

Yagub Mahmudlu

**AZERBAIJAN:
SHORT HISTORY OF STATEHOOD**



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Title photo: "Khudaferin Bridge" across the river "Araz" (XI-XII centuries)

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From translator

The English translation of the "Azerbaijan: Short History of Statehood" written by Professor Yagub Mahmudlu, the Doctor of History and Honored Scientist of the Republic of Azerbaijan, carries a special importance in terms of imparting the history of Azerbaijan to the world readers, academic-scientific community as well as various social-political circles. I hope this book provides accurate information for those who want to find out about the statehood history of Azerbaijan as it is the compendious review of the history of Azerbaijan from ancient times to our present day. Following a sequential order, this book covers different empires and states established within the geographical boundaries of Azerbaijan at various periods of history along with laying a special emphasis on the embodiment of national statehood traditions in the form of these states and empires.

In my opinion, by writing the much-needed book of the "Azerbaijan: Short History of Statehood", Professor Yagub Mahmudlu has reaffirmed his unfaltering devotion to his Nation. This book displays his indefatigable dedication to the study and research of history as well as dissemination of the national-spiritual values of Azerbaijan.

It's praiseworthy that the historic role of the national leader of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev in creation of the independent state of Azerbaijan and continuation of the same political course by Ilham Aliyev has been dispassionately elucidated by the author.

I'd like to extend my sincere gratitude to the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Pakistan for publishing this book. The electronic version of this book will be available on the Internet site of the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Pakistan.

I hope that this book proves to be informative and useful not only for the Pakistani readers, but also for all the English-speaking people across the world who wish to learn about the history of Azerbaijan as it's the first book on the history of Azerbaijan in English.

Nigar Madatli

Bachelor of the National University
of Modern Languages in Islamabad

AZERBAIJAN FROM ANCIENT TIMES TO THE ADVENT OF ISLAM

"It is imperative for our independent state to look into the fateful events by scrambling through the dark pages of our history in order to determine our national identity and rear our youth of new ideas as bearers of the nation's past as well. Despite the hardships and difficulties of the transition period, in a short span of time we have been able to bring forth brilliant periods of our national history and acquaint our people with them. Today every Azerbaijani child feels more proud of his identity and past as he delves deeply into our tumultuous history and rich cultural heritage."

Heydar Aliyev

The people of Azerbaijan, who were able to regain their independence in a part of their historical homeland by the close of the twentieth century, own an old and rich history of the state system.

Azerbaijan is surrounded by the Greater Caucasus Mountains in the north, by Alagöz ranges in the west including Gökçe Lake and Eastern Anatolia as well, Caspian Sea in the east and Sultaniye-Zenjan-Hamadan frontiers in the south. Azerbaijan is one of the oldest spots of civilization, a country with a rich and ancient history. A rich cultural heritage has been created on its territory over the span of many millennia, contributing to the treasure-house of World culture. The people of Azerbaijan, who at present constitute the second most prominent Turkic group of the world after the Turks of Anatolia, have developed a distinctive and unique culture in this land and thereby rich traditions of statecraft and governance.

In historical perspective, the territories of Azerbaijan were inhabited by the great forefathers of the present Azerbaijani people, who founded the oldest civilizations in the lands comprising Caspian-Aral Sea and the Persian Gulf regions. The old ethnic groups of this region contributing to the emergence of the Azerbaijani people led to the formation of the ancient cultural environment and Sumerian-Babylonian civilization and played a very important role in the history of ancient state system and politic-military life in the regions of the Middle and Near East. The main traces of civilization are viewed in Azerbaijan. This is evidently displayed by the scholarly researches, especially by the archeological excavations within and outside Azerbaijan. The ancient monuments spread all over Azerbaijan amply prove that this land was one of the oldest habitations of the mankind. The discovery of Azykh cave, one of the earliest habitations of man to be found in the world, and a number of other habitations of the ancient Stone Age prove that Azerbaijan enters the zone of anthropoids to reveal the birthplace of mankind. The archeological discoveries at the caves of Qazma (Nakhichevan), Azykh, Taghs, Damjili, Dashsalahli as well as in the monuments found elsewhere in the country pertaining to 300-400 millennia BC, together with the unearthing of the remains of lower jaw bone of the first Homo sapiens in Azerbaijan conclusively ascertain the evolution theory as to how the human formation had taken place. In view of these rare discoveries, the Azerbaijan territory has been included in the map of Europe's oldest inhabitants.

Azerbaijan is one of the rare countries that can be called the cradle of humanity in the true sense of word. As it is evident from the discoveries made at the grotto of Azykh, life began very early here. The excavations carried out at this primeval cave prove that Azerbaijan was a habitat to the oldest primitive human beings. The pictures and petrographic inscriptions engraved on the rocks of Qobustan and Gemiqaya as well as the artifacts of the material culture belonging to Kur-Araz and Khojali and the findings at Kurqan demonstrate that even thousands of years before the Christian era, Azerbaijan possessed a highly developed culture and advanced civilization.

Azerbaijan has been one of the oldest habitations of mankind since the primordial Paleolithic age. The people of Azerbaijan had started breeding an elaborate ancient culture from that time. Becoming property owners in the course of the Mesolithic and Neolithic ages, they started cultivating a settled life, tilling soil and engaging themselves in different trades and handicrafts. The spheres of economic and cultural development in the territories of Azerbaijan gradually expanded towards the end of the 4th and the beginning of 3rd millennia BC, which led to the formation and spread of Kur-Araz culture in different regions of North and South Caucasus as well as in Eastern Anatolia. Archaeological excavations carried out in this region resulted in the discovery of rich specimens of culture, especially grain residues, plowing instruments, welfare related equipments and various types of handicrafts. All these discoveries attest the fact that the Azerbaijani people were the creators of one of the oldest sedentary civilizations of the world.

The people of Azerbaijan possess a rich history of statehood which extends over approximately 5000 years. The people of Azerbaijan had started establishing the oldest traditions of state governance system since ancient times. The state organizations, more precisely the ethno-political unification of the separate units in the Azerbaijani territories first appeared in the Urmiya basin at the end of 4th millennium and beginning of 3rd millennium before our era. It was there that all the oldest Azerbaijan states were formed. These states played an essential role in the politic-military history of the entire region. Azerbaijan had a close interaction with the ancient imperial states of Sumer, Akkad and Assyria which were established in the Euphrates and Tigris valleys as well as the Hittites state of the Asia Minor.

The early states of Azerbaijan safeguarded their territories from external aggression by pursuing a vigorous foreign policy. The Kutis, who composed one of the main tribal kindred unions in ancient Azerbaijan, had defeated even the powerful neighboring kingdom of Akkad and thereby, expanded the frontiers of their rule up to the Persian Gulf for over a hundred years' time. Along with benefiting greatly from the highly developed administrative skills of the conquered states of Akkad and Sumer, the Kutis had also implanted the emergent governmental system of the ancient Azerbaijan in the territories of the countries under their subjugation.

The Kutis and Lullubian confederacies initially started their rule from the vicinity of Lake Urmia. At times, their state included the valleys of Euphrates and Tigris right up to the Persian Gulf, which left its deep imprints not only on Azerbaijan but, generally speaking, on the entire history of the state system in the ancient East. A distinguishing feature of the Kutis which differentiated them from the other neighboring states of the ancient Orient was the method of the selection of their rulers. The succession was hereditary. The Kuti rulers ruled their country through kinship of successors. The heirs to the throne enjoyed a vast degree of independence in administrative matters. This system had its impact on their long rule in ancient Azerbaijan over a vast stretch of land extending to the valleys of Euphrates and Tigris right up to the Persian Gulf.

With the passage of time, the state culture of Azerbaijan attained new heights as new states encompassing vast territories emerged on its soil. In the 1st millennium BC, the powerful states of Albania and Atropatena as well as kingdoms of Manna and Skit were established in the territories of Azerbaijan. These states played a vital role in unification of the people and strengthening of the administrative governance system in Azerbaijan as well as enhancement of the economic-cultural and ethno-political life.

The Manna State which emerged in the 1st millennium BC was a continuation of the traditional state system of Azerbaijan and represented an important phase in the administrative history of the country. Initially founded in the territories around the Urmiya Lake, the Azerbaijani state of Manna occupied a significant place in the history of the whole world in terms of its administrative governance system, not only because of its antiquity but also due to its evolved form as a state. The state of Manna unified all the petty states adjacent to Urmiya Lake under its rule. By this means, the territories of Azerbaijan controlled by the state of Manna extended up to the Araxes (Araz) River (sometimes even beyond that) in the North and up to the Caspian Sea in the North East.

The state of Manna was deeply involved in warfare as well as in political events affecting the entire region. It waged successful wars against the powerful neighboring states of Assyria and Urartu, which were trying to seize the territories of Azerbaijan. The Sumerians and the Skit tribes who had by then settled in Azerbaijan, joined hands with the people of Manna in fighting the Assyrian and Urartuan aggression.

The absolute leadership of Manna was regulated on hereditary basis. Nevertheless the country was administered with the help of the Council of Elders which was evidently of an advisory nature in the old administrative setup of the state.

The fact that the state of Manna withstood the repeated attacks of powerful neighbors in the southern region of Azerbaijan for almost 300 years corroborates the existence of strong traditions of state governance system in Azerbaijan right from the earliest times.

By the end of the 8th century BC and beginning of the 7th century BC, Saks and Massagets, who had a close kinship to Cimmerians and Skits, began to play an important role in the politic-military history of Azerbaijan. The Saks and Massagets were old inhabitants of Eurasia, who moved in family groups from the foot hills of Greater Caucasus during the various periods of history to the south through passes of Greater Caucasus and the Derbent route. They first established themselves in the northern parts of Azerbaijan and later moved from there directly to the lands of Manna and spread to the eastern Anatolia.

The composition of the Cimmerian-Skit-Saks society had its roots in different ethnic stocks. Turkic ethnic groups were in dominance among these unions which had originated the Cimmerian-Skit-Saks society. The personal observations of the Father of History, Herodotus (5th century BC), fully substantiate the veracity of this information. According to the writings of Herodotus, the Skits used to feed themselves with the milk of horses while the Massagets who held a kinship with the Skits, dressed in the same manner and

led their lives in a similar way. They worshipped Sun as their only God and offered the most beautiful living creature on earth- the horse-as a sacrifice to the God of Sun. As successors to the Mannaeans, the Skits founded a powerful kingdom in the northern parts of Azerbaijan and contributed to the process of unifying all the people of Azerbaijan in one land. The Skit — Massaget rulers successfully defended the territories of Azerbaijan from the invasion of foreign occupiers.

The kingdom of Massagets inflicted a heavy defeat upon the majestic Akhemenids dynasty of Iran— one of the strongest imperialist powers of all times. The Akhemenid ruler Cyrus II, who had conquered vast lands in the regions of the Middle and Near East, was in possession of the southern territories of Azerbaijan as well. Thereafter, he revealed his intention to occupy north of the country too. And for this purpose he proposed his marriage to queen Tomiris, the widow of the King of Massagets. However, queen Tomirus, being well aware of his cunningness, refused the offer of the Iranian ruler. In doing so, she kept the honor and independence of her country. She went to war after vowing in the name of the God of Sun and routed the unbeatable troops of her powerful neighbor in 530 BC. The "invincible" Cyrus was also killed on the battlefield. The abject defeat of Cyrus II formed a brilliant chapter in the history of Azerbaijan. Tomiris had bravely vanquished Cyrus II, the grand emperor who had won the title of Cyrus the Great for having destroyed powerful states like those of the Midian Empire, Lydia and Babylonia and annexed Parthian territories and extended his empire from Central Asia to the borders of Egypt.

The contacts between the Azerbaijani and Skit culture which had spread over large area of Eurasia during the rule of the Skit kings, created mutually beneficial conditions for interaction between the two. This led to a new prosperity in the evolution of the old culture of Azerbaijan. The artifacts of material culture discovered as a result of the archeological excavations and preservation of old names at various places of Azerbaijan dating back to the Skit-Saks-Massagets period plainly bear this out.

Despite the extremely complex politic-military situation in the Middle and Near East and artful contrivances of the neighboring countries to seize Azerbaijan due to its very important military-strategic location and rich natural reserves, the ancient statehood traditions of Azerbaijan were carried on. Neither the long- lasting repressive regime of the imperial Iranian-Akhemenids dynasty, nor the ruinous invasions of Alexander the Great could annihilate the established state system in Azerbaijan.

Following the decease of Alexander the Great, the old statehood traditions were revived in Azerbaijan. The historical territories of Azerbaijan were incorporated into the states of Atropatena and Albania in the southern and northern regions of the country respectively.

As mentioned above, the state of Atropatena covered the southern regions of Azerbaijan. In fact, this part of Azerbaijan had seen the revival of the independent statehood long before the invasion of Alexander the Great. Together with the lands of the vanquished state of Midia, the territories of the South Azerbaijan were delivered to the authority of the Akhemenidian governor, Atropat who was governing South Azerbaijan independently even during the rule of the Akhemenids. That's why South Azerbaijan was mostly referred to as Midian Atropatena, Midia Minor, Atropat's Midia, Atropatia or Atropatena.

As a foresighted politician and renowned warrior, Atropat was appointed to command the front troops of the Akhemenids king, Dara III, to fight the invasion of Alexander the Great. These troops were mainly composed of the military units involving the soldiers recruited from the northern and southern parts of Azerbaijan. Although Alexander the Great overcame the military forces of Dara III, he reconsidered invading Azerbaijan since he was well aware of the competence and politic-military influence of Atropat as an intrepid warrior and deemed it wiser to get closer to the governor of Azerbaijan instead of occupying it. Later on, this affinity was further deepened by the kinship as Atropat got affiliated with one of the associates of Alexander the Great through marriage. By this means, Atropat converted Atropatena to the first independent state of the East released from the Greek-Macedonian enslavement.

Resurgence of the independent statehood traditions resulted in the economic and cultural revitalization of the southern regions of Azerbaijan. The powerful state of Atropatena had developed close bilateral trade relations with the countries of Caucasus, Middle Asia, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Volga river basin and etc. Atropatena was the main determining power in the international relations of the whole region.

The mutual interaction and correspondence between the Greek civilization and Eastern culture had a shaping effect on the enhancement of the state governance system in Atropatena. The wide use of the Greek language brought about the improvement and perfection of the judiciary structure as well as other fields of society. The monetary system of the country had advanced too. It played a central role in the internal trade.

Deriving its roots from the ancient statehood traditions of Azerbaijan and state systems of the early Greek and Eastern civilizations, the authority and influence of Atropatena was further strengthened by the following rulers. Thus, Atropatena firmly withstood the invasions of the states of Parthia and Selefkı and crushed the military forces of the Roman Empire with the help of the subject Parthian forces. The army of

Atropatena was considered to be one of the best equipped and powerful military forces of the entire region. In order to surmount the military forces of the Roman Empire, Atropatena had mobilized 40 thousand infantrymen and 10 thousand combat forces.

The following years saw the emergence of close relationship between the Roman Empire and Atropatena. The Roman Empire was giving a special weight to Atropatena in its foreign policy regarding the Eastern countries due to the politic-military influence and strategic location of Atropatena. The delegates of Atropatena had paid numerous visits to Roma in order to hold diplomatic negotiations with the emperor Octavian August during the years of 27-14 BC. The emperor had even entrusted the governance of the neighboring Armenian kingdom to the rulers of Atropatena. This was the reason why the Armenian tsars were cautious not to spoil the relations with Atropatena. Wary of the politic-military dominance of Atropatena, the Armenian tsar Tigran had married his daughter with the ruler of Atropatena, Midridat as a safety measure. Later on, the Armenian kingdom was brought under the full dependency and control of Atropatena.

The state of Albania that was created in the northern part of Azerbaijan encompassed the territories starting from the high lands surrounding the Iori and Alazan rivers and stretching over to the Caspian Sea in the east, from Greater Caucasus Mountains to the Araxes (Araz) River in the south and basin of the Gokhche Lake in the west. Initially the capital of Albania was Kabala, but later on it was transferred to Barda.

During the rule of the Albanian state, North Azerbaijan saw the further growth of both the material and spiritual cultural expansion in its territories. At this period, there were more than 30 cities in the country that were considered important trade and business centers. New schools were opened and new Azerbaijani script was introduced which was called an Albanian alphabet.

As a country situated at the intersection of North and South, connecting East with West, Albania was a convergence point of different ethnic groups, religions and cultures. It was namely because of this factor that the rich civilization formed in Albania had a very unique and exceptional makeup characterizing the distinctive features and qualities of diverse cultures. The Turkic ethnos who were outnumbering the other groups had a vital role in the administration and management of the country. They were worshipping the Moon, Sky, Sun and God to whom they referred as Tanri which signified oneness of God. Along with this, Christian tenets were also freely disseminated in the country. It's noteworthy that the independent Albanian church had direct liability before the Roman Empire.

During the reign of the Albanian state, the state governance culture of Azerbaijan had reached to new heights. The rulers of the state were considered both the secular and religious leaders of the country who were also entitled to issue orders, formulate laws and command the military forces. By that time, the number of the military forces of Albania had already surpassed 80 thousand.

There was an Advisory Council functioning at the palace of the Albanian rulers. The Albanian rulers were supposed to head the Advisory Council and religious gatherings which were held to regulate the governance of the country. Like Atropatena, Albania had also developed its own monetary system. Possessing the powerful state structures and necessary military power to safeguard its territories from foreign invasion, Albania had resolutely withstood the constant attacks of Parthia and Roman Empire. Having suffered overwhelmingly heavy defeats by the Albanian warriors repeatedly, the Roman Empire had been forced to come to terms with the politic-military potential of Albania. That's why later on the Roman Empire had established close bilateral ties with Albania as a more prudent way of dealing with its formidable rival. Like the diplomats of Atropatena, Albanian delegates were frequently sent to Roma to hold talks with Octavian August. Along with the Roman Empire, Albania had also fostered close trade relations and political ties with the other countries. Inter-state trade routes which linked the Middle and Near Eastern countries and the Khazar Khanate with Eastern Europe passed through Albania which contributed a lot to the external trade relations of the country.

The Albanian ruler, Javanshir ably defended his country against the ferocious attacks of its opportunistic and expansionist neighbors such as the empires of Byzantine, Sasanids, Arab Caliphate and Khazar Khanate. Despite the military dominance of these powers over Albania, he had been able to maintain and uphold the independence of his country due to his farsighted, sagacious vision as well as immense aptitude and valor as a warrior.

At the beginning of our era, Azerbaijan faced one of the most turbulent periods of its history. It was occupied by the Sassanids Empire of Iran in the 3rd century and by the Arab Caliphate in the 7th century AD. The occupation by Iran and Arabia brought a large number of migrants from the interior of those two countries who were settled in Azerbaijan. These migrants were settled in militarily important strategic locations as well as on the highly productive lands of the country. They were given countless privileges. These foreigners started to pursue a policy of assimilation and extermination of the native population of Azerbaijan. However, despite the cruelties and excesses committed by the Iranians and Arab occupiers for a

period of more than 600 years, the old Azerbaijani traditions of the state governance system could not be eradicated. Despite the insufferable agonies at the hands of exploitive regimes and ensuing tough conditions, the integration and amalgamation of the people into one united association continued in Azerbaijan.

Nonetheless, the strategies worked out by the occupying powers to wipe out the native population by way of assimilation and absorption backfired. In reality, the fact that the people of Azerbaijan remained under the rule of those empires for a very long period of time in an integrated and undivided form actually resulted in establishment of the interregional links within the entire country which eventually led to the expansion of internal trade. Growth of internal trade accelerated the ethnic, political and cultural unification between the northern, southern, eastern and western regions of Azerbaijan. In fact, the prolonged common struggle for independence against the aggressive Iranian and Arab forces brought the Turkic and non-Turkic inhabitants of Azerbaijan closer to each other and helped them intermingle with each other. This, in turn expedited the process of unification and coalescence of the diverse ethnic groups into a single united nation.

Constituting majority of the population in the first centuries of our era, the Turkic ethnic groups who were stronger and more organized from the politic-military point of view played an essential role in unification of the masses in Azerbaijan. Amongst the ethnic Turkic tribes the Oghuz Turks were the most powerful and influential. Initially, like other Turkic tribes the Oghuz groups had also moved to the Southern Caucasus, which had been a part of their early dwelling place since ancient times. Later on they shifted from there to the territories of Azerbaijan through the Derbent passageway, called by their ancient forebears as "Iron Gate". Many of them crossed different other passes of the Greater Caucasus Mountain and spread all over the Azerbaijani lands. (One of these passes located in the Qakh District of the Republic of Azerbaijan is still called by the local people as the "Hun Beli" which means "Hun waist" signifying migration of the Hun Turks through this passage.) This fact is demonstrated by the information gleaned from the earliest sources about the Mausoleum of the Oghuz saint Dede Qorqud at Derbent and one of the gates of Derbent named after him as Bayat Gate ("Bayat" is a name of one of the Oghuz tribes). Including the Oghuz Turks, the early Turks who had abided in vast Eurasian lands were trying to keep the important pass of Iron Gate in their hands as it was the main connecting route linking the northern regions of the Turkic habitations with the southern parts, that's to say the Qipchak Steppe with the Southern Caucasus planes.

In addition to the other early sources, the facts presented in the Book of Oghuz named as "Kibabi-Diyarbekriyye" written by Abubakr Al-Tehrani Al-Isfahani on the order of the most prevailing ruler of the Agh Goyunlu Empire Uzun Hasan (1453-1478) prove that as the ancestors of the present Azerbaijani people the Oghuz Turks, the Agh Goyunlu and Qara Goyunlu tribes were the oldest inhabitants of the entire Southern Caucasus and Inner Asia. Having conducted thorough researches on the pedigree of Gara Yuluk Osman Bek, the founder of Agh Goyunlu state and grand father of Uzun Hasan, the abovementioned author had concluded that the begetter of this lineage goes back to the Oghuz (Khaqan) emperor. The book recounts the territories composing the powerful Turkic state headed by Oghuz Khaqan, the forefather of all Turks. The book also narrates that the said Oghuz emperor died in the vicinity of the Gokche Lake. The fact that Azerbaijan was a constituent part of the powerful state headed by the great Oghuz emperor and his death occurred in the vicinity of Gokche Lake verifies that the territories of Azerbaijan had been one of the oldest habitats of the Oghuz Turks.

