

NAKHIJEVAN - A VICTIM OF GENOCIDE (NOT AREA BUT HOMELAND)¹

Balayan Z. H.

*You love your homeland not because it is big
but because it is yours.*

Seneka

February 25th, 1988. The Kremlin, Moscow. I am waiting with Silva Kaputikyan to be received by M. S. Gorbachev, Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The day before we agreed that she would speak about Karabakh (Artsakh), and I would mainly speak about Nakhijevan, its history and the awful facts which affected the fate of the Armenians. I was sure that no one knew about these in the Kremlin, because, for the Kremlin decrepit old men, Nakhijevan is “a laureate of the Decoration of Peoples’ Friendship”, which means that everything is all right there in terms of Leninist internationalism.

IN ONE WORD, THE MEANING AND SUBSTANCE OF THE MEETING BOILED DOWN TO THE TRAGIC FATES that befell the two Armenian autonomous entities - Nakhijevan (as a republic) and Karabakh (as an *oblast*). I told Gorbachev that in 1978, under a 'Literary Gazette' project, I made a long journey through Armenia, Nakhijevan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (NASSR) and Mountainous (Nagorno)-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO). After that I wrote the book "Hearth". I told him this to emphasise that to enter the territory of the Armenian Nakhijevan Autonomous Republic, I, a citizen of the USSR, had to apply to Nakhijevan Militia through the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Armenia, to obtain a visa ten days before I started. Imagine this happening on the territory of the USSR (!!).

First Gorbachev did not believe me. He simply had no idea about such, putting it mildly, a complex and intricate situation. However, on the fourth day after our meeting (and on the third day of the massacres of Armenians in Sumgayit), on February 29th, 1988, at the meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU they talked about our meeting, too. Gorbachev said, "Nagorno Karabakh is an Armenian Autonomy. Even the roads leading to Armenia (Armenian SSR) are in a neglected condition. The cultural links are disrupted. That was done deliberately (! -Z. B). The broadcasts of the Turkish television are received in Nagorno Karabakh, while the Armenian ones are not."

After these words he switched to the topic of Nakhijevan (perhaps, with his better informed staff, he had verified the data Silva and I had provided). "I asked Viktor Mikhailovich (Chebrikov, the Chairperson of the USSR KGB – Z. B.) what he had done there with the border strip. He told me that Nakhijevan, where the border with Turkey

¹ Translation from the Armenian (Զորի Բալայան, Ոչ թե տարածք, այլ Հայրենիք. «Հայաստանի Հանրապետություն» օրաթերթ, 04.10, 2016, էջ 6) and Russian (Зорий Балаян, Нахиджеван - жертва геноцида, не территория, а Родина!, - газета «Голос Армении», 04.10. 2016) versions of Zori Balayan's article (updated).

lies, is under surveillance of border guards; they have their own strip with outposts. And the entire depth (i.e. the entire territory of Nakhijevan Autonomous Republic, five and a half thousand square kilometers - Z. B.) of the border zone was determined by the local bodies, in this case, the republican ones (i.e. exclusively Azerbaijani– Z. B.). And what was their decision? To consider all of Nakhijevan as a border zone. Free entry there was forbidden. And yet the victims of the Armenian Genocide were buried there, there are graves. Once there were many monuments there², and only one is left. That's it. No one is allowed there on the pretext that it is a border zone”.

Jumping ahead, I will add: even after Mikhail Gorbachev's speech at the said meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU nothing changed about that. This improbable situation started in 1924.

THE POLITBURO, NATURALLY, ADDRESSED 'SUMGAYIT' TOO. Even before the meeting started, Gorbachev had managed to become informed about that nightmare, then, in everyone's presence, he addressed D. Yazov, the USSR Defence Minister.

”Tell us, Dmitri Timofeevich, how do they kill in Sumgayit?”

”They cut off two women's breasts. They beheaded one and skinned the girl. Such savagery. Some cadets, seeing such things, fell into a swoon ...”



