

Turkism, Azerbaijanism and the Language Question

Tadeusz Świętochowski

Turkism and Pan-Turkism, terms popularized by the Crimean Tatar journalist Gaspirali Gasprinski in the late 19th century, were both tolerated by the Tsarist government as a suggestion of the unity of Turkic peoples under the rule of Imperial Russia. Later, with the growth of the local press and the “time of storm and pressure” – starting with the Russian revolution of 1905-1907, the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911 and the Young Turkish Revolution of 1908 – the people of Azerbaijan, previously known as Persians or Caucasian Tatars, now began to call themselves Turkic or Caucasian Turks.¹ Soviet rule, established in 1920, also initially tolerated Turkism, as neighboring Turkey was experiencing a revolutionary stage of Kemalism, which was thought might acquire a socialist character. Such expectations ceased to exist in the 1930’s, during the early years of Stalin’s reign.

A particularly Azerbaijani dimension of the “Time of Fear” became the question of nationality linked to religion. As a fresh note of incriminations in the purges began to sound, Pan-Turkism and its ties to Kemalist Turkey – until recently regarded as a friendly neighbor – was no longer tolerated. The head of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, Jaffar Baghirov, explained to the Central Committee, that Turkey viewed itself as the only independent and free, Turkic speaking state, therefore its aim was to support the bourgeois-nationalist elements of the Turkic-Tatar Soviet population for the purpose of separation from the USSR and of creating a state under the guidance of Ankara². Along with the air of hostility towards Pan-Turkism, the Stalinist purges also assumed an anti-Iranian fervor. The codeword for the “Iranian trace” now became Pan-Islamism and the campaign against it extended from the Shiite clergy to the labor immigrants; most of them of Azerbaijan origin, from across the Araxes frontier. Close to 15,000 persons were deported to Iran, where so-called “muhajirin” (immigrants) gave rise to the suspicion that they were a potentially pro-Soviet element. Among Iranian citizens remaining in

¹ See: T. Świętochowski, *The Politics of Literary Language and the Rise of National Identity in Russian Azerbaijan before 1920*, “Ethnic and Racial Studies”, vol.14, no.1, 1991, pp. 55-67

² J. Baberowski, *Stalinismus an der Peripherie: das Beispiel Azerbaijan 1920-1941*, in: Hildermeier, Manfred, *Stalinismus vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg: Neue Wege der Forschung*, München, 1998, p. 763

the USSR, the number of persons that were imprisoned totaled 8979.³ A much worse fate awaited the Iranian political émigrés residing in Soviet Azerbaijan. The prominent Iranian Communists, among them Ehsanulla Khan, Hasan Abdulqasim Ashuri, Ali Huseynzadeh and Reza Pashazadeh, were arrested in late 1937 and subsequently executed⁴. The anti-Iranian aspect of the purges also marked the high point of a century long process of “de-Iranization”, showcased by the brutal suppression of Persian cultural traditions and language, which had until then survived in some towns north of the Araxes River borderline.

In December 1936, shortly before the culminating stage of the purges, the new (Stalinist) constitution was proclaimed. The USSR underwent another act of restructuring and its special feature this time was, once again, the issue of nationality. Partly in recognition of the fact that national differentiation among Muslims had progressed and partly with the aim to expedite the whole restructuring process, the Autonomous Republics of Kirghizia and Kazakhstan were upgraded to the status of constituent republics of the USSR. The same status of nominally sovereign Union republics was granted to Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, the three components of the *Zakfederatsia* (Transcaucasian SFSR), which was now dissolved amidst indications that behind this regional association lurked counterrevolution. This was the crowning act in the Stalinist *korenizatsia* (nativization) policy of promoting national identities by splitting larger cultural, linguistic or regional entities. From now on, only vertical links (i.e. republic–center), rather than horizontal ones (republic–republic), would be permitted. Regional blocks on the pattern of *Zakfederatsia*, which might conceivably become a challenge to the Center, ceased to exist.