The author of Kitabi-Diyarbakriyye further writes that "the grandson of the Oghuz emperor Bayandir used to spend his life in winter huts of Karabakh and in summer houses around Gokche Lake. It was there that he summoned the great assembly and divided his great empire amongst his sons according to their capabilities. After this he responded to the call of Allah and breathed his last there". According to Abubakr Al-Tehrani Al-Isfahani, Sungur Bek who was the 20th great-great grandfather of Gara-Yuluk Osman, was a contemporary of the prophet Mohammad as well. He had waged a fierce war against the blasphemers on the frontiers around the summer pastures of the Alagoz Mountains and Gokche Lake and perished in one of the skirmishes. Qara-Yuluk Osman Bek's 14th inline predecessor, Shektur Khan and a contemporary of Caliph Haroon Ar-Rashid, Gipchak Khan had also fought against the infidels with great bravery for the release of Alinja Fort. They both had inflicted heavy defeats on the enemies and liberated the Alinja Fort from long drawn-out besiegement.

These facts are in complete consonance with the narrations related in the Book of Dede Qorqud about the Oghuz tribes. The consistency of these facts with the events which took place during the rule of the prophet Mohammad and Arab Caliphate not only prove the veracity of the abovementioned happenings, but also reaffirm the fact that the people of Azerbaijan had managed to preserve their strong independent statehood traditions despite having been subjected to the subordination of the superior powers.

Unlike other nationalities and ethnic groups, the Turkic tribes who constituted majority of the population in the country were spread all over the territories of Azerbaijan from north to south. That's why since the very beginning of the first centuries of our era, the Turkish Language became the principal medium

of social intercourse between the non-Turkic minority communities and other ethnic groups as well. The Turkish Language played a key role in development of the interrelationships between the northern and southern parts of the country and, thereby, ensured integration of the entire country. Over a period of time this factor played a very important role in the process of unification of the masses in Azerbaijan. It happened so, because during the period under discussion there was no concept of a united monotheist religion for the whole country to embrace. Till that time, worshipping of Tanri, the principal God of the ancient Turks which was the main concept of divinity in the country, had not squeezed out other religious notions prevalent in the land, nor had it been able to completely eradicate them. Zoroastrianism, worshipping of Fire, Sun, Moon, Sky, Stars, Land and

Water were still in vogue at that time. In the northern regions of the country though, especially in the mountainous western parts of the Albanian territory Christianity was spreading at a fast rate. The Albanian independent church was in a vigorous and strong rivalry with the neighboring Armenian and Georgian Churches.

Under these composite historical circumstances, it was specifically the powerful Turkic ethnic groups, the leading politic-military power of the entire region who had become the main bearers of the statehood traditions of Azerbaijan. The Turkic ethnic groups played an enormous role in protection and preservation of the independent state system in Azerbaijan. They were the corner stone of the state governance system in Azerbaijan. Indeed, at a time when there was a lack of united religious belief in one Allah, only Turkic ethnicity and Turkish language played a unifying role in the north and south as well as in the entire length and breath of the country.

AZERBAIJAN AFTER ADVENT OF ISLAM

"We are successors to an exceptional heritage. Every citizen of Azerbaijan should try to be worthy of this unique legacy and must live with a strong sense of the historical past, rich culture and high moral values of our country and feel a deep responsibility towards the present as well as future of our Nation."

Heydar Aliyev

The advent of Islam in 7th century was a decisive turning point in the history of Azerbaijan. The religion of Islam gave strong impetus to the creation of a single nation with a single language in Azerbaijan. Acceptance of Islam had a significant impact on acceleration of the unification of the masses in the country. Thus, it became a cause for the establishment of religious unity among the Turkic and non-Turkic ethnic groups and a single common tradition on the Azerbaijani lands where they were spread, as well as expansion of the neighborhood relations, and further deepening of the process of intermingling. The religion of Islam united all Turkic and non-Turkic ethnic groups under one Turkish-Islamic flag, against the Byzantine Empire and its Armenian and Georgian feudal supporters, who were trying to bring the whole region of South Caucasus under the influence of Christianity.

Since it was against the Islamic principles to convert monotheists to Muslims, the Albanian Christians remained away from the influence of the Islamic religion during the period of Arab invasion. Therefore, the country was divided religiously. The Turkish-Muslim population including Albanians who had accepted Islam was in majority. They were scattered throughout the entire country, whereas the minority Christian population including Albanians who had not accepted Islam was confined to the western regions of the Northern Azerbaijan. The struggle by the Armenian and Georgian churches to bring the Christian-Albanians dwelling in the western parts of Albania into the sphere of their own religious-political and ethnic influence gained momentum due to the religious differences in the country. So, Azerbaijan was converted into the fierce battleground of confrontation between the religions of Islam and Christianity. With the passage of time, the Grigorianization and Armenianization of the Christian-Albanian population of the Western Azerbaijan including mountainous region of Karabagh gathered more speed. Moreover, the Georgian church was also striving to subordinate the Christian-Albanian population living in the north-western regions of Azerbaijan.

The existence of religious divisions in Albania incited the Armenian and Georgian feudal to start making territorial claims against Azerbaijan. The politic plans of the insidious neighbors of Albania consisted of putting the Christian Albanians under the religious-political and ethnic sway of the Armenian and Georgian churches and achieving their full Armenization and Georgianization which would eventually lead to the complete usurpation of the territories of Azerbaijan.

After the fall of the Arab Caliphate in the middle of 9th century, the ancient statehood traditions of Azerbaijan were revived once again. The country saw a new political renaissance as the dynasties of Sajids, Shirvanshahs, Salaries, Ravvadids and Shaddadis began to reign in the territories of Azerbaijan.

During the period under discussion, Shekhi State came into existence in the north-western regions of Azerbaijan which encompassed the territories stretching over till Tiflis, the border city of Islam. To the west of Shekhi there was another Muslim State- Tiflis Muslim Kingdom with Tiflis as its capital. Acting as heirs of the Albanian State, the Shekhi rulers used to carry the titles of the Albanian rulers as well. Unlike other dynasties ruling in Azerbaijan, the territory of the Shekhi State was transformed into the area of swear conflict between Christianity and Islam. Along with Christianity, the religion of Islam had also started penetrating into the territories of this Azerbaijani state with its influence expanding by the passage of time. Despite the very complex conditions, the Shekhi rulers were fearlessly fighting the invasive attacks of the Georgian feudal aimed at Georgianization of the Albanian Christians. They were also ably defending the north-western frontiers of Azerbaijan from foreign occupation.

Due to the establishment of independent states in the territories of Azerbaijan, all areas of life were revitalized politically, economically and culturally. That's to say, the "Renaissance age" of the history of Azerbaijan had taken a real start.

The decline of the Arab Caliphate and awakening of the old statehood traditions of Azerbaijan stimulated the use of the Turkish Language as the main means of communication throughout the whole country. This was a historical achievement, which would give great impetus to the development of Azerbaijan in future. Establishment of a single Azerbaijani Turkish state incorporating all the territories of

Azerbaijan in the form of Sajids State which lasted from the late 70's of IX century till the middle of the century (879-941), had a very positive effect in deepening of the economical and cultural relations, eradication of ethnic differences and further acceleration of the formation of a single Azerbaijani Turkish nation in the country.

During its most prolific era, the territories of the Sajids State were extended on a vast region from Zanjan to Derbent, starting from the shores of the Caspian Sea and stretching over to the cities of Ani and Debil. All the territories of Azerbaijan were included in the domain of the Sajids State. Sajids repeatedly defeated the Armenian and Georgian feudal, who were backed and supported by the Byzantine Empire. These victories played an important role in preservation of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and strengthening of the ethnic-political unity in the country. It was namely in this period that the stories of the Book of Dede Qorqud, which is considered to be the master piece of the Azerbaijani and broad Turkish literature were spread throughout the entire country.

"The Book of Dede Qorqud' is an epos of heroism. It is not about a warrior or a courageous man. It is an epos which embodies the bravery and valor of the whole nation. The main idea behind this epos is to display the ever- readiness of all the heroes, be it a military leader or an ordinary character, for even sacrificing their lives to protect their homeland. The quintessence of the epos is based upon the ideology of heroism. It is necessary for the citizens of the contemporary Azerbaijan to benefit from this ideology of heroism in order to be able to overcome the problems faced by our Nation at this age and strengthen the sovereignty and independence, as well as territorial integrity of our country today".

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Thus, creation of the local dynasties (Sajids, Shirvanshahs, Salarids, Ravvadids, Shaddadis, Shekhi rulers) in Azerbaijan after 600 years long enslavement under the Sassanids and Arabian rule and establishment of the monotheist religion of Islam throughout the entire country played a fundamental role in the ethnic evolution of the Azerbaijani nation and formation of a common language and culture.

At a time when different feudal dynasties were frequently substituting one another, the religion of Islam played a vital role in association of the Azerbaijani population and alliance of the non-Turkic tribes with the Turkic ethnic groups in the form of a single force against the foreign invaders. It was because of this reason that the machinations of the United Christian Block comprising the Armenian, Georgian and Byzantine aggressors to invade the territories of Azerbaijan could never be materialized. Even the Slavic Russian interventionists attacking the country persistently from over the Caspian Sea could not get hold of Azerbaijan. The necessity to get united against the common adversaries and intermingling, neighborhood, common traditions and integrated culture bought about by the single religion of Islam gave way to the cohesive society and further strengthened the ethnic-political unity in the country.

Nevertheless, since none of the Azerbaijani states established after the downfall of the Arab Caliphate managed to endure as a single, consistent and powerful state encircling all the territories of Azerbaijan, the long- lasting political stability could also not be created. At that time, taking advantage of the disintegration of the Arab Caliphate the United Christian Block comprising the Byzantine Empire, Armenian and Georgian feudal formed a united front against Islam and diverted all of its power against Azerbaijan. It was precisely at this period, towards the middle of XI century that formation of the Great Seljuk Empire made the major turning point in the history of the Middle and Near East. The lands ruled by the Great Seljuk Empire extended over a wide area from Central Asia to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea and from Derbent passage to the shores of Persian Gulf. Azerbaijan was once again incorporated into the Oghuz Turk state, the Great Seljuk Empire.

The Great Seljuk Empire played a crucial role in the history of Azerbaijan. Sultan Alp Arslan routed the military forces of the Byzantine Empire in the battle of Malazgert. (26th August 1071) By defeating the Byzantine forces, the Turkish-Islam unity had actually won a decisive victory over the Armenian and Georgian members of the United Christian Block who had been long conspiring to take over the territories of Azerbaijan. Thus, the plans of the Byzantine Empire to reinforce its positions in the Southern Caucasian region and artful devices of the aggressive Armenian and Georgian feudal to get possession of the western territories of Azerbaijan through the assistance of the Byzantine Empire proved to be fruitless in the end.

In this way the plots to subdue the Southern Caucasian region and bring Azerbaijan under the influence and control of Christianity remained unrealized. That is to say, the Christianity factor utterly failed in the region of South Caucasus.

As a result of the influx of the Seljuk tribes, the Oghuz Turks or notion of Turkism turned into the key ethnic-political factor in all the regions of Southern Caucasus and Asia Minor. The Turkish-Islam factor played a decisive role in the history of the Middle and Near East, as well as Caucasus for a long period of time.

During the period of the Seljuk influx different communities of Oghuz Turks settled in Azerbaijan. Oghuz-Seljuk Turks and Azerbaijani Turks who shared the same origin and religion intermingled with each other within a short span of time.

The communities such as Skit, Sak, Massaget, Hun, Bulgar, Khazar, Barsil, Pecheneq, Suvar, and some other Turkic and non-Turkic ethnic groups had participated in the formation of the Azerbaijani nation at different periods of history. (BC and AC) But it was mainly the Oghuz Turks (Qaraqoyunlus, Aqqoyunlus, Seljuks and others) who had played a decisive role in the formation of the united Azerbaijani nation. Therefore, by the arrival of the Seljuk Turks, the unification of the Azerbaijani people as a single nation came to an end. The Azerbaijani Turkish language became the main source of communication in the Southern Caucasian including the territories of Azerbaijan. As a simple and intelligible language, by replacing the Arabic and Persian languages and different undeveloped local languages used in small circles, the Azerbaijani Turkish language became the general language throughout the whole country. The Verbal Folk literature and recitals narrated and spread verbally by the folk artists referred to as Ozans or Ashiks who were living in tribes and moving from one place to the other like nomads, paved the way for creation of the masterpieces in written literature of the Azerbaijani Turkish Language within a short period.

Having been strengthened after the breakdown of the Great Seljuk Empire, the states of the Shirvanshah and Eldenizs dynasties played an enormous role in continuation and further reinforcement of the statehood traditions of the Azerbaijani people. Especially Eldenizs state of Azerbaijan, which had become the most powerful and influential state of the Middle and Near East, played a pivotal role in the ethnic-political history of the Azerbaijani nation.

Unification of all the territories of Azerbaijan in the form of a single state during the rule of Eldenizs resulted in the great enhancement of the economical, political and cultural life in the country. Production, trade, education and culture also developed more. Internal and external trade relations grew largely. New educational institutions were opened; mosques and unique architectural monuments were constructed. The cultural Renaissance had been reached to new heights because of the prominent literary figures such as Khaqani, Nizami, Ajami. The magnificent statesmen such as Shemseddin Eldeniz, Mahammad Jahan Pahlavan and Gizil Arslan wrote golden pages of the state management system of Azerbaijan. During the rule of Eldenizs, the domain of the Azerbaijani Turkish Language and culture of the Azerbaijani Turks expanded as well.

Therefore, following the decline of the Arabs Caliphate, from the middle of the IX century the weight of the Turkish-Islam states increased not only in Caucasus, but also in the Middle and Near East as well. The states administered by Sajids, Shirvanshahs, Salaris, Ravvadis, Sheddads, Sheki rulers, Seljuks, Eldenizs, Mongolians, Elkhanis-Hulakus, Chobans, Jalayirs, Teimuris, Osmans, Gara Goyunlu, Agh Goyunlu, Sefevids, Afshars, Qajars and other Turkish-Muslim dynasties left lasting impressions not only on the history of Azerbaijan, but also all over the Southern Caucasian region as well as the statehood traditions of the Middle and Near Eastern countries. For a long time Azerbaijan remained the central province of these states, with Tabriz as its capital. Most of these great Turkish-Muslim empires were administered by the Azerbaijani-Turkish dynasties.

During and after the period of XV-XVIII centuries the statehood culture of Azerbaijan was further enriched. It is noteworthy that the grand empires of Gara Goyunlu, Agh Goyunlu, Sefevids, Afshars and Qajars encompassing vast territories were under direct administration of the Azerbaijani dynasties. This significant factor had a positive effect on the internal and international affairs of Azerbaijan. It contributed a lot to the growth of the military-political influence of the country and expansion of the use of the Azerbaijani Language; and created a suitable atmosphere for further development of the material and spiritual culture of the Azerbaijani nation. Along with playing a central role in the international relations and military-political life of the Middle and Near East, the Azerbaijani states actively participated in the European- Eastern relations as well.

During the rule of the great statesman of Azerbaijan, Uzun Hasan (1468-1478) the Agh Goyunlu Empire became the most potent military-political factor throughout the entire region of the Middle and Near East. At this period, the statehood culture of Azerbaijan was promoted more through the measures taken by Uzun Hasan. He carried out the well-thought-out policies aimed at the creation of the independent Azerbaijani state with a powerful central government incorporating all the territories of the country. For this purpose he had ordered preparation of the special "Code of Law" wherein the regulations and laws formulated to rule the country were enshrined.

In order to achieve an upsurge in the economical power of the country, as a foresighted statesman, Uzun Hasan was trying to improve the life conditions of the people who were paying taxes to the state treasury and boost different spheres of the sedentary lifestyle in the country. In view of that he had passed special laws to end the tyranny of the government officials and bridle the military-political supremacy of the tribal leaders.

Uzun Hasan had anticipated the rise of religious divisions in the country in beforehand. In order to thwart the destructive effect of the religious differences on the strength and ethnic-political unity of the country, he had married his sister with Sheikh Juneyt Sefevid, and his daughter with Sheikh Heydar Sefevid. By doing so, he was trying to establish peace among the Agh Goyunlu and Safavids, and tackle the threatening hazards of religious partition which had enveloped the whole country. Keeping a watchful eye on the changes taking place in the military world, as a capable commander Uzun Hasan was making every effort to form an army with strong discipline and order. To this end, he had amplified the number of the mercenary infantry divisions in the army and had made arrangements for production of the fire-arms and establishment of strong artillery. He had even invited Italian armor experts and military specialists to help expedite an army-building process in the country.

The glorious statesman also paid a special attention towards the development of education in the country. He had collected the most advanced scholars of his period into his own palace. Nearly 60 scholars used to work in the personal library of Uzun Hasan. An academic committee composed of remarkable scholars of that period used to function at the palace of Uzun Hasan. Great ruler got Quran-e-Kerim translated into Azerbaijani language. The outstanding academician of that period, Abubakr Al-Tehrani had written a book named Kitab-i-Diyarbakriyye (Book of Diyarbakir) about Oghuz tribes on the order of Uzun Hasan.

During the rule of Uzun Hasan, the credence of Azerbaijan in the relations between the Eastern and Western world had also augmented. In addition to the Eastern countries with which Azerbaijan had close relationship traditionally, vast diplomatic ties were established with the European states as well. During the reign of Uzun Hasan the Azerbaijani envoys had held several diplomatic meetings and negotiations at the palaces of the rulers of many neighboring Eastern countries as well as different European countries such as Republic of Venice, Papacy, Kingdom of Naples, Albania, Hungary, Poland, Germany, Kingdom of Burgundy, Cyprus, Rodeos, Trabzon Empire, and Great Russian Kingdom. The mother of Uzun Hasan, Sara Khatun, the first lady diplomat in the Eastern world played an important role in the meetings conducted with the foreign countries. There was a permanent embassy of the Republic of Venice in Tabriz at the palace of Uzun Hasan. Azerbaijan was converted to the country of high influence in resolution of the international issues concerning both the East and West.

The life and activities of Muhammad Jahan Pahlavan, Gizil Arslan, Uzun Hasan, Shah Ismail Khatai and other statesmen further developed the nation's love for their country. They had inspired the people of Azerbaijan to cultivate a strong sense of statehood as the most basic and fundamental aim of their life.

Heydar Aliyev

Towards the end of XV century and beginning of XVI century the statehood of Azerbaijan entered into a complete new phase of its history. The distinguished statesman, Shah Ismail Khatai (1501-1524) who was the descendant of Uzun Hasan, took the task of his father to himself and united all the territories of Azerbaijan under his own state power. Thus, Safavids State, the first united and centralized Azerbaijani state came into existence with Tabriz as its capital.

During the time of Sefevids authority, the administrative state culture of Azerbaijan was further elevated. Azerbaijani language was declared the state language. Due the constructive reforms, internal and foreign politics carried out by Shah Ismail, Shah Tahmasib, Shah Abbas and other Sefevid rulers, Sefevids State became one of the most powerful and influential empires of the Middle and Near East on the whole.

In order to run the vast territories of the Sefevids Empire, an inclusive state administration mechanism was formed. Sefevids rulers had seized the religious authority along with secular leadership of the country. There was a Supreme Consultation Assembly or Supreme Council of Kingdom at the palace of the rulers. In order to regulate and organize the work of the central and local authority organs, a full-fledged bureaucratic system was established in the country. All the judicial matters of the country were looked after by Supreme Law Court. As a result of the extensive reforms implemented by Sefevid rulers, especially the reforms carried out by Shah Abbas, the Sefevids State had become one of the most powerful military powers of the

world due to its disciplined strong army. During the years of Sefevids sway, the use of Azerbaijani language escalated widely in the regions of the Middle and Near East. As a rule, the diplomatic negotiations and meetings held with the envoys of the foreign countries at the Sefevids palace were all conducted in the Azerbaijani language. Carrying on the same pattern of foreign policy as Aqqoyunlus, the Sefevids State had close diplomatic ties with many countries starting from the littoral states of the Black Sea and extending over to the other European states up to England and Scandinavia. Many Western emissaries used to visit the palaces of Shah Ismail Khatai, Shah Tahmasib, Shah Muhammad Khudabanda, Shah Abbas and other Sefevid rulers in order to foster strong mutual relations with the Sefevid states. Azerbaijan continued to play an imperative role in the mutual relations between East and West, during the rule of Sefevids State as well.

The magnificent Azerbaijani warrior, Nadir Shah Afshar (1736-1747) who came to power after the downfall of the Sefevids State, further expanded the boundaries of the former Sefevid Empire. In the year of 1739, this grand Afshar-Turk ruler of Azerbaijan conquered Delhi and got hold of the Northern regions of India as well. But, the plans of the Azerbaijani ruler to establish a powerful centralized state on the subjugated territories proved futile due to the increasing internal problems.

After the death of Nadir Shah, his gigantic empire collapsed. Even when Nadir Shah was alive the process of disintegration had taken a start. Following the demise of Nadir Shah, Azerbaijan saw emergence of the local states struggling for self-determining independence and sovereignty. So, in the II half of XVIII century Azerbaijan was divided into the different small states ruled by Khans and Sultans (dukes). The separation of the country into the local states brought about the military-political decline of the country. Although some of the Khanates endeavored to revive the ancient statehood traditions of Azerbaijan once again by unifying the whole country into a single and centralized state, due to the prevalent circumstances and lack of cohesion among the local states their aspirations remained unrealized. This state of affairs inflamed political disagreements and deepened divergences in the country which created a favorable opportunity for the foreign invaders long waiting to chance upon an unstable situation to occupy Azerbaijan.

At the end of XVIII century, the Azerbaijani-Turkish dynasty of Qajars (1796-1925) came to power in Iran. Qajars started pursuing the policy of bringing all the territories once ruled by their forefathers Gara Goyunlu, Agh Goyunlu, Sefevids and finally Nadir Shah, including the Azerbaijani small states under a central authority. Thus, a long period of wars started between Qajars and Russians who were seeking a chance to occupy the Southern Caucasus. Azerbaijan was converted to the land of bloody wars between the two big states. Emboldened and instigated by Russia with pledges of extra lands, the generals with Armenian and Georgian origins were taking advantage of this opportunity to perpetrate terrifying atrocities and mass murders against the peaceful people of Azerbaijan.

The long drawn out wars between Iran and Russia resulted in partition of Azerbaijan. On the basis of the Gulistan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828) agreements signed between Iran and Russia, Azerbaijan was separated into two parts. According to these agreements, Northern Azerbaijan was annexed to Russia and Southern to the Iranian Kingdom ruled by the Qajars dynasty.

