

REVIEW OF THE IRANIAN AZERBAIJAN IN THE SOVIET PRESS IN THE 1940S

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Abstract: The article presents an overview on the “21 Azer” (December 12, 1945) movement in Iranian Azerbaijan¹, its national and cultural issues, including literature, based on the publications of the Soviet press. It especially focuses on the articles, published in the 1940s in the newspaper “*Communist*”, printed under the ideological control and run by the Communist Party of the Soviet Azerbaijan. The Soviet media publications of the time, expressing a condemnatory attitude towards the Pahlavi government, contains an analysis and critique of socio-political, economic and cultural processes, samples of the contemporary intellectuals’ pieces. They also reflected the activities of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party (ADP), national and ideological issues of the movement. Moreover, the subtext of these publications shows how the Soviet government exploited the fraternal feelings of Azerbaijanis on both sides of the Aras River.

For a comprehensive exposition of the topic, this research paper considers diverse sources and scholarly literature that shed light on the historical context of the period.

Keywords: *Iranian Azerbaijan, Soviet Press, the Newspaper “Communist”, ADP, National issues, National autonomy*

INTRODUCTION

In 1941, the USSR carried out a military intervention in Iran under the pretext of border security from the Pahlavids, accused of being in alliance with the Nazi Germany. Reza Shah Pahlavi, who had been in power in Iran since 1925, was overthrown at the request of the USSR and Great Britain due to his pro-Hitler policy. Subsequently, his son Mohammad Reza was brought to the power. The Soviet and the British armies occupied the northern and the southern regions of Iran respectively. Indicting the former shah, the army newspaper “*Krasnaya Zvezda*”, published in Moscow, asserted that Reza Shah had deceived the public in his ascent to power by promising the establishment of a republic instead of a monarchy, and the implementation of democratic reforms. The ousting of Reza Shah marked an end of the decades-long military police regime and dictatorial rule, characterized by the oppression of the Iranian people, and it was welcomed by the population. The newspaper emphasized that Reza Shah had amassed billions of pounds in

¹ The name *Iranian Azerbaijan* refers to the provinces in the northwest of Iran. In the Republic of Azerbaijan it is also commonly called *Southern Azerbaijan*.

personal accounts, both domestic and foreign, as a result of exploiting the citizenry, dismantling democratic institutions, and engaging in unlawful appropriation [К отставке шаха: 1941, 4].

It's these days, the newspaper "Communist", led by the Communist Party of Soviet Azerbaijan, strived to expose the tyranny of Reza Shah, his suppression of critical writers and poets such as Eshghi Mirzadeh and published his following poem:

*Torpaq sovurmaq istəyirəm başıma bu gün,
Hardan alım o torpağı? İrani satdılar! [Əliyev (2020): 111]*

Translation:

*I want to spill soil on my head today,
Where can I buy the soil? Iran has been sold!*

Saying this, the poet-thinker, who complained about tyranny, supported by imperialism, was murdered at the age of 29.

The coverage of the 21 Azer movement on the Soviet press clearly shows how it used human rights and the national issue in its foreign policy interests. A similar approach and activities of the Soviet press were analyzed in an article by Robert Axelrod and William Zimmerman back in 1981 [Axelrod R., Zimmerman W. (1981): 183-200]. This research aims to scrutinize the issue in the case of Iranian Azerbaijani movement in the 1940s.

Political View of the ADP Activity in the Soviet Press

In 1941, Sayyed Jafar Pishevari, released from prison following the resignation of Reza Shah, assumed the role of editor at the "Ajir" newspaper in Tehran and was subsequently elected as a deputy to the Iranian parliament. Despite the government of Tehran refused to acknowledge his deputyship, S.J. Pishevari established the Azerbaijan Democratic Party on September 3, 1945. He also launched the party's newspaper, "Azerbaijan", paving the way to national independence. The leader of Soviet Azerbaijan, Mir Jafar Baghirov, played a significant role in the appointment of S.J. Pishevari as the head of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party (ADP). Baghirov recommended Pishevari, citing his qualifications as a former communist and "a figure of considerable authority and respect in democratic circles" [Farhadov (2023): 33].

When S.J. Pishevari sent an appeal to the foreign ministers of major countries, he emphasized: "Our situation, Azerbaijanis, with a population of five million in Iran, has become untenable. We want the restoration of real democracy throughout Iran and seek to secure internal freedom and autonomy for the people of Azerbaijan. While awaiting impartial legislation for the entire nation, we call for Azerbaijan to have the opportunity to determine its own destiny" [Farhadov (2023): 33]. It was with the support of the Soviet government that the ADP government was instituted in Tabriz on December 12, 1945, under the leadership of Pishevari.

