

19th anniversary of the anti-Armenian pogroms in Sumgait, Azerbaijan

AZERBAIJAN: ARMENOPHOBIA

AZERBAIJAN'S POLICY AND PRACTICE OF ETHNIC-CLEANSING

CONDEMN



1988 Sumgait



2005



Djulfa, Nakhichevan

the crime

PREVENT

AZERBAIJAN: a curriculum vitae in blood

FACT

Before 1930, Nagorno Karabagh had a land connection with Soviet Armenia, but the border was later changed under pressure from Baku, leaving Nagorno Karabagh entirely surrounded by Azerbaijani territory.

FACT

Twelve Armenian villages located in Lachin, a region of Azerbaijan that came to separate Armenia from Nagorno Karabagh by an artificially created 2.2 mile-long strip of land, were destroyed and the populations violently deported first in 1919 and then in 1923.

FACT

From 1926 to 1976 Azerbaijan's authorities created 17 new Azeri villages in Nagorno Karabagh, liquidating 85 Armenian settlements in the process. As perestroika provided the Union republics with more autonomy to deal with internal matters, the demographic and cultural "azerbaijanization" (i.e. "de-armenianization") of Nagorno Karabagh skyrocketed.

FACT

... acts of coordinated hooliganism against the Armenians of Azerbaijan were coupled by ... calls of Azeri intelligentsia in Baku to disband the Nagorno Karabagh Autonomous Region and redraw the map of the Transcaucasus in order to annex Armenia's southern province of Zangezur (Siunik) to the Azerbaijani SSR.

FACT

In Chardakhly, when the local population resisted an ultimatum to vacate the town and provide their houses for the newly arrived Azeri settlers, the Communist authorities of the Shamkhor district of Azerbaijan, supervised by Shamkhor's Communist Party boss A. Asadov and backed by regional police and KGB agents, organized a pogrom whereupon mass beatings and the destruction of property of Armenians took place. The events in Chardakhly exploded half a year before the first demonstrations had been held in Nagorno Karabagh's capital of Stepanakert.

FACT

It is noteworthy that due to ... large-scale atrocities the international community in 1919 rejected Azerbaijani Republic's application for membership in the League of Nations.

FACT

The inhabitants of [Chardakhly and Getashen] were deported (8,345 people total), while 56 of Getashen's residents, mainly women and the elderly, were massacred by Azeri special police units from 1-3 May 1991.

FACT

"During the holidays we played 'Armenian massacres,' which was a game we preferred to all others. Drunk with our racist passions, we used to sacrifice Tamar (who was Armenian by mother) on the altar of our atavistic



Beginning December 10, 2005, approximately 200 Azerbaijani soldiers amassed at the

Nakhichevan-Iran border to destroy the remaining grave markers (khachqars) at the Djulfa (Nakhichevan) Armenian cemetery. The broken cemetery stones were rolled down into the Arax river. To date, Azerbaijan bars any and all international missions from visiting the site.

hatred. First we arbitrarily accused her in the killings of Muslims, and then we executed her immediately, several times in a row, to prolong the pleasure. After that we chopped limbs, tongue, head, and intestines from her body, which were subsequently thrown to the dogs, this for the expression of our scorn for the Armenian flesh ..."

--From the memoirs of renowned French author of Azeri origin Um-el-Banin, who spent her childhood in Baku

FACT

With the mass indiscriminate killings of Armenian civilians in Sumgait, Kirovabad and Baku in 1988-1990, and the aggression against Nagorno Karabagh, this tradition of anti-Armenian violence was revived in Azerbaijan full-scale.

FACT

After the violent deportations of Armenians from Sumgait and Baku (235,000 deported from both cities in total), from 1989-1999 more than 200,000 Russians, Jews, Tatars and others left the capital city.

FACT

Failed with the ill-fated encroachment against the Armenians, the proponents of "Greater Azerbaijan from the Caspian to the Black Sea" seem to shift the focus of their activities from Armenia and Karabagh to another neighbor - Iran.

FACT

On February 19, 2004, Gurgen Margaryan, an officer in the Armenian Army attending a NATO 'Partnership for Peace' program in Budapest, Hungary, while asleep was hacked to death with an ax by a fellow participant from the Azerbaijani Army, Ramil Safarov.

AZERBAIJAN: 89 Years of Ethnic Cleansing

The Turkic incursions into Asia Minor and the Caucasus in the Middle Ages were accompanied by systematic massacres and the expulsion of the natives from their lands. In the modern era, the development of Azeri national self-awareness, which started fermenting in the beginning of the 20th century and continues to crystallize to date was similarly marked by pogroms directed against the Christian population of the Caspian region. From 1918 to 1920, the leadership of the independent yet short-lived Azerbaijani Republic, with the help of expeditionary Turkish troops, attempted to annihilate the entire Armenian population of the Baku and Elizavetpol provinces of the former Russian Empire, including Nagorno (Mountainous) Karabagh. In an attempt to execute their share of a pan-Turkic plan to craft an ethnically homogenous all-Turkic geopolitical belt that would stretch all the way from the Balkans to China, in total, the army and police of the government of the first Azerbaijani Republic, from 1918 to 1920, massacred an estimated 100,000 Christians — mainly Armenians — in the Baku and Elizavetpol provinces of the former Russian Empire. Besides Baku and Shushi (in Nagorno Karabagh), regions where mass slaughter of Christian civilians took place included: Aresh, Agdash, Geokchay, Lenkoran, Khachmaz, Shemakha, Nukha, Beilakan, Ganca (Gandzak), the town of Agulis and the entire districts of Gokhtan and Yerndjak (both in today's enclave of Nakhichevan).

The Soviet years contributed to the maturation of nationalism in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan became one of the Soviet Union's foremost aggressive implementers of ethnic homogenization policies. This process aimed at achieving the cultural, demographic and territorial-administrative "azerbaijanization" of those regions of the republic (e.g. Nagorno Karabagh) which survived earlier massacres and was forcibly separated from Armenia and attached to Azerbaijan by the revolutionary whims of the early Bolshevik regime in Russia, in 1920-1923.

An incomplete list of articles of this program, mainly directed against Armenians, included: the official prohibition of the teaching of Armenian history and literature in Nagorno Karabagh's schools; a ban on practicing the Christian faith in the region; a suspension of cultural contacts between Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh by the Azerbaijani KGB; a gradual removal of ethnic

"If by October of this year (1992) a single Armenian remains in Karabagh, the people of Azerbaijan can hang me in the central square of Baku."

ABULFAZ ELCHIBEY
President of Azerbaijan (1992-1993)
June 1992

Armenians from the leading administrative positions and their substitution by ethnic Azeris; and the systematic destruction of Armenian architectural monuments in Nagorno Karabagh and the neighboring areas of Azerbaijan.

Before 1930, Nagorno Karabagh had a land connection with Soviet Armenia, but the border was later changed under pressure from Baku, leaving Nagorno Karabagh entirely surrounded by Azerbaijani territory. Twelve Armenian villages located in Lachin, a region of Azerbaijan that came to separate Armenia from Nagorno Karabagh by an artificially created 2.2 mile-long strip of land, were destroyed and the populations violently deported first in 1919 and then in 1923. In 1928, the territory of the Nagorno Karabagh Autonomous Region was further trimmed, as its northern Shahumian district — historical Golestan — was cut off from the region to form a separate administrative unit inside Azerbaijan.

The economic discrimination that turned Nagorno Karabagh into a virtual Azeri colony, backward and exploited as a source of raw materials, was coupled with Baku's policy of ethno-demographic aggression. Consequently, the region's population shrank from 149,600 in 1923 to 123,100 in 1979,

while the population of Azerbaijan's Azeri-inhabited districts adjacent to Nagorno Karabagh expanded five-fold in the same timeframe. **From 1926 to 1976 Azerbaijan's authorities created 17 new Azeri villages in Nagorno Karabagh, liquidating 85 Armenian settlements in the process.**

Even though the Armenians of Nagorno Karabagh preserved their numerical majority, comprising according to the 1989 census 77% of the entire population, they, at the same time, also suffered a demographic decline compared to the situation in 1928, when they constituted 95% of the entire population within the borders of their autonomous region. As a result of the Azeri government's policy of ethno-demographic aggression directed against Nagorno Karabagh Armenians, the number of ethnic Azeri migrants in the region boomed, from 4.9% in 1923 to 21.5% in 1989. Not surprising, Nagorno Karabagh resented Azeri rule since the first days of the region's arbitrary incorporation into Azerbaijani SSR. With the most salient manifestations in 1923, 1938, 1947, 1966-67, 1977, and, finally, in 1988, when mass protests were held against Azerbaijani despotism in Nagorno Karabagh regularly. A kidnapped and abused prisoner of Azerbaijan, the Armenian region of Nagorno Karabagh has long been struggling for its very existence.

On 23 February 2001, Azerbaijan's President Heydar Aliyev, in his address to the Parliament (Malli Mejlis) of Azerbaijan publicly acknowledged that this policy was devised and directed by him personally. Writing in May 1999 in Azerbaijan's government newspaper "Bakinskiy Rabochiy," Interior Minister Ramil Usubov praised Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev for his administration's earlier efforts aimed at ousting ethnic Armenians from Nagorno Karabagh, thus forcibly altering the ethnic composition of the autonomous region in favor of Azeris.