Division of Azerbaijan into two parts brought forth new political geographical notions: North Azerbaijan or Russian Azerbaijan and South Azerbaijan or Iranian Azerbaijan. Unlike South Azerbaijan which had been incorporated into the backward rule of the reactionary Kingdom regime, through Russia North Azerbaijan gained an access to the relatively advanced cultural-economical development processes going on in the Western Europe. But, with integration to Russia and Iran, the period of assimilation and absorption of the Azerbaijani people started, namely Rusification in North and Persianization in South of Azerbaijan.

In order to advance its territories further towards East and open a way to the warm waters, Russia started carrying out the stealthy policy of expelling the Azerbaijani people out of Caucasus. To achieve this goal, Russia was mainly relying on the support of the Christian population of the Southern Caucasus, precisely on the Armenians and Georgians who were migrated from Iran and Turkey to Azerbaijan deliberately for this purpose. Russia was using the Christian-Albanian population of Azerbaijan to materialize its malicious ethnic-cleansing plans. Forcible conversion of the Muslim population of the Southern Caucasus into Christians had gathered pace to make this end possible.

After the Byzantine Empire, the factor of Christianity once again became an effective tool of occupation and exploitation in the Southern Caucasus with the establishment of a new Christian state in the territories of Azerbaijan. Russia undertook massive relocation measures throughout the whole country in an effort to settle Christian population of Russia in the territories of Azerbaijan. Since this policy did not bear fruit in the beginning, Russia decided to create a bulwark of support for itself in the Southern Caucasus by organizing systematic mass migrations of the Armenian population from the neighboring countries to the Azerbaijani lands, especially to the mountainous region of Karabakh and previous Irevan and Nakhichevan Khanates. Along with this, the separate "Armenian Province" was created on the Western Azerbaijani lands

bordering Turkey which laid the foundation for establishment of the future Armenian state on account of the territories belonging to Azerbaijan.

What's more, in 1836, Russia abolished the independent Albanian Church and subordinated it to the control of the Armenian Grigorian Church. In doing so, Russia created favorable conditions for the Grigorianization and Armenization of the Christian Albanians and assimilation of the Azerbaijani people into the Armenian culture. Emboldened by the Russian support, Armenians started making new territorial claims against Azerbaijan. Not sufficing with this, the Tsar Russia resorted to more abhorrent means such as raising Armenians against the Turkish-Muslim population and arming them to commit slaughters and mass murders. This period of history is fraught with horrible atrocities and massacres perpetrated against the blameless Azerbaijani people.

In the north-western regions of the country adjoining Georgia, the Christianization of the Azerbaijani people was entrusted upon the Georgian Church. Backed by Russian colonialists, the Georgian feudal took advantage of the situation to realize their long time aspiration, Pravoslavization and Georgianization of the local Muslim population.

Although perfidious policies of the expansionist Tsar regime of Russia and contrivances of their menial servitors encountered fierce resistance of the local people, some Albanian villages were diverted from their religion on promises of great privileges and sharing the land which would be confiscated from the Azerbaijani landlords. Not sufficing with this, the colonialists converted all the ancient Albanian churches to Pravoslav churches and constructed new churches at every turn of the country. The Christianization of Azerbaijan was implemented by direct involvement and supervision of the vicegerent of Caucasus. Along with Christianization of the local population, the mass migration of the Christian population from Russia was also intensified. The aim of this strategy was to strengthen the Christian factor in the Southern Caucasus, especially in Azerbaijan as a warrant for the perpetuation of the oppressive Russian rule.

The people of South Azerbaijan were also subjected to the same type of repressive policies under the rule of the reactionary Kingdom regime in Iran. Soon after, the people of Azerbaijan who had been accustomed to live independently for centuries mounted a strong freedom struggle both in the North and South. Ironically, fearful of the unification of the country, the Russian and Iranian states, who had fought bloody wars against each other in order to seize Azerbaijan, became trusted allies for smothering the liberation movement of the Azerbaijani people. Despite the oppressions and cruelties carried out by the Tsarist Russia and reactionary Iranian regime, the people of Azerbaijan did not cease to fight for their independence. They raised repeated rebellions, fought many wars and lost countless people in their glorious liberation struggle.

During the revolutions of Russia (1905-1907) and Iran (1905-1911), the people of Azerbaijan were struggling both in the North and South for restoration of the sovereign statehood traditions and creation of a new democratic administrative system. During the First World War, the people of Azerbaijan rose once again both in the North as well as South for re-establishment of their own statehood traditions. The freedom movement of the Northern Azerbaijan was squelched tragically. On the order of the Dashnak-Bolshevik government headed by S. Shaumyan, a horrible massacre was committed against the innocent Azerbaijani people in March of 1918. Nevertheless, thanks to the assistance and military help of the brotherly Turkey, the freedom movement of the Azerbaijani people prevailed in North Azerbaijan. On 28th May in 1918, People's Republic of Azerbaijan was created in North Azerbaijan which was the ever-first democratic republic to be created in the Eastern world.

Meanwhile, an independent and democratic State of Azadistan was established in South Azerbaijan in 1920. Sheikh Muhammad Kheyabani became the head of the National Government of the Azadistan State. With the establishment of the national independent states, extensive national-democratic reforms started to be carried out in the territories of Azerbaijan, both in the North and South.

Thus, availing the historic opportunity brought about by the First World War, the people of Azerbaijan were able to revivify the old statehood traditions of Azerbaijan both in the Northern and Southern territories of Azerbaijan despite the complex circumstances. Establishment of national states reaffirmed that the people of Azerbaijan were capable of living free and independently. The fact that the government introduced in Azerbaijan at the beginning of XX century was based upon an exemplary parliamentary structure was in itself a historical achievement for the people of Azerbaijan.

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN THE FIRST REPUBLIC IN THE EAST WITH PARLIAMENTARY STRUCTURE

Even the most atrocious and bloody military-feudal colonial establishment of human history-Tsarist Russian regime was unable to wipe out the statehood traditions of Azerbaijani people. The Russian Empire was willfully implementing the hideous annihilation policy towards the enslaved Turkish-Muslim creed with the intention of obliterating the awareness of national identity among them. In order to stamp out the centuries-old statehood traditions of the Turkish people the Russian Empire had converted the region of Southern Caucasus into the most horrible, gruesome battleground of its politics. The final and the foremost aim of all this ruthless politics was to clean the Southern Caucasus region of the Turkish-Muslim Azerbaijani population and do away with Iran and Turkey whereby the ages-old historical desire to attain an access to the warm seas and conquer India would be fulfilled. In order to bring about this end the Russians were moving various Christian groups with diverse origins from the different regions of the empire and relocating them in Azerbaijani lands on one hand and carrying out the policy of assimilation on the other so that the incorporation of the local community into Christianity and espousal of Russian cultural thought and values could concurrently be accomplished. And the fact that they were resorting to all means to trigger bloodshed and inflame the Armenian-Muslim massacres is even more dreadful. Along with this they were also employing the policy of stirring up the divergences and igniting clashes between Georgian community and Azerbaijani people in the Northern-western borders of the country. To put it bluntly, Azerbaijan had become the theatre of war and the worst front line in the experimentation of the Russian colonial oppression policy.

This is the reason why in the entire region of the Russian Empire especially Azerbaijan, a country owning early statehood traditions turned out to be the major battlefield of national resistance and rebellion movement against the callous imperial Tsarist regime. With the enlightening headship of the leading intellectuals and thinkers, as a country accustomed to rule and not being ruled Azerbaijan grew to be the principal steering power of all the other national liberation uprisings in Russia striving to fend off colonial imperialism.

The late 19th century and early 20th century, the time period which saw the establishment of new relations and attitudes has had an enormous impact on all the facets of the life of the Azerbaijani people. The social processes of this era have transferred the mechanized city of Baku to the financial and industrial center of the whole Caucasus.

Heydar Aliyev

At the beginning of the 20th century Russia was going through the phase of reform in order to emerge from the deep military-political and economic crisis unscathed. Since 1905, with the patronage of the renowned philanthropist and benefactor, H.Z.Taghiyev, the Azerbaijani intelligentsia had been struggling to attain adequate representation of the Turkish-Muslim population in the central governmental and legislative bodies of the empire along with larger participation in local governance and judicial organs as well as eradication of the discrimination and restrictions in these fields. Prominent jurists such as Alimardan Bey Topchubashov, Shamsi Abdullayev, Ahmad Bey Agayev, Adil Khan Ziyadkhanov, Ali Bey Huseynzade and so many other devoted patriotic Azerbaijani thinkers were the primary influential figures heading this national liberation movement.

North Azerbaijan had become a symbol of struggle against the Tsarist Russia for all the other subjugated and oppressed people of East who had been awakened to their sense of national consciousness and freedom. It was not a happenstance that the idea to unite all the Turkish-Muslim community of the Russian Empire against Tsarist command and a proposal to set up a joint political organization to this end were formulated in Azerbaijan.

It was namely the spokesperson of Azerbaijan Alimardan Bey Topchubashov who had delivered a robust lecture on "The State of Turkish People in Russian Empire and Their Problems" at the First Congress of the Muslims living all across Russia which was held in Nijni-Novgorod in 1905. The vigorous Azerbaijani delegates were also active in the drafting of the Charter and Regulations of the newly-created Union of the Russian Muslims at that time.

The exhaustive and rigorous struggle of Azerbaijanis under tough and complex circumstances finally resulted in the election of the recognized intellectuals of Azerbaijan — Alimardan Bey Topchubashov, Ismayil Bey Ziyadkhanov, Abdurrahim Bey Hakverdiyev, Mammad Taghi Aliyev, Asadulla Bey Muradkhanov to the first parliament of the Russia, to be precise I State Duma in 1906. Out of the six elected Azerbaijani members who were well-read, erudite intellectuals two were lawyers by profession: Alimardan

Bey Topchubashov had received his education at the Petersburg University whereas Ismayil Khan Ziyadkhanov had graduated from the Moscow University.

Alimardan Bey Topchubashov had been elected the head of the Muslim Faction of the State Duma of Russia which was one of the largest factions within the parliament. The Azerbaijani members were very ardent and emphatic in their activities and severely critical of the Russian policy in Southern Caucasus aimed at the ethnic cleansing and national extermination. In their addresses to the parliament they were explicitly condemning the overt discrimination policy and brutal relocation strategy put into practice against Azerbaijani people. By criticizing the enslavement and exploitation of the Azerbaijani people in the strongest possible terms, the deputies were in fact ultimately supporting the interests of all the Muslims living within the precincts of Russian Empire. Ismayil Bey Ziyadkhanov, one of the Azerbaijani members had attended to this issue in a downright resolute and unequivocal manner in his address to the parliament. "Azerbaijan was invaded and occupied a century ago. Since then we have been denied all the human rights. We have been downtrodden and browbeaten like slaves. Our national identity and esteem have been assailed. Strict bans and exclusions from several universities have been unbreakably imposed upon us. It's hardly possible to encounter Turkish functionaries in governmental offices. Although we suffer from the dearth of soil, peasants from various parts of Russia are being continually brought to Azerbaijan in an endless stream. In this way, the residential settlements that you've planned to construct for Russian peasants will be erected upon the blood-spattered lands of Azerbaijan which have been besmeared by the slaughters committed through the direct complicity and sponsorship of state. This is nothing else, but the true manifestation of the "divide and rule" policy, surreptitiously devised and executed by the government. It's now more than two years that we're trampling on the corpses of our people in our own Motherland drowned in a bloodbath. Our patience is wearing thin and our tolerance draining out".

Following the same course of their predecessors the members of the Second State Duma-Fatali Khan Khoyski, Khalil Bey Khasmammadov, Mustafa Mahmudov, Muhammed Agha Shakhtakhtinski and Zeynal Zeynalov were also vehemently active in opposing and censuring the overall prevalent policy of Tsarist Russia. They were in particular sternly reproachful of the all-pervasive discriminatory and biased state politics applied in the governance of the empire as well as far-reaching prejudiced and bigoted national and religious approaches.

Tsarist Russia was gripped by terrible fear as the strong and cogent criticisms of the Azerbaijani members leveled against the government and meant for the elimination of the deprivation of the civil rights of the Turkish-Muslim population of the Russian empire and ensuing stirring consequences of the awakening speeches gave a rise to the opening of new horizons for the emancipation of the persecuted people of the empire. All these incidents along with other factors played an enormously important role in the events leading up to the dissolution of the First and Second State Dumas and prepared the ground for the eventual disenfranchisement of the Turkish-Muslim people residing in the regions of Central Asia, Siberia and etc. in the elections for the Third State Duma, as well as divestment of Baku of right to nominate its own candidate of Azerbaijan to the parliament. This is the main reason why the Muslims of the whole region of Southern Caucasus were underrepresented by only one Member of Parliament, Khalil Bey Khasmammadov. Likewise, there was only one member representing all the Muslims of the Southern Caucasus at the Fourth State Duma who was Mammad Yusif Jafarov.

Almost all the Members of Parliament elected to represent Azerbaijan in State Dumas were the leading affiliates of the national liberation movement. Alimardan Bey Topchubashov, Ismayil Bey Ziyadkhanov, Fatali Khan Khoyski, Khalil Bey Khasmammadov, Mammad Yusif Jafarov were lawyers by profession. Muhammed Agha Shakhtakhtinski had been a student at Sorbonne University and later on had graduated from the faculty of philosophy of the Leipzig University.

The I World War created the actual historic and momentous opportunity for the breakdown of the "Prison of the Nations" and subsequent downfall of the Russian Empire. Azerbaijan, as a country holding centuries-old statehood traditions together with a masterful command on modern governmental practices was all set to be in this world as an independent and self-determining country. In contrast to the Southern regions of the country which had been under the rule of the Kajar dynasty of the Iranian Kingdom, North Azerbaijan had had the privilege of getting acquainted and familiarized with the democratic state building system and parliamentary formation inherent to West through Russia.

The majority of the Azerbaijani intellectuals who were proficient jurists, especially Alimardan Bey Topchubashov, had gained an immeasurable experience in parliamentary skills during their tenure in State Dumas of Russia. They were fully prepared to institute a democratic republic system wherein unlike the despicable tsarist autocracy and brutal colonial tyranny, all civil rights and liberties would be respected. The idea to set up the People's Republic of Azerbaijan had been worked out by the Azerbaijani representatives of State Dumas. Therefore, it was the historical circumstances and realities which necessitated the

establishment of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan with a parliamentary government. The evolution of the processes and events succeeding the demise of Tsarist Russia dictated this inevitable end.

The development of the complex socio-political processes starting since the late 19th century produced significant changes in the Azerbaijani society and modified the course of events to the remarkable extents. Having breathed the air of this social environment, the distinguished public and political figures of Azerbaijan had become sophisticated enough to be able to respond to the summons of the century and meet the demands of the new era. All these events eventually paved the way for the foundation of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan.

Heydar Aliyev

In February of 1917, the autocratic and tyrannical regime ruled by the Romanovs dynasty was overthrown in Russia. The interim government, having assumed power after the collapse of the monarchy issued an order to set up the Special Committee for overseeing the governance of Southern Caucasus. But, the interim government could not maintain the power for a long time. Due to the coup d'état which took place in October of 1917 and resulted in overturning of the government, the members elected to represent Southern Caucasus in the Assembly of Institutors of Russia could not even set out for Petrograd and Moscow. Instead in 1918, on 14th of February they established the Assembly of Southern Caucasus in Tbilisi as a sole supreme power in Southern Caucasus.

The Muslim Faction was represented by 44 members in the Assembly of Southern Caucasus who had been elected to the Assembly of Institutors of Russia by gaining over a million vote cast by Turkish-Muslim electorate of Azerbaijan, as well as entire Southern Caucasus region. The Muslim Faction of the Assembly of Southern Caucasus was in effect functioning as the Muslim Council of Southern Caucasus, more precisely as the Muslim Parliament of Southern Caucasus. The fact that the most dedicated and zealous members of the Assembly of Southern Caucasus were Azerbaijani representatives as in the State Dumas of Russia is both interesting and not unforeseeable. It was specifically at their urging that the Assembly of Southern Caucasus proclaimed the independence of the Southern Caucasus on 9th of April in 1918 which in turn led to the creation of the United Republic of Southern Caucasus. But, the aggravated contradictions both in internal politics and foreign affairs and conflicting standpoints on national interest issues thwarted the Assembly of Southern Caucasus and United Republic of Southern Caucasus from taking solid, tangible measures in this respect. Consequently, on 25th of May in 1918, the Georgian members dropped out of the Assembly and declared the independence of Georgia on 26th of May.

On 27th of May, the members of the Muslim Faction of the Assembly of Southern Caucasus, that's to say the Muslim Council convened a private conference and came to a decision to proclaim the independence and self-government of Azerbaijan. To achieve this end, the Muslim Council of the Assembly of Southern Caucasus renamed itself as the National Council of Azerbaijan, more accurately Parliament of Azerbaijan. In this way, the first parliament of Azerbaijan was introduced and the groundwork for the commencement of the first, pioneering parliamentary republic in the East was laid. The election of the president and presidium of the National Council of Azerbaijan was determined at the same meeting and Muhammed Amin Rasulzade was favored to be the head of the Council.

On 28th of May, the historic meeting of the National Council of Azerbaijan was held. The momentous meeting was presided over by Hasan Bey Aghayev. The participants were Mustafa Mahmudov (Deputy Secretary), Fatali Khan Khoyski, Khalil Bey Khasmammadov, Nasib Bey Usubbekov, Mir Hidayet Seyidov, Nariman Bey Narimanbeyov, Heybat Kulu Mammadbeyov, Mehdi Bey Hajinski, Ali Asger Bek Mahmudbeyov, Asian Bey Kardashov, Sultan Majid Kanizade, Akber Agha Sheykhulislamov, Mehdi Bey Hajibabeyov, Mammad Yusif Jafarov, Khudadat Bey Malik-Aslanov, Rahim Bey Vakilov, Hamid Bey Shakhtakhtinski, Firudin Bek Kocherlinski, Jamo Bey Hajinski, Shafi Bey Rustambeyov, Khosrov Pasha Bey Sultanov, Jafar Akhundov, Muhammed Maharramov, Javad Malik-Yeganov and Haji Salim Akhundzade. On the same day, the Proclamation of Independence was drafted and adopted by the abovementioned members of the Council.

The Proclamation of Independence was a harbinger of the ever-first republican government in the Eastern world with democratic institutions, to be more exact an embodiment of a parliamentary republic. The proclamation encompassed the followings:

1. Henceforward the Azerbaijani people will be the sole source of power since Azerbaijan is a self-governing, independent state occupying North-Eastern Caucasus.
2. The governmental structure of the independent state of Azerbaijan is the Republic of People.

3. People's Republic of Azerbaijan has the determination and willpower to maintain close, friendly relations with all other nations, particularly with neighboring states and nations.

4. People's Republic of Azerbaijan guarantees political rights and civil liberties to all its citizenry residing within the boundaries of Azerbaijan irrespective of the nationality, religion, class, strata or gender they belong to.

5. People's Republic of Azerbaijan provides every opportunity and prospect for the unrestrained and free development of all the nations living within the territory of Azerbaijan.

6. The National Council elected by the people of Azerbaijan and the Provisional Government responsible before National Council will be in charge of Azerbaijan until the Assembly of Institutors is summoned.

The historic proclamation adopted by the National Council of Azerbaijan was a revelation of the primary principles of the newly-founded People's Republic of Azerbaijan in terms of both internal politics and foreign affairs. The main beliefs expressed in the proclamation such as the right of Azerbaijani people for self-determination, holding the equality of rights in high respect, sustaining friendly and peaceful relationships with neighboring, as well as other foreign states, regarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the other states with utter reverence served to boost the image and international standing of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan.

Heydar Aliyev

The cabinet of the first Interim Government of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan was ratified by the National Council of Azerbaijan at the same meeting which was chaired by the independent member, Fatali Khan Khoyski. The cabinet comprised the following members:

Fatali Khan Khoyski — President of the Ministerial Council and Minister for Internal-Home Affairs.

Khosrov Pasha Bey Sultanov — Minister for Military Affairs.

Mammad Hasan Hajinski — Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Nasib Bey Usubbekov — Minister for Finance and Education.

Khalil Bey Khasmammadov — Minister for Justice.

Mammad Yusuf Jafarov — Minister for Trade and Industry.

Akber Agha Sheykhulislamov — Minister for Agriculture and Labor.

Khudadat Bey Malik Aslanov — Minister for Communications and Transportation.

Jamo Bey Hajinski — State Supervisor.

Hence, the centuries-old statehood traditions of Azerbaijan were revived in the form of parliamentary republic in the Northern part of Azerbaijan against the backdrop of the growing events of I World War and the demise of the Romanovs' autocracy in Russia.

The young state of Azerbaijan had come into being under extremely complicated regional and international circumstances. Having usurped the power in Baku, the Dashnak-Bolshevik faction headed by S.Shaumyan had started perpetrating atrocious crimes against the Turkish-Muslim population of the country. The Armenian bands of gangsters armed and emboldened by Tsarist generals were incessantly committing bloody massacres and callous slaughters against the Turkish-Muslim people of the Eastern Anatolia and Western Azerbaijan. S.Shaumyan and Andronik who were the slayers and executioners of the Azerbaijani people were conspiring at the connivance of machinations for mass murders. Azerbaijani people were face to face with the danger of virtual decimation and total annihilation. The never-ending rivalry going on between the foreign powers for the seizure of the oil-rich city of Baku was on the verge of drawing to a close and the new menace for Southern Caucasus, the take-over by the Bolshevik Russia was looming in. Azerbaijani people were at the crossroads as to whether to strive for the national emancipation or reconcile themselves with being eliminated and wiped out from the ethnic-political map of the Southern Caucasus. That is why, the founders of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan had felt compelled and obligated to take the lead and guide the perplexed nation out of their miserable despair.

On 16th of June in 1918, the National Council and Interim Government shifted their headquarters to Ganja. Taking the existent, factual situation of the country into account, the National Council of Azerbaijan made two imperative decisions on 17th of June which included the temporary halting of its activities and handing both the legislative and executive powers over to the second Interim Government with the presidency of Fatali Khan Khoyski until the Assembly of Institutors would be convened.

The second Interim Government involved the followings: Mammad Hasan Hajinski, Nasib Bey Usubbekov, Alimaradan Bey Topchubashov, Khalil Bey Khasmammadov, Khosrov Pasha Bey Sultanov, Khudat Bey Rafibekov, Khudadat Bey Malik Aslanov, Abdul Bey Amirjanov, Musa Bey Rafiyev.

