

**AZERBAIJANI SCIENTISTS – VICTIMS OF STALINIST REPRESSIONS****Tamilla Kerimova-Kodjayeva\*****ABSTRACT**

This article is based on archival material and examines one of the most tragic periods in the history of Azerbaijan – the 1930s. This period is known as the "Great Terror," characterized by widespread repression. The purpose of this article is to examine the extent of the mass repression of scientists in Azerbaijan during 1937-1938. In the Azerbaijan SSR, due to the violence and arbitrariness of the totalitarian state regime, which enforced laws that violated human rights, hundreds of thousands of innocent scientists were subjected to political repression for their views, activities, dissent, and other perceived reasons. The brightest minds of the country were branded as 'enemies of the people' and 'saboteurs,' with thousands repressed on entirely baseless and absurd charges.

**Keywords:** Repression, Scientists, Scientific institutions, Universities, Totalitarian regime, Rehabilitation.

**INTRODUCTION**

In the modern era, as more facts about the lawlessness and arbitrariness of the Soviet totalitarian regime come to light, the 1930s are increasingly seen not only as a time of great achievements but also of severe trials. Researchers' interest in the 1930s-1940s continues to grow, as the socio-political processes of that period are directly linked to contemporary challenges, especially as the Republic of Azerbaijan embarks on its path toward democratic development. Analyzing the historical lessons from the negative experiences of past years enables researchers to seek answers to today's pressing questions. Following the devastating famine of 1932-1933, which affected numerous regions and claimed countless lives, a new tragedy unfolded—one that spared neither nation nor any corner of the multiethnic state. A wave of mass repression swept across the entire country.

**1. The initial stage of Stalin's repressions**

From the very first days of Soviet power, the Bolsheviks extensively employed methods of state terrorism and repression, which persisted until the regime's collapse. The peak of these actions is considered the Stalinist repressions of 1936-1938, often referred to in literature as the 'Great Terror' in the USSR. It is widely believed that the catalyst for the mass repressions of 1937-1938 in the USSR was the assassination of Politburo member, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), and First Secretary of the Leningrad Regional Party Committee, S. M. Kirov, on December 1, 1934, in Smolny, Leningrad (Исмайлова, 2015, p. 13).

On the day of Kirov's assassination, the USSR Central Executive Committee (CEC) adopted a resolution titled 'On the Procedure for Handling Cases of Preparation or Commission of Terrorist Acts, later known as the 'Law of December 1, 1934.' This resolution, signed by the Secretary of the CEC Presidium, A. Yenukidze, provided legal grounds for judicial bodies to swiftly issue execution sentences to a large number of Soviet

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citizens. Under Stalin's leadership, this assassination served as a pretext to activate large – scale repression against opposition forces in the USSR during 1937-1938. It enabled Stalin to purge party and state organs, targeting anyone suspected of disloyalty to the regime or to him personally.

Across the country, periodic inspections and purges of the Communist Party ranks were conducted. From 1933 to December 31, 1934, a 'general purge' of the CPSU took place, which resumed in May 1935. After the purge ended, a 'verification of party documents' began, lasting until December 1935. From January to September 1936, the 'replacement of party documents' was carried out. In reality, this verification was a continuation of the 1933-1935 purge and was accompanied by party expulsions and mass arrests. Expelled party members were among the first to face repression. The majority of Bolsheviks who had played leading roles in the Soviet government were executed (Исмайлова, 2015, p. 62).

The goals of the 1936-1938 repressions were to foster an atmosphere of universal suspicion, denunciation, and fear, while reshuffling the party and state leadership. This purge aimed to remove the old Bolsheviks from the party-state hierarchy and replace them with young cadres who were completely obedient and personally loyal to Stalin. Stalin's repressions affected the entire population of Azerbaijan, including party and state officials, clergy, intellectuals, the Red Army, and ordinary Soviet citizens, making the repression truly total and widespread. The scale of these actions during this period can be classified as state terrorism, which reached its peak in the USSR at that time.

In February – March 1937, the famous Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) took place, holding special significance in the history of the 'Great Terror.' On March 3, 1937, in his summary of the Plenum's work, Stalin called for the identification and exposure of a large number of 'enemies of the people' (Лубянка, 2004, p. 95). As People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, and acting under Stalin's direction, N. Yezhov, who led the NKVD, became one of the primary organizers of the mass repressions of 1936-1938. The year 1937, during which Yezhov headed the NKVD, became symbolic of these repressions, and the peak period of Soviet-era repression is often referred to as the 'Yezhovshchina.' The mass killings and repressions of the mid-1930s were carried out in accordance with the Politburo directive of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) dated September 29, 1936, titled 'On the Attitude Toward Counter-Revolutionary Trotskyite-Zinovievite Elements,' and NKVD operational order No. 00447 of July 30, 1937, titled 'On the Operation for the Repression of Former Kulaks, Criminals, and Other Anti-Soviet Elements' (Довбни and Макаровой, 2010, p. 39). This was the harshest order of the entire repressive policy and became one of the largest bureaucratically organized state crimes of the 20th century, paving the way for mass repressions.

Under Yezhov, local NKVD offices received quotas specifying the number of people to be arrested, exiled, executed, or imprisoned in camps or jails. This order was a top-secret plan for a massive assault on various segments of the USSR's population, with specific start and end dates, an enormous number of repressed individuals, and their division into two categories. The first category comprised the most hostile individuals, who were to be immediately arrested and executed by decisions of the 'troikas' (special courts). The second category included less hostile elements, who were to be arrested and sentenced to 8 to 10 years in camps or prisons, with the most dangerous among them receiving the same imprisonment terms. Investigations were to be conducted swiftly and in a simplified manner, mandating the identification of any criminal connections of the arrested. Upon completing the investigation, the case was submitted to the 'troika' for review. The personnel of the republican, regional, and district 'troikas' were approved, and the protocols of their sessions,

containing their verdicts, were sent to the heads of the operational groups for the execution of the sentences.

The overall leadership of the operations was entrusted to M.P. Frinovsky, Deputy People's Commissar of the NKVD of the USSR (Стецовский, 1997, т.1, p. 65). No prosecutor's sanction was required for arrests. Each republic, region, and district was assigned a quota for the two categories of individuals. The order planned for the arrest of a total of 258,950 people and also specified procedures for repressing family members. Republics, regions, and districts were divided into operational sectors, with each sector forming an operational group that functioned like military or police units. Every five days, the results of the operations had to be reported to the center via telegram and in detail by mail (Стецовский, 1997, т.1, p. 65). Orders for mass arrests not only directed but also obligated local NKVD bodies to 'uncover' insurgent organizations, spy networks, sabotage groups, and other entities. To give these arrests a semblance of legality, various insurgent, right-wing Trotskyist, spy-terrorist, and sabotage groups, including 'centers,' 'blocs,' and simple groups, were fabricated everywhere (Подлинная история РСДРП, 2009, p. 451).

