that we succeeded. For fear of attempts at Geidar Aliev's life I naturally could not adopt a simple decision and was astonished by Azhdar's determination, for he did not waver for a moment. He told my brother that there was no need for him to attach importance to all this fuss and threats, that intellectuals were full of determination and would meet Aliev at the airport. Brother asked me, I remember, to take steps to avoid excessive fuss; the best thing would be for Djalal to meet him alone. But Khanbabayev insisted that he would meet him by all means…

"In the evening of the same day I had to talk once more with Azhdar and made a call to his home. An unknown woman lifted the receiver. Weeping she told me that Azhdar had been heavily wounded and taken to hospital. Without regaining consciousness Azhdar died in the hospital a few hours later."

This is how Geidar Aliev recollected this event. "Of course I started comparing facts: on May 30 at 12:00 a.m. he had a telephone conversation with me and at 09:00 p.m. he was murdered. So far as I knew he was a calm and decent man, he had nothing in common with any dirty business, took no interest in politics, for many years he had worked at Azerneshr, the largest publishing house in Azerbaijan, he was respected in intellectual circles. Hence the question: why was he murdered exactly on that day and for what reason?"

– I'd like to know, do you believe it possible that the country's authorities or, say, Azerbaijan's leadership fears you so much that the consequences of their fear, if any, may assume any form?

– You know, it's difficult for me to speak about whether they are afraid of me or not, but I have experienced the negative attitude of the country's certain leaders in the past three and a half years. Regrettably, Azerbaijan's former leaders too without any objective reasons attacked me, and even now a trip to my native land has been transformed into a big problem (*an extract from dialogues with TV anchor Andrei Karaulov).*

Aliev was actually locked in Moscow. He did not attend the congress of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan. It may well be supposed that at the congress he might have been restored to his leading post and elected as a delegate to the 28th CPSU Congress.

Geidar Aliev flew to Baku on July 20. First he planned either to return to his old apartment or to get a new one, as whole districts were built when he was at the helm. But he was refused to be registered in Baku. Now he could go solely to his native town of Nakhichevan. In a couple of days that remained before his departure he wished to pay visits to his relatives, brothers and sisters, to those of his friends who had not betrayed him and of course pay tribute to those who lost their lives on that black night in January…

Young faces were looking at him from the monuments–14, 18, 20, 28 years old: Ilkham Alakhverdiyev, Fariza Alakhverdiyeva, Vera Bessantina, Ilgar Ibragimov, Agabek Novruzbekli… They were so young, they could have lived happy lives, have children and grandchildren… But that was not to happen. On the day of remembrance in prayer the mother looking older than her years

will visit the grave and the father will stroke the monument as if it were his son.

Geidar Aliev walked slowly from one to another monument looking attentively at the faces in search of a familiar face. No, they were little boys when he left the republic. They played football, bathed in the Caspian which was their favorite sea, it is shining below but it isn't easy to get to it… His heart ached for those lads, girls and elderly people–there were many of them here, too–for it was impossible to bring them back.

Chapter 8
THE RIGHT TO BE WITH HIS PEOPLE

July 22, 1990. Nakhichevan

Geidar and Djalal Alievs flew from Baku to their native town by a post fight. Quite romantic! The brothers smiling looked through the packs of newspapers and magazines, parcels and bags full of letters the plane was crammed with.

Djalal Aliev recollects:

"In Nakhichevan no one knew about the arrival of Geidar Aliev. We drove to the city in a Lada car owned by an acquaintance. An elderly man, who had caught a glimpse of my brother in the car, said: "Just imagine–such a man in such a car!"

"We arrived at our parents' old house from which quite recently we accompanied our sister Sura-khanum on her last way. The news of Geidar's return at once spread throughout the city. People kept coming to our yard and the narrow street was packed to capacity.

"Closer to the evening we went to pay tribute to Gusein Djavid's tomb. Nakhichevan residents greeted Geidar enthusiastically. Geidar was quite upset at the sight of the great poet's untended tomb. Next we made our way to the central square where a crowd of about 80,000 had gathered by 6-7 p.m.

"Many of them held Aliev's pictures in their hands, some of them with one star and others with two: they must have drawn them from the old stocks at book storehouses.

"Geidar did not conceal his emotions: after three years of actual isolation and persecutions he received such a warm welcome in his native land."

Dovlat Mamedov, whom Geidar had known since their student days at the pedagogical technical school. Some of our mutual acquaintances had told Geidar about Mamedov's visits with protests to the editorial offices which continued to compromise the man who, as they believed, had fallen out of favor.

– Thank you, Dovlat! –Geidar said softly.

– What for? I've done what I had to, –was the reply of the old teacher, a war veteran. "Grandpa, where's the mistake?", they told me at the editorial office with self-assurance as if they represented universal authority. "And where's truth in your articles full of slander?" I objected. But they refused to publish a refutation."

– It doesn't matter, –Geidar said. –Don't worry. Life will soon disprove all that.

Never before had such a large crowd gathered on the square. People had filled the balconies of the houses around it and even stood on the rooftops.

Geidar greeted his compatriots taking a megaphone. He was not prepared to make a speech. He rather addressed those standing next to him, but such silence reigned on the square that even those in the most remote corners could hear him. He did not speak much but it was precisely the words that the Oriental saying equates to a sword. On his way home Geidar looked animated: "So the people really have not forgotten me."

The crowd had dissolved and only relatives remained–Geidar, Djalal, their niece Sanifa and her daughters. Djalal was trying to tune the old TV set without success, but Geidar told him smiling that it was more difficult to manage this technology than work in the field.

– I was longing to listen to various "voices" here, –Aliev admitted later, –but we did not have a proper radio set at home, luckily, our neighbors offered a VEF radio set once manufactured in Riga."

Now it is only from rare photographs and recollections that you may picture the Aliev family's old house. These photographs show Geidar standing in the doorway, or Sanifa who as her Granny Izzet-khanum in her childhood pouring water from a pitcher for her uncle…

– He has long liked to wash his face and hands with water from the well in our yard. I used to pour water from a pitcher and Uncle Geidar splashed with pleasure cool small jets on himself, for that was his habit, as our relatives said, from childhood. Uncle was in general fond of all things that reminded him of the native home. He was fond of the dishes prepared in her time by his mother, my Granny: dyushbereh, much like Russian meat dumplings, pies kutaby, and dolma… He also liked fruits from our garden. We sent them to Baku and Moscow for many years on end. For him Nakhichevan fruits were simply unique.

Sanifa Sultanova, Geidar Aliev's niece, is a manager of the Nakhichevan Registry Office. She is widely known in the Republic also like a poetess. Svetlana Mirzoyeva, a *Bakinsky*

rabochy correspondent, told me about her. As a journalist Mirzoyeva met Geidar Aliev at that time perhaps more often than any of her colleagues. She carefully collected the recollections of the people with whom he maintained friendly relations, whom he helped, especially men of art and literature. She wrote a very interesting and emotional book modestly signing her name only at the end–as in the newspaper. She placed Geidar Aliev's portrait on the cover with his words: "Art was a part of my life…".

The reader, we hope, has noticed that on his first day in Nakhichevan Geidar Aliev paid tribute to Djavid's memory by visiting his grave. What was he thinking about standing there with his bent head? What lines was he repeating? Maybe these:

In looking for support
In the boundless space
The soul was tortured
Beating against the skies…

A day or two later Geidar Aliev paid a visit to Djavid's Museum. When did he visit it last time? It was probably in 1982, when preparations were in progress in the republic to celebrate the centenary of the poet, playwright and philosopher Gusein Abdullah ogly Rasizadeh, who was born in Nakhichevan on October 24, 1882, who died on December 5, 1941, in Siberian exile. What an irony: a herald of freedom, a poet who in his lifetime was described as the Shakespeare of the East, died on December 5, the day of the Stalin Constitution. Had he overstrained himself in cutting timber, couldn't stand Siberian frosts? Or had his heart broken from spiritual suffering? The soul was tortured…

Museum of Djavid (Eternal–in Azerbaijani) is located in his parents' old house. Photographs, documents, household articles of the early 20th century: a kerosene lamp, a samovar which somehow got here from Russia, a phonograph, fine armudu–small pear-like glasses for drinking tea… Dishes and pitchers are displayed in the niches (here they are called built-in cupboards since old times), and each one of them has its own designation, its name.

Displayed under the glass is the original order of the Taishet District Soviet of People's Deputies of November 21, 1982. Here is the document in full:

"According to the resolution of the bureau of the Nakhichevan Regional Committee of the CP of Azerbaijan of October 12, 1982, to permit Comrade Djafarov Gamid Gora ogly, secretary of the Nakhichevan Regional Committee of the CP of Azerbaijan, to

remove the remains of the outstanding poet and playwright of Azerbaijan Gusein Djavid Rasizadeh for interment in his native town of Nakhichevan.

"Chairman of the Taishet
District Executive Committee

V.A. Smirnov".

Most probably Mushkinaz hanym Javid would top in the saddest list those women capable of immortalizing the heaviest sores and grieves in their moralities. Women, mothers in the East or in the West have always survived tragic fates. At the same time, Mrs. Mushkinaz had run a course of her life, combating an overall regime. There was expected a time her name would be famous as mighty thinker in Turan civilization Huseyn Javid's spouse. Her memory would have been honored. However, it would have taken a long time. At least, until Javid had to prove himself in the right…. This dates back to hard timeso during World War II. In a time, when her son Ertoghrul joined the army, after her lovely Javid, who had been loyal to his ideas to the death, died on December 6,1941 in Eastern Siberia. Indeed, although he was not in an army, which the sons of "public enemies" were in, but served in Georgia, most likely, in a construction battalion. Ertoghrul Javid that was Great Uzeyir Hajybeyov's student had first proved his talents in music before being drafted. Without question, Ertoghrul's creative activity would be many-branched. Since according to archival documents related to him, he was willing to try himself in scenario. Additionally, his artistic paintings are available till present…

The destiny plays tricks with her. The time fights against Mushkinaz Javid. Times are hard for them. Ertoghrul Javid catches tuberculosis. Mushkinaz Javid was seeking to sell everything available in the home on account of want, in order to take care of her daughter and son. Even when she wants to sell the ring in her finger given by Huseyn Javid as a keepsake to her before Ertoghrul joined the army, Son protests, saying that "It is the keepsake from Father. Don't touch it! Later on, however, when Ertoghrul's health conditions were worsened, he was vomiting blood caused by tuberculosis, Mushkinaz Javid took off her ring and handed that over to a relative of hers. While she was saying "Sell it. My child is pinning from illness and hunger," she was shedding tears; her grief was tearing at her heart.

Fortunately, Mushkinaz Javid managed to witness the Javids times through fighting with her destiny, undergoing the loss of Great Javid - the grief of her only son…. And on November 16,1976, she joined the great majority, entrusting the cultural and moral heritage of the Great Javids as well as her daughter Turan hanym to our care. She was 75 years old at that time. The grave of Ertoghrul Javid, who passed away at the age of 24 on October 14,1943 in Nahchivan, had been alone by that time. He had been lying in wait for his parents.

Strange coincidences do occur: Ertoghrul Javid was born on October 22,1919 in Baki. His sister Turan Javid was born on October 2,1923. Now in Baki, Azerbaijan, October is called the month for the Javid family. In fact, Huseyn Javid himself was born on October 24,1882. Turan Javid, who had made irreplaceable contributions to Javidism, passed away some time later following October – on November 12,2004.

Mushkinaz hanym Javid was a great mother. She lives and will live in a sad epos that conveys a character of mother.

On the eve of Huseyn Javid's centennial, Father and Son met again after a long absence. The corpse of Mushkinaz Javid was buried next to their graves as well. Turan Javid, who died at the age of 81, was also buried there in accordance with her behest.

Currently all of them lie in a mausoleum in Nahchivan, on old Azerbaijan soil.

The Javids became the common property of the Azerbaijan people, and were the most valuable pages of this spiritual treasure. It is common knowledge that our National Leader Heydar Aliyev has had significant contributions in full retrieval of this treasure back to our nation.

Geidar Aliev's idea was that a snow-white mausoleum should be erected on their grave. However, in the summer of 1900 his hay-day was yet to come. But he was confident that it would come. And it came sooner than he expected–in October 1996.

– Yesterday (October 29, 1996. *–Author's Note.)* we paid tribute to the memory of Gusein Djavid, a great writer, poet, playwright, scholar-philosopher of Azerbaijan people, –Geidar Aliev said at a meeting with the people of the Nakhichevan Republic, –by attending the ceremony of opening his mausoleum. That was a great event of science and culture, and it is not only our holiday, i.e. of those who have gathered here, but it is also a holiday of all Azerbaijan people. Yesterday this holiday attracted the entire population of the autonomous republic. Tens, hundreds of thousands of people filled the streets and squares around the

Gusein Djavid Mausoleum. They congratulated each other with pride and great elation.

– That was a great holiday for me, too, for at long last the decision made by me 14 years ago was implemented by me.

… Adjemi ibn Abu Bekr, an outstanding architect who designed the mausoleums of Yusuf ibn Kuseiir and Momineh-khatun would have been proud, we believe, of such a masterpiece. Those mausoleums were built at the turn of the first millennium. And the magnificent Djavid Mausoleum joined them at the turn of the second millennium.

The world had changed–it's new completely,
Instead of wine blood flows profusely,
The world betrays its former vows,
Its ruins, palaces and hovels look much alike,
Who rolled in riches is a beggar now,
Who hated you before today's a bosom friend…
("Yesterday and Today")

In 1990 there were food shortages in Nakhichevan, just as everywhere in the Soviet Union. News traveled from one neighbor to another: our acquaintances have slaughtered a cow, go to them, you will probably be lucky to buy some beef from them. Sometimes Sanifa's sons-in-law were on time for the sale and then their favorite bozbash was prepared at home.

Geidar Aliev felt very unhappy that he could not attend his sister Sura's funeral for at that time he was practically locked in Moscow. But on the day after his arrival he visited her grave and laid flowers at the fresh mound and stood in silence at his father's grave….

In his first days in Nakhichevan Aliev missed the press badly. Sanifa subscribed to local newspapers, but those sent from Baku and Moscow was put on sale in stalls in the afternoon and sometimes on the following day. Then he switched on the radio set he had received as a gift from his neighbor.

Baku newspapers kept mum about Geidar Aliev's return, while Moscow publications carried the news immediately– *Komsomolskaya pravda, Izvestiya, Argumenty i fakty*. Letters poured in to Nakhichevan. Those who did not know his address wrote simply: to Geidar Aliev, Nakhichevan. Some of them sent sincere congratulations on his homecoming, others asserted that Azerbaijan was in need of a leader of that scale and still others, who had learned that he did not have a home of his own, invited him to their spacious and light apartments located in the city center, while they were ready to live with their relations.

These people remembered his kindness. One of Baku residents, Sanifa recalls, paid a visit to their place with keys to his apartment: "Please, come and live with us." A peasant from the Negram Village offered his newly built and well-furnished house as a gift.

Negram is a big village, where in the early 20th century Mamedkulizadeh, a brilliant prose writer, lived. It nominated Geidar Aliev as a candidate for a deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijan SSR. Offers were made from other districts as well, but he had made his choice in favor of Negram. And on September 30, 1990, he became people's deputy of Azerbaijan and deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the autonomous republic.

Back to the Roots

… Deputies had gathered in a comfortable hall on the ground floor of a small building resembling a school. Geidar Aliev was among them. But he was not allowed to stay in the hall –old and respected deputies invited Geidar Alirz ogly Aliev to take a seat in the presidium and preside at the meeting. He took this place of honor on a slightly elevated stage to the loud applause of the audience. His fellow countrymen believe in his lucky star and his wise words addressed to the long-suffering people. What has future in store for Nakhichevan? Whom have they to side with? Where have they to look for support in this unexpected war, in the siege unthinkable for the Union?

This force, Aliev was convinced, was the history of the people, of Azerbaijan as a whole, of Nakhichevan–return to spiritual sources. Russia, he said and often repeated later, had proclaimed its state sovereignty before all other union republics, thus launching the process of collapse of the Soviet Union… On Geidar Aliev's proposal the words "Soviet Socialist" were deleted from the republic's name, with mejlis to replace the former Supreme Soviet. The autonomous formation restored its tricolor– the blue-red-green banner of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic.

In the autumn of 1990 Baku journalist Elmira Akhundova was approved as *Literaturnaya gazeta's* own correspondent for Azerbaijan. An interview to be received from Geidar Aliev was among her first assignments. It should be reminded that a couple of years before the newspaper carried a crushing article about him by making use, it seemed, of the "compromising" material which

Ryzhkov disdained to use in his time. Geidar Aliev then wrote a well-grounded refutation and took it to the editorial office, despite the infarction he had suffered not long ago. But they did not publish his refutation.

"On learning that Geidar Aliev often pays visits to the Regional Party Committee," Elmira Akhundova recollects, "I made a telephone call to the first secretary's reception and requested his assistant to ask Geidar-muallim if he could spare time for an interview with the *LG*'s own correspondent. I was confident that my name would say nothing to Geidar Aliev, for I was a beginner in journalism and had little experience of work in the *big-time* press. However, counter to my expectations, I was informed that Geidar Aliev sincerely respected Elmira Akhundova and would be happy to meet her any time suitable to her. To say the truth, his reply astonished me and I even thought that he might have taken my modest person for some of the more venerable Azerbaijanian journalists.

"I am talking in detail about the prehistory of this meeting only because it serves as another testimony to a very remarkable trait of this politician–his astounding memory. Several days later I flew to Nakhichevan and met Geidar-muallim, who reminded me of an article I published in *Bakinsky rabochy* some time before. It turned out that it was owing to this article that we met. This is what Geidar Aliev told me. I recorded his words on the dictaphone and I am reproducing them literally:

– When in Moscow in the summer of 1990, I was looking through the press and an article in Bakinsky rabochy attracted my attention. If I am not mistaken, it was headlined, "We've All Come from the Past". It was its logic, objective nature and doubtlessly good style that attracted me. I naturally got interested in the author's name. Elmira Akhundova signed the article. I searched my memory for the journalist with this name, probably I met her before.

– After I have read your article, the past vividly came back to me–the years when I worked in Azerbaijan and when each interesting event, even if it was of little importance in the sphere of literature and art, was received by me with great enthusiasm. I have always followed closely our press, was happy when some interesting material appeared in the newspaper testifying to the author's creative, scientific or intellectual potential. I often called the editorial offices of *Bakinsky rabochy, Vyshka, Communist*, talked with editors, expressed my opinion of one or the other article and inquired about their authors. I invited some of them to get personally acquainted. That is why I knew all Azerbaijanian

journalists rather well. However, I couldn't recollect anything about you.

– I liked your article very much, especially in a situation when the press in Azerbaijan and other republics was over-infatuated with nihilism, pursued the course of all-out negation and presented a one-sided picture of our past. I read the article with pleasure and recommended to read it to my relations. And, you know, I felt relieved. That is why when you rang up and introduced yourself as a *Literaturnaya gazeta* correspondent saying that you'd got the editorial office's assignment to interview me, I had a dual feeling: on the one hand, I felt certain distrust of the *Literaturnaya gazeta* management. I have grounds for that. The newspaper has recently carried quite a few tendentious articles expressing some or other groupings' interests, which are far removed from real life. And on the other hand–your name. You know, I now treat meetings with journalists with caution, for I've "burnt my fingers" on several occasions. Some of them, having talked with me and received answers to the questions of interest to them, took liberty of distorting my ideas. However, I have recalled your article in *Bakinsky rabochy* and thought that such a person can hardly permit herself such a dishonest approach.

"Shall I add that this opinion was very flattering for me. But at the same time it was rather binding. I promised Geidar-muallim that I would not betray his trust and would do my best for the interview to be published in the newspaper in full and without any distortions. Incidentally, my word of honor contributed to a certain extent to the fact that our interview was never carried by *Literaturnaya gazeta*. Aliev sharply criticized in it the errors of the Union top political leadership, in particular, Mikhail Gorbachyov's errors in implementing perestroika reforms, with the result that the vast state found itself on the brink of national disaster. This interview is topical even today, and at that time it would have produced the effect of a bombshell, for Gorbachyov yet ruled the roost as President and almost a year divided him from dismissal. Geidar Aliev refused to shorten or "smooth down" certain pronouncements, and I accepted his stand."

Now we must admit the historical fact–Geidar Aliev's return to big-time politics was not by far a triumphant march. He had to clean the Augean stables of lies and slander, convince those in doubt and attract associates.

Witnesses recollect a situation when deputies of Azerbaijan's Supreme Soviet, who gathered at their first meeting in 1991,

sought to "hurt as much as they could the man before whom they have quite recently stood at attention". Poet Bakhtiyar Vagabzadeh was the only one of 340 people's deputies who reminded his colleagues that the same walls kept the memory of how Aliev had been greeted by a storm of applause. "You needn't muster courage to kick a fallen oak," he said. "You'd better heed the experienced politician's advice."

What was Geidar Aliev speaking about then? What was it that agitated him? What was his advice?

"Various rumors have been circulating about my return to Azerbaijan and election as people's deputy. In reply to this I declare that I have come back to my native land of course not to regain power or settle accounts with somebody, but exclusively in order to share my own people's grief, discharge my civic duty and join the fight for freedom in this difficult and complicated period for the republic. No one can deny these rights to me as an Azerbaijanian.

"I'd like to bring to the notice of the Supreme Mejlis certain of my thoughts and proposals on the current situation in the Soviet Union and Azerbaijan.

"*First.* In the past few years the country, Soviet society and the state administration system have been in the throws of a political and economic crisis. Relations between nations have been exacerbated to the utmost. The Soviet Union is on the verge of collapse.

"Reasons behind it: it is no doubt impossible to discount the effect of errors and miscalculations made at the various stages of our development on the current situation. However, serious, glaring and unforgivable errors made in all walks of our life in the period we described as "perestroika" are the principal ones.

"Regrettably all this is being hushed up, and the official circles and mass media subject to excruciating criticism solely the past.

"One may bold assert that the changes launched in our country in 1985 were not based on long-term scientific, political and economic strategy. So the hasty, sometimes contradictory measures naturally have not produced positive results…

"In the past five years Gorbachyov has been profuse in his promises to the people, however none of them have been translated into reality by him. As a result, vacuum divides the words and deeds and there is an abyss between the political leadership and the people. The people now distrust the leadership, they are not sure of the morrow. The Communist Party no longer wields authority.

"*Second.* The current situation in the country is also typical of Azerbaijan. Just as before, the republic's leadership blindly pursues the center's line in Azerbaijan in an effort to implement all instructions from above. And here are the results: the situation in Azerbaijan is deteriorating to the point of being unbearable.

"This is attributable to the problem of Nagorny Karabakh invented by Armenian nationalists. For more than three years our republic, the Azerbaijanian people have been subjected to constant aggressive attacks on the part of Armenia. As a result, Azerbaijan's territorial integrity has been violated…

"We must determine where, by whom, and what kind of error was made, how it happened that the people proved so helpless as to abandon their land. All that should be cleared up. V. Polyanichko has said here that Gorbachyov is contributing to the process of Nagorny Karabakh's loss. I must admit that I am of the same opinion. We need to expose in full the treacherous stand of the country's leader Gorbachyov in relation to Azerbaijan on this issue, and this should be reflected in our history … the perilous course of events could have been averted, with Armenia left as Armenia and Azerbaijan as Azerbaijan. That could be done only by a wise man guiding the Union. But Gorbachyov lacked this kind of wisdom, while the Azerbaijanian leaders could not muster enough courage, conscience and valor to uphold their people's interests and honor…"

And for him, Geidar Aliev, the notions of Motherland, land, the people's dignity and honor were inseparable.

A month later, on March 7, 1991, the session of Azerbaijan's Supreme Soviet discussed the issue of the republic's participation in a referendum due to be held in connection with a new Union Treaty prepared by Gorbachyov. Various viewpoints were expressed. Most of the deputies believed that it was necessary to take part in the referendum, to protect the Soviet Union. Then deputy Aliev took the floor.

– The destiny of Azerbaijan's future is the matter at issue, –he said. –That is why I would also like to express my ideas and proposals here.

– Azerbaijan has been a part of the Soviet Union ever since 1922. Our people have traversed a complicated historical path and scored great successes. We met with deprivations and hardships on the way. No one can deny it.

– We were all born, brought up, educated and formed in the period of this Union's existence. All of us, at least most of us, had boundless faith in this Union, we were loyal in our service to it, it was with this Union alone that we associated our people's bright

future. My colleagues who stood together with me at the helm of the republic and I worked hard to consolidate the Union and did our best to cultivate the feelings of loyalty to and love for this Union in the Azerbaijan people's hearts. However, the political processes, which were underway in the world and the country, have altered our attitude to the past, our worldview…

And further, analyzing economic and political contacts between the center and the republic, Gorbachyov's policy, Aliev drew a conclusion: the Union was breaking up. And the draft new Union Treaty was inadequate.

– In a word, I am against joining the new Union and against holding a referendum for these purposes without any conditions. That is a unanimous opinion of my electorate and deputies of the Supreme Mejlis of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic whose deputy I am. I am in favor of complete independence, economic and political sovereignty of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan people have already stepped onto this path…

– Certain people are trying to prove that our republic cannot possibly exist separately from the Union, independently. The idea is widespread in the country that the republics incorporated in the Union would be unable to exist separately from the Union for they are closely bound up by their economic and technological ties.

– These assertions hold no water. First, Azerbaijan has every opportunity to act as an independent state. Second, each state of the world maintains mutual economic, trade and technological relations with other states in the spheres they require, takes part in world economic integration, and all that does not deprive them of their sovereignty. That is why the economic contacts of the republics within the Union cannot serve as an obstacle on their way to independence. In my opinion, if Azerbaijan becomes an independent state, it will be able to maintain bilateral, equitable and mutually advantageous relations with each of the Union republics and even with the Union as such if it survives…

– Azerbaijan people must unite and protect as the apple of their eye their sacred native land. The Azerbaijan Republic should pursue the course of economic and political sovereignty, work for complete independence.

– I urge the people's deputies, all Azerbaijan people to pursue this goal and assure you that I will not deviate from this path.

"Is anything new in Nakhichevan? –was a question asked then by politicians in Baku and Moscow, Tehran and Paris, Ankara and

New York. Diplomats, journalists, public leaders and statesmen kept coming to Nakhichevan for a meeting with Geidar Aliev… Chairman of the Nakhichevan Republic's Parliament received Konstantin Totsky, deputy chief of the headquarters of the Transcaucasian Border Area, among others.

Nine years later Colonel General Totsky, director of the Federal Border Service of Russia, would recall at a meeting with the President of Azerbaijan their dialogues in Nakhichevan.

– In 1991 I had the honor to be received by you in Nakhichevan. You gave me valuable advice then on many issues. The situation was far from simple then. You took a very sensible stand on it and set concrete tasks. At that time it was difficult enough to appreciate this. Now, after all these years, all of us have accumulated certain experience and it has been brought home to us that this is the way it should be. There is a concrete territory, people, power, so it isn't Moscow alone that should establish rules on the border. All this was honestly delimited by you. There are nationwide rules and local problems, which should also be taken into account.

Rafael Guseinov, a consultant of the CPSU CC international relations department, also arrived in Nakhichevan. Incidentally, it was the first time since 1975 that an Azerbaijanian held a post in the CC staff. Prior to that he worked as a journalist with *Komsomolskaya pravda.* Aliev met him in Baku back in the period when Rafik (which is the way friends called Rafael Guseinov) was an editor of *Molodezh Azerbaijana* newspaper. Aliev met the guest from Moscow with alertness and was surprised to learn that it was Ligachev who had sent him, but thanked him for attention. He said that he did not need anything, but he only wished his Baku apartment to be returned to him. However, in Baku Geidar Aliev was regarded as persona non grata. Even dangerous.

July 19, 1991, Moscow

That was a day of Communist Geidar Aliev's application for withdrawal from CPSU membership to the party organization of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Union. You can imagine his feelings when he wrote this application, his thoughts about his path in the party, his father's parting words, but let's read an exacting edited text. It revealed his bitter pain experienced after treachery, the people's pain, the entire great country's tragedy.

Just a few minutes divided it from the disaster but the helmsmen were blind.

Geidar Aliev handed over his application to the party organization, where he had been registered since 1982, when he was transferred to Moscow. Documents of this kind should be read from the first to the last line rather than retold.

"I bring to your notice that I have adopted a decision on withdrawal from the CPSU.

"I would like to warn you at once that this is not a tribute to 'the current fashion' but a result of the hard road of disenchantment and revaluation of values I have traversed at a price of great suffering in the past few years.

"The main reasons behind this decision are as follows.

*"**First.** The problem of withdrawal from the CPSU arose already on January 20, 1990, in connection with military aggression against the Azerbaijan people carried out by the political leadership of the center and the CC of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan. As a result of the developments in January, hundreds of innocent peaceful residents died and were mutilated, including old people, women and children.*

"Having condemned this anti-human, anti-constitutional and illegal act in my speeches, I hoped that the CC CPSU, the CC of the CP of Azerbaijan would conduct investigation of this crime and reveal the guilty. I waited patiently with great difficulty curbing my emotions. And in response to these speeches a mass-scale slanderous campaign was launched against me by party publications, with Pravda to be the first among them. All my attempts to publish material in the same mass media with a grounded refutation of invented allegations against me ended in failure. Glasnost proclaimed as the main gain of perestroika proved to be a one-way traffic.

"Numerous requests by people's deputies of the Supreme Mejlis of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, various groups of individuals and prominent figures to find those guilty of the tragedy in January and to punish them are stubbornly rejected by the communist leadership of Azerbaijan.

"A year and a half has elapsed. Not only nothing has been done to disclose this monstrous crime whose perpetrators have long been known, but also on the contrary, all measures are taken to conceal it in the hope that with the passage of time the tragedy would be forgotten. However, history has repeatedly proved that neither years nor decades will erase from the people's memory and make them forgive murderous crimes against their people.

*"**Second.** As a result of the center's hypocritical policy, the conflict situation has been a reality in the Nagorno-Karabakh Region of Azerbaijan for more than three years, triggered off as it was by the efforts of Armenian nationalists with the connivance of the CC CPSU. The region has been as a matter of fact removed from Azerbaijan's state administration.*

"Azerbaijan's state sovereignty, territorial integrity have been grossly violated in defiance of the Constitution. Undeclared war is in progress between Armenia and Azerbaijan, there are human losses on both sides almost every day. And all this within the Soviet state with its "humane" ideology.

"I am convinced that had the party leadership wished, the conflict between nations, which flared up in connection with the so-called issue of Nagorny Karabakh back in 1987-1988, could have been averted at the start with measures to prevent the deepening confrontation and carnage bringing great privations and suffering in their train both for Azerbaijanian and Armenians people. That means that the center needed this conflict.

***"Third.** In the period of democratization of entire society, proclamation of political freedoms and pluralism, the broad democratic movement which swept Azerbaijan in 1988 for protection of the republic's territorial integrity and society's democratization is being stubbornly suppressed through the efforts of the CC CP of Azerbaijan under the CC CPSU guidance. Many persons were repressed for political reasons in those years.*

"A year and a half Azerbaijan's capital with its population of two million has lived in an emergency situation. It was in this context that the so-called "democratic" elections were held to the republic's Supreme Soviet and a referendum with the obvious positive result in favor of the Union's preservation. It would be naive to believe that one may hope for any kind of democracy and free expression of the people's will in an emergency situation. Democratic organizations repeatedly raised the question of foul play, i.e., the absolute majority of the republic's electorate had not taken part in the referendum and its results had been manipulated. However, Azerbaijan's communist leadership did not deem it possible even to consider these appeals.

"I have come out, and do so now, against a new union treaty imposed by the center. You cannot have several states' sovereignty within one sovereign state, with all freedom, powers and functions following from this notion.

"Genuine political and economic freedom and independence should be granted to all union republics for their national state revival. This would in no way obstruct economic integration and

the republics' traditional cultural relations, on the contrary, that would promote their improvement and development on a bilateral and multilateral basis.

"As a people's deputy of Azerbaijan and of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, I repeatedly raised in my addresses all these issues, proposed that the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, which no longer wields authority with the people, renounce its monopoly of power, provide conditions for free and equal activity by all political forces, for the development of democratic society, political pluralism and glasnost in full volume.

"However, all these appeals and my proposals are not only ignored by Azerbaijan's communist leadership but provoke a response in the form of new well thought out and organized attacks against me. Editors of newspapers and journalists who publish my addresses in Azerbaijan are relieved of their duties and subjected to persecutions.

"On the basis of the foregoing, I decided to resort to the most drastic measure and announce my withdrawal from the CPSU, although that was an extremely difficult decision for me. I grew up in the family of communists and all my conscious life was bound up with the Communist Party. I joined the Bolshevik Party at the age of 20 in 1943.

" I sincerely believed in the ideals of the Communist Party and took an active part in the implementation of its plans. Now this trust has been destroyed.

"The endless declarations of a renovated party, of a renovated Union of Republics is nothing but a new lie to mislead the people.

"It is necessary to tell the people honestly and openly that the communist experiment, socialist choice have not justified themselves, the Union of Republics, created and supported by force has lived its day.

"I can imagine the difficulties I will face after this statement, I can foresee all kinds of attacks and moral badgering. Sensible analysis of the path traversed by the party has led me to this stand set forth by me. And I realize the extent of my responsibility.

"On leaving the ranks of the CPSU I express my respect to all honest and decent communists who still believe and hope.

Geidar Aliev
July 19, 1991, Moscow".

Geidar Aliev adopted a courageous decision. He could visualize the future–a gift denied to the gentlemen at the top, he

was well aware of the vector for the developments. The August Putsch took place a month later.

The Putsch

The ceremony of Boris Yeltsin's inauguration as President of Russia was held at a formal meeting of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet. Relationships between the Union and Russian authorities were extremely exacerbated.

Who was to govern almost two-thirds of the country–the Union or Russia, personally Yeltsin or Gorbachyov? The Union parliament passed laws but the Russian parliament ignored them. Speaking at one of the grand assemblies, Mikhail Bocharov, Yeltsin's closest adviser (at that time it was planned to promote him to the post of prime minister), repeated many times in his address the words "Russia' sovereignty". Then Fyodor Burlatsky, a politologist who in his time was Andropov's, Brezhnev's and again Andropov's adviser, asked him a simple question:

– Well, you are breaking-up the USSR, what's next? What about the Russian Federation? And if Tataria, Bashkiria, Chechnya, Ingushetia proclaim their withdrawal from the RSFSR, what will you do then?

Bocharov was confused and muttered:

– Then we'll open talks with them.

Aliev put away the newspaper with this story. He had long known Burlatsky and read his books with pencil in hand. Of course Fyodor was quite right, but he would hardly make those cubs change their views.

On August 15, 1991, *Moskovskiye novosti* weekly published the draft Union Treaty Gorbachyov had been keeping secret. The General Secretary, according to ex-USSR KGB Chairman Kryuchkov, put through a telephone call from the Crimea, where he had departed for rest, fulminated and demanded that those guilty of the leak of information be found and punished. But that was of no interest to anyone. The country was on the verge of a political tsunami.

On August 19, 1991, at 04:00 a.m. Moscow time, the USSR learned that an emergency situation had been introduced in certain localities of the USSR for a period of six months. The causes and goals of this measure were set forth in the Statement of the Soviet Leadership. It stressed that the Constitution of the USSR and the laws of the Soviet Union had indisputable priority throughout the territory of the USSR.

Item 3 of this Statement contained information on the setting up of the State Emergency Committee of the USSR (GKChP). It adopted an "Appeal to the Soviet People".

On the same day President Yeltsin read out his address from the top of Tank No. 110 of the Taman Division (on General Lebed's orders tanks had been sent to the Russian government building to protect new leaders) and urged Russian people for resistance. Next, Yeltsin's decree was published which described the actions of GKChP organizers as a coup d'etat. Two days later the coup was suppressed. Next came the turn of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Aliev watched in his Nakhichevan office the live TV broadcast from the Kremlin, when Yeltsin was signing the Decree on the Suspension of the CPSU Activity as millions of TV viewers followed the ceremony. It was a hot day in August, a plane tree could be seen through the open window, he could hear two young women discussing what they had to buy for a new school year. He partly closed the window.

Yeltsin invited Gorbachyov to take the floor. Mikhail Gorbachyov started his address. Just at that moment Yeltsin received a message from Moscow Mayor Gavriil Popov who informed him that the CC CPSU buildings had been captured. Inspired by the news, Yeltsin interrupted Gorbachyov. In the presence of deputies, while millions of TV viewers were watching, he demonstratively signed the Decree on the Suspension of the CPSU Activity. And sneered:

– The decree shall take effect from the time of its signing.

That was the time of his triumph, his revenge, but not the last one, for the CC CPSU plenary meeting in October when Gorbachyov gave Yeltsin a public lashing, for the 19th party conference, for his former humiliations. Yeltsin rejoiced, although he could hardly appreciate the meaning of his actions.

The meaning of what had taken place was obviously unclear to Gorbachyov, who made a weak attempt to protest, since this action, he said, might stir up a wave of anti-communist hysteria which would be dangerous and unjust. Yeltsin waved his hand in reply: enough of that, Mikhail Sergeyevich. One of the deputies made his way to the microphone and shouted hysterically "communists should be swept out of the country".

Gorbachyov tried to reason with him:

– Are you going to drive 18 million communists, or 50-70 million people–with their families, out of the country? If you describe yourselves as democrats, act as such!

Geidar Aliev muffled the TV sound. The developments in Moscow fight for power served as a proof in favor of his proper choice–Azerbaijan's independence.

A session of the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan was held on August 29. Just as everywhere in those critical days in August, passions ran high in the hall. People's deputy Geidar Aliev took the floor:

"Esteemed People's Deputies!" He started his address looking calm outwardly. "The country has reached a critical point in its political and economic crisis, the crisis of state power… In this period the position of our republic, of the Azerbaijan people is especially complicated and difficult. The Azerbaijan Communist Party governing in the republic and its gross, irreparable errors are the main reason behind this reactionary policy…"

There is a note in the records of proceedings at this point: "Voices of protest in the hall". "My request is to give the floor to each deputy at this session," Aliev said to his colleagues with reserve. And continued after a brief pause. "As a result of this policy, the republic's communist leadership has practically approved the coup d'etat of August 19-22, the State Emergency Committee, and in this way the Azerbaijan people landed in a very difficult position…"

Deputy Aliev demanded that the emergency situation, which had been in force in Baku for a year and a half, be lifted and the stand of the leadership of the Azerbaijan Republic determined on the State Emergency Committee. The Communist Party of Azerbaijan, he said, should immediately give up its leading position. He asked Chairwoman of the Supreme Soviet Elmira Kafarova and President Ayaz Mutalibov why a political assessment of the January 20 tragedy had not been given.

This is what follows in the record of proceedings:

"*Elmira Kafarova:* It was given at the session held on January 20.