Mikhail Gorbachev's liberalization policies—perestroika—marked the peak of ethnic homogenization projects across the USSR. **As perestroika provided the Union republics**

with more autonomy to deal with internal matters, the demographic and cultural "azerbaijanization" (i.e. "de-armenianization") of Nagorno Karabagh skyrocketed. By March 1987, this policy took explicitly offensive forms, alarming the Armenians of Nagorno Karabagh by the rise of Turkic militancy in Agdam, Kirovabad, Lachin and a number of other neighboring regions in Azerbaijan.

Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of liberalization effectively coincided with a new phase of post-industrial mutation of the young and unstructured national identity of Azeris, and — as happened periodically, under similar circumstances in the past — was to include another cycle of ethnic purges in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani state-sanctioned pogroms against Armenians intensified on 1 December 1987, on the 90th birthday of Ivan X. Baghramian, Field Marshal of the USSR and perhaps the most prominent Karabaghi Armenian in the 20th

"... Armenians raised [the Karabagh] issue in the 1950s and 1960s as well. ... I headed Azerbaijan since 1969. ... I gave more attention to Nagorno Karabagh in order to preserve Azerbaijan's integrity, to protect the integrity of its territories. I did this because, first, it was necessary to settle Azerbaijanis in Nagorno Karabagh; second, to prevent Nagorno Karabagh and the Armenians from raising [the Karabagh] issue."

HEYDAR ALIYEV
President of Azerbaijan
23 February 2001

century. Azerbaijani nationalists symbolically picked Baghramian's Armenian-populated hometown of Chardakhly, located not far from Nagorno Karabagh, as a starting point for their anti-Armenian ethnic cleansing campaign.

The proliferation of concocted historical narratives where neighbors were pictured as foes or people who deserve little respect was another dimension of the pre-conflict reality of Azerbaijan. Yo'av Karny, an Israeli journalist and Caucasus expert, demonstrated in his "Highlanders" how Azerbaijani nationalist attempts to fabricate history formed a prelude to the Karabagh conflict.

In Azerbaijan, ethnic cleansing was preceded by “cultural cleansing.” Karny points to the role of Dr. Ziya M. Buniyatov, Vice-President of Azerbaijani Academy of Arts and Sciences, whose controversial state-supported project to invent Azerbaijan’s past and “un-invent” that of Azerbaijan’s neighbors soon spilled over into academia and helped to bring about a major regional trouble.

In the 1980s, Azerbaijani scholars, through a series of “discoveries,” built up a body of highly controversial literature that denied the association of thousands of ancient Armenian churches and monasteries in Nagorno Karabagh with Armenian culture and history. The eastern part of the Republic of Armenia was blatantly declared by Buniyatov and his disciples as a “historical Azerbaijani land.” Further, in a subsequently developed conspiracy theory, Buniyatov contended that Armenians and other native groups, which populated the territory of the present-day Azerbaijani Republic prior to the migration of proto-Azeri Turkic nomads from Central Asia to the Western Caspian, are not native at all. Therefore, he claimed, these groups deserved less political rights and should have ultimately been driven over the frontiers of the Azeri-controlled state. Dr. Buniyatov’s denial of the identity of a half million Armenians in Azerbaijan — “cultural cleansing” — formed an ideological pretext to the late ethnic cleansing campaign in Azerbaijan.

By 1987, Azerbaijani violence-on-paper translated into a sustainable policy on-the-ground. The efforts to bring to Nagorno Karabagh and adjacent areas new echelons of Azeri colonists gradually turned into an anti-Armenian ethnic cleansing campaign, which officially began in Azerbaijan in September 1987 in the town of Chardakhly, the largest Armenian settlement in Azerbaijan outside the Nagorno-Karabagh Autonomous Region. Chardakhly once was part of the historical province of Artsakh/Nagorno Karabagh.

The acts of coordinated hooliganism against the Armenians of Azerbaijan were coupled by the calls of Azeri intelligentsia in Baku to disband the Nagorno-Karabagh Autonomous Region and redraw the map of the Transcaucasus in order to annex Armenia’s southern province of Zangezur (Siunik) to the Azerbaijani SSR.

In Chardakhly, when the local population resisted an ultimatum to vacate the town and provide their houses for the newly arrived Azeri settlers, the Communist authorities of the Shamkhor district of

Azerbaijan, supervised by Shamkhor’s Communist Party boss A. Asadov and backed by regional police and KGB agents, organized a pogrom whereupon mass beatings and the destruction of property of Armenians took place. Apparently, the aim of the Chardakhly pogrom was to evict Armenians first from the territories adjacent to Nagorno Karabagh, where they constituted a demographic minority, and then to spread this policy to Nagorno Karabagh proper, where any plans to deport the Armenians were more likely to face organized resistance.

The events in Chardakhly exploded half a year before the first demonstrations had been held in Nagorno Karabagh’s capital of Stepanakert. Chiefly out of fear of repressions by Moscow, these acts of mass protest were peaceful and mild. They started petitioning USSR’s central authorities in Moscow to remove the Nagorno Karabagh Autonomous Region from the direct subordination of Azerbaijani SSR, until, as demonstrators argued, it was too late to rescue the Armenians there from the seemingly inevitable fate of being harassed out of their homeland, as nearly had happened in Chardakhly.

The protesters used only constitutional mechanisms for the expression of their will, employing the residual mechanisms of democracy that were still formally present in the Soviet political system and which Gorbachev-supported reformers in Moscow proposed to activate. Initially launched in Stepanakert, the protest movement against Azerbaijan’s unfolding ethnic cleansing project spread to Armenia by late February 1988.

After the events in Chardakhly, the Armenian residents of Nagorno Karabagh feared that the destiny of their homeland would soon be that of the Nakhichevan enclave of Azerbaijan.

Under pressure from the sympathetic-to-Azerbaijan Kemalist Turkey, Nakhichevan too — an internationally recognized Armenian territory — had been cut off from the Republic of Armenia and given to Azerbaijan by Russian Bolsheviks in 1921, while not even having a common border with the rest of Azerbaijani Republic. Downsized to a tiny and forgotten minority, Nakhichevan’s Armenians were subjected to a policy of “white massacre” during 70 years of Azeri misrule. While constituting nearly one half of Nakhichevan’s population in the 1940s, native Armenians were prompted to leave the region and comprised by 1988 a meager 2.4%. Currently, there are no Armenians left in Nakhichevan.

The rise of Azeri chauvinism in 1987, along with Nakhichevan’s white massacres, harkened back

to the 1905 anti-Armenian riots in Baku and the legacy of the 1918-1920 slaughter of Armenian civilians in Nagorno Karabagh by Azeri armed gangs and Ottoman Turkey's expeditionary forces — especially the 23 March 1920 destruction of Nagorno Karabagh's regional capital of Shushi, where up to 20,000 Armenian civilians were indiscriminately killed. **It is noteworthy that due to these large-scale atrocities the international community in 1919 rejected Azerbaijani Republic's application for membership in the League of Nations.**

Violence occurred when the institutional barriers of the USSR, which had served as security guarantees for the ethnic minorities, vanished, and when the prevalent nationalities acquired unlimited opportunity to victimize the minority groups. This became the worst nightmare for the native Christians of Azerbaijan (Armenians, Christian Tats and Udins).

Chardakhly and Getashen together comprised the backbone of so-called Northern Artsakh (historical Gardman-Hayots region), whose 44 Armenian settlements were left unincorporated into the Nagorno Karabagh Autonomous Region when that autonomy was created by the Bolsheviks in 1923. The leadership of both the first and second (Soviet) Azerbaijani republics tried — albeit unsuccessfully — to weed out Armenians from both towns. Despite the heroic resistance of the local population, both settlements were eventually destroyed and pillaged in the last years of the USSR by Azeri paramilitary gangs, in the course of the implementation of the Azeri ethnic cleansing project, from 1987-1991. **The inhabitants of both towns were deported (8,345 people**

total), while 56 of Getashen's residents, mainly women and the elderly, were massacred by Azeri special police units from 1-3 May 1991.

In 1991, Azerbaijan dismantled the previously existing Nagorno Karabagh Autonomous Region. The goal of the nationalist regime in Azerbaijan was to ultimately make Armenians leave the territories of their historical settlements. The Azerbaijani government designed to destroy

In his article "Nagorno Karabagh: Mission of Salvation Began in the 1970s," published in May 1999, in Azerbaijan's government newspaper "Bakinskiy Rabochiy," Interior Minister Ramil Usubov testifies:

"Heydar Aliyev, who became the 1st secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan on 12 July 1969, along with economic, scientific, and cultural work, took a demonstratively principled approach toward Nagorno Karabagh, an approach based on national norms and style. [...] This created conditions for an inflow of the Azeri population from neighboring regions, like Lachin, Agdam, Jebrail, Fizuli, Agjabedi and others. Azeris, who resettled into Nagorno Karabagh, were registered there, without the usual hindrances. ... All these measures in economic, educational, personnel, and other policies ... helped in the strengthening of ties between the autonomy and regions of Azerbaijan, and increased the inflow of Azeris. Thus, if in 1970 Azeris made up 18% of Nagorno Karabagh's population, in 1979 they already made 23%, and after 1989 — 30%. ..."

Karabaghi Armenians as a national, ethnic, racial and religious group.

The Armenians in Nagorno Karabagh withstood the brutal onslaught from Baku by reestablishing — through their parliament and a region-wide referendum — an independent state with its own political and military structure.

LEGAL FACTS ON THE NAGORNO KARABAGH ISSUE

The territory of Nagorno Karabagh has never been a part of the independent Azerbaijani state, because until 1918 such a state did not even exist.

Between 1919-1920 the newly-established Azerbaijan republic, besides Karabagh, claimed many Armenian territories and for these reasons its application for membership in the League of Nations was not complied with.

