

By Melaike HÜSEYİN,

PhD ABD in History, University of Warsaw

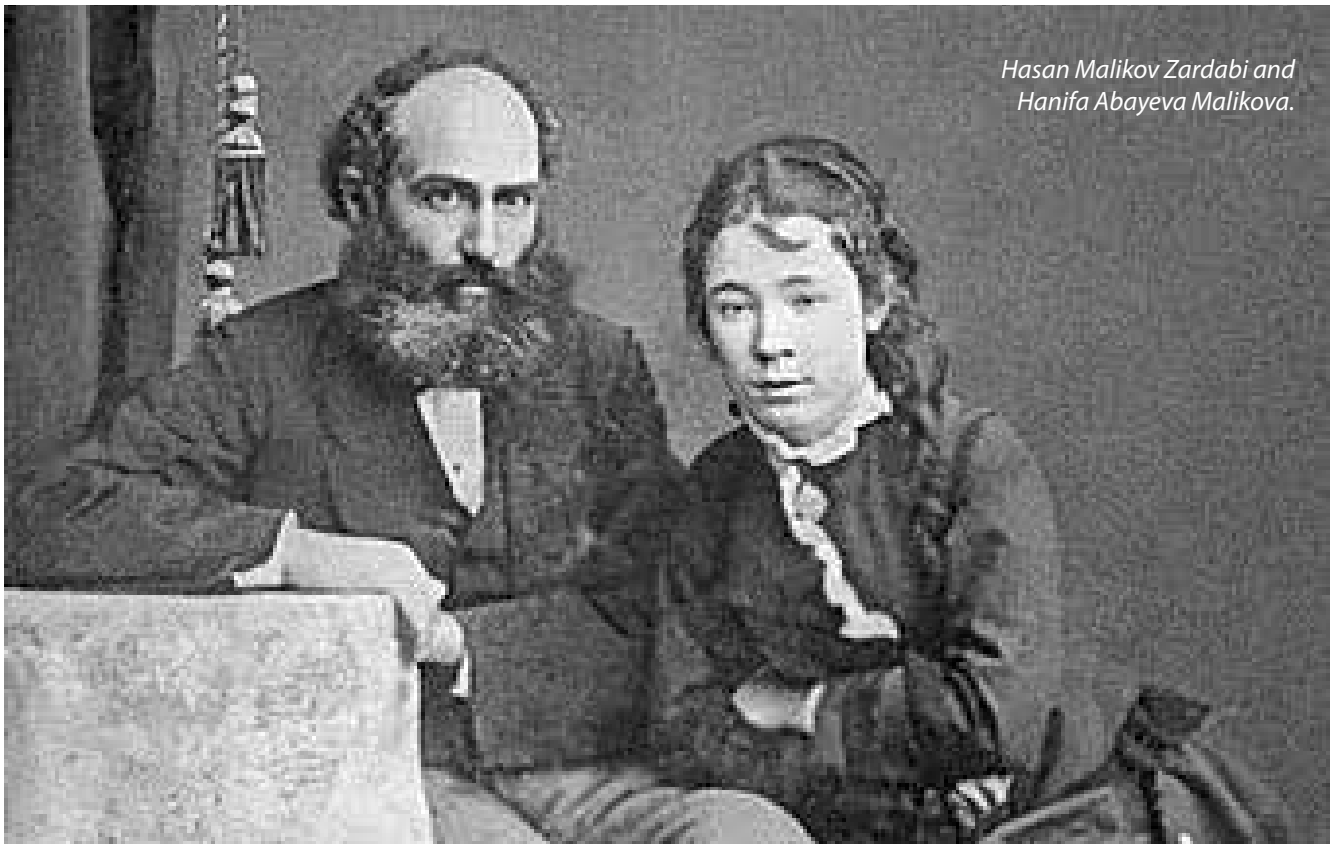
OVERVIEW OF THE ORIGINS OF NATIONAL JOURNALISM IN AZERBAIJAN

Being a country that recently opened to the world with an intensified success, Azerbaijan is also a field of meaningful historical developments. This article aims to introduce highlights related to the process of foundation of journalism, being dedicated to the 147th anniversary of establishment of the national journalism in Azerbaijan which we celebrate on July the 22nd.

