

ON SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES OF IRANIAN AZERBAIJAN IN THE NEWSPAPER “AZERBAIJAN” (1947-1949)

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Abstract: The article presents an overview of the movement of "21 Azer" (December 12, 1945), social-political, economic, national and ethnic issues, and national enlightenment in Iranian Azerbaijan based on the 1947-1949 issues of the "Azerbaijan" newspaper, the organ of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party (ADP) headed by S.J. Pishevari. The periodical was issued in the Azerbaijani Turkic utilizing the Arabic script during 1945-1946 in Tabriz under the governance of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party (ADP) and in Baku from 1947 to 1949 due to the defeat of the ADP. Issues of the newspaper for 1947-1949 are stored in the Documentary Sources Fund at the National Museum for History of Azerbaijan. The newspaper “Azerbaijan” contains a critical stance towards the Qajar and Pahlavi authorities, an overview of socio-political, economic and cultural processes, some pieces of revolutionaries and intellectuals of the time, the activities of the ADP, and ethnic and ideological issues.

For a comprehensive presentation of the topic, this paper considers various sources and documents illuminating the historical context of the period have been utilized, including speeches, articles and other works by S.J. Pishevari, alongside with issues of the newspaper “Azerbaijan”.

Keywords: *21 Azer, Pishevari, “Azerbaijan” newspaper, national enlightenment, national issues*

INTRODUCTION

Although Seyid Jafar Pishevari (1893-1947) was originally from South Azerbaijan, he moved to Baku with his family at a young age, graduated from high school here, and engaged in pedagogical activity in the Khirdalan village of Baku. He participated in the meetings of the Iranian Social-Democrat (*Ictimaiyyun Amiyyun*) Party in Baku, joined the Justice Party of the Iranian communists in 1918, and assumed the role of editor of the organization's newspaper, "Hurriyyat". He asserted Marxism and social-democratic ideas and viewed them as the means for the salvation of the Iranian people. In 1920, he was sent to Rasht by the Justice Party to support the Gilan revolution led by Mirza Kuchik Khan in Iran [Tağıyeva et al., (2000): 249-251]. In the 1920s, S.J. Pishevari held leading positions as the responsible secretary of the Iranian Communist Party and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet-backed Gilan Republic [Pişəvəri (2005): 12-15].

Following the defeat of the Gilan revolution, he became the editor-in-chief of the newspaper "Haqiqat" of the anti-government Iranian Trade Union Organization in Tehran. His publication of critical articles eventually led to the prohibition of the

newspaper [Tağıyeva et al., (2000): 252]. The prevailing socio-political conditions in Iran, notably the official prohibition of communist propaganda in 1931, compelled him to, at least outwardly, abandon communist ideologies. During the 1930s and 1940s, while incarcerated in Tehran's Qasri-Qajar prison on charges related to communism, he personally sought forgiveness from the Shah for transgressions and mistakes he had not intentionally committed, as conveyed in his statement to the investigator [Rəhimli (Bije) (2019): 120] and said: "I am not adhering to this ideology anymore. It is very early for the acceptance of this belief in Iran. Communists traditionally draw strength from the working class, which is notably lacking in Iran. I find it unlikely that, even over the course of a century, the working class will emerge as a substantial force forming the majority of our nation" [Rəhimli (Bije) (2019): 122].

However, Pishevari acted according to the prevailing political conditions at the time. At the request of the USSR and Great Britain, S.J. Pishevari, who was released from prison after the resignation of Reza Shah in 1941, began working as an editor of the "Ajir" newspaper in Tehran and was elected a deputy to the Iranian parliament. Despite the non-acceptance of his deputyship by the Tehran government, he established the Azerbaijan Democratic Party on September 3, 1945, and initiated the publication of the party's newspaper, "Azerbaijan", laying the groundwork for national independence. M.C. Bagirov, the leader of Soviet Azerbaijan, played a major role in the appointment of S.J. Pishevari as the head of the ADP, recommending him on the basis of his previous affiliation as a communist and as "a person with considerable influence and respect in democratic entities [Həsənli (1998): 204-205].

In the appeal sent by S.J. Pishevari to the foreign ministers of major countries, it was said: "The condition of the Azerbaijani population, numbering five million in Iran, is unbearable. We advocate for the reinstatement of genuine democratic processes throughout Iran, accompanied by the granting of internal freedom and autonomy to the Azerbaijani people. Simultaneously, we await equitable legislation for the entire nation, allowing Azerbaijan to autonomously determine its destiny" [Qızıl səhifələr (1946): 38-39]. With the support of the Soviet government, the government of the ADP was established in South Azerbaijan on December 12, 1945, under the leadership of Pishevari.

The "21 Azer" movement of 1945-1946, waged in opposition to the Pahlavi monarchy that had held power in Iran since 1925, in the words of S.J. Pishevari, set the goal of "attaining freedom to address our national necessities while preserving the independence and integrity of Iran" [Pişəvəri (2016): 32]. S.J. Pishevari, a dedicated participant in the struggle for the freedom of the Iranian and Azerbaijani peoples, adopted the words of Mirza Kuchik Khan, a revolutionary figure in Gilan, as a slogan: "To build Tehran, all of Iran has been destroyed. To build Iran, it is necessary to destroy Tehran" [Pişəvəri (2016): 67]. S.J. Pishevari demonstrated that the Shah regime in Tehran was suppressing the people's freedom movement, devastating heroes such as Sattar Khan, Sheikh Khiyabani, Mirza Kuchik Khan [Pişəvəri (2016): 67].

S.J. Pishevari's activity, including the "Azerbaijan" newspaper, an official organ of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party [ADP] and the National Government [Xoşginabi (1948): 83, 4], which he founded, was based on national foundations. Emphasizing that the official language of the newspaper is Azerbaijani and inviting writers to take this responsible work seriously, S.J. Pishevari noted: "Our newspaper ("Azerbaijan"

newspaper) will now pay attention to the Azerbaijani language. Despite the baseless assertions of our adversaries, our language stands as vast and rich. We firmly believe that Azerbaijani writers, through their dedicated commitment, will enhance the beauty, progress, and evolution of our language by undertaking and successfully accomplishing this challenging task with faith and conviction" [Qızıl səhifələr (1946): 13].