Geidar Aliev: If that was done, then who is to blame for this armed aggression? Today they say that it was Yazov, Kryuchkov, Bakatin, Girenko, and Gorbachyov. That's right. And who of the Azerbaijan leadership is to blame? Their names are known too: Vezirov, Kafarova, Mutalibov and other members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan. Yes, if some other people are also guilty, it should be found out. And if other forces are to blame such as democratic forces, the Popular Front, political assessment should also be given to their activity. Stability in the Republic cannot be attained until this is cleared up. If political assessment has been provided for this, I would like Ayaz

Mutalibov to tell us why when Gorbachyov coordinated the appointment of 3 ministers with the leadership of 9 republics, Ayaz Mutalibov did not object to Bakatin's appointment to the post of chairman of the State Security Committee. If he did so, why didn't he mention his objection in his address? Why did it happen that Vezirov, one of those behind the tragedy of January 20, has been elected as a member of the preliminary committee from the Azerbaijan Republic to prepare a Congress of People's Deputies? Who has nominated him to the post? If the leadership of the Azerbaijan Republic did that, it should bear responsibility for that to the Azerbaijan people. And I'd like to state this outright.

"Presidential elections should not be held in Azerbaijan until these questions are cleared up–on this point I absolutely come out in support of the opinion voiced here by the delegates in their addresses. Next, since communists account for the absolute majority of the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan, people who have worked in the authorities of the Communist Party, elected as deputies to Parliament, and the Communist Party of Azerbaijan are at fault in many respects, I believe that Parliament of the Azerbaijan Republic should be disbanded and new elections held.

"By speaking so sharply I think that after my address people, specially prepared for the purpose, will shower me with accusations. I'm used to such attacks. So, don't bother. I've said what I wanted with clear conscience."

Vladimir Dal described conscience as the heart of hearts, which responds with approval, or condemnation of each action. This heart of hearts of a great number of politicians is as a rule empty. Geidar Aliev did not just talk about conscience and morals from high rostrums, which in our days is a must for the politician's image, he acted from positions of conscience. Corresponding Member of the Republican Academy of Sciences Ramiz Rizayev, a prominent Azerbaijan scientist in the sphere of petrochemistry, stressed this trait of Aliev's character. His intolerance of injustice made him join the Popular Front in the late 1980s. In September 1991, Rizayev flew to Nakhichevan in order to meet Aliev. He was led along the veranda overgrown with grape to the mud hut inside which it was cool even at the height of summer heat in Nakhichevan. They talked for almost four hours. Seeing off his guest Geidar Aliev asked him to visit him more often.

The year 1991 was drawing to a close. On December 8, Yeltsin, President of Ukraine Kravchuk and Chairman of Byelorussia's Supreme Soviet Shushkevich, who met in

Belovezhskaya Pushcha, gave green light to the dissolution of the USSR. The Transcaucasian republics, which were among those who created this Union in 1922, were not invited. At the close of December the red flag was lowered from the Kremlin at night (they were ashamed to do so by day). The Kremlin's new master at once put out Gorbachyov, the first and last USSR President, from there.

And Azerbaijan fought its own battles. The Popular Front was out to win power. Popular Front leader Abulfaz Elchibei won the country's presidential elections. The destinies of these two people, who were both born in Nakhichevan, were entangled curiously enough. Two decades before Aliev saved him from prison. Elchibei was also committed to his people and its independence, he spoke the right words. But what about the deeds that followed?

The report of Elchibei's inauguration, prepared by his press service, closed in a businesslike way: "This is the beginning of the first workday of the President of the Republic." It took place on June 17, 1992. A year or so later he fled from Baku. But this will happen later. For the time being Elchibei ruled in Azerbaijan. Incidentally, he kept Geidar Aliev's picture in his office, though not in sight.

Nakhichevan in Siege

Please, take a look at the map in the Appendix. The Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic and Azerbaijan proper are separated by Armenian territory. In Soviet times this border was in effect conditional. But later it coincided with a frontline, blocking the way to trains, cars and people.

Siege for Nakhichevan residents was not an abstract literary notion. It determined their lifestyle.

No electricity. Kerosene lamps took the place of electric lamps. By force of habit one used to stretch his hand for the switch, but to no avail, so one could only swear in impotent rage.

No gas in the kitchens–again "hissing" of primus-stoves.

And now just imagine that you and your children live on the third, fifth or seventh floor, and you have to fetch water from a water cart and warm yourself near a small stove. This is how Geidar Aliev described those days in his recollections:

"Neither food nor oil was delivered to us. No electricity was supplied. Cold and famine reigned in the city. Newborns died in hospitals. People started cutting fruit trees for fuel, so 70 per cent

of them were cut down to warm houses. But I have survived and the people survived.

"My life was modest, frugal and difficult, just as that of my people. But we have survived and managed to be happy. People from Baku often paid visits to me trying to convince me to return to politics. But I was against it. I did not wish to be involved in the Popular Front's policy which led to a disaster…"

The siege of Nakhichevan, which bordered not only on Armenia but also on Iran and Turkey, could have been broken. But the Baku authorities held a different view: the worse, the better.

"Soon I was subjected to pressure on both sides, as if gripped in a vice–Mutalibov's communist regime and the Popular Front", –Geidar Aliev went on. "Incidentally, for the first time in Azerbaijan, Popular Front members held the leading posts in Nakhichevan precisely on my proposal. Two PF activists served as my deputies. Moreover, I appointed a PF member to the post of prime minister. True, later it transpired that he was a swindler, so I had to dismiss him. After that my contacts with the Popular Front were disrupted.

They worked under a delusion that their man was free to act as he wished. And that was also his idea. But after I had punished him for swindling, he sought to retaliate by some kind of schemes. However, that was tantamount to suicide in Nakhichevan. The people nearly tore him to pieces. He had to flee in a freight car–no passenger cars traveled via Armenia.

In October 1992, the Popular Front even made an attempt at a coup in Nakhichevan. Armed PF formations captured the militia and television buildings and were ready to assault Parliament with me inside. But a crowd of 15,000 gathered in front of the building and protected it. I put through several telephone calls to Elchibei and later transferred to him the materials of investigation of this incident. No reaction."

To be more precise, there was a certain kind of reaction. Elchibei tore unlucky plotters off a strip. The assault of mejlis was a failure, just as two attempts at Aliev's life.

That was how Elchibei worked to break the Nakhichevan siege. A politician of a different caliber could hardly succeed. That was a time when Aliev' s authority in the world came in handy.

"I established friendly personal relations with Iranian and Turkish leaders," he recollected of the years in Nakhichevan. "The President of Iran sent his plane to Nakhichevan, I flew to Tehran and agreed on assistance. We built electric transmission lines and electric power was supplied from Iran. Just as fuel and food…

President of Turkey Demirel offered me a credit of $100 million and also sent his plane, so I paid him a visit in Ankara. I built a highway to Turkey, a bridge across the river and made arrangements for supplies of goods. But, most important, I managed to avoid an armed conflict with Armenia. The situation was very critical, at times extremely critical, but I found a way out to avoid bloodshed.."

TV sequences have been preserved of heavy-duty trucks loaded with flour, sugar, dry milk and meat, i.e., humanitarian aid from Iran, rumbling across the bridge spanning the Araks. It's a pity that Samed Vurgun has not lived to see that... In 1948 the poet saw in his mind's eye a builder of the destroyed bridge:

> At the Araks he'd wept long, say, for ages
> As he looked at his ravaged creation…
> Oh, who knows how long
> The pedestrians missed its solid plates?
> The old man looks wistfully at the road…
> But it's deserted…

May 10, 1993… Geidar Aliev celebrated his 70th birth anniversary. He did not want any boisterous festivities and was going to spend the day among his relations. His son arrived from Turkey the day before… But he simply could not fail to meet askers, soldiers who had been permitted to leave the frontline for a day or two?! Could he refuse to meet veterans of the Great Patriotic War from Baku who had been deprived of their sacred holiday of May 9? Ilkham was listening attentively to his father.

– Nakhichevan residents celebrate Victory Day just as before, –responded the chairman of the autonomous republic's Supreme Mejlis.

– This holiday will come back to Baku with you, Geidar-muallim, the people revere it.

Journalist Svetlana Mirzoyeva had come from Baku. Her gift was an old, slightly faded amateur photo of the famous ballerina Gamer Almaszadeh,–that wizard of dance, a young girl Zarifa and her brother Tamerlan.

Geidar Aliev looked warmly at it:

– Zarifa was the love of my life…

Later, casting aside his worries, he spoke about encounters with great painters, masters he met in his life.

– Poetry, theater, music, painting, sculpture, all this means much more to me than just contacts with the captivating, fascinating world, more than ever new impressions and rest. Art served as a source of strength for me, it's a source of optimism for me, it makes me happy. In my encounters with artists I get

thorough knowledge and deep sense of the beauty of life, of human relations.

Prominent artists regarded Geidar Aliev as their colleague, co-author. The well-known singer Muslim Magomayev, who happened to hear Aliev singing at a concert at home, expressed his admiration of Aliev's voice. Old timers in Nakhichevan remember even now how they went to the city theater to listen to Geidar's singing... Yes, he might have become an artist, actor or architect. But life's dictate was different. In his role of a politician he could be of the utmost use to his people.

Chapter 9
NINETY-THREE

May-June 1993, Nakhichevan–Baku

The chronicle of events, kept day by day by journalist Ali Gasanov, now the head of the staff of the Milli Mejlis of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, does not include this episode: the kerosene lamp was removed from Aliev's office. The press secretary gave orders for the lamp to be left at his office. He even locked it up in the cupboard. He did not of course intend to use his chief's lamp if electric power was cut once more. As a thoughtful man, he hoped to see it on display at the Aliev Museum of the future.

Incidentally, that's what happened eventually. And here is what can really be found in the annals of the chronicle: in June 1993 Nakhichevan was connected to the Iranian power network. Moreover, a gas line was built from Tebriz to the besieged republic.

The Nakhichevan market was the first to react to the news: the prices of kerosene lamps dropped, solely the most distrustful people bought them acting in the manner of the hero of Azerbaijan folklore Kafir, i.e., the local lore equivalent of Doubting Thomas.

Shortly before Geidar Aliev's 70th birth anniversary, a journalist of *Bakinsky rabochy*, asked him for an interview. Aliev received him, answered his questions willingly but remarked before his departure that the interview would be hardly published. He hit the nail on the head. May 10 and 20 passed followed by June without any news from *Bakinsky rabochy.* It carried the interview as late as June 10 under the headline "I Believe in Azerbaijan's Happy Future".

Someone may regard such a delay in publication as a matter of no importance. Is there any difference after all if an interview granted by a provincial politician, the leader of an autonomous republic, of one of the country's regions, was published a month earlier or later? But the fact was that Azerbaijan in May 1993 and

in June of the same year looked like two different countries. That was due to the events in Gandzha* (in Soviet times, after Kirov's assassination, the city was renamed into Kirovabad, and still earlier, from the period of tsarist campaigns in Transcaucasia–into Yelizavetgrad).

Gandzha lived through turbulent times in the period of its age-long existence. But it was quite unprecedented for the people to fire at their own kin and kith…

Colonel Guseinov's Tanks

…Operation for the neutralization of Military Unit No. 7097", as it was described officially, under the command of Colonel Suret Guseinov, was launched on June 4, at 06:00 a.m. The units of the presidential guards, of the National Defense Ministry and internal troops, attacked it. There were casualties of 68 servicemen and civilians. The tanks crushed twelve soldiers who were fighting back the attack. The government units were defeated utterly, with 1,200 men taken prisoner, including 180 officers. It could well be that they sided with Suret Guseinov of their own free will, for, just like him, they did not wish to fight for the corrupt regime.

After a report of the parliamentary committee upon its return from Gandzha, deputies argued for two and a half hours whether a live broadcast had to be permitted on the national television or not. President Abulfaz Elchibei and Chairman of Milli Mejlis (it was described as the Supreme Soviet in the Russian-language press) Isa Gambarov believed that a live broadcast would only exacerbate the situation in the republic. Most of the deputies objected to them, so on June 8, at 19:30 television started its live broadcast.

Take note of this date.

Geidar Aliev was then in Nakhichevan. Elchibei got into contact with him some two or three times daily on the phone and implored him to fly to Baku and save the country from chaos.

Colonel Guseinov's tanks were approaching Baku sowing terror.

Elchibei sent his plane for Aliev on two occasions–to no avail, the crew returned without him.

* It is Azerbaijan's second biggest city after Baku for its population; it is a major industrial and cultural center.

– I spoke with Elchibei over the phone and refused to go to Baku, –Aliev recollected later. –On June 9 Guseinov's troops were stationed 100 kilometers from Baku. His people regarded it as an insult and said: "If we come to Baku we'll hang criminals on lamp posts!" Again Elchibei sent a plane for me and he begged me to come. I agreed.

"I must admit, I was afraid to fly to a catastrophe, but I realized that I must fly, for the people's destiny was at stake. Upon arrival, Elchibei and I talked for several hours. He offered me the post of prime minister still occupied by his associate Panakh Guseinov. I refused. All of them had joined Elchibei and were listening to me. I told them all I thought about their criminal rule. Isa Gambarov lost his patience and said: 'We were looking forward to your advice but you are reading out our indictment!' Well, that was the case."

That was not their first encounter. They had an eight-hour discussion in February. "Such a policy is doomed to failure," Geidar Aliev then said frankly to Elchibei, who parried in this way: "We are learning to govern. Let those who lack experience accumulates it. If they fail we'll either dismiss or replace them. – you experiment on people? –the old man objected to his authoritative interlocutor.

Aliev's article carried by *Bakinsky rabochy*–we remind you that it was published on June 10–seemed to serve as a sequel to that dialogue.

Geidar Aliev addressed the public from the columns of one of the most popular newspapers in the republic as a politician bearing responsibility for the entire country–and that was the way he had always acted, rather than as the head of an autonomous republic. Geidar Aliev was speaking about the most important, urgent problem: how to stop the hostilities, how to rehabilitate the ravaged economy…

"Sovereignty, national independence is Azerbaijan's most valuable gain. But there consolidation by no means conflicts with the establishment of business, economic and cultural relations with neighbor states, countries of near and far abroad. Who has benefited from the rupture of economic relations? None of the republics of the former USSR–even such powerful states as Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. And how long will it take us to establish new relations? Each country, with Azerbaijan among them, will certainly suffer in the process of its search carried out blindly, haphazardly, to its own detriment.

"A certain part of Azerbaijan's population migrates from the country. Some of them depart for the cities of the former USSR

and others even go abroad–to the USA, Israel, Germany, and so on. Baku is gradually losing its image of a city of international culture, which has always been beneficial for its residents.

"I'd like to assert definitely that Azerbaijan owes its gains in various walks of life to that multinational cultural and social climate which has been generated for almost a hundred years.

"And it's quite unpardonable that it is precisely Russian-speaking Azerbaijanians who are leaving Azerbaijan. They are as rule excellent specialists, graduates of Moscow and Leningrad higher educational institutions.

"Incidentally, the Yeni Azerbaijan (New Azerbaijan) party led by me comes out actively for the restoration of the former climate of trust, friendship and interaction by peoples of different nationalities."

At that moment the reporter reminded Aliev that when withdrawing from the Communist Party he promised not to join any party ever again.

"That's right," Aliev retorted, "but Yeni Azerbaijan has put forward so many ideals in harmony with my own concepts of life that I decided not simply to join it but act as its chairman. By virtue of its truly democratic goals this party attracts an increasing number of members from among men of arts science and technology, peasants and workers.

"And, last but not least, Yeni Azerbaijan sets itself the task of uniting people of most varied strata in the face of immense danger in the form of our enemy, the hostilities in Karabakh, ruin as a result.

"Yes, I've lived a long and difficult but, I believe, happy life. All I've gone through–negative and positive aspects, joys and disappointments–is my wealth, my property. I've come back to politics in order to do my best for the people, for Azerbaijan, not to dig up what was negative or settle accounts with someone.

"I'm a realist and I am well aware of the extremely difficult situation in Azerbaijan. But I can look ahead and trust in the people's strength, for even in these conditions they have been able to overcome their hardships, and they will be able to restore what has been destroyed and set about building a new life. After all they were able after the Great Patriotic War, which had taken a toll of hundreds of thousands of young lives, to heal its wounds and start all over again. I believe in Azerbaijan's happy future."

The same issue and the same column of the newspaper which carried the beginning of this conversation, published reports of fighting in Gandzha and information about the report of the government committee which studied the situation on the spot. All

this was further discussed at an extraordinary session of Parliament, with the result that ministers were dismissed and the President fled at night, much in the style of cool westerns. But we'll describe all this in proper order.

Supreme Soviet Chairman Isa Gambarov handed in his resignation on June 11. A group of deputies proposed that Geidar Aliev be elected chairman. He refused and asked them to suspend the session for a few days in order to meet Suret Guseinov.

"I have never met him before and flew to Gandzha to talk to him. We talked all through the night. In the morning he took me around the city and I could see the traces of fighting, destroyed buildings and charred houses. I saw the consequences of the crime. I came back to Baku, accepted the proposal of the Supreme Soviet and was elected chairman on June 15. I took this step with the sole purpose–to put an end to civil war.

"On June 16 Suret's troops clashed with the Popular Front's military formations. A battle followed, with casualties. I had to stop that fratricidal war, for innumerable lives have been lost over the period. Suret and I agreed that his troops would not enter Baku, no battles would be fought in the capital. You know what happened next. The result was–a committee for investigation into the events in Gandzha and its conclusion: The Popular Front represented by its leaders has committed a crime. Next, a mejlis session was held. The main culprits were stripped of their immunity as deputies and arrested. That was how I came back to Baku."

President Elchibei's Flight

Abulfaz Elchibei, a scholar who had abandoned historical manuscripts for the sake of big-time politics, flew from the capital at the dawn of June 18. Really incomprehensible are Allah's ways! The amazed people learned about the President's flight from the morning news releases. The President explained his flight to his native town of Nakhichevan by his desire to prevent fratricidal clashes in the capital and stabilize the situation in the republic.

In keeping with the Constitution of Azerbaijan, the chairman of Parliament assumed the powers of the head of state. Announcing this on the national television, Geidar Aliev stressed that he by no means justified Abulfaz Elchibei's move, for it was the President's duty to uphold his people's interests even at the most critical moment.

An extraordinary meeting of Milli Mejlis was convened on June 21. In his opening address Geidar Aliev said that no personnel reshufflement was planned, for that was impossible in the absence of President Abulfaz Elchibei. However, the President had no intention to return until Suret Guseinov's insurgent detachments withdrew from Baku. "We should discuss today whether or not Elchibei is in a position to govern the republic. If not, we should take some steps," the Supreme Soviet chairman said.

Acting Foreign Minister Rovshan Djavadov informed the deputies that Suret Guseinov's insurgent formations had approached Baku without any resistance. They were stopped at the Lokbatan Settlement (a Baku suburb) and on the Shemakhinskaya Highway 75th kilometer as a result of negotiations.

The minister's voice sounded with increasing sternness: "The insurgents maintain contacts with criminal elements, and this is fraught with the threat of losing control over the situation on the approaches to the capital. It is not ruled out that tomorrow it would be too late for the Parliament to gather…"

– And what about the President? –the deputies asked with anxiety.

– He rang me up, –the minister replied, –and said that he would not go to Baku but would issue all necessary orders from Nakhichevan.

– We cannot accuse President of the Azerbaijan Republic Abulfaz Elchibei of having left his people to the mercy of fate and left for Nakhichevan for the sake of his security, –declared State Secretary Ali Kerimov. –The President left the capital in order to avoid bloodshed.

He was at once interrupted: some deputies accused Elchibei of cowardice and others were insistent in their desire to know how the Supreme Commander-in-Chief would "perform his duties and monitor the aspects of military strategy and tactics staying outside Baku".

– The President has long elaborated a strategy and it should be only carried into effect today, –the state secretary tried to protect his chief. He believed that certain deputies wished to lure Elchibei out of Nakhichevan exclusively in order "to dismiss him immediately".

Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Geidar Aliev read out the report of Iskender Allakhverdiev, Chief of Administration of the Border Troops of Azerbaijan's National Security Ministry, on the fact that Colonel Aliakram Gumbatov, ex-deputy Defense Minister, was busy setting up "an independent Talysh Republic". Just as Guseinov, Gumbatov had been hastily promoted to the rank of

colonel. In peacetime he was employed at a garage in Lenkoran. After the advent to power of the Popular Front he made his way to the Defense Ministry but he was fired from it soon after. Having lost his job, he knocked together an armed detachment in Lenkoran, which terrorized the city and its suburbs. Gumbatov planned his "republic's" incorporation into Iran. His career was cut short by the court, which sentenced him to life imprisonment. (He was pardoned by President I. Aliev's decree in 2004.)

Powers Handed Over to President Geidar Aliev

An appeal was approved unanimously at a meeting of Milli Mejlis on June 21 for President of the Azerbaijan Republic Abulfaz Elchibei to come back to Baku and set about performing his duties. The draft appeal was elaborated on June 20 with the participation of the ministers of defense, national security, internal affairs, head of Parliament Geidar Aliev, his deputies Tamerlan Karayev and Afieddin Djalilov, former first secretary of the Nakhichevan Regional Party Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan. The deputies adopted an appeal to Colonel Suret Guseinov for an end to be put to the confrontation and for peace negotiations to be opened with the authorities.

That was a real war, not something like balancing on the verge of it. It swept through Azerbaijan as a whole, and God knows what would have remained of it, had Geidar Aliev not been present in Baku in those days.

On June 24 Milli Mejlis adopted a historical–no exaggeration here–relation:

1. To approve the fact that Abulfaz Gadirgulu ogly Aliev (Elchibei) shall no longer perform the duties of President of the Azerbaijan Republic.

2. To hand over the powers of President of the Azerbaijan Republic to Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijan Republic Geidar Alirza ogly Aliev.

Now his official titles were as follows: acting President of the Azerbaijan Republic, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijan Republic.

– I am well aware of my responsibility at this critical hour of trial for the Azerbaijan People, in the period of exacerbation of the socio-political situation in the republic… I will apply all my experience as a statesman and politician for the country to overcome its crisis in many spheres... And we shall, just as before,

pursue unswervingly democratic policy chosen by the Azerbaijan Republic…

Aliev had in front of him a sheet of paper with the theses of his address, but, just as usual, he spoke without looking in them. Just as in 1969, he had to open a new chapter in his life that was indivisible from the life of Azerbaijan. But he spoke with confidence. The captain was on the captain's bridge again. He knew what he had to do, he knew the course. They say that people of this type draw on their power for strength. That's right to a point. Power will be helpful if a politician relies on his own firmness, knowledge, intellectual potential, in a word, if help is given to a personality worthy of it. And if he is motivated by petty ideas and selfish calculations, nothing will help.

The developments in Azerbaijan were closely followed in many capitals. Ambassadors asked to be received by Geidar Aliev, editors-in-chief and special correspondents of the leading newspapers and magazines and of television and radio companies of various countries followed their suit. Here is what Russian writer Alexander Prokhanov, among many others, wrote at that time:

"I arrived in Baku and had to wait three days for my turn to be received by Geidar Aliev who was busy performing his duties. The country's mejlis presided by Geidar Aliev was in session and it heard a report of the commission which carried out investigation into the Gandzha events. I followed his moves on a live TV broadcast. The floor was taken in turn by those guilty of the carnage, idols of the recent past that engaged in verbiage, taught, entreated, exposed and stigmatized their opponents in the course of a year and a half. Now they looked confused, depressed, mumbled something with difficulty under the pressure of evidence and admitted their guilt. The name of the main culprit, Elchibei, was pronounced.

"As a clever psychologist Aliev led each of them to self-exposure, stripped each of his potential of power, detracted from his image, thus shattering the myth of their authority created by the smooth-tongued television. He tore one by one the threads binding them to the center of power and held them in his hands, for now he stood at the center and worked to create the first brittle structure of the destroyed administration. It was obvious that it was difficult for him that this seventy-year old politician had to muster great patience and self-control for it.

"At that moment he was motivated by the precise calculation of a pilot who had to assume the controls of a knocked out, burning plane, not the sense of triumph or revenge.

"The four leading 'frontline fighters', i.e., ex-Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Isa Gambarov, ex-Prime Minister Panakh Guseinov, the top officials of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and of the security service, were arrested…

"Power changed hands rapidly–every hour, every news broadcast reported new changes. The people, tired and demoralized, with their hopes dashed, followed inertly wherever the developments took them, but they were also undergoing rapid changes."

Aliev received Prokhanov in the spacious office of the Supreme Soviet Chairman late at night.

"I could see the state flag of the republic behind him. There were golden arabesques with Coran surahs on the table with numerous ivory-colored government telephone sets bearing the state emblem of the USSR.

"I knew that he had slept four hours a day in the past seven days. A lanky man with a flexible waist bearing no traces of fatigue rose to meet me. His dry palm was warm and strong as we shook hands. His sunburnt oval face did not look old. He wore an expensive well-cut suit. His tie did not look prim or official; it was rather fashionable, elegant, with a rich knot. He had sparkling, quick eyes with tenacious pupils, which lit up suddenly. In general, there was an artistic element in him–the ability to size up his interlocutor in an instant, guess his mood and plans.

"Moreover, his office did not smell of tobacco but you could smell a slight aroma of expensive eau de Cologne."

Here are several fragments of their long conversation.

Alexander Prokhanov. Geidar Alievich, it's clear now that one more period in Azerbaijan's latest history has come to a close. An end to the eighteen-month "rule" of the Popular Front was put as if at one stroke. It went up as if in smoke. How can you account for it? What was this period like for Azerbaijan?

Geidar Aliev. That was the republic's destruction. They have destroyed everything: the economy, morals, and mentality. And worst of all, the people had stopped working. The opportunity to work as such was eliminated. You know, in Lenkoran we created magnificent plantations on tracts of undeveloped land, in the desert. That area was described as an "All-Union vegetable garden". We grew excellent early tomatoes, cucumbers, melons and watermelons and sent all this to Norilsk, Ural, and Moscow. The republic earned colossal income, and excellent vegetables were supplied to Russia's industrial centers. I remember how President of Finland Urho Kekkonen visited these parts for recreation and expressed his admiration of the plantations. Where

are they now? They have been neglected–again wasteland, desert. And the people are jobless…

"Or take grapes. Alexei Kosygin provided great support to vineculturists growers. The annual grape output in the republic then hit the 2 million ton mark. Apsheron grape is the sweetest of all grape varieties that I know of. Apsheron has dry, hot sandy soil and vineyards grow excellently there, drinking their warmth and sweetness. All has gone to waste! We'll probably harvest some 400,000 tons this year…

"People no longer work, and to make their ends meet they are engaged in small trade. Iran is not far away, just as Turkey. So they buy small batches of some kind of unnecessary goods and sell them. But they do not produce anything!.. The Sumgait Chemical Plant operates at half of its capacity! Oil output has dropped sharply!.. Those at the helm are neither economists, nor administrators, nor politicians! As junior scientific associates or writers they are far removed from state affairs!.. Moreover, having started with proclamations of freedom and justice, they ended up in all-out thieving! The people are disenchanted! All they do is driving around in expensive *Mercedes* cars and engage in verbiage! There are lots of amoral people, lots of outright thieves!..

"And of course, Karabakh! They have not won this war; they have failed to resolve this conflict by political means! We have lost many villages and a lot of land! Yesterday I received a collective farm chairman. "Of course," he says, "it's horrible that we've lost there a great number of livestock, thousands of hectares of land but worst of all, we've lost our fathers' graves! The enemy celebrates victory on these graves!"

Alexander Prokhanov. So what will you do next? The country has been ravaged; the nation is split and demoralized. What kind of idea will unite the people? What kind of philosophy or ideology will unite the exhausted people? In the recent past you propagated the communist idea, which is nonexistent now. The liberal idea the Popular Front was propagating has just crumbled. What kind of idea the people will accept?

Geidar Aliev. Nothing but the idea of national accord! It doesn't matter to which party you belong, how old you are or what are your possessions. It is only national accord that will help us retreat from this state. The people, servicemen, businessmen and directors of enterprises are aware of it. We won't persecute anyone. If you are a liberal or a Popular Front member, you won't be persecuted. Serve the people, sacrifice yourself for the people. That's the idea, that's the kind of philosophy! And this ideology, I

believe, will be formulated by men of letters and art by religious advocates!"

Alexander Prokhanov. What was the reaction of Russia's official circles to the Baku events, to your return to politics?

Geidar Aliev. No reaction so far. Ruslan Khazbulatov alone congratulated me on election to the post of Supreme Soviet chairman. Not a word from the official Moscow. The Popular Front pursued an anti-Russian policy, did its best to rule out rapprochement between Russia and Azerbaijan. It must have been suitable to Moscow too. You know my attitude to Russia. Azerbaijan is bound up with Russia in economic, cultural and geopolitical spheres. We are not just neighbors, we have history in common. I repeat: I am not satisfied with our current relations with Russia but I am confident that they will inevitably develop."

Now it's time to tell you the story of a man whose bright star rose rapidly on the horizon of Azerbaijan politics in the early 1990s and later dropped in the same way.

Back in Soviet times Suret Guseinov was an engineer and held the post of director of a wool-processing factory. After hostilities with Armenia broke out, he, as he put it, "assisted the front as much as he could. Finally abandoned all affairs, except military ones". Readers who know the story of Civil War in Russia will certainly recall many destinies of this kind. Take, for instance, Nestor Makhno whose forces often changed sides by fighting now against the Red Army and then against the White Guards and, finally, on their own behalf. According to witnesses, Suret fought valiantly. He was promoted to the rank of colonel and became a National Hero of Azerbaijan, Elchibei appointed him as his personal representative in Karabakh and a corps commander, who had regular army units subordinated to him and "his own reserve units".

What did the ambitious colonel intend to attain with their assistance? He gave hazy answers to direct questions about his personal ambitions, as he did in an interview with journalist Elmira Akhundova in late June 1993, after the Gandzha events.

– The time hasn't yet come to distribute posts. Now all influential political forces and leaders should join their efforts in order to find a way to put an end to the hostilities as soon as possible and improve the people's living standard. I'm most of all concerned with these two problems. The people, I believe, already know who is who. It's high time to switch from empty talk to deeds. He who is in a position to assist the people, assist the front shall be put to the fore. It's the people's opinion that matters."

The insistent journalist asked her interlocutor what had to be done without delay. To elect a new President? Or probably to cancel the post as a destabilizing factor?

While telling his beads the young man in a well-cut light suit repeated his favorite idea that it wasn't time to distribute posts. The way out, he believed, was for all honest sons of the nation to join their efforts.

– And what role will you play in the new power structures?

– I will act in accordance with the people's will. If the people wish they will put me to the forefront. And I'll obey their wish.

Alexander Prokhanov saw Suret Guseinov in his mind's eye as a kind of Prince Pozharsky of our times. In the early 17th century Prince Pozharsky and Kuzma Minin, a Nizhni Novgorod resident, organized and headed the people's volunteer corps, which defeated the Poles who had captured Moscow. The grateful Russia erected a Monument on Moscow's Red Square to Minin and Pozharsky. This is what Prokhanov wrote about Suret Guseinov:

"As soon as he repelled the attack on his barracks in Gandzha and led his tanks to Baku in order to crush Elchibei, Suret Guseinov became a mythical hero for Russians. The liberals associated him with a horrible myth about a cruel colonel who dreamed of hanging all guilty "democrats" on lampposts. The patriots–with a heroic myth about a rebel, who headed a long-awaited revolt against the invaders. He became a symbol of the humiliated army that could no longer endure the mediocre rulers' policy, which was destructive for the nation and its armed forces.

"Patriots still laud him as a model for the Russian servicemen who failed to say a single valiant word of protest in the five tragic years which saw the end of the superpower, strategic defense and military industry, which did not see a single deed worthy of officers, but only dull complaints and groans, whispered threats and sullen subordination, which allowed the "democrats" to destroy groupings, fleets, protective belts, and stamp out defense mentality won by victories and at the price of sacrifices.

"Stealing generals, drinking officers and deserter soldiers– that's what made the Azerbaijan colonel into a hero in the eyes of the Russian patriotic movement dreaming of its own Pozharsky.

"I watched Suret Guseinov at the mejlis session shown in a live TV broadcast. A strained face with sharp features, gloomy tightly knit brows, sparkling eyes was looking attentively at those who had not long ago given orders to destroy his barracks in an attempt to kill him, shelled the residential houses and killed 40 people, and now deposed and humiliated, was mumbling something pitifully on the rostrum. The same vector, it seemed to

me, worked in him according to which his tanks had headed from the ravaged Gandzha to Baku in order to smash, punish, take revenge."

In reply to Prokhanov's questions, Suret Guseinov spoke about miscalculations and blunders of the Popular Front, which had formed "a mediocre team. They could do nothing but ravage. They deceived, bribed and were engaged in dirty politics". That was the dictatorship of bribe-takers, the dictatorship of Mafiosi, according to the insurgent colonel.

He spoke with deep respect about Geidar Aliev saying that he was "an experienced man, a wise politician relying on a wealth of past experience. I'm a comparatively young man and, I believe, I have a keen sense of the future. We shall supplement each other…"

And here is one more excerpt from the colonel's interview given to the Editor-in-Chief of the Russian *Zavtra* newspaper.

"...I did not wish to seize power! My path did not lead to power! I followed my own life's path but it has led me to power!..

"If the wave of disorder is sweeping the country, if the people are plundered and massacred, servicemen finally lose patience. For they are also a part of the people which are plundered and massacred…"

Geidar Aliev suspended contracts with foreign companies by one of his first resolutions after his return to power. *Izvestiya* newspaper then wrote that by that move "he shocked certain of the world's leading oil companies". However Aliev thought differently.

– It's an open secret, –he explained for his stand in August 1993. –Yes, I gave orders to the cabinet of ministers for suspending this process, and mind, it's all on the level of declaration there, this matter is yet to be discussed by the government and the parliament. The fact is that I am not by far a novice in these problems. When I stood at the head of Azerbaijan I studied them profoundly enough. And here many aspects seemed at once suspicious to me. Judge for yourself. On June 6 Panakh Guseinov handed in his resignation as prime minister and on June 11 he signed a government resolution on signing a declaration, on June 12 PF member Sabit Bagirov, head of the State Oil Company, signed the declaration. But as soon as I was appointed Supreme Soviet chairman several days after, members of the cabinet of ministers came to my office and told me that there was some kind of foul play with these contracts.

Then I gave orders on suspending this undertaking. And then they raised hell abroad. President of AMOCO, followed by the

leading officials of British Petroleum, immediately paid visits to me. I explained everything: there is nothing wrong. We should study the situation. If everything is properly done, why worry? The problem isn't simple; you can't resolve it in some way and then the other way round. Oil is Azerbaijan's national wealth which is required not only by our generation but the people will need it 100-200 years later. And of course there are variants, which would make it possible for our partners to «drain» our oil fields, clean in some 10-15 years, and so nothing will be left. Incidentally, there are serious grounds to believe that certain people were going to feather their nests and line their pockets by making use of such variants.

It should be noted in this connection that it's exactly what is taking place in contemporary Russia. Here, according to Academician Primakov, "the practice is continued of selective oil extraction at the most productive plots of oil fields. One may say that the state had lost control over the processes of depletion of natural resources and reduction of the stock of oil wells" (*Rossiiskaya gazeta,* January 15, 2005). Owing to Aliev, this has not happened in Azerbaijan.

Next came workdays. Personnel were the main concern. Aliev could not yet appoint anyone on his own, for Parliament had to approve each nomination put forward by him. New appointments were made in Baku on July 3: ministers of national security, internal affairs, the procurator general, and the head of the executive authorities of Baku… Aliev planned the discussion of «personnel matters» at the close of a workday, which for him meant late in the evening, and even at midnight. At one of such late meetings he offered Nazim Ibragimov to resume his duties at Goskomizdat (renamed as the Ministry of Information at that time). Nazim objected: under the circumstances such a ministry was hardly necessary…

– You always start by objections, –Aliev smiled. –Then what is your idea?

– My idea is to set up Azerbaijan State Publishers with up-to-date printing equipment at its disposal to be subordinated to the Presidential Administration.

And so they did. Azerbaijan Publishers is even now among the largest, and probably the largest, in Transcaucasia.

Geidar Aliev included in his team also young people at those evening and midnight conversations. Among them were also those whom in his time he had sent to Moscow for studies, for instance,

Fatima Abdullazadeh, Dr. Sc (Physics and Mathematics), now holding the post of manager of the Humanitarian Policy Department of the Central Executive Staff of the President of the Azerbaijan Republic.

And what about promoted workers of the Popular Front, were they calmly packing their bags? Nothing of the kind! Nine of the eleven heads of Baku districts announced "the suspension of their activities in protest against loss of presidential powers by Elchibei". God speed you, as they say. New people were appointed to their posts.

On July 4, 1993, Geidar Aliev granted a lengthy interview to Ostankino Television Company–that was then the name of Channel 1 of Russian television. He said in reply to the question about the situation in the country that they had "managed to avert civil war which posed a serious threat to our republic, and the confrontation has lost its edge to a certain degree. Nevertheless, the situation is still very complicated, but these difficulties are aggravated by the Armenian armed forces' offensive on Azerbaijanian territory, launched in the past three days."

Moscow had its own confrontation that summer, Boris Yeltsin was going to disband the recalcitrant Supreme Soviet of Russia led by his former associate Ruslan Khasbulatov. Moscow interviewers assailed Aliev with questions:

– Mr. Aliev, many observers have assessed your advent to power as "unconstitutional". Please, explain; can there be, in your opinion, such goals in politics for attaining which it is possible to waive the law? And one more question, associated with the former: what is in store for President Abulfaz Elchibei, what is happening with him today and what are the prospects, has he accepted his resignation?

– First, I must tell you that I do not regard my appointment to the post as anti-constitutional, –was Aliev's confident answer to his interviewers. –I was elected to the post of Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan on June 15 on the recommendation of many MPs and also of President Abulfaz Elchibei himself. That was quite a constitutional decision. Several days before that, as you know, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Isa Gambarov handed in his resignation. That is why I hold the post of Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan. Second, that was not my advent to power, I had been invited, I had been insistently entreated, for several days after the Gandzha events, members of various strata of the Azerbaijan population, intellectuals and authoritative

aksakals addressed me with this request. President of Azerbaijan Abulfaz Elchibei also insistently entreated me. On three occasions–on June 7, 8 and 9–he sent a special plane to Nakhichevan and asked me insistently in our telephone conversations to come to Baku. On June 7 and 8 I refused. Finally, on June 9, being aware of the further exacerbation of the situation, I accepted that invitation and arrived in Baku.

Here, jointly with Abulfaz Elchibei and other politicians I contributed to the process of relieving the tension, and on June 15, I repeat, I was elected chairman of Parliament. There is nothing anti-constitutional or unlawful here. And as to the fact that on June 24 I was entrusted to perform the President's duties, that can be easily explained.

