

RAFIG ALIYEV

**STATE
AND
RELIGION**

(Articles and Statements)

Baku – 2013

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STATE AND RELIGION (Articles and Statements)

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The book contains some articles, interviews and statements of Prof. Rafig Aliyev, the Chairman of the State Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the Work with Religious Associations, made at the recent International Forums and for mass media. They reflect relationship between the state and religion in Azerbaijan of today, the maintenance of peaceful interreligious dialog and the experience of this country in this field.

The model of political and ideological conception of Azerbaijan has been developed and briefly commented in this book for the first time.

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PREFACE

For the period of the last two hundred years in the world, both in the West and the East, there have existed various models of political and ideological state system: from monarchy to ultra democracy. Some of them still exist nowadays, others have been sent to history archives, and a number of models acting in developed and underdeveloped countries are undergoing serious economic, political and moral crises.

As we know, the models of political-ideological state systems used to be found, as a rule, on two fundamental bases: nationalism (or national idea) and the idea of unitarity (or state federative system). In the beginning of the 20th century the following ideologies were brought to the forefront: Marxism-Leninism and national liberation ideology (with inclination towards the exaggeration of the role of the nationalism and the nation as such).

Sometimes the whole structure of political power used to be based on one personality and his views - the Soviet Union, China, North Korea, Yugoslavia, Egypt, Germany, France, Spain, etc.; however, the history showed a full groundlessness of such an approach.

The West and the USA put forward the ideas of liberal democratism, social-democracy and democracy as the totality of European standards of building of open society, and at last an American idea of globalization that replaced the aforesaid ideologies appeared.

At present the models of political state structure relying on the foregoing ideas, including that of globalization,

do not satisfy most peoples and countries of the world; as a result of this confrontation, focuses, both on ideological and cultural bases, increase day by day.

Some eastern countries try to create a new model using century-tested dogmas and laws of religions - Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, etc., but today it cannot even claim to comparative universality.

I think the model presented in this book can be of a more universal nature. The application of this model in different countries requires just negligible changes that take into account historical and formation peculiarities of the development of every individual state.

The Azerbaijan model of the society's development offered in early 90s of the 20th century consisted of "Nationalism, Turkism and Islamism". Unfortunately, the first constituent gave rise to aggressive separatism, the second dissolved the Azerbaijanism and the third gave Islamists an opportunity to lay claim to the role of the first fiddle in state policy. Thus, this model did not exist long.

Taking into consideration Azerbaijan's development experience for the last ten years we turn back to the society development model which, I think, should consist of three basic components: a) the idea of Azerbaijanism put forward by the national leader, now late Heydar Aliyev; b) the idea of a unitary secular state system proceeding from the very point of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan; c) moral values of religions considering present reality of the process of public relation formation at the present stage of the development of Azerbaijan. Such a model, in my opinion, is able to provide taking into account of the interests of all strata of society, national, ethnical and religious minorities at the most as well as to create conditions

for harmonious development of society. The model can be expressed as a universal, more simplified formula: "Citizenship", "State System", "Morality".

The given formula can be applied to different states taking into account the level of their development, national-ethnic composition and religion.

Some details of this model are reflected in the articles included in this book; others (more specific explanations and the basis of its viability and superiority) are being worked out. To prove the above-said, we may try to apply the idea of this model taking two different countries as an example.

Iraq: *ideas of Iraqi peoples' unity (citizenship) and a unitary democratic state (state system) as well as Shariah norms (morality) acceptable to the present stage of the country's development.*

Russia: *united Russian people (citizenship); idea of democratic federalism (state system); moral values of religions (morality).*

Thus, when considered in detail, the model in question can be applied not only in those countries where religious consciousness constitutes a substantial part of public consciousness, but also in the states where religious place and role in society are inconsiderable. However, by different arrangement of the components of the model religious values and religious consciousness take the third position.

The previous models failed because either the idea of nationalism (in Muslim countries of the East) was taken into account or the nationalism did not take into consideration the importance of the people's religious consciousness. In the USSR the ruling Marxism-Leninism did not accept both at all. Everybody knows the result.

Bringing my views about the relationship between the state and religion to the attention of a wide circle of readers and experts, being against the deideologization of society and considering this idea warning and harmful for the development of any country, at the same time I have presented for the first time my model of political and ideological development of Azerbaijan:

Idea of Azerbaijanism + Idea of unitary secular state system + Moral values of religions.

Interaction of these complementary elements in the consciousness of the country population is capable of creating social and psychological comfort and thus providing harmonious development both of an individual and society as a whole.

I would be very glad to debate, exchange views and criticism related to the model I have presented, the details of which will be set forth in the next book that, I hope, will be published in late 2004.

Rafiq ALIYEV

INTRODUCTION

On June 21, 2004 three years have passed since the State Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the Work with Religious Associations was established. The experience of three years proves that the strategic policy, started by Heydar Aliyev, national leader of Azerbaijan, is being successfully realized in relationship between state and religion.

I think it would be useful to remind the essence of the policy of the Azerbaijan state concerning religious issues:

1. Azerbaijan is a secular state. However, it doesn't indicate atheism or the absence of faith in the country.

The state itself is a guarantor of religious freedom. It is enshrined in the General Law and in the law "On Religious Freedom" derived from the former and adopted in 1992;

2. Religion is separated from the state. Some religious and political figures attempt to comment the above-mentioned item as "separation of believers from the state", but it is distortion. Every believer is a citizen of his/her country. He/she has all rights and is responsible before the state. Separation of religion from the state is only of political and ideological nature and once again proves secular orientation of social-political system;

3. Religious values are an integral part of historically formed national spiritual and ethnic values of Azerbaijani nation. Creation and maintenance of proper conditions for their harmonious development should be within the state care. Not being involved in promotion of any religion, the state is interested in right understanding

by citizens their obligations before the law and before God, Who they pray to.

4. Interference of religious associations, centers, religion in politics is inadmissible and contradicts to current law. This fundamental position is one of the basic elements that constitute the very essence of the state policy in the field of religion. The state doesn't intend to make concessions to those religious associations, which violate the above-mentioned principle. It is an important stipulation, which is necessary for our religion and our state;

5. Establishing relationships between religious associations and religious communities on the basis of constructive cooperation and tolerance is promoted by state structures, interested in maintenance and development of these relationships. Thus, the state carries out explanatory work, e.g. by organizing workshops, symposiums and conferences. It is a very important supplementary element to maintain common political economic stability in the country;

6. Religious education and religious studies are necessary for society. However, these processes must be continued within the frame of current law. Informing citizens about religion should be carried out on the basis of the voluntarism. Within this work any activity, capable to cause destructive sectarianism, religious discrimination, confrontation and hatred between representatives of different religions, should be excluded. Different occult totalitarian sects in our country are prohibited to function under the guise of religious freedom. The State Committee acknowledges the necessity of fight against above religious structures and communities in accordance with the norms

of international law, taking necessary measures in this direction. The item of **Constitution "All religions are equal before the law"** should be completely implemented. This means that there is no privileged religion or religious associations for the state. Monopoly claims concerning morality are estimated as encroachment on the human rights and are not welcomed by the majority of society. Of course, this theme can be spoken during many hours. However, the above-said, to a certain extent, reflects the main directions of the state policy in religious field. Realizing the above-named strategic task, the State Committee has taken three factors as fundamental:

- 1. To ensure religious freedom.**
- 2. To maintain principles of secular state.**
- 3. Not to admit turning religious inclination into religious intolerance - fanaticism and extremism.**

Realization of these complicated tasks would give an opportunity to maintain current social political stability, successful internal and external policy. It enabled to reach gradual change in contradicting and complicated religious situation we witnessed at the beginning of 2002, and enabled to reach more predictable religious situation. Otherwise it would have been impossible to create a today real balance of interests within relationship between state and religion.

Nevertheless, we have to state here that the State Committee is concerned about negative processes which still exist, unfortunately, in religious field, excessive increase of negative missionary activity, aspiration of many destructive and totalitarian sects, supported by strong western sponsors, to enter Azerbaijan at all costs. In fact, favorable geopolitical position and natural recourses of our

country, the place our country occupies among world countries and its international image require from us to pursue a balanced policy in religious field.

We have to underline with regret that recently in order to realize their interests in the region some countries resort to religious factor, which, in my opinion, is inadmissible in relationship among countries.

Religious factor must serve for peace, accord and good-neighborly relations. Negative elements, ascribed to this notion with the help of incorrect using of religious dogma and canons, make religious position vulnerable.

Any violence in the name of religion is a crime against religion itself. The majority of religious leaders in the world support this principle. Thus, state representatives, religious figures, and every sincere believer should have careful attitude to religion, defending it from politics.

Analysis of gathered materials allows us to point out that within the period of time passed since the election in 2003 many people in our country have appeared willing to transfer the center of political fight to the places of worship. We may say that some religious associations, religious currents and movements supported by foreign "consultants" and "advisers" have already attempted to realize the plan.

However, respective state structures constantly prevent such attempts, and they intend to do the same in future. Those, who use or try to use the places of worship under the pretext of performing religious rites to fight against our state system and social political structure, should know one simple truth: their actions will harm, first of all, religion, and may certainly lead to deformation of religious thinking which is still under formation in our coun-

try. Consequently, turning these religious objects into political discussion club not only contradicts to laws, but also impedes development of religion in right direction.

Every person should know that state, by all means not contradicting to law, would never permit to use religion to carry out personal political interests. Such a position is stipulated by demands concerning the existence of a state that would defend secular principles of its state structuring. Some events, held recently in this respect, prove the above-said.

The State Committee is concerned about the problem of importing into the country a large amount of religious literature, its printing and spreading. The spreading of religious literature is normal; however, the cases of violation of the law in this field once again prove that religious communities misuse the opportunities given to them within the frame of laws and they don't give up their intention concerning the spreading of religious literature, which negatively affects social structuring of our country, state system and interreligious relationships. Such cases are observed in the activities of representatives of both traditional and non-traditional religions and religious currents.

Despite this, the problems are periodically solved in this field, religious literature of destructive nature is confiscated, and the ban is imposed on its import and spreading in the Republic. The intention of these measures is to defend current secular state system and to purge the market of religious literature from the books of doubting content as well as harmful publications. I believe we have achieved a certain success in this field. As a result of effective cooperation with the other state structures, hundreds of thousand copies of harmful religious literature (it would be fair-to call it "religious-like") didn't reach their addressers in

to call it "religious-like") didn't reach their addressers in our Republic. **The State Committee always proved its readiness to cooperate within the frame of the law with all religious associations in the field of importing, printing and spreading religious literature.** At the same time religious associations should carry out their work in the manner that would not cause taking administrative measures. The State Committee never objects to importation of the religious books, which advocate religion, promote tolerance, and books necessary for improvement of relationship among people.

In conclusion, I would like to state that **today's strategy of the Azerbaijan state in religious field hasn't changed, - the state intends to strengthen its policy with respect to this issue, giving opportunities to its citizens to enjoy the right of freedom of religion.**

Our country, having gained the status of the exemplary state in the field of religious tolerance, will try to prove that such a situation is a continuation of historical traditions of the Azerbaijan nation.

SCWRA Bulletin, №10, 2004

PHYSICAL ABSENCE OF HEYDAR ALIYEV WILL NEVER DIMINISH THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS IDEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

Two years and a half I contacted with the late former President Heydar Aliyev concerning my work. I fulfilled his instructions and recommendations. For the first time I'm sharing my thoughts connected with above instructions and recommendations fulfillment with you.

During one of the talks with him he said: "Religion and people involved in it are a very peculiar field. They have their own world and their own thoughts. It is necessary to take into consideration these peculiarities within the work with religious associations.

It is necessary to explain that Azerbaijan is a secular, but not an atheist state. State also needs spiritual, religious values to be spread, owing to which people learn to be patriotic and follow the principles of tolerance; it also helps in people's upbringing. We do not see our national values without religious ones.

However, relationship between state and religion should be transparent, comprehensible, and, first of all, it should be placed in the frames of current legislation of the Azerbaijan Republic. It is necessary to ensure religious choice of people. Compulsion of people to practice a religion is inadmissible; it is necessary to fight attempts to use religion in political purposes. Religion should be beyond politics and ideology; it must be understood as one values' system, meeting individual and moral requirements of every person in society".

These important recommendations and instructions, expressed by Heydar Aliyev during the first and further meetings with me, had defined the primary direction of activities of the State Committee for the last two years and a half: we were always aware of his attention with respect to our work and he personally controlled our activities.

