



PERIODIC PRESS OF AZERBAIJAN IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIO-POLITICAL AND CULTURAL PROCESSES OF THE 19TH

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Abstract. *The press, an operational mass media, is one of the most effective and universal means of spreading education and scientific knowledge, forming public opinion in society, and socio-political struggle. At the same time, in terms of origin and genre, it is of great importance as a unique historical source, as a carrier of the most diverse materials and information (news, opinion, analysis, attitude, advertising, announcements, etc.). In this regard, the Azerbaijani national press is no exception. Founded in 1875, this press has gone through a very difficult and honorable path. The period of its creation was a period when Azerbaijan was under the colonial oppression of the Russian Empire, where a very strict colonial-administrative system based on national, racial and religious slavery, arising from the socio-political essence of the empire, prevailed. The Russian government, which implemented a policy of total ethnic assimilation, Russification and Christianization, tried to limit the people's natural rights and freedoms, such as freedom of religion, language, speech, and the creation of a periodical press, by all means. Therefore, in the presented article is attempted to examine the problem posed in this context, and expresses its attitude to the activities of native-language newspapers under strict censorship control, as well as to the efforts of Azerbaijani intellectuals for science, education, national awakening and progress through the periodical press, from the prism of modern realities.*

Keywords: *Press, Hassan bey Zardabi, "Ekinchi", "Kaspi", Tsarist censorship.*

Annotatsiya. *Matbuot tezkor ommaviy axborot vositasi sifatida ta'lim va ilmiy bilimlarni targ'ib qilish, jamiyatda jamoatchilik fikrini shakllantirish hamda ijtimoiy-siyosiy kurash olib borishning eng samarali va universal vositalaridan biridir. Shu bilan birga, kelib chiqishi va janr xususiyatlariga ko'ra, u turli xil materiallar va ma'lumotlar (yangiliklar, fikrlar, tahlillar, munosabatlar, reklama va e'lonlar va boshqalar) tashuvchisi sifatida noyob tarixiy manba hisoblanadi. Bu jihatdan Ozarbayjon milliy matbuoti ham bundan mustasno emas.*

1875-yilda tashkil etilgan ushbu matbuot juda murakkab va sharaflı taraqqiyot yo'lini bosib o'tgan. Uning shakllanish davri Ozarbayjon Rossiya imperiyasining mustamlakachilik zulmi ostida bo'lgan, imperiyaning ijtimoiy-siyosiy mohiyatidan kelib chiqqan milliy, irqiy va diniy kamsitishga asoslangan qat'iy mustamlakachilik-ma'muriy tizim hukm surgan davrga to'g'ri keladi.

To'liq etnik assimilyatsiya, ruslashtirish va xristianlashtirish siyosatini amalga oshirgan Rossiya hukumati xalqning din erkinligi, ona tilidan foydalanish, so'z erkinligi va davriy matbuot tashkil etish kabi tabiiy huquq va erkinliklarini turli yo'llar bilan cheklashga harakat qilgan. Shu bois, mazkur maqolada ushbu muammo aynan shu tarixiy kontekstda o'rganiladi hamda qat'iy senzura nazorati ostida faoliyat yuritgan ona tilidagi gazetalar, shuningdek, Ozarbayjon ziyolilarining davriy matbuot orqali ilm-fan, ma'rifat, milliy uyg'onish va taraqqiyot yo'lidagi sa'y-harakatlari zamonaviy voqe'liklar nuqtayi nazaridan tahlil qilinadi.

Kalit so'zlar: *matbuot, Hasan bey Zardabi, «Ekinchi», «Kaspi», podsho Rossiyasi senzurası.*



Аннотация. Периодическая печать как оперативное средство массовой информации является одним из наиболее эффективных и универсальных средств распространения просвещения и научных знаний, формирования общественного мнения, социально-политической борьбы. В то же время, по своему происхождению и жанру, она имеет огромное значение как уникальный исторический источник, как носитель самых разнообразных материалов и информации (новости, мнения, анализы, взгляды, реклама, объявления и т. д.). В этом плане не является исключением и азербайджанская национальная пресса. Эта пресса, основанная в 1875 году, прошла очень трудный и славный путь. Период ее становления был периодом, когда Азербайджан находился под колониальным гнетом Российской империи, где господствовала жесткая колониально-управленческая система, вытекающая из социально-политической сущности империи, основанная на национальном, расовом и религиозном рабстве. Проводя политику тотальной этнической ассимиляции, русификации и христианизации, российское правительство всеми средствами стремилось ограничить естественные права народа, такие как свобода вероисповедания, языка, слова, создание периодической печати.

