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## **ECONOMIC MIGRANTS FROM AZERBAIJAN IN ST. PETERSBURG: THE PROBLEMS OF SOCIAL ADAPTATION AND INTEGRATION**

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### **Introduction**

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The disintegration of the USSR, coupled with the ethnic and military conflicts in the post-Soviet region, has caused a mass migration of the population to Russian cities. A considerable number of the migrants are refugees and economic migrants from the Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan) and Central Asia (in particular, Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan).

The metamorphoses which have occurred within the post-Soviet area have broken the old institutional links. However, social networks of a new quality are now taking the place of the broken ones. In spite of the new borders and the changes in the economic area, which can be measured not in kilometres, but in the cost of travel, the subjective perception of the territory of the former USSR has not undergone significant changes. From our research, the post-Soviet area is perceived by many people, as it was before, as "domestic", rather than "abroad". The unequal economic development of the former states of the USSR and free travel in Russia have caused a mass migration of the population to Russian cities. Today the experts have established that there is an accumulation of new migrants, a growth of ethnic self-consciousness, and the appearance of formal national communities and an informal diaspora in the cities of Russia.

The interrelations of Russia with the states of the former USSR are not easy, especially with the states of the Caucasus and Trans-Caucasus. It is necessary to note that the position of the Caucasian Diaspora in Russia, its interrelations with the local majority, its political and economic

activity, and its languages and cultural preferences can influence the politics of Russia in this region. In the sphere of business, native Caucasians, with a very strong ethnic identity, direct their attention towards establishing business contacts with the states of the Caucasus and Trans-Caucasus. These businessmen try to create new contacts in place of the old destroyed ones. They are interested in establishing economic relations with Russia, and with the other countries which they regard as their homelands. They are able to promote their position, which can be conveyed in one sentence: "Azerbaijan is necessary for Russia, we are sure about it, and we want to convince the governing body of it". However, in the opinion of the "Caucasians" businessmen (1), one of the main bases for the success of such relations between the states is the establishing of civilized relations between the representatives of the Caucasian Diaspora in Russia and the local inhabitants.

On the other hand, the choice of the new foreign policy, the establishment or non-establishment of relations in certain cases, and the process of decision-making in certain political and economic situations - all this can be influenced by the attitude of Russian society to the "Caucasians" and the Caucasus. In this connection the position of the Caucasian Diaspora located in Russian cities seems to be very important. Different researches mention the strong connection between the events which occur in the native countries of the migrants and the actions of the diaspora in Russian cities. Very often, events in their homelands become factors which mobilize the ethnic identity of the migrants.(2) Because of that, experts making decisions about the foreign policy of Russia in this region must take into consideration the Caucasian Diaspora in Russia as an important factor.

So far, both states are interested in objective information about migrants from the Caucasus in big Russian cities about the position of the Caucasian Diaspora in Russia today. In this article some results of research on the Azerbaijan Diaspora of St. Petersburg are presented.

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The rate of migration of the citizens of the Caucasus and Trans-Caucasus to Russia is quite high, but there are no reliable data on the scale of this migration. According to the 1989 All-Russia Census there were 32.4 thousand emigrants from the Trans-Caucasus and 10.9 thousand from the Northern-Caucasus.(3) Today their number is much higher, which is to a considerable extent defined by the intensive stream of refugees and economic migrants. However, it is difficult to estimate the number of migrants very precisely. The main reason is that only a minority of the migrants are officially registered. For example, according to the same 1989 All-Russia Census, twelve thousand Azerbaijanis resided in St. Petersburg at that time. In the opinion of the experts (academics, representatives of the power structures and members of Azerbaijani NGOs) from 50 to 500 thousand Azerbaijani are living in St. Petersburg at present.

This estimate is closely related to the position of the expert, his goals, and the purpose of the estimate. In fact, the experts now are powerless to estimate the real number of migrants from Azerbaijan in St. Petersburg. Let us take the following quotations from the periodic press as an

example. All of them are connected with the incident of the wounding of the honorary consul of Azerbaijan in St. Petersburg, Gudsı Osmanov:

1. "Now there are more than fourteen thousand citizens of Azerbaijan in St.Petersburg", - Victor Bova, "Smena" 2.03.99;
2. "During the last year Gudsı Osmanov has done a lot to reinforce the contacts of the three hundred thousand strong Azerbaijani Diaspora (the biggest in St.Petersburg) with the local authorities and the capital of their historical homeland", - L.Korsunskii, "Peterburgskii Chas Pik", 3-9.03. 99.

