
Zaur GASIMOV

*Ph.D. (Hist.),
research associate at the Institute of European History
(Mainz, Germany).*

**DISSIDENCE AND OPPOSITION
IN THE CAUCASUS:
CRITICS OF THE SOVIET REGIME
IN GEORGIA AND AZERBAIJAN
IN THE 1970S-EARLY 1980S**

A b s t r a c t

This article is devoted to depicting and analyzing the intellectual resistance to the Communist occupant regimes in Georgia and Azerbaijan with special emphasis on dissident activities in the 1970s and early 1980s. The critics of Soviet Communism, its socialist rhetoric, and so-called internationalism are the main topics of the research. The article does not focus on how the protest was organized, but traces the development of an alternative ideology by the Georgian and Azerbaijani intellectuals.

I n t r o d u c t i o n

The political changes within the Soviet Empire since 1985 caused further liberalization of the political regimes in Eastern Europe and in the European republics of the Soviet Union. How were the societies that accepted Communism as an “imported article” able to get rid of it so easily? German political scientist Jerzy Maćków explains this phenomenon by the particular role of nationalism. It was nationalism and not civil society that actually destroyed Communist ideology in those countries.¹

¹ Jerzy Maćków obtained those results by comparing the democratic development in the Czech Republic, Ukraine, and Belarus (see: J. Maćków, “Voraussetzungen der Demokratie in der postkommunistischen Systemtransformation: Ts-

With fluctuating intensity and not always consistently, resistance to Bolshevism continued until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The Ganja uprising in May 1920 and the Georgian uprising in 1924 were brutally suppressed. Despite that, so-called anti-Soviet riots took place until the beginning of the 1930s. The circumstances of the Red Terror² provided no freedom for national protest either in Georgia or in Azerbaijan. Only after liberalization of the Communist regime after Stalin's death in 1953 and during the years of stagnation under Brezhnev were the Caucasian societies able to create a new framework for their resistance to the Soviet ideology. Dissidents emerged in Ukraine, as well as in the Caucasus and Russia, which was quite a new phenomenon for Soviet reality.

As for historiography, it states that the topic of Soviet dissident tradition is quite well researched, particularly in the West. The absolute majority of Western authors concentrated on the Baltic, Ukrainian, and Russian dissidents, but only a few publications about the social protest in the Caucasus have emerged in the last decades. German historian Jürgen Gerber³ published his fundamental research on the political opposition in Georgia in 1956-1989. U.S. researchers R. Gregor Suny⁴ and Jonathan Aves⁵ touched sporadically on the topic of the Georgian protest movement in the 1970s. The activities of Gamsakhurdia and Kostava are highlighted in a fundamental research on Soviet dissidents prepared by Ludmila Alexeyeva.⁶

Azerbaijani dissidence is even less explored in the West. U.S. researchers Audrey Altstadt⁷ and Tadeusz Swietochowski⁸ wrote about Elchibey's activities during the Soviet occupation.

So some serious publications about the Caucasian dissidents have emerged, but no comparative analysis of their ideology has been conducted. Students of Soviet studies concentrated on the later ideology of the Georgian and Azeri dissidents at the end of the 1980s when the ethnic conflicts influenced reality in the Caucasus to a vast extent. The philosophy of protest in the 1970s and in the early 1980s remains unexplored. This article is an attempt to shed light on the main ideological principles of the Georgian and Azerbaijani dissidents in the 1970s and to compare them.

Sovietization of Georgia and Azerbaijan: Changes in Society

The Azerbaijan Republic was the first victim of Bolshevist expansion in the "southern direction." By the end of April 1920 the whole republic was occupied by the 11th Red Army. In February 1921, with the fall of the Georgian Republic, the Caucasus became "Sovietized."⁹ The period of Sovi-

chechien, Belarus und die Ukraine," *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen*, No. 2, 2005, pp. 411-424). His model could be applied to the Caucasian and Baltic republics, as well as to Moldova.

² See: J. Baberowski, *Der Rote Terror. Die Geschichte des Stalinismus*, München, 2003.

³ See: J. Gerber, *Georgien: Nationale Opposition und Kommunistische Herrschaft seit 1956*, Baden-Baden, 1997.

⁴ See: R.G. Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1988.

⁵ See: J. Aves, *Paths to National Independence in Georgia: 1987-1990*, London 1991.

⁶ See: L. Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent. Contemporary Movements for National, Religious and Human Rights*, Middletown Connecticut, 1985.

