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BRIEFING ON AZERBAIJAN: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

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BRIEFING ON AZERBAIJAN: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

MONDAY, JUNE 22, 1992

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Washington, DC.

The Briefing was held in room 2222 of the Rayburn House Office Building, South Capitol Street and Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC, at 1:30 p.m., Michael Ochs, presiding.

Present: Michael Ochs, moderator, and Mary Sue Hafner, Deputy Staff Director.

Mr. OCHS. Hello. I'd like to welcome you to this briefing of the Helsinki Commission. I'd like to welcome Senator Cranston and thank him for coming.

Those of you who received notices about the briefing were told that Paul Goble was going to be here today. He was supposed to. But his office called this morning and told us that he is sick and would not be able to make it, and so, we have changed the composition of our panel.

We are very grateful to Shireen Hunter for agreeing on such short notice to come and talk to us.

In 1988, the Helsinki Commission held its first briefing on the situation in Karabakh when it was just developing.

At that time Paul Goble, who was supposed to be here today, and Mark Saroyan, who at the time had just finished up, I believe, a year in Armenia, came and briefed congressional staff about what was going on. In October of last year we held a briefing on the situation in Karabakh—excuse me, a hearing—in February another briefing, and this briefing is occasioned by the recent election in Azerbaijan, which on June 7 brought to power a popular front government.

Both of our panelists were in Azerbaijan during the elections. They did election monitoring, as well as talked with all of the candidates, and are in a position, from rather different perspectives, as you'll hear, to give us some insight into what is going on now in Azerbaijan, and what sort of policies we can expect, both in the domestic and in the foreign policy areas, and, of course, with respect also to the situation in Karabakh.

Our guests, our panelists, are Shireen Hunter, who is the Deputy Director of the Middle East Program at CSIS, the Center for Strategic and International Studies. From 1966 to '78, she was a member of the Iranian Foreign Service. Since coming to the States in the late '70s, she has written a number of books on Iran, and

her latest study, "Iran After Khomeini," is soon going to be published by CSIS.

Ms. HUNTER. It's already out. That's a little out-dated, I apologize.

Mr. OCHS. Well, it's already out, so you have to rush out and get it.

Thomas Goltz is an Arabist and Turkologist by training. He is a graduate of the Middle East Department at the Kevorkian Center at New York University. He has been living in Baku, Azerbaijan for more or less a year, as a grantee of the Crane-Rogers Foundation. He is currently writing a book about the Kurds, with focusing on the relief effort after the Persian Gulf War, and is also writing a book about Azerbaijan.

We welcome both of them. We will ask them to make a brief statement, say, 5 to 10 minutes, or however long they want to speak, and afterwards we encourage all of you to ask questions. This is one of the reasons that we wanted to have this forum, so that we could get different perspectives on a complicated issue, and then by asking questions to see if we could figure out what might happen and where things might go.

I'd like to recognize also Van Krikorian, who handles government and legal affairs at the Armenian Assembly, Vicken Papazian, who is the Executive Director of the Armenian National Committee, and Moorad Topalian, who is the Chairman of the Board of the ANC, is also expected to come. We hope that there will be lots of provocative discussion and probing questions.

So, Thomas, if you will begin. He'll speak for about five to ten minutes, and then afterwards we will take questions for as long as we continue. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF THOMAS GOLTZ, FELLOW, INSTITUTE FOR CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

Mr. GOLTZ. Thank you for inviting me here. I will try and keep this presentation short and sweet and fairly personal, and then open it up to questions, which I think will probably be more interesting than any presentation I can make.

As Michael has suggested, I have been a resident in Azerbaijan for approximately the last year. I ended up there almost by mistake. I thought I was on my way to Tashkent, but in passing through Baku I recognized that for a journalist and as a researcher that this was virgin turf indeed. So I changed my residency from Tashkent to Baku.

But "resident" is hardly the word. It's been more like being on a political roller coaster ever since I arrived. Following the August 19 putsch, Azerbaijan, like every other one of the Soviet Republics, declared itself to be independent. It was more or less a meaningless declaration of independence at that time. That was in September.

I met Abulfaz Elchibey, the Chairman of the Popular Front for the first time at that time and I've had contact with him and his organization ever since. As a point of interest—and I wish Paul Goble was here today for me to point this out to him—that the Popular Front actually asked foreign governments not to recognize

Azerbaijan, and certainly not to establish diplomatic ties with the Mutalibov regime at that point in time.

Well, we continued on the roller coaster throughout the fall and into March, when Ayaz Mutalibov was obliged to resign from government on March 6 following the Khojaly massacre of February 25-26.

According to the Azerbaijan constitution, presidential elections were then set for June 7. The Popular Front asked, and, in fact, pleaded with the residual communist regime of Azerbaijan to postpone these elections because of the situation in Karabakh. But the regime refused and proceeded with the elections until mid-May, when it was becoming apparent that the Popular Front would win these elections. Then on May 14 the former communist-dominated parliament sitting without quorum, rescinded their decision to accept Mutalibov's resignation.

The Popular Front demanded that the elections be put right back on schedule, and that "citizen Mutalibov" remove himself from the presidential office or else the Front would march on the presidential office.

These were remarkable days in Azerbaijan, and we feared that we were slipping into civil war. I was at parliament on the 14th when Mutalibov was reinstated. I was down at the Popular Front when the march on the parliament building began on the 15th. We thought the assault would be on the presidential building, and went up to see what was happening when all the fires of hell broke loose around the parliament.

Remarkably, there were only three wounded and one dead in this assault on Parliament, which allowed all the policemen and militia men guarding the presidential palace to slip home to sleep, and wake up to a new government the following morning.

We proceeded to the elections on June 7. I covered them, not only in Baku, but also in more traditional neighborhoods like Mashtaga outside of Baku. I noticed a great deal of "ballot stuffing," although this, perhaps, is the wrong term. Individuals were voting for their entire families, which could up to 15 people.

In spot interviews on the street, however, the proportion of votes going to either Elchibey or the various rival candidates seemed to be about correct. If Elchibey won the election by 60 percent, then it would be 60 percent of the people I spoke with on the street who had voted for their entire families and 35 percent for Nizami Suleimanov, Elchibey's main rival.

Elchibey was elected on the 7th. I think that most of the international observers believe it was a largely free and fair, and certainly democratic election. It was marred mainly by the invisible presence of Haydar Aliev, who is usually called Gaidar Aliev in the literature on the Soviet Union or the CIS.

Mr. Aliev apparently made common cause with Nizami Suleimanov, the second candidate in the elections. As soon as the elections were over I contacted Mr. Suleimanov to see if he felt that they (the elections) had proceeded in a fair manner. He maintained that they had not, and that he had taken between 80 and 90 percent of the vote and that the Popular Front was guilty of mass ballot stuffing and that he was perfectly willing to lead the nation against the "Neo Bolshevik clique" that had seized power, and that

his first act would be to invite back Mr. Haydar Aliev from Nakhi-chevan, as well as another erstwhile associate of Mr. Elchibey, Itibar Mahmedov, to form an opposition government.

This has not happened to my knowledge. I left Azerbaijan on the 12th. As you know, the situation in Karabakh again began to be explosive on the 13th. I have to say that I have limited information, aside from what is purveyed in the New York Times, the Washington Post and on radio. Most of this information is derived from wire services in Moscow, and I have to say that I'm deeply suspicious of most news on Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh that comes out of Moscow.

I'm sure that you will like to talk about this later on.

In any case Aliev has not come back, Itibar Mahmedov has not yet come back, and we have for the first time a democratically elected popular nationalistic government in Azerbaijan.

I personally wonder how long this will last. It is obvious that Mr. Elchibey and Azerbaijan have enemies all around. They have enemies inside. They have enemies to the north. They have the enemies, with the greatest respect, to the west (i.e., Armenia). And Mr. Elchibey's almost demagogic statements about relations with the Azeris in Iran make him an enemy of Teheran.

On the other side of the Caspian Sea, the presence of a secular nationalist democracy in Azerbaijan gives the leaders of the autocratic states of Central Asia great pause. As an example, the general secretary of the main opposition movement in Uzbekistan has been granted refugee status in Azerbaijan. Islam Karimov sent seven policemen to arrest him and bring him to trial on charges I'm not quite familiar with, but the Popular Front and Mr. Elchibey declined to deliver this individual to the Uzbek security forces.

So, mixed with excitement and pleasure in seeing the democratic process proceed in such an unlikely place and in such unlikely circumstances, I am deeply pessimistic about the future of the Popular Front government, as well as the stability of Azerbaijan.

I think I will conclude my remarks right there, and leave Karabakh as part of the question and answer.

Thank you.

STATEMENT OF SHIREEN HUNTER, CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Ms. HUNTER. Yes, thank you very much.

First of all, I have to say that you are not very disappointed that I am interloping instead of Paul Goble, but I'm sure you will get Paul on many other occasions.

