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NOTABLE INTELLECTUAL FROM KARABAKH

Abdurrahim Hagverdiyev

Outstanding playwright and educator, talented prose writer, thoughtful publicist and satirist, theatrical figure, musical erudite, pioneer in conducting, translator, intellectual, scientist and teacher and, in a word, versatile intellectual Abdurrahim bay Hagverdiyev was a native of the mysterious, sacred and unforgettable Karabakh... He was born into the family of an impoverished nobleman Asad bay, who served as a translator at the district administration, in the village of Agbulag 6 kilometers from the city of Shusha on 17 May 1870. Having lost his father at the age of three, the boy was raised by his stepfather Hasanali bay Sadigov, an educated man who introduced him to the Russian language and taught him how to read and write. In 1880, the family moved to Shusha, the main city of Karabakh, where Abdurrahim entered the city's six-grade school and a year later moved to a fully-fledged school. In 1890, he continued his studies in Tiflis, the then administrative and cultural center of the Caucasus. A year later, having received a certificate of maturity, he entered the Institute of Railway Engineers in St. Petersburg. While studying to be a railway engineer, he attended lectures on literature at the Eastern Faculty of St. Petersburg



University as an external student. Hagverdiyev was seriously engaged in studying Persian and Arabic, as well as oriental philology. In five years, he successfully passed all course exams and received the diploma of an oriental philologist.

The eight-year stay in St. Petersburg had a huge impact on young Abdurrahim. He became familiar with great Russian culture and, through the Russian language, to the advanced European culture. He broadened his horizons, and all this contributed to his outlook and enriched his artistic talent. He was keenly interested in theater. According to the writer himself, of the St. Petersburg theaters he was particularly attracted to the Alexandrinsky Theater: "The Alexandrinsky Theater has completely captured me. At least once a week, I went to this theater. Some weeks, I went there two or three times." In those years, the theater staged the works of Russian classics Fonvizin, Griboyedov, A. Ostrovsky, Gogol, Pushkin, Saltykov-Shchedrin and Chekhov. Such outstanding representatives of Russian theater of the time as M. Savina, M. Komissarzhevskaya, V. Davydov, K. Varlamov, M. Pisarev, M. Dalsky and I. Dalmatov acted in this theater as well. Under the beneficial influence of the St. Petersburg theatrical environment, young Abdurrahim wrote his first plays: the comedy "Eat the Goose Meat and You Will Find Out Its Taste, or The End Crowns the Matter" (1892), which ridiculed polygamy, and then the drama about a decline of the landowner economy "A Ruined Nest" (1894), which was published with the author's translation into Russian in St. Petersburg in 1899.

In 1899, Abdurrahim bay returned to Baku with two prestigious diplomas and took up creative work. He staged performances by Azerbaijani playwrights in the city's theaters and wrote his own plays. He wrote the drama "The Unhappy Young Man" (1900) and the tragedy "The Sorceress Peri" (1901). A. Hagverdiyev took an active part in public life. In 1904, he was elected a member of the city council in his native Shusha and on 20 April 1906 a deputy of the first State Duma from the Elizavetpol (as Ganja was called at the time) province. But this Duma did not last long – from 27 April to 9 July 1906 when it was dissolved by Tsar Nicholas II. Abdurrahim bay was caught up in St. Petersburg for four months, collecting material in the state library, museums and city archives for the historical tragedy he had conceived, "Aga Muhammad Shah Qajar", which he completed in Baku in 1907.

Hagverdiyev's return to his homeland coincided



Hagverdiyev at school in Shusha

with the time when the democratic satirical magazine "Molla Nasraddin" (published from 1906 to 1931) gained immense popularity. The publisher, the great democratic writer Jalil Mammadguluzadeh (1869-1932), invited Hagverdiyev to collaborate with the magazine, and the recognized playwright switched to humor and satire, from large drama works to stories, essays, short stories and one- and two-act comedies in which he proved himself as a mature and talented master. Traveling around the country, the writer observed the everyday life of his compatriots, who were still at the mercy of medieval prejudices and superstitions. He would send to the magazine caustic stories and essays, which subsequently formed the content of two significant cycles, "My deer" and "Letters from Hell". This was when his famous stories "Father and Son", "Evidence of the Moon", "Sheikh Shaban", as well as small comedies "Fantasy", "Friends of the Nation", "Hungry Guys", "Who is to blame?" were written, castigating bigots, religious fanatics and obscurantists, mercilessly criticizing and ridiculing backwardness, ignorance, tyranny and other vices of society. Abdurrahim bay Hagverdiyev became