## 2. "Great Terror" in Azerbaijan

The country was entering a period of mass repression. Mir Jafar Baghirov, who had led the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan since 1933, and with the support of L.P. Beria, began to take action. Arrests, which had increased steadily from 1933 onward, grew in number and severity throughout the late 1930s. On July 9, 1937, M.D. Baghirov sent a cipher telegram to Joseph Stalin in Moscow, requesting authorization to 'remove 4,000 people: 1,800 kulaks and 2,200 criminals.' The telegram also requested the deportation of the families of bandit groups to camps and the submission of other cases to the 'troikas' for review. M.D. Baghirov proposed Y. Sumbatov, T. Kuliev, and J. Akhundzade for approval as members of the 'troika.' The following day, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b) issued a resolution approving the composition of the 'troikas' and the quotas of repressed individuals, including those for Azerbaijan (Юнг, 2008, pp. 71-72)

According to an official document from the archive of the State Security Service of Azerbaijan, from January 1, 1934, to January 1, 1939, the NKVD of the Azerbaijan SSR repressed 27,458 people for "counter-revolutionary and anti-Soviet activities." Among them were: 1,515 Trotskyists-Rightists, 3,332 counter-revolutionary nationalists, 4,450 insurgent elements and kulaks, 854 Musavatists-Ittihadists, 139 Dashnaks, 492 counter-revolutionary clergy and sectarians, 953 criminals and their associates, 935 saboteurs and wreckers, 767 embezzlers of socialist property, and 371 terrorists (Архивно-следственное дело №ПР, 2, p. 4; Краткий обзор и разгроме контрреволюционных формирований и антисоветского элемента в Азербайджанской ССР, p. 4). During this period, out of all the 27,458 people arrested, 15,926 were charged with political crimes, 3,207 with criminal offenses, and 8,325 for other reasons. This does not include 8,979 Iranians arrested in 1938, most of whom were deported to Iran.

Between 1936 and 1938, the NKVD of Azerbaijan fabricated numerous 'mandatory' cases, including the 'Conspiracy of Party Workers,' the 'Military Case,' the 'Azneft Case,' the 'Ganja Case,' the 'German Nationalist Center,' the 'Shamakhi Case,' the 'Land Commissariat Case,' the 'Writers' Union Case,' the 'Scholars' Case,' (№12493) and others. In total, 1,700 people were implicated in these cases, including 20 people's commissars and their deputies, 34 executive committee chairmen, 52 district committee secretaries, 8 professors, 88 military personnel, and others. The 'Azneft Case' alone involved 300 individuals (Бехбудов, n.d.). M.P. Frinovsky, who served as the chairman of the GPU of the republic from 1930 to 1933,

reported to Moscow that Azerbaijani citizens were the most repressed in the Caucasus (Фриновский, n.d, p. 3), and noted that the repression against Azerbaijanis was harsher than against many other national groups (Исмаилов, 2015, p. 170).

Today, determining the exact number of repressed Azerbaijani scholars and their subsequent fates is extremely difficult, not only due to the inaccessibility of classified documents but also because of efforts at the time to conceal the scale of the atrocities. In a 1937 report sent to Moscow, it was noted that out of 232 arrested individuals in Azerbaijan, 8 were professors (Мамедов, 1989, p. 140). Over 50,000 representatives of Azerbaijani intellectuals—including scholars, writers, artists, teachers, military personnel, and religious figures—were executed, and over 100,000 were exiled to Siberia and Kazakhstan (Бүньядов, 1993, p. 4; Алиев, 2001, p. 3). The facts gathered so far are insufficient for a thorough statistical analysis or for writing comprehensive studies on this issue. Researchers and publicists provide varying numbers, and a final tally for the entire Soviet Union remains elusive, with it being unlikely that one will ever be made. In short, the entire intellectual elite of Azerbaijani society – comprising talented, outstanding, and educated individuals with exceptional minds, spirituality, and diverse social backgrounds – was destroyed.

An atmosphere of widespread suspicion, violence, and fear was actively cultivated in the country. While it would be wrong to attribute all the victims of terror solely to Stalin and his inner circle, a significant share of responsibility for the crimes of the Stalinist era lies with the entire party-state apparatus of that time, as well as with the NKVD. However, an important aspect of the 'Great Terror' was that NKVD operations were conducted with the loud approval – at least from some, if not the majority—of Soviet society and ordinary citizens. Many people denounced their friends, neighbors, colleagues, and acquaintances, often fabricating political accusations. Without this widespread complicity, the terror of 1936-1938 would never have become the 'Great Terror' condemned worldwide (Янсен and Петров, 2003, p. 181). When the scale of the repressions in the USSR became known to the world, the country lost its international standing.

### **3. Repressed science of Azerbaijan - Case No. 12493**

The entire scientific community became the target of repression, affecting not only individual scholars but also their ideas, institutions, and activities. This repression encompassed the suppression of scientific institutions and centers, as well as the censorship of books, journals, and classified archives. It included job dismissals, slander in the press, expulsions, and the deprivation of voting rights and food cards. Academics faced the stripping of awards and degrees, prohibitions on leaving the country for permanent residence or scientific trips and bans on communication with foreign colleagues. When discussing repressed science, it's important to understand that the impact extended beyond the direct consequences of violence and the destruction of people and ideas. Even scientists who were not imprisoned by the NKVD experienced repression. Many of them, while adhering to party-bureaucratic dictates, faced a split between their scientific integrity and the moral compromises imposed upon them. This resulted in a double moral standard and a divided consciousness.

The 1930s in Azerbaijan were marked by a series of dialectically contradictory phenomena, making them extremely difficult to analyze. Even today, providing an objective assessment of the events from those years remains a challenge. Azerbaijani science endured harsh and tragic times during its development. The 1920s were characterized by the establishment of organizational foundations for science and the rapid growth of scientific intelligentsia. Azerbaijani science made significant strides, becoming a leading center for

theoretical research and uniting key areas of knowledge with relevant institutions and organizations. However, the 1930s saw a stark reversal of this progress. During this period, the best representatives of Azerbaijani science and the intelligentsia faced monstrous repression. Hundreds of scientists and prominent members of the Azerbaijan Branch of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (AzFAN) and universities were subjected to unfounded persecution, slander, and moral destruction. Many were sentenced to execution or long-term imprisonment by unjust courts. Prominent figures in Azerbaijani science who fell victim to these repressions were labeled as traitors and enemies of the people. Their contributions were completely denied, their names often erased from history, and their productive research activities silenced (Керимова, 2017, p. 207).

In the 1920s and 1930s, Baku emerged as the largest center of science and culture in the USSR. Many prominent scientists from various Turkic-speaking regions, including Tatarstan, Uzbekistan, Crimea, Turkey, and others, worked there. Most of these scholars fell victim to the repressions of 1937. The First All-Union Turkological Congress (1926) was a pivotal event that contributed to the spiritual unification of the Turkic peoples by establishing a unified Latin alphabet. However, nearly all the participants in this congress were later targeted and eliminated under accusations of "nationalism," "pan-Turkism," "Musavatism," and other forms of "bourgeois nationalism." Some Russian Orientalists who participated in the congress, such as the renowned Turkologists Academician A.N. Samoylovich and Professor E.D. Polivanov, were also repressed. The impact of these losses was profound, and many remain irreparable (Керимова, 2005, pp. 328-329).

