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INFLUENCE OF THE EXPANSION OF RUSSIA ON THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN AZERBAIJAN AT THE TURN OF THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

Abstract

The article examines the wide-ranging consequences of Russia's expansion into the Caucasus and the resulting demographic, economic, and social changes. By focusing on lesser-known aspects of 18th-century Russian colonial policy, it explores why Azerbaijanis were historically referred to as "Tatars". The study also analyzes the causes and consequences of ethnic resettlements within Azerbaijani principalities following their early 19th-century annexation. Furthermore, it addresses the broader demographic data and the economic status of leading Azerbaijani entrepreneurs, alongside the political shifts triggered by Bolshevik pressure during the Baku oil boom of the early 20th century. Additionally, the article highlights the presence and impact of the Polish community in Azerbaijan at the time. Finally, the article shows how Russian expansion shaped the Azerbaijani mentality, resulting in psychological and anthropological effects that remain relevant today.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, Russia, Caucasus, demography, colonialism, Poles

The matter of demographic particularities of the Caucasus due to its rich ethnic patterns stands out as a topic which requires a patient investigation, along with the courage to look into archival sources, so far scarcely revealed to the public due to its sensitive political content. This is also why the matter of the political tactics of colonisers, so far least known in the context of Azerbaijanis, is actually significant in understanding the reason why contemporary issues are going a certain way and not another.

One of the pillars on which the factual map of the Caucasus ethnic historical background stands today is indeed the information on its demographic movements in general and the data on the Azerbaijani population in particular. In other words, this aspect, so fact-providing, is the main source of knowledge for those who might want to obtain the capacity to understand contemporary geopolitical occurrences in the region. Obviously, without this knowledge deeply rooted in history, or at least the perspective offered in this article, the overall available data on the topic is to be considered incomplete.

The colonial policy of the Russian Empire significantly influenced and changed the demographic pattern of the Caucasus in the first half of the 19th century, showing itself in the flow of population from the region and into the region, both in vast numbers, yet bringing depopulation on the part of Muslim Azerbaijanis.

Factually, free research on the origins of Russia's colonial policy in the Caucasus and the ethnic clashes it created locally was not favored during the Soviet era. Specifically, the role of religious and ethnic factors in the implementation of Russia's expansive politics, was first shown in the work of Professor Mustafazadeh entitled "Azerbaijan in the First Quarter of the 18th Century. Azerbaijan and Russian-Turkish relations".[1] Written on the basis of primary sources, this book comprehensively covered events related to the campaign of Peter I into the Caspian region, presenting for the first time the results of research which revealed the role of religious and ethnic factors implemented as a part of Russia's colonial expansion.[2]

The conquest of the South Caucasus by the Russian Empire changed the ethnoterritorial map of the region. Already at the initial stage of the coloni-

[1] Т. Т. Мустафазаде, *Азербайджан и русско-турецкие отношения в первой трети XVIII века*, Баку 1993.

[2] Г. Наджафли, *Азербайджан в XVIII–XIX веках*, Бишкек 2010, p. 19.

zation of the Caucasus, Russian authorities tried, relying on a Christian population of various national identities, to minimize the role and importance of the Muslim, including the Azerbaijani, ethnic factor as much as possible. Obviously, to be able to achieve such a goal, particular policies were launched.

Upon the inclusion of the territory of the South Caucasus into the Russian Empire, Azerbaijanis found themselves in the new territorial, administrative, and socio-economic conditions. The subordination of administrative units and the tax system changed. New procedures for control and protective measures were introduced along with penalties. The possibility of traveling was restricted, and as a result, the traditionally natural development of socio-economic relations among Azerbaijanis themselves became limited.[3]

The partition of Azerbaijani lands by the Turkmenchay Treaty on February 10, 1828, initiated significant demographic shifts. One major movement was the migration of the Sunni population from the northern parts of Azerbaijan toward the Ottoman Empire. Simultaneously, Christians including Georgians, Russians, and Armenians, crossed the newly established treaty border from Iranian territories into the northwestern regions of Azerbaijan. Before the treaty, the percentage of Shia and Sunni population was almost equal and presented itself in a fifty-fifty ratio with a slight favor towards the latter.[4]

Remarkably, in the first years of the presence of the North Azerbaijani lands as a part of Russia, in the late 20s and early 30s of the 19th century, mainly from Irevan, Nakhichevan, Karabakh, Pambak, and Lori, about 100 thousand Muslims, mostly Azerbaijani Turks, emigrated to neighboring countries.[5]

According to the data presented by Ludwik Widerszal, only during 1863–1864, the number of Muslim emigrants reached 220,000.[6]

Shia and Sunni diversity was present to an extent of being useful to Russia, which did not hesitate to engage and arm Azerbaijanis in colonizing

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[3] Э. Исмаилов, *Азербайджанцы в конвое российских императоров*, Москва 2018, pp. 24–25.

[4] T. Świętochowski, *Russia and Azerbaijan: A Borderland in Transition*, New York 1995, p. 10.

[5] See А. Балаев, *Азербайджанская нация: основные этапы становления на рубеже XIX–XX вв.*, Москва 2012, p. 55, 61.

[6] T. Świętochowski, Ibid. pp. 240–241.

clashes[7] of Russian expansion in the region, specifically in the Russia-Ottoman conflicts.[8]

When it comes to movements into the region, one of the first colonists in the lands of the South Caucasus were immigrants from the German states. The colonies Annenfeld and Helenendorf were located in the Elisavetpol district, and another Ekaterinenfeld was in the Borchalinskaya administrative unit. In total, out of 480 families in eight German colonies, 295 families, i.e., more than half, settled in three colonies on Azerbaijani lands.[9]

From the first half of the 19th century, Azerbaijani lands were also settled by Russian schismatics *старообрядцы* (Staroobriadtsis), *молокане* (Molokans), *духоборцы* (Dukhobortsis), *скопцы* (Skoptsis) and *субботники* (Subbotniks). Thus, during the period from 1830 to 1844, 8361 schismatics were settled on the territory of the former Karabakh, Talysh, Sheki and Shirvan khanates. However, the flow of such numbers of German and Russian settlers

[7] This statement of Professor Tadeusz Świętochowski deserves further clarification. It is important to state that indeed Azerbaijani nobles were highly engaged in the Russian army top military ranks and were serving Russian Tsars, being known for their reliability, agility and bravery. Researcher Eldar Ismailov dedicated years to scrupulous and highly praised in academic circles research on, among others, escort guards of His Majesty the Emperor's Guard Regiment members of Azerbaijani origin. (See Исмаилов Эльдар Эльхан оглы, "Азербайджанцы в конвое российских императоров", Фонд "Русские Витязи", Москва 2018; "Персидские принцы из дома Каджаров в Российской империи", (Москва 2009); "Золотое оружие с надписью "За храбрость". Списки кавалеров. 1788–1913" (Москва, 2007), "Георгиевские кавалеры Азербайджанцы", (Москва 2005). Indeed, the fact of overall Caucasian origin nations to speak Georgian, Abhasian, Armenians and being recognised by the Russian authorities as valuable warriors is a particularity of the matter. On the other hand, military career was the directly predetermined path to take in case of the princes and male offsprings of the heads of Azerbaijani principalities annexed to Russia, as they were receiving automatically ranks of generals and colonels. Specifically, the clarification is in aspect of Azerbaijanis nationals being engaged in all ranks of the Russian army, precisely being in the regular military service in various military ranks during Russian regional expansions, including Russia-Ottoman clashes and not as it may seem in a guerilla formations of hit and run tactics of illegal armed groups.