I would like, perhaps, I think that the excellent kind of expose' of the unfolding of events that Thomas Goltz gave I will not go into, but I would like to, first of all, mention some much more fundamental issues that I think Azerbaijan is facing, and I think that I would like to place the question of Karabakh in the context of this process that Azerbaijan is going through, and I will, however, have somewhat different perceptions of the Popular Front and their commitment to democratic process, and how they position themselves that enabled them, really, to capture to a great extent the political process.

I cannot pronounce myself on whether or not the elections were fair, because I went with a group that we are not supposed to—there will be a reporter, you are not supposed to—we were not election monitoring, so I'm not going to comment on that, but, rather, I will talk a little bit more about the general atmosphere in the region.

First of all, let me just say that one thing people have to remember, and I think this is absolutely vital, that Azerbaijan is going through a national soul searching. I think that what the Popular Front and Mr. Elchibey and his supporters are saying is only one stream of what is going on in Azerbaijan.

There are other countervailing forces that are underway, but they were not allowed to express themselves freely, neither on the ex-communist Mutalibov and before that Lazarov and other governments knew since the Popular Front has come to power. This became very abundantly clear to me when almost two years ago I visited Azerbaijan and I talked about some other things, and during the time that I was in Baku a number of people when they found out that I could speak the language and so on, told me certain things that probably they would not say to—as you gathered from my resume' I'm Iranian born, so they were saying certain things to me that I don't think that they would say to Westerners, because one of the things in these regions, like in many parts of the Third World, particularly, in the ongoing situation with the struggle for power, people are very much likely to tell the researcher what they think that they like to hear. And, I think that one has to be extremely aware of that, and even the most honest reportage is only based on what people have told you.

So, I think that there is this element there. For example, somebody came to me who spoke in Persian to me, and he was very upset that there is no opportunity, for example, to have Persian language classes, or those writers and others in Azerbaijan that also look to the Iranian heritage of the region are actually attacked. For example, when I was there last time, and said that whoever that even mentions the name of Akhmedi Kasaravi, you know, is sort of, there's the campaign of discredit that's ongoing on there.

So, there are these others, admittedly, these are weaker, I think, trends probably in the region. There is also the Islamic—variance of Islamically oriented elements that, obviously, are also underground, and I think that eventually when in the long term we are dealing with this region, I think that Thomas was correct saying that, that this is just—we have to remember that is just the beginning, the first stage in a people, and a nation, and a group trying to define themselves and their identity.

The other point that I would like to make in this regard is in terms of the APF. I think that what Thomas Goltz said is correct, that this is correct after 1991, but the fact also remains that by early 1990, after the event of January, certain elements of the APF, including Abulfaz Elchibey and others, reached a sort of a modis vivendi with the ruling Communist Party, and that's how they managed to have more influence in the power structure, and they were much more capable of organizing and operating than anybody else was.

For example, that in the 1990, October, 1990 elections to the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan, the only party, opposition party who was allowed to take part in the election was the APF, and 25 of its members was elected, were elected to the membership which later on that 25 members, plus others, made themselves the kind of nucleus of the National Council that was developed.

The second thing is, of course, let me just talk a little bit about the philosophy of APF, and also that what aspects of it I think that is going to be extremely, in my opinion, this is obviously just one opinion and we have to wait and see what really transpires, that what are the positive aspects of APF, and that, perhaps, in dealing one should try to strengthen those positive tendencies, and then what are, in my opinion, I think that are rather less constructive aspects, and less positive aspects of APF philosophy, and, particularly, to the extent that it impinges on the Karabakh issue, and the overall relationship between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the future, and the chances that, ultimately, these two nations manage the process of reconciliation, and, if not completely, live in amity, at least, in an atmosphere of non-hostility.

Obviously, I think that APF proclaims that they are democratic, and I think that we should take them at their word, I think that we should accept that at face value, and then monitor and see whether they actually fulfill their democratic process.

The aspects that I find positive, that they do want a more secular, modern sort of oriented government, or at least that's what they say, and, secondly, I think that is another trend that I think that should be encouraged.

However, there are aspects of APF philosophy, you'll also see that I personally frankly find that is not very constructive, and I think that some others are also in Azerbaijan, including some people that we talked to, and including some people that even are close to the APF leadership will tell you in private.

And, I think that, I'm not quite sure to what extent this view reflects the Elchibey's own personality and its own personal commitment, and to what extent this has much more deep seated, and it's very difficult really to make that judgment.

I mentioned the positive dimension of it. The negative dimensions, I think that is Elchibey's absolutely demagogic ultra-nationalism, and particularly, ultra-Turkikness. I think that this is something that I felt that, it was not so much the Turkikness of Azerbaijan, but rather a nation of Turkishness, which I think that frankly it's a novel, it seems to me, phenomenon to a great extent. This, very frankly, has, indeed, created deep-seeded fears among the non-Turkic groups in Azerbaijan. You must see it among the Kurds and among the Talisch, and all the other linguistic and other minorities, and even among the Azerbaijanis themselves, who are not, for example, Russian speakers, who don't—who cannot function in Azerbaijani dialect, you know, they have never really learned that as that.

And, many people mentioned that if this ultra-Turkishness continues, that is going to fragment the country. And, I think that it's not so much that the across the border Iranians are worried about that. I personally, myself, don't—I'm not that much worried about that. There are more pan-Turkic Iranian Azerbaijan's living in

Frankfurt and Washington, than probably are living in Tabriz although there may be pockets, or some people maybe be referring to.

But, I think that what it is, is that APF has over time tried to—and some of their people admit this, and they admit it to me in 1990 when I was there, that they are using this external enemy, and they are using a whole series of historic and other falsification to really generate a sense of national identity, and that is where the whole Nagorno-Karabakh issue and the symbolism of Nagorno-Karabakh comes, and I think it will be very difficult to understand that if we see how this thing has been kind of manipulated, first by the Russians, and then again even in the Gorbachev period, but it has become a kind of a litmus test of nationalism and commitment to this new nation.

And, I think that there is this tendency, I think, that within the APF leadership, to look for enemies outside. I'm not saying there are not, but there are also a tendency to look for the enemies outside, in order to get a greater sense of national unity and national identity.

There were a couple of things that I saw that were really, frankly, quite distressing to me, because, although I am a firm believer that, obviously, Turkey, as a modern secular state, Western allies, and a country that basically has behaved in an exemplary way for more than 70 years towards its neighbors and so on, obviously, has a very important role to play in that region. I don't think anybody in its right might can deny Turkish role, that, unfortunately, some of the APF members have connections with the kind of groups in Turkey that in Turkey itself these groups are rather on the margin. For example, I was told, so I don't want to say whether this is correct or not, but I was told by a number of people that the APF gets a lot of financial assistance and so on from the Turkish Ultra-Nationalist and Semi-Fascist Party of Abersalon Turkesh, and that Abersalon Turkesh somehow managed to make his way to Baku when Prime Minister Suleiman Demirel was there, and went and participated in a rally in favor of Elchibey, and gave the grey wolf salute. The militia guarding Elchibey's house had brand new jeeps that had the grey wolf symbol, and the crescent, and a howling coyote, and one knows that this party itself in Turkey is a kind of marginal, you know, element, but they are operating in those terms, and I think that I'd like to just to end it here, but with one comment.

I think that if these tendencies become stronger, in my opinion, one, it will undermine Turkey's ability to play a positive role in terms of resolving conflicts, and in terms of really being a modernizing and moderating force that I think it potentially can be, and also I think that you have to realize the demographic and geopolitical, basically, vulnerabilities of Armenia. I mean, no matter who is winning the war now, I don't want to get into that, Armenia does have a basic demographic and geographic imbalance there.

And, any talk of the sort of extreme views that I explained is, obviously, going to increase the vulnerability of the Armenians, and I think that probably then their ability or their capability, emotional capability, really, to make some compromises.

So, just to sum up, I think that the Azerbaijanis should be given credit for at least having taken a preliminary step towards the process of democratization. This was not a completely level playing field. APF did have advantages, because, for all practical purposes, they were already in power when they had the elections, so that gives, you know, an advantage, even the most democratic country incumbents have some advantage, that doesn't mean that they will not fare. I think probably Thomas's analysis is close to the mark, give and take a few here and there. And so, in that sense, I think that that's a positive thing, and I think deserves applause.

And, there are some positive aspects to the philosophy, at least, what they declare, which I think that we should, again, keep in mind and try to encourage, but I also think that there are some of these other dimensions to it that, frankly, if goes unchecked I think that will lead both to the fragmentation of Azerbaijan itself, I think that to a worsening of conflict with Armenia, and I think that to a general instability in the region that the outcome, I don't think, can be ascertained at this point.

Thank you.

Mr. OCHS. If, perhaps, before we open it up to questions, maybe we can ask whether Thomas has any comments on what Shireen has said.