В представленной статье были предприняты попытка по исследованию поставленной проблемы именно в этом контексте, выражено отношение к деятельности газет на родном языке в условиях жесткого цензурного контроля, а также к усилиям азербайджанской интеллигенции через периодическую печать во имя науки, образования, национального пробуждения и прогресса через призму современных реалий.

Ключевые слова: Пресса, Гасан-бей Зардаби, Экинчи, Каспи, царская цензура.

Introduction. The periodical press has not only been an operational mass media, but also acts as one of the most universal means of spreading enlightenment and scientific knowledge, cultural development and the formation of worldviews.

The periodical press has the power to penetrate any social environment, study public opinion, shape it, and influence the behavior and social position of members of society.

The periodical press is also of great importance as a unique historical source, carrying a wide variety of materials (news, opinions, analysis, attitudes, advertisements, announcements, etc.) and information in terms of origin and genre. It is no coincidence that, due to the listed characteristics, in a number of countries the press is also figuratively called the “fourth power”.

However, in our opinion, the most accurate definition of the press was given by the prominent Azerbaijani intellectual Omar Faig Nemanzadeh (1868-1938). O.F. Nemanzadeh writes: “...Every nation lives with civility and upbringing, and perishes with ignorance. The first mean is Khatib (Friday prayer), and preachers are magazines and newspapers. The newspaper is the mirror of the world. The newspaper is the sharpest sword of time”. [17] In this sense, the study of the history of the 19th century Azerbaijani press, the study and disclosure of its role and participation in the socio-political and cultural-domestic life of society is one of the most important tasks of modern scientific research.



Literature Review. The history of the Azerbaijani press has been studied within the broader context of Russian imperial policy, modernization, and national identity formation in the South Caucasus. A notable contribution is Geoffrey Hosking's *Russia: People and Empire, 1552–1917* (1997), which analyzes the policies of Russification and their impact on non-Russian peoples. Existing studies show that the press played an important role in the spread of education, public awareness, and national consciousness. However, the Azerbaijani periodical press of the nineteenth century has not been sufficiently studied as an independent subject, which increases the relevance of the present research.

Research Methodology. The study is based on the principles of historicism and objectivity. A comparative-historical approach was used to examine the development of the Azerbaijani periodical press within the socio-political and cultural processes of the nineteenth century. The research relies on archival documents, periodical publications, and relevant scholarly literature. Methods of source analysis, content analysis, and comparative analysis were applied to evaluate the activities of Azerbaijani newspapers, the impact of tsarist censorship, and the role of the press in promoting education, national consciousness, and social progress.

Analysis and Results. First of all, it should be mentioned that period is considered one of the most difficult and complex periods in the history of Azerbaijan in terms of the nature of socio-political, economic and cultural processes. Thus, the long-term war that began between Russia and the Qajars at the beginning of the century ended with the signing of the Gulistan and Turkmenchay treaties (1813 and 1828) between these states. Under the terms of these treaties, which formalized the division of the historical Azerbaijani lands into two, the north of Azerbaijan joined the Russian Empire, and a strict colonial-administrative system based on national, racial and religious slavery, arising from the socio-political essence of the empire, was established here. The only thing that was thought about the integration of these lands inhabited by autochthonous Azerbaijanis of different languages and religions into the Russian administrative and legal system was this: Russian statehood as a single state, the Russian nation as a single nation, the Russian language as a single language, and “respect for the Russian faith” should prevail in the territory of the empire. This thesis, called the “Russian idea,” denied not only the administrative-territorial autonomy of the big peoples included in the empire, but also the right to cultural development, and as a condition for the existence of small peoples, it implied their gradual assimilation by the Russians.[30.15] That is, the empire had to be “integrated” not only in administrative-territorial terms, but also in cultural-spiritual, and therefore religious and linguistic, terms.[29.49] To achieve this goal, tsarism, along with the most diverse methods and



means, intended to use the power of the press. Therefore, immediately after the occupation, as in other national remote regions, a massive “Christianization” and “Russification” campaign was launched in the South Caucasus, where Azerbaijani Turks constituted an absolute majority - the settlement of Russians, Armenians and other Christian ethnic elements. Restrictions were imposed on the natural rights and freedoms of Azerbaijanis, such as opening schools in their native language, receiving education, developing literature and, in particular, creating periodicals. Instead, Russian-language newspapers, which appreciated and propagated Russia’s domestic and foreign policy with mass circulation, and their supplements in local languages, just for show, were launched. In such a difficult socio-political environment, thanks to the selfless work of a small number of national intellectuals, enlightened people who tried to pull their people out of the darkness of slavery, and later, the national bourgeoisie that was forming, the foundation of the Azerbaijani national press was laid.

