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THE POLES IN AZERBAIJANIAN REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT  
IN THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES

Development of the revolutionary movement was one of more significant phenomena in the socio-political life of Russia at the end of 19th century. In the late eighties and early nineties of 19th century, there were formed Social-Democratic circles in different centres of the empire<sup>1</sup>. It was also at that time that Karl Marx's ideas began to find their way to Azerbaijan. Initially, these ideas were spread mainly by representatives of the local intelligentsia. For such activity they would be frequently imprisoned and next sent into exile for at least several years. Despite severe punishments and repressions the number of people involved in the revolutionary activity tended to grow all the time. Workers were joining the Social-Democratic movement as well, and already in the nineties most managements of Social-Democratic groups were composed of intelligentsia and workers. The competences and tasks of the intelligentsia members included managing activities of organizations, propaganda and agitation among working class masses and in other environments, editorial work and distribution of illegal prints. On the other hand, the workers acted as a link between intelligentsia centre and the circles in factories.

The most favourable conditions for dissemination of revolutionary ideas in Azerbaijan could be found in Baku. This was, however, an extremely complex and difficult task for the following reasons:

- 1) a strong impact of Islam, which sharply opposed any changes in the social, economic and political life;
- 2) very strong patriarchal-family traditions;

<sup>1</sup> Z. Łukawski, *Polacy w rosyjskim ruchu rewolucyjnym 1894—1907* [Poles in the Russian revolutionary movement 1894—1907], Warszawa 1984, p. 16 and the following.

3) spreading ideas of local nationalism (pantiurkism, panislamism, miuridism);

4) extremely low level of education and culture (about 97% of all Muslims were illiterate) and accompanying deeply rooted prejudices, superstitions, and distrust to any new ideas<sup>2</sup>.

In spite of these difficulties, the revolutionary activists could boast certain successes in the Muslim environment. The greatest successes were scored by representatives of the Muslim youth, who had got some insight into the revolutionary activity during their academic studies in Russia. Among them were, for example, Mieshadi Azizbiek and Nariman Kierbalaya Nadjaf.

A significant role in the Azerbaijanian revolutionary movement was played by the Poles. The Polish revolutionary activists recruited largely from among exiles-revolutionaries. They appeared in quite a big group in Azerbaijan in the eighties. Their number grew quite considerably in the nineties. Thus, for example, in 1893 alone the number of people sent into exile from the Kingdom of Poland reached 78 persons. Among others, Stanisław Bezkowski, Tomasz Szymczak, Feliks Turowicz, Antoni Bukiewicz, and Edmund Kawczyński<sup>3</sup> were deported to Azerbaijan.

The revolutionary ideas quickly made their way to the Polish workers. The total number of the Polish workers employed in Azerbaijan's industry amounted to over two thousands in the last years of 19th century. They were mainly from White Russia and Ukraine. Relatively easily they adjusted themselves to conditions existing in Baku and equally easily they won confidence of the workers of other nationalities, which was due to their exceptionally high level of class awareness. They would often criticize the capitalist exploitation and tsar's oppression among their colleagues. It was to the Polish workers that Social-Democratic activists would address their revolutionary slogans first of all. They did not have to await their response for a long time. In the eighties, participation of the Polish workers in the revolutionary movement was already quite pronounced.

The Poles in Azerbaijan were organizers of the first workers' strikes. They were prompted by mass protests of workers in Petersburg and Moscow. The workers participating in strikes in Azerbaijan demanded primarily increase of their wages and shortening of working hours. Thus, mainly economic causes generated the workers' protests here. In the first stage of the revolutionary movement development

<sup>2</sup> See: A. Chodubski, *Rewolucja kulturalna w Azerbejdżanie*, [Cultural revolution in Azerbaijan], Gdańsk 1981, *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> Łukawski, *op. cit.*, p. 54—55.

in Azerbaijan, the most active involvement was displayed by: Leon Jasewicz, Julian Gryglaszewski, Andrzej Czumak, and two brothers — Leonid and Włodzimierz Rynkiewicz. Their revolutionary activity resulted in imprisonment and deportation to Siberia<sup>4</sup>.

The first general strike of political character took place in Baku on 4th May 1902. Over five thousand workers took part in it. An important role in the strike was played by a Pole — Hipolit Krzyżanowski, who was responsible for printing and distribution of leaflets exhorting workers of different nationalities to participate in demonstrations and strikes.