In spite of their large numbers, the Azerbaijanis of St. Petersburg do not form any united community with clear boundaries, collective consciousness, articulated group interests or strategies. The Azerbaijani Diaspora of St. Petersburg consists of various social milieux (4), which are relatively closed, and have a weak interaction with each other. There are, for example, scientists or outstanding business men connected with Azerbaijan etc. There are several criteria of distinctions between these milieux: the length of time resident in the city, the level of adaptation, social status etc. The combination of these characteristics forms diverse social communities.

The subject of our research is recent economic migrants from Azerbaijan (who have lived in St.Petersburg for not more than three years). There are several reasons for the choice of such a subject:

1. The group of recent economic migrants is the least integrated into the urban community, and its participants are weakly adjusted to the new conditions of life in the "alien" culture;
2. In the context of the xenophobia existing in Russian society, such a group seems to be the most problematic and most vulnerable. Moreover, xenophobia is nowadays acquiring a "market" character because it is based now not only on ethnic prejudice but also on market competition. The high competitive ability of migrants from the Caucasus in certain spheres of activity, e.g.: in trade, and their distinctive appearance, which differs from that of the local inhabitants, as well as the sharp differences in cultural and everyday practices, result in the ascribing of negative features to these migrants and lead to an increase in hostility with respect to "Caucasians";
3. We investigated those people who live both in Russia and Azerbaijan. Through them two cultures become closely connected and influence one another.

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## **Some preliminary notes**

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This article is based on the materials of the research project of the Centre for Independent Social Research (CISR) "Caucasians in Russian Cities: the Problems of Social Adaptation in the Context of Xenophobia (the Case of St.Petersburg)", with the financial support of the MacArthur Foundation. The purpose of the project was the investigation of

Caucasian migrants' problems of integration, as the most problematic and conflict-prone group in public discussion in St.Petersburg.(5)

We used the method of case-study. Our main informants were two families from the town of Gyandja in Azerbaijan. The "length of migration" of our informants was approximately two years. We investigated the new social networks, the living strategies and the everyday practices of migrants in the context of their life stories.

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## **Methods of research:**

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1. Participant observation of the milieu of economic migrants from Azerbaijan. We observed and participated, as far as was possible, in different spheres of their everyday life (working in the market, the organization of their ordinary life and relations with local authorities and inhabitants of St.Petersburg etc.).
2. Interview. Normal interviews with representatives of the last wave of migration proved impossible because of the informants' poor knowledge of Russian language. For this reason, during the participant observation we practiced "talks" with informants.
3. Expert interviews. Besides those persons whose professional activity is connected with migrants (the representatives of FMS (Federal Migration Service), the local authority and the service personnel of the city's markets, officials of MIA (the Ministry of Internal Affairs), public health and educational services, and estate agents), we interviewed the inhabitants of St.Petersburg as experts who in their everyday life come into contact with (co-operate or clash with) migrants in different contexts: the owners of the rented flats, and the people working for migrant businessmen, for example.

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## **Economic migration**

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The migration of the last few years from Azerbaijan (as from the other unconflictible regions of the Caucasus and Central Asia) is connected, first of all, with economic difficulties and unemployment. The big Russian cities give good opportunities for the realization of the economic strategies of the migrants, and, in spite of some formal difficulties and the "Caucasophobia" of Russians, remain available for them.

The main purpose of migration is the realization of economic strategies, which, connected with the maximum rapid enrichment, defines the character of this migration. The purpose also mainly defines the lifestyle and ways of spending time of migrants in St.Petersburg. The seasonal and shuttle (6) character of these migrations is connected with the situation in the market. For example, gastarbeiters from Azerbaijan take part in the greengrocery business in the markets of the city only in winter. In summer, products which have been cultivated in the Leningrad oblast'

(district), are much cheaper and successfully compete with those from Azerbaijan. In this period, most of the greengrocery businessmen from Azerbaijan return home and come back in winter (if they cannot get a job at home).

It is difficult to estimate the number of economic migrants, because they are not registered. According to our research, they prefer the strategy of avoiding of any contacts with the "state", including registration and any kind of help from the Federal Migration Service (FMS). Every formal clash with the state mechanism has proved to be expensive and implies trouble for the migrants. The well-developed system of giving and taking bribes gives an opportunity to solve all the problems with the militia which are connected with the infringing of the registration regime on the spot. Because of that, all the attempts to estimate the number of migrant newcomers with the help of FMS data or registration data in the MIA (Ministry of Internal Affairs) have proved to be fruitless. The above mentioned estimates of the experts are very subjective, and have practically no real bases.