Since National Council of Azerbaijan was wary of losing the hard-earned independence, it had made a firm decision to press the exigency of convening the Assembly of Institutors and ensure the maintenance of power by the Fatali Khan Khoyski government until then without any concessions or compromises. Along with this, the National Council of Azerbaijan had also put forward a clear-cut definition of the authority and plenary powers of the Fatali Khan Khoyski government. In view of that, the government was sanctioned to operate autonomously and take action accordingly on all issues except for the invalidation of the state sovereignty of Azerbaijan and annulment of the existent political liberties in the country. The government was also not entitled to make alterations on the radical laws such as the laws concerning agrarian matters. The Interim Government was under imposition to summon the Assembly of Institutors in not later than six months.

Thus, National Council of Azerbaijan, the first Parliament of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan began taking its initial steps in this way. The National Council of Azerbaijan conducted 7 meetings during the first 20 days in power from 27th of May till 17th of June in 1918. Two major proceedings highlighted the significance of these meetings which included the declaration of the state independence of Azerbaijan and the adoption of the Proclamation of Independence, as well as the formation of the first Azerbaijani government under the presidency of Fatali Khan Khoyski in Ganja. This was the first time that Azerbaijan was enjoying independent, sovereign and self-regulating government since 1813. The creation of the republican system in North Azerbaijan was extraordinarily remarkable event.

The government of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan had to take huge responsibility of pulling the whole nation out of the horrendous whirlpool of atrocities, agonies and tribulations despite the complicated internal situation and thorny international circumstances. To achieve this goal, the state building process had to be launched straight away without any delays. The government was forced to take immediate and drastic measures in order to be able to undo this odious situation and reverse the dire circumstances prevalent in the country. On 19th of June, the Martial Law was declared throughout the whole territory of Azerbaijan. On 24th of June, the red flag with white crescent and eight-pointed star was endorsed as one of the state attributes of Azerbaijan. On 26th of June, the Muslim military corps was converted to the detached Military Corps of Azerbaijan and the rank of General was conferred upon the commander-in-chief of that corps. The commander of the Military Corps of Azerbaijan was assigned the authorities inherent to the commander-in-chief of the Division enabling him to enforce the special directives issued by the government which in fact meant the actual formation of the armed forces of Azerbaijan. On 27th of June, Azerbaijani-Turkish language was announced as the official language of the state. In light of the expansion of the state building process, the decision was passed about inviting qualified teachers from Turkey and bringing in text books published in Turkish language. To this purpose, all schools were nationalized and new schools were inaugurated countrywide with adjoining training courses for teachers. The names of Yelizavetpol and Karyagi were changed with their historical names and reintroduced as Ganja and Cabrayil respectively. The National Army was mobilized and conscription was carried out. On 15th of June, the decision for the establishment of the Extraordinary Investigation Commission was passed by the Cabinet members. The Commission was accountable for the examination of the inquiries linked with the beastly, depraved massacres viciously committed against the Turkish-Muslim population of the entire Southern Caucasus region during the I World War and embezzlement of their possessions through looting and pillaging. The Commission was also liable to bring action against the perpetrators if these heinous crimes at a juristic level and inculcate the executors. As a matter of fact, the creation of the Investigation Commission laid the foundation for the establishment of National Security system in Azerbaijan. In addition to this, the government abruptly undertook the immense task of setting up communication and post-telegraph infrastructure in the territories under its control and stabilizing the situation by embarking on sweeping reforms. On 11th of August, the military service was made mandatory. On 23rd of August, a decree was issued on the citizenship of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan. But, the main mission of the Fatali Khan Khoyski's government was to reinforce and underpin the authority of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan throughout the whole country and purge Baku and its outer reaches of the adversaries of the Azerbaijani people.

On 15th of September in 1918, after fierce battle and furious fighting Baku was liberated by the Islamic Army of Caucasus with the help of voluntary army groups of Azerbaijan. The Menshevik-Dashnak faction, "Centrocasi Dictatorship" which had seized power in Baku after the collapse of the Bolshevik-Dashnak regime of S.Shaumyan was removed in this way.

On 17th of September in 1918, three months after the formation of the F.Khoyski's cabinet, the headquarters of the government was moved to Baku. Baku was declared the capital of the government. As a

result, People's Republic of Azerbaijan obtained greater domain of power and larger sphere of influence through the release of Baku.

On 9th of November in 1918, the state banner of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan was replaced with three-colored flag with a white crescent and eight-pointed star on it. The state building process was further expanded and promoted both in social-political and economical fields and cultural areas of life. Adhering to the legal regulations and norms of the parliamentary republic, the Fatali Khan Khoyski government was simultaneously making arrangements for convening the Assembly of Institutors as soon as possible. Even a special commission was created for this purpose. Although barely 6 months had elapsed since the enactment of the decree issued on 17th of June in 1918 by the National Council and government still possessed the authority to maintain the power independently, the National Council of Azerbaijan resumed its activities on 16 of November in 1918 at the initiative and appealing of Fatali Khan Khoyski. Moreover, National Council of Azerbaijan assumed the responsibility of summoning the Assembly of Institutors on the proposition of Fatali Khan Khoyski.

The meeting of the National Council of Azerbaijan held on 19th of November in 1918 and presided over by M.A.Rasulzade was marked by a few significant decisions which would shape the history of the parliamentarianism in Azerbaijan. Notwithstanding the extraordinarily complex and intricate circumstances under which the government had to function, People's Republic of Azerbaijan rightly opted for the democratic values. It was wholly agreed upon that since Azerbaijan was a homeland not only to the Azerbaijanis, all the other non-Azerbaijanis dwelling within the boundaries of Azerbaijan should be adequately represented both in the National Council and Parliament of Azerbaijan. National Council of Azerbaijan was supposed to consist of 120 members with 1 representative per 24 thousand people (Overall population was 2 billion and 750 thousand people). The Muslims were supposed to be represented by 80 members, Armenians by 21 members, Russians by 10 members, whereas Germans and Jews by 1 member for each in the Parliament. Georgians and Polish people were granted the right to be represented by 1 member per each although the insufficiency of their numbers prevented them from being a part of the eligible electorate for parliamentary elections.

According to the resolution adopted by the National Council of Azerbaijan on 19th of November in 1918, 44 members of Turkish-Muslim community already elected to the Assembly of Institutors of Russia at the end of 1917 were supposed to be included in the new parliament. The other 36 members of Muslims as well as representatives of the non-Azerbaijanis had yet to be elected. Altogether the formation of the new parliament had to be concluded not later than 3rd of December in 1918.

Although no more than 6 months had gone by since the perpetration of the brutal massacre against the Turkish-Muslim people in March of 1918, the Armenians were allowed to participate in the elections and be represented by 21 members in the parliament. This a lucid testimony to the democratic nature of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan and clear proof to the respectful approach with regard to human rights even at a time when the Azerbaijani people were subjected to the insufferable afflictions.

M.A.Rasulzade had underscored this attitude as worthy and laudable stance in his address to nation on the convening of the new parliament on 29th of November in 1918. His words actually reflected the exact standpoint of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan: "Let's put all the hostilities and antagonism aside, since our enmities and divergences have brought on nothing else except inflicting miserable poverty and grievous calamities upon us. History has obliged us all to live together side by side. In order to be able to carry the natural burdens of this new life without trouble and overcome the obstacles successfully we have to lead our lives in compliance with sensible and humane principles. In order to achieve this aim, we have to treat each other with mutual respect and compassion. Regardless of their national and religious identities, all the subjects of Azerbaijan are the off springs of the same motherland. That is why they have to collaborate and extend a helping hand to each other if they want to gain their lives by a joint effort and attain their happiness and wellbeing cooperatively on the same land".

Appealing to the Azerbaijani people, in his address M.A.Rasulzade had underlined the importance of the representation of the minorities and provinces of the country in the parliament. He had described the new parliament as the mainstay and guarantor of Azerbaijan which would determine the fate of the country, form and safeguard the government as well as defending the interests and welfare of the Azerbaijani people.

On 7th of October in 1918, at 13.00 pm the Parliament of Azerbaijan was ceremoniously inaugurated in the premises of the Girls' School founded by H.Z.Taghiyev. The Parliament of Azerbaijan was the ever-first parliament to be formed in the Eastern-Muslim world on the basis of the most democratic principles of that era.

M.A.Rasulzade, the chairman of the National Council of Azerbaijan delivered a congratulatory speech in the inaugural ceremony of the Parliament. At the proposal of the "Musavat" (Equality) faction, Alimardan Bey Topchubashov was elected to be the chairman of the parliament and Hasan Bey Aghayev the vice-

chairman. Since Alimardan Bey Topchubashov was on a visit to France to participate in Paris Peace Conference, the parliament was provisionally chaired by Hasan Bey Aghayev. The dissolution of the Fatali Khan Khoyski government was ratified and creation of the new cabinet was endorsed. As with the previous ones, the formation of the new government was entrusted to Fatali Khan Khoyski.

On 26th of December in 1918, addressing the Parliament Fatali Khan Khoyski introduced the program of the new government as well as presenting the new Cabinet members for approval. Parliament ratified the proffered agenda and granted vote of confidence to the new government.

In spite of having been allocated 21 and 10 seats in the Parliament, Armenians and Russians didn't even bother to partake in the augural ceremony of the Parliament. This taught a very good lesson to the People's Republic of Azerbaijan about the ingratitude of the Armenians and Russians with whom they so wishfully wanted to mend the fences and achieve rapprochement by way of parliamentary elections. The National Council of Russia which was functioning in Baku at the time didn't even recognize the secession of Azerbaijan from Russia and interpreted the declaration of independence on Azerbaijan's part as a stimulus goading the disintegration of the "United and Indissoluble Russia". This was the reason why National Council of Russia decided to settle on boycotting the Parliament of Azerbaijan. However, soon after the National Council of Russia was compelled to rescind this decision due to the overwhelming protests of the Russian-Slavyan community living in Azerbaijan.

Armenians who hadn't been able to come to terms with the independence of Azerbaijan were wholeheartedly backing up the position of the National Council of Russia. They didn't participate at the sessions and meetings of the Parliament for more than two months and when they finally joined, all they did was to make use of every opportunity to propagate against the Azerbaijani statehood by disloyal and treacherous means.

In addition to the abovementioned hurdles and hindrances deliberately put in the way of the newly-founded democracy, the existence of 11 factions and various groups within the Parliament which hardly consisted of 100 members, nonetheless considered to be the sole bearer of the supreme power in the country, added up to the obstacles impeding the independent state building process that had to be carried out under tremendously complex internal and international circumstances. The narrow interests and concerns of different factions and groups were often taking precedence over questions of national interest due to the partial and inadequate approach of their representatives. For instance, the Socialist Faction of Parliament was constantly advocating and promoting the accession of Azerbaijan to Soviet Russia manipulatively in the name of "defending the interests of the poor". Socialist Faction had in this way succeeded in Mahmandarov creation of the diplomatic representation in Soviet Russia. Socialist Faction had also supported the deployment of Red Army in Azerbaijan which was nothing else, but a part of subversive and traitorous campaign to undermine and overthrow the People's Republic of Azerbaijan.

Nevertheless, with the invaluable experience gained through the measures taken for the independent state building and practices attained through the advanced legislative bills along with rulings passed for the reinforcement of democracy, the Parliament of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan has left deep-seated and permanent marks in the history of Azerbaijan in terms of statehood traditions in general and parliamentary culture in particular during its 17 month-old short, but unremitting performance.

The parliamentarianism history of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan can be categorized into two main stages when viewed in light of the undertakings and accomplishments. The first stage encompasses the time period from 27th of May in 1918 till 19th November of the same year. During this opening phase of 6 months, the Parliament of Azerbaijan which was functioning under the name of National Council of Azerbaijan with 44 Muslim-Turkish members had passed historic, ground-breaking decisions such as declaring the sovereignty of Azerbaijan on 28th of May in 1918, assuming power and shouldering governance of the country as well as adopting the famous Proclamation of Independence.

Declared at the headquarters of the vicerent of Tbilisi-Caucasus by the National Council of Azerbaijan at a time when exceedingly complex and critical historical conditions prevailed, the momentous Proclamation of Independence still retains its thorough practicality and wide-ranging expediency as a legally valuable document signifying the democratic statehood traditions and parliamentary culture of Azerbaijan.

Taken as a whole, including the Constituent Assembly, the overall number of the meetings conducted by the Parliament of Azerbaijan during the rule of National Council doesn't surpass 10. The first meeting was held on 27th of May in 1918 in Tbilisi and the last one in Baku, on 19th November of the same year. The National Council of Azerbaijan was instituted on 27th of May only to suspend its activities on 17th of June for handing over all legislative and executive powers to Interim Government with the prerequisite of convening the Assembly of Institutors in not later than 6 months. Once People's Republic of Azerbaijan shifted its headquarters to Baku on 17th of September in 1918, National Council of Azerbaijan recommenced its activities on 16th of November. On 19th of November National Council of Azerbaijan announced the

discontinuation of its activities by passing a resolution that stipulated the institution of the Parliament of Azerbaijan on 3rd of December which had to be composed more inclusively than the Assembly of Institutors. Tbilisi, Ganja and Baku were the three cities that the Parliament of Azerbaijan was consecutively stationed during the first 6 months of its existence.

The second stage of parliamentarianism in history of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan which is occasionally referred to as "Baku phase" as well covers the time period of 17 months between 7th of December in 1918 and 27th of April in 1920. The first meeting of this relatively longer phase was held on 7th of December in 1918 and the final one on 27th of April in 1920. The number of the meetings held during this phase doesn't exceed 145 though. However, all the meetings of the Parliament are characterized largely by the undeviating adherence to the principles enshrined in the Proclamation of Independence by way of endorsement and enactment of fundamental laws and crucial regulations aimed at preservation of the state independence and territorial integrity despite the thorny international circumstances along with establishing and strengthening the modern, secular, legal and democratic state wherein all human rights and civil liberties would be equally respected and promoted. Needless to mention that ratification of all these laws and regulations were essentially intended at the formulation of the legislative, executive and juridical branches of power.

Extraordinarily complicated internal situation and intricate international conditions arising from the fierce and decisive confrontations going on among the powerful states for division and distribution of the world in the course of I World War and subsequent emergence of the newly- surfacing invasion threat propelled the Parliament of Azerbaijan to dedicate most of its activities to the protection and maintenance of the state independence of Azerbaijan and reinforcement of the army-fortification process. It's noteworthy that the members of the Parliament were displaying regular solidarity and unbroken unanimity in the deliberations held to discuss the adoption of the laws and regulations in this respect.

In spite of having to function under extremely complex circumstances and undergoing immeasurable hardships, both the government and parliament of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan had undertaken the huge task of providing a quality education and health service to the people of Azerbaijan and keeping the scientific development and enlightenment of the nation under constant attention in order to be able to achieve national awakening and revival. To this purpose, the campaign of opening schools of different levels, schools for girls, gymnasiums, kindergartens, short-term proficiency courses for training teachers, libraries was gathering speed countywide. Local hospitals and clinical centers created in villages were being connected to the medical attendance networks. What is more, special centers were being set up in different regions of the country for fighting communicable and contagious diseases.

Establishment of the Baku State University in accordance with the decision passed by the Parliament on 1st of September in 1919 carries a special weight among the countless other services rendered to the Azerbaijani people. The conception of the national university is accurately considered to be one of the most meaningful deeds of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan. Baku State University has played an incomparably significant role in the perseverance of the Republican dream even after the collapse of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan throughout the decades leading up to the ultimate restoration of the state independence in 1991.

Comprehending the enormous importance of encouraging development of science and education in the country, both the government and parliament of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan were working industriously in order to expedite the preparation and edification of the national experts in this regard. At the suggestion of the government, the Parliament of Azerbaijan had decided to grant a scholarship to 100 Azerbaijani students for receiving education in foreign countries. The fact that the Parliament had ordered the organization of competition among the would-be recipients of the scholarship under superintendence of the special commission responsible for carrying out the contest which comprised M.A.Rasulzade, Mehdi Bey Hajinski, Ahmad Bey Pepinov, Gara Bey Karabekov, Abdulla Bey Afandiyev is a manifestation of the magnitude given to this matter. The Commission had settled on sending 45 students to France, 23 students to Italy, 10 students to England, 9 students to Turkey for getting higher education at the corresponding universities of these countries. The 13 students selected to be sent to Russia had been unable to set out for Russia because of the Civil War which had enveloped the entire country.

The government and parliament of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan were also dynamic in bringing the activities of the newly-created state into light in the international arena in an attempt to ward off the looming danger of foreign invasion which had become increasingly palpable. On 28th of December in 1918, the Parliament had delivered a decision to delegate a special deputation to Paris Peace Conference. The prominent statesman of the Republican era, A.M.Topchubashov was appointed as the head of this mission. Although faced with inconceivable complications, A.M Topchubashov succeeded in getting several great powers to recognize the de-facto independence of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan. But, unfortunately,

the diplomatic mission of A.M.Topchubashov was disrupted due to the incursion of Red Army and occupation of North Azerbaijan.

The strained relations and border disagreements with neighboring countries- were frequently engaging the attention of both the government and parliament of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan. As a result of fairly exhaustive and rigorous negotiations, the tense relationship with Georgia was finally straightened out, whereas relations with Armenia had remained knotty and unstable on account of the territorial claims and pretensions of the Armenian government. The Parliament of Azerbaijan had also ratified a number of treaties and contracts signed with Iran.

The rule of the People's Republic ushered in the ever-growing culture of parliamentarianism and contemporary statehood traditions in Azerbaijan. The overall number of the meetings conducted during this period amounts to 155. However, the number of meetings held during the rule of the National Council of Azerbaijan doesn't go beyond 10. The rest of the meetings have been held within the framework of the Parliament of Azerbaijan. More than 270 legislative bills have been presented for discussion and approximately 230 of them have been approved and adopted. The heated debates and fervent exchange of views are the depictions that can be used to typify the meetings of the Parliament. It's worth mentioning that all legislative bills were usually adopted only after third hearing. The members of 11 different factions and groups used to take part in the preparation, deliberation and ratification of the laws and regulations in Parliament.

There were 11 commissions within the Parliament of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan. The Parliament was functioning in conformity with the guidelines defined in the "Regulation of the Parliament of Azerbaijan" set down exclusively for this purpose.

M.A.Rasulzade had evaluated the Parliament of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan in following terms: "National Assembly was a representative body embracing people of all nationalities and classes as well as being the sole determining power in the country. No action was taken, no outlay was disbursed, no warfare was waged, and no truce was signed without consent of the Parliament. The government could only survive if it gained a vote of confidence from the Parliament; otherwise it was doomed to a failure. There was no other intermediary power in-between. The Parliament was the only holder of the absolute power".

Although North Azerbaijan was annexed to Russia for a second time after bloody and ferocious combat operations carried out by XI Red Army Divisions on the command of the Soviet Russia in contravention to all the standards of international law, People's Republic of Azerbaijan still played an exceptionally vital role in the national liberation movement of the Azerbaijani people. Despite its 23 months-long short existence, People's Republic of Azerbaijan once again proved the incapability and powerlessness of even the most brutal and repressive colonial regimes to exterminate the freedom ideals and independent statehood traditions of the people of Azerbaijan.

The national leader of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev has appraised the spirit of People's Republic of Azerbaijan as valiant and laudable through these words: "Even though People's Republic of Azerbaijan has managed to endure no more than 23 months under extremely complex and overwrought socio-political circumstances, the national liberation movement launched by the leaders of the People's Republic will remain engraved in the minds of future generations as one of the most inspiring undertakings of our history. Although the commendable steps taken in the fields of state building, economy, culture, education, health services, and army fortification were left incomplete, the innumerable services and contributions rendered to the people of Azerbaijan in terms of statehood traditions and national enlightenment within a short span of 23 months have been ingrained in our memories. Above all, despite its short-lived lifetime, People's Republic of Azerbaijan has achieved a great deal of success in strengthening the freedom ideals of our nation. Today our grateful nation holds the deeds of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan in high regard and pays a deep tribute to the founders of this Republic, Muhammed Amin.Rasulzade, Alimardan Bey Topchubashov, Fatali Khan Khoyski, Hasan Bey Aghayev, Nasib Bey Usubbeyov, Mehdi Bek Hajinski, Mammad Yusif Jafarov, Khudadat Bey Rafibeyov, Akber Agha Sheykhulislamov, Teymur Bey Makinski, Samad Bey Mehmandarov, Ali Agha Shikhliniski, Sultan Majid Kanizade, Khalil Bey Khasmammadov, Ahmad Bey Pepinov, Shafi Bek Rustembeyov who have had a remarkable share in the establishment of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan".

It's noteworthy that People's Republic of Azerbaijan was the ever-first parliamentary, democratic, legal and secular state to be created in the Eastern as well as Turkish- Islamic world. Furthermore, People's Republic of Azerbaijan didn't lag behind the time-honored, democratic republics of Europe neither in terms of its political structure and agenda, nor in the democratic state-building processes it carried out in consistency with the obligations and commitments it had undertaken.

THE COUNTRY OF AZADISTAN THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AZERBAIJAN (From April to September of 1920)

The tumultuous historic milieu of the I World War similarly set the background for resurrection of national liberation movement in the Southern part of Azerbaijan bound for the revival of statehood traditions as it had led to the creation of the People's Republic in North Azerbaijan.

During the war, including the South Azerbaijan which occupied the Northern-western regions of the country, the whole territory of Iran had been converted to the abject battleground of military operations for foreign powers. The ubiquitous dominance of the die-hard reactionary Iranian command doubled with foreign invasion had further exacerbated the livelihood of the people along with aggravating the heightened internal contradictions. Despite the fact that the February revolution had eventuated in the downfall of the Tsarist autocratic regime in Russia, South Azerbaijan still remained under the control of the Russian armed forces. The national insurgence enveloping the whole country aimed at the elimination of the monarchical rule and foreign incursion as well as implementation of democratic reforms for foundation of the constitutional establishment in the country soon after assumed the form of a massive national liberation movement in South Azerbaijan. The processes going on in Russia, the successful victory of the liberation movement in North Azerbaijan, the revitalization of the national statehood traditions as well as the restructurings carried out by the People's Republic of Azerbaijan gave impetus to the national liberation movement in South Azerbaijan.

The national liberation movement of South Azerbaijan was headed by Sheikh Muhammad Kheyabani (1879-1920), who was one of the spirited activists of the Iranian Revolution which had taken place in the years of 1905-1911.

The main heroes of this revolution called "Mashruta (Constitution) Revolution" were Sattar Khan and Baghir Khan who were the valiant sons of Azerbaijan.

