

# The Issue of the Independence of the Peoples of the Caucasus in the Journal *Yeni Kafkasya*

## *Yeni Kafkasya* Dergisinde Kafkasya Halklarının Bağımsızlık Sorunu

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### ABSTRACT

*Yeni Kafkasya* [The New Caucasus] is the journal of the Azerbaijani emigrant press organ in Türkiye and has always held onto the idea of independence and unity of the peoples of the Caucasus. The main purposes of the magazine were to inform readers about the negative impacts of the Bolshevik occupation and to promote the unity of the peoples of the Caucasus and the idea of “the Caucasus House” in the struggle for independence against Bolshevism. The published papers, news articles, and poems were aimed at influencing Turkish public opinion, with the general idea being widely propagated that the Bolshevik government in the Caucasus could be ended as a result of unifying the peoples living there. Studies have shown the papers, news articles, and poems published in *Yeni Kafkasya* to have been one of the means by which the peoples of the Caucasus would not lose their ideas of independence and maintain their determination to fight on this path. Studies have also revealed the literature and the press to have been extremely important for the cooperation and integrity of the peoples of the Caucasus under modern conditions.

**Keywords:** Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Emigration press, *Yeni Kafkasya*, Peoples of the Caucasus

### ÖZ

Türkiye’deki Azerbaycan muhaceret basın organı olan *Yeni Kafkasya*, Kafkasya halklarının bağımsızlığı ve birliği fikrini her zaman gündemde tutmuştur. *Yeni Kafkasya*’nın yayınlanmasının temel amacı, okuyucuları Bolşevik işgalinin sonuçları hakkında bilgilendirmek, bu duruma karşı mücadelede ve bağımsızlık uğrunda Kafkasya halklarının birliğini ve “Kafkas Evi” fikrini teşvik etmektir. Yayınlanan makale, haber ve şiirler, Türk kamuoyunu etkilemeyi, Kafkasya halklarının bağımsızlığını hazırlamayı ve muhacirlerin bağımsızlık fikrini unutturmamayı amaçlıyordu. Dergide Kafkasya’daki Bolşevik hükümetinin burada yaşayan halkların birliği sayesinde sona erdirilebileceği fikri de ileri sürülüyordu. Yapılan araştırmalar, *Yeni Kafkasya* dergisinde yayınlanan makale, haber ve şiirlerin Kafkasya halklarının bağımsızlık düşüncelerinin kaybolmamasında ve bu yolda mücadele etme kararlılıklarının muhafaza edilmesinde araçlardan biri olduğunu göstermiştir. Çalışmalar, edebiyat ve basının Kafkasya halklarının modern koşullarda da işbirliğinin ve bütünlüğünün sağlanması için son derece önemli olduğunu ortaya koymuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkiye, Azerbaycan, Muhaceret Basını, *Yeni Kafkasya*, Kafkasya Halkları

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## Introduction

After Bolshevik Russia's occupation of Azerbaijan in April 1920, the state's independence was terminated and the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic was established. After its Sovietization, prominent Azerbaijani statesmen and politicians were forced to emigrate, and they first took refuge in Türkiye. This was not without reason. Türkiye was a sibling country, and due to sharing a border with Azerbaijan, these people could get information about the events happening there. Meanwhile, the political immigrants believed that the Bolshevik government would soon be overthrown and that they would be able to return home. They sought ways to convey the heavy consequences of the Bolshevik occupation to the Turkish community, to propagate the idea of independence to the peoples of the Caucasus, and to unite their efforts, understanding unity could be effective in the fight against the occupation. After the cooling of Soviet-Turkish relations at the Lausanne Conference in 1923, the *Yeni Kafkasya* [The New Caucasus] magazine was published in Istanbul in that same year to promote the idea of the independence and unity of the peoples of the Caucasus, publishing 95 issues between 1923-1927.

The articles published by Azerbaijani political emigrants and intellectuals in the magazine played an exceptional role in keeping the independence of the peoples of the Caucasus in mind and promoting their unity. These articles explained the grave consequences of the Bolshevik occupation for the peoples of the Caucasus, promoted the need to put an end to it and work together to gain independence, and emphasized that such a union could be the Caucasus House.

As is known, reading the *Yeni Kafkasya* magazine was prohibited in Azerbaijan during the Soviet period. Only after the state's independence was restored did the first research works into this field begin to be written. The research articles from Abid Tahirli<sup>1</sup> and Badirkhan Ahmadov<sup>2</sup> studied the emergence, stages of development, journalistic problems, and personalities of the Azerbaijani immigrant press and literature.

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1 Abid Tahirli, *Azərbaycan mühacirət mətbuatı*, 1-ci hissə, Bakı, Grapp poligraf, 2002; Abid Tahirli, *Azərbaycan mühacirət mətbuatı*. 2-ci hissə, Bakı, Ozan, 2003; Abid Tahirli, "Azərbaycan mühacirət mətbuatı tarixində "Yeni Qafqasya" jurnalının mövqeyi", *525-ci qəzet*, No.7, 11 yanvar 2003; Abid Tahirli, *Azərbaycan mühacirət mətbuatında publisistika (1921-1991)*, Bakı, CBS, 2005.