The Polish workers in Azerbaijan organized one of the biggest strikes of railwaymen in Transcaucasia in February 1906<sup>5</sup>. Among its organizers, the main role was played by Czumak and Rynkiewicz. Prior to the strike, they had been organizing meetings during which they had stressed the necessity of political changes in Russia and pointed out the abnormalities existing in that country. Both of them worked at a railway station in Yelisavietpol, where they set up a Marxist organization called „Yelisavietpol Station Organization”, and printed leaflets. In February 1906, 47 members of the organization, including its leaders, were arrested.

A wide renown in Yelisavietpol was won by a Polish worker by the name of Kazimierz Borozdicz. During breaks in work he would gather railwaymen and acquaint them with contents of illegal workers' newspapers and leaflets. This form of activity was very significant considering the fact that Azerbaijanian workers were for their most part illiterate. They were unfamiliar with the language of newspapers and leaflets or with the word „revolution”. Borozdicz demanded that his listeners should support actively strikes and be ready to undertake armed struggle. In his speeches, there predominated a slogan „Away with anarchy”<sup>6</sup>.

Railwaymen in Azerbaijan were general distinguishing themselves by their very active involvement. Apart from Yelisavietpol, it is worth mentioning the workers employed on a railway junction Baladjary near Baku, who organized one of the first strikes in Azerbaijan. In the first years of 20th century, the station-master there was a Pole — Włodzimierz Okulicz and his deputy — Władysław Górnicz. Both suppor-

<sup>4</sup> Centralnyj Gosudarstvennyj Istoričeskij Archiv Azerbajdžanskoj SSR [further: CSHAA], f. 46, op. 1, d. 24; f. 315, op. 1, d. 814; f. 831, op. 1, d. 2; f. 898, op. 1, d. 114.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 831, op. 1, d. 2; A. Chodubski, *Polskie tradycje rewolucyjne w Baku*, [Polish revolutionary traditions in Baku] „Dziennik Bałtycki” 1981, No. 240.

<sup>6</sup> CSHAA, f. 831, op. 1, d. 2, l. 45.

ted the Social-Democratic movement and the workers actively participating in this movement, and assisted them in distribution of leaflets<sup>7</sup>.

The Polish workers played a significant role in organization of Social-Democratic circles and groups in Azerbaijan. One of the most prominent of them in this field was Celina Bobrowska (1876—1960)<sup>8</sup> who had been holding the position of the secretary of the Social Democratic Party of Russian Workers since 1902. She came from Witebsk Region, and her first contacts with the working-class movement had place in Warsaw in 1894. Since 1898 she had been a member of the Social Democratic Party of Russian Workers. For her revolutionary activity she was arrested in 1900, but she managed to escape and avoid penal servitude in this way. She went to Switzerland, but she soon returned to her companions in the revolutionary movement. She made her way to Baku, where she stayed till 1905, and next she was connected with the revolutionary movement in Moscow till the end of her life. She arrived in Baku in connection with distribution of „Iskra” (revolutionary newspaper). Baku was at that time one of the points where this newspaper was sent from abroad and next distributed in other parts of Russia, while from September 1901 Baku was a typographic point of its reprinting. „Iskra” was reprinted there in the total number of 60 000 copies<sup>9</sup>. It was also in the underground typography in Baku „Nina” that the works of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Karl Liebknecht, Vladimir Lenin were printed along with proclamations and leaflets. Bobrowska attached a great deal of attention to selection of appropriate political agitators and propagandists of the Social-Democratic movement. She would see to it that they represented all professional groups. An important section of her activity was the maintaining of contacts with revolutionary activists in smaller centres such as Shusha, Nuha, and Kadabek.

An important role in the agitation activity of that time was played in Baku by Wiktor Radus-Zenkowicz (1877—1967)<sup>10</sup>. He was a son of the Polish political exile. His first contacts with the Social-Democratic activity took place during his studies in Moscow. Radus-Zenkowicz was a journalist, who published his articles arousing enhanced political activity of workers both in legal and illegal papers. In Baku, he

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 898, op. 1, d. 114.

<sup>8</sup> *Encyklopedia Rewolucji Październikowej*, Warszawa 1971, p. 43.

<sup>9</sup> *Istorijsk Azerbajdžana*, vol. 2, Baku 1960, p. 474—475.

