

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

tcg-10 Part I

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Dear Peter,

In an effort to help you and others who might be taken aback at by the weight of this monster report I think it wise in this instance to include a sort of table of contents, to wit:

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As you must gather from some of the chapter headings, the report deals with the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan--a curious, ill-understood piece of real-estate that has, I have to admit right off the git-go, claimed a chunk of my heart.

With no further ado, then, I submit to you:

Impressions of Azerbaijan: (or travels in trans-Türkiye)

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Since 1925 the Institute of Current World Affairs (the Crane-Rogers Foundation) has provided long-term fellowships to enable outstanding young adults to live outside the United States and write about international areas and issues. Endowed by the late Charles R. Crane, the Institute is also supported by contributions from like-minded individuals and foundations.

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Aboard the Good Ship Turkmenistan

I write these notes to you from one of the most lovely hotels in the whole wide world.

I am not referring to the Plaza, or the Park, the New Stanley or even the infamous Tommy's Arms--my own dumpy hostel in Zakho, Iraq.

I refer, specifically, to the captain's quarters of the good ship Turkmenistan, a transcaspien cruise-liner now in semi-permanent damp-dock along the quay-side in down-town Baku, Azerbaijan.

Why is it so special?

Well: it enjoys the very best view of the harbor area (especially from the fine, al fresco restaurant situated between the vessel's twin smoke stacks), it affords immediate proximity to down-town (we are within spitting distance of the Azerbaijan parliament building, the promenade and various museums) and it boasts the unique status of being the only hostel in Baku town where foreign folks can pay in roubles. Unlike the Intourist, which charges outlanders a hundred yankee smackers a day, or the Azerbaijan or the Moscow hotels, which only accept Soviet citizens as clients, the good ship Turkmenistan falls in-between for reasons we cannot quite understand but are grateful for: our 2 1/2 room suite on the fo'castle, replete with hot running water and multiple portholes, costs us something like \$3 a day.

The price, though, is less important than the respite that the hotel-boat affords.

For we have been running strong and hard throughout Soviet Azerbaijan for the past two weeks, desperately trying to absorb and record impressions of people and places and ideas and have had just about no privacy whatsoever. Due to a confluence of circumstance, culture and personal contacts we have had a wonderfully confusing time and I submit the following notes to you with almost a sadness in that there is no guarantee that there will be a second or third or fourth report...Tashkent calls and although I would gladly sit and scribble a novel based in Baku (and I still might), I feel obliged to get to the territories where my fellowship was designed for. Still, I have promised myself and my spouse that we will try and come back here again.

It is that sort of place.

Let me then recite some basics of how and why we came and then include some themes of discovery and hope that there is some order and that you will sense our excitement and delight and frustration at having self-imposed time-constraints put upon us. Let us call these notes "Impressions of Azerbaijan" and leave it at that; we feel we have scratched the surface, and not much more.

Getting There

Our visas for the Soviet Union were secured in the USA and stamped for a San Francisco-Moscow-Tashkent entrance route. But due to circumstances we found ourselves in Turkey and came up with the idea of expanding the visas to include Baku and Akshabad in Turkmenistan so as to take the southern land route to Uzbekistan.

Then events compelled us toward Iraqi Kurdistan, a trip that I have written about at length. (Indeed, that material is now threatening to become a book in itself.) But our travels with the Kurds pushed our entrance requirements to the USSR to the limit. The visas expired on July 14th, and we were booked to fly from Istanbul to Baku on the 11th. Plenty of time, three days! But we were booked aboard the weekly Aeroflot flight, and with Aeroflot anything can happen.

Accordingly, I took the precaution of extending the time limit of our visas by dropping in to see the Soviet consul in Istanbul. There, to my amazement and chagrin, the counselor officer informed me that "these visas are no good. A page is missing and you cannot enter the USSR."