In the "Azerbaijan" newspaper, the examination of Azerbaijan's history and culture during the Qajar and Pahlavi periods holds a prominent position. In his works and in the "Azerbaijan" newspaper, S.J. Pishevari accorded particular attention to the Mashruteh (Constitutional) Revolution against the monarchy and to the prominent intellectuals of that time.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Tabriz was also one of the cultural centers. During this period, the advanced training method applied by Mirza Hassan Roshdieh was widespread in Iran. Muhammad Ali Tarbiyat notes in "Danishmendani-Azerbaijan" ("Azerbaijani scientists") that M.H. Roshdieh, inspired by the alphabet reform like Mirza Fatali Akhundzade, wrote the first textbooks, "Vatan dili" (Motherland language), "Ana dili" ("Mother tongue") in South Azerbaijan written using sound and phonetic method [Tərbiyə (1967): 31; Məmmədli (2009): 19]. The textbook "Vatan dili" ("Motherland language") was published in Tabriz in 1905 in the Turkish (Azerbaijani) language [Beregian (1988): 47]. The book "Vatan dili" ("Motherland language") was taught as a primary school textbook in the schools of the Caucasus and Turkestan until 1917-1918 [Sərdariniya (2014): 109]. S.J. Pishevari described this work as "a unique work in the history of Azerbaijani education" [Pişəvəri (2016): 128]. M.H. Roshdieh also included Azerbaijani Turkish in the curriculum of the schools he operated [Cənubi Azərbaycan (1987): 418]. The "Azerbaijan" newspaper, under the editorial guidance of S.J. Pishevari, actively promoted the national pedagogical efforts of M.H. Rushdiyya, recognizing him as "a distinguished public figure and educator" [Azərbaycanın böyük xalq...(1945): 11, 1].

The South Azerbaijani intellectuals, such as M.A. Talibov and Z. Maragayi, were promoted in the newspaper "Azerbaijan". S.J. Pishevari recommended "reading Talibov's books and Ibrahimbey's travelogue" [Pişəvəri (2016): 16] to understand the Iranian constitutional revolution and the role of Azerbaijan in this movement. Sheikh Khiyabani, a patriot of constitutional movement and founder of the "Azadistan" government, was reported as "one of the prominent sayyids of Azerbaijan and outstanding thinker" in the "Azerbaijan" newspaper. It also was noted that he taught theological sciences in Tabriz, possessed extensive knowledge in religious sciences, and served at the Karimkhan mosque [Şeyx Məhəmməd Xiyabani (1945): 43, 2]. The newspaper highlights Sheikh Khiyabani's efforts in the struggle against the Qajars and foreigners for the freedom of the people in Azerbaijan [Şeyx Məhəmməd Xiyabani (1945): 46, 2]. Additionally, it provides information about the "Tajaddud" ("Renewal"), a newspaper published by him in Tabriz [Şeyx Məhəmməd Xiyabani (1945): 76, 2].

The "Azerbaijan" newspaper emphasizes Azerbaijan as one of the most ancient and cultural nations of the world, holds the view: "Every nation should determine its own destiny. Linguistic, cultural, economic, political and social freedom is the fundamental principle of this matter. However, innocent Azerbaijani children were deprived of education in their dear mother tongue" [Səməndər (1945): 1].

The "Azerbaijan" newspaper accused the Pahlavi government of being a loyal servant to Western imperialists, illustrating how they brought ruin to the country, executed national heroes, and forced tens of thousands into exile. The newspaper accentuated the Pahlavis' reactionary policy, targeting not only Azerbaijanis but also patriotic intellectuals and workers throughout Iran, stating, "The reactionary forces spare no effort in shedding the blood of Iran's honest freedom seekers" [London...(1945): 10, 1].

During this period, "Azerbaijan" newspaper responded to those who accused the ADP government of splitting Iran as follows: "National autonomy does not mean fragmentation or annexation. Real democracy can only be achieved through local and national autonomy ["Azərbaycan" qəzeti (1945): 42, 1-2]. The newspaper demonstrated that the genuine objective of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party (ADP) is not the separation of Azerbaijan from Iran but rather the establishment of democracy in Iran and the provision of national and cultural rights to all the peoples of Iran. Simultaneously, it was asserted: "Those advocating for the territorial integrity of Iran within its present borders should recognize that such integrity can only be guaranteed through the establishment of a genuinely democratic government in Iran, coupled with the due respect for the languages, customs, traditions, and nationalities of all its diverse peoples" [Azərbaycan Midiyadır...(1948): 28, 3].

S.J. Pishvari, who expressed that "The whole of Iran aspires the restoration of the real democratic system and freedom" [London... (1945): 10, 1]: "Long live democratic Azerbaijan! Long live independent and free Iran!" [Pişəvəri (2016): 37], is an eminent social and political figure who fought for the freedom of not only Azerbaijan, but also the whole of Iran. However, Pishvari is primarily a socio-political figure and intellectual with the overarching goal of protecting and advancing Azerbaijan's national rights, culture, and national education. This is clearly noticeable in his articles and speeches in the 1945 issue of "Azerbaijan" newspaper. Pishvari, who devoted his life to the freedom and education of these people, declared, "The national government is nothing but our people" [Baş vəzirimiz...(1946): 1]. Criticizing the chauvinist language policy of the Pahlavi government, Pishvari says that it is not allowed to speak Azerbaijani in Iran's educational institutions, cultural centers, even in the premises of the Academy of Sciences in Tabriz, indicating that the ADP government successfully terminated this oppressive policy. S.J. Pishvari, emphasizing, "A nation cannot live without education", wanted Azerbaijani teachers and educators to impart knowledge to the children of the country with love and passion for freedom, aiming to enlighten and empower them. S.J. Pishvari noted that not only Azerbaijan but all the peoples of Iran expected democracy, human rights, and educational support from the Azerbaijan Democratic Party (ADP).