<sup>10</sup> CSHAA, f. 315, op. 1, d. 814; *Robočee dvizhenie v Baku (1905 g.) v godu pervoj revolucii. Dokumenty i material'y*, Baku 1956, p. 541; *Sovetskaja istoričeskaja encyklopedija*, vol. 11, Moskva 1968, p. 832.



published his articles in such newspapers „Bakiński Robotnik” (Baku Worker), „Wezwanie” (Appeals), or „Orzeł” (Eagle).

The activity of agitation-propaganda type was fulfilling its aims. The number of members of the Social-Democratic groups was growing all the time. They were also joined by Muslims. The socio-political involvement of population and the extent of its membership in different organizations found their best visible expression in the number of strikes and participation of workers in these strikes. However, they were best verified by the Revolution in 1905—1907. To manifest the solidarity with the events in Petersburg, the strike organized in Azerbaijan between 6th and 20th of January encompassed almost all work establishments. Workers' protest found its support among certain representatives of the intelligentsia. From among the Polish intellectuals well known in Baku environment, workers' protest was supported among others by Kazimierz Skórewicz — an architect, Józef Bratkowski — a teacher in Baku Real School, Paweł Potocki — an engineer. Some signs of understanding for workers' demonstrations were displayed by the Rylski family, a group of millionaires having their own stock company.

Quite significant seems to be here the life history of this family, and the way in which they earned their millions. Hipolit Rylski, father of the family, never felt himself to be a millionaire. He was an exile in Siberia. After serving his sentence in Siberia, he came to Baku, where he started his work as a railway track-walker. Next he got involved in the oil extraction business. Owing to his hard work and accumulated savings he was able to purchase a small site which proved to be very rich in „black gold”. After several years of oil exploitation he became one of the richest men in Baku. At that time he was accused of appropriation of oil from the neighbouring oil deposits. The cause of this accusation was the fact that in 1899 one of his helpers was caught while collecting oil from the neighbouring oil-wells. Slanders and imputation led to a complete breakdown of Rylski and his suicide<sup>11</sup>. Later on, the allegations proved to be unjustified. His children and heirs of his fortune did not forget their father's life history. At the time of mass protests of the working class, the Rylski family did not counteract the disturbances. Neither did they impose any penalties on the striking workers. A different attitude was assumed by the remaining millionaires in Baku. For example, Tagijev — a millionaire-philanthropist threatened the striking workers with the most severe penalties, and when his threats did not work, he called in the gendarmerie and ordered them to shoot at the workers.

<sup>11</sup> „Kraj” 1899, No. 30.

The Revolution of 1905–1907 was suppressed. It contributed, however, to a marked animation of the cultural and educational life. It drew attention to denationalization processes. Workers often blamed representatives of the intelligentsia for denationalization of Poles. Starting from autumn 1905, there was undertaken a search for new solutions that would allow to involve the biggest possible number of the Polish people in Baku in the socio-cultural life. The attainment of these aims was to be promoted by establishment of new Polish organizations such as „Polish Home”, Catholic Society of Charity, Polish Society of Mutual Aid „Hearth”, Polish school and Polish library<sup>12</sup>.

A new stage in the revolutionary activity of the Poles in Azerbaijan started in the years of the First World War. Many Poles cherished hopes for improvement of their living conditions, and a substantial part of them hoped they would be allowed to return to their home country. These hopes were accompanied by irresolutions. Quite remarkable in this respect was a statement made by an elderly woman, an inhabitant of Georgian town Kutaisi, which was quoted by Bohdan and Krzysztof Baranowski. „Almost all Poles were awaiting impatiently the time of repatriation. For us, however, born in the Caucasus and brought up far away from our country, this was an approaching time of some huge life calamity. We had to leave behind us in Kutaisi everything which had been won by two generations and travel to the unknown”<sup>13</sup>.

The Polish people in Azerbaijan were strongly split then. The proprietary classes and the intelligentsia generally supported the local bourgeois nationalists. There developed, however, also quite strong probolshevik orientation. It was supported by the Polish socialist organizations. Their members quite often joined the Red Army seeing in it their revolutionary duty. In August 1921, on the basis of left-wing organizations there was set up the Polish Section attached to the Committee of the Russian Communist Party (bolsheviks) in Baku. Its programme envisaged that its main task would be preparation of party and state employees for their work in Poland<sup>14</sup>.

The Polish Section, in accordance with the regulations about nationality sections attached to party committees of the Russian Com-

<sup>12</sup> A. Chodubski, „Dom Polski” w Baku [„Polish home” in Baku], „Przegląd Polonijny” 1984, No. 4, p. 101 and the following.

