

## A NATIONAL ISSUE IN THE ACTIVITY OF SOUTHERN AZERBAIJANI INTELLECTUALS IN IRAN AFTER THE IRANIAN ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

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### Abstract

After the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Southern intellectuals for the first time began to perform high-level theoretical studies on the people, language and culture of Azerbaijan. Although the Iran-Iraq war pushed the unresolved national issue into the background, at the same time, the problem deepened the process of national self-awareness. After the war, in the conditions of the reform atmosphere in Iran, the struggle of the Azerbaijani intellectuals began to take on a mass character, became centralized and took an organized form. The impact of the processes taking place in North Azerbaijan (gained independence) can be clearly seen here. In the 1990s, the national intelligentsia, including students, showed an emotional reaction to the events that took place in Northern Azerbaijan, and against the background of these events, within the framework of Iranian legislation, the extension of the rights of the mother tongue, the cessation of the assimilation of the Azerbaijani language on Iranian radio and television, the protection of national-cultural monuments, etc. such demands were made.

**Key words:** south azerbaijanis, intellectual, Iran, national consciousness, struggle

### Introduction

The positions of intellectuals defending the interests of different groups in Iranian society, which has a multi-stage social, political, ethnic, and cultural structure, are varied and sometimes contradictory. In general, the factor determining the nationalization of intellectuals is mainly their limited opportunities for self-expression in the current system or, on the contrary, the creation of a democratic society that ensures freedom of self-expression. We can only talk about the role of the first factor in the nationalization of Azerbaijani Turkish intellectuals in Iran. The second factor never existed as an influencing factor, except for the years 1941-46. Azerbaijani-Turkish ethnicism, an important stage in the process of self-awareness, developed as a reaction to the insulting and complete limitation of the Azerbaijani Turkish language, history and culture, which continued for many years, starting with the early years of the Pahlavis and the emerging Islamic regime. As the Iranian author noted, an important indicator of the identity of the Azerbaijani Turks in Iran, the reason for such a high level of development of language awareness, which is more than 100 years old, was the efforts of the Pahlavi dynasty to homogenize the people through the Persian language education system (Safizadeh, 2013). This idea was confirmed by the fact that after the revolution, the issue of restoring the function of the Turkish language in all fields occupied a large place in the national-cultural activities of intellectuals.

### I. The issue of first language in the activities of intellectuals after the Iranian Islamic revolution

The intellectuals and cultural societies, who together with other layers of the society achieved the approval of the very limited rights reflected in Article 15 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, worked for preparing textbooks in the Azerbaijani language and compiling a new regular alphabet during 1979-80. Especially in 1980-81, reforming the Arabic

alphabet was one of the main issues faced by Azerbaijani intellectuals because it did not match the Azerbaijani language. In this field, the alphabet compiled by Muhammad Farid for Azerbaijanis based on Latin script was more suitable than the Arabic alphabet (Məhəmməd, 1360). The brochure prepared by the Azerbaijani intellectual Habib Azersina in 1980 on the introduction of a writing system in accordance with the Latin alphabet was evaluated by the government as promoting Turkic ideas and led to the arrest of the author under the label of Pan-Turkist (شافەر, 1385: 111). However, the majority of intellectuals were not in favor of changing the alphabet, but of keeping the Arabic alphabet with certain reforms. Society of Azerbaijani Poets and Writers in Tabriz prepared an improved version of this alphabet in terms of the Azerbaijani language and distributed it in the form of leaflets (Tağıyeva Ş.Ə., 1989: 171).

Based on Dr. Hamid Nitqin's experience in this field, the creation of a unified system adapted to the phonetic structure of the Azerbaijani language, referring to the principles of spelling that have already been tested in Northern Azerbaijan and the uniqueness of the Arabic alphabet, should be considered an important service in the field of alphabet reform. Because the publication of the version of the spelling principles in South Azerbaijan that takes into account the specifics of the Arabic alphabet provided scientific grounds for fighting against the manifestation features that do not conform to the pronunciation and spelling norms of the literary language (Cəfərov, 1990).