In the early hours of June 18, President Abulfaz Elchibei secretly left Baku without warning anyone, me included, although an hour before his departure from Baku we were together. It was only in the morning that we received the news of his plane having landed in Nakhichevan whence the President was taken by Popular Front members to the mountain our village of Keleki where he has stayed ever since. In the period from June 18 to 24, I constantly held telephone talks with Abulfaz Elchibei, and a large group of intellectuals left for the village, led by the President of the Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan–academicians, professors, writers and aksakals.

They met with him and also asked him to come back to Baku. I insistently invited him. He did not accept our invitation, did not agree with it and is even now staying in the Keleki village. It was he who issued the Decree on almost all Presidential duties to be entrusted to the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, with his duty reserved in the Decree solely to grant citizenship and sign laws. All other duties he has entrusted to the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan.

Simultaneously this situation was discussed for several days in a row at a meeting of the Azerbaijanian Parliament, and MPs insistently proposed that I assume these duties. I would not consent, but after Abulfaz Elchibei had issued such a Decree, I consented. As a matter of fact, the republic was almost out of control, for it had neither President nor Prime Minister–the latter has long been dismissed, so only I have remained, and many problems had to be resolved using presidential powers. And in that situation I assumed these duties. I repeat, that was not my goal, I didn't want it. And if Abulfaz Elchibei comes back here today, he is free to perform his presidential duties.

– As to your second question referring to Abulfaz Elchibei's fate–he still resides in the Keleki village and is protected by a Popular Front armed group. He is there now and, I believe, is not engaged in anything. Probably he is resting or doing something, I don't know.

– You stood in stiff opposition to Elchibei's team, to him personally, to his course. What was Elchibei's aim in inviting you to take up the post of Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the republic and what were your motives when you consented?

– You are slightly inaccurate in formulating this question. I did not stand in stiff opposition to Abulfaz Elchibei; moreover, I did not belong to opposition. I simply resided in Nakhichevan and performed the duties of Chairman of the Supreme Mejlis. On rare occasions I spoke with Abulfaz Elchibei over the phone. Of course Abulfaz Elchibei did not devote sufficient attention to the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic as President, although it was and still is in dire straits in connection with the siege. And of course he did not devote the required attention to me as the Chairman of the Supreme Mejlis. So our relations, strictly speaking, were of this kind, not in the nature of acute confrontation.

(For some reasons, probably owing to respect for the man who legally still held the post of the country's President, Geidar Aliev did not supply Russian TV viewers with all details of their relationships. He passed over in silence the fact that when the Popular Front forces were assaulting the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the television building in Nakhichevan, he called Elchibei, who promised to intervene. It later transpired that Elchibei had been informed of the attempted coup.

In February 1993 Geidar Aliev left for Baku to attend his elder brother Gasan's funeral. Then he first met Elchibei in person. The President expressed his condolences suitable for the occasion and showed signs of attention to the guest.)

– We met, –Aliev went on, –discussed many issues, it seemed that we had reached mutual understanding on many issues. I gave him advice, expressed my wishes and recommendations. He was free to use them or not–that was his own choice, and we had quite normal relationships after that.

What had Abulfaz Elchibei in mind on inviting me? Here we should proceed from the first question about our alleged acute confrontation–there was none? And after the situation in Azerbaijan had exceedingly exacerbated, and proposals kept coming, as I have said, from many regions and various strata of population to invite Aliev, Elchibei must have come to the conclusion that here, in that tense situation, my assistance was

required. And when he rang me up he said just this: the situation is complicated, I ask you to come to Baku, let's discuss the situation jointly and find a way out of it…

On August 29, 1993, a referendum was held in Azerbaijan on confidence in President of the AR Abulfaz Elchibei. Just a year and a half before he collected over 1,800,000 votes, or almost 60% of the electorate expressed their confidence in the scholar-historian who promised them a happy future. One should have spared no effort to squander this capital, this unexpected wealth. Today only 77,000 people expressed their confidence in Elchibei. Seven, the figure associated with good luck in Azerbaijan mythology, this time proved to be unlucky for him. A total of 3,673,978 people actually said they had no confidence in him. The Azerbaijanian people had made their choice.

Of interest is testimony by Olzhas Suleimenov, a prominent Kazakh poet, writer and public figure.

"…On June 1, 1993, Children's Defense Day, I brought to Baku humanitarian aid–40 tons of foodstuffs for children. "Children are not at fault" –ran the inscription on the board of our "truck", i.e., Il-76 airplane. I saw to it that all cans with foodstuffs were used according to their designation–at children's hospitals and children's homes. My friends Elchin, Anar, Polad Byul-Byuloglu, and Farkhad Badalbeili helped me in my undertaking.

"Elchibei received me in his residence. I knew him for several years. I met him as a philologist in peacetime and in January 1990 as one of the leaders Popular Front. At that time I spoke in his support in reply to accusations by Ye. Primakov and A. Mutalibov. I was in Baku as the sole observer of the USSR Supreme Soviet and my opinion was taken into account.

"But the meeting and conversation with the President on the Children's Defense Day I remember rather well. A nice and intelligent man, but certainly not a leader. Not a politician either. In a short period of time he managed to spoil relations with two great neighbors–Russia and Iran. And he was firm in his determination not to restore them.

"I am sure that had the people not invited Geidar Aliev a few days later, in June of the same year, the country could have lost considerably more lives and territories. Slaughter was rampant at that time also in Tajikistan, massacres and violence accompanied the process of division of Yugoslavia, Georgia and Moldavia with the connivance of the UN and omnipotent Western democratic states…"

News releases opened with frontline reports in those months. Azerbaijan units bravely defended their positions. "Suret Guseinov's units have been dispatched to the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict zone where the situation had been extremely exacerbated" to assist regular troops, said one of the official reports.

Geidar Aliev sent an open letter to US President Bill Clinton, Vice-President Albert Gore, Speaker of the Congress Thomas Foli:

"At the time I am writing to you this letter Armenian armed forces continue their attacks in order to seize more regions of Azerbaijan–Djebrailsky and Kubatlinsky, they capture, burn down and subject to barbaric plunder ever more populated localities.

"In the name of the ideals of democracy and freedom, respect of human rights and of man's primary right to life, I ask you to do all you can to put an end to this carnage and defend Azerbaijan people who have proved defenseless through no fault of theirs in the face of barbaric aggression."

Aliev's first decree in the capacity of President of the Azerbaijan Republic was devoted to the appointment of an ambassador to Moscow. He chose Ramiz Rizayev for his penetrating mind, initiative, readiness for dialogue, determination in inordinate situations, which is not out of place for a diplomat.

– It's only to you that I can now entrust this sphere, –were Geidar Aliev's parting words to the ambassador said in his office late at night. –That's of primary importance. Please, go there for two months. Do not make institutional concessions. I'm sure you'll cope with the task.

On September 5 Geidar Aliev left for Moscow, as the official communiqué said, "for holding talks with the leadership of the Russian Federation". In the four days of his visit he met with President Yeltsin, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Ruslan Khasbulatov, Chairman of the Government Viktor Chernomyrdin, ministers and Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov.

– Current contacts have made it possible to break the ice of distrust, which had frozen the bilateral relations due to the miscalculations, and blunders of the republic's former leadership, –Geidar Aliev said summing up the results of the talks. –This turn in the Azerbaijan-Russian relations has been dictated by the logic of historical development, for the bonds of close cooperation in the past two centuries have bound up these two states and they cannot be torn.

Incidentally, Boris Yeltsin deleted the offensive and unjust assessments of Aliev from the second edition of his *Ispoved Na zadannuyu temu* (Confession on the Set Subject). The ambassador's two-month business trip is in progress for more than a decade.

At present Ramiz Rizayev acts as a doyen of the diplomatic corps in Moscow.

…Presidential elections were due to be held in Azerbaijan on October 3. Not long before it, on September 20, 1993, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijan Republic Geidar Aliev signed a resolution "On the Annexation of the Azerbaijan Republic to the Commonwealth of Independent States". Printed below is this most important political document, laconic and expressive at the same time, written by Geidar Aliev personally in his minute handwriting.

" Guided by the primary interests of the Azerbaijan people and with account of the Azerbaijan Republic's historical contacts with the member countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, for the purposes of promotion of political, economic, scientific-and-technological, cultural and other relations with these states, the National Assembly of the Azerbaijan Republic hereby resolves:

"1. The Azerbaijan Republic shall join the Commonwealth of Independent States.

"2. The Azerbaijan Republic shall join the "Collective Defense Treaty" of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

"3. To recommend the President of the Azerbaijan Republic to implement the required measures following from this resolution."

A meeting of the heads of states and governments of the Commonwealth was planned to be held on September 24. On September 21 President of Russia Boris Yeltsin signed a decree on termination of the activities of the Congress of People's Deputies of the Russian Federation and of the country's Supreme Soviet. Simultaneously Yeltsin assumed the powers to amend the Constitution. Electricity, water, communications and sewerage were switched off in the Government House. In this way a siege of the countries own parliament has started, unprecedented in modern history, with preparations underway for the assault of the huge building near the Moskva River.

Boris Yeltsin feared that in that situation the heads of states and governments of the Commonwealth republics would not come to Moscow, the summit would not be held and that "this would be

a heavy blow at the president's authority". However, all of them arrived. On September 24 Geidar Aliev signed in the Kremlin documents on Azerbaijan's joining the CIS. Yeltsin congratulated him and gave him a friendly smile saying: "Geidar Alievich, you seem to have never left the Kremlin." But it was only too obvious that Boris Yeltsin had other concerns on his mind. You've come– thanks so much! The more so that Stanislav Shushkevich, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Belarus, declared on his colleagues' behalf that "the heads of states and governments of the CIS have supported the constitutional reforms carried out by President Yeltsin and wished him success in implementing the reforms."

The RSFSR Supreme Soviet was coming to its end. No one in the Kremlin thought about the Constitution at those moments. The power of the period, let's repeat Tyutchev's words, neither recognized nor thought about any other rights than its own. In this way "it was formed by its own past on the basis of the break with the country and its historic past".

Azerbaijan Elects Geidar Aliev

On October 3, 1993, Azerbaijan elected its President–Geidar Alirz ogly Aliev.

On October 4, elections were held in Moscow too. Tanks of the Russian army fired at the Supreme Soviet of Russia. US television conducted a live broadcast of the fight in Moscow's center for the world to see.

In contrast to Aliev, Yeltsin failed to find a peaceful constitutional way out of the state crisis.

…The ceremony of inauguration. President Geidar Aliev expressed gratitude to his compatriots and spoke about the responsibility to the people.

– The Azerbaijan Republic has gained independence in exceedingly complicated conditions. The most difficult thing for us are the hostilities Azerbaijan has been living with for more that five years, aggression by the Armenian armed forces against our territories and misfortunes which befell the Azerbaijan people as a result. That is why our primary task is to do away with the state of war in the republic and ensure peaceful conditions for the people's life.

…As a result of gross miscalculations by Azerbaijan's statesmen, the republic found itself on the verge of civil war with a real threat of separation of certain regions. Thank God, all these phenomena have been averted, a number of criminal groupings have been eliminated, with conditions provided to ensure socio-political stability within the republic.

Step by step Geidar Aliev developed Azerbaijan's new policy. Search for peaceful settlement in Karabakh…. Oil agreements–the *Contract of the Century* we will tell you about in the next chapter, visits abroad–to Turkey, England, China and Turkmenistan.

He spoke as a man having equal rights with foreign partners, not as someone in quest of a salutary credit. Elmira Akhundova remembers Geidar Aliev's brilliant speech made in Turkish Parliament. The president described Azerbaijan's great and impressive successes of the past 70 years in the sphere of science, education and culture. "Our country has preserved its face, its language and its national traditions," the President stressed. By proclaiming Turkey as one of Azerbaijan's main partners, Geidar Aliev also expressed the idea of the inadmissibility of rupture of the age-long political and economic relations between Azerbaijan, on the one hand, and Russia and the former Soviet Republics, on the other. In his opinion, one should speak not about replacement of some priorities with others but about their balanced combination.

That long year, packed with dramatic collisions, which would be sufficient for a decade, closed with a visit to Turkmenia, Ashkhabad, to attend a meeting of the Council of the Heads of CIS States. President of the Azerbaijan Republic Geidar Aliev made the following statement at the Council's closed meeting of December 24.

– The almost six-year-long aggression of the Armenian Republic against Azerbaijan has caused boundless suffering to the Azerbaijan people, –the President said. He pointed out that the Armenian armed formations which had full control of the territory of Nagorny Karabakh, were consistently expanding their operations having occupied outside it a number of Azerbaijan's other regions. About a million of Azerbaijanians had lost their homes, and private and state property to the value of hundreds of millions of dollars was being taken out of the occupied territories to Armenia. –I must state with great regret, –Geidar Aliev went on, –that after the Azerbaijan Republic became in September 1993 a full-fledged member of the Commonwealth of Independent States and joined the Collective Security Treaty, the Republic of

Armenia not only failed to stop its aggression but, on the contrary, its military operations have been escalated on a larger scale.

The President of Azerbaijan proposed that a system be elaborated for bilateral and multilateral agreements aimed to stabilize the political situation throughout the CIS space. He appealed to the heads of states with an insistent request "to give a political assessment of aggression by the Republic of Armenia against the Azerbaijan Republic; to resolutely demand that the Republic of Armenia stop military operations against the Azerbaijan Republic; to immediately withdraw all units of the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia from the territory of the Azerbaijan Republic…"

September 30, 1994, New York

The President of Azerbaijan had to address a session of the UN General Assembly. UN General Secretary Butros Ghali met Geidar Aliev in the hall of the world-famous skyscraper. Protocol photographs were taken at the flags of the United Nations and Azerbaijan; the General Secretary led the guest to the assembly hall. For the first time in sovereign Azerbaijan's history its leader spoke from such a high rostrum.

On the same day in Azerbaijan hired killers assassinated Afiyaddin Djalil ogly Djalilov, deputy chairman of the Republic's Supreme Soviet, and Shamsi Nuru ogly Ragimov, chief of the Special Department under the President of the AR, one of the oldest staff members of the republic's security agencies.

Their funeral was held on October 1… Funeral wreaths, portraits in black frames, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Rasul Guliyev, Prime Minister Suret Guseinov, Procurator General Ali Omarov standing in the guard of honor… Not a single muscle moved on the face of iron-willed Suret.

Rasul Guliyev informed them that Geidar Aliev had just called him from New York, expressed regret that he would not be able to attend the funeral ceremony and asked him to convey his deep condolences to the relatives of the deceased, to all Azerbaijan people.

– The goal of those guilty of this tragedy, –the Chairman of Parliament went on on his own behalf, –is to reverse the course of Azerbaijan's history, break the people's will, throw them into confusion. The prisoners' flight from the isolation ward of the National Security Ministry, the brutal assassination of the prominent statesman Afiyaddin Djalilov and of the oldest staff

member of the security agencies Shamsi Ragimov testifies to the fact that we have enemies scheming against the Azerbaijan people."

"I Rely on the People"

Yes, both the flight and two assassinations were only initial links in the chain of tragedies, which the future had in store for Azerbaijan. Having returned to the country, the President signed on October 3 a decree on the introduction of an emergency situation in Baku. An attempt on Geidar Aliev's life had also been prepared. He reminded of it hundreds of thousands of people from Baku and other cities and villages, who had gathered for a meeting at the Azaldyg Square.

– Esteemed compatriots, dear sisters and brothers! –Aliev addressed the crowd. –My beloved Azerbaijan people!

In the past few days' complicated events occurred in the life of Azerbaijan, tension has increased. In this connection I have repeatedly addressed the Azerbaijan people with a request to come up in defense of the independent Azerbaijan state. I have always pinned hopes on the people, on their support and each time was convinced of its strength and wisdom. In these days, too, the Azerbaijan people have again displayed their cohesion, solidarity and proved that having gained national freedom, they are inflexible, unswerving and valiant…

The armed conflict provoked three days ago as a result of unlawful actions of individual groups of the police detachment of special designation, has been defused by peaceful means, although the situation was extremely tense, –Aliev said. –I realized that there was forces, which had deceived those young people, led them astray, forces, which, by using them as their pliant tool, pursued dishonest hostile goals. We spared no efforts for a long period of time to get to the bottom of it. And we've succeeded!

As a result, we've managed to settle the conflict amicably.

…You know that last autumn a terrorist group was detained in Baku, which was engaged in the preparation of an attempt on my life. Members of this group were caught red-handed–right at the time of committing the crime. Having misled Gasan Toka, a Turkish national, certain Popular Front members had brought him here to make an attempt on my life. However, certain forces failed to draw appropriate conclusions from the fact that those terrorists had been indicted, that is why they are again trying to resort to terror. I have no doubt that our people will not tolerate it. But our

people should also bear this in mind: I've spared no effort in the name of Azerbaijan's independence, our Motherland's sovereignty, integrity of our lands, and I am not to be intimidated by terror and made to retreat.

Today I'd like to say with great regret that certain terrorists who were behind the attempt on my life are now hiding in the Keleki village. They have rallied behind ex-President Abulfaz Elchibei. I appreciate Abulfaz Elchibei's contribution to the fight for Azerbaijan's national liberation. But, I repeat, no one should resort to arms or terror. All armed detachments should be disarmed. That is why today I say that I hate people who have chosen the line of political terror and I urge the people to expose them.

The President had to speak about Gandzha on two occasions in that uneasy situation. First, when he addressed at dawn his compatriots who had converged towards the Presidential Palace. He thanked Baku residents:

– There is a wise saying: strength lies in unity. No one, no strength can withstand the people's strength. And I rely on the people, on you, my dear citizens of Azerbaijan. Thank you… – And he went on to say that in Gandzha the armed forces had seized "the buildings of the city and district executive authorities, the airport, the railway station and the administration of the National Security Ministry. However, that was a great blunder in relation to the people and state. Their patron has also sinned. He should have realized that one should not act like that in those difficult days for Azerbaijan. He has failed to appreciate the respect shown him until now.

However, I can inform you that healthy forces have risen in Gandzha. They are giving a rebuff to all those who encroach on Azerbaijan's statehood. Gandzha residents probably can hear now my address on television. I send them greetings from Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, and express my respect and esteem to Gandzha residents. I'd like to express confidence that they would withstand the hostile forces.

The President did not mention as yet the name of the insurgents' patron.

Here is the text of Aliev's one more address to the people:

– It was very difficult to establish contacts with Gandzha, for all communication lines had been damaged. I called Prime Minister Suret Guseinov. As you know, Gandzha is his native town, his associates are there and the armed forces subordinated to him (regrettably, illegal armed forces) are now stationed there. I told him about what happened in Gandzha. Suret Guseinov

answered that he knew nothing about it and promised to sort things out. After some time I asked him once more to study this problem. He answered that unrest in Gandzha had been provoked by the police detachment of special designation (OPON).

Later I was informed that it was not OPON but illegal armed detachments led by close friends of Suret Guseinov. I also received information that certain people from Suret Guseinov's Cabinet of Ministers had left for Gandzha to manage the developments in Gandzha. On learning this, I summoned Suret Guseinov in order to clear up the situation jointly. But regrettably he did not come.

Later I couldn't contact him by phone. He rang me up after my TV address. I told him that such actions were intolerable. As we work jointly, in the same state. If you hold a leading state post you cannot take part in a coup. That is why I again invited him to my office. But he did not come this time either. Now he is here. I speak about everything openly. I do not conceal anything. I condemn actions like these. Such things should not happen among us.

In order to avert a sequel to the Gandzha events, we had to use the army, which started carrying out an operation last evening. As a result, the criminals, those of them who had taken part in the coup, were detained.

Then a trial followed. Suret Guseinov was sentenced to life imprisonment. In anticipating the events we'll tell you that on March 17, 2004, President Ilkham Aliev pardoned him. As soon as he was set free, Suret Guseinov went to Geidar Aliev's tomb and made three bows to his ashes. Repentance may also take such form.

Yuri Konstantinovich Shafranik held the post of Minister of Fuel and Energetics of Russia in 1993-1996 and for the past few year's heads the Interstate Oil Company SoyuzNefteGaz and the Supreme Mining Council of Russia. He met Geidar Aliev in the crucial years, which served as a turning point for Azerbaijan.

– A statesman of such plane, –Yuri Shafrannik believes, –is guided in his actions by his country's priority interests, which are not always clear to outsiders. Contemporaries regard certain things as wrong but he looks far ahead and chooses the only right way. One may draw many historical parallels.

Deng Xiaoping said in his time, –Yuri Shafranik recollects, – that it would take China a hundred years to carry out its perestroika. And in this case the political system, political choices are not questioned. While in the economy you are free to act, as

you like provided you ensure prosperity for the people. The cat's color doesn't matter, the wise Deng argued, and it should be clever at catching mice. As a young man I only shrugged shoulders thinking that Chinese wisdom is too enigmatic for me, – Shafranik went on. –But with the passage of time you can see that they have acted wisely. They have learned the lessons of there "great leaps" while we haven't. We accepted the theory that the economy could be transformed in 500 days. Here I'm drawing a parallel with Azerbaijan in order to show Aliev's calculated, weighed, well thought out moves in an emergency situation. You cannot judge about it from outside. You should have been at his side to assess him as a politician and that time. Even today that has not yet been done. I assure you, at that time–in 1993, 1994 hardly any of the Russian ministers paid a visit to Baku. Maybe some servicemen did. And since they didn't, how could the people in Moscow conjecture what had to be done in Baku, in Azerbaijan?

More than a decade has elapsed. Not so much, you would think, but that's quite a long period, although as time goes, events recede into the background. Let's recall: it wasn't simply a conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia but a full-scale war. It was a brutal war. The units advanced and retreated alternately. Millions of refugees fled to Baku, most of them peasants from mountainous regions who were not used to life in the city. Whole families were starving. The plants did not operate. Azerbaijan accounted for 70 per cent of oil and gas equipment supplied to the Soviet Union, while the figure was nil in 1992-1993. Oil production had dropped. Complete isolation due to the war. And inside–the Popular Front, parties, the president had fled and havoc reigned in the streets. I tried to put myself in Geidar Aliev's shoes: what would I have done? Then and now I can say this: in that situation Aliev "won" 100 out of 100. Yes, he was a political sharpshooter! I continued to follow the developments with increasing interest: could he really make such precise calculations? I followed him with keen interest. And I may assure you that I did not find a single error in his actions. I paid visits to Baku and met with his understanding and trust–as a Russian Minister, not just Shafranik. Of course he supplied information to me in an attempt to bring certain aspects to the notice of Russia's leadership with my help: here is one plot exposed by me, another… Yes, you may perceive it in different ways. Both as political fighting and efforts to oust his rival… But the question arises: what's the result? Had that led to stability? Had the

hostilities come to a close as a result? Was Baku a different city two years later? Yes.

…Another man in Aliev's place, I believe, could have declared an emergency situation in the country. And would have acted according to military-time laws in order to preserve Azerbaijan, put an end to the hostilities, ensure elementary law and order, make it possible for the people to be sure of the morrow, regenerate the economy. It took Aliev two-three years to attain this goal. And, I stress, by political means.

I remember our first encounters. Geidar Aliev invited to sit next to him Popular Front members and leaders of various movements. I looked at those people and realized that as compared to Aliev, to the tasks confronting Azerbaijan, they were simply nonentities. He also invited people from the crowd gathered at the meeting to the negotiations with me and asked for their opinion… Once I saw Suret Guseinov. I do not want to cast a slur on anybody, but they looked worlds apart by the level of education, comprehension… He had the most complicated period, sought to build up some kind of support in society.

I am not going to idealize anybody; simply I have no idols since childhood. But I have a definite admiration for personalities like him. He created something in the most critical moment of history. It was God who gave him to Azerbaijan.

What kind of resources has Azerbaijan to rely on to change the situation? –I, Russian Minister Shafranik, asked myself. And answered: –Oil! Consequently, it's necessary to find partners and launch an oil project.

And where does Russian interest lie? –is Shafranik's next question. –In banning this project? Wrong. To share and join efforts. Pipes run across our country, Azerbaijanian oilmen have long been working here and we–there. What's the problem? Political will–that's what is required. To assist Azerbaijan and determine our own share. I do not touch any other details of higher order. Even this vector is sufficient to start the decision-making process. Time has shown that I as a minister upholding Russia's interests–which is my credo–was quite right. And this, you see, makes me happy. I have warm feelings for all former Union republics, Armenia included… We grew up and were educated in one big country. Can I feel hostile to Armenia? There were a great number of our gas-and-oil builders there when an earthquake shook Armenia, and they gave a helping hand. But if we are to speak from positions of Russia's interests, I acted regardless of public opinion, regardless of the stand of Russia's Foreign Minister Kozyrev. After all these years I can assert that

Aliev's actions and mine as a minister were not conflicting. I proceeded from my own idea of Russian interests in a new situation."

Yuri Konstantinovich Shafranik described the nature of a different approach to Russian interests in Azerbaijan, on the Caspian, in Transcaucasia. We shall discuss it in greater detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 10
AZERBAIJAN'S OIL IN WORLD POLITICS

If Oil Is a Queen…

We must admit that the title of this chapter represents Geidar Aliev' formula. Back in 1994 he planned to write a multi-volume work entitled *Azerbaijan's Oil in World Politics* which had to deal with the history of the country's oil industry since ancient times to our days, its lessons and prospects. Its publication was entrusted to Ilkham Aliev who at that time held the post of the first deputy Chairman of the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR), and to Akif Muradverdiyev, Dr. Sc. (Technology). One may assert today that Azerbaijan's new oil policy and the study of its history were carried out in parallel. And that represented the President's remarkably precise solution–in political, economic and social respects.

In old times oil was an object of worship by pagans. At the close of the 19th century one of obscure prophets wrote: "Oil which provided only frugal light to the small temple now serves as a source of light for the empire as a whole, and the time will come when it will supply light and heat to half of the world." Oil worshippers include kings and tsars, presidents and sheikhs, bankers and adventurers. States and politicians waged wars for oil.

British economic journal *Middle East* wrote in 1918: "Baku is unique in the oil world. If oil is a queen, then Baku is its throne". Many countries made their claim to the throne, such as England, Germany and Turkey… The Red Army made short work of them all in 1920.

…On April 20, 1942, German generals presented Adolf Hitler with a cake representing a scale-model of the Caspian Sea and the city of Baku. In those days Wehrmacht was engaged in preparations for a decisive offensive on the southern flank of the Soviet-German Front.

From mid-May Sovinformburo bulletins opened with reports of battles in the Kharkov and Kerch directions. Later Kerch was no longer mentioned in the reports. It was years later that we

learned about the staunch resistance of Adjimushkai where, blocked in the catacombs, suffocating from gases and suffering from hunger and thirst, the underground garrison fought to the last breath of their life. On July 3 Soviet troops withdrew from Sevastopol after the 250-day-long heroic defense. The Soviet Army retreated to the south in the Rostov, Bataisk and Krasnodar directions… The world waited avidly for news from the East. Mr. Cassidy, a US Associated Press correspondent, posed the following question to Joseph Stalin, Chairman of the USSR Council of Peoples' Commissars:

– What is now Soviet potential for resistance?

– I believe that Soviet potential for resistance to German bandits is no lower by its capacity–and probably even higher–than the potential of Nazi Germany or any other aggressive power to win world domination.

The Front was retreating. But Marshal of the Soviet Union K.S. Moskalenko stressed in his memoirs that "retreating were not just groups of servicemen but battalions, regiments, divisions, that is, the army guided by their commanders and headquarters… We were tormented by bitter thoughts. However, we by no means felt either impotence or doom. Just as before, we were firmly, boundlessly confident of the enemy's defeated, of our victory."

August 1, 1942. The journal of military operations of the 383rd rifle miners' division: "…all reserves, including even the commandant's company, have joined the fighting". August 2. "The enemy attempt to crush the defense ended in failure. At 16:00 the enemy outflanked from the right the 691st RR (rifle regiment–*Author's note.)* and by the force of up to two battalions crushed the third battalion. The people fought to death. Most of the servicemen fell in battle heroically. Five machinegun squads fell in battle. Commanding officers took their place with the same result. Only a few people of the battalion have survived."

The 416th rifle division, manned largely by Azerbaijanian servicemen, fought on the same fronts. A year later, when the war moved in the Western direction, this division distinguished itself in the battles for liberation of Taganrog and was renamed as the Taganrog Rifle Division.

And in the summer of 1942 Nikolai Baibakov, deputy People's Commissar of Oil Industry of the Soviet Union (he was born in Baku, as mentioned above), was blowing up oil wells in Kuban region.

– Comrade Baibakov, –Stalin said entrusting him with the task, –Hitler is eager to win Caucasia. He has announced that if he fails to seize Caucasian oil, he will lose the war. We must do our best

for the Germans not to get a single drop of oil. And he added more sternly: –Mind, if you leave even one ton of oil to the Germans, you'll be shot… –After a pause he added: –But if you destroy oil fields prematurely and they are not seized by the Germans, while we are left without fuel, you'll be shot as well.

The young deputy People's Commissar (he was over thirty) summoned his courage and said under his breath:

– But you leave me no alternative, Comrade Stalin.

Stalin stopped next to him, slowly raised his hand and softly rapped his fingers on the temple:

– Here is the alternative, Comrade Baibakov. Fly. And resolve the problem on the spot jointly with Budenny. –Marshal Semyon Budenny was in command of the Northern Caucasian Front.

Kuban oil wells operated to the last hours. And Baku residents were building defense fortifications around the city. After their exhausting shifts oilmen kept watch students, schoolchildren and housewives took spades. Luckily, the front did not approach the city. Antiaircraft gunners alone used their gunfire to protect oil fields.

Much water has flown under the bridges. Secret orders kept in archives have been declassified. Order No. 45 was revealed in a heap of Nazi directives, dated July 23, 1942:

"The immediate task of "A" Group of Armies consists in the encirclement and destruction of the enemy forces which have retreated beyond the Don River, in the region located south and southeast of Rostov." "A" Group of Armies did not implement its immediate task. Our units had retreated to Northern Caucasia.

A remarkable detail. On September 9, 1942, Adolf Hitler assumed the command of "A" Group of Armies. He displaced former commander Field Marshal General List and assumed the command of the operations of "A" Group of Armies in Caucasia via its headquarters, located in the town of Stalino (now Donetsk). On the following day Hitler issued an order from his Verwolf headquarters near Vinnitsa for an offensive on Tuapse to capture the Black Sea coast. But the developments took a different course–both near Stalingrad and in Caucasia.

The gentlemen in Berlin certainly acted too hastily when they placed an order for that fancy cake representing a scale model of the Caspian and Baku.

In the years of the Great Patriotic War Azerbaijan's oilmen produced about 75 million tons of oil and 22 million tons of petrol. Azerbaijan accounted for 71.4% of the total Union oil output, and the figures for aircraft petrol and motor transport oils were 80% and 96% respectively. Soviet tanks rolled to Victory by using Baku fuel.

April 21, 1971, Baku

On that day a formal meeting was held in Baku devoted to an epoch-making–it's no exaggeration–event both in Azerbaijan's history and the Soviet Union's oil industry–the billionth ton of oil was produced by the oil fields of the republic. There is an old photograph of that meeting showing in the first ranks oilmen wearing their decorations, Geidar Aliev on the rostrum with an impressive composition above the stage of a derrick, the stunning figure and Lenin's profile, an obligatory element for celebrations of those years.

Billion is, understandably enough, a slightly conditional figure. Trustworthy records have been kept in the past hundred years, i.e., after the commercial development of oil fields. And who knows how much had been produced in the past centuries, even millennia, for they started pumping "black gold" on the generous Caspian coasts even in prehistoric times.

And it was not only black. Merchants and travelers had long known and valued white oil of Baku. Vladimir Dal pointed out in his famous dictionary: oil can be white, very liquid; brown and black, thick as resin and, finally, hard and flexible as shale. Oil springs (a very apt word used by Dal!) can be met in volcanic localities, for instance, near Baku, where they dug "oil wells for oil flow and collection". In 1880 the outstanding Russian scientist Dmitry Mendeleyev wrote from Baku: "…nowhere has so far been discovered such rich oil as here. I visited Pennsilvania and inspected oil fields there, and I can confidently assert that there are greater oil stocks here and it is much easier to produce it". One of new oil gushers in the oil fields of the widely known Azerbaijan industrialist Tagiyev was named by their owners after Mendeleyev's son Vladimir in recognition of Dmitry Mendeleyev's services for Azerbaijan's oil industry. Here is one more excerpt from the prophetic lines from his letter:

"There are sufficiently great stocks of oil here… Now it is necessary to develop the oil fields and use oil to supply light and oil for the benefit of Russia, East and West. Baku residents can hardly manage it on their own.

They have already performed all their works and fulfilled their tasks with honor. New brains and new strength, foresight and daring are needed."

September 20, 1994, Baku

…Now, let's find in the calendar September 1994. It was then that the *Contract of the Century*, a vigorous formula coined by Aliev, gained currency in Azerbaijan and in the political and business circles of other countries. What did it stand for? The agreement concluded between the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) and the consortium of international companies for joint operation of the Chirag, Azeri and Gyuneshli oil fields, located in the Azerbaijan sector of the Caspian Sea. Pay attention to this detail. The ceremony of signing the *Contract of the Century* was held on September 20, 1994, exactly a year after Geidar Aliev's return to power, i.e., slightly more than a year after the initially planned date–it was planned to sign the contract on July 21, 1993, and President Elchibei was going to England. As you remember, he had to change his route unexpectedly.

Yes, Aliev's predecessors, incompetent and greedy temporary rulers, had opened negotiations. The dilettantes were going to conclude a contract with foreign companies on crippling terms for the country, but apparently on advantageous terms for themselves. The meaning of versions in attractive packing can be explained in terms of the enticing advertisement: "Total sale". But in this time mineral resources, not old rags, were at stake. A certain smart businessman offered to invest $21 million in the development of the Chirag oil field in the course of six years, with himself to become the owner of oil and casing-head gas, later to be sold by him to Azerbaijan at market prices. Chirag oil gushers began operating on the third year of the field's development and oil output was counted in millions of tons.

This is how Ilkham Aliev recollected the negotiations: "…Each of the parties naturally wished to promote its interests to the utmost. Sometimes we landed in a dead alley. The final stages of the negotiations, held in Istanbul and Huston in the spring and summer of 1994, were especially difficult. There were also critical moments in the course of the negotiations. And the Azerbaijan side was on the verge of termination of the negotiations, since, regarding certain terms as unacceptable for the country's national interests, it could not accept them. We said to the foreign companies: "You uphold the interests of individual companies but we uphold the interests of the country and of the Azerbaijan people. If you make an error, that will affect your company's one project. If we make an error, the error will have a negative effect

on the interests of all Azerbaijan people. In other words, we cannot afford any error."

The opponents asserted that all profits would line the pockets of foreign businessmen. Ilkham Aliev's answer was to the point: "…Azerbaijan will receive 80% of the profit from the *Contract of the Century* in the course of thirty years, and foreign companies as a whole–just 20%".

The *Contract of the Century* became Azerbaijan's political and economic breakthrough to the 21st century. Undoubtedly it is first of all due to Geidar Aliev's efforts, his intellect, will and energy. That is why we'll describe in more detail this epoch-making event, which had worldwide repercussions.

On February 4, 1994, President of Azerbaijan Geidar Aliev issued an order "On Speeding Up of Development of Off-Shore Oil and Gas Fields in Azerbaijan". This strategic document formed the basis of the negotiations the country's State Oil Company was conducting with the consortium of the world's leading companies. The President signed a decree according to the results of these negotiations on September 14, 1994. It assessed the project's economic, social and political significance. President of SOCAR Natik Aliev (no relation of Geidar Aliev) was entrusted with a task of signing a contract for joint development of the Azeri-Chirag and the deep sea Gyuneshli oil fields and for share distribution of oil products between the SOCAR and nine foreign companies, Russia's LUKOIL among them. Initially Azerbaijan refused to include LUKOIL and Iranian and French companies.

The ceremony of signing the contract was held on September 20, 1994, in the Gyulistan palace. Ministers and MPs, deputies and businessmen from the United States, Russia, Great Britain, Turkey and Norway arrived in Baku.

– Oil is the greatest national wealth of the Azerbaijan Republic and of the Azerbaijan people, –Geidar Aliev said in this address to the guests. –That is why Azerbaijan is described as the Land of Lights. –He spoke with pride about the history of oil production in the republic and highly praised the contribution made by Azerbaijan's oilmen to the victory over Nazism in the years of the Great Patriotic War. –Our oilmen took an active part in the development and operation of new oil fields in any spot of the Soviet Union. It is not by chance that new oil fields, prospected and developed owing to their efforts and work were described as Second Baku, Third Baku and Fourth Baku. Azerbaijan's oilmen have made an inestimable contribution to the development and operation of Russia's largest oil fields, located in Siberia and in

the Tyumen region, and to the creation of major oil and gas complexes there.

I deem it necessary to inform our guests about it and remind the Azerbaijan people of it. For all that is a part of the Azerbaijan people's pride and glory and serves as a testimony of our people's great deeds and of our oilmen's contribution to world economy.

That was the President's address to the country, and his words were heeded not only in the resplendent and brightly-lit hall of the Gyulistan palace but also in each home throughout the republic, for it was national wealth that was discussed.

– I'd like to say frankly that not all wishes of the Azerbaijan party have been reflected in the contract, –the President went on. – But we understand that the interests of both parties should be taken into account in any contract. The consortium of the Western oil companies sought to promote its interests and the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan spared no efforts to promote the Azerbaijan Republic's national interests. I can assert that as a result of great and intensive work, as a result of the parties' highly responsible approach to the matter, a contract has been prepared meeting both parties' interests.

On December 2, 1994, the Contract became a law. Intensive work was launched, or continued, to be more precise, at offshore derricks and in the laboratories, offices and routes of oil pipes running across Russia and Georgia.

Bon Voyage, "Dede Gorgud"!

On October 9, 1995, a year after the ceremony in Gyulistan palace, Geidar Aliev received members of the International Management Committee of the Oil Consortium. The year was successful, according to the project participants. Oil production and utilization of initial oil became a reality in 1996.

Azerbaijan's oilmen were able to engage in deep drilling owing to the vast experience they accumulated in Soviet times. November 7, 1949, is a red-letter date in the history of oil industry, for on that day first ever oil gusher started operating in the Neftyanie Kamni (Oil Stones) offshore field. Later it was followed by floating derricks such as Shelf-1, Shelf-2 and Shelf-3, and a plant for the manufacture of deep-water foundations was built on the initiative of Geidar Aliev, then First Secretary of the CC of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan (initially planned to be built in Astrakhan); the construction project was recorded in a

separate line in Union plans–after all, $500 million had been allocated for it!

On June 4, 1996, Azerbaijan signed one more contract with foreign partners for the development of the Shakh-Deniz deep-water oil field. Geologists had prospected there under half kilometer thick water a fabulously rich gas stock–up to a trillion cu m. It should be reminded that speaking about the results of survey at the Shakh-Deniz field, Geidar Aliev noted: "There are even now certain people who seek to put roadblocks to this project. But no one will be able to do anything. Azerbaijan's new state strategy has been determined. We will resolutely implement this strategy in the future."