Just like in the Russian Empire, following the process of annexation of Azerbaijani principalities which was concluded in 1828, Azerbaijani intellectuals acted with a goal of establishing a publication tribune for their own ideas, literary and poetic works and just as it was at the initial steps of Russian journalism, in Azerbaijan the idea of expressing own views was considered as non profitable intellectual activity. Despite the fact that in Russia



From left to right: Ismail Gasprinski, Hasan Malikov Zardabi and Alimardan Topchubashov in Baku, beginning of the 20th century



*Hasan Malikov Zardabi and
Hanifa Abayeva Malikova.*

this matter found its way as early as in 1834 with a commonly known fixed price of 200 Rubles per printed sheet(1), in Azerbaijan this aspect was yet to come even at the times when Zardabi was publishing his *"Əkinçi"* (Akinji-The Ploughman) in 1875. This aspect surely remained as a disadvantageous factor for development of journalism in Azerbaijan as a whole.

The Russian authorities facilitated publication of a newspaper in the Caucasus in 1828. The prime newspaper of the Caucasus was «Тифлисские ведомости» Tifliskiye vedomosti. While the aim of the newspaper was defined by the dignitary of the time baron Rosen as:

"... to provide Russia with information about the still little known Transcaucasian region and back to acquaint the natives with Russia and European education."(2)

Akif Aşırılı points out alternatively:

"... the necessity of a propaganda medium in the Caucasus for the tsarist government so as to carry out its colonial policy subsequently to Northern Azerbaijan's becoming part of the Russian Empire."(3)

Later on, a newspaper in Azerbaijani language *"Tiflis Əxbəri"* (March 1832-January 1833) followed. Published on Wednesdays, in the form of a leaflet the *"Tiflis Əxbəri"* was considered not only in the Caucasus, but also in Iran and Turkey. Abbasqulu aga Bakikhanov co-

operated with the newspaper as advisor on matters related to "life, history, literature and culture" of Azerbaijan.

Great majority of the contemporary historians and researchers of Azerbaijani journalism are reluctant in evaluations regarding primary publications in Azerbaijani language. Their ideas are as follows:

"It should be noted that the Azerbaijani press was not established with the *"Tiflis Əxbəri"*, *"Qafqazın bu tərəfinin xəbəri"* and the Russian language newspaper the *"Kavkaz"*. These were only its embryos. At the same time, these bodies reported the dawn of the opening of the national Azerbaijani press, initiated by Hasan Bey Zardabi."(4)

"Tiflis Əxbəri" or *"Qafqazın bu tərəfinin xəbəri"* were not independent publications. Those newspapers published solely the official information of the tsarist authorities, which cannot be considered a service to the formation of independent Azerbaijani journalism. Furthermore, these newspaper's content, neither polygraphy base, nor any of its editors were related to the social life of Azerbaijan."(5)

Hasan Bey Zardabi and his newspaper Akinji.

1875 brought into the history of Azerbaijan development which constitutes a milestone in the process of foundation of national awareness and independence.



Esma Sultan Shafiqa Sheyhzade Efendizadeh (1882-1959), first woman journalist of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijani intellectual, philanthropist and greatest enthusiast of all times Hasan Bey Zardabi Malikov (1837-1907) published his first newspaper “Əkinçi” (Akindji) in Azerbaijani language. Entire project in terms of ideas, arduous process of obtaining permissions from authorities, along with the financial realisation belonged to him, a humble state employee and a school teacher. He was the one who secured the groundwork, travelled to Istanbul to order the printing materials, had to shape the minds of young authors and face all the battles of fierce censorship, even death threats and assassination attempts.