A. Hagverdiyev (left), a student of the Institute of Railway Engineers in St. Petersburg

famous in Azerbaijani literature as a revealer. His keen, observant and inquisitive gaze covered the most diverse aspects of the life of his contemporaries.

A. Hagverdiyev is the author of many research papers in the field of theatrical art and literary criticism, including "Theater in Azerbaijan", "Folk performances and religious dramas in Azerbaijan", "Life and activities of M. F. Akhundov", "Samples of the old and new literature", "Syllabic size", "About the work The Sorceress Peri", "Life and activities of M. Gorky". A great fan and connoisseur of national music, A. Hagverdiyev was the first to organize a group of folk performers Sazandars, supervised their activities and helped to improve their performing skills. He also brought together folk singers Ashugs and invested a lot of effort in popularizing their work, understanding the importance of Ashug art for the development of national musical culture. In fact, it is worth noting that Abdurrahim bay Hagverdiyev conducted the premiere of the "Leyli and Majnun" opera at the Baku Theater of Haji Zeynalabdin Tagiyev on 25 January 1908.

A special place in Hagverdiyev's biography is occupied by his activity as the diplomatic representative of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1918-1920) in Dagestan and later in Armenia. In particular, when the government of Azerbaijan was selecting personnel for diplomatic work, it was taken into account that Hagverdiyev was very knowledgeable, spoke Russian and French, had managerial experience and was expe-

rienced in working with people (on the eve of the collapse of the empire, he worked as a newspaper editor in Tiflis; in March 1917, as a representative of the Special Transcaucasian Committee, he was sent to Borchali and, finally, was elected to the parliament of Georgia). The Special His famous speech in the Georgian parliament on 19 December 1918 regarding the Armenian attack on Georgia with the aim of capturing Borchali was published in the Georgian press.

Azerbaijan's diplomatic mission in Dagestan was established at a difficult time. Thus, the Mountain Republic was a union of the highlanders of the North Caucasus and Dagestan, which acted independently since May 1918. By the spring of 1919, the White Guard troops of General Denikin began an offensive on the Mountain Republic. At the same time, the Bolsheviks also sought to seize the region. This situation on the northern borders worried the government and parliament of Azerbaijan. On 6 March 1919, a special session of the Azerbaijani parliament decided to help Dagestan in every possible way and provide financial assistance to it. A total of 10 million rubles was allocated and the process of setting up a diplomatic mission was also accelerated.

A. Hagverdiyev was appointed as diplomatic representative in the Mountain Republic. On 28 March, he arrived in Buinaksk and on 30 March, after presenting his credentials, began working. The three-person representative office was based at the Kryanev Brothers hotel in Temirkhanshur (now Buinaksk), the then capital of the Mountain Republic. Through dozens of meetings with different people, Hagverdiyev managed to obtain detailed and reliable information about the events. The diplomatic activities of A. Hagverdiyev have not been studied sufficiently, but what is known shows how broad and fruitful his activities were. The main principle he was guided by was voiced in the following way: "The fate of Azerbaijan depends on the reliable protection of Dagestan." He believed that the unification of all peoples of Dagestan under the leadership of a government friendly to Azerbaijan would help protect the northern borders of Azerbaijan. However, the domestic situation was exacerbating in the entire North Caucasus, as the Bolsheviks and Denikin were menacingly approaching it. Under such circumstances, calls for unification with Azerbaijan gained momentum in Dagestan. As Hagverdiyev's letters and telegrams show, both the

A. Hagverdiyev. Early 1900s

Government of the Mountain Republic and its population approved of the idea of unification. Hagverdiyev managed to find reliable sources of information about the events. On 7 June 1919, Hagverdiyev wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "The encrypted telegram I received from the Ministry yesterday recommends sending only verified information. Occupying such a responsible position, I understand perfectly well the inadmissibility of sending unverified information and am aware of my responsibility."