2 Bədirxan Əhmədli, *Azərbaycan mühacirət ədəbiyyatı: təşəkkülü, problemləri, şəxsiyyətləri*, Bakı, Elm və təhsil, 2017.

Unlike in Azerbaijan, the magazine had great interest in in Türkiye. Yavuz Akpınar,<sup>3</sup> Yılmaz Özkaya,<sup>4</sup> Adam Can,<sup>5</sup> and other prominent literary critics studied the Azerbaijani emigrant literature and press, including *Yeni Kafkasya*. Yavuz Akpınar, Selçuk Türkyılmaz, and Yılmaz Özkaya considered the magazine to be important and prepared it for publication in 2018 by Teas Press.<sup>6</sup> Yavuz Akpınar has provided information about the magazine, its owner, management, responsible persons, private issues, and authors in his article about the publication and deeply analyzed its purpose, schedule, and ideological line<sup>7</sup> and asks about the extent to which *Yeni Kafkasya* had achieved its goal and how much it had served its beliefs. According to Yavuz Akpınar, researchers have the duty to answer these questions and determine the real place of the magazine within the political and cultural history of Azerbaijan and the Turkic world after the passing of nearly a century since its publication.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the fact that a number of studies have been conducted on *Yeni Kafkasya*, unexplored issues still remain. Although many papers, news articles, and poems dedicated to the idea of independence and unity of the peoples of the Caucasus had been published in the journal, they have yet to be comprehensively researched in Azerbaijani literary studies. Therefore, studying this problem is relevant in terms of literature, press history, and modernity.

The purpose of writing this article is to study the reflection of the idea of unity and independence of the peoples of the Caucasus in *Yeni Kafkasya* in the struggle against the policy pursued by Bolshevik Russia after the occupation of the Caucasus.

The main goal of the article is to show the activity of the Azerbaijani emigration press in preserving and promoting the idea of the independence and unity of the peoples of the Caucasus through the case of *Yeni Kafkasya*. In order to achieve this goal, the article describes the reasons for creating the magazine; its tasks; the idea of the independence and unity of the peoples of the Caucasus; the uprisings against the Soviet

3 Yavuz Akpınar, “Azeri Edebiyatı”, *Azərbaycan mühacirət ədəbiyyatı: reallıqlar, problemlər, vəziyyətlər. II Beynəlxalq Konfransın materialları*, Bakı, 10-11 oktyabr 2016, Bakı, Elm və təhsil, 2016; Yavuz Akpınar, “Yeni Kafkasya’ya Umumi Bir Bakış”, *Yeni Kafkasya*, 1. Yıl 1923-1924, S.1-24, Neşre Haz. Yavuz Akpınar, Selçuk Türkyılmaz, Yılmaz Özkaya, İstanbul, TEAS Yayıncılık, 2018, p. XXIII-XXXVI.

4 Yılmaz Özkaya, “Yeni Kafkasya Dergisinde Azərbaycan Edebiyatı Məsələləri”, *Azərbaycan mühacirət ədəbiyyatı: reallıqlar, problemlər, vəziyyətlər; II Beynəlxalq Konfransın materialları*, Bakı, 10-11 oktyabr 2016, Bakı: Elm və təhsil, 2016, pp. 247–259.

5 Adem Can, “Yeni Kafkasya Mecmuası”, *Bilgi*, S.41, 2007, pp. 110–115.

6 Yavuz Akpınar-Selçuk Türkyılmaz-Yılmaz Özkaya, *Yeni Kafkasya*, İstanbul, TEAS Yayıncılık, 2018.

7 Yavuz Akpınar, “Yeni Kafkasya’ya Umumi Bir...” , p.XXIII-XXXVI.

8 Yavuz Akpınar, “Yeni Kafkasya’ya Umumi Bir...” , p. XXXVI.

government; the economic, educational, language, and religious policies of the Bolshevik government in the Caucasus; and the exposure of the lies of the Bolshevik propaganda and analyzes the papers, news articles, and poems dedicated to these issues.

Research has shown the literature and press to have been two important factors in the national struggle and unity of all peoples of the Caucasus in the contemporary period.

### **The reasons and main goals for creating the Azerbaijani emigrant press in Türkiye**

The executions and confiscation of property by pro-independence supporters after Bolshevik Russia invaded Azerbaijan sparked mass protests. Rebellions against the Soviet government took place against almost all incidents in Azerbaijan, with the Soviet army ruthlessly suppressing the uprisings. Political asylum seekers in Türkiye were aware of these atrocities but could not communicate them to the wider Turkish community. Due to the heavy war of independence, the Turkish government did not have the opportunity to create favorable conditions for the activities of Azerbaijani political emigration.

The Turkish people won the war of independence, with the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne on July 24, 1923 marking the official end of the war. Shortly afterwards, the Republic of Türkiye was established, and relations between the USSR and Türkiye had grown cold at the Lausanne conference, and the Soviet press afterward increased its publishing of anti-Turkish articles. The Bolshevik government continued to ruthlessly destroy the supporters of independence in Azerbaijan and the Caucasus as a whole, and from this situation, the Turkish government created favorable conditions for the activities of Azerbaijani political emigration. At the initiative of the prominent sociopolitical and state figure of Azerbaijan Mohammad Amin Rasulzade in September 1923, the magazine *Yeni Kafkasya* began being published in Istanbul. The magazine's title had no relation with Soviet Russia's new policy on the Caucasus. The title was not geographical but rather spiritual. The term "Yeni" [new] was used in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to refer to the revolutionary movements that had engulfed Russia, Türkiye, Iran, and the East as a whole and aimed to establish order for the peoples based on freedom, justice, and democracy. The best example of this was the establishment of the Turkish Republic. According to the founders of the magazine, the peoples of the Caucasus would gain their independence by following the path of Türkiye. In order to be free, people had to fight hard against the occupation of Soviet Russia. Because of the difficulty of

struggling alone, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Dagestan, Georgia, Crimea, Idil-Ural, and Turkestan Turks had to unite. The goals were realistic, not romantic, because Bolshevik Russia had occupied all of the Caucasus and Turkestan and put an end to the existence of independent states by shooting freedom fighters, imprisoning them, and sending them into exile, and these activities were ruthlessly continued. The joint struggle would deal a heavy blow to the occupying Bolshevik Russia, as well as to Turkish and world public opinion. Therefore, the main purposes of the magazine were to inform the emigrants and the Turkish community about the situation after the loss of Azerbaijan's independence as a state due to the Bolshevik occupation, to prevent the idea of independence from being forgotten, and to promote the idea of knowledge of the peoples of the Caucasus.