Today an entire flotilla operates on the Caspian including the Istiglal and the Dede Gorgud (once widely known as the Kaspmorneft). The latter, a half-submerged floating oil derrick–as a matter of fact a plant–set out in search of oil and gas in 1981. It prospected scores of oil wells and new oil-and-gas horizons. Then a period of modernization followed and the floating plant was modernized by US Santa-Fe Company jointly with Azerbaijanian specialists and skilled workers.

…An odd hundred steps lead to the upper deck of the powerful floating oil derrick. Even strong oilmen sometimes feel exhausted while ascending them. However, 74-year-old Geidar Aliev confidently climbed higher and higher. I wish the Kremlin doctors who made a diagnosis in 1986 could see him then!

Geidar Aliev made a memorable note in the honorary guest book:

"Today a memorable event is taking place in the development of Azerbaijan's oil industry.

"As a result of the implementation of the Contract of the Century, the first half-submerged oil derrick is being put into operation. It will be named Dede Gorgud, a name which is near and dear to our people. May this installation have a long and successful service life, bon voyage! I express gratitude to all those who have reconstructed this installation and modernized it. I wish great success to the international consortium carrying out the big oil contract.

President of the Azerbaijan Republic
Geidar Aliev
Baku, August 24,1996"

Incidentally, exactly on that date, 17 years ago, the title of the Hero of Socialist Labor was conferred on the First Secretary of the CC of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan. Oilmen had not forgotten that memorable event. It was obvious that Geidar Aliev had never forgot about it either, to be more precise; he probably remembered it as a sign of recognition of his selfless work.

– In order to promote the development of our republic's oil industry, rational utilization of oil fields in the Azerbaijan sector of the Caspian, –Geidar Aliev said on that occasion, –we adopted a decision in the 1970s on the construction here, on the spot where we are standing now, of a big deep-water foundation plant… Now we can see with great pride the buildings of this big plant, production sites created here.

– On my way here today I once more felt proud at the sight of the buildings of the big plant and powerful installations, of the trees growing on the coast and around this square–all that has appeared on the once completely deserted Caspian coast. I'm very happy today, really happy. I feel happy for I am among those who have laid the foundation of all you can see here, it was my initiative. In the past I tried for years for all this to be implemented, I worked for many years for this to become a reality, I've traversed a difficult path for the sake of this.

(Yes, one should feel happy if he lives to see his project incarnated. Let's recall the builders of the Baikal-Amur Highway and their joy and pride when they laid a "golden link", and their tears were quite understandable. Let's recall the oilmen and geologists and their happy faces smeared with first oil. Geidar Aliev was confident that such time would come here too.)

– The installation has got a new lease on life, –the President went on. –That is why it should be given a new name. I can tell you that about a score of names have been suggested that are associated with the Azerbaijan people's history, their traditions and various historical places. All suggested names were really important. However, I decided to name this installation *Dede Gorgud.* This name, I believe, is sacred and dear to each Azerbaijanian, and it will be the most valuable and outstanding name for this installation.

I wish great, happy journey to the *Dede Gorgud* installation!

My Grandfather Gorgud's Book, an Azerbaijan folk epic story dates back to the early 8th century. By UNESCO's decision, in 2000, the 1300th anniversary of this widely known epic story was celebrated in the world. The anniversary was naturally celebrated on the grandest scale in Azerbaijan. And in this connection the name of Vassily Vladimirovich Bartold, a Petersburg University

graduate and an outstanding Russian scholar specializing in Oriental studies, was on everyone's lips.

– It was he, –said Kyamal Abdullayev, Rector of the Baku Slavic University, –who had actually brought back to life *My Grandfather Gorgud's Book*. –But for Bartold's translation, the epic story might have had a tragic fate.

This was said at the ceremony of presentation of a certificate of Honorary Doctor of Slavic University to President of Russia Vladimir Putin, who, just as Bartold, is a graduate of Petersburg University. And Geidar Aliev established Slavic University of Baku. That's the way epochs meet.

The road to big-time oil is never simple. And not only because "black gold" is produced through a lot of work. Oil is money–a formula coined by a famous banker. Big-time oil is big-time money… And big-time politics, another one added. A great variety of interests, those of corporations, banks and states, clashed around Azerbaijan's oil, the development of oil fields, transportation means. Russia, formerly the region's omnipotent master, naturally could not put up with the loss of its positions. "Only one solution can suit Russia–domination of the Caspian," noted an influential diplomat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. "It has rights and opportunities for the purpose. The alternative will lead to the loss of Moscow's political influence in the region…" Threatening rhetoric, quite in the spirit of Peter the Great's instructions to Neplyuev, the Russian resident in Constantinople: "Our interests utterly exclude the possibility of any other power, whichever it may be, to be strengthened in the Caspian…"

Yes, this is threatening rhetoric, but regrettably it has lived its day. Many businessmen in Moscow were aware of it. For instance, Yuri Shafranik, Minister of Fuel and Energetics of Russia, said in his speech in Baku in May 1995, that he viewed positively the *Contract of the Century* and regarded "as ungrounded talks about the Caspian's status". It was a bold statement by the minister. Some time before the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia sent a note to the British Ambassador B. Fall who was surprised to get it. This rare and probably unique event in diplomatic practice occurred on April 27, 1994. It was a note of protest against the use of the term "the Azerbaijan sector of the Caspian Sea" in the memorandum "On Cooperation in the Sphere of Power Engineering", signed between Great Britain and Azerbaijan. Any project, the note stressed, dealing with the development of oil fields in the Caspian and with its transportation to the countries of Europe shall be invalid without a

prior agreement signed with all countries of the basin. That was the decision of Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, a "defender" of Russia's interests. Strobe Talbot, US Undersecretary of State, once described Kozyrev as one "of the most pro-Western politicians of Russia".

It was in those years that Russia introduced a transportation blockade of Azerbaijan, the official reason for it being the need to block the roads used for the supply of arms to Chechnya. The blockade boomeranged on Daghestan and on Russia as a whole as a matter of fact. As a result, in 1994-1995 Russia incurred losses estimated at $6.1 billion. Before his tragic death, General Rokhlin in his address at the State Duma assessed Russia's policy in relation to Azerbaijan as betrayal of Russia's national interests.

Verbiage in connection with the Caspian's status continued for many years. Russia finally accepted Azerbaijan's positions, in Ilkham Aliev's authoritative opinion, after an official visit to Baku of the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin in January 2001.

In out opinion it would be expedient to study the origin of the issue, i.e., the note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. What was the reaction in those days of Yuri Shafranik, RF Minister of Fuel and Energetics? Was he also preparing a note? Or did he issue instructions to border guards to send patrol for protection of the Caspian's Russian sector? We posed these questions to the chairman of the board of SoyuzNefteGaz Company in his comfortable study in an old mansion located behind the Minsk hotel soon to be pulled down. Yuri Shafranik slightly pushed aside the desk lamp and said:

– While you were posing your questions, I tried to find suitable words to describe the subject–conceptual, system–of the conflict. Here is my answer: the difference of our opinion depended on the worldview. I insist on precisely this word. On this position.

And my interlocutor adduced an example from his own life when before his appointment as minister he stood at the head of Tyumen Region. Then, in the last months of the Soviet Union's existence, the Latvian authorities extradited from Latvia the Riga OMON (militia detachment of special designation).

– No one wished to receive it, but I did so and accommodated it, –Shafranik went on. –The people lived and worked–and suddenly, at the close of 1991, when I was on a business trip, representatives of the Procurator's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia came to Tyumen, arrested our citizen and took him to Latvia. As soon as I came back, I raised a row. "How can it be", I said, "they have proclaimed their

independence, Russia, Ukraine, Latvia–all of them have proclaimed their independence. Can, for instance, the French police fly to our country and arrest our citizen? Why the devil do they fly from Latvia in order to arrest a citizen of Russia?" I unfold this story of the Caspian and Baku. If we ourselves have broken up the united country, it was not Aliev who has broken it up, then why the devil do we believe that relations should be based on pressure? This is a conflict of different worldviews. Absolutely! I, Minister of Fuel and Energetics, and Kozyrev, Minister of Foreign Affairs, relied on certain positions and views. But I asked myself as a citizen of Russia Shafranik: how should we build our relations with Azerbaijan? Version 1: to comprehend their problems, to comprehend our problems. To find a common vector and, having joined our efforts, to pursue it. Version 2: to comprehend their problems and not to throw obstacles in the way of their solution. And Version 3. Well, you've separated, haven't you? So, God speed you.

The last of the three versions is the worst. It's unproductive in all respects–historical, political and economic. Just imagine that an unstable country might exist next to Daghestan and Chechnya. One should pose oneself such questions. The first version is the best. But to follow it you should gain an exhaustive insight into their problems and make a thorough study of yours. I made preparations for a trip to Baku; I weighed all pros and cons, insisted. And now, with the passage of time, I'm happy that my concept has proved to be right. Our countries' Presidents have signed documents on the Caspian. But even had the negotiations been as yet in progress, the policy of joint action would have been correct. We at once received a share in Azeri-Chirag and passed it over to LUKOIL, for that was a *state* company. Then I issued an order for Rosneft to assume responsibility for the Caspian on the part of Russia, and Rosneft is still a state company. It was only later that the process of redistribution of property went out of control.

Yuri Shafranik remembers his long talks with Geidar Aliev. "Yuri Konstantinovich, please, asks the President to come here at least for an hour. We might stroll together. Stand still on the square for some time. There is no need for anything else." But he didn't.

– Other viewpoints have prevailed, –Shafranik went on. –And I said that I was also fond of Armenia. I have more Armenian than Azerbaijanian friends. In general, the people's nationality is of no importance to me. But Russia is vitally interested in the Caspian and oil. Azerbaijan and Baku were and will be a geopolitical and

strategic center. Then let's work here and promote the development of relations with all countries of the region.

After the Ministry of Fuel and Energetics had elaborated this line with the help of diplomats and officials of other departments, I reported to President Yeltsin that I was going to Baku, and he consented.

– Did he receive you then?

– Of course, he did. True, that was not a directive, elaborated and agreed with the government. Had we engaged in those procedures, we would have been bogged in discussions. Consequently, there was a certain degree of risk. I assumed the responsibility. Later, when I reported to the President, I managed to convince him to take a more serious stand on Russian-Azerbaijan interstate relations.

I am radically opposed to the policy of concessions. I believe that we've made too many of them as it is. We should be oriented toward unification and look for mutually advantageous solutions, rather than make concessions.

So, we shouldn't simplify the conflict. I believe that it is based on different worldviews. Should Russia be worthy and strong?

That is exactly what we, the Ministry of Fuel and Energetics, defended on the Caspian. I mean upholding our national interests. Geidar Aliev also consistently upheld Azerbaijan's national interests.

– And were they going to dismiss you from you post for upholding Russia's interests?

– That wasn't only on one occasion. I was on the verge of dismissal at least on three occasions when deputies of the chairman of the government wrote in their reports to the president that it was necessary to dismiss Shafranik.

– What was the reason for it?

– That was in connection with fuel-and-power and economic problems, I'd put it like that. I acted quite consciously. I couldn't imagine that all that would lead to a note. But I consciously took steps for materialization of my idea of cooperation with Azerbaijan. And I'll conclude our conversation by a few words about Geidar Aliev. I regard Geidar Aliev as an outstanding man, an outstanding statesman. It was a piece of good luck for the Azerbaijan people that at that time Geidar Aliev held that post. His spirit hadn't been broken, so he was strong enough to rise… But those who have never risen are not in a position to judge what that means to rise.

Have you met many people who rose after their dismissal? But he managed to do so and be of use to his republic, his people. I

took part in many meetings, many conversations which lasted for hours on end, in night negotiations and discussions. That was a sort of Aliev's classes. I could see that the man took pains to be thoroughly prepared for a conference or meeting; he himself checked the way the tables were arranged, who and where would take his seat and realized that there were no minor problems for a politician. I flew to Azerbaijan at Aliev's invitation to attend his meetings with presidents in the period when I was no longer a minister. I could see how efficiently he conducted them, he did not run them but conducted, for all participants had equal status, and he acted as a conductor–that was high class, I'd say. Those were also the lessons of a big-time politician.

Many people must have told you about his fantastic memory. I've never met such people ever since. Sometimes he supplied certain data from memory, and of course you would think that he had been prepared for the conference. But after the subject, was changed he again had a lot of factual material at his fingertips–that was stunning.

About the *Contract of the Century*

October 1996. The participants in the conference held by Geidar Aliev discussed the results of activities of the Azerbaijanian International Operating Company (AMOC) for the past two years, set up in connection with the implementation of the *Contract of the Century*. The records of proceedings of the meeting remind one of a thrilling detective story. Take for example, an excerpt dealing with a course of construction of pipelines.

"*Geidar Aliev.* You've said that you'll start laying the western pipeline next March and complete the process in late 1998. Then the question arises: but why so late? You must remember that in March of this year Mr. Shevardnadze and I concluded a contract for the western pipeline. Why did it take you a whole year to begin work? Why such delay?

AMOC Vice-President Vane Vaults: Mr. President, we spare no efforts to draw up an estimate of construction works for the western route, to determine the cost of works to be performed. The section assigned for the construction of the terminal in Supsa is described as the world's worst for this kind of work. The Georgian International Oil Corporation and John Brown Engineering Company are engaged in thorough technical, engineering and geo-technical survey of this section. We'll gain

required precise information for sufficient confidence to star works and precise estimates of the required works as late as in March 1997.

To make preparations for construction works and start them as soon as possible and as efficiently as possible, we've drawn up an interim budget of $33 million to order equipment and materials, as their delivery requires a long period of time.

We can assure you that engineering works are in progress and will be on till the next year for the inspection of the existing pipelines, examination of the pipeline laying sites, design of the initial parts of the pipeline, survey of the sea bottom and probing of the opportunity to use the organic terminal as an alternative to the construction of a ground terminal. A contract has been concluded with John Brown Engineering Company for carrying out engineering works in the sphere of project management and of preparation of the project as a whole.

Next month we are planning to hold a tender for construction works. I think that we'll be able to fairly rely on our figures and calculations in order to present the design of construction at the start of next year; construction works are expected to be started in March 1997.

For the project to be completed in late 1998, we will draw up a very stringent, intensive schedule of works, i.e., for it to be completed within 20 months.

Geidar Aliev. Thank you. But anyway, I believe that there is a considerable delay in the construction of the western pipeline. If the Supsa Port is described in this way, if, as they say, it is the world's worst place for such purposes, I think that a different port could have been chosen there, on Georgian territory. But the Supsa Port was chosen from the outset. They must have known that the port was advantageous. In general, we've been discussing the western pipeline for a year now. And now suddenly it has transpired that the Supsa Port is not suitable, and even other terminals are discussed. To tell the truth, I'm quite astonished by the fact.

Other records of proceedings of business conferences held by the President were no less to the point and concrete. Nothing like general words about "the need to work better", but a subject analysis of the situation whether they discussed oil derricks or the need to recruit local personnel…

Here is an excerpt from Geidar Aliev's address at the conference held on April 5, 1997, devoted to the development of the Karabakh oil field.

– Sometimes I hear that these companies would like to bring their own workers here. I'm warning you against it in advance and issue orders to the Azerbaijan State Oil Company to keep the situation under control, we are against it. You know that Azerbaijan oilmen are skilled in their trade. There are prominent researchers, engineers and skilled workers in the sphere of oil in Azerbaijan. All this is a reality. Azerbaijan specialists, researchers, prospected all oil fields oil contracts have been signed for. Azerbaijan has been extracting oil from deep-sea layers for over 50 years now. Azerbaijan oilmen were engaged in oil production not only at home but also, for instance, in Vietnam where they produced oil in deep-sea. As you know, there's a place called Vunchtau in the sea, in the south of Vietnam. It was precisely Azerbaijan oilmen who were the first to prospect and produce oil there. I visited Vietnam in 1983 and paid a visit to the place where Azerbaijan oilmen work, I saw all this there. Large volumes of oil are now produced there by Vietnam.

Azerbaijan oilmen worked in the sphere of oil production in Kuba, Romania and India. So, Azerbaijan oilmen are certainly skilled specialists in the field. I'm convinced that Azerbaijan engineers, technicians and workers should be attracted to these works on a large scale.

For instance, when I paid a visit to the *Dede Gorgud* drilling installation I could see that skilled specialists of the Azerbaijan Republic worked shoulder to shoulder with skilled specialists from Western countries. And they worked very well. That is why, I'd like to ask you to take this idea of mine into account in your future activity, in manning the construction. I entrust the Azerbaijan State Oil Company and its president to ensure control over these matters for our part.

Our goal is to carry into effect all agreements signed by us and we'll work in the same direction even after that. I'm happy that you are satisfied by your labor conditions. We shall even after that take all measures required for the provision of good conditions for foreign companies and specialists.

Our cooperation with the world's widely known oil companies is of long-term nature. All our agreements have been signed for a period of thirty years. But I hope that after the results are achieved, they will be extended for many more years.

July 3, 1997, Moscow

It was to the Russian Federation that Geidar Aliev paid his first official visit in the capacity of President of the Azerbaijan Republic, for talks in the Kremlin with President of Russia Boris Yeltsin. Ten years before Geidar Aliev collected his documents and left the Kremlin. Some other person might have felt satisfied–something like vanity: here I am! I've come back! I've avenged myself on the offenders… Of course Aliev wasn't alien to simple human emotions; he looked with interest at the new interiors of the Kremlin chambers where he was received by the President of Russia, inquired about his health, about his wife, daughters and grandchildren… Yeltsin felt quite well after the heart surgery and even had taken steps to reshuffle the Kremlin services and the government, with Boris Nemtsov (his namesake and protégée) transferred from Nizhni Novgorod to Moscow and assigned to a government post.

The reporters in their official information about the meeting of two presidents stressed that it was held "in a warm atmosphere of mutual respect". Of course, it could be nothing but warm considering the fact that it had taken the President of Russia four years to invite his Azerbaijan colleague whom he had known since the time of their service in the same Politburo. He must have been unable to invite him earlier…

On this occasion they had to sign a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Security and approve some five or so agreements, including on prospecting, development and share distribution of oil output of the promising D-222 Azerbaijan block in the Caspian Sea…

The national anthems of Russia and Azerbaijan were played under the vaults of the Kremlin St. Vladimir Hall, restored to its entire original splendor. Boris Yeltsin carefully read out his speech from a note.

– Russia and Azerbaijan are united by their age-long history, rich traditions and multifarious contacts. We cannot disrupt them. We must do our best to promote their development.

Geidar Aliev did not use his paper, even if he had one.

– I cordially congratulate you, Boris Nikolayevich, and those present on this significant event–signing of the document of friendship, cooperation and mutual security between the Russian Federation and Azerbaijan… I am very satisfied with the fact that we have signed today a big package of economic documents. They provide a good contractual and legal basis for further development and deepening of our cooperation in all spheres.

Some time later, Geidar Aliev said in reply to the journalists' problem that the question of Caspian oil had also been discussed, "and Boris Nikolayevich and I held a broad exchange of opinion… Russian LUKOIL Company is a party to three contracts signed before by the Azerbaijan State Company with transnational companies, and today in the presence of the Presidents of Russia and Azerbaijan the fourth contract has been signed between LUKOIL Company and the Azerbaijan Oil Company."

Geidar Aliev discussed this subject also at a meeting with members of Russia's financial and business circles held on July 4. He reminded them of the first contract signed in 1994 and pointed out that certain circles in Russia had for some reason unfavorably received the news of it, although LUKOIL was a party to it.

– Now LUKOIL is a party to four contacts. I'm speaking about it because there are talks in various circles and, regrettably, also in government circles that Azerbaijan is drifting away from Russia, it allegedly gives preference to contacts with Western companies and so on, and the ill-wishers of our republic seek to artificially generate an unhealthy atmosphere by spreading in the press and writing various articles to this effect, and so on. I'll admit frankly that this irritates us very much, for we work jointly…

He spoke in this way, as he himself admitted, as a friend of Russia. He believed that "after all meetings held yesterday and the day before yesterday in Moscow, all these talks, which took place and maybe will take place tomorrow, for there are many ill-wishers, would be cut short by you…". He reminded them that it was Azerbaijan that accounted for 70% of oil-production equipment delivered to Siberia, Tataria and Bashkiria, "but we have been cut off from these contacts, our mechanical engineering works are in dire straits. But that's not the main problem, we'll put things straight there. But if there is certain well-managed production, why not make use of it?"

If There Is Will There Is a Way

All's well that ends well. This proverb exists in various versions in many languages. But how will you apply it to oil production? First oil gusher crowns geologists' efforts. Next comes the turn of oilmen's clever and creative work. For the *Contract of the Century*, production of early oil was the most significant event, which occurred three years after work was started to attain this goal.

…Grand celebrations were held in Baku on that day. Oil had been produced. According to tradition one shall smear his face with the priceless product. That was done with pleasure by Geidar Aliev, Ilkham Aliev, then the first deputy President of the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR), and by all guests of honor.

The Oil Fund of hundreds of millions of dollars served as a visible testimony to the new strategy. The money would be spent on the solution of social problems, on the improvement of living standards of all the republic's citizens.

The amount of investments made in Azerbaijan far exceeded that made in many CIS countries. That was not only owing to the economic gain but also to stable climate in the republic, to the firmly entrenched democratic and legal principles. Foreign partners and specialists stressed this fact. President of AMOC company David Woodward pointed out: "Economic and social stability, ability by foreign oil companies to cooperate with the SOCAR and the government of Azerbaijan on the basis of partnership meeting the standards of international oil industry will further attract investments to the country."

The first stage in the development of the Azeri-Chirag-Gyuneshli fields alone created 3,000 additional jobs in the country.

Two new oil pipelines started operating. A major terminal was built in Sangachaly.

Will in combination with a wealth of administrative experience and realistic approach were Geidar Aliev's traits, which ensured successful implementation of the republic's oil strategy.

In various epochs' philosophers, writers and politicians pondered on the nature of man's will. Jack London described it as a kind of magic. "There is no solid wall, no matter what kind of stones were used to build it," Brazilian writer Jorge Amado asserted, "which could block the way to man's will and thought."

You could also find works by other famous thinkers on the desk of the President of Azerbaijan, such as Dostoyevsky, Carlyle, Nizami, Sartre… Who knows what idea exactly was especially close to the soul of the man who read them. Geidar Aliev was such a great book lover that he never made notes on the margins. He often recommended his son or daughter to read this or that book and drew his assistants' attention to certain publications. For instance, that was the case with *Repentance*, written by Guseinbala Miralamov (who is one of the authors of this book about Aliev) and devoted to the Karabakh tragedy, the Azerbaijanians' exodus from that land.

Geidar Aliev could well repeat Emerson's words: "Man alone can implement what seems impossible… Character means will train to the point of perfection." Will is all-important for a general, statesman and scholar. Will was the core of the character of Suvorov and Zhukov, de Gaulle and Roosevelt, Korolyov and Mendeleyev… Clever will! And we may well agree with these Nekrasov's words:

Man's will and work
Amazing wonders work.

For Azerbaijan the implementation of the *Contract of the Century* is in the nature of such amazing wonders. And not this alone.

August 1, 1997, Washington

On that day in the White House four contracts were signed between US companies Shevron, Exxon, Mobil, AMOCO and the Azerbaijan State Oil Company in the course of Geidar Aliev's official visit to the USA. This is how the presidents of the two countries assessed these documents.

Bill Clinton: "The Caspian Sea basin is a region of vital importance for the implementation of new oil and gas projects. The agreements reached these days for the operation of energy resources will be of benefit for future generations. By our work jointly with Azerbaijan in the sphere of exploitation of the Caspian wealth, we thereby not only contribute to Azerbaijan's prosperity but also supply our country in various ways with energy products and consolidate our state security."

Geidar Aliev: "Good success has been so far gained in cooperation between America and Azerbaijan in the sphere of utilization of energy resources in the Azerbaijan sector of the aspian. We continue and shall continue this cooperation. Four contracts, signed by us today in this hall, serve as a tangible proof of this. We are faced with a task of laying a number of oil pipelines, including from Central Asia via the Caspian to the West for expert of energy resources to the world market, to the West. We will cooperate with you in this sphere on a permanent basis."

The documents were signed in the White House, in the room named after Franklin Roosevelt. US Vice-President Albert Gore said in this connection that America and Azerbaijan were opening "a dialogue on power engineering" which "reflects our serious attitude to our common hopes for the utilization of the Caspian wealth".

Geidar Aliev: "Today here, in Washington, in the White House I am happy to say that it was 50 years ago that Azerbaijan's oilmen started operating off-shore oil fields. At the close of the 20th century Azerbaijan presented to the world large, rich oil fields of the Caspian Sea. I point out with great satisfaction that major oil companies of the United States of America take an active part in these works. We realize that the inflow of foreign investments to Azerbaijan, our economy's integration in the world economy, in particular, the establishments of strong economic relations with the United States of America serve as a contribution to the Azerbaijan people's bright future.

Incidentally, these relations have a long history. Back in May 1923 Azneft concluded a contract with an American corporation for oil drilling and production. In July of the same year "11 American experts in various sectors of oil industry arrived" in Baku. The *Bakinsky rabochy* issue of July 17, 1923, carried all their names. A certain Clinton Longshore represented Number 7, and 18 drilling technicians were still on the way.

Apart from high-level meetings, in the course of his visit Geidar Aliev held 75 (yes, seventy-five, no mistake) business talks with the heads of the leading companies, such as BP America and Frontera Resources, Shevron and Pennsoil, Unocal and Conoco, Exxon and Shell. The President's schedule naturally included not only meetings with businessmen.

In a dialogue with one of his interlocutors he pointed out that he had talked with congressmen, senators, Chairman of the International Relations Committee Gilman, speaker of the House of Representatives Gingrich. These negotiations are a separate subject, stubborn and consistent stand to uphold Azerbaijan's national interests on the world scene, arguments in favor of the repeal of infamous Amendment 907 to the Act in Support of Freedom, passed by the US Congress.

Here are some more episodes of that transoceanic trip of Geidar Aliev illustrating the intensive style of his work, his delicate and clever methods of "educating" his partners, of winning them over to his side.

On July 28 a meeting was held in New York with Steve Percy, Ed Wyahat and Michael Townshat, representatives of BP America Company:

– All conditions have been provided in Azerbaijan for carrying out joint works on a large scale with companies of various countries of the world, including the United States of America, and also for companies operating in the oil sector. Foreign investments made in our country are protected by the legislation.

Azerbaijan is building its economy on market principles; it has opened its doors to the world.

This is what Geidar Aliev said on August 2 when he met in Houston with Pennsoil President James Pate:

– Pennsoil is one of the first foreign companies to arrive in Azerbaijan. I highly value Pennsoil's services in the sphere of building a gas-compression station in our country and of boosting gas output in Azerbaijan. Pennsoil is a party to the *Contract of the Century*, and your company plays a leading role in the performance of the contract for joint development of the Karabakh oil field. I know that you are carrying out great work by representing and advocating Azerbaijan's interests in the United States.

On August 3, again in Houston, in the course of negotiations with Exxon President Terry Kuntz, Geidar Aliev said:

– After signing in 1994 of the *Contract of the Century*, the distribution of what has remained was a formidable problem. As you remember, at that time many big companies, just like yours, wished to acquire the remaining part. Those companies included representatives of your country and of Europe, as well as our neighbors. You are well aware of it, and so do I–but I won't name them–that's a part of history now.

I was also hard put then to make decision, for apart from your company, other quite respectable companies also wished to establish really good relations with us. Having pondered on the problem, I adopted a decision. And this decision offered the opportunity for Exxon to join the *Contract of the Century* after its signing. And after that I met with you on several occasions, my idea was for you to work on a separate oil field. I'm happy that this has finally happened. It's the Nakhchyvan oil field, that's the name of my native town. And this adds to the responsibility.

– Yes, –Mr. Kuntz answered, –Exxon is proud of it.

It should be noted that the subject of the conversation must have been close to the President's heart. His words sounded like a declaration of love for his native land of Nakhichevan, as it is referred to in Russian, or Nakhchyvan as the land is called in Azerbaijani.

– And another reason for my love of my native town, –Geidar Aliev said, –is that in 1990, when I lived in Moscow and my life was in danger, I was subjected to persecution, with many roadblocks thrown in my way, so I finally came back to Azerbaijan and since it was impossible for me to reside in Baku, I went to my native town, Nakhichevan. The years of my life there were very difficult, but Nakhchyvan warmly received me, and I

spared no effort to help it survive. It may well be that had I not returned there, the residents of that land could have been threatened with great danger. That is why I'm very fond of my native land, my native town. In the hour of trial it gave me a helping hand, and I value it very much…

I expect that you will start work energetically. I know that Exxon is America's leading oil company. But I don't know whether you have ever signed contracts in the White House.

– That was for the first time ever!

– You see, –Geidar Aliev went on, –it wasn't simply a contract we signed but we managed to sign it in the White House. I met you on several occasions in Baku and in the United States. But now we've signed this contract in the White House in the presence of your government leaders, with their participation, which in itself is a historic event, and it was you who signed this contract.

– Our company jointly with the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan works on B-9 block in the Caspian. This is a promising deep-sea structure. It would be desirable to sign a contract for this structure in the near future. That would allow us and the SOCAR to engage in deep drilling and extract oil at great depth… No doubt, you will give a name to this oil field, for B-9 sounds meaningless.

– Yes, this name is temporary, after the contract is signed, it will have another name. I'll instruct Natig Aliev to report me about it.

– We'd like to take part in the development of the Caspian deep-sea structures and we'll soon submit our proposals to the SOCAR. I believe that deep-sea layers of the Caspian's Azerbaijan Sector hold large oil stocks. Exxon's experience and potential give grounds to speak about rational utilization of these fields jointly with the SOCAR.

I avail myself of the opportunity to discuss one more matter we've spoken about earlier with you, Mr. President. I mean the operation of Caspian gas fields. At that time we announced that we would prepare proposals on the stocks of these gas fields and on the operation and transportation of "blue fuel" jointly with the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan. They are ready and we consider that our vice-president and Mr. Natig Aliev will shortly coordinate them on all points. We should take even more energetic steps for the operation of gas fields, since search for the buyer of this product differs from search for the buyer of oil; there is fierce competition in this sphere. With account of the factor of close location, Turkey could be the best market for Azerbaijan gas. Your northern neighbor, Gazprom, has concluded several

contracts with Turkey, but Turkey is still in need of more supplies of this product. And if we are not to lose this market, prospecting should be stepped up.

– If you are ready, I'll instruct Natig Aliev and, after negotiations, you'll prepare a final project. You are quite right. There is great need for gas in our region, in Turkey and other countries, and if you start this work efficiently, that would be fine… Our friendship is very reliable and I'll consider all proposals. I accept all your ideas of stepping-up the process of preparing proposals on gas fields.

On August 3 Geidar Aliev met with Texaco Vice-President Robert Black, also in Houston.

– Texaco has been operating for 95 years and for about 80 years it is implementing projects in various countries of the world, –said Robert Black. –However, our visit to Azerbaijan was made with great delay. Several years ago the company's Board of Directors adopted a resolution on ruling out any visit to the Caspian region, and now I'm sorry the resolution was adopted. Just as many companies of the world, we are also prone to making mistakes.

– He who says he never makes mistakes is mistaken, –replied Geidar Aliev. –One must pinpoint the mistake, admit it and confess that he has made a mistake.

– The new management of the company's board is eager to start cooperation in order to take part in the development of Azerbaijan's oil fields on a long-term basis.

Geidar Aliev's reply was brief:

– Azerbaijan has thrown its doors wide open to the world, to all companies, and especially to the companies of the United States of America. That is why you haven't lost your opportunity. It's good you've realized that you were mistaken.

Legends and True Stories of Three Seas

The initial section of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan main export pipeline was laid on September 18, 2002. It will to be used to pump Azerbaijan's "black gold" to the world market for the benefit of the republic.

The pipeline laying ceremony was really unforgettable and highly emotional for its main participants–three presidents: Geidar Aliev of Azerbaijan, Ahmet Nedjdet Sezer of Turkey and Eduard Shevardnadze of Georgia…

Geidar Aliev: "I'd like to tell you that the opponents of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline used to say that it was an illusion, impossible, Azerbaijan hasn't got, and it won't have so much oil. There was a lot of talk like that… Now all of it has proved groundless, we've made it. Remember that conference called "The Legend of Three Seas"… I delivered an address there, saying: "You are talking here about a legend. But I'll tell you that it's neither illusion nor legend, the three seas… will be connected. And Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan will connect them through their project and constant support of this project by the United States of America. That is why we've switched from dreams to reality."

Ahmet Nedjdet Sezer: "My greetings to all those who have contributed to the creation of the East-West Energy Corridor with esteemed Aliev and esteemed Shevardnadze at the head, I remember with respect the former Presidents of Turkey, the late Turgut Ozal and esteemed Suleiman Demirel, who displayed political determination by their activity, by their guiding services. May these grand projects contribute to the further consolidation of friendship and brotherhood among the people of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, to peace and security in our region."

Eduard Shevardnadze: "The Project of the Century which has been launched today will be inherited by our grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I'm proud that our generation leaves them such worthy heritage. We've shown to the world that by our joint efforts and coordinated harmonious activity we are capable of working a miracle, true, a small one. I wish our joint cooperation could work many such miracles."

…The President of the Azerbaijan Republic Ilkham Aliev, Geidar Aliev's son, proposed that two more volumes be added to the publication planned by his father. These volumes include the materials on Geidar Aliev's state visits to the USA, Russia and other countries, negotiations held by him, shorthand reports of his talks and interviews. The books were published under the title *Azerbaijan's Oil in World Politics*, suggested by Geidar Aliev in his time. The son is carrying on his father's cause.

In August 2004 the French *Le Monde* carried an article under the noteworthy title "Why Is Oil Again in the Center of Geopolitics?" The article was about "a new world order established from Africa to the Caspian region".

"The Caspian region is the most important in geopolitical respect. According to various surveys, the prospected oil stocks of

Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan amount to about 30 billion barrels, i.e., approximately equal to the amount of the oil field in the Northern Sea.

– The construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline designed for oil transportation from Azerbaijan to a Turkish port on the Mediterranean via Georgia is a real state of affairs behind clashes between Americans and Russians in the region closely watched by Iran, Turkey and China, –*Le Monde* concludes. – Among all these countries Russia lays claims for the role adequate to its potential not only as an oil (it exports approximately 8 mln barrels of oil a day–on a par with Saudi Arabia) but also a gas power, as it accounts for 45% of world gas stocks as against 36% in the Middle East. These two factors account for President Vladimir Putin having restored control over the country's energy policy, which had been snatched by oligarchs suspected in betrayal of Russia's interests.

Analyzing "the flare-up of prices at oil exchanges" in the summer of 2004, *Le Monde* points out that the appeal to OPEC and to oil-producing countries, which are not its members, to raise oil export quotas will hardly have a notable effect in the medium-term perspective: 96% of the OPEC countries' capacities are already operating and it would be no easy task for it to deliver 2 million barrels more per day as is required from it.

The new energy outburst, analysts consider, has been provoked by China whose demand, according to the data of the International Energy Agency, will grow from 5.5 mln to 11 mln barrels of oil per day by 2025. China alone accounts for a 40% increase in the world demand, with other developing Asian countries, in particular India, to be soon added to the list of major oil consumers, whereas–a sign of the changing times–Great Britain started importing oil in June 2004 for the first time ever in the past decade.

Demand for oil is growing. Where is it to be found? Theoretically, Iraq, the world's second–after Saudi Arabia–oil-rich country according to its prospected stocks, should play a key role in increasing its supply. However, the unfavorable situation in the country serves as a formidable roadblock to it. The same is true of the whole Arabian-Persian zone. Consequently, new sources of supply should be sought. The Caspian, *Le Monde* asserts, is one of them.

Chapter 11
THE SUN RISING FROM THE SEASIDE

July 14-15, 2001, Baku

Once–it was in July 2001, at yet another meeting of President Geidar Aliev with the "sharks of the pen"–someone from among the journalists present asked if he was going to write his reminiscences.

– No, –he said, –I do not write reminiscences. Though when I have a chance, I just recall some of the episodes. But I don't put it down, no! Not that I won't, I've got no time for that.

The get-together took place in the government country residence, the *dacha*, with a rather odd name, *Zagulba*–odd to an Azeri ear anyway, as the singer Muslim Magomayev has noted. The word could be rending from the Russian as a place for drinking-bouts, or "benders". It was built back in the 1930s for the *nomenklatura*, or big shots in the Communist apparatus of power. But both the "new Russians" and the "new Azeris", too, would be disappointed at this country *dacha* as much below the mark to them. Yet the gushing spring with its tasty, sweet water is certainly an attraction. Perhaps the *bender-bent* folks were fixing themselves up with its invigorating water after their *benders* over there?

– This is an old house, –Azerbaijan's President told his guests, the moguls of Russia's biggest mass media. –It in no way answers today's needs. It's just in my makeup, you know: once I get used to something, I can't wean myself from it. But if I come here at all, it is mostly in summer, I stay in town for the most part. My children have grown up here. It's a memorable place to us.

Working with their elbows and rushing ahead, the journalists jostled their way in the footsteps of the hospitable host, they clicked their cameras and changed cassettes in their dictating machines, seeking not to miss a word of this sudden confession.

– You've asked that we meet in an informal atmosphere, – Geidar Alievich Aliev said. –Here we are, you are welcome! Now look. You've been driving down the road, which is much like an alley. We planted these trees in the seventies when building the

road. We nursed and fostered each sapling. Baku, you know, had no greenery in the past. Gorky spoke about that.

– A city without a patch of greenery... A master picture of a dark hell en earth... A Moscow reporter showed he was conversant with the work of the classic of proletarian literature, Maxim Gorky.

–...And Mayakovsky did, too, –Aliev went on matter-of-factly. –Unlike it is in Russia, trees grow hard here. You've got to rear, water them. To raise a good tree you should water it for five or six years until it takes root.

A motley boisterous crowd glanced around: they couldn't believe such paradise could grow up on a barren patch of land like that.

– Yes, I do say we planted the trees as we were arranging this place, putting it in order. These pomegranate trees I've planted myself. Our people are fond of pomegranate fruit...

Sitting to a table creaking with fruits, Azeri dainties and obligatory teapots, the guests talked things over–the status of the Caspian, an attitude towards the press in the republic, Aliev's comeback to big politics and Nagorny Karabakh, of course…

Geidar Alievich recalled the year 1971. Soviet Literature Days in Azerbaijan. Foremost writers came to our republic from all over the Soviet Union, among them the famous Marietta Shaginyan.

– I had never met her before, –President Aliev said. –But I had read her works, sure. It was her first visit to Azerbaijan in twenty-five years or so, she was eager to look around, without official hustle and bustle. She asked and I agreed to have her about as my guest. She stayed as my guest for about twenty days.

