

IRAN AND POLITICAL MODERNISATION
IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY
PARLIAMENTARIANISM, CONSTITUTIONALISM
AND FEMINISM IN THE NEWSPAPER *ŞŪR-I ISRĀFĪL*

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The Constitutional Revolution in Iran (1906–11) was of momentous significance for the evolution of various social and political concepts that were mainly rooted in Western ideologies. During the period of this revolution the face of Iran was changed. The flourishing of free and autonomous newspapers was one of the main features of the period. The contribution of these newspapers to the social and political development of Iran and the modernisation of the realm was more obvious than that of other factors that were changing the traditional society of the country at the beginning of the twentieth century. *Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, the most influential and independent newspaper of the time, played an essential part in the process of modernisation. This article attempts to examine the role of the newspaper by analysing relevant texts published in it during the period and identifying the elements they mediated that were important to the process of change.

Introduction

From the day that the first Iranian newspaper was launched in 1837 until the end of the Qajar period (1797–1925) there was no stronger, revolutionary, rational or critical newspaper than *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* (The trumpet of Isrāfīl). Through this and other private and independent papers, issues concerning politics and society were introduced to the traditional and conservative society of nineteenth-century Iran, which had hitherto been largely unfamiliar with such debates.

Among these various political and social matters, ideas of freedom, democracy, feminism, parliamentarianism and constitutionalism ranked among the most significant. The notion of feminism was considered as one of the main concerns in Iranian society at that time, and the newspaper was a pioneer in raising the issue and focusing on the suffering of women in nineteenth-century Iran at a time when it was almost impossible to discuss anything of that nature. But what Iranian intellectuals like Mīrzā Jahāngīr Khān Shīrāzī (1876–1908), the founder of *Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, tried to do was to call attention to many social problems relating to the

position of women in society that could be solved within the limits of Islam. The idea of feminism in society in this case can be seen as a discussion from a social perspective, rather than a radical change in the status of women.

The idea of feminism cannot be discussed without looking to other relevant political and social contexts. And, generally speaking, the contribution of *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* to the social and political development of Iran during the nineteenth century is not limited simply to the idea of feminism, as many other modern social and political elements were also brought into social discourse by this newspaper.

Topological analysis

Şūr-i Isrāfīl was founded on May 30, 1907, during the time of the Constitutional Revolution, and it ceased publication three days before the bombardment of the Iranian Parliament by Muḥammad ʿAlī Shāh (r. 1907–1909) in 1908.¹ The first issue was published by the Pārsiyān printing house in Tehran on eight sheets measuring 22cm by 34cm. According to Kasravī “This newspaper was published on good paper and showed good calligraphy”.² On the top of the first page of each issue there is a painting of the “Angel of Freedom”, who blows a *şūr* (a type of horn or trumpet), with a group of people below, some sleeping and some pointing with their fingers. Above the “Angel of Freedom” is a Qurʾānic verse: “The trumpet shall be sounded, when behold! From the sepulchres (men) will rush forth to their Lord!” (36:51; trans. Abdallah Yousuf Ali, here and below, capitalization altered). Below the painting is another Qurʾānic verse; “Then when the Trumpet is blown, there will be no more relationships between them that day, nor will one ask after another (23:101). A banner with the slogans *Ḥurrīyat* (Freedom), *Musāvāt* (Equality) and *Ukhūvat* (Brotherhood) is also found hanging from the horn. Between the angel and the people the name of the newspaper appeared in *naskh* calligraphic script. Below the painting all the relevant information regarding the newspaper is written. This information is as follows:

- Price per issue: Tehran: 4 shāhīs, other cities of Iran: 5 shāhīs
- Subscription fee: Tehran: 12 qirāns, other cities of Iran: 17 qirāns; for foreign countries: 2 tūmāns
- Correspondence address: Mīrzā Jahāngīr Khān Shīrāzī and Mīrzā Qāsim Khān Tabrīzī, Tehran, Nāşīrī Street, Tarbiyat Bookshop

¹ Muḥammad Şadr Hāshimī, *Tārīkh-i jarāyid va majallāt-i Īrān*, 3:136.

² Aḥmad Kasravī, *Tārīkh-i Mashrūṭah-i Īrān*, 277.

- Date of publication: According to three calendars (Hijrī Qamarī, Hijrī Shamsī, and Gregorian, respectively)
- Interval of publication: weekly
- Policy of the paper: political, social, and informative newspaper.
- How to contribute to the paper: “All articles that are not in contradiction to our principles and have a signature will be accepted. However, the newspaper is free to publish or reject any articles of its choosing. Also, envelopes without stamps will not be accepted”.

The newspaper was to run for a total of thirty-five issues. Thirty-two of these were published in Iran, with the rest being published in Switzerland by Mīrzā ʿAlī Akbar Khān Tabrīzī, where he became known as “Dihkhudā”. This name change was made to honour the martyrdom of the newspaper’s founder, Mīrzā Jahāngīr Khān Shīrāzī. Our study will concentrate on those issues that were published in Iran. The names of some of those that contributed to the publication of the paper, as well as that of its founder are listed below:

- From no. 1 to no. 6, at the correspondence address: Mīrzā Jahāngīr Khān Shīrāzī and Mīrzā Qāsim Khān Tabrīzī
- From no. 7 to no. 14: the editor-in-chief: Mīrzā Qāsim Khān Tabrīzī
- From no. 15 to no. 32, at the correspondence address: Mīrzā Jahāngīr Khān Shīrāzī and Mīrzā Qāsim Khān Tabrīzī; secretary and writer: Mīrzā ʿAlī Akbar Khān Tabrīzī

Although the name of Mīrzā ʿAlī Akbar Khān Tabrīzī, “Dihkhudā”, made its first appearance only in issue number fifteen, according to Afshār, “Dihkhudā” was with the founder of this newspaper from the very beginning.³ This claim is also supported by the satirical column, *Charand parand*, published in the first issue. The article is accredited to “Dekhū,” a pseudonym chosen by Dihkhudā to refer to himself. According to Bāmdād, Mīrzā Qāsim Khān Tabrīzī provided the financing for the publication of the paper, while Mīrzā Jahāngīr Khān Shīrāzī functioned as manager and editor-in-chief.⁴

While the circulation of *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* was only “approximately 5,000 to 5,500, it actually succeeded in reaching a much larger audience than these numbers suggest. Each copy, originally sold for a few *shahis* (twenty *shahis* to a *qaran*), was then quickly sold and resold for several

³ Īraj Afshār, “Şūr-i Isrāfīl”, *Ayandah* 5 (1979–80): 511.