Ms. HUNTER. Absolutely, sure.

Mr. OCHS. And then, we'll ask for questions.

Mr. GOLTZ. I'll try and keep this, once again, short and sweet.

The Azerbaijan Popular Front is not a political party, as you suggested. It is an organization, and it encompasses a number of small political organizations and groups, just a factual detail.

The number of deputies of the Popular Front in parliament, there are no deputies of the Popular Front, there are 21 deputies of the Democratic Bloc. Most of them, but not all, are associated with or members of the Popular Front.

The National Council, to which you referred, was established last December, 25 former Communists, 25 members of the Democratic Bloc.

The Turkishness of Elchibey: certainly, it informs much of Popular Front thinking, but I would like to make a distinction between Anatolian Turkishness and Azeri Turkishness.

My dealings with the Popular Front and others in Azerbaijan suggest a sense of Azeri Turkik nationalism as opposed to Anatolian Turkish nationalism.

In terms of the Kurds I'd just like to make one comment—that after the Karabakh Armenians punched through the Corridor to Armenia, via Lachin, allegedly in aid of Kurds in revolt, by sheerest chance the Lachin community council was set up in the courtyard of my house in Baku and half the people who came to the courtyard of my house, several hundred every day, were Kurds. And they were joining the Azeri National Army, both men and women, to go back out to Lachin.

Outside enemies: We can talk about that later.

As concerns Alparslan Turkesh and his fascist or quasi-fascist Turkish party and the grey wolves: there's an interesting thing here that I haven't gotten to the bottom of yet and I don't pretend to have the last word on it, but the symbol of the moon and the

howling wolf, is an old Turkish symbol that long predated Mr. Turkesh's party. And, the curious thing is that however unsavory an individual he is, one has to understand his appeal to the Azeris is that he has been the sole voice in the panoply of political parties in Turkey over the years who even pretended to interest in the Turkic East.

I can only say that one hopes that now that communications have been opened up, and that greater contact with the outside world is happening, that not only the individuals in Azerbaijan, but also in Central Asia, will recognize Mr. Turkesh for being what he is, and he will not make the sort of inroads that Shireen is suggesting in the future politics of any political party in Azerbaijan.

At the same time one must admit that he does represent something in the Turkish body politic, and that he will attempt to promote his ideas in the developing political atmosphere, not only of Azerbaijan, but central Asia.

Ms. HUNTER. Could I just make a comment on Thomas's comments on me.

I did not say that APF is a political party, because there are no political parties even now, because there's no political parties law. So, I think that I was very much cognizant of that. I do know Azerbaijan a little bit.

The fact of the matter is that, when, for example, I was in Azerbaijan, just prior to the election campaign, and I talked about various figures that were much more prominent in 1988 and 1989, and I said, how come they are no longer prominent, whereas, Mr. Elchibey and others were given a much freer hand, and said that my guide, which was a minor person, then when his boss was there he wouldn't talk to me, but on the trip to Baku to Moscow, when it was only the two of us, then he told me certain things, he says you have to ask why some of the democratic forces, as you put it, Thomas, are languishing in jails, whereas, some of the others are given free rein.

So, there was a modis-vivendi struck between—and I don't want to name names, but there was a modis-vivendi struck around this thing.

There weren't very much—I just talked with an individual that will become a very high person in Azerbaijan, and they explained to me that they are very concerned about Elchibey's emotionalism, and about Elchibey's passions. They said that he is a passionate scholar, and they are very much concerned whether to what extent he's going to be, in terms of, you know, statesmanship.

On the subject of—Turkesh, I don't want to go into that, why it isn't a symbol and whatever, but the fact of the matter is that other people that live there, if these notions gain currency within the body politic of Turkey also, I personally believe that that would be destructive both to Turkey and for others, because it's going to make other countries very much nervous. Russians, for example, right now, to varying degrees, are nervous. A colleague of mine who tended to disagree with me about the potential danger of pan-Turkism, and used to dismiss it after a recent trip to Moscow, came back saying that the Russians now are much more concerned about this thing.

You read the Arab press, you know, they are beginning to be concerned about this. I happen to believe that the mainstream of Turkish politics also is concerned. They lack, obviously, to see a role for Turkey, which I think is natural, inevitable, and potentially very, very positive, but there are also these other elements that are trying to actually manipulate people like that to their own purpose. Again, we differ on this. Obviously, it's just a matter of opinion, but I don't see characters like Turkesh, or some others, if there were some fundamentalist figure doing the same thing in Azerbaijan, I would be equally disturbed.

But, I don't believe that these extremist notions are—I don't take such a kind of a benign view of them. Maybe I'm wrong, but that's my interpretation.

Thanks.

Mr. GOLTZ. Let us continue our discussion afterwards.

Mr. OCHS. If anyone has any questions, can I ask you to walk over to the microphone, if you can, because we are taping this.

Audience MEMBER. I was wondering whether you could elaborate on the enemies issue, specifically, where Russia and Iran are concerned, just as in the past the Azeris and the Armenians always felt that the Soviet Army was on the other guy's side, we see the same kind of conversations, shall we say, and charges are being made now vis-a-vis Russia, in general, and the Russian Army, in particular.

And also, with respect to Iran, I noticed that Elchibey, very shortly after his election, charged the Iranians with taking Armenia's side in their negotiations.

But, if you could also elaborate more fully on what Elchibey is saying about the Azeris in Azerbaijan.

Mr. GOLTZ. Are you asking Shireen or me?

Audience MEMBER. Both of you, actually.

Mr. GOLTZ. OK.

Shireen?

Ms. HUNTER. You go ahead. I had the last one, you go ahead.

Mr. GOLTZ. Russian, and Iran, and Azerbaijan: Azerbaijan has been part of a Russian Empire since 1828, this way or that, with the short exception of 1918-20, during the short-lived Republic of Azerbaijan.

As a result, the Azeris have a phobia, you might say, about things Russians—as many colonial peoples have had about their colonial masters.

How accurate these fears are I don't know, but in discussions with perfectly reasonable individuals in Azerbaijan, one runs into the wildest conspiracy theories. I have to say, after living in Azerbaijan for about a year, that one becomes susceptible to believing some of these wild conspiracy theories.

In terms of Iran, the classic concern expressed in the Western press and elsewhere is a fear of the export of Islamic fundamentalism. I find this an exaggerated concern everywhere concerning Iran. I find it particularly exaggerated in Azerbaijan.

Certainly, individuals have been sent up, money has been sent up to build mosques in villages and towns, but I don't find this particularly distressing at all.

Shireen had mentioned that Persian was forbidden, or discouraged, or something. This is not quite true. In the various Quran schools in Mashtaga, and in Nadiran and elsewhere Persian is taught very, very actively to very young people.

Just a moment.

But, it's clear that Elchibey and the Popular Front have identified Teheran, the government of the Islamic Republic, as being a threat and they have put it in the context of the oppression of the southern Azerbaijanis, or the southern Azeris. How accurate this is, it's difficult to say.

I was recently in Iran myself, and I was distressed to see how much naked Azerian nationalism was coming up. In anticipation of a comment by Shireen, let me jump the gun. While in Tehran, I was traveling with an Azeri from Teheran who is also resident in the United States. Quite naturally he would speak Persian on the streets of Teheran, until I told him to hold back and that I would like to speak Azeri. We became two boys from Baku, and it was phenomenal how many Azeris we ran into on the streets of Teheran in every possible context. And appearing as Azeris from Baku; we also ran into a deep vein of resentment against the government in Teheran.

I might even sum this up by saying it was an anti-Islamic feeling, both in the sense that the mullahs were supporting the infidel against the cousins to the north. This sentiment only increased in Ardabil, which is a very, very conservative town, and especially in Tabriz, where on Fridays the mosques were virtually empty. Individuals were allowing their moustaches to grow out in distinction to Islamic code (or the Hadith, the traditions of the prophet), and very specifically were avoiding going to the mosque in protest.

I went to the main mosque in Tabriz—it's a large parking lot sort of affair—and I was going to attend the prayers but I had come an hour early, and I had announced myself to be a Turk. I do this periodically.

Well, there were two Kurds from Malatya, Turkey in the mosque, and I quickly said, oh, I've got a problem here, I'm going to be caught with this pious fiction that I'm throwing out. I managed to wheedle out of it and the two Kurds from Malatya and I went down to have tea while waiting for the prayers to begin. And, in a coffee shop down the street from the mosque, we ran into a number of Azeris. The two pious Kurds—and they were very pious Kurds indeed—invited the Azeris to come to the prayers. And the Azeris went into peals of laughter, peals of laughter. They said "you want to go to the prayers, you want to go and have contact with those mullahs?" The two pious Kurds were shocked by this. I just stepped back and let this conversation happen in front of me, but it was clear that there was a deep-seated feeling against the mullahs, specifically because of the Karabakh issue, because of the sense that every time that there would be a cease fire agreement broken by Iran in Teheran, there would be some disaster that befell Azerbaijan the next day.