In the "Pravda", a newspaper run by the Communist Party of USSR, it was stated that the people of Iranian Azerbaijan, comprising a quarter of the population in Iran, have consistently played an active role in struggling authoritarian regimes, in the Mashruteh (Constitutional) revolution, and in the protection of their national rights [Владимиров (1946): 3]. The path to freedom, however, was difficult and full of violence inflicted by the authorities. The articles, published in the pages of the "Communist", referring to

“*Rahbar*”, the newspaper run by the People’s Party of Iran, and other media outlets, detailed Iranian reactionaries assaulting democratic organizations, attacking and killing the government protesters and landowners in various regions [İran irticaçılarının.., (1945): 4; İranda baş verən.., (1945): 4]. The newspaper pointed out that the Iranian government had veered onto a misguided path. The prevailing administration's suppression of the Iranian population, acts of terrorism against freedom of thought, widespread closure of newspapers, as well as arrests and pressures were ongoing [İran qəzətləri.., (1946): 4]. The “*Communist*” asserted that unless the Iranian government ceases its arbitrary and lawless practices, there is a likelihood of mass uprisings and protests erupting throughout the country [İranda baş verən.., (1945): 4]. The protest movement of Iranian Azerbaijanis was spearheaded by the ADP and the Azerbaijan Committee of the People's Party of Iran, which subsequently merged with the ADP. The “*Communist*” newspaper reported that, despite its real name being Urmia, in the city known as Rizaiya, named in honor of the Shah, “Iranian troops perpetrate a massacre against the Azerbaijani and Armenian population, who have sympathy towards the national government of Iranian Azerbaijan. Civilians are taken in groups, arrested, beaten and shot, the population is forbidden to leave their homes” [Rizaiyyədə.., (1945): 1]. These tragedies were not confined to Urmia but unfolded in numerous regions throughout Iranian Azerbaijan.

As a result of the activities of the ADP fedais and the Azerbaijan Committee of the Iranian People's Party that supports them, the national movement achieved its goal and Iranian Azerbaijan was liberated from the yoke of the Pahlavids for sometime. Opponents of the ADP left the region. “Some reactionary officials, unwilling to collaborate with the national government, departed for Tehran”, reported the “*Communist*” [İran Azərbaycanındakı.., (1945): 1].

The elections for the Milli Majlis (National Assembly) lasted for five days in Tabriz. Despite the recent rise to power, the votes given to the candidates of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party were two and a half times more than the votes given to the central Iranian government. Moreover, for the first time in the history of Iran, women participated in the elections. [Çernişev (1945): 1].

According to S.J. Pishevari, the “21 Azer” movement of 1945-1946, a struggle against the Pahlavis, who had been in power in Iran since 1925, set itself the goal of “being free to ensure the national needs while preserving the independence and integrity of Iran” [Farhadov (2023): 33].

The victory of the Soviet-backed ADP compelled the Iranian government to lodge a complaint with the United Nations against the Soviet Union. According to the “*Izvestia*” newspaper, on January 28, 1946, A.Y. Vyshinsky, the head of the Soviet delegation at the UN Security Council, responded to objections from the Pahlavi delegation. Vyshinsky stated that undemocratic and corrupt forces within the Iranian government harbor hostility towards the USSR, including Soviet Azerbaijan, and sought to instigate diversions and provocations. The reason for the presence of the Soviet army in Iran is self-defense against these threats [Выступления.., (1946): 5].

Iranian Prime Minister Ahmad Qavam and Shah's sister, Ashraf Pahlavi, visited Moscow and met with Stalin, aiming to get rid of ADP. A. Qavam, who visited Stalin in February and March 1946, made an agreement with him by pledging to facilitate

democratization in Iran and offering a share of North Iranian oil to Stalin. He persuaded Stalin to withdraw the Soviet troops from Iran [Гасанлы (2008)]. Following the USSR's victory in World War II, Stalin sought control over the rich oil reserves in the northern part of Iran [Həsənli (1998): 13]. A. Qavam's commitment to providing oil and pressure from the United Nations and the United States influenced Stalin's decision to cease support for the national movement in Iranian Azerbaijan.