[8] T. Świętochowski, *ibidem*, p. 10.

[9] Записки о состоянии 8-ми Вюртембергских колоний в Грузии поселенных (из дела 1820 года)// АКАК. Т. VI. Ч. I. С. 347-349. Док. No 469; Рапорт ген.-м. Ховена ген. Ермолову от 14-го марта 1824 года, No 4 //АКАК. Т. VI. Ч. I. С. 350-352. Док. No 472. in Исмаилов Э., *ibidem*, p. 25.

could not affect the ethnic picture of the South Caucasus (for example, in contrast to the North Caucasus, where military settlements of the Cossacks were actively organized).

The main changes in the ethnic picture of the region occurred as a result of the policy pursued by the Russian authorities to populate the lands of the South Caucasus with the largest ethnic group, the Armenians, which especially affected the former western possessions.[10] Shortly after the annexation of Azerbaijani lands to Russia, 8 thousand families of about 40 thousand people were resettled from Persia,[11] and another 84 thousand Armenians were brought from Türkiye.[12]

Russian war historian Ivanenko narrates that as a result, already a few years after the conquest of the Caucasus by the Russian Empire, the composition of the local population "changed dramatically: a significant part of the Muslim population, and especially nomads, moved to Persia and Türkiye, and dense crowds of Armenians moved into places inhabited by those who left. Here, in once densely populated areas, the newcomers, having found more than 300 abandoned and devastated out of 1100 auls, easily settled down with only an insignificant allowance from the government".[13]

The movement of the Christian population, mainly Armenian, from the lands of Iran to Azerbaijan, which was now annexed to Russia, has been widely organized, supported, and described by the Ambassador of the Russian Empire to Persia, the writer, poet, and diplomat Alexander Griboyedov. Migration was initially triggered by the understandable will of Christian Armenians to find protection under the Christian Russian Tsars. Though re-

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[10] Записка о русских переселенцах-раскольниках в Каспийской области, АКАК. Т. X. Тифлис, 1885. С. 289. Док. No 293. in Исмаилов Э., *ibidem*, p. 25.

[11] Глинка С., *Описание переселения армян адербиджанских в пределы России*, Москва 1831, pp. 48, 87, 92.

[12] See *Колонизационная политика России в Закавказье*, Шавров Н.Н. *Новая угроза русскому делу в Закавказье: предстоящая распродажа Мугани инородцам*. Санкт-Петербург 1911, pp. 58–66.

[13] See *Утверждение русского владычества на Кавказе: К столетию присоединения Грузии к России: 1801–1901* / Под руководством Беляевского / Под редакцией В. А. Потто Т. XII: *Гражданское управление Закавказьем от присоединения Грузии до наместничества великого князя Михаила Николаевича* / Сост. В. И. Иваненко. Тифлис 1901, p. 229.

luctant initially, this idea was later supported by Russian authorities without paying any attention to the probable future outcome of the matter.[14]

It is not a secret that Russian policy was the main factor in triggering further atrocities in the Ottoman Türkiye.[15] Basically, Armenians, just like Georgians, Persians, Circassians, Chechens, and other ethnicities that inhabit the region, are neighbors to Azerbaijanis, while particularly between those two there has been a fierce conflict with significant disadvantage and the highest toll in the form of civilian deaths on both sides.

The Armenian priest Tirigish Kigamiyants, in his work titled *History of the Armenian movement*,[16] draws attention to the fact that the Russian state actually used the Armenians to implement particular policies in the region.

Understandably, such a situation occurred in the context of Russia's desire to ensure its hegemony, also against the Ottoman Empire and Persia. Remarkably, already at the time of Catherine the Great (1729–1796), Russia explored intensively possible ways of exercising power. As for the politics of the government of Catherine II in the South Caucasus, in the 80s of the 18th century, it included conspiracy acts between Alimurad Khan[17] and the Russian authorities regarding the division of Azerbaijani lands. Historian Mustafazadeh highlights the policy based on the use of Christians for political profits, along with inciting the main Azerbaijani khans against each other.[18]

Indeed, at the times of Catherine the Great, the Russian state, in the frame of implementation of its policy of conquest, tried to play a trump card – a conflict between the Karabagh khans and the meliks,[19] continuing the

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[14] See А. С. Грибоедов, *Сочинения в двух томах*, т. 2, Москва 1971, pp. 339–341.

[15] On Russian interference in the internal affairs of the OE see G. Lewy , *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Türkiye. A Disputed Genocide*, The University of Utah Press 2005, pp. 7, 31, 95, 102, 156, 178. See also Шиманьски А., Рецензия на *Guenter Lewy, The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Türkiye. A Disputed Genocide*, "Европа" Журнал Польского Института Иностранных Дел, Issue 1(22) 2007, Warszawa 2007, pp. 155–156.

[16] T. Kigamyans, *Erməni hərəkatının tarixçəsi* (Erməni dilindən tərcümə Mirzə Fətəli İsmixanova məxsusdur), Baku, 1917. (Əski əlifbadan çevirən Q.Camalov), AMEA TİA "Əlyazmalar fondu".

[17] A l i M o r a d K h a n – fifth Shah of the Zand dynasty of Iran, reigned: March 15, 1781–February 11, 1785.

[18] Г. Наджафли, *ibidem*, p. 19.

[19] M e l i k s – Azerbaijani historians claim them to be of Christian-Albanian origin. According to Armenian historians, Meliks are of Armenian origin.

thereby introduced by the Russian tsar Peter I (1672–1725) so-called policy of "protection" of Christians in regions populated by Muslims.[20]

One of the most specific facts regarding Russian colonial policy in the region refers to the definition used to describe Azerbaijanis by the Russian authorities. While this paradoxical and bizarre historical fact is known in itself, the reason behind it has not been properly explained in the Western academia so far. Upon the conquest of the South Caucasus by the Russian authorities in the 19th century, we see an unprecedented tendency hidden in the official naming of the population of Azerbaijan as Tatars. To be more precise, while the fact of Azerbaijanis being defined as Tatars is known, the historical data and factual motives behind it remain blurred for the majority of Orientalists. Our article aims to bring clarification to this matter.

In fact, the term "Tatars" is present in Russian administrative records of the time, even in reference to the population of Northern Azerbaijan. Yet, here appears a fundamental question, namely, whether such misnaming was a result of insufficient knowledge or an acute way to nourish colonial aspirations by suppressing the identity awareness of Azerbaijanis through an intentional misnaming of their nation. Alternatively, this fact can also be considered as a proof of "fundamentally confused questions about the policy of the Russian authorities in the Caucasus".[21]

Vital to this is the awareness of a variety of definitions related to Azerbaijanis in the historic documents of Russia. Prominent Azerbaijani researcher Eldar Ismailov specifies all those available in the Russian historiography, and they are presented below:

> Following the annexation of Northern Azerbaijan by Russia, distorted ethnic definitions emerged in official Russian usage. Azerbaijanis were referred to as "Tatars" (a broad generalization applied to various nationalities of the Caucasus, or more specifically, "Transcaucasian Tatars", "Azerbaijani Tatars", and "Turko-Tatars") or "Persians" (particularly in the Derbent and Baku regions). Alternatively, they were identified by their religious affiliation simply as "Muslims".[22]

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[20] Г. Наджафли, *ibidem*, p. 119.