Heydar Aliyev's exclusive role in formation of an important state structure within the short period of time that now regulates relationship between state and religion is very significant. The structure in question is a new organizational form that does not exist in the rest of CIS countries.

Religious tolerance in Azerbaijan can be characterized as a state policy concerning relationship between state and religion, taken by many world countries as an acceptable model. Moreover, most of western countries wish to follow Azerbaijan's experience in this field.

Smooth and normal relationship in the field of religion existing in Azerbaijan is considered as an integral part of common stability in the country, in this respect Heydar Aliyev's policy, directed to stability and progress in society, caused positive results in relationship between state and religion.

The enforcement of this policy is going on today, and I think that there is no alternative to this approach. Continuation of this policy as well as its protection from any distortions is our duty for the memory of Heydar Aliyev.

Heydar Aliyev's physical absence will never diminish the importance of his ideological heritage. Like in many fields, Heydar Aliyev's political ideas in religious field, his recommendations and wise sayings will be kept in our memory and will have a positive influence on solving cur-

rent problems existing in relationship between state and religion.

State structure and political system created by Heydar Aliyev are real factors enabling dynamic development of Azerbaijan. Now we all understand this, thus, Heydar Aliyev's ideological heritage is the major tool in the hands of those who are following and continuing his course - the course of protection of the idea of Azerbaijanism, the idea of unitary secular state system, taking into account moral values of Islam, which are very important elements for Azerbaijan of today. Fortunately, whenever we need, we can apply to the heritage and the experience of state structuring left by our national leader - Heydar Aliyev.

*"525", newspaper,
December 16, 2003*

**STATE AND RELIGION: PRINCIPLES
OF AUTONOMOUS CO-EXISTENCE**
*(Statement made at the Conference on
"The Role of Freedom of Religion and Belief
in a Democratic Society: Searching for Ways
to Combat Terrorism", organized by OSCE)*

Dear Conference participants!

The conference you are participating in is dedicated to a difficult problem that is troubling all of humanity and affects all people's fate.

In other words, it is dedicated to an analysis of the relationship between a person's belief and his actions, as well as the results thereof.

Many people make the mistake of not distinguishing between the role of religion and the role of beliefs in a democratic society. They do not completely understand these two concepts, and, perhaps because of such an approach, concepts such as terrorism, extremism, religion and belief, as well as the interrelation between them, remain unclear not only for ordinary people, but also for those who work in this field. People confuse freedom of belief with freedom of religion.

Freedom of belief has been recognized as one of the fundamental human rights in many International agreements, conventions, decisions, and resolutions, and it can be said that this has been reflected in the constitution of every state in the world.

Nonetheless, we should take into account that fact that a person's beliefs are not limited to religion and that

freedom of belief itself, in principle, is regulated by laws and realized within the framework of the law.

If we make a small excursion into history, we'll see that people's beliefs, including religious beliefs and their actions have often been in contradiction. Both in society at large and in family, questions of belief are often the primary factor for the origin of a number of difficulties and conflicts.

Terrible wars, tragic conflicts, numerous changes in the map of the world, the founding and fall of empires, beginning in ancient times and continuing right up today, were not always the result of a quest for power. Beliefs, and often religious beliefs, were a part of these battles. Historical facts bear witness that, during wars that were conducted for the sake of religion or under the guise of religion, at least as much blood was spilled as during World War I and World War II.

The destruction of Jerusalem by pagans, the fall of the Roman Empire at the end of the 4th and beginning of the 5th centuries as a result of the spread of Christianity, the Crusades, Islamic conquests, the inquisition in the Middle Ages, as well as other events and facts, are directly related to religious beliefs, once more bearing witness that beliefs, in the form of religion, have not always taken hold in society through peaceful means and, in order to obtain power, sometimes resorted to force and weapons.

We are not talking about the divine essence of religion but about different approaches to the understanding of that essence and to the practice of religion in society.

Immediately after 11 September 2001, many people appeared who began to make a connection between terrorism and religion. People calling Islam the religion of terror

could also be found. Years have passed since these tragic events, but nobody wants to show courage and clarify the question about the existence of a connection between religion, religious beliefs, and terror.

Some people have, with caution, indicated that there is a connection between religion and terrorism or extremism; others have made efforts to prove that there is no connection between religious beliefs and terrorism and extremism and, thus, to protect religion and religious organizations.

However, religion and beliefs are not abstract concepts. Terrorists, extremists, and people sacrificing their lives in the name of religion are not abstract; they are real people, each of whom has a religion, nationality, and citizenship.

If we, even superficially, analyze the events of the 20th century, or even of the latest 50 years, we will be assured that existence of a religious factor in the "ideologization" of today's wars and conflicts is indisputable.

Events of recent years, in particular the Israel-Palestine confrontation; the tragic events in Ulster, which have been going on for 30 years; the events occurring in Yugoslavia; the first and second Chechen wars; and, finally, the occupation of 20 per cent of the territory of Azerbaijan, give concrete meaning to everything that has been said. These wars and conflicts, which have resulted in a great loss of human life, are subject to the influence of the religious factor, and, in several of them, religion and religious organizations played as a source of ideology. Although the Armenian Apostolic Church has, in words, supported attempts at finding a peaceful solution to the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict over the Upper Garabagh, it still has not

recognized that this conflict is the result of Armenia's policy of occupation, and, in 1988-1989, it even supported the separatist ideas of Armenians in Garabagh.

Therefore, when discussing the role of religion in democratic society, one ought to pay attention to the peace-loving character of heavenly religions and holy writings and examine the activities of people practicing religion through the prism of the laws of a democratic and civilized society. And taking into account the significant authority of religious leaders, one ought to define their role and responsibility in a democratic society.

This responsibility should be, at a minimum, an adequate reaction to the privileges that religious figures receive in a democratic society and to the civil rights that are guaranteed by international and domestic legislation. In analyzing the today's process in democratic societies, it becomes clear that, for the protection and complete guarantee of human rights and freedoms, including freedom of religion, a democratic society needs strong authority and effective administration.

These two factors, which are important for society, have a direct connection with morals and are indirectly related to people's beliefs.

1. I am sure that, in the fight with terrorism, the front shouldn't be lined with tanks, guns, and fighter planes but with true religious figures and authoritative religious leaders who should declare a "holy jihad" in the name of preserving the integrity of the democratic society of which they are citizens. In this battle, the concept of "religion separated from the state" should be set aside; society should make a common, concerted effort to defeat the horrible

rible disease of terrorism. The parameters of this joint activity should be extremely clear and comprehensive. Religions, religious leaders, and religious organizations need to assist the strengthening of state power at the expense of their activities in the sphere of spirituality, insofar as strong authorities have wide-ranging possibilities to provide for freedom of belief and freedom of religion.

Such close co-operation should not lead to an increase or decrease of the rights, advantages, or powers of either party. It should be seen as a special type of joint fight for the world in general.

2. As far as I am concerned, one of the fundamental aspects of the fight against religious extremism and terrorism on religious grounds is the development of proper religious education. **There should not be lack information about religion in society. However, religion doesn't have to become a priority in terms of informing the public.** At the same time, people should get information about religion not only from religious figures, but also from other sources. Even the state should provide such information. This will weaken people's susceptibility to religious fanaticism and guarantee the objectivity of the information provided.

The administrative persecution of those who are strict adherents of a particular religion and their being treated like second-class citizens pushes them to conduct underground religious activities that foster in people, especially in youth, the spirit of "romantic revolutionaries", which can play a fundamental role in the development of terrorism and extremism.

3. The state and religion are two important elements of the foundation of society. The former

implies the rule of law; the latter - the essence of the law - morality and spirituality. Power, ethics, and morality - in reality, these concepts complement one another in the life of society. In other words, power and laws are the result of moral and spiritual criteria; together, they play a paramount role in society.

Laws have to protect morality and spirituality. History has shown that power devoid of morality does not last long. Morals have traditionally stemmed from religious values. Consequently, the state and religion need each other, are necessary for one another, but only under the conditions of autonomous coexistence. History doesn't know any convincing facts or successful practice that would prove the opposite. Here, we have the most important question: what sort of autonomous co-existence should this be, so that politics is not devoid of morality and spirituality, so that it can create the conditions for preserving the true significance of heavenly religions, and so that the social status of religion in society is defined such that it does not interfere in the state's role as the regulator of social relations in society?

4. In a society based on democratic foundations, the state should create identical conditions for all religions and beliefs. **The state should not promote any particular religion.** In my opinion, one of the main reasons for the lack of success of a lengthy, interreligious dialogue is the representation of religions as privileged, traditional, non-traditional, and destructive and the creation of interrelations among them on this basis. If we are talking about beliefs, then we should be interested in whether those beliefs are healthy or unhealthy, helpful for society or harmful. If a harmful belief takes the form of a religion, then it should

meet serious opposition from society, and the state should fight it. We shouldn't assess the fight with unhealthy forms of belief that are propagated under the guise of religion as an infringement on freedom of religion. Unfortunately, a number of international organizations take exactly this approach to this question. In society, the only general law for citizens professing religions and ideologies is the constitution of particular state.

For religions and religious figures, a person's spirituality and religious outlook are, of course, a priority field of activity. By bringing up highly moral and spiritually pure people, religious figures and leaders can carry out, without interfering in politics, their own sacred mission and, in addition, help the state. By impeding the transformation of extreme religious fanaticism into extremism, they can bring great benefit to society. In my opinion, this can be seen as the best form of autonomous co-existence in relationship between religion and state in a modern democratic society, and these relations should be built on such a fundamental basis.

Baku, October 10-11, 2002

STATEMENT AT THE HOUSE OF LORDS OF THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT

Dear Chairman,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I'm very grateful to you for your kind invitation to visit your country. This is my first visit to your country and I must say that I'm honored to participate in such an important workshop; I have an opportunity not only to listen to you, but to exchange views on many issues regarding religion and spirituality.

I'm pleased that some of you, dear Lords Ahmed, Janer and Alton, visited Azerbaijan and witnessed normal relationship among people and religious communities in our country. Azerbaijan is a native land of many religions, including Zoroastrianism (Fire-worshipping) - the most ancient religion in our country. The temple of fire-worshippers is still being visited today.

The history of Albanian churches in Azerbaijan has been traced back to the end of the 3rd century A.D. Three of these churches, situated on the territory of present-day Azerbaijan, are being restored; they are our national heritage. Azerbaijan had to experience many wars, but we are proud to point out that none of them were religiously motivated.

Religion constitutes the essence of our morality and spirituality. We think state is founded on three principles: Power, Morality and Spirituality. Morality and spirituality are closely connected with religion. I think that only harmony of these three elements - unity of power, morality and

spirituality creates normal conditions for all people. State must provide equal conditions for activities of all religions. The Government of Azerbaijan exerts every effort to create necessary conditions for practicing religions.

As you may know, Muslim population of Azerbaijan is 90%.

The population of our country is 8 million. Today, there are about 1,300 mosques, more than 40 churches, synagogues and houses of prayers, more than 500 praying rooms, connected with religious past of nations, which live on the territory of present-day Azerbaijan.

It would be relevant to mention that in the middle of March of this year the opening ceremony of the largest synagogue in the Caucasus will be held in Baku. Muslims and Christians have been involved in its construction. They rendered a financial assistance as well as are partaking in the construction process. The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1918-1920) was the first secular state among all Muslim states of the East. Since then all religions have been recognized equal before the law.

All religions are equal before the law, according to the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan. There is no priority religion for our state. Everyone prays in his/her own way. This proves the presence of religious pluralism in our country, in other words, there are traditional and non-traditional religions in Azerbaijan, religions that have started spreading in our country comparatively recently. At the same time we strictly adhere to the principle of separation of religion from state. Though, it defines only political direction of our state. Criteria of spirituality and morality, national and spiritual values constitute the second part of state nature.

Every nation is a separate natural family; as far as I know, there are no identical nations; that is why, it is impossible to create peaceful society if it lacks for tolerant relationship among people.

To defend a nation or country, it is necessary to protect not only its territorial integrity. It is important to protect spirituality, morality, national traditions, habits and rites. I believe that it is difficult to defend a nation or a country if mentioned values are not protected. In this respect, it is worth mentioning Great Britain as a good example, with its historical, national and state traditions of synthesis of positive conservatism and new democratic values. Though, having changed their shape, these traditions are being followed at present.

