

ARTICLES.

■ WHY BOSNIA MATTERS

Appointment
In Sarajevo

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

The daily round in Sarajevo is one of dodging snipers, scrounging for food and water, collecting rumors, visiting morgues and blood banks and joking heavily about near misses. The shared experience of being, along with the city's inhabitants, a sort of dead man on leave, makes for leveling of the more joyous and democratic sort, even if foreign writers are marked off from the rest by our flak jackets and our ability to leave, through the murderous corridor of the airport road, more or less at will. The friendship and solidarity of Sarajevo's people will stay with all of us for the rest of our lives and indeed, at the present rate of attrition, it may be something that survives only in the memory. The combined effect of incessant bombardment and the onset of a Balkan winter may snuff out everything I saw.

On a paved street in the center of town, near the Eternal Flame (already snuffed out by lack of fuel) which consecrates the Partisan resistance in World War II, is a bakery shop. Eighteen people were killed by a shell that hit a bread line a few weeks ago, and mounds of flowers mark the spot. Shortly after I paid my own visit, another shell fell in exactly the same place, randomly distributing five amputations among a dozen or so children. One of the children had just been released from hospital after suffering injuries in the first "incident." A few hundred yards farther on, as I was gingerly approaching the imposing building that houses the National Library of Bosnia, a mortar exploded against its side and persuaded me to put off my researches. All of this became more shocking to me when I went with some Bosnian militiamen to the top of Hum, the only high ground still in the defenders' keep. It was amazing, having spent so much time confined in the saucer of land below, to see the city splayed beneath like a rape victim. This sensation was soon supplanted by outrage. From this perspective, it was blindingly clear that the Serbian gunners can see exactly what they are doing.

Entering the handsome old Austro-Hungarian edifice that houses the presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that absorbed several hits that day, I saw in the vestibule a striking poster. Executed in yellow and black, it was a combined logo featuring the Star of David, the Islamic star and crescent, the Roman Catholic cross and the more elaborate cruciform of the Orthodox Church. *Gens Una Summus* read the superscription. "We Are One People." Here, even if rendered in iconographic terms, was the defiant remnant of "the Yugoslav idea." (Pictures of Tito, incidentally, are still common in Sarajevo, in both public and private settings.) And here also was all that was left of internationalism. The display was affecting, and not only because it rebuked the primitive may-

hem in the immediate vicinity. All across former Yugoslavia, a kind of mass surrender to unreason is taking place, hoisting emblems very different from the Sarajevoan.

Across the street from the Zagreb café where I am writing, there is a display of adoring memorabilia, all of it brashly recalling the rule of Ante Pavelic and his bestial Ustashe in Croatia, which was constituted as a Nazi and Vatican protectorate between 1941 and 1945. Young men in black shirts and warped older men nostalgic for fascism need no longer repress the urge to fling the right arm skyward. Their "militia," long used for harassing Croatian Serbs, is now heavily engaged in the "cleansing" of western Herzegovina, in obvious collusion with the Serbian Chetniks to the east and south. Miraculous Virgins make their scheduled appearance. Lurid posters show shafts of light touching the pommels of mysterious swords, or blazoning the talons of absurd but vicious two-headed eagles. More than a million Serbs attend a frenzied rally, on the battle site of Kosovo, where their forebears were humiliated in 1389, and hear former Communists rave in the accents of wounded tribalism. Ancient insignias, totems, feudal coats of arms, talismans, oaths, rituals, icons and regalia jostle to take the field. A society long sunk in political stagnation, but one nevertheless well across the threshold of modernity, is convulsed: puking up great rancid chunks of undigested barbarism. In this 1930s atmosphere of colored shirts, weird salutes and licensed sadism, one is driven back to Auden, that period's clearest voice, who spoke of:

The Enlightenment driven away,
The habit-forming pain,
Mismanagement and grief:
We must suffer them all again.

