

Analysis of Consul General of Azerbaijan, Mr. Aghayev lecture at Utah Valley University



Consul General of Azerbaijan in Los Angeles, Mr. Aghayev during presentation at UVU

Unfortunately, prior to attending the lecture, I had never even heard of the country of Azerbaijan. It was not a country I would have studied in school or on my own, nor did I hear about it in popular news or media. However, after attending the lecture of Consul General of Azerbaijan in Los Angeles, Mr. Nasimi Aghayev on October 8, 2018 at Utah Valley University, I am now interested in, or at least more aware of, Azerbaijan.

I was especially impressed by the way in which he spoke and presented. His English, of his many languages, was excellent and he was very articulate. He spoke about his country with pride and enthusiasm. He even talked about how the people not only 'tolerate' each other's religions, but they accept other religions. The people often celebrate holidays other than theirs in support of their friends and neighbors. As he spoke, he used maps and diagrams to educate those

in attendance about his country. Interestingly, he educated his audience about his country before he drew attention to some of the issues the country deals with. He talked about culture, history, geography and geographical features like ‘the silk road’, resources, and pointedly on peace and religious tolerance.

The focus of his lecture, of course, was on religious tolerance. He spoke about the many various religions and conveyed that the country and people of Azerbaijan were very proud of their diversity. During the time of the Soviet Unions’ reign of Azerbaijan he talked about how controversial and even violent the struggle over religion was. The trauma of the country’s history was a driver in the current massively successful religious tolerance, or rather ‘religious acceptance’ as he called it, the country of Azerbaijan displays and practices. He spoke about the country’s leadership and the fact that, impressively, every one of the country’s religions is represented in the country’s three tiers of Government.

As Mr. Nasimi Aghayev spoke on a very impressive feat of interfaith harmony between faiths that fight and war in almost every other part of the world for likely as long as history is recorded, I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. It was difficult to believe that interfaith harmony was possible especially among some of the most ‘violent’ religions. I noticed that I was asking myself “what’s the catch?” What makes this country so perfectly harmonized? Then distinguished guest answered a question on the subject and it made sense: regulation and bureaucracies. He talked about how religion was heavily regulated in laws and policy. Proselyting on the street would be punishable by law and religious leaders were not allowed to have public offices to mention a few examples. As he mentioned these policies, the idea of a country of ‘mutli-religious harmony’ seemed to make more sense.

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