

PRESIDENT
EMOMALI RAHMONOV

ПРЕЗИДЕНТ
ЭМОМАЛӢ РАҲМОҶОВ

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The river of time flows incessantly, but it leaves memories behind...

The beauty and wisdom of these words written by "the Adam among poets", as Rudaki, the founder of Tajik and Persian poetry is often called, send a message to future generations:

Those who spend their life without learning any sense from it,
No master in the world would ever be able to teach anything.

In order to understand and appreciate the resolute path which a person or a nation decides to take, it is necessary to study the past, which enables us to learn lessons and to make precise forecasts. As everyone knows, history not only teaches, it also punishes those who challenge its laws.

Humankind has been afforded many opportunities to observe that great talents always appear at moments favourable for the birth and development of these talents. It is quite often the case that dramatic turns of history and some extraordinary events bring to the fore people who were not well known before, but who in the course of these events swiftly became prominent public figures. Had it not been for the liberation movement against the Mongol conquerors, the flames of which enveloped the whole nation, would it ever have been possible for Timurmalik to become the greatest Tajik military commander and to gain immortality in popular memory?

[Timurmalik, not to be confused with Timur or Tamerlane, was governor and military commander of Khudzhand in the 1220s.] Again, if it had not been for the great French Revolution, would Maximilian Robespierre, a provincial lawyer, ever have attained world-wide fame?

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan went through a variety of dramatic events, struggling to find a course of independent development. Those troubled times brought to prominence a number of politicians who had previously been little known. Among them was Emomali Rahmonov, a man who has come to symbolise the sovereign state of Tajikistan. While absolutely unknown abroad, at the beginning of the 1990s he assumed an important position in the political life of his country and, subsequently, in international affairs.

Quite typical of the President is his understanding that he owed this extraordinary power to the extraordinary circumstances prevailing in his country. As early as November 1992, during the XVI Session of the Supreme Soviet, which, with the civil war still

*1. The President of
Tajikistan, H.E. Emomali
Sharifovich Rahmonov.*

*Президенти Чумхурии
Тоҷикистон Эмомалӣ
Шарифович Раҳмонов.*

*Президент
Таджикистана Эмомали
Шарифович Рахмонов.*



Memorial to Abulkasim Firdousi, the famous Persian-Tajik poet who glorified the ideas of national unity and patriotism.

*Ҳайкали Ҳамосасарои
бузург ва муноди гояҳои
ватандӯстӣ Абулқосими
Фирдавӣ.*

*Памятник Абулкасиму
Фирдоуси, великому
персидско-таджикскому
поэту, воспевателю идей
единства нации и
патриотизма.*

in progress, took place in the city of Khudzhand instead of the capital, Emomali Rahmonov, after being elected Head of State and Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, announced his political views in a few very clear and precise words: "I am ready to lay down my life to achieve peace in Tajikistan and to bring all the refugees back to their native land."

The citizens of the Republic were given convincing proof that these were not just words intended to win the sympathy of the political establishment. There is one illustrative example of this. At the end of 1996, shortly before the long-awaited General Peace Agreement was signed in Moscow, the President flew to the village of Khosdekh in neighbouring Afghanistan, a region totally embroiled in civil war. The purpose of this trip was to hold a decisive meeting with the leader of the armed opposition. It goes without saying that, apart from a strong desire to bring peace and mutual understanding to the land of Tajikistan, for which no effort should be spared, this action demonstrated the President's personal courage.

The President's personality and destiny are in many respects unique, like the time in which we live. It is a time full of unpredictable events. Who could have foreseen, even as recently as five or six years ago, the far-reaching political changes in the Central Asian countries, which even after the beginning of *perestroika* were considered strongholds of totalitarian socialism? In those days it seemed absolutely inconceivable that the communist parties, with their *nomenklatura* system of appointments to specified posts, could be relegated from the political scene to the shadows, and that a forty-year-old man of peasant origin, the former head of a small-sized farm in Dangarinsky region, would take over the reins of government.

As Emomali Rahmonov's political career clearly illustrates, one does not become a president by right of birth, but only through courage and determination in the course of a fierce political struggle. Even the President's most vehement opponents, who at one time were eagerly forecasting his imminent downfall, eventually acknowledged the political courage which led him to assume responsibility for the reconstruction of the country and made him into a strong politician and statesman with qualities typical of a world leader. He is a living embodiment of the people's wisdom and vitality. One of the newspapers published abroad by members of the opposition, which could not be suspected of sympathising with the President, once wrote: "Rahmonov could compromise on questions of minor importance, but he remains firm and unshakeable when solving major problems."