⁴ Mahdī Bāmdād, *Sharḥ-i ḥāl-i rijāl-i Īrān: dar qarn-i 12 va 14 hijrī*, 5: 178.

qarans by the same evening”.⁵ According to Mustawfī, the circulation of this paper was much higher than Afary estimated; he puts the figure as being closer to 24,000.⁶ This level of circulation, in comparison with that which was common before the triumph of the Constitutional Revolution, shows a marked difference between the two periods. In any event, both the number of newspapers and their circulation increased during the Constitutional Revolution period. According to Rizvānī:

Before the Constitutional Revolution, circulation and the number of newspaper readers was very limited. The highest circulation before this revolution probably belonged to *Ṣurayyā*, *Ḥabl al-matīn*, *Nāsirī*, and *Akhtar*, which never reached more than one thousand copies each. During the time of the Constitutional Revolution the circulation of these newspapers increased until it reached two or three thousand copies for each newspaper.⁷

From the increase in circulation it is evident that the readership of these newspapers also increased during the Constitutional period. For example, the editorials and articles appearing in *Musāvāt* (Equality), a newspaper published in this period by Sayyid Muḥammad Rizā Shīrāzī that attacked and criticised the despotism practised by Muḥammad ʿAlī Shāh against the press and the Constitutional Law, were welcomed warmly by the people, and many issues of the paper were reprinted on the same day.⁸ Not only this newspaper, but a good number of others, such as *Ṣūr-i Isrāfīl*, were also reprinted or copied by the people and distributed around the country.

There is a strong case for arguing that, in the history of Iranian journalism, *Ṣūr-i Isrāfīl* was “one of the best Persian papers, old and new”.⁹ It was called “the most literary, the best written, the best composed, and the most vehement of the newspapers that appears in Iran today”.¹⁰ In

⁵ Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906–1911: Grass-roots Democracy, Social Democracy & the Origins of Feminism*, 117.

⁶ ʿAbd Allāh Mustawfī, *Sharḥ-i zindigānī-i man, yā, Tārīkh-i ijtimāʿī va idārī-i dawrah-i Qājārīyah*, 2: 249.

⁷ Muḥammad Ismāʿīl Rizvānī, “Tīrāzh-i jarāyid-i Īrān: az āghāz tā Shahrīvar 1320”, *Pizhūhishnāmah-i tārīkh-i maṭbūʿāt-i Īrān*, vol. 1., 1997–98, no. 1., p. 377.

⁸ Ḥamīd Mawlānā, *Sayr-i irtibāʿāt-i ijtimāʿī dar Īrān* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishkadāh-i ʿUlūm-i Irtibāʿāt-i Ijtimāʿī, 1358 A.H.), 10.

⁹ Edward Granville Browne, *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia*, 33.

¹⁰ *Revue du monde musulman*, 7 (1909): 362; cited in Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 117.

comparison to the three other well known newspapers published during the Constitutional Revolution period (*Ḥabl al-matīn*, *Musāvāt*, *Īrān-i naw*), “the socialist paper *Sur-i Israfīl*, which began publication on May 30, 1907, was the most radical of the three [*Ḥabl al-matīn*, *Musāvāt*, and *Īrān-i naw*], the best written, and in the space of a few short weeks it also became the most popular”.¹¹

Ṣūr-i Israfīl sought to establish an alternative mode of distribution to that used by the governmental newspapers, such as *Rūznāmah-i vaqāyī^c-i ittifaqīyah*, a current events newspaper. These were mainly sold to government officials by order of the government. Indeed, *Ṣūr-i Israfīl* newspaper was to prove a pioneer in this respect, forming a distribution network based on sale in various shops, delivery by mail and sale by children in the streets. This sort of distribution was not used before the triumph of the Revolution in Iran. According to *Iṭṭilā^cāt*, an Iranian monthly magazine, some people believed that the purchase of *Ṣūr-i Israfīl* was like a daily prayer, and as such was compulsory for them (*Iṭṭilā^cāt*, 1948, no. 11). Regarding its sales techniques, the paper itself explains:

This humble newspaper (it is common in Iran that newspapers are sent to the people without them wanting it) shall never be sent to anyone or to anyone’s house, but shall be sold in the alleyways by children. Whoever would like an annual subscription shall inform the Tarbiyat Library (*Nāṣirī* Street, near *Shams al-^cImārah*). (*Ṣūr-i Israfīl*, no. 1, p. 8)

On the first page of the first issue *Ṣūr-i Israfīl* announced its journalistic code of conduct, which was based on truth, respect for people, freedom and the courage to write about the good as well as the bad things in society:

Without having the competence, we have taken up the pen to serve religion, the country, the people and the nation by the will of God and to express our good intentions for the land that is familiar with the blood of our fathers. In introducing the concept of constitution and the protection of the National Consultative Assembly, and the engagement of the villagers, the weak, the poor, and the oppressed, we hope to be steadfast to the last drop of our blood. We will never wash our hands of this good purpose as long as we live. With our loud cry, we shall say that we are not in the least afraid of threats. We have no regard for a life that is without freedom. Except for the spirit of God, the divine laws and the heavenly rules, we are not afraid of anyone or anything. We will not flinch from this steadfast position. We shall not flatter anyone. We shall not be deceived by bribery. We shall not praise anyone for nothing. We shall not give in to material

¹¹ Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 117.

aspirations. Finally, we will record good as good and bad as bad. In writing this newspaper, there is no personal benefit and we shall not use this enterprise as our profession. We will tell all the Iranians all over the world that if, God forbid, there is something amiss on our part with respect to our country, then they have the right to guide us to the right path. As long as we wish for their good, let them consider us as one of themselves. (*Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 1, pp. 1–2)

This same code of conduct was emphasised in issue number 6:

Despite the fact that the style of our newspaper is based on peace and harmony, we have no alternative but to defend right against wrong. And this will be encouraged to our subscribers. (*Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 6, pp. 2–3)

This method of writing was uncommon in Iranian journalism before the Constitutional Revolution. The freedom that was obtained by the triumph of the revolution opened the gate to Iranian intellectuals to write objectively with the intent of serving the interest of the nation.