The first issue of the magazine published an article by M. A. Rasulzade titled "Prometheus on Fire" under the pen name of Azeri. The author's goals were to unite the peoples of the Caucasus against Bolshevik oppression and to explain the need for independence. This idea was reflected in the title and content of the article, which strongly objected to the occupation policy of Bolshevik Russia in Azerbaijan and the entire Caucasus, as well as its consequences. The article wrote about how the force that would ensure the freedom of the peoples of the Caucasus could not be an innovation in the guise of a Russian soldier. By using the phrase "innovation in the guise," the author revealed how the Soviet policy was no different from that of the tsarist era. Although the regime had changed, the Soviet government still maintained the tsarist policy, just in new ways. By considering the freedom of the peoples of the Caucasus, the author wrote how the Caucasus of the day was not the eagle of Russia but its sickle. The article asked that, if the people of Azerbaijan, Dagestan, and Georgia do not get crushed under the eagle, a symbol of black imperialism, but by the hammer and sickle, a sign of Russian imperialism, how would that benefit the new Caucasus?<sup>9</sup> The author wrote how tsarism had currently been replaced by another power in Russia. Although this power had changed not only the eagle but also all aspects of tsarism, its meaning and content had not changed. As a result, no difference was found between the former Russian government under the tsarist regime with that of the current Caucasus government in terms of the true freedom and power of the nations of the Caucasus.<sup>10</sup> The article went on to say how the establishment of Caucasian governments and their sincere and close alliances would be in Türkiye's favor.

9 Mehmet Emin Resulzade, "Ateş Çalan Promete", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.1, 1923, p. 3.

10 Mehmet Emin Resulzade, "Ateş Çalan...", p. 4.

When writing the phrase “Eagle Russia,” the author implied the two-headed eagle that had been on the coat of arms of Tsarist Russia, and when using the phrase “sickle Russia,” he implied the sickle and hammer that was now on the flag and coat of arms of Soviet Russia.

The article outlined the emigrants’ ideas of the Caucasus House and Prometheus. The author likened the fire rising to the skies from the shores of the Caspian Sea to Prometheus, the hero of Greek mythology. He wrote that *Yeni Kafkasya* would continue to work to ensure that Turkish public opinion did not remain indifferent to these issues. The magazine looked at the Caucasus issue more broadly as an issue that concerned the whole East.

The first issue the magazine published in its third year stated that a New Caucasus had to be established in the form of a Caucasian confederation in order to free the nations of the Caucasus from Russian captivity and to resist future Russian occupation. Like Tsarist Russia, the magazine fought against Russian imperialism and saw Bolshevik Russia as an obstacle to the Turkic world and an enemy of the Caucasus.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, *Yeni Kafkasya* as the press organ of Azerbaijan’s political emigration undertook promoting the unity of the peoples of the Caucasus in the struggle against the Bolshevik regime for independence.

### **Destruction of the proponents of independence in the magazine**

After Tsarist Russia invaded the Caucasus in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the people fought against colonialism in its various forms. The declarations of independent states for the Azerbaijani, Georgian, and Armenian peoples in 1918 was also the conclusion to this struggle. Even after Bolshevik Russia invaded Azerbaijan and Armenia in 1920 and then Georgia in 1921, their independence supporters did not reconcile with the Soviet government, and their struggle was reflected in *Yeni Kafkasya*.

From its first issues, the magazine began playing the role of a tribune, not only for the Azerbaijani Turks but for the peoples of the Caucasus as a whole. The magazine covered a wide range of content and geography and published news articles, sociopolitical articles, and literary texts on various aspects of the life of the peoples of the Caucasus. The article “Persecution in Azerbaijan” stated how the Bolsheviks were oppressing the foundations of Turkism and that Turkish public opinion could not remain

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11 Mehmet Emin Resulzade, “Üçüncü Yıl Başında”, *Yeni Kafkasya*, No. 1, 1925, p. 3.

indifferent to their oppression. The article associated the brutal policy pursued against the Azerbaijani Turks with the Soviet government's fear of rebellion.

The pages of the magazine explained the essence of Bolshevik policy and the importance of establishing a union of the peoples of the North Caucasus in the struggle against their occupation. The article "Situation in Georgia" was published in the first issue of the magazine under the pen name of The Georgian and spoke of Russia's occupation of Georgia nine months after its occupation of Azerbaijan, the brutal suppression of the uprisings by the Russian occupying army, and the deportation of many Muslims to Russia. In addition to the arrests and executions, the article also reflected upon Soviet Russia's economic plunder of Georgia. Drawing attention to the deplorable situation, the author wrote how the wealth of Georgia had been loaded in wagons and transported to Russia since the beginning of the occupation and how punitive squads had been ravaging the countries.<sup>12</sup> The article stated that, despite the strength of the Red Russian army and despite the weakness of the Georgian military, the author never loses hope that Georgia will win and that the Georgian people will constantly oppose the Russian occupying army.

That article was important not only in terms of knowing what the consequences of the Soviet occupation meant for Georgia but also in terms of being an example of the solidarity of the Georgian people and the Azerbaijani people in the struggle against the occupation of Bolshevik Russia. Georgia's independence was just as important as Azerbaijan's independence.

Elif Celik's article "The North Caucasus Republic" provided information about the North Caucasus Republic Bolshevik Russia had occupied and stated how the occupation of Dagestan would not last long. According to the author, the existence of a single mountainous republic was dangerous for the Bolsheviks, and the Soviet government had artificially divided the territory of the North Caucasus, which in fact was religiously, historically, traditionally, and socially united. The article also stated that the peoples of Dagestan would never give up their independence, and the republics the Ingush, Chechens, Kabardians, and others had created was their right and they would fight for it. According to the author, if the Dagestanis became independent, they would be able to provide for themselves economically. The article also stated how Bolshevik Russia had divided the peoples of the Caucasus as follows:

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12 Gürcü, "Gürcistan'da vaziyet", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.1, 1923, p. 12.