We must suffer them all again. But Bosnia, and especially Sarajevo, is not so much the most intense version of the wider conflict as it is the heroic exception to it. During respites from the fighting, I was able to speak with detachments of Bosnian volunteers. At every stop they would point with pride and cheerfulness to their own chests and to those of others, saying, "I am Muslim, he is Serb, he is Croat." It was the form their propaganda took, but it was also the truth. I met one local commander, Alia Smet, defending a shattered old peoples' home seventy meters from the Serbian front line, who as well as being a defector from the Yugoslav National Army (J.N.A.) is also an Albanian from the province of Kosovo. There was a Jew among the entrenchment-diggers on Hum hill. Col. Jovan Divjak, deputy commander of the Bosnian Army, is a Serb. I shook his hand as he walked, with a Serbo-Croat aide-de-camp named Srdjan Obradovic ("Obradovic is a multinational name"), among the nervous pedestrians on the edge of the Old City, under intermittent fire at noonday. He was unarmed, and popular.

In the Old City itself, you can find a mosque, a synagogue, a Catholic and an Orthodox church within yards of one another. Almost all have been hit savagely from the surrounding hills, though the gunner is usually accurate enough to spare the Orthodox. ("Burn it all," said Gen. Ratko Mladic,

the J.N.A. commander whose radio traffic was intercepted, recorded and authenticated recently. "It is better to bombard Pofilici. . . there are not many Serbs there," replied his more "moderate" deputy, Col. Tomislav Sipicic.) The Jewish Museum is badly knocked about and closed, and perhaps one-third of the city's Jews have fled. An ancient community, swelled by refugees from Spain in 1492 and resilient enough to have outlived the Ustashe version of the Final Solution, is now threatened with dispersal. Even so, an Israeli Army Radio reporter, who had come to cover the evacuation of Jews, told me that he was impressed by how many of them wanted to stay on and fight.

The exquisite Gazi Huzref Beg mosque, set in the lovely but vulnerable Muslim quarter of wooden houses and shops, has a crude shell-hole in its minaret, and its courtyard garden is growing unkempt. The mosques, very important in the siege for their access to antique stone cisterns or *sadrivan*, normally used for ablution before prayer, have found even those old wells drying up. And thirst is a fiercer enemy even than hunger.

To speak of "quarters" is not to speak of ghettos, or at least not yet. A good estimate puts the proportion of mixed marriages here at one in three, a figure confirmed by anecdote and observation. So to try to make Bosnia "uniform" in point of confession or "ethnicity" is not to put it together but to tear it apart. To call this dirty scheme "cleansing" is to do grotesque violence to both language and society. To turn, for a moment, from the period's greatest poet to its greatest essayist, we find that in 1933, Leon Trotsky wrote in *Harper's*:

The idea proclaimed by Hitler of the necessity of re-adapting the *state* frontiers of Europe to the frontiers of its *racess* is one of those reactionary utopias with which the National Socialist program is stuffed. . . . A shifting of the internal frontiers by a few dozens or hundreds of miles in one direction or another would, without changing much of anything, involve a number of human victims exceeding the population of the disputed zone. [Emphasis added.]

The 2.4 million refugees and the numberless dead *already* outweigh the populations of the various "corridors" by which Serbian and Croatian nationalists seek to purify their own states and to dismember Bosnia. As before, their "nationalism" has its counterpart in the axiomatic resort to partition by certain "noninterventionist statesmen." When Lord Carington, the European Community's mediator and a man obviously bored with the whole business, recommends "cantoning," the Serbian puppet in Bosnia, Radovan Karadzic, and the Croatian client there, Mate Boban, both make a little holiday in their hearts. The British Foreign Office's favorite fetish has triumphed again. After Ireland, India, Palestine, the Sudetenland and Cyprus, partition—or ghettoization—ceases to look like coincidence. Cantons by all means! say the fascists of all stripes. They won't take long for us to cleanse!

Near the town of Novska, on the Croatia-Bosnia border, I came upon a scene that illustrated the process in microcosm. An immaculate contingent of Jordanian U.N. soldiers was politely concealing its shock at the tribal and atavistic brutality of this war between the whites. It had done its task of separating and disarming the combatants in its immediate area. But here came six busloads of Bosnian Muslim refugees, many

of them injured, who had taken the worst that Christian Europe could throw at them and who were bewildered to find themselves under the care of a scrupulous Hashemite chivalry. They had come perforce to Croatia, but Croatia wants no part of these victims of "Serbian terror," a terror that it denounced only when it was directed at Catholics.

