



## MARD-E EMRUZ

---

*MARD-e EMRUZ* (Man of today), a controversial and highly popular newspaper published weekly in Tehran, with frequent interruptions, from 19 August 1942 to 14 February 1947, by Mohammad Mas'ud ([Moḥammad Mas'ud](#), 1901-1947), the noted journalist and the author of several popular, and also controversial social novels.

Capitalizing on the freedom of expression that followed the invasion of Iran by the Allied Forces, and the subsequent fall of Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1941, Mas'ud, whose earlier attempts to obtain a journalistic license had been rebuked, reapplied for the license. The initial title he had asked for was *Mard-e āzād* (The free man), a daily newspaper published in Tehran from 29 January to 14 November 1923 by 'Ali Akbar Dāvar (1885-1937), who had facilitated Mas'ud's trip to Europe on a government scholarship to continue his studies. When he was denied the title, he opted for *Mard-e emruz*, instead (Šiftah, 1984, 13). From 1942 to 1943 *Mard-e emruz* was published as the organ of *Paykā*r, a political party founded by Ḳosrow Eqbāl (Elwell-Sutton, column 356), and then as an independent journal.

*Mard-e emruz* was a twelve (occasionally eight) page weekly, measuring 35X49cm, which through fifth issues appeared on Thursdays, and from the sixth issue onward shifted to Saturdays. It was among few journals of the time, which had an officially assigned editorial board: Mohammad Mas'ud, director and author of editorials; Naṣr-Allāh Šifta, managing editor; Parviz Lādbon, translator and political analyst; Ḥosayn Banā'i, illustrator and caricaturist; along with Ḥosayn Fāṭemi, Abu'l-Faḏl Āl-e Buya, and Esmā'il Purvāli, as



regular contributors to the Journal (Abu'l-Ḥasani, 2006, 144). Never absent from the pages of *Mard-e emruz* were articles on such sensitive issues of the day as oil agreements and railroad industries. The Persian translation of articles published in American and French journals on separatist movements in Azarbaijan and the coverage of World War II also featured in the newspaper on a regular basis. Mention should also be made of Bahrām Šāhroḡ's passionate articles exposing the despotic atrocities by which Reza Shah's reign was remembered on those days. Ḥosayn Fāṭemi (1917-1954), the editor of *Baḡtar-e emruz*, and the minister of foreign affairs in the government of Moḥammad Moṣaddeq published his articles, while he was in Europe, in *Mard-e Emruz* (Šifta, p. 18). It is interesting to note that Fāṭemi narrowly escaped an attempt on his life carried out by a member of the *Fedā'iān-e Eslām*, while delivering a memorial speech at Mas'ud's tomb on the fourth anniversary commemoration of his assassination in 1947 (Azimi, 1999, 405).

Naṣr-Allāh Šiftah (1918-1995), who was in charge of the metropolitan news of the newspaper, contributed heated and highly popular reports on the city's brothels, as well as poorly managed hospitals, slaughterhouses and asylums for the mentally ill. Publishing the weekly schedule of movie theaters was also a unique feature of this newspaper. Commercial advertisements appeared on various pages, but the sixth page and the major part of the seventh page were specifically allocated to commercial advertisements. They covered a wide range, from cosmetics and hair coloring products, to the contact information of drug rehabilitation centers, clinics specialized in the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, and on to the schedule of intercity buses, imported goods new to the market, and newly published journals and magazines.

Mas'ud's highly charged articles against the Pahlavi court, the occupation of Iran by the Allied Forces, the secessionist movement in Azarbaijan, as well as the Tudeh party and its adherents, soon turned *Mard-e emruz* into the most widely read journal of the day (Kamshad, 1966, 66; Mošfeq Kāzemi, II, 91; Behzādi, 1966, 680). The print run of the newspaper exceeded 30,000 for several years. It was often sold out and sometimes even reprinted or re-sold in the black market at a higher price. Mas'ud's novel idea to print the title of the newspaper in red enhanced its popularity. Editorials appeared on the right side of the front page. The left side, as well as the top of the page was allocated to sensational stories about political figures and events with a scandalous overtone. An edited picture or a caricature of a political figure appeared either on the bottom half of the front page, and/or the last page of *Mard-e emruz*; a

novel idea ignored by many journals of the period (Kāma'i, 1993, 696). On occasion, a “comic strip” was published, satirizing oil deals, government riggings of the elections, and the incompetence of a cabinet minister or a member of parliament. In the first issues, Mas'ud oversaw the selection of cover illustrations and back cover caricatures, himself. The task was soon delegated to Ḥosayn Banā'i, a professional caricaturist who later became the head of Iran's Scouting Organization (Afšār, 2003, 743; Šaygān, 2001, 10).