Şūr-i Isrāfīl's publication was interrupted four times by order of the government. The first time was for a one-month period after the publication of the sixth issue. Issues number seven and eight were therefore published together. The second time was after the publication of the fourteenth issue and this interruption lasted for fifty days. The third time was after the publication of the nineteenth issue, and the fourth time followed the martyrdom of Mīrzā Jahāngīr Khān Shīrāzī.¹² The paper also stopped publication on two other occasions, first after the publication of the nineteenth issue and secondly after the twenty-fifth issue, but for different reasons.¹³

Generally speaking the main concerns of *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* were constitutional government, the parliamentary system, the idea of freedom, and the rights of the people, as well as feminism. In the following pages the content of the newspaper will be analysed.

Content analysis of Şūr-i Isrāfīl

Thirty-two issues of *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* were published between 1907 and 1908. These contain 258 pages and approximately 150,750 words altogether. By means of quantitative analysis the social and political terminology¹⁴ of the newspaper can be categorised and classified according to frequency of occurrence (see Table 1 below).

¹² Afshār, “*Şūr-i Isrāfīl*”, 511–17.

¹³ *Şūr-i Isrāfīl*. Reprint. Introduction and interpretation by Maṣūrah Ittiḥādīyah (Tehran: Nashr-i Tārīkh-i Īrān, 1982), 2.

¹⁴ Cf. Ithiel de Sola Pool, et. al. *The Prestige Press*.

Table 1: Different social and political terms mentioned in *Şūr-i Isrāfīl*

<i>No.</i>	<i>Terms</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Parliament	296	28.40
2	Constitution	179	17.18
3	Islam	156	14.97
4	Law	116	11.13
5	Freedom	84	8.1
6	Despotism	76	7.3
7	Progress	63	6.05
8	Justice	52	5.00
9	Unity	49	4.70
10	Security and prosperity	42	4.03
11	People's rights and feminism	32	3.07
12	Fundamental Law	32	3.07
13	Equality	15	1.44
14	Reform	14	1.34
15	Freedom of pen (responsibility of the pen)	7	0.7
16	Freedom of the Press	4	0.4
17	Censorship	2	0.2
18	Brotherhood	2	0.2
	Total	1042	100

The focus of the newspaper can be seen clearly in Table 1. As the data show, the issues that most concerned the paper as well as the public were the establishment of the parliament and the new constitutional government, which were seen as the biggest political events ever to have happened in the country. For the first time, Iran was practicing a new system of government based on the vote of the people. It was also the first time that the legislative affairs of the country were shifted from individual *'ulamā'* to a representative body of elected persons. A political newspaper such as *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* could hardly have been silent on these events. Thus the highest frequencies are those of the two issues "parliament" and "constitution". The word "parliament" was mentioned 296 times (28.4%) and the word "constitution" 179 times (17.18%). These figures not only show the importance of these issues as new and modern political elements, but also highlight the development of a new political discourse among the people with which this newspaper was actively involved.

"Islam" was clearly likewise an issue that preoccupied the publishers of *Şūr-i Isrāfīl*. This was the third most frequently mentioned term in the

paper (14.97%) and reflects the power of religion in the society. Despite the fact that the idea of constitutional government was derived from secularism and Western ideology, Iranian intellectuals were well aware of the importance of a good rapport with Islam because of the position of reverence and high esteem the religion held amongst the people. At the same time the great *'ulamā'* of the period were involved in the revolution, so no one could ignore its "Islamic character. Kasravī has raised this issue, but has also emphasised that this feature gradually changed to become a "national character":¹⁵

The Constitutional Revolution from the beginning was attempting to maintain an "Islamic character", but gradually this transformed into a "national character". The form of presentation also affected the newspapers. *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* from day one recognized the movement as a "national" phenomenon. Its writers had a very good knowledge of European countries and their history. Because of the manner in which it presented the revolution, the newspaper created for itself many enemies.¹⁶

However, despite the fact that *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* emphasised the revolution's "national character", this was not done at the cost of ignoring the importance of "Islam" as the fundamental belief of the people. Analysis of the newspaper shows that the "Islamic character" of the revolution was presented as no less important than the "national character". In spite of this balanced presentation and the writers' commitment to Islam, the *'ulamā'* were not totally satisfied with the paper. The critical language used in the publication, especially in the satirical column *Charand Parand*, greatly angered the *'ulamā'*. *Charand Parand* has been described as "the best specimen of literary satire in Persian",¹⁷ and, according to Tarbiyat, on many occasions it was critical of the *'ulamā'* and the traditional way of life in bold language.¹⁸ Indeed, the founder of *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* tried to strike a balance between praise of Islam and criticism of the *'ulamā'*. This was done in order to demonstrate, on the one hand, the publishers' respect for Islam, and on the other, their rejection of certain actions of some *'ulamā'* who were against the revolution. *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* writes in issue 14:

However, when the writer of *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* takes up the pen, he considers the Muslims in general and the Iranian Muslims in particular, and he takes the

¹⁵ Kasravī, *Tārīkh-i Mashrūṭah-i Īrān*, 278.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Browne, *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia*, 115–16.

¹⁸ Ibid., 25.

rights of the people in the palm of his hand to defend them. (*Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 14, p. 9)

In contrast to much other literature written during the Qajar period, the language and style of *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* is simple, fluent and less complex, as its Persian makes much less use of Arabic terminology. *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* consisted of narration of events, stories, dialogues, and reports, but usually without any specific headings. Its satirical column, *Charand Parand*, was an outstanding example of its style of presentation and writing.