When the article was shown to President Rahmonov and his attention drawn to this quotation, he remarked with a smile: "Maybe it is true...As you may know, I was in the Navy... For three years, from 1971 till 1974, I plied the Black Sea and Pacific Ocean on board a battleship. Those who sail the high seas know that if the anchor is dropped, no ship will ever drift off course. I have my

own anchor from which I would never break away. This anchor is my responsibility to the people of Tajikistan, who elected me to be their President."

Even at the moments when his life was endangered, the President has never betrayed these principles. When a terrorist attack was carried out in a regional centre in the northern part of the Republic with the aim of assassinating the head of state, whose political activities were interwoven in one of the most complex periods in the history of the Tajik people, it was only by a miracle that the President escaped death. Afterwards he commented: "The people cannot be blamed for it. The attack was the work of contract killers."

These words could only come, in such a situation, from a person who values nothing higher than the interests of his country and the people's welfare, and who, at the same time, understands better than anyone the deadly danger which attempts to incite animosity and mistrust between the different regions could pose for the country. At one time, it was the irreconcilable position of the opposing forces, among which the regional clans played an active role, that split the society and fanned the flames of civil war.

As Goethe, the famous German poet, once wrote: "If you wish to understand a poet, you must visit his native land.". To understand Emomali Rahmonov, as a person and politician, you must travel through time and space.

The Tajiks are descendants of a branch of the Indo-European family of nations who for thousands of years peacefully inhabited the fertile oases of Central Asia. But, as fate decreed, the Tajik people in time found themselves at the cross-roads of an international trade route, the Silk Road, and, furthermore, exposed to frequent massacres. Since ancient times both Central Asia and the bordering northern steppes had been inhabited by East Iranian nations who spoke similar languages and developed similar cultures. This land was drenched with blood by countless hordes of conquerors and so-called liberators coming from all sides. At the same time, its soil became a place of historical meetings and intellectual interaction between East and West. International cultural exchange was going on behind the clouds of smoke and dust raised from the battlefields.

The tenth century was the Golden Age of the Tajik nation. For the Tajiks it means the same as the fifteenth century for the Italians, the sixteenth for the British, the seventeenth for the French, the eighteenth for the Germans, the nineteenth century for the Russians and the twentieth century, judging by the facts, for the Americans. It is enough to say that the very idea of humanism (*odamijat*) was born in the cultural and historical environment of Ajam, as the original homeland of the Tajiks was called.

It was not by chance that with civil reconciliation achieved and a much more complicated and lengthy process underway, the process of strengthening the nation and state so that the country might take its place in the modern world with its growing trend



Memorial to Ibn Sina (Avicenna), one of the greatest scientists of all times.

Ҳайкали бузургтарин олими Ҳамаи давру замонҳо Аӯали ибни Сино.

Памятник великому ученому всех времен Абуали ибни Сине (Авиценне).

towards global integration, President Rahmonov, searching for the foundations of a new statehood, turned the attention of progressive intellectuals towards the tenth century, the golden age of the Samanid state. Those who safeguard traditions preserve a steady flame; they do not cherish the ashes.

In that period of consolidating Tajik statehood, peaceful coexistence and good relations with neighbours became the state policy. This political orientation is in complete harmony with the spirit and traditions of the Tajik people, who have always been open to friendship, co-operation and cultural exchange.

History has shown that the Tajiks, despite suffering numerous invasions and attacks by foreign conquerors, have preserved these traditions. Friendship and good relations with neighbours have always been principles to which they are strongly committed by their very rich spiritual and cultural heritage and continuity of traditions. They have always been people of honour, justly proud of their national identity.

In the eleventh century, the Turks, aspiring to conquer the Tajik state, nevertheless adopted the Tajiks' principles of government, traditions and etiquette. The Tajik language was retained as the state language. Central Asia inherited the principles of government mainly from the Samanid state. According to the eminent orientalist Herman Vambery, the Tajik people, after they had been overrun by the nomads, proceeded to civilise their conquerors.

The idea of celebrating the 1100th anniversary of the foundation of the Samanid state in 1999 was from the outset aimed solely at consolidating national unity. It never implied any historical or political claims in relation to Central Asia. When President Rahmonov first introduced this idea at a meeting with the intelligentsia in March 1997, he stressed that the political geography of the past should not determine the present.

The country's independence made it possible to create new political and economic structures. For the Head of State, this presented numerous difficulties that are characteristic of the transitional period between totalitarianism and democracy.

All who have the courage to take the helm after the ship of state has been crippled by the former crew invariably face such difficulties.