Following the footsteps of European newspapers, *Mard-e emruz* had also a sports section. Mas'ud even held bicycle races and for a while appointed one of its winners Parviz Kōsravāni (the future General and the head of the National Organization of Physical Education) in charge of the sports section (Šiftah, 1984, 55). Mas'ud also introduced the innovative idea of “šafḥa-ye ḥavādeṭ” in *Mard-e emruz*. There was also a page set for people's letters, grieving the pitfalls of the system and the misconduct of government officials. To ensure a wider recognition, Mas'ud held ceremonies in celebration of the Journal's anniversary; an event that noted journalists, artists, and the cultural elite did not forget to attend. He even sent flowers and food to hospitals for the occasion.

Mas'ud's editorials in *Mard-e emruz* were often colored by the disclosure of the classified, and not always based on substantiated information (Irāni, 1365/1986, 30). His editorial on the assassination of Mirzāda 'Ešqi (1894-1923; see 'EŠQĪ, MOḤAMMAD-REŽĀ MĪRZĀDA), entitled “Az parvandahā-e maḥramāna-ye Šahrbāni” (From the classified files of the Police Department), offers a telling example (*Mard-e emruz*, 16 Ordibehešt 1323Š./ 7 May 1944). The language and structure of the article, as disputed by a critic of the next generation, leaves little room for its plausibility as an officially classified document (Qā'ed, 1984, 336).

As noted by Naṣr-Allah Šifta, a close friend and colleague, Mas'ud's strong voice in betraying corrupt politicians, although cost *Mard-e emruz* frequent suspension, was not always disliked by government authorities. Instead, they tried to benefit from his journalistic appeal and bold language in suppressing the opponents, as demanded by the daily course of the political events (Šiftah, 1984, 153).

Mas'ud's engagement with journalism coincided with one of the most critical periods of Iran's recent history. His uncompromising rejection of Russian encroachments in Iran brought him into harsh conflicts with Aḥmad Qavām



(Qavām-al-Saltāna, 1873-1955), and his pragmatism in handling the intertwined predicaments of the Azarbaijan crisis, the Soviet oil deal, and the refusal of the Soviet forces to leave Iran. Throughout years, which partly coincided with Qavam's longest term as prime minister from February 1946 to September 1947, Mas'ud published over twenty-eight articles against Qavām. In his attempts to earn Mas'ud's silence, Qavām offered to either purchase one thousand copies of *Mard-e emruz* each week, or to pay Mas'ud twenty thousand rials each month (Šiftah, 1984, 378).

Mas'ud not only turned down the offer, but in an editorial on August 17, 1947, when the Soviet oil deal was with the parliament for ratification, offered to pay one million rials “to any person or his beneficiary” who would assassinate *Qavām* while still in office (*Mard-e emruz*, 25 Mehr 1326Š./6 October 1947; 'Āqeli, 1, pp. 406-08). Subsequently, he was under legal prosecution for three months, and his paper was suspended. However, he published it secretly (TaherehShokuhi).

*Mard-e emruz* had a high circulation, and billed its clients a sizable sum for publishing their commercial advertisements. During its life span of six years and a half, stretching from 19 August 1942 to 14 February 1947, *Mard-e emruz* was suspended 48 times, and only 138 of its issues saw the light of the day (Šiftah, 1984, 44), of which around 25% were published under the license of other journals such as *Nasim-e šomāl*, *Šedā-ye Irān*, *Nabard* and *Nedāy-e āzādi*. While Mas'ud was in hiding, stencil copies of *Mard-e emruz* were circulated (Šiftah, 1984, 92).

Mas'ud paid a high price for his harsh language, “which stopped at nothing and spared no one who had any influence in the affairs of the state (Kamshad, 1966, 66). On 11 August 1945 five men made it to his office and tried to beat him to his death. Mas'ud's loud screams brought the neighbors into the scene of the event. Four out five intruders managed to escape, while the fifth one was arrested and taken into custody (*Asnād-e maṭbu'āt*, IV, pp. 838-39: *Madr-e emruz*, 3/45, 17 August 1945).

It did not take long, however, that subsequent to complex political wheeling and dealing between the leftist and rightist groups, he was fatally shot while sitting in his car in front of Mazāheri Publishing House on Ekbātān Avenue in Tehran, on Thursday evening, February 11, 1948. At the time, the circumstances surrounding the death were shrouded in mystery. Years later however, a clearer picture emerged. His knowledge of the relationship

between the Tudeh Party and Hajj 'Ali Razmārā (1901-1950), the military leader who became prime minister in 1950 and was assassinated at the same year, proved an effective catalyst in his murder. The published confessions of Kōsrwo Ruzbeh, arguably the most controversial member of the Tudeh Party's military wing, who was executed on 11 May 1958, revealed his involvement in Mas'ud's murder plot (For further details see [MAS'UD, MOHAMMAD](#); Abrahamian, 1999, 94-95; Esmā'ili, 1987, 208).