The social composition of the migrants is various. Among our informants there were people from villages and from big cities, such as Gyandja, people with a high level of education and those without any education. One may mention the great professional diversity of the migrants: a driver, an engineer, a lecturer etc. Just a few years ago one could speak about the gender aspect of migration. The majority of seasonal workers were men. However, this imbalance is disappearing now. The living strategies of the migrants have become long-term. Now, the typical migrant is not a single man. All the family, including the children, take part in the process of earning money.

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## **Economic strategies of migrants**

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One can speak about a common "concept of a career" for all the economic migrants. It is connected with two aims: the minimum one - to survive and support a family in Azerbaijan, the maximum - to prosper and to stay in St. Petersburg permanently.(7) This concept of "economic career" is realized, first of all, through the search for a personal economic niche.

There are two main criteria of choice for the migrants' economic niche. These criteria are described in academic literature more or less in detail:

1. The business of the migrants can be characterized by being based on a small initial capital and its quick circulation;
2. The existence of social networks. A migrant can expect financial support (privileged credit), and useful information etc.(8) The market retail trade with vegetables and fruit has become such an economic niche for migrant newcomers from Azerbaijan.

According to our research, the major reason for the choosing of an economic niche by a migrant is the availability of connections and acquaintances. The choice of the specialization in trade of a migrant

newcomer depends on the activity engaged in by his friends, who can help or give advice. He/she will take up an activity when help is guaranteed. Such resources as connections, information, and the chance to get competent advice are of great importance. As a result, migrant-newcomers are looking for the same activity which their friends who have come before them are engaged in. Local economic niches arise, for example, in the framework of the same market, in which the citizens of the same town are involved. The greengrocery trade at the Kuznetchnii market in St. Petersburg is for the most part undertaken by the citizens of Gyandja (Azerbaijan) and those from one village in Tajikistan. The choice of the niche is determined not so much by some symbolic aspect of traditions, as by the practical availability of business advice and connections with compatriots.

Our research has shown that the pattern of activity of the "Caucasian" migrant to Russian cities is the following: nine times out of ten migrants arrive at the home of some relatives, friends or friends of their friends (it also might be an address simply passed on by someone). If a migrant has nowhere to go, he/she simply goes to the market. Most likely he will not be able to get any help there, if he cannot find any fellow-countrymen (ie. people from the same village or district). The first networks, based on territorial identity, are connected first of all not with the mythical unity of an ethnic group (the fellow-countrymen can represent different ethnic groups), but with the possibility of control. The fellow-countrymen may agree to take the newcomer into their own business or help him/her to start up: assign a selling position, and share some goods to be traded. They will strictly control his/her work, checking that he/she does not steal or cheat. He/she will receive further help until the migrant can start his/her own business.

There are certain unspoken professional ethics among the "Caucasian" migrants. These imply that every migrant strives to start an individual business, to sell his/her own goods, and not someone else's. It is impossible to find in the fruit and vegetable market a Caucasian who would work, for example, as a service person for another Caucasian, although the newcomer at first receives some help. It is generally accepted that a self-respecting person must collect a sufficient sum of money in order to start up his/her own business after one month. The countrymen who trust him/her (e.g. watch what he/she is doing) can loan him a small sum of money as start-up capital, provide accommodation, and supply the necessary connections and advice.

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## **Social networks of economic migrants and interaction with co-ethnics**

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Work is the ultimate purpose for economic migrants. Therefore it becomes the basis for forming networks. The interaction of migrants with their community and relations with their social surroundings are maximum profit-oriented as well as aimed at trying to eliminate possible problems. Their relations with their compatriots are formed on the principles of economic rationality and sometimes competition. Very

often, "pragmatic" solidarities, which economic migrants identify with maximum profit, dominate over other types. Ethnic solidarity is of the least importance. Family and compatriot solidarity as well as solidarity based on friendship are often sacrificed by those who have migrated in order to provide for the family in the first place. Research has shown that the informants at one of the city markets use each other to make money. In the first one and a half hours after the opening of the market a small wholesale fruit and vegetable sale takes place. Salesmen, who will later perform a retail sale, purchase their goods in bulk from the small wholesalers. Sometimes they resell the same goods, which they purchased a few minutes ago, in bulk, judging by the current prices and availability of goods. The tradesmen pay the least attention to each other's ethnicity. The small whole-sellers are usually citizens of St.Petersburg and the Leningrad region, who grow the fruit and vegetables in the greenhouses and bring it over to the market in the morning. Then they sell it to the Azerbaijanis, who retail these greens during the rest of the day.