Again, I was not in Iran very long, but my suspicion is that this disillusionment with the government is going to lead to something quite unexpected in the provinces usually known as Iranian Azerbaijan.

Ms. HUNTER. Can I just have a certain comment on that?

First of all, a little history on Mr. Elchibey. Mr. Elchibey, who obviously must have had some connections with the communists, although later on he went to jail and so on, otherwise he would not have survived to the ripe age of 50 or something, is originally from Iranian Azerbaijan, and among some of those Iranian Azerbaijanis, who went to the other side, and they have a visceral hatred of Iran, and I think that it is—he just betrays that, that is the Nakhichevan crowd, and the others Haydar Aliev is another one.

But, more to the point is the question of whether Iran poses a threat to Azerbaijan. That is, in my opinion, more to the point of the question that was asked. In fact, precisely because of some of the points that Thomas Goltz made, I think that Iran has no intention whatsoever to get involved in this whole entire Azerbaijani issue, and I think that if you really look at the record, their behavior has been quite—the behavior of the Iranian government, I would say that in this regard has been almost exemplary.

At the beginning, like in 1989 and so on, I remember that people like the Ayatollah, and the—and so on, used to call that, why don't we take more active role in that warning that how Turkey is doing all it can to help, and why are not we doing this.

As an Iranian Azerbaijani, I really would warn people again of taking some of these things, which is, you know, the sample of people that one talked to and so on, with a great, it seems to me, pinch of salt.

I think that there is, what I gathered from your estimate, and which I would not quarrel with it, but there is a general disenchantment with the Islamic regime in Iran. I think that you will have seen this disenchantment in Horazon, you will see that disenchantment in Teheran, and you will see that disenchantment in other parts of it.

But, I think that the disenchantment with government is something, and then all the other extrapolations that you are making of it, at least in my reading, at least at this point in time, things obviously, change and evolve is another one.

But, the same tendencies exist in the Iranian Azerbaijan. In 1990, particularly, when I was there, some people told me that if you allow people, for example, in Lenkoran, in Talisch, and so on and so forth, even now they will join Iran.

Elchibey and others, the fact is that there is also—there has been a battle going for the so-called hearts and minds of Azerbaijan. Of all the century former Soviet Asia thing, Azerbaijan is more schizophrenic in many respects because of its both ethnic and historical background.

The fact is that, Azerbaijan is not solidly Turkik. After all, there were people living in Azerbaijan before Turkik tribes came, and they did not just evaporate and go into the thin air, there was an intermingling, you can see that in people's faces and so on. Now, identities, obviously, is not the degree, the percentage of blood that you have flowing in your veins, but what I'm trying to say is that, this conflict is going on.

As far as the Iranian mediation in Nagorno-Karabakh is concerned, other people will say that the APF did everything they could to make this a failure, and I think that there were some

other governments also in the region and elsewhere, that did not want any sort of even temporary cease fire to succeed with the Iranian mediation.

The test, however, for Elchibey, for the APF government, for everybody else, is, now that they have the power, are they going to be able to get something for Karabakh problem or not, whether it's CSCE, whether it is Turkish mediation, whatever it is, and since they have made this Karabakh issue the litmus test of legitimacy and nationalism, I think that the APF may become haunted by its own manipulation of the Iranian subversion, the Russian manipulation and so on. This is a real problem. It has strategic dimensions. It has political dimensions, moral dimensions, and I believe that has to be—if it is going to be resolved, this has to be detangled from both power struggle within Azerbaijan and power struggle for regional domination.

Demerel, for example, complained that every time it's something Azerbaijan, this is before APF government, Azerbaijan has run to Teheran for mediation, now they can run to Ankara and we'll see whether they can do better. I wish them good luck if they can do better.

But, what I'm trying to say is that, it's very—it's not helpful to try to give a very simplistic view of a situation, which is extremely complex, with several overlapping factors influencing it, and I think that one needs a better need for texture. That's it.

Audience MEMBER. I'd like to ask this question of Mr. Goltz. Mr. Goltz, President Elchibey is part of the same Popular Front leadership which orchestrated pogroms against the Armenians in Sumgait in 1988, in Kirovabad about 1989, and in Baku in 1990.

He's also a member of the same organization that after the coup against Mutalibov imposed martial law in Azerbaijan, and suspended generally accepted due process rights in Azerbaijan.

Elchibey, not one week after being elected, initiated a massive offensive, the largest of the four year fighting against, not only Ladi-bov, but against Armenia, which has widened the war, as you know.

I don't understand why you are so encouraged or excited, as you termed it, by what you describe as the democratic process in Azerbaijan, when, unfortunately, the facts suggest that quite to the contrary President Elchibey is another in the succession of ultra-nationalist, undemocratic leaders, who has no intention of coming to a peaceful settlement of the Letibot conflict.

Mr. GOLTZ. Well, I would start by asking if he is the most recent in a succession of nationalistic leaders, who proceeded him in that guise? It was certainly not Ayaz Mutalibov, it certainly was not Abdulrahman Vezirov, it certainly was not Mr. Bogadov, and it was certainly wasn't Mr. Aliev. You might say he's the first in the line of nationalistic leaders, but he's certainly not the most recent.

You suggest that he is part of the organization that mounted the programs in Sumgait, at Ganji and in Baku. I think you used the word administration?

Audience MEMBER. I have no idea.

Mr. GOLTZ. What was the word that you used?

Audience MEMBER. Well, it's part of the Popular Front leadership which orchestrated the pogroms.

Mr. GOLTZ. Well, the jury is still out on that one, and not having been in the country at the time I'm reluctant to comment, aside from noting what people say: once again we are back into grand conspiracy land.

If you speak with people in the Popular Front, as well as individuals on the street, Russians, half Russians, non-Azeris, there's a general belief that the KGB was involved in many of these things, setting them up as it went along.

I can't comment on whether this is true or not, but there is a general belief about this. It may be an effort of the APF or, rather, the Popular Front to exculpate itself from its responsibility in this—I cannot say. But, certainly, my interlocutors in Azerbaijan over the past year would suggest that it was others and not the Popular Front.

In terms of the establishment of martial law after the resignation of Mr. Ayaz Mutalibov, that was not a Popular Front program. Rather, that decision was made by the National Council, which was still under the control of Yagub Mamedov, who was the acting president after he became Chairman of the parliament following Mutalibov's resignation.

And, in terms of the offensive, again, I have not been in Azerbaijan during this period of time. Sadly, I was obliged to come back on the 12th.

The one thing I would say about this, though, is that, the reports that I have read so far about this fit a familiar pattern that I've seen over the last year, which is the announcement, usually from the Armenian Ministry of Defense, that the Azeris are about to launch a massive offensive somewhere. This happened in Khojaly, this happened in Shusha, this happened in Lachin as well. And then, typically, the Armenian forces are obliged to defend themselves. Usually they have defended themselves very, very aggressively, and usually at the cost of more territory to Azerbaijan.

Again, I was not in Azerbaijan during this critical period. My reading of the media at that time was that on the 12th—I believe it was CNN reporting—sourced to the Armenian Ministry of Defense, that the Azeris were about to launch a massive offensive.

But Turkish television reporting from Baku that night was talking about massive shelling of Agdam, the city immediately to the east of Karabakh and Askeran.

Again, I cannot comment on this specific battle. The AP and Reuters reports out of Moscow, quoting the Armenian Ministry of Defense, suggested that the Azeris were taking back a number of villages and towns. Mardakent was about to fall, Askeran was about to fall, Lachin was about to fall, this, that and the other thing.

The most recent information I have out of Azerbaijan, which is very, very sketchy, is that most of the fighting was actually taking place outside of Nagorno-Karabakh, and in the area of Shumiyan around Garanboy and areas north of Nagorno-Karabakh, where Armenian villages and fighters were still in place.

I would not call this the most bloody offensive of the war from the information I have so far. The bloodiest offensive in the war, in my book, is the Khojaly massacre. The Red Cross last week confirmed that at least 578 bodies have been recovered.

Audience MEMBER. Actually, I wanted just to add a few details from my recent trip to Baku. One, what Shireen has said about Persian being forbidden, or banned, it isn't so really. I don't want to say that Mr. Elchibey is one of the most democratic leaders of the world, but so far he hasn't done anything. I don't personally like him all that much, but at the same time, you can't say this.

I did recently an interview with Aliiev and he's very pro-Iranian, and he has been funded by Iranian government, they are going to start a magazine which is called Rakdad. It is going to come out in Baku, and it is in two languages. It was about two weeks ago I had this interview, and the Iranians have started a printing house in Baku.

Similarly, the Turks have started this printing house. So, this kind of rivalry is going on.

