

CENTRAL ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS

Journal of Social and Political Studies

3 (27)
2004

CENTRAL ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS
CENTER FOR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STUDIES
SWEDEN

FOUNDED AND PUBLISHED BY

CENTRAL ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS CENTER FOR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STUDIES

Center registration number: 620720 - 0459
Journal registration number: 23 614
State Administration for Patents and Registration of Sweden

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SWEDEN

WEB ADDRESS:

<http://www.ca-c.org>

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CENTRAL ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS
Journal of Social and Political Studies
No. 3(27), 2004

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The Special Feature section in the next issue will discuss:

Central Asia and the Caucasus

- World and Regional Centers of Power and their Impact on the Regional Situation
- Energy Policy and Energy Projects
- Political Development Trends in the Context of International Antiterrorist Campaign

THE INFLUENCE OF URBANIZATION ON FORMING THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF AZERBAIJAN SOCIETY

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The past two hundred years in Azerbaijan's history has been a time of rapid, qualitative, and often dramatic change. It seemed a contemporary, dynamically developing society with a clearly marked social structure was about to appear, with a strong and large middle class at its center. But the first years of the 21st century, which was emotionally perceived as a kind of special watershed, have passed and talk about the need to create a developed civil society and reinforce the middle class are continuing without bringing about any perceptible changes. But it should be noted that if some researchers evaluate the events of the past years as positive and believe a middle class, which is so important and necessary to us, has just about been formed, others severely criticize the reforms of the 1990s, often calling them not

only a waste of time, but also an obstacle hindering the country's development. We would like to offer our own analysis of the situation in the republic, while in no way claiming the absolute truth of our conclusions. We begin our analysis with urbanization, a process that is playing a vital role in differentiating the social structure of both the residents in a particular country, and the planet's population as a whole. In so doing, we will note straight away that this process should be viewed in terms of globalization of the economy, which became possible by creating up-to-date communication technology and an integrated financial space. The urbanization process is the result of globalization, on the one hand, and its most important "agent" on the other, without the mass dimensions of which it would be impossible to talk about building a post-industrial society.

But no matter what serves as the foundation of this process, we are primarily interested in a more prosaic question: how urbanization has affected an increase in the urban population in particular. Its influence is not only blatantly clear in the rapid rise in this parameter, but also in the increase in the number of cities. "Beginning in the 1960s, the U.S.S.R. underwent accelerated urbanization. In 1950, 71 million people lived in Soviet cities (39% of the population), whereas by the 1990s, this number had jumped to 190 million (66% of the population). In so doing, in contrast to the West, a result of accelerated modernization ... was the appearance of a very large number of new cities."¹ But although this phenomenon also affected Azerbaijan, it was more concerned by the increase in population in its largest cities, particularly Baku.

The compilers of the Azerbaijan Human Development Report 1996 state that "the rapid growth of the oil industry in the second half of the 19th century and the subsequent rise in the urban population, particularly in Baku, transformed Azerbaijan into the most urbanized region of the Russian Empire."² In the 20th century, the picture took shape as follows: in 1913, urban residents constituted approximately 24% of Azerbaijan's entire population, whereas this figure was 18% for the rest of the empire. After the revolution, in the 1920s-1930s, the urbanization process speeded up. The size of the urban population rose 1.78-fold—from 649,500 to 1,156,800 (from 28.1% to 36.1%). And this process did not slow down throughout the entire 20th century. "Rapid urbanization was a feature of economic development of the period 1897-1995. The largest investments were made in the areas of greatest importance to the U.S.S.R., i.e. the industry of Russia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan."³ As for the most important reasons for urban growth, they include migration to the cities by the rural population, the natural growth in the urban population, and the transformation of large villages into towns.