Summary of the Russian-language press

The first Russian-language press in the South Caucasus was the newspaper “Tiflisskiye Vedomosti” published in Tiflis, the main administrative and political center of the empire in the region. The newspaper, which began publication on June 4, 1828 under the editorship of P.S. Sankovsky, was initially published in Russian and Georgian, and from 1830 in Persian. Only from 1832 did the newspaper begin to be published in Turkish under the name “Tiflis Akhbari” [25.14] (Tiflis News) instead of Persian, which was “little understood among the local population”. The texts given in the newspaper, which was published once a week and consisted of only one page, mainly consisted of literal translations of materials taken from central Russian newspapers. More precisely, the newspaper’s pages published news about the wars waged by Tsarist Russia against neighboring states, government orders and announcements, and all kinds of information that was in the interests of the empire as a whole.

Although there is no specific document, based on some biographical information, including the content of the Russian version of the newspaper, it is possible to assume that A.A. Bakikhanov served as the editor of the Persian duplicate of “Tiflisskiye vedomosti” [27.302] This assumption is also strengthened by what A.A. Bakikhanov’s contemporary and colleague, the Russian officer N.N.Muravyov, said about him: “...Abasgulu Agha, being a valuable personality in this land distinguished by his deep knowledge of Arabic, Persian, Tatar (Azerbaijani) and Turkish languages, deserves the attention of the European scientific community with his boundless enthusiasm for education” [27.303-304]. Based on the above-mentioned, we can say that A.A.



Bakikhanov also served as the editor of the Turkish (Azerbaijani) version of “Tiflisskiye vedomosti”.

However, the “Tiflisskiye Vedomosti” was published for a very short time. Thus, the publication of the Russian and Georgian versions of it was stopped in 1932, and the publication of the Turkish version in early 1833 [31.145] Instead, on January 1, 1836, again in Tiflis, on the initiative of the governor-general of the Caucasus, Lieutenant General Neidgart, “Zakavkazskiy Vestnik” (South Caucasus News) and its Azerbaijani-language page called “News from this side of the Caucasus” began to be published. In 1856, the newspaper was merged with the “Qafqaz (Caucasus)” newspaper, which began publication on January 5, 1846, and since then it was published as its official supplement.[37.4]

In the second half of the 19th century, due to the rapid development of the oil industry in Baku, the “attention” of the imperial leadership to the cultural life of the city also increased. Along with enterprises that would meet the cultural and domestic needs of the “higher class” (circus, theaters, entertainment centers, concert halls, schools, etc.), printing houses were opened and some Russian-language newspapers began to be published here. One of these newspapers and the first was the newspaper “Bakinskiy Listok” [11.60], the first issue of which was published on March 6, 1871. “Bakinskiy Listok” was intended not only for privileged circles, but, as the publisher himself wrote, for all readers representing all social classes of the city and having a more or less education. Although the newspaper was supposed to publish articles in Azerbaijani (Turkish), this did not happen. Instead, its pages contained small texts in Persian and Armenian. According to researcher L. Hajiyeva, who commented on the issue, the editor of the newspaper, Christian Sink, did not see any difference between the “Tatar” (Azerbaijani) and Persian languages. The main reason for this was probably that Azerbaijanis were sometimes described in official circles as “Transcaucasian Mohammedans”, sometimes as “Transcaucasian Tatars”, and sometimes as “Persians” .[11.64-65]

The pages of “Bakinskiy listok” mainly covered the economic life of the city. However, in its separate issues, music, education, theater, social problems of Baku, and sometimes even commentary on topical issues such as public, national and religious relations were also given space. One of the interesting moments is the occurrence in the newspaper of the name of Hassan bey Zardabi, who would later lay the foundation of the Azerbaijani national press under the signature “Hassan bey Melikov”. Research shows that in those years, H. Zardabi, who worked at Baku Realny School together with Christian Sink and taught natural sciences, often appeared in the newspaper with articles devoted to the establishment of a charitable society to



help disadvantaged students.[11.63] “Bakinskiy Listok” was closed on January 1, 1875 .[37.16]