[21] An idea expressed by professor Naumov in the introduction to the book of *Эльдар Исмаилов, Азербайджанцы в конвое российских императоров*, Москва 2018, p. 5.

[22] See E. Ismailov, *ibidem*, p. 10.

Ismailov indicates that the ethnonym "Azerbaijanis" was introduced to Russian academia at the end of the 18th century.[23] Another example of the usage of an ethnonym can be found in the translation of the letter dated 1782 by Fatali Khan of Derbent and Kuba addressed to Catherine the Great.[24]

Remarkable is also the matter of the particular naming of the language then spoken by the Azerbaijani population.

> The language of the nation that inhabits those territories is called "Turkish". Words such as Tatars and Tatar language is actually unknown to this population, which we call as Tatars; they are defining their own language as "Tiurk-dili", …accepting the fact that naming "Transcaucasian Muslims as Tatars… is groundless, as their language is indeed quite different from the Tatar language".[25]

Crucially, the academic aspect of the matter was clear, with no delusion and known well enough to Russian experts already prior to the annexation of Azerbaijani principalities, so if only taken into consideration, basically misnaming of the population of Azerbaijan and its language could actually be avoided. This we can also see from another example, which derives from the statement of Professor Lazar Emanuilovich Lazarev (1822–1884) of the Lazarevsky Institute of the Eastern Languages, who was an orientalist born in Iran, and according to him Azerbaijani people:

> "...are not calling themselves Tatars, but as Turks…". Professor Lazarev also mentions that: "The language defined as Turkish, the very same one which is used by Turks..., (and) in Aderbidjan, the territory which is under the rule of Russia and Persia. This language is used at the court of the Shah and in many Persian provinces".[26]

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[23] Specifically, already towards the end of the 18th century Russian dignitary Burnashev defines Azerbaijanis in his works as "адребиджанцы" "Adrebijanis", See С. Д. Бурнашев, *Картина Грузии или описание политического состояния царств Карталинского и Кахетинского, сделанного пребывающим при Его Высочества царе карталинском и кахетинском Ираклии Темуразовиче полковником и кавалером Бурнашевым в Тифлисе в 1786 г.* Курск 1793, p. 32.

[24] *Грамоты и другие исторические документы XVIII столетия, относящиеся до Грузии. Т. II: С 1769 под редакцией А.А. Цагарели*, Санкт Петербург 1902, с. 17"24. in Eldar Ismailov, p. 12.

[25] И. И. Шопен, *Некоторые замечания на книгу "Обозрения российских владений за Кавказом"*, Sankt Petersburg 1840, p. 66.

[26] Л. Э. Лазарев, *Сравнительная хрестоматия турецкого языка наречий Османов и Адербиджана с приложением тюркских разговоров и пословиц и с переводом их на русский язык для практических упражнений*, Moscow 1866, p. 1, in Eldar Ismailov, *ibidem*.

Significant is the awareness that one of the fundamental tendencies of the Russian policy towards the Azerbaijani population was the avoidance of defining them by a single name, which yet was remarkably in use by Russian officials in the pre-annexation era.[27] So to speak, once within the borders of the Russian state, Azerbaijanis were redefined as "Tatars", "Transcaucasian Tatars", "Azerbaijani Tatars", "Turco-Tatars", "Persians" albeit "Muslims". Such definitions were used, among others, in the names of regiments and squadrons of "His Imperial Majesty's Own Convoy", consisting of Azerbaijanis. It is of paramount importance to acknowledge today that by not being defined with one precise name, which summons ethno-cultural particularities, the Azerbaijani population was kept at bay from awareness of existing as a nation through tendentious long-term denial of its own ethnonym.

The third aspect of intentional misnaming related to the Azerbaijani territories newly annexed to Russia was the fact of the change of toponyms. From the perspective of time, this aspect of politics, with an extensive psychological impact, has come forward as a reality for the Azerbaijanis since the times of the Russian colonial expansion. The matter of changing the toponyms, being one of the known particularities of the Russian policy, finds numerous examples in the history of Azerbaijan, specifically not only in the imperial period, but also in the Soviet one. One of the numerous examples would be the ancient Azerbaijani city of Ganja known as Gəncə (up to 1804), then Yelizavetpol from 1804 till 1918, then again Gəncə (1918–1935), subsequently Kirovabad (1935-1989), and ultimately again Gəncə (since 1989).

As we can see, aspects of misnaming both: the ethnic group and its language are directly correlated with the policy of ruling the "new Russian territories", and it does not derive from a lack of knowledge, it exists as knowledge neglected, being cancelled for the sake of political strategies dictated by colonial aspirations. Curiously enough, referring back to the aspects of policy, we find the statement of a goal-setting particularity by the Italian general Marquise Filippo Paulucci,[28] made in 1816, on how precisely the Caucasian policy should be handled by Russia:

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[27] See С. Д. Бурнашев, *Описание областей Адребижанских в Персии и их политического состояния,* Курск 1793.

[28] Filippo Paulucci (1779–1849) marquis, general of Russian and Sardinian infantry primarily in the Russian, later on in Italian armies, diplomat, Livonia, Courland, Estland

1. "Refrain from anything that could weaken their perception of our power, the principal source of our strength in the region.[29]
2. Establish commercial relations so as to generate among them needs that they still do not feel.[30]
3. Maintain a continuous state of dissension among their diverse nations and never forget that their unity could be fatal for us.[31]
4. Introduce among them the light of Christianity.[32]

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and Pskov Governor-General, Governor of Genoa. Was assigned to the Caucasus during the years 1809–1812.

[29] The "perception of power" is a topic which would not be discussed here as it is a question of wide geopolitical scope in which Russia steadily keeps being present through its hegemony.

[30] Such as a particular social issue, which cannot be neglected: the emergence of the so-called *matushka* (concubine of Christian origin) on the scene of Azerbaijani family life. This occurrence represented not only a moral taboo but also a huge commercial impact on every day's basis of Azerbaijani families' life. It was something that the pre-partition era of Azerbaijani society was not accustomed with. Caricatures published by the prominent magazine "Molla Nasreddin" revealed this as one of the most sensitive social issues that the society had to deal with. "Where are you taking that chicken...?" Double standard by men towards women. Merciless treatment of wifes; Concubine in next room, are some of numerous known caricatures exposing this acquired problematics of Azerbaijani society of the time.

[31] As we can see, despite being voiced at the beginning of the 19th century the maintenance of a "continuous state of dissension" among the diverse nations of the Caucasus was thoroughly enforced up to the time when Molla Nasreddin magazine was already a popular periodical. The caricature published in the "Molla Nasreddin" represents three pictures where an Azeri and a completely alike Armenian at first fight fiercely but then kiss each other, with the third picture showing the reactions of the Devil (Russia) to those scenes. See Molla Nasreddin: *The Magazine that Would've, Could've, Should've*, Zurich 2011, p. 85.