<sup>13</sup> B. Baranowski, K. Baranowski, *Polaków kaukaskie drogi* [Caucasian routes of Poles], Łódź 1985, p. 195.

<sup>14</sup> Partijnyj Archiv CK Azerbajdżana, f. 1, op. 235, No. 20, 1.3; A. Chodubski, *Wkład w realizację rewolucyjnych idei* [Contribution to Realization of Revolutionary Ideas], „Głos Wybrzeża” 1983, No. 220.

munist Party (bolsheviks) constituted an organizational form promoting more active involvement of the Polish communists in work for appropriate political education, arousal of the class awareness, overcoming of barriers between nations, winning confidence for the communist party and the Soviet authorities, and securing active and conscious participation of the Polish working masses in the socialist reconstruction of the country.

In the initial stage of its activity, the Polish section had 42 members. It maintained very close relations with the Polish Bureau of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (bolsheviks) in Moscow. The Polish communists in Azerbaijan were attaching a great deal of their attention to implementation of assumptions of the cultural revolution making efforts to eradicate illiteracy, attract population to education, science, technique and art. An important task of the Section was the gathering of the Polish cultural heritage from the prerevolution period. During the turmoil of the revolution and the civil war, the cultural property of the Polish organizations was dispersed and plundered. A great deal of attention was devoted especially to completion of library collections, which were next passed over to the Library Department of the People's Commissariat of Education in Baku<sup>15</sup>.

The repatriation of Poles to their country was commenced after the end of the First World War. It was of a mass and often spontaneous character. Almost all Poles left Azerbaijan. Some of them tried to return there again after some time. This process of repatriation lasted till 1922.

At the time when some Poles were leaving Azerbaijan, others were coming there. However, there were fewer new-arrivals. Many Poles arrived in Azerbaijan in 1920 as soldiers of 11th Army. A great many of them decided to remain there for good and they became actively involved in construction of the socialist reality. The commander of 11th Army was a Pole — Michał Lewandowski (1890—1937)<sup>16</sup>. He came from a poor working class family. Lewandowski was born on 15th May 1890 in Tiflis. When he was a young boy his father died and his mother married a Cossack, who treated his stepson very severely. At the age of 16 he had to begin his work. His first job was that of a newsboy. He made his way to the army when he did not yet reach his adulthood. It was in the army that he was accepted to school. During the revolutionary events he took the side of bolsheviks. He distingui-

<sup>15</sup> Chodubski, „Dom Polski”..., p. 106—107.

<sup>16</sup> Bakinskij Filial Central'nogo Muzeja W. I. Lenina. Negativnyj fond, No. 5152, 5212, 9042, 22084, 11802; A. Chodubski, *Dowódca armii* [Army Commander], „Głos Wybrzeża” 1982, No. 11.

shed himself when smashing counterrevolutionary troops formed by Lavr Kornilov. Among others he took part in the battle of Kuban.

As soon as the Red Army was formed he joined it. Starting from February 1918 he was charged with a task of forming the Red Army regiments in the Northern Caucasus. Within a short time he managed to form big regiments there. In February 1918, he was elected a commissar for military affairs in the Tereck Soviet Republic proclaimed in March 1918 and he took over command of the local Red Army regiments. In July of that year he proceeded to liquidation of counterrevolutionary forces in that region. He scored numerous successes, and many volunteers were joining the regiments commanded by him. Among them were many Poles. The moment 11th Army was formed he was appointed its supreme commander. At the beginning of April 1920, this army had 72.5 thousand soldiers.

Lewandowski devoted a great deal of his attention to the political activity of soldiers. In 1920, he joined the communist party. The example of the commander was followed by his soldiers who also began to join the party in big numbers. By March 1920 every fourth soldier of 11th Army was a member of the communist party. The commander of the Army was also devoting a great deal of his attention to cultural-educational activity. He very often charged these duties to his countrymen. There were set up illiteracy eradication centres, clubs and even schools.

Having won Tsaritsin and Astrakhan 11th Army was sent to the Transcaucasus. The commander of the front was Michał Tuchaczewski, who became the marshal of the Soviet Union later on. Due to the fact that the counterrevolutionary forces held their positions very firmly in the Transcaucasus, the Soviet troops had to display maximum sacrifices and caution when capturing these areas. Lewandowski was constantly in touch with Tuchaczewski. On 28th April 11th Army entered Baku.

After entering Baku, a part of 11th Army occupied stationary positions. The forms and methods of its party-political activities changed. Many soldiers, including numerous groups of Poles, established permanent ties with Azerbaijan. They constituted an important source of cadres for the newly formed republic.