The "Pravda" stated that in the summer of 1946, Prime Minister of Iran A. Qavam founded the Democratic Party of Iran. It was announced that normal relations and cooperation would be established with all progressive democratic forces, including the USSR, for the sake of the democratic development in Iran [Кавам-эс-салтане..., (1946): 4]. The "Pravda" newspaper presented the words of A. Qavam before he became the Prime Minister, stating, "the cause of the revolutionary movement in Azerbaijan and the widespread dissatisfaction lies in the absence of democratic reforms in the country and the lack of constitutional rights of the citizens after the resignation of Reza Shah" [Владимиров (1946): 3]. "Azerbaijan" newspaper, referring to "Pravda", indicated that the desire of the new Iranian government, headed by A. Qavam, to establish good neighborly relations between the two countries positively resolved the issue of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Iran [Sovet-İran..., (1946): 3]. Nevertheless, upon assuming power, A. Qavam did not uphold his commitment.

On July 20, 1946, Ashraf Pahlavi, Mohammad Reza Shah's sister, met with Stalin in Moscow accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR V.M. Molotov [Приём..., (1946): 1]. In this meeting, Ashraf Pahlavi referred to the Pishvari government as a "puppet state" and asserted that it posed a threat to Soviet-Iranian relations. She persuaded Stalin not to protect the ADP [Иранская принцесса..., (2016)]. Following the departure of the Soviet army from Iranian Azerbaijan with Stalin's consent, the army of the Pahlavis initiated preparations for an attack. The "Communist" reported that on this occasion, "the Americans provided 40 bombers to the Iranian army" [İran ordusuna..., (1946): 1].

Referring to the Iranian press, the "Communist" mentioned that on December 7, 1946, "a government aircraft flew over Iranian Azerbaijan and dropped leaflets, urging the population to cooperate with the government forces, revolt against the democratic government institutions, expel them from their positions, as well as called for the hanging and persecution of all the democrats called as "deviant and traitors" in the leaflets" [İran Azərbaycanına..., (1946): 1]. To prepare for the Iranian parliamentary elections in Iranian Azerbaijan, the Pahlavi army launched an assault on December 12, 1946, ending with the occupation of region. Several members of the ADP, including S.J. Pishvari, managed to escape to Baku, while others were subjected to mass arrests and executed on charges of separatism. The "Communist", referring to the ADP, wrote that Azerbaijani people have consistently demonstrated many times their support for the freedom and independence of Iran through their works and actions. Azerbaijan has never wanted separation from the rest of Iran, and have expressed the opposition only to the reactionaries who aim to suppress freedom. "The doors of Azerbaijan are open to the Iranian government troops who arrived on the order of Prime Minister A. Qavam. However, we express the desire for the elections in Azerbaijan to conclude as soon as possible" [İran Azərbaycanı..., (1946): 1].

After the Soviet army withdrew from Iranian Azerbaijan, A. Qavam took off the mask of democracy he was wearing, started repressions against the ADP, and Iranian workers. Even he refused the oil deal with Stalin, announcing that this agreement was not in Iran's favor. Qavam, closely collaborating with U.S. politicians and earning millions of dollars in return for his services, was called as "slave to the dollar" by the Soviet press [Новбари (1947): 2].

The "*Pravda*", referring to the Iranian press, published information about the dismissal and arrest of hundreds of people, belonging to the party, after the defeat of the ADP. It was reported that instead of the ADP supporters, members of the Democratic Party of Iran, founded by A. Qavam, were hired [Репрессии.., (1946): 3]. According to the "*Pravda*", following the defeat of the ADP, administrative buildings of the party were destroyed, and party members were arrested. The newspaper also highlighted the concerns of the Iranian people regarding the fate of their freedom, future reforms, strengthening dictatorship and corruption [Расправа.., 1946): 4].

