

Zamanov D.I.,
Colonel of Police retired, member of the IOLR

H.A. Aliyev's school of fighting against corruption

Whoever and whatever is said but a period when H.A. Aliyev was in power from 1966 to 2003 had been a time of real fierce and effective fight against corruption in Azerbaijan. The state would be entangled in abyss of chaos and lawlessness if it was not that fighting.

I am writing about it not to make cheap points but in order to determine lost and forgotten, to remember and use an experience of professionals and government officials for the real fight against corruption and not its imitation.

February 20, 2000, answering the questions representatives of the European Parliament from the Netherlands and Italy Joot Lagendoek, Marie-Anne-Isler Beguin, Patsu Sorensen which conditions he will use in fighting against corruption H.A. Aliyev had not sent persistent MPs away like some new figures and said the following:

“...Corruption exists in Georgia, in Azerbaijan, everywhere. If the members of the economic commission of the European Union were corruptionists and left the office, it means not only Azerbaijan or Georgia, but other countries suffer from it as well.

Why do I say it? Because some people in other countries don't see the situation and the shortcomings in their own countries, but accuse the new countries such as Azerbaijan and Georgia because of them. So I wish you to take it into consideration and see also your shortcomings.

Now I can answer your question. Corruption exists in Azerbaijan; it existed also 30 or 40 years ago. I have learned this issue in detail. Corruption has been existing since the human society and state were established. Corruption was combated too. This combat reduced but can't eliminate it completely.

Thirty years ago I began to lead Azerbaijan. Three years later my friend Shevardnadze became the head of Georgia. Of the 15 member states of the USSR in

2 countries - in Azerbaijan, later in Georgia the struggle against corruption started at the initiative of Heydar Aliyev and Eduard Shevardnadze. Mr. Shevardnadze and I are friends; we have the same devotion. I gained a lot of enemies in Azerbaijan because of the struggle against corruption. But it doesn't worry me.

Now the formation of the new economic system is under way. We need tens of years to reach the level of Belgium, Italy or France. Now we are going on this way.

In the period of transition, more suitable conditions appear for corruption.

You should know that the problem of corruption really worries me. All my life I have been struggling against it. I'll keep struggling. It has various forms. Some think as if there will be no corruption after the establishment of the market economy. Japan has the market economy; it has corruption as well. Several ministers in Japan and Italy resigned because of corruption.

Joot Lagendoek: You are quite right.

Heydar Aliyev: I am right indeed. Thinking as if we'll have no corruption after the transformation into the market economy and privatization is just a dream, not reality.

Each issue has theoretical and practical sides. Some approach this issue only theoretically. Probably, they are not deep into life. But people who know the life and realities perceive how hard this problem is for a nation, a society and a state. It is necessary to struggle against it. But it is also wrong to think as if there is no corruption any more.

Sometimes non-governmental organizations in different countries make lists of countries and place them due to corruption. But on which principle? They all are based on subjective judgment. Some think that there is corruption in their country, some don't. Thus, those data are non-objective and subjective.

I can say that we are aware of the existence of corruption in Azerbaijan; there is nothing new when somebody tells us about it. We know it. We struggle against it, but there is no remarkable result yet. But we'll not yield. We'll keep struggling.

Perhaps after the realization of reforms, corruption will decrease. But it is wrong to hope that it will be completely eliminated. Perhaps it is so in your country. I wish I could see it in my country.

Joot Lagendoek: Mr. President, I invite you to our country.

Heydar Aliyev: Then I'll come and show the facts of corruption in your country. Understand me well. I am speaking to you sincerely. Answering your question seriously, I say that we have corruption in Azerbaijan indeed and we struggle against it. We'd eliminate it at all in a year or two if it is possible. Then both our people and I could be happy.

Patsu Sorensen: Mr. President, I understand you very well. Every country, every head of the state must combat against corruption, "money laundry", organized crime, all the types of crime and violation of human rights. We know you as an experienced diplomat. You are a good president and you have achieved a balance in your country.

During our stay here we observed that your people is a strong nation. This strong nation can bear all the difficulties. At the same time, I observed that your country has an ancient culture, prominent persons and tasty meals. During our stay we felt a friendly attitude. We also witnessed the hard lifestyle of the refugees.

Mr. President, as a diplomat I appeal to you to work with other heads of states more closely, to negotiate with them and tell this problem. Because it is hard to see such hard life of the refugees; it is our duty to ensure a better future for them. Maybe we should think of it together with you.

Heydar Aliyev: Thank you for your words about Azerbaijan, our nation and me.

What worries us? For over 8 years, people driven out from their homes have been living in tents. Perhaps there is no other country where of one million population out of 8 live in tents. I don't know if you have seen the tent camps. You have visited the refugees living in them; if you visit the camps, you'll leave them with tears.

Sometimes our guests visit those tents. After they return, I feel how impressed they are.

I have a friend who is a great musician. It is Mstislav Rostropovich; he is well-known also in Europe. He is a friend of President Jacques Chirac, too. Both Mr. Chirac and I call him just Slava. While being here he wanted to see the refugees. He went to the refugee camps by a helicopter. I met him in the evening when he returned. You should have seen his tears. He said if a human could live in such conditions.