*At this rate, the Bolsheviks have divided the population of the North Caucasus into six parts and given each of these parts different rights and forms from the autonomous region to the republic. The sun of freedom will shine again and illuminate the mountains of the Caucasus. We believe in the future of such a sacred hour.*<sup>13</sup>

The article “What the Bolsheviks Said and Did in the North Caucasus” revealed the inner workings of Bolshevik policy and provided concrete facts about how their words and deeds did not coincide. The author wrote how the actions of the Bolsheviks were completely in opposition to what they had once said. For example, the Bolsheviks acted in contradiction with their statement that nations should determine their own destiny. Explaining on the essence of this issue, the author also noted how the Bolsheviks’ governance of the North Caucasus was a clear example of this. The Bolsheviks had at one time spoken of the self-government of the peoples of the North Caucasus, but now were saying something completely different. The article went on to state how the Bolsheviks had promised national independence in a declaration addressed to the Caucasus highlanders by the Russian People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs Georgi Chicherin in order to attract and join the regal population of the North Caucasus in the struggle against Denikin. This right was promised in a private letter written by Dr. Nariman Narimanov as a representative of the leadership of the Soviet Union to the Sheikh of Dagestan, Najmaddin Molla. The Bolsheviks attracted the peoples of the Caucasus to their side and defeated General Denikin. However, Bolshevik Russia did not fulfill its promise.<sup>14</sup>

The article “Bolshevik Terror in Azerbaijan” emphasized how the Bolsheviks had ruthlessly killed the supporters of independence,<sup>15</sup> particularly noting how the Soviet government did not spare such people.

The article “How Georgian Nationalists Sacrifice Their Lives” wrote about how the intellectuals, enlighteners, and officers in Georgia had sacrificed their lives for national liberation, many of whom were shot by Russians. The author wrote the names of Georgian generals, officers, and intellectuals and emphasized how the Georgian people had suffered greatly to save their country from Russian occupation. When the occupying army of the Bolshevik Russia executed these people, they even said with their last breaths that they had sacrificed their lives for the independence of Georgia: “You know very well that we are dying for the Motherland. Long live Georgia!”<sup>16</sup>

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13 Elif Çelik, “Şimali Kafkasya Cumhuriyeti”, *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.2, 1923, p. 13.

14 Elif Çelik, “Şimali Kafkasya...” p. 13.

15 “Azerbaycan-da Bolşevik terörü”, *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.2, 1923, p. 9.

16 Gürcü, “Gürcü Milletperverleri Nasıl Fedayi-Can Ediyorlar”, *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.2, 1923, p. 10.



*With these words, they declared that they were not afraid of death and that their deaths were the key to the victory of Georgia's independence. The author stated how the head of the special military counter-intelligence department of the 11th Red Army occupying Azerbaijan, Semyon Pankratov, who had served as deputy chairman of the Extraordinary Commission in Tbilisi when the Transcaucasian Federation had been established in 1922, could not block the road to independence: "Georgian patriots were killed in this way. Their deaths had a profound effect on the whole of Georgia. The memory of the heroes and the love of the nation will live forever in the hearts of the Georgian nation."<sup>17</sup>*

The article "Russian Bolsheviks in Adjara" stated that, when the Moscow Treaty had been signed between Russia and Türkiye on March 16, 1921, the Russian Bolsheviks had also occupied Batumi and Adjara. Drawing attention to how Bolshevik Russia pretended to be close to the Adjarians but had in fact violated the national rights of the Adjar people and pursued a completely different policy, the author wrote that the treaty was to follow with local self-government. However, this issue remained only on paper, with the Russian Bolsheviks taking lands from owners under nationalization and giving it to whomever they wanted. At the same time, they destroyed and ruined the agriculture in Adjara.<sup>18</sup>

The magazine also published short stories about the events in the Caucasus. The purpose of providing such information was to bring to the attention of immigrants and foreign media the threat of terror and arrest against the forces fighting for independence, a force that had not reconciled with the Bolshevik occupational regime in the country. Immigrants received such information through their reliable channels. Because of the strict censorship in the country and how the Bolshevik press kept everything secret, this information was not disseminated in the press.

The article "The Second Annexation of Transcaucasia" described the grave consequences of the second occupation of the Caucasus, the presence of revolts against the occupation, and the fact that the peoples would not reconcile with this occupation.<sup>19</sup>

One report titled "In Georgia" reported on how Cheka had recently arrested former Agriculture Minister Noah Homerici in Tbilisi (Georgia), which had caused a stir.<sup>20</sup> Details of the circumstances under which Noah Homerici had been arrested were later published in the article "Persecution in Georgia." The article clearly shows that Noah

17 Gürcü, "Gürcü Milletperverleri...", p. 11.

18 "Acaristanda Rus Bolşevikleri", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.6, 1923, p. 16.

19 Gürcü, "Mavera'yi Kafkas'ın İkinci Defa İlhaki", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.4, 1923, p. 4.

20 "Gürcistan'da", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.5, 1923, p. 16.

