

Ambassador Matthew Bryza
Interview with Khazar TV
Baku, Azerbaijan
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Khazar TV: Mr. Ambassador, first of all thank you for doing one of your initial interviews with us. My question is, we are happy to see you in Azerbaijan again. After much long discussion and debate, you were finally appointed as Ambassador. It is clear that certain pro-Armenian Senators were an obstacle. As a participant in this process, can you share your impressions?

Ambassador Bryza: My impression is first of all, I'm very happy to be here and grateful for a chance to speak with you today.

What happened during my nomination process was an example of the American democratic system working. Certain Senators had a set of views that they articulated. The process followed accordingly. Then the President exercised his right under the United States Constitution to appoint me, notwithstanding the views of those Senators. I would also underscore that I was voted and approved by 17 members of the Committee on Foreign Relations. The only two opposing me were those two Senators that you alluded to.

Khazar TV: My question would be is the influential power of Armenia in the Congress is that high? That strong?

Ambassador Bryza: The Armenian-American community, like many communities in the United States or many groups interested in particular issues, has every right to be organized, and has been successful in organizing itself. Every organization in the United States has a right to organize itself and exercise its freedom of speech under the first amendment of our Constitution and we welcome always doing so -- exercising the democratic rights.

In my case what was really important to me was that our Constitution and our political system gave me a chance to respond and gave our President a chance to make his own decision.

Khazar TV: We know that you have been Minsk Group Co-Chair, American Co-Chair, and you have a great experience in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. I would like to know, I will have several questions on Nagorno-

Karabakh issue, and I would like to know will the U.S. increase its support in resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem?

Ambassador Bryza: I think the United States is working very actively and intensively to help the parties negotiate a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Of course you all know about Ambassador Bradtke who is now the Minsk Group Co-Chair, who just participated in the meeting in Sochi.

Secretary Clinton and President Obama as well as between Ambassador Bradtke and the Secretary President, Assistant Secretary Gordon, Deputy Secretary Steinberg who was just here -- all of these people pay immense attention to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. I should also add, by the way, my successor is Deputy Assistant Secretary Tina Kaidanow. We spend a lot of time discussing with each other the situation and sharing ideas on how best to help the parties reach an agreement. But I should also underscore I'm not the Co-Chair. My job is different here. I am now bilateral ambassador and love the job, bilateral ambassador to Azerbaijan. Of course my assignment is different, but all I can say is the United States up to the very top is quite active on the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiation process.

Khazar TV: Two days ago there was a tri-presidential meeting at Sochi. What are your opinions of this meeting?

Ambassador Bryza: I haven't had a chance to speak with Ambassador Bradtke yet. My understanding from the announcements that were made after the meeting is that the presidents agreed there would be an exchange of prisoners, is what I read; and that the parties reiterated their commitment to a peaceful settlement of the conflict and called for the negotiations toward a peaceful settlement to continue. So those are very positive signs. But beyond that, I don't have any further information.

What I know is there will be some active follow-up now, and I look forward to hearing more from Ambassador Bradtke once he finally makes it back to Washington.

I actually would like to add, assuming what was in this announcement is accurate, that there was an agreement to an exchange of prisoners, but also an agreement to activating and further the monitoring along the line of contact, these are important steps. They're signs of goodwill on both sides, as well as a commitment to a

peaceful settlement. As I've said many times, there can be no realistic way to settle the Karabakh conflict except peacefully.

Khazar TV: This as you know was the eighth meeting with the participation of the Presidents Medvedev, Aliyev and Sargsyan. The sides came to agreement to make this type of meeting official. Don't you think that this indicates a higher activeness and higher involvement of Russia over other Minsk Group Co-Chairs in the evolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?

Ambassador Bryza: I think what it means is that the President of Russia has decided that he shares all of the Minsk Group Co-Chair countries' views that there can only be a peaceful settlement of conflict. We can only welcome the fact that the President who has such a strong legal mind has decided to apply his expertise and his intellect to help the parties together reach a peaceful settlement. I have to say in my experience when I was active within the Minsk Group as Co-Chair, the meetings that I was involved with that President Medvedev participated in were quite helpful. I have to admit or state clearly that President Medvedev did really help the process along.

Khazar TV: We know that while you were Minsk Group Co-Chair you were also meeting with the Armenian side due to the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh. There is an opinion that Armenian side is displaying unconstructive position. I would like to ask you to give us ideas, your ideas on the position of the Armenian side on the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and do you see the progress out of this solution, of this problem?

Ambassador Bryza: I can comment on my own observations when I was the Minsk Group Co-Chair. At that time I repeatedly said that I welcomed how constructive both sides were at that time. I'd prefer not to comment on what's happened since I'm no longer the Minsk Group Co-Chair because we have a new Co-Chair, Ambassador Bradtke to make those sorts of comments.

More generally, addressing your second question, I can say that I remain positive about the prospects for further progress and believe that what the Co-Chairs together with the parties have been talking about, and what we as Co-Chairs proposed and now what the Co-Chairs after my group have approved, is fair, and it is reasonable, and requires, yes, it requires some difficult political decisions on both sides, but in terms of logic there really is no other way to resolve this conflict. Force isn't going to work and other logical constructs have been tried but I believe

that this basic set of ideas that is now the proposal is really the most sensible way and probably the only really practical way to resolve the conflict.