As you might imagine, this was more than a little disconcerting--especially after laying out more than \$1000 cash for the ridiculously over-priced and non-refundable Aeroflot tickets. Short of going back to San Francisco, though, there was only one thing to do: wing it, and see what happened at Baku customs.

For those who have traveled to the USSR before, perhaps, our flight was normal.

But I don't remember my own maiden journey to Tashkent as being so bad. There were seat assignments but no seats and not just because everyone aboard was carrying 100 kilograms of hand luggage: the Aeroflot folks had grossly oversold the flight and seemed to take a sadistic delight in watching people (like us) shuffle up and down the aisles looking for a place to sit, finding none. Tempers flared and the most vocal critics of the system were ejected from the aircraft; wisely and untypically, I kept my mouth shut until finally Hicran was shoved into a "tourist" class seat and I was pushed through a series of rows into a crammed and uncomfortable slot in back of the cabin. This was 'First class', I was informed--a cruel joke given the amount of leg room available. Too, given the hefty price of our tickets, I found it more than a little odd that the flight attendant wouldn't serve me liquid tranquilizers on request or even for dollars: they were reserved for the 'real' first class passengers from Baku, the folks who had shelled out \$80 for a round-trip ticket...

The flight, necessarily, was delayed by several hours and we were obliged to sit and sweat like pigs on the tarmac with no air-conditioning until finally and mercifully, the Tupolov's motors roared and we lifted off over the Black Sea, heading East to Azerbaijan.

Upon our arrival, more of the usual charade of efficiency was in store. After debarking, we watched our bags be hand-dumped from the belly of the craft onto a forklift, hoisted to a different level, hand-lifted off the fork and then once again dumped on a conveyor belt that led to the far side of the immigration counter. It remained mysteriously closed for an hour before the crush of returning Azeri nationals began clawing for the right to be the first through the gate.

Finally, waiting until we were the very last folks in line, we approached the immigration gate, wondering what would happen when the officials found, as they surely must, our irregular visas. The moment of truth arrived.

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The result was a sweaty anti-climax: the border guards indeed discovered that there was something wrong with our visas--the missing page. Happily, with a minimal amount of talk and the timely arrival of our hosts on the scene, we were suddenly punched through despite the revelation that the "missing page" represented the standard exit visa...I have no idea what will happen when we leave; I guess we are along for the ride.

The Reception Committee

Several years ago, in Ankara and while working for the Washington Post and other publications, I became acquainted with an Azeri correspondent for the Soviet news agency Tass. Let us call him Ahmed.

I always assumed Ahmed to be a spy and I always assumed that he assumed the same of me but we became pals anyway and were even featured on the same television show once when the Turks trotted out the few Turkish-speaking foreign journo's in their midst to talk about the country's "image problem" abroad.

It was a familiar subject much loved by the cultural hair-shirt crowd of Ankara and Istanbul and the program was not of great interest save for one element: while the rest of the guests endeavored to walk on thin ice and explain the reasons behind the 'Midnight Express' syndrom--Kurds, torture, drugs, etc.--Ahmed maintained an irritating insistence that the Azeri people knew everything about Turkey from food to music and loved and appreciated every bit of it. At the time, I thought it possibly a disingenuous and devious means of courting the Turkish viewing audience with Soviet cultural smooze. Only now do I realize how wrong my assumption was--but of that more, anon.

When I arrived in Turkey in April of this year, I called Ahmed to tell him about my Central Asia plans and that I wanted to include Azerbaijan on the itinerary. Ahmed was ecstatic that I was going to his homeland and insisted on my adding Baku to my list of visas and having his family take care of us there. We would, he assured us, be shown "all of Azerbaijan in total freedom and without paying a dime." I was just a bit nervous about this, given what I assumed to be his institutional connections, but figured that having some contacts there would be better than having none at all.