Lewandowski left 11th Army on 30th June 1920. He was appointed a commander of Tereck-Dagestani Military Groups, and from August 1920 he was a commander of 9th Kuban Army, which was charged with a task of smashing Wrangel's troops as soon as possible. Before his departure from 11th Army, he was decorated with the Red Banner Order of the Soviet Azerbaijan.



In the following years he held many important military posts. Between 1934 and 1937 he was a member of the Military Council of the Soviet Union. In 1935, in the hierarchy of military functions, he was nominated an army commander of the second rank. In March 1936, he received the Order of Lenin for his exemplary commanding and excellent combat and political preparation of military cadres. In June 1937, similarly to many other employees of the Red Army General Headquarters he was unjustly accused of treason of state and executed.

Poles could be also found among organizers of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan. Jan Godlewski (1886—1961)<sup>17</sup> was one of the members of the group initiating convocation of its illegal founding congress in February 1920. He came from a peasant family in Volyn, and he began his work as a fitter in Baku in 1901. He was involved in the revolutionary activity. During the first congress of the Communist Party (bolsheviks) of Azerbaijan he was elected a member of its Central Committee. In 1920, he was appointed a political commissar of the harbour-urban district in Baku. He was also a member of the Revolutionary Tribunal. Between 1923 and 1925 he was a chairman of the District Court, and in the later years a trade union activist. Till the end of his life, he remained in Baku.

The number of Polish communists in Azerbaijan was increasing quite considerably starting from summer 1920. Many representatives of the young Polish intelligentsia joined the party. The Poles readily participated in political courses and training to be able to participate actively in socialist transformations of the Soviet Union later on. Quite a big group of them was sent to study in Leningrad and Moscow.

In the first years of the Soviet political rule in Azerbaijan, Polish communists were members of practically all organs of power. Thus, for example, Eugeniusz Tomaszewski was a deputy Commissar for Education, Jan Godlewski was a chairman of the District Court, Michał Uszyński, Michał Downar-Zapolski and Michał Dąbrowski<sup>18</sup> were among the founders of Baku University, Paweł Potocki and Michał Abramowicz dealt with geological problems, and Ludwik Knit and Aleksander Piestun-Dąbrowski exerted a significant influence on development of the Azerbaijanian art<sup>19</sup>.

The revolutionary activity of the Poles in the Caucasus, including

<sup>17</sup> *Encyklopedia Rewolucji ...*, p. 118.

<sup>18</sup> A. Chodubski, *Na principach družby i sotrudničestva*, „Ugrunda” 1981, No. 3.

<sup>19</sup> N. M. Miklaševskaja, *Stanovlenie i razvitie iskusstva socialističeskogo realizma w Sovetskom Azerbajdžane (1920—1945)*, Baku 1974, p. 21, 79 and the following.

Azerbaijan, was an object of animated interest on the Polish territories and the Polish emigrants in Western Europe in the second half of 19th century and in the early 20th century. This activity received also some attention of the Polish Socialist Party led by Józef Piłsudski<sup>20</sup>. In 1901, there came out a brochure written by Leon Wasilewski and entitled *We wspólnym jarzmie* (Under the common yoke), in which the author was pointing at the necessity of fighting together with the Caucasian nations to overthrow the tsarism. In the period of eventful revolutionary transformations, the Polish Regency Council in Warsaw delegated its representative to the Caucasus. This was Wacław Ostrowski, who acted as „royal-Polish representative attached to the governments of Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijanian Republics”, and later on when Poland regained its independence as „representative of the Polish state in the Caucasus”. Due to a big number of the Poles in Baku, Ostrowski opened the Polish Consulate there<sup>21</sup>, which was directed among others by Stanisław Wąsowicz, (Jan) Tydelski and Stefan Rylski.

While describing the activity of Polish communists in Azerbaijan, it is worth noting that Polish women were actively involved in emancipation and ateization activities. The main platform for the ateization activity was the Union of Fighting Atheists led by a Pole — Ignacy Dębicki. In the first years of the Soviet rule, the Poles were among the biggest activists of the Union. The Polish women also distinguished themselves in production sphere, in the state administration, and in the socio-cultural life. It was easier for them to effect changes in the social relations prevailing there than for representatives of other nations.

