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ON DILEMMAS OF IDENTITY IN THE POST-SOVIET REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

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Anthropologists such as Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, Geertz, and again recently Sidney Mintz in his presidential address to the American Anthropological Association, have reminded anthropologists that we should stick to what we do best, that is description, thick description, and ethnography. Taking note of such counsel, this paper is an ethnographic inquiry into how the ordinary people of the Republic of Azerbaijan have dealt with their emerging identities since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

As we walked along the Caspian Sea on the oily waterfront Boulevard in Baku, I asked two recent Ph.D.s about the key elements of Azerbaijani identity. The oil management engineer replied:

"How can you speak about the identity of a people whose alphabet has been changed four times in the last seventy-five years?"

Events in the southern Caucasus -the declaration of independence by Nagorno-Karabagh and the ensuing conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and the assault on Baku by Soviet troops in January 1990 - were crucial to the derailing of Gorbachev's policies of openness, glasnost, and economic restructuring, perestroika, and in bringing about the dismantling of the Soviet Union. With the collapse of the USSR the project of statehood was achieved easily by the republics in the Union as they did not have to engage in protracted struggles and wars of independence as the Chechens have had to do. With the August 30, 1991 adoption of the declaration "On the Restoration of the Republic of Azerbaijan" and the December 1991 referendum to approve the formation of an independent democratic Republic, the people of Azerbaijan openly asserted their independence from Moscow and began the process of redefining their political and cultural identity.

I went to Baku in 1994 at the invitation of Khazar University, a private university formed after independence with the help of a United States Information Service grant and a partnership with UCLA Graduate School

of Education. I also wanted to visit my father's long-lost relatives. I had wanted to go to Baku for some time but the images and aura of the iron curtain had militated against my actually taking the first step.

It was in the 1903-1905 Muslim and Armenian conflict that my grandfather, his brother, and their families had moved to Iran to avoid the ravages of war. My grandfather stayed but his brother returned, later to perish in Stalin's gulags. I wanted to talk with his daughter and other relatives. I was interested in the family history and stories. From day one, I had unusual access to persons from different age groups and social positions, as well as to their homes. Under the usual fieldwork conditions it would have taken a long time to develop the intimate relationships in which I found myself. Drawing on this fieldwork my objective is to explore some of the important elements and dilemmas of Azerbaijani identity in the post-Soviet period.

It is important to note that there are a number of histories and stories which are being told simultaneously by individuals and families in Azerbaijan. Each of these histories needs to be told in its own right. In this century alone in the Transcaucasus, first, there is the story of intercommunal conflict in a manner that was not the case before(1); second, what happened to people and families with the coming of the October Revolution and the Communist take-over; third, what transpired with Communism, and in particular under Stalin and other party bosses, especially local ones such as Mir Jafar Baghirov (1933-53)(2); and finally, what has been taking place since the break up of the USSR and independence. With the opening up of the USSR, before the family histories and stories of the past 70-80 years could be properly told and heard, new and difficult conditions have imposed themselves on the peoples and cultures of the Caucasus and the USSR, and the earlier histories have become neglected in the same way that many highly skilled, educated people have been condemned to early retirement and anonymity.

While in Azerbaijan, I often said to myself that I needed to get the feeling and the sense of how people, such as my older relatives, or the scientist and astronomer Karimbegov and his director at Shemakhi observatory (the second largest in the USSR), talk to the outside world. The way people talked about their lives and work was enormously fascinating, at times unbelievable, yet touching. The ethnographic observations described here are my perception of what was going on there, and, as recent queries into ethnographic writing suggest, it is a construction of a multi-planed reality.(3) I wanted to break through the rather dry notions of culture, politics, economics, and social organization, and to capture the flavour and the plasticity of human encounters, and to appreciate the significance of the everyday statements and narratives of the people I met, particularly at a time when they were willing to talk more openly.

There are many sources of identity, such as culture, social structure, (i.e. tribe, clan, lineage), territory, locality, language, religion, music, and the arts. There is also the relationship with other people, such as the Russians, Armenians, Georgians, Iranians, Turks and many smaller groups within Azerbaijan such as the Lesghins, Avars, Tatars, Jews, Kurds, Tats, Talysh, and the Udin. In Azerbaijan, as in many of the other

newly independent successor states to the USSR, there is a state of flux, a crisis and a transition. Azerbaijan has turned from a socialist command economy to the instituting of a free market system in the midst of political turmoil which has seen the return to power in mid-June 1993 of Heydar Aliyev, the former chief of the KGB in Azerbaijan and a one time member of the Soviet Politburo in Moscow. The deteriorating economic conditions and the unstable political situation have had ramifications for Azerbaijan's relations with the other CIS states, as well as with other regional countries such as Turkey and Iran. Take, for example, the April 22, 1997 trial of four Islamic party leaders accused of spying for Iran on charges of high treason. If convicted, these individuals face the death penalty. This will have an impact on the nature of the cultural dialogue and exchanges with neighboring countries such as Iran and Turkey.

An important factor in sharpening the Azerbaijani sense of identity and nationalism has been the conflict with Armenia, which initially started as an ethnic conflict within the USSR.(4) The status of independent state was achieved after the start of the conflict, but the international perception is still that of an ethnic conflict as opposed to a national war. This conflict has produced nearly one million refugees and the occupation of nearly one third of the Republic of Azerbaijan by Armenian forces. Today, an unusually heightened sense of time, space and history underpin contemporary Azerbaijanis efforts to come to terms with the massive changes underway.

Vital to the reformulation of personal, ethnic and national identity has been the role of social memory going back to the years before the Russian Revolution, and the memories of the Stalin era when many families were forcibly divided, often never to see one another again. Also important for the sense of Azerbaijani identity is the question of modernity, that is the relationship with Russia, the degree of Russification, and social change.

Conceptual and Methodological Issues:

In attempting to deal conceptually and methodologically with group identity the work of the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrick Barth on ethnicity and identity are important and useful. In his famous introduction to the collection Ethnic Groups and Boundaries Barth regarded ethnic identity as a matter of social organization of "culture difference", and focused on the boundary and the processes of boundary maintenance. He showed that ethnic groups and their features are produced under particular interfactional, historical, economic and political circumstances. For Barth these features are highly situational and not primordial.(5) It is the everyday actions, choices, situations and conditions in which each individual finds himself or herself, and with which they choose to identify, which make a difference in how ethnic groups are made up.

If we examine closely the rather multi-cultural and multi-ethnic situation in Azerbaijan and particularly in the capital city Baku, i.e. with Armenians, Russians, and many other smaller peoples and cultures, and the everyday processes, we can observe that the areas of blending are

extensive. Thus, the task is how to map the contrastive identities, and to explore how relative cultural discontinuities are formulated and maintained in situations of flux where many cultures are mixing.

In order to sort out the connected forces that interweave this complex everyday situation, methodologically Barth suggests we model the processes separately on a micro, a median, and a macro level.(6) Each of these levels have a feedback mechanism on the other levels. This is a useful recommendation for dealing with the multi-dimensional nature of personal, ethnic, national, and supranational identity. Often, scholars have dealt with one or another of these levels in isolation. The interconnections between the levels are quite important for understanding how any group or population has a sense of self, and how, based on this, they behave socially, politically, nationally, or as a member of the world community.