Yesterday I had a pleasant conversation at the office of "The Three Religions Forum". The experience of this Forum is very useful and could be considered as a good model for any religious community. We intend to invite representatives of the Forum to Baku. I would also like to add that such kind of Forum has been functioning in Azerbaijan since 1992 coordinated by the Head of the Caucasian Muslim Board. I think that Forums, both in London and in Baku, should establish fruitful contacts and we should do our best in this respect. I think the Forum of the world's three religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, should not be the only model for peaceful co-existence in secular states, but it should also attract other religions by its principles of humanism.

We attempt to implement the above-mentioned and to derive benefit from it. That is why we regularly hold different kind of events, such as workshops, round tables, etc. inviting all religious communities.

It is worth mentioning that such meetings are of great deal of use.

For example, during one of these workshops representatives of religious communities mainly consisting of aged persons lodged complain that the roof of their house of prayers needed repairing. Their appeal to the city authorities gave no result, but common efforts of workshop participants helped to solve the problem next week.

Taking the opportunity I can't help mentioning the OSCE Conference on "Role of Religion and Belief in a Democratic Society: Searching for Ways to Combat Terrorism and Extremism", which was held in Baku in October of 2002, where we were suggested to form the International Forum of religious leaders. I believe it may play a positive role in promotion of peace and reconciliation.

I should also like to bring to your attention that since 2002 the International Religious Liberty Association with headquarters in Washington D.C. has also been functioning in Azerbaijan. And we intend to involve representatives of all religious communities of Azerbaijan in activity of this Association.

I think that inter-religious dialogue can only be of use and state must help to carry on this process, as positive aspects contained in the very religions may have favorable influence on the society.

Today in Azerbaijan we are experiencing integration into the West. We would like to be closer to you, but having preserved our culture and national originality and our belonging to the East. Otherwise, we would be boring and uninteresting to you.

In conclusion, I would like to once again thank you for your patience and attention. I would like to sincerely thank

dear lords Ahmad, Janer and Alton for their kind words about my religion, my nation and my country. Thank you very much Mr. Frazer for organization of this meeting and for invitation to visit your country.

Let the cordiality of Azerbaijan warm your souls and let the Almighty God bless you all!

London, March 9, 2003

STATE AND RELIGION: COMMON PURPOSES
(Statement at OSCE/ODIHR Workshop
on "Religion and State, Religion and
Mass Media, Religion and Education")

Azerbaijan is a native land of many religions, including Zoroastrianism (Fire-worshipping) - the most ancient one. The temple of fire worshipers is still being visited today. The history of Albanian churches in Azerbaijan has been traced back to the beginning of the 4th century A.D. Liquidated by Synod in 1836 (at that time Azerbaijan was a part of the Russian Empire), The Albanian Church was able to preserve some temples. Three of these churches, situated on the territory of present-day Azerbaijan, are being restored; they are our national heritage. Recently, owing to the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan the Alban-Udin church has been reconstructed and Alban-Udin Christian community has been registered. Azerbaijan had to experience many wars, but we are always proud to stress that none of them were religiously motivated.

Religions constitute the essence of spirituality. We think that conditions for normal functioning of society can be provided in case the state has completeness of supreme power, and social political and religious organizations have opportunity to purposefully influence on the institutes of public authorities. The law owing to state activity as well as habits and traditions respected in society, which have religious origin, ensures normal functioning of society. State regulates social economic and spiritual fields of society. Thus, it is obliged to provide equal conditions for activities

of all religions. It is a guarantee of tolerance among religions and confessions.

We know that laws are necessary not only for maintenance and protection of freedom, but also for a certain limitation of freedom. Holy Scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam as well as Holy Books of other religions contain limitations, rather than permissions. That is why truly religious people must be respectful to laws accepted by their states.

Our aim partially lies in explaining to all people - believers and non-believers - by the most popular way that **only strong power, supported by spirituality, can ensure freedom in society and preserve religion itself, freedom of religion and belief. That is why the aims and tasks of the state and religion are very often the same.**

There is one principal law in the country, but a lot of religions. Law can not consider all elements and peculiarities of all religions but only values universal and common to all mankind, and basing on this it should establish its relationship with believers, taking into account that religion and beliefs concern privacy of men.

The Government of Azerbaijan does its best to provide necessary conditions for practicing religion. In the middle of March of this year the openings ceremony of the largest synagogue in the Caucasus and main Cathedral church of Orthodox Christians was held in Baku. Muslims and Christians were involved in both reconstruction processes. They rendered financial assistance and partook in reconstruction works. The Cathedral church of Russian Orthodox Eparchy, built in 1907 by Azerbaijani capitalist Z. Tagiyev, almost a hundred years later has been completely

reconstructed mainly owing to financial aid of another Muslim, L. Kurbanov.

The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1918-1920) was the first secular state among all Muslim states of the East. Since then all religions and beliefs have been recognized equal before the law.

The Republic of Azerbaijan is following this tradition. This equality is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan. There is no priority religion for our state. It proves the presence of religious pluralism in our country. But for all that, we strictly adhere to the principle of separation of religion from state. Though, it defines only political direction of our state. Criteria of spirituality and morality, national and spiritual values are closely connected with religion and considerably affect the governing power of our country.

It is necessary to form some model of peaceful coexistence of religions in secular states. We attempt to implement the above-mentioned and to derive benefit from it. That is why we regularly hold different kind of events, such as workshops, round tables, etc. and invite representatives of religious communities. It is worth mentioning that such meetings are of great deal of use.

At the same time I would like to point out that at present religion is often used for other purposes, particularly, for terror and extremism. That is why, while speaking about freedom of religion and belief we should not forget the negative role of many religious leaders, groups in the history of the East and the West, who all the time waged wars under the guise of religions. Even today, many examples can be given, which could demonstrate how religious beliefs of people are being used for war and conflict pur-

poses in different countries. Paying great attention to people's beliefs we sometimes should cast a doubt on them. Not every belief, including religious one, is pure and serve for the good. Acts of terror, self-sacrifices at the result of which many people, mostly the innocent ones die, are committed by people with distorted religious beliefs. Society must learn to differentiate good beliefs from evil ones. We are for purity of religion. We think state itself must help its citizens in religious education, as well as in making right choice of faith, providing them with sufficient information about religions. It is possible to realize the above-said both in secondary schools and in the highest schools and universities. The support and help of mass media is of great importance in this respect.

Horborg, Vienna, Austria, June 17-18, 2003

SCWRA Bulletin, №8, 2003

**RESPONSE OF THE STATE COMMITTEE OF
THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN FOR
THE WORK WITH RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS
TO THE US STATE DEPARTMENT'S REPORT
ON "RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AT
THE INTERNATIONAL AREA" FOR 2003**

The history of the US State Department's report has started in 1998. It covers all aspects of human rights observation in different countries of the world, including respect towards freedom of religion.

Such a report is made only in the USA. To gather necessary information the US government permanently increases the number of staff members of its embassies in foreign countries.

Besides, a special commission, dealing with analyses of gathered information and making this responsible report claiming to have unbiased assessment regarding human rights and freedoms in the world, is functioning in the US State Department and in the Congress.

Thus, the report published this year is the sixth one and differs from the previous reports in several parameters.

As for its quality, it is of superficial nature and lacks serious analyses of the real state of affairs in the field of religious freedom in our country. Following to the report's content, the State Department approves the measures and decisions taken by the State Committee and Azerbaijani government concerning citizens' rights to religious freedom.

The Document underlines the current tendency of improvement of citizens' rights protection. The special atten-

tion is paid to "common friendly atmosphere reigning in society among representatives of different religions" and it is estimated as "the contribution to religious freedom". The actions of the State Committee are approved, as the State Committee "calls leaders of different religious communities to clinch the arguments, respecting confidentiality and organizes workshops to discuss faith issues with religious figures and guests".

The US State Department particularizes a number of events, initiated and organized by the State Committee, pointing out them as positive factor in development of freedom of conscience.

Referring to the above-mentioned organization, the opening of the Cathedral Russian Orthodox Church and Jewish Synagogue, as well as registration of Udin-Alban Christian community can be ascribed to these successful actions.

The report says, "The State Committee facilitated the religious literature import"; Russian Orthodox Eparchy and Jewish communities' representatives' saying that there is no restriction on freedom of religion in Azerbaijan is cited as an example.

Document also touches upon human rights and religious freedom violation in "uncontrolled territory of Garabagh, where the mosques do not function, even if they are not destroyed".

We could assess the US State Department's report for this year as positive, having expressed gratitude to its authors for their contribution in information gathering.

However, some inexactitudes are evident, especially the authors' strong willingness to find some faults in the field of religious freedom in Azerbaijan.

This willingness, as it seems, was so strong, that after mentioning every positive factor the word "however" follows; and frequently without serious arguments the expression "some violations" is used.

It gives an impression as if the authors of the report were more pleased to see violations, rather than positive changes in the field of human rights and religious freedom in Azerbaijan. Such a respectable institution as the US State Department enables its members to take and use unchecked facts and criticize the work of the government of another country, basing on information "allegedly provided by religious communities, some religious figures, or by newspapers".

There is no analysis of religious situation in Azerbaijan and in the whole region in the report.

There are only common words and assessments resembling analyses. Most likely, the authors cannot put up with reality of this time, still using criteria, which can be traced back five years.

At the same time, in the USA there are such religious freedom violations as Federal Court's ban imposed on Christmas holiday celebration at schools, ban imposed on Muslim women studying in the universities to enter gymnasium in headscarves (it deprives them of going in for sport), ban imposed on students to perform prayers on the territory of educational institution, ban imposed on religious communities to be involved in political activities and to give their supports to some candidates during congressional, senate and presidential elections, etc.

We can continue this ban list by the facts that the photo of Muslim women in headscarves in the USA cannot be taken for issuing driving license, and in many states and

cities (including Washington and New York) US Muslim citizens are the object of persecution on the part of authorities. Because of the fear to be arrested or even to be killed, dozens of Muslims had to leave this "democratic" country, in which it is obligatory to submit 13 documents, the necessity of 6 month time period, an advocate and signing of three authority obligations for registration of religious community.

We doubt that the authors of the report are unaware of these facts of religious freedom violations, and that they are unaware of Federal Court's decision to ban religious holidays celebration and wearing of headscarves in the universities, as well as arrest of 32 Mormons for no reason but their wish to follow the principles of their religion and to have more than one wife, to close religious charity organizations allegedly for their connections to terror groups and organizations, etc.

However, let us return to the US State Department's report: the report says that we have some problems regarding registration of religious communities.

Dear Sirs, actually we have no problem regarding registration. Two Christian organizations haven't been registered, and there were legal reasons for this.

They themselves caused the problem, but not the State Committee.

If someone receives religious literature a little bit later than expected, we believe it is necessary to stress that we have to read and review all literature submitted to the State Committee.

The quantity and the size of the literature do not allow three members of the Committee to read 100 pages a day; that is why we have the term for the review of each

book: if it consists of 500-600 pages, naturally, the term is 10-15 days. Very often, their quantity is 10-15, but sometimes more than 20-25 books. That is why religious communities have to wait for decision of experts' department, and it doesn't contradict to our law and norms.

Of course, we may have some disputes on every remark made in the US State Department's report. We do it every year, sending reasoned responses and hoping that given facts would change authors' attitude.

Every time we hope they stop to ascribe to us violations, basing on unchecked information from some "constantly unsatisfied" religious communities and human rights organizations. However in vain, we do try. Such game of "democracy" has become a norm of international life, and we have got nothing to do but learn to live in accordance with its rules.

Starting from this year, the State Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the Work with Religious Associations jointly with NGO "Transparent Elections" will also gather information on violation of human rights of American believers, and we intend to publish our report at the end of each year.

In contrast to the US State Department we will inform world society as soon as we get new information provided by human rights organizations of the USA and other countries, with which we are starting business relationships.

Now we would like to thank authors of the US State Department's report for their work, for we still believe in their kind intentions. We will take into account all acceptable remarks, if they comply with our Constitution, as well as with the laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

We are ready for the closest cooperation with the US Embassy in Baku and international organizations interested in respecting of human rights and religious freedom in Azerbaijan.

*NGO "Transparent Elections", newspaper,
January, 2004*

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

(Interview, "Echo", newspaper)

Today European countries are learning the Azerbaijan model of relationship between state and religion. The Chairman of the State Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the Work with Religious Associations, Prof. Rafiq Aliyev said: "Spreading the ideas of confrontation in the country means a grave damage to Azerbaijan state system".

