

Landlocked Countries: Azerbaijan, Part 1

by Geir Sør-Reime

Note: Azerbaijan has a Caspian Sea coast, but according to the definition used in this series, countries bordering inland seas are still considered landlocked. (Right, a map showing the Caspian Sea, which actually is the largest inland body of water in the world.)



Map of Azerbaijan, 2013

Azerbaijan is one of the three Caucasian countries. It has an area of 33,400 square miles and a population of 10.3 million. The capital city is Baku.

Azerbaijan has rich oil reserves, mainly in the Caspian Sea, but also on land, where at some

locations it creates eternal fire out of the rocks.

Having been linked to Iran for centuries, Russia gradually gained control of the northern Azeri territory 1813-28, whereas the southern parts remain part of Iran.

After the Russian October revolution Azerbaijan was briefly part of a Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic that collapsed after ethnic massacres in Baku March 30-April 2, 1918. An Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was then proclaimed in May 1918. The republic introduced suffrage to women, the first Muslim state to grant women equal rights with men.

The Democratic Republic lasted only until Baku was conquered by the Soviet Red Army on April 28, 1920. The country's oil reserves were an important factor for the strong Soviet desire to incorporate Azerbaijan into the Soviet Union. There was however stiff Azerbaijani resistance to the Soviet re-conquest.

After the Soviet re-conquest, the current borders between Turkey, Russia, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan were established. Azerbaijan then was awarded the Nakhichevan area, sandwiched between Turkey and Armenia, and the Karabakh region with its Armenian majority population.

The Nakhichevan area was an independent republic, the Aras Republic, from December 1918 until June 1919. Stamps of Azerbaijan's first issue exist with overprints for this republic, but their status is uncertain.

During Soviet times, the capital of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic,



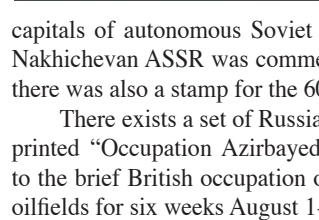
Left, 1919 Azerbaijan Sc. 1; right, Aras Republic (overprint on Azerbaijan's first issue)



Far left, 1961 Nakhichevan (street scene from capital Nakhichevan) (Sc. 2342);



Left, 1974 Nakhichevan ASSR 50 years (Sc. 3822)



Left, 1984 Nakhichevan ASSR 60 years (Sc. 5295)

also called Nakhichevan, was depicted on one of the 1961 stamps featuring capitals of autonomous Soviet republics. The 50th anniversary of the Nakhichevan ASSR was commemorated with a single 1974 stamp, and there was also a stamp for the 60th anniversary in 1984.

There exists a set of Russian stamps overprinted "Occupation Azirbayedjan" attributed to the brief British occupation of Baku and its oilfields for six weeks August 1-September 15, 1918. These stamps are also denounced as bogus, but in a recent article in the *Cinderella Philatelist*, Victor Berkovia argues that there could be one original issue, made by the British, and several forgeries made later.



1919 Occupation Azirbayedjan



1919 first issue (Sc. 10)

The first and only released issue of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was issued October 20, 1919 (Sc. 1-10), and depicted the national flag (Sc. 1, prior column), a reaper, the citadel in Baku, and the Temple of Eternal Fires in Suraxani (Sc. 10, left). The first printing was on white paper, and second 1920 printing was on grayish or buff/brownish paper. It appears that the second printing was also used by the Soviet Republic proclaimed April 28, 1920,

pending the introduction of a distinct series of stamps by the Soviet Republic, which was only issued October 1, 1921. These stamps featured an allegory of labor, a petroleum well, the minaret of the mosque at the Khan's Palace in Baku, the Bibi Eibatt oilfield, the State Museum of Arts, the Hall of Judgement at the Khan's Palace, globe and workers, the Maiden Tower in Baku, and a blacksmith.

1921 AzSSR-issue of the Azerbaijan soviet republic, *Globe & Workers* (Sc. 23)

several values were overprinted with control stamps at various offices to authorize them for new and higher rates.

Two famine relief stamps were issued October 22, 1921 (page 2).

The centenary of the first, October 1919 issue was commemorated on a 2019 souvenir



1922 control overprint (Sc. 302)

sheet issued by the re-established Azerbaijan republic and depicting the stamps of the 1919 issue.



1921 Famine relief (Sc. B1-2)



2019 stamp centenary (S/S)

A set of six pictorial stamps printed in Italy and dating from around 1921/22 and inscribed Republic of Azerbaijan are denounced by all catalogs as an entirely bogus issue, but it could

have been ordered by the Republic government and therefore, never put into postal use. Nonetheless, the series has been extensively forged.



Italy, catalogs say it is bogus, but could also be a prepared but not issued series.

When Azerbaijan became part of the Transcaucasian Federation of Soviet Republics March 12, 1922, separate stamp issues for Azerbaijan continued until October 1, 1923, when they were replaced by general issues of the Transcaucasian Federation.

During 1922, the stamps of the 1921 pictorial issue were surcharged with new values in Azerbaijan rubles to reflect the galloping inflation. In 1923, the 1919 and 1921 issues were surcharged similarly, but now in Transcaucasian rubles.



Surcharges: 1923 (Sc. 39); 1922 (Sc. 48)

The September 15, 1923 definitive stamps of the Transcaucasian Federation had two different designs, but both included oilrigs as a symbol of Azerbaijan.



