

The Tadjik Journalist-Refugees

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Emigration of creative minds or the brain drain, is not a new phenomenon for Tadjiks. This time it was the civil war that forced some journalists to leave the country. If historically reasons for emigration were mainly the poverty and spiritual desperation owing to long struggles in the country, this time it was the direct threat to their lives which made Tadjik journalists to leave their country.

Starting from the 90's the number of free mass media increased in the country, thus making the contacts with the readers more active.

As of 1992, the number of independent newspapers had reached more than thirty, and this was the reason, that the new, openly communist rulers of Tajikistan (which came to power in November 1992) blamed journalists in igniting all the conflicts.

According to The Journalist Magazine (Jan 1, 2000 issue), " After taking a full control of Dushanbe in mid December, 1992, the pro-government armed militia started to break in into the offices of independent newspapers murdering journalists at site, or hunting them down afterwards. Around 60 journalists were murdered during these years." Journalists and others affiliated with the mass media had to flee to save their lives, and settled mostly in the CIS.

Part of these journalists settled in Moscow, but had to go through more difficulties to obtain a refugee status. For the first couple of years they were supported by the Glasnost Protection Fund and only in 1994, some of them managed to get a status.

According to BBC reporter Zulfikor Ismoilion, who was lucky to get the status,

" Even though Russia is a signatory to the Geneva convention on Journalists, we were refused any status for two years. In 1994, through the Glasnost Protection Fund we applied to Moscow Mayor Luzhkov, and twenty-two journalists were given the status of refugees under the condition that they would not claim financial aid, housing etc.

As of today there are only 4 journalists still in Moscow. The rest have left for Tadjikistan and other countries." With such a status lacking rights, some Russian speaking journalists, or those who had had worked in Russian, got jobs in Russian mass media and organizations. Others found jobs in different radio stations which have Pharsy language departments, like BBC, RL/RFE and the Voice of Horosan.

Those who were not able to find jobs left Moscow. But even those who stayed, were refused to get their status prolonged.

Two bilingual papers - Charogi Ruz and Paem - in Tajik and Russian are published in Moscow today. Charogi Ruz had started in Tajikistan and has renewed its publication in exile in Moscow in 1993. Thanks to the efforts of its Chief editor Mr. Dodojon

Atulloev, the newspaper remains one of independent sources of information about Tadjikistan. Unfortunately both newspapers come out irregularly due financial restrains, with Charogi Ruz being out of circulation for more that half a year, even if the stuff agrees to print materials protecting certain sponsors.

Paem started its publication in March 1999. The newspaper covers mostly cultural aspects and problems, reflect lives of Tadjik refugees in CIS and abroad. According to it's Chief editor Mr. Muhammadrahim Saidar, the paper faces the same problems of financing and comes our irregularly. It is financed by a small circle of Tadjik intelligentsia in Moscow and is distributed free of charge.

Moscow, with its pretentious principles of democracy, failed to become an ideal shelter for Tadjik journalist refugees. We hope that things will get better in the future.