21 Azer (December 12) marked not only the day of independence but also, a year later in 1946, the day of the downfall of the ADP government. After the withdrawal of military support by the USSR prompted by international pressure, thousands of Azerbaijanis in South Azerbaijan were subjected to violence, with many losing their lives, and their homes being destroyed and set ablaze. Following the occupation by the Pahlavi army, the leadership of ADP was forced to emigrate to Soviet Azerbaijan, and the "Azerbaijan" newspaper, the official organ of the party, continued its publication in Baku.

The “Azerbaijan” newspaper extensively addressed national and ideological issues during the Pahlavi rule in Iran, highlighted the chauvinistic policies directed against non-Persians, delved into the ethnic minorities residing in South Azerbaijan, and the national policies of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party (ADP) as well as issues related to Marxism-Leninism. Although, on the eve of World War II, Reza Shah Pahlavi, who distrusted Great Britain and came closer to Germany, wanted to reduce the excessive oil concessions given to the British, especially the 80% share of the "Anglo-Persian Oil Company" [Bolot (2013): 58, 65] from Iran's oil revenues, and increase Iran's share to 20%, but he could not succeed in doing so. The propagation of Hitler's fascism within the country escalated rapidly, and Iran became a hub for German agents. In the country, "the heads of administration convened people daily in opium stores to discuss Hitler's bravery" [Əhmədžadə (1948): 68, 3]. After Nazi Germany attacked the USSR, the British and Soviet armies invaded Iran in the summer of 1941 with the objective of eliminating Reza Shah's pro-German stance. At the behest of the British and Soviet governments, Reza Shah was deposed from power, and his son Muhammad Reza was appointed as the new Shah. Exiled from Iran, Reza Shah passed away in South Africa in 1944 [Kurtuluş (2008): 67].

After invading Iran, the USSR and Great Britain partitioned the country into their respective spheres of influence. This new military-political situation led to struggle for independence of non-Persians in Northern Iran, especially Azerbaijanis and Kurds to establish national autonomy with the support of the Soviets.

The pro-Shah Iranian press of that time asserted that struggle for independence in Iranian Azerbaijan and Kurdistan were linked to the USSR, driven by aspirations for new oil fields [Həsənli (1998): 130-131]. The rejection of the Soviet government's concession and lease offer regarding North Iranian oil by the Mohammad Reza Shah government, supported by the British [Həsənli (1998): 136-137], created a unique situation that led the Soviet government to support national movements in South Azerbaijan and Kurdistan. The imposition of artificial restrictions on the national cultural development of non-Persians by the Pahlavi regime further accelerated this process.

Nearly every edition of the “Azerbaijan” newspaper, under the leadership of S.J. Pishevari and the Azerbaijan Democratic Party, which assumed power in Iranian Azerbaijan in December 1945 with the support of the Soviets, extensively addressed national problems. The newspaper consistently provided information about the ethnic minorities of the region, including the Assyrians, Armenians, and notably, the large Kurdish population. It was even dedicated a special page specifically for the Kurds. In the “Azerbaijan” newspaper, utilizing materials from the “Kurdistan” newspaper, the official organ of the Kurdistan Democratic Party led by Gazi Muhammad and established with the support of the Soviets, Kurds were provided with one-page educational and socio-political information in their own language. The “Azerbaijan” newspaper underscored the violation of Kurdish rights by Iran, Iraq, and Turkey [Kürd...(1949): 121, 1], the usurpation of their national and cultural freedoms [21 Azərin...(1948): 110, 1, 4: Əyyubi (1947): 4, 1]. It expressed a desire to safeguard the national and cultural rights of the Kurdish people [Kürd...(1949): 121, 1, 4]. As observed in the “Azerbaijan” newspaper, the “Kurdistan” newspaper similarly promoted the theory of Marxism-Leninism, Soviet ideology, the principles of friendship among peoples, and human rights policies

[Kürdüstan (1948): 106, 2]. The telegrams sent by the Kurdistan Democratic Party to the ADP showed the fraternity between the Kurdish and Azerbaijani people and expressed determination to jointly combat the common enemy.

National Journalism and Literature on the Pages of “Azerbaijan”

The “Azerbaijan” newspaper allocated a substantial portion of its content to issues pertaining to science, national education, enlightenment and the articles aimed at solving these issues for the enlightenment of the Southern Azerbaijanis. The works of patriotic publicists, such as Fathi Khoshginabi, Mirrahim Vilayi, Ali Shamida, Jafar Mujiri, Ghafar Kendli on the topic of enlightenment were often featured in the newspaper. Fathi Khoshginabi, an oriental scholar, writer and poet, served as a member of ADP, and during the period of emigration, held the position of responsible secretary at the “Azerbaijan” newspaper, which served as the official organ of the ADP [İsmayılov (2021b)]. In his article entitled "Historical role of Azerbaijan newspaper", he specially appreciated significant role played by the “Azerbaijan” newspaper in the activities of the ADP. F. Khoshginabi in his article "Historical task of Azerbaijan newspaper in the new stage of our struggle" noted that "Azerbaijan" newspaper is "the influential weapon of ADP, the tongue of our people and the mirror of our glorious struggle" [Xoşginabi (1947): 1, 1]. F. Khoshginabi wrote in his article "We should create a national education": "They have prevented the distribution of books in our country so far. We must show the truth in our history. The books taught so far are all relics of the former dictatorial system. We request for support from all our educational professionals in the endeavor to foster a national culture" [Xoşginabi (1945): 89, 2].