The "*Communist*" quoted the Iranian media, asserting that after the fall of the ADP, the social and economic development that had begun in the region came to a halt. Two years after the fall, the newspaper showed that poverty is predominant in Iranian Azerbaijan, also trade and industry are stagnating. The plight of thousands of unemployed individuals, unable to afford basic necessities, along with bankrupt peasants, is aggravated by the prevailing arbitrariness of government departments. The tax burden has become unbearable. According to the newspaper, the government officials themselves spread opium and alcohol widely among the population. In Iranian Azerbaijan, there is a severe lack of doctors and medicines. Fever, trachoma, and other diseases are common. Apart from promises of reform, nothing has been done in Iranian Azerbaijan [İran Azərbaycanında.., (1947): 4]. The articles published in the "*Communist*" indicated that tens of thousands of people were left homeless because they were unemployed [İranda fəhlələr.., (1949): 4], those who remained homeless on the streets froze to death during the winter months [İran əhalisinin.., (1949): 4; İranda soyuqlar (1949): 4], people could not find job, and those who protested were either imprisoned or exiled [İran Azərbaycanında.., (1949): 4]. After the fall of the National Government, the closure of democratic press extended across Iran, encompassing the ADP's "*Azerbaijan*" newspaper among others [İranda tərəqqipərvər.., (1946): 1]. "*Azerbaijan*" newspaper continued to be published in Baku by the ADP members who moved there. Simultaneously, the democratic movement in Iran was continued by the Iranian People's Party, at times operating underground. The "*Communist*" reported that in his speeches, Reza Radmanesh, the head of the Iranian People's Party, urged the Iranian public to strongly protest and resist to the arbitrariness of the government bodies, as well as the encroachment on Iran's legal and constitutional freedoms [İran Xalq Partiyası.., (1948): 3]. Emphasizing the positive role of the People's Party of Iran in the democratic movement, S.J. Pishevari also noted that the party's publications, including "*Rahbar*" ("*Leader*"), "*Zafar*" ("*Victory*"), and other democratic-oriented newspapers, are one of the pillars of the national movement in Iranian Azerbaijan, and deserve gratitude [Firqəmizin.., (1946): 2].

A Review of Iranian-Azerbaijani Culture In The Soviet Press

The “*Azerbaijan*” newspaper, run by the Azerbaijan Democratic Party and the National Government, founded by S.J. Pishevari [Farhadov (2023): 33], was based on national principles. S.J. Pishevari, who underlined Azerbaijani as an official language of the newspaper, urged the writers to take a serious approach to this significant work and emphasized: “our newspaper (“*Azerbaijan*”) will devote greater attention to the Azerbaijani language. Despite the baseless allegations of our enemies, our language is wide-ranging and rich. We have genuine confidence that Azerbaijani writers, with their faith and conviction, will lead the progress and evolution of our language as they undertake this challenging task”[Farhadov (2023): 34]. Research on the history and culture of Azerbaijan during the Qajar and the Pahlavi periods, as well as the struggle against the Shah’s regime, held one of the main places in the newspaper.

During the military intervention of the Soviet Army in Iran, numerous intellectuals from Soviet Azerbaijan arrived in Iranian Azerbaijan. Engaging in political activities, they educated the local population against the Pahlavis and prepared them for the struggle. Among of such intellectuals were Mirza Ibrahimov, Jafar Khandan, Mehdi Huseyn, Suleyman Rustam, Rasul Rza, and others [Əliyev [2020]: 101]. These intellectuals played a positive role in the development of the national press and national culture in the south. They promoted the culture of Soviet Azerbaijan in the south through the newspaper “*Vatan yolunda*” (“*On the Way to the Motherland*”), which was run by the Soviet military contingent in Tabriz, and served for national enlightenment. The “*Vatan yolunda*” presented the works and opinions of Iranian Azerbaijani intellectuals praising the Soviet system and the Soviet army [İranın..., (1945: 2].

The “*Communist*” extensively covered issues related to science, education, culture, and enlightenment for the people of Iranian Azerbaijan, along with articles addressing solutions to these issues. The pieces of Iranian Azerbaijani poets and writers were frequently featured in the newspaper. The “*Communist*” published poems and stories of the poets and writers, such as Mohammad Biriya, Balash Azeroglu, Ali Tude, Ibrahim Zakir, Ashik Huseyn Javan, Hokume Billuri, and Madina Gulgun, in the direction of socio-political and national cultural enlightenment and freedom, internationalism, and exposure of social problems. Notably, themes of patriotism, national freedom, hatred of the invading shah regime, and yearning for the south because they emigrated to the north after the fall of the ADP, took center stage in these poems.

In his poem “I am crying, he is laughing”, published in the “*Communist*”, M. Biriya, who was the Minister of Education of the Pishevari government, comparing Iranian Azerbaijan with Soviet Azerbaijan, states that he sees the divided people’s joy on one side and sadness on the other. He wrote:

*“İkimiz də bir hörmətli ananın,
Qucağında mən ağlaram, gülər o”* [Biriya (1945): 2].

Translation:

*We both in in the arms of one respectful mother,
But one of us is crying, other one rejoicing.*

Jafar Khandan’s article, “Mohammad Biriya”, published in the “*Communist*”, discusses the creative life of Mohammad Biriya, who lived and worked in Iranian Azerbaijan. Born in Tabriz in 1918, the poet dedicated himself to his nation, calling for unity in the struggle for freedom through his poetry [Xəndan (1947): 3].