In the event, our trip happened just about exactly as Ahmed promised it would be, proving one of four things:

- a) that I am an idiot with no eyes to see or ears to hear of being totally under control at all times, but knew it not; or that
- b) he, as an Azeri national, has changed and had forsaken "USSR" concerns for more immediate, familial ones and thus wanted me--whoever he thought me to be--to see his nation; or that
- c) relations between Soviet and Americans have fundamentally been altered to the point where even suspected spies are welcome; or that
- d) I was just plain wrong about Ahmed to begin with.

Because due to his intervention we have had the most wonderful trip through Azerbaijan imaginable--a little irritating at times due to the obsessive "guesting" of our hosts, it is true--but truly amazing in the level of cultural exchange and the sheer amount of physical and intellectual turf we have covered in a mere few weeks.

For we came as Turks.

And to be a Turk in Soviet Azerbaijan is the next best thing to being God.

It all started as we cleared customs at Baku airport.

There, waiting for us now for five hours, were Ahmed's sister-in-law Kamra Hanim (director of a local sanatorium), her son Kahraman, her deputy Shamir as well as a pudgy gentleman named Kazim.

At first it was a little confusing figuring out who was who and no one bothered to explain the web of relationships until the end of our journey, and even then it remained pretty obscure:

We were officially Kamra's guests but stayed at Kazim's house but our guides to Baku were Shamir and Kahraman. Of the last two, the latter would usually spend the night with us while the former, freed from work by his boss, our hostess, would daily drive the distance from town out to Kazim Bey's place in the sprawling village\suburb called Mashtaga, tour us around the sights of Baku and then deposit us back out in the village house for dinner in the evening.

This was all fine and dandy if a little cumbersome because it allowed us to spend a lot of time in a semi-urban non-hotel environment (IE, with a "typical" Azeri family), and I have to say that Mashtaga was not the sort of place I would normally seek out. Also, given the sheer amount of car travel involved in getting there and back, we also got to know our hosts fairly well. All deserve a quick character sketch.

Kamra, Ahmed's sister in law, was a medical doctor assigned as the director of a unique sanatorium that specialized in naphthalene cures for rheumatism and other ills, including barrenness in women. A handsome woman of about 50 or so, she was a Communist Party member--else how could she have acquired her position?--as was her husband, a famous judo instructor across the Union. Initially, we were to have stayed at the sea-side sanatorium, but apparently the big-bosses were coming on an inspection tour and Kamra thought it best to park us in the house of the enigmatic Kazim Bey. The result ^{WAS} that we saw very little of our hostess; she even refused our dinner invitations late in the trip because a CP big-wig had recently died and it would have been unseemly for Kamra Hanim to be seen carousing the town with us during the mandatory 40 day period of mourning.

Thus, the task of transporting and entertaining was left to her assistant, Shamir, who became our primary guide, driver and baby-sitter. It was a particular aid that he was bi-lingual in Azeri and Anatolian Turkish, a facility acquired by a couple of trips to Turkey, a constant listening to Turkish films and cassettes and the fact that his father lives in Istanbul.

Shamir was a war orphan, and this informed his being.

Just before his birth in the early 1940s, his father had been taken prisoner by the German's and sent to a labor camp in Finland. Upon the end of the war, though, he had chosen to join the other hundred thousand Azeri POWs who thought that migration to Turkey was a better idea than returning to the homeland. Enough was known about the music the Crimean Tartars had been obliged to dance to keep any and all suspected Nazi collaborators far away from Baku.

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So dad stayed in Istanbul, opened up a gold shop in the Grand Covered bazaar, remarried and started life anew; this was all duly noted by the Soviet authorities, who denied Shamir CP membership and thus condemned him to a life of less than optimal opportunity. Shamir was cynical but accepting and had a dry sense of humor I found unique among all the other Azeris I met. One could feel his sense of having been abandoned as a youth, dreaming of dad in distant Istanbul--a man he would not meet until Shamir was in his thirties--while he was obliged to go through the drudgery of life in a two-room flat in a totally anonymous housing complex, lining up for gasoline in a petroleum producing land and forced to become the companion of anyone his boss assigned him to--in this case, us.