Five issues of *Mard-e emruz* were published after his assassination by Naṣr-al-Allah Šifta, before it was confiscated in February 1947 (Šiftah, 1984, 384). The second serial of *Mard-e emruz*, with a pro-Moṣaddeq overtone, was published in 1952 by Hušang Šams Mostowfi, a colleague of Mas'ud, and saw its end after the overthrow of Moṣaddeq in 1953 (see [COUP D'ETAT OF 1332 Š./1953](#)). It reappeared for a short period of time (22 February-24 November 1979) after the Revolution of 1979. The entire run of the journal's articles from 1942 to 1948 has been published with an introduction (Tehran, 1984) by Moḥammad 'Ali Sepānlu, the noted poet and literary critic. The first volume of the collection sold out in just three months. The second volume is still awaiting publication. Copies of *Mard-e emruz*., in addition to libraries inside Iran, are available at the Library of Congress, libraries of Princeton and Michigan universities, as well as Russian Academy of Science.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

Ervand Abrahamian, *Tortured Confessions: Prisons and Public Recantations in Modern Iran*, Calif., 1999.

'Ali Abu'l-Ḥasani, "Zamāna va kārnama-ye Moḥammad Mas'ud," *Tāriḳ-e moāṣer-e Iran*, 10/40 Winter 1385Š./2006, pp.115-180.

*Idem*, "Zamāna va kārnama-ye Moḥammad Mas'ud," *Tāriḳ-e moāṣer-e Iran*, 10/40, Spring 1386Š./2007, pp.112-55.

Iraj Afšār, *Nādera-kārān*, ed. Māḥmud Nikuya, Tehran, 2003.



Bāqer 'Aqeli, *Ruzšomār-e tāriḳ-e Iran* (A chronology of history of Iran), 2 vol., Tehran, 1992.

Idem, *Mirza Aḥmad Khan Qavām-al-Saltāna dar dawra-e Qājāriya va Pahlavi*, Tehran, 1997.

Fakhreddin Azimi, "FĀṬEMĪ, ḤOSAYN," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* IX, 1999, pp. 404-06.

'Ali Behzādi, *Šebh-e kāṭerāt* (Pseudo memories), Tehran, 1996.

Amir Esmā'ili, *Jān bar sar-e qalam: zendegi-nāma-ye ruznāma-negār-e mobārez Moḥammad Mas'ud*, Tehran, 1987.

Nāšer Irāni, "Zendegi va mobārezāt-e Moḥammad Mas'ud," *Našr-e dāneš*, no.3, 1365Š./1986, pp.28-31.

Anvar Ḳāma'i, *Kāṭerāt-e siāsi* (Political memoirs), Tehran, 1993.

Hasan Kamshad, *Modern Persian Prose Literature*, Cambridge, 1966, pp. 66-68.

Moḥammad Qā'ed, *Mirzāda Ešqi*, Tehran, 1984.

*Ḳosrow Ruzbeh dar dādgāh-e nezāmi* (Khorow Ruzbeh in the martial court), Ḥezb-e Tudeh-e Iran, n.p. 1961.

Golām-Reza Salāmi and Moḥsen Rustā'i, ed., *Asnād-e maṭbu't-e Iran (1320-1332 Š.)*, 4 vols., Tehran, 1998.

Ḥassan Šāyḡān, *Moḥammad Mas'ud va jahān-bini-e u* (Mohammad Mas'ud and his world view), Tehran, 2001.

Moḥammad 'Ali Sepānlu, "Contemporary Trends in Iranian Publishing," [www.shahbazi.org/Articles/Sepanlou.pdf](http://www.shahbazi.org/Articles/Sepanlou.pdf), accessed at 05/18/2011.

Tahereh Shokuhi, "Mohammad Massud," [http://iichs.org/index\\_en.asp?id=797&doc\\_cat=16](http://iichs.org/index_en.asp?id=797&doc_cat=16), accessed at 01/01/2010.

Našr-Allāh Šiftah, *Zendegi-nāma va mobārezāt-e siāsi-e Moḥammad Mas'ud, sardabir-e Mard-e emruz* (*The biography and political activities of Mohammad Mas'ud, the editor of Mārd-e emruz*), Tehran, 1984.

L. P. Elwell-Sutton, "The Iranian Press 1941-1947," *Iran* VI, 1968, no. 356.