⁷ See: A. Altstadt, "Azerbaijani Turks' Response to Russian Conquest," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Vol. 19, No. 3-4, 1986, pp. 267-286; idem, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule*, Stanford, 1992.

⁸ See: T. Swietochowski, *Azerbejdżan*, Warsaw, 2006.

⁹ A detailed collection of the diplomatic correspondence of the Georgian and other Caucasian republics during the First Independence can be found in the publication of Georgian historian Guram Mamulia (see: G. Mamulia, *Dokumenty i materialy po vneshnei politike Zakavkazia i Gruzii*, Tbilisi, 1990). A detailed analysis of the Azerbaijan Republic (1918-1920) was delivered by Azeri historian Nasib Nasibzade (see: N. Nəşibzadə, *Azərbaycan demokratik respublikası. Məqalələr və sənədlər* (The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, Articles and Documents), Baku, 1990).

et occupation lasted approximately seventy years. In order to understand the circumstances under which the dissident movement developed in the Caucasian societies, we should explore the nature of the Communist regime established by Moscow in those countries.

In Azerbaijan, where the uprising against the Bolshevik occupants took place in May 1920,¹⁰ the Communist regime felt particularly “endangered.” The ethnic affinity of the Azeris with Turkey, their religious ties with Shi‘ite Iran, and the vast clerical and intellectual strata made it quite difficult for the Bolsheviks to explain to the Azerbaijani “workers and peasants” that their progress and security could be guaranteed “only in union with Russia and its proletariat.” Moscow tolerated such Azerbaijani national-minded communists as Chingiz Ildirim and Nariman Narimanov until the second half of the 1920s. During this period an extremely large number of Azeri intellectuals had to leave for Poland, France, or Turkey. This way was chosen by Rasulzade, Agaoglu, Topchibashi, Huseynzade, Mirza Bala, and others. Many representatives of the Azerbaijani intellectuals (poet Mahammad Hadi and others), members of the former Musavat government during the Independence in 1918-1920, were executed in the early 1920s. One of the leading politicians of the ADR, Fatali Khan Xoyski, was assassinated in Tbilisi,¹¹ where he and his family were given asylum in 1920 after Azerbaijan was occupied by Russia. The Chief of the General Staff of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic General Sulkiewicz and some others were executed in Baku a few days after the Bolshevik invasion in May 1920.¹² The communist persecutions also extended to Azerbaijani entrepreneurs. Zeynalabdin Tagiev, one of the richest art patrons, was under house arrest in Mardakan until his death in September 1924.¹³ The intolerant attitude toward the Azerbaijani culture and language increased at the end of 1930s. A huge number of Azeri literary figures, such as Hüseyin Cavid (1882-1941), Ahmad Javad (1892-1937), Salman Mumtaz (1884-1941), Mikayil Müshfiq (1908-1938), and others, were declared to be “enemies of the people.” They were accused of nationalism, pan-Islamism, and so forth. The romantic trend in Azerbaijani literature at the end of the 19th-beginning of the 20th century, which resulted in poets and writers concentrating on such topics as the Motherland, the mother tongue etc., was regarded as “an anti-Soviet phenomenon.”¹⁴ Swietochowski wrote: “By 1940 an estimated 70,000 Azeris had died as a result of purges carried out under Baghirov. The intelligentsia was decimated, broken, and eliminated as a social force.”¹⁵ The Communist attacks on the Azeri language reached its culmination in 1939-1940 when the Latin alphabet of 1926 was changed to the Russian one. This measure could be seen as the key element in the Russification of “Sovietized Azer-baijan” for the following reasons.

1. The change in alphabet,¹⁶ its Russification,¹⁷ cut the cultural ties of the Azerbaijani intellectuals with Turkey, with its cultural centers in Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara.

¹⁰ The second attempt of the anti-Soviet uprising was conducted by representatives of the old Musavat army officers in Ganja in 1930, which was similarly suppressed by the Bolsheviks (see: R. Zeynalov, *Voennoe stroitel'stvo v Azerbaidzhanskoj Respublike 1920-ijun' 1941 g.*, Baku, 1990, p. 113).

¹¹ Xoyski was shot by Aram Erkanian on 19 July, 1920 in Tbilisi (see: A. Svarants, *Pantiurkizm v geostrategii Turtsii na Kavkaze*, Moscow, 2002, p. 583).