The repressive actions were meticulously coordinated and planned in advance, following specific timeframes and a scale determined by the country's top leadership. This is corroborated by the testimony of H.P. Khaldybanov, who worked in the NKVD of the republic at the time. He recalled: "In late 1936, around December, Gerasimov returned from a business trip to Moscow and informed us at an operational meeting that mass arrests of hidden Trotskyists would begin in the coming days. Within two or three days, all operational officers were issued arrest warrants for numerous individuals in Baku, primarily from the professor-teaching staff and party-Soviet bodies. I distinctly remember that during this 'operation,' several notable figures were arrested, including Garber—the head of the language sector at AzFAN-Rakhmetov, Tikhomirov, Chichikalov, Belyaev, Nikolaev, Safronovich, Kuzenko, Dubinsky, and Tokin. This group, labeled as 'former Trotskyists,' consisted of Russian scholars working in various academic institutions and universities in Baku in the field of humanities" (State Security Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan, n.d. p. 81).

The persecution of "nationalists" began with Ruhulla Akhundov, who was the first among Azerbaijani leaders to be arrested. He was detained at the entrance of his home on December 17, 1936 (Ашнин and Алпатов, 1998, pp. 126-127). M.D. Baghirov, the new leader of Azerbaijan, viewed Akhundov as his most dangerous rival. Akhundov, a prominent figure in Soviet Azerbaijan, had significant experience in party work and considerable authority, especially among the national intelligentsia. He held the highest position in the party hierarchy among representatives of the indigenous nationality. From the mid-1930s, Akhundov's situation began to deteriorate due to his conflict with Baghirov. In the years leading up to his arrest, he was demoted to secondary positions. From 1933 until his arrest, he served as the Chairman of the Arts Committee under the Council of People's Commissars of the republic and as Deputy Chairman of AzFAN (Azerbaijan Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences) (Архивно-следственное дело Рухуллы Алиевича Ахундова: т. 1, p. 100). Although Akhundov did not have a university diploma, he effectively managed the day-to-day operations of the branch during the 1930s, as the chairman, Academician F.Y.

Levinson-Lessing, resided in Leningrad and only visited Baku occasionally. Despite not being a scholar himself, Akhundov's administrative duties included overseeing Azerbaijani culture (Ашнин & Алпатов, 2002, p. 100; Ашнин et al., 2002, p. 51). Among Azerbaijani leaders in Soviet times, Akhundov was notable for his relative education, which was recognized by all, including his primary adversary Baghirov. While working in the Central Committee, he published a Russian-Azerbaijani dictionary in 1927. Under his leadership, and with his involvement, the translation and editing of Marxist-Leninist classics into Azerbaijani were undertaken, a task he continued intermittently until his arrest (Архивно-следственное дело Рухуллы Алиевича Ахундова: т. 4, p. 347).

The extensive materials in Ruhulla Akhundov's investigative case reveal not only details about him but also insights into the situation within the Azerbaijani leadership from 1920 to 1937. They shed light on the scale and specifics of the repressive campaign of 1936–1938 against AzFAN and other organizations.

The persecution of the scientific intelligentsia by the totalitarian regime evolved significantly throughout the 1930s. Before 1933, repression primarily targeted individuals with disagreements against Bolshevik rule, those who had been active in political life, or members of political parties or organizations opposed to the Bolsheviks. However, from 1933 onward, the scope of persecution expanded to include anyone with a formal association with non-Bolshevik parties or organizations, and even those who were apolitical or loyal to the regime. To fabricate a case against a supposed "nationalist underground," the regime focused particularly on two humanities institutes: the Institute of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography, and the Institute of Language and Literature. Notably, Akhundov unofficially headed the former (with the official director, I.I.Meshchaninov, residing in Leningrad and concurrently serving as the director of the Institute of Language and Thinking of the USSR Academy of Sciences from 1935 to 1950). The Institute of Language and Literature was led by the well-known linguist A.R. Zifeldt-Simumyagi, who was later repressed and died in Kolyma in 1939 (Ашнин & Алпатов, 2002, p. 99).

Among the non-partisan Turkic intelligentsia were notable Tatar scholars such as linguist B.Choban-zade and historian G.S.Gubaiddullin. Azerbaijani scholars who were communists, like H.Zeynalli and V.Khuluflu, the deputy head of the Institute of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography, also faced scrutiny. Both groups, to varying degrees, had poor reputations with the party-state leadership of Azerbaijan. The older generation of intellectuals had long been labeled as "bourgeois nationalists," while communists working in the branch, such as H.Zeynalli, were branded as "national deviators." There was talk of the branch being "contaminated" by counter-revolutionaries, though they remained untouched until early 1937, largely due to Akhundov's influence. After Akhundov's arrest, these individuals faced similar fates (Ашнин & Алпатов, 2002, p. 100). By April 1937, most of Akhundov's associates at AzFAN, including B.Choban-zade, G.Gubaiddullin, H.Zeynalli, V.Khuluflu, G.Imanov, A.Mamedov, and others, had been arrested. Under torture, they were coerced into testifying against Akhundov as the "leader of an underground counter-revolutionary organization." During an interrogation on April 9, Akhundov had not yet admitted to being a "counter-revolutionary," but he was forced to compile a long list of Azerbaijani "nationalists" both inside and outside the party, totaling 54 people. This list included nearly all the prominent party figures, scholars, writers, artists, and musicians of Azerbaijan. Many on the list were arrested, while others were next in line. Akhundov confessed to a "lack of vigilance" regarding the "contamination" of the branch by former Musavatists (Архивно-следственное дело Рухуллы Алиевича Ахундова: т. 1, p. 178). The case thus introduced many new names into the investigation. Few could endure the "physical measures of coercion" that R.Akhundov and his comrades experienced.

The rehabilitative portion of Akhundov's case includes testimony from V.M.Dudiev, a former operative of the Secret-Political Department of the NKVD of Azerbaijan. Dudiev revealed that in July 1937, one of the NKVD chiefs issued the order: "From the boss (i.e., Baghirov), a directive has been given to obtain Akhundov's confession of belonging to a counter-revolutionary organization within 24 hours by any means" (Архивно-следственное дело Рухуллы Алиевича Ахундова: т. 4, п. 134). It was under this directive that Akhundov's extensive confessions from July 24 and 27 emerged. The phrase "by any means" is further clarified by another former NKVD employee, I.A.Kkhanumov, who described the brutality inflicted on Akhundov: "In Sumbatov's office, Ruhulla Akhundov was systematically beaten during interrogations conducted by Sumbatov and Baghirov. Baghirov frequently visited the NKVD to personally interrogate the arrested. Akhundov was beaten so severely that, after the interrogations, he was carried out of Sumbatov's office on a stretcher. Many operational workers knew about the brutal treatment Akhundov was subjected to, and we were astonished at how he, being a frail man, endured such extreme torture" (Архивно-следственное дело Рухуллы Алиевича Ахундова: 4, п. 235).

In September, Akhundov, along with a group of party-state figures, was transferred to Moscow, where the torture he endured was as severe as that in Baku. By April 1938, the indictment against Akhundov was prepared and, on April 13, 1938, it was approved by the Prosecutor of the USSR, A.Y. Vyshinsky. The indictment accused Akhundov of being the organizer and leader, since 1929, of a "nationalist organization," a spy for England, Germany, and Turkey, the organizer of a "rebel headquarters," and the mastermind behind a failed assassination attempt on K.E. Voroshilov, who had passed through Baku in 1936, among other charges.

