

## **A Community in Turmoil: The Iranians of the Caucasus and the Russian Revolutions (1900-1920)**

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The history of the formation of the Iranian Community in Azerbaijan traces back to the South Caucasian region's inclusion as part of the Russian Empire in the beginning of the XIX century under the Gulistan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828) treaties after the Iran-Russia Wars. These events not only radically changed the geopolitical situation in the region but also turned out to be a historical turning point for the peoples of this region, particularly the Azerbaijani, who had lived compactly until that time on the vast territories from the north of Iran to the south of the Caucasus.

As the official status of part of Azerbaijan changed, a population of 13 khanates became part of the Russian Empire. This change not only marked division of the united people but also created a number of serious problems related to both border crossings and the necessity of establishing new orders for residence in a new state, where the population had previously been accustomed to moving freely in these territories. In addition, the new conditions required regulation of the conditions of the former Iranian subjects, who were ethnic Azerbaijanis closely bound by numerous ties (economic, trade, language, relatives, etc.) to their former fellow countrymen, who had now become Russian subjects.

The Iranian and Russian parties had only begun to seriously discuss and adopt laws concerning the mass border crossing and regulating the official state of the Iranian subjects on the territory of the Russian Empire in the middle of the 1840's. All this time the Iranian subjects continued to move by legal or illegal means into the territory of the Caucasus. The establishment of new boundaries created a number

of impediments, but also opened great economic possibilities which made the Caucasus a more alluring region for the Iranian subjects. (1)

Beginning in the 1880's, the departure of the Iranian population to the Caucasus sharply increased and acquired the mass and continuous character that was conditioned by the severe socio-economic situation in Iran at the end of the XIX century and the rapid development of capitalism in the economies of the Caucasus. Turning Iran into a semi-colonial territory of the imperialist powers at this time abruptly worsened the severe state of the Iranian workers. The high feudal rent, numerous state taxes and requisitions ruined most of the first-hand producers, who were peasant sharecroppers. The poor peasants, worn out by exploitation, starvation and illnesses, were forced to partially sell their labor force and to go off in search of a living. On the other hand, in connection with the changes in economies of the Transcaucasus since the 80's, including development of capitalism, building of the Transcaucasian railroad and advancement in the oil industry and construction works, the tsarist powers began to encourage in every possible way an influx of the departed from abroad. This migratory wave of Iranians named in the scientific literature as "otkhodnichestvo" (the "departure" of workers) became a factor of socio-political and economic importance in the history of Iran and partially the Caucasus.

The Iranian community in the Caucasus began to form in the beginning of the XX century as a result of the mass departure of the Iranian population begun in 1880 conditioned by hard socioeconomic state of Iran and rapid development of capitalism in the economies of the Caucasus. The total number of this population group- Persian subjects – in the Caucasus amounted to hundreds of thousands of men and consisted of various social groups, including strata of traders, middle and petty bourgeoisie- intelligentsia and tens of thousands of Iranian migrant workers. By ethnicity most 'Persians' came from Iranian Azerbaijan, i.e. they were of Turkic origin and imparted to their state a somewhat unique character as they were of the same nationality as the biggest (by quantity) local population in the Caucasus – 'Persian' Azerbaijanis. It is not accidental that a great number of Persian subjects lived and worked in Caucasian Azerbaijan was and were also connected with the Azerbaijani city of Baku, which was at that time an impetuously developing industrial city owing to the oil industry. Consequently, the majority of Iranian migrants consisted of unskilled laborers working mainly in the oilfields of Baku. The former peasants had been on the whole uneducated, deprived of any rights, and carried out the most untidy work, for which they were contemptuously called 'Khamshara' (from the word 'Khamshakharan' from the same town, which is how the Iranian workers addressed each other). This word meaning beast or poor (i.e. the lowest man) in the employers' and local people's

dialect was only applied to Iranian workers, but the other strata of Persian subjects – the merchants, intelligentsia, both locals and Russian officials – were called ‘Iranians’. It is noteworthy that despite the kinship with Caucasian Azerbaijan, the local population treated the Persian subjects with some prejudice. One of the main reasons was that the Persian workers agreed to the lowest work and humiliating conditions and thus drove down the minimum wage, depriving the local population of work in rural and industrial settings. On the contrary, the Russian state and big employers integrated an inexpensive labor force and on the whole supported migration processes from Iran to the Caucasus.