¹² See: Israfilbey (Israfilov), “Vospominania ob azerbajdzhanskoj armii,” *Gorcy Kavkaza/Les Montagnards du Caucase*, No. 31, 1932, pp. 13-18.

¹³ See: Q. Ilkin (Musayev), *Bakı və bakılılar* (Baku and Bakuvits), Baku, 2006, p. 243.

¹⁴ The topic of Stalinism in Azerbaijan is fundamentally researched by German historian Jörg Baberowski (see: J. Baberowski, *Der Feind ist überall. Stalinismus im Kaukasus*, München, 2003). A concise booklet of Mammed Amin Rasulzade on modern Azerbaijani history, which was published in Ankara in 1951, also sheds light on the Stalinist policy toward Azerbaijan (see: M.E. Resulzade, *Çağdaş Azərbaycan Tarihi*, Ankara, 1951).

¹⁵ T. Swietochowski, op. cit.; B.C. Collins, *Historical Dictionary of Azerbaijan*, Lanham (a.o.), 1999, p. 31; B. Şimşir, *Azerbaycan'da türk alfabesi tarihce*, Ankara, 1991; T. Bayatly, “Alphabet Transitions. The Latin Script: A Chronology. Symbol of a New Azerbaijan,” *Azerbaijan International*, No. 5.2, 1997, available at [http://www.azeri.org/Azeri/az_english/52_folder/52_articles/52_alphabet.html], 10 May, 2005.

¹⁶ See: T. Swietochowski, op. cit.; B.C. Collins, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

¹⁷ The first attempts of the Russian colonial authorities to “Cyrillicize” the Azerbaijani script were conducted at the end of the 19th century. In 1897, a Russian language textbook for Azeris was published in Kazan'. The Azeri translation

2. De-Latinization of the Azeri alphabet broke the historical continuity between the generations. Actually, it “doubled” the tragedy, since the generation of 1920-1930s was educated using the Latin alphabet in spite of the fact that the Azerbaijanis had been using the Arabic script since the emergence of national literature in the 10th-11th centuries. The generational, social, and cultural continuity became deeply disrupted.
3. Russification of the alphabet through its de-Latinization also meant de-Europeanization of the Azeri language, if only in its visual perception.
4. Russification of the Azeri alphabet downgraded the influence of the Azeri language in the country. Simultaneously, it created better conditions for the forceful dissemination of the Russian language and culture in Azerbaijan.

The Communist regime continued the colonial policy of Czarist Russia in Azerbaijan. The influx of Russian settlers from the Volga Region to Baku and its industrial city-satellite Sumgayit created an ethnically Russian and then Russian-speaking core population in the capital.

In Georgia, the Communist regime aimed at exterminating the political opposition, which was able to develop its sufficiently strong social-democrat ideology during the Georgian Democratic Republic of 1918-1921. Georgian social democracy was closely connected with the European leftist political circles. In 1919-1920, on the invitation of Noe Jordania, numerous delegations of the European social-democrats paid visits to Georgia.¹⁸ The strong potential of the Georgian political opposition and the high level of national conscience among the Georgian population formed the background for the huge anti-Soviet uprising in 1924, which was brutally “pacified” by the Bolsheviks.¹⁹ According to Georgian historian George Anchabadze, “in 1922-1923 alone, 1,500 churches were destroyed in Georgia.”²⁰ German theologian Hampel wrote that “the Georgian church had over 1,527 parsonages in the pre-1917 period, while in 1963 ... it had only 80 parsonages.”²¹ Both in Georgia and Azerbaijan, the Communist purges almost totally destroyed the clerical institutions. The number of functioning churches, mosques, and synagogues drastically decreased. The ecclesiastical seminars in Tbilisi and the huge infrastructure of the Muslim educational centers, such as madrasahs, were liquidated. Because of the very important role that religion played in Georgian and Azerbaijani society until their Sovietization, the destruction of religious institutions deprived the social system of its moral-ethical values.