Karabagh was forcefully included in the territory of Azerbaijan following the latter's loss of independence when it became a Soviet republic. The territory of Nagorno Karabagh was given to the pliable Azeri leaders by the Bolsheviks despite the vociferous protests of the region's Armenian majority.

Thus Karabagh as an integrated part of Azerbaijan was *only* a Soviet reality. This reality ended in 1991 when the USSR disappeared from the world's political map, just as Karabagh disappeared from Azerbaijan's map.

This happened in an absolutely lawful manner.

On 30 August 1991, Azerbaijan seceded from the USSR, implementing its constitutional right and restored its statehood of 1918-1920, i.e. the statehood, which did not include the Karabagh territories. Three days later, the Nagorno Karabagh Republic seceded from Azerbaijan, in its turn implementing its constitutional right to separation, laid down in the Soviet law on "The Order of Solution of the Matters Related to the Secession of a Union Republic from the USSR". Article 3 of this law reads:

"In a Union Republic with autonomous republics, autonomous regions (oblasts) and autonomous areas in its composition, referendum is held separately for each autonomy. To the peoples of autonomous republics and autonomous formations the right to independently solve the issue of their stay in the USSR or in the seceding union republic, as well as the right to their state and legal status is reserved."

Thus the constitutional and legal basis for the establishment of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic is irrefragable.

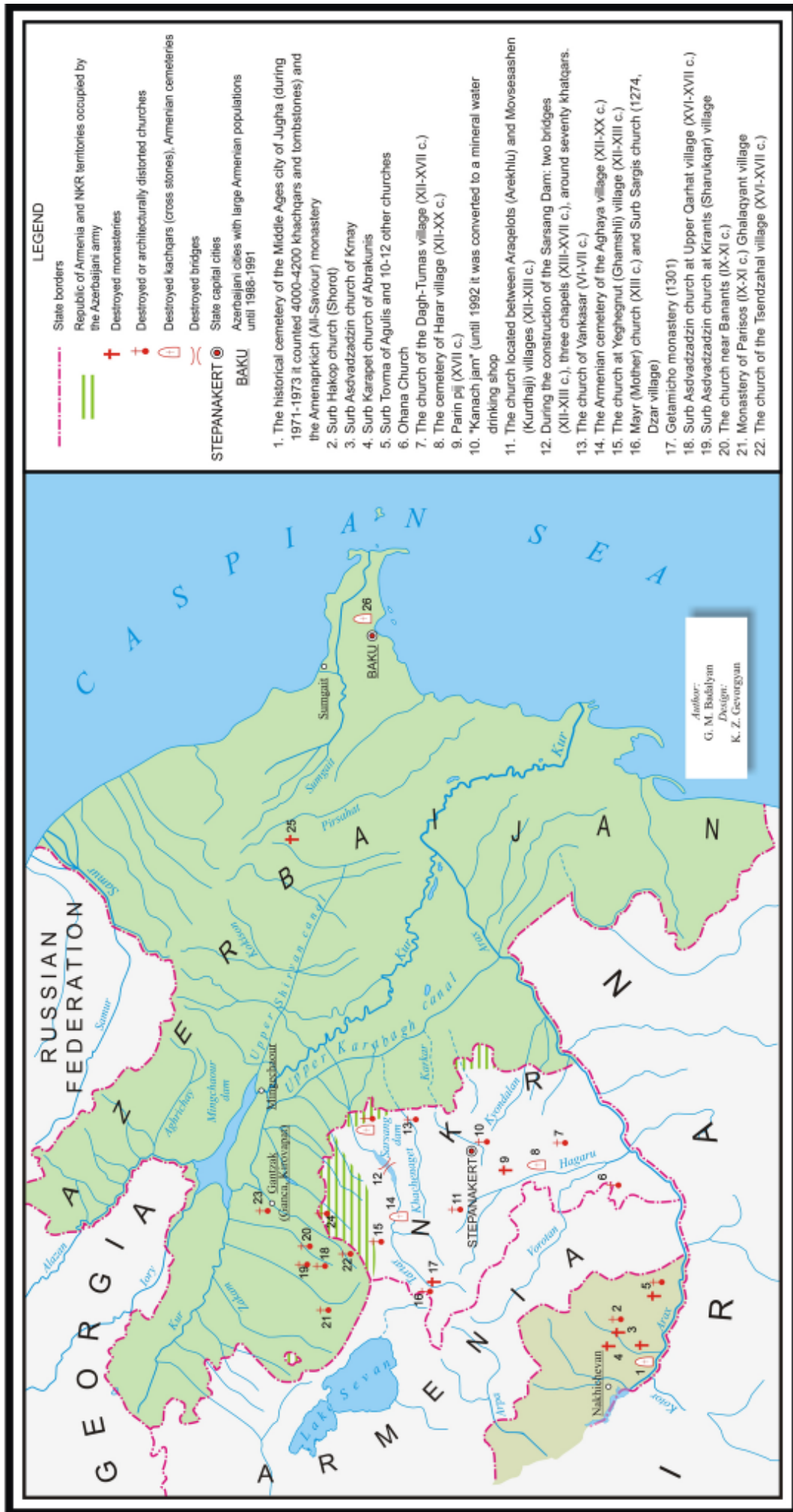
"Not only no status at all should be given to Nagorno Karabagh within Azerbaijan, but even granting citizenship to Armenians in Azerbaijan is a crime."

VAFA GULUZADE
Advisor to Heydar Aliyev,
President of Azerbaijan
"Bakinskiy Rabochiy", February 24, 1991

The political necessity for the establishment of the Nagorno Karabagh Republic and the declaration of its independence was based on the decades long discriminatory policies of the Soviet Azerbaijani authorities against the region and its majority Armenian population, as well as their violent reaction to the peaceful demands of the region's population and authorities to respect their civil and human rights.

The Azerbaijani aggression against the Nagorno Karabagh Republic followed the secession: war, bloodshed, destruction, refugees, blockade. And all the responsibility for the tragic consequences of these aggressions fall on the party which unleashed them.

Cultural Destruction by Azerbaijan (Partial list)



Historical Plunder and Cultural Destruction

In the early 1980s, the Azerbaijani Academy of Sciences embarked on a highly controversial project aimed at denying the Armenian character to thousands of historical monuments found on the Armenian-populated territories that were forcibly attached to Azerbaijani SSR in the 1920s. In 1997, when the head of the project, Ziya Bunyatov, was assassinated by his mafia companions, Farida Mamedova took over the project of Azerbaijan's "cultural cleansing." The policy of "cultural cleansing" formed the ideological basis for and preceded later ethnic cleansing against the Armenians in Azerbaijan.

In her works, Mamedova eclectically blends historical research, racist presumptions and conspiracy theories. She is best known for her attempts to "scientifically" prove that the Armenians do not deserve an independent national state of their own. In 1987, Dr. Mamedova welcomed Azerbaijan's ethnic cleansing initiative and called on her countrymen to further proceed with the annexation of parts of northern Iran, southern Armenia, and Dagestan (Russian Federation).

Certain Azeri academics have recently gone beyond the bounds of acceptable standards of scholarship by manipulating the text of printed editions of primary sources. These mutations, in what purport to be critical editions, consist chiefly in expunging most references to Armenia and the Armenians.

Ziya Bunyatov manipulated historical texts, trying to manufacture the tissue of Azerbaijan's history from parts of the historical heritage of Armenians, Persians, and other native peoples of the region, in order to create a misleading impression that contemporary Azerbaijan continuously existed in history as an identifiable political and ethnic entity.

The true nature of Bunyatov's mindset, however, was revealed during the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. Beginning from 1988 and throughout the conflict, Bunyatov published articles aimed at providing moral justification for anti-Armenian violence in Azerbaijan, including the city-wide massacre of Armenian civilians in Sumgait. A staunch apologist of the Soviet political order and hate writer, he periodically lashed out against those

Soviet human rights activists, e.g. Academician Andrei Sakharov and Galina Starovoitova, who defended Nagorno Karabagh's right to self-determination.

Several travelers' accounts have also been subject to the same tampering by Bunyatov. For one example, in Bunyatov's new edition of the account of the German traveler Johann Shiltberger of his wanderings through Karabagh in the early fifteenth century, Bunyatov has deleted critical references to Armenia and Armenians, particularly in those parts of the text which depict an Armenian presence in Karabagh. Bunyatov has boldly omitted chapters 63 through 66 of the manuscript, some twenty pages in all, which deal with Armenia and the Armenians, and has altered some of the text which he has maintained in his edition.

These altered editions have been printed in press runs of tens of thousands, and will, in time, replace the now rare earlier editions. One fears that these

"Armenia is a fictitious state created on Azerbaijani land ..."

HEYDAR ALIYEV
President of Azerbaijan
28 March 1998

new versions will be regularly cited by inexperienced historians, or by those with a political agenda, to the detriment of objective scholarship for decades to come.

Azerbaijani nationalism employs historical narratives to create mythical images of the past, which, in turn, later become a driving force behind the political agendas of opportunistic leaders and can be used to mobilize the masses for destructive action. Azerbaijan's nationalist myth-making is not the fact of the past, but is a process that started recently and continues today. Azerbaijani nationalism and chauvinism do exist as distinct and increasingly influential ethno-political phenomena, with their own logic, mythology, historical roots and objective mode of development.