There is no need to stress the scale of the problems confronting Emomali Rahmonov, inexperienced as he was in political games, when he came to power and found himself at the centre of a violent struggle. The social, political and economic situation in the Republic was aggravated by a crisis of statehood. The constitutional bodies almost ceased functioning; the institutions of power were paralysed.

This complex period was also characterised by spiralling crime and a fierce struggle for power waged by some ambitious politicians. The majority of Rahmonov's opponents foretold the imminent collapse of the government.

The gloomy forecasts of some short-sighted political analysts



Man's robe of brocade fabric, Ura-Tyube.

Чомаи зарбофӣ, Уротепна.

Мужской халат из парчевой ткани, Ура-Тюбе.

proved to be wrong because they failed to take into account that the President enjoyed the strong support of the people, from whose midst he came, like a spark from a flint. This support was convincingly demonstrated during elections, when Emomali Rahmonov received an absolute majority of the votes.

At the Forum of All the Tajik Peoples of the World, which took place in Dushanbe (five such forums have been held in the last five years), a guest from abroad declared that "Emomali Rahmonov is the President of all the Tajik peoples of the world", a statement that won a burst of applause from the audience.

Time is passing, but the course set by the Constitution never changes. Tajikistan is faithfully following the path leading to a democratic state based on a socially-oriented market economy.

Economic reforms are being carried out in the most important branches of the national economy. State property is being successfully privatised. New methods of management have been adopted.

Tajikistan has an abundance of various minerals. A planned geological survey of its territory resulted in the prospecting and mining of raw materials for fuel and energy production and the chemical industry. Extensive deposits of building materials, precious, non-ferrous and rare metals and other minerals have been discovered.

So far, more than four hundred deposits have been explored and some one hundred of these are now being exploited. Up to forty different raw materials, including fuels, ores and other minerals, are now extracted. Tajikistan is one of the leading countries in the world in resources of copper, silver, gold, lead, zinc, bismuth, strontium, antimony, tungsten, natural gas, hard coal and mineral water. There are also huge deposits of salt, stone for ornamental, building and manufacturing purposes, and gem stones.

These resources are the country's greatest wealth. Nevertheless, they can provide a basis for the state's prosperity only if used wisely, effectively and economically.

The friendly environment which has characterised the last few years should favour the growth of foreign investment in the further development of the country's huge mineral resources.

Over two hundred and forty joint venture companies have been launched in the last few years. Some foreign firms are participating in establishing these enterprises. It is worth mentioning that most of the new companies are actively engaged in production. For example, Zarafshon, a British-Tajik joint company, is being set up to produce more than ten tons of high-grade gold a year. Other such enterprises include an American-Tajik company specialising in the production of leather goods, and a South Korean-Tajik textile factory, Coobl Tajik Textiles, to mention but a few. According to the schedule fixed in the Program of Economic Reforms, by the year 2000 the Republic should be completely self-supporting in agriculture and power production.

A major step contributing to the implementation of the



Gold-embroidered 'khalat' – a traditional man's robe, northern regions of Tajikistan.

Чомаи зардӯзии мардона, ноҳияҳои шимоли Тоҷикистон.

Мужской золотошвейный халат, северные районы Таджикистана.



"Jusuph and Zuleikha", a XV-century poem by Abdurahman Dzhami. Envoys of shahs and kings arriving to propose to Zuleikha. Miniature from a XVIII-century manuscript in the collection of the Written Heritage Institute of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan.

*Абдурахмони Чомӣ,
«Юсуф ва Зулайхо».
Хостгори Зулайхо.
Санъати минётурии асри
XV. Фонди дастхатҳои
Пажӯҳишгоҳи осори
хаттии Академия
ишмоҳи Тоҷикистон.*

*Абдурахман Джамӣ,
"Юсуф и Зулейха", XV
век. Посланники королей
и шахов сопредельных
государств приезжают
сватать Зулейху –
миниатюра из рукописи
конца XVIII века, Фонд
рукописей Института
письменного наследия
Академии наук
Таджикистана.*

Program was the distribution of 75,000 hectares of land to the peasants. This was a revolutionary breakthrough, especially for a country where mountains occupy 93 per cent of the territory, and has resulted in a rapid growth in the production of grain and other agricultural produce. This experience proved that at a time of economic crisis, with all its aggravating consequences, the distributing of land could help curb a decline in production and open up new opportunities for personal initiative.

The Republic cannot move forward rapidly without raising electric power production. This is why the President urged the speeding up of the construction of a hydro-electric power plant on the Vakhsh river which opens up bright prospects for the Republic's future. Work on this is now progressing at full speed ahead.