In later years, but particularly during the Stalinist purges in the 1930s, a huge number of Georgian intellectuals were exterminated. But for certain reasons Stalinism in Georgia did not result in immense disruption of the historical continuity and ties between the generations, as was the case in Azerbaijan. The authentic Georgian script was preserved. One of the reasons for this was that Georgians as a Christian nation would not seek assistance from neighboring Muslim countries, such as Iran or Turkey. Secondly, the absolute majority of Georgians lived in the Soviet Republic of Georgia. Apart from a tiny minority in Iran, Eastern Turkey (Laz), and a small intellectual community in Paris and in Berlin, the Georgians did not have a large diaspora outside of the Soviet Union. In contrast, the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan was the homeland for approximately 20-25% of the Azerbaijanis living in the bordering countries, such as Iran and Eastern Turkey. The preservation of the Georgian alphabet sustained the centuries-long continuity with Georgian philo-

of the Russian words was written in Russian letters (see: T.A. Ivanickij, *Opyt pervonačal'noġo učebnika ruskago jazyka dla aderbeydžanskich tatar*, Kazan, 1897).

¹⁸ See: K. Kautsky, *Georgien. Eine sozialdemokratische Bauernrepublik. Eindrücke und Beobachtungen*, Wien, 1921.

¹⁹ See: W. Zürrer, *Kaukasien 1918-1921. Der Kampf der Großmächte um die Landbrücke zwischen Schwarzem und Kaspischem Meer*, Düsseldorf, 1978, p. 463.

²⁰ G. Anchabadze, *History of Georgia. Short Sketch*, Tbilisi, 2005, p. 39.

²¹ A. Hampel, *Glasnost' und Perestrojka— eine Herausforderung für die Kirchen*, Frankfurt am Main, 1989, p. 83.

sophical thought and played the important role of national mobilization in its resistance to Russification.

Azerbaijan and Georgia of the 1960-1970s already had fifty years of Soviet rule experience behind them. The Sovietized Caucasian republics saw the birth of almost two generations. Intellectuals still had historical memory of the period of state independence of 1918-1920/21, but it ceased to be a mobilization factor for the whole of society. Nationalism was the only phenomenon that became the main resistance impetus of the non-Russian nations against Russification and further destruction of their cultural traditions. French Sovietologist H el ene Carr ere d'Encausse wrote in 1978 that the nations in the Soviet Union learnt to use the framework which was offered them by Moscow.²² That means that despite the development of conformist literature and the propaganda of Marxist ideology in Georgian and Azerbaijani, the "new" generation of intellectuals preserved the appropriate languages. An educational revolution took place after World War II and the end of the Stalinist era in the countries of the Caucasus. It was not national independence, but the wish to achieve equality through better education and a strong desire for the industrial development of their republics that dominated the minds in Baku and Tbilisi in the 1950-1960s. Knowing their own history without any radicalization of their claims, the Caucasian intellectuals conducted a "still revolution" as U.S. historian Tadeusz Swietochowski called the changes in Azerbaijan in the 1970s.

In the 1950s, ethnic re-homogenization of the population in the Caucasian republics began. A percentage of the ethnic Georgians and Azerbaijanis in both republics grew permanently. There was also a proportional reduction in the Russian population.²³

A New Generation of Caucasian Dissidents

Due to the almost total elimination of alternative ideologies and religious identity, Georgia and Azerbaijan underwent an extensive industrialization and modernization process between the early 1920s and 1970s. Moscow was interested in better conditions by exploiting regional resources. Modern infrastructure for tourism on the Black Sea coast of Georgia and the renewal of road and pipeline communication around Baku had to make the transportation of the oil and gas resources from the Apsheron Peninsula and organization of all-Soviet tourism in Georgia easier. The development of medical resources and education was aimed at creating better living conditions for the Russian settlers working and living in the region.

Moscow paid attention to social improvements in the Caucasian republics, but left the nations to take care of their national cultural development themselves. Propaganda of the Russian language and financial support of the Russian-language educational institutions contrasted sharply with the neglect of Georgian and Azerbaijani schools and the failure to preserve historical monuments, the cultural legacy, etc. These trends dominated during the era of Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev as well.

²² See: H. C. d'Encausse, *Risse im Roten Imperium. Das Nationalit atenproblem in der Sowjetunion*, Wien a. o., 1979, pp. 283-286.

²³ In the Georgian S.S.R., the number of Georgians rose from 61.4% (1939) to 68.8% (1979). The Russian minority dropped from 8.7% (1939) to 7.4% (1979). In the Azerbaijani S.S.R., the number of Azerbaijanis grew from 58.4 (1939) to 78.1% (1979). The ethnic Russian minority decreased from 16.5% (1939) to 7.9% (1979) (see: A. Kappeller, *Die Russen. Ihr Nationalbewusstsein in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, K oln, 1990, pp. 189-190).

