A GREAT FRIEND OF PAINTERS

There are personalities that gain popular love in their lifetime and become dear to everyone, of course, for the good deeps and love for their homeland and nation... The first secretary of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan (1969-1892), Heydar Aliyev, who subsequently served as president of the Azerbaijan Republic (1993-2003), was one of such happy people. In his lifetime, people of different professions regarded Heydar Aliyev as dear to themselves. In this sense, painters, who were in love with beauty, were no exception. This was also due to the fact that Heydar Aliyev studied at the faculty of architecture of the Azerbaijan Industrial Institute for some time and was engaged in painting.

We will not be wrong if we say that Heydar Aliyev’s leadership in the republic from 1969 allowed him to exert influence on the settlement of unpleasant problems facing our national painting art “within the socialist ideological framework.” Heydar Aliyev, who could not accept the fact that in the Soviet period,
there was no exhibition hall that would meet modern requirements in a big city like Baku, first of all decided to establish such a center of culture. A spacious and bright exhibition hall opened in the 1970s on two floors of a multi-story building near the Government House where prominent intellectuals lived. After a short while, this place was named after painter Sattar Bahlulzada who glorified Azerbaijani nature. Heydar Aliyev, who personally attended the opening of interesting exhibitions here, became convinced that the numerous painters of our republic had a wonderful hall to exhibit their works.

Being well-aware that the studios in the Painters’ House, which
was built on Inshaatchilar Avenue in the capital in the late 1950s, were not enough for artists, Heydar Aliyev also thought about improving the working conditions for painters. On his instruction, two five-story four-block buildings-studios were built and handed over to painters in the Ahmadli residential estate in 1978 and in the 4th microdistrict in the 1990s. Now about 300 painters and sculptors are engaged in creative work in these buildings. In the years of independence, Heydar Aliyev signed an order to hand over all studios leased by painters to them for ownership free of charge.

Sensing that the financial situation of painters was difficult after the collapse of the socialist economic system, Heydar Aliyev assigned a special presidential stipend to various generations of painters, increased the amount of the fees for their works and issued an instruction to increase the number of business trips and exhibitions in foreign countries. **In a word, every decision and order concerning those working in the sphere of painting art was aimed at the survival, development and international promotion of Azerbaijani arts.**

Growing a new generation of painters was one of the issues prioritized by the head of state. Although there were the Baku Painting College and the University of Culture and Arts, he wished for many years
to open an institution of higher education in Baku, which would give young people academic education, and was able to implement his dream in 2000. The Azerbaijani State Painting Academy, which opened in 2001, is demonstrating that the spiritual bridge between its talented students educated during this period and creative generations is strengthening at the desired level.

Heydar Aliyev considered it important to value the artistic contributions of creative people to Azerbaijani arts. Hundreds of painters and sculptors were given honorary names and dozens of creative people were granted state awards. The memory of painters who contributed to the development of our national culture was immortalized. Today the streets of Baku and other population centers bear the names of Sultan Mahammad, Azim Azimzada, Sattar Bahlulzada, Kazim Kazimzada, Talat Shikhaliyev, Salam Salamzada and other artists. The buildings where they lived are decorated with commemorative plaques. The erection of monuments to Azim Azimzada and Sattar Bahlulzada and the opening of their home museums in the capital and in the village of Amiran are examples of respects for the memory of the prominent artists.

During his speech at a ceremony to mark the 85th birth anniversary of the people’s painter Sattar Bahlulzada in 1994, Heydar Aliyev said: “By marking the jubilee of Sattar Bahlulzada, we demonstrate our respect for all artists and painters. With a great feeling of pride, we can say that in the 20th century, the Azerbaijani painting school and Azerbaijani painters took a prominent place in the world. We are proud of this. We should take care of the works of all our painters and create conditions for them to create wonderful works.”