The figure of Zardabi is particular and interesting. His life journey proves how visionary his ideas were. Such an attitude brought him permanent struggles and life lasting financial difficulties. Feeling a deep compassion towards the mercilessly exploited, downtrodden population of his compatriots, he was mostly alone to educate his nation tirelessly believing in the efficacy of one to one contact, defending peasants from exploitation of landlords and reluctant approach of the Tsarist Russia authorities. Remarkably, the times when Zardabi, after 7 years of strenuous efforts was finally able to initiate publication of Akindji were marked by the strive of Azerbaijanis to establish their growth as a nation. Yet

the circumstances were so difficult for anyone who was a Caucasian Tatar (definition applied to Azerbaijanis in the Russian Empire), that the majority of those who could support Zardabi financially and morally, simply preferred to play a role of good, submissive and obedient citizen. Alternatively we can see that the first financial success in the oil industry of the prominent philanthropist Hacı Zeynal Abidin Tagiyev occurred only in 1878(6), while the Musa Nagiyev’s in 1903(7). On the other hand, oblivious population of his compatriots was also suspicious of Zardabi himself, an intellectual, educated at the Moscow State University on governmental scholarship, who was keen to make them claim their rights they were completely unaware about. This way we can see that Zardabi’s efforts were facing a triple opposition. This is why his newspaper’s life of two years (July 1875-September 1877) is even more meaningful for the history of expression and thought in Azerbaijan.

Memoirs of the spouse of Zardabi obtained from Azerbaijan National Archive of Manuscripts constitute a document of ultimate value. Hanifa Abayeva Malikova, the daughter of Balkarian Prince Aslanbek Abayev, reveals details, clarifying yet not widely known significant historical facts. In reference to the process of establishing the group of writers for the newspaper she explains:

“Some enthusiastic readers would send their short stories, poetry and critical articles to the newspaper with requests to be published. Unfortunately due to the financial limitations this was not possible. Income from subscriptions would not be enough to pay for the ink, paper and printery. Hasan Bey would dedicate a lot of attention to the new journalists of the newspaper. In situations of unsatisfactory level of the writing, he would politely return it to the author explaining in detail what should be improved.”(8)

Another significant aspect is Zardabi’s profound understanding of ideological aspects of the matter. Zardabi not only was a selfless enthusiast, he was also a clairvoyant strategist. All the steps he took towards establishment of freedom of expression in Azerbaijan, not only in his newspaper, but also in each article he wrote for upcoming Azerbaijani newspapers were constructed around ideas of unification of efforts by all Turkic and Muslim population of the Russian Empire for a newspaper in mother tongue for each. Yet until then he was offering a solution, which we see in the memoirs of Hanifa Malikova. She recalls:

"Əkinçi" received a lot of attention from other Muslim communities of the Russian Empire. Articles written in Arabic language from Crimean, Volga district Tatars and Siberians would reach Hasan Bey. He found a mullah from Kazan that had a good command of Arabic language, making him translating the articles back into native Tatar and sending them back to the authors as an example with a request of writing in their mother tongue. Those authors lately initiated writing in their own languages. Zardabi was extremely proud with his consistent work of acustoming the authors to the idea of writing in their native languages. Simultaneously he would advise the authors to collect and write down examples of songs, anecdotes, stories, proverbs of their compatriots, with the words: "preserve them well, one day you will also have newspapers and magazines."(9)