I told her: Please, go to districts populated by Armenians. There were many Armenians in Baku, of course, and she communicated with them. But I asked her to go to Nagorny Karabakh. She did–she went to Gandzha, too, and other districts of Azerbaijan. My wife also showed interest for literature and the arts. Somehow she forged good contacts with Marietta Sergeyevna from the first. One Sunday we invited her to our place. We spent all of this Sunday together; it was towards the end of her stay here. She presented her book to me and said, "You know, I have met all Armenians here, and I told them they were living here better than anywhere else." I still remember here phrase: "Armenians in Azerbaijan are rolling like cheese in butter, they are in clover." And she told me, too, –Aliev recalled about his meeting with Marietta Shaginyan, –that she came here from Yerevan where she had spent a week. She said many cultural and scientific workers had come to see her with a petition signed by

about a hundred prominent personalities and addressed to the Soviet Union's leaders with the request to join Nagorny Karabakh to Armenia. She heard them out and said they were just silly. She said she would never sign that, and advised them to drop the matter as a bad job. Marietta Shaginyan was an important person.

What I mean is that this issue was galvanized time and again. But the Soviet leadership had it under control. However, as it came up again in 1988, the Soviet leader, far from taking proper steps toward a settlement, stirred up trouble…

The Azerbaijan President spoke again of the tragedy that divided the two peoples. Karabakh was his pain and anguish; he touched on this burning wound when speaking to most different audiences so as to articulate his stand. Aliev was certain: "If Gorbachyov and his entourage had taken a correct stand in 1988, this conflict would not have escalated like that, there would not have been so many losses, and both Armenia and Azerbaijan would not have been in such hostile relations as today"(*from Geidar Aliev's address to his countrymen in Moscow on June 22, 2000*).

He Bequeathed Friendship with Russia to Azerbaijan

Meanwhile in 1922 the Minsk Group of the OSCE, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, got involved with the Karabakh conflict. In 1997 this group had three cochairmen representing Russia, the United States and France. The diplomats of these countries worked out proposals, which Azerbaijan accepted.

And now Geidar Aliev explained to his guests what it was all about. Nagorny Karabakh was to be granted a high status of self-government within Azerbaijan. Incidentally, by the close of 1997 Armenia's President Ter-Petrosyan had at long last come to the idea there could be no better way out of the deadlock. He made it clear he was supporting the proposal whereby the Armenian forces were to pull out of the seven districts they had occupied around Nagorny Karabakh. Negotiations on the status of Nagorny Karabakh were to come next... But someone spiked his guns, and in February 1998 he resigned…

According to such an authority as Yevgeny Primakov, Aliev was on the point of coming to terms on the Armenian-Azerbaijanian conflict.

– I am quite positive about that. Death stopped him.

Yevgeny Maximovich Primakov was directly involved in the settlement project, and so it makes sense to relate his point of view.

– The recognition by Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and inviolability of its state borders was linked to self-determination of Nagorny Karabakh's population within Azerbaijan as a state entity enjoying the highest decree of self-government. Both sides were to make practical moves...

Baku agreed to table these proposals to Boris Nikolayevich Pastukhov, First Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia at the time.

– I asked to meet Aliev face to face, –Pastukhov recalls. –And I could see him at first hand, a man of fantastic memory, opening his note pad–frayed somewhat–and getting down what I was saying. That was an oral message of Russia's President. "This is interesting, –Aliev said, –much interesting."

Aliev, in Pastukhov's opinion, was all set to solve the Karabakh problem. It would be harder to do that later, he said.

– Then Armenia recreated, too, –Boris Pastukhov continued, – though it was Azerbaijan that made the main concessions.

The two men quite a few times. What was Pastukhov's chief impression of these meetings and talks?

– Well, my chief impression… No doubt, Geidar Alievich Aliev is one of the brightest political personalities of the Soviet and post-Soviet times. He managed to keep peace in his land. He managed to avoid an economic collapse as it happened in Georgia. Step by step he built good-neighborly relations with Russia and supported our stand on the Chechen issue. He was upright with regard to Russia and acted on all his commitments. There is no other state in the CIS, with the exception of Belarus perhaps, where the Russian language enjoyed as broad rights as it does in Azerbaijan. You know where he is great? He bequeathed friendship with Russia to his son and his country. Like any other state Azerbaijan looks out for vantage points... This is but natural. I talked with him many times. We discussed different problems– like the Caspian for instance. It was tough bargaining, wasn't it! He accepted our formula, but when we stayed vis-à-vis, he said, "I shall tackle this problem instantly, but you guarantee on Nagorny Karabakh this and that..." This is quite normal from a political standpoint.

– Zounds! –Pastukhov exploded (his pet oath since his young days). –Yes, you've got to heed the interests of another side. Yeah, a balance of interests... That's the way to make politics. Geidar Alievich was a first-class policy-maker. A man of singular courage. He knew of his sickly heart, but he didn't spare himself. He overcame himself by sheer will power and did the job. A worthy life it was…

Yevgeny Maximovich Primakov adds to what his old comrade and like-minded friend had to say:

– Geidar Alievich was a born talent. He grew up as part of the Soviet system, it's a fact. But he checked out as soon as he felt where we were heading. His son, Ilkham Geidarovich Aliev, inherited his talents. Like his father before him President Ilkham Aliev does not use notes in speech making. He's pithy, clever.

Geidar Aliev was always ready for a dialogue and compromise. But up to a definite limit. He never overstepped a borderline where the national interests of Azerbaijan were at risk. He never ceded it, be it to Moscow, Washington or Tehran. "True, someone may try and take a stiff stand on Azerbaijan. But we are an independent state, and one cannot play tough to us" (*from his replies at a news conference on August 9, 1996, during his visit to the Russian Federation*).

On April 10, 1998, Geidar Aliev received Ivan Rybkin, then acting government head of the Russian Federation. They negotiated such issues as CIS, Russian-Azerbaijan relations, among other things. President Aliev recalled that on March 12 he had sent a detailed letter to Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin concerning Russian arms deliveries to Armenia.

– But today we are already in the tenth of April, and there is no reply yet. By the way, this is not the first instance when we send a letter to the leadership of the Russian Federation and get no reply. But we are an independent, equal state. Say, some time ago a [Soviet] republic could dispatch a letter to Moscow, to CC CPSU and get no answer. The situation is different now, see.

– The answers came in time in those days, –Rybkin remarked.

– Sometimes they didn't. But even if we got replies, we should get them all the more so now. It's a matter of principle to us.

One of the first orders of President Aliev back in 1993 dealt with the reopening of the reception room for citizens. Up until the late 1980s it had been open in the 4th entrance of the building of the Central Committee of Azerbaijan's Communist Party, but afterwards the doorway was nailed up.

The reception room was reopened in October 1993, with visitors received by receptionists, state officials and presidential aides. The schedule and reception hours were published in the press beforehand. These regulations are still in force.

Many letters were addressed to President Aliev personally. His resolutions were now extensive, now brief–sometimes with only one word in: "Bakhin" ("Consider").

Once a group of Baku residents complained about Seaside Boulevard being in poor shape. President Aliev instructed the city

authorities to put it in proper trim. But he went beyond that by according the famous boulevard, dear to many generations of Bakinians, a national park status. The President also acted on letters about the malpractices at the *Azryba* Fishing Company. Its chiefs were taken to task after the facts of such malpractices had been confirmed.

Surkhai Askerov, a fine, subtle performer of the Azeri *mugam*, is a big name in our musical world. At the very start of his career in music the gifted ninth-grader of the Baku School of Arts got support from Azerbaijan's President. Upon reading a letter sent by the boy's father, President Aliev ordered a good material allowance for Surkhai.

There are plenty of facts like that. But here's what is of special importance. In 1995 our people were discussing the draft of a new Constitution, which came to be adopted on December 12th of the same year. One of its articles, namely Article 57, proclaims the right of citizens, personally or collectively, to appeal to bodies of government. They can do it by word of mouth or in the written form. Undeniably the right of citizens to turn to government bodies with suggestions, applications and complaints is an essential part of human rights in action. And, what is also important, a written reply should be given to each appeal and application. The Constitution's clauses, including those of Article 57, had a follow-up in other legislative enactments. Incidentally, Geidar Aliev suggested the provision about the people's right to apply to bodies of government.

Accordingly, on June 10, 1997, the highest legislature endorsed the Law of the Azerbaijanian Republic "On the Practical Procedures of Handling Appeals from Citizens". This law as well as several presidential decrees and instructions laid a groundwork for legal rules and standards: the President specified deadlines for examining letters, responsibility of officials for violations of the procedures, and defined regulations for reception of private citizens. Deadlines were cut to 15 days in accordance with the legislation for considering letters from army servicemen, participants in the Karabakh War and their family members.

September 21, 1999, Baku

The capital of Azerbaijan marks the fifth anniversary of the *Contract of the Century*. Many foreign guests have come to attend the festive ceremony. Russia has sent a small delegation headed by Viktor Kalyuzhny, Fuel and Power Industry Minister. At his

meeting with Geidar Alievich Aliev he recalls with pleasure about his Baku roots: "My grandfather and grandmother are buried here, my parents have lived here, and my sister was born here in 1938... We lived in the Stepan Razin settlement at Neftechal. Later on, with the outbreak of the war, as the "Second Baku" oil-mining district came to be developed in the Urals, my father, the oilman, went there, and I was born in the Urals. But historical roots have a hard pull. It's a pleasure to be here."

But that was a lyrical digression as they say. Then the talk turned to substantive matters of oil transportation routes, problems of the Caspian and North Caucasus...

"A quiet situation in the North Caucasus means a reliable link with Russia for us, says Aliev. –And what is a reliable link with Russia now? These are transport and other communications. This is trade, this is barter, and this is a possibility of free movement for people.

...Daghestan is our next-door neighbor. We have always been interested in a quiet situation in Daghestan... Back in 1997–I have to recount these facts in the presence of the press today not to allow anybody to distort our stand–when I was on an official visit to Moscow and met President Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin, I told him (and that was in the presence of our delegation) that the situation in Daghestan is grave and is further aggravated, please turn your attention to that."

And what was Yeltsin's reply? Well, he said, we know, and we see about it.

But how? A man who was the worthy target of sharp criticism in the world press. "For all our respect, a comparison with a living corpse invites itself," – newspaper *Reinisché Merkur,* wrote about Yeltsin in August 1999. –He is revamped from time to time so as to ensure a survival of the Yeltsin system. As one does not manage to keep Lenin as a piece of visual agitation forever, so Yeltsin will not be able to outwit time even, if all timepieces in Russia were stopped."

"...Today I must say–no matter how unpleasant to anyone–that the Russian leadership has not taken necessary measures to make Daghestan secure. It has not! I have every reason to say that because I know the situation there...

I regularly meet Daghestan representatives. And they tell me: one comes and meets this or that person, and he says everything is alright, and so forth. One of Russia's most high-ranking officials had come to Daghestan long before these events started rolling, and he said, you know, the Wahhabis are very progressive people and that we should cooperate with them. Such statements are

known in Daghestan, and they have reached us, too. You see, an inconsistent stand like that on the part of all the various services of the Russian Federation is the chief cause of the situation in which Daghestan finds itself now… The Russian leadership knew all that perfectly well. Why didn't it take measures and permitted such a situation? We suffer from that. As neighbors and as partners we ought to speak openly about that..."

Geidar Aliev was tactful and did not name one of "the most high-ranking officials". He was Sergei Stepashin, head of the FSS (Federal Security Service), and prime minister from May to August 1999 (he held this post for 82 days, the record short time in the history of Russian governments). At Yeltsin's orders he flew to Daghestan on the eighth of August as Shamil Basaev's militants broke in. The Second Chechen War was underway.

Yeltsin dismissed Stepashin on the ninth of August, appointing is his stead Putin, the third premier in just one year.

"Russia is living through one of the most difficult periods in her history of many centuries. I think that for the first time in these last 200 or 300 years she faces a real danger of finding herself in the second or even in the third echelon of the world' states. The nation has to tax to the limit all of its intellectual, material and moral potential not to let that happen."

Such were the closing words of Vladimir Putin's policy article "Russia at the Turn of Two Centuries". It was published a few days before Yeltsin's resignation on the Cabinet of Minister site in Internet and then reprinted in the press. On the thirty-first of December 1999 Boris Yeltsin, in the presence of Patriarch Alexiy II (the Most Holy, it is said, did not know why he was urgently invited to the Kremlin) handed to Vladimir Putin the symbols of presidential power and the Parker pen. It is with this pen that he had been signing his ukases, including the very last one–on his own resignation.

Thy Son Forever

Political chronicles of the day also keep rather tough statements made by Geidar Aliev during his conversation with Viktor Kalyuzhny. And many other statements as well, which are eloquent examples of his readiness to arrive at mutually acceptable decisions, to make even certain concessions and consider other opinions.

Yevgeny Maximovich Primakov recalls a truly remarkable episode.

– As I was Russia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, –he says, – the International Red Cross asked me to arrange an exchange of war prisoners between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Total exchange– all for all. The Red Cross listed over one hundred prisoners of war in Azerbaijan.

At first we flew to Baku. "Geidar Alievich, –says I, –I would like to take with me the war prisoners in keeping with this list." He studied the list. –"All right, I will let everybody go except these three. They are in the death cell. Accused of killings." –"But if you don't let them go, I will not be able to make an exchange. The other side might cavil at that." We kept silent for a while. And then he said: "Good, take everyone."

Primakov and Pastukhov, First Deputy Foreign Minister, arrive at the airport and learn that one prisoner has not been brought in. Geidar Alievich is there to see the Moscow visitors off. All the prisoners but one are aboard Primakov's liner Il-62–that one is detained in spite of the President's instructions. The airliner is still grounded. Aliev reiterates his decision. Well-drilled waiters in the VIP hall offer a third or fourth cup of tea to the guests. At last the last in the list is led in.

Aliev assigned Deputy Minister of Justice Chinghiz Amirov to accompany the war prisoners to Yerevan where he was hand them over according to the list. He was to stay on in Yerevan and await Primakov's return from Stepanakert. Yevgeny Maximovich, on seeing Amirov on the anxious seat, asked Russian diplomats to take him into the Russian embassy in Yerevan. "Look, not one hair should drop from his head." The Armenian representatives felt sore; they said they would receive their colleagues properly.

– All that was being done whole-heartedly, we felt, –Yevgeny Primakov stresses. –On our return journey to Baku the Deputy Minister was in a cheerful mood. We even took a shot of vodka aboard the plane, though, as he said, he had never taken vodka before. And I was grieved to learn that several months later this likable and kind man died.

Yet another participant in that charity mission, Boris Nikolayevich Pastukhov, adds to Primakov's testimony:

– In Stepanakert, too, they didn't want to hand over three men from among those included in the Red Cross lists. The pretext: "They know about the disposition of our air defenses." A rerun of what happened in Baku. We shall not fly away, we said, until we get everyone. And we got them in the end. More than two hundred returned to their families.

– Many of those people had a frightful look–hungry, in rags, beaten up, –Primakov recalls. –My eyes were in tears which I

could not keep back as, getting into the plane's passenger compartment, I heard them shouting: "Thank you, Russia!" There were a few Russian lads among the prisoners of war, –Primakov adds in an afterthought. –We turned them over to our embassies in Yerevan and Baku right away with instructions to buy air tickets and send them home, to Russia, immediately...

...Primakov and Pastukhov happened to attend one of the last birthday parties of Geidar Aliev's. It was a big family reunion.

– ...And there I could see what Aliev was like, dad and granddad, –Pastukhov recalls. –In a way, he turned quite different, though it was the same man. He irradiated warmth all over. These several hours I enjoyed within Aliev's family stay on in my mind as one of my sunniest days...

Still in his childhood Pastukhov developed a passion for poetry, he recites readily his favorite verses. In this regard he is like Aliev. One day, while in the reception hall of Azerbaijan's President, he glanced over the bookshelves.

– I look and see: Samed Vurgun, different editions, in Russian, too. I took a collection of his poetry and asked Geidar Alievich to sign it, or else they wouldn't let me out.

He put his signature and asked:

– But, why did you get interested in Samed Vurgun?

– I know how Konstantin Simonov valued him. Wonderful lyric poems... "It may hap that a Bolshevik to London hurry must... –And further on: –Just say a few words to them, Samed, and spoil their devilish repast!"

Aliev roared with laughter.

– I thought Vurgun to be a "heavy metal" poet toeing the party line, –Pastukhov confided. –The Revolution, October, Mayday...

– Perhaps they translated only that, and poorly, too. There was no room for Vurgun in the Pasternak vein. He has superb lyric verses. Now listen... –And Aliev recited several poems, one after the other, in Azerbaijani. –You feel the music? And what about his verses on Azerbaijan?

Can one steal the soul from the heart? Never!
Thou art my breath, my bread and water!
Thy towns lie open before me.
I'm thine all over, forever thy son,
Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan!

(Translated, from Azerbaijan into Russian by A. Adalis;
From Russian into English by I. Kochubey)

– I recall the resounding impact of these lines on October 18, 1998, –Pastukhov responded softly.

Two momentous events concurred then–State Independence Day and Inauguration of the Azerbaijan President. Geidar Aliev took the oath and was sworn into office. Thereafter he made an inaugural address–without any notes, as usual–which staggered the audience by its in-depth, east-iron analysis of the situation within Azerbaijan and Caucasia in general, and of Azerbaijan-Russia relations. For nearly an hour and a half the huge hall listened with bated breathe to a man who had turned seventy-five, though no one noticed his age.

Attending the inauguration ceremony were many state personalities from the CIS, the Middle and Near East and Europe. "That was a tribute to the great prestige, which Geidar Aliev enjoyed the world over, –Alexander Sergeevich Dzasokhov, North Ossetia's President, noted. –I must point in particular to his popularity in the Islamic world and in the Arab countries, where he is honored as one of the most experienced political personalities of the world scale."

A grand reception with congratulations and speeches of foreign guests followed the inauguration ceremony.

– As they say, one cannot enter the same river twice, –were the opening words of Alexander Dzasokhov's speech. –But Geidar Alievich has done it twice. We are happy that the Azerbaijanian people has a leader like him... Relations among political personalities are part of relations among common people. A strong and courageous man, Geidar Alievich was hurt as a human being; but like the famous Hellenic hero, Antaeus, he returned to his native land, and he touched it. He regained strength and captained his people.

Speaking at the reception, Geidar Aliev brimmed with emotions. He recited the lines of the great Samed Vurgun:

> I'm thine all over, forever thy son,
> Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan!

..."Though when I have a chance, I just recall some of the episodes", –That's how, if you remember, Geidar Aliev answered the question whether he aimed to get down to writing his reminiscences. Such episodes are but facts without which there will be no history.

...A big durbar in Moscow. The speaker perorating on dissidents. "But we have no dissidents," –Aliev whispers to his neighbor, the writer Anar.

... Few people could hear Geidar Alievich telling jokes and his infectious laughter at a good joke. Here's one he heard in Armenia.

"They asked an Armenian:

– Who is Karl Marx?

– An economist.

– Like our Aikanush?

– You bet! Aikanush–she is the chief economist!"

...On December 1999, Geidar Aliev received a group of Russian journalists. As their meeting was coming to a close, Secretary of the Journalists' Union Gennady Maltsev asked the President to autograph the book of his (Aliev's) aphorisms.

"Where shall I sign?" –Aliev asked. –Let me do it here... Today we stick to Azerbaijani everywhere, but my signature is an old one, Russian."

When did he sign like that for the first time? In his college days or perhaps when working in the Narkomat (Ministry) of the Interior? Who knows? At any rate, his signature with a long flourish at the end followed him all his life long. Meanwhile Aliev confided that he had not known Russian up until he turned 15 or 16. We could hear other opinions on this score. It depends. Probably many proceed from their own command of Russian, how fluent they are. Aliev learned Russian at school and college, and brushed up on his knowledge in independent private studies. So thinking back, he meant a perfect command of an alien tongue as one's mother tongue–not the half knowledge of "Pidgin Russian" that one can use when talking to native Russians in the street.

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw an exodus of the Russian and Russian-speaking population from Azerbaijan. Azerbaijanians, graduates from Russian colleges and universities, tucked away their diplomas, too–their learning was no longer needed in their native land. As the Popular (?!) Front took over, the steamroller of a "cultural revolution" ravaged Azerbaijan (may we use the notion born in China in the 1960s under Mao Dze Dong). The self-styled Azeri *Hongweibings* ("Red Guards") went loose chasing professors and academy members and opening "universities" of their own. The world famous Oil Academy in Baku could begin its academic year in 1992 only in December (instead of September).

This is how Geidar Aliev reminisced about those years:

"...Do take me right–this is not self-advertising. But with my return to leadership in Azerbaijan many Russians came back... –

And he continued: –Mutual relations between Russia and Azerbaijan are of great importance to us... Let me tell you that Azerbaijan takes a firm stand in furthering and tightening friendly relations with Russia."

January 9, 2001, Baku

That day, standing at the ramp of the airliner *Rossiya* in Baku's Bina Airport, Geidar Alievich Aliev welcomed Russia's President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin on an official visit to Azerbaijan. Flags, posters, anthems, children in national dresses, guard of honor and a report of its commander... As it belongs to an official visit.

It was the first official visit of the Russian President to Azerbaijan in the post-Soviet years, and Putin's first visit abroad in the year 2001 that ushered in a new century and a new millennium. Unlike his predecessor who in those ten years had no condescended to honor Azerbaijan with a visit, Vladimir Putin demonstrated his sincere readiness for furthering good neighborly relations with the independent Republic of Azerbaijan. Aliev would not conceal his bitterness over the pattern of two-way relationship in the recent past, and he spoke bluntly at the talks of the Russian and Azerbaijan delegations:

– This is the first day of the official visit of the President of the Russian Federation to Azerbaijan, and I welcome you heartily, Vladimir Vladimirovich, in connection with this visit. I wish to express my deep gratitude for your accepting my invitation and arriving in Azerbaijan on an official visit.

It would not be much to say that this visit is of historic significance given the fact that since Azerbaijan's gaining its state independence... the Russian Federation's head has never visited Azerbaijan. There might have been certain reasons for that, of course; be that as it may, it is an important factor to us, and therefore we wanted very much for this visit to take place. And this visit is realized by Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin whom we came to know fairly well during our joint work within the CIS, at the Council of the CIS Heads of State and at our bilateral meetings; we came closer together and found very good mutual understanding on all issues.

The range of topics discussed was large: economic ties, the status of the Caspian, Karabakh, terrorism and organized crime. Russia's President felt duty bound to thank Geidar Alievich Aliev and all Azerbaijan leaders for the extradition of persons implicated in the explosion of residential houses in Daghestan...

"We know, –he noted, –that after the extradition of the criminals to Russia there came threats of terrorist acts to be committed against you personally. But you were not scared, you showed courage and temper."

The Russian President offered special thinks to Geidar Aliev for his regard for the Russian language:

– As far as I know, working in Baku are actually all schools of the Soviet times, and the base for the development of the Russian language has been preserved. This goes to show once again that our cooperation is indeed–the way the Azerbaijan leaders see it–targeted at the future.

Geidar Aliev: "Not only schools but also college departments working."

Vladimir Putin: "That is the sphere of application of the Russian language does not shrink. This shows indeed that we have a good base for further progress in our relations. We count on culture and art to continue as a consolidating link of our relations."

A group of regional leaders–of Daghestan, Astrakhan and North Ossetia–came with President Putin to Azerbaijan.

Vladimir Putin: "In our view, cooperation of the Russian Federation's and Azerbaijan's regions is an important area of our interaction..."

Geidar Aliev: "Your idea about cooperation of the regions is likewise of exceptional significance. May I recall history: the desire of the Russian Federation's regions and of Azerbaijan for economic cooperation emerged several years ago. I must say, however, that when some of the members of the //Russian// Federation close to Azerbaijan displayed initiative toward such cooperation and we lent our support for that, Russia's central government reacted painfully and even objected to that."

Vladimir Putin: "Geidar Alievich, we have this disease behind us..."

Geidar Aliev: I emphasize it because now you offer this. Guzhvin (governor of the Astrakhan Region at the time, died in 2004.–*Auth.*) is here, and he remembers that when we invited him, he arrived here. We were getting ready an agreement as came inquiries from Moscow–now why this has happened, the matter has not been cleared with so-and-so, and the like. But all that notwithstanding, we reaffirm our readiness. The same applies to Daghestan and other members of the Russian Federation. Your opinion fully dovetails with ours because Russia is a huge country, and some members of the Federation, including those near us, may be even equal to Azerbaijan in the economic potential."

At a joint news conference of the two presidents held after the negotiations, Vladimir Putin said this in part:

– The very fact that in the course of these last ten years the Russian head of state has not been to the Azerbaijan land now appears as an immense minus sign in the development of bilateral relations. And this means in the development of regional cooperation in the Caucasus...

Nine of these ten years were in the Yeltsin epoch.

Before leaving for Baku, Vladimir Putin had prepared an unusual and pretty precious gift for the Azerbaijan President. And he handed it over while meeting students of Slav University in Baku.

– Geidar Alievich spent a considerable stretch of time in my home city Petersburg/Leningrad, –the Russian President said. – While being there he finished a special school... I asked my colleagues to delve into the archives. Here is the graduation certificate issued by the special school. It says: "Certificate of Senior Lieutenant Geidar Aliev. May 16, 1949." And here are the grades. I shall not read out everything, but cite some of the results. Dialectical and historical materialism–excellent, chekist training–excellent, economic and political geography of the USSR and foreign countries–excellent, criminal law–excellent, literature–credit, military training–credit, Russian language–excellent. And there are no other grades here, just top marks… If all students of your university performed just as well as did Azerbaijan's President in his time, the country's prosperity will be in reliable hands…

Two years upon his gradation from the Special (State Security) School in Leningrad Geidar Aliev got enrolled in the Department of History at Azerbaijan University. Because of his service duties Aliev had to complete the university course extramurally, by correspondence, for he had to make haste and catch up on the years stolen by the war. His graduation diploma of a historian got an A.

As President of the International Monetary Fund Monsieur Michel Camdessus and his wife were visiting Baku, President Geidar Aliev received them. He presented a small Azerbaijan rug to Madam Camdessus.

– May it remind you of our land?

– Monsieur Aliev, –Madame Camdessus thanked, –you are a mind reader indeed: that's the design and color gamut I love.

Her high-placed husband added:

– Somehow I feel scary to stay on here. Mr. President reads my wife's thoughts. –And he smiled: –We'd better leave sooner.

Their friendly talk drifted back to the years of Aliev's work in Moscow, at the USSR Council of Ministers and at the Communist Party's presiding body, Politburo. Aliev said he occupied the Kremlin office where Vyacheslav Molotov, one of Stalin's closest associates, had been working for many years (in 1930 to 1941 Molotov headed the Soviet Government, then became Stalin's First Deputy as Premier and Foreign Minister). M. Camdessus, not at all indifferent to history, showed an interest in Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov as a person. He felt that this political figure opposed to Nikita Khrushchev was wronged. Aliev explained his stand and described some of the scenes of Politburo's sittings. M. Camdessus listened intently and wondered: "How can you remember all that?"

Many other people, too, wondered at Aliev's astounding memory. A truly remarkable observation from Fatima Abdullazadeh.

– Well, one can learn and remember lots of things. Geidar Alievich, however, could draw out information at the most appropriate moment. For instance, visiting some village, he might see a person whom he had met fifteen or twenty years before, and call him or her by name. "Remember, Vagif, you had a collective farm chairman so-and-so, and there was a good crop, and you complained about the harvesting being messy?"

– Aliev did not play for the public, –Fatima-khanum says. –He must have been proud of his memory, that's understandable. He was like a *bogatyr*, a Hercules, who would show his muscle. His brain was akin to a supercomputer not manufactured yet.

Geidar Aliev could recall a chance encounter in some out-of-the-way village or oil fields elsewhere when meeting writers or at a big party conference. He could recall his conversation with an oil-drilling technician, shepherd, with men and women usually called common people but who have outgrown in their political vision those who look down on them as "goofs".

But here's what Geidar Alievich himself said about his phenomenal memory:

"You know, I never write any speech, any report of mine beforehand. What I have in my memory it is there. But if I need reference materials and figures, I just call for them and I get them... My memory is good, Thank God, and so I can remember a lot.

Neither in the Soviet times did I use texts when speaking–in my home republic anyway. Once I tried the same thing in Moscow and spoke right off the bat, but they told me not to do that anymore. What, trying to be clever while everybody using notes? Each man has his habits, and mine are of long ago... If you know

your job and do it every day, this sinks into your memory and molds thoughts. They take body and form not in one single day, not on the spur of the moment when you have speak somewhere. They take form step by step, gradually; they sink in and come up, when necessary. That's what I think" (*from a conversation with Russian journalists on December 25, 1999*).

"I Know Well All Streets in Baku"

...June 2000, the sweltering days of the Bakinian summer. Azerbaijan is the venue of Russia's Culture Days. World-famous performers are in. All of them deeply moved by the sincerely warm welcome accorded to them, amazed at the changes that have occurred in Baku, Sumgait, and Nakhichevan...

– I, for one, am surprised at all these changes of late, –Geidar Aliev said in those days. –I'm not a stranger to Baku. Since my young days I've been here when I went to school at sixteen. Now, what does a student do? Re learns and goes about streets looking around. All the more so as I was a boy who came from the backwoods? Therefore everything looked interesting to me. Somewhat later, when I grew up (a young man not married yet!), I still would walk around and glance, at pretty girls, too. So I know well all these streets...

Geidar Alievich showed his guests about Baku–its hilly part, the oldest, with its fortress Icheri-shekhar put up in the Middle Ages; he took them up and down Seaside Boulevard which back in the 40s "still had a pier and bathing-places, too, where all townspeople took dips..."

Geidar Aliev looked at Baku with the eyes of an artist, architect and builder.

He compared Apsheron Peninsula on the map to an eagle's beak cutting deep into the sea. Apsheron is the eagle's head; and extending the simile, we might say that Baku is the eagle's orb.

Cutting across the heights in Baku's northwest is a mountain neck, the only passage to the sough, seawards, and to the north, inland. These heights are a natural rampart of Baku, Allah's gift. The Wolf's Track of old, today this pass is known as Wolf's Gate.

This mountain pass bore yet another name–after the man who had hacked through the steep slopes and cliffs: *Gasym chapdyran* ("Cut Through by Kasum"). What a pity that people don't remember that now...

The path leading upwards, to town, became a road for horse-and-buggy travel and later on, a motorway. Geidar Aliev often

took it when coming back from his business trips about the republic. Talking to quests he told them that the Patamdar Ridge stretches as far as the seashore. And where this ridge slopes off toward the seaside lays the village of Shikhovo, now a suburb of Baku with its amazing mosque, Bibi-Eibat. Shikhovo–this name derives from the word sheik (sheikh). In olden times people who wielded much respect and authority were called reverentially sheiks–men of great learning, wizards and highborn. The people's spiritual fathers and shepherds.

Standing at Wolf's Gate you can take a bird's-eye view of Baku and its environs. The city descends to the sea in a semicircle. Rising in the middle is the old citadel Icheri-shekhar ("Inner City") hugging the sea?

Baku had yet another bastion, the Sebayl castle. Today this district is known as Bayl (or Baylovo in Russian). The Caspian has engulfed that stronghold. Letters cut in stone and fragments retrieved from the sea bottom are now displayed in the courtyard of the restored memorial complex of Shirvanshakhs in Icheri-shekhar.

In the Azeri *mugam* melody our people give vent to their innermost thoughts and desires. And so it is with the hoary stones of the Bakinian citadel telling the tale of the people's soul and destiny in their cryptic language. Icheri-shekhar's silence is eloquent. Silence is a language, too.

Our poets draw inspiration from the historical monuments of Icheri-shekhar. Here are a few verses from A. Khalafli's poem *Icheri-shekhar: Stones, People*, as translated into Russian by Siyavush Mamedzadeh:

Wrought by a sculptor much in love
The maiden beauty towers above.
"Uzzal", fervent in the "Rast" mugam
A fleeting moment of history alive.
A brook down Karadag streams,
Shah-kyagrizi singing a mournful lay.
An arrow of love has pierced my heart
It bleeds and scalding tears sheds…
The Maiden Tower soaring to the skies,
Our sacred memory incarnate in bones,
And no fury of the Caspian
Can drown the proud silence of these stones.

(English version by I. Kochubey)

The people's tragic history is vibrant in the "Rast" mugam. "Rast" is an epic in music, and "Uzzal" is a part of this epic. Icheri-shekhar can be likened to an epic. An epic embodied in stone…

Geidar Aliev was a custodian of this historical and spiritual memory of the people, its caretaker and protector; he had done his utmost to keep this memory alive.

In the lines we have cited above mention is made of *Karadag* in the sense of a big, not black, mountain. *Shah-kyagrizi* ("the Shah's Spring") is a bourne whose water flowed down the pipes made of tile to the Palace of Shirvanshakhs. As local historians say, this brook gushed forth at the side of the monument to the poet Aliagi Vakhid (in the park near the Philharmonic).

At Geidar Aliev's initiative two monuments have been erected on Karadag, the Big Mountain: an obelisk to the Turkish asker warrior and a memorial to Motherland's defenders.

The poem (we have quoted but an excerpt) also mentions the names of Masud Davud ogly, an architect who lived in the 12th century A.D., the putative creator of the Maiden Tower; it mentions Mohammed Abu-Bekr ogly (11th century), who built the Synyg-gala Minaret within Icheri-shekhar (Inner City). Thence, from hoary antiquity, stretches a spiritual thread into our days, the twenty-first century.

Geidar Aliev did whatever he could and even more to keep in joint the living fabric of time. He brought Hussein Djavid back to the people. Alexander Dzasokhov can well remember "Geidar Aliev's efforts to have the mortal remains of Nasimi transferred to Baku. Nasimi, an outstanding Azeri poet and thinker, was buried centuries ago in what is now the Aleppo Province in Syria". Azerbaijan, as we have told you, has celebrated the 600th jubilee of the great poet. May we recall that Nasimi is well known throughout the Arab world? His works are translated into dozens of languages; his poems and his philosophy have a topical ring in this day and age, too. At Aliev's recommendation a delegation headed by Alim Keshokov, Secretary of the Soviet Writers' Union went to Damascus, Syria. The Syrian authorities did not consent to Nasimi's reburial. Subsequently, when working as the Soviet Union's ambassador to that country, Dzasokhov, acting on Aliev's request, approached the Syrian leaders again, but they replied it was impossible to translate Nasimi's remains to Azerbaijan.

– On two or three occasions we talked this matter over with Geidar Aliev when he was working at the USSR Council of Ministers in Moscow. Nasimi was tortured and executed with much brutality. He was flayed alive. He was victimized for his

ideas, ostensibly out of keeping with the canons of Islam. Not at all opposed to the Islamic teachings, he contended nonetheless that Man was all-important in the world created by the Maker, – Dzasokhov recalls.

...You feel reinvigorated and cheery on coming out onto the renovated waterfront. Is it the action of the mountain ridge on which Baku rests? Or is it the breath of the sea suffused with the bracing ozone? You cannot tell. Because the earth and the elements, mount and sea are conjugated, coupled together. Baku is the child of the two elements, the sea and the land, the Caspian and the mountains.

Everything here reminds us of Geidar Aliev, a man endowed with an architect's gift.

...At the roadside you may see storks that have built their nests on top of the tall poles of electric transmission lines. The storks fly away and seek asylum elsewhere when land, water and air come to be polluted. But their homecoming is a good omen.

Seaside Boulevard, the favorite haunt of the townfolk, is always crowded. Moms and dads taking their little ones to shows, swings and merry-go-rounds. You can hear all kinds of names. But one–Geidar! –comes up the oftenest.

Geidar Aliev always spoke with great love about Baku, our capital, now attired in green and decorated with new magnificent buildings:

"Baku is one of the world's nicest cities. The people, who have been building and creating Baku over many centuries, have laid a fine town for this generation and generations to cone. We are proud of its natural beauty, its architecture."

Baku is a city of winds, the "windy city". The violent northeasterly is quite a nuisance now and then–it whines and howls. You better stop your ears! But with its rage and fury spent, the air is calm and placid again... A traveler, driving through Wolf's Gate in the morn, hails the sun rising above the sea. It kind of rolls out from the sea depths. That's why our forefathers, who have left their drawings on Gobustan's cliffs, believed it to be born of the sea…

Chapter 12
ONE YEAR OF THE PRESIDENT

Leafing Through the Calendar

People have always been clambering up to the Olympus of power. Always, at all times. Some even manage to crawl to the top to vanish overnight into thin air, leaving as good as no trace in popular memory. Where are they, the men who had been dominating Azerbaijan's political arena in the 1990s? They had their innings, and one will hardly remember them in a decade or two. Why did they, Geidar Aliev's opponents, land on the losing end? Because our people, turning down sundry demagogues, windbags and embezzlers of public property, followed Aliev. Like the Hellenic hero Antaeus, he drew strength from his native land, his love for it, for its sons and daughters. His fellow citizens and compatriots came to appreciate that.

Yet another reason why Geidar Aliev became a national leader: his lofty moral virtues merged with a gift of a political figure and thinker. "One can be in opposition to the authorities, but one cannot be in opposition to Motherland, to the people, to morality and lofty ideals." He was true to this precept by word and deed. The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer has said that man's genius is in that his abilities for cognition… happen to be developed far above of what is necessary. So, a man of genius has an excessive abundance of intelligence, and this abundance finds an application domain in general laws of actual reality; thereby he devotes himself to the service to all of the human race, while a man of ordinary intelligence serves particular individuals, no more.

Yes, Geidar Aliev's outstanding intelligence served the entire people. The President shared the views of the great thinker of the East–Djemal-ad-din al-Afghani and like him believed there could be no happiness outside the people.

Someone will take this for granted, as an inalienable part of a big political personality, while others will have second thoughts about it–cut it out, this sweet hollow rhetoric... Well, let's leaf

through the President's calendar for one year only. But which one to choose?

There were eleven years of his presidency... Each year, though like all the others in some respects, has particular milestones of its own. The obligatory daily routine makes them common: the working schedule, visits, receptions, news conferences, and speeches... But the impress of Geidar Aliev's personality is there, giving new body and form to every event in his routine duties as head of state. We can pick out any year at random–1995 or 1999, and so on… I feel we should go through the calendar of the year 2002–Aliev's last full year in office.

One of the first documents, which Geidar Aliev signed in 2002, dealt with the Memorial Day on the 12th anniversary of the tragedy of January 20, 1990. Just Twentieth January–we need not name the year, though. These two words are eloquent enough, they tell a lot to the Bakinians and all the Azerbaijanians. They carry the same message as Bloody Sunday, the Ninth of January; for Russian: on that day in 1905 czarist troops shot at a peaceful demonstration of workers in St. Petersburg going with a petition to the czar. Hundreds were killed and wounded.

President Aliev insisted, way back in March 1994, on an exhaustive legal and political assessment of the tragic events staged in Baku on January 20,1990. A government decision was adapted to this effect. On that day, on Gorbachyov's orders, Soviet troops marched into Baku and other districts of Azerbaijan, without declaration of a state of emergency.