On April 21, 1938, Akhundov was sentenced and executed along with other Azerbaijani leaders, including G.Musabekov, S.M.Efendiyyev, D.Bunyatzade, G.Djabiev, A.Karaev, A.Faradzhzade, G.Safarov, U.Rakhmanov, M.Narimanov, and M.D.Guseinov.

The work of the Institute of History during this period faced considerable difficulties. Both in Akhundov's case and in the cases of his colleagues, there are constant references to the failure to fulfill scientific plans, their poor quality, and the lack of published works on the history of Azerbaijan for the period 1917–1936. It appears that this was true, but the reason was not "sabotage" or "double-dealing," nor the unpreparedness of the scholars, but rather the shortage of personnel and, most importantly, the fear of researching current issues, such as the "period of the Musavat government, Turkish and British occupation," and others (Архивно-следственное дело Рухуллы Алиевича Ахундова, архивно-следственное дело № ПР16629, том 1, п. 178). Academic activities in the fields of history and literature at AzFAN were curtailed, and the staff were accused of low qualifications, choosing random research topics, and missing deadlines. Almost all previous research topics were removed from the plan, and their executors were dismissed.

People perished, and so did the results of their work. Thousands of pages of long-term scientific research, unpublished studies, personal archives, documents, handwritten works in the old Arabic alphabet, books, and entire libraries were irretrievably lost, destroyed, or confiscated. This included not only public collections but also personal libraries and bookstore shelves. On July 4, 1935, at a meeting of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan (AKP(b)), M.D.Baghirov, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU(b)), delivered a report titled "The Decision of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b) on Libraries." The Bureau decided to adopt the Central Committee's resolution and instructed the Department of Culture and Leninism Propaganda (OKPL) of the Central Committee, led by M. Guseinov and J. Ragimov, to send a directive to all regional committee secretaries of the Communist

Party of Azerbaijan (AKP(b)). This directive, in collaboration with the NKVD, was to enforce the removal of counter-revolutionary literature in accordance with the Central Committee's instructions. Within 24 hours in 1935, books by L. Trotsky, G. Zinoviev, L. Kamenev, A. Shlyapnikov, and others were removed from libraries (Назарли, 2018, pp. 183-184). From July 8, 1935, to August 15, 1936, 46,499 "counter-revolutionary and ideologically harmful books" were confiscated from 114 libraries in Baku. Additionally, from September to October 1936, 2,487 books were seized from 42 Baku libraries and destroyed. The Main Directorate of Literature of the Azerbaijan SSR provided lists of "local counter-revolutionary authors to be urgently removed from libraries, party offices, clubs, and other public book collections" (Назарли, А, 2018, pp. 183-184, 186-187). Most of the authors of the seized and destroyed books were repressed scholars.

Arrested scholars were accused of nationalism, counter-revolutionary and subversive activities against the Soviet state, and terrorism against party and government leaders. They were alleged to have participated in an anti-Soviet nationalist organization led by R. Akhundov, which purportedly aimed to forcibly secede the Azerbaijan SSR from the USSR, seize Southern Azerbaijan, and establish a bourgeois-democratic state in the region. For example, under intense pressure during interrogation, Prof. Gaziz Gubaidullin testified about his supposed "counter-revolutionary" activities in Baku dating back to 1925: "The counter-revolutionary nationalist organization aimed to create an independent state for the Turkic-Tatar peoples by separating it from the USSR under the protection of England. This state was envisioned to include Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and Dagestan. Many members of the Society for the Survey and Study of Azerbaijan were involved in these plans" (Архивно-следственное дело Алексея Гаджи Кязим оглы Алекперова, архивно-следственное дело № ПР16863. р. 31; Архивно-следственное дело Газиса Салиховича Губайдуллина, архивно-следственное дело № ПР25993, том 1, р. 159; Бунятов, 1990, March 31, p. 7).

Any action by the institute's scholars was scrutinized and used against them. It wasn't just actual political participation that was problematic. Moves to Baku, scientific trips, attendance at conferences in Turkic-speaking republics, departures from and returns to Baku, business trips to Moscow and Leningrad, participation in the I All-Union Turkological Congress, teaching Turkological courses at universities, and assisting colleagues were all assessed as "implementing directives from the counter-revolutionary center," "creating sabotage groups under the guise of literary and dramatic circles," "recruiting members of terrorist groups," and engaging in "Pan-Turkist propaganda." Any research related to the history of Turkic peoples or Islam was interpreted similarly. In the charged atmosphere of the time, even a scientific review that deviated from Marxist methodology could become a pretext for a scholar's arrest (Архивно-следственное дело Газиса Салиховича Губайдуллина, архивно-следственное дело № ПР25993, том 1, р. 161; Ашнин., 2002, p. 90).

During a special interrogation on July 4-5, 1937, G. Gubaidullin – described as a "member of an all-Union Pan-Turkist organization" and one of its "ideologists" – was coerced into confessing about the formation of several groups of "counter-revolutionaries" among the Baku intelligentsia. These groups included: "communist nationalists" (the "Narimanovites"), which encompassed S.M. Efendiyev, D. Bunyatzade, B. Talibli, M. Israfilbekov (Gadirli), T. Shahbazi, P. Gasimov, D. Mamedzade, M. Kuliyev, G. Djabiev; Musavatists, including M. Velili (Bakharly), A. Ahmedov, A. Akhundov, A. Subkhanverdikhanov, I. Akhundov, N. Shahsavarov; and neo-nationalists such as A. Pepinov, F. Ordubadi, S. Kyazimov, F. Shabanov, Kh. Melikaslanov, and others. On August 7, 1937, he also identified a group of "Ittihadists," consisting of G. Shakhtakhtinsky, D.

Jahanbakhsh, Mughanlinsky, N.Shahsuvarov, A.Akhundov, S.Ajalov, R.Efendiyev, and S.M.Ganiev. This group was allegedly tasked with “preparing a rebellion against Soviet power in Azerbaijan and detaching Azerbaijan from the USSR to place it under the Caliphate” (Bünyadov, 1993, p. 197; Архивно-следственное дело Газиса Салиховича Губайдуллина, архивно-следственное дело № ПР25993, том 1,167).

By the end of the investigation, particularly during the interrogation on August 27-28, 1937, the focus shifted to counter-revolutionary activities among Baku’s Russian-speaking professors and scientific workers. This group included not only Russians but also Jews, Ukrainians, Arabs, and Poles working in universities and scientific institutions. According to G. Gubaidullin’s testimony, one group led by Prof. I.I.Shirokogorov was accused of advocating for the liquidation of Soviet power and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy. This group included: Professor Shirokogorov, Uaruvar, Belyaev, Oshman, Lopukhin, Iovlev, Zhuze, Ashmarin, Pisarevsky, Evakhov, Pakhmov, and Bogachev. Another group, known as the Ishkov-Bagri faction, was alleged to be working towards restoring capitalism and creating a bourgeois-democratic society in the USSR. This group included: Ishkov, Bagri, Baibakov, Zummer, Kovanko, Yelpatyevsky, Lukov, Khatuntsev, Komarovsky, Elyashevich, Makovelsky, Gulyaev, Fridolin, Selikhanovich, Lipin, Trivus, and Berger. All these groups were purportedly connected with “Trotskyists, Pan-Turkists, Musavatists, Georgian Mensheviks, and Ukrainian nationalists.” On September 4, 1937, the court’s verdict sentenced G.Gubaidullin to execution for allegedly preparing an armed uprising, conducting anti-state rebel and espionage activities, and engaging in sabotage (Bünyadov, Z, 1993, p. 197; Архивно-следственное дело Газиса Салиховича Губайдуллина, архивно-следственное дело № ПР25993, том 1, p. 161).