On the whole, the flow of the Iranian migrants across the borders of the Caucasus was inseparably connected to the policy of Tsarist Russia.

Thus, for instance, commencement of the revolutionary movements in Russia and Iran in 1905 as well as development of the Armenian-Muslim conflict in the Caucasus reflected directly and acutely on the life of the Iranian migrants.

As early as the beginning of the XX century, when the industrial centers of the Caucasus, particularly in Baku, were drawn into the working and revolutionary movement, the Iranian workers caused a problem both for state and political and revolutionary parties. Not failing to meet all the requirements of their employers, the Iranian workers broke, in practice, a strike movement organized by political and trade union organizations of Trans-Caucasia. Namely this circumstance made bolshevist and social-democratic organizations of the Caucasus pay attention to the numerous Iranian ‘proletariat,’ forcing them to carry out among them propagandist-agitation work evoking their socio-political consciousness based on class hatred toward the bourgeois-capitalistic world.

Thus, Persian workers gradually became involved in socio-economic and political processes taking place in the Russian Empire, including Baku, where there was an active political life.

However, at this time not only Persian political and revolutionary circles devoted their attention to the great mass of Iranian migrants in the Caucasus. In the beginning of the XX century, under direct influence of socio-cultural and political processes taking place in this region of Russia, affluent Iranian merchants –traders and representatives of the petty and middle bourgeoisie and intelligentsia residing in the big cities of the Caucasus, specifically in Baku and Tiflis (Tbilisi-Georgia) – developed their own public activity as well, which was expressed as the formation of various social, political and cultural propagandist organizations, editing newspapers and journals, and opening schools, libraries, and mosques. Organized mainly around Iranian consulates functioning in different towns of the Caucasus,

this stratum of Iranians opened the first Iranian schools for Persian subjects' children, 'Ittikhad' ('Unity') and 'Ittifaq' ('Union') in 1904 in Baku, and in 1906 in Tiflis, respectively. Very soon these schools exceeded the bounds of general educational institutions and turned into cultural centers to some extent for all the strata of Persian subjects, mainly promoting education of the Iranian community in the Caucasus.(3)

It is rather notable that the representatives of this group of Iranian migrants united around the schools 'Ittikhad' and 'Ittifaq' had played a great pole in penetration of the ideas of freedom, democracy and revolution into Iranian society, particularly in the years of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution in 1905-1911.

The Caucasian Iranians had played a very important role in the Constitutional movement, supporting their fellow citizens in every possible way, from sending arms and revolutionary literature to personal participation in the fights on Tebriz barricades, which will be discussed in more detail below.

Puzzled by politization of a definite part of the Iranian workers in the year of revolution, 1905, the Russian government began to send tens of thousands of Iranian workers back to Iran by ship and train. (4) The cause for this action was named as the international conflicts simultaneously arising and growing into the Armenian-Azerbaijani slaughter in which the Armenians exterminated hundreds of Persian subjects as 'Muslim-Turks'. (5)

With this, the migratory wave did not diminish and the process of socio-political activation of the Persian subjects increased. (6)

As a result, having been through the political struggle in the ranks of the Russian proletariat in the beginning of the XX century and having gradually assimilated proletarian ideology under the direct guidance of the Caucasian Bolsheviks and the influence of the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, the most active part of the Iranian workers formed their first revolutionary, political parties of left-wing socialist deviation on the Azerbaijani territory, in Baku.

**Political parties of the Iranians in the Caucasus:** The social and democratic group "Hummet" was organized in Baku 1904 for carrying out work among the Muslim workers, and the famous socio-political and educational figures of the Caucasus, among them Nariman Narimanov, played a great role in joining the Iranian workers in the class struggle in the ranks of the Baku proletariat. According to some sources the first political organization of the Iranian workers, the "Ijtimayun-amiiyun" party, traces its origin to the years of 1904-1905 or 1906. (7)

Later on, from the personal memories and documents of the well-known figures of the Iranian working class and Communist movements, it became known that Asadulla Gafarzadeh, Asgarzade Tabrizi, Rzazada Garadashi, Akhundzada Ardebili, Hasan Malakesh, Gafar khan Miyanali, Ahmed Amirov, Bahram Agayev, Abulgasim Asadi and other Iranian workers entered the ranks of the “Ijtimayun-amayun” organization. Among the founders of the organization, were the then-leaders of the ICP, Heydar Amioglu and his brother Abbaskhan Afshari, who had been in close contact with the revolutionary organizations of the Caucasus in that period as well. (9)

It should be noted that the socio-democratic ideas quite popular in the beginning of the century attracted not only Iranian workers but the representatives of the petty-bourgeoisie, Iranian intellectuals living in the Caucasus who were educated to some level.