And he was obsessed with our well-being.

In real terms this translated into his paying for everything, always (with whose money? he always had a wad) and putting himself at our constant beck and call. With time, these two elements became truly irritating because we were unable to do anything on our own until we managed to break free by jumping a train to Nahcivan. It goes without saying that he stood in line to pay for the tickets and waited outside the broken window of our carriage until the wheels began to turn.

In re-reading the above, I have a sense that Shamir looks like a somewhat nasty, embittered guy who gave us no slack. There was an element of that, but far more, too: he became a good friend, and at the end began to understand that we needed a little space to truly taste and enjoy his country, and gave us exactly that.

The second primary personality involved in hosting our stay was Kazim Bey, the owner of the house that we called home until our move to the hotel-boat. The reason for the move was only to be closer to down-town Baku, else we might have stayed at Kazim's abode for years...

For Kazim Bey had much to offer, not only in the way of material goods (of which there were plenty) but also in the way of representing an example of the contradictions of Soviet and Azeri society and how to get things done.

By profession, Kazim was employed by the government as a distributor to interface between the points of production and points of sale for various, mainly edible, goods. His salary for doing such amounted to something like 300 rubles (\$10) a month--about the same as an unskilled laborer might receive.

Kazim referred to himself as a tujaar, or "merchant". In common parlance, he was a fixer--a black marketeer, and he had become exceedingly wealthy by lubricating (or milking) the rusty wheels of the socialist state: rather than perform his allotted tasks of picking up, say, five tons of white cheese from a local Kolkoz farm and bringing it to a government warehouse in down-town Baku, Kazim would pay for the cheese and then distribute it privately--and profitably.

I thought it impolite to pursue exactly what his relation to Ahmed and Kamra Hanim might be.

More to the point, Kazim was a perfectly delightful host if personally a rather crude and boorish fellow.

His home, un-prepossessing when viewed from the aspect of the dusty street outside his compound walls, was a veritable palace when viewed

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from within. The estate (and it was) consisted of a comfortable, two storey main house flanked by a second kitchen/den unit with an attached marble hamam-style bath and separate digs for grandma, all set on about two acres of garden with fruit trees--cherry, pomegranate, apple and pear--tended by Kazim's ethnic Russian gardener\slave. Within the various housing units there were no less than seven televisions and several stereos. More fabulous was the fact that Kazim owned not one, but four cars: a Lada for public use and two Volgas for road trips. The fourth was a white 1986 Mercedes Benz 200 sedan, purchased somehow or other from or for Ahmed. It was kept under wraps in a garden shack awaiting the day when its presence on the streets of Baku would not immediately invite a visit by income tax fraud extortionists associated with the police or KGB. It also lacked a front wheel--exotic rims being rather too difficult to obtain even for a professional procurer like Kazim.

There were other toys and trinkets, too, as well as an endless supply of export vodka, fresh caviar, Brazilski instant coffee, real butter and more meat than Kazim knew what to do with; the flock of sheep he maintained in the animal section of his estate were only there to be slaughtered on religious holidays. For Kazim was religious--after his own fashion, anyway--and insisted that his two sons attend the local Farsi-language and Shiite indoctrination night school in town. He also worried about the future of his plump daughter Hamida who seemed more interested in imitating the life of a certain Turkish sex-star named Ahu Tugba than in finishing school.

The happy household was made complete--nay, dominated!--by the gay presence of Kazim's wife Nazila, a great, fat woman who force-fed us every chance she got, showing off her mouth-full of gold teeth every time she smiled and weeping real tears when we finally left her abode.

Our third interlocutor--and as different from the first two as they were from each other--was Kamra Hanim's eldest son, Kahraman. At first he seemed to be just an extra, unnecessary presence in the car, but with time he turned out to be a golden guide.

A student of law in Russian, it was clear that he had enjoyed a fairly privileged youth--like spending his time as a draftee soldier within Azerbaijan, and mainly off-barracks in the house of a corrupt police chief and family friend in the town of Gendja/Genci, of which you will hear more, presently.