Here we should note the influence of the city on the demographic indices. This was shown by the fact that "all demographic processes are manifested in greater relief in large cities and, as experience shows, are pioneering in nature, only later becoming universal, of which both positive and negative phenomena are inherent (for example, the drop in fertility rate and natural population growth, the trend toward fewer children in families, and so on)."⁴ Particularly important is the interdependence between the size of the city and its fertility rate, believes V.I. Kozlov, also because large cities set the standard of behavior and lifestyle for most of the country's population, and correspondingly, the development model, including demographic. In so doing, the correlation between the fertility rate and the size of the city can be very clearly traced. Studies also show that the difference in fertility rate among rural and urban residents is very significant. But for Azerbaijan it was not so noticeable. Whereas in all the largest cities of Russia and Ukraine, the fertility rate was lower than for the entire urban population of the Soviet Union, in our country, the difference was not as obvious. All the same, in spite of this, the fertility rate for the republic as a whole was much higher than in the capital.

It can be seen that the Baku urban fertility rate gradually dropped. But the difference between the indices for the capital and Azerbaijan as a whole is quite impressive. For example, in 1965, the fertility rate for the republic amounted to 36.6 per 1,000 people, in 1975 it was 25.1, and in Baku it was 21.6 and

¹ S.G. Kara-Murza, *Sovetskaia tsivilizatsiia*, Book 2, *Ot Velikoi Pobedy do nashikh dnei*, Vol. 2, EKSMO-Press, Moscow, 2002, p. 96.

² *Azerbaijan Human Development Report*, Baku, 1996, p. 33.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ I.I. Sigov, *Urbanizatsiia i razvitie gorodov v SSSR*, Nauka Publishers, Leningrad, 1985, p. 191.

Table

Fertility Rate in Baku
(number of births per 1,000 people)⁵

City	Size of population as of 1 January, 1980	1965	1970	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Baku	1,030	21.6	19.0	19.0	19.0	19.1	18.2	17.6

19, respectively.⁶ It should also be noted that the gap gradually closed between these indices (as they dropped). What is more, in the cities, particularly in Baku, the fertility rate was also lower due to the large number of foreigners among the population, primarily Russians, among whom this index was lower than among the Azeris. Whereas in 1970, the latter amounted to 73.8% of the republic's entire population, among city dwellers it was 60.8%. What is more, in the same year, the percentage of the urban population among the Azeris themselves amounted to only 41.3%, whereas by 1979, this percentage had increased to 44.5%. At the same time, Russians, who comprised one of the republic's largest ethnic minorities, mainly lived in the cities, primarily in Baku (up to 75% of all the Russians in Azerbaijan). Taking into account the relatively low, compared with the Azeris, fertility rate among Russians, this fact had a great impact on the fertility rate in the cities, particularly in Baku.

Although by the beginning of the 20th century, Azerbaijan was the most urbanized part of the Russian empire, only 24% of the population lived in its cities. By way of comparison, by 1920 urban residents in England amounted to 64%, in Germany to 40%, in France to 37%, in Belgium to 49%, and in Holland to 45% of the total population.⁷ But during the Soviet period, the size of the urban population in the republic rose at a rapid rate. In the 1930s, it was already 36.1%, and between 1959 and 1995, the number of city dwellers rose 2.24-fold, although in percentages the increase was not as significant, from 47.8 to 53%. By 2000, according to the official statistics, the percentage of city dwellers even dropped—to 51%.⁸ Admittedly, a certain discrepancy is noted in evaluating the size of the urban population. Several independent sources agree that this index is actually higher than presented in the official documents. The compilers of the *Universal Geography* website estimate (in June 2001) the size of the urban population at 56%.⁹ According to the statistical reference *Countries of the World*, it is even slightly higher at 57%.¹⁰ But all the sources agree that the size of the urban population is higher than the rural.

A comparative analysis of the population of Baku helps us to come to terms with this question to some extent. For example, as of 1 January, 1990, the yearbook of the *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopedia* (Great Soviet Encyclopedia) (1990), estimates the number of residents in Baku at 1,779,500 people.¹¹ By the end of the century, according to official data, it had increased by only 17,200 people (as of 1 January, 1999, it was 1,796,300 people).¹² And according to the data of BSE, in the 1990s, 7,131,300 people lived in the republic,¹³ and by 1999, according to official data, this number had risen to 8,016,200 people.¹⁴ But the

⁵ See: *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁶ See: B.S. Khorev, G.P. Kiseleva, *Urbanizatsiia i demograficheskie protsessy*, Finansy i statistika Publishers, Moscow, 1982, p. 53.

