

MEMOIRS OF HEYDER ALIYEV

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I want to thank you for the opportunity to share my memoirs of Heyder Aliyev during these 100 anniversaries of his birth. This remarkable man richly deserves the adoration, honor, and respect for the superb leadership he provided to Azerbaijan and to the Caucasus in general. his influence was felt beyond these borders, especially in the Middle East.

I first met Heyder Aliyev' in 1992 when he was chairman of the parliament. I was a representative of a the "Jewish Agency" to the Caucasus. though my office was in Baku he was in Nakhichevan. He gave me a lavish welcome and quickly formed a friendship that would continue through his presidency of Azerbaijan from 1993 till 1998.

I was so impressed by his openness, his knowledge, his goals and his concerns for the well-being of the population. All the journey back to Baku, I kept telling myself how lucky I had been to be friends with such a man.

I continued to visit him over the years. We discussed global and local topics as well as personal feelings for instance situation of 850,000 Azeri refugees from the struggle with Armenia caused him great pain.

He never refused to help me. he would happily meet dignitaries from Israel who I wanted him to meet and of course to meet him. He often asked my opinion About events in the Middle East and about Caucuses too, since I was very much familiar and educated about the area.

We also had many values in common. having been born and educated in Georgia my value such as a motherland, family and loyalty were important to us both.

Heyder was also close to the Jewish population. He was very interested in Judaism and history of the Jewish people. He was extremely proud that Azerbaijan has never experienced pogroms or other antisemitic occurrences. he was most interested in Israeli politics, economy, and society, I was therefor a good source for him at any time. I also tried to make him known in our state department, and in Israeli public in general. He's connections in the Arab world was also a good source for me.

As a person Heyder Aliyev was above the ordinary. He was interested in people, He wanted to know all about them, and to be open to them. He thought ahead about the future and about the future of society. He took gratification by the success of others.

He was interested much into arts, and other discipline such as science and history. The Aliyev center is an example of his influence. he had time for people.

Heyder Aliyev loved his nation. His greatest concern was their well-being, Their health, education, opportunities and happiness. We see this in the present way of life. Azerbaijan is a developing, advanced, modern country.

It reflects the wisdom of Heyder and his son İlham, who is skillfully guiding Azerbaijan into the modern world. It is such a pleasure for me to see this evaluation.

Yes, he loved his people as they loved him, as demonstrated by this year of celebrations.

No, I cannot forget Heyder Aliyev. He is one of the most important and dynamic people I have I had the good fortune of knowing. I can imagine the two of us having a long conversation over coffee for hours on end. he said to me, you and I have built a bridge of trust. We must do this to our two countries.

He was, as a Hebrew expression "A Mentch- Ben Adam" - a real man. A good human being.

Indeed, Azerbaijan you were blessed to have had such fantastic leadership, guidance and direction. Take care of it.