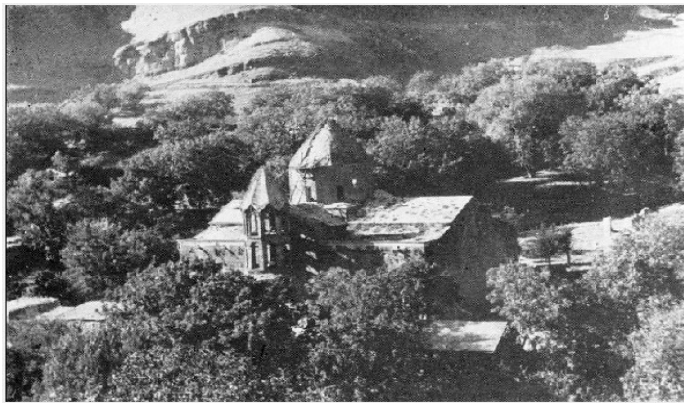
Armenian victims of the Sumgayit genocide

It seemed after all of this Gorbachev should do everything so that the organisers and perpetrators of the monstrous crimes were severely punished. Trials were held in ten cities of the USSR on the genocide of the Armenians in Sumgayit. However, in his nation-wide standard communist speech, Gorbachev accused the Azerbaijani leadership only for the “bad ecological situation in Sumgayit” where, it appeared, there were “many

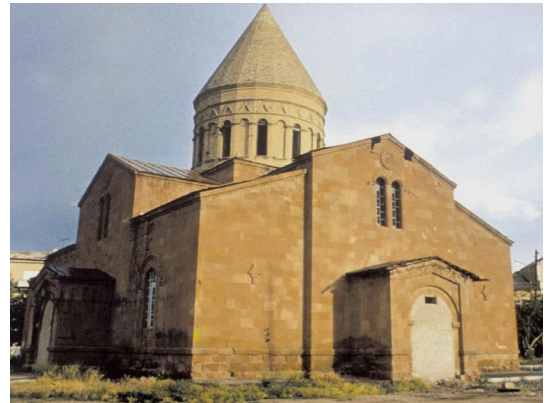
hooligan elements’. After that, all Soviet courts were silenced. And soon “sumgayit” impunity spawned a new evil, genocide of the Armenians in Baku and other Azerbaijani cities where Armenians had been living for centuries. Meanwhile, they were evicting the last thousands of Armenian families from Nakhijevan.

² According to the researcher of the Armenian cultural heritage of Nakhijevan Argam Ayyazyanyan, there were tens of thousands historical architectural, monumental and other monuments (200 monasteries and churches, 60 chapels and sanctuaries, 26 bridges, 41 castles, 84 village and town sites, 86 cemeteries with 22600-23000 tombstones, khachkars-cross-stones and others) in the ancient Armenian region of Nakhijevan. A. Ayyazyanyan registered of them 4500 monumental units (see Այվազյան Ա., Նախիջևանի ԻՍՍՀ հայկական հուշարձանները (համահավաք ցուցակ), Երևան, 1986, էջ 11, see also Nakhijevan: Atlas. Text by S. Karapetyan; RAA, Yerevan, 2012). During several decades Azerbaijani savages destroyed in Nakhijevan more than 27 thousand monuments <http://mamul.am/en/video/26644253/> (ed.).

... During the Supreme Council sessions the USSR People's Deputies discussed all issues related to Karabakh, Nakhijevan, Sumgayit, Baku, Kirovabad and Shushi only behind closed doors, without journalists. The Congresses were the only exceptions. I appeared in the first Congress, proposing to correct the absurdity which consisted in the fact that among the thirty-eight autonomous entities in the Soviet Union only the two Armenian ones, Nakhijevan and Karabakh, bore names based not on national characteristics, as required by the Constitution, but geographical ones. Hundreds of deputies supported my fully logical proposal. To no avail. Only years later, Yevgeny Primakov, the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the USSR, who often received in his office the Armenian envoys from NKAO, said that during the discussion on the issue of the logical naming of Karabakh and Nakhijevan Gorbachev had said, "Logic for logic's sake, yet you cannot avoid headache."