One of the birthmarks of Azeri nationalism — cultural plagiarism — is thought to be behind the denial of cultural and political rights of Armenians, Udins,

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Nakhchivan August 2005

By Steven Sim

The following is an account of my visit to the region of Nakhchivan, in Azerbaijan, during August 2005. My primary purpose in visiting Nakhchivan was to try to discover what the condition of that region's numerous Armenian monuments was. This was in the light of the widely reported damage inflicted on the medieval Armenian cemetery at Jugha, west of modern Julfa, in 1998 and 2002.

My criteria in drawing up a list of sites to be visited was to choose those monuments that were architecturally the most visually interesting, whose locations I could place on a map, and which did not lie too close to the Armenian border. For this I was guided by the photographs and information contained in Armen Aivazian's 1990 publication "Nakhchivan Book of Monuments". The photographs in this book were taken between 1965 and 1987.

I entered Nakhchivan by land, by way of Turkey, and travelled first to Naxçivan city. The following day I hired a car and driver.

(...) As we left Shurut the driver then told me that the villagers had phoned the police in Julfa and that a car would probably be waiting for us somewhere along the road.

A car was indeed waiting for us, shortly after the hamlet of Gah. In it were a policeman and someone in civilian clothing. The policeman got out and got into the back of my taxi. He could speak rough English and said that he was actually traffic police.

"Do you have topographic map, ethnographic book?" he asked.

I replied in the negative – but he made a cursory search of my bag anyway.

We continued along the earthen road and on reaching the tarmac road we turned to the left, towards the town of Julfa. In Julfa we stopped at the police headquarters, where I was first taken to see the head of the traffic police, then to the deputy-head of the regular police (where my bag was again searched).

After waiting in a corridor for a while, I was escorted outside and into a car that took me to the town's Araz Hotel, the taxi driver following behind in his car. I was escorted into a garden at the back of the hotel. Waiting at a table was a man in his 50ies, and a younger man in his 20ies. My escort also sat down at the table, and gestured to me to take the remaining chair. The taxi driver was given a seat a few metres away. The time was now about 5:30pm, and it was not until 8pm that I was finally allowed to leave. I will not bore you with details of all the questions that followed – however I will mention those that seem to throw some light onto the attitudes that Azerbaijan holds about Armenians and anything Armenian.

Everything in my bag was taken out and carefully looked at, and the bag itself was examined for any secret compartments. This lasted for about 15 minutes, without a word being spoken. Then the younger man spoke to me in English, mostly translating questions given by the older man (whom I took to be some sort of security chief – he never gave me his name or position).

To start with I was asked "What was my job, how much did I earn, who paid me to come to Nakhchivan, why would I use my own money to come here?"

He examined carefully a notebook I had with me. One of the things that I had written in it was the title of a book about Ottoman Armenians I had seen in a bookshop in Turkey. Seeing the word "Ermeni" in the title he asked me about it. When I told him what it was, there was incredulity in his voice – he was clearly astonished that a book about Armenians, written by a Turkish Armenian, could be published in Turkey, in Turkish, and that Turks would wish to buy it!

They checked through all the photographs stored in my digital camera. Fortunately I had left those of the Yernjak valley in my hotel room. They showed most interest in a photograph I had taken in Naxçivan city. It was of a stone slab that I had seen in the gardens opposite the Momina Hatun mausoleum, surrounded by a large collection of ram-shaped gravestones. On this stone was carved a cross rising from a rectangular base. The arms of this cross ended in a two-pronged fork, and the head ended in a semicircle. When I had seen it I thought that it resembled a very simplified khatchkar. "What do you think this is", he asked.

"It looks like a cross", I replied.

"No it isn't. It cannot be. Only Muslims have ever lived in Naxçivan!" he replied.

"Well, what do you think it is?" I asked him.

They had a discussion amongst themselves for a while, before pronouncing that "the curved top is a crescent moon – that is a Muslim symbol, so it is really an Islamic carving".

They seemed pleased with themselves for concocting this explanation – so I was surprised to discover, when checking over my pictures later, that they had deleted the two photographs that showed this stone.

They asked me why I thought that there was a church in Shurut.

"Because a book had told me", I said.

"It is wrong, it is lying to you. It is an Armenian book, yes?"

"Yes" I replied.

"You see, Armenians are always lying – they are lying to everyone".

I couldn't resist pointing out to them that there were photographs of the Shurut church in the book. To this they responded by saying "Armenians, they came here and took photographs of Shurut village and then they went back to Armenia and put into them photographs of a church in Armenia."

"It is all just Armenian lies. They are lying to you! There never were any Armenian churches anywhere in Naxçivan. There were no Armenians ever living here – so how could there have been churches here? There never was a church in Abrakunis, there never was a church in Shurut, there never was a church in Julfa!"

My interview culminated with them having a discussion amongst themselves, at the end of which they said, "we think that you are not here with good intentions towards the Azerbaijan republic".

I was told that I had to be out of Nakhchivan by midnight. It was agreed that for an additional 50 dollars on top of the agreed fare to Shurut, my taxi driver would take me back to Naxçivan city and then on to the Turkish border. I crossed the border with about 45 minutes to spare.

© Steven Sim, January 2006





1997 - The Armenian cemetery at Djulfa in the region of Nakhichevan (on the right), photographed from the Iranian side of the border.



2005 DECEMBER - Approximately 200 Azerbaijani soldiers amassed at the Nakhichevan-Iran border to demolish the remaining grave markers at the Djulfa Armenian cemetery. They broke the remaining cemetery stones (dabanakars) with sledgehammers and axes. The broken cemetery stones were rolled down into the Arax river.



2006 MARCH - Armenian clerics on the Iranian border photographed the barren cemetery and its new feature - a shooting range.



2007 FEBRUARY - To date, Azerbaijan refuses to allow any international mission to visit the site.

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Tats, Talishes, Lezgins and other native groups of Azerbaijan's colonized periphery, which survived earlier Turkification and became minorities.

As a people whose national consciousness and ethnic self-awareness crystallized only with the imposition of Soviet rule, Azeris have been long grappling with a sense of insecurity and inferiority in their relations with the older cultures of their Persian, Armenian and Georgian neighbors. Contemporary Azeris — similarly to their Turkish cousins — are the descendents of Turkic horsemen who arrived to the Caucasus from their homelands in Central Asian regions in the late Middle Ages. To date, the languages and a bulk of ethnographic specs of Turks and Azeris only insignificantly differ from those of Central Asia's Turkic groups, e.g. Turkmen and Uzbeks. Prior to the Turkic invasion of the eastern part of the Armenian Plateau, the territory of today's "Azerbaijan" was mainly populated by Armenians (to the west of the River Kur) and a number of Persian- and Lezgin-speaking groups (to the east of the River Kur).

No specific Azeri state ever existed before 1918. Historians agree that the surfacing in 1918 of a Turkish-imposed entity called "Azerbaijan" was largely an accidental twist of history, and it is questionable as to whether the Azeri nation would have ever been forged at all, had there not been the spectacular discovery of large deposits of petroleum in the Western Caspian region by Russian geologists in the late 1860s. In this regard, Azerbaijan presents an instructive example of how the processes of modernization are capable of creating entire nations virtually from scratch.

It is a stretch to speak about the existence of "Azeris" or "Azerbaijanis" of any sort, either as a single ethnic group, cultural entity or ethno-political unit before the late 19th century, when the oil boom in the Caspian resulted in rapid industrialization and urbanization of the Absheron peninsula. This socio-economic change turned Baku into a large metropolitan area, providing the nascent Turkic intelligentsia of the Caspian an opportunity to turn their share of oil bonanza into a nationalist educational and political resource.

The lack of clear ethnic self-awareness among the Turkic tribes and clans of the Caspian confused the Russian imperial administration at the time it governed the lands of the Southeastern Caucasus. To create a resemblance of order in the ethno-demographic cacophony of local Turkic shepherds, Czarist bureaucrats had to coin a special generic term to characterize them: Caucasian Tatars. Persians traditionally referred to them as Turks.

Prior to the 20th century, most proto-Azeris/Caucasian Tatars lived pristine, self-sufficient lives

of nomadic herdsman. The Turkic tribes that settled in the Western Caspian shot to prominence through harassing and robbing merchants who traveled along the Great Silk Road. These tribes significantly contributed to the gradual decline of this important commercial artery that in the medieval period was used for shipping goods from the Eastern Asia to Europe. In the absence of their own high culture, (meaning intellectual tradition based on written language) proto-Azeris had to use the intellectual products of neighboring civilizations of the region in order to interact with their political and social environs. The vernaculars of the Caucasian Tatars lacked literary tradition prior to the 19th century. When the territories of contemporary Azerbaijan were annexed by the Russian Empire from Persia, there appeared first humble attempts to create a literature in proto-Azeri dialect by early Turkic enlighteners — Abbas K. Bakikhanov (1794-1846) and Mirza F. Akhundov (1812-1878). This in contrast to Armenians, Georgians, and Persians, whose tradition of artistic and scholarly writing dates from antiquity.

The word "Azerbaijan," (originally — *Aturpatagan* in Parthian or *Atrpatakan* in Old Armenian) is also a confusing term. It never represented a single political or ethnic unit before 1918, being solely a geographic concept, for centuries designating an ancient northern province of today's Iran. Only in the last decade of 1800s, Azeri nationalist intellectuals came up with a controversial idea to hijack the term "Azerbaijan" in order to give a single name to the lands of the present-day Azerbaijani Republic, located to the north of the "original" Azerbaijan. Ironically, if anyone should be rightfully called "Azerbaijani" at that time, they should not have been the proto-Azeri Turkic tribal infiltrators from the sandy plains of Eastern Caspian, but the aboriginal population of present-day "Azerbaijan," i.e. Armenians, Udins, Talishes, Lezgins, Budughes, Tats, etc. All would later become victims of the Azeri policy of forced assimilation and ethnic cleansing.