One more thing about the Kurds is that, I did an interview with two people from Lachin, and they told me that there are 10,000—about 10,000 Kurds in Baku. They have their own newspaper they showed me, and they have their own school. So, we can't say that the minority rights are being violated in this respect.

Apart from these, I have just one question I wanted to ask, and this was when I was in Baku, it seemed that there were two trends of thought going on. One was that the Defense Minister basically wanted kind of relief from fighting, and simply wanted to conclude something in the case of Karabakh.

Whereas Towfik Gasimov, which I interviewed him, and he's the Foreign Minister, he's much more for negotiation. There's kind of two different trends are going on.

I was just wondering if you can, Mr. Goltz, actually, if you can comment on these two trends. This was what I noticed, is it right or not?

Ms. HUNTER. Let me just mention—said something about my part, I'm sorry, if I can just answer, obviously, you are talking to different people, but the fact of the matter is that there is no comparison.

As I say, when I went, you know, two years ago, I was there, and the things that I heard and I saw is extremely different, and the way you look at what I call the Turkeyization of Azerbaijan culturally, I think eventually Azerbaijan, if the process continues, it's not a question of Persian influence, Azerbaijan is going to lose its distant character, from the music all the way to all kinds of things.

Yes, there may be now—and, of course, we now have to see after Elchibey is coming into power, those were agreements reached during the Mutalibov period for a number of cultural and other co-operation with Iran, and also it's television programs and so forth, but, so far, and you say that even this one is in the future and we have to wait and see whether this is going to be, the number of—what I mentioned about the Kurds, I just refer everybody, you don't have to listen to what I am saying, but just read the latest article by Elizabeth Fuller in the excellent analysis she did in the Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty thing, which she talks about the Kurd issue in Azerbaijan, and the whole debate about the number of Kurds in Azerbaijan that have always consistently their number has been unestimated in the Soviet statistics. And, I don't know which one of these figures are correct, but the number of Germans

and others have made the estimates of the number of Kurds sometimes going all the way to 200,000.

I wasn't saying whether the minority rights are observed or not. The point I was trying to make, which it seems, as I say, the analysis of other—some of the other scholars, and people who are working on this, seems to prove, is that this ultra-Turkishness is exacerbating this, it's not merely the Kurds, it's the Talisch, the—everybody else.

There is kind of a sense of developing a sort of a distant Azerbaijaniness. That's what I was saying, that this is something that is very much debated. Some people that I talked to expressed this fear, now maybe this is part of the political game, and they are using this for their own political purposes, I cannot, you know, ascertain that. All I was trying to say, that, you know, these feelings really are there, and that, as I said, we talked to different people, I suppose, some of the people came to me said something totally different. *

But, we will see how things develop in the future.

Thank you.

Audience MEMBER. Let me just add one thing, that, actually, it seems that this pan-Turkish trend, it's kind of, there is definitely—it is there, and it so happened, I talked to several people, and sometimes, very often actually, if something goes wrong they very immediately blame it on Iran. This is true, I noticed that.

But, at the same time, from the point of view of being open and democratic, it was really striking, and, I mean, I hadn't seen anything like that. It was, basically, I was there for about two trips, and I stayed altogether about one month, and it was basically from whatever point of view you take it, it was very much democratic.

Ms. HUNTER. As I say, we had different experiences. One thing that I was absolutely astonished was that, how easily the communist jargon was replaced now by APF jargon.

I really had my ears full of how we had repression and now suddenly democracia has come, and I just, always I'm very much suspicious of the sudden conversions.

The same people that used to parrot the Socialist brotherhood, they are not parroting the whole democratic thing, and I know that democracy is a very difficult process. You really have to constantly work for it, so all I'm saying is that, yes, maybe they are trying to take some steps, but that, this very early stages, and I just am much more cautious, democracy is not a lotus flower that suddenly comes in the glorious day and everything is all right, and I am personally very suspicious of sudden conversions.

And, everywhere I went, and in two trips also I did see an awful lot of people, in this particular trip we traveled outside Baku and so on, that the same thing, I just kept hearing exactly even the same words, not even putting the main message in a different word, and so that is what makes me still a little bit, but you are right, there are different people, different people have—some of them are much more committed, some of them are more capable of seeing the subtleties and the nuances, and others more on both sides of, you know, various political sides are much more self-serving or manipulative.

The challenge, I think, that for us is to sort all these things out, and to help the positive dimensions of it, try to be, you know, conscious that there are these other elements too.

One of the other things is, for example, in Azerbaijan, is like everybody else, when they talk to Americans, if they think that if they talk that they are against fundamentalism against Iran, they are immediately going to endear themselves to an American audience. And so, you have to also understand that. This has become a very easy way of doing it, you go from the Arab World to wherever you want to go, that is one thing, the one button they are going to push is that.

And, you know, you talk to Elchibey and he pushes all the right buttons, I am going to do this, I'm going to recognize this, I'm going to establish relations with this, I'm against Iran, I'm against it, and he thinks that I'm pushing American's buttons, and he is.

All I'm saying is that, we have to be smart, we have some principles and some objectives which we should pursue, but we have to be conscious and cognizant of the fact that these people have other agenda and other objectives, and to the extent that their's is congruent with our's, we will help them in this process of democratization, and to the extent that it's not, we should not be fooled by it.

Mr. GOLTZ. You did have a question for me, didn't you?

Audience MEMBER. Yes, actually, I just wanted to find out that, did you find the same comparative trend, that one was negotiation, the other one was for war, in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, because I talked to two different people.

Mr. GOLTZ. Yes, absolutely so, and that's not surprising. In Azerbaijan, in Russia, in the United States, in Canada, in Bermuda, you are going to find good cops and bad cops.

Audience MEMBER. I would like to follow up on that question, since many of your comments have skirted around the issue of Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Given your understanding of the current Elchibey government, and their agenda, what do each of you feel it would take to bring the Elchibey government to the negotiating table, vis-a-vis a solution to the difficulties in Nagorno-Karabakh, and I'll let you—which of you cares to start, but I would appreciate your assessment on that situation.

Mr. GOLTZ. The official position of the Popular Front, and this is prior to the election of Elchibey, as well as after the election of Elchibey, and from what I understand is still the position of the Popular Front and Mr. Elchibey, is a negotiated settlement that would leave Nagorno-Karabakh within the boundaries of Azerbaijan, that it is part of Azerbaijan, that the Popular Front and Mr. Elchibey would allow for cultural autonomy and such like, basically, to revert to the status of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonome Oblasti that existed and still legally does exist today within Azerbaijan. Is that a realistic position to take at this point? That's another question, but that is their official position, and they have been going off to the various conferences and meetings about Nagorno-Karabakh in Rome, in Helsinki, I believe—now the Minsk Conference has been postponed for a number of different reasons. That is their official position on the matter.

Audience MEMBER. Well then, let me follow up. I appreciate what their official position is, and I'm sure that each of us, everyone could articulate what the official position is for the government in Nagorno-Karabakh, I am interested in your personal assessments, since each of you have considerable relationship and understanding, I would like to know what your assessment is of what it would take to bring the Elchibey government to the negotiating table, whether it involves other countries, whether—

Mr. GOLTZ. Just a moment.

Audience MEMBER [continuing]. It involves the United States.

Mr. GOLTZ. Just a moment. Excuse me. The official position or non-official position, the Elchibey government is saying that we are sitting at the negotiating table, we are perfectly willing to talk about this.

So, there's not going to be "what will it take to get them there"—they already are there.

Now, beyond that, am I optimistic about a peaceful settlement about Nagorno-Karabakh? At this point, I am deeply pessimistic because so much blood has been shed on both sides, and because both sides have claimed Nagorno-Karabakh in terms like "sacred land," "essential to the well-being of our national character," and such like. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan have established absolute positions on it.

I could chart out some ideas for a solution that I could propose—partial territorial exchange of parts of Nagorno-Karabakh, or most of it, plus a corridor in exchange for Zengazur, which would connect Nakhichevan to Azerbaijan, but no government in Azerbaijan could withstand that.

I'm not sure of any government in Armenia, if it could negotiate away Zangazul for parts of Karabakh plus Corridor as well.

As a result, I am deeply pessimistic.

Audience MEMBER. Ms. Hunter, do you have a slightly more optimistic attitude about that?

Ms. HUNTER. Well, I really don't think that I can be, unfortunately, much more optimistic. All I would like just to add is that my own feeling is that, and, again, I don't want to belabor certain points, I think that certainly it would require external insistence, and I think that one way is, for example, to pressure the Azerbaijani government that Western aid or whatever will come provided that there is some sort of a solution for the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, and, certainly, it has to be some kind of, I don't know what shape or form it would take, but at least for a while there has—I don't believe the Azerbaijani position, whether justified or not, that Karabakh should remain the way it is, and the Armenians are going to have cultural rights.