In 1876, the Baku Provincial Administration established the newspaper “Bakinskaya Izvestiya” (Baku News), later “Bakinskiy guberninskiy vedemosti” (Baku Provincial News) and a number of other Russian-language newspapers. These newspapers, especially “Bakinskaya Izvestiya”, mainly published economic news, information on oil production, articles devoted to the current problems of the Russian Empire and the world oil industry, as well as advertising and announcement materials. Therefore, the newspaper had a wide audience consisting of scientists, technicians, oil industrialists, and people related to the oil profession in general. “Bakinskaya Izvestiya”, which continued its activities under the name “Bakinskiy torgovo-promyshlenniy listok” (Baku Trade and Industrial Page) since 1888, is considered not only the first official press organ in Azerbaijan, but also the first professional newspaper.[11.107-108]

In 1881, another Russian-language newspaper, “Kaspi,” began publication in Baku and played a very important role in the history of socio-political thought. In particular, after the famous Azerbaijani millionaire H.Z.Taghiyev bought the newspaper in 1897 and appointed the prominent socio-political figure A.M.Topchubashov as its editor (1898), the newspaper became a real cultural center not only for Azerbaijani Turks, but also for all Turkic-Muslim peoples of the Caucasus and the Russian Empire.[20.26] It is no coincidence that Petersburg, Moscow, and Tiflis publications showed interest in “Kaspi” and republished individual materials published there on their pages.[20.26]

The leading topics of the “Kaspi” were the promotion of cultural, educational and enlightenment issues. The most famous representatives of Azerbaijani society of the time - M. Mahmudbeyov, N. Narimanov, M. T. Sidqi, M. Shahtakhtly, H. Zardabi, T. Bayramalibeyov, A. Mahmudbeyov, A. Aghayev, N. Minasazov, E. Sultanov, R. Melikov, F. Kocharli, M. Mahmudbeyov, N.Nazirov, S. Ganizadeh, J. Hajibeyli, U. Hajibeyli, N. Vezirov and others - published articles on various topics. Besides, separate issues of the newspaper also included articles on women’s freedom and women’s rights, attitude of Islam to enlightenment and science, the issue of the alphabet, the situation of Muslims living in the empire and other serious topics. During the years when A.M.Topchubashov was the editor of the “Kaspi” (1898-1907), the publication of articles on national relations and national issues became a tradition.[20.57-62] Due to a number of objective and subjective reasons, “Kaspi” ceased its activities in 1919.

From the history of publishing of the Turkish-language press



The first periodical published in the Azerbaijani (Turkish) language is considered to be the newspaper “Ekinchi”, which began publication on July 22, 1875. The launch of “Ekinchi”, published and edited by Hassan bey Zardabi, is considered a very important cultural event not only in the life of Azerbaijani Turks, but also in the life of the entire Turkic-Muslim world. When reviewing the program and charter of the newspaper, the tsarist censorship registered it, taking into account that it would cover purely economic and civil issues. Recalling his meeting with the military governor of Baku, D.S. Staroselsky, H. Zardabi wrote in this regard: *“After I told him (Staroselsky - T.Sh.) my problem, he advised me to name the newspaper “Ekinchi”. That is, so that it would be known that only agriculture (planting and harvesting - T.Sh.) would be discussed here in order to pass the censorship. In this way, I submitted an application and received permission”*. [2]

It is clear that the demands put forward were aimed at limiting the newspaper’s real purpose, subordinating its program of activities to the requirements of the colonial policy of tsarism, and thus place it into a narrow framework. Finding a printing house, covering the printing house’s financial expenses, delivering the newspaper to subscribers, and other similar organizational issues were another problem. Of course, publishing a newspaper in such difficult conditions was, in the words of M.F. Akhundzadeh, a difficult task, as hard as “cutting a mountain”. However, in order to achieve “the habit of the people to read newspapers” [5], H. Zardabi, in addition to distributing part of the newspaper’s circulation on the streets and markets of Baku, tried to send it to other cities free of charge. [12]