On 16 April 1919, a meeting of the Government of the Mountain Republic decided to include Dagestan into the Azerbaijan Republic. This was an undoubted success for both the Azerbaijan Republic and its diplomatic representative who had launched a wide range of activities. However, the British, represented by the commander of the allied forces in the Caucasus, General Thomson, said that the allies unequivocally support Denikin, hope for his victory over the Bolsheviks and guarantee Azerbaijan that Denikin's troops will not move into the South Caucasus. This meant that the British would use their supporters to bring the pro-Denikin government to power. The new government of the Mountain Republic fulfilled the demand of the British and, as a result, the troops of General Denikin captured all of its territory. Hagverdiyev's letters and telegrams from this period are full of anxiety, as there were real fears that the British, who guaranteed that Denikin would stop at the demarcation line, could be playing a double game, in which case Azerbaijan's own independence would be jeopardized. Hagverdiyev provided accurate information about the concentration of Denikin's troops in the North Caucasus, as a result of which the government of Azerbaijan took urgent measures to strengthen the northern borders and create a military and political alliance with Georgia. Hagverdiyev's activities worried Denikin's leadership and on 30 June 1919, it was demanded that he return to Azerbaijan within 24 hours. Hagverdiyev left Dagestan, managing to find a carriage in the most difficult conditions and take all correspondence, documentation and property of the Embassy to Azerbaijan. A little later, the news came that the Mountain Republic completely ceased to exist.

Later, Abdurrahim bay Hagverdiyev was sent as a diplomatic representative of Azerbaijan to Armenia, where the Dashnak government, disturbed by the vigorous activities of Azerbaijani Ambassador Muhammad Khan



Tekinsky, declared him *persona non grata*. Hagverdiyev, with the energy characteristic of him and despite the most difficult working conditions, honorably fulfilled his duty until the fall of the ADR, thereby inscribing his name in the history of Azerbaijan's diplomacy.

In September 1921, Abdurrahim bay Hagverdiyev began to lecture students of the Azerbaijan State University on the history of Azerbaijani literature. His translations from the classics of world and Russian literature, including Shakespeare, Schiller, W. Scott, Zola, Andersen, Gorky, Chekhov, V. Korolenko, E. Chirikov – are still considered high-quality samples of translated literature.

All these facts clearly indicate the versatility of the interests of the noble Karabakh intellectual and honored art worker of the Azerbaijan SSR (1932) in the field of culture and art.

Until the last days of his life, this tireless worker did not give up the pen of a realist writer, the teaching department, his social and patriotic work, giving all his strength for the benefit of his people. On 11 December 1933, in the prime of his creative powers, he suddenly died of a heart attack.

The name of Abdurrahim bay Hagverdiyev, a comprehensively developed intellectual and a classic of Azerbaijani literature, occupies a worthy place among the outstanding representatives of the literature of



Intelligentsia figures of Azerbaijan A. Hagverdiyev, Rzagulu Najafov, Salman Mumtaz, Zeynal Mammadov, Aligulu Gamgusar

the East. His activities are imbued with the spirit of the people and express people's aspirations, urge people to aspire to self-improvement and exciting readers with sincerity and realism. ✨

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SPEECH OF ABDURRAHIM BAY HAGVERDIYEV, A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF GEORGIA, AT A MEETING OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL IN TIFLIS (GEORGIA) ON 19 DECEMBER 1918

Citizens, members of Parliament!

