



## GORGIN, IRAJ

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**GORGIN, IRAJ** (b. [Isfahan](#), 25 Bahman 1313 Š./14 February 1935; d. Virginia, U.S.A., 13 January 2012), prominent radio and television broadcaster and journalist ([Figure 1](#); [Figure 2](#))

Iraj Gorgin was born to Mirzā Ḥeydar, the head of the Customs and Tariffs Office of southern Iran, and ‘Effat ‘Azimā, a trained singer and *tār* performer (Gorgin, 2012, pp. 16-17). His primary education began in [Bandar-e ‘Abbās](#), and he received his high school diploma from Qarib High School in [Shiraz](#) in 1952. Gorgin’s two maternal uncles—Amir Soleymān ‘Azimā, the founder of the newspaper *Orgān-e ḥezb-e mellat-e Iran*, and Jahāngir ‘Azimā, a lawyer—were active members of the nationalist Pan-Iranist Party, and Gorgin initially showed interest in that party. However, he soon became involved with the Tudeh Party (see Communism II. In Persia from 1941-1953) and gave several lectures at the Sāzmān-e Javānān-e Ḥezb-e Tudeh-ye Iran (Youth Organization of the Tudeh Party of Iran). He did not, however, formally join any political party (Afḵami, pp. 3-4; Farhang, 2012).

Gorgin’s media experience began at the age of 17; when still in high school, he published a journal, entitled *Dāneš-āmuz* (The student), and cooperated with *Javānān-e demokrāt* (The young democrats) newspaper, both leaning towards the socialist movements in Iran. His political activities came to an abrupt end after the coup d’état of Mordād 1332 Š./August 1953, and the overthrow of the nationalist cabinet of Moḥammad Moṣaddeq (Afḵami, pp. 7-9; Gorgin, 2012, p. 626).



Gorgin enrolled at the University of Tehran's [Faculty of Letters and Humanities](#) in 1954 to study Persian literature. His early professional career began in 1955, as a staff writer and art correspondent for the *Kayhan* newspaper, a period during which he also worked for one year as the managing editor of a recently founded offshoot of *Kayhan*, a weekly magazine entitled *Kayhan-e farhangi* (Cultural Kayhan), edited and managed by [Mohammad Amin Riahi](#). He received his bachelor's degree in Persian literature in 1957. In the same year Gorgin joined Radio Iran as a reporter, producer, and news anchor, and in 1961 he was appointed as the director of Radio Iran's newly established Radio Tehran: *Barnāmeḥ-ye dovvom* (Kimiachi, pp. 84-90; see also *Moḥseniān-e Rād*, p. 1455). He was also the writer, producer, and host of the Radio's program on modern Persian poetry, *Ṣedā-ye šā'er* (The poet's voice), in which he generated a rich archive of acclaimed contemporary poets reciting and discussing their poems. The interview he recorded with [Foruḡ Farroḳzād](#) in 1964 (available at Farrokhzad, 2012) earned him the praise of many and is still considered as an exemplary recording of the poet's voice.

Gorgin counted his years as director of *Barnāmeḥ-ye dovvom* as among the best years of his career (Gorgin, 2007, p. 160). Fereyduṅ Faraḩanduz, the program's editor-in-chief and news anchor, praised Gorgin as a pioneer who transformed Radio Tehran into a gathering place for artists, writers, poets, and intellectuals (Faraḩanduz, P. 19).

During the same period, in 1963, Gorgin also worked as the public relations manager for the Philips Company and for one year in 1964 for the Plan and Budget Organization. In 1964 Gorgin married Žāleh Kāžemi, a celebrated broadcaster, television producer, and pioneer in voice-over dubbing. Their only child, Afšin, was born in 1966, a few months before the couple's separation.

Gorgin left the Radio in 1966 and joined the National Iranian Radio and Television (NIRT) as its first news anchor. In the same year he started cooperating with the Arj Company, a major household appliance manufacturer, as its director of public relations and publications, and in 1967 he was appointed as the director of public relations in the NIRT's publication department. His deep, comforting voice, and the way he recited Persian poetry, made him a close collaborator with the Shiraz Art Festival, held annually from 1967 to 1977 (Gorgin, 2012, p. 628).

In 1971 Gorgin edited and arranged for performance a script, entitled

“Namāyeš-e nur o šedā” (Light and sound show), which was originally composed by the French playwright André Castillo (1911-2004) and was rendered into Persian by [Manucmehr Sheybani](#). It was premiered at the 25th Centenary of the Persian Empire at [Persepolis](#) (Gorgin, 2012, p. 628). In the same year Gorgin became the director of news operations and production at NIRT, as well as the editor-in-chief of the first series of *Tamāšā*, a socio-cultural weekly magazine, which lasted until fall 1972 (*Tamāšā Weekly Magazine*, DVD 1-2; [Figure 3](#)). Qobād Šivā, the prominent art designer, applauded *Tamāšā* magazine as an impetus of dramatic changes in the Persian press, in content and aesthetics (Šivā, p. 32).

In 1972 Gorgin enrolled in the Communications Management Master’s Program in the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California. He received his MA degree in Communications Management in 1974 and returned to Iran to continue his career as the director of the NIRT’s Channel 2, and also to make a series of documentaries about Iranian artifacts housed in museums worldwide. Work on the series, called “Hožur-e Iran” (Iran’s presence) was interrupted with the advent of the revolution in 1979 (Gorgin, 2012, p. 628).

In 1977 Gorgin encouraged Nāšer Taqvā’i, to make a television series based on Iraj Pezeškzād’s highly acclaimed novel, [Dā’i Jān Nāpel’on](#) (Uncle Napoleon, 1969-70), which went on to become one of the most popular series on Persian television and earned Gorgin the praise of Taqvā’i as the exemplary model for commissioning artistic productions—one who would give consultations, with no direct intervention (Taqvā’i, 2012).