It is natural that our painters and sculptors are giving an artistic look to the bright actions of Heydar Aliyev. The first work dedicated to him and publicized is a bust erected in the Soviet period in his home town of Nakhchivan. The fact that this sculpture, created by prominent sculptor and Hero of Socialist Labor Eldar Omarov, was erected in Heydar Aliyev’s lifetime was because he was granted the title of Hero of Socialist Labor twice. According to the then laws, it was allowed to erect a monument to a person who was granted this title twice in his homeland. After that, the artist created monuments related to the personality of Heydar Aliyev several times. Eldarov is also the author of the monument to Heydar Aliyev in the Turkish city of Kars and the monument installed on his grave at the Alley of Honor after his death. In those monuments, the positive features of the prominent statesman were expressed in a real plastic form.

The bronze monument created by people’s painter Natig Aliyev and erected in Kiev (Ukraine) in 2004 is also a valuable piece of art that reflects the wisdom and fighting spirit characteristic of the personality of Heydar Aliyev.

Monuments to Heydar Aliyev made from different materials in various cities and district centers of our republic were created by A. Asgarov, S. Guliyev, A. Zeynalov, A. Karimov, N. Mammadov, A. Rustamov and others at different times.

Among the paintings dedicated to Heydar Aliyev, a portrait created by the prominent painter, Academician Tahir Salahov, in 1998 takes
a special place. At present, this tableau, which decorates the Azerbaijani National Museum of Arts, portrays Heydar Aliyev at work in his office. The small and big details included by the author in this composition create a memorable image of this eminent head of state.

In the artistic description of Heydar Aliyev’s image (1998) created by people’s painter Ogtay Sadigzada, the artist relied on principles of realism and was able to create a piece of art that leaves a deep impression on the viewer with its genuineness.

The tableau “Thoughts” created by the republic’s honored painter Rafael Abbasov in 1996 is regarded as one of the memorable pieces of art dedicated to Heydar Aliyev. Refusing a solemn and formal presentation, the painter portrayed Heydar Aliyev at home - looking in an unknown direction and immersed in thoughts. The simplicity of clothes and posture, the small number of details surrounding the image and compact and penetrating colors make the image simpler...

In a portrait created by prominent painter Ali Verdiyev (2008), Heydar Aliyev is shown against the background of Azerbaijani nature. The optimistic colors that characterize the horizontal composition and the picturesque panorama in fact serve to tell that the creative and reconstruction work carried out by Heydar Aliyev yielded successful results.

A tableau dedicated to the personality of Heydar Aliyev created by painter Asif Azerelli, who has enriched our national painting art with interesting works on Azerbaijani history in recent years, is called “There is no excuse for occupation!” The statesman who is shown
against the background of the map of Azerbaijan on this large composition is surrounded by photographs and documents that show the bitter results of the Karabakh tragedy and expose Armenian occupation. The words “There is no excuse for occupation!”, which the painter chose for the work, in fact reflect Heydar Aliyev’s position on the problem facing us and the tragedy experienced by our people.

The graphic work “The Great Leader” created by honored painter Ulviyya Hamzayeva (2008) also created a memorable image of Heydar Aliyev. The flags of Turkic-speaking states, material-cultural samples that symbolize the Azerbaijani people, architectural buildings and pictures of our prominent figures that make each of us proud, placed around the portrait that forms the center of the composition, make the image more comprehensive and memorable.

A memorable image of Heydar Aliyev has been created in several pieces of art dedicated to the great leader by prominent carpet-weaver and painter Eldar Mikayilzada. The artistic image created with knots and colors in those carpets and paintings is notable. In one of the carpets (2003), Heydar Aliyev is shown sitting in an arm-chair against the background of a comprehensive panorama that combines the most beautiful parts of Azerbaijan’s captivating nature. It must be noted that the carpet-weaver and painter also recreated this composition in a painting. This time the image is surrounded with various buildings constructed in the republic under his leadership and placed in the main margin of the carpet.

Among the carpets dedicated to Heydar Aliyev, we can also name two carpets created by people’s painter Kamil Aliyev at various times. One of them shows Heydar Aliyev dressed up as a general while the other shows him in civilian clothes.

The international ex-libris exhibition and competition held in Baku in 2003 to mark the 80th birthday of Heydar Aliyev was also a manifestation of interest in a prominent person who headed the republic for many years. In ex-librises sent to the competition from several countries, there were enough works that gave an artistic and compact look to the most characteristic features of many years of Heydar Aliyev’s activities. 

Ogtay Sadigzadeh, Heydar Aliyev, 1998