A digression here, on the etymology of "ethnic cleansing." Few journalists who employ the expression know where it originated, and its easy one-sided usage has maddened the already paranoid Serbs. Jose-Maria Mendiluce, the exemplary Basque who came to Zagreb from Kurdistan as the special envoy of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, told me he thought he had coined the term himself (though he blushed to recall he had used the word "cleaning"). But of course there is no "ethnic" difference among the Slavs, any more than there was between Swift's Big-Endians and Little-Endians. Nor is there a linguistic difference. And religion has not yet succeeded (though it has often failed) in defining a nationality. So "cultural cleansing" might cover the facts of the case, if it did not sound more ludicrous than homicidal. At all events, a reporter for Belgrade TV described the gutted, conquered Bosnian city of Zvornik with the single word "cist" (clean), after it fell in April. And the unhygienic Serbian militia that did the job, the self-described Chetniks* of the warlord Vojislav Seselj, also freely used the happy expression. The "camps," which were the inescapable minor counterpart of this process, have at least served to concentrate a flickering European and American mind upon a fading but potent memory, though comparisons to Belsen and Auschwitz

*The name "Chetnik" was first used by Serbian royalist irregulars who, during the Second World War, could not decide whether they detested Tito more, or less, than Hitler



ILLUSTRATIONS BY LISA BLACKSHEAR

show not that people learn from history but that they resolutely decline to do so, and instead plunder it for facile images.

Who, if anyone, does play the part of the Reich in this nightmare? *Smrt Fasizmu! Sloboda Narodu!* (Death to Fascism! Freedom to the People!) say the wall posters of the Sarajevo Commune. In most of the Western media the role of fascist is assigned to the Serbs without hesitation. In order to try to comprehend the Serbian political psyche, I had to visit, and indirectly to loot, two highly significant museums.

The Serbs became that most toxic and volatile of things—a self-pitying majority.

The first of these was the Gavrilo Princip Museum in Sarajevo, which stands by the bridge of the same name on the Miljacka River and is normally enfiladed by Serbian gunfire. Its wrecked appearance is deceptive, nonetheless, because although it has taken a round or two of Serbian mortaring, its actual destruction was wrought by enraged Sarajevo citizens. Gavrilo Princip, who stood quivering on this corner on June 28, 1914, waiting to fire the shot heard round the world at the fat target of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was a member of the Young Bosnia organization, which yearned and burned for the fusion of Bosnia with Serbia. No cause could be less fashionable in Sarajevo today, and the crowd had even dug up the famous two “footprints” sunk in the pavement to memorialize Princip’s supposed stance. Until recently, this was the museum of the national hero, and it bore witness that Serbia, in alliance with Russia, was the historic guarantor of all Slavs. Princip appears to have chosen the date for the assassination to coincide with the exact anniversary of the Serbian defeat by the Muslim Turks at Kosovo in 1389, which testifies to the power of aggrieved memory and to the Serbs’ conviction that *they* are the victims of regional history, underappreciated by those for whom they have sacrificed.

The second museum I visited was the site of the Jasenovac concentration camp, a real one this time, where during the Nazi period some hundreds of thousands of Serbs and Jews, as well as Gypsies and Croatian Communists, were foully slaughtered by the Croatian Ustashe regime of Ante Pavelic. No Germans even supervised this “cleansing,” which was an enthusiastic all-volunteer effort to rival the butchery in Latvia or the Ukraine. Here is the Serbian Babí Yar, a piercing wound in the heart. It sits on a broad, handsome field where the rivers Sava and Una converge. During the appalling Serb-Croat combat last year, it was occupied for a while by Croatian forces. They methodically trashed the museum and the exhibits, and left only the huge, ominous mounds that mark the mass graves. As in Sarajevo, I was able to salvage a few gruesome souvenirs from the debris. My Serbian guide, a friendly metal worker named Mile Trkulja, told me, “The

world blames the Serbs for everything, but nobody writes about Jasenovac.”

In other words, it was not so very difficult for the Serbs to become that most toxic and volatile of all things—a self-pitying majority. (The man who commanded the now-notorious P.O.W. camp at Omarska, unearthed last month, had been born in Jasenovac. “Those to whom evil is done . . .”) Faced with the mass expulsion of Serbs from the “new” Croatia and laden with historical resentment, many of them fell for the crudest option, exemplified by the four C’s on the Serbian emblem, which translate approximately to mean “Only Unity Can Save the Serbs.” Here was a Versailles mentality, replete with defeat and fear on the part of the stronger side.