Church of the Holy Mother of God, Tsgzna

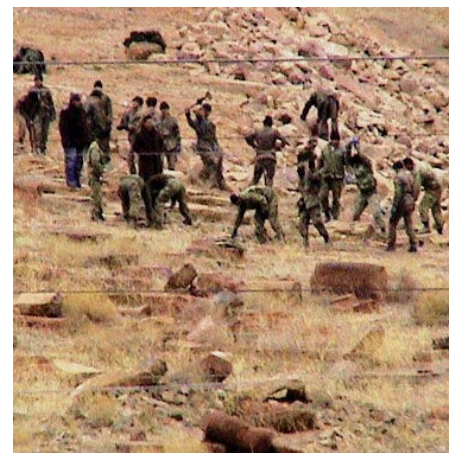


St Gevorg Church, Nakhijevan
(at present destroyed by Azerbaijani savages)

... In September 1990, in Moscow, Academician Viktor Hambardzumyan and I (as People's Deputies of the USSR) received a large group of our compatriots from Nakhijevan. They were essentially "the last of the Mohicans" - Armenians who were deprived of their Homeland. They talked about how in Nakhijevan the Azerbaijani, with blatant impudence and without a fear of punishment, broke, destroyed and even blew up everything that was Armenian.



Jugha khachkars



Destruction of Jugha khachkars by
Azerbaijani savages

Our compatriots were talking not only about the tombstone *khachkars* (cross stones) in Jugha, but also about all the towns and villages having being deprived of the native Armenian population. Over time, as all of our guests told gasping with heartache, it got worse, because the Azerbaijanis continued killing Armenians only because they were Armenians, and destroying Armenian cultural masterpieces not at night any longer but in broad daylight and before everyone's eyes. It was a real genocide. And Victor Hambardzumyan constantly spoke about the meeting with the Armenians from Nakhijevan, and unassailably repeated: "A genocide is happening in Nakhijevan and we maintain silence".

BUT WE WERE NOT SILENT. WE SPOKE. WE WROTE. WE APPEARED. WE WERE SENDING formal appeals to the Director-General of UNESCO Federico Mayor demanding stubbornly to establish an international commission to save the ancient Armenian historical and cultural monuments in Nakhijevan including (in the first place) the true masterpieces of the world Christian cathedral architecture. And, of course, we realised deeply that we should demand and act at the level of the entire people, all of Armenia and the whole world. For it was really a genocide.

...On January 28 1998 President H. Aliyev, not just at a meeting but at the session of the Constitutional Commission, not in the Azerbaijani language but in Russian, for the special purpose of replicating the text, made an impertinent and cynical statement full of falsifications: "The lands around Nakhijevan were also Azerbaijani lands, but, despite this, Armenians lived there, just the way they had seized other lands, for example, some lands on the territory of present day Turkey, or Azerbaijani lands - Zangezur region which separates Nakhijevan from Azerbaijan. If we had taken Zangezur then, perhaps Nakhijevan would not need autonomy ..." H. Aliyev did not fail to speak about Azerbaijani 'losses' like "Gafan (Kapan - Z. B.) and Meghri regions and even Erivan (Yerevan)". I emphasize that all of this was happening when the OSCE Minsk Group on the settlement of the Karabakh conflict was already operating.

UNESCO's deaf silence and our unforgivable passivity allowed Aliyev-Junior to totally destroy the last three thousand khachkars of Jugha - masterpieces that were shattered and transported by rail in open railway wagons. And UNESCO, one of the main UN agencies, was silent this time too. No masterpieces, no problems? Too much Turkish style. But even if not a single Armenian, not a temple, not a khachkar remains on the native land of Armenians, it does not mean that Nakhijevan is not Armenian, because we are not talking about land or about territory, but about Homeland.

... Throughout the Soviet period unbearable living conditions were being constantly and deliberately created for the native Armenian population of Nakhijevan. The Armenian population was deprived of contacts with their relatives in Armenian SSR, which forced many families to move there and other republics of the USSR.

Yet, Article II of the UN General Assembly's Convention states that "genocide means ... (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part."

AND SO, THE ARMENIAN AUTONOMOUS REPUBLIC OF NAKHIJEVAN was deliberately left without Armenians and anything Armenian: language, traditions, national holidays, historical monuments ... And the world was silent. Perhaps that was the reason that Aliyev-Senior brazenly admitted: "Nakhijevan's autonomy is a very serious factor that could help address the issue of return of the other lost lands (? - Z. B) and serve that purpose. Nakhijevan's autonomy is a historical event in terms of creating Azerbaijan's and Nakhijevan's border with Turkey."