Nationally-oriented representatives of the southern Azerbaijani intellectuals, divided by various political-ideological trends in Iranian society, know that the path leading to the mass stage of the process of self-awareness and self-affirmation passes through science and enlightenment and increases attention to this field, while the intellectuals who remain "loyal" to the ideology of Persian nationalism were operating in accordance with the spirit of the ruling nationalist policy even after the revolution. Those from the latter group were creating obstacles to the printing of books in the Azerbaijani language funded by the state, when this was not possible, they would publish biased articles about the printed books, and by actualizing the theory of "one nation" and "one language", they would pit Azerbaijani Turkish against Azerbaijanis. Pan-Iranism and Persian nationalism was developed in a uglier ways than in the period of the Shah and on a very large scale in the works of both Persian and Turkish intellectuals like ShirindokhtDaqiqian, AbdulaliKarang, SarhangRzazadeh, Inayatullah Reza, NasrullahPurjavadi, MazdakBamdadan, NasimNasrin, JililDustkxah, Muhammad Sahar, and Amir HuseynKhunci.

In the books on history published in Islamic Republic of Iran, it was shown that the only founding ethnic element in the territory of Iran is the Persians, the "negative effects" of the Arab and Turkish invasion on the Persian culture and development, and the fact that the root of the current problems are connected to these invasions were investigated. Haggi Ram, who conducted research on history books used in educational institutions, writes that the Islamic Republic of Iran remained loyal to the foundations of the "eternal Iranian nation" of the Pahlavi dynasty, and Persian nationalism flourished even more during the reign of the Ayatollahs (Haggi, 2000: 68-82). In response to the chauvinist "intellectuals" who apparently represented unofficial circles, already at the beginning of the 1980s, the studies of some national intellectuals included alternative theses that substantiated the idea that Azerbaijanis are Turks against the theses of the royal regime denying the connection between Turkishness and belonging to the Turkic peoples (Dədə Qorqud, 1980, No2: 4-5, 6-9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16). After the revolution, for the first time, high-level theoretical research on the Azerbaijani people, language, culture, and scientific history of the Azerbaijani language began to be written. JavadHeyat, who dealt with this issue, published his work in Persian

called "History and Dialects of the Turkish Language" as a response to the denial of the Azerbaijani Turkish language as an independent and rich language by the Iranian linguistic science and the ruling ideology during the Shah regime (Varlıq, 1982, No37-38: 12). The author reviewed the history of the Azerbaijani language, ethnic associations and groups that participated in the creation of this language, the place of this language among world languages, the ethnic territory of Azerbaijanis, and came to the conclusion that the Turkish-speaking population in Iran is not Turkic-speaking, but Turkic in every way (Varlıq, 1982, No37-38: 21-22). J. Hayet, in his other work entitled "Mughayisatul-lüghateyn" written on this subject, compared the language with the Persian language in order to show the lexical and grammatical richness of Azerbaijani Turkish and pointed out some advantages of the Turkish language (هیئت, 1983: 87), and in the article "Name and place of Azerbaijani Turkish" sharply criticized the chauvinistic aspirations and thoughts of pan-Iranists, spoke about the evolution and formation of the Azerbaijani language. The author's Persian language work "Iran wa Zabane Qovmi" (Iran and ethnic languages) opposed the separation of South Azerbaijan from Iran, and also exposed the obstacles to the teaching and spreading of the Azerbaijani language along with the Persian language. In his researches, JavadHayet provided a critical overview of existing ideas on the classification of Turkic languages since the 9th century and a concise interpretation of the morphological structure of Turkic languages, as well as detailed information on the historical development of Turkish and Azerbaijani Turkish. It should be noted that J. Heyat was also one of the first researchers of some dialects of the Azerbaijani language in Iran.

