

ЗАРУБІЖНА ЛІТЕРАТУРА ТА ПОРІВНЯЛЬНЕ ЛІТЕРАТУРОЗНАВСТВО

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Sociocultural reforms and the problem of free speech

(based on the «HAYAT»¹)

In the early 20th century straining of the socio-political processes in Russia resulted in demonstrations and strikes that eventually led to signing of the Manifesto by the ruling circles. The Manifesto signed by the government led to a series of reforms. Freedom of speech, press, conscience, assembly and union, as well as inviolability of person and property and other matters were promised to the people. The revolution of 1905, a number of authorities given to the people by the Tsar and its impact on the socio-political life of the country, the ongoing processes in the country were reflected on a regular basis in the «Hayat», where these issues have been studied based on the facts.

Keywords: *The Manifesto of October 17, Ahmad bey Aghayev, Ali bey Huseyn-Zadeh, freedom of conscience, First Duma, deputies.*

*«...Give me the liberty
to know, to utter and to
argue freely according
to conscience, above all
liberties»*

John Milton

In the early XX century social and political processes taking place in Russia as well as in Azerbaijan, the mass strikes conducted by workers, deterioration of living conditions of the peasants and thus, unrest stirred up by them rather exacerbated the situation in the country. Strikes spread across the country led the Tsarist Russia to make significant steps. The Manifesto of October 17, 1905 was one of the most important steps taken by Russia. Undoubtedly, the occurred processes were reflected in the press as well. According to the opinion of Hasan bey Zardabi, the founder of Azerbaijan's national press, «The

¹ The name of the newspaper is translated into English as “Life”.

press is a mirror of the given period, time». Approaching the matter from this aspect it is necessary to note that indeed all the socio-political processes taking place in Russia, as well as in Azerbaijan were regularly enlightened in the press in the early XX century.

The Russian text of the Manifesto of October 17 issued by Tsarist Russia was published in the 42nd issue of the «Бакинские губернские ведомости»¹ (1894 – 1916) on October 22. Initially this Manifesto was met mainly with satisfaction in Baku, which was one of the flashpoints of the revolutionary movement encompassing Russia entirely. A sense of hope was formed by the promises about freedom of speech, press, conscience, assembly, association, etc., as well as inviolability of person and property, and the people's participation in the State Duma and governing the country (1, 172 – 173). The translation of the Manifesto into the native language was published in the «Hayat» on October 25. The Azerbaijani translation of the Manifesto was made by Ahmad bey Aghayev, who previously was the editor of the «Hayat», then that of the «Irshad». The Arabic translation of the text was entrusted to Mufti of Transcaucasia Huseyn Afandi Gayibov.

The «Hayat» wrote about it:

«At the request of the Vicar Caucasian Clerical Office, the «Hayat» newspaper office sent «The New Code of Laws» translated by our editorial director Ahmad bey Aghayev to the Caucasian governors in order to distribute it among the Muslim villages». Mufti of Transcaucasia His Excellency Huseyn Afandi Ghayibov undertook translation of «The Code of Laws» into Arabic. The translation will be distributed among Dagestan villages» (3, 11 August, 1905).

The author of the Manifesto was political figure Sergei Yuliyevich Witte, who was the Prime Minister of the tsarist government from 1890 to 1906 (7, 614). Let us look over some moments from the Manifesto:

«We entrust the government with our unyielding and steady wantage to give people freedom of the individual, freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, and freedom of association.

To ensure the population's participation in the Duma it is necessary to involve immediately even the class absolutely deprived of

¹ It is translated into English as “Baku Provincial Bulletin”.

the right to be elected, as well as to note the further development of the basis of the right to be elected in the newly established code of laws» (3, 25 October, 1905). Ali bey Huseyn-Zadeh, the editor of the «Hayat» compared the events occurred in the Russian state with one of the articles on nature study by Hasan bey Zardabi. According to him, cerebral vessels are the factor of a human body that puts all the human body in motion, and he compared this factor with the occurring events: roads and railways were shown as compared to blood vessels, while posts and telegraph wires as cerebral vessels. He explained the reason, why during demonstrations the revolutionaries mainly demanded to shut down railways, posts and telegraph wires by the fact that railways met all the needs of the country and everything was brought by rail. Some information was transmitted by telegraph and post. Ali bey Huseyn-Zadeh wrote: «The class of revolutionaries have cognized the value of these two powers long ago. They realized that the importance of these two powers was above a soldier and army. The soldier is a simple tool and part of a body! They cannot move nor do anything without blood» (7, 118 – 119). Events that occurred in different regions of Russia, as well as in Azerbaijan were published daily in the «Hayat», while there was interruption in activity of railways, posts and telegraph wires, which was replaced by strikes.