It is not accidental that among the founders and members of the Iranian “Ijtimayun-amiiyun” organization, the people belonging to these classes were not migrants.

It was a quite a historical and psychological fact in itself that foundation of the first political organization of Iran abroad in the Caucasus relying on ideology from the West had deep socio-political and economic roots and was formed under such a circumstance that the Iranian workers, the relatively few representatives of the petty-bourgeois layers, and intelligentsia were the early bearers of this ideology.

Here it should be noted that the revolutionary winds blowing in both the Russian and Iranian political and social environments at the beginning of the century gradually drew all the layers of the Iranians living in the Caucasus into the sphere of their influence, despite emergence of contradictions in serious thinking and action between the Iranian consulate, the well-to-do Iranians around it and the Iranian workers who joined the revolutionary struggle taking the opposite position.

With the start of the Russian revolution and simultaneously the Mashruta revolution in Iran, a turning point, in the true sense of the word, was observed in the migrants’ lives.

The Iranian subjects, mostly consisting of Azerbaijanis, joined various organizations in the Caucasus cities, primarily in Baku and Tbilisi, since the start of the Mashruta revolution began to render assistance to this revolution in organized form in various initiatives. One branch of this aid included preparing the revolutionary print materials and sending them to Iran. The “Ijtimayun-amiiyun (Mujahid)” organization, with the assistance of the Baku and Tbilisi committees of RSDWP, as well as close aid provided by the “Hummet” organization, printed the

leaflets and information materials, sending them to various Iranian cities by different means. (10)

The second form of participation of the Caucasus Iranians in the Mashruta revolution included sending arms and military munitions to Iran. The proficient Russian diplomat working in Iran, N.G. Gartvig, sent a communication in February, 1907 from Iran that "Azerbaijani revolutionists brought through the Caucasian frontier many weapons and even a bomb, or at least it was rumored to be so; they no longer conceal this in Teheran." (11)

Many documents and literature note extreme involvement; for example, Iranians arriving from the Caucasus in the Mashruta revolution took positions as organizers and leaders in many cases. For instance, in the report on Iranian events from June 25 to July 11, 1907 prepared by a Tsar's Official, the state in Tebriz was described as follows: "Members of the Caucasian revolutionists party- Iranian Social democratic circles- have remained there as ruling power for a long time.... Recently these revolutionists went so far in their freedom attempts and party passions that they created the local opposition against themselves." (12)

In all the sources it is affirmed that the Iranian patriots arriving from the Caucasus represented the most conscious part of the local Mashruta participants in a political sense; they were the most organized and disciplined division in terms of points of organization; and they were the most prepared detachment (in sense of using weapons, explosive substances and other military ammunitions) from a military point of view. Thus the Iranian migrants who joined the growing working-class movement in the beginning of the century, then a sociopolitical and revolutionary fight, had already gone through the school of political struggle on this or another level, were acquainted with social and revolutionary ideas, and possessed some experience in revolutionary struggle.

However, in 1911, which is known to many as the period when the most intense, most striking stage of the Mashruta revolution had already passed, the hoped of freedom and democracy had failed and "the motherland would again leave its descendants without jobs and bread," the flow of Iranian migrants to the Caucasus began. Here it should be noted that according to the evidence of the future eminent public figure, M.S. Pishevari, "the Iranian workers abroad...were returning disappointed with the Mashruta revolution." (13)

Pishevari and most of the authors standing up like him from exclusive class positions put forward among the reasons of the Mashruta revolution the factor that the majority of Mashruta participants used this movement only in their interests. Indeed, the revolutionary forces participating in the democratic camp of the

Mashruta revolution on different strata from the standpoint of political, social, and class interests and positions exerted a sufficiently profound influence on the course of the revolutionary movement. For this reason, the struggle of the Caucasian Iranians temporarily united by the common principles of the Mashruta revolution-- patriotism, democracy, freedom, and progress for the achievements that Mashruta couldn't gain -- entirely parted after this period.