Mirrahim Vilayi's articles in “Azerbaijan” newspaper are also interesting. M. Vilayi's series of articles entitled "Analysis on the Program of Azerbaijan Democratic Party" broadly interprets the program of the ADP. M. Vilayi noted: “The national autonomy established under the leadership of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party provided an opportunity for the five million people to revive their native language and culture, which had been suppressed by the reactionary state of Iran. He inaugurated schools and published books in native language for our people” [Vilayi (1948): 16, 4]. M. Vilayi showed that the ADP government does not pursue an ethnic, chauvinist policy and has granted all peoples residing in the country their national-cultural rights and freedom of press.

The "Azerbaijan" newspaper, promoting national literature, had a particular "Literature page" section, and the announcements indicated, "the pages of our journal are open for stories, articles and poems" [Diqqət (1949): 116, 4]. The appeal to the writers stated, "Due to the oppressive policy of the Tehran government, we have been deprived of the reading and writing in our mother tongue, and the opportunity to develop our own rich literature. Henceforth, our party prioritizes this matter and strives towards the advancement of our language. The objective of our newspaper in this matter is very essential. It is expected that our fellow poets and writers reflect the struggle for a happy life, freedom, and progressive ideology of our people in various aspects. Our fellow writers should pay attention to this topic and try to further develop our language based on the instructions of their native party" [Xoşginabi (1948): 56, 1].

After emigration, Ali Shamida, a prominent publicist, became the editor of "Azerbaijan" newspaper, an organ of ADP. In his article titled "There is No Freedom of the Press in Iran" he illustrated the absence of genuine freedom of the press in the country, emphasizing that the majority of the ones that exist are subject to government influence. A. Shamida pointed out that newspapers such as "Ittilaat", "Gushesh", "Mehri-Iran", "Sitare", "Saba", which praised the German fascists, now serve the despotic Pahlavi government and Western imperialism [Şəmidə (1948): 43, 4].

A. Shamida also criticized individuals who utilize religion and sect as political tools in Iran, along with those who unknowingly follow them. He criticized those who used religion as a weapon and hindered people's struggle for freedom in his article "Religious propaganda or political activity!" A. Shamida wrote, "They exploit the religious and national prejudices of nations and peoples, inciting national and sectarian animosity and wars. Through various means of mischief, they obstruct people from establishing an independent and peaceful life. Furthermore, under the guise of sectarian propaganda, their aim is to dissuade the masses from the struggle for freedom by disseminating reactionary ideas, poisoning, and fabricating the ideology of the people" [Şəmidə (1949): 120, 4].

A. Shamida wrote that the foreign imperialist states used religious people along with the occupying army or experts to undermine the people they exploited. He also contended that the foreign missionaries operating in Iran were agents of the imperialists [Şəmidə (1949): 120, 4]. A. Shamida showed that Christian missionaries were mainly active against the USSR in South Azerbaijan, and at the same time they were trying to turn Iran into a colony of imperialists.

Also, significant articles by Jafar Mujiri are featured in the "Azerbaijan" newspaper. The Tabriz-based artist and writer J. Mujiri covered specific aspects of Azerbaijan's cultural history, exploring our classical poets and writers, providing insights into the Azerbaijani people's resistance against the Shah's regime, and documenting information on Azerbaijan in the Iranian press.

In his article "Tabriz", J. Mujiri explores the historical grandeur of the city in the Middle Ages, mentioning prominent Azerbaijani poets and Sufis such as Qatran Tabrizi, Khatib Tabrizi, Shams Tabrizi, Saib Tabrizi, and Khagani Shirvani's affinity for Tabriz as his second homeland. The article also mentioned Tabriz's historical significance as the capital of states such as Qara Qoyunlu, Aq Qoyunlu, and Safavids. J. Mujiri shows Tabriz's crucial role in events such as the Tobacco Protests, Constitutional Revolution, the struggle of Sheikh Mohammad Khiyabani, and the "21 Azer" movement. The author reflects: "During the "21 Azer" movement, the broadcasts from Tabriz radio earning the affection of the Iranian peasants and workers, penetrating the indifferent Pahlavi dynasty in Tehran like an arrow. Tabriz announced and proved to the Eastern world that the realization of peoples' freedom is not an unattainable dream but can be achieved through struggle" [Müciri (1948): 120, 1].

In this article of J. Mujiri, it is stated that these beautiful days of Tabriz came to an end with the defeat of the "21 Azer" movement and the occupation of the city by Muhammad Reza Shah's forces. Tabriz became a ruin. However, the author optimistically declares, 'Old Tabriz will avenge its enemies and, once again, inscribe a new chapter of pride in its venerable history' [Müciri (1948): 120, 3].

J. Mujiri condemned the wrong religious policy carried out in the country under the guise of religion in his article "Let The Iranian Reactionaries Be Disgraced Once Again!" The author vehemently criticized the Pahlavi government, which uses religion for political purposes, and its foreign patrons as follows: "The British imperialists who guide the Iranian reactionaries and their frauds masked by Pan-Islamism are also exposed. These reactionary actions, carried out under the guise of Pan-Islamism, poison the minds of the Iranian people" [Müciri (1949): 118, 3]. J. Mujiri criticized individuals who subjected people to oppression in the present world, attempting to sustain them with the promise of a better afterlife. He also denounced those who advocated the notion that "result of enduring hunger and poverty is commendable" [Müciri (1948): 68, 1].

J. Mujiri's article entitled "The government of Tehran is the enemy of our national monuments" criticizes the Pahlavi government's destruction of our national monuments and burning of books written in our mother tongue [Müciri (1949): 120, 4]. The "Azerbaijan" newspaper reported, "the government in Tehran shuts down schools teaching in the mother tongue while, instead, opening opium shops. This is the service of the treacherous rulers to the people" [Əhmədžadə (1948): 68, 3]. J. Mujiri pointed out that "their enmity could neither impede the struggle of our people nor weaken our national existence"[Müciri (1949): 120, 4]. The author attributes all these problems to the Pahlavi government, citing its lack of respect and care for the people. The author predicts, "the protests of the people of Iran indicate that this system of government will fall in the near future" [Müciri (1949): 118, 3].