Homerici had written a book on land reform during Georgia's independence and had had it legally translated into French. However, this process had been banned following the Bolshevik occupation. The article noted that Noah Homerici, who had once fought against Tsarist Russia, was now fighting the Bolshevik invasion and that the Bolsheviks had worked hard to arrest him and had finally achieved what they wanted.<sup>21</sup>

The magazine reported on how the Soviet government had killed 3,000 people in Georgia, calling it a bloody Russian invasion.<sup>22</sup> It specifically commemorated Noah Homerici's assassination.<sup>23</sup>

The article "The Truth about the Bolshevik" revealed the essence of the Bolsheviks' Eastern policy and wrote about how the Eastern question was not a goal but a means for the Bolsheviks, who had not keep the promises they had made during the occupation of the Caucasus Republics.<sup>24</sup>

In an article summarizing activities in 1923 in the magazine's first issue of 1924, M.A. Rasulzade analyzed the situation in the Caucasus and wrote about how the Caucasus had been covered in blood and how the whole Caucasus including Georgia had become hell. The articles published in the magazine influenced Turkish public opinion over the years and covered not only the Caucasus, but also Türkiye and the East.<sup>25</sup>

The Bolshevik occupation of Azerbaijan in April 1920 was considered a black day in Turkish history. Azerbaijan had been noted to be a Turkic country and the heart between the Turkestan wing of the Turkic world and the Anatolian wing, not only in uniting the Turks in the southwest, but also as the shortest path between Europe and Asia. Although the Bolsheviks declared an independent Soviet Azerbaijan, they soon turned it into one of the provinces of the Soviet Union. The article expressed hope that a nation of selfless youth would take revenge and that Azerbaijan would become independent.<sup>26</sup> On May 28, 1918, articles dedicated to the Republic of Azerbaijan expressed the belief that the Azerbaijani youth would succeed in the struggle for independence.<sup>27</sup> In this regard, the published article "Appeal to the People of Azerbaijan" emphasized, "Long live

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21 "Gürcistan'da Tazyikat", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.6, 1923, p. 15.

22 Azeri, "Gürcistan Kurbanları", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.3, 1924, p. 4.

23 Azeri, "Noe Homeriki", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.3, 1924, p. 5.

24 Ali Merdan Topçibaşı, "Bolşevikler Hakkında Hakikat", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.7, 1923, p. 11.

25 Mehmet Emin Resulzade, "İkinci Yıla Gecerken", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.1, 1924, p. 3.

26 "Türk Tarihinde Kara Bir Gün. 27 Nisan 1920", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.15, 1924, p. 2.

27 "1918-28 Mayıs-1925. Azerbaycan Misak-ı Millisi", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.17, 1925, p. 3.

Azerbaijan's independence, may the Russian occupation leave, long live populism, long live Turkism, down with oppression, and off with Russification.”<sup>28</sup>

The article “Political Situation in Georgia,” again under the pen name of The Georgian, stated how the Georgian people believe they will gain independence, despite all of Moscow's harsh policies. Criticizing the policy of European states on this matter, the author noted how the Europeans had said that they had no choice but to surrender to the Bolsheviks and had not helped the Georgian people.<sup>29</sup>

### **Information about the uprisings against the Soviet government in the magazine**

In the past, the peoples of the Caucasus had fought against the occupation of Tsarist Russia in various forms. The symbols of this armed struggle in the North Caucasus had been Sheikh Mansur and Sheikh Shamil. The armed uprisings in Azerbaijan were also led by religious leaders.

Even after Bolshevik Russia occupied the Caucasus, the pro-independence representatives of these nations did not accept Soviet rule and started to resist in various ways, one being armed uprisings.

*Yeni Kafkasya* also reported on the uprisings against the Soviet government in places such as Ganja, Karabakh, Zagatala, Lankaran, and Guba in Azerbaijan and described the Bolsheviks as having brutally suppressed the uprisings.<sup>30</sup> The magazine also published many articles on the protests against the Bolshevik government. For example, in 1924 in the Garadonlu area of the Salyan district, the villagers revolted and workers at the Bibiheybat oil field went on strike in protest.<sup>31</sup>

The uprising in Georgia was seen as a struggle for independence and emphasized to have had a purely national purpose. This revolt was led by people sleeping in the dungeons of tsarism.<sup>32</sup>

The magazine reported on the uprising against the Soviet government in Dagestan in September 1926, writing how the people had revolted when government tried to disarm

28 “Azerbaycan Halkına Hitab”, *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.17, 1925, p. 9.

29 Gürcü, “Gürcistan'da Siyasi Vaziyet”, *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.3, 1925, p. 13.

30 Sanan, “Azerbaycan'da İsyanlar”, *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.20, 1924, p. 16.

31 “Azerbaycan'da Köylü İsyanları”, *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.5, 1925, p. 12.

32 “Gürcistan İhtilalı, İstiklal Mücadelesidir”, *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.1, 1924, p. 4.

the population, with the government bringing in additional forces to brutally suppress and quell the revolt.<sup>33</sup>

The founders of the magazine believed that the struggle of the peoples of the Caucasus and Central Asia could be more effective as the struggle for independence against Soviet power. Therefore, the magazine also reported on events in Central Asia. One article titled “Uprising in Khiva” wrote how the uprising in the Khorezm People’s Soviet Republic had shown the Bolsheviks to have been unable to get what they wanted<sup>34</sup> and that Bolshevik opponents were present in the Caucasus.<sup>35</sup>

### **Criticism of the Bolshevik government’s economic policy**

As is known, Tsarist Russia had pursued a colonial policy in the Caucasus and plundered its natural resources. The same policy was continued even after the Bolsheviks occupied the Caucasus, to which the Azerbaijani emigration had also objected.

*Yeni Kafkasya* set out to explain the essence of the economic policy of the Bolshevik government, with the article titled “Bolshevik Oppression” stating how Bolsheviks intended to destroy all those who opposed the Bolshevik government, whose economic policy was looting.<sup>36</sup>

The article “Bolshevik Independence in the Caucasus: Moscow’s Economic Policy toward Azerbaijan” analyzed the economic policy of the Soviet government in Azerbaijan and wrote how the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was simply a new form of the former Russian Empire.<sup>37</sup>

Bolshevik Russia not only took away the rights of the peoples of the Caucasus but also carried their natural resources off to Moscow. Azerbaijani oil was ruthlessly plundered and transported to Russia in place of fuel oil ponds. Despite its rich natural resources, the population of Azerbaijan was in a difficult situation as a result of the Soviet occupation policy, while newspapers and magazines published in the USSR promoted the happiness of the peoples of the Caucasus.

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33 “Dağıstan’da İsyân”, *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.4, 1926, p. 15.