Balash Azeroglu's poem "Azerbaijan", published in the "Communist", praises Azerbaijan as the historical motherland of heroes, admiring the development of Soviet Azerbaijan, the established in April 1920, and the construction works in the republic. B. Azeroglu wrote:

*Bilsinlər əyilməz o şah vüqarın,
Gözündə heç zaman qəsbkarların.
Gündüz günəşisən bizim diyarın,
Qaranlıq gecənin çırağı sənsən [Azəroğlu (1945): 3].*

Translation:

*Let them know that your royal pride is unbending
Never in the eyes of usurpers.
You are the daytime sun of our country,
You are the light of the dark night.*

Ashik Huseyn Javan's poem "Getme" (Don't go), published in "Communist", was dedicated to the Soviet army. It is well-known fact that in 1946, as a result of international pressure and negotiations with Iran, the Soviet government ordered the withdrawal of the Soviet army units, supporting the national liberation movement in Iranian Azerbaijan. Affected by this incident, Ashik expresses his feelings as follows:

*Hüseynəm, mən sənsiz necə dözərəm,
Gecə-gündüz fərağında gəzərəm.
Mənə əl qaldırsa düşmən, əzərəm,
Sən mənə öyrətdin bu halı, getmə [Cavan (1946): 2].*

Translation:

*I am Hussein, how can live without you?
Days and nights I will wait for you.
If the enemy raises his hand against me, I will crush him,
You taught me this, don't go.*

Amin Sadiq's article, titled "Fuqara shairi" (Poet of the poor) published in "Communist", delves into the life and works of the poet Bayramali Abbaszadeh, known by the pseudonym Hammal. Born in 1869 in the Gunnu village of the Sarab district in Iranian Azerbaijan, Hammal was the son of Abbas Khan, a *ranjbar* (peasant) who endured a challenging life. The fact that his family works for the khan merely to live off caused a deep-seated hatred for oppression and bondage in Bayramali Abbaszadeh. When the national liberation movement commenced under the leadership of Sattarkhan, Bayramali came to Tabriz and joined the patriotic forces. While residing in Tabriz, the poet became acquainted with revolutionary literature from the Caucasus and took pleasure in reading the works of Mirza Alakbar Sabir. At the end of 1909, Bayramali Abbaszadeh, moved to Baku, met M.A. Sabir. Through this connection, he became familiar with the magazine "Molla Nasreddin" and occasionally published his poems there. Following the Sattarkhan movement (1917-1920), the freedom movement led by Sheikh Mohammad Khiyabani resulted in the establishment of a democratic government in Iranian Azerbaijan. Once again, Reza Shah Pahlavi suppressed the national liberation movement. During this challenging period, Hammal (Bayramali Abbaszadeh) fervently called on the local people not to yield and to persist in their struggle:

Qoyma mehtər başında tac olsun,

*Füqəralar həmişə ac olsun,
Parçala xətti, qoy tarac olsun,
Qoy onun dərdi laəlac olsun* [Sadıq (1946): 2].

Translation:

*Don't let the stableman² wear a crown on his head,
And so that the poor man will always be hungry.
Break the throne, let it be destroyed,
May his pain be incurable.*

Complaining about his fate, the poet expresses deep yearning for his friends, and siblings:

*Müntəzirdir gözüüm İranda qalan qardaşıma,
Töküb İranın o xanзадələri kül başıma.
Həsərətəm bir neçə müddətdir bacı-qardaşıma,
Töküb İranın o xanзадələri kül başıma* [Sadıq (1946): 2].

Translation:

*My eyes yearn for my brother in Iran
These Iranian princes made me miserable.
I've been missing my brothers and sisters for so long now,
These Iranian princes made me miserable.*

Hammal's literary activity was closely connected with the Mashruteh (Constitution-A.F.) movement in Iranian Azerbaijan. Hammal, who had once actively participated and consistently followed this movement, dedicating poems to its cause, died in 1926 [Əliyev (2020): 109].

Osman Sarıvəlli's poem "First Lesson", released in the "Communist", shows the joy of people in Tabriz who take pride in receiving the first lesson in their mother tongue. In this first class, the teacher instructs the student to "write a word freely on the board". The student chooses to write "motherland" and "mother". Until that moment, teaching in the Azerbaijani language was prohibited in Iran, and with the establishment of the national government in Iranian Azerbaijan, conditions were created for teaching the people in their native language:

*Şahın şəkli yoxdur, divarə bax bir,
İndi Səttərxandır seyr edən bizi.
Əziz körpələri görüb sevinir,
Nizami, Füzuli, Saib Təbrizi.
Müəllim şagirdə dedi inamla:
Gəl yaz, söz azaddır indi ölkədə!* [Sarıvəlli (1946): 3].