Here's the crux of the matter. Today we, instead of addressing the issue of the genocide of the Armenian people of Nakhijevan on the planetary level, allow the liberated territories of Artsakh, part of historical Armenia, to be deemed as "disputed", thus turning them into a subject of bargaining. Meanwhile, before the October Revolution all of the Armenian territories liberated at the cost of much blood were without exception part, I repeat, of historical Armenia. As to Nakhijevan, I suggest to read the authoritative Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary: "Nakhijevan - according to ancient Armenians, Naksuana - according to classical authors, a district in the province of Erivan... on the foothills of the Karabakh highlands"³.

After the signing of the Treaties of Gulistan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828) the most part of Eastern Armenia was incorporated into the Russian Empire. So, all the talks about artificially formed "Azerbaijan" as such, can only be from the mid 1918 and after its Sovietization (April 28, 1920). In 1921 were signed unlawful treaties of Moscow and Kars (1921) at the expense of the Armenian territories [Kars region, Ardahan, Mt.Ararat, Ani, Surmalu (Surb Mari) uezd, Nakhijevan, etc.]⁴. It was a gift of Lenin and Stalin to Ataturk, who, incidentally, years later frankly admitted: "We accelerated the establishment of ties with the Bolsheviks, hoping that, if successful, we would destroy the Armenian state, which is an abscess on the body of our country." Do many of us know about this today?

In Volume I (1904) of the 22-volume Encyclopedia by S. N. Yuzhakov the word "Azerbaijan" is written not where the Republic of Azerbaijan is denoted in modern encyclopaedic publications. There are several historical provinces in the northern part of Persia. One of them (I quote) is "Aderbaijan"⁵ inhabited by Turks and Kurds living a nomadic way of life". Meanwhile, the Kurds in low-lying areas are engaged in agriculture, but the Turks ("Aderbeijanians") are only "nomads".

During the Soviet period in different parts of artificially formed "Azerbaijan" along with the indigenous Armenians, the original owners of the Armenian lands with their thousands of Christian churches (many of which were destroyed in Soviet and post-Soviet times by the Azerbaijani savages and only due to the liberation struggle of the

³ Энциклопедический словарь, том XX, изд. Ф.А.Брокгауз, И.А.Ефрон, С. Петербург, 1897, стр. 704.

⁴ On the other hand, original Armenian territory of Mountainous Artsakh (Karabakh) was annexed to Azerbaijan SSR by the unlawful decision of Kavburo (Yuly 5, 1921).

⁵ Ancient Atropatene (according to Greek and Latin sources)-Atrpatakan (according to medieaval Armenian sources) in north-western Iran, to the south-east of Lake Urmia.

Armenian people historical monuments have been saved in the Artsakh Republic), also lived different (mostly called “Azerbaijanis”), indigenous Caucasian peoples - Lezgins, Budukhs, Khinalugs etc., as well as Iranian peoples - Talysh, Tats, and alien Kurds and Turks⁶. It is an indisputable fact. As for Azerbaijani ‘arithmetic’, as the Kurdish scholar Shakro Mgon wrote, “The Azerbaijani leadership deliberately substitutes religious identity for the national one”. In other words, all the representatives of the Muslim peoples (who were converted to Islam) living in Azerbaijan as in Soviet times, at present also are artificially turned into “Azerbaijanis”, the Turkic part of which not long ago they called ‘Turks’ or “Caucasian Tatars”.

... IN ORDER FOR THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND the issue of the genocide of Armenians in Nakhijevan, it should fully comprehend what happened to Artsakh (Karabakh) some years after the October Revolution. The collapse of the USSR, of course, gave Azerbaijan the opportunity to finally devastate stubborn Artsakh. In fact, Baku started an undeclared war. But at the cost of heavy losses we liberated some (not all!) parts of our Homeland, which before the October Revolution were part of unified Armenia, and which, of course, included the future NKAO with intricate borders. Azerbaijani cartographers regularly narrowed the map of Karabakh. And not only the map. In the heroically liberated regions – Lachin (Berdazdor), Karvachar, Kubatlu (Vorotan), Zangilan (Kovsakan), Jabrail (Mekhakavan), Fizuli (Varanda), Aghdam (Akna) only traces were left of historical Armenia. The picture was the same on the vast territories of Yelizavetpol province, historical Gardmanq, Gulistan province (Shahumyan region, legendary Getashen and Martunashen), in the magic village of Marshals Baghramyan and Babajanyan Chardakhlu where overall there were about eight hundred temples, churches, chapels, hundreds and hundreds of cemeteries with their thousands and thousands of stone crosses. And after all of that today they demand to “liberate” the seven historical Armenian regions which made up one entirety before the Soviet power. It was later, under Stalin, that the splitting into regions was carried out. So, the tragedy came to Eastern Armenia some time after the October Revolution. Incidentally, Russian President V. Putin wrote about a analogous tragedy: “After the revolution, the Bolsheviks, for various reasons, may God be their judge, joined considerable territories of the historical south of Russia to the Ukrainian Union Republic. This was done without taking into account the national composition of the population”⁷.