The moderate-liberal wing representing Teheran's socio-democratic organization, parted with the latter and created its own independent party-- Iranian Democratic Party-- in 1909. Some of the Iranians living in the Caucasus but not adopting the left-wing ideas joined the Iranian Democratic Party founded in Teheran in 1909, and others became members of other organizations based on other political ideas. If it is taken into account that the forces making up the "Mujahid" radical wing joined the Iranian Democratic Party of the same name and were already based on the socio-democratic ideas in this period, the forces that presented the radical wing of the organization "Ijtimayun-Amiyyun (Mujahid)" had already laid the foundation of the Iranian Social Democratic Party, many members of which already relied on socio-democratic ideas.

After the failure of the revolutionary movements in Russia and Iran, the regimes established in both countries that were characterized as reactionary by nature further worsened the political/social and economic/cultural state of the wider public. Under pressure of unemployment, starvation and feudal oppression, ten thousand Iranian migrants turned to the working centers in Russia, including the Caucasus. But since the beginning of 1910-1911, the number of the Iranians returning to the Caucasus or those who had just arrived there was growing more and more, and again they held a considerable place among Baku workers. For instance, as early as in 1913 the Iranian workers made up 30% of the total number of Baku workers. (14)

This period is characterized by extending and deepening stratification of the Iranian community in the Caucasus under the influence of political/economic and socio-cultural processes going on in the Russian Empire. Thus, while the rich and well-to-do layer of the Iranian community, businessmen, representatives of petty bourgeoisie, and intellectuals continued to live and work within the framework of existing laws as mere Iranian migrants, the other more numerous sector of the Iranians-- poor, illiterate workers-- began more actively to join the political-economic processes going on in this country. One of the most important and notable features of the working strike and working class movements, which gained strength beginning in the summer of 1913 and achieved their highest peak in 1914 to cover all the industrial branches of Baku, is that the main participants of these

strikes were the Muslim Iranian workers. The workers of “Russian Oil Society,” “Caucasus,” “Vatan,” Mantashov, Kolesnikov, Ogulevich, Asadullayev, Rothschild, Nobel brothers, M. Mukhtarov, Zubalov and other oil industry firms joined the strike one after another. (15) The Strike Committee of Baku Bolsheviks was founded for the purpose of guiding the strikes and directing them toward common organizational direction. It carried out extensive work among the workers. Included among the members of this Committee were representatives of the different nations-Russian, Georgian, Armenian, Jewish bolshevists, and an Iranian worker-Mir Bashir Fattah oglu (Gasimov).

Born into a poor farmer’s family in the Dashbulag village of Tebriz, M.B. Gasimov arrived in Baku at 17 years old in search of work as his countrymen began to work in the Balakhany oil fields and joined the revolutionary work there. As a participant of all the considerable mass strikes of Baku workers in 1903-1914, M.B.Gasimov carried on agitation and propaganda mainly among the Azerbaijani-Iranian workers. Here we note that M.B.Gasimov started his work as an ordinary Iranian worker, then would achieve the highest posts in Soviet Azerbaijan, establish “the workers and peasants power” and would be entirely integrated into Azerbaijani society and adopt its citizenship, and would be elected the Chief of Supreme Soviet Azerbaijan for 18 years. (16)

The majority of the Caucasian Iranians already growing strong in proletarian-class positions were very often imprisoned and exiled, having taken leading places in all the activities carried out by working and trade union movements and having participated in all the socio-political events of the country together with local left forces. Such as these, namely M.B.Gasimov, used the favorable political-historical conditions in the period of relative freedom created after February revolution of 1917 to organize Iranian Social-Democratic Party “Adalat (Justice),” the members of which they were consolidated in the course of revolutionary political struggle with their own program, rules and press organs. One of the founders and the first chairman of the party “Adalat” was Asadulla Gafarzadeh. A. Gafarzadeh, who descended from Ardebil by origin and joined the political struggle at a very young age, still lived in Iran and took part in delivering the “Iskra” (Spark) newspaper of RSDWP edited in Europe to Baku by the Turkey-Iran road, moved to Baku in 1903, joined the ranks of RSDWP and though was very often pursued by the Tsar’s Government or Iranian Consulates in the cities of the Caucasus for carrying on wide agitation and propaganda among the Iranian workers, continued his struggle, which led him to the position of the chairman of one party founded by his direct participation in February of 1917. Both assertions of contemporary scholars and historical documents testify to his true belief in his ideals and his brave and selfless



character in revolutionary struggle, and that he was to a great extent an energetic man in political activity. (17)