Under the current atmosphere is Azerbaijan, and, particularly, that is where the ultra-Turkishness and pan-Turkism comes into play. This is one of the paradoxes, is, the more Azerbaijanis try to say that they are not merely 7 million, Azerbaijan is a part of the 100 million Turkic world, the more 3 million Armenians are going to feel threatened. But, these are some of the talk that, you know, one hears.

And, all this talk about in northern Iran does not go only to Azerbaijan, I had somebody, when in 1990 I was in Baku saying,

well, the plans are that they are going to also take northern Iran, Turkemenchay, Turkemensaray, and then they are going to go all the way to Saransk Mashad, they are going to have all the gas fields of northern Iran, and that is how you are going to create a territorial Turkistan, not just merely a cultural Turkistan.

Now, I'm not saying that this is the official policy, but these are the type of characters that are the thinkers, and this guy name, I cannot be more specific, because people will figure out who I am referring to.

Now, the more these kind of talks go on, I think that the more the notion that you can have another Armenian enclave under the Azerbaijani authority is going to become a pipe dream.

On the other hand, I think that no Azerbaijani government can give up Karabakh, it just simply cannot do that, because that is, not only in terms of how much political fortunes are riding on that, is that they will see that as the first step in the process of disintegration of Azerbaijan, that there is no sanctity to the borders, and there is no sanctity to the current situation, and that that would mean that others, Talisch and, you know, I'm not saying that this is going to happen tomorrow, I'm not trying to be Cassandra-like, I'm just trying to say some of the constraints.

The only way I can see this happen is going to be some kind of a very active Western intervention, direct Western intervention, but if we leave that to Turkey, for example, to become the arbiter of events in that region, it's going to make it, in my opinion, much more difficult, maybe a CSCE thing, maybe even a NATO thing or whatever, probably, but I can't see it happening just, you know, the way they are saying, negotiations are not—and, even if the current Armenian leader should accept that, I stand to be corrected, there are forces that will not listen, you know, if, say, tomorrow Mr. Pertroussyan signed an agreement, others may not listen to him.

Audience MEMBER. I have two brief questions for Mr. Goltz. First, you made a statement early on in your opening statement, which I think begs for further explanation. You are deeply suspicious of news emanating from Moscow about the conditions in Azerbaijan, and, in particular, you mentioned wire services as a general category. If you could be more specific on that topic.

And, second, I find it quite interesting that you've been able to create quite a bit of access with the various forces of power in Baku, something that I haven't seen any other American journalist really achieve, and I was wondering how it is that you've been able to achieve that.

Mr. GOLTZ. I will deal with the second one first, and then go to the more interesting question. The reason that I have access, as it were, and you say that no other American journalist has this, is because there are no other American journalists in Azerbaijan. I'm the first foreign correspondent ever to live in Baku.

I've also been shut out of a number of things by being the sort of personality that I guess I have. I can tell you about stories later if you'd like.

Working as a correspondent in Azerbaijan has been surprisingly easy, maybe because they never had a foreign correspondent there before. Now others have started to come in, specifically, from Istanbul, and this is an interesting development, because previously cor-

respondents used to come down exclusively from Moscow, and usually deal through Russian as opposed to Turkish or Azeri-Turkish, which is the language that I deal in.

As a result, people are just comfortable with the fact that I'm around there, and I suspect also appreciate the fact that they have somebody around recording what is happening on the ground as opposed to taking it second hand.

Now about the first question you asked, about the "twist" sometimes knowingly put on news, sometimes unknowingly put on news, that comes out of Moscow and elsewhere.

I can give you a number of very specific examples. It has to do both with attitude, I suspect, as well as something as simple as communications. The communications network in Azerbaijan is rotten. As a result, if there is a breaking story that an AP, a Reuters, a UPI, must file today, and they are getting no feed out of anybody in Baku because the telephone lines are down, obviously, they are going to be taking it from elsewhere. Usually, this elsewhere, when we are dealing with the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, is Yerevan.

I'll give you a specific example what the BBC, once again reflecting the ability of the Ministry of Defense in Yerevan about getting out fax copies to the various news agencies, newspapers, et cetera, in Moscow and elsewhere.

At the time of the Khojaly massacre—the only way to describe this is as an effort to disguise what had happened, when finally the claims about hundreds of dead civilians were mounting up—a report surfaced on the BBC from Yerevan that 200 Fedayeen (Armenian militiamen) had just been killed by a massive Azeri assault on Askeran.

Well, I happen to know the people who made this massive Azeri assault, and they didn't even get into Askeran. They were beaten back with considerable losses.

To my knowledge, these 200 "dead" Fedayeen (Armenian militiamen) were never shown on television, their names were never released—but it was an effective ploy at that time from Yerevan that was immediately picked up by the BBC to sort of establish a balance of death.

Another BBC report sourced to Yerevan that I believe made it onto the wires as well was when the Karabakh Armenians were punching through the Corridor, through Lachin to Armenia. It was floated that they were there only to help local Kurds who were in revolt against the Azeri-Turks, a brilliant move if you ask me—but we all know that Turks just natively oppress Kurds. And it gave the international community pause, and this is one thing that we have not really dealt upon in the prospects for peace. Let me stray away from news coverage for just a moment.

At the time that the Corridor was established it was a direct violation of the frontiers of a sovereign state. Azerbaijan is a member of the United Nations, Armenia is a member of the United Nations. Azerbaijan is a member of the CSCE, Armenia is a member of the CSCE. To be members in these organizations, as well as other organizations in this world, you subscribe to certain basic tenets. For example, non-violation of the territorial integrity of

member states, as well as the commitment to not seek to solve territorial or other problems through violence.

I hate to say that with the very fact of the Corridor having been established between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, this is a direct violation of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

But back to news coverage. I could detail many distressing twisted stories, but I will give just one example, which is also an anti-Popular Front story, just for the record.

I used to work for a publication called Platts Oilgram News; it's part of the McGraw-Hill chain. I no longer work for them for a number of different reasons. And I passed this string on to a young American gal who came—young American woman who came to work in Baku as well. She does economic reporting.

In January, the head of Amoco arrived in Azerbaijan to announce that four competitive scholarships were to be distributed to students in Azerbaijan to come and study in the United States. This was during the period of time when Ayaz Mutalibov was still in power. Four competitive scholarships.

In March, or was it April, or was it May, I forget exactly, Amoco come out to actually distribute these scholarships. They held another press conference, and this American journalist wrote a short story about this for Platts Oilgram News. Amoco was there, the four scholarships were there, here we are.

About 3 days later, the Amoco representative called up this correspondent to ask what she had been writing, and I saw the copy that came out: Amoco was afraid that its contract would not be signed by the new Nationalist government in Azerbaijan of the Popular Front, and the removal of power from Ayaz Mutalibov as well as Hassan Hassanov, thus Amoco was trying to sweeten the deal by announcing a scholarship program. Four scholarships does not a bribe scandal make, and the four scholarships had been announced in January, but someone in Platts had taken this news and had twisted it in such a manner that it appeared that Amoco was trying to get in bed with a corrupt Popular Front government and was using nickel/dime scholarships to achieve its ends. Total nonsense.

Why is this happening? How is this happening? Who is doing this sort of thing? Another example. When I would write stories about Azerbaijan, I would use the term "Azeri-Turks"—but editors would change the term into "Muslim Azerbaijanians." I've never heard of such an animal before, but it is filled with content: they are "Muslim," and "Muslimness" somehow informs their behavior. This is very consistent and remarkable.

I hope this answers part of your question, and if you want to talk afterwards about pressy things, I'm perfectly willing. I won't drag it out.

Mr. OCHS. Thomas, you were talking about the Corridor that was established through Lachin as a violation of international behavior and norms.

Karabakh and Armenia have been under blockade by Azerbaijan since at least 1989, probably earlier. Is this not also a violation of international behavior and norms?

Mr. GOLTZ. You will be disappointed with my answer: "I guess so." Is it illegal to blockade a contiguous state? It certainly is not

nice, but I'm not sure if that is really illegal. It may be a violation of the spirit of international cooperation, but I'm not sure if it's a violation of the law. I could be corrected on that. I'm not sure.

Ms. HUNTER. Well, I just think that there has been a lot of misbehavior, I think, on both sides. I don't think that anybody comes out smelling like a rose out of this.

The question is, to me at least, the challenges, how you are going to deal with some basic problems, and the way that I put the basic problems is, one, the demographic and the geopolitical disadvantages of Armenia, and the other one is the requirements of Azerbaijani new states just beginning to try to build itself, and, obviously, they cannot also give up what they consider territory.

So, the way I see it, at least, the more positive and constructive way is not so much to apportion blame, because I think over various periods of time there is enough blame to go around, but it's really trying to start a process where you can actually address these real issues and to see how you can, you know, resolve this.