- Mr. Aliyev, now we read in press different articles on religious matters. In these publications religious philosophic issues, especially positions of religious currents, hardly accepted by the majority of population are touched upon. What is the most necessary for the society today: modernist currents in Islam or religious education?

- First of all I would like to say that for fourteen-century history of Islam there were many *ulema* (scholars who deal with religious issues) and religious currents that put forward the ideas of modernization of Islam. Egypt and Syria were distinguished as the countries where this tendency was widely spread. The above mentioned currents usually proposed not to make alternations in the Holy Qur'an and reliable traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), but in the very practice of Islam. At the same time they thought it possible to apply some Qur'anic verses in accordance with a certain time or epoch. Such currents do exist nowadays. Disputes between modernist and conservative currents are still going on, and in some Muslim

countries there are many believers who prefer modernist currents. As for Azerbaijan, here Muslim *ulema* historically constituted minority. The views of society with regard to Islam and religious values as something divine almost left no possibility for discussing such a serious ideological philosophic problem. Today we experience the same state of affairs. We have few *ulema*, but problems have been doubled. In our society there are several important issues that have to be spoken and discussed: I suppose it would be acceptable and useful for our society. In reply to your question, I can say that actually today we face certain problems that Azerbaijan Muslims (and in a wider sense the whole society) are concerned about. Discussions concerning these problems are important in order to give right direction to the process of returning to religion and religious values that started about ten years ago, at the same time to avoid extremes. Today the troublesome issue is the attitude to the system of moral values of religion. Solution the above-given problem is important for all society, including first of all the Government. The latter is in charge of regulating relationship between state and religion as the formation of normal relationship in society is directly connected with above values. I would rather say that our moral norms got mixed up with Islamic values that reached us owing to centuries-old practice. However, we have no sufficient scientific ground to clarify theoretic and philosophic issues included in disputes on religion. Knowing about the lack of work done in the field of religious education in our country, I can say that today the majority of people are not ready to approve broad discussions on Islamic philosophy. To understand Islam as religious philosophic system, it is necessary to hold scientific discussions and to learn different

views of famous Islamic scholars of the East and the West. If we prefer to go into details of the problem, we would be far from solving more everyday religious, social problems, and in the end it may prevent people from making a right choice of the direction in the field of religious education. It would be better to explain the system of moral values of religion and its constituents to the majority of population who has no great knowledge of religion. This system provides the notion of well-known ethic norms pointing out their place in the Holy Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Besides, the system in question makes people to live their life within the frame of these norms, confirmed by life itself. Due to this reason, today we need to teach religious norms and principles, that would help to regulate relationships between man and man, man and society and, what is the most important, man and God. We should strive for accordance of the main principles of Islamic education and norms of religious ethics and morality on the basis of care and attention given to one another and to the surrounding world as well.

- What norms are they? How can they be distinguished?

- First of all, it is family relationship - between husband and wife, parents and children, among relatives and among those belonging to different religions. No doubt, relationship between man and man and right putting into practice of the principle "all Muslims are brothers" are very important issues. Another important matter is an attitude of Muslims to Motherland, native land, the deep analyses and teaching "Love to Motherland comes from Faith". I think today it must be the issue of current importance. Those who understand love to Motherland otherwise, need to

know that Motherland is indivisible not because of being Motherland, but because Motherland, following to Islam, cannot be sold or put up for auction. If there are some people who have lost their way in this respect, they have to be returned to the way of love to Motherland. To do this it wouldn't be right to resort to humiliating critics, but one should take the strength from saving and upbringing love and care. Islam demands and teaches it. Our religion has never been prone to divide society into friends and enemies: Islamic morality resolutely denies this form of relationship among people. To strengthen this theoretic principle in life and to explain it to people have been a difficult task in all Muslim states. Nevertheless, the difficulty doesn't mean impossibility. That is why we need right information about moral ethic values of religion to be given to people, despite political and religious belongings. Today in society special attention should be paid to propaganda as well as to broad usage of thesis about peace and tolerance constituting a foundation of Islamic morality. Unfortunately, in society there exist groups that fail to understand one another. In this respect much attention should be paid to teaching the principles of peace and tolerance that constitute the basis of Islamic morality. Nevertheless, we are still proud of the fact that during 200 years no religiously motivated confrontation took place in our country. Yet, it by no means guarantees the everlasting absence of disputes of radical nature. We have more religious currents and sects than 10 and 100 years ago. That is why it is necessary to estimate and to maintain our valuable heritage - peaceful and tolerant coexistence of different religious currents. Many Muslim sects and currents functioning today in the country are about to be opposed to one another, trying to

present their own views as the Islamic basis. They instigate young people to be intolerant and I believe these actions contradict to Islamic morality. Giving this "food of morality" to young people, who long for learning fundamental principles of Islam, is considered as doing the sin before God.

- *How often do these cases take place?*

- Unfortunately, "the doers" of these crimes attend some of our mosques. And they, without any remorse during Friday prayers, try to incite our young people to religious intolerance. Moreover, we observe the increase of the number of people who, attending one and the same mosque, do not want to see each other; their behavior differs from behavior of those who call themselves brothers practicing the same religion. Religious views and beliefs shouldn't be used for instigation and spreading hatred among Muslims and among all believers. Religious values are necessary for mutual understanding, mutual assistance, mutual respect and love. As you see so many good deeds can be done in the name of religion. Some mosques, the names of which I don't want to mention here are being visited by "khavarijs", though it is known that this current appeared in the early stage of Islam. We doubt that God accepts the prayers of those who come to perform prayers at the same time never greeting each other. The hearts of believers should have no space for revenge and hatred.

- *You would agree that those who want to unleash religiously motivated war are spreading some kind of religious literature.*

- We often face the cases of spreading harmful religious literature among believers. Spreading the above-said publications, the authors, of which giving themselves out to be supporters of Islam, but in reality use the thesis that

contradicts to the essence of Islam and the content of the Holy Qur'an, must be estimated as a violation of current law, and the persons involved in this business must be called to account before the law. However, the most important lessons they have to learn must be the call of their conscience. They have to realize that poisoning the minds of the people in the name of religion with the help of harmful ideas which are far from religion, conflicts with religion itself, being an unforgivable sin before God. In the Holy Qur'an there are many verses regarding the punishment of those who cause confrontation among Muslims. Since 1964 spreading religiously motivated hostile ideas have been prohibited by International Conventions. "The Pact on Human Rights of 1964" was signed by 144 countries of the world. The Azerbaijan state joined the above-mentioned Conventions and Pacts, adopting its national laws in conformity with international norms. It was the International Conventions and laws that governed the State Committee for the Work with Religious Associations within the procedure of closure of a number of religious communities involved in unleashing of religiously motivated war. Freedom of religion and the equality of all religions are enshrined in our Constitution. Propaganda of religiously motivated hostility in our country, which always enjoyed religious tolerance, is a crime. Besides, such actions injure the Azerbaijan state system. Today European countries are learning the Azerbaijan model of state-religion relationship and they are thinking about its putting into practice. This idea was expressed at the OSCE/ODIHR workshop held on May 17-18 last year in Vienna (Austria). I think it is worth to mention the words of the Ambassador of Germany in our country Mr. Klaus Grevlich, said during the banquet held at his resi-

dence on December 24 last year. He particularly emphasized: "Religious tolerance in Azerbaijan may serve as a positive example for European countries and for everyone. I think that now it is possible to export the Azerbaijan model of relationship between state and religion. It is your national wealth". Bearing in mind these words, we should preserve this national wealth, which is the result of the hard endeavors of our predecessors. First of all, religion mustn't be distorted. It is not right to create hostility among people under the cover of modernist ideas or returning to the times of the Prophet. It is of great importance to maintain classical approach to religion, especially to Islam. It is not right to deceive young people by dividing into different sects and currents, gathering in some apartments in groups of 20-30 and reading the book of a certain religious leader from neighboring country, thinking of him as of one's idol, or *murshid* (someone who shows righteous way). Of course this action is something like quiet protest or revolutionary rush of the time preceded the October Revolution. Sometimes these gatherings are of clandestine nature, thus more attractive for the youth naturally disposed to Maximalism, sometimes self-sacrifice in the name of the ideas of "irreplaceable leader who has lived a life of martyr". We confirm the functioning of such sects in Baku. Yet they - attendees of the courses of the sects - are experiencing the state of imperceptible psychological transfer to the stage of comprehension of ideas which are taught as the only right ones; later on the stage will start (a certain group is experiencing it) within which they must be sure that young people of our country should resemble them, and it must be achieved by all means. I could continue, of course, the description of the kind till the end, for example

when those who deny resembling them are called unfaithful and like in secondary schools (we had it in our childhood) at first they would be boycotted. The later stage is worse. And right religious education is necessary to prevent this worse stage. And let the question who must deal with this education be the theme of our next conversation...

*"Echo", newspaper,
February 12, 2004*

THE NECESSITY OF BALANCED APPROACH WITHIN THE WORK WITH RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS

Freedom of religion, a right to practice one or another religion, to adhere any religious views is one of the most important democratic principles and one of the Azerbaijan citizens' constitutional rights.

This right is also called freedom of conscience - religious preferences are the privacy and a personal choice of people. It explains the reason why religion is separated from the state.

However, it doesn't mean that state shouldn't regulate activities of religious structures in society. In Azerbaijan the State Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the Work with Religious Associations, established in June 2001, is involved in this activity.

The Chairman of the mentioned State Committee for the Work with Religious Association, Prof. Rafig Aliyev informs E. Gasimova, correspondent of "Azerbaijani News" about the work carried out by the Committee within the time of its functioning.

- Tell us, please, about the main directions of activity of your Committee.

- The State Committee was established aiming to implement the state policy in the field of religion: We have developed conception on relationship between state and religion in Azerbaijan; we have taken some measures to put it into practice: registered religious associations, functioning in the Republic to put in good order their activities

and to put these activities in line with the Constitution of Azerbaijan and the law "On Religious Freedom", adopted in 1992.

The main task of the Committee is to implement the above-said laws, which would enable religious associations to satisfy a spiritual want of society, at the same time avoiding interference of religious associations in the state policy.

- Following Articles 18 and 48 of the Constitution of Azerbaijan religion is separated from the state. We would like to know whether this principle disturbs or not the activity of the Committee.

- In no way. We do not interfere in any ideology or religious matters of religious associations unless they contradict to current laws. If we notice that their activities threaten citizens or state, we apply the Regulations on the State Committee to interfere.

No doubt, balanced and careful approach is needed in this respect. Heydar Aliyev pointed out that religion is very peculiar field, and that is why state policy should be carried out very prudently in this field bearing in mind the interests of all parts, avoiding the violation of our laws and International Conventions we joined. It is not easy but it is necessary. Religion does exist in society; this is the fact that should be taken into consideration.

And we should build our independence taking it into account. By secular state we don't mean an atheist state. We just mean that its activities are not governed by Shariah or religious laws, but by democratic ones.

We also do not deny existence of religion in society and its influence on social even political processes, on people's behavior and psychology. We accept existence of re-

ligion within the frame of current state laws. It is this frame within which we carry out the work with religious associations.

- How many religious associations are functioning in the country today?

- We have registered 237 religious associations; we are going to examine about 25 written requests. We have been carrying out this work since the first day of establishment of the State Committee.

It was very important to put in order the activities of religious associations functioning in the country, to compile the archives, registration lists, to get acquainted with the charters. The most difficult task was to carry out this work at the same time not violating the rights of religious associations and not interfering in their businesses.

The Committee is ready to offer any assistance to religious associations for smooth functioning and for acquiring religious literature on conditions that it doesn't contradict to the interests of the country and its laws.

- Has any examination been made to assess the content of this literature?

- Religious literature being imported to our country is examined at the experts' department of the Committee.

In this connection we have a lot of work to do, there are 3 persons in department. We used to receive complaints regarding work slowness. But if we take into account the fact that we get dozens of books per month, and we have to read them, assess them and make a review, then we can say that the work of experts doesn't take much time.

We give permission to spread a considerable part of the literature. But we also get the publications containing

direct calls to overthrow the government, hostile calls towards representatives of other religions.

Sometimes they include the texts, which would lead to disturbance of religious balance in the country and would instigate interreligious confrontation. We cannot permit spreading such kind of literature. Moreover, we have a right to bring a case before a court to cease the activities of religious associations that order such kind of literature.

For example, we had to close Baptist community "Church of Love", as it was involved in propaganda of hatred towards representatives of other confessions.

- You are a very open interlocutor particularly with media representatives. It is very positive quality.

