

Beginnings of Azerbaijani democracy

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A democratic republic was formed for the first time in the Muslim East exactly one hundred years ago. This event carried tremendous historical significance. The establishment of a democratic republic for the first time in this region was a great achievement of the Azerbaijani people. It was the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) that applied the European model of a national state for the first time in the history of the Muslim world. According to the form of its governance, the ADR was built in accordance with the classical model of a parliamentary republic on the basis of political pluralism and a multi-party system. The republic did not exist for long – after two years the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic fell and the people of Azerbaijan lost their state independence. However, all state attributes were created within these two years: the state flag and the national coat-of-arms of Azerbaijan were adopted, state agencies and ministries were formed. The parliament defined the functions and activities of all state institutions of the country. The government was formed by the parliament and reported to it.

The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic carried out its activities in a tense and complex public and political situation both inside and outside the country. The measures taken in a short period of time left an indelible mark on the history of our people. The provision of all citizens with equal rights regardless of nationality, gender, political and religious affiliation, the determination of state borders, the adoption of the attributes of Azerbaijani statehood, and the declaration of the Azerbaijani language as a state language created a solid foundation for the future independence of Azerbaijan. The steps taken in the field of democratic state building, economy, culture, education and army building are the key indicators of the 23-month activity of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic fell in April 1920, when Soviet power was established in Azerbaijan. Our people restored their state independence in 1991, drawing on the traditions of the short-lived Azerbaijan Democratic Republic and creating an independent Azerbaijan state on this historical heritage.

Thus, it was in 1918-1920 that the foundations of a law-governed state were laid and the prerequisites were created for the formation of a civil society with a wide range of democratic freedoms and political pluralism in Azerbaijan. The Bolsheviks failed to cross out all the achievements of the ADR. They had to reckon with the fact that Azerbaijan had become a reality on the political map of the world. Therefore, the Bolsheviks had to give up plans for dividing Azerbaijani lands among neighboring republics and agreed to the existence of Azerbaijan as a republic within the USSR.

This issue of the magazine is entirely dedicated to the theme of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. We hope it can shed light on some of the so far hidden aspects of the early republic and show how significant its contributions to the modern state of Azerbaijan have been.