Under the guidance of Sheikh Muhammad Kheyabani, along with struggling against the internal tyranny and foreign occupation, the freedom fighters of South Azerbaijan were also demanding the countrywide reforms and democratic improvements at a national level. To realize this aspiration, they were primarily striving for the victory of popular revolution all across Iran which would wind up in the liquidation of the monarchical regime and establishment of the democratic republican state. The attainment of the self-autonomy of South Azerbaijan within the democratic state of Iran was one of the prior goals of the national liberation movement. Democratic Party of Azerbaijan (DPA) had played an essential role in the coalescence of the South Azerbaijani people into one united front. The Central Committee of DPA was chaired by Sheikh Muhammad Kheyabani.

On the instruction of Sheikh Muhammad Kheyabani, the Democrats were persistently calling on the people of Tabriz, Ardabil, Khoy, Urmiya, Sarab, Zanjan, etc. to go on a strike and protest against the pro-British Iranian government. They were vehemently exhorting the urgent abdication of the King and resignation of the government as well as immediate implementation of democratic reforms in the country.

At the beginning of 1918, at a time when national liberation movement was rapidly expanding, the Russian troops were abruptly withdrawn from South Azerbaijan. Taking advantage of this opportune situation, England started positioning its military forces in South Azerbaijan. In essence, the British were avidly craving for getting access to Baku oil. That's why the British government had calculatedly dispatched supplementary military units to Iran under the direction of general Densterwill who was specifically assigned to capture the port cities of Anzali, Rasht and Baku.

The seizure of the bordering regions of South Azerbaijan with Turkey by the British forces in the name of "preempting the Turkish danger" which actually meant the total takeover of control of Iran by England further deepened the growing frustration and dissatisfaction among the masses and shored up the escalating national liberation movement in South Azerbaijan.

Availing this favorable opportunity, armed by former Russian officers and emboldened by new foreign support, the Armenian criminal gangsters started perpetrating mass murders and slaughters against the Azerbaijani-Turkish population of South Azerbaijan living in the regions adjacent to Turkey in the same way as they had committed atrocities against the Turkish-Muslim people of the Eastern Anatolia and North Azerbaijan. Provoked and instigated by the French officers and American missionaries, Assyrians and Kurds also had aggressively conspired in the execution of massacres against the Azerbaijani people. If it hadn't been for the military presence of brotherly Turkey, South Azerbaijan would have been drowned in agonizing bloodbath of carnages once and for all. Starting from March of 1918, the Turkish military forces steadily purged Maku, Urmiya and Salmas of invaders and Armenian-Kurdish-Assyrian slayers and finally entered Tabriz which meant the liberation of South Azerbaijan.

But, faced with extremely difficult international conditions, Turkey was constrained to pull its military forces out of South Azerbaijan in November of 1918. Benefiting this chance, the British army swiftly seized Tabriz and took over entire South Azerbaijan. Thus, the British forces gained complete power all over the Iranian territory through the subjugation of South Azerbaijan.

Subdued by constant pressures, in the end Iran was coerced to sign a contract with England on 9th of August in 1919. The terms stipulated in the agreement transferred Iran virtually to the subordinate of the latter. Inflamed by this abject submission and unacceptably dismal capitulation, along with the entire Iranian nation, the national liberation movement of South Azerbaijan rose up to defend the county against this disgraceful and outrageous pact. With large participation of impassioned crowds, tempestuous demonstrations and heated pickets were held throughout South Azerbaijan in opposition to this subservient acquiescence. The freedom fighters that had started a mutinous riot against government drove the governor of Tabriz out of the city in October of 1919. Shortly, the British military forces were also expelled out of Tabriz at the urging demands of the people.

Having gathered a momentous speed, national liberation movement in South Azerbaijan assumed increasingly more decisive and critical role in mounting a violent insurrection against government. Thus, on 7th of April in 1920, the armed uprising took place in Tabriz under the leadership of Sheikh Muhammad Khiyabani. The rebellious people of Tabriz didn't have to vacillate even for an instant about joining the revolt to support their common cause. Not daring to interfere, the police forces that were fetched to smother the upheaval and quell the uprising were forced to vacate the city straight away. The rebellion of 7th April triumphed and prevailed without any bloodshed due to the unprecedented enthusiasm and matchless fervor of the Azerbaijani people. Addressing to the nation on the same day of victory, Sheikh Muhammad Khiyabani made an announcement about substituting the name of Azerbaijan with Azadistan, which means "the country of freedom".

Following the thriving victory, the insurgents of Tabriz immediately embarked on stepping up their activities through abrupt dismissal and eviction of the state functionaries and military officials appointed by central government. In this way, the governance and administration of South Azerbaijan were delivered to the well-organized and competent members of DPA. The uprising which had started with the pressing demands of democratic reforms and reconstructions in society consequently turned out to assume the form of national liberation movement. Thus, the self-determining statehood traditions were revived in South Azerbaijan. The people were genuinely longing for the quick establishment of their own independent, national state with a free, liberal society.

The cities of Khoy, Ardabil, Astara, Maragha, Ahar and Zanzan in South Azerbaijan saw numerous fiery revolts subsequent to the glorious armed uprising in Tabriz. It's worth mentioning that the national liberation movement of South Azerbaijan was received with very warm welcome among the other defiant groups all over Iran who were staunchly adverse to the presence of exploitive British invaders and the dominance of authoritarian, old-line domestic rule.

As the opposition and antagonism against the internal dictatorial rule and British supremacy escalated and enwrapped the whole country, the insurgents of Tabriz were compelled to take more drastic and far-reaching measures. On 23rd of June in 1920, with the leadership of Sheik Muhammad Khiyabani the National Government was founded in Tabriz. Principally composed of the proficient members of DPA, the Cabinet of the National Government represented all various stratum of society in an even way. 24th of June, the day which was marked by the festive inauguration of National Government in Tabriz was broadly celebrated on a national scale. All businesses and enterprises were suspended, educational institutions were temporarily called off and all the markets and stores were shut down. Acting on the order of the National Government, including the Governor of Tabriz as well, all state functionaries and officials designated by central government were toppled and thrown out of Tabriz within a span of only a few days. This in fact implied the actual dethronement of the autocratic monarchy in South Azerbaijan and ensuing deposition of the Iranian authority which in turn led to the revival of national statehood traditions. To achieve this end, the National Government set up by Sheik Muhammad Khiyabani was in reality functioning as a democratic and self-ruling republic on account of the continual reforms and restructurings it was carrying out.

Although people of South Azerbaijan possessed the resolve to put up a full-fledged struggle for absolute and self-determining independence, National Government was striving purely for the democratization of entire Iran and institution of the constitutional establishment in the whole country along with complete abolition of the internal tyrannical regime and repressive British dominance. National Government was also fighting to offset the discrimination policy directed against South Azerbaijan.

That is to say, notwithstanding the fact that the people of South Azerbaijan were in effect capable of aspiring to full sovereignty after having created virtually an independent, self-governing, democratic republic, National Government was pursuing a preset course of struggling to secure just a local autonomy

within the future democratic Iranian state. The leaders of the National Government held a deep conviction that the victorious uprising which took place in Tabriz would shortly arouse upheaval in different parts of Iran and soon after envelop the whole country. They had nurtured a firm belief that before long, the monarchy would be overthrown by the same token and eventually a republican rule would be established all over the country wherein the sole source of power would lie with the people. The founders of the National Government had cultivated a profound hope that the Azerbaijani people would play an important role in the formation of the soon-to-be Iranian government which would have its basis rested only on the people of Iran. Sheikh Muhammad Khiyabani was fully confident that "Tabriz would be the main redeeming power behind Iran's salvation"

Since National Government didn't have any premeditated political intentions about segregating South Azerbaijan from Iran and forming an independent, self- ruling state, as soon as it started functioning, numerous multifaceted reforms were introduced in the spheres of economy, education, health services, etc. without delay. As a priority issue, first of all a range of sweeping measures were taken to alleviate the miserable life conditions of the impoverished people residing in various regions of South Azerbaijan, including Tabriz. Special projects were undertaken for the eradication of illiteracy. Nationalized schools and equipped hospitals were opened countrywide. An exclusive school was set up in Tabriz for the girls from underprivileged families. Qualified teachers were invited from Baku, Turkey and Tbilisi for teaching in the newly- opened national schools. The preparations were underway for the formation of national garrison. Separate gendarme and police forces of the National Government were created. Special police academies were instituted. New ministries, offices and enterprises were founded to organize the necessary groundwork for carrying out other important projects such as creation of new job opportunities, implementation of currency reform, institution of finance- bank system, realization of municipal elections. Groundbreaking land reforms were launched as well in order to procure the even distribution of land among the people.

All the vital steps and reforms undertaken by the National Government were intrinsically oriented at the direction of independent, democratic, republican state-building process. The nascent independent state of Azerbaijan was therefore renamed as Country of Azadistan. Accordingly, the term "Azerbaijan" was replaced with Azadistan in all official documents, forms as well as panels of the ministries, offices and other enterprises and institutions.

Sheikh Muhammad Khiyabani always used to call on the beloved people of his Motherland to make every sacrifice for the sake of achieving enlightenment and development since it was his genuine belief that this approach was the only way whereby independence and freedom ideals could be fulfilled. He used to disseminate his progressive and reformist views at the gatherings arranged in the main garden of Tabriz. Sheikh Muhammad has specified his principal opinions about national struggle and freedom in his speech delivered on 15th of June in 1920 as follows: "It's a natural and universal phenomenon to love your own identity. Every human being loves himself more than his fellow being. That's why in order to improve the welfare and prosperity of the people, no society should expect help from the other. It's particularly useless and futile to wait for favor and service from the people who have no affiliation or connection with you. Self-respect, self-esteem and self-confidence should be put in the same order as self-love for one's identity. No society or nation should possess arrogance or low self-confidence. In the same way as one should by no means accept immorality, baseness and ignobleness since all these blight and cripple ones self-trust, similarly no society should approve aggression and belligerence as these equal inability and powerlessness. The mankind is in a desperate need of collaboration and mutual aid on the part of all of its members. It would be a great misperception to presume that small nations cannot contribute to the common cause of humanity and a huge mistake to disregard their existence because of this. It's extremely unfortunate and regrettable that we have always underestimated our self-worth and self-value to the extent of being unaware and oblivious of our own identity. This fact has been experimented and tested through individual lives time after time. It has been repeatedly deduced that the individuals who own high characteristic qualities and devote themselves to supreme ideals as well as valuing their capabilities and upholding their honor have proved to reach to great heights in life. It's specifically because of this reality that throughout the history the outstanding literary figures and philosophers have achieved great accomplishments and acquired broad influence expressly on the account of their personalities. They have gained the respect and admiration of great kings and grand emperors owing to their hard-earned toil and strenuous travail. This is the reason why they were endowed with the uppermost positions in the palaces. Likewise, the nations can only evolve and advance if they elicit their dormant sense of national awareness, educe their latent grandeur and concealed spiritual strength and bring forth their lost identity. The nation desirous of its independence and freedom cannot remain indifferent and unresponsive to the social and political processes impacting its life. If we wish to be enumerated among the developed and progressive nations, then we have to elevate our mentality and outlook to their level by raising our mindset and attitude all the time. The first prerequisite for a nation's

dignity is the independence and freedom of that nation. The nation deprived of its independence is doomed to disgrace and ignominy at the end. The independence of a nation can be deemed as its merit and moral distinction. The features which safeguard and preserve the independence of a nation are weighed with the heroism, bravery and valor of that nation"

The national liberation movement of South Azerbaijan was rapidly deepening. The Azerbaijani people were practically on the verge of creating their own independent, democratic, republican state. The resounding achievements of the National Government spurred the discontented population of Iran and galvanized the whole nation to action against the central government. Shuddering with fear, the rulers of the tyrannical monarchical regime were faced with real danger of abdication and banishment. The vested interests of the British who were trying to maintain supremacy over Iranian government and get a hold of Baku oil were also thrown into jeopardy by the growing turmoil and uproar in the country. So, without more ado they started conniving intimately with the diehard Iranian government to mastermind a conspiracy against National Government.

The malicious Iranian government was deliberately engaging the National Government in hectic negotiations by granting countless pledges and assurances on one hand and underhandedly plotting an assault plan to Tabriz on the other hand. After all the preparation work was over for machination of the surreptitious scheme, armed from head to foot, the military forces of the suppressive monarchical regime unexpectedly attacked Tabriz on 12th of September in 1920. The insurgents of Tabriz confronted the assailants intrepidly and withstood the attack heroically for two days. Nevertheless, the over armed regular forces of the central government far outnumbered the rebels. That's why on 14th of September Sheikh Muhammad Khiyabani was brutally assassinated and the revolt was beaten down in cold blood. Thus, the freedom struggle of the Azerbaijani nation was once again cruelly crushed and stifled. In the same way as the callous Bolshevik regime of the Soviet Russia had squelched the People's Republic of Azerbaijan in North Azerbaijan, similarly the reactionary monarchical regime of Iran viciously smothered the Country of Azadistan in South Azerbaijan. Russia and Iran couldn't have tolerated the independence of the country that they had once ferociously divided in Gulustan and Turkmanchay. So, once more North and South Azerbaijan were incorporated to Russia and Iran respectively.

THE COMMUNIST REGIME IN NORTH AZERBAIJAN (28th of April, 1920—18th of October, 1991)

People's Republic of Azerbaijan collapsed due to the military aggression of the Soviet Russia. Hence, the independent statehood of Azerbaijan was brought to an end in North Azerbaijan. On 28th of April in 1920, the establishment of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan (Azerbaijan SSR) in the territories of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan was declared.

Following the occupation, the Soviet Russia immediately started abrogating the independent state management system created by the People's Republic of Azerbaijan. Without delay, all authority of the country was instantly delivered straight to the Interim Revolutionary Committee and People's Council of Commissars of Azerbaijan SSR. People's Council of Commissars was chaired by Nariman Narimanov. Fearful of arousing popular anger and resentment, the occupiers had knowingly included only Azerbaijanis to the Interim Revolutionary Committee and People's Council of Commissars. But, this pretentious act was in effect a pure window-dressing meant to disguise the actual situation in the country since the real power was at the hands of the Communist (Bolsheviks) Party of Azerbaijan (CPA) that had been formed in February of 1920. CPA had strongly connived with the Soviet aggressors in orchestrating the breakdown of the People's Republic and invasion of Azerbaijan.

Communist Party of Azerbaijan was in fact an affiliate organ of the Communist (Bolsheviks) Party of Russia which was functioning on the direct orders issued by Moscow under the strict leadership of A.I.Mikoyan. The party cell was fundamentally composed of non-Azerbaijanis, particularly Armenians, Georgians and Russians. This is the primary reason why Armenians, Georgians and Russians and representatives of the other nationalities had found a favorable opportunity to play a specifically important role in the perpetration of atrocities against the Azerbaijani people such as the bloody massacre committed in March of 1918 and secretly conspire with the Soviet Russia in order to bring about the total occupation of Azerbaijan on 28th of April and accelerate the disestablishment of the state structures set up by the People's Republic of Azerbaijan.

In order to destroy the state institutions created by the People's Republic of Azerbaijan, special Revolutionary Committees with extraordinary powers were set up in each and every part of the country. The Bolsheviks were intentionally inciting clashes and disagreements among the different classes and instigating animosity in the society with the aim of rooting out the independent statehood traditions of Azerbaijan. Moreover, with the purpose of acquiring allegiance of the people, they had waged an extensive campaign of agitation to propagate on the proletariat-peasant issue. Exploiting the sentiments of the working class, they were constantly assuring the masses that the Soviet Russia would be a country where the sole source of power would lie with the proletariat.

But, the ostensibly convincing propaganda was extremely incongruous with the actual situation. On the contrary, every action was purposely directed at the extirpation of the independent statehood traditions and national awareness of the Azerbaijani people and establishment of the repressive communist dictatorship. The swift institution of the Revolutionary Committees all over Azerbaijan corroborates this fact by itself.

As a rule, all national central and provincial state structures were being systematically dismantled and steadily replaced with new law enforcement agencies of Bolsheviks. The national police forces were disbanded and supplanted by the special police units called worker-peasant police or "red police". Along with this, Extraordinary Commission and Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal were instituted to regulate and monitor the observance of law in the country.

Extraordinary Commission and Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal possessed exclusive extraordinary powers and boundless authority unrestrained by any regulation or law. Any judgment delivered by these two establishments was automatically and unquestioningly executed. Under the name of fighting against the counterrevolutionary and subversive forces, the abovementioned organizations started carrying out notorious policy of repression and extermination against the leading intellectuals of Azerbaijan who were the only bearers of the independent statehood traditions and national consciousness ideals.

The torturous "red terror" had engulfed the whole country. Whoever attempted to put up an opposition or resistance against the reinforcement of the Bolshevik regime was immediately labeled and ostracized as treasonous, traitorous, perfidious, subversive, insurgent, or counterrevolutionary and swallowed up by the deluge of "red terror".

In this way, the Soviet Russia had started perpetrating another atrocity against the Azerbaijani people. The only difference between this new slaughter and the massacre committed in March of 1918 was the alteration of targets. In contrast to the mass murder of March, this time the eminent statesmen of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan, renowned generals and high-ranking officers of the National Army, distinguished

intellectuals, leading thinkers, religious and literary figures, party leaders, political figures, famous scientists of the nation were specifically singled out for being killed. The Bolshevik-Dashnak faction was consciously implementing a well thought-out and premeditated policy of demolishing the main pillars of the Azerbaijani society in order to decapitate the whole nation once and for all. This new massacre aimed at incapacitating the entire nation was actually far more ruthless and monstrous butchery as compared to the mass murder of March. Furthermore, all this bloodshed was caused with the stealthy collusion of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan and conspiracy of the leadership of the Baku Committee without consent of the Interim Revolutionary Committee of Azerbaijan. Headed largely by the Armenian, Russian and Georgian slayers, the state structures regularly carrying out the orders of the special division of XI Red Army and red police as well as Extraordinary Commission and Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal were responsible for these horrible atrocities.

Orjonikidze, Kirov, Mikoyan, Sarkis, Mirzoyan, Lominadze, Yeqorov were the main Bolshevik-Dashnak executioners who had deviously masterminded the bloody massacres carried out against the leading members of the Azerbaijani people. The deceitful Armenians who had ensconced themselves in the state apparatus were particularly active in materialization of the "red terror" policy towards Azerbaijanis. Having installed themselves securely in law enforcement structures of the country, the cold-blooded Armenians were gunning down the Azerbaijanis on a massive scale. without any prior interrogation or trial. Taken as a whole, approximately 50 thousand selected members of the Azerbaijani people were pitilessly executed and shot down within a short span of only one year after the invasion of Azerbaijan on 28th of April in 1920.

While bringing the bloodcurdling policy of "red terror" to pass, the rapacious Bolshevik-Dashnak assassins were also greedily confiscating the properties and holdings of the people they were gunning down. Not sufficing with this, the opportunistic Bolsheviks had started pillaging the whole country voraciously. They were shamelessly plundering the possessions of the impoverished people and looting the goods of the indigents as well as stealing the valuable ornaments and precious personal effects bequeathed by past generations. Azerbaijanis were being arbitrarily dislodged from their houses which were later on given to Armenians, Russians and other non-Azerbaijanis. To put it shortly, the ravenous Bolshevik-Dashnak slaughterers were inflicting inconceivable tortures and insufferable agonies on the people of Azerbaijan through every possible line of attack.

Right after the occupation, the national armed forces of Azerbaijan were promptly submitted into subjection of the Red Army. The people were dispossessed of their army which was forcibly subjected to the direct authority and control of Moscow. Bereft of a national army, Azerbaijan lost its independence irretrievably at that time.

In order to blot out the independent statehood traditions and smother the spirit of national awareness amongst the Azerbaijani people, the iron-handed Bolshevik regime unleashed a ferocious attack towards the spiritual strength of the nation. In view of this repressive strategy, they started oppressing the Azerbaijani language as it was declared the official language of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan and imposing strict restrictions on the preparation and training of national specialists and experts. The society was being subtly and insidiously impregnated with Russian beliefs and values. The continuous policy of assimilation and amalgamation was being carried out. All the different castes, civil and religious privileges were abolished along with various ranks. Even the use of words indicating status such as Bey, Khan, Agha was prohibited. The religion was totally segregated from education and state management. The practice of religious rites and ceremonies was banned. The inclusion of religious studies in the academic curriculum of schools was outlawed and the religious schools were all shut down. Even the mosques and minarets of architectural value were decimated. In a word, the ages-old spiritual heritage and national culture of the Azerbaijani people had been subjected to a harsh assault because of the dreadful acts of Bolsheviks.

The creation of local committees for assistance to indigent people constituted an important aspect of the coercive state-building process in Azerbaijan. The committees ostensibly established for elimination of poverty were actually supposed to function as a foothold for Bolsheviks to aid them in exacerbating the standoff among the villagers and persecuting the so-called counterrevolutionary forces in provinces.

Soon after, the Revolutionary Committees and Committees for the Indigent People were replaced by local councils. The first congress of the nationwide councils convened on 6th of May in 1921 marked the completion of the full incorporation of North Azerbaijan to the Soviet Union. On 19th of May in 1921, the first constitution of Azerbaijan SSR was adopted. The constitution which was in fact a mere reproduction of the constitution of the Federal Republic of the Soviet Socialist Russia nominally promised extensive rights and perquisites to the people of Azerbaijan. But, since the councils were in reality governed by the leadership of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan who were implementing the direct orders of the Communist Party of Russia without any demur, the provisions enshrined in constitution carried only a cosmetic nature. Moreover, with ratification of the constitution, all political parties were banned in the country. In this way, the

proletariat dictatorship was essentially converted to the party dictatorship. According to the constitution, the intellectuals and scholars of the country were disenfranchised of the right to participate in the elections to the councils under the cover of creating a pure worker-peasant government. All these laws and regulations which transferred the councils into subservient and compliant organs acquiescently executing the instructions of Moscow were actually meant to enslave the Azerbaijani people.

So, as a consequence of the gory slaughters of Bolsheviks accompanied with forcible measures, within a span of one year after the occupation, powerful constitutional governing bodies were instituted and soviet socialist democracy was established to all outward appearances. But, in contrast to the People's Republic of Azerbaijan and its parliament, the newly-founded spurious democracy was in reality a superficial communist dictatorship.

But, even as a dictatorship, the communist government of Azerbaijan was not independent since it functioned only as a submissive vassal of Moscow. Whereas People's Republic of Azerbaijan had reached to the level of being able to compete with the most developed and progressive states of the world in terms of secularism and democracy as it was a natural product of the centuries-old statehood practices and intellectual potential of the Azerbaijani people. That's why the collapse of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan and subsequent destruction of its state structures is considered to be one of the gravest tragedies in the history of Azerbaijan.