Before *Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, while the main concern of some newspapers such as *Qānūn* had been *the establishment* of a modern ideology in Iran based on Western concepts, such as “law” and “freedom”, by contrast, the main preoccupation of *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* was *the establishment of a means for implementing* a modern ideology in Iran. This aim is clear from the language used by this newspaper and the way in which it is critical of the actions of different authorities in the country. Indeed, such critical language is used much more in *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* than in any other newspaper published during the same period. With regard to its critical language, Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn Vā‘iz, a famous speaker of the Constitutional Revolution period, after reading the newspaper, gave the following evaluation. It provides an indication of the effectiveness of the language that was used by the paper.

I had the chance to see and read the paper. I found no better name than the name given to your newspaper. Is it *Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, or inspiration, that gives life to the dead and raises the dead from the earth? However, regarding some issues, there are some remarks that I have deemed necessary due to the kind regard I have for you and your newspaper. The importance of the newspaper in furthering the goals of the constitutionalists, whose purpose is to spread justice and eliminate tyranny, is not hidden to anyone. The matter is so clear that I do not need to proclaim this. As long as the tongues of the preachers and the pens of the writers do not speak and write, how can the great ones cure the incurable pains of the country? However, your pen is so caustic. I presume that the pen of *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* is like a fire that burns the wet and the dry together. (*Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, nos. 7–8, pp. 10–11)

This style of writing and the language used was such that, “Tarbiyat, the co-author with Browne of *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia*, remarked on the paper’s ‘boldness of language’ and praised it for its confrontation with the *Ulama*”.¹⁹ Edward G. Browne called it “one of the

¹⁹ Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 118.

best Persian papers, old and new”.²⁰ Regarding its journalistic professionalism, Martin stated “There was no proper press in Iran before the granting of the constitution in 1906. Only a few official papers existed and they contained little in the way of news beyond flattering reports on the activities of the shah and senior officials”.²¹ Martin obviously sees *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* as an integral part of the proper press founded after the revolution. Indeed, this newspaper was “the most popular [and] the best written”²² in Iran during the whole Qajar period. The quality of writing of *Charand Parand* was evaluated by Keddie as “the brilliant political and anticlerical satire of the young writer *Dekhoda*”.²³

Three main personalities were central to the formation of *Şūr-i Isrāfīl*. The following section will deal in brief with each one of these personalities. Mīrzā Jahāngīr Khān Shīrāzī (1876–1908) along with the help of Mīrzā Qāsim Khān Tabrīzī and °Alī Akbar Dihkhudā, was the founder of *Şūr-i Isrāfīl*. Mīrzā Jahāngīr Khān “was a graduate of *Dar al-Fonun* and an *Azali-Babi* who had been influenced by Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani. Together with Mirza Qasem Tabrizi, who helped finance the paper, they began publication of *Sur-i Israfil* and asked Ali Akbar Dihkhuda (1879–1956) to join their staff as writer and editor. Both Dihkhuda and Mirza Jahangir Khan were members of the secret National Revolutionary Committee in Tehran”.²⁴

During the reign of Muḥammad °Alī Shāh, Mīrzā Jahāngīr Khān Shīrāzī and Malik al-Mutakallimīn (a famous speaker during the Constitutional Revolution period) were imprisoned for their opposition to the Shah before being eventually tortured and killed. Their graves in Tehran became a place of *ziyārat* (pilgrimage) and worship for those who took part in and supported the revolution.²⁵

The foundation of *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* depended to a large extent on the contribution of Mīrzā Qāsim Khān Tabrīzī, and it was he who helped finance his two colleagues, Mīrzā Jahāngīr Khān and °Alī Akbar Dihkhudā, in their publication of this newspaper. According to Şadr Hāshimī, “Mīrzā Qāsim Khān Tabrīzī, who eventually changed his name

²⁰ Ibid., 117.

²¹ Vanessa Martin, *Islam and Modernism: The Iranian Revolution of 1906*, 110.

²² Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 117.

²³ Keddie, *Roots of Revolution*, 74.

²⁴ Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 117.

²⁵ Şadr Hāshimī, *Tārīkh-i jarāyid va majallāt-i Irān*, 2: 143.

to *Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, was a socially active and extremely intelligent individual. During different stages of his life he was a minister, a governor and a mayor of Tehran. When Mīrzā Jahāngīr Khān was martyred he was able to hide in a water tank and save himself".²⁶

Regarding the publication of *Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, Mīrzā Qāsim Khān stated his aims and objectives in a letter addressed to Sayyid Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabā'ī.

I, Qāsim, am the son of Shaykh Muḥammad Bāqir Mujtahid. I am determined to attempt, as far as I can, to act according to conscience and to achieve the goals of the *Hujjat al-Islām*, including writing the *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* newspaper. I take God as my witness that I have no other intention than the happiness of my people and the satisfaction of God especially at this point in time, when taking up the pen means committing suicide (*Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 6, p. 2).

The great Iranian thinker, writer and intellectual °Alī Akbar Dihkhudā "was also a graduate of *Dar al-Fonun*, as well as the Political College in Tehran. He was a member of the Bureau of Foreign Affairs and had travelled to Europe, living in Austria for two years".²⁷ He is thought to be the first satirical writer of the Iranian press. It was he who started the *Charand parand* column in the first issue of *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* in order to criticise the social and political situation of the country at the time.

After the martyrdom of Mīrzā Jahāngīr Khān, Dihkhudā left the country to live in Switzerland, where he continued to publish *Şūr-i Isrāfīl*. However, he was not able to publish more than three issues of the newspaper. These issues continued the same style of writing that had characterized the previous issues. The paper was printed in Paris but, owing to difficulties that Dihkhudā faced in publishing it, was discontinued after only three issues.²⁸

The period of the Constitutional Revolution (1906–1911) was very different from any other time in the Qajar period. The triumph of the revolution changed the face of Iran. The establishment of Parliament and the obtaining of freedom by the people were the main fruits of the revolution. In this environment it is to be expected that free and independent newspapers would flourish and, indeed, this was one of the main features of the period. According to Browne, from 1905 until 1911, more than two hundred periodicals commenced publication and several of them

²⁶ Ibid., 143.