The articles published in “Ekinchi” had an important educational, social and even ideological significance. Thus, the newspaper often deviated from the main topic (agricultural news) defined in its charter, gave extensive space to language, religion, especially science and education, and tried to draw the attention of intellectuals, businessmen and wealthy individuals to these issues. [4] In particular, studying science and getting an education was promoted as a “fight for life” (struggle for life), it was stated that this was very important in order to stand against other nations, not to be defeated and perish. [4.9] At that time, the work done in the Ottoman state, especially the teaching of all subjects in the mother tongue in new-type schools, the printing of textbooks, etc., was given as an example, and it was emphasized that organizing these works in Azerbaijan would be of great benefit. [6]

The newspaper regretfully wrote, considering the problems among Muslims, especially inter-sectarian conflicts, as the main obstacles that hinder development and the formation and strengthening of alliances, national unity: *“...Half of the Muslims living in the Caucasus region are Shiites, half are Sunnis. Shiites are annoyed by*



Sunnis, Sunnis by Shiites. Neither of them listens to each other. Where can there be a unity?!” [8]

“Ekinchi” even criticized the colonial, national, racial and confessional policies of the Russian Empire, using veiled expressions and changing time and place. Such initiatives, which were incompatible with the newspaper’s obligations to the tsarist censorship, naturally caused concern and anger in the ruling circles.[7]

Along with this, Hassan bey Zardabi, who tried to publish “Ekinchi” in pure and simple Azerbaijani, was periodically attacked by some “educated people” and fanatical religious figures who ridiculed the “language” of the newspaper, calling it “nomadic jargon”. They accused, threatened with death H. Zardabi, who “did not know Arabic and Persian”, and angrily called him “godless” and “Urus with a hat” [12.293]. Therefore, a large part of the population did not buy and read the newspaper not only because of illiteracy and poverty, but also because of fear of those religious figures and the repressions of tsarism. In this regard, the following thoughts of H. Zardabi’s wife Hanifa Melikova are particularly noteworthy: *“The number of those who did not read “Ekinchi” out of fear of the tsar was much greater than the number of those who did not read it out of fear of God”.*[13.294]

In such a situation, of course, the regular publication of “Ekinchi” became increasingly difficult. Tsarism, considering the ideas and initiatives disseminated by the newspaper dangerous for the regime, was looking for an excuse to stop its publication. Soon, such an excuse was found, and in the context of the Ottoman-Russian war that began in 1877, “Ekinchi” was banned, “on the grounds” that it supported the Ottomans.[22.19-20] Thus, “Ekinchi” went down in history, having published 12 issues in 1875, 24 in 1876, and 20 in 1877 (a total of 56 issues).[19. 26]

Thus, despite its very short existence (1875-1877), “Ekinchi” played a very important role in Azerbaijani journalism and the history of Azerbaijani socio-political thought. It is of great importance, in the words of Ali Erol, as the first Turkic-language press that called on all Muslim Turkish communities in the Caucasus to join the struggle for independence and brought a multifaceted approach to professional journalism.[24.54-58]

However, it should be clarified one important point here: if in 1828-1832, Turkish editions of “Tifliskiye vedomosti” were published under the editorship of A.A.Bakikhanov, as well as several Azerbaijani supplements of “Zakavkazskiy vestnik” in 1838-1845, is it correct to consider the history of the Azerbaijani press from 1875 - the beginning from the publication of the “Ekinchi” ? At this point, let us also take into account that in 1928, in an article published in the collection “Culture and written language of the East”, the prominent orientalist I.Yenikolopov presented



“Tatar News”, which was published as a supplement to “Tiflisskiye Vedomosti”, as the “first Turkish newspaper” in the Caucasus: *“Despite the constant anger of the tsarist officials, the beginning of the publication of this first Turkish newspaper is the most reliable indicator of the enormous cultural power of the Transcaucasian Turks, who at that time demanded spiritual nourishment from them and persistently tried to obtain it”*. [31.146]