As soon as the Soviet rule was established in Azerbaijan, the avaricious communist regime immediately began squandering the wealth of the country in every possible way. The right to own private property in land was abolished. All the national resources were nationalized to be made state properties. In order to administer the oil industry a special Committee for Oil was set up. A.P.Serebrovski was appointed the head of this committee and sent to Baku by Lenin. Thus, Lenin's old desire to gain control over Baku oil which he had explicitly declared in the telegram he had sent to the Military-Revolutionary Council of the Caucasus Front on 17th of March in 1920 was finally fulfilled. Lenin, the man who had ordered the invasion and occupation of North Azerbaijan had expressed this blatantly as follows: "Seizure of Baku is a must for us".

After the oil industry, the nationalization of the Caspian trade merchant, fishing industry, all the functioning banks, as well as a series of other branches of economy ensued. As a matter of fact, the nationalization process was a heavy blow to the overall economy of Azerbaijan which had gathered pace during the period of late 19th century and early 20th century. Divesting the people of their due right to ownership on the natural resources of their own country eventually served to weaken the national consciousness for independence. The control of the industrial manufacture and management of economy were largely concentrated at the hands of Russians, Armenians, Jews and other non-Azerbaijanis. All the wealth of Azerbaijan was overexploited; particularly Baku oil was profusely extracted to be conveyed to Russia. This is the reason why Russia emerged from the energy crisis undamaged. North Azerbaijan had become the main supplier of fuel and raw material for Russia. Furthermore, the Russian army which had drowned the North Azerbaijan in a bloodbath subsisted on account of the Azerbaijani people.

The people such as Nariman Narimanov and his supporters who were trying to defend their much-loved nation despite the prevailing tough circumstances arising from the widespread mass murders and despoilments were blacklisted as nationalists and fully secluded from the governance of the country. Standing at the top of the government and determining the fate of the country, the Armenian-Russian-Georgian coalition was treating all the Muslims who held a spirit of freedom with deep distrust and suspicion. They were indeed trying to annul the titular independence of Azerbaijan and integrate it to the Federal Republic of the Soviet Socialist Russia as quickly as possible. Despite the enormous hindrances and difficulties, N.Narimanov managed to thwart this horrendous plan. But, this paid a heavy toll on him since soon after he was banished from Azerbaijan by the Bolshevik-Dashnak group due to his devoted partisanship and patriotic stance.

Nevertheless, the Bolshevik-Dashnak occupiers were unable to shatter the spirit of resistance among the defiant Azerbaijani people as easily as they had anticipated. On 25th and 26th of May in 1920, a strong armed uprising was mounted against the Bolshevik regime in the city of Ganja. Backed by the former national army units, the insurgents of Ganja repeatedly crushed the divisions of the XI Red Army that had launched violent attacks on them. The Ganja rebels inflicted grave defeats on the XI Red Army in a few days. That's why new divisions were brought in to subdue the mutiny. The Armenians residing in Ganja and its peripheries Nariman Narimanov got armed and joined to help the belligerent government forces to vanquish the revolt completely. The insurgents incurred heavy losses in the combat operations that had penetrated almost into every street and house in the city. Hundreds of people were martyred in ferocious fights. On 31st of May, Ganja was entirely subjugated and taken over by the government forces. During the

following three days, the city was subjected to a severe carnage and ransacking by the wolfish Bolshevik-Dashnak mobsters.

After the Ganja rebellion, the occupiers were faced with a fierce resistance in Karabakh. Likewise, the uprising was brutally quashed with the vigorous involvement of the Armenian-Dashnak forces and the people were wreaked great havoc on as in Ganja.

On 6th of June, the people of Zakatala also waged a life and death struggle against the invaders. The insurgents captured the fort of the city and seized the Kakh district successively. The whole region was immersed in the fiery and indomitable revolt against the brutal Bolshevik regime. Confronting the XI Red Army units valiantly, the rebel forces won repeated victories over the armed government divisions. But, having been reinforced with additional military forces, the XI Red Army units finally overcame the doughty insurgents and took the control over Zakatala on 18th of June.

The Ganja, Karabakh and Zakatala rebellions were followed by numerous other insurgencies. The spirit of unruly defiance and insubordination had enveloped the whole country. The districts of Shamkir, Kuba, Davachi, Kusar, Lankaran, Astara, Kurdustan, Javanshir, Kutkashin, Khachmaz, Nakhichevan, Ordubad, Sharur had put up a strong resistance against the occupation of Azerbaijan. Even the women and children were fearlessly taking part in the unyielding fights against the XI Red Army units in Shamkir.

That the entire nation stood up to defend their country unanimously and expel the invaders by mounting a formidable resistance movement and insurrectionary operations is a clear proof to the fact that annihilation of the spirit of freedom and independent statehood traditions of the Azerbaijani people was not as easy as Bolsheviks had expected. Fearing the escalation of the daunting resistance movement, the Soviet government decided to deploy new additional military forces to Azerbaijan which foreshadowed further tragedies for the long-suffering people of Azerbaijan.

The most atrocious crime that the Bolshevik government committed against the Azerbaijani people at the time of invasion was to encourage and facilitate the occupation of the ancient Azerbaijani lands by Armenians. Like Tsarist Russia, the Bolshevik regime was similarly pursuing the same stealthy policy of smoothing the way for the expansion of the Armenian state on account of the territories belonging to Azerbaijan. To achieve this goal, the Bolshevik Russia was artfully resorting to every mendacity and provocation to sever connections between Azerbaijan and Turkey by setting them at odds.

The Armenians who had achieved the partition of Yerevan from Azerbaijan and declared it as their capital during the rule of the People's Republic recommenced their aggressive activities by making unjustified territorial claims to Azerbaijan. This time, the Dashnak Armenians were trying to annex more lands to Armenia by occupying the regions of Nakhichevan, Zangazur, Sharur-Daralayaz and Nagorno Karabakh.

Heartened and emboldened by Bolsheviks, the Dashnak Armenian butchers were perpetrating sanguinary massacres and ravaging hundreds of villages in Azerbaijan. Hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis were displaced from their homelands. The Armenians had readily accepted the integration to the Soviet system and Bolshevik rule in order to be able to appropriate the Western Azerbaijani territories in return. The opportunistic and self-serving Bolsheviks couldn't have opposed such an offer since this sort of bargaining was advantageously beneficial for the Bolshevik occupiers as well.

But, this criminal deal had spurred harsh resistance and protestation in Nakhichevan. The courageous people of Nakhichevan staunchly opposed this conspiracy and withstood the Bolsheviks successfully. Thanks to the support of brotherly Turkey as well, the Dashnak Armenians were unable to realize their plan to capture Nakhichevan.

Nonetheless, on 10th of August in 1920 the ancient region of Sharur-Daralayaz was laid at Armenians' feet by Bolsheviks without prior consent or endorsement of the Azerbaijani people. Such a munificent gift enticed the Dashnak Armenians into more furious struggle for annexing Nakhichevan, Zangazur and Nagorno Karabakh to Armenia. Therefore, after the occupation of Sharur-Daralayaz, Armenians embarked on the invasion of Zangazur with the backing of the XI Red Army. The invasion ended with the incorporation of the Southern-western Zangazur (Mehri) into Armenia and consequent detachment of Nakhichevan from the rest of Azerbaijan geographically. By taking control over Mehri, Armenia in fact gained an access to Iran. This enabled the Dashnak Armenians to maintain close relationship and strategic partnership with Iran.

Under the constant pressures of Orjonikidze and Kirov, the infamous slayers and executioners of the Azerbaijani people, Armenians succeeded in getting the decision on the annexation of the region of Nagorno Karabakh to Armenia passed in the plenum of the Caucasus Committee of the Communist Party of Russia on 4th of July in 1921. But, because of the rigorous opposition and expostulation of N.Narimanov, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Russia interfered and invalidated the decision by repealing it abruptly. Following the nullification of this decision, on 5th of July the Caucasus Committee adopted new decision on

the preservation of Nagorno Karabakh within the territory of Azerbaijan. This statement granted a broad self-autonomy status to Nagorno Karabakh with Shusha as its capital. Although Armenians could not fulfill their old desire to achieve a complete disunion of Karabakh from Azerbaijan, by attaining self-autonomy they actually further reinforced their positions in this region of Azerbaijan.

However, the schemes plotted by Armenians and Bolsheviks to secure control over Nakhichevan were disrupted thanks to the apt and timely intervention of Turkey. The unwavering and resolute standpoint of Turkey resulted in signing of the Moscow contract between Turkey and Russia on 16th of March in 1921 which enforced the autonomy of Nakhichevan within Azerbaijan. According to the terms of the agreement, Nakhichevan was by no means authorized to compromise its self-autonomy status to the third country. The Kars accord which was signed between Turkey and Southern Caucasus Republics on 13th of October in 1921 reconfirmed the status of Nakhichevan as self-autonomous. Therefore, Bolsheviks could not hand over Nakhichevan to Armenians as they had promised. Thenceforth, the city that was referred to as the "Gateway of the Turks" by M.K. Atatürk remained within the boundaries of Azerbaijan for good.

It's necessary to underline that the Bolsheviks were resorting to all deceitful means of demagoguery and agitation in order to keep the entire Islamic Eastern world under the influence and dominance of the Soviet Russia. The Bolsheviks were extremely diplomatic and delicate in promulgating their guileful intentions under the slogan of "converting Azerbaijan into a thriving and blossoming soviet socialist country" at the doorway of the East. But, observing the ongoing processes in Azerbaijan, the Eastern countries soon came to apprehend the quintessence of the actual Russian policy aimed at the ensnarement and entrapment of the Eastern nations under the devious propaganda of egalitarian society. This was the main reason why the formal independence of Azerbaijan was annulled soon after. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia were confederated into the united state under the name of Federal Soviet Socialist Republic of Southern Caucasus. This fusion created a favorable opportunity for the Georgian-Armenian leadership of the confederacy to exploit the natural resources and economic potential of Azerbaijan in order to boost the development and growth of their own countries.

Amalgamation of the three Caucasian countries into such a confederation actually served to legitimize the national and religious discrimination policy carried out against the Azerbaijani people in South Caucasus. The incorporation of Azerbaijan into the Soviet Socialist Republic of Russia as a confederate member of the Federal Soviet Socialist Republic of Southern Caucasus on 30th of December in 1922 actually meant the complete abolition of the nominal independence of Azerbaijan.

As soon as Azerbaijan was integrated into the SSRR, destructive utilization of natural resources and overexploitation of the country grew deeper in all senses. Azerbaijan was subjected to more ruinous and heightened national colonialism policy during the years of 1920-1930. With the establishment of the new socialist economy, implementation of the one-sided industrialization and forcible collectivization programs made the economy of Azerbaijan entirely dependent on the central government. The policy formulated and carried out on the direct orders of the central government was in fact calculatedly designed for bringing the economy of Azerbaijan into subordination of Russian economy. The principal goal of this policy was to convert Azerbaijan into the main supplier of raw material and secondary manufacturing power not capable of functioning in an independent and self-regulating way.

The attacks on the national-spiritual heritage and cultural values of the people of Azerbaijan had been stepped up as well. By and large, the preparation and training of national experts was artificially curtailed or immensely prevented. The immigration of Russians, Armenians, Jews and other nationalities from abroad in large numbers was promoted and expedited through encouragements and incentives such as guarantees for an appropriate employment and accommodation with luxurious apartments in the most affluent districts of Baku.

The policy of assimilation and absorption of the Russian-Armenian values was carried out blatantly. This process was especially set in motion in the capital city of Baku under the name of cosmopolitanism. The Azerbaijani language was subjected to severe pressures and oppressions by the government. The Russian language had been declared the official language of the state. The insidious policy of distributing the territories of Azerbaijan among the neighboring countries was carried on in full force at this period.

On 7th of June in 1923, yielding to the constant pressures of Orjonikidze and Kirov who were relying on the support of Stalin, the Central Executive Committee of Azerbaijan declared the creation of the Autonomous Province of Nagorno Karabakh within the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan. On 27th of June in 1923, the plenum of the Country Committee of the South Caucasus of the Communist party of Russia ratified the decision on the autonomy of Nagorno Karabakh passed by the Caucasus Committee of the Communist Party of Russia on 5th of June in 1921. This decision paved the way for Armenians and their Russian benefactors to set the grounds for laying new territorial claims against Azerbaijan in future.

Due to the judicious intervention and well-timed assistance of Turkey the legal status of Nakhichevan had been determined as self-autonomous and integral part of Azerbaijan by the accord which was signed between Turkey and Russia. That's why Armenians were rendered powerless in realizing their schemes about the annexation of Nakhichevan to Armenia. On 9th of February in 1924, the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Nakhichevan was created within Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks hadn't given up the perfidious policy of expanding the Armenian territories on account of the lands belonging to Azerbaijan. Therefore, three villages of the Zangilan province were bestowed to Armenians in 1929. Availing this opportunity, Georgians seized the Azerbaijani lands on the right bank of the Kanik (Alazan) river and annexed them to Georgia.

The implementation of forcible collectivization starting from late 1920, coercive confiscation and embezzlement of all the property of the people, violent policy of complete and indiscriminate annihilation in order to wipe out the kulak class from society added up and wore the patience of the Azerbaijani people thin. The country was once again enwrapped by a harsh resistance movement which had spread through the regions of Shekhi, Zakatala, Nakhichevan, Khizi, Shamkir, Cabrayil and others.

The strongest of these rebellions took place in the village of Koynuk of Shekhi district in 1930. The people of Koynuk overthrew the Soviet rule in the village and marched towards Shekhi. After the insurgents seized the power in Shekhi, the people of the neighboring village, Zayzid mounted an uprising as well and joined the rebels in Shekhi. Thus, the Soviet rule was completely toppled in Shekhi. In order to squelch the rebellion the XI Red Army units were brought in to the city. Despite the fierce resistance of the insurgents, the reinforced regular army forces quelled the revolt and captured Shekhi. The people of Shekhi were gunned down on a massive scale within a few days. Having ensconced themselves securely in the Extraordinary Committee, the Armenians had played an active role in the slaughter of the Shekhi people as well. Executed mercilessly before the eyes of the people without any interrogation or trial, the corpses of the insurgents of Koynuk were crammed into the shafts dug by the rebels themselves. In this way, the Armenians took vengeance for the Dashnaks who had been unable to exert their influence and control over Shekhi in 1918 due to the renitence and reluctance of the people of Koynuk to be swayed by aggressors and occupiers. Later on, the mass grave of the Koynuk insurgents, especially the grave of Turk Ahmed, one of the main leaders of the rebellion was converted to a consecrated shrine symbolizing the resistance movement of the Azerbaijani people against the Soviet rule.

Fearing the growth of the nationwide resistance movement and arousal of the strengthened national awareness, towards the end of 1930s, the Soviet regime started exercising more repressive and authoritarian rule in Azerbaijan. Sumbatov, Grigoryan, Markaryan, Malyan and other Armenian-Dashnak slayers who had settled themselves firmly in the leadership of Azerbaijan under the masquerade of communists had virtually started purging Azerbaijan of Azerbaijanis, more precisely of the Azerbaijani Turks. The chief executers of the "cleansing" policy machinated and orchestrated by the same Armenian leadership were Armenians themselves since they were the main authorities in the central and provincial structures of the intelligence and internal security agencies of the Soviet Union, namely KGB and NKVD. In more than half of the districts which equaled to almost two third of the overall number of the districts of Azerbaijan, it was Armenians who held the sway in the local NKVD structures.

Thus, the Bolsheviks were persistently continuing the historical policy of Russia to exterminate Azerbaijanis through using Armenians, but this time with new tactics and new maneuvers due to the changed circumstances. Under the cover of denunciation and inculpation of the treasonous people, sham criminal acts were concocted and fake trials were conducted along with fabricated cross-examinations and punitive measures which were deliberately contrived to execute and exile tens of thousands of the Azerbaijani people. The number of people subjected to the deathly repressive acts only in 1937 surpassed 29 thousand. It was not a coincidence that most of the victimized people were the leading thinkers and scholars of Azerbaijan who posed a great threat to the very existence of the Soviet Union. Banishment of the eminent literary and intellectual figures such as Hussein Javid, Mikayil Mushviq, Ahmed Javad, Salman Mumtaz, Ali Nazmi, Tagi Shahbazi and hundreds of other academics from Azerbaijan was an irreparable loss for the country. The intellectual potential of the people was barbarously ruined through annihilation of its honorable and conscientious personalities. This was a very heavy blow to Azerbaijan with a lasting impact that prolonged throughout an extensive period of time since it left indelibly deep marks on the conscience of the people for decades.

The late 1930s saw the rapid intensification of oppression against the entire Azerbaijani nation. The Armenians who were arbitrarily persecuting and maltreating the Azerbaijanis residing in Western Azerbaijan drew tens of thousand of Azerbaijanis out of their ancient homelands at that time.

In the same way as Shaumyan had connived with Andronik to perpetrate bloody massacres against the Azerbaijani people at the time, having usurped power in Baku the Armenian-Dashnak group was similarly colluding with the Party leadership of Armenia in order to mastermind new slaughter plots in Azerbaijan. Relying on the backing and support of Stalin, the Dashnak Armenians were enjoying an unbridled authority all over Azerbaijan. At the order of the Armenian-Dashnak group, thousands of the South Azerbaijani people who were residing in Baku were forcibly deported to Iran. The hostile act of expulsion was craftily premeditated by Armenians with the intention of subjecting the compatriots of Azerbaijanis to the new suppressions and persecutions of the despotic Iranian monarchy. The tyrannical rule of the Iranian Kingdom regime had forced them to flee to North Azerbaijan. So for saving their lives and earning a livelihood, they had run off to Baku. By deporting them back to Iran with the conspiracy of Armenians, the Russian colonialists were in fact secretly cooperating with the reactionary Iranian regime against the Azerbaijani people. The ulterior motive of the expansionist Russian imperialists was to clean North Azerbaijan of Azerbaijanis and eventually annex the territories of Azerbaijan to the RSFSR. The apportionment of certain territories among the Armenian and Georgian chauvinists was naturally included in this plan.

The national leader of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev has expressed his views on the oppressive policies of the Soviet rule as follows: "The repressions carried out during the years of 1937- 1938 has wreaked great havoc on the intellectual, cultural and scientific development of Azerbaijan. More than 50 thousand people have been executed and other 100 thousand people have been banished from their motherland and exiled to Siberia and Kazakhstan. Distinguished personalities such as Hussein Javid, Mikayil Mushviq, Tagi Shahbazi, Salman Mumtaz have been coldly destroyed during this era".

Along with mass murders and widespread banishments the national-spiritual and cultural values of the Azerbaijani people were being systematically obliterated as well. Under the alleged reason of preventing the dissemination of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism, the Soviet regime had launched an extensive propaganda of distortion and misrepresentation of the historical truths in Azerbaijan by labeling the national-spiritual values and moral beliefs of the people as the outdated remnants of the past. Even the national musical instruments of Azerbaijan were branded as obsolete and banned under the pretext of "artistic evolution". In order to agitate contempt and disdain against religion, special associations called "Society of the Godless" started to function at every turn. Under the cover of "creating a civilization nationalist in form and socialist in essence" everything embodying the national-spiritual precepts of the Azerbaijani people was annihilated one by one. Replacement of the alphabet with the Cyrillic was a huge impediment for the Azerbaijani people in terms of intellectual and academic progress since the people had not yet grown fully accustomed to the Latin alphabet adopted after the abolition of the old Arabic script. This hasty change was purposely designed to disconnect the people of Azerbaijan from the vast historical treasure of national-spiritual wealth and cut off all relations with the past mirrored in the documented facts of history. This was also a dreadful manifestation of the prejudiced and biased policy carried out discriminately against the Azerbaijani and other Turkish-Islamic nations. The fact that the alphabet change was not introduced in the neighboring Christian countries verifies the unjust and bigoted attitude of the Soviet Russia towards Azerbaijanis and other Muslims.

During the vicious repressions of 1920 and 1930s, thousands of talented and capable Azerbaijanis were forced to flee from their country and seek a political refuge in different foreign countries in order not to languish in the KGB prisons. Majority of them were the people who were struggling to emancipate their downtrodden motherland from the torturous prison of the Bolshevik-Dashnak rule and restore the independence of Azerbaijan. The National Center of Azerbaijan formed and headed by M.A.Rasulzade played an important role in cohesion of the political emigrants at one united front.

Neither Bolsheviks, nor the Armenian-Georgian chauvinists who were carrying out the South Caucasus policy of the Soviet Russia could have eradicated the national-spiritual existence of the Azerbaijani people notwithstanding the atrocious repressions and bloody massacres they were committing since the freedom ideals strengthened by the willpower to rule instead of being ruled were overflowing in the soul of every spirited Azerbaijani. This wasn't the first time that the people of Azerbaijan had faced such a difficult ordeal. The courageous people of Azerbaijan had repeatedly emerged victorious from the whirlpool of trials and tribulations in history. The nation that had bred and reared such illustrious and valiant personalities as Javid, Mushviq and Ahmed Javad could not have been exterminated as easily as Bolsheviks had thought.

Even the constant persecutions and harassments of the heavy-handed Soviet regime in 1920-1930s could not stifle the innovative spirit of the resourceful Azerbaijani people in terms of creativity and ingenuity. Azerbaijan outpaced all the other Soviet countries in growth and performance in the socialist world. Since Azerbaijan was the main supplier of fuel for the gigantic empire of the USSR, the oil industry of the country boomed rapidly. As an oil academy of the USSR, Baku started living its flourishing days. New industrial enterprises were launched, power stations were built, roads and channels were constructed, and bridges were put up. Different branches of manufacturing, industry, agriculture and culture started expanding

in a high speed. Illiteracy was completely eliminated. An all-encompassing network of educational institutions, scientific research centers, medical-health clinics and cultural-enlightenment societies of all levels was created. There were 16 universities and 18 running theaters in the country during the II World War. Formation of the separate branch of the Science Academy of the SSSR in Azerbaijan in 1938 was a significant event in the academic life of the country. The cultural and artistic activities were also revived throughout the country.