In Barth's schema, the micro level is to model the processes effecting experience, the formation of identities, and the management of selves in the complex context of relationships, demands, values and ideas. The median level is to model the processes that create collectivities and mobilizes groups for different purposes by diverse means. Barth calls this the field of entrepreneurship, leadership, and rhetoric. It is at this level that stereotypes are established, and collectivities are set in motion. It is also at this level that the either-or choices are imposed, and many aspects of the boundaries and dichotomies of ethnicity are fashioned. Finally, the macro level is to model state, national, supranational, transnational and global processes. For example, state policies, the legal creation of bureaucracies allocating rights and impediments according to formal criteria, and the arbitrary uses of force and compulsion that underpin many regimes. It is at this level that ideologies such as nationalism are articulated and imposed, which often subtly transpose some of the identities arising from ethnicity. Also, the control and manipulation of public information and discourse, an extremely important activity of every regime, takes place at this level. Nowadays, more and more global discourses and international organizations play an increasingly important role on this level, and often **articulate** with interests on the median level. This tripartite or tri-level analysis suggested by Barth goes a long way, at least, in suggesting how we can close the gap between different types of studies, and also between the different disciplines in the social sciences. Clearly, this is a task much larger than that which I have undertaken. The present paper falls within the micro level as an ethnographic account of the salient issues in the management of selves in the complex organization of culture difference in Azerbaijan, and more specifically in the capital city, Baku.

In terms of trying to understand ethnic identity in Azerbaijan in general, and Baku in particular, it is useful to revisit Barth's earlier insights on ethnicity and ethnic identity in his introduction to Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. These can be summarized as: (1) the starting point for understanding ethnicity is not in analysis of 'culture' but in viewing ethnicity as a form of social organization, an organizational type. It is as Barth's title states, a form of organizing cultural difference. (2) The roots of this organizational form are not in the cultural content associated with ethnic identities but rather in the fact of their dichotomization - the presence of boundaries separating groups. This shifts the emphasis from

seemingly 'objective' cultural traits to behavior (including 'cultural' behavior) that is socially effective in maintaining group boundaries. (3) Ethnic identification should be seen as based in ascription and self-ascription, rather than in 'possessing' a certain cultural inventory; this focuses analytic attention on the possible manipulation of identities and on their 'situational' character. Central to all three insights was a dethronement of a certain concept of culture and an invitation to rethink its meaning as manifested in 'ethnicity.'

Encountering Baku:

As an Iranian Azerbaijani, as a member of a Turkish speaking minority, and as an anthropologist who has lived in the West for the past thirty-seven years it is difficult not to view the socio-political and cultural history of the Republic of Azerbaijan from a multi-planed and comparative perspective. Upon my arrival in Baku from the United States via Istanbul, I found myself completely fascinated by Baku and Azerbaijan, and making interesting cross-cultural comparisons with Iran, Turkey, Europe and the United States. The initial major impression made on me was how people behaved in public spaces. Unlike in Iranian, and other Middle Eastern, cities, people in Baku do not look or stare at one another in the street. Human curiosity is there, as people pass one another a quick glance is made. It is nice not to be stared at, but eventually one wonders and asks why people are so bashi ashagha, or "heads down" as the saying goes in Turkish. Good manners is the easy answer. Fear, repression and docility is the not so easy answer. The second major impression in the first few days was the five or six storey concrete apartment-blocks. Poured concrete and low grade prefabricated building material, stacked apartments, and stacked human beings living on top of one another made a strong impression. In some ways, this is no different than in any large city anywhere. Intellectually it is nice to know that the Soviet state took care of everybody, and all of the people had housing. But, later, as I flew over Tabriz in Iran seeing one or two storey homes as far as the eye could see, and compared this view with the aerial view of Baku, I could not help but think how different the geography and the physical appearance of free enterprise versus the planned economy urban landscape are from one another. In Tabriz most people have a small house with several rooms and a yard. There is a spaciousness to the city. This could not be said about Baku, although as a city it is more beautiful and imposing. Baku is not a new world urban sprawl with all the common problems of violence and robbery. But many entrances to people's apartments in the Soviet block buildings have double doors with metal casing, with multiple locks, and a eye-piece for viewing those knocking or ringing the bell. I was told these were post-Soviet period ways of dealing with theft and insecurity in the wake of weakened central authority. But the preponderance of locks, keys, and doors had also something to do with security from the state, both in the Soviet and in the present day. In contrast to Iran and other Middle Eastern cities people on Baku streets do not come up to you and ask who you are or what you are doing. But when they find out that you are an Azeri from Iran, they are warm, friendly, and happy to see you and talk with you. They are apologetic about the little means they have with which to receive you, or

about how dirty their city or metro has become in the past five to ten years.

As you spend more time in the city you realize that Baku is a heterogeneous place, it has a heterogeneous population, and not simply because of the Russians or Armenians. The culture, the way people dress, the way people look and behave are different. The general feel in the streets, the clothes, and the behavior is less restrictive than in many Middle Eastern countries, and in the Iran of today. By and large, the women are well dressed. In the midst of old concrete block apartments and the feel of a bygone era, one is surprised each time to see that people are wearing good clothes and are mindful of fashion.(7) The people of Baku speak Russian, young boys and girls are arm-in-arm as they walk in the parks. Russification is rather strong among certain people and groups. But it is now somewhat in retreat. A more interesting question was, what does speaking Russian and exhibiting Russian culture mean to individuals in the street and in everyday life? A young man and a woman holding hands and kissing in the metro is not an occasion for condemning looks and uproar. The paradox of expected behaviour on my part was interesting. I may not have thought twice about such behaviour in the Paris metro, or on the New York subway, but here in Baku it did strike me, especially the fact that people showed no indignation. There may have been disapproval, but it was not going to be made public. I realized something about the disjointed commonalities and differences between north and south Azerbaijan. There was much in contrast with Tabriz only a day's drive away, such as the one or two storey buildings in Tabriz, which by their physical appearance told a different story about a people's notion of ownership, housing, public and private space.

Other strong impressions for a first time visitor were the frequent recurrence in speech, of the words surgin, meaning to be deported or to be driven, and gulalandi, meaning to be executed by firing squad. These concepts, acts, deeds, and people's fate were commonly understood, and a phenomenon that many individuals, young and old, dealt with everyday. I was astonished how abruptly people broke open past family histories, and lived with the ghosts of deportations, executions, and rehabilitations. A case in point was Javid the rug man. His mother, an elderly woman, walked into the office with her six year old granddaughter where Javid and I were talking not about rugs, but about filmmaking. His brother-in-law is a well known filmmaker, who was making a film about Azerbaijani society at the turn of the century located in Zeynal Abdin Taghiyev, the famous oil man's house, now the Azerbaijan Museum of History. In the ten minutes that we were there together, it became quite clear that her father had been sent away to Siberia. But she quickly stated that she was still living in her dada mulki, in her father's land or home, in the old part of the city. Later on, as Javid took me to his home, he said that the three storey building that we were about to enter had been theirs before the Bolshevik revolution. They took everything and left the family with one room. Since independence in 1991 only one other room has been given back, but the rest he said "we will never see because these people are just mafia." His use of the words inglab doshmani, enemy of the revolution, was interesting. That was the charge against his grandfather who had been deported in the 1930s and died in exile. A deed that Heydar Aliyev became well known for in the 1970s was his efforts to return the remains

of Azerbaijani deportees who had died in various corners of the USSR. On any given day one could hear one or two stories like that of Javid's family. The historian Sweitochowski quotes in his book that in comparative terms, the Great Terror of 1937 in Azerbaijan and Georgia was "probably worse than in any other republic, barring Ukraine," and has indicated that of the 70,000 Azeri fatalities in the Great Terror, 29,000 were classified as intellectuals.(8) Clearly, the deeds of the past are much on the minds of many Azerbaijanis, and in many ways shapes their sense of self and identity.