With the right parents, the right contacts and the right education, in another time Kahraman's destiny would have been pretty clear: get your degree, join the party and then rise through the nominacultura to a position of a member of the elite in the land of socialism.

But something had profoundly shaken Kahraman which had fundamentally altered his perspective on the party, privilege and patriotism.

It was the night of January 20th, 1990--a date etched into the minds of all Azeris and gouged into the consciousness of Kahraman. It was the night that the Soviet Army rolled into Baku and killed 200 people, and Kahraman was there.

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January 20th, 1990

I will avoid a detailed rendering of the events leading up to that seminal night and Kahraman's thoughts on what happened and the aftermath and let the following suffice: Kahraman knew a lie when he saw one and the lie that evening was that the Soviet army was crushing a rabid mob of "Islamic fundamentalists" and saving hundreds of innocent Armenian Christians in so doing. Kahraman had a slightly different perspective: the Red Army had come to kill him and his friends to prove a point to the rest of the USSR, namely, that there were limits to Glasnost and freedom.

A similar lesson was to be taught to the Baltic states last year, with world-wide condemnation; but at the time of the Baku massacre, not a western liberal voice was raised in protest. And Kahraman felt he had divined the reasons for this indifference to the fate of the Azeris crushed beneath the Kremlin's tanks: not Christian, with no "resonance" group outside the country and generally distrusted within it for their relatively affluent life-style, the Azeris were perfect targets for a limits-of-Glasnost crackdown, and Kahraman could never look at the Union, Moscow, Gorby or the Party in the same light again after that famous night of terror. He would tirelessly point out the road-side remembrance markers to us as we drove by, naming the names of those who had fallen, and where. He also had us linger at the primary memorial to the martyrs at the Shakheed Park in down-town Baku. Formerly called Kirov Park in honor of Stalin's close associate Marshall Kirov who was the governor of Azerbaijan in the early years of the Soviet, the park had been the venue for all manner of entertainment but had now become a graveyard dedicated to the memory of the January 20th martyrs. All restaurants and tea houses there have now been banned out of respect for the dead. The monumental, brown granite statue of General Kirov, meanwhile, lay shattered at the foot of its pedestal overlooking Baku Harbor; another famous, communist memorial, that of the 18 Commissars killed by the anti-Soviet forces in the hurly-burly of the Bolshivik conquest of Azerbaijan in 1920, had also been destroyed at the same time. Fearing a repeat of the events of the popular uprising that led to the events of January 20th, the communist authorities have still not bothered to repair either memorial.

And in addition to the various publications and literature devoted to the theme of the January 20th massacre, Kahraman also had us view a boot-leg film documentary on the subject, replete with gruesome close-ups of crushed bodies in situ in the streets, long, extended morgue shots and autopsies of victims killed by "twister" bullets the Soviet Army denies even having; an Azeri physician who had served as a (Soviet) front-line MD in Viet Nam was interviewed in the program and showed how a bullet would enter the leg or foot and then cork-screw along the bone, emerging from the shoulder and leaving no hope of recovery for the victim.

"We were used as a testing ground for new weapons," said Kahraman in disgust, "A perfect group of Muslim fundamentalist rag-heads to kill as a warning to others."