Many scholars were also accused of espionage on behalf of foreign states such as Iran, Turkey, and England. Hundreds of thousands of people were destroyed based on fabricated espionage charges. However, it’s important to note that the NKVD – Ministry of Internal Affairs maintained a Special Archive where data on actual spies was recorded. During subsequent years, when various individuals were rehabilitated, requests were made to this archive to clarify allegations of “espionage”.

Arrested individuals were subjected to sophisticated and brutal torture, which many could not endure, leading them to sign any pre-fabricated accusations. The methods used by investigators were designed to extract confessions and further incriminate others. The practices employed by the Cheka and GPU under Bagirov are exemplified by the testimony of Main Political Administration employee V.I.Churashov from 1954: “I saw that all the arrested were beaten mercilessly during interrogations. They were beaten with fists, legs, and rubber truncheons, forced into prolonged standing positions that disrupted circulation and caused severe swelling of the legs. Many could not withstand it, lost consciousness, and fell. This was done with two goals: to make the arrested confess to belonging to a counter-revolutionary organization, and after the confession, to extract as many names of so-called counter-revolutionary organization members as possible. If the arrested person refused, they continued beating them until they signed the falsified protocol in a semi-dead state” (Mircəfər Bağırovun məhkəməsi, 1993, p. 59).

The success of an investigator was often measured by the number of “counter-revolutionaries” named by the accused. An investigator’s career advancement was determined by the number of people sentenced to execution (Ашнин & Алпатов, 2002, p. 106) Special operatives were assigned to carry out the beatings, such as N. Musatov, who would enter offices to identify individuals scheduled for torture. Musatov often used boxing gloves while beating the arrested. Beatings were also carried out by former People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs Markaryan (Ашнин, Алпатов, 1998, p. 129). Many innocent

intellectuals, under extreme torture, provided confessions that served as pretexts for the subsequent arrests of numerous “enemies of the people” still at large.

The interrogation protocols reveal only a fraction of the true extent of the abuses that occurred. By 1937, detainees were subjected to severe beatings and torture throughout the country, with extensive documentation emerging in the 1954-1956 period specifically about what happened in Baku. This documentation was part of the broader effort to rehabilitate the victims of the terror described and was conducted alongside the investigation into the cases of M.D.Baghirov, Y.D.Sumbatov, and their associates in 1953. Two volumes of the investigation file on R.Akhundov are dedicated to uncovering the crimes committed by these individuals (Керимова, 2017, 210).

The continuation of unprecedented extrajudicial arbitrariness in the late 1930s saw the involvement of representatives from various nationalities in the investigative practices of the NKVD. This was partly due to the exploitation of longstanding national and territorial tensions among the peoples of the USSR. Notably, while many Armenian, Russian, and Jewish surnames are found among the NKVD staff, Azerbaijani names are conspicuously absent, except for a few less significant participants in the so-called “counter-revolutionary organizations” (Ашнин et al., 2002, p. 88).

In Azerbaijan, a significant portion of the investigative and operational staff were Armenian. For example: Yevlakh district: Gabrielyan, Nukhi district: Karakhanov, NKAO: Kasparov, Ujar district: Mailyan, Karyagin district: Vartanyan, Markaryan, Shahbuz district: Grigoryan, Belokan district: Sarkisov, Astara: Arakelov, Lerik: Khachaturov, Agjabedi: Sarkisov, Zangelan: Zarzoryan, Markaryan, Kazichan, Jabrayil: Avanesov, Dzhirdyan, Astrakhanbazar: Avakyan, Israelyan, Pushkin: Zakaryan, Yardimli: Sevanyan, Samukh: Petrosyan, Massally: Avanesov, Fizuli: Saakov, Shahanyan, Vartanov, Gazakh: Grigoryan, Nakhchivan: Bagdasarov, Israelyan, Ionesyan, Evonyan, Agadjanov, Seyranov, Akopov, Parsegov (future NKVD party committee), Baku: Avanesov, Arutyunov. Out of 51 districts, Armenians headed the NKVD district departments in 31 (Bekhbulov, n.d. pp. 87-91).

Here's the revised text for clarity and coherence: A similar situation was evident at the higher echelons of the NKVD apparatus. Notable figures included: Adamyan – Senior Investigator of the Special Department of the 11th Army, Ishkhanian – Sergeant of the Main Political Administration of the NKVD, Kh.G.Grigoryan – Head of the Special Committee of the NKVD of the Azerbaijan SSR, Vartanyan – Head of the OBKhSS (Department for Combating Economic Crimes) of the NKVD of the Azerbaijan SSR, Grigoryan – Head of the KGB Apparatus in the Gazakh District, Markaryan – Deputy People's Commissar of the NKVD, Mirzoyan – Deputy People's Commissar of the NKVD, Pchelyan – Head of the Bayil Prison, Gevorkov – Head of the Nakhchivan Prison, Khachaturov – Head of the NKVD Prison Hospital, Aslanyan – Head of the NKVD Archive, Gevorkov – Chief Physician of the Baku Investigative Prison Hospital, Babakevkhyan – Chief Physician of the Ganja Mixed Investigative Prison Hospital (Bekhbulov, n.d.).

Those working in the NKVD of the republic at that time, such as Mirzoyan, Galstyan, Grigoryan, Avanesyan, Markaryan, Oganesyan, Musatov, Sher, Tsinman, Borshchev, Borisov, Klementchich, Durlyanin, the Sonkin brothers, Platonov, and others, subjected detainees to brutal and sophisticated forms of torture. Many of these detainees could not withstand the abuse and, under extreme duress, signed any pre-fabricated accusations against themselves or others.

From August 1937 to November 1938, sentences for new accused criminals were issued not by the traveling session and the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR but by the Special Committees of the NKVD, specifically the "troikas" created by Stalin, Yezhov, and Beria. These NKVD troikas became notorious for their extreme

arbitrariness, embodying a conveyor method of systematically destroying hundreds of thousands of Soviet citizens (Керимова, 2005, p. 218). The Special Troika of the NKVD of the Azerbaijan SSR, in 1937 alone, sentenced 2,846 people to various terms of imprisonment for political crimes, and 2,215 people were sentenced to execution. Specifically, for anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda, 1,108 people were condemned to death. In 1938, the Special Troika reviewed cases involving 10,000 people. Similarly, the traveling session of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR, which began its work in Azerbaijan on December 30, 1937, under the new leadership of Nikitchenko, reviewed cases with comparable ruthlessness. This session examined 95 cases over two days, December 30 and 31, 1937, and in January 1938, continued to review 40 to 50 cases daily. During this period, a vast number of notable scientists, party and Soviet workers, and prominent figures in Azerbaijani culture were executed or otherwise persecuted (Исмаилов, 2015, p. 142).

Bagirov took a particular interest in the case of Akhundov and the associated scholars. He personally led the investigation, giving directives for subsequent arrests. Nearly all the scholars of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (AzFAN) involved in investigative case No. 12493 were arrested and sentenced to death on October 12 and 13. Most of these individuals were executed following the arrival of the traveling session of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR in Baku.