The twenty years after the end of the Stalinist terror gave the Georgians, Azerbaijanis, Ukrainians, and others an opportunity to “regenerate” themselves to some extent by giving birth to a new generation of intellectuals. Being socialized under Communist occupation, they were able to take advantage of the “absence of the terror” since 1953. Many of the former “prohibited” literary and research works written by Georgian and Azeri historians, writers, and philosophers could be published after the death of Josef Stalin. Some of the national holidays, historical traditions, and folk music were reinstated. This framework made it possible for the above-mentioned “new” generation of intellectuals to emerge, who obtained a brilliant education and were bonded to their national traditions. The reason for the protest of those intellectuals was the continuation of the Russification policy and Moscow’s “Russia-first” approach in its attitude toward the non-Russian republics.

There can be no doubt that Elchibey in Azerbaijan and Gamsakhurdia in Georgia were the most prominent representatives of intellectual dissidence. For the purposes of this study, it can be concluded that they represented the most radical wing of national opposition against the Soviet regime. At the same time, there were other intellectuals who preferred to resist the Communist ideology within the “permitted” ideological framework. Despite all that, their activities had a destructive influence on the ruling Communist ideology. The numerous Georgian and Azerbaijani historians who published books on the Russian colonial policy toward the Caucasus in the 19th century opposed to some extent the Moscow-backed trends to depict the history of Caucasian-Russian relations as “a centuries-long friendship.” In Georgia, there were historians I.G. Antelava, A. Menteshashvili, and others who carried out in-depth research on the anti-Russian uprisings in Georgia after Russia’s annexation of the Kartli-Kakhetian czarism. In Azerbaijan, historians Alisohbet Sumbatzade²⁴ and Ziya Buniatov²⁵ published their research in the 1960-1970s on Russian colonialism in the Azerbaijani khanates and Azerbaijani history of the Middle Ages. Referring to the class theory and Marxist view on history, these authors disseminated the complicated history of Russian-Caucasian relations in the crucial 19th century. Their works became an ideological foundation during the National Liberation Movement at the end of the 1980s.

Another group of non-traditional dissidents consisted of writers and poets who concentrated on historical topics in their poetry. Even if they had their “socialist” period in past, national themes began dominating among them in the 1950s. Georgian poet Galaktion Tabidze²⁶ and Azerbaijani poet Bakhtiyar Vahabzade²⁷ can also be considered dissident writers who were tolerated by the local commu-

²⁴ Alisohbet Sumbatzade (1907—1992) defended his dissertation on the anti-colonial uprising in Quba in 1837 at the Azerbaijani State University in 1942. As a book it could not be published until 1961 in Baku (see: A.S. Sumbatzade, *Kubinskoe vosstanie 1837 g.*, Baku, 1961, p. 5).

²⁵ Ziya Buniatov (1921-1997) defended his doctoral dissertation on *The History of Azerbaijan in the 7th-9th Centuries* in March 1964. In 1965, his monograph was published in Moscow in Russian. In the 1960-1970s Buniatov explored the medieval history of the Uzbeks and Azerbaijanis and translated ancient Arabic manuscripts. His publications were criticized by the Uzbek Communist party leadership because of their “glorification of the past” in 1973. In 1978, Buniatov published his profound research work on *The History of the Atabeks’ State in Azerbaijan*, which was awarded the state prize of the Azerbaijan S.S.R. (see: A. Beliaev, *Ziya Buniatov*, available at [http://www.warheroes.ru/hero/hero.asp?Hero_id=1680], 26 March, 2008).

²⁶ Galaktion Tabidze (1891-1959) belonged to the “symbolists” like prominent Russian poets Balmont, Briussov, and Blok. His poetry represented the continuity of the Georgian poetical tradition of pre-1917-Georgia, an independent Georgian Republic, and of “Sovietized” Georgia as well. In the 1930s he founded the famous literary journal *Mnatobi*. In 1959, his suicide turned to the symbolic reaction on the philosophical emptiness of the Communist regime.