The "Azerbaijan" newspaper also presented noteworthy articles by Ghafar Kendli, an active participant in the "21 Azer" movement and a Tabriz-based literary critic. In his article "Fatali Khan of Quba", he delineates the period of the khanates of Azerbaijan, illustrating that their fragmented condition led to invasions as they failed to unite under a central government. The author described the existence of fragmentation, the absence of central authority, and the skillful exploitation of this situation by imperialist states as follows: "Trade has completely weakened. Both urban and rural life had stagnated. Scattered khanates, isolated economically and politically, were constantly fighting each other. This led to further economic collapse of the country. Neighboring states intensified the internal clashes between them to easily capture these khanates" [Kəndli (1948): 75, 4].

G. Kendli discusses Fatali Khan's attempt to unite other khanates around Quba and observes that, despite its brevity, "his effective initiatives contributed to the growth of the economy and culture in the country and the advancement of Azerbaijani cities [Kəndli (1948): № 75, 4]. G. Kandli appreciates Fatali Khan's attempt to unify the khanates, describing it as "a living witness of the struggle for a unified Azerbaijan" [Kəndli (1948): 75, 4].

In his article titled "Azerbaijani National Government Ensured the Freedom of the Peoples", G. Kandli discusses the ADP government's policy aimed at securing freedom for the people of Iran. The article shows that the Pahlavi government, fearing a unified resistance of the Iranian people against the Shah, employs a policy of Persian chauvinism. The author noted: "In the culturally, scientifically, and educationally lagging country of Iran, plagued by hardship, disaster, and poverty, the national oppression is particularly severe". Persian chauvinists aim to secure their dominance over other nations

and, additionally, to retain exploitation of Persian workers, therefore try to poison them with the venom of nationalism. They fear the amalgamation of diverse peoples residing in Iran. [Kəndli (1948): 90, 1].

The newspaper "Azerbaijan" published poems and stories of Azerbaijani poets and writers such as Balash Azeroglu, Ali Tude, Ibrahim Zakir, Ashik Huseyn Javan, as well as poetesses Hokume Billuri and Madina Gulgun. And they reflect both political direction and national enlightenment, illuminating cultural issues and freedom, internationalism, and social problems. The themes of patriotism, national freedom and hatred of the cruel Shah's regime play a central role in these poems.

The National Enlightenment Concerns on the Newspaper's Pages

The program and policy of the ADP paved the way for the use of the mother tongue in secondary schools, universities, and in the fields of radio and newspaper publishing. The ADP program declared: "The mother tongue is a great mean for the advancement of national culture. Therefore, our children should be educated in our mother tongue, whether in state or private schools. To achieve this, the preparation of textbooks and other educational materials is essential" [Qızıl səhifələr (1946): 67].

Considering the national rights of non-Azerbaijani people, the program mentioned: "Other nations living in Azerbaijan have the right to open a school in their mother tongue, and our party is completely convenient for that." [Qızıl səhifələr (1946): 67]. Commenting on the party program from this perspective, M. Vilayi emphasized the necessity of the establishment of "anjumens" (councils), self-governing institutions of the provinces, and national autonomy for the development of science and education in the country. In his series of articles entitled "Analysis of the Program of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party", he expressed that "Self-governance of the nationalities living in Iran through the establishment of councils and provinces, the creation of schools, education, and culture in their own national language, and the management of state organizations are essential conditions for autonomy. Public freedom, linguistic freedom and freedom of speech are the legal rights of every nation" [Vilayi (1948): 4].

During the ADP government, the national education policy was one of the top-priority issues for the state. The "Azerbaijan" newspaper emphasized the significance of protecting the rights of all nations and fighting against poverty to eradicate general illiteracy in the country. It was stated "To implement comprehensive education, it is essential to respect the rights of the Iranian people. This was accomplished during the time of the Azerbaijani national government. Orphaned children were placed in foster homes. Schools teaching in the mother tongue were established in cities and villages. Students received free books and educational materials. 600 students studied at Tabriz University; the first university opened in 1946. They were provided with accommodation, food, clothing, and stipend. Consequently, our native language developed significantly within a short period" [Əlioğlu (1948): 15, 1].

The "Azerbaijan" newspaper characterized the Pahlavi government's neglect of education as follow: "The state does not allocate funds for the education of the nation. This is because an educated nation that contemplates its rights does not want to be enslaved" [Əlioğlu (1948): 14, 4]. The impediments to education were due to high costs,

which hindered the increasing of local specialists and deprived underprivileged children of educational opportunities. The newspaper stated: "The doors of education and schools in Iran are closed to the children of hardworking people. Because all existing schools are private, and each person has to pay a certain amount of money per month to study in these schools. For example, if a person wants to become an engineer or a doctor, he has to spend at least a few thousand tomans on education starting from elementary school until finishing high school. Of course, it is known that such conditions are impossible for poor children" [Davudzadə (1948): 1].

During this period, the "Azerbaijan" newspaper pointed out the detrimental effects of Azerbaijani students studying only in Persian in secondary schools, stating that these students "in the end know neither their own language nor Persian well. Of course, only the Persian language occupies most of their time in such a long time" [Məhəmmədzadə (1948): 68, 4]. As a consequence, students found it challenging to allocate time to learn subjects other than studying Persian, a foreign language to them, over an extended period. The Pahlavi government also targeted Azerbaijani teachers to undermine national education. The "Azerbaijan" newspaper reported: "Azerbaijani teachers have been dismissed with the permission of Tehran's Persian Ministry of Education, and the most reactionary Persian teachers are appointed to educate Azerbaijani children. As a result, local and experienced teachers of Azerbaijan remain unemployed and are forced to write petitions, letters, or engage in street vending" [Bəxşi (1948): 94, 1, 4].