Azerbaijanis try to participate in the morning's small wholesale business as well: they buy and sell to each other, but Azerbaijanis have to pay no less than the Russians. If a Russian sells the same product for less, an Azerbaijani will gladly buy it. They can immediately re-sell this product to another Azerbaijani for a higher price, therefore making more money.

There are many examples of Azerbaijanis using their co-ethnics as a source for increasing their own capital. Let us take several examples, which can help us to understand which kinds of networks are the most important, and which are not.

Azerbaijanis living in St. Petersburg for a long time have permanent "propiskas"(9) and ties, and can help their countrymen with registration. One of our informants used the services of such an acquaintance to obtain temporary registration and paid three hundred thousand(10) roubles to the compatriot who helped him. The official cost of this registration was seventy (!) thousand roubles.

Other informants, who had found their economic niche in the market infrastructure, and cooked food for the sellers, were forced to buy vegetables for cooking in the same market from their countrymen at a higher price than the wholesale one, but cheaper than the retail price. For their part, they did not give any food free of charge to their compatriots who were working in this market and eating this food, but they did do this for us (perhaps because of our friendly relations).

The same informant, who is a cook, has several times sent his nephews back home, when they came to him hoping to find work and help. According to him, they turned out to be incapable of independent work, and he could neither feed them, nor help them forever. He had to do the same thing with one of his compatriots who helped him with cooking. Out of two co-workers this informant had to choose one, as it was more profitable to work as a pair. They did not need the third co-worker. He did not bring any additional profit, and did something that could have been done by two, and they would have had to share the money among three people.

The informants told us about cases in which the market community refused to redeem from prison their teenage compatriots who had been arrested for stealing. Among the economic migrants, who come for seasonal work and earn their bread by hard work, the attempt to get easy money is not encouraged.

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## **The cooperation of Azerbaijanis with other ethnic groups**

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In the course of our investigation we observed examples of cooperation between Azerbaijani-migrants and local businessmen. Our observation shows that this is not co-operation between the representatives of two different ethnic groups, but a mutually profitable co-operation between professionals. Co-ethnics play practically no part in choosing this kind of a partner, but other factors are of great importance. An example of such co-operation is the trade in products between the inhabitants of the Leningrad district and the Azerbaijanis. This kind of example contradicts the widespread mass media myth about the "obvious economic harm which is done by the strategies of the economic migrant "Caucasians" to "our" manufacturers, consumers etc.

There is no pressure on small wholesale suppliers; they are not forced, nobody buys anything from them against their will, "under threats" (the terms used by the mass media). These wholesale tradesmen simply prefer to bring dozens of kilos of produce to the market in the morning and to earn five or six thousand per kilo during one hour and then to leave the market. The chance to freeze for ten hours at the market, risking the produce, having to solve problems with the militia, OMON and the market administration, St.Petersburg citizens consciously leave to the Azerbaijanis.

Another example of the economic cooperation between Caucasian migrants and local inhabitants is the provision of jobs (such as sellers, service men or drivers) for the local population by the migrant businesspeople. The basic principle for such co-operation is mutual benefit, professional applicability and economic laws.

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## **Kinship**

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The importance of family status and of familial relationship were of great interest to us. It is known that the importance of family ties is a vital part of a traditional society. In the course of our research we have concluded that the idea of a family and family ties does not play a vital role when choosing a behaviour strategy. It does not dominate the relationship or land solidarity.

At certain points of the research it would seem that family status is most important. One of the informants claimed that Azerbaijani culture has the

tradition of calling a best friend "brother" or "sister", in other words, using family terms. In another case, when the same informant was describing the improper behavior of a relative, he said: "If he does it he will no longer be my relative!". At the same time we found out that his more successful relatives, who have been living in St.Petersburg for a long time and own a kiosk-business, do not help him in any way: no money loans, no help with work. "The most that they would do, is to help to get a return ticket to Azerbaijan", he claimed.