Against the background of such a diversity of opinions, the explanation given by the prominent Azerbaijani writer Aziz Mirahmadov is absolutely correct and appropriate, and we have no alternative options to disagree with him. The scientist noted that although the publication of the newspaper “Tiflisskiye vedomosti” and its Turkish supplement, as well as the participation of the Azerbaijani writer and scientist A.A.Bakikhanov in this work are of great scientific and historical importance, not a single issue of that newspaper has been obtained. Only archival documents and some other sources are known about this. As for the special Turkish editions of “Zagavkazskiy vestnik” (news from this side of the Caucasus), these supplements, consisting of translations of official documents, were published in a very small circulation and in a very short period of time. Most importantly, neither the content of the materials presented here, nor the printing base, nor the people who translated and printed them, had any connection with the existence of Azerbaijan. Therefore, there is no reason to consider them the predecessors of our national press. According to A. Mirahmadov, *“the first newspaper that is not only connected to the land in which it is published, its founder, editor, and authors, but also its content, ideological direction, language, printing base, and readers, is based on its spiritual and material life, and primarily serves its native compatriots, is “Ekinchi”, and the history of the Azerbaijani national press, quite naturally, begins with this newspaper”*. [15.7-8]

In this case, the “Ziya” newspaper founded by the Unsizadeh brothers can be considered the second initiative in the history of the native Azerbaijani press after “Ekinchi”. One of the brothers – the prominent educator and religious figure of his time, Said Efendi Abdurrahman Efendi oglu Unsizadeh, applied to the Caucasian Censorship Committee on December 4, 1878, for permission to publish the newspaper in question and received a positive response. “Ziya” [21.155-156], published in Tiflis and the first issue (76 issues in total) was published on January 14, 1879, and continued its publication under the name “Ziyayi- Qafqasiyyeh” from December 1880, and its 107th issue was published under the new name.

Due to the appointment of the gazi to the Baku province, Said Unsizadeh left Tiflis on January 22, 1883 and came to Shamakhy. After being published in Tiflis for a while, the printing house and editorial office of “Ziyayi- Qafqasiyyeh” were also



moved to Shamakhy. The newspaper, the last issue of which was published in June 1884, was closed due to traditional “economic difficulties”.[21.160] Although we do not deny the existence of “economic difficulties”, it would be wrong, in our opinion, to say that they were the main and only reason for the closure of the newspaper. Because it is clear from the information of the sources that the role of complaints made to the tsarist censorship bodies, the conflict situation that arose between Said Unsizadeh and other religious figures, and especially the special “services” of V. Bezabrazov, the chief censor of the Caucasus Censorship Committee for “Oriental and Local Languages”, played a role in this matter. Thus, the “chief censor”, who considered the activities of the Azerbaijani language periodical press and publishing as “untimely” and “extra work”, faithfully served the national enslavement policy of tsarism by preventing all kinds of cultural events that would promote the national awakening and progress of the peoples of the Caucasus, including Azerbaijanis.[21.165]

In the Azerbaijani socio-political environment of the period, the attitude towards the activities of “Ziya” (“Ziyayi-Qafqasiyyeh”) was also ambiguous. Many wrote that the newspaper did not have a specific and clear direction, and many emphasized that the newspaper, whose creative load consisted mostly of religiously motivated materials, served Islam, not the nation and nationalism.[21.174] There were even those who accused the publisher of the newspaper, Said Unsizadeh, of speaking out against the alphabet reform and collaborating with the tsarist authorities.

At the same time, some researchers have highly appreciated the role of “Ziya” and “Ziyayi-Qafqasiyyeh” in the history of the Azerbaijani press, noting that, despite being a cleric, Said Unsizade had a liberal worldview, and that national and enlightened intellectuals such as Hassan bey Zardabi, Seyid Azim Shirvani, Najaf bey Vezirov, Jalal Unsizade, S.Velibeyov, A.Berje, A.O.Chernyaevsky and M.Shahtakhtly gathered around him [1] In their opinion, the pages of “Ziyayi-Qafqasiyyeh” sometimes contained materials accusing colonialism, occupation and violence, along with religious materials. For example, in the 22nd issue of the newspaper dated August 11, 1882, the democratic “Akhtar” newspaper published extensive information about Arabi Pasha, who led the resistance movement of the Egyptian people, and his appeal.[21.172-173]

In this regard, the position of the prominent Tatar thinker, great Turkist and nationalist Y. Akchura is clearer and more specific. Y. Akchura notes that “Ziyayi-Qafqasiyyeh” and “Keshkul” spread and defended the view of Islamism, which constituted a separate stage in the idea of “Comprehensive Turkism”, rather than the idea of Turkish nationalism. Considering this, he wrote that the Unsizade brothers’



services to the Turkish nation consisted in publishing the works of Ismail Gasprali in Turkish.[22.91]