In addition to this legalistic change, citizens of the republic were suddenly ordered not to call themselves Turks any longer, but Azerbaijanis. A new, particularistic variety of national identity was imposed with the purpose to cut historic links to the outside, non-Soviet world. It signified not only the rejection of reactionary pro Iranian Pan-Islamism, but also of identification with the Turkic speaking world, such as that in Kemalist Turkey. Turkey, although strongly secular, ceased to be regarded as a friend of the USSR.

Azerbaijan, the part of the Caucasus region with the strongest ethnic, linguistic and cultural links to the countries outside the Soviet border, now had to renounce even its most nominal ties with the Turkic world. The term for the country’s language, as well as its inhabitants, now became the strictly observed: “Azerbaijani”, instead of Turkic or Azeri-Turkish, officially in use up to this point. A special committee was hastily put together for rewriting school text-

³ T. Solmaz, *Iran kominternin sarq siyaseti, 1919-1943*, Baku, 2001, p. 426

⁴ *Ibidem*, p.432

books and, later, for another urgent task, which appeared to imitate Kemalist Turkey – purging, if possible, the native language from Arabic, Persian, and even modern Turkish words. A scholar in the field of linguistics, Idris Hasanov, was accused of treason as a Pan-Turkist: the proof – his approval of the use of Turkish grammatical forms in the native language of Azerbaijan, as well as words of Ottoman origin.

The narrowly ethnic and strictly secular national particularism, as opposed to programs of a broader appeal, such as Turkism, or Pan-Islamism, also opened prospects for faster assimilation with Russia. A meaningful step in this direction seemed to be the change from the Latin alphabet, in use since 1926, to Cyrillic in 1940.

Curiously, Soviet “Azerbaijanism” appeared to follow in the shadow of Pan-Turkism, which the leader of the Musavat party, Mammad Amin Rasulzade had mentioned in his writings in exile. In his view, Pan-Turkism could be acceptable as a platform for cultural or educational cooperation, but not for long term political action, as this would implicitly subordinate Azerbaijani interests to Turkey, and threaten the native identity. Future political partners should rather be their Caucasian neighbors, including Christian and non-Turkic Georgia and Armenia.

Within the Soviet space, the dissolution of *Zakfederatsia* marked the end of the idea of the Common Caucasian Home tradition of regional federalism that was intended to rise above national and religious divisions. From now on, the never fully successful idea of Caucasian federalism would continue in weakening forms within the émigré environment. The main centers of activity of the Azerbaijani political emigration were Istanbul, Paris and Tehran.

The forum for non-Soviet Caucasian federalism was the Promethean movement, born in 1925, in Paris, with the encouragement of the Polish government. Its purpose was to support, through cooperation, the strivings for independence of non-Russian nationalities of the USSR, including Georgians, Caucasian Highlanders, Crimean Tatars, Azeris, Karelians, and above all, Ukrainians.

Of all the Azerbaijani émigré political groups, by far the largest was the Musavat, with most of the party activists gathered in Turkey. As the years passed by, the Kemalist authorities put the immigrant community under increasing pressure to fully assimilate, on the grounds that the Azeri people, as Turkic speaking residents of Turkey, should become its citizens. It was thought that the ideas of Caucasian federalism could also serve as a counterbalance to Pan-Turkism and act as a shield against possible Turkish attempts at expansion into Azerbaijan, as Rasulzade implied in his book, *Pan-Turanism and the Caucasus Question*, published in Paris in Russian. In his view, the Azeri – conscious

that they had not been and were now not part and parcel of Turkey – should focus their efforts on ties with their closest neighbors in the Caucasus region.

That same year, in 1930, Rasulzade transferred the party leadership from Turkey to Poland. The idea of regional unity spreading among the Caucasian émigrés induced Polish government agencies to increase their support of the Promethean movement. In 1934, the Brussels Pact was signed, dedicated to the achievement of future confederate, rather than federal, regional states in the Caucasus region. The pact was endorsed by the Azerbaijanis, Georgians and Caucasian Highlanders, leaving the door open for the Armenians; hesitant about joining in an anti-Russian initiative.