Memory and Identity.

It was striking to see the people's reliance on the past, things they owned, or which had been handed down, such as a few silver items, or antique relics that attested to their social position prior to the Bolshevik revolution. For example, in one family only two vases had been preserved from the grandparents, who were people of some importance before the revolution. The way in which these vases were handled, and the discussion that took place around them was the link between the past and the present. It was the unusually meaningful link, it was a cultural link, almost a civilisational link. Another example concerned those who had been bey, small landholders or notables before the revolution. Some of these individuals were beginning timidly to distinguish themselves as bey. Initially, they may have used the title **fatuously**, but nevertheless, it felt good when people used bey after your name, such as Iskandar bey. It was a change from the politically correct Iskandar mu'alem, or other socially accepted titles.

There was an unusually strong tendency to try to place people in some type of social framework. The role of personal, social, or collective memory was important in the construction and maintenance of Azerbaijani identity. Bad memories were often those of the 1930s and the Stalin period. Good memories were the bringing out of the very few photographs of old family from the pre-revolutionary period to show who they were in those days. People I did not know would take me to their homes to show me such evidence of the past, to locate themselves, to be given acknowledgement, respect and to place themselves in a class system, as somebody, as a bey, agha or even a khan. Indirectly, what was being said was that "what you see now is not the real family or me. Who we are today is an aberration." Over the years the Soviet system had obliterated most material evidences of the past - family things, such as photographs, silver, and memorabilia. In some ways connections with the past were quite effectively severed.(9) There is almost nothing that most Azerbaijanis can say today that it was their grandmother's or their grandfather's. The painter's house and his statement that "this is the only thing left from my family" was a glaring example of this. Imagination and imagined communities are the only things left.(10)

The Azerbaijanis remained proud and poised, but clearly they did have a sense of how they looked and appeared as Soviet men and women, coming out of seventy-five years of isolation. The key was that the people felt a strong need to make a reference to the past to complete their

presentation of themselves. This was in clear contrast to Tabriz, where one does not notice such an urge on the part of the people to rely on their past life to make sense of the present, or the changes that are underway. This is one of the keys to understanding the reformulation and negotiation of identity at the present time in Azerbaijan.(11) This will probably change in the next 10-15 years.

In contrast to the obliteration of the material evidence of the past by the Soviet regime was the phenomenon of remembering. I have called this "live" memory, but it can be call long-term memory, and at the societal level it can become social and/or collective memory.(12) By "live" memory, I am referring to the unusually clear knowledge of particular events, days, or hours some thirty or forty years earlier, often during the Stalin era, even by individuals who were not born at the time. The exactness was astonishing and almost unbelievable. The strength of the memory, at least among the northern Azerbaijanis was something very different from what one finds in Iran or what one is familiar with here in the West. When I enquired about it, the response was that we know our history well. My response was that this is more than knowing your history well, something else is at work. The passing of the stories of the executions, deportations, losses from one generation to another within families played a major role in chiselling this kind of information on people's minds. It was information that was to be known privately and carried in the heart, or what Jones has called privatization of memory. Nevertheless, there is an interesting interplay between privatized memory and its reflection as a social and collective phenomenon. It was clear that there was a deeply rooted need for recognition on the part of Azerbaijanis, who wanted others to become interested in their history, their stories, their culture and who they are as Turks, Muslims, Caucasians, Europeans, Russified cosmopolitans and moderns.

Ethnic and Minority Identity in Azerbaijan

As a result of various Soviet policies ethnic consciousness and identity is very strong in Azerbaijan.(13) People regularly enquired about your background, so that they can place you, so they can classify you. It was officially required that one's ethnicity be noted on one's passport and official records, it is part of your being. A question for me was to what extent Azerbaijanis identify with the Central Asian peoples and cultures, or do they just identify ideologically in the sharing of a Turkic language? There is much discussion of Turkicness and race as something other than a social construction. But when asked how closely Azerbaijanis felt akin to Turkmen and other Central Asian populations they are less sure.

Everyday negotiation of identity and formulation of difference in relation to other groups is an important matter in Baku and many parts of Azerbaijan.(14) The multi-ethnic and multi-cultural context of Baku versus the almost totally mono-ethnic context of Tabriz was an interesting contrast for me. Some of the key factors in group difference and relationships or, as Barth states, the maintenance of "culture difference" were looks, dress, cultural values, ideas, competition, and respect. Between groups, boundary maintenance was achieved through the

stereotyping and the articulation of difference or competition. But clearly there was a shared field of inter-ethnic discourse and interaction, a kind of complementarity among various ethnic groupings. Boundary breaking, transgression, and mixing was much in evidence. Little attention has been paid to non-maintenance of boundaries, that is the porousness of ethnic boundaries. Barth has accurately emphasized that ethnicity is emergent in the very process of social interaction, and that there is no simple one-to-one relationship between ethnic units and "objectively defined" cultural differences.(15) Similarly, the anthropologist Stanley Tambiah, who has written much on ethnic conflict, has stated this well:

"although the actors themselves, invoking [different] claims, speak as if ethnic boundaries are clear-cut and defined for all time, and think of ethnic collectivities as self-reproducing bounded groups, it is also clear that from a dynamic and processual perspective there are many precedents for "passing" and the change of identity, for incorporation and assimilation of new members, and for changing the scale and criteria of collective identity. Ethnic labels are in application porous."(16)

With claims to primordality and deep cultural roots, ethnic identities were consciously manipulated in Azerbaijan. Approximately 14% of urban (rural 2%) marriages are inter-ethnic, multi-cultural and trans-nationality marriages.(17) Some of the people were truly intermixed from four or five different directions, and with no place to go in post-Soviet population shifts. Examples are the case of Fekrat in San Francisco, and the mixed parentage of his wife, two generations of Armenian women marrying Muslim men, or the case of a family with an Azerbaijani, **Tadjik**, Russian, Jewish and German mix in Baku. A study of mixed marriages and children would yield important results in attempting to understand the dynamics of identity negotiation in the former Soviet republics. The mixed persons in Azerbaijan were not viewed as second class citizens, but they were a distinct category, gani garishikh, or mestis. Finally, the concepts of tribalism, taifah, and yeri-az, meaning those who have little land, were much in currency. It was often stated that it is through tribalism that Heydar Aliyev was able to mobilize people to stave off challenges to his power, that is through his Nakhichevan gang or tribe, or through the Yeri-az, transplants to Baku from the countryside in the past 30-40 years.(18) These people dominated the Communist Party and the local administrative positions.

When mentioning the same kind of rights for their own internal minorities that Azerbaijan had demanded from the Russians and the Soviet Union, the response was less than inclusive. Subsistence to the needs of the new state and nation-building took precedence. Nevertheless, official publications stated that the languages of the minorities are taught in the local schools, used in publications, and broadcast without restriction.