With the upsurge of anti-government protests in 1978, Gorgin resigned from the directorship of the NIRT’s Channel 2 and, while still an employee of the organization, published an open letter emphasizing the importance of full coverage of protests and strikes on television. The letter also proposed the idea of governing the NIRT by a council, in which the representatives of the opposition, academics, lawyers, parliamentarians, and clerics would participate (Afḵami, p. 24). He was, however, fired soon after the 1979 revolution.

While still in Iran, he translated Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s (1900-1944) *The Little Prince* (Paris, 1943) and wrote a script play based on that, which was directed by playwright and director Bižan Mofid (1935-1984) as an audio play *Šāzda kučulu* with Gorgin’s narration ([Figure 4](#)). It was the very last work he



was able to complete inside Iran, and did not get the publication license until 2002.

*In Exile.* Gorgin chose Los Angeles for his self-imposed exile and settled there in 1980. Two years later he founded Radio Omid, the first privately owned and independent Persian language radio in Los Angeles, growing it within a year from a daily, one-hour broadcast to five hours. In 1983, Radio Omid merged with Radio Iran, a newly established radio station owned and operated by Nureddin Ṭābet-Imāni. The newly minted Radio Omid-e Iran continued broadcasting from Los Angeles until 1991, when it ceased operation due to financial concerns (Gorgin, 2012, p. 90). Gorgin was credited for his efforts to safeguard the reliability of his radio transmissions for expatriate Iranians (Farhang, 2012).

In 1987 Gorgin married Aʿzam Kowṭari and founded *Omid* magazine in Los Angeles (Figure 5). In 1991 he established a daily news journal in the international television network, KSCI. He was the writer, producer and anchor of the program for five years (Gorgin, 2012, p. 629; Figure 6).

Throughout his eight years of residence in Los Angeles, Gorgin helped organize many Persian cultural programs directed at the Iranian expatriate communities. He wrote the script and directed in 1997 a documentary film about the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, titled “Iranica: ganjineh-ye dāneš” (Iranica: The Treasury of Knowledge; Gorgin, 2012, pp. 409-18). He also read and recorded selected parts of the *Golestān-e Saʿdi* as an audio book, produced by Čehel Ṭuṭi Publications. The first volume of his *Anthology of Contemporary Persian Poetry*, produced by Afshin Gorgin, was published in 1998.

Invited by Radio Free Europe to establish a Persian broadcasting branch, Gorgin moved to Prague in 1998. He was the first deputy director and acting director of Radio Azadi, which started broadcasting into Iran from Prague in the same year. Gorgin’s idea was to establish a non-commercial radio environment, such as the National Public Radio (NPR) in the U.S.A., to produce and broadcast news and cultural programs, at a professional level (*Rahāvard*, 83/2008b, pp. 139-41; Gorgin, 2012, p. 83; Figure 7). Radio Azadi produced several radio programs on Persian literature and culture. Of special note is “Bā Saʿdi dar bāzārčeh-ye zendegi” (With Saʿdi in the marketplace of life), a series of modern stories, written and hosted by the journalist Ṣadreddin Elāhi, with an appreciable connection to Saʿdi’s *Golestān*. Elāhi later expressed his admiration for Gorgin as an accomplished radio producer and director who

would attract people with kindness and patience (Elāhi, 2012a, p. 11).

In December 2002 Radio Azadi was succeeded by Radio Farda, whose format focused on news and popular music as a way of attracting the younger generation. Gorgin, no longer involved in planning and policy making, was appointed as the editor-in-chief of the station (*Rahāvard* 82, 2008a, p. 164). As proposed by Gorgin, the Dutch institute “Press Now” established an [Amsterdam-based Persian language](#) radio in 2006, entitled Zamaneh (*Rahāvard* 86, 2009, p. 108). Radio Zamaneh started Internet broadcasting on August 2006, and satellite broadcasting a month later. In 2007, Gorgin participated in a seven-part interview about radio and television in Iran, with *Rahāvard*, a Los Angeles-based Persian quarterly founded in 1982 by [Hasan Shahbaz](#). A year later he withdrew from Radio Farda and continued his career as news analyst in Radio Free Europe (RFE). He retired from RFE in 2009 and moved to Virginia to start writing a book about Persian media in Iran and abroad.

On the morning of Friday, 13 January 2012, Iraj Gorgin succumbed to complications from cancer in Inova Fairfax Hospital, in Virginia. His death came as a surprise, as he did not want the public to know about his illness. Gorgin was buried in Forest Lawn Memorial Park in the Hollywood Hills ([Figure 8](#)). Several memorials were held in various locations, including UCLA and Roshan Institute for Persian Studies at the University of Maryland. The prominent Poet, Simin Behbahāni, praised Gorgin in a celebratory note, as a noble, gentle, elegant and graceful friend (Gorgin, 2012, p. 610)

His book, *Omid o Āzādi* (Hope and liberty), was published along with an audio compact disc, an audio memento that Şadreddin Elāhi called a reminder of his evocative voice (Elāhi, 2012b, p. 11). The book consists of a biographical sketch, a history of radio and television in Iran, an account of the growth of Persian radio and television in Los Angeles, a selection of speeches, lectures, and articles, as well as several of the best known interviews which Gorgin conducted with such cultural figures as Ḥosayn ‘Alizādeh (b. 1951), Aḥmad Šāmlu (1925-2000), [Bozorg Alavi](#) and Nader Naderpour. The book was praised as an invaluable source on the history and development of the Iranian media, both in Iran and abroad (Karimi-Hakkak, p. 1).

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