The newspaper also showed that "when the teacher discusses the most basic rights that the people of Iran are deprived of, while teaching in the classroom, the Ministry of Education labels it as communist propaganda" [Şəkibxan (1948): 100, 1, 4]. The Pahlavi government, asserting that "the university should stay out of politics" [Şəkibxan (1948): 100, 4], intensified the dictatorship, threatened teachers and students with accusations of communism, exile, and imprisonment, attempted to undermine human rights, and to suppress the ideals of freedom.

Another method used by the Pahlavi government was demonstratively burning of books in the Azerbaijani language. The "Azerbaijan" newspaper expressed this by stating, "If the Tehran government truly supported the education of the people, it would not have demolished and looted the educational centers of our national government. It would not have set fire to the books printed in the mother tongue, a highly beneficial initiative of the national government that facilitated the education of our people" [Mücirri (1949): 120, 4].

The "Azerbaijan" newspaper conveyed the sentiment that "Even if they burn our books, they will not be able to extinguish the flames of revenge and the love of freedom burning deep in the soul and heart of every Azerbaijani" [Xoşginabi (1947): 47, 3].

In addition to violating the national rights of the non-Persians, the Pahlavi government also ignored and insulted their existence. The "Azerbaijan" newspaper wrote, "In a program on Tehran radio, all Azerbaijanis were derogatorily referred to as "portugalfurush" ("orange seller") due to those Azerbaijanis selling oranges. The term was used by Pahlavi propagandists and chauvinist officials to insult Azerbaijanis who were not fluent in Persian. Now let's see who are the Azerbaijanis being referred as "portugalfurush" in Tehran? They are Azerbaijani workers and peasants. They are peasants who escaped from the oppression of gendarmerie, landowners and state officials

due to severe financial problems, and unemployed workers who were fired by oppressive factory owners. In spite of the disgraceful insult from the Tehran government, these individuals represent the most honorable, honest, and hardworking Azerbaijanis [Açıq təhqir.. (1949): 115, 1, 3].

The "Azerbaijan" newspaper emphasized: "It is not shame for some individuals of our nation to sell oranges on the streets of Tehran; what is shame is for the government of Tehran to sell the economic and political freedom of the Iranian people to the Americans for a handful of dollars. Shah's betrayals and immorality in the palace are not disgrace, but is it deemed disgrace for Azerbaijanis to sell oranges to secure their daily life?" [Açıq təhqir... (1949): 115, 3].

The "Azerbaijan" newspaper also commented: "Pahlavi chauvinists, who deny the national existence of our people and our mother tongue, shamelessly call the language of Azerbaijanis, several million people, a "local dialect" while speaking in Azerbaijani on Tabriz radio" [Məhəmmədzadə (1948): 68, 4].

The "Azerbaijan" newspaper criticized the fact that after the fall of the ADP government, Tabriz radio became a tool in the hands of the reactionary Pahlavi government, speaking against the primary education of all citizens. It was stated in the newspaper: "Tabriz radio attracts the disdain of freedom-loving peoples in every word. This radio shamelessly addresses the people of Iran: "If all the Iranian nation receives primary education, then not only will no progress be seen in the administration of the country, it will even lag behind politically, but instead, five or ten political and scholarly individuals can govern the Iranian country with great dignity" [Məhəmmədzadə (1948): 82, 1].

The newspaper denounced the fact that during the Pahlavi period, secondary and higher schools only trained obedient and patient servants and officials, which were necessary for capitalists and landowners, and that they were deprived of social and political education. The author stressed that during the period of the ADP government, struggles against such negative situations, efforts to protect not only the national and cultural rights of Azerbaijanis but also those of all Iranian peoples were realized [Məhəmmədzadə (1948): 82, 4]. Unfortunately, the ADP was short-lived, and as a result, the Pahlavi rule once again hindered Azerbaijani national culture and human rights. In the "Azerbaijan" newspaper, it was mentioned that during the Pahlavi period, the absence of free education and instruction in the mother tongue, and the fact that most children had to work due to poverty, were the major impediments to general education [Əlioğlu (1948): 14, 4].

The Native Language Issues on the Pages of "Azerbaijan"

The newspaper "Azerbaijan" criticized Pahlavi's oppression of national rights for using of native language, the development of national culture and schooling:

"Reza Khan's tyranny imported Hitler's fascist thoughts and actions to our motherland, strengthened oppression and slavery. The Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Assyrians, and Armenians living within Iran were prohibited from writing and reading in their native language, publishing books and journals, having art and theater, and using their native language in local administrations and courts. Consequently, it caused significant discord among the peoples. Despite the fact that four years have passed since the fall of this tyranny, that failed policy is still continuing. Perhaps the

reactionary elements are gradually becoming more impudent, attacking the people and suppressing their democratic movement. Reactionary elements do not want our country to progress industrially and become strong and puissant" [Azərbaycan Demokrat Firqəsinin... (1948): 13, 3].

Condemning the education policy of the Pahlavi government, the "Azerbaijan" newspaper stated: "The main goal of the state in general education is to forcibly teach the Persian language to non-Persian nationalities. Persian is not the language of all peoples in Iran. One of the obstacles to general education is that the state does not take into account the language and national characteristics of the Azerbaijani, Kurdish, Armenian, and other peoples" [Əlioğlu (1948): 15, 1].

Taking into account the national rights of non-Azerbaijani people, it was mentioned in the ADP program that "Other nations living in Azerbaijan such as Kurds, Armenians, Assyrians have the right to open schools in their mother tongue, and our party is completely convenient for that [Qızıl səhifələr (1946): 67]. The program of the party was welcomed by non-Azeris. Assyrians, Kurds, and other peoples expressed their support for the establishment and program of the ADP through telegrams and letters sent to the "Azerbaijan" newspaper ["Azərbaycan" qəzeti (2022): 6]. Five deputy seats were reserved for Kurdish representatives in the Milli Mejlis (National Assembly). The program of the National Government stated "The National Government of Azerbaijan considers all peoples living in Azerbaijan, including Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Armenians, Assyrians, and others, as equal in terms of rights and laws" ["Azərbaycan" qəzeti (2022): 782].