To the point, “Keshkul”, which belonged to the Unsizadeh press, began publishing in Tiflis at a time when “Ziyayi-Qafqasiyyeh” was in decline, but was still continuing to be published. The first issue of “Keshkul”, whose editor and publisher was Jalal (Jalaladdin) Unsizadeh, the middle brother of Said Unsizadeh, was published in January 1883. After 12 issues published as a magazine, the editor turned it into a newspaper. The first issue of the newspaper version of “Keshkul” [21.180] was published on March 22, 1884. Its pages devoted extensive space to the promotion of the ideas of national consciousness and national identity, criticism of the actions of hypocritical clergymen who robbed and plundered the common people under the guise of religion, why they were called “Tatars” and not Turks, the reasons that hindered the development of national consciousness and the national language, an explanation of the concepts of “ummah” and “nation”, etc. In this regard, he is also called the “pioneer of the search for national identity” [26.159] in Azerbaijan. According to researchers, the fact that “Keshkul” was more exposed to censorship persecution by tsarism, and even the cancellation of many issues, was most likely due to the nationalist position it demonstrated. Therefore, during its publication, announcements such as “due to reasons beyond our control, “Keshkul” was not published on time” were very common on its pages.

Moreover, the publisher of “Keshkul” Jalal (Jalaladdin) Unsizadeh mentioned the language of the Turkish population of Azerbaijan as “Azerbaijani language” in a number of his writings, along with “Turkish language”, and according to some information, he even applied to the Main Press Affairs Department in Tiflis in 1891 to publish a newspaper called “Azerbaijan”. In such a case, it is impossible to agree with Yusif Akchura’s views on “Keshkul” and Jalal Unsizadeh.

Thus, “Keshkul”, which was published for about ten years, was closed in November 1891, and from that date until the beginning of the 20th century, no newspaper or magazine in the Azerbaijani language was allowed to be published.

The struggle for the national press in the 1980s - 1990s

After the closure of “Keshkul”, the tsarist government and censorship, implementing a policy of real repression, racial, religious and national discrimination, rejected all initiatives and appeals to create a periodical in the Azerbaijani language, which is distinguished by its pleasantness, musicality and ease of understanding, is considered the language of communication of all the peoples of the Caucasus and is comparable to French in this respect [36.523-524] [38.120] [32.52] [39.91-92] [41.119] [28.71-72]. However, such a tendency was never observed in relation to other



peoples of the South Caucasus - Christian Georgians and Armenians. Since the beginning of the 19th century, schools have been operating in the languages of these peoples and numerous periodicals have been published (“Sakartvelos gazeti”, “Kartuli gazeti”, “Droeba”, “Mnamobi”, “Iveria”, “Shroma”, “Imedi”, “Kvali”, “Makharobeli”, “Siskari”, Sakartvelos Moambe”, “Azdarar”, “Arevelyan Janujmunk”, “Pcela Armenii”, “Juravli Armenii”, “Ararat”, “Mshak”, “Dproc”, “Pordz”, “Psak”, “Gorc”, “Arvochapahakan Tert”, “Varzharan”, “Ardzagank”, etc.).[33.191]

However, the struggle of Azerbaijani intellectuals to create a periodical press continued and this struggle gradually turned into a movement. Thus, after the closure of “Keshkul” - in December 1891, J. Unsizadeh, as mentioned above, took the initiative to publish a new newspaper called “Azerbaijan”. The appeal of his brother - Kamal Unsizadeh to the Main Press Department was also not positively responded to. Even his appeal in 1896 to create the Russian-language press “Letuchiy listok” (Flying Leaf), “Mestnoye obyavlenie” and “Danish” (Science) was rejected.

In 1893, the attempt of the prominent Turkist and nationalist Ahmed bey Aghaoglu to publish a newspaper called “Mashrig” (East) was unsuccessful. In his response to a letter sent by the Russian Minister of Internal Affairs to the Baku police chief, it was emphasized that this was unacceptable: “...*The publication of newspapers and magazines in the Azerbaijani language is completely undesirable. The Main Press Affairs Department believes that Mr. Aghayev’s request should be rejected*”. [21.226]

