UNITED STATES COMMISSION
FOR THE PRESERVATION OF AMERICA'S HERITAGE ABROAD

December 31, 2003

WARREN L. MILLER
CHAIRMAN

His Excellency Hafiz M. Pashayev
Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan
2741 34th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20008

My dear Ambassador Pashayev,

The commission I am privileged to chair was established by federal law and is comprised of 21 members appointed by the President of the United States. It was established in recognition of the need to address a serious concern regarding the condition of certain cultural properties in Eastern and Central Europe, including parts of the former Soviet Union.

Since most Americans trace their ancestry to other parts of the world, they have an interest in the preservation of cultural properties that are important to their heritage in the countries from where they came. Such properties include places of worship, historic sites, monuments, and cemeteries.

In particular, properties of minority groups were damaged or have deteriorated due to actions of the Nazis and Communist governments. In many places, the people who would have cared for the properties were killed during the Holocaust or emigrated due to repressive conditions. Because of this, the Government of the United States is seeking agreements with the governments of the region on the protection and preservation of cultural properties that are associated with the heritage of their citizens.

The Commission is negotiating these agreements in response to a directive from the Congress and the President. It is doing so in cooperation with the Department of State. To date, agreements have been reached with 12 European governments.

I would like to meet with you at our earliest mutual convenience to discuss the prospect of such an agreement being entered into between my government and yours. The Commission's staff will call the Embassy's staff in the near future to try to arrange such a meeting.

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I look forward to meeting and working with you on this matter.

Sincerely,

Warren L. Miller

Cc: The Honorable Colin L. Powell