We can state that the economic networks of the migrants from the Caucasus in St. Petersburg are not based on the co-ethnic criterion. When creating these networks and choosing the economic niche, migrants do not use co-ethnicity as a criterion. It is not the most important factor. The biggest role is played by territorial ties, while at the same time there often appear to be neighbourly, family or friendly ties. Besides, the study of the interactions between the economic migrant-newcomers and their co-ethnics who have been living in St.Petersburg for a long time, shows that the greatest importance in these interactions is the identity of the economic migrant.

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## **The problems of social and cultural adaptation**

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Crossing the border and facing a "non-Caucasian" majority is the moment of conversion for a migrant from the Caucasus region into a "Caucasian". (11) Finding himself in a new social environment, a person starts to explore the new limits of his/her abilities, while exceeding them unconsciously from time to time. In order to succeed in the new surroundings the "Caucasian" needs to understand and to define his/her new status.

The problem of "boundaries" of communication is an interesting subject for research. In particular the following questions could be investigated: what are the relations between the migrants of the "Caucasian" minority and the "titular" nation? Where is the borderline between the Caucasians and the cultural majority, and what is happening at this "borderline"?

The answers can be obtained by investigation of the living strategies for social and cultural adaptation of the economic migrants. The choice of living strategies, types of activities, and the contracts which are taken by the migrants is strongly connected with the economic nature of migration. The greater part of their time is occupied by work. The markets where our informants work have no days off except for a sanitary day once a month. Those involved in the market trade have practically 29 - 30 working days a month. The nature of the work requires their constant presence at the market; therefore their contacts with the outside world are limited to the journey from home to work and back, as well as contacts with the market administration, the customers and militia staff. Below we will present in more detail certain "zones" of everyday life in which Azerbaijanis communicate with the local population and administration. Specifically during those moments of contiguity problems arise which require from the migrant a social and cultural adaptation to the changed

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## The social problems of migrants

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It is very difficult for a person with a "Caucasian" appearance to rent an apartment or a flat. According to the information given by estate agencies, the people who apply there for assistance in renting their flats often specify their preferences: "no Southerner need apply". One can meet such announcements as "a RUSSIAN family to rent an apartment" where the word "Russian" is underlined and means "not Caucasian".

The main criterion which the Caucasians use in their search for housing is the recommendation of their compatriots who had lived there before them. The latter can help to find an apartment, or give a recommendation; they can allow another migrant to live in their flat, if they move to another place. In addition, there is the practice of offering flats or rooms for renting at the railway station where the migrants arrive. However, sometimes it happens that a newcomer becomes the victim of swindlers when the people who offer a flat bring him to the promised place of residence, make him drunk and rob him. Migrants are often forced to change their place of residence. There are a lot of reasons for this. The landlords who lease their flats to "Caucasians" are very often alcoholics. The tenants come across a lot of problems while contacting such persons. Cases in which the host of the flat tries to make maximum use of his tenants are common. He can demand that the tenant brings him goods, e.g.: vegetables, if his tenants are involved with market trade. If a tenant works as a cook, the landlord can come to his place of work and eat free of charge. The landlords can take a much higher rent from a "Caucasian" than was provided by their preliminary agreement on renting the flat, just because a "Caucasian" is legally unprotected. Actually, there is a "double-standard" in the relationships between the local population and the Caucasians. As far as renting a flat is concerned, a "Caucasian" can be asked to pay a much higher price than a person of another nationality does.

The migrants' problems which emerge in the course of contacting the local authorities concern mostly "propiskas" and registration, that is regulations for residing in the city, either temporarily or permanently. The "Propiska" is the residence permit (but not notification) which existed in Soviet times and has been preserved to a considerable extent up to now, in spite of the fact that at the Federal level the institution of "propiska" has been declared against the law. It means that the city or the regional administration can either permit or not permit a person to reside in the place where the latter wants to live.

It is very difficult to get a permanent residence permit. When a migrant comes to the city, he has to get registered. He can obtain either temporary registration or a temporary propiska. The temporary registration is a permit to stay in the city for not longer than 45 days. On the expiration of the term the registration must be prolonged. The temporary propiska is a permit to live in the city for a period not exceeding 3 months (or 6

months, since 1997). One can get a temporary propiska only once a year, and it cannot be prolonged. Thus, on the expiration of the temporary propiska a migrant can either be granted a permanent propiska or he/she should leave the city until the following year.

