

Caucasian Regional Studies



The International Association For Caucasian Regional Studies
Law Politics Sociology Economics Modern History International Relations

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

During the Soviet epoch the Caucasus was probably the most flourishing region of the Soviet Union. But as it was behind the 'Iron Curtain', it remained little investigated by the rest of the world. When the Curtain fell down and the newly independent states (NIS) began to emerge out of the ruins of the Soviet Empire, it was the same Caucasus that became the arena of bloody wars and of the geopolitical games of the large regional powers, and the people living there fell into a state of poverty and despair.

Not many people could understand the complicated interweaving of the postcommunist, geopolitical, ethnic, cultural and other factors, causing the deep social shocks that took place practically all over the region. So far in the West only a handful of Caucasian experts have shown professional competence in the politics, economics and public life of the Caucasian republics. Even in the Caucasus itself there are few such experts as the communist system needed ideologists and not analysts.

From the necessity to regulate ethnopolitical conflicts, to render assistance to refugees and to generally stabilise the region as well as to use the Transcaucasian route and the Caspian oil there arose in the West a definite strategic interest in the Caucasus, and, accordingly, the need to analyse the processes that are happening here. To use a Russian idiom, the Caucasian and Russian political leaders had chopped a lot of firewood before they started to realise the idea of the unity of the Caucasian region and that of positive state building. But so far there is practically no systematic research into the problems of interCaucasian relations, state building, the processes of democratisation and economic liberalisation, the state of affairs relating to Human Rights and national minorities, Caucasian republics joining the world community, etc.

In September 1995 within the framework of the TACIS programme and with the support of the EC Delegation in Georgia, an international conference on the 'Problems of Democratisation in the Caucasus' was held. Apart from theoretical discussions participants at the conference from Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belgium, Great Britain, Georgia, Denmark,

Russia, France and other countries, established the International Association for Caucasian Regional Studies, the aim of which is for representatives of the regions of the Caucasus and Russia to carry out joint research projects with the participation of western colleagues. At the conference a decision was also taken to systematically publish the results of research on actual political, economic, legal, international, historical and other social problems of the Caucasian Region.

The first edition of 'Caucasian Regional Studies' is the result of the decision taken at the conference. The next issues will be promulgated on the basis of the selection of relevant articles and materials. There are separate English and Russian issues. In future, with the improvement of 'Caucasian Regional Studies' and the increase of world interest towards the Caucasus, it is planned to turn the journal into a quarterly publication. On behalf of the Editorial and Advisory Boards of 'Caucasian Regional Studies'

I would like to express gratitude to His Excellency, Mr. Denis Corboy, Head of the E.C. Delegation to the Republic of Georgia as well as to his assistant Mrs. Kate Whyte for help and assistance rendered in conducting the conference on the problems of the Caucasus in September 1995, and establishing the International Association for Caucasian Regional Studies. I would like to thank the British Embassy in Georgia and personally His Excellency Mr. Stephen Nash, HM Ambassador for a great contribution to the preparation of the first issue of 'Caucasian Regional Studies'.

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Alexander Kukhianidze Editor June, 1996

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