At this historic moment, I speak on behalf of the Muslim citizens of the Republic of Georgia. The Great European War is over. We were convinced that from now on there would be good relations between the peoples, most importantly between the peoples of the Caucasus. But we fell short of our expectations. The neighboring republic declared war. There was no reason for this war. All the issues between Georgians and Armenians could have been resolved peacefully. Our government was looking for solutions to these problems, as can be seen in the wires published today. But an Armenian party started this war for its own selfish purposes. I want to say that I was convinced that what happened in 1905 was carried out by a third party, but today I doubt it. When we, the Muslims, entered the parliament, we made a declaration that the Muslims living in the Republic of Georgia would defend their country from enemies to the extent necessary. Today we reiterate and repeat that it is necessary to move from words to action. A Muslim military unit has already been formed to fight the enemies of the Republic of Georgia. They are fighting not only for the independence of Georgia, but also for the independence of the entire Caucasus. Independence is valuable to some and they must protect it in every possible way. The Muslims understand this and oppose those who want to trample on the independence of Georgia and the independence of the Caucasus. The Muslims of Borchali, the Muslims living in other parts of Georgia, the Muslims of Signagi, Telavi and Akhalkikhe districts are on the side of their country in all circumstances. It is a great honor for me to say this every time I enter the parliament – Long live Georgia!

Novella

A SACRED PLACE

Incredibly tired Mirza Javad, panting, entered the room, put the box he had brought in the corner, placed a small bundle of books tied in a scarf on the windowsill and fell to the floor near the oven. His wife put aside the stocking she was knitting and, bringing the mutakka, put it under the husband's head.

Let Mirza have some rest. In the meantime, we will tell you who he is.

Mirza Javad was a street scribe. There are many such scribes in big cities – Baku, Tiflis, Iravan and Ganja. Spreading out a rug, they sit at the gates of the mosque, in a square or in a street and wait for customers. In front of each scribe, there is a box with two or three books placed on it, several sheets of white paper and a pencil case.

Their main customers are Iranian porters for whom they write letters home. But city residents often turn to them with various requests as well: write a letter, tell fortunes, provide a mascot, and so on. In Irevan, I once saw a scribe even seal a marriage contract. Obviously, the profitability of any trade depends on the demand for the commodity, and these scribes earn from 20 kopecks to a ruble every day.

Mirza Javad was one such scribe.

Mirza had 23-year-old son Ahmed, a passionate fan of billiards who played the game all day, from early morning until late at night. He was so overwhelmed by his passion that he often cried out even in his sleep: "Here comes an ace in the middle! A 10 in the corner! You are a lumberjack, not a player! Why are you trying to play a master like me?"

In the morning, without even having tea, he ran to the billiards room.

Ahmed was right in calling himself a master. He played excellently, and the whole city knew him. He won a lot, but spent everything on himself, and the house expenses fell entirely on his father.

His wife put a glass of tea in front of Mirza Javad. At this moment, Ahmed appeared, apparently after a good scrape: all his clothes were covered in chalk, a torn sleeve of the chukha dangled on a thread, there were bruises under his eyes, and his nose was shattered. In short, all the signs of the beatings suffered were there.

"My son, what's wrong with you?" the mother exclaimed.

Mirza Javad turned to his wife's voice and, seeing his



A. Hagverdiyev. Early 1930s

son in such a state, began to grumble:

"Damn it! Just look at you! You cannot find a decent job and do something that would please Allah. Aren't you ashamed of being beaten up almost every day and coming home in such an ugly state? Just look at you! If you are not ashamed of me, you should at least be ashamed of your peers.

Mirza Javad told his son a lot of unsightly things and relieved his soul.

But Ahmed began to pour out his soul too.

"Of course, a poor man can be beaten up, scolded and called crazy... If I had money, of course, I would have several kochi bodyguards. Where is justice if a dog like the son of Haji Rasul ordered to beat me up? He is guilty, but it is me who gets beaten up. Just listen! He ordered a ball in the corner, but the ball hit the middle. Then he began to insist that the ball was ordered to hit the middle. I swore, called the marker, referred to witnesses, but he wouldn't want to listen and kept insisting. Then I said to him, 'Brother, why are you lying so brazenly?' That was all I said... But he exploded like a bomb. 'Oh, you, he says, the son of Purishkevich, how dare you curse me!' I flared up too and grabbed him by the collar. But his bodyguards came to his rescue. There were three of them, and I was by myself... So they beat me black and blue. If my father were wealthy, the son of Haji Rasul would not venture to approach me... If it were not for his kochi, I would have shown everything to this scoundrel.