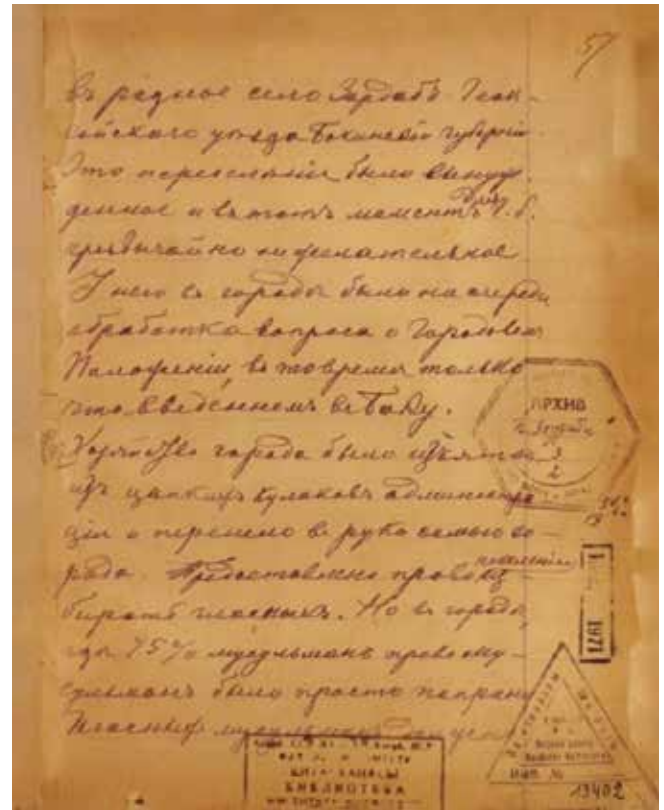
The majority of articles devoted to the history of the press of Crimean Tatars are reluctant to mention both fathers of journalism of the time next to each other. In other words, the figure of Zardabi is predominantly missing in their narratives, giving the impression of their refraining from underlining the importance of Zardabi's and Gasprinski's mutual goals along with the fruits of their cooperation.

This way it looks like the researches of the legacy of Ismail Gasprinski prefer to focus on the distinctiveness of his ideas and their impact. While, from the memoirs of Hanifa Malikova, the factual dates of publications of both newspapers Akindji(1875) and Terdjuman(1883) and the fact of Terdjuman's being sponsored by Azerbaijani oil tycoon Hacı Zeynal Abdin Tagiyev (500 Rubles in 1897; 1000 Rubles in 1901; 1000 Rubles in 1902), we can see that the approach of both Zardabi and Gasprinski (10) was deprived of self centered, own nation oriented ideas, being more feet to the concept of propagated "Unity in language, thoughts and deeds", which encompassed all Muslim Turkic population of the Russian Empire and actually corresponds comprehensively to the goal of unifying efforts expressed multiple times by both.

In this context memoirs of Hanifa Malikova are significantly informative. Here we read:

"In 1879 Ismail Bey Gasprinski wrote a letter to Hasan Bey, informing him about endeavours related to publishing of a newspaper, asking *hairdua* (a blessing) along with supervising the matters of the project. This letter was a great joy for Hasan Bey. He was exclaiming: "We are about to have another newspaper. In the future we will have third and forth and so on." He was happy like a

Exemplary page from memoirs of Hanifa Malikova dedicated to her husband. Courtesy of the Azerbaijan National Archive of Manuscripts.



child, while following the Terdjiman and its success. He would advise Ismail bey Gasprinski to refrain from using Arabic and Persian words, stressing likewise the necessity of omitting specific words particular to Crimean Tatar dialect. Gasprinski would always take into account the advice of Hasan Bey, so this way the newspaper was published in such a Turkick language that it would be sufficient enough to be understandable to the population of Caucasus, as a result being willingly read".(11)

As to other important personalities first journalist among Muslim women of the Russian Empire was Shafiqə Efendizadəh. Her first article "*To the Enlightener, highly esteemed Magomed Aga Shakhtakhtinsky*", was published in the 7th issue of the newspaper "*Shargi-Rus*"(April 16, 1903). Later on, her articles appeared in newspapers and magazines such as "*Hayat*", "*Irshad*", "*Achyg soz*", "*Azerbaijan*", "*Dyabistan*", "*Dirilik*", "*Myaktyab*".