Translation:

*There is no image of the Shah, look at the wall,
Sattarkhan is watching us now.
Nizami, Fuzuli, Saib Tabrizi,
Rejoice at seeing cute babies.
The teacher confidently told the student:
Come and write, there is now freedom of speech in the country!*

² Here the author disparagingly calls the Persian Shah "stableman".

Jafar Khandan's article, "Iranian Azerbaijani Writers and Stalin's Constitution", published in the "*Communist*", provides examples of poems by the Iranian Azerbaijani poets. It conveys their profound appreciation for the Soviet constitution and their admiration for the country's leader. The examples drawn from the works of Muhammad Biriya, Ali Fitrat, Mir Mehdi Etimad, Mir Mehdi Chavushi, Ali Tudeh, Ashik Huseyn Javan, and others serve as a call to awaken the national spirit in Iranian Azerbaijan, opposing oppression and enslavement:

*Bəlkə yetişim mən də, ata, şanlı vüsala,
Həsrətlə daha baxmayım heç səmti-Şimala* [Xəndan (1946): 4].

Translation:

*Father, maybe I will realize my glorious dream,
I will no longer look to the North with longing.*

By publishing these verses, emphasizing the feelings of brotherhood between Soviet Azerbaijan and Iranian Azerbaijan, the newspaper, which was actually the ideological mouthpiece of the Communist Party, tried to use these feelings as an instrument.

Jafar Khandan's article concludes with an appeal written to Stalin on behalf of the "Assembly of Tabriz Poets":

*Sayəndə sənin çatdı bu eşq əhli vüsala,
Bir də bilirik batmayacaq dərdə, məlalə* (Xəndan (1946): 4].

Translation:

*Thanks to you, lovers have realized their dreams,
And the Union will not have troubles and difficulties.*

Another Jafar Khandan's piece in the "*Communist*", titled "Poet of the Iranian Azerbaijani People", commemorating the 20th anniversary of Mirza Ali Mojuz Shabestari's death, talks about the poet's literary activity and the challenges of pressures and persecutions he faced. Born in a poor family, the poet mentioned the negative aspects of the time, the hardships endured by the people. He also declared gaining freedom and independence is possible only through revolution. His satires mercilessly exposed all villains, from "petty" individuals, involved in snake-playing, fortune-telling, and witchcraft, to American, British, and German politicians and the Shah of Iran:

*Əlac yoxdur bizə şeyxdən, nə də şahdan,
Vəkildən üz əlini, çünki mülkədar odur!* [Əliyev (2020): 112].

Translation:

*We have no help from either the sheikh or the shah,
Avoid the lawyer because he is also the owner!*

Mammad Rahim's article "Balash Azeroglu" published in the newspaper "*Communist*" provides information about the modern poet of Iranian Azerbaijan. Through an analysis of Balash Azeroglu's literary activity, the author concludes that the sadness and suffering depicted in his works reflect the collective sorrow of the people [Rahim (1947): 3].

M. Rahim's poem "Durna" (Crane), published in the "*Communist*", expressed the hope that this tragedy of the Azerbaijani nation, suffering from partition and separation, will soon end, and the poet says to the migrating crane:

*Çəkilib sinəmə zülm əliylə dağ,
Nədir bu əsarət, nədir bu firaq?* [Rahim (1945): 3].

Translation:

*Oppression drew grief to my chest,
What kind of slavery is this, what kind of separation is this?*

In his poem “Aras’s Complaint”, Mammad Rahim, mentioning that it was not the Aras River that divided Azerbaijan, but rather the Shah's regime, and writes:

*Bir zaman tufanlar keçdi başından,
Səni ayırdılar öz qardaşından.
Mənmi səbəb oldum?
Dedim: Yox, Araz...
Məgər mənmi dedim Rza şaha: dur,
Azəri yurduna sən də qan uddur?* [Rahim (1947): 3].