²⁷ Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 117.

²⁸ *Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, intro. by Ittīhādīyah, 3.

became known for their innovative literary expression.²⁹ These newspapers were responsible for introducing many modern social and political concepts into society. Many of these concepts were used as the titles for newspapers published in this period. Titles such as: *Taraq̄q̄i* (Progress), *Bīdārī* (Vigilance), *Adamīyat* (Humanity), *Ittiḥād* (Unity), *Āzād* (Free), *Musāvāt* (Equality), and *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* became commonplace. Such changes became possible for at least two reasons. The first was the tremendous work that was undertaken by Iranian intellectuals in introducing these modern political ideas to the people. Through their efforts, people began to realise the important benefits to be gained from such concepts being operative in society. The second reason was the democratic environment that existed after the revolution. Following years of enforced silence the new situation encouraged Iranian intellectuals to rush “to the printing presses to pour out all their newly acquired political ideas”.³⁰

It was in such an environment that *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* started its publication in Iran. “The revolution had created a unique moment of self-expression in Iranian history”.³¹ Taking advantage of this momentary possibility for freedom of expression, *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* started to challenge social, political, economic and cultural institutions, particularly the government system and the clerical institutions. The triumph of the revolution not only prepared the ground for experiencing freedom, but also allowed Iranian intellectuals to express their ideas about the institutionalisation of freedom and democracy in Iran and to suggest various projects for the future development of the country. According to Afary, “the Constitutional Revolution unleashed a flood of new ideas and intellectual discourse not only through the radical *anjumans* but also through the newspapers published in this period”.³² Thus the big difference between these times and the rest of the Qajar period lay not only in the acquisition of freedom and constitutional government, but also in the flourishing of ideas and the outpouring of political, cultural and ideological contributions from the people. Before the revolution, and especially during the first half of the nineteenth century, the government was the main generator of political, social, economic and cultural activity in the country. Little contribution came from the people. However, this situation was reversed after the revolution, with the people assuming a more active and effective role in

²⁹ Browne, *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia*, 25.

³⁰ Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, 87.

³¹ Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 141.

³² *Ibid.*, 116.

the decision making process.

The role of the press in this process of change and development has to be judged in the context of the new environment. This environment did not require ideological and philosophical interpretations of modern social and political concepts. Rather, it called for practical suggestions for the implementation of these concepts. Accordingly, *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* emphasised the national aspect in criticising the situation of the country and in proposing how it should be run.

The discourse analysis of *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* might begin with the following question: What were the elements of socio-political discourse mediated in this newspaper? This is the main question examined here. Through an analysis of these elements, both the “attention” and the “direction” of the paper will become clearer. The findings should make possible an assessment of the contribution of *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* to the process of social and political development, and especially to the evolution of the concept of feminism. Data drawn from the content analysis of the newspaper will also be of assistance in this task.

Referring again to the Table 1 (above), the socio-political concepts of “parliamentary system”, “constitutionalism” and “feminism” are selected here for further analysis and discussion. The first two concepts are the most frequent ones appearing in *Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, and they demonstrate its involvement in the introduction of modern political issues into Iranian society. Besides these concepts, the idea of feminism, though much less frequently mentioned, will also be discussed because of its great significance. Analysis of these three terms and the underlying concepts will show the extent to which they contributed to the process of change by stimulating and popularising different discourses in society.

The establishment of “Constitutional Government” was the main aim of the Constitutional Revolution. Therefore, it is hardly surprising to find that, *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* focuses on the importance of this issue and attempts to show the people the exact meaning of constitutionalism.

The meaning of constitution is that wise authorities are chosen to protect the rights of others, to oversee the duties of the State towards the peasants and to determine the limits of government so that its deeds and sayings may be controlled by wise persons. (*Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 11, p. 1)

If “the wise” must come together to protect the rights of others, how should these people be chosen? The answer is, of course, through the election system. *Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, by the use of logic, tried throughout its deliberations to convince the people of the importance of using a modern political system to protect their rights.

Elsewhere the paper defines constitution as justice and the elimination of tyranny, and it is emphasised that these things have become understandable thanks to the influence of Europeans. In other words, this paper acknowledges that modern political ideals are all rooted in European ideology and were introduced to Iran by those who had become familiar with the workings of these concepts.

From the first day, I realised that constitution was taken to mean justice. Constitution means the elimination of tyranny. Constitution means the comfort of the farmers. Constitution means the rehabilitation of the country. These things, I had understood. Or to put it otherwise, European-styled gentlemen had made me understand these things. (*Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 22, p. 7)

If any problems regarding the definition and the implementation of the notions underpinning the concept of constitution should arise, then these same educated people, who had studied in the West and were familiar with the modern political system, should be consulted:

Killing people without trial is not in conformity with the principles of constitution, and if our courtiers do not have any information regarding these principles, we entreat them to discuss the limits of their responsibilities for one or two hours a day with one of the students who have gone to Europe. Now that they are obliged to accept these principles, they should learn their rights and duties as well as possible so that they may not make us lose face with foreigners. (*Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 11, p. 3)

Şūr-i Isrāfīl also explained that modern words such as “parliament” and “constitution” are not opposed to Islam and do not seek to undermine the religion of the people. It was most important that the people should not be afraid of modern terminology. The paper wrote on this matter as follows:

The principles, the procedures and the knowledge involved in it [constitutional rule] are different from those involved in a tyrannical reign. Although these principles and this knowledge are in harmony with the principles of the Holy Qur^{ān}, nevertheless, because of the gap in time and the oblivion of the Muslims of today, we are obliged to borrow the terms concerning it from the languages of others. For as we have said, every particular principle demands particular knowledge, and the description of particular things demands particular terms. We cannot call a cart-driver a camel-driver, and we cannot call a telegraph a butterfly, for if we do so, we fail to express what we mean. And once we have become confused, we will remain in this state until doomsday. In other words, if we wish to have a just constitutional state, we are obliged to have terms for it.