During the II World War, the Azerbaijani people displayed an exceptional bravery and heroism both in the battlegrounds and antifascist guerilla movements in various European countries. More than 600 thousand Azerbaijani soldiers were enlisted and mobilized for the war. Approximately, 170 thousand of them were rewarded with the highest medals and honorary degrees and 130 of them were granted the title of "Hero of the Soviet Union" for their feats and exploits in the war. During the war, for the first time in the military history, technologically sophisticated production of the aviation petroleum with high concentration of octane was initiated under the guidance of the renowned scientist of Azerbaijan Yusif Mammadaliyev in Baku. The Baku oil played a vitally decisive role in the war. That is to say, if it hadn't been for the fuel provided by Baku, the Soviet forces wouldn't have been able to win the war. Having positioned themselves securely in Kremlin, the double-dealing Armenian-Dashnak group had availed the unrest and disquietude of the II World War to plot new insidious schemes against the Azerbaijani people. But, their plans to drive the Azerbaijani people Samad Vurgun out of their homeland failed. II World War had once again proved that the intrepid people of Azerbaijan were resilient enough to come out of even the most difficult and trying crucible as triumphant and glorious. Large contribution of Azerbaijan to the victory in the war gave a boost to the browbeaten Azerbaijani people and greatly increased their lowered sense of self-confidence and adequacy in the following years.

Even after the II World War, repressions were continued against the Azerbaijani people both in North and South Azerbaijan. The National Government created in South Azerbaijan on 12th of December in 1945 was an outstanding expression of the national liberation movement of the Azerbaijani people against the reactionary monarchial regime in Iran. The painstaking struggle of S. J. Pishevari, the leader of the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan and his dedicated associates had finally resulted in establishment of the National Government of Azerbaijan. The role of the complex internal and international circumstances cannot be underestimated in the events leading up to the formation of the National Government.

Mir Jafar Pishevari (formerly Javadzadeh Khalkhali) was born in 1882 in Khalkhal, a city of eastern Azerbaijan located near the Caspian Sea. In 1905, he left Iran and went to Baku with his father who was seeking employment in the Caucasian oilfields. Pishevari started his career as a journalist in 1917 when he contributed an article to *Achiq Soz* (The Divulged Word), an Azerbaijani language newspaper which was published in Baku.

From 1922, after his second return to Iran, Pishevari resided in Tehran, where he became actively involved in the country's newly born trade union movement and founded the newspaper *Haqiqat* (Truth) which was associated with this movement.

On 12 December of 1945, with seventy-five of its one hundred and one deputies present, the Milli Majlis of Azerbaijan (the National Assembly of Azerbaijan) was officially opened in Tebriz.

The National Government of Azerbaijan was the name which the Milli Majlis officially adopted to designate the totality of the governmental offices of executive power in the province. This complex of executive powers, which included the military as well as the political substructure, was defined as "entirely separate from the legislative power", the latter being embodied in the National Assembly of Azerbaijan. This executive power was exercised by a *Dowlat* (State) which was known as the Azerbaijan Milli Hokumeti.

Pishevari was appointed by the Majlis as *Bash Vezir* (Prime Minister) and invited to form cabinet and propose it to the Majlis for their approval. The members of the cabinet he formed were: Javid (Interior), Kaviyan (PeopPs Army), Mahtash (Agriculture), Biriya (Culture), Orangi (Health), Elhami (Finance), Azima (Justice), Kabiri (Roads/Posts/ Telegraph and Telephone) and Rasuli (Trade and Economy). Furthermore, Pishevari appointed Qiyami as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Azerbaijan and made Fereydun Ebrahimi Prosecutor General of Azerbaijan.

Once the National Government was established, it went on to publish a program containing twenty separate articles. After reiterating its "commitment to Iranian independence and territorial integrity" and its desire "not to act to the detriment of Iran's sovereignty", the National Government of Azerbaijan went on to declare its intention to carry out a series of changes and reforms in Azerbaijan.

By way of winning popular support in Azerbaijan, the National Government set about putting into effect a series of reforms, many of which the DPA had promised in its early program. The most important of these were land reforms.

As early as 8 January, 1946, the national assembly of Azerbaijan passed bills which regulated the electoral procedure affecting the provincial, district, regional and municipal councils. According to these bills, for the first time in Iranian history, women had the right to stand for office in an election.

On 12th of December in 1946, just one year after it had been established, the Democrats' rule in Azerbaijan came to an end. Ironically, this was the date on which the anniversary celebrations were set to take place in commemoration of "the glorious day when the government of the province had been placed in the hands of the people".

As a result, during the early days of chaos which followed upon the arrivals of the government troops in Azerbaijan, a great number of lives were lost and a mass migration to Soviet Azerbaijan took place. Whereas on the eve of the collapse of the national government only a few of the DPA leaders were advised to leave the country, in the days that followed there was a mass exodus of upwards of 15000 people. Pishevari was one of those people who left the country.

The controversy over Pishevari's life is not confined to his early career. The manner of his death has occasioned heated disputes among the old guard of the DPA, as well as among scholars of Soviet history who are specialists on Stalin's period. Pishevari's death occurred in Soviet Azerbaijan in 1947, one year after the fall of the national government of Azerbaijan and the flight of the ADF leadership. The Soviet authorities officially reported his death as the result of a car accident. There are, however, well-informed sources which maintain that Pishevari was murdered by agents of Stalin-Bagirov in the hospital where he was taken after the car accident.

The opportunist Armenian nationalists who were reigning in Kremlin at the time had initiated the mass deportation of the Azerbaijani people from their ancient homelands in Western Azerbaijan under the downright support and espousal of Stalin-Bariya-Mikoyan trio. This process had assumed a special magnitude during the years of 1948-1953. After expulsion of the Azerbaijani people, Armenians took numerical precedence in Western Azerbaijan territories and strengthened their standing there.

A GREAT HEADWAY TOWARD DEVELOPMENT AND AWAKENING OF NATIONAL AWARENESS (1969-1982)

In the years following the II World War, different fields of industry and agriculture saw some remarkable growth and progress in Azerbaijan. Considerable steps were taken forward for the enhancement of culture and education in the country. The Baku oil played a sizable role in the revitalization and advancement of the debilitated economy of the war-ravaged Soviet Union. Exploration of the new oilfields which were discovered in Tataristan, Bashkirdistan, Tumen owing to the conscientious partnership of the Azerbaijani specialists further enlivened the oil industry across the entire country. The vigorous people of Azerbaijan were participating dynamically in the recovery and development of the Soviet economy in so many other areas of the SSSR as well.

But, despite the significant achievements and marked success that had been gained in previous years due to the ingenuity and creativity of the Azerbaijani people, the economy of the country had relapsed into a very deep and protracted recession during the 1960s. A wide range of intrinsic and extrinsic reasons had put both the industrial and agricultural domains of the economy on a steady downslide. Long-drawn-out regression in economy hampered the development of the country severely which in turn deteriorated the welfare of the people to the level of poverty. Azerbaijan started lagging behind the other Soviet countries in terms of growth level of the manufactured industrial goods, gross domestic product and labor productivity. The worst part was that the downswing of the economy and overall growth was swiftly exacerbating. Especially, agriculture of the country was on a constant decline. Application of the scientific accomplishments and technological findings to the manufacture was literally brought next to naught.

Heydar Aliyev has assessed the economic situation of the country during the 1960s in the following terms: "It would be perfectly accurate to say that the economy of Azerbaijan had entered into the stage of abysmal and extended recession during the 60s. The only way to reverse this dismal situation was to formulate new conceptual principles and approaches for the gainful development of economy, reshuffle the structural establishment radically for the profitable growth of agriculture and put new methods and incentives into practice for the encouragement of industrial and business executives".

At such a trying and demanding time, fundamentally important changes were made in the leadership of the country which proved to be to the benefit of the Azerbaijani people later on. Because it was Heydar Aliyev, the great guardian and advocate of his nation who was brought into power in 1969. In order to convert Azerbaijan into one of the most leading countries of the Soviet Union, Heydar Aliyev embarked on an immense task of carrying out an all-embracing extensive reform program in all areas of life despite the totalitarian Soviet rule and prevailing complex historical circumstances.

More than 50 years of the XX century history of Azerbaijan is closely associated with the name of Heydar Aliyev. He is considered to be the creator and national leader of the present Azerbaijan. Heydar Aliyev had started his state-building activities long before he had assumed power in 1969. Starting his career in law enforcement agencies of Azerbaijan, H. Aliyev had managed to overcome all the obstacles and hindrances deliberately put in his way and rise to the post of head of the State Security Committee of Azerbaijan, the main bulwark of the Soviet Union in Azerbaijan. As a result of his determined and purposeful work under extremely difficult conditions, a number of serious measures were taken aimed at purging the State Security Committee of Azerbaijan of the malicious enemies of the Azerbaijani people and admitting the competent Azerbaijanis to service in law enforcement agencies for the first time in the Soviet history despite the overwrought circumstances.

Since 1920-1930-s it was Armenians and other non- Azerbaijanis who had the upper hand in the State Security Committee of Azerbaijan. The atrocious repressions and bloody executions carried out against the Azerbaijani people at that time were all worked out specifically by this Committee under the pretense of State Security. That's why removal of Armenians and other adversaries of the Azerbaijani people from the State Security Committee and induction of the proficient Azerbaijanis to service in law enforcement agencies at the initiative of Heydar Aliyev was a tremendously difficult, but worthy task at a time when the Dashnak-Armenians disguised as Bolsheviks were committing horrible slaughters against the Azerbaijani people in the name of cooperating in establishment of the Soviet rule in Azerbaijan. It should be emphasized that it was the same Dashnak-Armenians who had facilitated and aided the occupation of Azerbaijan in 1920 by the Soviet army after having perpetrated unspeakably horrendous massacres against the Turkish-Muslim population of Azerbaijan in March of 1918. Having settled themselves securely in the highest posts and decision-making process of the KGB and NKVD, this time the Dashnak-Armenians were murdering the leading intellectuals and literary figures of the Azerbaijani people under alleged reasons of treason and

subversion in order to annihilate the spirit of freedom and independence. By fabricating the concocted stories of criminal acts, they were subjecting the Azerbaijani people to severe tortures and sufferings. So, by initiating admittance of the adept and skilled Azerbaijanis to service in the State Security Committee, Heydar Aliyev actually prevented the future persecutions and repressions against the Azerbaijani people.

Towards the end of 1960s, the zealous activities of Heydar Aliyev dedicated to the emancipation and development of the Azerbaijani people assumed more extensive and versatile role. By being elected the First Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan in 1969, Heydar Aliyev became the main steering force in Azerbaijan as the head of the supreme governing body at a time when life in the country was at a complete stalemate and the economy had relapsed into lingering regression. Appointment of Heydar Aliyev as the First Secretary of the Central Committee was a turning point in the history of the Soviet Azerbaijan. The course of later events proved that Heydar Aliyev had already started laying the foundation and preparing the groundwork for the present independent state of Azerbaijan back then in 1960s.

Having a close familiarity with all the peculiarities of the Soviet regime and a masterful expertise on administration of the state affairs due to his immense experience, as soon as he came to power Heydar Aliyev started taking sweeping measures in order to pull the hard-pressed people of Azerbaijan out of the all-pervasive austere economic situation. With great foresight and perspicacity he ordered the immediate formulation and execution of the complex, all-encompassing economic development programs which would ensure the dynamic and all-inclusive growth of the country in the long run. Heydar Aliyev received very warm welcome and great support of the Azerbaijani people due to his deep insight and sagacity. Heydar Aliyev started pursuing a judicious policy of putting Azerbaijan on the way to progress through utilization of the vast economic potential of the Soviet Union. In a word, he devoted his life to the liberation and development of his nation selflessly.

Pressing the most imperative issues regarding the revitalization of the various fields of economy and agriculture in Azerbaijan first at the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, then at the plenums of the Central Committee and at the congresses of the Communist Party, Heydar Aliyev was determinedly working to get new decisions passed for the development of Azerbaijan. Heydar Aliyev wanted to convert Azerbaijan into a powerful, self-sufficient and technologically fully advanced country and a self-regulating administrative-economic unit within the Soviet Union. By mobilizing the whole nation to work for the accomplishment of this goal, Heydar Aliyev had actually commenced the independent state-building process in Azerbaijan.

Despite the countless hurdles and encumbrances, Heydar Aliyev achieved the unachievable and managed to influence the Soviet Government to adopt five special all-inclusive decisions with respect to the full development of Azerbaijan. And with the same resolution he ensured the implementation of those decisions and set about propelling the Azerbaijani people into action. As a result of the complete mobilization of the country's economic and intellectual resources, the years of 1970-1985 saw the most vivid growth and expansion in all spheres of life in Azerbaijan. All fields of industry and agriculture became vibrant. Fundamental structural modifications were introduced in the economy of the country. New revolutionary branches of industrial manufacturing were launched. Significant measures were taken to ensure a proportional growth level in industry across the country. Special attention was laid on the increment of the scientific research directly related to the industrial manufacture. Thus, within a short span of time Azerbaijan grew to be one of the leading countries of the Soviet Union in terms of the accomplishments in economy and scientific-technological findings applied in the industrial manufacturing. The quality level of the manufactured goods had also increased incomparably.

As a result of the competent leadership and farsighted, prudent policies of Heydar Aliyev Azerbaijan was converted to the foremost agricultural country of the Soviet Union. Azerbaijan was standing out especially because of the sophisticated viticulture and cotton-growing. The welfare of the people had improved markedly. The livelihood of the villagers and workers had also increased considerably. Construction of new accommodations and amenities as well as cultural establishments was in full swing in the villages of Azerbaijan.

During the years of 1970-1985, hundreds of new plants, factories, industrial enterprises were opened in Azerbaijan. The number of the newly-launched large industrial enterprises and institutions exceeded 213. Azerbaijan had turned into one of the central countries in the Soviet Union in terms of the variety and importance of the manufactured goods in the country. 350 different items were being manufactured for exportation to 65 foreign countries. The overall quantity of the industrial goods manufactured during these years outweighed the amount produced in previous 50 years. Azerbaijan resembled a huge construction ground in those years. The look of Baku and the provinces of Azerbaijan had undergone an enormous transformation due to the constant renovation and modernization process.

One of the historic achievements brought to pass during the years of 1970-1985 was preparation of the trained national experts and qualified specialists for the future of Azerbaijan. Therefore, in accordance with the extensive development program laid down for the speedy revival of the economy, the network of secondary and higher education institutions was largely expanded throughout the country. In these years, 3500 students were granted scholarship and sent to 170 various reputable universities of the Soviet Union. The number of the students sent abroad annually surpassed 800. Improvement of the military education was one of the priority issues. Students were sent to the high-status aviation academies under the personal patronage of Heydar Aliyev in order to gain necessary proficiency for taking part in space mission programs of the Soviet Union.

As a result of the all-inclusive complex development programs initiated and carried out painstakingly by Heydar Aliyev in 1970-1980s, the economy of Azerbaijan was transformed into the preponderant power in the Soviet Union which had entered into the stage of gradual disintegration then. Azerbaijan had gained an outstanding dominance among the other Soviet Republics in terms of its industrial, agricultural and cultural growth due to the focused and insightful policies of Heydar Aliyev. Deep vision and forethought of the national leader of Azerbaijan had paved the way for the liberation of the Azerbaijani people and establishment of the independence of Azerbaijan many years later. Heydar Aliyev himself has evaluated the years of 1970-1985 as follows: "The most important outcome of the achievements brought to pass during the Soviet rule is that the economic, scientific-technological and cultural potential gained at this period has formed a strong foundation for the present Azerbaijan to function as a fully independent and self-regulating state".

Heydar Aliyev was vigorously struggling against the authoritarian and oppressive rule of the Communist regime in a way that no one else could have done under the intricate circumstances imposed by the Soviet era. In return for the agonies and tortures inflicted upon his nation by the repressive policies of Kremlin, Heydar Aliyev was retorting robustly by taking clever and audacious steps such as erecting edifices and sculptures of the victimized and persecuted personalities in each and every part of the country, bringing the corpse of Hussein Javid to Azerbaijan many years after his demise in exile and putting up a memorial near Sapun Kora as a honorary tribute for thousands of Azerbaijanis perished in Kerch and Krim.

It's an irrefutable fact that it was specifically during the years of Heydar Aliyev's leadership that the distinguished poets, writers and composers of Azerbaijan were conferred upon an honorary name of Hero of Socialist Labor for the first time in the Soviet history. On the order of Heydar Aliyev, the stately sculpture of Nariman Narimanov was erected in Baku. This was a clear manifestation of Heydar Aliyev's unwavering courage in face of the omnipotent Soviet domination. Nariman Narimanov had been banished from Azerbaijan and labeled as a militant nationalist because of his devoted and faithful services to his Motherland. Later on by putting up a commemorative monument for Nariman Narimanov in the city of Ulyanovsk, Heydar Aliyev actually once again proved that no power in this world, not even the heavy-handed Soviet regime could have averted him from his steadfast loyalty to his cause which was the protection and fortification of his country and emancipation of the browbeaten Azerbaijani people.

During the years of Heydar Aliyev's leadership, the exploration of the history of Azerbaijan expanded. Accordingly, the national-spiritual life of the Azerbaijani people was revived as well. The Encyclopedia of Azerbaijan compiled under the supervision of the eminent thinker of Azerbaijan, Rasul Rza was a true embodiment of the national awakening and scientific-cultural development in the country. The chief editor of the encyclopedia and the other compilers were delivering forceful speeches with regard to the misrepresentation of the historical background of the Azerbaijani people. They were urging inclusion of the undeniable historical facts in encyclopedia without distortion such as the role of Turkish ethnos in formation of the Azerbaijani people, occupation of North Azerbaijan by Russia as well as an unbiased examination of the valuable services rendered to the people of Azerbaijan during the People's Republic of Azerbaijan and invasion of Azerbaijan in April of 1920 by the Soviet forces. At the initiative of Rasul Rza, the historical maps of Azerbaijan were composed and published in Kiev for the first time in the Soviet history. These maps were issued both in Azerbaijani and Russian languages under the editorship of Rasul Rza in 1972. Alarmed by the emerging national awareness, the Soviet regime availed this opportunity to label the impartial intellectuals of Azerbaijan as fanatic nationalists, bourgeois ideologists and the enemies of the Soviet rule in Russia and sent the son of Shaumyan, the Armenian butcher who had craftily masterminded the bloody massacre of March in 1918 against the Azerbaijani people to Baku as the first deputy of the chief editor of the Comprehensive Soviet Encyclopedia. Although as one of the main disseminators and executors of the suppressive Soviet ideology, I.S.Shaumyan wanted to take advantage of this situation to disparage and denigrate the Azerbaijani intellectuals and scholars, thanks to the deep perception and unbending courage of Heydar Aliyev, the majority of the intellectuals, including the compilers of the encyclopedia were saved from persecutions of KGB and punitive measures of the Communist Party of Russia.

The actual historic significance of the achievements brought to pass during the years of Heydar Aliyev's leadership lies in the fact that as a result of all the developments and accomplishments materialized in these years the spirit of freedom and independence was awakened among the Azerbaijani people once again. Thus, feelings of national esteem and national consciousness were greatly bolstered and strengthened due to the dutiful guidance and unwavering dedication of Heydar Aliyev. The revival of national awareness meant recommencement of the national liberation movement, but this time in a more subtle and covert way. This success is deemed to be the unmatched feat of Heydar Aliyev. Therefore, Azerbaijan was fully prepared to function as an independent and self-regulating state when the Constitution Act declaring the state independence of Azerbaijan was adopted on 18th of October in 1991 following the downfall of the Soviet Union.

RESTORATION OF THE STATE INDEPENDENCE IN NORTH AZERBAIJAN: THE STRUGGLE FOR REINFORCEMENT OF STATEHOOD (1991 - 2004)

Today Azerbaijan is fully integrating to the world by following a successful foreign and domestic political course. However, the industrious people of Azerbaijan are going through the most difficult, but honorable period of their history. This period is generally defined as a transitional phase. All the civilized nations and developed states of the world have passed through this phase in order to reach to their present advanced level. Naturally, the transition process in Azerbaijan has its own inherent peculiarities and ensuing complexities. Strong military pressures exerted on Azerbaijan, occupation of the Azerbaijani lands by Armenians, existence of more than 1 million refugees and displaced people in a country of only 8 million people are the grim facts which further exacerbate and complicate the strenuous process of transition in Azerbaijan.

Moreover, the long-established foreign enemies of Azerbaijan are doing their utmost to overturn the state independence of Azerbaijan and prevent the development of the Azerbaijani people. By attempting to avert the natural course of events every now and then through persistent impediments and obstructions, the adversaries of Azerbaijan are actually trying to thwart ascension of the Azerbaijani people to the level of the most developed nations of the world. The fact that Azerbaijan plays the intermediary role of Golden Bridge between Europe and Asia as well as Middle East and Russia is a cause of great perturbation and uneasiness for the enemies of the Azerbaijani people who cannot tolerate the sovereignty and ever-increasing strength of Azerbaijan as an independent and self-determining state. That's why, as a country possessing rich natural resources and reserves, Azerbaijan inevitably encounters ceaseless political, military, spiritual pressures and immeasurable economic constraints. Due to the strategic importance of Azerbaijan both in terms of its growing geopolitical significance and vast natural resources, such an interference on the part of the intrusive antagonists of the Azerbaijani people will remain as unavoidable and inescapable in future as it has always been during the past years.

The "Armenian Card" which has been deviously manipulated by the insidious opponents of the Azerbaijani people for centuries has never been used as vigorously and maliciously as it is being used by the influential Armenian lobby today. Backed and sponsored by certain involved establishments, the Armenian lobby is active in numerous countries such as Russia, France, and USA. Working at various prestigious international organizations, this time Armenians carry out their malicious plots more purposefully and rigorously in order to put across their unjustified and groundless case. Enjoying enormous financial resources and important political leverage as well as a wide range of effective vehicles for influencing the decisions of the parliaments and political-military governance of the countries they work with and affecting the activities of a number of esteemed international organizations, the Armenian lobby resorts to all possible means to hamper the flourishing relationship between Azerbaijan and the world states by trying to mold the foreign diplomacy line of the dominant states and international organizations.

In essence, the very independence of Azerbaijan meant resurgence of the entire Azerbaijani people and revival of the independent statehood traditions of a great and ancient nation that possessed advanced governance skills and rich cultural-spiritual heritage. Resurrection of the feelings such as rightful entitlement to ownership of the territories severed from the ancestral Azerbaijani lands inch by inch at various times, recommencement of the struggle for restoration of justice, fairness and equality in the country and reinstatement of the national-spiritual unity and cohesion all pointed to the rebirth of renaissance in Azerbaijan. The ever-strengthening independence and sovereignty of Azerbaijan is a strong warrant that firmly stands behind the 60 million Azerbaijani people spread all over the world. It's precisely these reasons that cause a palpable anxiety and apprehension among the enemies of the Azerbaijani people today.