With regard to NKAO, back in 1930 the Primate of the Artsakh Diocese Bishop Vrtanes sent a telegram to Echmiadzin through a courier: “We were first told that under the program of state atheism they would destroy only every other church, but they destroyed almost all. Due to the insistant urging of Karabakh leaders they kept only several half-ruined temples, including Amaras (4th century), Dadivank (9th century)⁸,

⁶ http://www.ecmi.de/uploads/tx_lfpubdb/ECMI_Europabuch_2011_Vol_1_Internet.pdf

⁷ http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?doc_itself=&&nd=102367453&&page=1&rdk=0#I0

⁸ According to the ecclesiastical tradition, the monastery Dadivank was founded in the I century by Dadi, a disciple of the Apostle Thaddeus. His relics were found during archaeological excavations in 2007.

Gandzasar (13th century) and Holy Savior Church in Shoushi (19th century). Thus, 112 churches and 17 temples were destroyed”⁹.

I will note that since the first days of Liberation of Karabakh (1994) through the efforts of the Primate of the Artsakh Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church Archbishop Pargev Martirosyan, more than seventy churches have been restored in all parts of the liberated Homeland. Their revival continues today.



St. Hovhannes Mkrtych Church (1216-1238).
Gandzasar



The Cathedral of Christ the Holy Savior (1868-1887),
Shushi

Nevertheless, the leaders of Turkey and Azerbaijan (I mention Turkey in the first place because in 1921 all the documents in Moscow and Kars were signed exclusively by the Turks), desecrating Armenian history, call the liberated part of the Homeland of Armenians “occupied territory”. In a similar context, back in 2006 the Russian President V. V. Putin raised the important issue of the necessity for active “protection of historical truth”. And Russia took action. A high-level special commission was created to counter the “increasingly aggressive attempts to rewrite history to the detriment of Russia.” Armenia is facing exactly the same problem.

IS IT BY MERE CHANCE THAT ONLY IN ORDER to force the word “Azerbaijan” into history, Aliyev-Senior. in 1998 legislatively fixed a special date of the “genocide”... of Azerbaijanis on March 31. According to Aliyev, it turns out that the Bolsheviks headed by Vladimir Lenin and the Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars of Baku, Stepan Shahumyan (an Armenian was required for the absurd lie) as if “committed a genocide in March 1918, killing a total of five hundred thousand Azerbaijanis”. By the way there is a large map of the Transcaucasus on the wall of Lenin’s apartment in the Kremlin (currently a museum) (I have seen it with my own eyes), where there is no “Azerbaijan”. Only Armenia and Georgia. Meanwhile today the whole Azerbaijani people, especially the young generation, believe all this nonsense about the alleged “genocide” in Azerbaijan in 1918.

Indeed, in early 1918 there was a terrible massacre of 2,000 soldiers near the stations Elizavetopol and Shamkhor (and, in fact - a genocide) only because they were

⁹ The Azerbaijan SSR’s authorities carried out policy of systematical destruction of Armenian cultural heritage; it continued also during military operations unleashed by aggressive Azerbaijan against Artsakh after declaration of independence and establishment of the Artsakh Republic (September 2, 1991). Azerbaijani savages altogether destroyed 167 churches, 8 monastic complexes, 123 Armenian historic cemeteries, 47 settlements, 2500 cross-stones and more than 10000 gravestones, 13 historical archaeological monuments <https://goo.gl/aLnGqL>