A. Gafarzadeh also became an editor of “Beyrege Adalet” journal, the first press organ of the party “Adalet.” In this journal, edited in 5 issues only, the program of the democratic party and the basic political line were elucidated, and the responsibilities connected with the conditions of the Iranian workers and political struggle were shown (18). The journal’s work came to an end when the editor of this journal, the party leader A. Gafarzadeh, was sent to Iran in May 1918 for the purpose of establishing a link between the Caucasian revolutionaries and Jangali movement and was savagely murdered there. However, this event was not reflected much in the general activity of the party. On the contrary, Bolsheviks coming to power in Russia, and the events occurring in the Caucasus as a result, directly opened a new period in the activity of the Iranian workers and their political organizations and generally of the entire Iranian community and its destiny.

In the beginning of 1917 more than 150 thousand Iranian Persian subjects in the Caucasus were drawn into the social and economic processes taking place in the Russian Empire beginning with the February Revolution of 1917. To this time the Iranians of the Caucasus had their own political parties, social organizations, and charitable societies. The most organized was the community in Baku. However, under the influence of the different political tendencies, the Iranian community was feeling social, political and class stratification. Some of the Iranian workers drawn by the Caucasian Bolsheviks in the working movement actively participated in the revolutionary struggle, openly quarreling with Iranian Consulates, blaming them for betrayal of their interests and violation of the rights of the Persian poor working in the hardest social conditions. The Iranian consulates concentrated the representatives of petty and average bourgeoisie intelligentsia and merchants, attempting to take control over the lives and matters of their Iranian citizens. Thus, during the active political events in the Caucasus, the Persian subjects ended up on different sides of the barricades.

This circumstance first became apparent during the March events of 1918 in Baku. At that time the united armed forces of the Bolshevik Baku Soviet headed by S. Shaumyan and the Armenian National Soviet led by the Armenian National ‘Dashnaksutyun’ party committed Azerbaijan pogroms (massacres) in Baku and its environment within three days, aiming at annihilation of Azerbaijan national forces and establishment of their power. As a result, more than 12 thousand peaceful Muslim civilians were killed. Among the casualties there were more than 2 thousand Persian subjects of both the poor and well-to-do strata, particularly rich traders for whom Armenian bands hunted. (19)

The Persian Consulate in Baku was also seized by Armenian soldiers, and the flats and properties of Persian subjects<sup>(20)</sup> and great fortunes of the Iranian merchants and employers underwent complete devastation.<sup>(21)</sup> However, at the time when the Persian consul in Baku, M.S.Maragei, made urgent attempts to prevent pogroms <sup>(22)</sup>, some of the Iranian workers, upon the instruction of the Bolsheviks, guarded oilfields with arms in their hands, preventing a fire that enveloped a whole city and the surrounding villages from spreading to the oilfields, as Red Moscow keenly needed oil, which Bolsheviks were planning to transport to Russia without compensation after the establishment of their power.

However, in the subsequent month, the state of the Muslim population of Baku and its surroundings, including Persian subjects held as hostages, abruptly deteriorated as a result of establishment of Soviet power and then a Russian-Armenian (Social-Democratic (Eser) – Dashnak) government called ‘Centro Caspian.’ At this time a mass departure of Persian subjects back to Iran began, particularly from the affluent stratum. Tens of thousands of Persian poor people who were unable to depart turned into a poor state experiencing all the difficulties that fell upon the Muslim part of population.

After the liberation of Baku and movement of the government of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) to Baku in September of 1918, the situation in the Republic was being established and this situation changed; most former Iranian migrants returned to Azerbaijan, and the state-diplomatic ties between Iran and Azerbaijan were established. The Iranians whose rights were observed by the Azerbaijan government managed to keep their economic and civil rights in the period of ADR rule (May 1918-April 1920). However, the Iranian community was indifferent in this period too. Thus, calling their republic ‘Azerbaijan,’ the leaders of ADR caused serious trouble among Iranian governmental circles who interpreted this action as a claim to Iranian Azerbaijan. The bourgeois-intelligentsia stratum of the Iranian community in Azerbaijan headed by the Iranian Consulate immediately reacted to this event.