Among those sentenced to death were prominent humanists who had been pioneers in advancing scientific knowledge in Azerbaijan. They were authors of the first fundamental studies on the history, economy, philosophy, literature, and language of Azerbaijan. The list of executed scholars included: Bekir Chobanzade, Gaziz Gubaidullin, Khanafiz Zeynalov, Husseinali Bilendarly, Boris Tikhomirov, Alexander Bukshpan, Khalid Said Khodjaev, Abdullah Tagizade, Agamir Mamedov, Taghi Shahbazi, Abdulaziz Salamzade, Balabek Gasanbekov, Mikael Guseynov, and many others (Исмаилов, 2015, p. 139).

These scholars were instrumental in the development of Azerbaijani intellectual and cultural life, and their loss was a significant blow to the field. The scholars were found guilty on all counts and sentenced to execution. However, the main factor determining their fate in Baku at that time was not the detainees' behavior during the investigation but rather the decisions of Bagirov. He wielded considerable power, having already orchestrated the destruction of many, and had the authority to spare others. For example, Bagirov initially authorized the arrest of the poet Samad Vurgun but later called him to his office and informed him that he was pardoned (Mircəfər Bağırovun məhkəməsi, 1993, p. 65; (Архивно-следственное дело Джавада Мамедали оглы Ахундзаде (Ахмед Джавад), архивно-следственное дело № ПР22316, p. 164; (Архивно-следственное дело Рухуллы Алиевича Ахундова, архивно-следственное дело № ПР16629, том 1, p. 102). Other individuals who survived included: writers Abdullah Shaig, Suleyman Rustam, Suleyman Ragimov, Mammad Said Ordubadi, composer Uzeyir Hajibekov, language and literature specialist Ali Sultanly, Mikael Rafili, Fayzulla Kasumzade, party figure Mir Bashir Kasumov, and others. These individuals were spared from execution due to Bagirov's decisions. However, the fate of others was not as fortunate. For instance, the renowned head of "Azneft," M. Barinov, who was working in Moscow as the head of "Glavneft," was sent under escort to Baku at Bagirov's request (Правда и только правда: «белые пятна» нашей истории, 1991, p. 12).

Repressions during this period extended beyond the individuals directly accused. Families of convicted scholars also faced severe consequences. Secret operational orders, such as NKVD Order No. 00486 and NKVD Order No. 00689 (October 17, 1938), outlined the procedures for punishing the families of "enemies of the people." These orders, issued by the first deputy people's commissar of the NKVD, M.P. Frinovsky, mandated that the adult

family members of those convicted be imprisoned for 5 to 10 years, have their property confiscated, be deprived of electoral rights, and be exiled to remote areas of Siberia. This led to the creation of the term ChSIR – "family member of a traitor to the motherland" (Алекперова, n.d.)

Wives of convicted individuals were particularly targeted. They were arrested, labeled as "wives of traitors to the motherland," subjected to torture, and sent to corrective labor camps in the north. The arrest was based solely on marital status, with no need for evidence of involvement in the accused's activities. Even divorced women were not exempt if they had been involved with or had not reported their former husbands. Only those who cooperated with the authorities and provided information about their husbands were spared. Typically, wives of those sentenced to execution (Category 1) received 8-year terms, while those whose husbands were sentenced to labor camps (Category 2) received 5 years. Between the 1930s and 1950s, 3, 022 Azerbaijani women were repressed (Soyqırım analardan başlanır, 2003, p. 12), many of whom were exiled to regions such as Mordovia, Karelia, and Kazakhstan. In Kazakhstan, the Karaganda corrective labor camp (Karlag), also known as the 17th Akmolinsk division (ITL "R-17"), was notably harsh. The camp for "wives of traitors to the motherland" was derisively named A.L.Z.H.I.R. (Akmolinsk Camp for Wives of Traitors to the Motherland) by the prisoners themselves. ChSIRs began returning to Azerbaijan only after World War II. They faced a permanent criminal record, were banned from living in Baku, and encountered significant obstacles in employment (Алекперова, n.d.)

On August 15, 1937, the People's Commissar for Internal Affairs, Yezhov, signed an order for the "seizure" of minor children of "enemies of the people" and their transfer to special orphanages. Over a thousand children were taken, with 659 eventually handed over to relatives (Заплетин, 1997, p. 3). Those who remained in orphanages faced a lifetime of stigma, being marked as "children of enemies of the people," which severely restricted their opportunities for education, employment, and personal life. The category listed on forms about their parents marked them as outcasts within Soviet society (Исмаилов, 2015, p. 173).

Soon after the arrests, the Institute of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography, which had significantly diminished in size, was merged with the Institute of Language and Literature. A.R.Zifeldt-Simomyagi, who held high authority in Baku, initially served as the director of the merged institute. However, his tenure was short-lived, and although he was not immediately arrested, he was removed from his position. On June 1, 1937, Ahmed Ali oglu Ahmedov, a graduate of the Institute of Red Professors and the first secretary of the Gala-Mashtagi district party committee, was appointed director of the Institute of History, Language, and Literature of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Ahmedov managed to hold this position for only 40 days before he was "seized" as a "member of the organization led by R. Akhundov" on July 11, 1937, and subsequently executed on October 13, 1937 (Архивно-следственное дело Ахмеда Али оглы Ахмедова, архивно-следственное дело № ПР23397, p. 18)

He was replaced by linguist Professor Idris Gasanov. However, Gasanov's tenure was also short. On April 3, 1938, he was arrested and accused of "long conducting pan-Turkist and subversive work in the field of the Azerbaijani language" and of being "practically involved in the compilation of subversive orthography." On June 21, 1939, Gasanov was sentenced by the Special Committee to 8 years in a labor camp in Kolyma, Magadan (Архивно-следственное дело Идриса Заман оглы Гасанова, архивно-следственное дело № ПР28306, том 1, p. 66-67).

Additionally, between February and April 1938, three more individuals were arrested in connection with this case: A.R.Zifeldt-Simomyagi, the former director of the Institute of

Language and Literature; his former deputy, Ghulam Bagirov; and geologist Jafar Kazimov, who was the deputy chairman of the branch.

For several months, the institutions of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (AzFAN) remained largely vacant. For instance, in May 1937, the Institute of History, Literature, and Language had 51 staff members, including 42 researchers. By the end of 1937, the staff had dwindled to 37, with only 26 being researchers and the remaining 11 comprising scientific-technical and administrative personnel. By the end of 1939, the institute's staff had further diminished to just 26 members, of whom only 2 held academic degrees (Президенту Академии наук СССР академику Комарову В.Л., Архив Центра научного наследия Президиума НАНА, Фонд № 5, опись № 2, дело № 79, pp. 70-74).

Despite the increasing severity of the repressions, the highest political leadership of the country was dissatisfied with the pace and scale of these measures. This discontent was evident at the plenum of the Central Committee of the Party held from February 23 to March 5, 1937. During this plenum, I.V. Stalin delivered a report titled "On the Deficiencies in Party Work and Measures for Eliminating Trotskyist and Other Double-dealers," in which he accused both central and local leaders of political negligence and of facilitating the promotion of foreign agents to key positions. This led to a new and harsher wave of repression against scholars.