[32] While the policy of a permanent destabilization of the region by planting the seeds of hatred among two nationalities proved to be an unfortunate, yet total success, the "need of introducing the light of Christianity", resulted in a complete failure: indeed, none of the existing multi-cultured ethnic groups ever experienced any kind of difficulty practicing their own religion or coexistence with other communities in Azerbaijan. In other words, the historical and ethnic wealth of religions in the region represents, today as it did centuries ago, one of the most interesting examples of tolerance and spiritual freedom. In this respect, it is useful to underline that even prior to the partition of Azerbaijan, populations in the Caucasus had never experienced any hurdles practicing Orthodox Christianity as well as Gregorianism, Judaism, Catholicism, Zoroastrianism, and Islam. Remarkably, spiritual affiliation was always considered a personal matter in each community, so it was never pos-

5. Absolutely prevent them from the possibility of links with Türkiye and Persia".[33]

Critically, the aspect of "preventing the possibility of links with Türkiye and Persia" is directly tied to the intentional misnaming of the Azerbaijani nation by calling it Tatar instead of Azerbaijani Turks. As a result, the population of northern Azerbaijan kept bearing a certain sentiment, often combined with a huge admiration and respect for the Ottoman Empire in particular and a sort of bitter nostalgia towards Iran. Such an attitude was due to the fact that families had fallen apart and had lost track of each other over years, decades and then centuries.

Furthermore, the Russian state acquired a permanent policy to secure its hegemony over the lands of Azerbaijan not solely upon annexation of Azerbaijani principalities in the 19th century, but also much later, already in the 20th century, with constant migrant transfers of non-Muslim population into the region. Hence, it was a perpetual process. We find one of such facts in an Azerbaijani 1903 newspaper article. According to the information presented by the "Şərq-i rus", there were: "795 Russian migrants brought to be settled together with their families in Baku. As a rule, Russian migrants were placed in 9 regions of Azerbaijan. While mainly they were inhabiting areas of Guba and Shamahy".[34]

Furthermore, the situation of political instability transforming into tensions continued in the 20th century, while the rapidly developing city of

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sible to use religion to trigger nationalism. On the contrary, the lands of Azerbaijan have been fully recognised since the Middle Ages as an oasis of undisturbed pride in traditions and ethnic values. As a point of reference to this statement: "While the North Caucasus has historically been the scene of tensions and conflicts that persist to this day in present-day Russia, the independent and secular republic of Azerbaijan in the South Caucasus has not experienced similar domestic conflicts of a protracted nature. Azerbaijan's experience shows that the co-existence of several ethnic groups in the South Caucasus can be peaceful and that the solution to ethnic conflicts elsewhere is not to create ghetto mono-ethnic states but to encourage multi-ethnic diversity, respect, and tolerance, which is in line with European values. There may be lessons to be learned from Azerbaijan's experience of ethnic and ethno-religious diversity that could be helpful for other states that are dealing with comparable diversity within their borders. *Human Rights Without Frontiers Report*, Int'l Avenue d'Auderghem 61/16, 1040 Brussels. 3 September 2013.

[33] T. Świętochowski, op cit., p. 12.

[34] "Şərg-i rus", 24 December 1903, N. 113.

Baku was growing. It showed itself in security, which was poor among the masses. From a time perspective, the simplicity of the tool that was used to create particular conditions in the region, repeatedly occurring from 1905 and even up to those days, is striking in its intentional political context.

The Russian authorities kept tendentious anarchy in certain parts of the city of Baku. First, this was possible by simply giving way to some crime medium that was allowed to smolder permanently, either between Azerbaijanis on their own or between Azerbaijanis and Armenians. As an example of the first aspect of the case, the "Şərq-i rus" lamented: "The frequent killing incidents in Baku result from Muslim backwardness. There is not a single day without a situation where one Muslim kills another. Sometimes this even rises up to 3–5 killings and deaths".[35]

On the other hand, the multinational texture of the society was also instrumental in achieving certain goals when needed. That was also part of the policy of the state which had proven to nourish tensions upon religious and nationalistic ideology in this particular geographic region, using gangs to become a handy tool on the way to set violations, hatred, and social disorders as occurred in the 1905–1906 *pogroms* in the city of Baku, bringing forward huge numbers in casualties. The prominent patriot of Azerbaijan, composer Üzeyir Hacibeyov, stated: "Such hostility has been woven among those two nations by other hands".[36]

As stated by Nizami İbrahimov, who, after deep scrutiny of the newspapers of the investigated time period, proves plainly that Armenian armed groups regrettably had always been instrumental for Tsarist Russia as an implementation tool to achieve goals of the Russian tsarist policy showered with blood.[37]

So to speak, in the context of the incidents of 1905 in Baku and other cities of Azerbaijan involving fights and casualties of the peaceful population, Ahmed Agayev sought to convey to the Russian public the true causes of the tragedy that had unfolded in the Caucasus and to honestly determine the share of guilt in it on both sides. The author explained the origin of the

[35] "Şərg-i rus", 9 July 1903, N. 42.

[36] M. Aslanov, *Üzəir Hacıbəyov gündəlik yazmış olsaydı*, Baku 1994, p. 23.

[37] See Н. Ибрагимов, *XIX Əsrin sonu XX əsrin əvvəllərinde Bakı şəhərinin siyasi və mədəni həyatı,* Baku 1997.

conflict as the clash of common interests in the fields of entrepreneurship and social activities. He emphasised that the strong position of the Armenian bourgeoisie strengthened its desire to take commanding positions not only in the economic, but also in the public life of the region, which was facilitated by the long-lasting mendacious Russian state policy of discrimination against Muslims, an infringement of their rights in all spheres of life since the colonization of Azerbaijani territories by Russia. The author noted that this policy poured a large dose of poison into the relationships, not only between the top of the population of both nationalities, but primarily among the lower strata. However, Agayev blamed not the entire bourgeoisie and intelligentsia for inciting the conflict, but their predatory, reactionary part. Agayev sharply condemned the opposition between two great religions, Christianity and Islam. Addressing the morally healthy part of the intelligentsia, he called for tireless joint work in the name of the triumph of peace and the prosperity of the common motherland: "Remember", the author warned, "your discord is your ruin, and your unity is your salvation".[38]

When it comes to the overall condition of the society, a prominent figure of the Enlightenment in Azerbaijan, a great patriot Hasan Bey Melikov Zardabi, whose words reflect the suffering of an intellectual while observing the situation of his nation, was writing:

> At the same time when they were opening educational establishments in Tiflis and other cities, where there had been the beginning of correct culture, the Eastern Trans-Caucasus was forgotten. The population, mainly Muslims, was considered backward and far from civilization. Enormous masses of Persian nationals were flooding the Trans-Caucasus daily, and they could not bring anything except poverty and ignorance that shroud those lands more and more, killing the weak rays of European civilization, which have reached those lands as if by mistake.[39]

The social structure of Azerbaijan was deeply affected by the economic developments of the region and the historical events that took place mainly at the beginning of the 20th century.

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[38] See "Каспий", 18 January 1905, № 13; *"Правда о Бакинских событиях"* in Санкт--Петербургские ведомости 1905; https://azerhistory.com/?p=10129 [accessed: 23.07.2022].

[39] H. Zardabi, *Selected articles and letters*, Baku, Azerbaijan, Academy of Sciences Publishing 1962, p. 349.