For instance, in dictionaries concerning the constitutional countries, in addi-

tion to the multitude of words we have, there are two other [foreign] terms, which are written this way: *reactionary* and *conservative*, and the words are translated as referring to proponents of the old situation in life and politics. These two words are other than the word “tyrant” (*mustabidd*), because the word “tyrant” also exists in their dictionary. The proponents of the old situation in life and politics are not proponents of tyranny, but want justice and perfection. They lean towards the survival of the past situation in place of the present situation. It is almost as if some days we hear at least a hundred times about this or that old man saying, “Were we dead when we did not have a railroad? Did the people not eat bread when there was no *Majlis*?” In order to make this meaning understood in foreign lands, the two preceding words are usually used.

Contemporary writers and especially those associated with Mīrzā Malkum Khān [the publisher of *Qānūn*] translated these two words as “old-fashioned” (*kuhnah-parast*), which is used in this way in books and newspapers. In this case, what does it mean? How can its meaning be against Islam? How has this word been used by Muslims? While the real form exists in European languages, it is translated [that is, directly transliterated] as *conservative*. The [foreign] word “politics” (*politique*) is about the affairs of life and has nothing to do with one’s religion. The groups of people who have the real form of this word in their language do not at all challenge anyone’s religion and do not concern themselves with each other’s conscience. (*Šūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 14, p. 4)

The following excerpts make the point that the constitutional system is required for the sake of the people, for the sake of their rights, for the sake of justice. They should not fear to point out whatever is wrong or to express whatever they have in their minds. The encouraging language used in *Šūr-i Isrāfīl* is highly sophisticated and it touched the hearts of the people. It set forth the problem and then attempted logically to explain the remedy.

Today is the time of constitution and justice. Do not let any fear enter your hearts. (*Šūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 2, p. 3)

As the constitutional period, which can be regarded as the age of justice, allows the exposure of any sort of treachery so as to eliminate it, two clear cases of treachery will accordingly be reported. (*Šūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 32, p. 7)

The age of fear is over. The time for progress has arrived. The age of misery is over. The rebirth of Iran has arrived. Language and pen have become free to serve the welfare of the country. (*Šūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 1, p. 1)

The contending party is mighty and does not run away. It is not afraid of those opposing it. It is a divine lamp shining over the entire country. No wind blows it out. Therefore you had better come off your high horse and walk with us. (*Šūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 1, p. 7)

The constitution of Iran is necessary because of you. (*Šūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 1, p. 8)

Şūr-i Isrāfīl argued that if the meaning of the Constitution was misinterpreted, then persons who could be considered the true lawyers of society should be chosen to represent the people and define the meaning of the document.

O King! O Crowned Father! Do not listen to the treacherous sayings of those who claim themselves to be your sacrifice and servants and to those who interpret the meaning of the Constitution according to their harebrained opinions. Without hesitation, determine that the Council of Ministers may consider the full meaning of the Constitution with their utmost exertion and implement the meaning of the Constitution. Choose lawyers that are true members of the society and send them to the National Consultative Assembly. Let the contracts be signed by His Highness. All the ministers shall do their duty. Officially, let them declare the constitutionalisation of Iran to all countries around the world on behalf of His Exalted Highness. Finally, let them give the mature nation what it demands, so that the country may be secure from the dangers of the foreigners, that the King may go to any part of the country and stay there free from anxiety, and that he may have security of life and property. (*Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 2, pp. 3–4)

The main consequence of the constitutionalist movement was the parliamentary system, in which the people could play a central role in managing their own lives and destinies through recourse to legislation. This was the central goal for which the supporters of the movement struggled. They saw that the concepts of justice, law and order could be utilised as means of preventing tyranny and despotism. Their goal was achieved by the triumph of the Constitutional Revolution. Prior to this, the main contribution of the Iranian press lay in introducing modern ideas to the people and highlighting their importance. After the revolution, the focus of the press switched to explaining how these ideas should be implemented in society and what the people could expect from having a modern political institution such as a parliament in the country. This process of explanation made a vital contribution to the overall process of social and political development in Iran. Without such clarifications, people would not have known what they should expect from the new political system or how it should function.

Şūr-i Isrāfīl defined the main tasks of parliament as twofold. Firstly, it was a place for the establishment of laws, and, secondly, it acted as a body for observing and controlling the acts of the government. This seemingly obvious explanation was none the less extremely important in pointing out to the representatives, the government and the rest of the people their various responsibilities in the new system and making known to all what to expect from the parliament:

The parliament of every country is the factory for establishing the laws of that country and the observer of the deeds of the executive power. (*Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 20, p. 3)

The newspaper described the two new-born parliaments of Russia and Iran, the Duma and the Consultative Assembly, as having grown from the earth of justice and constitutionality and living on in the air of freedom and equality. It seems that *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* wanted to show that the triumph of the revolutions in both countries had brought justice, law, freedom and equality. It actively encouraged the people of both countries to respect the new political situation and urged the representatives of the people to act in accordance with to the principles it implied.

The Russian Duma and the Iranian National Consultative Assembly are like two new, fresh branches and two saplings grown from the earth of justice and constitution. . . . The two saplings are fresh, and fostered in the air of freedom and equality. (*Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 1, p. 5)

The triumph of the revolution in no way meant that all those who possessed power in the country had come to support it. Apart from the government authorities, there were also many clerics who were acting against, or at least not supporting, the revolution. *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* was well aware of the resistance to the revolution. The paper raised the question of the possibility of there being a contradiction between Islam and *Majlis* (Parliament). It emphasised the fact that the main concern of the parliament was not the spiritual life of the people. It then argued that the establishment of parliament was not only not in contradiction with Islam but was actually meant for the protection of this religion and for the benefit of the Muslims.