If I may add one more thing, often people on both sides say nothing truly happens in the Minsk Group. My own experience is that's completely untrue. It has taken years to get as far as the parties have which is, as I said, a fair proposal that is absolutely practical and workable.

Khazar TV: We are interested in the western energy co-operation with Azerbaijan, you also worked in the State Department Office for Eurasian Affairs. I'd like to get your views. How can we see Nabucco gas pipeline project competing with the Southern Corridor project?

Ambassador Bryza: What we support in the United States government is, as you say, a southern corridor which can be any combination of pipelines. They could be large ones like Nabucco, could be smaller ones like Turkey-Greece-Italy pipeline or the Trans-Adriatic pipeline. It could be even smaller ones like interconnections between one country and another which if added to enough countries create a pipeline *de facto* through small steps rather than one big pipeline.

What matters to us is that all the investments work. In other words, the needs of the investors who want to bring the gas out of the ground are met; and the needs of the consumers of the gas are met; and that all of the complex investment decisions in between happen at the right time to meet all of the investors' needs. That's a difficult challenge.

Actually, to be clear, these are gas pipelines, not oil pipelines. They're natural gas pipelines. We wish all the projects well. Not all of them will succeed right now, but there may be more than one of these projects that ends up being invested in by the companies.

Khazar TV: The issue of questions of how far from the politics, as an American what are your thoughts on Azerbaijan, it's true that you haven't had the chance to get to know the Azerbaijan public from up close, but you have been quite open to Azerbaijan. Which places have you traveled and which places do you want to see?

Ambassador Bryza: I've been to very few places in Azerbaijan. I've been all over Baku, of course, in my previous visits. I've been to Sangachal, and I've been Karabakh, Nagorno-Karabakh. Other than that I haven't had much time to see the

rest of the country, but I'm really looking forward to traveling across the entire country, all the way from Lenkaran to Ganja and everywhere in between, as well as all the way up the coast. I would, if I had a chance I would leave right now and then just spend the next months visiting everyone I can in every city possible. But right now we have a huge amount of work here in Baku to strengthen our relationship as much as possible. But I hope to be heading out soon, within the next week or so, to do my first visits out away from the capital.

I love history, I love the mountains, but I hope to go as well to Barda and see as many fortresses I can. We were in Qala over the weekend. Fantastically beautiful museum. Very impressive artifacts. I want to see as many of those sorts of places as possible.

Khazar TV: I would like to advise you to go to the inner city, for sure if you're interested in the history.

Ambassador Bryza: We have already been there several times, and the Shirvanshah Palace is fantastic.

Khazar TV: In your opinion, is it difficult for your family to get accustomed to life here?

Ambassador Bryza: No, it's not at all. Everyone we have met has been so incredibly warm to us. Not just to me, but especially to my wife Zeyno, and most of all to our baby Maya who seems just to love it here. You could see from the moment she arrived when we were at the airport, she was so excited and smiling and laughing. She continues to smile and laugh all day, every day. So it's been very easy to get used to being here because there's nothing to get used to. It's a question of just enjoying the hospitality and the warmth that we've been feeling from everyone.

Khazar TV: I would make that kind of a postscript here, and I would note that your spouse is Turkish born. Did you get to know Turkish traditions due to this fact? And how does it feel to be married to the Turkish-born person?

Ambassador Bryza: Well, Zeyno, I've benefited from her teaching on pretty much everything that has to do with the world east of the Bosphorus, as well as everything that has to do with being a good person. She of course was born in Turkey and loves Turkey, but she is a person of the world. She is the most worldly person I know. When I think of her, I think of her in that way more than

any other way. But she has really helped me understand this part of the world in ways that no one else ever has. I'm so grateful for that.

Khazar TV: My last questions. I will split my questions in two, what do you think and what you have learned of Azerbaijani culture, music and art? I would place separate question for the truth. [Laughter].

Ambassador Bryza: I spent two of our Saturdays so far, two of four, at the Tagiyev History Museum. I've spent more time now refamiliarizing myself with Azerbaijan history than anything.

I have spent in the past many enjoyable evenings at mugham concerts and I look forward to the festival coming up here soon. As I improve my ability to speak and read in Azerbaijani, I hope someday to be able to read the great poets. But I'm not there yet. At least not in Azerbaijani. But in English, no problem. Reading in Azerbaijani is a great goal.

Khazar TV: Generally what type of music do you listen to?

Ambassador Bryza: I listen to a lot of classical music. I particularly love Chopin. Maybe it's my Polish soul deep inside, but love all of the classics. Whether it be Mozart or Beethoven or later Tchaikovsky who was romantic, not classic. But I listen to a lot of modern music, too. I really enjoy chill music when I need to chill, relax. But I have also a great love of folk music. So I love pretty much all music.

Khazar TV: My last question. Did you have a chance to get to know the Azerbaijani cuisine, to try the Azerbaijani food? Do you try yourself to cook the Azerbaijani food?

Ambassador Bryza: I haven't tried to cook yet myself. I'm just starting to appreciate all of the flavors and all of the spices. But sure, I have been enjoying Azerbaijani cuisine for many years. I love dushbere, that's one of my favorite soups in the whole world. Of course I love dolma and all the kebabs, [inaudible] as well, and the beautiful deserts, the walnuts that are preserved, and of course baklava. I love it all. [Laughter]. I haven't tried Xash yet, though.

Khazar TV: Thank you very much.

Ambassador Bryza: Thank you so much. It's very nice to be with you.