January 24, 2002, Moscow

January 24, 2002, was the first day of the visit of President Geidar Aliev of the Azerbaijan Republic to the Russian Federation. "When the Russian capital is visited by political figures of a caliber like this, it is a big event in itself," wrote the Russian newspaper *Izvestiya* in those days. "This personality, shelved by Mikhail Gorbachyov, was claimed back by big politics and his land. Today he has been able to get over the wrongs done by Yeltsinist Moscow."

As *Izvestiya* saw it, few, if any, could expect that "the first acquaintance of a shrewd and wise policy-maker like Aliev with the young Russian President would yield such positive results". Thinking back to their first meeting, Aliev confided he "reckoned only on a 30-minute meeting with Putin. But we talked as long as nearly four hours". "They must have made a good impression on

each other," *Izvestiya* commented. –Aliev, as eyewitnesses spy, parted with Putin having an express desire to meet him again. In the upshot the high guest was accorded a special honor yesterday night (January 24, 2002. –*Auth*.) Vladimir Putin received him in the countryside dacha at Zavidovo. It was a supper in a close family circle. Informed sources say the present Russian leader did not deem it superfluous or humiliating to seek advice from Geidar Aliev on different international issues."

A state visit–this is a lot of ceremonial, protocol acts, meetings and talks, eye-to-eye negotiations and those held together with delegations; this is receptions and news-conferences... One of us, then editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Tribuna*, had the luck to attend the meeting of Geidar Aliev with heads of Russia's mass media–that get-together was arranged by Vitaly Ignatenko, Director General of the ITAR-TASS News Agency. The official visit was drawing to a close, that was the last function culminating those three tense days immediately after the big press conference. The President's dryish face did not betray any trace of fatigue. It's amazing how a man nearly 80 years old stand such kind of loads.

These sit-round gatherings at TASS had a longtime ritual. The host, Vitaly Nikitich Ignatenko, welcomed the guest and proposed to drink to the health of Geidar Alievich Aliev. President Aliev had a glass of red wine. Taking a sip, he recalled his meetings with journalists after his resignation; he spoke about Azerbaijan's oil strategy, about relations with the press... When we were about to take leave, I told him I had met his former aide Alexander Timofeyevich Gavrilov a few days before. "My best greetings to him," the President said. "I do remember him well."

On that long day President Aliev met journalists again, for the third time, now back in Baku.

– Moscow television gave a fairly good coverage of my visit, our meetings, negotiations and the talks we had. I may just as well say that this visit was exceptionally important to Azerbaijan. First, the Russian state and the President of Russia had invited the President of Azerbaijan to Russia, to Moscow, on a state visit. This status and invitation were realized in compliance with the demands bearing on a state visit. You must have seen all that on television. You couldn't see all, of course, but what you have seen should leave a definite impression in you...

I am very satisfied with the outcome of the visit... We have signed important documents.

President Putin and I have signed a joint declaration on our ties, on the substance and principles of our ties. Thereupon we have signed a treaty on Russian-Azerbaijanian economic

cooperation up until the year 2010 providing for long-term cooperation, and yet another two documents as addenda. Finally, we have signed an agreement on he Babalin radar station as well as agreements on other matters. All these are very important documents for Azerbaijan, which, I think, also give a powerful impulse for the progress of Russian-Azerbaijanian cooperation.

All that was on Saturday, January 26, 2002. Next Wednesday, on the 30th, President Aliev was flying to the United States where, as his news service reported, he was to attend a session of the Davos Economic Forum meeting in New York. On the eve of his departure, on January 29, Geidar Aliev received US Undersecretary of State Ms. Elizabeth Jones.

Talking with Ms. Jones, the President mentioned his Moscow talks about the struggle against international terrorism.

– President Putin told me the United States and Russia were cooperating closely enough in this field... I felt Russia would keep up this cooperation. Mr. Putin likewise knows that we are participating in this alliance, that aircraft of your country fly over our territory. All this is common knowledge. Thus, I believe your cooperation with Russia opens up broad opportunities for work, which you would be carrying out in Afghanistan and all over the region as a whole.

Bidding farewell to his guest, President Aliev asked her to convey his best regards to his friend Mr. Armitage. "Tell him I wish him the best of success in the work of the joint Russian-American commission. I hope it will be a success."

Now Richard Armitage was US Deputy Secretary of State. Small wonder that both could well remember their meeting in the early 1990s. Forgetting the protocol, Richard said suddenly, and quite sincerely at that: "My father was very much like you, Mr. President!" That's how good relations were born. Richard Armitage was heading the US-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce and during Aliev's visit to the United States introduced him former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger.

– Earlier, as I saw you on television, you were pictured as our enemy, –Aliev smiled. –But what a pleasure to meet you now!

Richard beamed on hearing these words: Weinberger was his teacher and friend.

February 1, 2002, New York

Flying in to New York, President Aliev laid a wreath at the obelisk put up over the ruins of the World Trade Center. It seemed this wreath was also laid on the scorched ground of Knodzhaly, at the foot of the machine-gunned monuments in Shusha, on the lacerated land of Karabakh. Grief and memory of the slaughtered innocents is but one, no matter where.

The motto of the World Economic Forum was Leadership in the Troubled Times: Common Look into the Future. Klaus Schwab, the forum's founder and president, said speaking at the opening ceremony that the choice of New York as the venue of the forum "prosecuted above all the aim of giving support to the city that sustained the worst of damage on September 11, 2001."

On February 1 Geidar Aliev spoke in the hotel Waldorf Astoria at a session on "Stability in Central Asia". He was the first to take the floor. Touching on the problems facing the world in the globalization era, President Aliev enlarged on separatism and war conflicts that had enveloped Caucasia.

"Separatism takes on the form of terrorism and, what is more, poses a threat of territories seized by separatists being turned into uncontrolled zones. Let us take, for example, the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. The conflict on this territory began exactly because of separatist intentions, it grew into a war between Armenia and Azerbaijan and, as a result, a part of the Azerbaijan land, about 16 thousand square kilometers large, became an uncontrolled zone–in brief, it remained under the control of illegal armed detachments. Neither the world community nor any international organization controls this territory. Naturally a lot of weaponry is concentrated there, with drug trafficking not excluded either. Which means this is a flash point of conflicts. A flash point of terrorism.

Therefore when waging a struggle against international terrorism, one should consider the sources, various forms and stripes of terrorism. Elimination of war conflicts is a very serious and important measure toward restricting the possibility of international terrorism emerging on the arena."

New York is far away from Karabakh. And yet it seemed its mountains moved closer in those minutes. The three thousand delegates to the forum from a hundred and six countries must have understood a little better what it all meant–one's Motherland taken away.

On February 27, 2002, the Swiss newspaper *Matin* carried an article titled: "History Shall Not Forget: the Azerbaijan People

Marking the 10th Anniversary of the Khodzhaly Genocide". In connection with the tenth anniversary of the Khodzhaly massacre the Milli Mejlis of the Azerbaijan Republic issued a statement made at President Aliev's initiative. It said this in part: "The Armenian Republic, ignoring the four resolutions (Nos 822, 853, 874 and 884) of the UN Security Council on liberation of the occupied lands, the documents of the Parliamentary Assembly of the European Union, of the Budapest, Lisbon and Istanbul summits of the OSCE, refuses to recognize Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. Set up on the territory of Nagorny Karabakh are camps for training terrorists who arrive not only from Armenia but also from other countries for committing fresh crimes against the Azerbaijan people. The profits drawn here from drug dealing and trafficking, from arms sales are used for terrorist purposes."

Fatima Abdullazadeh can well remember a night phone call from the President.

– It was two o'clock in the morning. We did net turn in yet, seeing something on the video. Geidar Alievich asked a perfectly concrete question. After I answered it, he remembered suddenly, embarrassed: "O my, what did I do, it's two o'clock in the morning!" I told him we were not asleep yet, were seeing a film. "And I've been burning the midnight oil over the document..."

Shortly before that, at about midnight, Aliev rang up one of the ministers and asked the same question. It came out later in the morning that Fatima-khanum was the one who had supplied trustworthy information. President Aliev did not forget to thank her.

Fatima-khanum remembers something else as well–the gorgeous bouquet from the President on her birth jubilee.

– Geidar Alievich phoned me up. It was a wonderful conversation... By the tone of your voice he could understand how matters stood with you. And he asked again and again: "Any problems?" He had insights, which even I, Doctor of Physics and Mathematics, could hardly explain, from positions of reason…

Fatima Abdullazadeh had worked side by side with Aliev for ten years. It was a gift of the fates, she says.

Fatima-khanum recalls how once, at midnight, Aliev asked her to attend talks with the State Secretary. At that time, in 1993, they worked until daybreak.

– I talked to him and went home, I didn't fee like going back to the party's Central Committee where I was working then. Meanwhile things started spinning. It became clear that someone was rocking the boat overmuch.

I lived in an apartment house on the waterfront, and we could well hear Suret Guseinov's guns. We had Russian-speaking tenants in our section of the house. Geidar Aliev went on the air, live, and I translated his address into Russian right off the bat. I shall always remember one phrase of his: "I have no military personnel, what I have is my political will and my experience." And the people backed him up.

Novruz, the Spring Holiday

March 13, 2002. President Aliev signs a decree on general pardon. A significant gesture from the head of state that has done his best toward civil accord and peace. May the amnestied prisoners appreciate that? The President has pardoned them. But will Allah forgive them? It will depend on their subsequent life.

Eighty-one inmates were set free, and eight had their term commuted by half. Nearly all the pardoned convicts were implicated in crimes committed against the independence, statehood and territorial integrity of the Azerbaijan Republic. Some took part in a coup attempt at Gandzha in October 1994, and others tried to seize power in Baku, Kazakh and Akstaf in March 1995. Three made an attempt on Aliev's life on September 30, 1993.

President Aliev timed this act of goodwill for Novruz, they holiday of the vernal equinox. For years and years the powers that be had been seeking to strike it out of the popular calendar as a holdover of the past.

But action breeds counteraction. Cur people have always treasured their customs and transitions. On the occasion of Novruz President Aliev addressed the Azerbaijanians all over the world: "The Azerbaijan people have eagerly been awaiting this holiday which they have been cherishing throughout their history, nourishing it in their heart of hearts–in the hard times full of travails, too. And today, too, our people are celebrating with much joy the holiday of spring, which has turned into a symbol of our national being. The Novruz holiday, which is a treasure-trove of our culture–now, upon the reinstitution of the traditions of our national statehood and the regaining of our independence–has entered into our calendar for ever as an official holiday of the Azerbaijan Republic."

On that festive night the Alievs had a big family reunion, with brothers and sisters, in-laws, nephews and nieces. They enjoyed Novruz in their native and hospitable home at Nakhichevan and

thought back to the days when *ana* (mama) and *ama* (papa) were still alive.

The willow growing back of the house came as the first messenger of spring. All of a sudden, despite the snow here and there, its branches shot up white fluff all over. Izzet-khanum, the *ana*, was very fond of the willow, the *bedmshyuk*. She rejoiced like a small girl as the tree was out in blossom. Once Shafiga asked the mummy why she loved the willow as much as that.

– O my dear, who does not love the willow! Every time as it blossoms out, I think of the spring at Zanghezur... We were picking willow blossoms in gullies and brewed them into sweet water, the *gyulab*.

This childhood memory always stayed with Shafiga. In districts where she worked in later days, she always looked out for a little willow. And whenever she came to see its drooping branches, she always recalled mama's eyes, radiant with joy.

There came an all-out house-cleaning operation well before Novruz–a week before Wednesday, the great holiday. Everybody got busy whitewashing the walls, washing the windows and scrubbing, swabbing, polishing the doors. The blankets and the pillows were ripped open and fluffed up... The earthen floor was covered with a mat and carpets and cozy cushions, the *mutakki*, put up above–stuffed with wool, these nice pillows were meant as elbow-rests.

As always, the jovial family party recalled the happenings of long ago, the dear niceties of the bygone days.

– Now do you remember? –Shafiga, the youngest of the house, burst out. –Remember the snowfall just on the eve of Novruz?

– Well, that's a common thing for our parts, –Djalal responded.

Shafiga remembered, that March snow for he rest of her life. Mum and dad took out the biggest carpet, spread it out on the snow while the kiddies–in bare hands, without their mittens on–were strewing the fresh snow above, in handfuls, one after the other. Sure, during that jolly merry making someone would contrive to get a handful of snow down the scruff of your neck, making you, the poor thing, yell like hell, while Izzet-khanum made as if she were angry in good earnest.

Then everyone took besoms to sweep the snow away. Brought in, the carpet felt fresh and cool to tread on.

Everything was spick-and-span at the Alievs'–let the dirt, dust and rubbish stay in the past. That's the folk custom. On festive

Wednesday all of the family sat down to table adorned with green wheat seedlings and candles. There came the obligatory *sabzali ash* (pilaf with herbs–leek and tarragon), and *uchar* (pilaf and chicken stuffed with sultanas, raisins, plums and apricots).

It was mama who laid the table. The daughters set out fancy *fatiras*–buns, flat cakes and the *kecha* pies, the family dainty. Mama baked them from fancy pastry on milk, butter and eggs laden with chicken, ginger, cardamom and cloves. The round pastry cakes and fillings were baked in the *tendir* earthen stove.

Treating the family to pilaf, Izzet-khanum put up rose petals jam and syrup, the *gyul-gend*.

And next came the emotional, thrilling moment of gift giving. The parents got the gifts ready well in advance–dresses for little girls, shirts and boots for the boys. No money for toys, one could afford bare necessities only. In years Geidar could bestow gifts on his dear *ana*–the sisters remembered him bringing a dress length of navy-blue flowered voile. Izzet-khanum sewed her best yashmak (veil) from it.

Dressed up, the kiddies ran out and built a bonfire in the backyard. Meanwhile the costumed mummers made rounds of the folks–they, the young men for the most part, impersonated Kesa and Kechal (Beardless and Baldy), the pet heroes of Azeri folklore.

In his address to the Azerbaijan people on March 31, 2002, the Day of the Azerbaijanians' Genocide[*], President Aliev stressed this point:

"We are against importing the events of yesteryear into this day and age, something that the Armenian nationalists are doing systematically and in an ugly form, and against making use of these events for sowing discord and animosity in people-to-people contacts. In the present-day world war propaganda, the ideology of the hatred of mankind, territorial claims to other states–all this is impermissible to us. Capitalizing on the opportunities of our independence, we are striving for our country's steady progress, we seek to build a happy life for our citizens."

[*] The Decree of the President of the Azerbaijanian Republic "On the Azerbaijanians' Genocide" was promulgated on March 26, 1998. Geidar Aliev declared March 31 the Day of the Azerbaijanians' Genocide. It was on this day that the Azerbaijanian Democratic Republic, in 1918 and 1919, commemorated the victims of the wholesale slaughter in a national day of mourning.

We do not choose our neighbors. That's the gospel truth. We should live in peace and agreement with them. This is wholly true of peoples, too. Fate has brought the Azerbaijan people with different neighbors–different, in their national temper, mentality and ethnic roots. There is but one sky above us and above them. But it is not always clear, this sky.

March 3, 2002, Baku

Speaking about Geidar Aliev, journalists have often uses colorful similes. For instance, by comparing him to a mighty age-old plane tree rooted, in the native soil and drawing strength and power from it.

Man-the-Plane-Tree. Quite an apt metaphor...

On the third of March Geidar Aliev hosted in the Presidential Palace the cellist Mstislav Rostropovich and his spouse, the opera diva Galina Vishnevskaya. Their names are known the world over.

– Dear Slava, –the President addressed Mstislav Rostropovich by his first name in the diminutive. –I am happy beyond words that the festivities devoted to your 75th birth jubilee have got off to a good start in Azerbaijan, your Mother Country. The year 2002 is the year of the 75th birth anniversary of Rostropovich, and the month of March is the month of the 75th birthday of Rostropovich. And it is here, in your native land, that this pleasant event is off to a good start; and I know it will carry on in other countries, too, and in other cities where you enjoy great respect and prestige, and where people love you so much... You have come to us with a delegation of the Global Vaccination Fund and have brought in vaccine to the sum of more than a million dollars. This is good assistance to our republic. What is more, this is good assistance in the most vital sphere, the children's health.

"For your signal activities in promoting international ties with Azerbaijan, and for your contribution in fostering Azerbaijan music you, dear Slava, are awarded with the highest order of Azerbaijan, the Order of Istigal, or Independence..."

The famed musician must have heard plenty of compliments and superlatives during his long and fruitful career. He must have got used to thunderous applause. But he is a bit embarrassed nonetheless:

– …I am overwhelmed indeed, and I feel I should collect my thoughts first. And the first thing that comes to my mind is the deep gratitude to my parents, for what they have given me– education, and all. But I thank my mother ever so much because

she chose the best place on earth for my birth. That's why I offer special thanks to her, exactly for that.

I, for one, inherited my love for Azerbaijan and Baku from my father. He, my father, settled down in Moscow upon leaving Baku. Here, in Baku, there is a museum of the man whom I met. I was a small child then as my father brought us together–that was Uzeir Gadjibekov, my father's friend. It was when the Azerbaijan Arts Decade was on in Moscow. My father took me to the Moskva hotel and said: You are going to meet a great musician. And I still remember what Uzeir Gadjibekov looked like. Uzeir Gadjibekov's museum has a letter, which my father sent to him just before the outbreak of the war. My father wrote in that letter: "I dream about leaving Moscow and coming back to Baku."

Father did not come back to Baku only because the war broke out. We had to move to Orenburg in the hinterland, where my father died in 1942. This sorrow and these travails are still with me. Every year that I visit Baku is eventful to me. And when I leave this place, I get thinking–when at last I could catch another plane bound for Baku and come back."

And here's what Mstislav Rostropovich said about Russia and Azerbaijan during the reception.

– ...The happiest moment to me recently was your meeting with President Putin.

It was the moment of my jubilation and my happiness. You know that I am one who has got education in Russia and who has spent the larger part of my life there. Azerbaijan and Russia, I feel, are two halves of my own selves. Thai is why I am perfectly sure we should never lose our musical contacts, cultural contacts, contacts among artists and writers. They were won in mutual suffering. So thank you. Everybody knows you are a very wise man, the whole world knows it. This meeting has reasserted your reputation as the truly great President of you country and as a far-sighted, noble and very kind man. I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

The same night, in the *Respublika* Palace, Mstislav Rostropovich conducted the Azerbaijan State Symphony Orchestra named after Uzeir Gadjibekov. If words written on paper could express that holiday of music which Mstislav Rostropovich granted to his hometown!

Since that hapless year of 1985 as his dear Zarifa-khanum departed from this world the fifteenth of April had come to hold a peculiar place in the life of Geidar Aliev, of all the Aliev family. On that sad anniversary in 2002 Geidar, his son Ilkham, his children and a11 the kith and kin who happened to be in Baku

came to the grave of Zarifa Azizovna. They stood silently and, by the old custom, laid their hands on the bronze warm with the spring sun.

At first the Alievs were going to set up the marble monument–built by the talented Azerbaijanian sculptor Omar Eldarov–in Moscow, where Zarifa-khanum was buried. But bringing it to Moscow–"became a big problem" to Geidar Alievich at the time.

– What is going to happen next, in the future? –This question worried me. So I told Omar Eldarov that I was grateful to him, but let him keep his work for a while at his place. The situation was bad, we could not pin hopes on the morrow. I thought should I not be able to carry this work to the end, some of my children might do it. Omar Eldarov kept this monument in his workshop for as long as eight years.

Back in Baku I often visited his workshop and looked at the monument with much admiration. You know, on the one hand this admiration was in reverence of Zarifa-khanum's memory, and on the other, it was a worthy tribute to the masterpiece of the high art of sculpture. Things changed as Zarifa-khanum's remains were brought from Moscow to Baku. On second thoughts we decided to leave the monument where it was–as a work of art it belonged in a museum. Omar Eldarov advised me to do that, and I agreed. This conversation took place in 1994. So a bronze replica of the monument was mounted on the tomb (*from Geidar Aliev's speech at the Baku Center of Arts at the presentation of Elegy, a marble memorial to Zarifa Alieva and a dedicatory album on April 15, 1997*).

On April 25 the President met entrepreneurs. The lists of those invited were not drawn up *in camera*, in the silence of government offices. Well before the event the newspapers published a communiqué on the forthcoming meeting and invited all persons concerned to apply to the Ministry of Economic Development, with phone contacts supplied accordingly. That's how the audience came to be formed.

– One of the main goals of our meeting today is to get reliable and objective information on the state of affairs directly from you, the business community, –Geidar Aliev addressed the audience. – Let me stress it once again–reliable objective information. That is you must speak the truth only.

We have invited to this meeting only local entrepreneurs of Azerbaijan. None from among the government bodies and their officials involved with enterprise and the nascent market economy

in Azerbaijan is present here. Aside from myself, present here are the prime minister, the head of the presidential executive administration, the state counsellor on economic affairs and a presidential aide–they alone. Now why did I do that? To get you to speak up freely and not feel the pressure or see the angry looks of government ministers and officials from the law enforcement, internal revenue and other departments... The communications you are going to make today will be studied and analyzed in due course, and on their basis our final conference will be held.

Gyulnar, the Peace Envoy

The tenth of May, Geidar Aliev's birthday. On that day he received many official letters and telegrams. But the most precious of all was a letter from a Bakinian schoolgirl, Gyulnar Guseinova, a ninth-grade pupil of School No. 106 named after S. Magerramov. She sent cordial congratulations to the President and asked–with touching candor proper to children alone–to protect her agemates. "The 20th century, the century of science and technology, is also the century of wars at the same time, –she wrote. –Although the development of science has brought progress, it has also brought such things as the atom and neutron bombs, and nuclear weapons. All this could mean death to millions of people. And the worst blow in all wars is dealt at children.

I am one of those who have seen war at first hand, in my hometown... Like all people torn away from their hearth and home, I pine for my native parts.

I want to see our morrow clear and cloudless, without wars, children–with their mamas and papas, and people–in their family nests and homes..."

Gyulnar called her message this way: "If I were a peace envoy…"

On May 13, 2002, the President of Azerbaijan released a decree providing for relief for displaced persons ("forced migrants") in the district of Bilyasuvar. Geidar Aliev took personal care of the social and living conditions of refugees and displaced persons camping out in tent settlements, he showed much concern for their daily needs. We were loath to delegate this job to anyone else.

Wheelers-dealers and politicos, out to cash in on the plight of people in distress, clamored for a war settlement of the Karabakh problem. Clearly, such calls stem from sheer irresponsibility for

the most part. War always means bloodshed, and it is the helpless and defenseless that suffer most.

On May 22, on the eve of the tenth anniversary of the recognition of the independent Azerbaijan Republic, Pope John Paul II arrived in Baku on an official visit. According to the Italian newspaper *La Stampa*, all told there were only 130 Roman Catholics in Azerbaijan. So one could not reckon on huge crowds. But *La Stampa* had a point by noting it was a momentous event. Both the Pope and Geidar Aliev assessed this event; exactly this way.

– Your visits to countries with a large Islamic following serve peace and mutual trust between these two great world religions, – said, the President addressing the Pope. –You are advocating the ideas of mercy and compassion among people; you wish patience and comfort unto people in dire straits. Azerbaijan likewise has victims of such calamities. These are over a million of Azerbaijan refugees chased from their homes in consequence of the seizure of Azerbaijan lands by neighboring Armenia. These people need kind words of solace. They count on your assistance, too, in their just cause.

– I have come to your ancient land full of admiration for its cultural wealth and richness, –Vatican's head said in reply. –This Caucasian country has internalized many ethnic cultures, the Persian and Altai-Turan cultures in particular. This land has seen many religions, present to this day: Zoroastrianism coexisted here with the Christianity of the Albanian Orthodox Church, which played a very important role in antiquity. Subsequently Islam came to play an ever more growing role, and in our days it is a religion worshiped by the overwhelming majority of the Azerbaijan people... Even with the loss of some of the original luster of their church the Christians kept on living shoulder to shoulder with the worshipers of other religions. This became possible owing to the spirit of tolerance and mutual understanding which this country cannot but take pride on. I invoke God and pray to Him–may the remaining hotbeds of tension go out as soon as possible, and everybody gain peace in truth and justice.

...The Pope officiated at Mass in the Sports Palace, for the Roman Church building was still under construction in Baku. But what matters most of all is that the Pope did visit Baku. This very fact signified the recognition of Azerbaijan and attested to the high authority of its leader in the world.

The 45th European championship on free-style wrestling brought representatives of nearly all countries of Europe to Baku. President Aliev addressed the participants with a message of greetings.

President of the Azerbaijan National Olympic Committee Ilkham Aliev opened the championship. He was a worthy representative of our republic in the International Olympic Committee.

The Azerbaijani language has an apt word similar to what the Russians call "father's darling" in the sense "he who has a father with a pull". We in Azerbaijan say: *dedelilar*.

"In the Sixties as we entered the world of literature many people looked askance at us," wrote Vagif Samedoglu, a well-known poet and political personality. Many of our generation were scoffed as *dedelilar*. This little word denoted a social type. I believed such bias was buried in the annals of the latter half of the last century. But I was wrong. The same kind of bias staged a comeback in the beginning of the twenty-first century with regard of Ilkham Aliev: as Geidar Aliev's son, he should not go into politics. But why? He behaves like a mature political figure; I could see that during our visits to Strasbourg, France, together with him. He did the best job over there–no one in Azerbaijan could have coped just as well, I guess."

Lessons of History

In his works and public addresses President Aliev often turned back to the lessons of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (AzDR).

He had on his desk books on the history of that short-lived republic along with documentary publications.

In 1919 the chairman of the peace delegation of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic and President of the ADP Parliament, Alimardan bek Topchibashev wrote this from Paris to the Azerbaijan government in Baku:

"They do not recognize us as a state yet, that's true. But wherever we are we tell everybody that for a year and a half already we have been existing de facto as a state, that Azerbaijan, which has a parliament of its own, a government, administration, courts of law, schools and the army is living in sovereignty. This Azerbaijan has stood the remorseless struggle against the Bolsheviks and, consequently, the Azerbaijanians are viable and can build an independent state of their own. Within our powers we

should carry on and defend our self-affirmation. We would like everybody, all of our people to realize that we are standing the test in proving our capacity for independent social-political and economic life.

I believe that we can cope with that. Ours is a capable people, and our land is rich in natural resources. However, we still have no political school relying on moral values... We should restore order within our country, in its administrative structures, in courts of law, and foster respect for legality.

Only given such orderliness in its domestic life will Azerbaijan be able to become a state in its own right. A state that will need no recognition from anyone. Because a strong, stable Azerbaijan will per se gain recognition as a real and indisputable fact."

According to Topchibashev, the "orderliness of the country's home life" was a prima condition for building a viable state. And Geidar Aliev pursued the same objective in all his activities.

Geidar Aliev sponsored an ideology capable of uniting all of society. This ideology is materialized in Azerbaijanianism. In his report to the First Congress of the Azerbaijanians of the world President Aliev made it clear: "We are Azerbaijanians. Azerbaijan is a Motherland to all of us. This land has reared us as a people, as a nation, as human personalities. Therefore the spirit of Azerbaijanianism is alive in each of us. The spirit of Azerbaijanianism, the idea of Azerbaijanianism should become a bond linking us together and prodding us toward a still tighter cohesion. Every state has a national ideology of its own. The national ideology of the independent Azerbaijan Republic is the ideology of Azerbaijanianism."

Geidar Aliev reverted time and again to this idea in his public statements and speeches, and deliberations. He had supporters; true, but also opponents–both at home and abroad. "...Two lines, or trends are clearly at work in the present ideological life of the republic, –wrote in this connection Academician Afrand Dashdamirov. –The first one aims at dissolving the Azerbaijan idea in the Pan-Turkic and Pan-Islamic idea. The other champions the formula of Azerbaijanism that integrates the multilayer ethnic culture of Azerbaijanism, including the Turkic roots, Caucasian realities, national-democratic traditions and Islamic sources."

May 28–the Republic Day. On that day in 1918 the groundwork was laid for the first democratic state in the East. In 1918, by concerted efforts of Fatali-khan Khoisky, Nasib-bek Yusifbeili and Mamed Emin Rasulzadeh, the Azerbaijan

Democratic Republic was born. The words that Mamed Emin Rasulzadeh uttered on October 26, 1917, at the First Congress of the *Mussavat* (*Equality*) Party–these words came true. "A new independent Azerbaijan state will be established, and this new state will enter an alliance of independent states." Time has borne out the shrewd prediction of this active politician who–all the way back in 1902, then a seventeen-old student of the Baku Technical School, set up a Moslem youth organization, to be followed by the Social-Democratic Organization *Gummet* (*Energy*) that cooperated actively with the Bakinian Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party. The Azerbaijan Republic of today has inherited the traditions and positive experience of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic and Soviet Azerbaijan alike.

On June 6 President Aliev received a US delegation headed by roving ambassador Steven Mann, the presidential counsellor on the development of energy resources of the Caspian basin. Welcoming the guests, President Aliev noted their useful work at the 9th International Exhibition and at the Conference *Caspian: Oil, Gas, Oil-Refining and Petrochemistry.*

– Mr. President, –Steven Mann said. –During my work as ambassador I got only two letters from President Bush which I was to forward to addressees. In both cases those were the letters addressed by President Bush to Your Excellency. This way we, the Americans, express our respect and gratitude for your support in implementing the Baku-Ceyhan project. We assess just as highly your assistance in achieving such a level of relationships between our two countries.

Geidar Aliev thanked the ambassador:

– These two letters are of much significance to our country. The promulgation of President Bush's letter at the opening of the 9th International Exhibition and Conference showed how much the USA and its President are concerned with the exploration and mining of oil-and-gas deposits in the Caspian, and the export of energy resources... In 1994 we signed the *Contract of the Century* and, at all subsequent stages, we felt support from the US government. The fact that the US President put his signature to the agreement endorsing the blueprints of the trunk export pipeline Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan that we had signed in Istanbul in 1999–this fact demonstrates what great significance the US government attaches to our work.

– We are making a new history in using the oil and gas potentialities of the Caspian Sea, –Geidar Aliev emphasized.

–I am satisfied very much that we are among those who are creating this history. Our job has a great future. This history will be continued after us, too...

In June 2002 the Azerbaijan State Economic University turned 70 years. “In order to advance the economy of Azerbaijan and have it integrated into the world economic system, we need high-skilled specialists,” President Aliev said at the jubilee celebrations. He outlined the milestones of economic pickup. “You know that since about 1994 as much as 9 billion dollars has been invested. Just stop to think: this is a very big figure for a small country like ours... We have already set up an Oil Fund. This Oil Fund has close to 580 million dollars. Our hard currency reserve is up to 1 bullion 200 million dollars. But in 1993, nine years ago, on June 12, and in a hard situation at that, I pondered over the proposal on assuming the burden of responsibility for Azerbaijan. At that time we had not even one dollar’s worth in our hard currency reserve. All we have done is only the first result. In the next few years our incomes will increase, the people’s well is being improved, and earnings will go up. Now we have steady budget revenues, no problems here.

... A few days ago I told the President of the Oil Academy of Sciences, and I want to say it today, too, that I am about to raise the salaries of the Academy’s personnel, and I have instructed the Prime-Minister and the Finance Minister accordingly. They will table proposals, and I shall consider them in a few days’ time. Don’t worry; there will be a pay rise! Salaries will be raised in other spheres as well.

Just two days ago I signed a decree. I have fixed a life pension to 150 prominent professionals in the arts and literature of Azerbaijan, and to people active in other areas, too. Five years ago I had no opportunity like this. I couldn’t do that much as I wanted... Today, as you see, we’ve got the wherewithal, see, how generous I have become suddenly! I have allocated 150 pensions. Each and everyone from among these people embody the history of Azerbaijan literature, arts and culture, and in other spheres, too. Each and everyone!

And something else as well: the works created by their genius, their legacy makes history. They are the makers of our history.”

June 25, 2002, Istanbul

The conference, the *Legend of Three Seas*, took place in Istanbul within the framework of the summit held by heads of state and government of member countries in the Organization of Black-Sea Economic Cooperation. The very name of this conference is an apt reply to sceptics of little faith who deemed impossible cooperation of the Black Sea countries with Azerbaijan that did not heal war wounds yet. But life has confirmed the practicability of our plans and hopes for Azerbaijan's renaissance.

All this came to be reflected in Geidar Aliev's address.

– It is five years how of the conference, the *Legend of Three Seas*–the Caspian, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. But why was it not held before? Because there was scant information on the tight interconnectedness of this work of ours, and there were but few who believed in that. But... with the signing in 1994 of the treaty named *Contract of the Century* there came broad discussions of the Caspian Sea problems. Few, if any, the world over knew about the richest deposits of oil and gas in the Caspian. But we in Azerbaijan know it.

Then the Azerbaijan President came up with a brilliant lecture that could have graced even a career oilman.

– The legend of three seas has but one mother, the Caspian Sea. And near this mother lies Azerbaijan, –Aliev said emotionally.

Azerbaijan is an inalienable part of the Turkic world. In the Soviet years strict restrictions applied to Azerbaijan's ties with Turkey, to cultural contacts and mutual exchanges of spiritual and intellectual values. But the ideological swing-beam barriers were gone with Azerbaijan gaining independence.

Turkey was the first to recognize Azerbaijan's independence. Geidar Aliev recalled that time and again. One event moved him overmuch: a park and a boulevard in Kars were given his name.

July 9,2002, St. Petersburg

The Sunday of July 9, 2002, will always remain a red-letter day in the records of Russian and Azerbaijan culture. On that sunny day a monument was unveiled on Kamenny Ostrov Prospekt to the great Azerbaijan poet and thinker Nizami; Geryush Babaev, an Honored Artist of Azerbaijan, sculptured the statue.

– Nizami was more than a poet; he was a great humanist, –said Russia's President Vladimir Putin at the unveiling ceremony. –In this sense Nizami's creations belong to all of us, to all of mankind.

– On the twelfth of October last year a monument to the genius of Russian poetry, Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin, was unveiled in Baku, –Geidar Aliev recalled. –And today, a monument to Nizami has been erected in the city which Pushkin called a creation of the great Peter.

We might just as well add: it's fine when countries and states could exchange Ambassadors like Alexander Pushkin and Nizami Gandzhevi.

Taking a stroll about St. Petersburg, Geidar Aliev could find Gorokhovaya ulitsa (street) hands down. One of its buildings, No. 6, once housed an advanced training school for commanding officers of the Ministry for State Security, the *MGB*. He was pleased to have his photo taken–in memory of the good old days–within the walls so much familiar to him. On his way back to the hotel Astoria he talked readily with city residents and compatriots. It had always been that way on his trips, be it in Paris or Berlin, St. Petersburg or Moscow.

...Leontyevsky pereulok (lane) is a calm, quiet street in the beehive of central Moscow. This alley dives under the arch next to City Hall (formerly Moscow Soviet, the Mossovet) facing the busy Tverskaya Street, one of the main thoroughfares of Moscow. You find sundry office-buildings here and three embassies–of Cuba, Ukraine and Azerbaijan; in former times several union republics of the USSR had their missions here. Sundays Leontyevsky pereulok is virtually asleep–you see only drowsy puffing on their cigarettes outdoors. On weekdays crowds line up in front of the embassies and consulates. But that Sunday people flocked to the Azerbaijan embassy not for documents, visas or passports. They were guests, Azerbaijanians resident in Russia. President Aliev had invited them.

He began his address in Azerbaijani, the mother tongue of the Azeris from the cradle.

– My dear compatriots! Dear sisters, brothers, friends!

I am much pleased to meet you here today. I greet cordially all of you. In your person I greet heartily all Azerbaijanians resident in Russia, each and every Azerbaijanian. I wish you good health and success in your work. Good luck to your families!

President Aliev spoke softly, but each of his word could be heard even in the backbenches.

– Azerbaijani is your language, your native language, and the state language of independent Azerbaijan... I want Azerbaijanians–and I say that to the youth in particular–to have a good command of Russian and English, French and German, Spanish and Arabic. But let them have a perfect command of Azerbaijani, too. The more languages you know, the richer you are. He who speaks one tongue only will have it hard in our present world, an interconnected world.

Considering all this and in token of my respect for you, I shall continue my speech in Russian..."

They who could hear Aliev, noted: his Russian was perfect, impeccable. Unlike the Russian of some other well-known Caucasian politicians, Shevardnadze, for one. What is behind all that? School? Family? Self-education?

The Alievs–all of their family–had spoken only their native tongue, Azerbaijani, ever since childhood. There were but few people at Nakhichevan in the early 1920s with any command of Russian. As Fatima Abdullazadeh, one of Geidar Aliev's biographers, says, "Geidar Aliev began studying Russian rather late. He first heard Krylov's fables and Pushkin's poems at Nakhichevan School only."

But we might suppose something else as well. Namely that the great realist writer and satirist Djalil Mamedkulizadeh was one who had influenced Geidar Aliev in his school years–more than Krylov and Pushkin did, much as we respect the geniuses of Russian and world literature. This classic of Azerbaijanian national literature must have instilled in Aliev the zealous regard for the mother tongue–in particular, by his drama piece *The Book of My Mother*.

...Three sons return to their mother, an Azeri woman, from alien parts. One interlards his Russian words, another speaks a breed of Azeri-Turkish, and the third flaunts Iranian and Persian idioms.

A well-nigh migrant, international story. At this point we could recall the dull-witted seminarist described by Nikolai Gogol in *Village Evenings Near Dikanka*. On having picked up a few Latin words, he became quite a "latynist" (latinist) for that matter; latinized so much so as to forget his native Ukrainian *mova*, the mother tongue. He hanged us to all his nouns. A spade thus became a *spadus*, a wench–a *wenchus*. Laying his eyes on a rake,

the bastard latynist asked his father, now, dad, how do you call that in our tongue?" Gaping at the thing, he stepped on the rake's prongs and–lo and behold! –got a good blow with the rake-stick on his pate. "On this darned rake! –the hapless scholar hollered with pain and jumped up as high as two feet. –A plague on its damned father-of-rake, it hits real bad!"

So, as the saying goes, the three Azeri youth stepped on the selfsame rake. The three brothers, once back in the home of their fathers, were unable to speak their mother tongue, the tongue in which their mother had told their first fairy-tales. The Mother's Book was Greek to them: picking up a smattering of alien idiom, they lost the sense of the native idiom and the spiritual memory of their fathers together with it. Those "lettered gentlemen" were actually of the same kidney as the ignoramuses portrayed by Mamedkulizadeh in *Happenings in the Village of Danabash*.

In June 2000 the grand hall of the Azerbaijan embassy in Moscow brought together Azeri compatriots domiciled in Russia. Geidar Aliev could see many a familiar face–people he had met in the line of his duties in Moscow or on business trips, and them whom he had sent for Big Science abroad, away from their native land.

– ...I have always said–I said it in the former times as I was still working in Azerbaijan, and I am saying this today–that no people can advance at the rates of the entire world system if it shuts itself up within the space of its territory; that is I have always come out against the narrow-minded moods of ethnic isolationism"

In those times by far not everybody, both in our republic and in Moscow, supported him; First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, when he proposed sending young Azeri people for knowledge to Russia and other republics of the Soviet Union. But he, Aliev, got the upper hand and today, with a sense of legitimate pride, thinks back to his *project*, because Azerbaijan was the only one from among the other Soviet republics "that had succeeded in gaining certain advantages in this regard."