Another example. Zbigniew Brzezinski, former advisor of the USA president on security issues, a prominent politician, and he has visited the refugees camp in Africa, Afghanistan, India, he came here, too. On his own will he visited the refugees camp. When we met that evening he expressed his impressions saying that he had visited many refugees camps, but had never seen such terrible conditions.

You are right. I should negotiate to other heads of states about it; they can help us. Actually, I have done it several times.

A few days ago - on the 15th I met President Bill Clinton in the White House. It was probably our tenth meeting within the recent 5-6 years. I told him these problems in every meeting.

I meet Mr. Chirac often. I've invited him to come here. He is planning to visit us. We submit them books, photos, cassettes to show the real situation. I have met some of the Swiss presidents and told about it.

I paid an official visit to Italy at the invitation of President Scalfaro. Prodi was the Premier then. I told also him about it.

I have negotiated with many heads of states, including the ex-President of Germany, Chancellor Kohl, the former Prime Minister and Foreign Ministers of Great Britain. France, Italy, Germany, Great Britain, the US and other countries have embassies here. Their ambassadors visit the refugee camps. I mean that we inform the heads of states, the politicians and officials of the international organizations. They understand the issue, but don't take effective measures for its solution. It is the problem.

Peer Gahrton: Mr. President, I thank you for this meeting. Thank you for your answers. I see that you are well informed of the European Union, its commissars and

why and because of which mistakes they left their offices. We wish to be informed of Azerbaijan.

Meeting you we end our visit to Azerbaijan. The facts you gave us will be added to our facts. We`ll further cooperate with you effectively.

Heydar Aliyev: Thank you. I am satisfied of meeting with you. I appreciate your visit to Azerbaijan, your attention to our country and our nation. I thank the lady for her nice words about the Azerbaijani people, our culture, even our meals. I hope that we`ll cooperate with the European Union more intensively in the future. We are ready for the cooperation. We know that it is a hard task. So are your terms. But I always think that one must work in the hardest conditions in order to achieve successes. Good luck to you. Thank you”.

What can conclusions be mad from the above?

H.A. Aliyev was a realist and honestly stated an existence of corruption in Azerbaijan and the difficulties of combating it. This is a big deal; one recognizes the presence of severe illness and the need to treat it.

Studying the issue in a medical perspective one can firmly state that H.A. Aliyev was engaged in homeopathy and did not use placebo in the fight against corruption. If one read decisions of Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan after the appointment of H.A. Aliyev by the first Secretary one can ensure that his measures to fight against corruption were surgical in nature and cut out the rotting parts of the social body and had not veiled it and moreover had not transferred patients from one ward to another.

At that time medical service was a common. Patients with corruption diagnosis were treated by the same means irrespective of their material or official position, status, friendship or family ties. Orderlies, who are law enforcement personnel on the instructions of a head of state, put the same enema to patients with corruption, making no differences between owns and others.

H.A. Aliyev did not allowed in anti-corruption fighting persons affected by this disease, had watched over the observance of the diet, eliminating overeating, feeding

by bear meat and garbage from the construction of roads, fountains and other similar sources of infection.

None of the potential patients had not kept for years in one slush fund and used their knowledge and accumulated capital in areas where slush funds were absent, so had observed a certain balance of coexistence of all species of wildlife.

Those who did not want to be treated voluntarily had gone to overseas resorts.

H.A. Aliyev had always kept the situation of public health under control for which he used the knowledge and experience in other areas of work. Control made by him had had a methodical nature and excluding campaign forms of treatment. He knew everybody with poor health the name, and took care that they had not evaded preventive vaccinations.

They say that once in one of the regions of Azerbaijan H.A. Aliyev asked a little girl who presented him a bouquet of flowers whether earrings that retard her small ears were diamond. He had received the answer that this was cubic zirconia. Then H.A. Aliyev applied to the Secretary of the District Committee: “You have a good knowledge in diamonds, is it cubic zirconia or real diamond?” Poor fellow-secretary in that day came down with a heart attack and being ready to treatment other diseases also.

At one of meetings seeing numerous upraised arms of voters, H.A. Aliyev asked their owners who were paying imported expensive watches. On the same day native “Rocket”, “Glory” and other similar watches in steel (just not yellow like gold) packages had gone from the shelves of all stores in Azerbaijan.

H.A. Aliyev was modest at home and undemanding, respect others and appreciate these qualities in them. From respect to him, all officials bought few the same clothes in order to people thought about their humility and honesty. However, with the H.A. Aliyev such tricks had not passed and one day he asked one such know-all: “What material is your suit. The holes disappeared in it. In past your visit there was a hole from a cigarette in it and had gone now”.

H.A. Aliyev's anti-corruption school has hundreds of such examples which should be the subject of careful study.

It is possible that above is a little bit exaggerated. Quite a bit, but essence is the same: we have forgotten the lessons of H.A. Aliyev in fighting against corruption, though following them but not ostentatious love of our officials would be the best signs of respect to the outstanding personality – Master, Man, Leader and Citizen.