In the Soviet period, many Poles involved themselves actively in construction of the socialist reality. There remained, however, their quite significant part who refused to accept the revolutionary changes. They would create opposition organizations such as e.g. „Prometeusz”. A part of the Poles with this orientation tried to leave the Soviet Union by all means and they often became involved in the antisocialist activity trend. In such a way behaved a well known activist among the Poles in the Caucasus — Stanisław Zuber<sup>22</sup>. He left for Italy where he became one of advisors of Benito Mussolini.

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<sup>20</sup> J. Ręychman, *Kaukaz* [Caucasus], [in:] *Polska i Polacy w cywilizacjach świata. Słownik encyklopedyczny* [Poland and Poles in civilisations of the world. Encyclopedic dictionary], vol. 4, Warszawa 1939, p. 271.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 273; M. E. Resul-zade, *Azerbejdżan w walce o niepodległość* [Azerbaijan in struggle for independence], Warszawa 1938, p. 157—160.

<sup>22</sup> S. Zieliński, *Mały słownik pionierów polskich kolonialnych i morskich* [Small dictionary of Polish colonial and sea pioneers], Warszawa 1933, p. 638—639.

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POLACY W NURCIE AZERBEJDŻAŃSKIEGO RUCHU REWOLUCYJNEGO  
W KOŃCU XIX I NA POCZĄTKU XX W.

W końcu XIX w. jednym z ważnych zjawisk życia polityczno-społecznego Rosji było kształtowanie się ruchu rewolucyjnego. Wtedy również zaczęły przenikać do Azerbejdżanu idee Karola Marksa. Istotne miejsce w ruchu rewolucyjnym tego kraju zajęli Polacy. Wyróżnili się w nim zarówno przedstawiciele inteligencji, jak i robotnicy. Polscy działacze rewolucyjni rekrutowali się w dużej mierze spośród zesłańców. Na początku lat dziewięćdziesiątych do Azerbejdżanu zesłano m. in. Stanisława Bezakowskiego, Tomasza Szymczaka, Feliksa Turowicza, Antoniego Bukiewicza, Edmunda Kawczyńskiego.

W ostatnich latach XIX w. w przemyśle Azerbejdżanu pracowało ponad 2 tysiące polskich robotników. Wyróżniał ich spośród innych narodowości tam pracujących wysoki poziom świadomości klasowej.

Polacy w Azerbejdżanie byli organizatorami pierwszych strajków robotniczych. W pierwszej fazie kształtowania się ruchu rewolucyjnego w Azerbejdżanie dużą aktywnością wyróżniali się: Leon Jasewicz, Julian Gryglaszewski, Andrzej Czumak, bracia Leonid i Włodzimierz Rynkiewiczowie. Wśród grup zawodowych szczególnie dużą aktywność rewolucyjną cechowała Polaków kolejarzy. Szeroko znani z tej działalności byli kolejarze z Jelisawietpola i Baładżarów.

Na polu organizacji kół i grup socjaldemokratycznych w Azerbejdżanie wyróżnili się Celina Bobrowska i Wiktor Ratus-Zenkowicz. Wystąpienia rewolucyjne cieszyły się tam poparciem inteligencji. Na szczególną uwagę zasługiwały postawy np. Kazimierza Skórewicza — architekta, Józefa Bratkowskiego — nauczyciela, Pawła Potockiego — inżyniera.

Nowy etap aktywności rewolucyjnej Polaków w kraju ognia zarysował się w latach I wojny światowej. W sierpniu 1921 r. na bazie organizacji lewicowych (SDKPiL, PPS-Lewicy, PPS) powstała sekcja polska przy Komitecie RKP(b) w Baku. W programie swym jako główne zadanie postawiła przygotowanie pracowników partyjnych i państwowych do pracy w Polsce.

W 1920 r. dużo Polaków komunistów przybyło do Baku w szeregach XI Armii Czerwonej. Dowódcą armii był Polak Michał Lewandowski. W pierwszych latach władzy radzieckiej w Azerbejdżanie polscy komuniści zasiadali prawie we wszystkich tamtejszych organach władzy. Tak np. zastępcą komisarza ludowego oświaty był Eugeniusz Tomaszewski, przewodniczącym Sądu Okręgowego Jan Godlewski, Uniwersytet Bakiński organizowali Mikołaj Dąbrowski, Mikołaj Uszyński, Michał Downar-Zapolski, o problemach geologii decydowali Paweł Potocki, Michał Abramowicz, na kształt azerbejdżańskiej sztuki istotny wpływ wywierali Ludwik Knit i Aleksander Piestun-Dąbrowski.