The "Azerbaijan" newspaper, criticizing the national policy of the Pahlavis, wrote that during the reign of Reza Shah, "speaking Turkish in schools became a legal obstacle" and "they prohibited the Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Assyrians and Armenians, residing in Iran, writing and reading in their native language, publishing books and newspapers, creating art and theater works, and using their native language in local administrations and courts. So, a great strife arose between the peoples" ["Azərbaycan" qəzeti (2022): 200].

S.J. Pishevari showed that the conflicts between the Kurdish-Azerbaijani peoples at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the tragedies caused by the Kurdish terrorists against our people, have already ended as a result of the ADP's policy, and that these conflicts are the result of the offensive policy of the Tehran government and imperialism. He noted, "the Tehran government's policy of treating these two nations with the same consideration, robbing and oppressing them, should be considered as one of the reasons that bind these nations together. Unfortunately, it can be asserted that before the formation of our party, there was no unity between Kurds and Azerbaijanis. Perhaps, on the contrary, the Tehran government and foreign imperialist states have fostered discord between these two nations [Pişəvəri (2005): 61-62]. "Azerbaijan" newspaper also mentioned that the British imperialists exploited the people and incited national problems via the companies they established in Iran. The newspaper showed that "Iranians have nothing to do with this big enterprise, which is outwardly named "Anglo-Persian Oil Company" [İngilis və İran... (1949): 117, 1]. The company used the shah's gendarmerie and police forces and many unemployed workers to oppress the Iranian protesting workers employed under low wages and in dangerous conditions. The company, in collaboration with British intelligence, maintained its private military

forces. It was involved in smuggling, denied Iran its fair share of oil products, incited the Kurdish people to revolt against Iran, and fueled interethnic military conflicts to keep the shah in a state of fear [Ishaqi (1948): 108, 4]. The ADP government, which emerged after the “21 Azer” movement, eliminated the artificial contradictions between the Iranian peoples and brought them closer in the struggle against the Pahlavi regime. “Azerbaijan” newspaper wrote about this in its 12th issue of 1948: “The national movement that started in Azerbaijan aimed to strengthen the feelings of fraternity, friendship and love between peoples on the basis of sincerity against that treacherous policy. One of the primary goals of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party is to foster unity and solidarity among the Kurdish, Armenian, Assyrian, Azerbaijani, and Persian peoples residing in Azerbaijan, uniting them in a genuine sense. Respecting the national language, customs and traditions of these nations, providing all of them with political and social rights is the main line of our party”.

In order to strengthen their power, the Pahlavis created contradictions and clashes between representatives of different religions and sects in the country. “Azerbaijan” newspaper wrote about it in the 90th issue of 1948: “Iranian reactionaries want to incite national bloodshed among the peoples living in Iran based on the outdated slogan of the British colonialists, “make discord, make government!” The first weapon in their hands to achieve this goal is the sect. They aim to create conflicts between peoples under the names of such as, Sunni-Shia, Muslim-Armenian. After the ADP government took power, it did not pursue an ethnic and chauvinist policy. Instead, it granted all peoples living in the country their national and cultural rights and freedom of press. In the 16th issue of “Azerbaijan” newspaper in 1948, it was noted, “Azerbaijan National Autonomy respected the rights of nationalities living in Azerbaijan, acknowledging their language, customs, and traditions. It granted them freedom of language and press, treating them with equal rights with the people of Azerbaijan and fostering a sense of fraternity”. During the ADP government, which respects the national and cultural rights of all peoples in the country, the Kurdish, Armenian, and Assyrian peoples were given the right of primary education in their native language. Additionally, the rights of the Turkic-speaking Qashqais and other peoples living in other regions of Iran were defended through newspaper. Even a political-social newspaper called “Arevud” (“Sun”) was published in Armenian. The “Armenian National Council” in Tabriz expressed in its appeal to the ADP: “The democratic slogans you declared in accordance with the Basic Law [constitution] of Iran align with the long-cherished dreams of Armenians of Azerbaijan. The provincial and regional councils proposed by you are precisely among the topics for the happiness and progress of our country that the Azerbaijan Democratic Party mentioned in its declaration” [“Azərbaycan” qəzeti (2022): 113]. The Armenian newspaper “Antifascist” published in Tabriz actively promoted the Azerbaijan Democratic Party on its pages. Some Iranian Armenians, who had previously gained representation in local self-government by supporting the constitutional movement at the beginning of the 20th century, were now seeking to protect their national and cultural rights by supporting the new democratic government. The organization of Iranian Dashnaks, centered in Tabriz since 1892, deemed it unwise to join the ADP, stating: “It is highly perilous for us Armenians to engage in such parties. If we align with the Democratic Party, the Iranian government will accuse us of their activities and will harass

our community". As the ADP government respects the rights of all peoples in the country, Assyrian Danil Yushia from Urmia was elected a member of the Central Committee of the ADP and a deputy to the National Assembly, and the representative of the Armenians of Tabriz, Simon Mkrtychyan, was elected a member of the 39-member National Delegation, which was the supreme governing body before the establishment of the National Assembly ["Azərbaycan" qəzeti (2022): 607]. With this humanitarian policy, the ADP showed the hands of peace of the people of Azerbaijan, towards the Assyrians and Armenians, who were involved in genocides against Muslims in South Azerbaijan at the beginning of the 20th century.

In the "Azerbaijan" newspaper, a special place was dedicated to the memory of the Kurdish socio-political figure Gazi Muhammad, portraying him as a "martyr Kurdish leader" [Kürdüstan (1947): 4, 2]. Ghazi Muhammad was a nationalist, a religious person, and despite being a Ghazi-Sharia judge, he was a person who knew world history and culture, several Western and Eastern languages, and he constantly defended the rights of non-Muslims. He was a figure loved by both Kurds and non-Muslims in Kurdistan [Qazi Muhammedin kızı.(2019)].