Translation:

*Storms once passed over your head,
They separated you from your brother.
Did I cause this?
I said: No, Araz...
Did I tell Reza Shah: come on,
Oppress Azerbaijan?*

M. Rahim’s poem “To My Southern Brothers” describes the plight of the people, the oppression faced by protesters, and their imprisonments, and the poet states:

*Dedin qanun hanı, ədalət hanı?
Gülüb göstərdilər sənə zindanı.
Sən torpaq istədin, qəbir verdilər,
Küllük eylədilər gülüstanını.*

Translation:

*You said where is the rights, where is the justice?
They laughed and showed you the prison.
You asked for land, they gave you a grave,
They turned your rose garden into ashes.*

The poet states that this oppression will end one day and writes that “I have my nation and my freedom!” [Rahim (1945): 2].

The “Communist”, showing cares for the Iranian Azerbaijani poets, highlights the works of Ali Tudeh. In the article titled “Ali Tudeh”, Ilyas Afandiyev writes about the poet’s activity and emotionally describes how a poet and fedai was formed from a difficult childhood and experiences [Əliyev (2020): 110]. Ali Tudeh writes:

*Nədir hüsnündəki bu sis, bu duman,
Neçin danışmırsan, neçin gülmürsən?!
Məni düşündürən, məni güldürən,
Məni şair edən sən deyilmisən?* [Əfəndiyev (1948): 3].

Translation:

*What is this fog and smog on your face,
Why don't you talk, why don't you smile?
The one who makes me think, the one who makes me smile
Wasn't it you who made me a poet?*

In I. Afandiyev's story "Khanjar" (Dagger) the national liberation movement in Iranian Azerbaijan is portrayed in artistic language. The story illustrates that following the establishment of the National Government, the Azerbaijani language became the official language in all socio-political fields. People enjoyed repeating the words "National Government" and "Azerbaijan" many times, taking pride in these expressions [Əliyev (2020): 102]. Anvar Mammadkhanli's piece "Golden Buds", released in the "Communist", the challenges confronted by the people of Iranian Azerbaijan, again falling under the Pahlavi oppression, descending into poverty, and suffering from unemployment after the fall of the National Government were shown in an artistic language. Despite the prevailing oppression, the author expresses hope, declaring in the conclusion of the work, "No, it cannot continue like this until the end of time. That day will come. The sun will rise, and the buds will open" [Məmmədşanlı (1945): 3].

İsrafil Nazarov's article devoted to İbrahim Zakir, the fedai poet from Ardabil, was printed in the pages of the "Communist". Additionally, poet Nigar Rafibeyli's article entitled "Hokume Billuri" published in the same publication under the rubric "Modern Poets of Iranian Azerbaijan". The article notes that she was born into a family of blacksmiths and started composing poems with a spirit of resistance against oppression and tyranny from a young age. At the age of seventeen-eighteen, she clearly understood the immense oppression endured by the people. She wrote in one of her poems:

*Neynirik İrani biz, əgər Azərİstan olmasa,
Can nə lazımdır bizə Azər gülüstan olmasa.
Şad olamıaz bu könül, bilməz ki, rahatlık nədir,
Ta ki Azər məskənim şərq ilə şad olmasa* [Rəfibəyli (1948): 4].

Translation:

*We don't need Iran if there is no Azeristan,
What do we need life for if Azer has not become a rose garden?
My heart cannot be happy, and cannot know what comfort is,
While my abode Azer is not happy with the east.*

The article "Patriotic Poet" by Kamran Mammadov, published in the "Communist", talks about the book, prepared by Ghulam Mammadli, about the life and one of the Iranian Azerbaijani poets, Mirza Ali Mojuz's activity. The article highlights that Mirza Ali Mojuz was born in 1873 in Shabestar, in the northwest of Tabriz. Orphaned at the age of 16, the poet eventually returns to his homeland after residing abroad for a period. Mirzali Mojuz, a distinguished figure among the poets of 20th-century Iranian Azerbaijan, was, above all, a poet driven by patriotism. He profoundly loved his motherland, Azerbaijan, and his mother tongue.

*Nə yatıbsan, ayıl, ey milləti-biçarə, ayıl,
Sətr axır vətəni düşməyə əyani-vətən* [Əliyev (2020): 111].

Translation:

*Why are you sleeping, wake up, o helpless people, wake up,
Because master of the motherland is selling it to the enemy.*

The story "Two Lives", written by Mirza İbrahimov and published in December 1949 issues of "Communist", contrasts the bright socialist life in Iranian Azerbaijan after World War II with the somber situation in Iranian Azerbaijan following the downfall of the National Government. The narrative emphasizes the name of the Soviet worker,

celebrated for his hard work and earning admiration with a collective “well-done!”. In stark contrast, compatriots in the south stand as representatives of people oppressed by the tyranny of the Iranian regime [Əliyev (2020): 112]. Fragments from İbrahimov’s novel “My Unfortunate Love”, depicting southern life [İbrahimov (1946): 3], along with an article discussing the novel “The Future Day”, found their place in the issues of “*Communist*”. The writer accentuates the importance of the union and joint struggle of the peasantry and the working class for the future of Iran, believing that the sun of Soviet freedom will illuminate it [Cəfər (1948): 3]. The writer asserts that “the people of Tabriz enduring hunger and thirst, however, their honor and dignity remain untouchable” [Əliyev (2020): 107].