In an astounding speech, given at the last Congress of Serbian Intellectuals to be held in Sarajevo, as late as March of this year, the Serbian academic Milorad Ekmecic was so daring as to phrase this consciousness directly:

The Serbian people do not want a state determined by the interests of the great powers and of European Catholic clericalism, but one which emerges from the ethnic and historical right possessed by every people in the world. In the history of the world, only the Jews have paid a higher price for their freedom than the Serbs. Because of their losses in war, and because of massacres, the most numerous people in Yugoslavia, the Serbs, have in Bosnia-Herzegovina fallen to second place, and today our policy and our general behavior carry within themselves *the invisible stamp of a struggle for biological survival*. Fear governs us. . . . Therefore the internal division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into three national parts is the minimal guarantee for the maintenance by Serbian and Croatian peoples of a partial unity with their national homes [Emphasis added]

Under the dispensation of Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic, notional heir to a vestigial Socialist Party, this combined pathology of superiority/inferiority has become the equivalent of state dogma. With dismaying speed, and by a macabre metamorphosis, the World War II Partisan slogan of One Yugoslavia has mutated into yells for a Greater Serbia, and the army devised by Tito for defense against foreign intervention has been turned loose, along with various militias, against civilians and open cities. You could, without stretching things too much, describe this hybrid as “national socialism.”

Yet it is also true that Croatia has a fascist ideology and a contempt for Serbian rights. President Franjo Tudjman does not quite affirm the Ustashe tradition, and can usually contrive to keep his right arm by his side, but he did adopt a near-replica of the Pavelic symbol for his national flag, and he did write a stupid revisionist book that said (1) that the Jasenovac camp had really killed very few Serbs and (2) that in any case it was run largely by Jews! He coupled this crassness with a campaign against Serbs living in Croatia, 200,000 of whom “relocated” as a result. Finally, he solicited support for his egotistical unilateralism from Germany, Austria and Italy, thus materializing the very geopolitical alliance that every Serb is taught by history to fear.

Yet Serbs had never been persecuted in Bosnia. Nor had Croats. But now the Serbian and Croatian irredentists are allied in a sort of Molotov-Ribbentrop pact against a defense-

less neighbor. (Ekmecic was wrong. There will be *two* Bosnias, not three, and he knows it.) Each camp exploits its Sudeten minorities to establish "pure" ministates that will in time demand fusion with the mother- and fatherlands. The Serbs have proclaimed "republics" in Croatian Krajina, and in Bosnia. The turn of Kosovo and Macedonia is probably not far behind. Meanwhile, the Croats have begun the annexation of western Herzegovina, on Bosnian soil. There is no guarantee at all that this narcissistic subdivision will not replicate itself across international frontiers (involving Greece and Bulgaria in the case of Macedonia, and Albania in the case of Kosovo) and attract the "protective" interest of outside powers like Turkey, armed with NATO weapons. But then, that's what Balkanization is supposed to mean.

There is no need to romanticize the Muslim majority in Bosnia. But they have evolved a culture that expresses the plural and tolerant side of the Ottoman tradition—some of this subtle and diverse character can be found in the stories of Ivo Andric, Yugoslavia's Nobel laureate—and they have no designs on the territory or identity of others. The Bosnian President, Alija Izetbegovic, is a practicing Muslim, which makes him an exception among his countrymen. I have read his book, *Islam Between East and West*, a vaguely eccentric work that shows an almost pedantic fidelity to ideas of symbiosis between "the three monotheisms" and the humanist tradition of social reform. In the rather surreal atmosphere of a press conference under shellfire, I asked Izetbegovic, who is accused by both Serbs and Croats of wanting to proclaim a fundamentalist republic, what he thought of the *fatwa* condemning Salman Rushdie. He gave the defining reply of the "moderate" Muslim, saying that he did not like the book but could not agree to violence against the author.