- We must explain our activities. It is the direction we have chosen to work with religious associations, international organizations, and public. We spent certain time to change some view, accordingly to which the Committee was established to fight religion, this view was followed by some international organizations.

Today many of them applied to us to be informed on many issues, with this aim we started to run internet web page in three languages: Azerbaijani, English and Russian, we also issue a Bulletin quarterly in two languages. Besides, several international conferences were held in Baku.

- You told that 237 religious associations were registered in Azerbaijan. What kind of religious current they represent; is it necessary to have such a number today?

- There are 23 non-Muslim religious associations (Christian, Jewish and those representing non-traditional religions for Azerbaijan - Hare Krishna and Bahai) from total number of registered associations. The rest ones are Muslim associations.

Actually the number of believers has considerably increased and the number of religious currents increased as well. Let's give the following example: previously Muslims were Sunnite and Shiite who lived in peace, and many of them didn't know to what current they belonged. Now there are 10 Muslim currents in Azerbaijan, except the mentioned ones. There are vahhabists, followers of Said Nursi, followers of Suleyman, Sufi currents appeared, and "dervishes".

The Committee is working with them; we do our best for the maintenance of public order and observance of tolerance principles. Yet we enjoy some harmony. But nobody can guarantee the reign of everlasting harmony, and that the state won't have to take measures to restore the order, as it used to do it before.

- Not so long ago one American journalist said that Azerbaijan authorities had to deal with three main tasks: economic development, settlement of Garabagh conflict and liquidation of threat of Islamic fundamentalism. Does this mentioned threat exist, and if so to what extent it is dangerous?

- The threat of Islamic fundamentalism really exists and it is real danger. The threat was especially dangerous three years ago, and it is dangerous now. It caused the establishment of our State Committee.

Many Muslim states are trying to spread this current in our country, pursuing only their own interests. It is not of religious but political nature. We should think about it and take necessary measures that must be sophisticated and balanced.

- You and your colleagues should know religions and the basis of state policy well and you must be capable to

apply your knowledge. At the same time one should be tactful to deal with this issue. What kind of persons do work in the Committee, what is their education?

- We have 22 persons in staff. There is experts' department, department of registration and legal matters department. The staff members are lawyers, theologians, and historians. It would be good to increase our staff but it is very difficult to find people who have knowledge in this field.

Besides, special knowledge is necessary to solve some unexpected problems and to do it tactfully. We should be tactful with lawyers, politicians, and patriots and be capable to be unbiased, what is not easy.

Our task is not to allow religious situation to be out of the frame of law, morality, ethics and normal human relationships. But these frames should be flexible enough for religious confessions to exist and develop.

*"Azerbaijani News", newspaper,
February 13, 2004*

ESTRANGEMENT IS THE ACTIVITY BASIS OF TOTALITARIAN SECTS

The religious situation in Azerbaijan for the time being remains comparatively stable and more predictable than a year ago, what is reflected not only in our reports but in those of many "jealous" international public and governmental organizations. The latest report of the US Department of State describes the same.

23 religious communities out of 260 registered in our country are of non-Islamic orientation: as a matter of fact, this agrees with the number of adherents of world religions. They are Christians, Jews as well as Krishnaites and Bahaites. Mass Media and the society on the whole have spoken much about the penetration of destructive totalitarian sects to our country lately. However, that is incompetent people, who have a superficial idea of religious communities' activities and the nature of their interrelations with the state that speak much more about that. First of all, we should focus on that a secular system of Azerbaijan secures every citizen's right to religious choice preaching no violence and spreading no discord among people with the purpose to change their religious mode of life. Along with that the religious communities' activities are regulated by the law and supervised by the State Committee for the Work with Religious Associations which, in compliance with its status provides the freedom of conscience and controls whether legislative demands in this field are observed. When the law "On Freedom of Conscience" is contravened, pressing measures are taken in respect of those who vio-

lated it. It equally applies to power structures and individual society members as well as religious associations. In particular, in 2003 according to a court resolution, the activities of the community "Church of Love" was broken off and in early 2004 religious communities "legova Witnesses" and "Greater Grace" received notifications. As to the religious associations of a marked totalitarian or destructive orientation, their activities are stopped by law-enforcement bodies, as a rule, and of course, they are not officially registered. In particular, last year an Indian sect "Osho" broke off its illegal activities in the republic; the same year the attempt of spreading the ideas of "Satan's Church" was prevented. The sect offering healing of all diseases by means of right breathing has made more frequent attempts to be registered in Azerbaijan under the pretence of a charitable organization. Its center is in India.

The process of differentiating destructive and nondestructive sects is difficult and needs the experts' thorough work. As experience shows, sometimes outlooks of one or another sect can be transformed under the influence of various factors, and when spread in a new, sounder environment they lose their original totalitarian nature.

Therefore, it is very important to study without bias the activities of every individual religious association and to make a fair assessment. In this context a comparative isolation of destructive sects is one of their basic features. Under the influence of purposeful sermons the followers of such sects feel outside society and only find peace among their associates. According to experts, it is the social action of closed religious groups that promotes the spreading of suicidal violence or aggression towards other members of society.

To prepare believers for sacred war against all humanity and to bring up the adherents' religious tolerance to dissidents is not a less important feature of destructive sects. The adherents of such sects are often ready to accuse those who have no relation to their "fraternity". Furthermore, leaders of totalitarian sects never reveal their true purposes to neophytes and propagate a hierarchal system of knowledge transfer. Therefore, leaders of lower and middle units only know what they have to, according to their religious dignity. In the very basis of these trends there is readiness for deception which is, in principle, incompatible with either norms of morals or true religious - ethic values.

Of course, the penetration of such near-religious movements into our republic and their spreading are fraught with serious consequences, and therefore appropriate state agencies take all the necessary steps to prevent it. It should be mentioned that despite the authorities' efforts, sects and religious movements of non-traditional direction are still endeavoring to penetrate into Azerbaijan, as a rule, through Russia.

The Law of the RF "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations" adopted in 1997 contributed little to the normalization of the situation in Russia and did not stop seriously unlawful activities of many destructive communities. Hundreds of communities, aspiring to keep in people's consciousness the ideas doing harm not only to morals and ethics of the nations of this country but also to the Russian State system as well, were registered throughout Russia.

According to mass media and law-enforcement bodies of the RF, these religious communities often try to legitimize those kinds of activities that are contrary to some arti-

cles of the Federal and Republican legislation and International Conventions.

The activities of communities such as "Krishna Consciousness" (both orthodox believers and Muslims of Russia spoke out against it) and "Iegova Witnesses" have been in the focus of the Russian public attention. As to the latter, according to mass media and RF juridical agencies, there have been stated the cases of children's death because of the refusal of their parents, members of the foregoing community, to transfuse blood during surgical aggression. Despite this, Russian law-enforcement bodies managed to break off the activities of the sect only in one region of Moscow (the community "Iegova Witnesses" numbers about 400 all over the country).

In Russia religious movements, such as Akhmadiysky Tarikat, Last Testament Church, Sahadja Yoga and Church of Scientology, are spread. The latter relies on a certain Hubbard's teaching, and the influence of scientologists in Russia is so great that till recently their followers have been admitted to teaching at secondary schools of anti-drug program "Narconon", which was forbidden by the RF Ministry of Health as a result. It is known that the author of some technologies L.R. Hubbard was not a doctor and was not medically educated.

Moreover, according to the facts of various juridical bodies of the USA and Europe, he used to be a man of morbid mind; in 1947 he was in naval hospital Oak Knoll (USA), where he took a course of mental treatment. As his son acknowledged, his father made a great deal of "discoveries" in the state of deep drug intoxication. Nevertheless, according to the scientologists' statute, every word uttered or written by L.R. Hubbard is "a holy writ".

The activities of the scientologists in Russia are very restricted for the time being, however Russia still serves unwittingly a peculiar "jumping-off place" for many destructive sects. Even some radical Islamists have their centers in various regions of Russia and countries of Western Europe. In our opinion, superfluous liberalism and seeing democratic wealth as a cure-all at times achieve absurdity under such conditions, a number of international human right organizations, a part of which, unfortunately proceeds from the interests of influential leaders of the sects in western countries being guilty of that. All this taken together paves the way for the activities of religious extremists and aggressive separatists who very often use a religious shelter not only in Russia but also in contiguous states. In this context Azerbaijan is not insured, of course, from the appearance of various branches of destructive and totalitarian sects demolishing the basis of morals and religion itself on its territory.

Therefore, one state's efforts to prevent consequences of the activities of destructive and totalitarian sects that are harmful for the society are not enough. Citizens should be more watchful, discerning and, above all, should have reliable information both about religious values and hazardous trends using religion as an appearance. Religious education for citizens, including secondary school-children falling under influence of missionaries and sectarians more often is of great importance.

We think today the interpretation of the acting law "On Freedom of Conscience" should be paid particular attention to as well. According to Article 1 of the document, state structures are permitted to limit the freedom of conscience considering of state and public security as well as

the protection of rights and freedoms in compliance with international obligations if necessary.

Well, what do we understand by public security? Does it apply to the sects that call the citizens to be single, vegetarian, to refuse medical aid or those that oblige adherents to meditate for 7 or 8 hours a day? Therefore, state bodies have to act accordingly to the conditions where specific criteria are absent currently. This results in definite difficulties for coordinated actions of corresponding structures and gives every ground to criticize any kind of state activities under the pretence of the protection of the believers' rights.

As a matter of fact, the members of these sects need to be protected from a pernicious influence of different preachers of "divine truth", all possible confessors and lying prophets of our times. This has nothing common with religion and morals, clear convictions and belief in good.

Faith and good are charismas. They do not involve estrangement and do not accept evil and hatred: these three elements are unchangeably inherent to destructive and totalitarian sects.

*NGO "Right of Choice", newspaper,
June, 2004*

THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE AND PRAYER

On June 21, 2004 an International Conference on "Religion and Democracy: Theory and Historical Practice" is held in Baku on initiative of the State Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the Work with Religious Associations.

On the eve of the event our correspondent met the head of the State Committee Prof. Rafiq Aliyev and interviewed him on problems that would be touched by scholars and religious figures representing more than 10 countries. Below you can read this interview.

As you may know, the UN proclaimed June 21 the International Day of Peace and Prayer. By chance or not, but three years ago, that is on June 21, 2001, the State Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the Work with Religious Associations was established, following the decree №512 of late President of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev.

Planning this Conference 6 months ago, we didn't think that such a pleasant coincidence might take place. We prefer to commence on the first day of the week - Monday. Though we could choose Friday, Saturday or Sunday, but as these days are special for representatives of Islam, Christianity and Judaism, we supposed that every believer should be in mosque, synagogue or church these days, and it would be a sin to ask them, for the sake of scientific conference, not to go there. Thus, we've chosen Monday - the day, in many respects, convenient for everyone, and equidistant from sacred days for believers to pray

- being close to God. That is why the coincidence of these three important events once again not only proves the existence of the Creator, but the existence of invisible mechanism that regulates our earthly relationships, as well as the will of Almighty God to fill them with morality and love.

The theme of our conference, *"Religion and Democracy: Theory and Historical Practice"*, is of current importance not only from the point of view of religion itself, philosophy and politics, but from the point of view of capability (necessity, if you wish) of interaction of these two important elements of our life, our being.

We all understand and accept the fact that people always have had faith, and it may forever stay in life of every person. But today, the majority of countries and nations of the world live not only with faith in their hearts, but according to the laws of democracy - laws, accepted by people, however, sometimes not being in line with respective, strict religious canons. Nevertheless, it is these laws that actually create, relatively equal for all, conditions of coexistence and normal labor; they ensure and guarantee invariability of freedom of choice, speech, deeds and regulate relationships among members of society, in spite of their nationality and religious belonging.

There exists a common viewpoint that religion is older than democracy. Religious canons and dogmas are unchangeable and they cannot be subject of reforms as applied to new social political conditions. People, no matter how they wish, have no right to make alternations in Divine laws.

Laws of democracy changed and were enlarged by new additions in the course of time, and it is of constant nature, following its essence. I think that the principles of

democracy have more ancient roots than the divine ones. They existed in their primitive form when first people appeared on the Earth. The election of the chieftain of the tribe was carried out in accordance with traditional not divine beliefs. Of course, in principle, today it is not so important when religions and common nowadays notion "democracy" appeared. It is important that today they do exist being the real pillars of existence for us. That is why interrelation between religion and democracy is not a simple issue today. It is the fact that finally defined (however, not to the same extent) vital capacity of every nation, state and whole world.