From newspaper reports:

«Telegraph news

This time the railroad strike prevents work in Baku oil fields. As! Most things sent for the fields were left in the railway areas». (3, October, 1905).

The people welcomed freedom given by Tsarist Russia with pleasure. Gatherings were held and meetings were conducted. People of various strata took part in these strikes. The people hoped. They hoped that as a result of the reforms, ensuring improvement of their lifestyles, to be implemented very soon the people's living conditions would be improved, and the solution of problems like carrying out new reforms on the quality of education, on application of mother-tongue-based education system at schools, as well as on development of industry and agriculture, etc. would prove their values. As we mentioned above, demonstrations, meetings, gatherings were held during the period before and after the Manifesto of October 17, people of various strata demanding their rights from the ruling circles.

«Azerbaijani entrepreneurs' and intellectuals' inclinations to opposition started to manifest themselves. The national entrepreneurs' and intellectuals' most active representatives realized that events, which had started in Russia, were the beginning of an important period in the lives of the peoples, living on the national outskirts of the empire». (5, 58). On December 16 in 1905 a meeting comprising Baku landowners, entrepreneurs and rich folk was held in the city park, where a number of representatives among them made a speech, and in the end a requisition was prepared. The «Hayat» reported about this event in its 123 rd issue and published the content of the requisition.

Some moments from the transliterated content of the requisition:

«1. They pinned their hopes on freedom promised by the state, and requested for that freedom from the state to give it to them without fail».

It is unknown how long our Muslims will wait for freedom, and if this freedom (humane right) is not given to them without fail then what they will do, and if they are going to do something then what they are waiting for. Because freedom given on October 17 is not implemented, and what has been given, is taken back. For example, the freedom of speech and press and the freedom of association start to be taken back, and those, who have gathered in the meeting, know all this» (3, 21 december, 1905). Rousing unrest in Russia and on its outskirts could not calm down. On August 5 in 1905 Nicholas II issued a decree on establishment of the State Duma. «In less than a week after the grand opening ceremony of the First Duma (on May 5) its deputies made demands addressed to Tsar. They comprised such demands as holding general elections, abolishing all restrictions put on legislative activities of the Duma, protecting freedoms of citizen, abolishing capital punishment, preparing an agrarian reform, revising the tax system, passing to general and free education, meeting requirements of the national minorities, implementing an absolute political pardon and other demands that Liberals once put forward. However, the government obedient to Tsar refused these demands. Finally, on July 8 in 1906 the first Duma was dissolved. (6, 28 – 31). Issues concerning the State Duma were touched upon in the tsarist Manifesto of October 17, 1905, and it was emphasized in the «Hayat» that «it is necessary to involve immediately even the class absolutely deprived of the right to be elected

in order to ensure the population's participation in the Duma». The main issue concerned deputies to be elected to the State Duma. (7, 25).

In general, who are the deputies and what privileges do they have?! It was persons, who meant to act as the elected people's deputy in the State Duma, put forward the solutions of the people's all social problems as a matter of grave concern before the ruling circles, and seek ways of solution. And intellectuals of that period brought forward very polemic thoughts on this subject as «How should be our deputies?» (7, 40). The subject was touched on as a serious issue in the columns of the «Hayat», and to the question «Who are the deputies elected to the State Duma?» was given a sufficient answer: «The right to send a deputy authorized by the nation to a meeting or to that nation is called «the electoral (voting) right». These deputies solve and decide problems concerning their voters instead of them in the meeting together with the deputies elected by other nations».

The paper addresses some historical facts on the issue regarding deputies, as well as emphasizes the Muscovite kings' working principle with them three hundred centuries ago.(3, 23 december, 1905).