The problems of temporary registration, which the Caucasians come across are most likely connected with lack of time, bureaucratic procrastination and the migrants' wish to avoid any additional contact with the official bodies, because every contact can be fraught with grave consequences. The bureaucratic delays presuppose the necessity to arrive at the militia office on the expiration of the term of registration (that is, once every 45 days) for its prolongation and to pay another 75 thousand roubles (\$12). For all this, the fact of registration often cannot save a Caucasian migrant from illegally being terrorised by the militia.

As regards the migrants' unwillingness to meet with the surrounding majority too often, it is normal behaviour for the representatives of a minority which is discriminated against. Such behaviour has a logical basis, as there are certain informal and illegal practices on the part of the militia bodies connected with the registration of migrants of the Caucasian origin. If the district militia inspector knows about a "Caucasian" living in his territory, he treats this fact as a potential danger for the security and law and order of his district. The district militia inspector can come to the migrant's place and impose control over the private life of the latter. This not only insults the migrant's feelings, but also entails a host of other problems, for example with their landlords, who regard the visits of militiamen with great displeasure. It can negatively influence the relationships between the landlords and the tenants. That is why migrants try to avoid registration where possible. They see almost no use in registration, only all too evident problems.

The opportunity to obtain a permanent propiska is connected with a lot of problems: for example, Azerbaijanis are expected to pay bribes. If they marry local women who are ready to register them in their place of residence, the officials of the corresponding municipal services treat such marriages as fictitious ones and demand bribes. Whatever the motives for registration - whether an Azerbaijani wants to be registered illegally and evade the law or whether he is going to do it legally and according to the law - he is deliberately treated as an infringer who tries to evade the law. Therefore a Caucasian is forced to act illegally by giving a bribe. According to our Azerbaijani informants, the "price" of a temporary propiska in St.Petersburg (the bribe rate in fact) can reach 200 USD, while a permanent propiska "costs" 1000-2000 USD (\$200 is more than an average monthly salary, and correspondingly, the sum of \$1000-2000 is more than the average income of an inhabitant of St.Petersburg in one year).

For all that, the supposition that fictitious marriages are one of the possible strategies actively used by migrants is not without reason. The purpose of such a strategy is either to get a permanent propiska, or just to improve living conditions. The migrants and refugees who come to the city with their families or who are going to invite their families later often meet with the problem of placing their children at a school, because the latter are not willingly accepted there. However, according to the law,

they should be accepted. In Moscow and the Moskovskaya oblast' this problem is more acute, as the local administration there is extremely hostile with respect to "Caucasians". There were precedents of expelling Caucasian children from schools on the basis of nationality (in the Moscovskaya oblast'). No such cases have been revealed in St.Petersburg. However, migrants and refugees who can hardly be granted an official status also meet with a lot of problems connected with placing their children at St.Petersburg schools, and can do it only by a "backstairs" acquaintance or with the help of bribes.

A formal community – the organization of Azeribaijanis in St.Petersburg "Dajag" (its members are Azeribaijanis who have been living in St.Petersburg for a long time) – have come out in favour of a proposal to open an Azeribaijani school. However, our informants (migrants from Azerbaijan who work in the market) are not going to enrol their children in such school. This is connected with the fact that the education of their children in a Russian school is very important. Knowledge of the Russian language is a personal capital which is necessary here in Russia and may also be claimed in Azerbaijan. Obviously, the Russian language is the language of international communication in the whole post-Soviet area. The vast territory of Russia, available for economic activity, creates a very strong stimulus for studying the language.

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## **Problems of cultural adaptation**

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There are some informal rules, "something known to everybody" (the so-called rules of everyday life), everyday routine practices, which distinguish and separate different cultures from each other. Clearly, the study of such rules is the most important and complex part of the process of integration into an "alien" culture, and the process of making it "their own". The problems of the adaptation and integration of the migrant are in the first place connected with the change of his/her social status and life style. The absence of knowledge of the peculiarities of the local culture complicates these problems.

Besides the problem of everyday xenophobia, there is another problem which stands in the way of the cultural adaptation of newcomers from the Caucasus to the big city. This firstly concerns their behavioural stereotypes, which are treated by the receiving community as bad manners, that is, lack of knowledge of the behavioural norms accepted in this society. The Caucasians understand that this problem exists. They try to correspond to the behavioural standards accepted in the dominant culture. Those who have settled here long ago learn to reproduce the cultural stereotypes of this society (behaviour, forms of contact, clothes, etc.). Others, who keep in touch only with their compatriots, pay attention to the local rules of propriety only when "crossing the boundary" - when they visit somebody or go to some public place.