⁷ See: A.G. Vishnevskiy, *Serp i rubl. Konservativnaia modernizatsiia v SSSR*, O.G.I, Moscow, 1999, p. 80.

⁸ See: *Azerbaijan Human Development Report*, p. 33.

⁹ See: *Universal Geography. Azerbaijan* [<http://wgeo.ru/asia/aze.shtml>].

¹⁰ See: *Statistical Reference. Countries of the World. Azerbaijan* [http://allworld.wallst.ru/page.php?nfile=Azerbaijan_pop&ctr=3].

¹¹ See: *Ezhegodnik BSE*, Sovetskaia entsiklopediia Publishers, Moscow, 1990, p. 99.

¹² See: *Statistical Yearbook of Azerbaijan*, Baku, 2000, p. 54.

¹³ See: *Ezhegodnik BSE*, p. 99.

¹⁴ See: *Statistical Yearbook of Azerbaijan*, p. 54.

size of the population in Ganja has essentially not increased since 1991, when it amounted to 300,000 people¹⁵; by 1999, it was 300,500. A similar situation also developed in other cities, for example in Sumgait. However, according to the same official sources, the natural population increment in Baku and Ganja was quite high, 6.1 and 4.5 per 1,000 people, respectively.¹⁶ Of course, during these years many representatives of the national minorities, Russians and Armenians, left the republic, who mainly lived in the cities. Nevertheless, a large number of refugees and forced migrants settled in the cities, primarily in Baku and Sumgait, thus replacing those who had left.

The situation that developed can be characterized as follows: first, the size of the population of Apsheron, particularly Baku, has noticeably grown in recent years; second, this happened despite the large outflow of city dwellers; third, the number of residents in other cities, particularly Ganja, decreased, which is related both to internal migration (moving to Baku) and to emigration. In order to explain what this led to, we need to turn to ethnic demography. Today, all the sources show a very perceptible increase in the ethnic composition of the republic's population in the percentage of Azeris themselves. For which there were both objective reasons (the increased fertility rate), and the events of the end of 1980-beginning of the 1990s. During the whole of the second half of the 20th century, their percentage in the republic increased at a rapid rate. But this did not promote an increase in their numbers in the cities. In 1959, 36.4% of the total number of Azeris lived in the cities, and they constituted 51.3% of city dwellers,¹⁷ that is, almost half of the urban population was made up of non-Azeris, primarily Russians, 24.8%, and Armenians, 15.2%, although with respect to the entire population, their percentage was perceptibly lower, 13.6% and 12%, respectively.¹⁸ By 1970, the number of city-dwelling Azeris, in terms of their total number in Azerbaijan, amounted to 39.7%, that is, it increased somewhat compared with 1959. Unfortunately, there are no data for 1971-1989, but it is unlikely they would have changed the picture as a whole.

Now we can draw our conclusions. Despite the fact that by the beginning of the 20th century, Azerbaijan was the most urbanized region of the empire, its level of urbanization was clearly insufficient, and what is more, very unevenly distributed throughout the republic, since at that time this process mainly affected Apsheron. The republic underwent the accelerated urbanization of the Soviet period in the same way, its cities had quite a number of rural features, and a full-fledged middle class could not form in them. Not one feature of the "rural" urbanization that swept the nation during Soviet times, which A.G. Vishnevskiy gave such an exhaustive description of, passed us by. What concerns us now is how this process has been developing since the Soviet Union disintegrated, and was there an attempt to change the situation that developed?

The data presented above shows that the representatives of national minorities who left the republic were mainly city dwellers. Today, approximately 90% of our country's population are Azeris, whereas the percentage of them among the urban population in Soviet times amounted to no more than 50%. This draws us to conclude that even although the number of city dwellers did not change in the 1990s, it directly indicates an enormous inflow of rural residents into the cities. What is more, it should be emphasized in particular that with the exception of a few cities (Baku, Ganja, Sumgait), all the others are much more rural than urban in their lifestyle. Therefore, the population of many provincial cities did not become true city dwellers, instead they have essentially remained rural residents. The large inflow of villagers into the cities is also confirmed by the data on refugees. For example, as of 1 July, 1995, according to the official documents, there were more than 285,000 refugees and forced migrants in Baku, and more than 71,000 in Sumgait (38.5% of their total number). We intentionally did not look at the problem of Azeris themselves leaving the republic, although in our opinion it is a central one. It is enough to mention that no less than 2 million of them have left the country in search of work, an enormous number of which are city dwellers, primarily members of the intelligentsia. If we also take into account that the percentage of city-dwelling

¹⁵ See: A.A. Gasanova, *Ganja segodnia*, Elm Publishers, Baku, 1991, p. 14.

