

Baku State University turns 100

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On 1 September this year, Baku State University (BSU), the pioneer and recognized flagship of higher education of modern Azerbaijan, marked its centennial anniversary.

BSU was founded by a resolution of the Parliament of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in 1919. The first European-type higher education institution in the Muslim East, Baku State University was the fruit of painstaking efforts of the “Golden Age” Azerbaijani intelligentsia, in particular the leaders of the first Republic. Some of them subsequently lectured at the university. In the most difficult political and economic conditions, the government attached priority importance to the establishment of the university, thus laying the groundwork for education in the country. The first rector of BSU, prominent medical scientist and professor of Kazan University Vasily Razumovskiy, wrote: “It is clear that the Azerbaijani government is seriously interested in setting up a university in Baku, and thoughts of all classes of society are centered on opening the university immediately...” Due to an acute shortage of national workforce, most of the professors and teachers were Russian scientists, but the involvement of the intelligentsia and prominent cultural figures in the university helped create a true temple of science in Azerbaijan.

In May 1921, the government of the Azerbaijan SSR adopted a decree on bilingual teaching at the university – Russian and Turkic (Azerbaijani). In 1922, Baku State University was renamed into the Azerbaijan State University (ASU), and this name remained until the restoration of the country’s independence. In 1926, the first Azerbaijani rector was appointed at the ASU – he was prominent writer, publicist and public figure Tagi Shahbazi. Even though other higher schools appeared in Azerbaijan in the Soviet period, the ASU confidently maintained the status of the leading and most prestigious higher education institution of the republic, an intellectual center and the main base for training scientific personnel in various disciplines.

Baku State University’s colorful past is inextricably linked to the bright pages Azerbaijani history. Its key role in the development of science and education has brought about traditions that have been preserved by generations of teachers and students. These traditions are also underpinned by the fact that there are many famous people among university graduates. Those whose best years of youth passed within the walls of the university are noted not only for their knowledge and general outlook, but also for their unique “mark” – a feature characteristic of leading educational institutions with deep-rooted traditions. In other words, it is possible to say that the university stays with its graduates, its unique aura continues to live in them, becoming an integral part of their personality.

In connection with this significant anniversary, this issue of our magazine contains an interview with BSU rector Elchin Babayev. As always, also available are a number of other interesting stories. Enjoy!