The knowledge of everyday rules is gained through observation. Friendship with local inhabitants plays a very important role in this process. For our informants friendship with us was very important. We

didn't only participate in solving their everyday problems, but played a significant role in raising their status among their compatriots (we were always introduced to neighbours and fellow countrymen with pride), and very often they seek advice from us. For example, one informant asked our advice whether it is possible to visit someone wearing a particular kind of clothes. He would scarcely need this advice at home in Azerbaijan

Facing a different culture, which is hard to understand, implies the necessity of painlessly (or rather without any conflict) assimilating into it. In any case, people strive not to be any different from the others. We cannot claim that there are any ethnic specifications for the clothing worn in the market. The most important thing for a Southern "native" is warmth. Therefore warm clothing is obtained from the same bundle at the market itself. There is a certain clothing style for a certain environment; its requirements and labelling. The collision of different cultures generates the problem of "filth". This problem is frequently confronted by people directly or indirectly. People talk about it. The stereotype of "filth" in the case of migrants is not an attempt to accuse a different ethnic group of lack of hygiene, but rather to prove oneself clean, an attempt to show that one belongs to his/her environment. A good example of this is a story told by one of our informants about arguing with his partner about which of them is dirty and who should put on some clean clothes. This informant was wearing a white robe while selling "plov", a traditional Muslim dish. This is not as practical as an apron, but it shows that everything is hygienic and edible as well as "in accordance" with the trade regulations which are accepted at that particular market.

Migrants feel their current low status quite painfully. Stories of high living standards are often told as a protection or an excuse. Either former membership of the Communist party (which still sounds very respectable, and a great achievement), or different job positions (their "importance" is determined by the number of people under one) are often mentioned in this case. In addition, our informants often invite us to visit them, showing that they have a place to live, or complain that everything was so much better back home: cleaner, more affluent and more beautiful. They enthusiastically tell us about the beautiful golden decoration of their ceiling and the chandeliers. It is clear from what they are saying that they plan to return to the original high status of their society. One cannot call a migrant "temporary" in the full sense of the word. Only the living place and work position are temporary. The fact that people bring their families and enrol their children into local schools proves that they are here to stay. The sign of instability is the feeling of temporary status- it is reflected in the attitude towards the place of living and the organisation of everyday life.

An example from one of our informants: furniture (including a table, some chairs, a bed and a wardrobe) is bought at a sale and is very cheap. The vital items are a table and a number of different sleeping places (a couch, a portable bed, a mattress on the floor); the rest is not important. The table is in the centre of the space, it attracts everyone and everything around itself, the rest is of less importance, and is located more to the sides of the room. The sleeping places are not hidden, but are in the shadow of the dominant table. Life goes on around the table: it is the

place to take meals, to do homework, and to have a conversation. The flat is not decorated, apart from the children's New Year decorations (home-made coloured paper-chains). Every object in the room is very practical and has no aesthetic value. Despite the apparent poverty (apparent, because one cannot identify instability and temporary status with poverty) vital items such as a TV have been acquired

The informants call themselves Muslims, because "all Azerbaijanis are called Muslims". It is a common point of view that all of them are Muslims, just as all Russians are in general Orthodox Christians. The reality is different. That informant never mentioned that he did not believe in Allah, but said that he must have been a bad Muslim, because he did not go to the mosque (he never went to the mosque back home either), as well as eating pork (his favorite kebab is made of pork), and drinking vodka despite all the restrictions of the Koran. If a person has not had a faith since he was a child, and it is not "inherited" with the primary socialization, then later acceptance of a confession results in a certain change in identity.

One cannot claim a specific gender-based division of labour among the Azerbaijani migrants (it is rather a stereotype that St. Petersburg citizens have regarding inhabitants of the Azerbaijani districts). Two families of our informants work at the market, for example. Another family's wife actually sells the products and her husband does "market research" by going around the market asking the prices, as well as taking care of the household and children. In another case it's the reverse: the husband is doing the selling, the wife is taking care of the house. It is a reasonable labour division in a family business. For the most part such a division is based on the level of knowledge of Russian in order to communicate with the customers. It is always easier for men, because even if they have never found themselves working in a multi-cultural environment, most of them have served in the army, where the language of communication is Russian (despite a very specific word content). Women take part in all financial discussions, and they for the most part are the ones to keep all the money. It was noticed that when sending a boy to do some shopping, it was the mother who gave the money to her son after a mutual discussion of the shopping list.