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Although Kahraman had continued to study in Russian, he made a concerted effort to bring his kitchen Azeri up to snuff and now preferred that language as a medium of discourse. Unlike the half-baked pan-Turkism\pro-Turkeyism of many Azeris, whose cultural consciousness expressed itself in memorizing the names and deeds of Turkish movie and music stars, Kahraman read voraciously, intelligently and critically. As such, he was also the source of a lot of casual information on events and attitudes across the Union as well as specific to Azerbaijan. He also took pains in helping us translate first the headlines and then the following articles out of the rather lively Azeri opposition press, which seemed to carry an interview a day with Mister Abulfaz Elchebi, leader of the Azerbaijan People's Front who were just then concluding their first party congress (decisions included support for Boris Yeltsin, lifting of martial law in the country and the rather naive and dangerous dream of reuniting Soviet and Iranian Azerbaijan) as well as to print exceedingly poignant cartoons. One such referred to the coming parliamentary election on September 10th for a new Azeri president and used Chile as a point of reference: 'Unique in history: under a state of Martial Law, General Pinochet has himself elected President of democratic Chile. One wonders who will have the honor of repeating the feat...' Other tid-bits were less political, if just as painful--like the twin reports concerning trade deals with Japan: to the great joy of Soviet Industry, Tokyo had started to import Soviet light-bulbs and heavy machinery, like road graders. Soviet Industry comes of age! Later, and to the great chagrin of all, it was revealed that due to the high-price of wood in Japan, the Japanese merely wanted the crates the light bulbs came in and were using the machines as scrap steel...

We ended up spending a great deal of time with Kahraman, and were not sorry for an instant.

Rasulzade and Azeri Nationalism

In totally losing faith in the Soviet system, Kahraman, like many of his thinking compatriots, was attempting to fill the gap with something else, a something that can only be described as true Azeri nationalism.

The symbols of this are the Azeri flag dating to the Republic of Azerbaijan of 1918-1920 and to that state's first and last president, Muhammad Amin Rasulzade (1884-1955).

Seldom encountered in western annals, Resultzade would appear to be one of the few, principled heroes of the region. The son of a religious family, he managed to break free of the Persian-language clerical education of the day early on (in fact, he never graduated from any proper school) and began his literary and political career as a printer's apprentice in a Tbilisi-based newspaper by the name of Shark-i Rus ('Eastern Russian'), soon graduating to the level of writer for this and other nationalist newspapers. Along the way, he encountered and then began cooperating with the socialist movement of the Caucasus, where he befriended such people as Josef Stalin, Kalinin and Vashiniski. During the revolutionary movement in Iran of 1908-10, Rasulzade was drawn to Teheran where he edited another newspaper in

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Persian before being evicted by the Persian authorities. He then found refuge in Istanbul where he apparently abandoned his devotion to socialism and became involved in explicit Azeri Turkish nationalism. This found expression upon his return to Baku in 1913 (benefiting from a general amnesty on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the House of Romanov) when he began publishing a paper by the name of Acik Soz, or "Clear Word", using the vernacular Azeri Turkish as the medium of discourse.

His big break, as it were, came in the aftermath of World War One, when the political vacuum in the Caucasus formed by the collapse of the Czars allowed him and other Azeri nationalists to found the Republic of Azerbaijan, of which he became the first--and last--president. The republic lasted a mere two years before the Bolsheviks moved in and partitioned Azerbaijan in favour of the neighboring (and rival) Soviet of Armenia. Specifically, a long corridor from Lake Sevan to the Iranian frontier was ceded from Azerbaijan to Armenia, detaching the province of Nahcivan from Azerbaijan proper, while the highland province of Karabagh was declared a semi-autonomous zone. The fruit of both these territorial adaptations has come home today.

Rasulzade was opposed to it all, for which he and other "bourgeois-nationalist" elements of Azerbaijan were arrested; it is said that he only escaped execution because of the direct intervention of his old pal Joe Stalin, who brought him to Moscow instead. Old Joe suggested he join the Communist Party, but Rasulzade declined to play quisling in the new order, and was thrown in prison for two years before managing to escape to Turkey via Finland. He later settled in Ankara, where he died a broken man in the 1950s.

But his memory now lives on: both he and his short-lived state have become the very symbols of Azeri nationalism. His portrait is everywhere, as is the simple blue, red and green banner of the first Azeri Republic, with a crescent in the middle instead of the hammer and sickle. Usually, it bears an inscription in both Cyrillic and the Latin-based script that Rasulzade had encouraged that 'a flag once unfurled can never be taken down.' The phrase may sound similar to Czar Nikolaus' words that 'where the imperial banner is raised it must not ever be removed', but let us not quibble and give Rasulzade credit for coining his own nation's call to stand at attention.