Another small detail, again, this may be one of those informations that Thomas so eloquently explained how sometimes gets distorted, but I think that the escalation also began when Ayaz Mutalibov, if I'm not wrong, in January 1992, brought Nagorno-Karabakh under direct presidential rule, and I think that that was also, I think, frightening for some Armenians and may have contributed to some—I don't know that, and I would like to know what your interpretation is.

But, the bottom line is that this log jam has to be broken, and the basic needs of both populations and both countries addressed.

Audience MEMBER. Good afternoon.

I'd like to ask my questions to Goltz, and I understand how media can distort the information we receive.

However, since the last election of the new Azeri government, it appears that the pogroms against the Armenians in Karabakh has been increased.

My basic question is, why, and what do you think we'll do to cut it out?

Mr. GOLTZ. I think I addressed that same question earlier. If you'd like me to repeat, I will.

I have not been in Azerbaijan since June 12. The new offensive allegedly began on the 13th. I would be reluctant to qualify that as a pogrom. I would rather favor qualifying that as a continuation of the military violence that has been in the Nagorno-Karabakh for at least the last 9 months.

Audience MEMBER. I was only going to ask one question, but some of your comments, Mr. Goltz, is prompting me to ask a second.

My first question is to both speakers, and it's about pan-Turkism, which both of you had mentioned, and spoke of as a minor threat on the fringes. I think what the world is seeing with the crisis in Yugoslavia, a continuation of a history that, perhaps, is left in suspended animation from the World War I to the end of the Soviet Empire, and all of us in the room know that two underlying aspects of the First World War was the crisis in the Balkans and the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

Now, the young Turkish movement that tried to salvage the empire instilled this idea of pan-Turkism, and in a way began it, and the fundamental aspect of that pan-Turkism was the massacre of the Armenian population in Turkey.

Now, you both spoke that it's a minimal threat, but my fear, and the fear of, I think, many Europeans, and many Americans, is that with the rise of nationalism and all throughout the former Soviet Empire that this idea of a pan-Teheranic state will be the rallying cry behind, perhaps, a new Turkish leader that will defeat Ozal, and even an Azeri leader that will rise to power.

What facts do you have, concrete facts? You both just spoke of your impressions, of your feelings, what concrete facts can you give us with the fact that the Turks are right now slaughtering the Kurdish population, and the fact that the Azeris did the same in Baku and Sumgait with the Armenians, what concrete facts can you give us in terms of the pan-Teheranic threat to the area, both to the Kurds and to the Armenians?

And, my second point is that, Mr. Goltz, I find it surprising that you so eloquently speak about the Azeri point of view, and, yet, you failed to mention what all European papers and magazines, namely, the Economist, the Financial Times, LeMonde, bring out time and time again, and the issue of how this Karabakh issue came to the forefront with the violation of international law by Stalin, by giving the land to the Azeris to begin with, and the actual implications of that in violation of the rights that were first given under the Soviet constitution to both the Armenians and the Azeris.

So, I was wondering if you could comment on that, and if you have nothing to say, then if you could please read some of those papers so next time you can present both sides of the picture.

Thank you.

Mr. GOLTZ. Would you like to run away with pan-Turkism first or second?

Ms. HUNTER. Well, I just would mention something. First of all, I think that we have to be very careful here when we talk about the pan-Turkic trend, and I refer to that in all fairness to Turkish government, I think it's very important to say this is not something that they are actively encouraging, but what it is, however, that as a result of the configuration, international and regional configuration, and in quest of a greater role for Turkey in this area, there are some side effects, and that one of those side effects is the evolution of this extreme pan-Turkic.

My own understanding is that, you know, certainly, comments that Prime Minister Demerel made, you know, they don't want all this headache, basically, I think, but they are kind of thrust into a situation.

On the other hand, it seems to me that there are certain forces pulling in that direction that they may not be controllable, and I think that we have to be careful about that.

However, I think that whatever historical facts is, I guess my understanding, I don't think that the tragedies that happened during the 1st World War, I don't think that they were a direct result of a pan-Turkist push, you know, so we have to be a little bit careful on that.

The reason I am concerned about this pan-Turkist push is that, mostly for really two reasons. One is that for Turkey's own domestic evolution, I think Turkey has done a remarkable job of basically Westernization, modernization, and, you know, a Western outlook.

Given the current circumstances, and, particularly, given the rather unhospitable atmosphere towards Turkey and Europe itself, which I believe is misguided from the European perspective, but being the way it is, Turkey is looking for a new role, and so, they are pushing in that.

But, any new role needs to have a philosophical underpinning, and so, unwittingly, this pan-Turkism may become, and that in my opinion is really what would be damaging to Turkey itself. It will give Turkey a lot more Eastern covering than it is due.

But, the other thing is that, it will also generate reactions within the non-Turkic people, in a kind of a reaction to this Turkish thing.

So, what I'm trying to get at is that, let's not exaggerate this, but on the other hand let's not become too starry eyed about the Turkish model and the Turkish role and so on and so forth. I think what we really should do in this region, from Azerbaijan to the central Asia, is basically to promote democracy, freedom, free market economy, respect for human rights. We don't have to say that that is Turkish model. It can be French model, American model, Spanish model, who cares what model.

On the other hand, of course, I don't think that we should yet attribute tendencies, or designs, or, you know, to Turkey that I don't, at least at this point, see them pursuing, you know, actively.

Thank you.

Mr. GOLTZ. I agree.

Ms. HUNTER. Good.

Mr. GOLTZ. Rather than take the bait, I will answer your question in a different way, that I think you have identified the main problem, in not only the Armenian Azeri conflict right now, what you are calling pan-Turkism. I don't believe in pan-Turkism myself as part of the problem, but raw nationalism. And that is the song that many peoples in that particular region of the world are going to be dancing to during the 1990s.

Certainly, this is true in the break up of the Soviet Empire, it's happening in Mother Russia itself. It's happening in Bashkir, it's happening in Tataristan, it's happening in Dagestan, it's happening in South Ossetia, it's happening in Abkhazia in Georgia, it's happening in Armenia, it's happening in Azerbaijan, and it's going to be happening, I'm afraid, also in Iran. And as you rightly pointed out—not about Turks slaughtering Kurds—but it certainly is a growing movement within Turkey itself.

And, if nationalism is what is happening in the '90s, raw nationalism, there's no way that Turkey can be exempt from that either.

Ms. HUNTER. I agree, and the other thing is that, of course, you know, there are rumblings of—I think what is going to happen if they push this, we are going to divide—first of all, I don't believe it's going to succeed. I mean, the experience of pan-Arabism shows this very much. I mean, Egypt paid a heavy price, and I think it would not be a service to Turkey to push them in that direction, frankly, in my opinion, but that's just an opinion.

But, the other thing is that it will stir others, and, yes, for example, Iran will have some centrifugal tendencies, but there will also be some centrifugal tendencies. I mean, even once you have an independent, even a—state, eventually these people will discover their inter-European origins, because, you know, we tend to identify Iran to Persian, whereas, Iran is Iran, and Persians just are one part of that whole Iranian thing.

Then, you can have the Tajiks, and somewhat the Afghans and so on and so forth. And, I am against that, too. I am against any pan, because I believe that it would lead to conflict.

The thing to do, I think, first of all, one has to have also a more long-term view. The only way I think that the problems of this region can ultimately be handled is through greater regional cooperation, and within that context, I think that the more constructive relationship with Iran actually will be better if Iran can be a counterweight to Turkey, which then can give the Armenians a greater sense of balance and security, provided, obviously, the right political changes happen to Iran.

I don't see what is wrong with that. So that, what I'm trying to say is that the objective has to be stability, democracy, human rights and the prevention of the development of the sort of radical or militant governments that we have seen, either of a secular or a religious type, that we have seen, you know, wreak such havoc in the rest of the Third World, but whose model it is, it seems to me that at least we have to be a little bit more impartial.

Audience MEMBER. As a consultant to the Immigration and Naturalization Service over the last few months, I have been doing studies of a series of conflicts or countries in that part of the world which might generate refugee flows to the U.S., that's why the INS is concerned, including both Yugoslavia, Serbo-Croatia, Serbo-Bosnia, and Nagorno-Karabakh.

And, you know, after a while things began to percolate in my old mind, and I suddenly realized that both of them involve Moslem/Christian conflicts, and both sides, in both cases, are damned well aware of that fact.

And, I think one of the reasons why we have not reacted, why we, as the whole West, have not reacted more decisively against what amounts to me as kind of a German invasion of Poland, in the case of Serbia invading defenseless Bosnia, is precisely because a large number of Bosnians are Muslim, even if they might be blond.

In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, you could theoretically, and some people have speculated, on the idea of a NATO versus ex-Soviet war, because Turkey isn't part of NATO, at its most extreme, you know—at its most extreme situation.

And, if a fellow whose ancestors came from Christian Europe noticed that, I can't help wondering if a few Moslem fundamentalists haven't noticed that, too.

There's, you know, two different Christian/Moslem wars, in both of which cases the Christians currently are winning, given how, you know, fanatic some of the Islamics are.