Today there are widespread talks about global clash of civilizations, cultures and religions. I think it is a considerable breakaway from the problem itself. Everything depends on capability to combine with religion and democracy. I realize that religious leaders would say that religion is the best democracy, as it is sent down by God Himself to set up peace and harmony among people on the Earth. I do not argue about it. Religion has regulated believers' life and deeds for centuries. Sometimes it describes in details when and how one should act; it includes a precise notion of what is permitted and prohibited. It would seem that the notion of democracy itself is unnecessary. Is there any need in it?

Democracy supporters would say: religions are numerous, but the law, as usual, is one. Nowadays, it is impossible to regulate relationships between nations and states with regulations of one religion. Yet, there are no universal religious regulations that would be accepted by followers of, at least, five world religions, being fair and equal for all. No matter how hard theologians and spiritual

leaders have tried during centuries, no religious criteria do exist, aiming to satisfy all 6-billion population of the Earth.

The principles of democracy are more universal, and they can be applied without serious infringement of human rights, if we take into account faith and its absence. However, it is not envisaged in religions. Tolerance has clear borders in religions. Outside "red lines" there is heresy, which places the man out of the believers' society: actually, he has no right to be equal with the others.

However, it is just the hundredth visible part of contradictions between religion and democracy, but people and countries need both religion and democracy. Actually, there is no necessity in attempts to oppose these real powers of world society, though since 2000 the cases when politicians and religious leaders strive for finding ways of real separate existence of religion and democracy, disputing about importance of one of them for world's fate, have become frequent. It led politicians and religious leaders into the dead end.

I am not going to tell about doubtless, destructive results of this incorrect confrontation. They are evident for everyone. I would like to stress the possibility of the counter, that is, the close interaction of religion and democracy to set up peace and harmony in society.

Coming outside the limits permitted by religion, I would compare their unity with commonality of soul and flesh; one means nothing without the other in real world. Democracy without spirituality is destined to failure: everyone knows about it. Religion without democratic institutes is unable to ensure peace and harmony.

Then what is the problem? Why do wars, violence, terror and fear for future appear? It can be explained dif-

ferently: the absence of more stable spiritual guiding lines, gradual deformation of the very essence of democracy, or by both above-mentioned reasons. If we take this point of view, we should assume that the whole world is destined to death; however, we have no right to think so.

I think that the reason lies in the second part of the theme - in contradictions between theory and historical practice. It, to the same extent, concerns religion and democracy. Today, we, unfortunately, have to establish a fact of absence of a more or less ideal state, built up in accordance with religious laws, or in accordance with principles of democracy. Nevertheless, we are witnesses of historical experience in European and Oriental countries: it is long peaceful coexistence of actually opposite, accordingly to their content and principle powers of monarchy and democracy. There are lots of examples of this. It gives additional possibility to search for ways of liquidation of numerous contradictions between religion and democracy.

Today, as you may see, I'm ready just to emphasize the issue: What kind of actions we should undertake to neutralize danger that may lead to disastrous consequences for the whole world? I think that existence of this danger, judging by recent developments, I mean of last five years, raises no doubts. Despite the power of democracy and the prayers of religious leaders, the world of today has become very restless.

History teaches us that home collapses in two cases: when the fundament is not firm, or when people incur God's anger. To live in peace, as life teaches us, we should act reasonably in both cases: to lay the firm foundation based on principles of democracy, and, of course, not being the object of God's anger. To this end, religion, as the code

of Divine laws, and democracy as the way of survival, invented by His best beings, should work not for certain nations and countries, but work equally for everyone. Then the world would be as in fairy tales.

*"Echo", newspaper,
June 12, 2004*

**INTERACTION OF STATE AND RELIGION
WITHIN MODERN CONDITIONS**
*(Statement made at the International
Conference on "Religion and Democracy:
Theory and Historical Practice ")*

Dear Conference participants!

Azerbaijan is a native land of many religions, including Zoroastrianism (Fire-worshipping) - the most ancient one. The temple of fire worshipers is still being visited today.

The history of Albanian churches in Azerbaijan has been traced back to the beginning of 4th century A.D. Three of these churches, situated on the territory of present-day Azerbaijan, are being restored; they are our national heritage. Recently, owing to the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan the Alban-Udin Church has been reconstructed, once liquidated by Synod in 1836 (at that time Azerbaijan was a part of the Russian Empire), and Alban-Udin Christian community has been registered. The Albanian Church was able to preserve some temples; one of them is open, the second is being restored.

At the beginning of the 7th c. Azerbaijan became a Muslim country, and today Muslim population is more than 90%.

Religion constitutes the essence of spirituality. We think that conditions for normal functioning of society can be provided in case the state has completeness of supreme power, and social political and religious organizations have opportunity to purposefully influence on the institutes of public authorities.

The law owing to state activity as well as habits and traditions respected in society, which have religious origin, ensures normal functioning of society.

State regulates social economic and spiritual fields of society. Thus, it is obliged to provide equal conditions for activities of all religions. It is a guarantee of tolerance between religions and confessions.

The Government of Azerbaijan does its best to provide necessary conditions for practicing religion. The population of our country is 8 million. Today, there are about 1,300 hundred mosques, more than 40 churches, synagogues and houses of prayer, more than 500 praying rooms, connected with religious past of nations, which live on the territory of present-day Azerbaijan. For the last 15 years more than 100 mosques have been built. In the middle of March of the last year the opening ceremony of the largest synagogue in the Caucasus and the main Cathedral church of Orthodox Christians was held in Baku.

Muslims and Christians were involved in both reconstruction processes. They rendered financial assistance as well as were partaking in reconstruction works. Cathedral Church of Russian Orthodox Eparchy, built in 1907 by Azerbaijani capitalist Z. Tagiyev, almost hundred years later has been completely reconstructed mainly owing to financial aid of another Muslim, L. Kurbanov.

The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1918-1920) was the first secular state among all Muslim states of the East. Since then all religions and beliefs have been recognized equal before the law. The Republic of Azerbaijan is following this tradition.

This equality is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan. There is no priority religion for our

state. Everyone prays his/her own way. This proves the presence of religious pluralism in our country, in other words, there are traditional and non-traditional religions in Azerbaijan, religions that have started spreading in our country comparatively recently. Nevertheless, we strictly adhere to the principle of separation of religion from the state. Though, it defines only political direction of our state. Criteria of spirituality and morality, national, and spiritual values are closely connected with religion. Late Heydar Aliyev, our National leader, repeatedly stated it.

It is necessary to form some model of peaceful coexistence of religions in secular states. We attempt to implement the above-mentioned and to derive benefit from it.

At the same time I would like to point out that at present religion is often used for other purposes, particularly, for terror and extremism.

That is why speaking about freedom of religion and belief we should not forget the negative role of many religious leaders, groups in the history of the East and West, who all the time waged wars under the guise of religions. Even today, many examples can be given, which could demonstrate how people's religious beliefs are being used for war and conflict purposes in different countries.

Paying great attention to people's beliefs we sometimes should cast a doubt on them. Not every belief, including religious one, is pure and serve for the good. Acts of terror, self-sacrifices at the result of which many people, mostly the innocent ones die, are committed by people with distorted religious beliefs. We are for purity of religion. We think state itself must help its citizens to learn more about religions. It is possible to realize the above-said both in secondary schools and in the highest schools and univer-

sities. The support and help of mass media and society is of great importance in this respect.

Interaction of religion and state should be carried out within the frame of current national laws and International Conventions, taking into account all believers' interests. As for regulating social relationships, laws should have priority. But it by no means should limit the freedom of every believer to practice his/her religion and to be an active citizen of his/her country. State laws, as a rule, do not concern spiritual part of religion, they mainly concern religious practice.

Thus, within laws of any state the essence and content of religion remain unchanged. I think these circumstances must be thoroughly examined and rightly explained to followers of all religions.

To be secular state doesn't mean to deny religion. Role of religion cannot be denied. Secular nature of state enables to create equal conditions for all religions.

Thank you for attention.

Baku, June 21, 2004

*NGO "Right of Choice", newspaper,
July, 2004*

STATEMENT AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON "RELIGION, PEACE AND OLYMPIC IDEALS"

Dear Conference participants!

Today here gathered people of high moral, leaders of world religions whose aspirations are directed to the search of ways of establishing peace and concord among people and in society on the whole. We, officials, do not separate us from you.

Our final aim is common. Only the ways towards the aim can be different, however, it is not so important. Different religions often have different ways to God. Nevertheless, we are united by belief in good, justice and virtue.

The state and religion have similar tasks before society. Religion, as you may know, regulates, mainly, three moments of life and activities of the man:

- a) relations between person and person;
- b) relations between person and society;
- c) relations between person and God.

In first two cases the state and religion interact and co-operate. The state is not related to the third moment. That is, in my view, inviolability of spiritual affairs of every believer.

Man's belief is his strength, prohibited area. It is possible to destroy this stronghold; today giving up faith and to be an unbeliever has become admissible, as that is man's decision.

However, to give other people an opportunity to take advantage of one's belief is a crime not only before God,

but mankind on the whole. This often leads to tragic consequences, i.e. extremism, terror and even wars. All we do not know it by hearsay. Thus, the state should be interested in the third moment as well, as much depends on the relations between person and God.

Man's place in society should be connected with this aspect of his life on the Earth. What is his spiritual state, so is his attitude to surroundings.

Man, doing good things and aspiring to concord with others, must have, first of all, a kind heart, but it is seldom kind if there is no belief and place for God in it.

Therefore, the state must aspire to fill every citizen's heart with love to neighbor. So write Holy Writs: only through love for our neighbors can we reach God.

In this sense the Olympic Games relied on physical and spiritual perfection of the participants play a great role in the establishment of peace and concord among nations irrespective of religious, racial, national or state belonging. No war or conflict has used Olympic ideas or ideals as excuses. Unfortunately, we cannot say it about religion. History has witnessed a lot of bloody wars waged under religious slogans; even today the use of religion as "the implement" of war or terror is not exception.

On the eve of the start of the XXVIII Olympic Games to be held on the native land of these Games the conference on such a theme is to the point. It is necessary to make religious ideas similar to Olympic ones in order to prevent them from being used as excuses of war and violence.

Our duty is to create conditions, under which it would be possible to carry the Olympic torch of peace, Olympic fire through the whole system of religious ideology.

It must burn in the heart of every believer and be passed on from generation to generation. Only then can we say with pride that "Religion, Peace and the Olympic Ideals" going together in the name of the present conference are not separable from one another indeed.

Thank you for attention.

*Athens, Greece,
August 10-11, 2004*

**NO OUTSIDER SHOULD HAVE
AN INFLUENCE ON OUR CITIZENS
(Interview, "Echo", newspaper)**

- Mr. Aliyev, Head of the US State Department office on religious freedom in his recent statement criticized activities of local authorities concerning the mosque of "Jumuah". Are the claims of the community members on independence from the Caucasian Muslim Board lawful?

- Frankly speaking, I didn't mean to comment John Hanford's statement, distinguished as one of the most biased and at the same time irresponsible ones, touching upon artificially arisen problems connected with "Jumuah" mosque situated on the historical and architectural reserve "Icheri Sheher" (Old City). Unfortunately, mass media representatives of Azerbaijan took this statement as a position of the US State Department, and I have to clarify the situation.

a) Mr. Hanford stated that allegedly "Azerbaijan authorities occupied the mosque". In Azerbaijan, mosques are in the charge of the state, and "Jumuah" mosque in "Icheri Sheher" being a historic monument is a property of state, that protects it. In this case I don't understand what does the State Department's representative mean by "occupation of the mosque"?

b) Mr. Hanford "demands" (not asks, as is customary in civilized countries) to "return" the community to the mosque and to provide conditions for its activities to be independent from the Caucasian Muslim Board and to elect their own leader "imam". Mr. Hanford's "demand" demon-

strates his complete unawareness regarding current situation and current laws of our country, regulating functions of religious communities.

In articles 8 and 9 of the law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on "Religious freedom" it is underlined that: "With regard to organizational matters, all Muslim religious associations shall be submitted to the Caucasian Muslim Board... uniting in their historical center". Apparently, Mr. Hanford decided to establish a precedent of breaking the law and openly demonstrates his disrespect for the Caucasian Muslim Board as historical center of Caucasian Muslims. This attitude would eliminate any peaceful ways of conflict settlement and strengthen existed confrontation among Muslim religious communities of Azerbaijan.