Subsequently "*Burhani Taraqqi*"(1906-1911) was a newspaper which was published by Mustafa Lutfi Ismailov Shirvanski in the city of Astrakhan. Azerbaijani intellectual Mirza Djalal Yusifzade was the editor in chief of the first non governmental newspaper "*Bukhoroi*

- 4 -

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1892г.			
Май	10	Ивань	100 -
	20	Покртышвили	10 -
Июль	1	Покртышвили	100 -
Август	3	Кладь за пособіи	50 -
	20	Покртышвили	10 -
Сентябрь	27	Покртышвили Владим	10 -
Октябрь	20	Бѣдина	500 -
Ноябрь	11	Челюскаіи заемъ 0-ву Спасскіи на кладь	50 -
	13	Покртышвили	10 -
Декабрь	29	Тифлисскому Кавказскому заемъ на казеніи почтового смотрителя Тиф- лисского Мусульманскаго Училища	500 -
1893г.			
Январь	16	Покртышвили на устройство стѣи кон- рета Мусульманскаго кладбища	500 -
Мартъ	1	Покртышвили на заемъ за Оруж- ный Судъ	100 -
Май	7	Покртышвили	20 -
	10	Челюскаіи заемъ 0-ву Краснаго Креста	10 -
	13	Редактору "Переводчикъ" на обидей	500 -
	20	Покртышвили М.О. Чечулову на казеніи почтителя приэмнаго письма для 05д- милъ божьихъ	200 -
	24	Въ пользу Ахметри въ Ваг. Са. Илии	100 -
Июль	4	Покртышвили Кавказскаго Царска	50 -
	6	Покртышвили на постройку мечети въ Кубанскомъ уездѣ	500 -
	15	Покртышвили черезъ А.В. Пазыренкова	100 -
	16	Челюскаіи заемъ на казеніи Директора Терскаго Комитета за 1893 г.	20 -
Июль	7	Бѣдиной заемъ	20 -
	20	Покртышвили на устройство ограды на	

Sharif"(1912-1913), published in Kagan, New Bukhara Tajikistan.(12)

In overall the development of national press and publishing was possible thanks to three generations of Azerbaijani intellectuals involved in journalistic activity, their main goal was bringing awareness on national identity. Their approximate number was 360. Many of them were simultaneously editors. Among publishers particularly brothers Gambar and Abuzar Orujevs, Vezirov, Ashurbekov, Muznib, Mikailov, Mirbagirov, Abdullazade, Abdulbeyzade, Alibekov, Alekperov, Ahmedov, Gandjinski, Heydarov, Karabekov, Mirzazade, Tairov, Sharifov were most prominent. The main financier among them was Hacı Zeynal Abidin Tagiyev, who was sponsoring such periodicals as: "Kaspiy", "Hayat", "Acig soz", journals "Füyuzat" and "İşiq". Another oil tycoon Muhtarov was sponsoring the publishing of "Tereqqi". As of 1905-1906 publishing house of brothers Orucevs was established in Baku and functioned till 1917. Other publishing houses belonged to Ashurbekov and Vezirov. In 1905 Tiflis printery "Geyrat" where the journal "Molla Nasreddin" and other periodicals initiated its publication process was established by Mamedquluzade and

Exemplary page from lists of Zeynal Abidin Tagiyev's charity donations. Courtesy of the archives of the National Museum of History of Azerbaijan.

Nemanzade. This one was privately supported by the merchant Bagirzade.(13)

To summon, journalistic activity of such Azerbaijani columnists as Zardabi, Efendizadeh, Hadija Alibeyova, Shahtahinski, Ismailov Shirvanski, Yusifzade, Agaoglu, Mamedquluzade, Hajibayov to mention just a few, stand out with its own value due to the fact of their not being sponsored, instructed or forced to voice certain ideas of planned agenda of authorities. In other words, to recall the famous saying of Zardabi: "My articles are good because they are written by a free man!"(14) speak for itself. ✨

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