It is possible to meet the occasional Bosnian Muslim fanatic, and it is true that some of them made an attempt to sequester some Sarajevo Serbs in a football stadium. But that action was swiftly stopped, and roundly denounced in the newspaper *Oslobodenje* (Liberation). None of the Bosnian Serbs I met complained of cruelty or discrimination, and where they had heard of isolated cases they reminded me that it was the Serbian forces who had stormed across the River Drina, thus breaching a centuries-old recognition of the integrity of the Bosnian patchwork. If, however, that patchwork is ripped to shreds and replaced with an apartheid of confes-

sional Bantustans, those who like to talk ominously of Bosnian Muslim fundamentalism may get their wish, or their pretext.

During the Tito and post-Tito years, one used to read *Praxis*, a journal of secular intellectuals, in order to find out what impended in Yugoslavia. Suppressed by the party state in 1975, the magazine continued to publish as *Praxis International* under the aegis of Jurgen Habermas and other European and American sympathizers. Since the push for Greater Serbia began to ignite every other micronationalism in the region, I had not heard the voice of *Praxis* above the snarlings and detonations. But in Zagreb I did find the oldest and the youngest member of this apparently irrelevant collective.

Professor Rudi Supek is a veteran by any definition. For his work in organizing resistance among Yugoslav workers in Nazi-occupied France, he was sent to Buchenwald and is now the last survivor of that camp's successful "Liberation Committee." He left the Communist Party when Tito broke with Stalin in 1948 and now tries to keep alive the ideas of secularism and internationalism in a Croatia that has grown hostile again. "My family is an old Croat family, but I have no choice but to say I am still Yugoslav. In Buchenwald I was the chosen representative of Serbs, Bosnians and Croats, and they were Yugoslav in a way that I cannot betray."

Supek spoke with regret of the defection of some distinguished Serbian *Praxis* members. Professor Mihailo Markovic, on whose behalf I remember signing a petition or two in days gone by, is now a vice president of Slobodan Milosevic's Serbian Socialist Party and an ideologue of the diminished Serbian ideal. Svetozar Stojanovic, likewise, has become the personal secretary of "Yugoslavia's" exiguous President, Dobrica Cosic, whose stories about Partisan martyrdom have now taken on a distinctly Chetnik tone.

Zarko Puhovski, the younger *Praxis* adherent, teaches political philosophy at Zagreb University and bears with stoicism the anti-Semitic cracks that come his way as the son of a Jewish mother and a Croatian Communist father who did hard time in Jasenovac. "If you say you are a Croatian atheist, given that there are no ethnic or linguistic differences," he told me, "the next question is: How do you know you are not a Serb?" For both Puhovski and Supek, the contest with their "own" chauvinism was the deciding one. And for both of them, the defense of multinational Bosnia was the crux.

"Both the Chetniks and the Ustashe should be told to keep out of Bosnia," said Supek. "The fascists on both sides must be defeated and disarmed. If this needs an international protectorate, it should be provided."

"The embargo on arms to 'both sides' is pure hypocrisy" said Puhovski. "The Bosnians need arms to defend themselves, and the J.N.A. has appropriated to itself the weapons that used to belong to everybody." This, by the way, echoed the street opinion in Sarajevo, which roundly opposed the idea of foreign troops fighting their battles but bitterly recalled that the lavishly accoutered People's Army had been paid for out of the historic tax levies of Croats, Bosnians and Macedonians, and witheringly criticized the moral equivalence that the great powers are using as a hand-washing alibi.

Both Supek and Puhovski do their best to keep in touch

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with their Serbian counterparts despite reciprocal jeers about "treason" and despite wrenching breakdowns in ordinary means of communication. Supek gave me a printed statement from committed Serbian democrats, who denounced the ruin brought on their country by Milosevic's realm of delusion. Puhovski told me of the courageous Mirjana Miocinovic, widow of the great novelist Danilo Kis, who wrote to Milosevic renouncing her academic privileges and refusing the patronage of conquerors and occupiers.