Let us suppose Mr. Hanford cannot see the "basis" of problem in question that could explain why he made such a statement, not willing to remain behind his colleagues from some western international organizations. What do some of our mass media representatives mean by "replicating" his statement with a certain pleasure? It causes a great bewilderment and regret rather than Mr. Hanford's statement itself.

- Why today so much attention is paid to freedom of religion, or precisely its role in society? Can it be explained by a special respect for Divine Providence, or something else?

- I think recent developments in the world may have their own explanations, and religion is not exception. I think the struggle for dominating role in the public consciousness represents impulsive force for world development of today. As you may know public consciousness has a space for religion, nationalism and for other important

components: *etatism* placing the state system above all (for example Turkey during the time of Kamal Atatürk, *national chauvinism* (Germany during the time of Hitler), etc. Today in our society, religion is not a dominant power, but the idea of *Azerbaijanism*, idea of Azerbaijani unitary secular state system. When someone speaks of religion, he, of course, means Islam. Islam and nationalism are, as a matter of fact, incompatible. The fight between them has been going on in all Muslim states since the second half of the XX c. Before the collapse of the USSR in many countries of Arab East nationalism dominated. However, within the last decade it lost its leading position and was ousted by Islam. The change of political and ideological priorities negatively affected the role of above countries in the world community.

The lack of close relationships between Islamists and nationalists sometimes causes civil wars: Algerian example demonstrates it. Today, analyzing all above mentioned, we are starting to observe a special assessment given to both main components of the public consciousness. In connection with the mosque of "Jumuah" in "Icheri Sheher", I would like to stress the following: in spite of the things to which we are used as well as the will of our opponents inside the country and outside it to ascribe their views to us, this mosque has, like all the rest mosques and churches, become not only the place of worship. However, it is worth to mention here that presently it is the places where religious consciousness of our citizens is being formed and developed, and it is this consciousness that often dominated over the national one, claiming to central place in public conscience. And public conscience, as far as we know, defines the way of life and the form of social political system.

We daresay the mosques and churches embody ideological responsibility. They can neither be compared with the usual cultural and religious historical monuments, nor with the buildings, usually called "House of God".

Following to Islam, prototype of house of God is situated in Mecca, and all the rest mosques are the places where Muslims perform prayers and worship. Not without reason the word "mosque" derived from Arabic word "sajada" (to worship). I wish it would be so. However, in practice it is not easy. I think everyone must understand why the state cannot under the pretext of liberalism be indifferent to the fact that some political and religious figures are trying to actively partake in formation of the public consciousness via cult buildings. Acknowledging the fact that the public consciousness, being still under formation, may in a decade lead to the change of social system, current system of power and political orientations, state does what it must do - protects status quo of the current public consciousness, which mainly includes, following the degree of importance, three components: *Azerbaijanism*, idea of unitary secular state system and moral values of Islam.

Any attempt to change the places of these constituents causes natural concern of the state, and it does its best to prevent it. I think all of us, including our foreign opponents, should understand and respect this position. As far as we know some of them very often under the pretext of "lessons of democracy" and "human rights" are striving for weakening ideological basis of our society. Numerous followers of "change of ideology of society" also constitute the part of this international "chorus". In fact, I think no country or society in the world can be found without dominating ideology.

To demonstrate in practice consequences of indifference to the issues of public consciousness formation I would give following examples from the recent history:

V.Lenin needed 15 years, Adolph Hitler - 10 years, Aya-tollah Khomeini - 20 years and M.Gorbachev only 5-6 years to change completely the destinies of countries and nations. Transformation of public consciousness shocks society, and the "damages" can be different.

Long time we thought that Lenin made the people of Russian empire happy, putting an end to the tsarism. Germans were happy to know that they, headed by Hitler, were nation chosen by God, several millions of Iranians were delighted with the Islamic revolution headed by imam Khomeini, the nations of the former USSR were very pleased with reforms implemented by M. Gorbachev, who, with the help of the states of capitalist west, was able to change "direction" of public consciousness belonging to population of such a vast territory possessed by the USSR.

These are examples without comments and connected with public consciousness that, as I think, should be sacred and untouchable for everyone. No outsider should have an influence on our citizens.

*"Echo", newspaper,
July 31, 2004*

RIGHT AND MORALITY ARE CHOICE CRITERIA

The right and morality: these two notions have existed for centuries and still exist as a core of man's behavior in the sense of accordance of the rights of morality that we confess.

How much ethical we are not to violate other people's rights and how much right we are trying to prove by all means propriety or, to put it more precisely, accordance with the right norms of immorality that sometimes shakes the whole world and shocks even those who became accustomed to a very monstrous state called "indifference": "The bullet which had whined past my ear hit my brother, thank God".

The most appalling event of this month has happened in a Spanish city - Madrid. As a result of acts of terror innocent people died - there are hundreds of killed and wounded, much blood and a lot of people became invalid for the rest of their life.

The terrorists' inhuman deed brought a heap of grief and sufferings. These people are enemies of all humanity whoever they are. These monsters of cruelty killed and crippled a host of people by, thus, attempting upon other people's expectations, including our ones as well.

Our hopes for peace and future happiness for our children have once more cracked deeply, becoming more fragile and vulnerable.

Reverting to the state of indifference and analyzing what we have nowadays, the following conclusion can be

made: the world has changed for most people - it has worsened from the standpoint of the observance of morality and the right to the choice of one or another action.

Yes, some has chosen terror and murders that spike fear into the others.

Nowadays even a most indifferent person cannot take an electric train in the morning and contemplate the passing landscapes and be pleased with what he can see through the window.

He will constantly torment himself against his will with thoughts whether in the car there is an infernal machine that can turn his life into a nightmare in a blink in the center of civilized Europe, Europe of the 21st century, Europe which voluntarily, without anybody's permission, assumed the right to teach others living and working according to its standards, the so-called "standards of democracy, leadership of law, justice and morality; standards of equal attitude to all countries and nations".

Is that really so!?

Is not this tragedy in Spain an echo of Khojali that has now reached the heart of Europe? Is not this a result of indifference to others' sufferings, a result of double or triple standards of democratic Europe applied to other countries?

It is more than ten years that most Jewish civilized democrats and socialists, conservatives and reformers have not wanted to see what is on the surface, to evaluate and acknowledge that "...yes, Azerbaijan friends, we understand and feel grief with you, we see incontestable facts of barbarian cruelty and inhumanity while watching films of Khojali tragedy.

Yes, those who committed these terrible murders are worse than terrorists as they killed looking into live people's

eyes and hearing their entreaties of mercy. They sneered at old people, children and women; neither the most gifted writer nor the greatest psychologist can describe the state of a woman with a year-old child clasped to her bosom and waiting for an Armenian sadist's bullet".

This is the state of fear and love, appreciation of good and evil, the state of deep disappointment of the existence of the world itself and even almighty gods who permitted themselves to create such monsters who take delight in blood and the people's death.

Only one, who is devoid of human sufferings and does not understand the sense and core of the words "right" and "morality", cannot feel all this, support the victims, express his sympathy and hold up to shame those who ventured to perform such atrocious deeds.

Of course, we can say "the tongue ever turns to the ailing tooth".

I agree and share your opinion, but what surprised me is that I did not see a crowd of people who represent the interests of Spain, walking towards the Turkish embassy to present their condolence and sympathy, to support the country which is overtaken by a disaster. That is not less terrible.

The feeling of condolence might have been lost in our heart. We take other people's grief as something remote as well.

I am sure that we should not return indifference. This is not the case when insult should be paid for insult. Though we have a right to do that, however our morality does not allow. We ought not to and cannot act like that: our fathers and grandfathers taught us quite different things.

We have learnt a lot of things from Europeans for some ten years. Nevertheless their attitude to our grief -the genocide of Azerbaijan people must not make us renounce our morality. We should not counterfeit to Europeans. Morality in its point is above any right, and in such cases our moral and ethic norms and century-old traditions must be placed above all.

Feelings of condolence and empathy alleviate grief. When the man shares his grief and woe, he feels much easier.

We, of course, feel grief with people, who lost their relatives and friends and present our true condolence to the victims' relatives and all the people of Spain. We support a noble fight against terrorism and extremism in all its forms urging all the peoples of the world to fight not only against terrorism, but indifference as well.

Terror and indifference nourish each other. Indifference is passive aid to terrorists that makes them sure of their impunity and gives these heartless murderers an opportunity of continuing their villainous business, i.e. to deprive people of their lives. Only understanding and the right estimation of bloody events in the whole world can help us overcome terror and endure its consequences. .

Our general solidarity will increase our certitude in victory over terror as "the plague of the 21st century". However, we must acknowledge that in the world there still exist definite objective and subjective prerequisites as well as "excuses" for acts of terror.

Until there are wars, bloody conflicts and occupation of foreign territories unjustified either by law or moral, no fair approach can be taken to them; and until political, economic and financial interests are placed above the right and

morality, we will remain in captivity of fear for a long time waiting for the very terrorist who for long has broken our peace of mind with his actions thus having deprived most people of compassion.

*"Echo", newspaper, March 17, 2004,
"Viewpoint" column*

GOD ACCEPTS THE PEOPLE, WHOSE HEARTS ARE FULL OF LOVE

Every year Christians celebrate a number of holidays, which, as generally agreed by Church, make every believer pass through the life of Jesus Christ to reach God. One of the most important holidays is Easter, known as Resurrection of Christ. Christians believe that Easter is a reminder of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Due to the differences in the system of chronology, Orthodox and Catholic Easters, as a rule, fall on different days. This year they coincide, and Christians of the world will celebrate this holiday on April 11. Last time this coincidence took place three years ago. That time the Pope John Paul II proposed Christians to celebrate this holiday on one and the same day, starting from the first year of the third millennium. Earlier, in 1965 the Second Vatican Council proposed to celebrate Easter on the second Sunday of April.

In 1997 this idea was supported by the so-called "Aleppo Declaration" adopted by the participants of Orthodox-Lutheran dialog, organized by the Standing Conference of canon and Orthodox bishops in America and Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

The Declaration proposed to celebrate Easter on the same day, accordingly to precise astronomic calculations following meridian on which Jerusalem is situated. However, these proposals have still no support of the Christian world. Next time the joint celebration of Easter by all Christians will take place in 2007.

The Orthodox Church celebrates this day accordingly to Julian calendar, which 13 days remains behind the Gregorian one. The Catholic Church celebrates Easter on the first full moon Sunday after the day of vernal equinox, during March 22-25. Time interval between Orthodox and Catholic celebrations may be a month.

40-day Lent - the time of repentance and fasting - proceeds Easter. Lent starts in the West on Ash Wednesday, when the priest sprinkles ashes on people's heads to remind them the returning to the earth. Oriental churches, including the Orthodox one, start the Lent on Monday, 7 weeks prior to Easter.

The rules of the Lent of Christian currents are not the same.

Palm Sunday is celebrated a week before the main holiday, - the start of Holy Week. This day symbolizes Christ's coming to Jerusalem, when his followers, who waved with palms, came to greet him. During the rest seven days Christians mourn over Jesus Christ's death.

The last Friday before Easter is called Good Friday. According to Bible, this day Jesus was crucified on the cross. On the Easter day, starting from the sunrise, churches hold services. Easter baskets, full of colored Easter eggs, bread and other food, are taken to the church service to get consecration at the church.

The history of Easter celebration is traced back to extreme antiquity. Jews celebrate Easter to recall the times of Israelites exodus from Egypt. Christians gave the holiday another meaning and connect it with resurrection of Prophet Jesus.

Nevertheless, spring holiday had been celebrated long before these religions appeared in the Middle East. Every

spring pagans celebrated Estre holiday in honor of goddess of light and spring. Trying to convert pagans to Christianity, ancient missionaries didn't mind celebration of pagan holiday in the manner of Christians.

Estre holiday was celebrated at the same time with Christian holiday. With time it was substituted by Christian one, however, the latter, following to historians' view, was "contributed" with some pagan elements. One of these elements is a colored Easter egg - the symbol of new life and revival.

Tradition connected with Easter eggs, perhaps, appeared at the time when church was prohibiting eating them during the Lent. Tradition to color the eggs was started by ancient Egyptians and Persians, who made it during spring holiday.

The same tradition was followed during the ancient celebration of Novruz holiday.

Another element of the holiday is Easter rabbit. In ancient Egypt the rabbit was the symbol of fertility and Europeans took it as one of the important elements of Easter celebration. Following to popular belief, Easter rabbit lays eggs; that is why people symbolically hide them in nests or gardens.