Newspapers were writing about the situation of local businessmen and oil magnates:

> Now one out of 10–20 shops and one out of all business offices remains in the hands of Muslims. Daily, our trade and country is going away from our hands. From Iran, the Ottoman Empire, and other places, other nationalities arrive in Baku and become business owners in 5 days. To them we sell the places that were meant to us by our fathers and mothers. They built factories and buildings and spent nice days there.[40]

Simultaneously, considering the Caucasus as an alternative to Siberia in terms of an exile district for inconvenient political individuals, the Russian government had chosen the lands of Azerbaijan, in particular, to temporarily exile dissidents. In time, such a situation provoked flourishing aspirations for unconventional ideas and revolutionary deeds, which were already particular to this geographical area due to the rich tolerance of the ethnic map for any contrasts. Types of migration kept evolving, mainly in line with the region's economic development. Foreigners engaged in the exploration of oil would move to Azerbaijan together with their families; eventually, massive immigration had a tremendous impact on the social life of the country's main cities.

Specifically, the population in Baku grew over nine times from 1864 till 1897. Already in 1903, the number of residents of the city and environs reached 207,985 people. 128,676 of those were men, and 79,985 were women.[41]

Indeed, this observation was made even much earlier by the "Əkinçi" (The Ploughman) newspaper, which in an article dated 5 October 1875 stated as follows: "We observe plainly how foreign groups are gaining wealth in our country".[42]

Hence, a relevant number of working-class people was gathering around industrial areas. "In such a context, the growth of the population in Baku was impressive: from 113,004 people in 1897, the city grew to 222,412 in 1904".[43]

The country's industrial development brought forward a new social class made up of the Azerbaijani intelligentsia and the bourgeoisie.

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[40] "Şərqi-rus", 25 July 1903, N. 48.

[41] N. İbrahimov, *XIX Əsrin sonu XX əsrin əvvəllərinde Bakı şəhərinin siyasi və mədəni həyatı*, Ozan nəşriyyatı, Bakı 1997, pp. 18–19.

[42] "Əkinçi", 5 October 1875, N. 6.

[43] N. İbrahimov, *ibidem*, p. 20.

Azerbaijan's national capital, having mastered certain positions in oil production, was widely represented in metalworking, silk, food, carpet production and some other industries. The stratum of the Azerbaijani bourgeoisie was significant in trade. The majority of the ships belonged to them. Analysis of the economic positions of the Azerbaijani bourgeoisie in a number of branches indicates that, despite the limitations associated with the great-power politics of tsarism and competition from foreign and some other national groups of domestic capitalists, Azerbaijanis in a number of industries, transport, and trade were holding quite large enterprises that had an objectively positive value for the overall development in Azerbaijan, constituting important branches of its national economy. Baku became the main center for the formation of the Azerbaijani industrial and commercial bourgeoisie. The activities of its main representatives, such as Tagiev, Nagiyev, Dadashev, Asadullaev, Ashumov, Sadykhoz, and Mekhtiev in the late 19th – early 20th century concentrated there. It was in Baku that some of them invested in profitable real estate rental businesses, becoming owners of dozens of luxurious high-rise buildings which brought stable profits.[44]

In this regard, when the numbers of entrepreneurs are investigated, it becomes clear that the Russian Empire officials were willingly encouraging the development of capital on the side of non-Azerbaijani nationals. In this respect, according to the evidence taken by the Baku district factory official inspectorate: in 1900, among 204 industrial enterprises with 115 owners, Azerbaijani nationals were present in 18% of the total number, while Armenians were present in around 29%, Russians in around 27%, and foreigners were present in 13%.[45]

The newspaper "Kəşkül" lamented: "Wealthy individuals give away by selling and depositing precious expensive lands, left to them by their ancestors and fathers, so of their nobility there remains solely a dry title 'Bey', which surely in time will be in any way extinguished".[46]

Respectively, an intensely developing economy was a reason for new employment opportunities to be established. Baku underwent a considerable

[44] Д. Б. Сеидзаде, *Азербайджанские Депутаты в Государственной Думе России*, Азербайджанское Государственное издательство Баку 1991, pp. 5–6.

[45] S. Kərimova, *Çarizmin Azərbaycanın işgalında və müstəmləkəcilik siyasətində ərməni siyasətbazlarının rolu*, Azərnəşr, Baku 1995, p. 164.

[46] "Kəşkül", 2 April 1908, N. 68.

increase in numbers of factory workers, which can be traced through detailed information given in local newspapers. Along with the oil industry, rapid development could be observed in the field of cotton and fabric production. Haci Zeynalabdin Taghiyev was a pioneer in this field by establishing, in 1901, a technically equipped, remarkably advanced large-scale factory which employed up to 1000 workers. In 1903, the number of workers rose to 3000.[47]

This process gained momentum due to the interest of owners of small lands or peasants without land in working industrial units. As the number of employees in Azerbaijan was rising, their gender, age, abilities, and ethnic profile were changing. So to speak, in the mining industry, the majority of workers were men, while in others, the numbers of women and minor employees were predominant.

As an example, in 1900–1902, at fisheries on rivers and lakes, worker profiles were as follows: 6100 men, 129 women, and 120 minors.[48] Then, the northern Azerbaijan fish supply basin was divided into 11 districts. In 1903, in the 7th Samur Fishery District, there were 9088 men and 1564 women workers. In 1901–1902, in Nuha Province, the number of workers in the silk industry consisted of 1500 small children, teenagers, women, and 2000 men. In 1903, at the silk production lines of Qarabağ and Naxçıvan, 1036 minor girls, 76 boys aged between 8 and 15, and 144 elderly were working. One-fifth of the workers were girls and women.

The number of women involved as workers in the food and light industries was one tenth of the total number, while in some areas, such as Qarabağ, this number was four fifths. Such a vast involvement of women in labor had an economic and political background. Women were underpaid and were less likely to express their discontent with the heavy conditions of work. As an example, in 1903, in Nuxa silk production lines, male workers were paid 45–75 Kopeyek,[49] while women and minors were paid 15-25 Kopeyek.[50]

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[47] "Şərqi-rus", 25 November 1904, N. 232.

[48] G. İbrahimova, *XIX-XX əsrlərdə Azərbaycanda Qadın Siyasəti*, Əlyazması hüququnda dissertasiya, Baku 2010, p. 97.

[49] Kopeyka, kopeyek, kopeyki - definition used to define a monetary unit less than 1 Russian Ruble.

[50] G. İbrahimova, *ibidem*, p. 98.

In due course, promises of independence of the nation along with the enchanting dream of "lands for peasants, factories for workers"[51] were gaining enthusiastic response from the masses of the working class. The strategic importance and potential of the Azerbaijani economy were well recognised by communists, who brought forward diligent work in terms of mobilizing all possible efforts to secure a deep spread of communist ideology among those unhappy with their condition and worried for the future social class.

Curiously enough, the contemporary numbers and worldwide distribution of the population with Azerbaijani ethnicity strongly reflect historical occurrences.[52]

From a psychological and anthropological point of view, those historical occurrences also left traces in the mentality of Azerbaijani society. As a result of long-term policies applied not solely by the Russian Imperial rule, but also in its oppressive and marginalising notions by the Soviet regime, the majority of Azerbaijani nationals are victims of internalised racism, which comes forward in the acceptance by members of the racially stigmatised group of negative perceptions about their own abilities and intrinsic worth, characterised by low self esteem and low esteem of members of their own social group in comparison to members of communities of diverse background.[53]

We clearly observe this in embracing attributes of "whiteness" (while the majority are brunette, since the availability of chemical hair dyes and eye

[51] One of the most known and often used propaganda slogans of the communists prior to the 1917 October Revolution.