In the end of 1917 the Azerbaijani Committee of the Iranian Democratic Party was organized. The founders of this party, Haji Mirza Taghi Jafarzadeh, Mirza Abdulla Abdullazadeh, Hasanzadeh, Mirza Bagi Azerbaijani and Ajdar Alizadeh, were the leaders and the most active members of the Iranian school “Ittihad” opened long since in Baku. In 1918 the party started to edit its newspaper, “Azerbaijan-jozve lainfek-e Iran” (Azerbaijan is an inseparable part of Iran). In the publications of the newspaper, which marked itself as a political, literary and social paper, articles were published in the Farsi and Azerbaijani languages. The newspaper clearly kept the line of the Iranian statehood, but from a democratic position. In the gazette the

problems of the Iranian community in the Caucasus were widely discussed as well. Only 13 issues of this paper were published. (23)

Despite the differences in the political stand of the “Adalet” party and the Democratic Party, the main object of both these organizations was the Iranian Consulate and the third political party of the Iranians in Baku “Istiglale Iran and ittihade Islam” (Liberation of Iran and Islamic Unity). Created by the Iranian nobility and affluent stratum of the Iranians living in Baku, this party didn't have its own political leaders. Formed around the Iranian Consulate in Baku, it carried on a struggle against other Iranian political organizations, particularly the “Adalet” party, trying to guard against the influence of the left-wing forces. (24)

But if Azerbaijan governmental circles managed to solve the problems and misunderstandings among them, the Iranian consulate and the bourgeois/intelligentsia strata of the Iranian community, the case was somewhat different in relation to active members and political organizations of Iranian workers. The latter, closely collaborating with Russian and Azerbaijani Bolshevik organizations, openly spoke against the policy of ‘Musavatist government’ (‘Musavat’ - (Equality) - Azerbaijan National Party) as they embodied the government circles of ADR, considering them the bek-khan's power, i.e. estimating them as Bolsheviks not from a national, but a class perspective.

The period of 1919-1920 was a stormy time of flourishing of many-sided activities in the Iranian community, which was simultaneously torn by open political struggle. At that time, on the one hand, educational and charitable organizations of the Iranians were established anew (one of them issued its own newspaper, Seda-i Iran (Voice of Iran) in Baku. (25)

On the whole in both Baku and Ganja and other cities of the Caucasus--Tbilisi, Batumi, Vladikavkaz, and Irevan-- charitable societies of the Iranians existed which were occupied with extensive educational and charitable activities among their countrymen.

The Iranian schools continued their activities in Baku both as general education schools (Ittikhad, Tameddun) and evening schools for adults (Taraggi, Saadat, and Vatan) as well as in other cities of Azerbaijan: in Ganja (Akhmedie) and in Lenkoran (Bekhdjet). In addition, schools existed in Tbilisi (Ittifag), Batumi (Nidjat), Vladikavkaz (Novruz), and Astrakhan (Mozaffari). (26)

In Baku and Tbilisi, the theoretical troupes of Iranians began to arise who prepared small performances jointly with Azerbaijani artists. These joint theatrical troupes often went on tour to various cities of Iran. (27)

In the press of this period, both Iranian and Azerbaijani materials abound telling of the very active socio-cultural life of the Iranian community.

On the other hand, there was opposition of separate strata both among the Iranian community itself and between the different forces of this community and political forces of Iran and the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic.

Thus, the Iranian social-democratic organization Adalat began to call itself the Iranian Communist Party. Adalat issued the daily paper *Khuriyat* (Freedom) – (73 editions were published which openly spoke out against the Bolshevik positions, defended the interests of the working class, putting forward the revolutionary slogans in which it saw decisions of many problems set before the working class of Iran. In addition, expressing solidarity with the communist organizations of Russia and Azerbaijan, *Khuriyat* openly criticized all the measures of the Azerbaijan government including those which were directed towards improvement of workers' conditions. (Most of the local workers, Muslims, supported the national government). (28)

In its turn, the Azerbaijan government took measures for preventing the struggle of the communist organizations, namely a strike movement that had done great harm to the country's economy, and made an attempt to find a common language with Muslim political organizations including the Iranian ones, convincing them of the democratic character of its power. It testified to freedom of speech, assembly, and consciousness existing in the country which were used to a full extent by Iranian organizations deprived of this possibility in their own motherland.

