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HEYDAR ALIYEV: RELEVANCE OF HERITAGE IN THE MODERN CONTEXT

FOR THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SOVIET POLITICIAN
AND STATESMAN OF INTERNATIONAL SCOPE

MANY OLD PEOPLE 25 YEARS AGO AND TODAY SEE A CHANCE TO MODERNIZE THE FADING POWER OF THE USSR IN THE NAME OF HEYDAR ALIYEV. IT IS NECESSARY TO STATE THE FACT – MANY PERCEIVE ALIYEV IN RUSSIA AND IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION THROUGH A PRISM OF PERSONAL DRAMA: AFTER ALL, THE COLLAPSE OF THE COUNTRY AFFECTED MANY FAMILIES, WHILE ALIYEV COULD GUARANTEE REFORMATION OF THE SOVIET UNION. ACCORDING TO THE RECOLLECTIONS OF SENIOR SOVIET OFFICIALS, HE WAS THE SUBJECT OF A NUMBER OF SCENARIOS FOR THE MODERNIZATION AND PRESERVATION OF THE UNION, WHICH COULD HAVE BEEN REALIZED, HAD THE REIGN OF YURIY ANDROPOV LASTED LONGER. THIS ARTICLE IS LARGELY DEDICATED TO THIS LOST OPPORTUNITY.

Aliyev left his mark at two levels: at the information level, i.e. he left his image in the memory of people working with him, and at the physical level, in particular, the fruits of his work. The first level is largely subjective and emotionally loaded, and it should be cleared from the current situation into which the narrator falls. However, both levels

are difficult to falsify as it happened in the cases where the events of the past were relegated from us at too great a distance. This is the source of attention to the figure of our hero: *he can be assessed not only by specialists studying archival documents, but also by masses of living people who see his fruits in the current educational system, health system, masses of small and*

large enterprises in the CIS, the largest Soviet railway BAM - a lot was built with his direct participation or through initiatives personally approved by him.

At the same time, we must recognize that there was a circle of dedicated opponents of Aliyev, who ignored his achievements or intentionally retouched his figure because of a number of short-term consider-



ations. And they can be found at different levels of the social hierarchy and on different orbits of power - his former ideological and political opponents in the Politburo, first of all, Mikhail Gorbachev and Aleksandr Yakovlev, and their ideological successors in Russia from the camp of the liberal-democratic opposition of the first wave, who tried to form a negative stereotype about Aliyev and hide the scope of his bright erudition and communication style behind the overall faceless color of the Soviet bureaucracy. The first opponents and critics of Aliyev's policies emerged as a result of the anti-corruption campaigns of the 1960s-70s in Azerbaijan, organized by Aliyev in the position of First Secretary of the Central Committee of the republic's Communist Party (1). The second broader group of offended opponents formed from

groups ousted from power in the 1990s, mostly successors of the era of the anarchy of the national democratic revolution in Azerbaijan. Finally, it is clear that Aliyev has very few well-wishers in modern Armenia, but it is the consequence of the well-known conflict. It is also worth noting here that Aliyev was always appreciated by prominent representatives of the Armenian elite (remember the recollections of actor Armen Jigarkhanyan or the recollections of contemporaries about Aliyev's respectful and business relationships with the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Armenian SSR, Karen Demircryan). In general, it must be recognized that enemies are the flip side of his achievements. A strong personality of this magnitude does not have to be liked by everyone.

It is necessary to take into ac-

count that now, 10 years after the demise of Aliyev, we can distinguish at least some stages of his activity: as head of a Soviet republic, as first deputy prime minister (Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers), a politician of Politburo caliber, and then an eventful transit decade as president of independent post-Soviet Azerbaijan. These periods do not match by the scale of the tasks and the level of power he had and by the geographical scope of his responsibilities. At the same time, they are united and integrated into the fate of one man. His work as the leader of Soviet Azerbaijan became a stepping stone to five years in the Kremlin from November 1982 to October 1987, but even in Moscow, he kept his finger on the pulse of the republic's development. These were two more or less independent lines of



activity. You can call them the era of "Aliyev for Azerbaijan" and "Aliyev for Russia". Today, for masses of ordinary people in Azerbaijan, he has become a symbol of the self-made success of an Azerbaijani in the Soviet Union, and in relation to the post-Soviet period, he is often referred to as the Azerbaijani Atatürk.