– As of the year 1970 I set the task of sending more Azerbaijanians to Russia, to Moscow and Leningrad above all, and to other major centers of higher education, centers of science and culture.

Even he, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, and member of the CPSU Central

Committee, did not have it easy. At first, after so many consultations and solicitations, the Republic of Azerbaijan was granted a quota of 100 student vacancies at college and university in Soviet republics. Those one hundred youths and girls were surely free to go where they wished–to Moscow or Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), Kiev or Sverdlovsk (now Yekaterinburg) and seek enrollment like everybody else. And get flunked as a rule. Young Azerbaijanians could not compete on a par with their agemates in big cities–especially Azerbaijanians coming from backcountry districts. They were unable to stand the stiff competition among applicants.

In the long run Aliev managed to obtain the right for Azerbaijan young people to enter higher schools of the Soviet Union without competition at entrance examination. At first there were 100 reserved vacancies, and then, in the 1978/79 academic year, the number was raised to 800 (at that time Aliev was elected candidate member of the CPSU Politburo). As a matter of fact, Azerbaijan was no exception–the issue involved the vocational training of ethnic personnel from other union republics. Quotas were accorded to youths and girls of Turkmenia and Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Georgia, Moldavia and Tajikistan. Aliev appears to be the only one from among top officials to take the matter in hand.

– You know, –he said at that eventful meeting of June 200 in the Azerbaijan embassy in Moscow, –much of my archives of the past is gone, I had to move here and there, sometimes I was unable to keep everything and had to destroy it for lack of space. But I have kept the files of those young people who went each year to different cities of the Soviet Union for enrollment without competition. Even today you can find their personalia in my archives–which in particular and from what town and district came to be enrolled in this or that college. Many of these people have shown a worthy performance.

Now why was I doing that, you may ask? First, let me tell you frankly, the level of education at Moscow University is much higher than that at Baku University. That's the way things were in those days, and that's the way they are now. I am citing just one example out of many. Second, we had no higher-school training for some specialties at all. So we had to use the possibilities of higher schools in other republics for training specialists in this or that line. And third, I wanted people to get out of their shell. You see, they could tear down the barriers of ethnic narrowness; they could break out into the open and get in touch with other people. This thing, like you or not, makes one study Russian to begin

with, and many found time to learn English and other languages here, in Moscow, Leningrad and other cities.

By the way, I took care of that daily and on several occasions gathered students of Moscow colleges here, in our mission. But in time their number rose so much that there could be no room enough for everybody here, in this hall. And then we went to the new building of MKhAT (Moscow Art Theater) on Tverskoy Boulevard and brought everybody there; and I invited the Moscow leadership–the head of the Moscow city authority, the minister for higher education, the top people from the Central Committee of Komsomol and officials from the CPSU Central Committee."

That get-together in the new MKhAT building is still in the memory of many of those who took part. And one of those who hade the floor and spoke was a boy taking a course at Moscow State University. Aliev could well remember the chap–who came from an out-of-the-way hamlet of the Djebrail mountain district; a bright student, as his professors said, he spoke but poor Russian–at home school his class had no teacher of Russian at all–the pupils got a passing grade, free. Geidar Aliev met this lad again, at the embassy meeting, and he took a special liking for this youth, now mature and grown up to manhood. A straight-A student, he spoke fluent Russian now.

– I kept looking at this lad, and nearly wept with joy, –the President confided. –I rejoiced that much.

That's what only a father could say about his beloved, son.

A book exhibition opened in the Akhundov National Library. It displayed books donated by President Aliev–reference books, dictionaries, volumes of Samed Vurgun, Sergei Yesenin, Bakhtiyar Vagabzadeh, Bazhov and Nietzsche, collections of fantastic tales... More than 500 editions in all.

Geidar Aliev had been fond of books from his childhood years, he understood the importance of books in societal life, valued highly the role of libraries. He visited this largest library of Azerbaijan three times.

– He was here on the third of July 1995, on the fourth of March 1996, and on the twentieth of November 1997, –the director, Leila Gafurova specifies. –In 1997 the president signed the law "On Library Management in Azerbaijan". This is certainly immense support for music lovers. –You know, –she adds, –they say now and then that Geidar Alievich has planted, his own people everywhere–fellow countrymen, kinsfolk and that sort of cronyism. But I admire him, though I don't belong to any of the bunch.

…Should the President of the Azerbaijan Republic leave his post before his established term, an early presidential election is to be held. This is stated in Article 105 of the Constitution of the Republic. The President suggested an amendment: for the prime minister to carry out presidential duties prior to the election. Should the President be unable to discharge his duties, his official powers were to be transferred to the prime minister.

But the opposition spoke out against. Why? Abel Magerramov, the rector of Baku State University and Corresponding Member of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, wrote in this connection that the handing over of powers is fully in compliance with international legal standards. "By Articles 7 and 99 of the Constitution the executive power in the Azerbaijan Republic is vested with the President of the Republic. The President exercises government of all the executive structures, including the Cabinet of Ministers. He is both the head of state end the head of executive government. As to Nilli Mejlis, it is a different body, that of the legislature. The transfer of powers to the executive branch of government is more expedient, for it is the prime-minister who is concerned with executive matters."

On August 24, 2002, Azerbaijan had a referendum on the amendments to the Constitution. As testified by international observers, in this referendum the people placed their trust in Geidar Aliev.

The Central Electoral Commission received no complaints about any violation of the law either in the course of the referendum or in after days. Still and all, on August 26 the leaders of some parties in the opposition circulated information "full of slander to the address of TsIK (Central Electoral Commission)." This was said in a statement of the Central Electoral Commission.

The Commission also gave a worthy rebuff to the hullabaloo raised in Washington and Brussels over the matter.

"The reply of a spokesman for the press service of the US State Department to the question of newsmen about the referendum and the position set forth by the OSCE representative in Azerbaijan stem from the rash and subjective approach formed on the basis of wrong information fed by the opposition party. We maintain that the stand taken by the press-service of the US State Department and by the OSCE representative in Azerbaijan on the referendum of August 24 is not objective, it is but biased and groundless, and is in disregard for the Azerbaijan people at large and for millions

of voters who have voiced their attitude to the changes in the Constitution.

As much as 83 percent of Azerbaijan's citizens took part in the referendum of August 24. Most of them supported the constitutional amendments.

General Akhundov's Birthday

September 16, 2002, General Vagif Akhundov's birthday, happened to be a Monday. This event, however, in no way interfered with the general's daily routine. As usual, he reported for work by nine o'clock in the morning. He ran up lightly upstairs to the first floor of the old building that once housed the Council of Ministers and now, the headquarters of the Chief Directorate. He did not get short of breath–no! As if he scampered on a smooth sidewalk. Lean and wiry, the general did look his age, on he wrong side of fifty though he was. No sooner he stepped into his office than the phone rang. A direct government line!

– Hullo! Yes, Mr. President!

– Good morning, Akhundov! Could you come to me right now?

In a few minutes the general mounted to the fourth floor of the white building on the hill known to all of Baku. Geidar Aliev stepped forward.

– Congratulations! Happy birthday!

Recalling that Monday, Lieutenant General Akhundov did not conceal his emotions:

– Geidar Alievich was considerate of everybody, near and distant folks. He didn't forget anyone.

They first met in 1978, when the YCL committee secretary of the Azerbaijan Ministry of the Interior, Senior Lieutenant Akhundov got a new job offer–that of the political instructor at the Directorate in charge of security of party and Soviet bodies–this department was dubbed a "niner"–for officially it was the Ninth State Security Department. Geidar Aliev, the First Secretary of the Communist Party's Central Committee of Azerbaijan, asked for a young man showing promise for the job. Arif Geidarov, the Interior Minister, recommended Akhundov. There might have been other proposals, from the KGB (State Security Committee), too. But Aliev chose Akhundov. The general remembers:

– He //Aliev// asked where I worked and in what position... I told him about my record. An Oil Institute graduate, with honors. Called up right upon graduation, saw service in Engels, with the

Air Force, in the logistics department; saw to gas and lubricants supplies in my unit.

That's how a new page was turned in the biography of Senior Lieutenant Akhundov, then 28 years of age. Meanwhile Aliev was promoted to a top government post in Moscow. And Akhundov, now a career state security officer, continued his service in Baku. In 1985 he became a department head. Head of the Government Security Directorate now.

– Is it true, sir, that you prevented several attempts on Geidar Aliev's life?

– There were such attempts indeed, in October 1994, in March 1995 and later, just before the visit of Leonid Kuchma, the President of Ukraine. Terrorists were about to blast a big bridge on the highway between the airport and Baku. They put about a hundred kilos of explosives under the bridge. Had this charge gone off, it would have wrecked all the houses nearby. Inspecting the bridge just on the eve of the visit, our officers noticed one nonstandard concrete pier–it misfitted the overall structure. We found the explosive charge with a 500-to-600-meter fuse attached to it... There were also other episodes," the general smiled, "when the fates protected the President...

On yet another occasion, too, the fates saved President Aliev, General Akhundov and many other people flying home after a visit abroad. Because of the strong head wind the pilot decided to land elsewhere, not on the regular runway. This sudden maneuver, as it came out afterwards, saved the plane. The bandits detained for another crime confessed they were preparing a terrorist act in the airport. They were the people implicated in the turmoil of 1993. And they could not launch a Stinger on that eventful day.

President; Aliev was fond of strolling about Baku...

– Only a few security guards accompanied him, General Akhundov recalls. –He talked with Bakinians in the streets, in cafés.

– They say Geidar Aliev was a good wit, wasn't he? Of course you remember some episode…

– There were all too many, it's hard to choose any particular one. He was a genius, a man of many parts... And yet always eager to learn and consult competent, knowledgeable people. I could see him many times asking about what was new and unknown to him. Aliev never considered himself a great know-all, he was never shy of admitting he didn't know this or that. Live and learn? In such cases he would draw people out and ask to explain some matter and go deeper into it.

General Akhundov's small office has portraits of the two presidents–Geidar Aliev and Ilkham Aliev–as well as many books and souvenirs... There ought to be a special, most intimate memento? The general replies right off the bat:

– Here, this shot. –He takes a framed photo from the shelf above the telephones: Geidar Aliev in a red life jacket bursting with laughter, and General Akhundov behind him wearing the same jacket.

– It was in Norway. We were to fly to a floating drilling-rig out in the North Sea–300 kilometers by helicopter. They, the Norwegians, briefed us and fitted us out with jackets. Some of our companions tried to talk Aliev out of it–better not risk flying over the rough sea. But he didn't fear anything. Said he: "I am not afraid of death. Let my foes know: I understood where I was going. God protects me!"

Before flying off we had to sign papers that each of us did it of his own free will. That's by the book... Gasan Gasanov, the foreign minister, would not sign–should he go under, he said, his family would get no insurance money anyway. But Geidar Aliev took it easy and put his signature. He just laughed it off. So we flew out."

– When was it?

General Akhundov leafs through his logbook. Here it is–this trip occurred on April 24-27, 1996. That year Aliev made 18 visits to other countries. The following year, in 1997, there were as many as twenty. In 1998–ten. In 1999–thirteen. Just as many in 2000. Nine visits in 2001. Sixteen trips in 2002: Moscow, USA, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Iran, St. Petersburg, Istanbul, Ankara, and Yalta...

Rafael Bagirov, the President's personal photographer (a great master of documentary photography!), accompanied Geidar Aliev on each of these trips, now memorialized in the photos. Rafael Bagirov:

"...The first days of August 1997. President Aliev on an official visit in the United States. After meeting US President Bill Clinton we arrived in Houston. And here good news: he, Geidar Aliev, had another grandson born to him. Granddad again! Ilkham and his lovely wife Mekhriban had a son. Geidar Alievich was beside himself with joy. He met all of our delegation and received our congratulations. I had never seen Aliev as jubilant as that. On his home journey to Azerbaijan the President made a stopover in London and called at the clinic to see his newborn grandson.

Geidar Alievich, I might say, rushed there. Tears welled in his eyes as he saw the baby, and he uttered in a loud, quivering voice,

‘I name this baby boy Geidar!’ At those moments I took a few snapshots, quite impressive, I think. I am proud to have made the first photos of the infant Geidar Aliev.

Geidar Aliev Senior loved all of his grandchildren immensely. But he was especially soft on the little one, his last grandson named after him, and took much pride in the toddler, Geidar Aliev Junior.”

President Aliev was in this mad race day in and day out, all through his incumbency, year after year... He liked very much going on business tours. There is hardly any town, village or other place in Azerbaijan, which he did not visit. Aliev had a special liking to Nakhichevan, his hometown where austere nature molds such sturdy characters as his one.

Tenth of August... The presidential plane touches dawn in Nakhichevan Airport after an hour-long flight from Baku. The overland routes to this autonomy still cut off, one had to go by air only. Everyone. The President, college students, those on business trips–everybody! Ten daily flights of large aircraft in summertime–even that was not enough!

The airport, once up to the mark, was now clearly out of date. The blueprints of the new air terminal were shown to he President. He remarked bluntly on hearing what the architects had to say:

– A jerrybuilt affair again!

The design had to be overhauled, from A to Z. He was so eager to attend the opening ceremony of Nakhichevan Airport! Building crews worked apace and did their best. But it was Ilkham Aliev who came to the opening of this wonderwork of architecture...

Five August days in the hometown. Airport construction. The museum of the talented Azerbaijan artist Bakhruz Kengerli. It was opened at the President’s initiative in the same good two-storey of brick where a long time ago Geidar Aliev, a college student then, had heard the artist’s name for the first time. “He was a man of rare talent,” President Aliev said at the inauguration ceremony. “His works are precious indeed.” Next, the Baikhyr artificial lake–the canal had already been laid through, the arid steppe was thirsty for water... Ground-breaking for a new school building, opened by the new President of Azerbaijan, Ilkham Aliev...

September 23, 2002, Moscow

That was President Aliev's second visit to Russia within a year. A case that had no precedent in diplomatic practice. But such contacts may become commonplace for neighboring friendly states. In January the Azerbaijan President had been on a state visit to Moscow; on June 9th he had met Vladimir Putin while on a working visit in St. Petersburg when both presidents attended the opening ceremony of the Nizami monument. And now, a third Russian-Azerbaijan summit, the signing of agreements between the Russian Federation and the Azerbaijan Republic on the delimitation of contiguous sites of the Caspian sea floor.

– We have traveled a long path toward this settlement, – Russia's President said in his statement. –There have been many disputes and much strenuous work on both sides; but I want to stress that this was the work of interested partners. And I am very glad that it has ended in such positive results.

Considering the agreements signed earlier between Russia and Kazakhstan, and also between Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, we can say with certainty that from now on the interaction of these three countries in the exploration and development of the mineral resources of the bottom of the Central and Northern Caspian has gained a solid international-legal basis. I am positive that the use of the formula, 'we divide the floor, but the water is common', and of the principle of stage-by-stage approach will ultimately bring us to the mutually advantageous solution of the problem of Caspian status with due account of the interests–let me stress it–of all the Caspian states.

Other intergovernmental agreements were signed–on the reciprocal recognition of education certificates; on continued specialization of enterprises and institutions involved in the manufacture of military-related equipment...

Geidar Aliev did not list all the documents signed.

– Vladimir Vladimirovich has been speaking about what we have done today and what documents we have signed. I would rather not tire you but say it is important that what Vladimir Vladimirovich has said here is one to one what I would have said myself. That's what our relations mean today...

I wish to say once again that the Russian-Azerbaijan relations represent a priority trend in our foreign policy. Being together for nearly two centuries we have grown so much together and come so much close together that it would be wrong to break these bonds. The fact that we have become independent states now does

not at all mean that we should move away from each other–quite the contrary, we should strengthen and foster our ties...

On September 24 President Aliev met the faculty and students of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) who presented him a diploma of MGIMO's Doctor honoris causa. The young diplomat Ilkham Aliev, a graduate of this college, had been among its faculty. Their came other times, however, something we have told you about. The son of the disgraced politician was dismissed. –Now, Ilkham Geidarovich, you can no longer work at this college.

Anatoli Torkunov, the rector, would not recall this sad episode of the past.

– We are pleased to note that the mutual interest shown in Russia and Azerbaijan in studying scientific achievements and cultures of our two peoples, their languages and literatures, keeps on and grows. Esteemed Mr. President, there is your personal contribution in all this...

High-level meetings and your visits to our country since 1993 have been exerting much influence on our relations. As a result of these visits and this meeting with Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, a number of important interstate agreements have been signed. The agreement on the division of the contiguous sites of the Caspian sea floor that you and the Russian President signed yesterday is likewise in this number.

We are well aware how important this agreement is both for promoting two-way relations and for the development of the entire Caspian region in stability and peace. And it is of no little significance to us, college professionals, that yesterday the two education ministers signed an agreement between Russia and the Azerbaijan Republic on the mutual recognition of graduation diplomas, academic degrees and titles.

Unlike his shortsighted political opponents Geidar Aliev understood perfectly well the role of good, friendly relations with the great northern neighbor.

"Russian-Azerbaijan relations are a priority line to us," he said. "These are the relationships of strategic partnership and cooperation. Looking back into the history of Russian-Azerbaijan relations after the Soviet Union's breakup, we must say it has not always been smooth riding...

With the election of Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin to the presidency we felt immediately a change in our relationship. His first visit abroad in 2001 he made to Azerbaijan. Our public assessed it highly. In this past period our domestic situation has been stable, and our relations with Russia have been developing

with much success. Speaking about the history of our relations with the gaining of independence by us, we should say that President Putin's visit to Azerbaijan ushered in a new stage."

We may find different pages in the two-century history of relations between our two countries. We can pick out all sorts of documents to fit any occasion. Say, about the long-standing pro-Russian orientation of Azerbaijan. Here is, for example, a dispatch sent to Empress Catherine I in February 1727 by Prince Vassily Dolgoruky: "I was met with great joy in all the provinces where I was traveling... Everybody asked that I should take them under the Russian Empire's protection…" And another message, half a century later: "All the indigenous peoples are awaiting with impatience the arrival of Russian troops and are eager to become Russia's subjects…" We could continue in the same line. Or come up with the opposite version and quote from the stuff about invaders and occupationists barging in from the North. Neither of the versions would be true. Because there cannot be truncated truths, half-truths. History, as Geidar Aliev used to say, "should know the whole truth".

The holy month of Ramadan (Ramazan) began. A month sacred for the Islamic world.

In independent Azerbaijan, Islam emerged into the open as part and parcel of the nation's spiritual fabric. The historic role of this old creed is reflected in our state insignia–the green band in Azerbaijan's Tricolor is a symbolic testimony thereof. President Aliev addressed warm greetings to the people on Ramadan's eve. He paid homage to the heroic sons and daughters of Azerbaijan who sacrificed their lives for the sake of freedom, sovereignty and territorial integrity of their land, and wished "peace and repose for their souls, and patience–to their kith and kin, to all our people." Geidar Aliev conveyed his best greetings and congratulations to all our compatriots abroad.

– I wish all of you success in the work you are doing toward the strengthening of Azerbaijan's independence, and in the work to build democratic society and achieve well-being for our people.

According to Islam, in this month of Ramadan Allah chains the sheitan (iblis, the devil) so as to forbid him from entering people's souls and making them stray from the straight and narrow path of truth; thus the fiend is rendered impotent before man. Ramadan is a month of sublime thoughts about human life and good deeds; in all his doings man invokes his Maker.

In just one week of November 2002 President Aliev signed several decrees and orders, including one on the celebrations of the 80th birth anniversary of the composer Fikret Amirov. A memorial plaque was installed on the wall of the house where the creator of magic music lived; a five-volume edition of his works was to be published, and a documentary film released. One of Baku's schools of music was named for Amirov.

Meanwhile the Baku Metro (subway) marked its 35th anniversary. President Aliev conferred decorations on a large group of engineers, workmen and managers. Azerbaijan, like it was in the Soviet times, awards high distinctions to citizens for their labor feats. There are but few examples like that in other countries. In the Soviet years inventors and innovators were awarded the title of Hero of Socialist Labor, they merited the orders of Red Banner of Labor and Labor Glory, and Valliant Labor medals... Now pause to think: the key word of each award and distinction is LABOR. That's the way it should be in people's life. In the life of everybody.

Today's Azerbaijan also has a similar title, the Hero-of-Labor title. Omar Agayev is one such hero. This man is a living legend and chronicle of the republic's accomplishments. On the first of January 2003 he turned seventy-five.

– Although I am not fond of marking my birthdays, my friends and acquaintances assembled at the Council of Aksakals of the Sabayl District to greet me, –the old man says. –The following day Geidar Aliev rang me up at home and congratulated me both on my jubilee and on the First of the Year. He wished goal luck and health to all my family and me. I, for one, was glad to greet our much-esteemed President... I have many decorations. But it is a most precious award to me that my modest services to the people are not forgotten and that the head of state himself hailed me.

A Girl With the Flag of the Republic

The history of flags, banners and standards mirrors popular history. As in the year 1918 the flag of the first Azerbaijan Republic was hoisted, one of its leaders proclaimed, "A banner raised once will never fall." But history willed it otherwise. On November 17, 1918, British troops moved into Baku. Their commander was General Thomson. On spying the flag of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic flying at the waterfront side by side with the flags of Great Britain, the United States, France and Italy, the haughty Briton ordered to pull it down then and there.

But neither did the Union Jack flutter long. A red flag replaced it in 1920.

Geidar Aliev recalled the national holy when meeting the public of the town of Sheka.

"I've been long looking at the little girl holding the flag. Watching her. Now look. She's holding the flag in one hand only. The wind waving it this and that side, but she keeps it straight. My little daughter, I kiss you, I hug you. If you love this flag as much as that–the symbol of our independence–if you hold it tight in your hand, I bow to you in respect and reverence. In love and affection. This is our people's independence."

October 18 is Azerbaijan's Independence Day. On October 18, 1991, Azerbaijan proclaimed its independence. Proclaiming your independence is one thing–you should be able to defend it. That's what history teaches us to do.

In 2002 just on the eve of this holiday, Geidar Aliev returned from his official visit to Turkey. A crowd of journalists jostled, their way to him in Bina Airport.

– I believe this meeting will lay a good foundation for a new influx of business people of Turkey to Azerbaijan and for big investments from them, –the President said. –I am satisfied very much.

As always, he was peppered with questions. He replied pithily and precisely, just stopping to think for a moment now and then.

– The commander of NATO troops in Europe is now in Baku. His meeting with you is scheduled for today. What areas of Azerbaijan-NATO cooperation are going to be discussed?

President Aliev smiles.

– Really and truly, I love you all very much. I want you to become good journalists. Getting ready and asking good questions. Now you say he is in Baku, but I don't know if he is going to meet you or not. You ask what areas of NATO's cooperation with Azerbaijan we shall be talking about. Even if we do, I won't tell you that. But why do you steal both your and my time with questions like that?"

He said it half in-joke, a man who had never spared time for meeting journalists. He understood the impact of the press better than many other leaders. He did not regard newsmen as "underlings of the party", as they were once called, he saw in them comrades-in-arms, comrades in the common cause. Years ago, as Aliev still headed the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, a local chief had the total print of the district newspaper destroyed, put to knife: he, the secretary of the party's district committee, did not like some critical article,

and so he ordered it that way... As soon as Aliev learned about the thing, he taught a good lesson to the district party boss, in fact, to the entire republic. All those guilty of that misdemeanor were relieved of their duties and punished, as party members, with no exception made for ranking officials of the Central Committee, too. Aliev, First Secretary, played tough in reinforcing respect for the press.

– Geidar Alievich always worked Saturdays and Sundays, – General Akhundov recalls. –But he worked shorter hours than on weekdays that are the only difference.

Quite often–before work or after–he visited his wife's grave. Standing for a long time at the monument, all alone, musing...

The general knew better: that Geidar Aliev designed the memorial all by himself–down to every tree and its particular place... He, the general, would step aside–he could well understand those precious moments of spiritual communion that cannot be expressed in human words.

You leave me in the dusk of this painful time,
The sun so much in love with me and mine.
The birds, black swans up in the wintry sky
And heavy snowfall in our southern clime.
Your fleeting shadow hovering on the edge and lip of time
Escapes and melts away in the tender arms of mine...

These lines are from the song *Come Back, My Love*. The daughter, Sevil Geidarovna Alieva–put the lyrics by the poet Nikolai Dobronravov to musicor Seva, as her dear mother liked to call her....

Baku came to be the venue of an international conference on the role of religion and creed in democratic society and on exploring ways of combating terrorism and extremism. President of the Azerbaijan Republic Geidar Aliev made an opening speech.

– In this globalized world of ours we have come closer together. Consequently, the dialogue among nations, cultures and religions has acquired a deeper meaning and dimension. Fostering and sustaining this dialogue, we should... strive to expose and nip in the bud all seats of nascent terrorism.

Today terrorist forces, in a bid to achieve their self-seeking political objectives, will turn now and then to universal human

values sacred to all of us; they work to justify terror in protecting the interests of this or that group... Humankind, having said "No!" to terrorism and pooling all its forces, should seek to destroy the spiritual, economic and political roots of terrorism.

The President pointed out that the occupation of 20 percent of the republic's territory is not only a sequel to the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict. This is also the result of the activities of international terrorism in the region.

By its Constitution, Azerbaijan is a secular state... We, Geidar Aliev stressed, perceive religion as a natural phenomenon, as an inalienable part of our national culture, historical heritage and self-identity.

Three days–November 21, 22 and 23–President Aliev spent in Golden Praha (Prague), the capital of the Czech Republic, attending a summit of the NATO countries. It was not his first visit to this kind and hospitable city where he could admire its lovely sights–the Karlåv Most (Bridge), Staré Město Square and Hradčany wherefrom a breath-taking view opens on the crooked medieval lanes and greenish roofs of the old city... This time too, in spite of the tough schedule of official meetings and negotiations, he managed to put in a few minutes and stand for a while by the ancient walls of the Praha Grad.

November 24, 2002, Baku

He returned to Baku on Saturday, November 24, toward the close of the day. He could have taken a bit of rest on Sunday, the day off. But this is no good for Aliev, the live wire. On Sunday morning he phoned up General Akhundov.

– I'd like to drive out to town.

In 10-15 minutes the general showed up in the presidential quarters.

– The President was all set to go out, with his sweater and suit on. I told Geidar Alievich that lately he had been taking all too many rides about town, someone might be out waiting for him, and it was not safe for security reasons."

"Don't worry. Make ready, let's drive to the monument to Djabarly."

Geidar Aliev liked this monument put up and unveiled at his initiative in 1981. He often spoke with much gratitude about the great contribution of Djafar Djabarly, who died in 1934, to Azeri

literature and in promoting Azeri national selfhood. By the by, a solid block of granite was brought from the Ukraine at Aliev's persistent request.

The presidential car pulled up at the Oil Academy on the square where the monument stands... Passersby flocked immediately. Some saluted the President and wished him good health. "You've brought back human dignity to us"; and others, out to seize the opportunity, approached him with their private requests.

Geidar Aliev never took his aides on such unscheduled trips, it was General Akhundov who had to do their job. Having his note pad at the ready, the general put down the applicants' names, home addresses and telephones. "They shall ring you up and tell about the measures taken."

As General Akhundov sees it, Geidar Aliev was eager–especially after his trips abroad–to meet his country fellows, the Bakinians, informally, face to face.

– Next, the President asked to stop his car at the Portofino café at the corner of Street May 28 and Byul-Byul Avenue. The café's open veranda is always full of people. Young boys and girls, family couples, kids... Geidar Alievich took a free table, invited me to take a seat next to him and ordered an ice cream.

Hanging in this café are photos taken on that memorable day. Geidar Alievich wearing a light sweater, his eyes behind sunglasses. We paid the bill ("The general will pay for the ice cream, he's got my money") and walked down Nizami Street to Fountains Square–that's about two kilometers. He looked into shops end talked with passersby.

Children, young people and adults kept dogging us and asking for permission to take photos. Geidar Alievich did not say "no". This stroll took two hours or so. It was a big headache for security guards, and an unexpected welcome encounter for Baku townfolk. To the President it must have been a rare and thus dear chance to mix with the townspeople.

On November 28th Geidar Aliev received a delegation from Turkey, it was headed by Sharyk Tara, an honorary president of the Turkish company *Enka*. The guest said that his company had built Europe's biggest electric power station; that it aimed to invest into Azerbaijan's economy, in particular, into streamlining the Sumgait thermal-power station. Geidar Aliev thanked the guest for his proposals and said he knew *Enka* since the days of his work in Moscow.

– When you had renovated the Petrovka Arcades in Moscow, everybody said, what; topnotch builders these Turks are... Though formerly one did not think much of the Turks–good-for-nothing, ne'er-do-well.... When some poor bungler botched this or that, one blamed him: What? Are you a Turk? But you have built many nice houses in Moscow. And I am pleased to learn Enka has put them up.

Those who had ever been to Baku might have had a chance to admire it at night, its "golden beehive of lights shining", as the lyrics of Tofik Kuliev's song go; the older generations remember it in the matchless rendition of Rashid Beibutov, the nightingale of Azerbaijan.

...An old building in the heart of Baku houses the academic Institute of Manuscripts named after the great thinker Mohammed Fizuli. Priceless ancient texts are in custody there. A museum was opened in the rooms in which Hussein Djavid, a magician of the word, lived in the nineteen-thirties. President Aliev spoke at the opening ceremony. Recalling the tragic lot of the great poet and philosopher, he said no power and no force could ever deprive a people of its history and culture.

May the soul of great Djavid rejoice...

When aides of the First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers begged off from work earlier, they said they were going to the theater. They knew for sure–he, Geidar Aliev, would give permission and then ask how good the performance was.

Geidar Aliev had been an ardent theatergoer from the tender nail. Therefore he could not miss the first night of *Hamlet* in the academic National Theater. After the show the President met with cast and congratulated them on their wonderful performance. Aliev's meetings with the artistic and literary community had been a longtime tradition ever since the Soviet times.

On December 12th Geidar Aliev invited to the Presidential Palace the sisters Fidan and Khuraman Kasimovs, People's Artists of the Republic and State Prize laureates. They had their debut on the opera stage twenty-five years before. Here's a fragment of the President's conversation with the two Azeri opera divas.

Geidar Aliev: "You have achieved a good deal. You have done very much for the Azerbaijan arts and music. You've got a rare natural talent. Both of you. Allah does not bestow this on anybody."

Fidan Kasimova: "Mr. President, do you remember in 1975 you heard the opera *Kyorogly*? After the second act you came out into the foyer. I stood there at the corner with my father and mother. By that time I had won two or three competitions... You came up, saluted my parents and asked, 'Fidan, when shall we see you in Nigyar's role?' Do you remember that?"

Geidar Aliev: "Yes, I do, I remember it quite well."

Fidan Kasimova: "Believe it or not, but I still remember that day. I've been elated by what you instilled in me–perseverance and a sense of responsibility. Your words overwhelmed me and spurred to learn Nigyar's role, and I sang it."

We shall not err against the truth if we say: each of the great masters of Azerbaijan culture keeps fond memories of Geidar Aliev and feelings tinged with personal emotions. The singer Muslim Magomayev, for instance, remembers how after one of the concerts Geidar Aliev came over and asked:

– Maybe I can do something for you? Any needs?

– No, –the young singer replied, –it's all right. –But he lived in a tenement-house in cramped lodgings, in what is known as a "communal" flat (in which kitchen and toilet facilities are shared by several families).

"I deem he appreciated my tact, –Muslim Magomayev confided years later in his kind and radiant book *Melody, My Love*; –and that inspired his respect and love. I feel the same way about him."

"All Azerbaijan Children Have Got Together With US"

The year 2002 was drawing to a close. The folks were getting ready for the New Year holidays. But Aliev knew no respite, it was all work and no holidays to him.

General Akhundov: "I can't recall a day when he stayed away. In all those years after 1993 he had never been on leave. And he never changed his schedule. Breakfast at eight in the morning. By ten o'clock he drove to his workplace. No lunch for him. His work schedule was tight–meetings, interviews, documents, phone calls, letters... Light dinner at eight in the evening. I've been working 25 years here and I know–such was his daily routine.

We believed: things would be going on like that in the new year, 2003, when the President was to turn eighty.

On New Year's Eve, December 31st, he arrived at the Republic's Palace where kids from Baku children's homes got together for festivities. There was a lot of music, dancing and singing. The children listened intently what Geidar-baba (grandpa) had to say.

– As I meet you to attend these festivities, I feel as if all Azerbaijan children and young people had got together with us. I feel I'm hugging all of our younger set. Good luck to all of you!

– We can say with legitimate pride that the year 2002 has been a success for the Azerbaijan people. –Geidar Aliev cited quite a few substantive figures on the republic's economic growth, on the rising state budget, wages and pensions. –But we have many problems, too. Yet one problem is our nagging pain, and this is the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict, the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, still outstanding and not settled." The President recalled the balance of the outgoing year and said Azerbaijan "will make the best of the possibilities of the peace pathway". –We have seen to it that our people could live in peace, and we shall keep working for improving people's standard of life every year, every month.

Chapter 13
IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD

Prominent politicians, statesmen and public leaders often assess each other. If you judge by their official addresses and messages, you gain the impression of wizards and heroes. Whereas behind there backs they describe each other in such terms that you would think they were speaking about entirely different individuals.

The attitude of US President George W.Bush, Sr., to the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachyov serves as an excellent illustration of the fact. After their talks on Malta in 1988, Bush exclaimed in the circle of his assistants: "Oh, God! He's such an ignoramus in economics!" We can't say if Washington experts specified the field in which, in their chief's opinion, the loquacious General Secretary was well versed in.

Political propriety and ordinary calculation are of course of no small importance in the actions of the leaders of states, socio-political movements and diplomats. General de Gaulle taught a classical lesson in his time to FRG Chancellor Adenauer.

The chancellor received a red-carpet treatment in Paris in July 1962. De Gaulle awarded him with the Grand Cross of Legion of Honor and addressed many flattering words to him. Two months or so later the President of France paid an answering visit to the FRG. According to Nikolai Molchanov, who was the author of a book about General de Gaulle, what followed was a strange but impressive spectacle.

Konrad Adenauer met the French President at the airport in Bonn. Quite unexpectedly de Gaulle embraced the stunned old man and kissed him on both cheeks. The chancellor later said that "it was the first time in his life that he was kissed by a foreign statesman, and, moreover, a Frenchman!" Then de Gaulle addressed the audiences in German in the five days of his visit to West Germany's largest cities–Hamburg, Cologne, Munich, Stuttgart, and Düsseldorf… The Germans made a great fuss over him. "De

Gaulle arrived in Germany as a French President," noted *Der Spiegel,* which never displayed warm feelings for the French. "He returns as the Emperor of Europe." And later the general confessed to one of his close associates: "I told the Germans: 'You are a great nation.' But that's a lie. Had the Germans been a great nation, they would not have met me in that way."

The general regarded his own performance as a prelude to the conclusion of a treaty of French-German cooperation. De Gaulle and Adenauer signed the treaty in Palais de l'Elysee on January 22, 1963. It was "Europe's greatest wedding ceremony", as someone remarked aptly. French-German relations took various turns subsequently, they sometimes quarreled and drifted apart and even had serious conflicts. But it's quite clear in retrospect that de Gaulle made each move in line with the national interests of France.

…On April 10, 2000, Geidar Aliev received deputy of the French Parliament Jacques Baumel who acted as a reporter of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) for Azerbaijan. Mr. Baumel compared Aliev to former President of France General de Gaulle: "Taking the same stand as he did, you pursue a policy which is outside of all blocs. It seems that it is precisely for this reason that the further rapprochement between Azerbaijan and Europe is of special importance. Europe in substance supports you in all spheres. And this contributes to the preservation of Azerbaijan's independence."

The golden-mouthed Paris orator generously complimented Geidar Aliev on his being in good trim and good health. Geidar Aliev paid him in the same coin: "Mr. Baumel, I can see that you look well and you have such an excellent memory… Yesterday evening when you watched our dances with such lively interest at the official reception I was once more convinced of it."

And he went on seriously:

"Each time you speak about General de Gaulle's policy and you've also touched the subject now. General de Gaulle is naturally among the most outstanding personalities in the world. All that was done by Charles de Gaulle in the period of World War II and after it, will be remembered for ages without losing its significance. General Charles de Gaulle is an ideal and model for me.

"To conduct a balanced policy you were speaking about, a policy of upholding Azerbaijan's independence–is the basis of my policy today."

And this policy, it should be added, has become a reality. Aliev found a balance of his country's and great powers' interests.

What does the image of Geidar Alirza ogly Aliev look like as presented by statesmen and public leaders of other countries, leading world politicians? Let's look through the press of the period and memoirs, and ask our interlocutors to answer this question.

President of Turkey Suleiman Demirel described Aliev, in line with Oriental florid style, as "my brother who, having transformed his breast into a shield, acts bravely in order to lead Azerbaijan persistently and by democratic ways to the goal".

UNESCO Director General Federico Mayor declared addressing Geidar Aliev: "You are an outstanding leader recognized throughout the world."

And that's really so. There were many flattering words–sincere and sly. Mrs. Albright, former US State Secretary, paid a compliment to Geidar Aliev, with a share of it in her own favor, by saying that in the period of holding the post of US state secretary she "never met another president to be received here with such honors". The implication was that it was to the State Department's credit.

Henry Kissinger, Mrs. Albright's colleague, outlined a whole program in his speech. "President Geidar Aliev's activities are worth of approval, he is striving to develop close relations with the USA and Western countries, spares no efforts to promote market economy and democracy. Geidar Aliev is zealously and resolutely fighting for maintaining independence."

Geidar Aliev's image presented by President of France Jacques Chirac stands out among all other characteristics: "This no ordinary personality has steered Azerbaijan to the path of prosperity. I praise highly his boldness, wisdom and determination displayed in the course of our meetings, in particular, in conducting discussions around the Nagorny Karabakh conflict for the settlement of this conflict amicably.

"It's Azerbaijan's good luck that the country is led by such a wise, sagacious and authoritative statesman as Geidar Aliev, with his great political will power and a wealth of political experience."

It's a comprehensive and precise evaluation. A wealth of guiding experience–this refers not only to post-Soviet years but also to those of the Soviet epoch when Aliev emerged as a statesman. It was precisely this aspect that was stressed by President of Russia Vladimir Putin when he said that Geidar Aliev

was widely known in the Russian Federation as an outstanding statesman not only of Azerbaijan but also of the Soviet Union as a whole.

In his capacity as Chairman of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of Russia, Yegor Stroyev pointed to Aliev's wisdom and optimism, his daring manner in formulating questions and ability to resolve problems in the most complicated situation. "To find a way for settling a conflict amicably, " Yegor Stroyev stressed, "means to be at the top of political thought."

Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov said this about Aliev as a politician:

"Geidar Aliev was a great man of the Soviet and post-Soviet period throughout the territory of the former USSR, a remarkable internationalist, wise and profound, who believed by his mind and heart, not through calculation, that Azerbaijanians would always benefit greatly from Russia."

Alexander Dzasokhov, President of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, regards Geidar Aliev as "a great son of the Azerbaijanian people whose wealth of experience as a statesmen his country was in great need of after the political earthquake which culminated in the disintegration of the union state".

FRG Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and Japanese Prime Minister Zyunichiro Koidzumi primarily stressed, of course quite independently, Aliev's historic services for his country's independence.

According to US President George W.Bush, "for a long period of time Geidar Aliev was a central figure in Southern Caucasia. His personal efforts were of vital importance for the establishment of friendly relations with the United States of America, which are maintained by Azerbaijan today, and for the preservation of Azerbaijan's independence".

Boris Oleinik, head of Ukraine's delegation to the EC and an outstanding Ukrainian poet, described Geidar Aliev as a genuine rescuer: "It was precisely at the time when Azerbaijan's independence was threatened, the steering wheel of the country was taken by Geidar Aliev, a true son of his people. As a true rescuer, he was able to steer Azerbaijan clear of a critical situation owing to his wisdom, bravery and fortitude."

President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Abishevich Nazarbayev was probably the most circumstantial in his letter among those to whom we had applied. He did not confine himself to a cursory though an expressive formula, but offered an all-round political portrait of "a man relying on a wealth of experience gained in his life and in the sphere of economy and big-time politics and who

was at the same time quite open and cordial". We mentioned this letter while speaking about the 1986 events in Alma-Ata, about the initial peals of the impeding storm in Karabakh. Gorbachyov turned a deaf ear to Aliev's warning words about miscalculations in the nationalities policy, it was easier for Gorbachyov to deal with obedient and subservient people. So the man who was firm in upholding his views and his stand was dismissed.

"Nevertheless, the crisis broke out, tension and public perturbation were mounting, separatists and nationalists raised their heads," Nursultan Nazarbayev writes. "And one could only marvel at Geidar Aliev's fortitude, great patience and staunchness, for attempts were made to lay the responsibility for the incipient dislocation and strife at his door. But they failed to break his spirit.

"In spite of his enemies' threats and his friends' warnings and even of the simple instinct of self-preservation, he couldn't keep aloof, did not observe the situation 'from the distance', but returned to his native land. As a citizen and patriot he wished to face the mounting difficulties jointly with his people. Not simply face them but by relying on his experience and authority, to take part in the improvement of the situation.

"In those hard times Geidar Aliev conducted such a competent, weighed and open policy that in 1993 the people asked him to take up the post of President of a new independent state showing in this way their boundless trust in their leader, for they could see no other alternative in the face of the most difficult crisis the country was gripped by.

"I may state in general terms that when departing for Moscow in 1982 he left behind an economically and politically stable republic which was on the upsurge in its development. Ten years later, in 1993, having been elected President, he stood at the helm of a country which boasted independent status but had its economy in ruins, was torn asunder by national strife and conflicts leading to brutal carnage, a country with thousands of refugees and ransacked by bandit formations, with its population in despair.

"He performed a veritable feat by having rapidly restored and consolidated all institutions of power, stabilized the political situation, stopped the carnage, rehabilitated the economy practically from scratch, launched radical market reforms and substantially improved the people's living standard.

"A man who grew up in the Soviet Union and was brought up on the basis of socialist ideas but who, by the will of fate, was confronted with radically new conditions, he managed to bring together what seemed to be incompatible. It was purposefulness,

inexhaustible trust in the people's strength and reason, fidelity to duty and great responsibility for the entrusted cause that he had brought from the past life and set about with youthful vigor developing principally new social and economic relations. And he had attained this goal.

"He had managed to ensure proper answers to the challenges and threats of the globalization age which were sometimes far from humane and hardly in harmony with the preservation and further development of the heritage of the past, of the rich culture and national traditions of his native land.

"I'd like to lay stress on a most important aspect which reflects Geidar Aliev's wisdom and foresight as a statesman and politician of worldwide stature," President of Kazakhstan points out. "It should be recalled that by the time he again stood at the head of the country, Azerbaijan lived practically in isolation from the rest of the world. The opposition forces led by Elchibei, which ruled the country for several previous years, had managed to strain relations not only with neighboring countries but also with many other foreign countries by staking on the policy of isolationism and national exclusiveness.

"As a staunch pragmatic and advocate of cooperation and integration, Geidar Aliev exerted titanic efforts to improve the situation and establish relations with the international community, primarily with the CIS. I point out with gratitude that he also treated with understanding many of my integration efforts and undertakings. I could always count on my senior colleague's wise advice and support.

"We discussed problems of the Caspian region for many hours on end. We were unanimous in the realization of the fact that the region's resources had in no circumstances to be used as an apple of discord, considering that the region's conflict potential was really great. And we did, just as we are doing now, our best for the Caspian to become a sea of friendship and mutually advantageous cooperation. All Caspian states and our partners throughout the world are interested in it.

"I mean no offense, but I can firmly assert that it is the political will of the leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, our good will for interaction and mutual understanding alone that helped to set in motion the process of determination of the Caspian Sea's legal status.

"Today Azerbaijan is again on the upsurge, and I hope very much that the country's new president, Ilkham Aliev, Geidar Aliev's son, will carry on his cause. I have no doubt that Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan will, just as before, act not only as

good neighbors but also as efficient partners, and not only in the Caspian region."

In 1986 Vladimir Kuzmich Gusev was appointed Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers. Prior to that he held a job at Russia's Council of Ministers, acted as First Secretary of the Saratov Regional Party Committee. Two years (before Aliev's dismissal) Gusev and Aliev worked in the same team.

"I often met with Geidar Aliev, I could observe him at work," Vladimir Gusev shares his recollections of Geidar Aliev. "He was a well-organized man. He was demanding and wanted his instructions to be preformed carefully. We had the same approach on this point; I believe supervision to be among the main components of the leader's activity. I can't stand the absence of control, although you come across it everywhere now. Geidar Aliev was never like that. The builders of the Baikal-Amur Main Line even now remember Aliev's demanding style.

"As distinct from some other leaders who preferred the comfort of their offices, he systematically inspected state of affairs on the spot. Contacts with workers, specialists, and study of the actual state of affairs were typical features of Aliev's work. A leader of such scale is a rare occurrence nowadays."

Vladimir Gusev often visited Azerbaijan in the period when Aliev worked in Moscow.

"It was pleasant to hear that the people in his native republic held him in high esteem. He maintained contacts with his native land and visited it… I know certain episodes of his family life. He took care of his wife, Zarifa Azizovna–to her last days! This also shows that he was a real, strong-willed man.

He was quite dynamic even at the age of 80 and confidently guided the country. State control was preserved over many key sectors in Azerbaijan, which made the country governable. You cannot rule in the absence of such levers. On the basis of all this I can safely assert, without flattery, that he was a real big-time statesman and politician of the Soviet Union and of independent Azerbaijan."

Anar, Chairman of Azerbaijan's Union of Writers, recollects:

"In Soviet times Geidar Aliev went by train to the Republic's remote regions. Specialists usually accompanied him; sometimes there were also poets and actors among the group. On one

occasion Nodar Shashigogly, a popular actor, made his appearance on the platform.

Geidar Aliev asked him why he had come.

"I'll watch you," Nodar replied. "It may well happen that some day I'll have to impersonate you."

Geidar Aliev was quick to parry:

"You needn't impersonate me. I can do it myself pretty well."

Yes, he played the role he was cast in by the destiny to the best of his ability. And it is not only his contemporaries but also future generations who will have their say in terms of history. They will probably view something from different positions than we, his contemporaries. That's the way things are. And quite understandable is also a desire of historians and scholars to look for the testimony of the great people's contemporaries. And those people from Nakhichevan, Baku, Moscow, Azerbaijanians and Russians, people of various professions, age, men and women, shared their recollections of Geidar Aliev with us, and their testimony served as a basis of this book.

AFTERWORD

Two worlds are now a part of me
Although for me this world is small.
Nasimi

They say bad news travels fast. So the bad news flew across the ocean: Geidar Alirza ogly Aliev died in a Cleveland hospital, in the United States.

He was called Geidar when he came to this world. Geidar stands for an epithet name of St. Ali, a symbol of strength and might in the world of true believers of the East, the incarnation of wisdom and righteousness. The role of parents, environment and upbringing is indisputable in people's destiny. But the choice of one's name is also a kind of sign, predestination. So all their life people carry the imprint of this predestination.

Can you find a trace of light? Can you imagine the Sun that has gone out forever? Stars go out with the passage of time, but their light can be seen even after for eons of time.

Life is unthinkable without light.

Geidar Aliev was born under Azerbaijan's sunlit sky and his soul was full of the native sun's light–for this light to be returned to all people, to his native land. He was destined to die at 80. But Aliev's star will shed its light to Azerbaijan for ages.

Nature was quite generous to you.
You might have lived a hundred years
But for troubles and life's vicissitudes,
But for deep scars concealed from view.

Those are lines from poet Siyavush Mamedzadeh's poem in tribute to the President's memory. Yes, life was not a bed of roses for Geidar Aliev. There were much more thorns in it. He had lived through many dramatic trials, balancing on the verge of death–not only for himself but also for Azerbaijan.

But he had won. He had stood all trials. He had overcome his pain.

> You've never bowed your proud head,
> And saved the life and honor of Azerbaijan,
> You viewed the sland'rers with contempt
> With valiant dignity of Coriolan…

Even his opponents gave his political experience, will power and intellect their due. He came back to power in 1993–at the critical time when his country was ravaged by the enemies and torn asunder by internal strife. And he used to repeat ashug (folk singer) Abbas Tufarganly's words: "If the people join their efforts they'll move mountains!"

His people were orphaned in the early hours of December 13, 2003. In the morning of December 13 great crowds flooded the streets of Baku and other Azerbaijan's cities, towns and villages wearing black-and-red mourning ribbons and carnations. Black ribbons could be seen everywhere: on flags, buses and attached by scotch to turnstiles in the underground. The crowds were converging on the Presidential Palace. First carnations and burning candles appeared there, on the parapet, immediately after midnight, when the TV announcer interrupted the program and said that Geidar Aliev had died. Geidar Aliev was very fond of carnations, so the people carried them to the Presidential Palace.

…Not long ago he easily ascended its steps. Until his last days he looked vivacious with no traces of pitiful, weak old age. They liked to tell the story of the President's refusal to approve the appointment to the post of one of the new ministers: "He's a clever lad, but why so fat? He should first take care of himself." The nominee to the post of minister went on a diet, lost extra weight and the President was, just as ever, as good as his word. That was how one more Aliev's "godson" took his post in the government.

Mournful music was broadcast on television, with sequences shown on the screen of Aliev's life as first secretary of the CC of the Communist Party of the Republic, first deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers and as the country's President.

– We would like to take a still stronger independent Azerbaijan state into the 21st century. We want a happier life for the coming generations. By making an effective use of Azerbaijan's potential, by developing the economy we aim to improve the Azerbaijan people's living standard… Azerbaijan will develop as a free, democratic country and will display its historic attainments on the border of Europe and Asia.

Dear Compatriots! You may be confident that I am well aware of the difficult and responsible duties of mine and I'd like to tell you that I highly value your trust. I accept this trust with a great responsibility. I assure you that I'll try to justify this trust and ensure headlong development for Azerbaijan in the next few years.

The people's stream seemed to be endless. That was the people's caravan of grief.

A gray-haired woman was treading heavily; she couldn't stay at home and had come to share common grief. A young mother with her newborn baby and a carnation–she was clasping the only flower close to her breast like a baby. A veteran soldier was trying to keep straight, with his sons looking much like him walking next to him. The people of Azerbaijan, whom he had never deceived, paid tribute to their Aksakal, to their Geidar-kishi.

– We live as an independent state and repeatedly stated that our independent state would exist as such forever. That is, we will never live as a part of some other country, under the patronage of another state… This independence should have not only a moral-political but also material result, that is, to ensure the people's high living standard.

In the period of the break-up of the Soviet Union many economists … came to the conclusion that if two or three of the fifteen Soviet republics were able to be completely self-sufficient in the period of independence, Azerbaijan would be one of them. That was said even at that time both by Soviet scholars and Western Sovietologists. That's not wishful thinking. The idea is associated with Azerbaijan's rich natural resources and economic potential.

Geidar Aliev pronounced those words with deep trust and optimism!

The city on the Caspian coast has lived through various periods in the long years of its existence. Alien hands were stretched "to the burning oil described as nafta" both in old times and at present.

In those uneasy days the country looked much like the Caspian in storm, so the President had to turn repeatedly to the people. Not that he couldn't use force. No, the law authorized him for that. But he had always chosen the force of law, conviction, not the law of strength. He asked for his compatriots' advice.

– There are many forces seeking to dismember Azerbaijan, with some of them inside and other outside the country. One has to make a compromise on certain points, and on other occasions some things should be forgiven. Today I say it again: I used to forgive many things. Some people are even astonished, saying that

they know Geidar Aliev; there is a certain difference between Geidar Aliev of the 1970s and the man of today. The difference consists in the fact that then he was more resolute, strict and sharp, whereas now he has become soft and forgives certain things.

There are a number of reasons behind all that. The fact is that now we live in conditions of democracy. There is a difference between the former and present state systems. I follow the path of democracy. As a man asserting the principles of democracy in Azerbaijan, I am prepared to compromise on many points. In following the path of democracy, you need to promote peace, security and civic accord…

Much like a sensitive seismograph, Geidar Aliev could feel political trends of the times and took them to heart. In May 1987, as mentioned above, he had a heart attack. "An extensive infarction," Yevgeny Primakov specified in one of our talks. Laura Vasilyevna, Primakov's late wife, a cardiologist of the Kremlin Clinic, told him about it. Soon after Aliev was pensioned off. "But he managed to restore his health after the heart attack," Primakov added, "and this also serves as a testimony to his will power, ability to muster his vital resources." On that black Saturday, December 13, 2003, Primakov was among the first to visit the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Moscow in order to pay tribute to his close friend. "He was an epoch-making man," Primakov wrote about Aliev in the book of condolences. "He was a man who would do credit to any nation," State Duma deputy Sergei Baburin wrote. "A man of genius", "a great son of the Azerbaijan people"–these words were often repeated in the book of condolences.

… They remember in Azerbaijan the idle "prophets", who often repeated that after Aliev had regained power, he would set about settling accounts with his former offenders. But that is not in the nature of great people.

Today we, of course, may speak about repressions of the past period; speak about the evil caused to the people, about injustice… That's our history. One should always tell the historical truth. But along with this, why do you gloss over our achievements? The Azerbaijani language among them. Now you may describe it as you like but the Azerbaijani language has been enriched in the past sixty years as never before in its history… Think of the unprecedented quantity of books, novels, poems and stories written in those years. That's a part of our history, that's our historical gain…

...We should always highly value our national awareness. National awareness has always helped me in difficult situations. Owing to my national awareness I was able to follow the chosen path, attain the desired goal and serve my people.

President Geidar Aliev was fond of taking strolls in Baku streets in his last years. "He could drop in a small restaurant he liked, just like anyone else," *Izvestiya* journalists noted in their reports. His guards were anxious, saying that they had no chance to examine the meals. "That's all right, that's all right," Aliev smiled and noted jokingly to the guard chief: "That'll be your fault if anything is wrong." He was great and simple in his ways at the same time, sincere and responsive and attractive to the same degree. Geidar Aliev won the people's hearts by his sincerity.

Creative personalities–writers, composers and artists were attracted to him looking for his moral support and regarding him as their spiritual guru. And they often stressed it. We may refer to the testimony of writers Anar and Mamed Araz, Vagif Samedoglu and Elchin, their Russian colleague Ivan Polikarpovich Tretyakov, a veteran of the Great Patriotic War who fought at the front. Tretyakov was one of the groups of men of letters to receive the Presidential Scholarship. "I will remember Geidar Aliev as long as I live," Ivan Tretyakov wrote to us. "He appraised people by their work, people were prepared to work as hard as they could for him."

Aliev highly valued friendship and despised turncoats. He never forgot those who had stood by him in the bitter days of the Moscow disfavor, at the time of trials, who had not taken the side of the seemingly more promising patrons. He knew how to be grateful and valued this trait in other people.

On December 19, 1995, Geidar Aliev addressed a meeting in the Gyulistan Palace devoted to the 60th birth anniversary of Yusif Samedoglu, a people's writer and prominent public figure who died so early.

*– Today I deem it necessary to tell you about an interesting episode. In 1990 I came back to Azerbaijan from Moscow. It was impossible to live here (*in Baku. *–Author's note.) and I went to Nakhichevan. At that time, on the one hand, I was persecuted, isolated from the public, had to bear injustice committed against me, while, on the other hand, and I constantly met with respect and often with the people's love. I've never forgotten and will never forget the people who in the period of my life in isolation in Nakhichevan, breaking the siege, came to see me. For that was far from simple. Many people came to Nakhichevan. They paid brief visits to me, for an hour or two, and after our talk, having*

expressed their attitude; they would go back–either to Baku or Gandzha, or to other cities.

One day something quite unexpected happened. The gate was opened and Aibeniz-khanum entered. At that time I was sitting in the yard. I thought that Aibeniz-khanum must have arrived in Nakhichevan to meet somebody for her own affairs… Probably she had heard that I was staying here and decided to drop in and greet me. But it transpired later that she had flown from Baku to Nakhichevan together with her relations with the only aim in view: to visit me…You know, I repeat, many people came at that time to see me but that meeting was especially valuable to me. For she was one of Samed Vurgun's family. Moreover, Nakhichevan then lived through hard times and flights by air were made difficult. Just imagine, the woman had come for the only reason to greet me. I was very excited and happy and was convinced once more that good people, people with a pure heart are in majority in our society…

That was exactly what he was like–a man with a pure heart.

God was generous to have created him as a man of good physique, high intellect, phenomenal memory, orator's gift and creative flair, physical attraction and spiritual beauty.

In March 2003 destiny had a severe trial in store for him. He was paying a visit to Military School named after Djamshid Nakhichevansky, which was pioneered by him back in the Soviet period. The President was making an address and all of a sudden he clutched at his heart, swayed… The whole country could see these moments in a live TV broadcast…then followed five, ten, fifteen minutes of resonant silence when even a whispered word seemed like a shout. Twenty minutes later, in spite of the doctors' protests, the President again mounted the rostrum and said a few parting words to the audience and to future officers, independent Azerbaijan's hope. He couldn't have acted otherwise. It was his will power, Aliev's unbending will power that made him then rise to his feet and come back to the hall packed with young people.

…Baku residents remember that in the early 20th century thousands upon thousands of people attended revolutionary Khabdar Safaraliev's funeral. The city paid its last respects to General Aslanov in its time. The great Uzeir Gadjibekov's funeral was attended by a mammoth crowd, which even "swept" the mounted militiamen. The people in the same way mourned over the death of their poet Samed Vurgun and composer Kara Karayev… They paid their last respects to Kara Karayev in the Philharmonic Society and he was interred in the Alley of Honorary Burial Places. The road leading to the Alley is long and

steep. The coffin with the great composer's body was carried along it. Geidar Aliev was the first to offer his shoulder to carry it. And he covered the entire mournful road. "I believe that such things are rare in the world, it's probably something unique," said prominent Azerbaijan composer Arif Melikov, Kara Karayev's student. " But this also serves as a testimony to Geidar Aliev's exceptional attitude to outstanding people, those who had brought glory to our republic, our people."

On the third year of the third millennium the people's grief reached its climax when millions of his compatriots paid their last respects to Geidar Aliev.

On December 14 endless streams of people were converging on the Presidential Palace. It was clear that the mammoth crowd was too big for the city's limited space, so the stream stretched along the highway to Bina Airport. Azerbaijan was waiting for its son's return. The lowered flags with their black ribbons were fluttering in the wind. They seemed to be saying: "The banner raised by you will never fall… We are lowered in tribute to your memory… We are offering our last respects to you."

The Azerbaijan people's leader came back to his Motherland to rest in his native land's embrace.

Troubling ripples suddenly covered the Caspian, which had been napping under the bright skies.

Veteran soldiers carried on their shoulders mournfully and sternly the burden as heavy as the gray Caucasian Mountains.

Mountains of grief.

Oh, God, the light of sorrow was so blinding. The light of this sorrow attracted the people.

The December wind tore yellow leaves from the trees and drove them along the pavements. The trees could tell us many stories. They cannot talk but they have memory. The Apsheron steppes advanced to standard five-story apartment houses carrying in their train dried salt lakes, sands, camel's thorns, oily pools, lakes of waste water at the old mines. Green was ousting yellow and sandy gray color in the landscape of Apsheron thanks to Geidar Aliev. Green color symbolizes Islam's spiritual values in the republic's tricolor. But this color also reminds us of green gamut in the palette of Azerbaijan's nature, improved by Geidar Aliev's will, his efforts and care…If only he could see his beloved city, compare it to the former ugly conglomeration of stone blocks, flat roofs, cobblestone pavements, gray asphalt with islets of dwarfed trees!

The road leading from the airport to Baku was lined on both sides with live human walls.

True, very often on holidays people would line the roads he was driving along, waited for him, greeted him, wished him farewell with flowers in the hope of exchanging a few kind words and were happy to hear his words of greetings and see him smile. On that day he again returned to Baku Airport. Thousands of people simultaneously glanced at their watches: 13:55. But he was not destined to descend from the airliner again… Bitter sagebrush aroma was wafted in the wind. The heavy silence reminded of the silent requiem.

Each person could hear its sounding in his heart. The burden of pain and sorrow had merged into common grief.

The people had lost their national leader. And Ilkham Aliev had also lost his father. The mournful news reached him when he attended the World Information Community Summit.

He was to approach the plane's ladder, go up to the plane, to his father. They would spend the last 15 minutes alone. Who could say what Ilkham was thinking about at that moment, what words would be pronounced and heard by the son's heart? Probably only those who had paid that mournful duty, who had accompanied on the last way their father or mother…

The mournful prayers sounded in the Teze-Pir Mosque. The age-old rites bequeathed by Prophet Mohammed were performed.

The Prophet insisted that the people should not mourn over those who had departed from this world, for all creatures were pilgrims on this road. Do not weep over those with whose departure you lose so much. But how could they?!

Geidar Aliev's last and chief concern was: whom he could entrust the state to. Would the country's young democracy cope with the task? Wouldn't they snatch at the opportunity to test their luck, those temporary rulers and past masters of secret political intrigues?

He could see a new and worthy generation of politicians, graduates of his school. As a tutor and educator he rejoiced in Ilkham's success in the public sphere, his son enjoyed increasing recognition in society, among the people. And his heart told him: your son. His experience, however, protested: his recommendation would be accepted in various ways, and the radical opposition, those engaged in political verbiage would certainly accuse the President of "parental protectionism", "introduction of succession to the throne" and of God knew what… But that was the case when the proposed successor was in possession of all traits of a promising and competent leader. When the heir of his own blood was also the heir in spirit. Geidar Aliev was well aware of it. The people supported his choice.

His choice was appreciated throughout the world. On December 15, the day of his funeral, *Vremya Novostei*, a Moscow newspaper, wrote: "Geidar Aliev 'departed' in the manner worthy of an Eastern statesman. He had managed to set up a dynasty of power in the country. And no matter how indignant his political opponents might be, he has done it in an extremely legitimate way, so far as it was possible in conditions of Azerbaijan today. And whether or not this dynasty will survive, for it is utterly unique not only for the CIS but also for Europe as a whole, now depends on his son Ilkham. Incidentally, Ilkham has his own son, little Geidar."

We won't argue on the subject of assertions, which are not entirely appropriate in our opinion, about the dynasty. Quite a different aspect is most important. Ilkham was following his father's coffin, and many people repeatedly pointed to the fact that he looked much like his father. And it wasn't only his appearance. "He has inherited many of his father's traits and one is quite impressed by him," Yevgeny Primakov noted. "Ilkham Aliev is a broad-minded and intelligent man. I'm confident: he will be a worthy President of the country, just like his father."

One could see not only sorrow in the eyes of the people who lined the road to the airport but also a soft light of hope.

…December 15. The coffin with Aliev's body was placed in the Palace of the Republic, which was built on his initiative and with his direct participation in the 1970s. He was a great builder, architect of Azerbaijan. The buildings erected on his creative advice now serve as symbols of a new Baku.

The Republic Palace, the Presidential Palace, the Gyulistan palace, palaces of culture, plants, chess schools, clubs, educational establishments, residential areas–are immortalized "author's certificates" of his style as a statesmen.

The endless line of mourners marched past the stage where he lay in state in the coffin covered with the national flag. Some of them wept and other prayed while walking. And each had his own image of Aliev in his soul. Some of them had seen only his screen image, while others were lucky to have met him in person and still others, just as General Vagif Akhundov, had worked together with him every day…

September 16 was the lieutenant general's birthday. The President used to invite him to his place and warmly congratulate him on this day… In September 2003 they were both in Cleveland. The President had been placed in a Cleveland hospital ward and his and American guards occupied the adjoining wards. The last thing General Akhundov expected on that day was that

the President would invite him to congratulate him on his birthday.

– I bid farewell to Geidar Aliev on September 27, –Vagif Akhundov said to us later. –He looked excellent and was in a good mood. I kissed his right hand, while his left hand was connected to the system. He drew me closer to him and also kissed. He said: "See you later!" And I replied, "As soon as the elections are over, I'll come back and we'll fly together to Baku." My task was to ensure Ilkham Aliev's security; at that time he held the post of chairman of the government. I called from here to Cleveland, reported to him and we talked… And then came December 12, when the tragedy occurred…

The final minutes of paying the last respects. Close relations and General Akhundov were standing at the open coffin.

– I was looking at Geidar Alievich and he seemed to be alive… He even looked younger as if he was 60-65. "Why have they brought you here?" –I thought. In the past few months of his stay at the hospital he had even put on some weight, but when I bid him farewell he looked thinner… And now as he lay in state his cheeks were pink and he looked tranquil… As if bathed in the light of the skies.

Foreign delegations paid their last respects, with President of Turkey Akhmet Nedjdet Sezer and Prime Minister Redjeb Taib Erdogan among them.

President of Kazakhstan slowed his pace and lowered his head respectfully to the coffin.

President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin deemed it his duty to fly to Baku to pay his last respects to the outstanding politician of our days–on his own behalf, on behalf of all the country's residents and of the Russian people.

Before his departure from Baku Putin said in press interview: "I held Geidar Alievich in high esteem. I felt not only great respect but also affection for him. He was a prominent statesman, a colossus–it's not an overstatement."

Telegrams of condolences poured in to Baku from all over the world: from Berlin, Washington, Tokyo, and Beijing, to name but a few.

The caravan of sorrow marched around the Presidential Palace…

In the far-away transoceanic clinic Aliev must have learned in his last hours that would replace him at the post of head of state and he must have smiled happily.

Sabir, a poet of genius, wrote these lines in his time:

– You should be blind!
– And I shall close my eyes.
– You should be deaf!
– My ears I'll cover with my hands.
– You shouldn't argue!
– Forgive me, your lies
I dismiss!..

That's the nature of man's thought. You can't zombie it. And then you'll hear the words coming through the ages: "And still it rotates!" The people's poet of Azerbaijan Rasul Rza gave the following title to one of his books *I Can Feel Earth's Rotation*. Geidar Aliev also felt Earth's rotation.

After Aliev had come back to power, dilettantes in politics, caliphs for an hour felt ill at ease. They were irritated by the consolidation of the disorderly state machine; they sought to remove him at any cost even resorting to lies and fabrications.

The caravan of sorrow marched past the tombs revered by all people. The eternal fire fluttering in the wind seemed to stretch its hands to the man who had devoted all his life to Azerbaijan. There was a lot of red color on the flags and on the republic's tricolor. Red color symbolizes blood spilt in the fight for freedom.

Banners turn red like the blood spilt
for their sake.
The land you die for
be comes your Native Land.

Geidar Aliev was buried to the accompaniment of gun salvoes in the Alley of Honorary Burial Places. His native land, sanctified by his last resting place. This land will be forever a sacred site for the Azerbaijanian people.

Land seemed to breathe and its warm pungent breath, mixed up with the aroma of fallen leaves, was wafted above the sea of people.

He was laid to rest next to his wife Zarifa-khanum. The two souls reunitedforever. Zarifa-khanum's soul seemed to be soaring over the mournful children and entrusting their destinies to the Creator of Worlds.

The people buried their leader, their Aksakal. But can you bury Faith, Hope and Love?!

…"The land you die for becomes your Native Land." Quite right was Turkish poet Namik Kemal, the author of these lines.

The man our book is devoted to had lived a happy life. The Prophet urged us to compete in good deeds. That was precisely

what Geidar Aliev was doing–both in the years when the Koran, just as the Bible, was banned and after these great books had been returned to the people. He had lived to see his cherished desires, his grand good deeds incarnated. He died being convinced that he had fulfilled his mission predestined by Allah. He liked to read in his free moments these Samed Vurgun's lines:

> Death won't have reason to rejoice! It won't
> Capture those who loved their Native Land.
> And those who lived with love and died beloved
> Will be revered by custom and the world…

Baku–Moscow–Baku
2003-2005

BASIC DATES OF GEIDAR ALIEV'S LIFE AND ACTIVITY

May 10, 1923–Geidar Ali Rza ogly Aliev was born in Nakhichevan.
1936-1938–Student of the Nakhichevan Pedagogical Technical School.
1938-1941–Student of the architecture department of the Azerbaijanian Industrial Institute (at present the Azerbaijanian State Oil Academy).
1941-1943–Head of the secret division of the Archives Department of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the Nakhichevan Autonomous SSR.
1943-1944–Head of the general department of the Council of People's Commissars of the Nakhichevan ASSR.
1945–Joined the CPSU.
1944-1949–Work with state security agencies of the Nakhichevan Autonomous SSR: operative authorized officer; senior operative authorized officer, and department chief of the NKGB-MGB.
1949-1950–Student of the Leningrad School of the USSR State Security Ministry (MGB) for leading personnel retraining.
1951-1969–Work with state security agencies of the Azerbaijan SSR: department chief of the MGB, department chief, deputy chairman of the KGB, Chairman of the KGB under the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR.
1951-1957–Studies at the correspondence course of the History Department of Azerbaijanian State University.
1954–Married Zarifa Alieva.
October 18, 1955–Daughter Sevil was born to Geidar and Zarifa Alievs.
December 24, 1961–Son Ilkham was born to Geidar and Zarifa Alievs.
July 14, 1969–Elected to the post of First Secretary of the CC of the CP of Azerbaijan.
1971–At the 24th Party Congress elected a member of the CC CPSU. Was also elected a member of the CC CPSU at the 25th CPSU Congress (1976), at the 26th CPSU Congress (1981) and at the 27th CPSU Congress (1986).
March 1976–Elected a candidate member of the Politburo of the CC CPSU.
1976-1987–Member of the Chief Military Council under the USSR Defense Council.
August 24, 1979–the title of Hero of Socialist Labor conferred upon him.

November 22, 1982–Elected a member of the Politburo of the CC CPSU.

November 24, 1982–The Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics assigned Geidar Aliev to the post of First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers.

1983–Awarded with a second Gold Star of the Hero of Socialist Labor. Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet resolves to put up Geidar Aliev's bronze bust in his native town of Nakhichevan.

April 15, 1985–Zarifa Azizovna Alieva, Geidar Aliev's wife, dies.

1986–Re-elected as a member of the Politburo of the CC CPSU.

1986–Approved (to held two positions) to take the post of Chairman of the Bureau of the USSR Council of Ministers for Social Development.

August 1986–Appointed to the post of Chairman of the State Committee for Investigation the Tragedy of the S/S Admiral Nakhimov.

October 1987–In connection with his retirement relieved of the duties of a member of the Politburo of the CC CPSU and of First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers; appointed to the post of state advisor under the USSR Council of Ministers.

November 1988–Relieved of the duties of state advisor under the USSR Council of Ministers.

April 24, 1989–Withdraws from the CC CPSU as one of the group of persons of pension age.

January 21, 1990–Makes a statement at the permanent mission of the Azerbaijan SSR in Moscow in connection with the entry of Soviet Army troops to Baku.

July 20, 1990–Returns to Baku.

July 22, 1990–Returns to Nakhichevan.

September 30, 1990–Elected deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijan SSR and deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the Nakhichevan ASSR.

July 19, 1991–Withdraws from the CPSU.

September 3, 1991–Elected to the post of Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Nakhichevan ASSR.

1992–Elected to the post of Chairman of the Eni (New) Azerbaijan party.

June 10, 1993–At the insistent requests of President of the Azerbaijan Republic Elchibei arrives in Baku in connection with the state crisis.

June 15, 1993–Elected to the post of Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan. Geidar Aliev is entrusted with the task of exercising the powers of President of the AR.

September 24, 1993–Attends the Moscow Meeting of the CIS Heads of State and Government.

September 20, 1993–Signs a resolution "On Joining of the Azerbaijan Republic with the Commonwealth of Independent States.

October 3, 1993–Elected to the post of President of the Azerbaijan Republic.

October 10, 1993–Inauguration of a new head of state in the Palace of the Republic in Baku.

November 2, 1993–First address to the people of Azerbaijan in a live TV broadcast.

December 11-12, 1993–A trip to frontline regions.

December 19, 1993–First trip abroad as the head of the Azerbaijanian state–official visit to France. The Treaty of Friendship, Mutual Understanding and Cooperation signed.

May 1994–End of the hostilities in the Karabakh Armenian-Azerbaijanian conflict zone.

September 20, 1994–The *Contract of the Century* signed in Baku.

September 30, 1994–Address made at a UN General Assembly session in New York.

July 1997–First official visit to Russia.

August 1997–First official visit to the USA.

February 1998–Man of the Year prize presented to Geidar Aliev and to President of Turkey Suleiman Demirel in Istanbul.

October 11, 1998–Elected for a second term to the post of President of the Azerbaijan Republic.

October 18, 1998–Inauguration in the Palace of the Republic in Baku.

January 2001–Talks with President of Russia Vladimir Putin in the course of Putin's official visit to Baku.

May 28, 2001–Meeting with Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Alexiy II.

November 9-10, 2001–The First Congress of Azerbaijanians of the World held in Baku at the President's initiative.

January 24-26, 2002–State visit to the Russian Federation.

January 30-February 3, 2002–Attends the World Economic Forum in New York.

May 19-20, 2002–Official visit to Iran.

May 22, 2002–Meeting in Baku with Pope John Paul II.

June 9, 2002–Presidents Putin and Aliev unveil the Nizami Monument in St. Petersburg.

September 23-24, 2002–Working visit to the Russian Federation.

July 30, 2003–Letter signed on Ilkham Aliev's nomination to the post of Chairman of the Government of Azerbaijan.

September 2003–Withdraws his nomination for running for the post of President of the Azerbaijan Republic in the elections.

December 12, 2003–Geidar Aliev dies.

December 15, 2003–Burial of Geidar Alirza ogly Aliev in the Alley of Honorary Burial Places in Baku.

Geidar Alievich Aliev–twice Hero of Socialist Labor, decorated with five Orders of Lenin, Orders of the October Revolution, of the Patriotic War (1st Degree), of Red Star and with 13 medals and also with the orders of the Azerbaijan Republic, Russia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Ukraine and of other states.

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CONTENTS

Foreword 5

Chapter 1. "I WAS BORN IN NAKHICHEVAN…" 11

May 10, 1923, Nakhichevan 11

A Day in History 12

Parents' House 14

Chapter 2. HERE IS A FRONTLINE TOO 24

June 22, 1941, Nakhichevan 24

Soviet Mission in South Azerbaijan 28

It was Covered with Silence 37

Chapter 3. GEIDAR AND ZARIFA 41

Chapter 4. "I CHOSE THIS PROFESSION IN MY YOUTH" 53

December 21, 1980, Baku 53

July 15, 1997, Baku 57

What Country We Live In 67

Chapter 5. AT THE HEAD OF THE REPUBLIC 78

July 14, 1969, Baku 78

"Tell me, is he an honest man?" 81

Feeling of Fulfilled Duty 87

Let Justice Prevail 96

December 2, 1982, Baku 104

Chapter 6. "THE WHOLE UNION NEEDS YOU, GEIDAR!" 111

The Last Visit of the General Secretary 111

November 22, 1982, Moscow 117

The Sovmin–Workday Routine 123

Someone Else's Children 136

BAM Remained in His Heart 143

Light of the Dead Star 150
April 22, 1985, Moscow 154
August 31, 1986, Novorossiysk 160
He Could Appreciate Kindness 166
What is Your Hobby? 169
In the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee 174
Chapter 7. "I AM NOT A STONE OR IRON, I AM A MAN" 191
October 19, 1987, Moscow 191
Story of One Envy 193
Harsh Treatment 197
Karabakh 198
June 28, 1988, Moscow 201
Baku Diary 203
"I Spared No Effort to Be Received by Gorbachyov" 216
January 21, 1990, Moscow 218
Pravda Fires a Shot 221
Moscow Blockade 224
Chapter 8. THE RIGHT TO BE WITH HIS PEOPLE 228
July 22, 1990, Nakhichevan 228
Back to the Roots 234
July 19, 1991, Moscow 240
The Putsch 244
Nakhichevan in Siege 248
Chapter 9. NINETY-THREE 252
May-June 1993, Nakhichevan–Baku 252
Colonel Guseinov's Tanks 253
President Elchibei's Flight 256
Powers Handed Over to President Geidar Aliev 258
Azerbaijan Elects Geidar Aliev 272
September 30, 1994, New York 274
"I Rely on the People" 275

Chapter 10. AZERBAIJAN'S OIL IN WORLD POLITICS 281
If Oil Is a Queen… 281
April 21, 1971, Baku 284
September 20, 1994, Baku 285
Bon Voyage, "Dede Gorgud"! 287
About the *Contract of the Century* 294
July 3, 1997, Moscow 297
If There Is Will There Is a Way 298
August 1, 1997, Washington 300
Legends and True Stories of Three Seas 304
Chapter 11. THE SUN RISING FROM THE SEASIDE 307
July 14-15, 2001, Baku 307
He Bequeathed Friendship with Russia to Azerbaijan 309
September 21, 1999, Baku 312
Thy Son Forever 314
January 9, 2001, Baku 319
"I Know Well All Streets in Baku" 323
Chapter 12. ONE YEAR OF THE PRESIDENT 327
Leafing Through the Calendar 327
January 24, 2002, Moscow 328
February 1, 2002, New York 331
Novruz, the Spring Holiday 333
March 3, 2002, Baku 336
Gyulnar, the Peace Envoy 339
Lessons of History 341
June 25, 2002, Istanbul 345
July 9, 2002, St. Petersburg 345
General Akhundov's Birthday 352
September 23, 2002, Moscow 356
A Girl With the Flag of the Republic 359
November 24, 2002, Baku 362

"All Azerbaijanian Children Have Got Together With US"365
Chapter 13. IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD 367
Afterword 375
Basic Dates of Geidar Aliev's Life and Activity 387
Literature 391

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