¹⁶ See: *Statistical Yearbook of Azerbaijan*, p. 54.

¹⁷ See: V.I. Kozlov, *Natsionalnosti SSSR. Etnodemograficheski obzor*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1989, pp. 89, 93.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

Azeris is clearly low, we can draw the conclusion that the rural element currently predominates in the cities, particularly in Baku and Sumgait. It is much more difficult to change in an environment which largely reproduces the one a person is already accustomed to. Only one conclusion can be drawn: if it was very difficult to form an urban stratum in the population, as a special one with certain qualities unique only to it, in Soviet times, it is even more difficult now.

There are several other reasons for this, primarily the collapse in the economy, which has brought with it disintegration and essential destruction of the working class. What is more, the new system of statehood is largely based on the over-inflated ranks of civil servants. The republic currently has too many policemen, customs employees, utility workers, municipal housing department employees, and so on. But teachers and doctors are also largely classified as civil servants. The development of market relations has essentially stopped, and due to the over-inflated bureaucratic apparatus and corruption, a viable class of free businessmen has been unable to develop. Business is largely carried out by those same civil servants, only they can afford this in an atmosphere of incessant extortions. This leads to an absence of real competition, which means there is no real market economy. Not only has a middle class failed to form, but the foundation created during Soviet times, on which it was to be built, has essentially been destroyed. The transfer of the rural thinking and traditions to city life has created fertile ground for the development of favoritism and clannishness, which are flourishing in the country and, in turn, promoting an increase in corruption and bureaucratization.

All of this has undoubtedly led to archaism of urban society, which has assumed many features of medieval times. Nothing has been done to overcome the negative aspects of urbanization which we brought with us from the Soviet Union. Nothing has been done to form a viable middle class, which is the foundation of a contemporary democratic society. Admittedly, something has nevertheless been achieved, cows and sheep are no longer grazing in the center of the city. But on the whole, the republic today faces even greater problems than those it encountered back in Soviet times. "Completion of the urban revolution, which presupposes dying out of the "village settlement" and the formation of full-fledged middle-class urban strata, is an absolute requirement of the times. We cannot manage without these strata, without the "third" estate, we cannot extricate ourselves from the impasse, or breathe new life into the concrete and metal bulk of the cities and factories, which the generations of peasants caught unawares by the revolution sacrificed their lives to create."¹⁹

So we can say that the country has not undergone sufficient urbanization, and the peasant class is still the largest. As for the rapidly growing population of Apsheron (and particularly of Baku), it has been provided with jobs by means of the catastrophically bloated administrative-bureaucratic apparatus, and not because of an upswing in the real sector of the economy. If large and even medium businesses have formed close ties with the corrupted bureaucratic apparatus and employees of the "power" structures, the small businessman is having just as hard a time dealing with the burden of extortions. The only encouragement is the increase in number of highly paid (compared with the wages in the republic) qualified specialists in western companies and organizations. But they are few. For example, according to various data, approximately 20,000 jobs have been created in the oil business. What is more, many representatives of the mentioned stratum are potential emigrants. The working class has become extremely eroded, only a few enterprises actually produce anything, for example, the Baku Steel Company that opened relatively recently, at which approximately 800 people are employed. But on the whole, compared with Soviet times, production has been cut way back. At the same time, a noticeable revival in the construction business has led to an increase in the number of jobs in this branch, which is certainly encouraging, but does not solve the problem. As for the upper class, given Azerbaijan's specifics, it mostly consists of the high-ranking members of the bureaucracy, and is very small.

¹⁹ A.G. Vishnevskiy, *op.cit.*, p. 111.