For now, all these are no more than efforts to "show an affirming flame." But they may not be merely quixotic. Post-Communist Europe is hesitating on the brink of its own version of Balkanization, and Yugoslavia gives an inkling of what could lie ahead for more than one region, to say nothing of more than one culture. Bosnia matters, because it has chosen to defend not just its own self-determination but the values of multicultural, long-evolved and mutually fruitful cohabitation. Not since Andalusia has Europe owed so much to a synthesis, which also stands as a perfect rebuke to the cynical collusion between the apparently "warring" fanatics. If Sarajevo goes under, then all who care for such things will have lost something precious, and will curse themselves because they never knew its value while they still had it. □

■ NATIONALISM UNLEASHED—I

The Question of Azerbaijan

DILIP HIRO

On August 9 Azerbaijani troops captured Artsvashen, a pocket of Armenian territory within western Azerbaijan. This latest fighting in a four-and-a-half-year conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan sent Armenia—a member of the mutual security pact signed by six former Soviet republics in May—pleading with its fellow members to intervene militarily on its side. So far they have not done so. And the predominantly Russian troops of the twelve-member Commonwealth of Independent States (C.I.S.), stationed in Azerbaijan and Armenia, continue to be under orders to keep out of the fray.

Like the situation in what was once Yugoslavia, this is an ethnic conflict with a long and complex history. At the root of the conflict is Nagorno-Karabakh (the name means Mountain of the Black Garden), a 1,700-square-mile, largely Armenian enclave within Azerbaijan, so placed by Joseph Stalin in 1921 to reward the revolutionaries of the Azerbaijani capital, Baku, a strong Bolshevik center. The territorial dispute is fueled by a centuries-old animosity between Armenians and Turkic people, of whom Azeris are just one variant.

Dilip Hiro, a London-based journalist, has just returned from a monthlong visit to Turkey and Azerbaijan. His latest book is Desert Shield to Desert Storm: The Second Gulf War (Routledge).

In an environment of rising ethnic and religious consciousness following the collapse of secular Marxism-Leninism and the Soviet Union, Azeris find themselves living in the only Muslim republic in Transcaucasia. However, in the final analysis, they feel reassured by having Muslim neighbors to the south (Iran) and the west (Turkey).

Azerbaijan did not join the mutual security pact signed by half of the C.I.S. members. Armenia did. Peace talks sponsored by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (C.S.C.E.) collapsed in early August, but Armenia's pleas to its mutual security members for military intervention have failed largely because it was the Armenians themselves who capitalized on political chaos in Azerbaijan last spring by seizing Nagorno-Karabakh militarily. Since the seizure, followed by the Armenian establishment of a seven-mile corridor running through Azeri territory from Nagorno-Karabakh to the Armenian border, the enclave has been "cleansed." Virtually all of the 50,000 Azeri inhabitants, forming 25 percent of the population, have left, voluntarily or otherwise.

Such migrations have marked the conflict almost since it began, as have numerous charges and countercharges of cold-blooded murder and massacres. When on February 20, 1988, Nagorno-Karabakh's regional soviet called for a formal transfer of the enclave from Azerbaijan to Armenia, angry Azeris killed thirty-two Armenians in Sumgait, a dormitory town near Baku. Armenians in turn killed Azeris living among them. The escalating violence resulted in the dispatch of Soviet troops to Baku in January of 1990, the death of 122 Azeris at their hands, and the flight of 300,000 Armenians and 200,000 Azeris across the borders. (Russian and Jewish minorities, however, are not threatened in either country.) More than 3,000 people have died in the fighting.

In both republics the conflict has intensified nationalist passions, with the ultranationalist Tashnak Party gaining ground among the Armenians. The Armenian government's claim that Nagorno-Karabakh was taken by a militia over which it had no control wounded Azeri pride. People could not accept the idea that their republic, three times the size of Armenia and twice as populous, rich in oil and gas, had been defeated not by a regular army but by a militia. They attributed their setbacks to conspiracies hatched by pro-Armenian Russian officers in the C.I.S. army and politicians in Moscow, by the well-heeled Armenian diaspora in league with the Tashnak extremists, by the fanatic Iranian mullahs in Teheran—as well as by the treacherous Azeri "mafia," which allegedly sold Azeri arms to the Armenians for huge profits.

Having just shed the ideology of proletarian internationalism, Azeris have adopted nationalism with a vengeance. They blithely put the number of Azeris in the world at 60 million, twice the actual figure. They began referring to the Azeri-speaking region in northern Iran as South Azerbaijan, implying an eventual union of the two parts. (This was enough to set off alarm bells in Teheran, where the power of ethnic nationalism is well understood.) And they nurtured a powerful nostalgia for the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan, which existed from May 28, 1918, to April 20, 1920. Azeris claim that Baku was the center for the Turkish-speaking intellectuals who developed the ideology of secularism in a Muslim state.

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