34 “Hive’de İsyân”, *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.12, 1924, p. 14.

35 “Kafkasya’da Bolşevizm Aleyhtarlığı”, *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.10, 1927, p. 16.

36 “Bolşevik mezalimi”, *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.6, 1923, p. 3.

37 “Kafkasya’daki Bolşevik İstiklalı. Moskovanın Azerbaycana Tatbik Eykdeyiği İktisadi Siyaset (Vesikaların Şehadeti)”, *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.6, 1923, p. 7.

The magazine wrote about the deplorability of the Soviet government's oil policy, emphasizing that if the budget of Tsarist Russia had been filled with part of Baku's oil, the Soviet government was taking all of Azerbaijan's oil. One report stated that, if Azerbaijan was able to obtain permission from Moscow to use 25% of its oil for agriculture, Azerbaijan's share in oil would be reduced to 5% once the Transcaucasian Republics formed a confederation.<sup>38</sup>

The policy of the Bolshevik government in the Caucasus was considered colonial, with stories being written about facts such as the looting of Azerbaijan's oil wealth in wagons and ships and the transportation of Georgian magnesium to Russia.<sup>39</sup>

The article "Oil, Russia, and Transcaucasia Republics" was published under the pen name of The Caucasian and explained the essence of the Bolsheviks' oil policy in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the North Caucasus. By comparing oil production in Russia before and after World War I, the author drew attention to the growing number of reports about the local population's growing demand for oil, writing how Russia's claim to Azerbaijani oil had been hidden behind these reports and emphasizing that the songs sung about the fact that Russia would not exist without Azerbaijani oil were masks used in every way possible to hide the goals of the occupier Russia.<sup>40</sup> To quote the article, "This crime must finally be stopped; Russia must know that its territory is behind the Caucasus Mountains."

M. B. Mirzazade described in his article the situation in Baku, which had been enslaved by Bolshevik Russia; he revealed the essence of Moscow's oil policy and analyzed the policy of Russification of the Caucasus through facts and figures. He also wrote such phrases as:

*Turkish Baku is dying... Whoever owns Baku has the wealth of Azerbaijan in his hands... The Caspian Sea will also be used by Russia... Turkestan, Tatarstan, Kyrgyzstan, Dagestan, and other Turkic countries will be under Russia's political, economic, cultural, and military influence.*<sup>41</sup>

Moscow's colonial economic policy had placed oil-rich Azerbaijan in a difficult position. One article on the situation in Azerbaijan stated the Soviet government's economic status to be deteriorating, the budget of the Baku Soviet to have a deficit of 2

38 "Azerbaycan'ın Petrolden İntifası", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.6, 1923, p. 15.

39 D.Ş. "Mavera-yı Kafkasyayı Yağma." *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.9, 1924, p. 7.

40 Kafkasyalı, "Neft,Rusya ve Mavera-yı Kafkas Cumhuriyetleri", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.9, 1924, p. 9.

41 Mirza Bala Mehemmedzade, "Rus Esaretinde Türk Bakü", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.11, 1924, p. 5.

million rubles, and taxes to have been raised to maintain the Red Army.<sup>42</sup> Another article stated that Azerbaijan, with its capital in Baku as well as its famous oil, was currently having an oil shortage.<sup>43</sup>

Issues 11-12 of the magazine in 1927 emphasized that the Russians should forget about landing in the Caucasus and give up the idea that Baku oil would remain in Russia: The Caucasus belongs only to the peoples of the Caucasus.<sup>44</sup>

### **Revealing the essence of the Bolshevik government's education, language, and religion policies in the Caucasus**

After occupying the Caucasus, the Bolsheviks reneged on their promise to grant rights on education, language, and religion. This time, the Soviet government continued the Russification that tsarism had implemented earlier with different methods. The peoples of the Caucasus were dissatisfied with such policies from Bolshevik Russia, and their struggles necessitated the creation of unity in thought, language, and effort, just as Ismail Bey Gaspıralı had once said. These issues were also reflected in the emigration press.

The magazine also published articles revealing the essence and goals of the Bolshevik government's policies on education, language, and religion. After the Bolshevik occupation, special attention was paid to the Soviet government's educational and language policies in the Caucasus. The article titled "Latin Alphabet in Azerbaijan" wrote that, despite the declarations of the Bolshevik government, it was suppressing the national languages in the Caucasus and pursuing a policy of Russification.<sup>45</sup>

The magazine reported on the Russification policy in Baku, stating that the Turkish population in the city had dropped to 18%.<sup>46</sup> The magazine revealed the essence of the Soviet educational policy in Azerbaijan and wrote about how Turkish libraries were being suppressed and shut down.<sup>47</sup> Drawing attention to the state of education, one author wrote that the main issues the Bolsheviks preferred for raising children in schools were: no nation, no homeland, no religion, and no family.<sup>48</sup> In doing so, the Soviet

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42 Ali Kemal Azerbaycanlı, "İktisadi Vaziyet", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.1, 1924, p. 15.

43 Azeri, "Azerbaycan'da Petrol Kıtlığı", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.3, 1925, p. 13.

44 Azeri, "Mavera-yı Kafkas ve Rusiya." *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.11-12, 1927, p. 6.

45 Azeri, "Azerbaycan'da Latin Elifbası", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.2, 1923, p. 5.

46 Ayin Kurbankulu, "Bakü'nün Son Vaziyeti", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.2, 1924, p. 13.

47 Mirza Bala Mehemedzade, "Azerbaycan'da Sovyet Maarif Siyaseti", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.2, 1924, p. 5.

