
Obituary

ACADEMICIAN MIKHAIL USEINOV

The architect Mikhail Useinov died in Baku in March, 1993 at the age of 88. He had been the outstanding architect of that city for half a century. Useinov was the second Honorary Fellow elected by the R.A.S. who came from Baku. The historian and linguist, Muhammad Ali Mirza Kasim Bey, preceded him in the nineteenth century.



Academician Mikhail Useinov.



Residential houses of scientists in Baku.



“Moscow” hotel in Baku.

At the start of his career, Useinov had been inspired by the work of Corbusier and kindred architects. However, he was only able to complete a few examples in this manner, including the Moscow Hotel, Baku, before he was compelled to follow the cultural exigencies of the Soviet hierarchy. He was deeply interested in the historic monuments of the old city of Baku and, when a student, he had recorded detailed measurements of the Shirvanshah palace. It was predictable that the frustrated Useinov should turn to the past and use romantic detailing associated with Islamic buildings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He also worked in a classical style associated with German architecture of the mid-nineteenth century.

What sustained Useinov through the sadly thwarted years was his immense reserves of humour which made knowing him such a pleasure. No one could have been less like a Hero of Socialist Labour, People’s Architect and Academician which, among many honours, he achieved. He was regarded with great affection and respect by colleagues and students and this enabled him to survive and to be an influence for the future in Azerbaijan. His exhibition at the R.I.B.A. in 1985 brought him to London and made it possible to assess the quality of a life’s work and also that of the man.