In the pages of the “*Communist*”, significant attention was devoted to the issues of national theater in the south. An article reported that the theater staff of the Soviet House of Culture in Tabriz recently concluded a month-long tour across cities and villages in Iranian Azerbaijan, aiming to provide artistic services to the local population. Notably, the tour coincided with the Azerbaijani people’s struggle for freedom and national rights, significantly contributing to the reinforcement of the people’s spirit of resistance. Audiences expressed joy in witnessing outstanding plays such as “Sevil” performed in the mother tongue.

This cultural exchange of artists served to strengthen the bond between the Iranian and Soviet parts of Azerbaijan, being in the service of Soviet politics. Interestingly, the audience noted that witnessing a group perform in our mother tongue brings us immense joy and “we hold deep affection for the Soviet people and the Red Army. While the Red Army was here, we experienced significant cultural progress”. The Tabriz theater tour was indeed a display of Soviet Azerbaijan literature and art. The audience had the opportunity to acquaint with the masterpieces of prominent Azerbaijani figures, such as Nizami, Fuzuli, Vagif, Sabir, Abbas Sahhat, Suleyman Sani, Jafar Jabbarli, Samad Vurgun, Suleyman Rustam, Rasul Reza and other classics and modern Soviet writers [Sadiq (1945): 3]. The theater staff of the Tabriz House of Culture staged the plays “Arshin Mal Alan”, “Mashadi İbad”, “Asli va Karam”, “Haji Kara”, “Sevil” and others. The theater troupe noted that they take Soviet Azerbaijan as an example in their activities and want to win the audience’s sympathy by performing in the Azerbaijani language [Təbriz mədəniyyət evi., (1945): 4].

It is evident that despite the brief existence of the National Government in Iranian Azerbaijan in 1945-1946, its defeat did not diminish the impact of its activities. The influence of its initiatives, the pivotal role it played in shaping national culture, and the activities of the southern intellectuals have found a lasting resonance in the pages of the Soviet press. On one hand, presentation of literary works of the Southern poets, including A. Tudeh, B. Azeroglu, H. Billuri, M. Gulgun, and active promotion of Southern culture by writers such as M. İbrahimov, N. Rafibeyli, J. Khandan within the pages of the newspaper “*Communist*”, played a significant role in elucidating the realities of Iranian Azerbaijan to the readers. The Soviet press significantly propelled the advancement of national consciousness and a distinct national culture in Iranian Azerbaijan. On the other hand, these feelings of brotherhood between Azerbaijanis on both sides of the Aras River and the national consciousness of the southerners were used by the Soviet government for the political means.

CONCLUSION

The scrutiny of Soviet newspapers such as “*Pravda*”, “*Izvestia*”, and “*Communist*” is essential for a comprehensive analysis of national issues in Iran during the Pahlavi era, particularly focusing on the national movement in the south and Soviet-Iranian relations. The Pahlavi regime, providing chauvinistic nationalist policy, compelled non-Persian ethnic groups, notably Azerbaijanis, to pursue their national-cultural rights and advocate for national autonomy, marked by numerous violent clashes and massacres. The analysis of materials from the “*Communist*” and other Soviet newspapers elucidates that, despite the resolution of national issues in Iran through the unifying policy of the ADP, this policy ultimately faltered due to the Pahlavis’ systematic dismantling of national autonomies. The oppressive and dictatorial measures implemented by the Pahlavi regime in Iran generated widespread resentment and incurred animosity throughout society. Despite its military strength and the backing of Western powers, the Pahlavi regime eventually succumbed to popular demands, leading to its removal from power and ultimate demise. In addition to scrutinizing the Soviet press, an examination of the legacy of S.J. Pishevari, particularly the newspaper “*Azerbaijan*”, hold paramount significance in delving into not only the historical-cultural, and educational dimensions of the Pahlavi period, but also in comprehending the significant role played by the population of Iranian Azerbaijan in the national democratic movement, the trajectory of national liberation, and the contours of their struggle.

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