[52] In Iran the number of ethnic Azerbaijanis is higher than it is in the contemporary ADR. There is a considerable number of Azerbaijanis in Türkiye, as a result of migrations from the beginning of 19th century, beginning of the 20th century and the times of the pre-Soviet Union. The number of Azerbaijanis in the Russian Federation, USA, Germany and Ukraine is a reflection of the post-Soviet migration. To summarize, presently the situation of demographic distribution of Azerbaijani population within the Republic of Azerbaijan and neighboring countries is as follows: Azerbaijan Democratic Republic: 10 000 000 (2019), Islamic Republic of Iran: up to 30 000 000 (Iranian authorities avoid declaring precise numbers), Republic of Türkiye: 3 000 000, Russian Federation: 2 500 000 (2020).

[53] See W. M. Byrd, L. A. Clayton, *Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Healthcare: A Background and History*, [in:] B. D. Smedley, A. Y. Stith, A. R. Nelson (eds.), *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care*, Washington D. C., National Academies Press 2003, pp. 455–523.

lenses, it is not rare among Azerbaijani women to change their hair and eye colour to blond and blue, grey, or green, as blond and its natural feature eye colours are considered an attribute of higher status).

Another aspect is exemplified in the self-devaluation (through the usage of nicknames: the most common in post-Soviet Azerbaijan was "Mongol").

Alternatively, the rejection of ancestral language, which was extremely widespread during the Soviet times, manifested itself in the tendency of the population to speak Russian in public places, so as to appear more educated and of a higher social status, while outside of their homes. After the fall of the Soviet Union, this tendency transformed to the opposite, creating a situation in which, outside of their homes, Azerbaijani people speak mostly in their native language, while at home or with close friends, the majority still have a tendency to switch to Russian.

Polish Community

Indeed, Poland and Azerbaijan, through a certain period of their history, were actually a part of the same state; as a result of the colonial policy of Russia what they had to endure was practically the same situation, together with the prolonged disruptive effects of it on the entire national heritage and psychology of both nations. Numerous individuals of Polish origin formed a considerable number of middle- and upper-class intellectual groups, inhabiting the Caucasus region in general and Azerbaijan in particular.

Though specific works have been written by some researchers already, this aspect of the history of Azerbaijan constitutes a field of research that is still in its infancy. In this respect, we present the information we were able to verify in our turn.

> Following the First Partition of Poland by the Russian Empire in 1772, Polish citizens came to Azerbaijan. Russia forced Polish recruits at that time to go fight in the Caucasus. In 1813, an additional 10,000 Polish prisoners were sent to the Caucasus as a result of Napoleon's campaign in the region. In November 1831, after a failed uprising against Russia, a new wave of exiled Polish insurgents was sent to Azerbaijan. The main points of entry for the Poles taking up military service were Quba, Qusar,

Shamakhi, Ganja, Baku and Zaqatala. Chapels built for these Polish military personnel and their families in Quba and Zaqatala still exist.[54]

Specifically, since the beginning of the 19th century, foreigners of Polish origin began to appear in the lands of Azerbaijan, not only as voyagers but as a settled population. The reason was their military and administrative service. Shortly after, Poles started to appear in the Caucasus as exiled military service soldiers who had been punished by the Russian state for their activity in anti-governmental secret groups and as participants in revolts. Rauf Badirbeyli states that according to Polish investigators, the number of Polish-origin members of Caucasus military bases was rising from time to time, up to 19%. The oil boom that began in the 1870s of the 19th century resulted in the flow to Baku of representatives of the most various professions and national backgrounds. According to the investigation performed by Rauf Badirbeyli, the number of Poles among those newcomers was significant. They were founding their own companies, working in administrative service, and were pedagogues, doctors, and investigators of biological and geological aspects in Azerbaijan. Among them, W. K. Zglenicki has to be particularly praised for his outstanding contribution as the expert who, as the first in the world, suggested extracting oil from the bottom of the Caspian Sea using a method of drilling from oil derricks placed on a pile platform.

The other prominent Poles who contributed to the development of Azerbaijan at those times were geologist K. Bogdanowicz, who penned a line of important works on Azerbaijan, as well as architects such as E. J. Skibiński, J. W. Gosławski, K. B. Skurewicz and J. K. Płoszko, who were the authors of the most magnificent buildings in Baku city.[55]

Poland has also been relevant to some historical milestones in the culture of Azerbaijan. Abbas Kuli-aga Bakihanov, a poet, academician, and man of thought, known under the pseudonym Kudsi (1794–1847), visited Warsaw

[54] *Human Rights Without Frontiers Report*, 3 September 2013. Int'l Avenue d'Auderghem 61/16, 1040 Brussels.

[55] Р. Бадирбейли, *Поляки в Азербайджане в XIX – нач. XX в.* Автореферат. Summary of the Master's degree thesis at Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences, Department of History, Baku 1985, p. 19.

and met the sister of Alexander Pushkin, Olga Pavlisheva. Upon her request, he brought from Warsaw a letter addressed to the Pushkin family and met the great Russian poet in person in May 1834.[56]

So to speak, the book of Ismail Bek Kutkashenski, *Raşidbek and Saadat Hanum* was published in Warsaw in 1835 in French. The main character of this book reflects the profound thoughts and democratic ideas of the author.[57]

When it comes to collaboration in the field of charity, already since the mid-1850s, we find information on collaboration of Polish women with women of Azerbaijani, Russian, Georgian and Armenian origin in such societies as Saint Ripsime and Saint Nina.[58]

In the Caucasus, the teaching activity profile according to division by nationalities was led by Russian teachers, which constituted 70% of the total number. Yet there were also representatives of other ethnic groups such as Polish, German, Greek, Tatar, Ukrainian, etc.

Remarkably, the fields of social interactions of persons of Polish origin, as well as their existence and involvement in social life, were determining certain processes within Azerbaijani society. This is particularly visible in activities such as charity and public health, both of which have considerable involvement of women.

Remarkably, during the whole process of this research, we acknowledged that the number of dignitaries of Polish origin in the Russian administrative structures was impressive. Literally, there are such personalities as Tchórzewski, Radziecki, Janowski, and Irecki acting as dignitaries leading Russian authorities in the Caucasus region which were dealing with national education. Their involvement is even more meaningful when we discover that those men were personalities in official posts related to the aspects of education for Azerbaijani women.[59]

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[56] М. А. Дадашзаде, *История Азербайджанской литературы (краткий очерк)*, Баку 1971, p. 96.

[57] М. А. Дадашзаде, *ibidem*, p. 102.

[58] See S. Gəncəli, *Qadın, gözəllik və ülviyət [Woman, beauty and divinity]*, Baku 2001, pp. 60–63.

[59] See The acting director and inspector of public schools of Baku Governorate and Dagestan Province, A. Txorjevski (highly likely Tchórzewski), whose significant contribution to the opening of the Aleksandrinski school is known. There is additional information

Another important figure of Polish origin is the head of the Caucasus Censorship Committee, Lev Nikolayevich Modzalevsky.

Piotr Semyonovich Sankovski is another important figure in the history of the Caucasus. Among them is also Kahanovski,[60] deputy of foreign affairs for Iran and Türkiye.

Extraordinarily, there are strong grounds to presume that, despite being defined by Zardabi as Russian, Dmitri Semyonovich Staroselsky was of Polish origin.