48 "Maarif İşleri Ne Halde?", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.4, 1925, p. 16.

government put forth its presence while neglecting the idea of unity and independence. That author emphasized how Turkish demands had been expelled from the university and cleaned up, with almost all of the expelled being final-year students.<sup>49</sup>

Another article stated that only members of the Communist Part taught history in schools. Schoolchildren were trained as pioneers and Komsomol members.<sup>50</sup> The article assessed the use of the Russian language in primary and secondary schools as a policy of Russification and wrote how this had been the same policy as Tsarist Russia.<sup>51</sup>

The magazine described Moscow's actions in Azerbaijan, which were under the guise of a cultural revolution, to actually be Russification.<sup>52</sup>

M. B. Mammadzade's article stressed how the Bolsheviks used Russification to pursue their goal of a national policy in Azerbaijan.<sup>53</sup> The article also noted how this policy was a continuation of another form of the Great Russian chauvinism that tsarism had pursued, with Azerbaijan being Russified and the Russian language increasingly being taught in schools.<sup>54</sup>

The article "Bolsheviks in Adjara" wrote about how the Bolsheviks' education policy in Adjara was completely irreligious, how children were educated in schools in line with a communist pedagogy, and how Turkish books had been banned by the Emergency Commission.<sup>55</sup>

Persecution of believers in Georgia was seen as a manifestation of the Bolshevik policy. The magazine's eighth issue in 1924 condemned the arrest of Georgian Catholics and wrote about how the Georgian Orthodox Church had become independent from the Russian Church 500 years ago.<sup>56</sup>

The magazine also wrote about how Bolshevik Russia had destroyed the language of the peoples of Dagestan and pursued a policy of Russification, noting that Russian was

49 Ayin Kurbankulu, "Azerbaycan'dan mektub. Darülfünun'un Temizlenmesi Neticesi", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.11, 1925, p. 14.

50 "Azerbaycan Ahvali. Maarif siyaseti", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.9, 1925, p. 16.

51 Ayin Kurbankulu, "Azerbaycan'dan mektub...", p. 14.

52 Mirza Bala Mehemmedzade, "Medenileştirme Unvanı Altında Ruslaştırma", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.16, 1926, p. 4.

53 Mirza Bala Mehemmedzade, "Bolşevik Azerbaycan'da Milliyet Siyaseti", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.7, 1926, p. 5.

54 "Rusca Okumalıymış...", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.8, 1926, pp. 2-3

55 Acaralı, "Acaristan'da bolşevikler", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.2, 1923, p. 11.

56 "Gürcistan'da", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.5, 1923, p. 16.



being taught in schools and Russian culture being promoted.<sup>57</sup> One article published in the tenth issue of the magazine in 1927 stated Moscow to be pursuing a policy of Russification in order to eliminate the use of Turkish as a language of communication between peoples speaking different languages in Dagestan. Dagestan's cultural and economic orientation was linked to two places: Russia and Azerbaijan. Many Dagestanis studied in Azerbaijan. Therefore, the Soviet government used all means to cut off this connection and drove the Dagestanis away from Azerbaijan.<sup>58</sup>

Evaluating the magazine's activity, Yavuz Akpınar writes how it had analyzed socialism, Bolshevism, and communism and conveyed to the Turkish and world public opinion the Soviet government's revival of the Russian imperialism as a leftover from the policy of the tsarist era. From this point of view, *Yeni Kafkasya* was more than just a representative of the Azerbaijani press. At the same time, it was the voice of all Turkic peoples and one of the first political opinion magazines to fight against the communist threat and Soviet imperialism in the East.<sup>59</sup>

### **Revealing the essence of the propaganda of the Bolshevik government**

The magazine also commented on the materials of communist newspapers published in the Caucasus. The article "Bolshevik Propaganda in the Caucasus" wrote about how no one knew that the Bolsheviks were good propagandists.<sup>60</sup> The magazine also commented on the materials of communist newspapers published in the Caucasus, arguing the propaganda to be false and to show the true nature of Bolshevik ideology. The magazine used facts to refute the opinions published in propaganda articles in *The Communist*, in *Bakinski Rabochiy* in Azerbaijan, and in *Zarya Vostoka* in Georgia, as well as in the North Caucasus newspapers and the Moscow-based *Pravda* newspaper. Articles published in the Bolshevik press were analyzed and used to criticize the falsity and inconsistency of the figures. Such contradictions were evident in the far-fetched reports of Bolshevik figures in Baku, Tbilisi, and Moscow.

### **Promoting the ideas of independence and unity**

The emigration from Azerbaijan did not separate the consciousness of the peoples of the Caucasus from the struggle for the independence of Azerbaijan. In this regard, Abid

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57 "Dağıstan'da Lisan Meselesi" *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.16, 1925, p. 16.

58 "Dağıstan'da Lisan Meselesi", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.10, 1927, p. 17.

59 Yavuz Akpınar, "Yeni Kafkasya'ya Umumi Bir..." p. XXXV.

60 K(ef), T(e), "Kafkasya'da Bolşevik Propagandası" *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.3, 1923, p. 4.

Tahirli wrote how the Azerbaijani emigrants, who considered the idea of the unity of Caucasus as a part of the ideological struggle for the independence of Azerbaijan, have been its ardent promoters since the beginning of their organized activities.<sup>61</sup>

The importance of unity of the peoples of the Caucasus in ending the Bolshevik occupation and gaining independence was propagated in the pages of the magazine. For example, the article “Dagestan-Azerbaijan Union” wrote about how Dagestanis love Azerbaijanis as their siblings, and up to that point, no disputes had occurred between Azerbaijan and Dagestan.<sup>62</sup>

The magazine covered the differences between the Soviet leadership and wrote about how the leadership would intensify its anti-government protests. The magazine praised how the chairman of the Communist International Grigory Zinovyev and a member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist (Bolshevik) Party had expressed opposition views within the party and wrote about how the peoples of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the North Caucasus must always keep the independence of the Caucasus on the agenda.<sup>63</sup>

Although the emigrant representatives of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the North Caucasus supported the idea of unity, the Armenian representatives should be noted as having opposed it. As a result, the magazine gave little room to news about Armenia. The breakdown of the unity of the peoples of the Caucasus had extended Bolshevik Russia’s presence in the Caucasus and strengthened its colonial policy.