The rapprochement with other nations of the Caucasus region reinforced the position of Rasulzade against the Musavatist “Istanbul wing” of the old time politicians from the *Difai* (Defense) organization. This was confirmed at a secret party congress in Warsaw in 1936. As new world conflict was approaching, the Third Reich began to show an interest in the Azerbaijani émigré groups. Gradually, Berlin began to attract their activities and key political figures went to reside there.

When World War II expanded into a conflict between Germany and the Soviet Union, the strategic importance of Baku and its environs also served as a reason for imposing a preventive occupation of northern Iran by the Red Army in August 1941. The Soviet occupational authorities, staffed by ethnically Azerbaijani personnel, encouraged local autonomist aspirations and tended to support native education and the use of literary language, after a many years long campaign of imposing Persian under the rule of Shakh Reza Pahlavi. At the same time, soldiers who had crossed over from the Soviet to the German side, requested that the Stalin-imposed term “Azerbaijani” cease to be used in Germany and be replaced with “Turk”.⁵

Contrary to its declared obligations, the Red Army forces failed to leave the northern part of Iran at the end of the war. In November 1945, Sayyid Jaffar Pishevari, the leader of the newly created leftist Democratic Party of Azerbaijan formed an autonomous government in Tabriz, under the protection of Soviet troops. The decree of the autonomous government of January 1946, proclaimed Azeri as the official language of Azerbaijan, elevating its status.

The issue of Iranian Azerbaijan soon quickly acquired international dimensions and a solution was deferred to the broader forum of the United Nations, as it was feared that the problem might develop into a preliminary skirmish in the approaching Cold War. Under pressure from the Western powers and the Security Council, Soviet troops left the occupied territory of Iran in the spring of 1946.

⁵ See: P. Zur Muhlen, *Zwischen Hackenkreuz und Sowjetstern. Der Nationalismus der sowjetischen Orientvolker in Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Dusseldorf, 1971

In the early post-war years, radio propaganda from the USSR attempted to stimulate separatist feelings in the Iranian part of Azerbaijan, where “Persianisation” returned on a much larger scale than before. At the same time, in Soviet Azerbaijan, writers and artists were encouraged to create works in the spirit of “unity of the common fatherland”. The effect was the rise of the “literature of longing”, devoted to the theme of a divided country, especially exalting the happy conditions in Soviet Azerbaijan, in contrast to the sad fate of its other “half” under the yoke of Iran. Some of these literary accomplishments received some of the highest Soviet distinctions, including the Stalin Award. In 1950, it was awarded to the composer Jangir Jangirov for the symphonic poem “*On this side of the Araxes River*”, and to the writer Suleiman Rustam, for his collection of poems, entitled: “*The Two Coasts*”. In the following year, the award was received by Mirza Ibragimow, for a novel describing the recent events that had taken place across the southern border, on the eve of the rise of Azerbaijani autonomy, under the poignant title, “*The Day Will Come*”. As the Cold War gained momentum, expectations grew that with the transition to armed conflict, Iran would become one of the first objects of military action. In such a way, a rapid unification of the two parts of Azerbaijan would be achieved. Suddenly, in 1955, any voices calling for Pan-Azerbaijanism were silenced, corresponding with the improvement of Iranian-Soviet relations.⁶

In the post-World War II years, the anti-Soviet position that emerged in Iran and Turkey found its reflection in the political climate imposed in Soviet Azerbaijan to secure the stability of power by intertwining fear, suspicion, and economic stagnation. Even though such a climate was by no means a unique feature of Azerbaijan under Soviet rule, the content of the denunciations carried particular meaning. The largest category included those concerning pro-Turkish or Pan-Islamic inclinations at a time of intense promotion of the identity of Azerbaijanism. By its nature, such promotion attempted at erasing the extensive historical links with the Middle East in general, and with Iran and Turkey in particular; now viewed as a dangerous neighbor in the context of the Cold War.