Ghazi Muhammad was the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), established on August 16, 1945, and the Kurdistan Republic, proclaimed on January 22, 1946 in Mahabad. M. Bagirov, who met with Gazi Muhammad in Baku in September 1945, and Soviet statesmen played a special role in the creation and support of the KDP [Mehabad... (1999): 29, 34]. In this meeting, M. Bagirov initially proposed autonomy for Kurdistan within South Azerbaijan, but after Gazi Muhammad objected, he agreed to establish Kurdish autonomy within Iran under the leadership of the Kurdistan Democratic Party [Aegleton (1989): 110-112]. The ADP government led by S.J. Pishevari demanded the autonomy of the Kurdistan to be established within Azerbaijan, however, the Kurds asserted territorial claims on provinces of Azerbaijan, such as Urmia, Khoy, and Maku. However, after some time, both governments recognized the necessity of forming an alliance against their common enemy, the Pahlavis, and gave up their mutual territorial claims [Aegleton (1989): 192, 242; Mehabad.. (1999): 29; Memmedli (2020): 1129-1130, 1143-1144]. In the program of the KDP, the autonomy of Kurdistan within Iran was defined [Aegleton (1989): 143-144].

Thus, with the establishment of the Republic of Kurdistan, Kurdish separatism triumphed in South Azerbaijan, the Kurds succeeded in establishing a new Kurdish autonomous state in the territory of South Azerbaijan in addition to the Iranian Kurdistan province with its center in Sanandaj. Along with the Pahlavi government, the Dashnaktsutyun and Tudeh (People) Party, a left-wing party, were also against the idea of autonomy for national minorities in Iran. One of the leaders of Tudeh, A. Ovanesyan criticized the nationalist movement of non-Persians in his articles in the party's newspaper "Rahbar" and indicated "we condemn provocateurs among the Iranian Azerbaijanis and Kurdish population who want to divide Iran" [Rahbar...].

The Iranian government offered Gazi Muhammad the idea of abolishing the Republic of Kurdistan and integrating it into the province of Iranian Kurdistan, appointing him as the governor of this province. However, this proposal was not accepted [Aegleton (1989): 244-245]. During the attack on South Azerbaijan in December 1946, Iranian Prime Minister Ahmad Qavam sent a telegram to the leader of Kurdistan, Gazi Muhammad,

stating that he considered Urmia, Khoy, and other provinces to be "Kurdish areas" and promised to give them to the Kurds in exchange for support. However, A. Qavam's attempt to create discord between the Kurdish and Azerbaijani peoples failed. Gazi Muhammad rejected A. Qavam and asserted, "these two peoples cannot be separated" [Əlioğlu (1948): 107, 1].

ADP and KDP, the governments of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan were forced to join hands against the common enemy-the Pahlavi Shah regime. On April 23, 1946, an agreement on political, economic, cultural, military cooperation and mutual assistance was signed between the two national governments in the city of Tabriz [Çeşmazer 68]. S.J. Pishevari wrote, "Kurds are a family of Azerbaijan. Let there be no discord between us" ["Azərbaycan" qəzeti (2022): 588]. According to the April 23 agreement, the protection of the rights of Azerbaijanis in Kurdistan and Kurds in South Azerbaijan was defined [Aegleton (1989): 194].

Gazi Muhammad refused to flee abroad during the attack of the Pahlavi army in Mahabad and stated, "I made a promise to my people that I will stand by them in both good and bad time" [Qazi Muhammedin kızı...(2019)]. He was executed by the Pahlavi Shah regime in March 1947. Consequently, following the destruction of Azerbaijani autonomy by the Shah's army in Iran in December 1946, Kurdish autonomy also met its end. S.J. Pishevari, the head of the autonomous government of Azerbaijan, was deceived and transported to Soviet Azerbaijan on the eve of the occupation of Tabriz. He passed away in 1947 as an emigrant, following a suspicious accident in Soviet Azerbaijan.

CONCLUSION

Despite the defeat of the ADP government, it succeeded in perpetuating and disseminating its ideological principles through "Azerbaijan" newspaper. The inclusion of writings by publicists such as S.J. Pishevari, M. Vilayi, J. Mujiri, A. Shamida, as well as poets like A. Tuda, B. Azeroghlu, H. Billuri, and M. Gulgun, played a pivotal role in conveying the realities of South Azerbaijan to its readers. The newspaper significantly contributed to the fostering of national consciousness and the advancement of national culture in South Azerbaijan. A thorough examination of the "Azerbaijan" newspaper is crucial for understanding the national dynamics in Iran during the Pahlavi era, particularly the Kurdish, Armenian, and Assyrian problems, assessing the ADP's role in addressing these issues, and comprehending the interrelations among Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Armenians, and Assyrians. The fascist and chauvinist nationalist policies pursued by the Pahlavi regime prompted non-Persian ethnic groups, notably Azerbaijanis and Kurds, to assert their national-cultural rights and advocate for national autonomy, leading to numerous violent conflicts and massacres. Examination of materials from the "Azerbaijan" newspaper underscores that although the unifying policy of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party (ADP) effectively solved these national issues in Iran, this policy were subsequently undermined by the Pahlavi regime's dismantling of national autonomies. The Pahlavis, oppressing the people through dictatorship and suppression, caused widespread resentment among the Iranian peoples. Despite its military strength and Western imperialist support, the Pahlavi regime ultimately faced removal and destruction due to widespread popular demand. The scholarly examination of the legacy of S. J.

Pishevari and the “Azerbaijan” newspaper holds significance not only for delving into the historical, cultural, opinion journalism, and educational issues of the Qajar and Pahlavi periods but also for understanding the role of the people of South Azerbaijan in the democratic movement, their pursuit of national freedom, and their struggle. This area of research should be considered one of the primary focus for emerging scholars.

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