Russians¹⁰. In those days the Russian pogroms continued at Aghstafa, Dallar, Yevlakh and Khachmas stations. The immediate supervisors of the Russian pogroms were the members of the Muslim National Council of the Caucasian Tatars A. Ziyatkhanov, A. Sofikyursky, L. Magalov and M. Rustambekov (the latter, incidentally, was the organiser of the Armenian pogroms in Nukhi, Arish and other regions). In September of the same year the genocide against Armenians was committed in Baku by the Turkish regular troops and gangs of Caucasian Tatars. This is what actually happened in 1918. And, after all of this, a top Russian official, while in Baku, solemnly declared about some centuries-old friendship between Russia and Azerbaijan. Friendship, let's imagine, but "centuries-old" is a historical nonsense!

... I respect the leaders of the co-chairs of the Minsk Group on settlement of the Mountainous-Karabakh conflict. But I can not understand why as soon as Azerbaijan, violating the ceasefire agreements of 1994 and 1995, once again organized the barbarous adventure on the night of April 2nd, 2016, the Presidents and Foreign Ministers of the co-chair states set their minds to actively speeding up the solution to the issue. Instead, they should have punished the barbarians and instigators in the first place. The horrors of the April morning were nothing new. After the Bishkek agreements since the early days, during all the 22 years without exception, the Azerbaijanis fired, even with rockets, not only at the villages and towns of Karabakh, but also the settlements of the Republic of Armenia which is a member of the UN. And all this time, the world was silent.

IN 2004 IN BUDAPEST, AT NIGHT AN AZERI OFFICER cut off with an axe the head of the Armenian officer Gurgen Margaryan while he was sleeping, only because he was Armenian. It seemed that would be the worst of all crimes. And the court of Budapest ruled, "for life". A few years later, the President of Azerbaijan fished the cutthroat out (not for his beautiful eyes). But it was not enough. The cutthroat (literally) was not only freed, but solemnly received with flowers during a merry holiday organised by the President of Azerbaijan himself. Before the eyes of the whole world, the barbarian was made not merely a hero but a role model for young people. And so it happened.

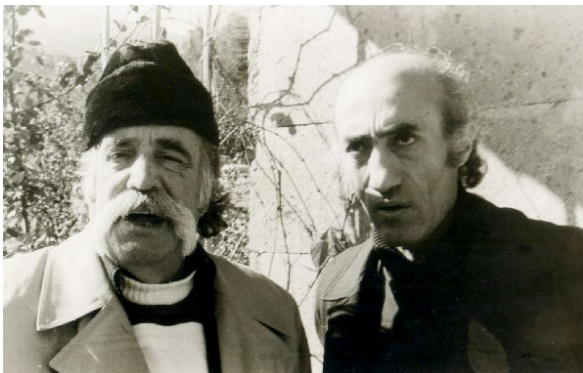
During those bloody days in April 2016 an Azerbaijani military serviceman, so to say, went farther than his "Budapest teacher". He did not just cut off the head of the 20-year old Armenian soldier of Yezidi ethnicity Kyaram Sloyan. It is difficult to imagine how in this age, a man in uniform, like the ISIS thugs, can carry in his hands a severed head (may the reader forgive me for the forced naturalism) and display it under the blustering of the crowd. The cynicism was repeated: the same person, the President of Azerbaijan, again in a festive atmosphere and with a smile on his face, handed the cutthroat the highest decoration of Azerbaijan. This monstrous cynicism was shown on Azerbaijani television.

And the world continues to keep silent. The co-chair countries' Presidents and Foreign Ministers, ignoring this whole nightmare, just now suddenly come to the conclusion that the problem of Artsakh should be solved as quickly as possible, based

¹⁰ In Soviet times it was forbidden to write about this.

on the documents of 1994-95. Yet what was going on in and around Karabakh at the time is well known: it is well known who began the war and how the war ended in 1994. As it is known, the victorious Armenian army was to return (by the way, without bloodshed) the Armenian villages of Erkej, Buzlukh and Manashid occupied by the Azerbaijanis, eleven villages in Shahumyan region, legendary Getashen, Martunashen and many others which were experiencing the tragic fate of Nakhijevan. But, someone at the top suspended the attempt to rescue parts of our country and our compatriots.