What are the milestones of Aliyev's "Moscow period"? He controlled 12 ministries, oversaw engineering, light industry, transport and communications, and he was also in charge of cultural and educational spheres. In 1986, Aliyev was appointed chairman of the Bureau for Social Development in the USSR Council of Ministers. He participated in a number of non-core projects in related fields. For example, Aliyev headed the Commission on Operational Issues at the Council of Ministers, which included deputy prime ministers and several ministers. With the arrival of Aliyev, the commission convened every Monday and became virtually a governing body of the Council of Ministers, deciding many pressing issues of economic governance. Sometimes it was called "the second Politburo".

In January 1984, school reform began in the Soviet Union. Its main developer and curator was Aliyev. The general education, professional schools, the training of teachers and the system of preschool education were reformed. It was suggested that primary schools should start a year earlier - from 6 years; the period of study at the secondary school was extended from 10 to 11 years. A new subject was introduced in schools - the basis of computer technology and programming, and Soviet-made personal computers were purchased en masse. The reform raised the public prestige of the school and the authority of the teaching profession (the salary increased by 30 per cent and guarantees of social conditions were introduced), and the structure of education management changed. By 1989, Aliyev's project provided for the construction of schools for 7,000,000 pupils and 800 vocational schools. The Russian law on "Education" signed by Vladimir Putin in December 2012 is the evolutionary development of the base that was laid in the 1980s.

Reforms in the social sphere and

health care stand out. On the initiative of Aliyev, the first comprehensive diagnostic centers were created; Soviet surgeons were allowed to conduct open-heart surgery. Aliyev launched Svyatoslav Fyodorov's Center for Eye Microsurgery and lobbied for the creation of his mobile laboratory on a river boat sailing the Volga. In August 1987, he began medical reform that covered the period up to 2000, which had a positive impact on the state of medicine. The current state of medical technology and material resources of medical science in Russia still use Aliyev's spurt.

The "disposal" of Soviet inheritance has not yet finished: businesses, control and communications structures, transport communications operate and even the models of decision-making in Russia are similar to the 1980s. For example, the general plan for the development of Moscow until 2000 was adopted partly under the influence of Aliyev's initiatives made in a speech in the House of Architects in Moscow in October 1981. We can recall his methods of targeted state support in the field of culture. Thus, many elements of his management practices are still used today. Many parts of Russia, Central Asia and the Caucasus have a sufficient level of various types of infrastructure thanks to the breakthrough of the 1970-80's. Heydar Aliyev had a direct relation to this work.

Based on the results of the 1980's, many remember that it was then that they acquired an apartment without bank loans, bought a country house and their first car. From July 1985 it was allowed to sell durable goods on credit with minimum (2-3 per cent) interest rates. Largely due to various programs of the USSR Council of Ministers with the participation of Aliyev, the low-paid categories of



professions could afford an adequate standard of living.

Aliyev's activity was a response to the challenge about the technical backwardness of the Soviet Union. Attempts to develop the photocopying industry and introduce methods of cost accounting and independent economic planning at businesses - all that came from Aliyev or he helped the enthusiasts who offered relevant initiatives. In the middle and at the end of the 1980s, the chance to avoid the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century was connected precisely with Heydar Aliyev. However, these complex reforms drowned in the atmosphere of bureaucracy and inter-departmental struggle after the death of Yuriy Andropov, and were soon buried under the rubble of the collapsing political system.

The chain of citizens' romantic confidence in the Soviet leaders was interrupted at Heydar Aliyev. But his work during the period of the Soviet Union left the most positive impression on many who lived or watched him at the time. In the spring of 2007, the Echo of Moscow radio station conducted a rating survey among listeners about Russia's most prominent figures in the last hundred years. Listeners could vote in alphabetical order with any number of candidates. It was surprising to hear that the top three favorites starting with the letter "A" included Anna Akhmatova, Yuriy Afanasyev, a living historian and thinker, and our hero - Heydar Aliyev. Russian Heydar Aliyev is a surprising fact, but entirely appropriate with the mark he left in the history of the great country.

Aliyev's way was a Soviet party and administrative career, which started in the state security system. The conflict environment within the Soviet administrative-vertical sys-

tems was not lower than now, and perhaps there were more complex twists and turns given the huge size of the command apparatus of power and various interest groups. Aliyev grew as a leader and worked in the system of apparatus risks of high intensity complicated by ideological clichés of the socialist system.