"What was the word you said – something like 'puru-shkovich?'" asked the father.

"How would I know? If it was something good, he would have said this about his father. I asked afterwards and they say that it is a new Russian curse. So it turns out that my father, who is lying on his side by the oven, is to blame for my humiliation.



A group of Azerbaijani writers, Baku. 1929. Front row, left: Jalil Mammadguluzadeh, Huseyn Javid, Abdurrahim Hagverdiyev, Jabar Afandizadeh, Suleyman Sani Akhundov, Ibrahim Eminbayli, Haji Karim Sanili. Second row, left: Khalil Ibrahim, Jafar Jabbarli, Seyid Huseyn, Suleyman Rustam, Mikayil Mushfig, Abdulla Shaig, Ahmad Javad, Mammad Rahim

Mirza Javid jumped up as if the ceiling had collapsed on him.

"Oh, you bum! You will be beaten up every day like a dog and will I be to blame for this?" he growled at his son.

"Exactly! They will beat me up like a dog and you will be to blame. You are 80 years old, but where is your fortune? Your peers have become noble people, but you have not taken your eyes off your pencil case and this shabby book for a hundred years. Are you not ashamed? During the same time, Musa Nagiyev became a millionaire; the Emir of Bukhara himself comes to visit the former lasher Shamsi; Haji Zeynalabdin used to carry bricks on his back for a dime a day, but now he has general's epaulettes on his shoulders. After all, they are all your comrades. Why didn't you take care of your future? Where are your oil rigs, factories and five-story buildings?"

"Why are you attacking me," the father lashed out. "Allah has given all this to them, not to me. If you want, go and ask for this from Allah. You can't get money from a crack in the ground, can you?"

These words made Ahmed even more angry.

"Did wealth fall on these people from the sky? Where does all this come from then if not from under the ground? If you had been smart enough, you could have secured yourself 13 acres of land and would have been a big man now.

"Son", the father interrupted, "instead of reproaching the old father, you could save these instructions for yourself. If it is so easy to get money from under the ground, go right ahead and do it! Since skill and ability are enough to do this, show yourself.

These words cut Ahmed to the heart. He thought for a moment and then suddenly, as if waking up from a dream, muttered:

"Alright, father! I will get money from under the ground. Mark my words ...

With these words, he left the room.

Mirza Javad had a house with a tiny garden in the village, which he inherited from his father. With the onset of the heat, he moved to the village together with his wife and stayed there until fall. His son, however, did not leave the city for a day, spending all his time in billiard rooms.

About two months after the conversation we have described, Mirza Javad was getting ready to go to the village. Ahmed also went with his parents.

"What happened, son?" Mirza Javad asked in surprise. "Why did you decide to come with us?"

"I am going to extract money from under the ground."

The father laughed but said nothing.

So the whole family moved to the village.

Once Ahmed came home with a pickaxe and threw it into a corner.

"What do you need that for?" asked the father.

"Why, you have to dig the ground to get money. I will use this pickaxe to dig a well in the garden and get money.

"Are you even sane?" the father asked anxiously.

"Do not count your chickens before they are hatched!" the son answered calmly.

At night, when everyone had gone to bed, Ahmed took the pickaxe and went to the garden.

At dawn, when Mirza Javad was leaving the room to wash before morning prayer, he noticed a pit a few steps from the porch. Coming closer, he saw his son working there, at the bottom, at a depth of five arshins.

"What is all this about, son? Why are you torturing yourself?" Mirza Javad asked.

"Don't worry, dad. I will get to the treasure soon. What time is it?"

"It is almost morning."

"Well, I guess that's enough for today. To be continued tomorrow."

Mirza Javad had no doubts that his son had gone crazy.

"Great Allah!" he said to himself with chagrin. "I have only one son, and he has gone crazy. Whatever you will, God!"

Bust of A. Hagverdiyev in the Alley of Honor

For several more nights, Ahmed worked in the garden; worked until dawn and slept during the day.

