**“The road to the V-Day: One nation’s eternal hope and dedication.”**

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“Fuzuli!”

“Here!”

“Jabrayil”

“Here!”

“Shusha”

“Here!”

And the crowd kept chanting...

With a cry in their eyes and hope in their hearts, hundreds were standing up for Azerbaijan at the Market Square of Wroclaw, Poland’s third largest city - home to a sizeable Azerbaijani community.

On that typical cold October day, I walked from my dormitory to the city center to support my home. Yes, this is what I call Azerbaijan, as home means everything to me.

When the crowd started gathering, one could witness a sense of unity, grief, support, and hope. Here, in the heart of Central Europe’s Silesia lands, hundreds of compatriots lined up to raise their voices against Armenia’s illegal occupation of Azerbaijani territories and the former’s vicious attacks against the residential areas of Azerbaijan. “Why do innocent people have to experience this hell?" I asked myself, thinking about my family and friends who have become witnesses to Armenian aggression in Ganja, Azerbaijan’s second-largest city, targeted five times by missiles fired from Armenia and the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.

Endless questions were terrorizing my mind, with no clear answers on the horizon. Was it even worth standing in the center of a city where not many people were aware of the realities?

This question kept haunting me for a long time, or at least for the next three weeks. After each day, I started realizing the importance of finding answers to my questions through the responses coming from the inner world. Not sure, but maybe those responses were being fed by the hope I have been keeping in my heart for a long time. Recalling childhood memories when all of us were reciting poems dedicated to Karabakh and Shusha, accompanied by the realities of the ongoing war, has become a daily routine. “Is the dark page coming to an end?"—that was the main question storming my mind, making me forget about the October storms in Polish Wroclaw.

The first days of November brought an unimaginable strength, which doubled the dose of hope. By the beginning of November, the Azerbaijani army had managed to liberate four cities and hundreds of villages across the Araz Valley and southern parts of Upper Karabakh. Everyone started counting the days until “D-Day.” The supreme goal of the army and the biggest hope of the millions was the liberation of Shusha, the cradle of Azerbaijani culture and a symbol of the nation’s strength.

Early in the morning of November 8, 2020, I opened my laptop and went through my social media accounts, through which I was trying to combat the Armenian disinformation campaign. Convincing the foreign audience was not easy, but once I started presenting the facts, I could feel some progress. While scrolling the pages, I saw some posts about President Ilham Aliyev’s sudden speech, or, more accurately, the address to the nation. Almost everyone in my contacts list was online waiting for the broadcast of the speech. Undoubtedly, all of us had one question: Is Shusha back home?

When the president announced the liberation of Shusha, I was among millions of people who screamed with all their hearts. Despite being the only Azerbaijani in my dormitory, I could feel that all my compatriots surrounded me. It is still hard to explain how one can feel so satisfied and happy about their home. During the first hours of joy, I started recalling all the past years without Shusha and realized that it was not a “D-Day” but a “V-Day”, as “victory” was the keyword for the liberation of this beautiful city up in the mountains. The victory in Shusha made one point crystal clear: the end of the darkness is near.

In two days, the war came to an end with Azerbaijan’s victory over the three-decade-long illegal occupation. November 10 was the beginning of the new era. The next three years were remembered as the period of mass reconstruction of the liberated territories, the demining process, and the return of the former IDPs. Unquestionably, “V-Day” led to the complete liberation of Azerbaijani territories in September 2023. Exactly seven weeks ago, the city of Khankendi and several Azerbaijani towns that temporarily remained under separatist control were liberated by the victorious Azerbaijani servicemen.

This year’s Victory Day celebrations are special in all ways. With the flag of Azerbaijan proudly flying across Karabakh, we must remember the dedication of our nation, its eternal hope, and its strength, believe in peace, and surely honor the brave soldiers who made this victory possible.