The struggle against the “Turkish trace” extended to the fields of historical linguistics and ancient literature, as shown by the campaign against the old-Turkic language folk epic, *Dede Korkut* in the early 1950’s. Until recently, regarded as a precious monument of historical legacy, it was now turned into a target for political condemnation. In the words of Baghirov, the epic work

⁶ See: L. Fawcett-L -Estrange, *Iran and the Cold War. The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946*, Cambridge University Press, 1992; T. Atabaki, *Azerbaijan: Ethnicity and Autonomy in Twentieth Century Iran*, British Academic Press, 1993; B. Shaffer, *Borders and Brethren. Iran and the Challenge of Azerbaijani Identity*, Cambridge 2002

was a reactionary, anti-populist literary piece, permeated throughout with the venom of Turkic nationalism, not to mention Pan-Islamism

The attempt at suppressing historic roots was to be a stepping stone towards the expansion of Russian culture and language – a process aimed at building unity between the Soviet nationalities. Shortly before Stalin's death, Baghirov, in the party periodical "*Kommunist*", officially brought into use a new term, and described how two centuries ago the people of Azerbaijan eagerly awaited incorporation into Russia, feeling respect and gratitude ever since towards "Older Brother" – the great Russian nation.

The post-Stalin execution of Baghirov was to be the signal for a changing political climate, and the new Party head, Imam Mustafayev, an academic in the field of agriculture, assumed the leadership position in 1954. His nomination was seen as the coming of a new, "Thaw Generation", alongside the revival of the intelligentsia. Mustafayev was fond of calling his country the "land of oil and cotton" and tended to view Azerbaijan in its wider context as a part of the (albeit Soviet) Middle East. In his speeches, he often compared Azerbaijan's economic achievements with those of Turkey. As time went on, Mustafayev's statements gave rise to suspicions of Pan-Islamic and even Pan-Turkish proclivities. His downfall proved to be the resurgent controversy over the language issue. According to the new law, applicable to the whole of the USSR, teaching of native languages ceased to be obligatory in Russian schools in the Soviet republics and the choice of school (with instruction in either Russian or the local language) was left up to the parents. When Mustafayev's government, fearing linguistic Russification, attempted to delay implementation of the new law (with the intention to reconfirm Azeri as the official language of the country) a political crisis arose at the highest level of the Azerbaijani Communist Party hierarchy. In the words of Mustafayev's rival, Veli Akhundov: "The issue of recognizing Azeri as the official language of the republic in 1956, brought negative consequences, such as the reawakening of nationalist sentiments and distortion in Party policies. This issue was exploited by various demagogues and nationalists for the purpose of heating up nationalistic passions, especially among parts of the intelligentsia and the student youth". In answer to such criticism, Mir Ibrahimov, recipient of the Stalin Award, mindful of refusals by the postal service to accept telegrams or letters in the Azeri language, responded: "Some comrades show not only dislike, but also contempt for the language of Azerbaijan". In June 1959, Mustafayev was forced into retirement, officially because of the failures of his policies; prime among them: "confusion in the question of language".⁷

⁷ J. Gasanly, *Natsional'nyi vopros v Azerbaidzhane, Pravda i vymysel (1956-1959 gg.)*, "Zerkalo", 6/6, 2006, no. 8

His successor, Veli Akhundov, was committed to reverse the nationalist deviations of Mustafayev. The Moscow language policy was accepted and was met with the approval of well-educated Azeris. Their personal ambitions or expectations most probably stretched beyond the limits of their home country, and thus, they favored mastering the Soviet *lingua franca* over the native idiom. The complex interplay of the conquered people's national sentiments and imperial assimilation is presented in the commentary of an Azerbaijani writer:

“The Soviet regime in Azerbaijan, as in other national republics, left its impact on the formation of national consciousness in a convoluted and contradictory manner. On the one hand, it promoted the idea of the Azerbaijani nation, and even cultivated high, but incomplete, Azerbaijani patriotism. (Incomplete inasmuch as the Azerbaijani culture was purposefully separated from its historic roots through such means as the imposition of atheism, the change of Arabic alphabet to Latin, and then, later, to Cyrillic, banning the normal study of the Musavatist period and of the links to the culture of the Iranian Azeris and akin peoples – Iranians and Turks – and inasmuch as any manifestation of patriotism had to be accompanied with an oath of friendship and fealty to the Russian “Older Brother”). On the other hand, the Russification that took place was partly imposed and partly spontaneous. Characteristically, the process reached especially large dimensions when the Azerbaijani bureaucracy came to positions of power on all levels, squeezing out the non-Azeris. Precisely, in the 1960's and 1970's, the number of Russian schools in Baku exceeded that of Azerbaijani schools, even though the city was acquiring an increasingly higher native character through its ethnic composition. Both the intelligentsia and the bureaucracy mainly sent their children to Russian schools”.⁸

The long term effect was a further deepening of the rift between the “big city” inhabitants and the small town and village populations. There, the view continued that learning Russian was wasteful, inasmuch as this foreign language was easily forgotten among the local people.

In 1969, Haidar Aliyev, a former KGB General, was appointed the new head of the CPAz. Among the key political figures in Azerbaijan, his personal impact would last longer than that of any of the other leaders – more than three decades. The early Aliyev years initiated the sending of students and young scholars on a mass scale to universities in Russia and other republics, making it possible for them to pursue careers outside their homeland. Aliyev also promoted the further growth of Russian schools inside the country. During

⁸ A. Abasov, *Azerbaidžanskaia revoliutsia*, in D. Furman (ed.), *Azerbaidžan i Rossiya*, Moscow, 2001, p.123

the 1970's, the proportion of inhabitants with good knowledge of the Russian language almost doubled from 16.6% to 29.5%, although it still remained lower than in most other republics. At the same time, the Azerbaijanization of the bureaucratic and industrial personnel was accompanied by a noticeable ethnic change, with the proportion of Armenians and Russians slowly, but steadily, declining, while the natives, by the time of the 1979 census, amounted to almost 80% of the republic's population.⁹ Pan-Azerbaijani voices once more resounded in literature and scholarship and before his transfer to the Politbureau in Moscow, Aliyev openly expressed the hope to realize a reunited Azerbaijan in his lifetime.¹⁰ While in Iranian Azerbaijan this campaign was viewed as a new indication of Soviet expansionism, north of the border it appeared as a reminder that pan-Azerbaijani aspirations could only be fulfilled through the actions of the USSR.

During the *perestroika* transformations, the leader of the People's Front of Azerbaijan, Abulfaz Elchibey, became the president of an independent Azerbaijan on June 7, 1992. As the first democratically elected head of state, he received "only" 59% of the vote (i.e. without the Soviet-style majority. The figure reflected the strong, but not overwhelming support he enjoyed at the time; quite satisfying in the case of an established democracy, yet in the existing situation, indicative of the extent of fear towards essential political transformations. A historian witnessing the events commented:

"The prospect of taking over full power by the People's Front, gave rise to fear amongst the privileged stratum, since now the issue would no longer be the usual success of one or other of the clans and factions, but rather the undermining of the very foundations of its existence. Full independence and exit from the Community of Independent States, would lead to the disruption of the system of connections with Moscow, which for them constituted the basis of power and influence... Transition to the Azeri language was a frightening prospect tied to the loss of status and even the loss of jobs by a large group of people without command of the native language. The taking over of power by the PFAz was a victory for the plebeians, towards whom the Baku elite felt true class hatred".¹¹

The electoral victory of the People's Front signified the superiority of the more nationalistically disposed, but also provincial part of the population over the urban and, at least partly, Russianized members of society. Elchibey articulated more clearly than any other Azerbaijani public figure the community's

⁹ See: V. Kozlov, I., *Natsional'nosti SSSR. Etnodemograficheskii obzor, Finansy i Statistika*, Moscow 1982.

¹⁰ "The Times" (London), 1982, 11/29.

¹¹ A. Abasov, *op.cit.*, p. 145

historically ingrained aspirations and concerns. These were: the emancipation from Russia's all-pervading grip, drawing closer to Turkey, as well as the West and developing links to the Azerbaijani population across the Iranian border. He sought to act upon these goals, often only to find out that they exacted a heavy price and could be mutually exclusive. The attempt to officially designate the native language of Azerbaijan as Turkish met with a wave of protests. The extent of these protests was a shock for Elchibey and forced him to give up the attempted change. Clearly, Soviet-imposed Azerbaijanism had put down deep roots in the native soil.