There is no question that Azerbaijani identity has been under threat. Clearly there is much more Russification in northern Azerbaijan than

there is Persification in southern Azerbaijan. When one travels from north Azerbaijan to south Azerbaijan directly as I did along the Caspian Sea from Baku to Astara and Tabriz, it is evident that Iranian Azerbaijan is very Turkic. Russification has brought northern Azerbaijan new ideas, industry, science, music, and some modernity. Nevertheless, at the same time it has changed, threatened, or even put into question the Azeris' sense of who they are, that is, their Turco-Iranian and Islamic heritage. So it is a much more volatile situation, often giving way to essentialist, primordialist and nationalist positions in the discussion of identity by Azerbaijanis. Enhanced by the Soviet handling of the nationalities, the post-Soviet period of nationalism for the people of Azerbaijan is a new found expression of self and identity, whereas in the West it appears as old-fashioned and virile particularism, and in Tabriz it is found to be a tiresome issue. There was yet little sense of transnationalism or global cosmopolitanism, which to many seemed as too blended. Historically, the crux of the dilemmas of Azerbaijani identity lies in the intersection of the indigenous Albanian, Islamic, Turkic, Perso/Iranian, Russian, Soviet socio-cultural and political life. This, coupled with the issue of European/non-Europeanness, East/West, modern/traditional status and sense of identity, results in a rather complex organization of culture that requires astute managing and negotiating on a daily basis for most Azerbaijanis.

Identity vis-a-vis Iran and Turkey.

Kinship relations with Iranian Azerbaijan are extensive, strong ties are there and one feels this when talking with people. On the other hand, in everyday discussions few say that they have relatives in Turkey, whereas there are many who say that their relatives are in Iran, or that their father is from one or another town in Iran. People have left Azerbaijan for Turkey, and even after World War II people sought refuge there. But in the course of everyday conversation it is rare to hear that people are going to see or find their relatives in Turkey.⁽¹⁹⁾ The perception that north and south Azerbaijan was one land, a unified geographic area or a nation which the Russians have divided is still strong after a century and half of Russian and Soviet rule. This perception is not there with Turkey. It makes a difference with respect to how Azerbaijanis view southern Azerbaijanis, or Iranians in general.

Turkey is an attractive alternative as a country for Azerbaijan to become allied with because Turkey is seen as a successful country. Some Azerbaijanis returning from Turkey had a changed opinion about emulating the Turkish model of socio-cultural and political organization and development. According to American diplomats in Baku, after the independence and opening up of Azerbaijan, Turks from Turkey came in with aggressive ways of attempting to help Azerbaijan, and to lift it out of the chaos of socialism and economic crisis, and to become partners in Azerbaijan's adoption of a market economy. Because of the Turks' patronizing and superior attitude it appears that some of their efforts have been counter productive and have backfired. Many Azerbaijanis have a sense that they are a developed country, and that they must resist the onslaught of popular contemporary Turkish culture and ways, particularly

the capitalism of Turkey, so that they can search for a modern post-Soviet identity based on the cultural and historical features and strengths they have. For example, they treasure their own musical traditions, such as creating the first opera and philharmonia in this part of the world. Or, for example, in the field of politics, they value the democratic ideals based on the advances they made in the first two decades of the 20th century which according to them were more advanced in Baku than in Istanbul in those days. Clearly there is a perception that they were historically more progressive, more European, before the Ottomans, Iranians, and others in the Near East. This may have been the case, but in the hands of the Russians who had dominated the Caucasus since the early 19th century Azerbaijanis have been paying a price for that advancement and modernity. As yet it is unclear how Azerbaijan is going to pull itself together after the seventy-five year period of isolation and more than a century and half of being dominated. Clearly Azerbaijan's relationship with the Soviet Union is a factor in how they think about themselves today. Many Azerbaijanis still have a superpower perspective or mentality. The superpower mentality was evident in their notions of Soviet space achievements: details were common knowledge, and people talked about these achievements as a part of their own, Azerbaijani achievements. There was a level of self-aggrandizement emanating from having been a part of a superpower. In many ways the "former" in the appellation former Soviet Union, is an essential part of the Azerbaijani identity, and plays an important role in the prevalent sense of self in Azerbaijan. The dynamics of the "Third-worldisation" of the former USSR was a difficult process to admit to and witness, especially for the educated sector. For now, Azerbaijanis are living with a large dose of self-centredness and ethnocentrism, and feel superior to Turks in Turkey, or to the Turks in Iran, and to the Iranians.

On the other hand, when there was discussion of literature and culture, the point of reference is often Iran. The well-educated Azerbaijanis appreciate Persian literature, they can read and enjoy Persian poetry. They are more sympathetic to the Iranian heritage. Even Azerbaijan's own famous men of belle-lettres such Khagani Shervani (1126-1199), Nizami Ganjavi (1141-1202), and Mohammad Fizuli (1494-1556) wrote in Persian.(20) Azerbaijanis travelling to Iran in the past few years have found the Iranians open and interested in them even if the common street person may not have been as informed about northern Azerbaijan as they may have liked. Although it would be reasonable to think that communications between northern Azerbaijan and southern Azerbaijan should come naturally, and that they have much common knowledge about each other, there are still serious information gaps and mutual misperceptions. Besides the politics, and the national fears and concerns of the elite on both sides, that is fear of Islam in the north and of independence in the south, the ordinary people are slowly reacquainting themselves, and realizing how alike they are in some senses and in what areas they are dissimilar.(21)

Language, Alphabet Change, Education and Identity.

An important subject in the complex of Azerbaijani identity is language,

change of alphabet and education. It is one thing to state it intellectually, and to think about it historically. It is another thing to observe in the streets, homes, and among people the impact of alphabet change, the dynamics of language use, and the interplay between Russian, Azerbaijani Turkish, other minority languages and dialects. Up to 1926 Azerbaijani Turkish was written in the Persian/Arabic script, between 1926-1939 it was written in the Latin alphabet, from 1939 to 1991 the Cyrillic alphabet was used, and since 1991 again a modified Latin alphabet has been adopted.(22)

Today, the older generation is experiencing difficulty in adapting to the newly adopted Latin alphabet. They cannot read and write in it, they are not comfortable with it. They feel cut off, even from the advertisements. There are serious generational breaks in households and in the society because of alphabet and language. The father's generation is comfortable in one, the children in another, and the grandparents yet in another in terms of writing, reading, and comprehension. Letters, words do not look familiar to people in different generations. In discussing language and alphabet change problems with Fekrat, an Azerbaijani dentist who had recently immigrated to the United States because his wife was an Armenian, he stated it in this way:

"in the United States for the different generations in a household the word table conjures up the same word image or picture. But when we think of table in my family in Azerbaijan we get three different word images, one for each generation depending on which alphabet we grew up with. In the United States this is something that you do not have to think about daily. But for us, it was such."

Today, most Azerbaijanis still use the Cyrillic alphabet because there are not enough typesetting and printing presses to do a massive switch from Cyrillic to Latin. They have not been able to put out books in Latin in significant numbers in a short period of time. Furthermore, since most people are not familiar or comfortable with the Latin alphabet, they are not buying the material published in it. However, in the Azerbaijan sector schools, children are being taught in the Latin alphabet.

There are two types of schools in Azerbaijan, known as the Russian and Azerbaijan sectors. Obviously, in the Russian sector one's schooling is in Russian using the Cyrillic alphabet. In the Azerbaijan sector, up to the time of independence, students were schooled in Azerbaijani Turkish using the Cyrillic alphabet, but since 199x the alphabet has been changed to Latin. Students who had been schooled up to seventh grade in the Cyrillic alphabet now suddenly had to change to Latin letters, and finish in that alphabet. This shift caused quite a disjuncture. In fact, this type of disjuncture is a remarkable feature of life in Azerbaijan, particularly among the earlier generations.