The Turkic Azeri tribes of the Southeastern Caucasus would have continued their inconspicuous and unnoticed existence, on the margins of human history, if not the emergence of two factors that drastically changed the geopolitical map of the Caucasus: the spread of pan-Turanist ideology and the 1917 revolution in Russia. Both factors prompted proto-Azeri tribes to unite and, further, provided them initial means to masquerade themselves as a nation, throughout the rest of the 20th century.

Assembled from linguistically related but disparate pastoral and semi-pastoral tribal formations — known as Borchali, Kengerly, Demurchi-Hasanli, Djinli, Padar, Karapapakh, Afshar, Shahseven, Ottuz-Iki, Igirmi-Dort, Chobankara, Karim-Beghlu, Sayidlu-Akhsakhlu, Jam-Melli, Qafarlu, Karabeghlu, Godaklu, etc., etc. — Azerbaijan represents a mutant entity that took its final shape in the course of

scholarly experiments of Stalinist anthropologists as late as in the 1930s, long after the imposition of Soviet rule on the Southern Caucasus. Early Soviet terminology identified contemporary Azeris as “Turks” or, phonetically more precisely, as “Tyurks.” It was not until 1937, when the current ethno-name — “Azeris” (translated into *azərbaycanlı*, in Turkic) — was put into wide circulation by Bolshevik anthropologists, becoming one of a dozen of terms that were created to describe those ethnic entities of the USSR that lacked clear self-definition in the past.

The rationale of this early Soviet ethno-engineering was largely political and bureaucratic: it was easier to impose totalitarian control on the vast and restive non-Russian population of the re-assembled Russian Empire — the USSR — through the codification and structuration of its ethnic mosaic. However, the try-out with the Azeris went terribly wrong and snaked out of control. Stalinist “Dr. Frankenstein’s-of-anthropology” would hardly imagine back in the 1930s that the subject of their scholarly experiments in the Transcaucasus, yesterday’s dim Caucasian Tatar herdsmen (freshly remodeled into “Azeris”), would soon vigorously embark on

manufacturing their “historical past” — virtually from scratch — lashing out against commonsense. This by the means of attributing to themselves the pieces of cultural heritage of neighboring Persians, Armenians, Arabs, Turkomans as well as long extinct, semi-mythical “Caucasian Aluanians.” A range of historical leaders, scholars, poets, writers and musicians of the mentioned peoples — together with architectural monuments and other artifacts produced by them and found on the territory of today’s Azerbaijan — were wholesale declared manifestations of Azeri culture, which, through several miraculous “discoveries” of Azeri academics, almost overnight acquired lacking ancient flavor and gloss.

Mark Saroyan, an American political scientist, noted that Azerbaijani historians produced histories of “Azerbaijan” based not on the historical facts of a prior national state(s) but on the assumption that the genealogy of “Azerbaijanis” could be traced in

terms of putative ethnic-territorial continuity of all lands that are found within the borders of the present-day Azerbaijani Republic. Similarly, the history of the ancient tribal Christian commonwealth of Caucasian Aluania (also known by its customary Armenian name — *Aghvank*, or as Strabo’s “Caucasian Albania,” no reference to European Albania) was assimilated by Azerbaijani historians into the history of the “Azerbaijani (Azeri) nation,” despite the absence of any linguistic and cultural similarities between the Armenian civilization of Caucasian Aluania and the contemporary Azeris. In this way, cultural practices substantiated claims to

"The creation of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in the Northern Azerbaijan on some of Azerbaijani lands in 1918-1921, and its restoration as the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1991, does not mean that the Azerbaijan national liberation movement is over. ... The new stage will end with the creation and or restoration of a united Azerbaijani statehood. ... Already [in Iran] there are active organizations, whose sole purpose is the state independence of the Azeri Turks."

Excerpted from a speech by Abulfaz Elchibey, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan from 1991-1993; delivered at the V Congress [Kurultai] of the Azerbaijan Popular Front Party, 30-31 January 1998

ethnic continuity based on the modern form of the territorial national state.

Hardly unique in the history of the Soviet or other states, the Azerbaijani case demonstrates the logic of Stalinist national-state construction, whereby the formation of a Soviet republic named Azerbaijan required the existence — or invention — of an “Azerbaijani people” to inhabit it.

The lack of a tradition of ethnic Azeri statehood highlighted the problem of international legitimacy of the early Azeri state, when it was proclaimed after the demise of the Russian Empire on the territories with mixed population, where ethnic Azeri were often a demographic minority. While Armenians and Georgians imagined their newly born independent republics created in 1918 to contain the lands of the previously existing Armenian and Georgian state formations (kingdoms and principalities), Azeris used a quite different mode

of addressing this issue. Reflecting a specific attitude toward territoriality, Azeri leaders perceived their state as encompassing all the lands spanned by the routes of seasonal migrations of Turkic tribes, a tight net of which covered large swathes of the Transcaucasus. Hence the popular saying among Azeri nationalists in the beginning of the 20th century: *"Bir, iki, Kavkaz bizimty!"* ("One, two, and the Caucasus is ours!").

Rewriting history and pillaging the cultural heritage of neighbors has an important function in the ethnopolitics of Azerbaijan. This practice is aimed at legitimizing the presence of the Azeri state on the territories which were earlier associated with or, in fact, were original homelands of other peoples of the region and became part of today's Azerbaijan as a matter of chance, political expediency or even topographic error. Another rationale behind Azeri cultural plagiarism relates to the efforts to deny civil liberties and cultural rights to Azerbaijan's indigenous non-Turkic groups through hijacking their culture and "privatizing" their historical heritage by the republic's ethnic majority.

In addition to the controversies surrounding the modern concept of nation-state, there exists yet another political and intellectual root of Azeri historical revisionism and identity theft: the Turkish nationalism of the 1920s-30s, the ubiquitous blueprint of the late Azeri nation-state-building project. Kemal Ataturk-supported historians in Turkey at the time invented the so-called Sun Theory of Languages. At the core of this theory lies an odd doctrine that says all world languages developed from Turkish and all peoples of the world — from Japanese to Russians to America's Aztecs — originated from the Turkish "mother-super-race." Furthermore, the ancient civilizations of Asia Minor — including Hittites, Trojans and Sumerians — were simply declared as "proto-Turks." While the "Sun Theory" quickly sank into oblivion, never being taken seriously by anybody outside Kemalist Turkey, its controversial legacy was recently revived in Azerbaijan, whose population is closely related to the Turks.

Mimicking their Turkish role models, Azeris similarly began falsely personating themselves as heir of — unrelated to them — Midians, Manians, Aluanians (i.e. "Caucasian Albanians," no connection to European Albanians) and other real or hypothetical groups that inhabited the Transcaucasus at least fifteen centuries before the arrival of the first proto-Azeri nomadic infiltrators from the eastern shore of the Caspian to the territory of the present-day Azerbaijan. In an equally absurd manner, Azeri nationalist historians laid down claims to the legacy of late medieval Persian *khanates* (principalities) of the Transcaucasus, as the precursors of their modern nation-state.

As in the Turkish case, Azeri nationalists believe

that historical fabrications, which attribute pieces of other peoples' culture in contemporary Azerbaijan to Turkic Azeris, strengthen the international legitimacy of their nationhood and serve as a bulwark against possible encroachments of neighboring countries against the territorial integrity of their young state.

The fact that Azerbaijan is a recently constructed nation is a circumstance that makes historical revisionism a genetic, ever-present attribute of Azeri ongoing nation-building process. Azeris regard historical past as a periodically updateable domain that from time to time could be subjected to arbitrary, politically-motivated reformulations and revisions. In their nationalist exercises, Azeri scholars waxed insolent to the point that, as of today, proclaimed not only mosques but even Christian churches (!), found in the vicinity of former Azeri pastures and built by Persians and Arabs, or Armenians, respectively, as manifestations of their own "Azeri" architecture. ... It is both ironic and symbolic that Azeris, the descendents of those whose economic life in the past was sustained by nomadic banditry and looting, now try to embezzle not only material but also cultural and spiritual heritage of their neighbors.

Converted to Christianity by Armenian missionaries in the 5th century, Aluania/Caucasian Albania existed as a loose state nine hundred years before the first Turkic pastoral tribes — ancestors of today's Azeris — migrated en masse to the Caucasus from the Central Asian prairies, making indigenous Christians and Zoroastrians of the Caspian flee to the mountains. When Aluania disintegrated in the aftermath of the Arab invasion of the 7th-8th centuries, the smaller Udino-Armenian Principality of Nizh (Nidj) in a circumscribed form continued its political tradition.

However, in order to enrich Azerbaijan's thin historical record and justify the over-extension of its present territory, Azeri nationalist scholars in 1970s and 1980s tried to "expropriate" and attribute the cultural legacy of the Aluanians and their Udinian descendants to Azeris, amid surprise and indignation of international academic community. Azerbaijani historians produced histories of "Azerbaijan" based not on the historical facts of a prior national state(s) but on the assumption that the genealogy of the present-day Azerbaijani Republic could be traced in terms of putative ethnic-territorial continuity.

Similarly, the history of the early medieval Christian commonwealth of Caucasian Aluania was assimilated by Azerbaijani historians into the history of the "Azerbaijani (Azeri) nation," despite the absence of any linguistic and cultural similarities between the Caucasian Aluanians and the contemporary Azeris. In this way, cultural practices substantiated claims to ethnic continuity based on the modern form of the territorial national state.