. . . and they made it look as if the establishment of the Consultative Assembly were contrary to the glorious religion of Islam and as if serving the *Majlis* were serving the party that has gone astray. (*Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 5, p. 3)

The purpose of the *Majlis* is to mitigate tyranny, and to find solutions to the problems of [everyday] life. It does not concern itself with the spiritual life of people. (*Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 11, p. 2)

Question: what do you suggest, O *Hujjat al-Islām*, concerning the Consultative Assembly? [Answer:] “Its establishment is for the protection of Islam, the spread of justice, the meting out of justice, the enjoyment of freedom of the pen and of thought and deeds in general affairs, the observance of the *Sharī‘ah*, the uniformity of laws with respect to all Muslims, king and beggar, rich and poor, wise and ignorant, the progress of the country, the unity of the people and the state, and the elimination of internal and foreign aggression and other national and governmental issues, in accordance with the glorious religion of the great

Messenger of Allah, the Last of the Prophets. It is, in fact, necessary to hold such an assembly at this time, as is not unknown to the great ones. It is incumbent on all Muslims to protect this assembly". (*Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 6, p. 1)

Furthermore, *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* stated explicitly that the main duty of the new parliament was to establish or extract laws from the sources of the *Sharī'ah* itself.

The rights and duties of the Consultative Assembly concern the establishment and extrapolation of law from the sources of the *Sharī'ah*. (*Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 25, p. 6)

The paper did not neglect to cite the view of °Abd Allāh Māzandarānī, one of the °*ulamā* of the Constitutional Period, in support of its position:

The establishment of the National Consultative Assembly is for the sake of ameliorating the condition of the farmers and (ensuring) the orderly course of state affairs. Its benefits will be of advantage to the public, owing to the necessity of preventing acts of oppression on the part of rulers that are beyond the endurance of the people. Moreover the attempt to sustain such a *Majlis* is necessary and does not contradict the prescriptions of the *Sharī'ah*, because it constitutes one of the stages of the act of enjoining good and forbidding evil. Indeed, grounds (one may offer) for its abolition and opposition to it reflect the extent of one's own opposition to the authority of the *Sharī'ah*. (*Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 11, p. 2)

While attempting to vindicate the creation of a legislative assembly in Islamic terms, *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* made clear in no uncertain terms the power of the people and the importance of the parliament in reflecting this power. It emphasised that "public opinion", or the view of the public, is the condition for the continuance of the parliament. This idea of public opinion had come from western sources Its use in the Iranian press showed that Iranian journalists were well aware of the political theories and concepts prevailing in the West and their significance for developments in Iran, and that they were attempting to explain their significance to the people. This was done in relation to parliament, by explaining that its continuance was based on the will of the people.

Of course, scholars are well aware that in free countries all affairs, both major and minor, are dependent on the will of the people. For the state is the representative of the nation and does not concern itself with anything other than the welfare of the people whom (the members of the government) represent. These must in all cases protect the vote and view of that group, except in carrying out laws, which is of course dependent on the effectiveness of each minister. In other words, the responsible ministers have (particular) aptitudes and must

adopt in their affairs their own style that is most effective in each particular case. The state should not allow breaking laws in implementing them, and tyranny should not be exercised in the name of justice. It is the case that in (the parliaments of modern) constitutional states the will of the people is judged according to the votes secured by the majority. The vote is considered law, and the law must be obeyed. Lawmakers and the representatives of the people, namely, the members of parliament, should be free in expressing their views. They should not be forced by anyone to carry out the orders of anyone. However, there is another thing that must be considered regarding the welfare of the country, and that is the will of the people, and it can be said that public opinion is the condition for the continuance of the parliament. In other words, agreeing or disagreeing with the view of the parliament becomes the measure of the weakness or strength of the government versus forces in and out of the country. If opposition to the parliament is general, the head of state, namely, the King, obtains the right to dissolve the national assembly. In other words, the dissolution of the national assembly means that, in the making of a new choice, in the reelection or rejection of the former lawmakers, the agreement or disagreement of public opinion with the view of the Majlis (parliament) is made known. Thus, disagreement of public opinion with the national assembly is not free from effects, for it may end in the latter's dissolution. (*Šūr-i Isrāfil*, no. 31, p. 6)

Briefly, the most important concepts contained in the citations given above can be summarised in eleven points. These concepts are representative of how modern ideologies were introduced and explained to Iranian society. They reflect the greatest contribution made by the Iranian press to the process of change during the nineteenth century, and they are all related to "parliament" and the parliamentary system.

1. Parliament is a place for the establishment of laws.
2. Parliament is a body that observes and controls the acts of the government.
3. Justice, constitutionality, freedom and equality are the basic elements in the establishment of the parliament and its continuity.
4. Parliament does not concern itself with the spiritual life of people nor is it contrary to the glorious religion of Islam.
5. The intention of parliament is to curb tyranny and to solve the problems of (everyday) life.
6. Parliament protects the freedom of the pen and of thought.
7. It is important that the law be administered impartially with respect to all classes of society, from the king to the beggar, the rich to the poor and the wise to the ignorant.
8. Parliament can play a vital role in the progress of the country and uniting the people, the development of the state, the elimination of inter-

nal [oppression] and foreign aggression and other national and governmental issues.

9. The right and duty of the Consultative Assembly is to establish laws, and it should seek to base them on the principles of the *Shari'ah*.

10. The establishment of the National Consultative Assembly (the parliament) is for the benefit of the public and the prevention of acts of oppression on the part of the rulers that are beyond the endurance of people.

11. The view of the people, "public opinion", is the condition for the continuance of the parliament.

Feminism

The idea of the rights of individuals alongside the rights of a people or nation was most certainly introduced into Iranian society from the West. Among the most influential channels through which this took place was the press. During the Constitutional Revolution period the rights of individuals became of the highest concern to intellectuals. Ideologically and practically, the constitutional government offered its support to the creation a system that would protect these rights. By means of elections it showed its commitment to supporting the rights of the people in general. The idea of the rights of women, in its modern definition was not, by any means, a concern of the society before the triumph of the Constitutional Revolution. In fact, the concept of women's rights existed only in the context of traditional and long-established religious schemes. I do not propose to evaluate the rightness or wrongness of the traditional and the modern interpretations of this concept. In this regard it is certain that religion has its own specific and well considered views. What concerns me here, however, is the modern idea of "the rights of women", a notion based on the western concepts of freedom and democracy and rooted firmly in western ideology. Such a way of looking at the rights of women was not known in Iran before the mid-nineteenth century.