Furthermore, linguistic disjuncture is the cause of tension within families and households. As a highly educated daughter of a well-known female public figure (who herself is perfectly versed in Russian and held high

posts during the Soviet period) told me, when she would respond to her mother in Russian after independence, the mother more than once had retorted "why are you speaking the colonizer's language."

In the post-independence period there was an uneasy rush among the elite and the educated to become comfortable with the native language. It was interesting to observe how many Azerbaijanis took care to hide their difficulties in speaking Turkish. On the other hand, only the generation born from the 1950s on were most comfortable in Russian. By 1994 there were not sufficient books for all the subjects and all the grades to be taught in the Latin alphabet. The main focus was on enabling first grade children to start using the Latin alphabet. Despite all the cultural, political, and military tensions with Russia, many parents still stated that, because the Russian sector had continuity, they preferred that to the merits of schooling in the native language. Of course, the Russian sector is also known to be stronger, and parents who had higher expectations for their children placed them in the Russian sector schools. Needless to say, there had been a strong tracking system in the Soviet period with its roots going well back into pre-Soviet times. Also, there was a strong stratification system, particularly for those living in the different regions of Azerbaijan, in terms of education and schooling. There was a distinct urban versus rural, and Baku versus the more provincial towns and cities split. Families more oriented toward Moscow wanted their children to attend Russian schools. As a medical doctor related to me, you could even go to medical school in the Azerbaijani sector, but there are limited books in Azerbaijani Cyrillic in many topical areas of medicine. So, at examination time medical students in the Azerbaijani sector would come begging us in the Russian sector to translate from our books. As Fekrat the dentist stated it:

"our tongues have been colonized, changed, and Russified. This allowed for better control, access to particular literature and knowledge, but also it produced a disjointed thought process and cultural life."

The social and psychological impact of alphabet and language change has been enormous. But how do you measure the impact of language policies on a people and society? How do you measure what a person can do, and cannot do, because of an asymmetrical linguistic situation and numerous alphabet changes? Colonial conditions of bilingualism are very different from voluntary bi- or tri-lingualism. The story of the medical students begging to have material translated from Cyrillic, so that they could pass their examinations, is the type of first hand information and detail that throws light on how people have adjusted to changes in colonial language conditions and alphabet "reform."⁽²³⁾ The linguistic policies of the Soviet Union are the story of attempts to build a union.⁽²⁴⁾ Alphabet and language change was also an attempt at the creation of a new Russian and Soviet man or citizenry. The result is a hybrid or a mutant who through a selection process has been brought deeper and deeper into the Russian and Soviet world and culture.⁽²⁵⁾

Religion and Identity:

The period of glasnost and the breakup of the USSR allowed the different peoples of Azerbaijan to openly turn to their religion and religious practices. Religion and its institutions suffered nearly eighty years of attack, repression and abuse by the Soviet state and its local communist ideologues as a concerted effort was made to uproot religiosity by inculcating the Soviet citizens with the tenets of scientific materialism. In general, the effort failed, but the persistent propagation of atheism and secularism has left its mark among the different peoples and classes in Azerbaijan. The striking result in terms of individuals is how disjunctured or broken their knowledge is of the main line of thought and history of their religion. This was particularly evident among Muslim middle-aged and younger persons I interviewed.(26) The anti-religion campaigns and classes were successful in neutralizing religion and making it ineffectual for most everyday purposes. Without mosques, without trustworthy clerics, religion was resorted to only in times of bereavement and difficulty. In discussing Islam in post-Soviet Azerbaijan a first hand observer notes that:

the rituals at such ceremonies (of bereavement) are so eclectic that it is hard to say that what is being practiced is Islam. Led by self-educated and appointed religious leaders, what is practiced is a form of oral religion learned from family and friends. I attended a "taziyeh" in Baku in the month of Ramadan. Sweets and tea were served throughout the ceremony to those present. I wore black and had debated whether I should cover my head. I took a scarf to be on the safe side. The immediate family was wearing black, but not all those attending wore black. No one had covered their hair. We all sat around a large table and a female cleric led the ceremony. It was difficult not to be saddened by the words and tone of the cleric who bemoaned the useless death of the young boy who had died in an accident. After she had finished and during lunch the cleric turned to me and asked what I had thought of her performance. She apologized and said that they were just learning how to do things - no doubt in Iran they did it properly!!

The author states that for everyday purposes what Islam is practiced, is improvised, constructed and often does not follow any of the formal rituals of the Shi'a or Sunni traditions, but people want to resurrect them. It has been a part of their traditions that have been denied, and people want to know how to bury their dead in a proper way.(27)

As indicated, the level of general religious knowledge is quite low among many young and middle aged urban individuals, it is almost folk Islam or what one might call "secular" Islam. There is an embarrassment about this lack of religious knowledge. People identified themselves as Muslims and as members of a Muslim nation, but in the same breath defended

materialism and the fact that there is no God. Others stated that they are Muslims and raised their glass and bragged that they have never prayed. The term "Muslim" did not necessarily indicate a religious person, but rather somebody identified as a native of the Caucasus or Central Asia. (28)

The secular nature of society or the fact that religion plays very little part in the public sphere has been noted by many observers. But how this translates to religion having a less significant role in people's lives is a question that needs to be better examined. In fact, one finds religion and religiosity in the most unexpected places, and it can be safely stated that religion is an important element of identity among Azerbaijanis, and not just among the traditional groups in the countryside as many Soviet writers would have it. Paradoxically, the Soviet anti-religion propaganda has produced a heightened sense of "Muslimness." Most importantly this identification has distinguished many Azerbaijanis from the Russians, the Armenians, the Christian Georgians and the Ukrainians. Historically, Islam has been a problematic factor in the relationship of many peoples of the Caucasus to Russia and to Christendom. There is a dominant perception that Azerbaijan and the region in general has suffered greater repression because of Islam, and there is an identification with an imagined community of Muslim peoples. This is in distinct contrast to the situation in southern Azerbaijan where religion is not a key identifying factor in the relationship with the rest of Iran.

It can be said that there is "a crisis of meaning" in Azerbaijan in the post-Soviet period. The difficulties of the collapse of the USSR, the human toll, the suffering and the disarray that it has caused is beyond everyday perception and understanding. The general mood in the aftermath of the collapse for the vast majority was not one of euphoria, joy or hope. With the collapse of the political and the social system came a crisis of meaning and identity. For most Azerbaijanis the other side of the "modern" atheist Soviet man is the Turco-Iranian and Muslim heritage. In the search for cultural roots Islam has an undeniable position. Observers have noted the growth of participation in small study groups on religion, the urban elite and secularized women with polished nails and western attire talking about their daily prayers, or the striking similarity in the narrative of some Azerbaijani people's religious experiences with that of the "reborn" experiences here in the United States.(29) People are rediscovering Islam, readopting it, transforming it, and using it in ways that suits them.