Painful and bizarre as it is, Azeris — yesterday's little-known marauding vagrants from the Central Asia — are trying to pose as the descendants of older cultures of Christians and Zoroastrians of Southeastern Caucasus, whose flourishing civilizations in the not-so-remote past were crippled or even totally extinguished by the attacks of their predecessors.

Motivated by the odd logic of ethnopolitics, the deportation of the Udins from Azerbaijan in autumn of 1989 was chiefly driven by a desire to eradicate the rival claimants to the Aluanian historical heritage. The Udinian and Tatian towns in Koutkashen, Vartashen, Sheqi, Shemakha and Ismailli regions were burned, their graveyards demolished, and churches ransacked. Rescued Udins found refuge in Armenia's Lori Province.

As opposed to neighboring Armenians, Georgians and Persians, whose nationalisms had peaked long time ago and by now well faded away, Azeris are a nation-in-the-making, and, not least because of the excessive mythologization of contemporary Azeri ethnic identity, Azeri nationalism currently exists in the state of hypernationalism. Hypernationalism is an ideological deviation from the mainstream nationalism that sometimes transpires in the early stages of the development of ethno-national entities. It designates inability to adequately address not only the facts of the remote historical past but also the events in recent history. The cases of Hitler's Germany and the Young Turks' Ottoman Empire demonstrate that hypernationalism robs people of the sense of guilt and often turns them into paranoid zombies, capable of committing unspeakable atrocities against human beings with different ethnic or racial backgrounds.

With the Azeri identity still in flux, the adequate grasp of the objective component of social reality — be it history or politics — becomes an almost impossible exercise for those who knowingly or otherwise subscribe to the values and ideals of Azeri nationalism. Lies and truths, imagining and reasoning bear few marks of distinction at the current stage of development of Azeri ethnopolitical identity, with myths and reality mixing together in a swirl of apologetics and propaganda.

While the depth of Azeri practice to fiddle their way into nationhood continues shocking outside observers dealing with Azerbaijan, insights into the chronology of Azeri nationalist evolution explain the spectacular ability of Azeris to prevaricate and forge

facts about the events of the past and present. And many of these observers, including international mediators involved in the Karabagh peace process, begin realizing that because Azeri nationalism still undergoes hypernationalist fermentation, Azerbaijan is in grave difficulty to live up to most of its pledges of peace and toleration with regard to both minority groups and neighboring states.

The whole discussion about the Azeri cultural plagiarism and falsification would be redundant and unnecessary if not the immediate implications that these phenomena have for politics. Nationalism as

"This is Azerbaijan, and everybody here should learn by heart that nothing non-Azeri exists or ever existed on this land ..."

Excerpt from a speech of Mr. S. Suleimanov, head of the Dashkesan district's Azerbaijan's Communist Party, who supervised the demolition of Armenian architectural monuments in the town of Banantz (Bayan) by Azerbaijani KGB agents, on 26-27 July 1969

a political ideology implies the conversion of ethnic mythology into policy guidelines, and, in this respect, Azerbaijan presents a special case in point. Due to the bareness of a distinct Azeri self-image and state tradition, and virtual non-existence — prior to the 19th century — literature in the Azeri language, young Azeri nationalism is incapable, by default, to fully employ the means of positive self-definition and self-assertion of post-Soviet Azeri identity, in other cases usually achieved through the insights into the topic of "who-we-are."

Perversely coupled with hyper-nationalist paranoia, Azeri self-examination efforts tend to turn ugly, necessitating periodical aggressive interactions with minority groups and next-door neighbors, including the victimization of non-Azeris and the display of indiscriminate hostility toward them. These violent exchanges help to define Azeri ethno-political identity through mostly negative rather than positive patterns, in other words, through the understanding of "who-we-are-not" in contrast to "who-we-are." Ultimately, in Azerbaijan, sharp lines between "us" and "them" were drawn in blood.

All in all, Azeri leaders try to assemble Azerbaijani nationalist mythology from the pieces of historical heritage of Azerbaijan's neighbors and indigenous minority groups, unraveling the fabric of their civilizations in the process. Azeri nationalists make full use of the fact that while plagiarism, identity theft and falsification are viewed as criminal offences in the realm of domestic affairs, they are not codified as such within the parameters of the international law.

Put together in the last 30 years, the Azeri nationalist myth of origin runs as a patchwork of pseudo-scientific narratives, having little to do either with real historical facts, let alone plain common sense. The problem is that this eclectic collection of self-laudatory fables affects the attitude of the Azeri public toward the outside world and continues to translate into the aggressive foreign policy of Azerbaijan, providing it with the rationale of territorial revisionism and expansionism.

Azerbaijan's authorities did not dare to embark on explicit ethnic cleansing of the Armenians of Azerbaijan while the USSR was in place. Instead, Baku authorities tried to destroy those artifacts of Armenian cultural heritage ("cultural cleansing") which might remind observers about the Armenian historical background of Azerbaijan's west.

On 26-27 July 1969, the town of Banantz became a venue of mass demolition of Armenian architectural monuments by Azerbaijani KGB agents. By his own admission, the pogrom in Banantz was masterminded by Heydar Aliyev, the late President of Azerbaijan. In 1969, Aliyev was Azerbaijan's KGB chief.

The Sovietization of Azerbaijan placed a heavy burden on other ethnic groups as well, which involuntarily found themselves subject to Baku. Because of the open policy of forced assimilation, national minorities living in Azerbaijan, including Kurds, Tats, Udins, Talishes, Lezgins and others, almost disappeared. One such example is that of a Farsi-speaking national minority, the Talishes. In 1926, there were about 90,000 Talishes in Azerbaijan. However, according to the 1977 census, no Talishes were mentioned at all.

Largely a side effect of the early 20th century oil boom in the Caspian, the general concept of Azeri nationhood was maligned by factors developed during the industrial revolution in the region. Thus, the closest analogue of Azeri nationalistic attitudes toward the Armenians is anti-Semitism, with concomitant ideas of the "universal conspiracy" of purportedly better-educated and more prosperous Armenians against the young Azerbaijani nation.

These sentiments go back to pre-Soviet times. After the failed Russian revolution of 1905, the Czarist secret police, suspecting Jews and Armenians behind the liberal agitation in Russia, used Cossacks and Azeri bazaar mobs, respectively, for instigating acts of mass hostility against both groups. The result of those policies was the massacre of Armenians in Baku and Nagorno Karabagh by Azeris, which, in turn, coincided with anti-Jewish pogroms in Ukraine, Bessarabia and southern Russia.

The renowned French author of Azeri origin Um-el-Banin, who spent her childhood in Baku, depicts in her memoirs, "Caucasian Days," the

emotional atmosphere among the Azeri nationalist intelligentsia in the beginning of the 20th century. This is how she describes the popular games of Azeri children, who mimicked the behavior of their adult relatives at the time: "During the holidays we played 'Armenian massacres,' which was a game we preferred to all others. Drunk with our racist passions, we used to sacrifice Tamar (who was Armenian by mother) on the altar of our atavistic hatred. First we arbitrarily accused her in the killings of Muslims, and then we executed her immediately, several times in a row, to prolong the pleasure. After that we chopped limbs, tongue, head, and intestines from her body, which were subsequently thrown to the dogs, this for the expression of our scorn for the Armenian flesh ..."

The Presidential Decree

With the mass indiscriminate killings of Armenian civilians in Sumgait, Kirovabad and Baku in 1988-1990, and the aggression against Nagorno Karabagh, this tradition of anti-Armenian violence was revived in Azerbaijan full-scale. The missing ideological conceptualization of hostility directed against Azerbaijan's minority groups was soon formulated, and its most explicit example is the so-called "Decree of the President of Azerbaijan on the Genocide of the Azerbaijanis." The "Decree..." was issued on 26 March 1998 by the Office of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and published in most governmental newspapers at the time.

Written in the best traditions of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and Chapter XI of Adolf Hitler's "Mein Kampf," this document could also be viewed as a concise manifesto that summarizes the main postulates of contemporary Azeri nationalism at large. The publication of the "decree" openly legitimized and endorsed the proliferation of racist literature in Azerbaijan, which subsequently snowballed, rapidly becoming an inseparable part of Azeri post-Communist political culture.

The main theme of the "decree" is a painstaking yet grotesque story of how "the Armenians" — at large, i.e. as a racial group and an entire people — together with their mysterious but unspecified "patrons" not only have masterminded a centuries-old plot aimed at "eliminating the Azeris," but also have been meticulously implementing it throughout the last 200 years (!). Based on arbitrarily picked false accusations, the text of the "decree" demonizes the victims of Azeri chauvinism, resurrecting an earlier practice widely used during the 1905-1918 pogroms. Despite being an official state document, the "Decree..." is oversaturated with hate language. It opens with a symptomatic introduction, a key component of many racist writings — passage about unmasking a Grand Conspiracy:

"Azerbaijan's attainment of independence made it possible to recreate an objective picture of our people's historical past. Long years of secrecy about which the truth could not be told are being revealed, and the true nature of facts that were falsified at the time is coming to light. The genocide that has been repeatedly committed against the Azeri people, which for a long time was not subjected to proper political and legal assessment, is one of these unopened pages of history."