Elchibey's foreign policy was highlighted by the withdrawal of Azerbaijan from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and emotional gravitation toward Turkey. His slogan, borrowed by the President of Turkey, Suleyman Demirel, resounded: "Two states, one nation", but it did not bring the hoped for amount of aid and assistance to Azerbaijan. Elchibey's openly voiced concern pertaining to the limitation of Iranian Azeris' cultural rights aroused distrust in Tehran. The PFAz government's attempt at opening up to Western oil companies by concluding "preparatory" agreements on investments and the joint exploration of off-shore oil deposits was a step that provoked unconcealed hostility from Moscow. In the view of many, this sealed the fate of Elchibey's rule after just one year, leading to the return to power of Haidar Aliyev.

Political instability continued as a hallmark of post-Soviet Azerbaijan and within the first 4-5 years of its existence, the independent republic had three presidents, two acting presidents, and one successful coup d'état. An air of relative stability only returned with the consolidation of power in the hands of Haidar Aliyev. Even so, he had to contend with various attempts to overthrow the government by force.

Among the many diverse aspects of post-Soviet Azerbaijani identity, the language question contained political potential and became the foundation of dissident activities across the Araxes frontier.¹² As if in appreciation of its significance, on July 5, 2001, Haidar Aliyev issued a presidential decree declaring that the Azerbaijani language was the state language of the Republic of Azerbaijan and that the usage and development of the native language was one of the principal attributes of Azerbaijani independent state and whereby Aliyev resolved to issue regulations for its protection. This included creating a committee for language issues chaired by the president of the republic, which would submit proposals for legislation on the legal status of the Azeri language. The heads of

¹² See: G. Riaux, *The formative years of Azerbaijani nationalism in post-revolutionary Iran*, "Central Asian Survey", Vol. 27, no. 1, March 2008

ministries, state agencies and academic institutions were to prepare and carry out projects related to the use of the state language with the Latin alphabet. In addition, the Ministry of Education was to take decisive measures for improving the learning of the native language, while the Academy of Sciences, along with the Union of Writers, was to submit a program for publishing works on the arts and sciences, as well as dictionaries and textbooks in the Latin alphabet, introduced by Elchibey.

After an exceptionally lively debate, Parliament passed legislation on the state language, banning the use of Cyrillic in public places – a continuing practice, despite the official switch to Latin. The streets of Baku became the scene of feverish labor, as signs, billboards and advertisements were altered. The third change of alphabet proved to be incomparably more difficult than the change to Latin in the 1920's, when the majority of people were illiterate. The ban on the use of Cyrillic caused disaffection amongst the middle-aged and older members of the population. Similarly, some opposition voices expressed concern that enforcing Latin would reduce the readership of the independent press. Chief amongst the complaints concerning the alphabet reforms was that “there is not much to read in the Latin script”.

Frequently, the answer came back “use Russian”. The significance of this language has left a deep impact on the educational system in Azerbaijan, where the number of Russian schools is on the rise again, inasmuch as they enjoy a reputation for higher academic standards. One of the reasons for this is the abundance of textbooks in Russian. On the broader aspect of the language situation in Baku, one local resident wrote the following observations: “Despite all the changes, the Russian language does not disappear. Perhaps the younger generation knows Azeri better, but those who used Russian before independence – whatever their nationality – still speak in that language, as in the old days”.¹³

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¹³ B. Blair, *Alphabet and Language in Transition*, “Azerbaijan International”, 8, 1, Spring, 2000. (Special Issue), p.33