Therefore, I am deeply convinced that we should sit down at the negotiating table only when we know exactly how the realities will develop after the ink dries on the paper, as the legitimacy of the formation of the Republic of Mountainous Karabakh (NKR) with the liberated Armenian historical regions is beyond doubt.



William Saroyan and Hrant Matevosyan



William Saroyan and Zori Balayan

... The great Armenian and American writer William Saroyan, with whom I was fortunate enough to make long trips in Armenia, Russia and the Baltic States, once said in the presence of his favourite famous writer Hrant Matevosyan: "I was born in Fresno. Since my childhood I had been thinking that America was my Homeland. But when, as a mature writer I visited the home of my parents and ancestors in Bitlis (Baghesh), I realised that Bitlis is my Homeland where currently Turks live. Since then I became a different person. I agree with Goethe, who believed that "the true courage of enlightened nations is in their readiness to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their Homeland". The same thing is happening to all of my compatriots who are scattered across all the five continents."

... During half a century I visited almost all the Armenian communities in all the five continents. And everywhere I became convinced that, indeed, there is no nobler sickness than homesickness. This illness is chronic. Probably it will never disappear for Armenians. However, this does not mean that we are talking about coming to terms with the loss of our historical Homeland. I am deeply convinced that our people just do not have the right to become prisoner to the "phenomenon of a fait accompli", as if it is too late, as if the train has left, as if it is useless act.

On the contrary. All we need to do is act. It is time for us to know and tell the world that there is no Karabakh problem. There is the problem of Azerbaijan, which committed the monstrous genocide of native Armenians of Nakhijevan. The true apartheid lies not

only in depriving people of their political, social, economic and civil rights, but also in depriving them of their national identity, and even in territorial isolation.

Article 1 of the Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to Crimes Against Humanity begins with a loud line: "No statutory limitation shall apply to the crimes, irrespective of the date of their commission." It is important that numerous logically verified provisions of the UN General Assembly' Convention "do not provide for any exception in any case." This means that, pursuant to Articles VIII and IX of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Armenia, i.e. the National Assembly, in accordance with the provisions of the UN Charter, shall have the right to apply to the United Nations with the lawful claim to "take all necessary measures". And this implies that, in accordance with the said Article IX, "the disputes shall be submitted to the International Court of Justice". It should be emphasized that in the case of Nakhijevan, "attempt to commit genocide and complicity in genocide" shall be punishable.

Thus, the genocide had been committed in Nakhijevan before the eyes of all the generations of Soviet times since the 20s of the 20th century. The last several thousands of Nakhijevani Armenians were deported in 1991. And the last thousands of sacred khachkars were smashed into pieces and taken out in open railway wagons in the beginning of the third millennium. I will repeat myself: *khachkars* - masterpieces of small architecture, first and foremost are tombstones, beneath which lie the remains of the ancestors of Armenians, the ancestors of geniuses like Komitas and Aram Khachaturian and many thousands of talented Nakhijevani Armenians. I think very few people know that in this sacred place for Armenians the Azerbaijani barbarians have now established a military training ground, a combat firing range.

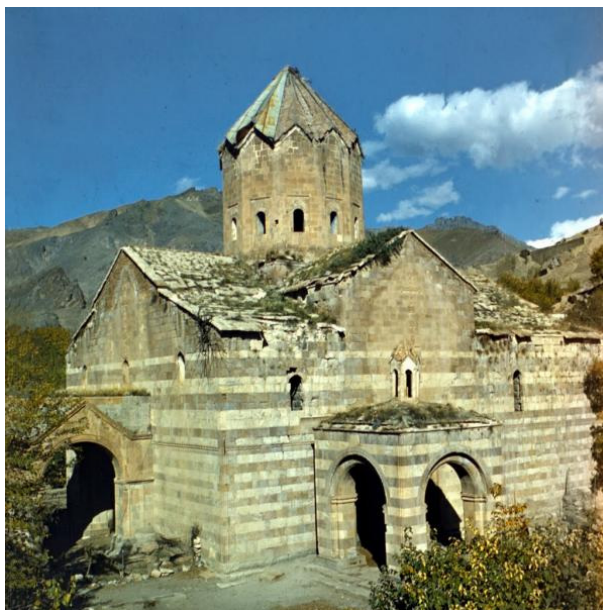
We should not keep silent. We need to raise our voices! We need to act!