Uncompromising and almost hostile relations were also observed between the left-wing forces of Iran and other Iranian political and public organizations existing in the Caucasus, particularly in Baku, which sometimes turned into open armed conflict. It should be noted that the most popular political figures of Azerbaijan, whose authority was recognized both by Iranian groups such as Nariman Narimanov and Mammad Emin Rasulzadeh, often spoke as arbiters attempting to solve conflicts in the Iranian community which had deep social and class roots. (29)

At the same time, tens of thousands of Persian subjects not entirely involved in the political and social passions storming around them lived their everyday lives, gradually integrating into Azerbaijani society. As ethnic Azerbaijani Turks, they often married local Muslim women, i.e. Azerbaijani women, and thus preferred not to return to their historical motherland. Despite certain difficulties, the economic, socio-cultural conditions in the Caucasus were more attractive for them than in Iran, which was backward in every respect. It was mainly this factor that determined the further destiny of the Caucasian Iranians.

In April 1920, the power in the Caucasian Azerbaijan was changed, i.e. the first independent Azerbaijan Democratic Party was overthrown with the aid of the Russian Red Army, and the Soviet power was established. This great event indeed radically changed not only the political situation in the Caucasus and the life of the Caucasian Azerbaijan. It reflected on a state of both the Iranian community, on the whole, and every Persian subject individually.

Thus, in the very first days of these events, the Iranian communist workers attacked the Persian Consulate in Baku and other cities of the Caucasus, declaring that henceforth they would represent the interests of the Iranians. In its turn, the new power immediately set to nationalization and requisition of the property of prosperous strata of a society in the course of which the Persian citizens, in particular hundreds of Persian merchants, had suffered. There commenced a mass departure of Persian citizens to Iran, particularly well-to-do ones, frightened by the actions of the new authorities. Some Iranian workers returned to their land as well. Occupation of the buildings of Persian consulates, and the first actions of the communist power, namely requisition of the goods and properties of the Persian merchants, had played a rather negative role in the perception of the new power among a great number of the Iranians and formed a public opinion in all of Iran against the Bolsheviks' regime.

Other Persian subjects who collaborated with the Bolsheviks and actively participated in the establishment of a new power decided to stay in their new homeland on which they had pinned so many hopes. In addition, tens of thousands of Persian subjects who had not joined either group of Persian subjects remained in Azerbaijan. They were ordinary workers and were distant from socio-political activities; they had already linked their destiny with Caucasian Azerbaijan long ago.

The first stage and then a whole epoch ended in the lives of the Iranian community in the Caucasus, particularly in Azerbaijan, where they always constituted a considerable majority compared with the other Caucasian republics and were distinguished by special political and social activity.

The years 1920-1940 make up the second stage in history of migration and the Iranian community in the Caucasus. This period does not relate to the subject of the present research; however, we think to touch briefly upon it to complete this study; many destinies in this generation of the Iranian community are connected with the Soviet period as well. At the moment of establishing the Soviet power in Azerbaijan, in April 1920, 60 thousand of so-called "Persians" lived in the Republic.

This figure is only approximate; according to the documents of the Peoples Commissariat of Education referring to the middle of 1920, the number of the Persian subjects fluctuates from 250.000 (in conformity with the data of the census of the population in 1917) to 60,000 (according to an inquiry of Narcompros on the quantity of the national minorities by uyezds (districts) of the republic. (30)

Right up to the beginning of the 30's, the Persian subjects in Azerbaijan made an attempt to preserve their community in a form that was supported by the new Soviet power in the first years. Until 1931, the Persian school "Ittikhad" existed, Iranian mosques functioned, and the Persian subjects were included in the list of national minorities and certain arrangements of elucidative character were carried out among them. However, a campaign on admittance of the foreign inhabitants to the citizenship of the republic they lived in started in 1925 not only in Azerbaijan but all over the Soviet land, and this affected the Persian subjects too. This campaign, which had a voluntary nature at first, had already acquired a compulsory character by the beginning of the 30's. In 1930-32, tens of thousands of Persian subjects, mainly highly affluent, left Azerbaijan. Foreseeing the approaching events, they successfully sold the fortunes they had earned for decades and returned safely to their land. The further destiny of the generations of the Persian subjects who decided to stay in Soviet Azerbaijan to whom they were related by political, social, everyday and spiritual ties turned out differently.