In the last two decades of the 19th century, such notable individuals of Polish descent as Kamiński, Karpowicz, and Kotylewski were working in the field of education in the Caucasus. The notable personality in the field of education for the masses in Azerbaijan was Czerniawski. Among the middle school teachers who devoted many years to work in the Baku district was Michalewski. Archival documents bear traces of numerous teachers of Polish origin who devoted their lifetime careers to various educational units in Azerbaijan. The most prominent of them were Razdorski, Sizemski, Starzycki, Porębski, Celiński and Szarogardzki. There were also women of Polish origin who were serving as teachers. An important role in the establishment and pioneering of journalistic resources in Azerbaijan was played by such Polish-born writers and journalists as Sokoliński, Zdanowicz, Iwliński, Karpicki, Matuszeński, and Olendzki.

Another field in which a notable number of individuals of Polish origin were present was pharmacy. According to Huseinova's data, at the beginning of the 20th century, Polish pharmacists and Georgian workers made up 28%

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that Tchórzewski resigned from his post upon his disagreement related also to the opening of another school for girls in the Azerbaijani region of Lenkaran. From the article of prominent Azerbaijani intellectual and advocate of necessity of popularization of education among Muslim girls, Teymur Bayramalibeyov, we understand that the Caucasus head of city schools Tchórzewski was very supportive to the petition of Bayramalibeyov for opening of the school for Muslim girls in Lenkaran in 1913. Tchórzewski ordered local authorities to make a necessary building available promptly for such a school in the city, yet the decision was prevented by the head of Caucasus Education Unit Rudolf, who was a boss of Tchórzewski. Rudolf believed that a separate building must be built instead of using available ones. The situation among two dignitaries resulted in the resignation of Tchórzewski from his position. See "Азербайджан", No. 28, 6.11.1918.

[60] Highly likely Kochanowski.

of the workforce in Baku pharmacies. Huseynova states that the situation was almost identical in the case of pharmacies situated in peripheral areas.[61]

When it comes to the education of Azerbaijani girls in various parts of Azerbaijan, in the last years of the 19th century, we see girls studying in state schools, yet they were mostly not Azerbaijani but Russian, Armenian, and other nationalities, including Polish.[62]

Upon the establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in 1918, the population of the country was represented in the Parliament with regard to national diversity. Specifically, the numbers would consist of the following deputies: 80 Azerbaijanis, 21 Armenians, 10 Russians, 1 German, 1 Jew, 1 Georgian, 1 Pole, 3 from Baku Trade Union, 2 from Baku Oil Industrialists' Union.

It would be significant to focus on the historical fact regarding the history of the press in Azerbaijan. Prominent publisher and the founder of the first independent national newspaper Hasan Melikov Zardabi was writing:

> Though our deceased governor, general Starosielski was a pure Russian man, his wife was Georgian. Thus he would see the natives of the Caucasus as friends. After I explained to him my problem, he advised that I would name the newspaper as "Əkinçi" (The Ploughman), hinting that it would write about planting and cultivating, promising that he will take on himself the matters of censorship. So I submitted the request accordingly and was able to obtain the permission…
>
> On July the 10th, 1874, I went to Istanbul on a business trip and came back in August. Metal printing materials arrived in winter. As I didn't have enough money to open a print shop, Staroselski bought the printing materials for Gubernskoye Pravleniye printing house.[63]

This analysis centers on the historical role of General Dmitry Semyonovich Starosielski (1832–1884), a Russian general and bureaucrat, who served as the Governor of Baku from 1872 to 1875 and the Chief of the Administration of the Viceroy of the Caucasus from 1878 to 1884. Here, it is important to mention that we have a strong doubt about General Starosielski's

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[61] Д. Гусейнова, *Азербайджанская интеллигенция в конце XIX – начале XX в.* Баку 1993, pp. 111–116, 132, 92.

[62] Н. Таирзаде, *Из истории Азербайджанской интеллигенции,* Баку 2009, p. 163.

[63] T. Aydınoğlu, *Hanife Xanım Melikova-Abayevanın xatireleri*, Baku 2005, pp. 14; 136–137.

being ethnically Russian, as General Starosielski might have actually been of noble Polish origin. The fact that the surname does not sound typically Russian but Polish, the fact that it sounds additionally like a noble Polish surname, as can be seen from records on the surname Starosielski, the origin of the surname is actually Poland, additionally, we can see that on the armorial and heraldry of Polish nobility, the Starosielski surname is listed among the surnames that belonged to the arms of Ogończyk.[64] Those details are a trigger point for us to pursue the idea that the general was actually not ethnically Russian, as it is declared by Russian and Azerbaijani sources, but Polish by origin. In this respect, we can state that the historical figure who facilitated the initiation of the national press in Azerbaijan, Dmitry Semenovich Starosielski (May 15 [27], 1832, Chernigov province, Russian Empire; March 11 [23], 1884, Tiflis, Russian Empire), lieutenant general of the Russian Imperial Army, senator, head of the Caucasian Mountain Administration, Baku governor in 1872–1876, might have been of Polish origin. What then would be significant is to presume that the very first independent newspaper, hence the birth of the long-denied freedom of the press in Azerbaijan, was so far anonymously endorsed by the Russian administrative official of Polish origin. This unacknowledged fact would actually be one of the examples of the once strongly pronounced sympathy of Polish-origin Russian subjects with the local population of the Caucasus, which in time found reflections among the Polish diaspora in Europe in the circles of Hotel Lambert.

Remarkably, when it comes to the history of Azerbaijani press, between 1918 and 1920, periodicals were published in Baku, Ganja, Shusha, Tbilisi, and Yerevan; these publications appeared in Azerbaijani as well as Russian, Armenian, Persian, Polish, Georgian, and German languages.[65]

According to the information presented by Nasiman Yaqublu, a central element of the Polish community was the monthly scientific and literary periodical "Faris", edited by Voynilovich and first published in Baku on January 22, 1907. Although its circulation was limited to 200 copies and the publication ceased in 1908, it marked a significant moment in the Polish diaspora's local history.

[64] *Herbarz Polski Kaspra Niesieckiego*, vol. VII, Lipsk 1841, p. 60.

[65] A. Aşırlı, *Azərbaycan mətbuatı tarixi (1875–1920)*, Baku 2009, p. 127.

During this period, broader Azerbaijani media also engaged deeply with Polish culture. The Baku-based newspaper "Kaspi" featured articles on prominent figures such as Adam Mickiewicz and Henryk Sienkiewicz. Beyond *Kaspi*, numerous other influential publications—including "Əkinçi", "Molla Nəsrəddin", "Təzə həyat", "Sədayi-Qafqaz", "Açıq söz", "Sovqat"—regularly documented Poland's cultural and political developments.

Notably, "Açıq söz", under the editorship of M. A. Rasulzade, served as a primary platform for analyzing Azerbaijani-Polish relations. Such a cultural discourse was exemplified in 1916, when the newspaper commemorated the death of the Nobel laureate Henryk Sienkiewicz.[66]

The field of activities and involvement of individuals of Polish origin in various projects related to improvements in public life might be another reference to factual information indicating a high level of the Polish community and its leading,[67] constructive and positive influence on Azerbaijani society.