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## **Instead of a conclusion: Does the community of "market Azerbaijanis" really exist?**

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From our research we have come to the conclusion that Azerbaijanis living within the city cannot be described as a unified Diaspora with defined outlines, "collective thinking", explicit common interests and group strategies. Moreover, only a small number of formal Azerbaijani NGOs can be called part of an Azerbaijani community, while the social networks of these communities are based on a divided ethnic identity. The rest of the groups are united under different codes, for example, professional ones. It is also not correct to speak about the "market" Azerbaijani community as a group of Azerbaijani migrants working at the city markets. It is a community of individuals with their individual

strategies, a set of individual activities in the framework of a certain economic status in the first place. However, the research has shown, that situational collaboration and solidarity often arise among the market workers. When talking about the nature of such solidarity networks, it is important to point out that they are not formed on the basis of ethnic characteristics. They are not created consciously by social agents, oriented on the criterion of co-ethnicity.

We have extracted four basic principles for setting up such social solidarity networks:

- **Space.** Interaction with those who operate and/or exist in the same space: at the market, owners of the flat, service market, fellow workers, market visitors who enter "their space". This is how sellers, business partners, suppliers, and lenders are found).
- **Profit.** Interaction with those who can bring profit - this criterion is often the crucial one when choosing workers, partners, and suppliers. One does not hire someone from the same ethnic background, but a cheap worker; goods are purchased from the one who sells most cheaply and sold to the one who pays the most.
- **Trust-Control.** Interaction with those whom one trusts, who are easy to understand, who are easily controlled. This is often the principle on which solidarity networks are set up. They are based on common lodging place, land, and the ethnic criterion.
- **Simplicity.** Interaction with those who are simpler to deal with. The knowledge of the language here plays the crucial role: poor knowledge of the language interferes with "Caucasian"-Russian communication. Therefore Caucasians would rather communicate and/or cooperate with someone of the same origin just because it is easier for them to understand each other - they speak one language. Common cultural stereotypes and behaviour patterns facilitate communication with compatriots, and interfere with interaction with the representatives of the different culture. The existing negative stereotypes of Azerbaijani culture held by the local population in St. Petersburg makes it more difficult for the local population to communicate with the "Caucasians".

Social networks which unite Azerbaijanis working at the markets are situational. They are not based on the splitting of ethnic solidarity. It is the xenophobia of the local that defines "the strangers" in ethnic terms, while constructing a solid exterior border. Therefore, all Azerbaijani migrants are perceived by local inhabitants as "Azerbaijanis" or "Caucasians", no matter whether this identity is significant or not.

An inhabitant of Azerbaijan becomes an "Azerbaijani" or "Caucasian", when he faces a rival environment, and drops this status in the case of professional or any other cooperation.

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## Notes

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1. The people who used to be referred by the surrounding people to the ethnic groups originated from the Caucasus are called on one basis or another (appearance, as a rule) the "Caucasians". In this context we use the word "Caucasians" as the name of representatives of a minority which is discriminated against.
2. Brednikova O., Chekadze E. Armenians in St.Petersburg: Careers of Ethnicity // In: Voronkov,V., Osvald, I. (ed.). Konstruirovaniie etnichnosti: etnicheskie obshiny Sankt-Peterburga. Sankt-peterburg: "Dmitrii Bulanin", 1998. p. 246.
3. In: Sikevich, Z. (ed.) Peterburzhtsi: etnonatsional'nii aspekt massovogo soznaniia. Sankt-Peterburg: NII\_SI, 1995. p.126
4. In this case, social milieu is not just the totality of emigrants from Azerbaidjan, but a community of people, connected with each other not only by ethnic identity, but also by social networks, which are based on diverse criteria.
5. Within the framework of this project were also undertaken discourse analyses of "Caucasus-phobia" in the local press.
6. A "Shuttle"(Chelnok) is a person who buy small amounts of goods wholesale in one city and retails them in another one.
7. About half our inhabitants have the desire to live in St. Petersburg.
8. For example: R.Waldinger, Immigrant enterprise // Theory and Society, 15, 1986.
9. "Propiska" is the residence permit. For a detailed explanation see below.
10. All the above prices refer to the period spring-summer 1998.
11. In the intensive mass media propaganda in Russia under transition, the term "Caucasian" contains many negative connotations. It is interpreted not only as referring to an inhabitant of the Caucasus region (without any ethnical diversity), but most importantly as implying danger.

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**Back to [index](#)**