1923 Transcaucasian Fed.: Left, 1923 September issue in Transcaucasian rubles (Sc. 20); right, 1923 October issue in gold rubles (Sc. 30)

In 1924, stamps of the Soviet Union replaced the stamps of the Transcaucasian Federation.

The first Soviet stamp with a specific reference to Azerbaijan was one of the 1933 Peoples of the Soviet Union series, featuring representatives of the three Caucasian Soviet republics.



1933 Ethnography Caucasus peoples (including Azerbaijani) (Sc. 502)

Also in 1933, a set of five stamps commemorated the 15th



Left, 1933 Baku commissars awaiting execution (Sc. 521); right, 1968 Baku commissars monument (Sc. 3510)

death anniversary of the 26 Baku commissars, leaders of the Baku commune 1918. In 1968, the 50th anniversary was remembered with a single stamp.

The new Soviet constitution of 1936 was followed by stamps displaying the arms of the new constituent republics, 11 in all, including the Azerbaijan Socialist Soviet Republic.

The Azerbaijan arms was also featured on one of the 17 1947 stamps for the Supreme Soviet elections.

The 1940 All-Union Agricultural Fair series of 17 stamps included one depicting the Azerbaijan pavilion. The Azerbaijan pavilion at the 1955 Agricultural Exhibition was also depicted on a stamp.



Left to right: 1937 new constitution (1936), here arms of Azerbaijan SSR (Sc. 648); 1947 arms of union republics (issued for the Supreme Soviet elections)—here Azerbaijan SSR (Sc. 1106); 1940 agriculture exhibition—Azerbaijan SSR pavilion (Sc. 800)

In 1950, the 30th anniversary of the Azerbaijan Soviet Republic was celebrated with three stamps depicting



Left, 1950 Azerbaijan SSR 30 years (Sc. 1474); right, 1957 October revolution 40 years—here Azerbaijan SSR (Sc. 2007)

monumental buildings in Baku, and in 1957, the flag and arms of the Azerbaijan SSR was featured on one of the stamps celebrating the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution.

The 40th anniversary of the Azerbaijan SSR was celebrated with a 1960 stamp depicting the Government House in Baku, and the 150th anniversary of the union between Russia



1960 Azerbaijan SSR 40 years (Sc. 2318) 1964 150 years union Azerbaijan-Russia (Sc. 2898)

and Azerbaijan was commemorated with a 1964 overprint on this stamp.

The flag, arms, and capital cities of all Soviet republics were depicted on a set of stamps issued 1967 for the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution, and the flag and arms of the Azerbaijan Soviet Republic and a view of Baku was featured on one of these stamps.



1967 October revolution 50 years–Azerbaijan flag and arms (Sc. 3344)



1970 Azerbaijan SSR 50 years (Sc. 3713)

In 1970, the 50th anniversary of the Azerbaijan SSR was commemorated with a single stamp, and likewise in 1980, when a single stamp commemorated the 60th anniversary.



1980 Azerbaijan SSR 60 years (Sc. 4821)



1958 Baku (Sc. 2129)

A view of Baku, the capital city of Azerbaijan appeared on one of the 1958 stamps featuring views of the capital cities of all 15 Soviet republics. The Baku oil industry was honored on a 1971 stamp showing oil rigs and oil pipelines. All capitals of the Soviet republics were included in a 1990 set of 15 and Baku was represented with the Maiden Tower and the Divan-Khane Palace. The Shirvanshah Palace in Baku appeared on another 1990 stamp as part of the historic buildings series.



1971 Baku oilfields (Sc. 3936);



1990 Baku (Sc. 5863); 1990 Baku palace (Sc. 5914)



Left to right: 1962 Sabir (Sc. 2616); 1972 Ordubady (Sc. 3974); 1976 Vurgun (Sc. 4433)



The birth centenary of the Azerbaijani poet Sabir was commemorated on a single 1962 stamp, and the Azerbaijani writer Ordubady on a 1972 single. Poet Vurgun appeared on a 1976 stamp for his 70th birthday.

The Persian poet Nizami Ganjavi was born and died in present-day Azerbaijan, and his 840th birth anniversary of commemorated on a 1981 Soviet stamp. The Azerbaijani epic poem Koroglu was one of the epic poems of Soviet republics issued in 1989.

Two Azerbaijan operas were featured on a pair of 1966 stamps. In



1981 Ganjavi (Sc. 4949)



1989 Koroglu (Sc. 5790)

1974 the centenary of Azerbaijan Drama Theater was celebrated with a single stamp featuring the theater building.



1966 Azerbaijani operas (Sc. 3253-54)

Typical Azerbaijan costumes were depicted on the 1963 series of national costumes of the Soviet republics.

The birth centenary of the Azerbaijani politician Nariman Narimanov was commemorated in 1973 with a single stamp.



Left to right: 1974 Azerbaijan Dramatic Theater (Sc. 4174);



1963 Azerbaijani costumes (Sc. 2725); 1973 Narimanov (Sc. 4135)



Traditional Azerbaijan string instruments were included in the 1990 series featuring traditional musical instruments of the Soviet republics.

The series of 15 stamps illustrating folk festivals of the 15 Soviet republics included the Azerbaijan Novruz (New Year) holiday.



Left: 1990 traditional instruments (Sc. 5931); right: 1991 folk festivals Novruz (Sc. 6032)



To Be Continued