The application of the prominent educator and public figure Mahammadaga Shahtakhtly at the end of 1896 for permission to publish a weekly newspaper called “Tiflis” in Russian, Arabic, and Azerbaijani was also rejected by the relevant authorities. Thus, the chauvinist Russian censor V.D. Smirnov, who was familiar with M.Shahtakhtly’s application and the newspaper’s program, called Shahtakhtly’s initiative “good intentions” in his opinion sent to the Main Department for the Press, but under the pretext that each statement in his application had a subtext, he wrote in his opinion: “...*Mr. Shahtakhtinsky does not properly understand both the direction and content of the newspaper. He wants to fill the pages of the newspaper with various Eastern yells. It is not difficult to understand that this will lead to the exclusion of the Russian language, which is the common state language for Caucasians, and at the same time, even the preservation of the Arabic language, and this cannot be viewed as serving Russian interests*”. [21. 242-263]

But M.Shahtakhtly did not lose hope and went to Reterburg to meet personally with the head of the Main Department M.P. Solovyov. Solovyov told him, “*If you wish, I will allow you to publish a newspaper in Russian. Let the Tatars (Azerbaijanis – T.Sh.) take your example and get educated in Russian. You speak Russian perfectly.*”



Why do you need a Tatar newspaper? ... The intelligentsia should read in Russian. As for the simple Azerbaijanis, let them go and pasture their cattle”.[40]

One of the pioneers of the struggle for a national press at the end of the 19th century was Nariman Narimanov. In March 1896, N. Narimanov, together with his teacher friend S.M. Ganizadeh, decided to publish a children’s magazine called “Sovkat” for Azerbaijani schools. However, the tsarist government authorities traditionally did not allow the publication of “Sovkat”.[14.27] A few years later, his desire to publish a newspaper called “Fresh News” and a scientific and pedagogical magazine called “School” in Azerbaijani and Russian languages did not come true.[21.247] Thus, he experienced great sadness that 2 million Caucasian Muslims were forced to live without information in their native language, while 19 Armenian and Georgian newspapers were published in Russia.[3.38]

During these years, S.M. Ganizadeh and H. Mahmudbeyov were also not allowed to publish the literary and pedagogical magazine “Nubar” and the newspaper “Chirag” [21.248] Finally, the attempts of prominent enlightened intellectuals - Mahammad Taghi Sidgi and A.O. Chernyaevsky to publish a newspaper in the Azerbaijani language called “Fikir” were also unsuccessful. In general, none of the more than fifteen applications submitted to the Minister of Internal Affairs for permission to publish newspapers and magazines in Azerbaijani in the 1890s was given a positive response.[21.248]

Thus, we can say that during the 19th century, the Azerbaijani national press was represented by only three newspapers that were published in a very short period of time - “Ekinchi”, “Ziya” (Ziyayi-Qafqaziyyeh) and “Keshkul”.

Conclusion. From what has been said, it can be concluded that at the beginning of the 19th century, in Azerbaijan, which was divided into two and incorporated into Russia by the Gulistan Peace Treaty of 1813 and the Turkmenchay Peace Treaty of 1828, as well as in the entire South Caucasus, a very complex and equally intolerable socio-political and socio-cultural environment prevailed. Thus, in the policy and strategic plans pursued by the empire, the issue of the development of non-Russian and Christian peoples, their cultures and languages was completely rejected. In Russian society, the idea of the “great Russian people” was raised to the level of a national idea, Orthodox Christianity was given the status of the “national religion” of all peoples incorporated into the borders of the empire, and “Russification” and “Christianization” became one of the main directions of state policy.

The attitude towards the non-Russian population was determined by the degree of their loyalty to the strengthening of the ruling regime and the monarch and his dynasty. The ultimate goal of such a policy, as the English historian G.Hosking said, was to



“educate” all the peoples who had joined the empire’s borders, a sense of belonging to Russia, its historical past and traditions. [42.367]

In this sense, the emergence of the Azerbaijani language periodical press can be called the most important socio-political and cultural event of the era in the full sense of the word. Thus, the initial expression of Turkish ethnic identity and identity, which took fragile steps in 1975 in the form of the “Ekinchi” newspaper, published by H. Zardabi, gradually grew and expanded through the publications “Keshkul” (1883-1891) and “Kaspi” (1881-1919), and at the beginning of the 20th century, it took the shape of ideology in the form of “Shargi-Rus” (1903-1905), “Hümmet” (1904-1905), “Hayat” (1905-1906), “Fuyuzat” (1906-1907) and other press organs, whose position and main goal in Azerbaijan was “political Turkism” and “Azerbaijaniism”.

The end of this difficult and long path, the main result of this selfless struggle, was the establishment of the first national state in the Turkic-Muslim East in 1918 - the People’s Republic of Azerbaijan.

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