Since the time of glasnost the primary goal of Muslim religious leaders has been to familiarize ordinary Muslims with the history and philosophy of their religion. Even among the secular elite and the intellectuals there is interest in being better acquainted with the tenets of Islam. Under communism debating the existence of God was a way of resisting the state, party ideology and domination. The same observer states "I spoke with students who had been through the yearly courses on atheism in their schooling. For them initiating debate concerning the existence of God, skipping class altogether on the basis of being a Muslim, and even getting a low grade in the course were forms of resistance to the authorities and a defence of Muslim cultural traditions. The resisters had little formal knowledge of Islamic teachings, and did not necessarily

practice any of the rituals. However, being Muslim was an element of their identity, one that could be used against the authoritarian rule." Similarly, it was indicated that sufism had an appeal to the young, especially the university students, and had become an underground resistance movement during the period of communism.

The rivalry of Iran and Turkey to influence Azerbaijan has also encompassed the religious sphere. Both countries have been active in propagating Islam in Azerbaijan. Different mosques in town are identified with the Iranians or the Turks. In the publication and dissemination of religious books both countries play an important role. In Baku, Gouy Masjid (Blue Mosque) is unofficially the Sunni mosque, and this is where Turkey's clerical representatives give sermons. The government appears to facilitate Turkey's religious activities in Azerbaijan, but is more careful about Iran's religious activities. Iranian clerics make regular visits to Baku and several of them teach religion in various places. However, Iran faces a number of problems in its attempt to gain a foothold in Azerbaijan's urban religious life.

First, Iran has played a precarious role in the Azerbaijan-Armenian conflict. Although it set up refugee camps for nearly 100,000 displaced Azerbaijanis just south of the Aras River, Iran's overall role in the conflict is seen as a betrayal of its Islamic goals. It is no secret that Iran's foreign policy in the region at this point in time coincides with the Russian policy towards the Caucasus. Second, two components of Iran's politico-religious rhetoric and stance which often come up in the sermons -its anti-West and anti-American position and its stance against Israel- appear to fall on deaf ears in Azerbaijan. Likewise, anti-Russian sentiment in Azerbaijan has created very pro-western and pro-American sentiments. It is difficult to see how Iran's religious and cultural propaganda will withstand the secular and Western challenge. The main political discourse in Azerbaijan is about disengagement with Russia and engagement with the West and most specifically with the United States, which is seen at times as the only viable alternative that might help them to emerge from the crisis created by the collapse of the Soviet Union and socialism. Even the organized opposition to the present regime of Heydar Aliyev has a clear pro-West stance and the Islam Partici, which is a religious Islamic party, has not taken an anti-West or anti-American position. This is coupled with this Azerbaijan's good relations with Israel - unlike other Middle East countries Israeli products are abundant in Azerbaijan and people speak with respect about the quality of these products; Israeli advertisements appear on Azerbaijan television, and the Arab-Israeli conflict does not dominate public political consciousness as in other Muslim countries; Israel appears to be a familiar country because people's Jewish neighbors go and come from there. This presents a formidable obstacle and cultural milieu for Iran to overcome. Consequently, clerics from Iran have been forced to adapt to the situation and to water down their key organizing slogans.

Third, Sunni and Shi'a differences are not as sensitized or demarcated as they are in Iran. Both sects having been repressed by the Soviet regime, there is not that distinction that one finds in other countries. Even among local religious groups there is a noticeable attempt to avoid Sunni and Shi'a rifts. The Islam Partici does not openly avow to being Shi'a.

Discussing the Sunni and Shi'a split five years after the breakup of the Soviet Union an observer notes: "I met a group of young people who had formed a religious group and asked them if they were Sunni or Shi'a. Their response was neither. There is a simplicity about this attitude that is a breath of fresh air. In this atmosphere Iran is seen as pushing a very sectarian religious line - the Jafari school of Shi'aism."(30)

Finally, Iran's reputation has been tarnished by Iranians visiting Baku and Azerbaijan. They are looked upon not as symbols of religiosity, piety, or as exemplars of an Islamic state's proper conduct. The popular image of Iranians is men hitting the bars, and women stripping their head covers and long coats the minute they set foot in Azerbaijan. Even official Iranian government personnel are criticized for their late night disappearance after meetings or for smuggling liquor into Iran. Even if one is to take these stories with a pinch of salt, they have left their mark on the imagination of the Azerbaijanis with respect to Iranians. Azerbaijanis having just come out from under the Soviet regime which suppressed individual freedom, so democratic rights are valued, and a centralized Islamic alternative does not look appealing. Even those individuals in Azerbaijan who have found Islam recently and express "born again" sentiments, see Islam not as a doctrine that should be forced upon the populace but as a path or light to be discovered.

These difficulties notwithstanding, Iran continues its religious activities. For a while Iran put out a newspaper called "Islam Berlik" in Arabic and Cyrillic script, and there are regular sermons given by Iranian clerics in the Jemah Masjid in Baku. Most importantly there is a proliferation of small study groups available for studying Arabic, special topics in Islam, and the Koran. During the month of Ramadan discussion groups after the mosque meetings attract many who are interested in knowing more about Islam and the teachings of the Koran. However, most Azerbaijani Muslims do not necessarily identify with present-day Iran or the religious establishment there. Neither does Iran see the Azerbaijanis as fully believing or "true" Muslims. Interestingly, the idea of "backward" Islam does have its appeal to some Azerbaijanis, as it serves their purpose in differentiating themselves from others, such as the Iranians. It can be said that the impact of the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran has been to stunt the Azerbaijani people's return to Islam in their own more natural way in the post-Soviet period.

Turkey also has shown great interest in influencing religious life and activities in Azerbaijan. In 1995 a very large mosque **was being built by** Turkey in Baku. In Sumgait the Turks have created a "madreseh" or religious seminary. In the Gusar region /// a mosque was also being built. With Turkey's help an "Ellahiyat Facultaci" (divinity or theological) was organized at the Baku State University, and it began to accept students in 1993. Also, in the dissemination of books on Islam Turkey is very active. Turkey's Refah Partici (Welfare Party) and Islam Partici have also held meetings in Baku. Turkey's religious activities are sanctioned and coordinated by the "Dinni Ishlar Bakhanliqi" or the Office of Religious Affairs at the Turkish Embassy. The popular image in Azerbaijan is that the Azerbaijani government appears to facilitate Turkey's religious activities and oppose those of Iran. As mentioned before, on April 22, 1997 the government of Azerbaijan tried four Islamic Party leaders on

charges of espionage for Iran who were convicted of high treason and given long prison sentences.

Racism, National Borders and Identity

Racism and chauvinism on the part of the Russians, Ukrainians and other northerners in relation to the "black" or darker skinned southern persons is not uncommon. This is in sharp contrast to Iranian Azerbaijan where one does not have this problem. For example, from a distance you cannot tell the difference between a Persian and a Turk, as you can in northern Azerbaijan between the Russians and Azerbaijanis. Northern Azerbaijanis are a different nation partially because of their physical appearance. A living example of this was the Sevda family, who in the aftermath of the breakup of the USSR, returned to Baku because of harassment in Moscow. As we know there have been significant population movements and displacements in the post-Soviet period. The Sevda family have not migrated permanently back to Azerbaijan, and like many others they have kept their apartment believing that someday they will return to Moscow. While in Baku Mr. Sevda became ill and had to have his appendix removed. So, the family decided to take him back to a Moscow hospital for the operation. But they were quite concerned and afraid that the Russian hospital staff might harm him in one way or another because they were Azerbaijanis. Therefore a number of other family members went to Moscow to be in the hospital, to insure that nothing was done. Of course, medical care is better in Moscow: a young relative of the Sevdas' recently died of an infection in a Baku hospital. People want the better medical services of Moscow, but they are afraid that if the Russians find out that they are Azerbaijanis they will deliberately not give them the proper attention. Also, the fact that some doctors in Moscow hospitals are Armenians, further complicated matters. These were real fears whether justified or not, and Mr. Sevda's brother's telephone calls from Moscow about his being stopped on the street and demanded to show his identity card and his permit to be in Russia because of his southern, Caucasian or "black" look did not allay anybody's suspicions and fears.