P.S. I have stepped into the ninth decade of my life. In 1937 I lost my father who was the People's Commissar of Education of Mountainous Karabakh and was condemned as "an enemy of the people." I was raised by my grandfather who lost three sons in the first two years of the war. I served in the Baltic Fleet for four years. I graduated from Ryazan Medical Institute. I worked as a doctor in Kamchatka for ten years. I was awarded the Medal for Excellence in Healthcare by the Minister of Health of the USSR. I worked as an own correspondent of 'Literary Gazette' in Armenia for forty years. I wrote about eighty books. To me the main ones among these are "Between Hell and Heaven" about the Karabakh war and "Vanquishing Death" about the tragic fate of my parents in GULAG ("Main Administration of Corrective Labor Camps"). I was a People's Deputy of the USSR, and all my speeches at the Congresses and sessions focused exclusively on the fate of Nakhijevan and Artsakh (Karabakh).

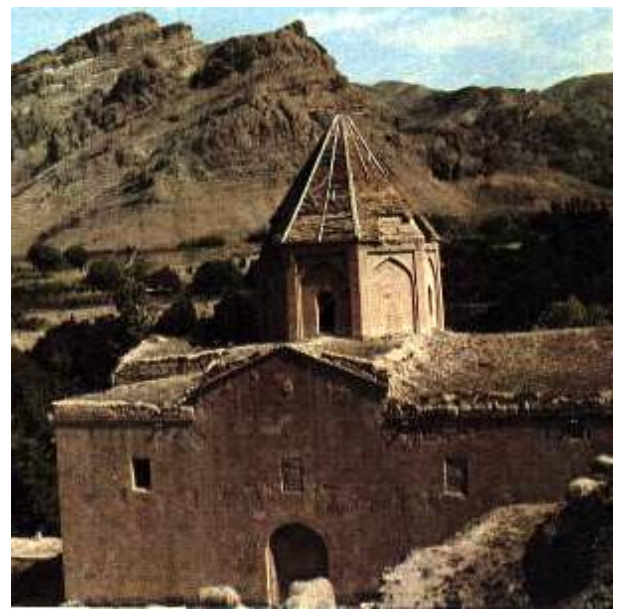
I MUST SAY COMPETENTLY THAT AFTER THE END OF KARABAKH WAR and the adoption of Bishkek so-called peace agreement, the Presidents of the co-chair countries changed three times. And, of course, no matter how carefully they may have studied the issue, they may still not know a lot, the main thing, the details. For those who possess the entire volume of information, it is clear: one can proceed to the issue

of Artsakh only after imposing sanctions on Azerbaijan for the genocide in Nakhijevan, through the legitimate application of the UN General Assembly's Convention.

In the current difficult situation, I urge and advise all the three Presidents, before undertaking the final solution of the problem, no matter how naive it may sound, to visit Artsakh. Visit the monastery of Amaras which has seen one and a half thousand calamities and misfortunes during one and a half thousand years. It was there that the inventor of the Armenian alphabet St. Mesrop Mashtots opened the first school where Armenians in Armenia first learned to write and read with the thirty-six sacred Mesropian letters. It is remarkable and exciting (especially today) that Mashtots took his thirty-six letters that people had called soldiers first to the town of Agulis in Nakhijevan (! Z.B.) where twelve majestic Armenian Christian churches and cathedrals were erected throughout the centuries.



St Thomas the Apostle Monastery of Agulis.



**St. Christophor Church of Agulis
(at present destroyed by Azerbaijani savages)**

Mashtots as if predicted that the vandals would destroy Agulis. And he opened his own school in Amaras of Artsakh. The monastery of Amaras was always the target of the vandals, especially during the Artsakh war. Everything was restored and recreated after the victory.

... A little farther from Amaras there is the village of Machkalashen where until recently a truly saintly woman, mother Raya, lived. At the funeral of her son (I was there together with the Speaker of the House of Lords Baroness Cox and the Russian writer Andrei Nuykin) she said, addressing the people:

"Today I sacrifice my second son who gave his life for his Motherland, for Amaras. But God forbid, if you allow the enemy to commit sacrilege again and to freely desecrate the graves of our ancestors and our children and our holy Amaras again".

**Translated from Armenian
by V. M. Gharakhanyan**