The fact that Azerbaijan was steered by such a competent politician as Heydar Aliyev was even more disquieting for the insidious adversaries of Azerbaijan. Much to their dismay, the perfidious enemies of Azerbaijan who had drowned the whole country in the agonizing bloodbath of atrocities and perpetrated ruthless massacres against the subjugated people of Azerbaijan had come to realize that Heydar Aliyev was the only personality capable of withstanding and rebuffing their duplicitous games and endless contrivances due to his unique political ingenuity and incomparable foresight.

The deceitful foes of the Azerbaijani people were well aware that the historical circumstances were by no means matching with the fragile environment that prevailed during the years of 1918-1920. They had come to understand that this time the national liberation movement of the Azerbaijani people would come out as undefeated and triumphant and lifelong struggle to create a powerful independent state of Azerbaijan would emerge as victorious since it was ushered by Heydar Aliyev, the judicious statesman who owned the exceptional gift of taking the pulse of time and political milieu.

The distinctive personality of Heydar Aliyev resembles an unexplored world. His unique political ingenuity and infinite wisdom can be measured up to a boundless ocean. His extraordinary ability to surmount the most intricate and tangled obstructions and illimitable talent to overcome even the most convoluted obstacles and hindrances were nothing, but divine endowment of the Almighty God. The most distinguishing facet of Heydar Aliyev's personality was that everything he undertook and accomplished was invariably and incomparably dedicated to the protection and defense of Azerbaijan.

Heydar Aliyev was born to an ordinary and humble Azerbaijani family. As an extremely gifted student pursuing knowledge assiduously, Heydar Aliyev had educated himself excellently on a wide range of subjects as well as acquiring a deep political vision. As a person of broad views, Heydar Aliyev had cultivated an immeasurable love and affection towards his county and nation. And being a firsthand witness of the horrid wiles and harsh stratagems of the enemies of Azerbaijan as a young student, Heydar Aliyev had developed a strong sense of patriotism and devotion to his oppressed country. Possessing a rich governance experience extending over half a century and closely conversant with all the subtlety and nuances of the administration mechanisms of all levels and kinds in the Soviet system, Heydar Aliyev had deservedly risen to the impenetrable leadership of the imperious Soviet Union. After having been deviously distanced from the decision-making circles of the SSSR due to the underhanded ploys and artful schemes of Qorbachov, Heydar Aliyev had managed to make a spirited, incisive comeback to the political arena despite the persistent persecutions and continuous threats of Qorbachov. Heydar Aliyev was a man of iron will and unbreakable determination who played a matchless role in salvaging the people of Azerbaijan from the turbulent whirlpool of disorder and unrest during the era of transition.

During the years of 1982-1987, Heydar Aliyev was working in Moscow as a high-ranking member of Politburo and First Vice-chairman of the Cabinet of Ministries which constituted the central part of leadership in the SSSR. By attaining an enormous success through efficacious management of the most troublesome branches of administration in the vast empire of the Soviet Union which was on the verge of irremediable debilitation and complete disintegration, Heydar Aliyev gained a wide influence all across the SSSR and demonstrated his inexorable aptitude to the discriminatory and bigoted Soviet regime. As the only proficient statesman in Politburo capable of governing the entire Soviet Union on his own and reversing the deteriorating regressive situation of the country, Heydar Aliyev aroused the jealousy and distrust of the chauvinist and incompetent Kremlin leaders. Especially M.Qorbachov regarded Heydar Aliyev as a formidable rival that had to be eliminated immediately. Despite the prejudiced and biased attitude of the Soviet leadership towards Azerbaijan, even under the most complicated circumstances Heydar Aliyev was always pressing the issues related to the growth and development of the Azerbaijani people with emphatic forcefulness. Heydar Aliyev was the main hurdle for the Armenian nationalists who wanted to materialize the much-coveted separation of Nagorno Karabakh from Azerbaijan and annex it to Armenia. This is the reason why M.Qorbachov, the obedient attendant of the Armenian mafia headed by Stavropoulos was used as an instrument to take away this impassable barrier. M.Qorbachov finally achieved his spiteful goal and dismissed Heydar Aliyev from the leadership of the SSSR. The removal of Heydar Aliyev from office was in fact the hardest and heaviest blow dealt to the Azerbaijani people during the Soviet rule. It's not a mere coincidence that as soon as Heydar Aliyev was ousted from power, the opportunistic Armenian nationalists intensified their propaganda activities in order to usurp power and snatch the region of Nagorno Karabakh from Azerbaijan.

During the years of 1987-1990, the authoritarian Kremlin regime headed by M.Qorbachov carried out innumerable persecutions and repressions against Heydar Aliyev. Nevertheless, Heydar Aliyev displayed an unflagging perseverance and tenacious fortitude in face of all the restrictions and harassments directed against him. On the contrary, despite the imperfect circumstances, with his immense experience and deep prudence, he continued doing his utmost to lead his disoriented nation out of the great turbulence and confusion of 1990s when the Soviet Union was on the threshold of an irrevocable breakdown and complete disintegration.

The years of 1990-1993 have been imprinted in the minds of the Azerbaijani people as fateful times of devastating adversities and heavy calamities. During these years Azerbaijan was face to face with an ominous danger of total annihilation due to the inept governance of the country first by treacherous and obsequious leaders who were given in to abject servitude of the Moscow regime and then by the incompetent rule of Popular Front Party of Azerbaijan. The illuminating guidance of Heydar Aliyev was the only source of hope and relief for the disoriented people of Azerbaijan who were at a complete loss at that time. On 21st of January in 1990, one day after the bloody slaughter committed against the blameless people of Baku, Heydar Alyev visited the headquarters of the permanent representation of Azerbaijan in Moscow and openly conveyed his deep condolences at the expense of putting his life at risk. By fearlessly expressing his outrage at this hideous massacre and urging the due punishment of its perpetrators, Heydar Aliyev actually took the

lead of the liberation struggle of his nation and managed to return to Baku on 20th of July in 1990 despite the inescapable persecutions of the Kremlin regime. But, due to the perfidious stance of the subservient Azerbaijani leaders who were controlled by Moscow then, on 22nd of July Heydar Aliyev was forced to leave Baku and take refuge in Nakhichevan. While he was in Nakhichevan, Heydar Aliyev embarked upon a nationwide liberation movement in face of all the difficulties and impediments as Nakhichevan was in a complete isolation because of the military-political and economic blockade set up by the aggressive Armenian armed forces and their Russian supporters. Entrapped by the blockade, all ties of Nakhichevan with the rest of the country were severed both politically and economically. It was not only Nakhichevan in Azerbaijan that was beleaguered with the hostile forces. The entire country was in turmoil. Azerbaijan was on the verge of complete breakdown and disintegration. The long-desired seizure of the territories of Azerbaijan was on the point of being brought to pass by the Armenian aggressors. At a time when Azerbaijan was going through the most turbulent and tumultuous age of its history, Heydar Aliyev rose to deliver the Azerbaijani people from the evil of disarray and confusion. Putting his faith and confidence in the fighting spirit of the strong-willed people of Nakhichevan, Heydar Aliyev displayed an unequalled political ingenuity and indescribable valor and saved the ancient land of Azerbaijan from being occupied by the malicious Armenian forces. Nakhichevan had been besieged by the modern Dashnaks with the help of the Soviet frontier troops just like an encircled ring. Extrication of Nakhichevan from such a menacing danger under extremely tough circumstances was an achievement that would determine the fate of the whole country.

At a time when Azerbaijan was beset by the enemy forces on all sides and regions of the country were being occupied one by one by the Armenian armed units, instead of forging a strong resistance movement on a national level and bringing the competent leaders into the frontline, the only person capable of mobilizing the whole nation for struggle against the occupiers, Heydar Aliyev was denied an access to power. At a time when the Azerbaijani people desperately needed the guidance and leadership of such an experienced and proficient political figure, the disloyal Soviet leaders of Azerbaijan were underhandedly plotting conspiracies to remove Heydar Aliyev from power in Nakhichevan and smother the liberation movement launched by him.

Nonetheless, Heydar Aliyev was taking resolute steps in Nakhichevan which were aimed at strengthening the newly-emerging statehood of Azerbaijan. In order to revivify the national statehood traditions of Azerbaijan, the words of "Soviet" and "Socialist" were taken out of the name of the Autonomous Republic of Nakhichevan and three-colored flag of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan was hoisted as a state banner of Nakhichevan. The local branches of the Communist Party were immediately shut down and all government bodies were disestablished. Condemnation of the bloody slaughter of 20th January on a political level, total abstention of the people of Nakhichevan from participation in the plebiscite held to ascertain as to whether the Soviet Union should be preserved or dissolved, declaration of 31st of December as a solidarity day of the Azerbaijanis living all across the world and deterrence of the seizure of Nakhichevan by the enemy forces despite the prevalent military-economic blockade were groundbreaking measures taken during the short rule of Heydar Aliyev in Nakhichevan.

When Heydar Aliyev returned to Baku in June of 1993, the country was on the brink of disastrous breakdown. The people were floundering to pull themselves out of the bloody whirlpool of confusion and disorder. Worn out by the incompetent governance of Ayaz Mutallibov during the years of 1991-1992 and Abulfaz Elchibey in 1992-1993, the hard-pressed people of Azerbaijan were in a desperate need of strong and assertive leadership. The imminent danger of ethnic clashes and civil war was hanging over the country that was overshadowed by the raging attacks of the Armenian armed forces. The inexperienced leadership of the country possessed neither ability nor the courage to confront and pre-empt the opportunistic enemy forces. The old dream of the Dashnak Armenians devised with the contrivance of their Russian supporters to create the state of "Great Armenia" was about to be materialized through occupation of the Azerbaijani lands and much-desired obliteration of Azerbaijan from the face of this earth as an independent state. Faced with the danger of civil war, the people were in a state of constant despair and nervousness. Azerbaijan had completely lost its already tarnished international image due to the growing internal chaos and upheaval. The people of Azerbaijan had no faith in the future of their country.

Therefore, Heydar Aliyev's return to power on 15th of June in 1993 carries a special weight in the modern history of Azerbaijan. As soon as assuming power, Heydar Aliyev took action to put a halt to the civil unrest by using several political and tactical maneuvers. Thus, the ethnic encounters were instantaneously thwarted and the overall situation was tranquilized. So, in this way the looming danger of possible civil war was eliminated immediately. The devious designs of the enemies of Azerbaijan machinated to divide the Azerbaijani lands in order to achieve the total destruction of the independent state of Azerbaijan were astutely forestalled by the newly-established firm leadership.

Heydar Aliyev himself had defined the state independence of Azerbaijan as irreversible, indestructible and everlasting. Failure of the insurgency attempts to overthrow the leadership of Heydar Aliyev in October of 1994 and March of 1995 verified Heydar Aliyev's unshakeable resolve and willpower once again. Heydar Aliyev's sacrificial devotion and unflinching loyalty to his nation inspired the whole country. Invigorated by the steadfast dedication of their undeviating leader, the people of Azerbaijan regained their faith in future of Azerbaijan. Thanks to the strenuous efforts of Heydar Aliyev, the blustery situation of the country was stabilized, law and order was restored. Establishment of stability and political tranquility at such a tempestuous time was an inconceivable achievement on Heydar Aliyev's part.

Acting judiciously on the issue of war as well, Heydar Aliyev took a pragmatic stance and evaluated the situation realistically. Being well aware of the insidious plans of the cunning enemies of Azerbaijan and well cognizant of their military supremacy backed and reinforced by their powerful supporters, Heydar Aliyev saw the enforcement of ceasefire as the only way of deliverance of the Azerbaijani people from the bloodbath of atrocities. Along with this Heydar Aliyev also prevented the national-spiritual breakdown of the country by reversing the ill-advised decisions of the previous leaderships adopted unrealistically and rather emotionally.

Today the independent state of Azerbaijan is enjoying a growing influence and weight in the international arena. Azerbaijan is widely recognized as a democratic, legal and secular state. The constitution of Azerbaijan wholly embodies all the democratic rights and civil liberties that have also been enshrined in the constitutions of the most developed nations of the world. Together with the continuous reforms carried out on the order of Heydar Aliyev, the enduring stability prevailing in the country creates an auspicious environment for the establishment and expansion of bilateral ties with the foreign countries based on the principle of equal and mutual partnership.

One of the major undertakings of the foreign policy set by Heydar Aliyev was to end seclusion from contact with the Turkish-speaking nations and integrate Azerbaijan into the Turkish world by restoring the relations especially with the newly independent states of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. It's noteworthy that Azerbaijan is gaining a wide influence among Islamic nations of the world as well.

To tackle the "Armenian card" used for centuries against the Azerbaijani people, Heydar Aliyev worked out an immaculately sound investment strategy for oil. The successful oil policy laid down by Heydar Aliyev assured the whole world of the possibility of solving the problems of Caucasus through effective means rather than occupation and exploitation. Heydar Aliyev adroitly used the idea of Great Silk Way to release Azerbaijan from the economic blockade imposed by the Northern and Southern neighbors who were working dexterously to extinguish the existence of Azerbaijan by cutting off its most basic relations with its customary collaborators and partners. In view of that the international conference held in Baku on 7-8th of September in 1998 with the participation of 32 states and 13 international organizations was a huge event in the history of Azerbaijan. Reinstallation of the Great Silk Way meant not only revival of the economic-spiritual potential of the Azerbaijani people, but also cultural revitalization and unification of the entire Turkish world.

Today Azerbaijan acts as the main guarantor of peace and stability in the region of South Caucasus. The strained relations with Russia have been normalized due to the farsighted foreign policy carried out by Heydar Aliyev. The perspicacious and prudent strategy of Heydar Aliyev has rendered the littoral states of the Caspian Sea a peaceful, serene atmosphere of cooperation and collaboration. Azerbaijan is a strong ally of the worldwide antiterrorism campaign. And most importantly, as a result of Heydar Aliyev's arduous efforts, the world has come to accept the existence and weight of Azerbaijan.

AZERBAIJAN ON THE WAY TO PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT

Today Azerbaijan is headed by Ilham Aliyev who worthily carries on the political course laid down by Heydar Aliyev. He is not only the elected president of the independent state of Azerbaijan, but also the new leader of all the Azerbaijanis living across the world. His leadership is a true embodiment of the willpower and resolution of the Azerbaijani people and manifestation of the strength of Heydar Aliyev's insightful forethought. Gaining a firm political standing as well as deserved respect and influence in Azerbaijan through his painstaking and dedicated work, Ilham Aliyev has also achieved wide recognition in international political arena.

Ilham Aliyev is the son of Heydar Aliyev. He's a professional politician. He has graduated from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations in 1982. After getting his post-graduate degree, Ilham Aliyev started his scientific-pedagogical career as a professor at the same institute. In 1985 he was conferred degree of a doctor for history. In 1991 he started working as the general manager of the "Orient" company in Moscow. In 1994 he was appointed the vice-president of the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic for foreign economic relations. He was promoted to the post of first vice-president of the State Oil Company in 1997. Having worked as the Prime Minister of Azerbaijan as well, he was a close associate and collaborator of Heydar Aliyev.

Ilham Aliyev has worked closely with Heydar Aliyev on the formulation and realization of the oil strategy in Azerbaijan. He has played an enormous role in the augmentation and enhancement of this strategy and preparation of the various projects in this regard. Discharging his diplomatic duties devotedly, Ilham Aliyev has contributed a lot to the creation of incentives for the large-sized investment in the oil industry of Azerbaijan. During his tenure as the vice-president of the State Oil Company, Ilham Aliyev has rendered invaluable services to his country by taking an active part in the political and state-building processes such as implementation of economic reforms in Azerbaijan, establishment and expansion of the bilateral economic-cultural relations with the foreign countries, integration of Azerbaijan to the world, completion and effectuation of oil contracts with the accredited oil companies of the world on joint exploration of the oil-gas fields as well as conclusion of the much-awaited contract for exportation of the Baku oil to the world through construction of Baku-Tbilisi-Jeyhan oil pipeline. As a result of the consistent execution of the oil strategy worked out by Heydar Aliyev and actualized by Ilham Aliyev, during the years of 1994-2000, the foreign companies have granted 800 million USA dollars additional benefit to Azerbaijan. More than 30 thousand people have been provided with new jobs in oil industry due to the large-scale foreign investment in this sector.

Ilham Aliyev is the leader of the New Azerbaijan Party as well. As the leader of the main political party of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev plays an essential role in the state-building processes of democratization, legalization and secularization of the country. He had been elected the vice-chairman of the Party in I Congress held in 1999 and the first deputy of the Party in the II Congress held in 2001. Fulfilling the responsibilities and obligations of this important task dutifully, today Ilham Aliyev works industriously to mobilize the country's economic and intellectual resources for the speedy growth and development of the newly-founded independent state of Azerbaijan. The election campaign of the New Azerbaijan Party for the parliament elections of 2000 was steered by Ilham Aliyev himself. It was expressly because of the conscientious guidance of Ilham Aliyev that the New Azerbaijan Party won the parliament elections with overwhelming supremacy and gained the majority of seats in the National Assembly of Azerbaijan.

Following the elections, Ilham Aliyev worked tirelessly and vigorously to serve the national interests of Azerbaijan in the best possible way. During this period, he spent most of his time among the ordinary people trying to find out about their problems and bring a feasible solution to them. He showed a special concern for the underprivileged and deprived members of the community as well as refugees and displaced people. His genuine attitude towards creation of the socially considerate environment for the disabled people impaired in the Karabakh war is a lucid indication of his unswerving love and affection for Azerbaijan. The rewarding projects carried out in Karadagh and some other regions of the country at this period illustrate another aspect of the extensive and versatile activity of Ilham Aliyev as the Member of Parliament.

As a member of the Permanent Commission of International and Inter-parliamentary Relations of the National Assembly, Ilham Aliyev worked thoroughly at the Parliament Assembly of the European Council. As the head of the Permanent Delegation of Azerbaijan at the Parliament Assembly of the European Council, Ilham Aliyev worked assiduously and purposefully to bring the realities of Azerbaijan into light. As a result of Ilham Aliyev's spirited and strong-minded standpoint with regard to the issues of national interest, European countries gradually came to acknowledge and accept the international position of Azerbaijan. It was namely the cogent and forceful speeches delivered by Ilham Aliyev at the European Council that compelled the European countries to evaluate the conflict of Nagorno Karabakh impartially and denounce

occupation of the Azerbaijani lands by the Armenian aggressors as the contravention of inviolability of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Ilham Aliyev has played an enormous role in imparting the actual facts about the Nagorno Karabakh conflict to the Europe which has produced a fair assessment of the situation among the Western states. Due to his inexorable and untiring efforts, Armenia was finally recognized as an occupier and aggressor country. During this period, Ilham Aliyev worked indefatigably to lay the Armenian terrorist acts bare to the world community and achieve its condemnation as a part of international terrorism by providing sound substantiation for the horrible crimes committed by the Armenian terrorists in Azerbaijan at various times. It was precisely because of Ilham Aliyev's emphatic urgings that use of the occupied and uncontrolled Nagorno Karabakh territories for international terrorism and drug smuggling was brought into spotlight. Ilham Aliyev had gained wide influence and recognition among the Western politicians on account of his objective and constructive speeches. So, he was elected the vice-speaker of the Parliament Assembly of the European Council in 2003.

The relentless activities of Ilham Aliyev set for upgrading the sport facilities and recreational amenities of the country and aimed at cultivation of the new healthy generation deserve a special appraisal. Since he was appointed the president of the National Olympian Committee of Azerbaijan in 1997, Ilham Aliyev has been carrying out an invariable policy of creating a series of health-sport complexes throughout the entire country and appropriating funds and resources for establishment of the necessary material-technical basis to finance the promotion of the different branches of sport in Azerbaijan. As a result of his unflagging pursuit of accomplishment in this field, the sport has been revitalized and enlivened in Azerbaijan. The sportsmen of Azerbaijan have gained outstanding victories at the regional sport contests and international competitions. The fact that Baku has become an important center for holding various international sport competitions serves to elevate the international image of Azerbaijan across the globe.

As a professional politician and well-read expert on history of international relations, Ilham Aliyev has gained wide influence and respect in international arena as well. He has been to the USA, UK, Turkey, France, Russia, Ukraine, Switzerland, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Slovakia, Poland, Georgia, Qatar, Italy, Saudi Arabia, China, Poland and so many other countries on official and state visits and delivered numerous acclaimed discourses at international conferences and congresses.

After winning the presidential elections of 2003 with an overwhelming majority, Ilham Aliyev started carrying out a policy of democratic, legal and secular state-building worked out by Heydar Aliyev. Since he came to power, implementation of economic reforms has been further accelerated in the country. Along with this a State Program has been adopted for social-economic development of the regions of Azerbaijan in the years of 2004-2008. On the order of Ilham Aliyev, special measures have been taken to ensure unfailing observance of human rights and civil liberties in the country. As a continuation of Heydar Aliyev's political line, Ilham Aliyev follows the same guiding principles aimed at protection and preservation of the national-spiritual heritage of Azerbaijan. In view of that Ilham Aliyev shows great concern for the scientific study and dissemination of the history of Azerbaijan in the country. The decrees passed and enforced by Ilham Aliyev on compilation of the National Encyclopedia of Azerbaijan and broad issuance of wide-ranging books in Azerbaijani language and Latin script as well as increasing salaries of the scientists and scholars in accordance with their relevant academic degrees and multiplying stipendium of the undergraduate and postgraduate students demonstrate the magnitude of the steps taken in this regard.

As a result of the focused and purposeful work of Ilham Aliyev, today the foreign policy course laid down by Heydar Aliyev is successfully carried on. The main principle of this policy is to inform the world of the horrid atrocities committed by the Armenian aggressors who have occupied more than 20 percent of the Azerbaijani lands. Thanks to the dedicated commitment of Ilham Aliyev to the same political line, the majority of the world states have come to recognize and condemn Armenia as the violator of international norms and regulations. As the owner of broad vision and extensive knowledge, Ilham Aliyev has achieved wide influence and respect among the distinguished world politicians. Being wide awake to the fast-changing dynamics of the modern world and mindful of changes brought by globalization and integration, today Ilham Aliyev ably defends national interests of Azerbaijan at all the international meetings and high-ranking negotiations. Consequently, the role and share of Azerbaijan in resolution of both the regional and international problems grow day by day. To put it shortly, Azerbaijan has become the leading county of South Caucasus because of the insightful domestic reforms and foresighted foreign policies carried out by Ilham Aliyev.

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