The "decree" tries to prove to the citizens of Azerbaijan — pure and simple — that "the Armenians" are solely responsible for all of their troubles, both old and new: "... all of Azerbaijan's tragedies, which took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries ... represented various stages of the Armenians' deliberate and systematic policy of genocide against the Azeris." Hence, the "Decree..." provides a ready-to-use rationale for an average Azeri of why "the Armenians" should be collectively loathed by the "... rising generation [of the Azeris] brought up in the spirit of the great humanistic ideals of Azeri literature and culture."

Racist writings, despite their ugliness are a genre of literature in their own right, with most xenophobic texts bearing structural and thematic similarities. Thus, some parts of the "decree" look like they have been directly copied from Hitler's Chapter XI with minor alterations, where word "Jew" is simply changed for "Armenian." Those are the passages that refer to the issues of Jewish or Armenian cultures, respectively, and the alleged exploitation of Marxism/Bolshevism by both groups.

An important feature of the document and Azeri nationalism at large, is the orientation toward territorial revisionism and ethnic irredentism (i.e. the idea of "reclaiming" lands from neighbors). This line of thought in the "decree" is explicated by a bizarre claim that Armenia is "a fictitious state [created] on Azerbaijani land." Ethnic Azeris in the document are described as "a divided people," torn between the Azerbaijani Republic and Iran, whose northern provinces, so-called "Southern Azerbaijan," are increasingly more loudly claimed by Azeri agitators in Baku. The "decree" vividly demonstrates that Azerbaijan has serious territorial ambitions

concerning neighboring countries, with Azeri accusations that Armenia ostensibly eyes part of Azerbaijan serving as a convenient cover-up for the designs of the Azerbaijani revisionist state itself. **Failed with the ill-fated encroachment against the Armenians, the proponents of "Greater Azerbaijan from the Caspian to the Black Sea" seem to shift the focus of their activities from Armenia and Karabagh to another neighbor — Iran.**

Given the aggressive and hysterical tone of the "decree" as well as manipulations with historical data in the text, it is yet a question whether Azeri elites are able to develop positive long-term policies with regard to Azerbaijan's neighbors and native minority groups.

The fear is that in Azerbaijan cultural plagiarism, racial intolerance and attempts to view the relations with neighbors through the prism of neo-pan-Turkist largesse and grandeur tend to penetrate the structure of new post-Communist political institutions in the form of carcinogenic inclusions, capable of affecting the whole political system down the road.

"In the nearest 25-30 years there will be no Armenian state in the South Caucasus. These people played so many dirty tricks on their neighbors, that they have no right to live in this region. Modern Armenia is built on the historical Azerbaijani territories. I think that in 25-30 years these territories will be transferred back under the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan"

RAMIZ MELIKOV
Spokesman of the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan
ZERKALO, August 4, 2004

The history of the Azerbaijani Republic in the post-independence period has already created such a precedent. In 1992, a year after independence, Azerbaijan became the first and to date the only state among the all post-Communist countries which allowed a representative of a neo-fascist group to become a member of the government. Thus, Col. Iskander Hamidov, the leader of the Azeri chapter of "Grey Wolves" (Bozkurt), a Turkish terrorist and neo-fascist organization that structurally models itself on Adolf Hitler's NSDAP, was appointed Minister of the Interior of Azerbaijan. "Grey Wolves," whose

earlier deeds ranged from the murder of progressive Turkish politicians in the 1970s to the assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II in 1981, are responsible for a bulk of war crimes in Nagorno Karabagh, including the mass slaughter of Armenian civilians in the town of Maragha on 10 April 1992.

After becoming Minister of the Interior, "Grey Wolves" paramilitary gangs were re-armed and upgraded to become special punitive units — notorious Death Squads — of Azerbaijan's national police. Before the eruption of the first Chechen war, Col. Hamidov and his "Grey Wolves" served as a link between the rebel army of the Chechen commander Dzhohar Dudayev, Turkish intelligence services, and Afghani-stan-headquartered terrorist networks. "Grey Wolves" supplied Dudayev's army with weapons, maps, and information.

The foremost significance of Azerbaijan's "little *Mein Kampf*" lies in the fact that it politically institutionalized those prejudices toward Azerbaijan's neighbors and minority groups that earlier existed in Azeri society merely in the form of common folklore. This transformed the ethnic bias into an array of state-promoted routine practices and activities, including the introduction of xenophobic texts into the system of secondary and higher education and the establishment of annual hate festivals — so-called "days of sorrow" (e.g. 20 January, 31 March, etc.). The "days of sorrow" effectively bookmark Azerbaijan's official calendar with the consequent periods of state-sanctioned public grief, perhaps to indicate the different stages of the 200-year-old Grand Conspiracy against Azerbaijan.

Some observers in the past had an image of Azerbaijan as a relatively cosmopolitan place. The reason why that erroneous image was so successfully maintained lies in the fact that the absolute majority of visitors to Azerbaijan used to limit the range of their travel to Baku, an industrial

hub where the spirit of proletarian internationalism-cum-cosmopolitanism has been kept up due to the efforts of local Armenians, Russians, Jews and representatives of a dozen other nationalities which together comprised a demographic majority in that city for a long time.

Baku was a unique phenomenon and never represented Azerbaijan at large. From a certain perspective, the massacres in Sumgait and Baku could be interpreted as revenge of the xenophobic, mono-ethnic and marginalized Azerbaijani

"It is no secret that our notorious neighbors, distorting recent and distant history, have assumed the full-scale offensive against Azerbaijan on all sides. [...] The Armenians have resorted to a new tactics, which is to distort the recent and distant history, distort the cause of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and present Azerbaijan as an aggressive country. At the same time our distant history is being distorted. For example, it is no secret in Azerbaijan that the Armenians came to Nagorny Karabakh - the integral part of Azerbaijan - as guests. [...] But I see very few people around the world know it. [...] We need to bring this truth to the global community. [...] All necessary conditions will be created, and extra funds will be allocated to this end."

ILHAM ALIYEV
President of Azerbaijan
AzerTag, December 14, 2005

countryside against the cosmopolitan, multicultural and well-off urban communities of the Absheron Peninsula. **After the violent deportations of Armenians from Sumgait and Baku (235,000 deported from both cities in total), from 1989-1999 more than 200,000 Russians, Jews, Tatars and others left the capital city.** The main reason is that the departure of Armenians shifted the demographic balance in the Absheron Peninsula. This event effectively ruined the last vestiges of Baku's cosmopolitanism, an old tradition that was rapidly replaced by Azeri chauvinism and xenophobia.

JOINT STATEMENT

On Azerbaijan's crimes and policies expressing hatred against Armenia and Armenians

On February 27, 2006, the political factions represented in the National Assembly of Armenia published a joint statement condemning Azerbaijan's hateful policies against Armenia and the latest expression of that policy which resulted in the barbaric destruction of the cross stones in Old Djulfa.

Since the first days of the establishment of the Soviet Union, an anti-Armenian policy of ethnic cleansing has been implemented in the Armenian lands that were arbitrarily attached to Azerbaijan. Starting February 1988 the Soviet then independent Azerbaijani authorities embarked on a new bloody phase of this policy, as a result of which Nakhichevan, the plains of Artsakh, Kantsag and other regions housing Armenian cultural monuments were cleansed of their Armenian population.

The further expansion of ethnic cleansing coupled with mass killings was halted only through the struggle of the Armenians of Artsakh to defend themselves and achieve national liberation. Based on the right of nations to self determination, the population of Artsakh held a referendum and declared its independence.

Today, the barbaric policy to destroy and remove all traces of Armenian historic and cultural values from territories cleansed of their Armenian population and still under the control of Azerbaijan are continuing with a newly found zeal.

Encouraged by the tame reaction of the international community in the face of the destruction of the cross-stones in Djulfa by the Azerbaijani Army units in December 2005, the authorities in Baku have embarked on a new project vandalizing the centuries old Christian cemetery.

The efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict are

periodically faced with the intransigent positions of Azerbaijan. There is an impression that Azerbaijan, by stalling the international community, is trying to gain time to implement its anti-Armenian policies.

The political parties represented in the National Assembly of Armenia firmly condemn all expressions of anti-Armenian hysteria in Azerbaijan, ranging from calls to revenge to the destruction of Armenian Christian monuments that are part of the entire mankind's cultural heritage.

Highly appraising the resolution adopted by the European Parliament condemning the Azerbaijani acts of vandalism and hate against Armenians, we expect international organizations to show even more resolve against such acts, for the sake of the resolution of conflicts and establishment of peace, harmony and mutual respect in the region.