²⁷ Bakhtiyar Vahabzade (1925-2009) represented the continuity of the Azeri poets of the medieval period. In his poetry, he constantly referred to Fizuli and Nasimi as well. Vahabzade praised the poetry of Mahammad Hadi (1879-1920), who was one of the arduous protagonists of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1918-1920). In 1958, Vahabzade wrote a short article on Hadi “A Tragedy of an Artist” (see: B. Vahabzade, “Sənətkarın faciəsi,” in: B. Vahabzade, *Sənətkar və zaman. Ədəbiyyat və sənət, həyat və zaman haqqında düşüncələr* (The Creative Personality and the Time. Pondering over Literature and Art, over the Life and the Time), Baku, 1976, pp. 36-41).

nist parties. Vahabzade was famous for focusing on the theme of “South Azerbaijan” and the historical partition of the Azerbaijani territories by Russia and Persia in the 19th century.²⁸ In 1975, two volumes of his selected poetry were published in Baku.²⁹

There was a vast non-radical intellectual stratum opposed to Soviet ideology, as well as a tiny radical dissident group in the Caucasus. The latter dared to criticize the political regime openly. Kostava, Gamsakhurdia, and Elchibey rejected the “rules of the game,” they aimed to change the actual conditions. The above-mentioned widespread group of national-minded intellectuals, such as historians Ilia Antelava, Avtandil Menteshashvili, Ziya Buniatov, and Azeri writer Elchin, accepted the framework “granted” by Moscow but they were ready to use any opportunity they had to promote their own system of values.

There was also a third group of intellectuals that ignored the existing regime and its ideology and simultaneously rejected its political activities. Georgian philosopher Merab Mamardashvili (1930-1990) and Azerbaijani philosopher Asif (Ata)³⁰ Efendiyev (1935-1997) belonged to that group. In contrast to Gamsakhurdia and Elchibey, whose political views and values emerged during the National Liberation Movement in the second half of the 1980s, Asif Ata and Mamardashvili had a very specific world-view concept.

The contribution of Mamardashvili and Efendiyev consisted of creating a developed national school of philosophy in Georgia and Azerbaijan, which was able to rival with the metropolis in Moscow in some fields.

C o n c l u s i o n

As we see, dissidence in Georgia and Azerbaijan was a conglomerate of radical questioning of the regime, as practiced by Gamsakhurdia, Kostava, and Elchibey, and moderate destruction of the Communist ideology by a large group of intellectuals. Historians like G. Mamulia, I. Antelava, Z. Buniatov, and S. Ashurbeyli created fundamental works on Georgian and Azerbaijani history within the framework of the Marxist view on history. At the same time, they depicted the past of their nations as ancestors of the millennium of old traditions and culture. Their historical publications destroyed the myth of the impact of Russia’s civilization and its culture on the “backward Caucasian peoples.”³¹ The Caucasian philosophers were able to found national philosophical schools which combined the achievements of European thought trends with the local philosophical traditions. Writers in Georgia and Azerbaijan appealed to the national past and the ancient literary traditions of the Georgians and Azerbaijanis. Vahabzade’s references to Fizuli and the early medieval dastan of Dede-Korkut contributed to the continuity and national conscience of having an ancient literary tradition.

So the “radical” and “moderate” wings of Caucasian dissidence created the potential in Georgia and Azerbaijan for cultural resistance to Soviet policy, which aimed to destroy the local alternative institutions. The toolkit of their direct or indirect criticism of the Moscow-backed Soviet regime combined open non-acceptance of the official policy (Gamsakhurdia and Elchibey) and intellectual en-

²⁸ So-called “longing” literature in the Soviet Azerbaijan was researched by American specialist in Turkish studies David B. Nissman (see: D.B. Nissman, *The Soviet Union and Iranian Azerbaijan. The Use of Nationalism for Political Penetration*, Boulder, London, 1987).

²⁹ See: B. Vahabzade, *Seçilmiş əsərləri* (Selected Works), in two volumes, Baku, 1974-1975.

³⁰ The first publication of his main works appeared in Baku two years after the philosopher’s death (see: A. Ata, *Mütləqə inam* (Belief in the Absolute), Baku, 1999).

³¹ The Russocentric trend in Soviet historiography was dominant under Stalin as well as under Khrushchev and Brezhnev. The numerous publications of historians Anna Pankratova, Yuri Poliakov, and Ilia Berkhin depicted the civilizational role of Russia and the Russians with respect to the other peoples of the Soviet Union.

gagement with the national past, literature, and music within a framework tolerated by the authorities. The “indirect” opposition was broader and often not understood as such by the representatives of the intelligentsia, which through studies of the cultural history of Azerbaijan and Georgia destroyed the myths on the “cultural superiority” of Russia. By the end of the 1980s, the moderate wing of the intellectual opposition began to merge with the former radical wing. In any case, this was the second part of the process, which began in the 1970s.