What did the Soviet system of governance look like? The Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party had 14 - 20 members; several of them represented the interests of the ideology and the others - the main directions of the economy, military, foreign policy and intelligence. Then there was the Central Committee of the CPSU, which had about three hundred members, who formed various committees on the economy, defense, culture and education. Formally, the status of a member of the Central Committee was higher than that of the deputy premier of the Soviet government. The Council of Ministers of the USSR was, in fact, the executive body of the Politburo, which solved a lot of specific questions of economic activities. Budget expenditure, large-scale projects of reform and many other issues were resolved by joint resolutions of the Politburo and the Council of Ministers. Within the Council of Ministers, there were multiple vertical lines, they intersected and were not always connected to a single leader. For example, Heydar Aliyev was in charge of transport and communications until September 1985. Therefore, he was above the Ministry of Transport (from 1982 to February 1991, it was headed by Konarev). At the same time, other areas of the economy assigned to other deputy chairmen of the Council of Ministers or subordinate directly to the head of the Soviet government depended

on the efficiency of transport. It is known that the Aliyev-Konarev working partnership was the most effective tandem on Soviet rail transport. At the end of Aliyev's period, in 1988 the industry reached the highest indicators not only in the country but also in the world, surpassing, for example, American railways twice by the volume traffic.

Brezhnev's death in November 1982 intensified various scenarios of distribution of group influence and power within the Politburo (2). It is known that Aliyev was indebted for his transfer to Moscow to Andropov, who became the next secretary-general after Brezhnev. Indeed, Heydar Aliyev was appointed first deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers in November 1982 at a plenum of the Central Committee on the initiative of Andropov, who dealt with personnel issues after Brezhnev's death. According to the head of the RSFSR Council of Ministers, Vitaliy Vorotnikov, "Aliyev treated Andropov with great respect, and Andropov respected him too. They were humanly sympathetic to each other." (3) It is likely that Andropov transferred Aliyev to promote him to the post of head of the Soviet government. According to the recollections of the chief of Brezhnev's guard, Vadim Medvedev, the former secretary-general just did not have time to take Aliyev to the Politburo (4). Andropov decided that this decision would strengthen the Council of Ministers with an energetic leader. In my opinion, on the basis of the results of Andropov's rule, Aliyev can safely be called his right-hand man: this manifested itself in the strengthening of administrative discipline, in the fight against bribery and the shadow economy, and to a lesser extent in matters of staff appointments (Aliyev had almost no

“henchmen” unlike Gorbachev and Ligachev, which accordingly weakened his positions during the acute struggle for the Politburo “throne”). It is not by chance that when Andropov called Aliyev to Moscow, he gave him the opportunity for the first time in Soviet practice to approve his own successor as head of the republic.

Western analysts also predicted a high rise for Aliyev, which is illustrated by the article “Andropov’s first 100 days – changes he’s making” by Washington Post journalist Dusko Doder. The author points to the process of de-bureaucratization of power. For example, Andropov abolished the secretariat of the Secretary-General of the Politburo, which had been growing since the time of Khrushchev and blocked or impeded important decisions on the link of the Politburo - Central Committee - Council of Ministers. The same process of optimization affected the government. But the most interesting thing is the characteristics of the first round of power around Andropov. The main new figures are Heydar Aliyev, Vitaliy Fedorchuk (new interior minister instead Schelokov, a career KGB officer) and the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, Vladimir Scherbitskiy.

What made Andropov’s rule in the post of Secretary-General of the Communist Party different? His apparatus, relying on the Council of Ministers group led by Aliyev, was preparing great strides in the socio-economic development of the USSR through the acceleration of scientific and technical progress. Attempts were made to limit the functions of the ideological administration of the Communist Party and the economic functions of the state. It is on this basis, using the slogan of “acceleration”, that Mikhail Gorbachev surfaced at

the beginning.

Heydar Aliyev was valued in the Politburo as the “engine” of the Council of Ministers, but he was not considered as a candidate for the post of secretary-general - the post-Stalin syndrome was still there. After 1953, there was a consensus that a native of the Caucasus and Asia would not lead the Soviet Union. They stumbled over this stereotype. The indecisive fluctuations of the Politburo conclave after Andropov’s death led to a shaky interim decision: it was decided to give way to the young, but at the same time, to extend the status quo of the existing balance of forces. In view of this, old-age Konstantin Chernenko, a friend of Brezhnev and ideological rival of Andropov, became secretary-general on 13 February 1984, but from August to 10 March 1985, he was at the Central Clinical Hospital, where meetings of the Politburo were held. On behalf of Chernenko, many of the Politburo meetings were chaired by Gorbachev in his absence.

Historians have an opinion about a number of key parameters that supported the operation of the Soviet system of power on a daily basis. One such indicator was the availability of the boss to the staff and lower-ranking officials. As far as Gorbachev’s entourage is concerned, many converge in stating such things as “favoritism”. There was a hard split into two camps: “our people” and “aliens” in relation to Gorbachev. He almost immediately began to get rid of representatives of the “old guard” and relatively young potential competitors such as Heydar Aliyev. These were people who “kept their back straight” and did not look into the mouth of Gorbachev asking “what do you want...”