Of great interest here is Rasulzade's efforts to Latinize and de-Persify Azeri Turkish--and long before Mustafa Kemal Atatürk announced his revolutionary language reforms in the neighboring Republic of Turkey. True, the movement to do just that had longer precedents, especially the efforts of the Crimean Tartar intellectual Ismael Gaspirali (Gaspirinski). But Rasulzade, even if fallen from grace, remained one of the prime movers in Azerbaijan's adopting the new script in the 1920s (the script, along with the Latinized version of the Turkic languages of Central Asia, was thrown out in favour of Cyrillic in the late 1930s). Now, with a new generation vowing to return from Cyrillic to Latin in the near future, an argument can be made that every Latin letter written on building and post throughout Azerbaijan--ranging from the 'Komisyoncu' signs advertising foreign-goods shops to the title pages of newspapers and magazines--pays silent homage to the Azeri patriot.

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(A quick, out-of context note on the differences between Azeri and Anatolian Turkish might be in order here for the Turkologists out there. The two languages (I prefer the word 'dialects') are eminently mutually-intelligible after a few days ear-bending, the greatest barriers to immediate understanding being the simple present and the present continuous tense of the verb. Anatolian Turkish uses both, with distinction, whereas Azeri only uses the latter form. Too, Azeri has retained many of the 'harsh' consonants such as Q, X, Kh and Tzch which have been dropped from orthographic Anatolian Turkish even if they are still used in several dialects (notably those of the Turkish northeast). Also, Azeri Turkish retains far more Persian and Arabic words than Anatolian Turkish, not having been subjected to the rigor of Mister Ataturk's de-Islamification campaign. Naturally, most newer loan words in Azeri tend to come from the Russian as opposed to the French or English in Anatolian Turkish. The differences and similarities between the two can readily be studied now with the aid of a new and noteworthy addition to the newspaper scene: Azerbaijan Zaman, a daughter publication of the Istanbul-based Zaman newspaper, itself the un-official organ of the right-wing, "Turk-Islam synthesis" movement. Printed in Baku and distributed everywhere in Azerbaijan, it is written in both standard Anatolian Turkish on themes and personalities relating to Turkey and an up-dated version of the Latinized Azeri of the 1920s on Azerbaijan subjects. In terms of content, these latter articles seem light and more directed at attracting attention to the Latinization cause than purveying hard and fast information, but politically the very presence of such a paper is of the highest interest: it is clear that there are those in Turkey who now want an intellectual foot-hold in Azerbaijan and that there are those in authority in Baku willing to let them have it.

Related to this is another aspect of this inchoate Turkish nationalism in Azerbaijan: a popular poster sold in all news stands (and even distributed free by such daily newspapers as Kommunist) describes the flags and founders of the 14 Turkish states in history. It starts with Atilla the Hun and progresses through the familiar entities of the "state-founding tradition" claimed by the Turks, including everyone from Chengiz Khan to Timurlane to Osman, the eponymous head of the Ottoman Empire, but pointedly excludes the Safavid Shah Ismael (see below).

I have seen similar posters, culminating with Kemal Ataturk and the Republic of Turkey that he founded in 1923, pinned everywhere throughout Anatolia.

But those Fihristas had only had thirteen Turkish states.

Claiming every one of the historic others for their own, the Azeris have added a fourteenth to the historic list--their own short-lived state of 1918-20, inserted immediately before that of Mister Ataturk.

This is heady stuff indeed, so much so that Rasulzade and the flag have even been adopted by the Azeri Communist party. The banner now hung on the facade of even the monumental Communist Party headquarters across from the martyrs' park, as well as on the interior frieze of the second floor of the Lenin Museum along the quay-side: the displays in this sector consisted of formerly banned publications from the period embossed in black and hung along the walls.)