On January 31, 1938, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (VKP(b)) adopted a resolution on "Anti-Soviet Elements," which set additional "quotas" for repression. For the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, 2,000 individuals from Category I were to be sentenced to the highest form of punishment, and 1,000 from Category II were to receive long-term imprisonment in labor camps. In total, 62,200 people across the Soviet Union were to be convicted. The NKVD of the USSR was instructed to complete these operations in the designated regions, territories, and republics by March 15, 1938, at the latest (Лубянка, 2004, p. 467).

Almost all the scholars involved in the "Scholar's Case" perished in Stalinist camps or were executed. Stalinism left a profound mark on the historical, economic, philosophical, and philological sciences. It not only drained and disgraced the social sciences through repression, purges, and the persecution of leading scholars but also imposed a specific system of thinking that drove the humanities into a deep deadlock, threatening their complete collapse and causing professional and moral degradation. Stalinism took deep root in the social sciences, more so than in other fields, distorting scientific thought and persisting for many decades (Репрессированная наука, 1991, p. 189).

The fate of Azerbaijani students sent to study in European countries by the government of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) during Azerbaijan's independence (1918-1920) became part of the broader tragedy experienced by the Azerbaijani people, who suffered enormous losses during the years of repression. Archival materials from the GPU-NKVD often reveal that Azerbaijanis who had studied in Germany were repressed by punitive bodies upon their return to Azerbaijan. Many were arrested in the 1930s by the GPU-NKVD as alleged German "spies" and supporters of Azerbaijan's independence. Archival analysis shows that in the 1930s, any connection to Germany or acquaintances of German nationals in Azerbaijan was viewed with suspicion. For instance, having studied in Germany during the ADR years was recorded as a crime in NKVD files: "was sent by the Musavat government to study in Germany" (Керимова, 2018, p. 303).

In the NKVD report of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (AzSSR) titled "On the Struggle Against German Intelligence in the AzSSR for 1935," signed by its head, Sumbatov, and the head of the Special Department, Avanesyan, there is a chapter specifically dedicated to "The Case of the Baku Gestapo Agents." This chapter focuses on

Azerbaijanis who had studied and worked in Germany. The GPU memorandum of June 20, 1934, highlights: "Of interest is a group of pro-German elements among Azerbaijani Turks, connected with Germany and closely tied to several German specialists in various enterprises" (Керимова, 2018, pp. 49-50).

Out of 102 students who were initially supposed to go to Russia and Ukraine, 13 remained in Baku while waiting for the opening of routes. Of the 89 students who studied in Western Europe and Turkey, 56 returned to Azerbaijan. Among these returnees, 41 were repressed, and another 6 managed to emigrate abroad a few years later. Notable returning students who later became prominent scholars included Iskander Rzazade, Djafar Kyazimov, Ahmed Rajabli, Aslan Vezirzade, Mustafa Vekilov, Iskender Veliev, Abdullah Taghirzade, Mursal Shahsavarly, Ismail Akhundov, Bakhish Sultanov, Alekper Aliyev, and Khaidar Zeynalov, and others.

### **3. Scientists - prisoners of the Main Directorate of Correctional Labor Camps (GULAG)**

During the era of grandiose socialist construction, the Soviet Union required a vast number of scientific and technical personnel. To achieve the goals of industrialization and collectivization, the country relied heavily on its developed repressive apparatus and the correctional labor camps of the "GULAG Archipelago" (Реабилитация, 1991, p. 13). Despite facing severe sentences, many "wreckers" were utilized as specialists. The newly established structures were tasked with implementing the five-year plans across the Far North, Siberia, Kazakhstan, and the Far East-regions characterized by harsh natural conditions where voluntary labor was scarce (Репрессированные геологи, 1992, p. 7).

In these years, numerous mineral deposits were discovered, forming the raw material base for the country's oil, gas, and coal industries. The GULAG camps housed a diverse group of individuals, including prominent geologists, scientists, doctors, writers, actors, engineers, technicians, public and political figures, and military personnel. Through their efforts, roads were constructed, mines were developed, and resources such as oil, coal, gas, radium, and asphalt were extracted. Additionally, social infrastructure was established (Керимова-Коджаева, 2023, p. 168). Among the repressed scholars sent to the GULAG camps were geologists Djafar Kyazimov, Vladimir Bogachev, Rustam Velibekov, chemist Madat Iskenderov, and doctors Alirza Ataev, Fuad Ibrahimbekov, and Khambulla Abdullabekov, among others. Some of these scholars, despite their imprisonment or exile, were involved in teaching at secondary and higher educational institutions. Many led various production units in geological services at enterprises, thereby contributing to the training of scientific and technical personnel and the discovery of new mineral deposits in the Urals, the Far North, Central Asia, Kazakhstan, and other regions of the country (Репрессированные геологи, 1992, p. 7).

By the spring of 1938, the primary objectives of the "Great Terror" had been largely achieved, leading to a significant reduction in its scope. Stalin and Molotov, in a display of hypocrisy, shifted the blame for the recent excesses onto the punitive agencies, particularly targeting Yezhov, and condemned them for their actions. Even regional heads of the NKVD began to report overcrowded prisons and a lack of space for the detained. The scale of arrests had become so vast that it began to threaten the country's industrial, scientific, and military capabilities. If the pace of these repressions had continued for a few more years, half of the country would have been imprisoned. The ongoing repressions risked destabilizing the situation, which was not aligned with Stalin's and his entourage's plans (Керимова, 2017, p. 211).

The “Great Terror” of the late 1930s had a paralyzing effect on many scientific teams, and the AzFAN was no exception. The destruction of AzFAN, coupled with the arrests and executions of many of its staff, significantly slowed the development of scientific research. However, it could not entirely halt the process of scientific advancement.

#### 4. Political repression of scientists in the post-war period

Stalinist repressions persisted in the years following the initial wave of terror. Alongside constant administrative oversight, scientific development faced rigorous party control through ongoing repressive campaigns. Certain scientific disciplines were denounced as “bourgeois” and “idealistic,” leading to the suppression and banning of entire fields of study. Prominent scientists, engineers, and doctors were persecuted, and ideological interference reached various disciplines including physics, chemistry, astronomy, linguistics, statistics, literary studies, philosophy, sociology, psychiatry, demography, economics, genetics, history, and cybernetics. The apex of this repression was marked by the execution of leading demographers after Stalin rejected the results of the 1937 census, which exposed significant population losses due to famine and purges. The census data were officially declared “defective” and “erroneous,” resulting in the effective dissolution of demography as an academic field in the USSR. Consequently, until the mid-1950s, the exact population of the Soviet Union remained unknown. The first post-war census was only conducted in 1959 (Волков, 1990).

The severe decrees of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (VKP(b)) on August 14 and 26, 1946, concerning the journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad* and the decree “On the Repertoire of Dramatic Theaters and Measures for Its Improvement” marked the beginning of a new post-war wave of denunciations and persecutions. A prevalent method of repression in the national regions was accusations of nationalism. These decrees were followed by the so-called philosophical discussion of 1947, the infamous VASKhNIL session of 1948, where classical genetics was discredited, and discussions related to I.P. Pavlov's teachings, which caused significant harm to the development of genetics, physiology, cytology, histology, embryology, and several related disciplines. In 1949, a campaign against “cosmopolitanism” and “worship of the West,” which had anti-Semitic undertones and impacted various fields, was launched. This was followed by a discussion on linguistics in 1950. The “Doctors’ Plot” of 1951-1952 marked the culmination of these policies.