The geographic and spatial restriction that has come with the breakup of the Soviet Union is a change that most people in Azerbaijan do not like. In the old days, people got into their cars and drove as far as the Baltic Sea for a vacation, or went to the Black Sea coast to sanatoria. Internal permits or passports were required, but once you had one, you could travel to various corners of the USSR without being harassed because of the colour of your eyes, hair or skin, at least to the degree that happens nowadays. The Sevdas regretted how in earlier days when they could have travelled and vacationed, they did not, and now it is no longer possible. Mr. Sevda lamented "the opportunity has been lost, we are trapped and localized to Baku and its environs and ..." **As much as becoming an independent nation was a long time dream for the majority there is a phobia of national borders, and of not being able to travel within the former USSR. ALTHOUGH BECOMING AN INDEPENDENT NATION HAD FOR A LONG TIME BEEN A DREAM FOR THE MAJORITY, THERE IS A PHOBIA ABOUT**

NATIONAL BORDERS..... Being confined to one's much smaller national borders is painful. The thought of it may be more confining than the reality, but certainly people talk about the sense of confinement. Other borders have opened, for example, Turkey and Iran, but who can afford to vacation in Turkey or in Eastern Europe these days as they had before.

Russia and Modernity:

Historically, pro-Russian sentiments emerged in the early 1800s among certain elites (beys, aghas and the khans) in Azerbaijan who experienced ruthlessness at the hands of the Iranian Qajar rulers, or those who thought that by supporting the Russians they could improve their own position. Some of the elite, who often attended Russian military schools, or the "Russo-Tatar" schools that came into existence in the 1830s after the annexation of territories in the Transcaucasus, were recruited into the ranks of the militia the Russians organized.(31) The nineteenth century also witnessed the rise of a dynamic intelligentsia who established wide ranging contacts in Europe, Russia and the Ottoman Empire. By the time of the October Revolution, some of the Russified members of the alien nationalities, (inorodtsy) as Lenin called them, were more Catholic than the Pope about Bolshevism.(32) Early in the Soviet period it became clear that when non-Russians were removed from their main ethnic territories, they were easier targets for Russification. Often the local intelligentsia were a problematic group for the Communist Party structure. As with many other peoples of the USSR, the indigenous "Azeri intelligentsia" suffered indiscriminate losses during Stalin's time as indicated earlier, and others moved to Moscow, Leningrad, and other Russian cities. The new guard in Baku, who rose to power in the Communist Party ranks, were mainly immigrants from the villages who had "never become truly cultured and were prone to extremism and vulgarity." And the "internationalization" of the various peoples and nationalities meant the migration of Russians into non-Russian regions. The general attitude during the Russian and Soviet periods and even today in the post-Soviet period is that the further one gets from the centre, that is Moscow and St. Petersburg, the more backward the people get. So, by the time the ever expanding concentric circle reaches, for example, the Iranian plateau, the people found there are rather "backward." The similarity between the writings of Pavel Tsitsianov, the general responsible for annexation of the Iranian territories in the Transcaucasus which became Azerbaijan, about the Iranians in the early 19th century, and statements by certain elements in Azerbaijan today are striking.(33) Then and now for example, the "backward" people of southern Azerbaijan are believed to be in need of liberation, help, and deliverance. The uniformity of this thinking makes one wonder about the effects of brain washing and hegemonic tendencies in northern Azerbaijan. This is one of the more obvious reasons for Iranian Azerbaijanis' passivity towards the north.

The period from the 1940s to the 1980s saw the emergence of native intellectuals in Azerbaijan who were clearly reared in the Party ideals, knew their limits, and drifted with the tide.(34) With Gorbachev's ashkarliq or glasnost/openness, through the break up of the Union and

independence, significant number of intellectuals, university educated technocrats and professionals returned from Moscow, St. Petersburg, the Baltic republics, and other places to Azerbaijan. Some individuals returned voluntarily and with high hopes. Others found themselves less welcome in the various republics where their positions were slowly taken up by the new nationals. This was the case of a number of Azerbaijani individuals I spoke with, who had been working in Tallin, Estonia as Soviet citizens. Some of the returning recent university graduates and Ph.D.s clearly articulated that "we are intellectuals, we are a part of the intelligentsia, we have studied in Moscow, we are modern people, we have read existentialism, we have read Kant, we have read Weber, Durkheim, and of course Marx. Now we are confined to Baku, and not welcome in what used to be the Soviet Union, nor anywhere else for that matter." One such individual invited me to his home where his Moscow State University educated Armenian wife tried to hide the fact that she was an Armenian. Eventually, they let us, the "visitors or foreigners", know how isolated and confined they felt. The only thing that many of these intellectuals were looking forward to was maybe to get an IREX, or an Edmund S. Muskie scholarship to go to the United States for three months, six months or one year. Clearly, there was a feeling of being sandwiched between an illusory modern Europe, where they had never set foot, and the "Muslim East." The contrast was interesting for me, as southern Azerbaijan is very much part of Asia and has no identity crisis about it. On the other hand, northern Azerbaijanis viewed themselves as a part of Europe, and distanced themselves from the Central Asian republics, Iran and to a lesser degree Turkey. In many ways Azerbaijan was a land of incredible paradoxes. Enlightenment and European ideals of modernity, which had appeared as real guideposts for some Azerbaijanis such as Hassan Bey Zardabi, Mirza Fathali Akhundzada, Mammad Amin Rasulzada, and Nariman Narimanov and some later communist leaders, or for Mohammad Ali Tarbiat, Shaikh Mohammad Khiabani, or Ahmad Kasravi in Tabriz and Iranian Azerbaijan, now appeared quite imaginary for many Azerbaijani intellectuals. Their dilemmas stemmed from a sense of disillusionment, abandonment, and betrayal in the experiment with socialism, internationalism, Russian modernism, and in today's post-modernist conditions the Azerbaijani intellectuals and the common people have to await for the trickling down of "European" modernity through the operations of the various multinational oil companies that have been lining up to sign lucrative contracts for piping oil out of the Caspian Sea to the world markets.