Turkizm, Azerbejdżanizm i problem języka

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Turkizm i pan-turkizm były tolerowane przez władze carskie jako oznaka jedności ludów tureckich pod rządami Imperium Rosyjskiego. W początkach XX w. populacja terytorium dzisiejszego Azerbejdżanu, nazywana dotąd Persami lub Kaukaskimi Tatarami, zaczęła nazywać się Turkami lub Kaukaskimi Turkami. Władze sowieckie w początkowym okresie konsolidacji państwa w latach 20. również tolerowały turkizm, jako że sąsiednia Turcja również przeżywała rewolucyjny etap Kemalizmu, który, jak wierzone, ma szanse na pewne cechy socjalistyczne. Jednak już w latach 30. prąd ten nie tylko przestał być akceptowany, a spotykać się zaczął z represjami. W konstytucji z 1936 r., aby rozładować napięcia wśród muzułmańskiej populacji kraju, zapisano powstanie oddzielnych republik związkowych m.in. Kirgizji, Kazachstanu i Azerbejdżanu. Obywatele tej ostatniej mieli od tej pory nazywać się Azerbejdżanami, a język – Azerbejdżański. Specjalna komisja poprawiała podręczniki szkolne i książki, usuwając z nich jakiegolwiek związek ze światem muzułmańskim poza ZSRR. W 1940 r. zmie-

«Тюркизм», «азербайджанизм» и языковая проблема

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«Тюркизм» и «пан-тюркизм» были приняты царскими властями России, как знак единства тюркских народов великой империи. В начале XX века, население территории сегодняшнего Азербайджана, ранее называемое персами или кавказскими татарами, стали именоваться турками или кавказскими турками. Советские власти, в начальный период консолидации государства в 20-х годах, достаточно спокойно толерировали «тюркизм», так как соседняя Турция испытывала революционный этап кемалистского движения, которое, как полагалось, имело некоторые особенности социализма. Тем не менее, уже в 30-е годы, это направление не только перестало быть акцептованным, но стало встречаться с репрессиями. С тем, чтобы облегчить напряженность среди мусульманского населения страны, согласно конституции 1936 года, были образованы отдельные союзные республики, в частности, Кыргызстан, Казахстан и Азербайджан. Граждане последней, в дальнейшем должны были называться азербайджанцами, а их язык – азербайджанский. Специальная центральная комиссия проверяла учебники и книги, удаляя из них какие-либо связи, касающиеся объединения

niono również alfabet, z dotychczas obowiązującego (od 1926 r.) łacińskiego na cyrylicę.

W okresie powojennym nadal tępieno wszelkie przejawy postaw pro-tureckich czy pan-islamskich przy jednoczesnej promocji tożsamości azerbejdżańskiej. Jednocześnie niezwykle aktywnie postępowała ekspansja rosyjskiego języka i kultury. W republice funkcjonowały całkowicie rosyjskojęzyczne szkoły, które miały opinię dających lepsze wykształcenie i perspektywy zawodowe. Proces ten nasilił się po objęciu władzy w republice przez Gajdara Alijewa w 1969 r. Po upadku ZSRR, wojnie w Karabachu i pierwszych latach niestabilności, pełnia władzy skonsolidowana została w rękach klanu Aijewów, Gajdara, a później Iłhama. Nadal kwestia tożsamości, a w szczególności języka pozostaje silnie upolitycznioną i budzi kontrowersje.

республики с мусульманским миром за пределами СССР. В 1940 году был изменен азербайджанский алфавит, с уже существующей (с 1926 года) латиницы на кириллицу.

В послевоенный период, еще более безжалостнее стали подавляться все про-турецкие и пан-исламские проявления при одновременном содействии укрепления азербайджанской идентичности. В то же время, чрезвычайно активно прогрессировало расширение русского языка и культуры. В республике существовали только русскоязычные школы, которые имели репутацию приобретения лучшего образования и карьерной перспективы. Этот процесс усилился с приходом к власти в республике Гейдара Алиева в 1969 году. После падения Советского Союза, разразившейся войне в Нагорном Карабахе и первых лет нестабильности в стране, полная власть была консолидирована в руках клана Алиевых: сначала Гейдара, а позже - Илхамы. Тем не менее вопрос о идентичности, в частности, языковой - остается крайне политизированным и противоречивым.