Moreover, during the Constitutional Revolution the idea of the rights of women was not limited to basic theoretical elements but evolved in a more practical direction as well. Women were urged to become involved in revolutionary activities. According to Afary, "the roots of modern Iranian feminism were firmly planted during that early, turn-of-the-century revolution".³³ In her study about the origins of the women's movement in Iran, Afary states:

Several progressive male intellectuals, including journalists, poets, and *Majlis*

³³ Ibid., p. 178.

delegates, emerged as strong supporters of women's rights in this period. The satirical column of Dehkhoda in *Sur-i Israfil* (1907–1908), the poetry of Iraj Mirza, the articles by various writers in *Habl al-Matin* (1907–1909), *Musavat* (1907–1908), and *Iran-i Now* (1909–1911) expressed solidarity with women's causes.³⁴

Şūr-i Isrāfīl was one of the pioneer newspapers dealing with women's issues in Iran. However, it was not the first publication to champion the rights of women in the country. Newspapers such as *Qānūn* had already done much in this regard and had introduced the main concepts related to the issue. The difference, however, between *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* and other newspapers is that *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* tried to use a different style of language in highlighting the issue. Exploiting this new tone, it criticised the situation of women in Iran, whilst at the same time endeavouring to show what should be done to change the situation. The idea of feminism had not been dealt with before in such a way. Indeed, raising the issue at all had been an advanced step in the social movement of the country. The following quote illustrates the statements written in *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* concerning the issue:

During recent years, women in Britain have taken serious measures towards obtaining political rights, organised great assemblies, drawn global attention to themselves and written a number of essays and books to prove the reality of their identity. (*Şūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 26, p. 7)

Implicitly the women of Iran were being told by *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* that they had no choice but to exercise their own rights to social and political activity in order to assert their identity and gain true freedom of thought and expression. The following social and political principles might be deduced from what we have said thus far:

1. The best model for women's rights is found in the West.
2. Social activity cannot be separated from political activity.
3. Women can realize their rights only through social and political activity.
4. Identity is bound to social and political activities.

We cannot be reminded too often that expressions or terms such as women's rights, identity, political activities, and freedom of expression represented new concepts for Iranians living during the Qajar period. Nevertheless, the one sentence cited above from *Şūr-i Isrāfīl* concerning women's issues touches to some degree on them all. The contemporary

³⁴ Ibid.

ideas brought into play by this newspaper were much more advanced than those being invoked by the press before the triumph of the Constitutional Revolution. After the above quoted sentence, the text continues thus:

The wife of Mullah Muḥammad the Dirge singer one night in Qazvin realised that it was two in the morning. The children were crying and asking for supper, and she felt sleepy herself. The man who was her husband's guest was fast asleep, with no intention of leaving. So one of the children laid the head of his brother on my lap and caught a cockroach in his hair. Then he went on tiptoe into the men's room and dropped the cockroach into the guest's shoe. Then and there, the guest jumped up and went off, even though Mullah Muḥammad insisted on his staying and smoking a hookah. In two minutes the woman emptied the casserole. (*Šūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 26, p. 7)

The upshot of the above story is that the wife of Mullah Muḥammad, without any fear, took an independent decision in order to solve the family's problem. Stories of this kind encouraged women to exercise their right to think independently and make decisions on their own, thus bolstering their individual identity and equipping themselves to face problems more effectively.

On women's education and the establishment of new schools and societies for women, *Šūr-i Isrāfīl* also spoke out, condemning the resistance of ministers to such ideas:

Considering the great insistence of the prophets and the eminent scholars of the world on women's education, why is it that our women on several occasions have sent appeals to the court, to the *Majlis* and the Council of Ministers demanding the establishment of new schools and a women's society and each time our ministers have rejected their appeals?

Our ministers and lawmakers know well that if Iranian ladies gather together, start a school, have a society of their own and receive education and training, they will gradually realise that good and clean broths are better than those covered with dust and fat. It goes without saying that when such responsibility is learnt from mothers, sons will grow proud, and like Mr. Taqīzādah, they will ask persistently: How long shall our ministers and authorities be chosen from among a particular group of people? If the Council changes a thousand times, it will be decorated with Mushīr al-Salṭānah's stomach [indolence], Nizām al-Salṭānah's sad cry or Āṣif al-Dawlah's robe [connections]. Of course, you know that as Ḥājji Šadr al-Salṭānah, the notable scholar and future minister of Higher Education says, "This is a long story". In other words, when this idea becomes universal, it will be the turn of the lawmakers next". (*Šūr-i Isrāfīl*, no. 31, p. 8)

From our survey above we can see that the main characteristics of *Šūr-i Isrāfīl* were somewhat different from those of other newspapers

published before or even during the Constitutional Revolution. The difference in language, style of writing and political views reflected the changing situation of Iran itself. The triumph of the Constitutional Revolution was actually the outcome of a huge change in the political understanding of the people and their demands. This new state of affairs called for a new language with a new terminology with which to express the revolutionary changes the country had undergone and the new concepts that were integrally related to them. Another important issue here is the atmosphere of freedom of expression that prevailed at this time, which was to influence greatly those newspapers published during the first year of the revolution. The new circumstances allowed these newspapers to use their voices as a means of criticising the government and articulating the rights of the people. *Šūr-i Isrāfīl* was one of the best newspapers born from this situation. It exploited the existing freedom for what its founders saw as the benefit of the people, struggling for change in both the governmental system and traditional attitudes in society. Against this background, it is easy to understand not only why the critical language of this newspaper had to be strong and to the point but also why it was popular.

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