NOTES:

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1. For an historical discussion of intercommunal conflict see: Swietochowski, Tadeusz 1995. *Russia and Azerbaijan: A Borderland in Transition*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 39.
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3. Clifford, James and George Marcus 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and*

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4. For a discussion of the creation of the administrative-territorial unit Nagorno-Karabagh see: Altstadt, Audrey L. "Nagorno-Karabagh - "Apple of Discord" in the Azerbaijan SSR." *Central Asian Survey*, 1988, 7:4:63-78. Saroyan, Mark. "The "Karabakh Syndrome" and Azerbaijani Politics." *Problems of Communism*, 1990, 39:5:14-29.
5. Barth, Fredrik ed. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries, The Social Organization of Culture Differences*. Boston: Little Brown, 1969, Introduction, pp. 9-38.
6. For recent reflection on Ethnic Group and Boundaries see: Barth, Fredrik 1994. "Enduring and Emerging Issues in the Analysis of Ethnicity." Vermeulen, Hans and Cora Govers 1994. *The Anthropology of Ethnicity: Beyond 'Ethnic Groups and Boundaries'*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, pp. 11-32.
7. For a discussion of gender relations and women's role in Soviet and post-Soviet period Azerbaijan see Tohidi, Nayereh 1996. "Soviet in Public, Azeri in Private: Gender, Islam, Nationality in Soviet and Post-Soviet Azerbaijan." *Women's Studies International Forum*, 19:1-2:111-123.
8. Swietochowski, Tadeusz 1995. *Russia and Azerbaijan: A Borderland in Transition*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 127. Other scholars have put this much higher see: Brzezinski, Zbigniew 1956. *The Permanent Purge: Politics in Soviet Totalitarianism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 189.
9. Alternatively, it has been argued by Stephen Jones in discussing Georgia that the Soviet system cemented links with the past, first by privatizing memories, and second by promoting nationalities' languages, publishing, and cultures. This is true. Nevertheless, I would still argue that the requirements for creating "Soviet man" and the impact of the various political policies or actions aimed at achieving that end by the Soviet regime, the Party and its local operatives on households and families was one of erasure of the past and the creation of a set of disjointed links with earlier ways of conducting social life. See: Jones, Stephen 1994. "Old Ghosts and New Chains: Ethnicity and Memory in the Georgian Republic." In Rubie S. Watson ed. *Memory, History, and Opposition Under State Socialism*. New Mexico: School of American Research Press, pp. 149-165.
10. The term imagined communities is borrowed from Benedict Anderson. His usage is more specific in discussing the emergence of national communities and nationalism. See: Anderson, Benedict O. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
11. For an interesting discussion of the role of memory in conditions of state socialism see: Watson, Rubie S. ed. 1994. *Memory, History, and Opposition Under State Socialism*. New Mexico: School of American Research Press, pp. 1-20.
12. For discussion of memory and the distinction between private and collective memory see: Halbwachs, Maurice 19.. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp.; Gillis, John R. 1994. "Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship." In John R. Gillis ed. *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 3-26; Connerton, Paul 1989. *How Societies Remember*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1-105.
13. For past Soviet policies such as korenizatsiia, see: Swietochowski, Tadeusz 1995. *Russia and Azerbaijan: A Borderland in Transition*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 110-111.
14. For a discussion of identity negotiation see: Eriksen, Thomas H. 1993. *Ethnicity & Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Pluto Press, pp. ...
15. Barth, Fredrik ed. 1969. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries, The Social Organization of Culture Differences*. Boston: Little Brown.

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17. Tohidi, Nayereh 1996. "Soviet in Public, Azeri in Private: Gender, Islam, Nationality in Soviet and Post-Soviet Azerbaijan." *Women's Studies International Forum*, 19:1-2:116.
18. Kechichian, Joseph A. and Karasik, Theodore W. 1995. "The Crisis in Azerbaijan: How Clans Influence the Politics of an Emerging Republic." *Middle East Policy* 4:1-2:57-62.
19. Swietochowski, Tadeusz 1994. "Azerbaijan's Triangular Relationship: The Land Between Russia, Turkey and Iran." Banuazizi, Ali and Myron Weiner eds. *The New Geopolitics of Central Asia and its Borderlands*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 118-135.
20. Nizami Ganjavi's poems "Leyli and Majnun," Khosrow and Shirin," are master pieces of Persian poetry.
21. For a historical study of Iranian Azerbaijan see: Atabaki, Touraj 1993. *Azerbaijan: Ethnicity and autonomy in Twentieth Century Iran*. London: British Academic Press and I. B. Tauris and Co.
22. For a discussion of the politics of literary language use and alphabet change see: Swietochowski, Tadeusz 1991. "The Politics of a Literary Language and the Rise of National Identity in Russian Azerbaijan Before 1920." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 14:1:55-63.
23. Edwards, John 19xx. *Language and Identity*.
24. Khazanov, Anatoli 1995. *After the USSR: Ethnicity, Nationalism and Politics in the Commonwealth of Independent States*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, p. 12.
25. For a discussion of the linguistic complexity of the Caucasus see: Catford, J. C. 1977. "Mountain of Tongues: The Language of the Caucasus." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6:283-314. Geiger, B., T. Halasi-Kun, A. N. Kuipers, and K. H. Menges 1959. *Peoples and Languages of the Caucasus*. *Janua Linguarum Series Minor* 6. `S-Gravenhage: Mouton. Gammkrelidze, T. V. and T. E. Gudava 1974. "Caucasian Languages" *Encyclopedia Britannica* pp. 1011-1015.
26. In terms of Islam, the former Soviet Union had the fifth largest Muslim population of any country in the world, over 55 million, with about 500,000 person in Moscow alone. Today, in Azerbaijan 87% of the population (7.6 million total) are Muslims and about 70% of the Muslim Azerbaijanis belong to the Jafarite rite of Shi'ism. Before the October Revolution there were 2,000 mosques and 786 Koranic schools in Azerbaijan, by 1928 there remained 969 Shi'a and 400 Sunni mosques. The number of working mosques in the mid-1980s under the control of the Muslim Spiritual Board of Transcaucasia with its centre in Baku, were 14 Shi'a and 2 Sunni mosques for the whole of Azerbaijan and only two in Baku. For the religious situation of the Caucasian Muslim see: Bennigsen, Alexandre and S. Enders Wimbush 1986. *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 127-222. Anderson, Barbara A. and Brian D. Silver 1990. "Growth and Diversity of the Population of the Soviet Union." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*. No. 510 pp. 155-177. See also: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, ed. Glenn E. Curtis 1995. *Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, Country Studies*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, pp. 81-148.
27. Safizadeh, Mina "Islam and Religious Syncretism in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan. Paper prepared for the 30th Annual Meeting of Middle East Studies Association of North America, Providence, RI, November 21-24, 1996.
28. Swietochowski, Tadeusz 1989. "Islam and the Growth of National Identity in Soviet Azerbaijan." Kappeler, Andreas, Gerhard Simon, Georg Brunner eds.

Muslim Communities Reemerge: Historical Perspective on Nationality, Politics, and Opposition in the Former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 46-60.

29. Tohidi, Nayereh 1996. "Soviet in Public, Azeri in Private: Gender, Islam, Nationality in Soviet and Post-Soviet Azerbaijan." *Women's Studies International Forum*, 19:1-2:111-123. Dragadze, Tamara 1994. "Islam in Azerbaijan: The Position of Women." El-Sol, Camillia and Judy Mabro eds. *Muslim Women's Choices: Religious Belief and Social Reality*. Providence, RI: Berg Publishers, pp. 152-163.
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31. Swietochowski, Tadeusz 1995. *Russia and Azerbaijan: A Borderland in Transition*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 26.
32. Khazanov, Anatoli 1995. *After the USSR: Ethnicity, Nationalism and Politics in the Commonwealth of Independent States*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, p. 4.
33. Atkins, Murial 1980. *Russia and Iran, 1780-1828*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p.73.
34. For an interesting discussion of the projects of the native intellectuals in the "indigenization" of Marxism as well as in the promotion of various national-cultural agendas see Verdery, Katherine 1991a. *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaucescu's Romania*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 72-134.

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