Do you have any comments on that?

Also, by the way, Mr. Goltz, I've found the same kind of thing you were discussing before, in terms of slanting news, talking to people in our own State Department.

Mr. GOLTZ. Most Azeris are nominally Muslim. In the general rebirth of culture and identity, this is going to be a factor. It's also going to inform how they go to battle. They will start bringing Korans into their tanks.

But I find most Azeris singularly uninformed about Islam, no matter how much they may believe. This may or may not change.

At the present moment, though, the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is, I would give it 95 percent, 97 percent a nationalistic conflict from the Azeri perspective, with maybe 3 to 5 percent who are involved in the conflict because of being Muslim, and that Karabakh is somehow Muslim territory.

I have run into volunteers in the Azeri Armed Forces from Tajikistan, not even Turkic speakers. When I asked why they were not here, they said it was because of Islam.

But I've also run into Ukrainian volunteers in some of the militia groups, who don't even speak Azeri, who are there for, I guess, fun, as it were.

And I've run into Jewish volunteers from Baku who are there for love of country. It's a mixed bag, but as it progresses, it will increasingly become Moslem/Christian, Moslem/Christian, Moslem/Christian, and there is a great danger in that.

Ms. HUNTER. The only just one footnote, I think that the remarkable thing, however, is that the one more important Moslem country there has not played the Moslem card for a variety of reasons.

I am very much—at the rhetorical level there is going to be a lot of this Moslem talk, but I think that deeply, though, that various countries are going to react to this issue on the basis of their national interests.

In fact, when I was talking with a lot of Azerbaijanis, they were extremely complaining that, why the Islamic Conference has not done anything.

My own feeling is that, if I may say so, the Armenian Azerbaijani conflict, I don't see it, although their different religion contributes to that, but I don't see this as a Moslem/Christian conflict, although it can, as Thomas is saying, degenerate into something like that. He certainly has a good point in there.

The reason that I'm saying this, of my own personal experience, that the Azerbaijanis and the Iranian Azerbaijan, and the Armenians lived for a long, long time together without any outbreak of this. I don't want to hark back to this, but the more pan-Turkist they become, and the more Azerbaijanis emphasize their identity with Turkey, frankly, I think that that's going to frighten the hell out of the Armenians, because whether rightly or wrongly, and I'm not going to take part and say whether it is right, what happened in 1915 or not happened, when you mention the word Turkey it creates a sort of kind of atavistic fears and concern in their Armenia psyche that I think that—that's why I think that we should try to resolve it as soon as possible, before it develops—now, but volunteers from here and there, you know, we have had Germans fighting in Ajaria, and, you know, Austrians doing that, some people just love to support them.

Audience MEMBER. In light of the discussion we've had about the Muslim influence and in light of the fact that a lot of Westerners ideas of democracy involves religious freedom and religious liberty, do you—I'd like to hear from both of you your impressions on whether or not this new government will allow religious freedom or pursue religious freedom.

Mr. GOLTZ. The public pronouncements on the issues, which I think are public feeling on the thing, is "let a thousand synagogues, churches and mosques be built." Let us bring religion, informed religion, not wild-card religion, informed religion into our society, Christianity, Judaism and Islam, to make a moral underpinning that has been lacking due to the collapse of Marxist ideology. That is the public face of the government if Azerbaijan.

I find no reason to doubt that, that it's—well, I find no reason to doubt that.

Ms. HUNTER. Neither do I.

Mr. GOLTZ. Number two agreement.

Audience MEMBER. I want to—my question reverts back to an earlier part of the discussion, where we were touching on what the Azerbaijan government might or should bring to the negotiating table.

My own impression is that very little attention has been devoted this afternoon, and probably rightly so, to the Armenian government.

Does either one of you, Doctor Hunter, or, Mr. Goltz, have any comment about what the Armenian government might be expected to bring to the negotiating table?

Mr. GOLTZ. I think Doctor Hunter touched on one thing—I don't want to stress it in her name, but I would like to stress it in my own—is the need for good faith and the ability to seal the deal. That means that every time that Levon Ter-Petrossyan has sat down to sign a cease fire, the Dashnaks of Karabakh have not concurred, which has put Ter-Petrossyan in the rather interesting or embarrassing situation of maintaining that he does not control them.

If this is true, then he has no business being at anybody's peace table. If it is not, then one should ask why he is allowing the Dashnaks to run out of control.

Doctor Hunter?

Ms. HUNTER. I'm speechless. You were so eloquent, I don't have anything to add.

Audience MEMBER. Hi. My name is Van Krakorian, I'm with the Armenian Assembly of America, and before I ask my question I just wanted to make a statement for the record, and I think that last question brought it out, is the fact that this briefing was conducted without someone to present the Armenian side.

What we do have is Mr. Goltz. Mr. Goltz, if it is not evident by his answers and his presentation today, is a spokesman for the Azerbaijani point of view. There's no question.

He wasn't there, or he doesn't know anything about the pogroms in Sumgait or Baku. He was there, but he doesn't know whether it was a violation of international law that these blockades took place.

He doesn't know, or doesn't care to know, the fact that 80 per cent of the births in Stepanakert were stillborn, that the abortion rate went up dramatically because Armenian mothers couldn't bear to have children while they were constantly being shelled.

He was there, and he didn't care to say anything about the fact that Azerbaijan, from Khojaly, his beloved Khojaly, were launching GRAB missiles onto Stepanakert every day, and closed off the airport so that these Armenians were having stillborn babies, and malnourished mothers, couldn't get their supplies even by air.

Perhaps, the best evidence, though, of his bias, and his—it just disgusts me to see you here, Mr. Goltz, comes from his own lips in a letter that he circulated, crying because he claimed 2,000 people had been killed in Khojaly, when nothing like that happened. He said, when he called in his stories, he told me, his editor, he had solicited opinions about previous Goltz files from others and that they had been found wanting. The death was doubting. I needed to study the basics of journalist trade.

You need to study a lot more than the basics of journalist trade, Mr. Goltz.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

Mr. GOLTZ. I thought that was a question.

Audience MEMBER. I had one more point, if I might, since we are addressing what was not represented here, except by inference, I have not been to Azerbaijan, I have not been to Armenia, but I have been to Turkey many times, and most recently I spent a month there, and I talked with many people about the phenomenon of Alpaslan-Turkesh, and pan-Turkism, or whatever.

I found, and I consider myself something of a specialist on observing Turkey, having lived and worked there many years, that there is so little sympathy for the idea of pan-Turkism in Turkey, in the Republic of Turkey, that it's a trivial issue, and the phenomenon of Alpaslan-Turkesh is certainly not something that is an abiding concern for the Turkish body politic.

I think we owe it to Turkey, which was not represented here either, to put it in perspective, that the rank and file of hundreds of Turkish people that I talked to this year, and in years past, have no ambitions in that part of the world.

Thank you.

Ms. HAFNER. May I introduce myself. I am Mary Sue Hafner, Deputy Director of the Commission.

I think it's unfair to ask Mr. Goltz to respond to the last statement, so I think the Commission will respond on his behalf.

We personally invited Mr. Goltz, because the Commission respects Mr. Goltz's experience, and what he has done. We have had him testify before, and we will be more than happy to have Mr. Goltz testify at future hearings. We respect his opinion.

We also respect the opinion of Doctor Hunter.

As in the past, we have tried our best to present as objective a view of what is going on in Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan politics, as well as Armenia. That is our objective.

And, secondly as in the past, at all of our briefings and hearings we have attempted to present the views of all parties concerned.

Mr. Goltz was invited here, not to present the view of Azerbaijan, of Armenia, or of any government official. He is a respected journalist who has been on the ground, and that is the reason we have invited him.

And, I want to point out that this presentation was in no way intended to present the perspective of any government or of any peoples involved. These are academics, people who are involved in the issue, and it is their opinion, their analysis, and their viewpoint that we have solicited here today.

I will tell you that the Commission is extremely concerned about what is going on in Nagorno-Karabakh, and as we have done in the past, we will be soliciting the views of people who have gone and visited these sites, as we did with Caroline Cox, whom we do not believe to any significant degree represents the views of the Armenian government. That was why she was invited, because she has visited this area. We were interested in her viewpoint, her experience, and that is why Mr. Goltz and Doctor Hunter have been invited.

In no way does the Commission, at any time, put forth a panel that is to present a biased view in favor of one government or the other. That is the one thing that we have attempted to avoid throughout our examination, and it is an ongoing examination of the issue. It is unfinished business. This is just one of four presentations we have held on this issue.

So, we thank all of you for coming. I think that will probably be the last question that we take, since we were due, I believe, to end at 3. We thank you for coming, and we hope to invite you all again to participate in our ongoing examination of this very critical human rights issue.

Thank you.

[Whereupon, the hearing was concluded at 3:19 p.m.]