According to historical facts, adoption of new laws, tax collection, military affairs of the state, conclusion of peace agreements between states and other issues were resolved with deputies in state meetings. These deputies were invited from different areas of the Russian land. (3, 23 december, 1905).

After 1653 these «state meetings» were never invited again to solve the state's corrective work. Starting from 1905 the issues on solution of state affairs were again put on the agenda of the State Duma. An interesting matter about the deputies' authorities is the matter about their interferences in the work of the ruling circles, i.e. the ministers and viziers: «Each deputy of the nation and people can demand an explanation from separate ministers about governing not only officers (from the highest to the lowest rank) subordinated to ministers and viziers, but also ministers themselves and the whole government, and ask them what the government intends to do regarding such and such issues». (3, december, 1905).

Uzeyir Hajibeyov's convincing opinions that «being elected as a deputy to the Duma by the people in order to help the people to get out of a difficult position and to find a way out of the needs is a very important duty and not all can carry it out» draws the persons really

intending to be elected as a deputy to make an honest decision in their work. The publicist puts a number of issues before the deputies. If the deputy is elected among the people, then (s)he must perceive all the people's needs and pay attention to the solution of each class's peculiar needs. (7, 40).

U. Hajibeyov appreciated perfect knowledge of Russian as an important criterion for the deputies. Because a deputy without language skills could not explain the illiterate people's needs in the State Duma, i.e» ... a deputy must know Russian perfectly to explain the need properly». The deputy must be a little brave expressing his/her thoughts. Qualities like timidity, cowardice are not for the deputy. «This is a platform, where each deputy feels free to do the work (s)he considers necessary for discharging and performing his/her duty undertaken by him/her. The deputy must never forget that he is the hope – the unique one for the people. Eyes of the people, having elected him/her are just on him. It gives the deputy boldness and courage, inspires him every moment» (7, 40).

The deputy must not think about his own personal benefit, and must be guided by the people's interests. According to the news of December 23, a meeting of officers and teachers was conducted in Baku city office. The issues of participation of schools in strikes and demonstrations, as well as of closing of schools guided by this reason were discussed at the meeting. It was decided that the educational system would not benefit from joining of schools to the strikes, as these schools were not run by state resources. According to the «Hayat» report, «... afterwards, our goal is that children idly wandering during the strikes would not be at least deprived of classes. Moreover, closing the doors of our schools will be of no benefit to strikers struggling for freedom». (3, 8 november, 1905). The problem of education in the native language at high schools was one of the reforms included in the tsarist Manifesto, which expressed different opinions on the ways of its implementation now in education, as well as on involvement of teachers with a good command of Turkish in the issue and on other matters.

Abdulla Sur considered solution of the problem with textbooks important in the implementation of reforms in education. The author considered the problem of teaching from a book, each teacher wants to, unproductive. Concerning the study in the native language at high schools, Abdulla Sur, first of all, touched the question on perfectly

mastering the mother tongue by teachers. He emphasized that though some of them graduated from a university, they could not speak in their literary native language. He showed that others engaged in teaching just based on some experience, while some of them were completely inexperienced, being aware of neither a teaching method, nor nurture work, nor Turkish, nor the Turkic literature. Of course, Abdulla Sur severely criticized such men, and wished the education system to be reconsidered: problems of choosing subjects, drawing up new textbooks as soon as possible, as well as involving the educated personnel and teachers in the education process to be solved.

The Manifesto of October 17, 1905 and the resulting social and cultural reforms played a major role in the political and social life of that period, and gave some incentive to giving freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, freedom of the press, and to establishment and formation of certain organizations and unions, charities, as well as to activity of the press in Russia and Azerbaijan.

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Обострение социально-политических процессов в России начала XX завершилось митингами и забастовками, что в результате привело к подписанию манифеста со стороны правящих кругов.

Манифест, подписанный русским царем, стал причиной проведения ряда реформ. Народу были обещаны свобода слова, печати, совести, собрания, неприкосновенность личности и имущества и т.д. В газете «Хаят» («Нэуат») регулярно отображались темы революции 1905-го года, процессов, проходящих в стране, ряда полномочий,