Georgia was a supporter of independence and an enemy of Russia. Drawing attention to Georgia’s position, Mammadzade stressed that if a war broke out between Russia and Türkiye, Russia and Azerbaijan, and Russia and Georgia, a 99% chance existed that Armenia would side with Moscow. The author wrote about the importance of unity in order to achieve their independence.<sup>64</sup>

At that time, representatives from Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the North Caucasus came together in Geneva to establish the Caucasus Independence Committee. The magazine published a report on this and the appeal the Independence Committee made to the peoples of the Caucasus. The appeal informed about Russia’s oppression of the

61 Abid Tahirli, “Azərbaycan mühacirət mətbuatında publisistika...”, p. 151.

62 “Dağıstan və Azərbaycan Vahdeti”, *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.3, 1924, p. 6.

63 “Siyasi Vaziyet Karşısında Kafkasyalıların Vaziyeti”, *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.19, 1926, p. 5.

64 Mirza Bala Mehemedzade, “Kafkasya’da Bolşevizm” *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.1, 1925, p. 10.

peoples of the Caucasus and called on them to create an independent Caucasus confederation when the occupation ended,<sup>65</sup> stating that the salvation and progress of the peoples of the Caucasus are one and the same.

Sometime later, the magazine republished the appeal of the Caucasus Independence Committee to the nations of the Caucasus in the magazine *Prometheus*, which had been founded in Paris. The appeal stated that the nations of the Caucasus should make a final effort to unite the nations fighting against the Russian occupation and reject the Russian occupational government, wishing long life to the Confederation of the Independent Peoples of the Caucasus Republics.<sup>66</sup>

The headline on the first issue of the magazine's fourth year stated how the Turkish lands that had been groaning under Russian occupation should not spare their aid to the neighboring republics of the Caucasus nor leave it alone in the square.<sup>67</sup> According to that article's author, the salvation of the peoples of the Caucasus was about moving together.

### **The process of shutting down the magazine**

The articles published in the magazine had influenced Turkish public opinion and not allowed the idea of independence and unity to be forgotten. However, after the signing of an agreement<sup>68</sup> between the USSR and Türkiye on December 17, 1925 in Paris, the magazine started encountering difficulties. At the suggestion of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, the magazine was closed down at the end of 1927 due to its "harmful" publications.<sup>69</sup>

Although *Yeni Kafkasya* had ceased to exist, other magazines and newspapers soon began to operate. Journals such as *Azeri Turk* (1928-1930), *Yeşil Yaprak* (1928), *Odlu Yurt* (1929-1931), *Bildiriş* (1930-1931), and *Azerbaycan Yurt Bilgisi* (1932-1934) were published by Azerbaijani emigrants and became the spiritual successors of *Yeni Kafkasya* to continue its preaching.

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65 "Kafkasya İstiklal Komitesi", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.18, 1927, p. 16.

66 "Kafkasya Milletlerine Hitap", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.20, 1927, p. 5.

67 "Dördüncü Yıl", *Yeni Kafkasya*, No.1, 1926, p. 2.

68 "Sbornik deystvuyuşix doqovorov, soqlaşeniı i konvençiy, zakluyeçennix s inostrannimi qosudarstvami." Vipusk III. Deystvuyuşiyi doqovori, soqlaşeniya i konvencii, vstüpivşiyeye v silu mejdu 1 yanvary 1925 qoda i 1 maya 1926 qoda / Narod, Komissariat po inostrannim delam SSSR; Sost. A.V.Sabanin, A.Q.Şaxov. – M.: Litizdat N.K.İ.D., 1927, pp. 9–10.

69 Musa Qasımlı, *Azerbaycan Türklerinin Milli Mücadele Tarihi 1920-1945*, İstanbul, Kaknüs, 2006, p. 327.

## Conclusion

Thus, after Bolshevik Russia's occupation and the end of state independence, prominent Azerbaijani statesmen and politicians took refuge in the sibling land of Türkiye. Political immigrants believed that the Bolshevik government would soon be overthrown. After the victory of the Turkish people in the war of independence, new opportunities also arose for political emigration from Azerbaijan. After the cooling of Soviet-Turkish relations during the Lausanne Conference, the emigrants considered publishing newspapers and magazines necessary in order to inform the Turkish public about the grave consequences of the Bolshevik occupation, to promote the idea of the independence of the peoples of the Caucasus, and to unite their efforts. For this purpose, the magazine *Yeni Kafkasya* began publication in 1923. Although the main theme of the magazine was about Azerbaijan and its independence, the theme of the Caucasus was also widely covered. The magazine's authors were well aware that the support these peoples have for each other would ensure their future independence. Therefore, the magazine always focused on the grave consequences of the Bolshevik occupation, the unity of the peoples of the Caucasus in their struggle against it, and the idea of the Caucasus House in both sociopolitical and literary terms. The magazine did not allow the idea of independence to be forgotten among Azerbaijani emigrants, but at the same time it worked to influence Turkish public opinion.

The conducted studies show that literature has been an effective tool in preserving the idea of the independence and unity of the peoples of the Caucasus. From this point of view, the papers, news articles, and poems of *Yeni Kafkasya* magazine as published by Azerbaijani emigrants in Türkiye had exceptional importance.

In the beginning of the 20th century as well as in the 1990s, the articles in this magazine played a special role in the independence of the peoples of the Caucasus. This current research also has concluded that developing the idea of the cooperation and unity of the peoples of the Caucasus is relevant under these modern conditions.

Thus, the conducted research has revealed how *Yeni Kafkasya* was a magazine that reflected the issues about the struggle for the independence and unity of the peoples of the Caucasus. The journal is an important source and studying the issues it addressed is relevant because of how the published articles reflect the views of the politicians, intellectuals, poets, and publicists who participated in the political, social, cultural, and other events that had taken place in the Caucasus region at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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