The most influential favorite of

Gorbachev was the ideologue of perestroika and a member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU by 1988, Aleksandr Yakovlev. A former Soviet ambassador to Canada and then head of the influential Soviet Institute for International Economics and International Relations (IMEMO), he had an extremely destructive effect on the character of the Gorbachev era. Gorbachev sent his proxy on business trips to negotiate with active national separatists. Such diplomacy had an ambiguous nature: Yakovlev stopped informing the leaders of national-democratic movements in the troubled republics about the will of the Politburo and they perceived his visit as an endorsement. Yakovlev’s most disastrous mission was in May 1988 in Yerevan. There, his visit was perceived as a clear gesture of approval of the actions of the Armenian separatists by Gorbachev.

Thus, the final of Aliyev’s being at the helm of the economic power of the Soviet Union coincided with the final of collective rule in the Soviet Union organized by “democrat” Mikhail Gorbachev (5). As a result, after a few years, this led the whole country to collapse.

Having declared independence in 1991, the Azerbaijan Republic faced serious challenges and real threats. Issues of forming new state institutions, coupled with the intensifying conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, were an unbearable burden for the then leadership of the republic. Lacking the qualities allowing them to solve problems in a complex way, the first leaders of independent Azerbaijan often changed. Opportunities missed in 1991-1992 led to the loss of territorial integrity and internal displacement. By 1993, the ethnic conflict with Armenia es-



calated into an inter-state war (6).

In 1993, with the coming of Heydar Aliyev to power in the republic, the process of state formation actually began. Aliyev faced new forms of external and internal diktat.

Heydar Aliyev was able to stop attempts at destabilization, demonstrating the determination of the government in an effort to strengthen the state organism. From November 1993, instead of the so-called defense battalion united only nominally, the formation of a centralized army begins. To unite society on the basis of citizenship, Aliyev put forward the slogan of "Azerbaijanism", which was the beginning of the policy of strengthening national identity. To overcome the stereotype of the alleged violation of the principle of peoples' right to self-determination in Azerbaijan, Aliyev pursued a consistent policy persuading the world community that Azerbaijan's right to territorial integrity is an inalienable right of the Azerbaijani people.

The adoption of the 1995 Constitution endorsed the basic principles of the emerging state. Aliyev was able to build a republican system based on the national experience of the Azerbaijan Republic in 1918-1920, modernizing the well-established vertical-horizontal communications of the administrative system of Soviet Azerbaijan and applying a system of Western European law. The specific features of the Turkic-Islamic synthesis, opposition moods, the interests of the leaders of the post-Soviet national-democratic wave and other positive achievements of the Azerbaijani intellectual elite also found their place in the political system of Azerbaijan. Thus, we got a practically unique single secular republic in the Middle East surrounded by Islamic traditionalism.



The signing of the "Contract of the Century" and the implementation of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan export oil pipeline project shaped the strategy of the country's foreign policy aimed at strengthening the economic and other foundations of independence. The adoption of the fundamental laws and concepts of the country's development in the second half of the 1990's and early 2000's, the definition of foreign policy and the implementation of the oil strategy created a favorable framework for the political and socioeconomic development of independent Azerbaijan. ✦

References

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2. V. Kryuchkov. Andropov. M., 2012, p. 29.
3. E. Akhundova. Heydar Aliyev. Personality and Era. Volume 2, p. 754.
4. Ibid, p. 755.
5. Dmitriy Olshanskiy, a prominent Russian blogger and editor-in-chief of *Russkaya Zhizn* magazine, gives the following definition to Gorbachev's reforms: "Gorbachev's rule is an example of an unsolvable problem: everything good in those years was offset by evil. The destruction of the CPSU, the weakening of the KGB, the release of political prisoners, freedom of believers, freedom to travel, rehabilitation of trade, fair elections, the abolition of censorship, the flourishing of book publishing, and so on were paid by pogroms and killings, peripheral civil wars, free surrender of territories, with proceeds from which it was possible to provide for the country, a betrayal of our own military, economic, foreign policy and national political interests, idiocy and chaotic plunder of state property built on Gulag and peasant bones. Maybe, if God judges Gorbachev and his time, he will decide what is more important - this or that, but I do not know and do not want to choose." Source: <http://www.newlookmedia.ru/?p=26279>.
6. The fall of Shusha intensified political divisions in Azerbaijan. Thomas de Waal, "Black Garden": Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War", p. 247