The wide range of newly established political parties, movements and non-governmental organisations heralds a new dawn in civil society. Freedom of conscience has acquired a real meaning and become a democratic right of the population.

Nevertheless, no-one doubts that the most important victory in this period was that achieved by the inter-Tajik talks which lasted three years and resulted in the signing of the General Agreement on peace and national consent between the President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmonov, and the leader of the opposition. This document marked the end of the antagonism between the opposing parties in Tajikistan.

It is no secret that the initiative for the inter-Tajik talks, which aimed to achieve peace in the Republic, stop any military operations on the Tajik-Afghan border, decide the fate of refugees and reach a national consensus, came from President Emomali Rahmonov. As a result, a government delegation met with representatives of the opposition. The meeting took place in Moscow from April 15th to 19th 1994, with the mediation of the United Nations and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. In essence, it was the first step towards the ultimate goal.

It would be fair to say that long before the talks started, Emomali Rahmonov, then an ordinary Member of Parliament, took serious steps to stop the bloody war in Tajikistan. As early as 1992 he travelled twice to Bishkek, capital of the neighbouring Republic of Kyrgyzstan, to have talks with President Akaev in order to clarify the situation and ask for help in drawing world attention to the tragedy that had struck the Tajik land.

Before and during the talks, the President stated: "We are ready to talk to all the parties that are interested in leading the country out of this political and economic crisis and towards a dialogue for the sake of creation and not destruction."

He has never betrayed his views. On the contrary, he has constantly reaffirmed them by his day-to-day actions.

It is remarkable, but true! On November 16th 1992 he was elected Head of State. Four years later, once again in November,



"Yusuf and Zuleykha", a XV-century poem by Abdurahman Dzhami. Yusuf at the court of the shah interpreting the shah's dreams. Miniature from a XVIII-century manuscript in the collection of the Written Heritage Institute of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan.

*Абдурахмони Чомӣ,
«Юсуф ва Зулайҳа», асри
XV. Омадани Юсуф ба
дарбори шох бо мақсади
таъбири хобҳои шох.
Санъати минҷуриии асри
XVIII. Фонди
дастхатҳои
Пажӯшишгоҳи осори
хаттии Академияи
илмҳои Тоҷикистон.*

*Абдурахман Джамӣ,
"Юсуф и Зулейха", XV
век. Юсуф прибыл ко
двору, чтобы
истолковать сны шаха,
— миниатюра из
рукописи конца XVIII
века, Фонд рукописей
Института письменного
наследия Академии наук
Таджикистана.*

he won the presidential elections by an overwhelming majority. At the same time the Constitution drawn up by Rahmonov was adopted by the people. Five years after he assumed the Presidency, by November 16th 1997, the last refugee had returned to his homeland... Was all this mere chance? Possibly. But this coincidence, if such it was, may be seen as symbolic of the call of a great destiny and the consistency with which President Rahmonov is implementing his policies.

Nothing under the sun is eternal. Politicians come and go, but each of them exerts a certain influence on the course of events, leaving a trace in the country's history. Such a trace President Rahmonov will undoubtedly leave in the memories of future generations. He returned his compatriots who had become refugees as a result of the war to their homeland. The majority had been living in camps in Afghanistan, but many others had been scattered to the ends of the earth.

Most countries which have suffered a civil war have had their own refugees and emigrants. But none of these countries ever managed to bring them home after the national conflicts subsided. President Rahmonov succeeded in this task.

Just as President Abraham Lincoln in his day achieved national unity in American society, Emomali Rahmonov has preserved the statehood and the territorial integrity of Tajikistan. This is the greatest service which he has performed for his people and for future generations.

After Tajikistan gained independence, this young sovereign state was officially recognised by more than one hundred and twenty countries, with the majority of which diplomatic relations have been established. It is a full member of the United Nations and several other international organisations. Tajikistan sees its future development in strengthening multilateral relations with the CIS countries and ties with other states ready to co-operate to mutual benefit.

All these trends have been confirmed by the delegations from Tajikistan at recent sessions of the United Nations General Assembly, where President Rahmonov proclaimed from the high tribune, "The world has seen and appreciated that the top priorities of our small mountainous country are not political ambitions or momentary benefits; these priorities are peace, good relations with our neighbouring countries and progress, our aspiration to occupy a deserved place in the community of civilised nations." This is something President Rahmonov has often reiterated in his public speeches.

The citizens of Tajikistan have no doubt that these aims and aspirations voiced by their President are bound to be attained, for they can see that decisive steps along this road have already been taken.