Some time passed. One afternoon, Mirza Javad returned from the city, having traveled there for several days on business. Ahmed led his father to the well he had dug.

"See, father?"

"I do, son."

"So what is this?"

"Nothing special. A well."

"Now, come here. See the crack in the ground under the fig tree?"

"I see, son. So what?"

"Eh, you are so unobservant! From the well to this place, I have dug an underground passage ... Still don't understand?"

"No, I don't understand! Punish me, the Koran I am reading, if I understand anything... So what is it? You have dug a well at the door, made an underground passage to the fig tree and made a crack between the roots."

"So you can't guess, can you? This is the very crack in the ground from which we will extract money. Go get the mother. She will figure this out.

Mirza Javad, shaking his head in bewilderment, went for his wife.

Ahmed took his mother by the hand and led her to the pit.

"See, mother?"

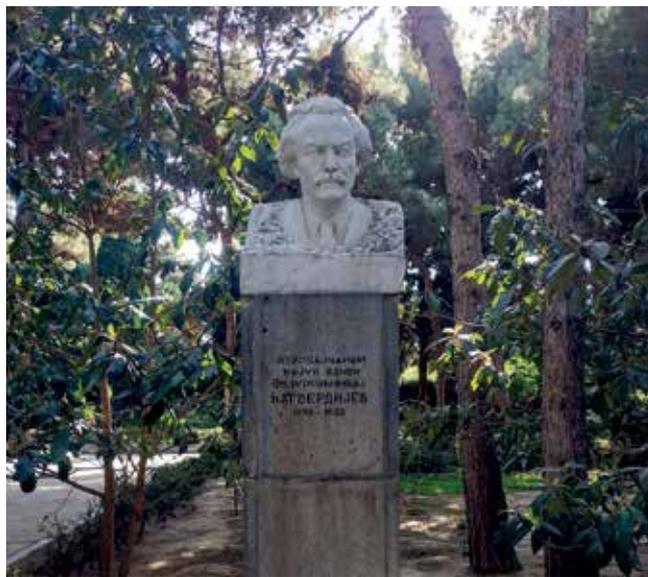
"Of course I do, son!"

He showed her the whole structure.

"Mother," Ahmed said. "At night, I will pass from the well along the underground passage here to the fig tree, light a candle and stick it out through the crack. Then you will go to our neighbors and whisper to them that a light has appeared under our fig tree. Then come back and sit quietly at home. Further it is not your business..."

"Well done, son!" Mirza Javad exclaimed joyfully. "Wealth will flow to us through this crack! Well done! This is a different matter now!"

Ahmed's mother told several neighbors about the appearance of a mysterious light in their garden. From neighbor to neighbor, from Gulpari to Khanpari, from Khanpari to Shahpari ... In the evening, Mirza Javad's entire garden was filled with women. They saw light un-



der the fig tree, but none of them dared to come close. Aunt Fatmanisa turned out to be the boldest of all.

"I will see what kind of light it is," she said and came closer to the tree. But as soon as she approached it, the light went out.

It reappeared as she walked away. And no-one doubted that a miracle had appeared under the fig tree in Mirza Javad's garden and that this place was a holy shrine.

The rumor of a miracle spread throughout the surrounding villages and even reached the city. Pilgrimage began. Some brought money, others brought sheep, bread, halva and all sorts of things. In short, Mirza Javad's yard turned into a khan's court.

The holy place gave at least 20 rubles of income a day, sometimes reaching 50 or 60 rubles.

"Father!" Ahmed said. "See how wealth is extracted from a crack in the ground? Now sit here and rest at your pleasure. From this income, 50 rubles a month is your salary, while the rest is mine. Let the son of Haji Rasul try to poke his nose at me now.

Since that time, the holy shrine of Sheikh Javad became famous.

I was walking down a street one day. A phaeton rushed past with a drunk man inside. Next to him was a blonde in a hat as high as a minaret. The phaeton zoomed past me like a gust of wind.

"Who is this?" I asked a friend.

"This is Ahmed, the son of Mirza Javad. And next to him is his kept mistress."