Conclusion

Narrating the period of the reign of Catherine II in the 80s of the 18th century, historians refer to a letter[68] presented to the Empress by Grigori Potemkin. This document contained a plan for the creation in the South Caucasus of the Armenian, Albanian, and Iberian kingdoms, orchestrated by Russian governmental circles in order to secure for themselves reliable support in the face of Christian states. The obvious fact is that interference in the geopolitical structures of the existing territorial reality of any region in the world, with a desire to favor one ethnic group above another, particularly

[66] N. Yaqublu, *Polşa Respublikasının Müstəqilliyi Günü münasibəti ilə*, https://modern.az/az/news/88940/ [accessed: 30.03.2026].

[67] In this context, peculiar is the fact of surnames of Azerbaijani intelligentsia that has been reflecting surely the influence of Russian hegemony, simultaneously extensive is also the influence of Poland, when we focus on the aspect of how Azerbaijani noblemen preferred to pick up their family names. Important for Azerbaijani history figures such as Kutkaşenski, Ganjinski, Ismailov-Shirvanski, Nakhichevanski are just a few. Indeed, this fact gives an idea of another topic that deserves to be considered for a new particular research.

[68] Г. Наджафли, *ibidem*, p. 22.

in the condition of religious diversity, would bring permanent tensions and stir, which we can observe up to now.

Furthermore, as time passed, similar reasons were creating tensions even in the cities of Azerbaijan. The Russian state was never interested in establishing a balanced social existence among the middle class and the needy. Remarkably, while the security of the wealthy was guaranteed, the coexistence of the lower classes was kept in a state convenient to be stirred when it was necessary to totally obstruct the homogenization of the country's social classes and stable economic growth which would secure prosperity.

Prominent intellectuals of Azerbaijani society were the most aware social class of the reasons and calamities such a state of affairs would bring to the region, unless prevented by the joined forces of both Azerbaijanis and Armenians. This article demonstrates that Azerbaijani intellectuals were already searching for answers to such questions at the beginning of the 20th century.

It would be greatly important to acknowledge the existence of the conflict between Azerbaijanis and Armenians since the time when the colonial policy of the Russian Empire started gaining force in the Caucasus. Indeed, the paradox of the history of the conflict is based on the fact that its duration is equal to that of the Russian hegemony in the region, while the factual coexistence of Armenian and Azerbaijani populations on those lands dates back to the pre-Russian expansion.

Furthermore, in light of Russian expansionism in the Caucasus, a systematic and tendentious shift in Azerbaijani ethnonyms and their application to toponyms is observable.

While Western academia widely recognizes the "Tatar" misnomer in relation to Azerbaijanis, whether this error resulted from the Russian authorities' lack of knowledge has yet to be factually and clearly explained in the West.

In the context of the influence of historical events on the self-perception of Azerbaijani people, we discussed the matter of misnaming Azerbaijanis as Tatars. From a contemporary sociological perspective, the attitude of the Russian imperial authorities reflects a social stigma toward Caucasian peoples in general, defining them as *tuzemtsy*. Within this broader category, Azerbaijanis—labeled as "Tatars"—constituted the largest demographic group.[69]

[69] *Tuzemtsy* - туземцы, a native, indigenous person born in a particular area or country. In Russia this definition was most often used to refer to residents of remote or less civilized

In this context, the aspects and bibliography of Azerbaijanis, properly defined as Azerbaijani or Adrebidjani have been presented. Those facts demonstrate and confirm the Russian academia's sufficient knowledge regarding proper naming of Azerbaijanis and the territories they lived on providing examples, from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, when Azerbaijanis were defined as Tatars in the statements of Russian authorities and their internal communications, such as reports, evaluations, and official decisions related to policy-making acts, censorship, education, and charity organisations.

The economic conditions of the era were closely associated with demographic factors. By focusing on such aspects, one can better understand the underlying social processes that resulted in substantial demographic and societal changes.

As for the representatives of business owners, the bourgeoisie of Azerbaijan, in its composition, was multinational. The correlation of the positions of the Azerbaijani bourgeoisie was different in various industries. Baku attracted a vast number of foreign investors. The fact that the local bourgeoisie could not be considered as powerful in numbers and influence created an even more attractive environment at the initial stage of the boom around Caspian oil production.

Initially, despite the economic relations paramount to trigger rapid economic growth, economic development was rather slow, and any kind of improvement was insurmountable due to the lack of a legislative system sufficient for investments and exploration of the existing economic possibilities. Regrettably, apart from a few foremost capitalists of Baku who were investing in the development of the oil industry, local entrepreneurs were not enthusiastic in this matter and even preferred to sell the lands with confirmed oil reservoirs to foreigners, gaining a few thousand rubles and sometimes even a few hundred instead of millions.[70]

200 years after the statements of Philippo Paulicci, the evaluation of the historical facts seems easier in many aspects. Certainly, awareness of the Russian state of the value of Azerbaijani products existed since the begin-

regions, as well as to refer to the indigenous population of Siberia and southern regions including Caucasus.

[70] "Şərqi-rus", 13 January 1905, N. 12.

ning, while the utmost richness of natural resources within the country did not contribute to Azerbaijan's overall prosperity.

Furthermore, Azerbaijan faced a social exclusion policy applied by the Russian imperial authorities due to ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. This situation correlates directly with the social stratification and categorization enforced by Russian colonial policy between 1828 and 1918. During this era, Russia viewed Azerbaijan merely as a geographic region over which it unscrupulously claimed expansionist rights.[71] As a result of the marginalisation and distortion, society was persistently pushed towards the fading of its national awareness and heritage.

In this respect, Azerbaijani history of social identity comes forward as the field in which we can plainly detect the presence of social, tribal, and spatial stigma along with low self-esteem among the target group, which brings us to the field of investigation for the benefit of the labelling theory. The author of this article can state plainly that so far none of the sources evaluated by her authors have approached the matter from this perspective.

Ultimately, the information on the Polish community is presented in a general frame, while the specific individuals from Russian authorities in the Caucasus who dealt on various, but mostly top and prominent positions, with education and censorship issues in the second half of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries are indicated for the first time. We can see that plainly Polish surnames of those individuals bring to light two main aspects related to the Russian historiography in the Caucasus. First is the fact of prominent positions being held by dignitaries of Polish origin in the Russian Imperial structures, and the second is that their attitude to the matters related to the establishment of national identity, improvements in education,

[71] In this context, institutional racism of the Russian Imperial authorities looks like a perfectly fitting evaluation by Sir William Macpherson: "The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes, and behaviour that amount to discrimination through prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping that disadvantage minority ethnic people". See Home Office, The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: Report of an Inquiry by Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, Cm 4262-I, February 1999, para 6.34 (cited in the Macpherson Report – Ten Years On in 2009); https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhaff/427/42703.htm official British Parliament Website [accessed: 2.04.2023].

social life and press demonstrates a mostly warm and supportive attitude towards Azerbaijani intellectuals of the time.

Moreover, for the first time, the thesis of the prominent dignitary of the Russian state, general Dmitry Semionowich Starosielski's being of Polish origin is scrutinised and explained.

To sum up, based on primary and secondary sources, it is of paramount importance to state explicitly the fact that eminent dignitaries of Polish origin of the Russian Empire were in charge of developments of vital aspects for the Azerbaijani nation's historiographical formation, such as journalism, charity, censorship and education. This and related findings stand out as valuable occurrences of the history of the Caucasus as a whole, deserving further academic research.

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