Before the 3rd c. Christians agreed the dates of their religious rites with Jewish practice. Malaysians celebrated Easter in accordance with Old Testament's tradition - on the night 14-15 of Nisan, any day of the week.

Those who celebrated Easter on Sunday also connected it with Jewish tradition.

Alexandrines celebrated it on Sunday that fell on the period from 15 to 21 Nisan, Romans - on Sunday, fell on the period from 16 to 22 Nisan.

At the beginning of the 3rd c. there appeared independent Christian Easter celebration tradition of Ippolit and forgotten Easter celebration tradition of Dionysus Alexandrine.

Apparently, Christian scholars were not satisfied with the way Jews celebrated Easter.

The fact is that Jewish priests took into account barley ripening by full moon, as the barley was necessary for the rites during the second day of celebration, and worshipers should have been in time in Jerusalem on the eve of Easter.

However, Christians' protests against Jewish arbitrariness reasoned the wish of Christians to get rid of any Jewish practice. And they managed that at the First Ecumenical Council in Nikea in 325.

Priests decided to celebrate Easter only on Sundays and after vernal equinox. But due to the fact that Christian Writings were silent about celebration of Easter on Sundays, Council didn't adopt a certain celebration tradition.

Thus, Christian Easter historically is closely connected with Jewish one of Old Testament, and many Easter traditions of Christians preserved elements of pagans reigning in Ancient Egypt and Ancient Rome. New religions couldn't completely deny traditions closely connected with the people's faith.

Islam, Judaism and Christianity have the common origin, however, Easter celebration cannot be found in Islam. Verses of Qur'an tell that Romans didn't crucify Prophet Jesus. We read in Qur'an that: "...but they killed him not, nor crucified him..." (Nisa, 157).

Roman soldiers crucified one of the followers of Christ. Accordingly to tradition, resemblance of Jesus (Isa)

was put over his follower and they killed that man. Jesus ascended the Heaven in followers' presence.

Thus, Holy Qur'an denies the Christian doctrine on sacrament of resurrection and the doctrine that says "Lord's blood" redeemed mankind's faults. At the same time Muslims follow Jewish tradition, basing on Old Testament Easter.

We know from Prophet Muhammad's traditions that he fasted on the tenth day of Muharram to express the gratitude to Allah for saving Prophet Moses and sons of Israel from Pharaoh's army on this day. This day is well known as the day of Ashoora, the day when Prophet Muhammad's grandson was killed.

In Azerbaijan the followers of three world religions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam - had lived through the centuries and live now in peace and accord. Good tradition to jointly celebrate religious holidays and to congratulate each other seems to sophisticated Europeans as something fantastic, but in reality it reflects the very essence of relationship between the citizens of our country. Air, water and bread of this noble land change the people's character and behavior. Hostility and hatred have no trace in their souls. Maybe, it is our fortune and partially misfortune. Anyway to live with love inside is enshrined in all world religions, and on the day of great Easter holiday we wish to Christians and non-Christians of our country to live in fraternal love to each other, bearing in mind that only love for our neighbor enables us to reach God.

*"Echo", newspaper, April 10, 2004,
"Viewpoint" column*

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE GENIE RELEASED FROM THE BOTTLE

The proverb ***Mind you don't fall into your own trap*** has existed from time immemorial.

Terror and terrorism as a phenomenon that overwhelmed the world nowadays emanates from two sources - Afghanistan and the Middle East, experts for anti-terrorism think.

Nearly all politicians and teachers of social sciences relying on historical facts and irrefutable arguments say simultaneously that today's terror comes from anti-Sovietism and anti-Communism of the 70s of the last century, the appearance of which was planned both in the West and the East.

Ideological and financial protectors of the so-called "terrorist No. 1" Bin Laden and Islamic radical groups in the Middle East, or, to put it more precisely, on the occupied territories of Palestine and the part of Southern Lebanon purpose their strategic object to fight against communism and its forms in Eastern countries.

The USSR, a Communism stronghold and the main enemy of the West, collapsed slowly having surrendered at discretion to foes without any special problems and the terrorists' "help". The West itself did not expect that, and the best experts, "fighters of invisible front" remained unclaimed by authorities. The West that recovered from a sudden state of ideological shock called "suicide" of the Soviet Union did not manage to find its bearings under new conditions, i.e. the conditions under which the main foe of

the global confrontation between Capitalism and Socialism is absent and that had devoured the great brains of both the sides in full for years - scientists, politicians, strategists, commanders, shot-firers, scouts, counter-intelligence agents and others.

Those who founded the Taliban's movement and individual subversive groups like Bin Laden's subdivisions in Afghanistan or movements of radical Islamists like "Hamass", "Hezbollah", "Muslim Brothers" and others in the Middle East were fully, excessively and long engaged in establishing order in anti-Soviet and anti-Communist "economy".

For nearly ten years these abandoned groups had grown and matured without any help and supervision of their initial founders and "ideological fathers". Over this time new sponsors as well as renewed ideological purposes, political guiding lines and subjects of extermination could have appeared.

Potential foes to which hatred was inculcated in radical Islamists did not pose a threat - it stopped existing not only in respect of the Islamic world, but also the world society.

War in Chechnya that became a ring-buoy in a sense in the slough of this fierce feeling that has overflowed the banks and finding a use for itself was the only factor providing the preservation of the power of this hatred.

However, Chechnya is a too small territory to station their on deck terrorists from the camps of the above-mentioned regions.

Nevertheless, the Chechen war gave a comparative opportunity to stall for time and to try to find acceptable ways of restraining craving for revenge and hatred of ter-

rorist and extremist groups that passed the last training stage, which were out of their founders' plans.

The leaders of these organizations, in their turn, took advantage of widely announced Western values of "freedom and democracy", declared them independent and changed the struggle direction.

For this time the founders themselves of these terrorist organizations, groups and transnational networks spread all over the world like cancerous metastasis became the targets of hatred and revenge.

The 90s of general muddle paved the way for further strengthening of their organization structure and independence as well as intensification of autonomy, mobility and arming.

The situation showed that the original founders could not fight against the terror monsters, which they themselves created, without international support and involving world countries into this more than noble cause.

Nowadays, nearly all the countries and nations, both those which applied force and did not spare means to breathe life into terror monsters and those for which an ill-fated hole was first dug, lay claim to the interment in it.

In the end the world turned into a hostage of fanatic self-murderers.

To express it figuratively, the genie, which has very serious intentions, has been released from the bottle, and this time it seems for long.

I think to drive it back into the bottle is far from being easy. It is armed, dangerous, has the crudest plans; its unspeakably frightful dream is to avenge itself on those who have never been confined in a vessel. At least nobody has seen such things in movies.

Today the strongest and richest country of the world has activated its military power to capture and annihilate the main "genies", and the whole world live as if in real thrillers, full of visible and invisible enemies of the humanity.

One thing comforts: people themselves created them; therefore, this is not the Almighty's fault. Knowledge of this truth dictates us that this is not the God who is punishing us. The fight structure of two world systems seriously failed, and the whole world has to rectify the errors of those who once intended to win over 1/6 of the world as well as the idea of Communism by means of a new kind of tools, i.e. "genies" released from bottles and deep holes.

History has done what it should have done: it did not break our forefathers' vows.

*"Echo", newspaper, March 26, 2004,
"Viewpoint" column*

WHAT PREVENTS THE DEMOCRACY VIRUS FROM FIGHTING AGAINST THE DICTATORSHIP VIRUS?

The system of the International Law has seriously cracked recently as a result of events in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and the Upper Garabagh. Law is a very delicate matter and, of course, it cannot stand up to frivolous treatment to its constituents: conventional norms and mechanisms of regulating mutual relations of all nations and states. One who has broken it must answer according to the law.

But the inhabitants of the Earth have got used for some time to another thing: nowadays the strong "beat" the weak, which has broken, by virtue of their weakness, individual points of the community law and some regulations of the above-said law. The fight against them is very hard, according to the laws of wartime, without judicial investigation - along with the culprit, to great shame of the international "law eaters", it destroys the law itself: not only by the methods of its selective application, but also by the echo of bursting rockets and shells in the process of compulsion to observe the international norms of behavior.

Judging by TV channels' broadcasts, all this fails to make the majority of the world not only fall into the state of psychological shock that is so usual for us, but also feel slight sorrow, which, by the way, is getting to disappear slowly.

However, everything is not as bad as it seems: a recent execution of an Italian, not guilty of all this in Iraq

shocked Italy and a half of Europe, mass media reports. Probably, the matter is that the man's soul, owing to its psychophysical abilities, is not able to perceive such a large amount of pain and grief, the witnesses of which we become everyday.

The world can turn to a large ward of intensive therapy if to act as one's nature says. The proverb "Self comes first" is likely to have existed for ages for such cases. And as a French philosopher said, "One cannot cry for the whole world, you should choose one thing". Now every person cries at his own shrine and takes care of his own cart. Radio, TV, press and other mass media overload us with so much information, that a small engine, called "heart" and the soul as well, shrivels with the horror of the heard, seen and read; mind, in its turn, refuses to be an assistant of the soul as a conductor and a filter of received information.

From time to time the heart seems to stop analyzing what is going on: "...during April more than 1,200 Iraqis were killed; the war took away 70 soldiers' lives of the coalition forces". In the first case it is simply "killed", in the second "the war took away". The accuracy of the words of the world TV channels' authors of survey is astonishing: "the war took away", "died at war".

In the first case there will be a common grave of human body parts, and in the second case - solemn burial with paying the last honors, including gun volleys, to the heroes of super democracy.

Those who have not been "gone" and "killed" had better remember sometimes all who were gone by the war, not by the wind, but by the war, which is terrible, relentless and no longer useful.

In the aggregate, all these facts indicate a possible end of the actions of the international law, on the ground of which a new form of democracy, hitherto unknown to the world politics of the 21st century, is built; on completion of the principal constituents of this system, the necessity of the right is likely to fall away, as such democracy does not need additional piling up; especially as some serious gentlemen of Europe and America in their time thought of it at a party of a cup of tea or a glass of whisky, added to that word an attribute "international".

If more attentively, there are representatives of different nationalities among the population of every country, and each of these countries could establish that law, calling it international. From such an easy logic construction it follows that we can have the majority of international laws, as a result of which the law once established and now preventing some all-knowing and all-having people from converting their "global dream" into a real fact, backing it with practical deeds, - let it be even at the expense of the attempt to expand psychic and physical potentialities of our souls, not meant by nature for perception of rich imagination of "fathers" of new democracy will disappear.

They say some countries and nations must be glad that they were chosen for the experiment not simply, out of thin air. Only the chosen are experimented on like rabbits in biological laboratories, which become sick later due to viruses, inoculated in their bodies. But all we know that it is done in favor of the sick, i.e. for good purposes. It seems that the nations, "selected" for the approbation of a new system of democratic principles, were not explained properly the sense of the historical experience, being carried out. The "Democracy virus" has been inoculated, the body

has reacted, the reaction of the immunity has started, the reproduction clockwork is ticking, but the result will be known later.

The incubation of various kinds of viruses differs. The others are side effects of the experience. The Dictatorship virus must blockade the action of the Democracy virus; the latter has never dominated in the Iraqi society.

But, nevertheless, to bear two viruses in one's organism simultaneously is an extremely undesirable state, but there is likely no way out. Now we are waiting for the end of two viruses' struggle, destined to decide the fate of the organism, weakened and wasted.

However, judging by the data of the international laboratory, a third virus, that of religious fanaticism and extremism, is penetrating into it as a balancing spiritual-biological element.

Physicians say that if these three viruses, independent on one another, get along together in the organism, this phenomenon can be beforehand christened "the golden discovery of the 21st century", awarding all the conceivable premium and medals.

There is nothing left for us to do but watch how the democracy virus successfully fights against the dictatorship virus and what the virus of religious fanaticism will do if the first two are weakened and not able to adapt in the body.

It is known from Biology and Medicine that the virus represents the so-called "thing" - it is not a living being and acts like a robot. But the physicians doubt one thing: the virus of religious fanaticism has not been studied enough and it can turn out to be of another type and nature than the other viruses, as its "behavior" and structure are beyond both logic and electronic-microscopic analyses. Such

an unexpected and strange element impedes the civilized struggle of enough "legal" viruses of democracy and dictatorship, approbated by centuries.

Little time is left. One should have patience and wait.

*NGO "Right of Choice", newspaper,
May, 2004*

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