“National Unity” Faction

“Justice” Bloc

“Popular Deputy” Group of Deputies

“Armenian Republican Party” Faction

“Armenian Revolutionary Federation” Faction

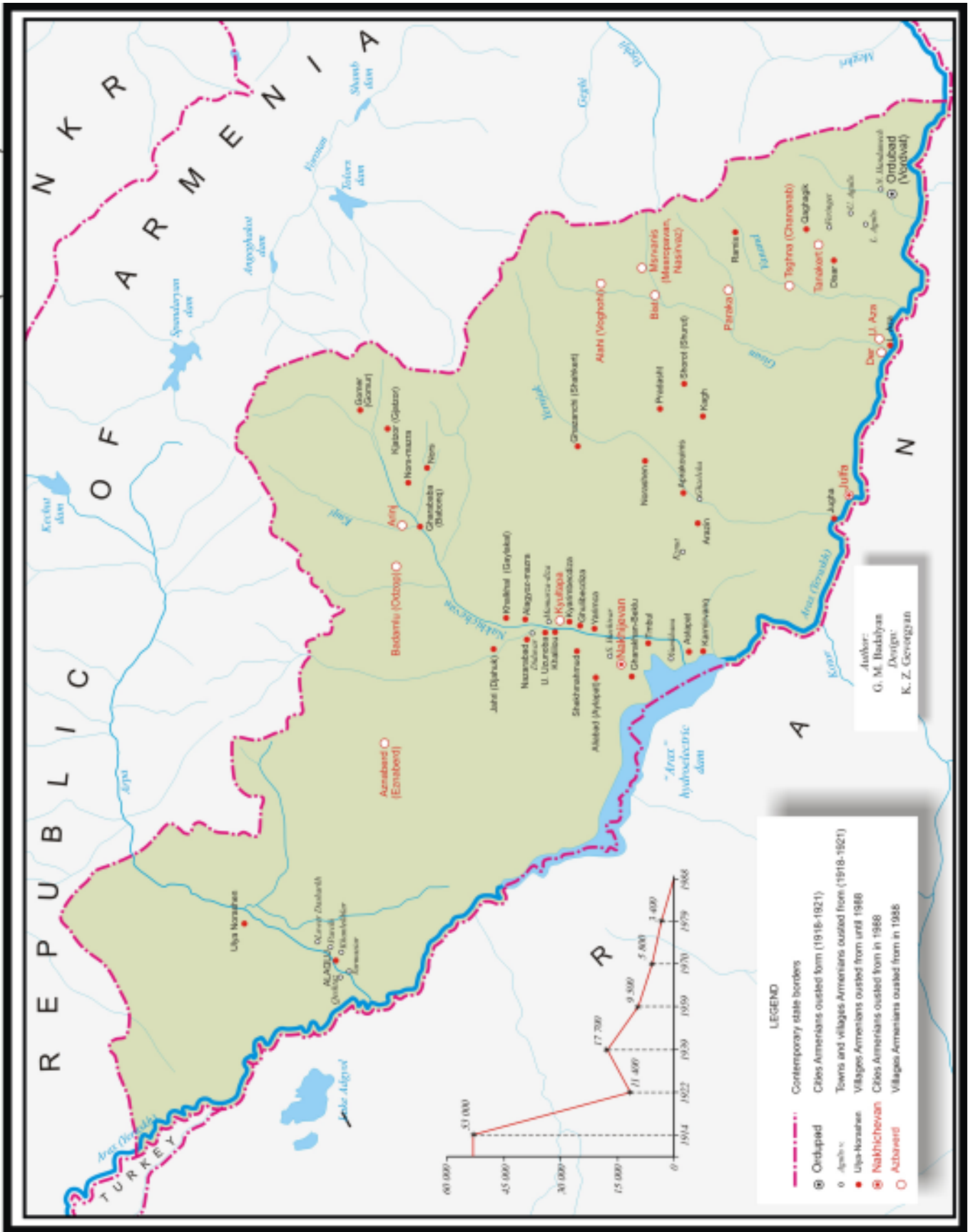
“Party of United Work” Faction

“Country of Rule of Law” Faction

February 27, 2006

Yerevan

ARMENIAN POPULATION CHANGES IN NAKHICHEVAN (1914-1988)



European Parliament resolution on cultural heritage in Azerbaijan

P6_TA-PROV(2006)0069 - B6-0111, 0115, 0126, 0129, 0130 and 0134/2006

The European Parliament ,

– having regard to its resolutions of 9 June 2005(1) and 27 October 2005(2) on Azerbaijan,
– having regard to its resolution of 19 January 2006 on the European Neighbourhood Policy(3) ,
– having regard to its previous resolutions on the South Caucasus and, in particular, its resolution of 11 March 1999 on support for the peace process in the Caucasus(4) and its recommendation to the Council of 26 February 2004 on EU policy towards the South Caucasus(5) ,

– having regard to the Council decision of 14 June 2004 to include both Armenia and Azerbaijan in the European Neighbourhood Policy, in particular for the purpose of fostering good neighbourly relations, especially through respect for minorities,

– having regard to the obligations of Armenia and Azerbaijan within the framework of the Council of Europe, especially through the European Cultural Convention, the revised European Convention for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage, and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which they have ratified and undertaken to respect,

– having regard to the UNESCO 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its 1954 Protocol, as applicable to occupied territories, to which both Armenia and Azerbaijan are party,

– having regard to the 2003 UNESCO Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage, by which the international community recognises the importance of the protection of cultural heritage and reaffirms its commitment to combat its intentional destruction in any form so that such cultural heritage may be transmitted to the succeeding generations,

– having regard to the report of the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)(6) and the UN Committee for Human Rights' intermediary report on freedom of worship and religion(7) ,

– having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas allegations have been made by Armenia that campaigns to destroy the Armenian cemetery at Djulfa in the region of Nakhichevan were carried out by Azerbaijani forces in November 1998 and December 2002; whereas the most recent destruction took place in December 2005, as evidenced by video footage taken by the Armenian authorities,

B. whereas there were numerous reactions by the international community to these actions; whereas Azerbaijan has not provided answers to inquiries by Mr Abdelfattah Amor, the former special rapporteur of the United Nations, concerning the events of November 1998 and December 2002,

C. whereas serious allegations have been raised about the

involvement of the Azerbaijani authorities in the destruction of these monuments,

D. underlining the exceptional nature of the Djulfa cemetery, which still had 6 000 khatchkars (crosses carved in stone typical of Armenian religious art) remaining and which testifies to the ethnic and cultural diversity of the region,

E. whereas the destruction or desecration of any monuments or objects of cultural, religious or national heritage infringes the principles of the European Union,

F. whereas such destruction is taking place in the context of the suspended conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh,

G. whereas there might soon be a favourable outcome to the negotiations on Nagorno-Karabakh and agreement might be reached on the principles for settling the conflict despite the unproductive meeting in Rambouillet on 10 and 11 February 2006 between the presidents of Armenia and of Azerbaijan,

H. recalling that the European Neighbourhood Policy aims to establish a privileged partnership with Armenia and Azerbaijan on the basis of common values, including the respect for minorities and their cultural heritage,

1. Condemns strongly the destruction of the Djulfa cemetery as well as the destruction of all sites of historical importance that has taken place on Armenian or Azerbaijani territory, and condemns any such action that seeks to destroy cultural heritage;

2. Calls on the Council and the Commission to make clear to the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan that all efforts must be made to stop the practice of ethnic cleansing, which has led to such destruction, and to find ways in which to facilitate the gradual return of refugees and displaced people;

3. Demands that the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan respect their international commitments, notably as regards cultural heritage, and, in particular, those deriving from the two countries' accession to the Council of Europe and their inclusion in the European Neighbourhood Policy;

4. Stresses that respect for minority rights, including historical, religious and cultural heritage is conditional on the genuine and effective development of the European Neighbourhood Policy, which must also lead to the establishment of good neighbourly relations between all the countries concerned;

5. Demands that Azerbaijan allow missions, such as experts working with ICOMOS who are dedicated to surveying and protecting archaeological heritage, in particular Armenian heritage, onto its territory, and that it also allow a European Parliament delegation to visit the archaeological site at Djulfa;

6. Calls on the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan to

Murdered for Partnership for Peace

On February 19, 2004, Gurgen Margaryan, an officer in the Armenian Army attending a NATO 'Partnership for Peace' program in Budapest, Hungary, while asleep was hacked to death with an ax by a fellow participant from the Azerbaijani Army, Ramil Safarov. On April 13, 2006, the Hungarian judge sentenced Ramil Safarov to life imprisonment without the right to appeal for parole for the next 30 years. According to the court's decision Safarov was not mentally ill and he was able to assess the consequences of his act when he committed it.

"R. Safarov must become an example of patriotism for the Azerbaijani youth."

ELMIRA SULEYMANOVA
the Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman) of Azerbaijan
"Zerkalo", February 28, 2004

"... if at the present stage the society of Azerbaijan fails to free Ramil Safarov from the hands of the Armenian Diaspora, then in the future we will fail to win the war for the liberation of the occupied Azerbaijani lands."

GYULTEKIN GADJIYEVA
Member of the Azerbaijani delegation at
the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
"Zerkalo", February 28, 2004

"It is time to wipe Armenia from the face of the earth."

HAVVA MAMEDOVA
Azerbaijani Member of Parliament
2006

comply with their international commitments, in particular as regards culture and the safeguarding of cultural heritage, entered into within international bodies such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe, and calls on both countries to do their utmost to protect archaeological, historical and cultural heritage on their territories in order to prevent the destruction of other endangered sites;

7. Invites the Commission and the Council to incorporate a clause on protecting both territories' invaluable archaeological or historical sites into the action plans currently being discussed in a European Neighbourhood Policy context;

8. Invites the Commission and the Council to make the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy action plans conditional upon the respect by Armenia and Azerbaijan for universally accepted principles, in particular their obligations as members of the Council of Europe regarding human and minority rights, and calls on the Commission and the Council to incorporate into these action plans specific

provisions for the protection of the cultural heritage of minorities;

9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Parliaments and Governments of the Member States, the Government and the President of Armenia, the Government and the President of Azerbaijan, as well as the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Director-General of UNESCO, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

- (1) Text Adopted , P6_TA(2005)0243.
- (2) Text Adopted,P6_TA(2005)0411.
- (3) Text Adopted,P6_TA(2006)0028.
- (4) OJ C 175, 21.6.1999, p. 251.
- (5) OJ C 98 E, 23.4.2004, p. 193.
- (6) World Report on Monuments and Sites in Danger 2002.
- (7) 58th Session of the UN General Assembly, 1/58/296, 19.8.2003.