

Speech by Famil Ismailov at an event hosted by Angus Robertson MP at the Palace of Westminster to launch Accord 17.

Famil Ismailov is a Senior Producer with the BBC Russian online. He was born and raised in Sumqayit, north of Baku. Famil has worked for a number of major Russian and Azeri newspapers in Moscow and Baku, and in 1993 for the US State Department. He joined the BBC World Service in 1994.

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I felt some kind of duality when I was reading this issue of "Accord" - one part of me as a reader was an observer and the other part was an insider.

Speaking as an observer I have to say this is a must have publication for everyone who wants to find out quick but nevertheless concise information on the Karabakh conflict. Anybody writing about the Karabakh conflict should read this publication if he or she wants to be clear about what happened between the Azeris and Armenians.

Why? Because I don't know any other publication that has managed to have such a complete balance of views from both sides of the divide, to gather such a variety of authors who are directly or in some way linked to the conflict, or involved in the negotiations: from foreign ministers to academics, from Western researchers to journalists.

This is a star studded publication, trust me, I know most of them personally.

And then there is the insider's view. I have to admit I am not only a BBC journalist. I am also an Azeri boy who was born and brought up in the town of Sumqayit, and who -- despite all the tragedies his hometown has been through -- still loves it and is connected to it.

I suppose this publication will be not to everyone's liking, because it highlights some of the myths that have been created around the Nagorny-Karabakh conflict and it destroys them. Take for one the myth about the uniqueness of the Karabakh conflict or the myth about the impossibility of Azeris and Armenians living together within the boundaries of one state.

And the destruction of those myths makes me feel much more optimistic about the possibilities of resolving this conflict.

One of the key findings that appealed to me is the necessity to end the monopoly of political elites of Azerbaijan and Armenia in the search for a solution.

Reconciliation is still possible. In 2004 the BBC Russian Service website set up a Friends Reunited Forum for people in Azerbaijan and Armenia who wanted to try and find old friends and relatives with whom they'd lost touch because of the Karabakh conflict. A year and a half later we are still getting emails almost every day from people as far away as Israel, USA and even Tunisia who still remember old friends and old times.

When I heard that Azerbaijani and Armenian football teams will compete in the same group for the European championship - I thought, well, its fate, these two nations cannot live without each other.

I wish they would play qualifying matches in Baku and Yerevan and not on some neutral pitch. This is such an opportunity for two nations to make a step towards each other. It would be unfair to waste it.