During this period, many scientific institutions in the USSR were subjected to ideological scrutiny, with the main goal being the complete subjugation of Soviet scientists to party-administrative control. The technique of repression shifted from the NKVD's basements and “special meetings” to the press and the scientific community. Those suspected of political disloyalty were accused of sabotage, espionage, and terrorist acts. Well-known Azerbaijani scientists were among those accused of committing “gross political mistakes” and were persecuted (Керимова, 2017, p. 211). For example, in 1950, Geydar Guseynov, Vice President of the Academy of Sciences of the Azerbaijan SSR, Director of the Institute of History at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, and laureate of the Stalin Prizes, was driven to suicide. Unable to endure the persecution, he hanged himself at his dacha. Academician Guseynov perished, unable to protect his honor and good name through any other means. Other persecuted individuals included Aliashraf Alizade, Doctor of Geological and Mineralogical Sciences, Professor, and twice laureate of the Stalin Prizes; Aligulu Farajev, head of the Department of Agricultural Economics at the Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan; Jafar Jafarov, art historian; literary scholars Ali Sultanly and Abbas Zamanov; and Fuad Ibrahimbekov, Professor and psychiatrist, among many others.

After the 20th Party Congress in February 1956, there was a shift towards a more objective coverage of the repressions of the 1930s and 1940s and their consequences. Following the Congress, many scientists from AzFAN, universities, and other research institutions were rehabilitated.

The investigators who had previously worked at the Azerbaijan NKVD, such as Gerasimov, Sher, Grigoryan, and Tsinman, were ultimately convicted, with Sumbatov also arrested and held accountable for fabricating investigative cases (Архивно-следственное дело Бекира Вагабовича Чобанзаде, p. 1031). These individuals were punished at different times. In early 1938, Gerasimov, Sher, and Tsinman were arrested when a commission from Moscow arrived in Baku following the January plenum of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) to address the excesses in repressive measures. Gerasimov was executed, while Sher and Tsinman were sentenced to 20 years in prison.

On March 13, 1954, by decision of the Party Control Committee (KPK) of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), Mir Jafar Bagirov was expelled from the party and arrested. An open trial began on April 12, 1956, in Baku, though it was more political than legal in nature. The trial was held at the Dzerzhinsky Club, now named after Shakhriyar. On April 26, 1956, the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR convened in an open court session in Baku to examine the case against Bagirov M.D., along with Borshchev T.M., Grigoryan K.I., Markaryan R.A., Atakishiev A.I., and Emelyanov S.F. They were charged with crimes under articles 63-2, 70, and 73 of the Criminal Code of the Azerbaijan SSR. It was established that, starting in 1935, the defendants, following Bagirov's orders, orchestrated mass groundless arrests of citizens and employed investigative methods that were prohibited by Soviet law (Приговор Военной Коллегии Верховного Суда СССР, архивно-следственное дело № ПФ-474, pp. 2, 3).

This moment of reckoning revealed the extent of the false accusations, and the unlawful methods used to carry out mass repressions, marking a key point in the accountability for Stalinist repressions in Azerbaijan.

The court investigation revealed that the Assistant People's Commissar, Head of the 3rd Department, and later Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the Azerbaijan SSR, Borshchev, was involved in falsifying over 120 cases between 1936-1938. Similarly, the Head of the Special Department and 3rd Department, Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the Azerbaijan SSR, Markaryan, falsified around 100 cases, while Grigoryan, the Head of a Department from 1936-1939, falsified about 100 cases. Atakishiev, another Head of Department and Assistant Deputy Head between 1936-1939, was responsible for over 50 falsified cases, and the Commissioner of the NKVD of the Azerbaijan SSR, Emelyanov, was implicated in 39 criminal cases. These actions led to the condemnation of hundreds of innocent Soviet citizens, many of whom were executed (Приговор Военной Коллегии Верховного Суда СССР, архивно-следственное дело № ПФ-474, pp. 11-18).

The Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR found Bagirov, Borshchev, Grigoryan, Markaryan, Atakishiev, and Emelyanov guilty of being part of a traitorous group and committing terrorist acts against Soviet citizens. They were sentenced to the highest measure of criminal punishment: execution with the confiscation of all property for Bagirov, Borshchev, Grigoryan, and Markaryan. Atakishiev and Emelyanov were sentenced to 25 years in labor camps, with an additional 5 years of deprivation of rights and confiscation of all property (State Security Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 1956, archival case № PF-474).

By the time posthumous rehabilitations of scientists began, Yu.D. Sumbatov-Tapuridze, who was detained, was dying of cancer in prison. On May 27, 1956, newspapers

published news of the executions of M.D.Bagirov, T.M.Borshchev, K.I.Grigoryan, R.A.Markaryan, and the 25-year sentences handed down to A.S.Atakishiev and S.F.Emelyanov (Mircəfər Bağırovun məhkəməsi, 1993, pp. 116-118).

## CONCLUSION

The damage inflicted on domestic science as a result of the illegal repressions in the post-October period is immense. Its scale is only gradually being uncovered, recognized, and analyzed today. The Stalinist repressions of the 1930s and 1940s caused irreparable losses not only to the scientific intelligentsia but also to the entire national culture. However, despite the severe political pressure, the scientific intelligentsia of Azerbaijan strived to make significant contributions to the scientific, economic, and cultural development of the republic (Керимова, 2017, p. 212).

Among the prominent minds of Azerbaijan, tragically repressed during 1936-1938, are names such as Salman Mumtaz, Alekper Alekperov, Idris Gasanov, Rashid Izmailov, Ghulam Bagirov, Ahmed Kazimov, Veli Khuluflu, Husseinali Balandarli, Agamir Mamedov, Hasan Imanov, Pasha Sultanov, Idris Imanov, Khanafi Zeynally, Taghi Shahbazi, Gasanbek Balabekov, Emin Abid (Akhmedov), Ahmed Akhmedov, Ali Nazim (Makhmudzade), Jafar Kazimov, Mamedkhasan Velili (Bakharly), Abdullah Taghizade, Iskender Rzazade, Ibad Aliyev, Alexander Bukshpan, Boris Tikhomirov, Khalid Said Khodzhayev, Arthur Zifeldt-Simumyagi, Bekir Chobanzade, Gaziz Gubaidullin, Zinnetshakh Zakirov, Vladimir Bogachev, Maria Kuliyeva, Jabbar Mamedzade, Abdullah Sharifov, Yusuf Vezirov (Yusuf Vezir Chemenzeminli), Atababa Musakhanly, Abdul Aziz Salamzade, Sultan Majid Ganiev, Abram Shapiro, and many others.

These individuals laid the foundation of Azerbaijani science. The names of these repressed scholars, regardless of their level of fame, deserve to be included in the golden fund of Azerbaijani scientific thought of the 20th century. The events that transpired during these years represent a profound tragedy for Azerbaijani culture, marked by irreparable losses and irrevocable defeats. The Stalinist repressions form a bloody chapter in the history of Azerbaijan, and they should forever remain in the collective memory of its people.

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