Some of them were able to integrate into Soviet society when they were forced to become Soviet citizens, and then to achieve a high standing in the spheres of policy, economics, culture, science, literature, etc.

The other Persian subjects who did not become Soviet citizens, or merely preserved their Iranian passports, were exposed to repressions of a different kind beginning in the 1930's which reached their peak in 1937-1939 assuming the name 'Stalin's repressions': the tens of thousands of Iranians who had become Soviet citizens were deported to Iran; thousands of former Persian peasant subjects living in Azerbaijani regions neighboring Iran had been Soviet citizens from before but nevertheless were exiled to Kazakhstan and Siberia. More than two thousand Iranian communists, revolutionaries, activists, and representatives of the intelligentsia who honestly served the communist idea were shot as 'Iranian spies.' In the other Soviet republics of the Caucasus, Georgia and Armenia, where the number of Iranians was much lower, the same processes were taking place.

After 'Stalin's repressions,' the Iranian community both in Azerbaijan and other republics ceased to exist.

In conclusion, it should be underlined that we consider the first stage of mass Iranian migration (1880-1920) as of great importance in the socio-political and economic history of Iran.

Presenting an important socio-economic phenomenon in itself, this migration, by its periodicity and the mass quantity of the Iranian subjects who chose the Caucasus as their permanent residence, promoted the development of Iranian-Russian relations, economies, trade, etc. On the other hand, an impetuous socio-political life in the Caucasus was gradually drawing Iranian migrants too. The strong social and political stratification taking place among the Iranian migrants in the beginning of the XIX century directly influenced the fortunes of the generations of Iranian subjects on the whole, enveloped in the migratory wave. Some of the Iranian migrants, mainly the representatives of petty and middle bourgeoisie, intelligentsia and traders/merchants, who lived in the big cities of the Caucasus, particularly in Baku and Tbilisi, under the immediate influence of socio-cultural and political processes taking place in this region of Russia in the commencement of the XX century, were developing an active social activity which was expressed as the formation of various social, political and cultural propagandist organizations, editing newspapers and journals, and opening schools and libraries. This very group of Iranian migrants played a great role in the penetration of the ideas of freedom, democracy and revolution into Iranian society, in particular in 1905-1911, the years of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution. The other group of Iranian migrants, larger in number, who were workers became more active participants of the working movement of the Caucasus, gradually coping with the proletarian ideology. Under direct leadership of the Caucasian Bolsheviks, they also began to organize their party organizations and media. The majority of them linked their destinies with the Soviet state forever.

It should be noted in particular that, after establishment of the Soviet power in Azerbaijan starting in 1920, Soviet Russia, Soviet Azerbaijan and Comintern relied on this group of Iranian migrants in their Iranian policy.

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## Summary

### **A Community in Turmoil: The Iranians of the Caucasus and the Russian Revolutions (1900-1920)**

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The history of the formation of the Iranian Community in Azerbaijan traces back to the South Caucasian region's inclusion as part of the Russian Empire in the beginning of the XIX century under the Gulistan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828) treaties after the Iran-Russia Wars. The Iranian community in the Caucasus region was shaped by a long history of political influences and resulting migrations to the Caucasus, twenty years of which are analyzed in this article. The 1880-1920 migrations promoted the development of Iranian-Russian relations, economies, trade, etc. On the other hand, an impetuous socio-political life in the Caucasus was gradually drawing Iranian migrants too. The strong social and political stratification taking place among the Iranian migrants in the beginning of the XIX century directly influenced the fortunes of the generations of Iranian subjects on the whole, enveloped in the migratory wave. The conclusion is drawn that the first stage of mass Iranian migration (1880-1920) as of great importance in the socio-political and economic history of Iran.

**Key Words:** *Iranian Community, South Caucasian, Russian Empire, Gulistan and Turkmenchay treaties, Iranian migration*