In the early 1980s, the discussion of issues related to Azerbaijan expanded. In this regard, the role of "Var" magazine, distinguished by its national educational activity and scientific level, was specially mentioned. The publisher of the magazine Dr. JavadHeyat wrote that even if Ahmad Kasravi's information about the "Azeri language" is true, it cannot overshadow the existence of today's Azerbaijani population. Because "the modern Turkic-speaking population of Iran does not mean the history of tribes and people whose identities have not been clearly determined by science, but the history of the ancient Turks (Huns, Savirs, Khazars, Goyturks, Uyghurs, etc.) who built great states and created cultures in Central Asia and neighboring regions (Varlıq, 1982, No 3-4: 15). Writings dedicated to historical topics prove that the Turkish rulers did not suppress the Persian language, as racist researchers say, but on the contrary, they expanded the scope of this language. Trying to prove the groundlessness of Dr. JavadSheikhulislami's Persian theses with historical evidence, J. Heyat wrote: "No one can deny the fact that the Persian language came to Iran through the Ghaznavid and Seljuk Turks, and through the Turkish sultans became the official and literary language of Iran, Asia Minor and India. Later, it rose to the level of a literary language with the cooperation of classical Turkish poets" (Varlıq, 1982, No3-4: 15). The response of Teymur Pirhashimi, another author who presented Persian theses, to NasehNatig, published in "Varlig" magazine, is also interesting. Speaking about the honorable role of the Azerbaijani people in the history of Iran, N. Natig connects the fact that Azerbaijanis think like Iranians, write Persian, but speak Turkish with the fact that their language belongs to the Iranian language group by its roots, and notes that until the Mongol invasion, this language was one of the secondary dialects of the Persian language, and later the Turkish language suppressed it and eliminated it. Allegedly, the ancient Azerbaijani language is still used in some places in the territory of present-day Azerbaijan. For example, the Harzandi dialect spoken by the people of Harzand village near Marand is the same Azerbaijani language (Rüstəmov, 2011: 30). TeymurPirhashimi, in his answer published in Varlig, scientifically proves that the Azerbaijani language arose and developed on the basis of its own laws and obeys these laws, emphasizing that the Azerbaijani language is a language capable

of creating new words and does not differ from other languages in accepting words of foreign origin. The author proposes to scientifically study correctly and in detail the issue of the existence of small population groups speaking languages that do not belong to this language group among the Turkic-speaking people of Azerbaijan (Rüstəmov, 2011: 31). Although T. Pirhashimi agrees with N. Natiq's opinion on the necessity of a common language of communication in a multi-ethnic country like Iran, he shows that the Azerbaijani Turks, who have played a major role in the development of the Iranian state, especially in the history of freedom movements, have always preserved their national traditions and national glory, and thus, he specially noted that this nation has the right to speak, write and create in its own language. The debates of the intellectuals in the "Varlig" magazine published in the capital city Tehran show that the problems related to the Azerbaijani language and history have become a socio-political and cultural issue and are the subject of discussion.

At the end of 1982, the publication of periodicals opposed to the political-ideological paradigms defined by the regime was banned in IIR, and at that time, Azerbaijani national intellectuals continued their activities in the direction of national enlightenment, albeit within the framework defined by the political regime, only in the "Varlig" magazine.

M. A. Yashar, H. N. Altay, H. Nitqi, M. Farzane, C. Hayet, T. Ganjayi, stood at the forefront of the scientific-enlightenment mission with their in-depth research on the language, history, and culture of Azerbaijan and played an important role in the formation of the ideas of Turkism. H. Nitqi believed that the role of the Azerbaijani people in the history of Iran, at least in the last millennium, is not less than that of the Persian people, but on the contrary, it is greater, and Azerbaijanis have also closely participated in the development of Persian-speaking culture. In this case, every nation living in Iran has the right to freely develop its national culture as a part of the country's culture. H. Nitqi noted that this is "a precious heritage for both Azerbaijani-speaking and Persian-speaking Iranians. Those who betray these signs are enemies of Iranian culture" (Nitqi, 1982: 39-40). H.N. Altay in his article "The poor who are rich" addressed the issue of the development of the history of the Azerbaijani language, in depth and comprehensive study of its vocabulary and grammatical laws, and wrote resolutely about the protection of the language from the persecution and attack of conservative-minded, authoritarian people from the period of tyranny: "No one has the right or permission to ban our spoken language. Our language will be spoken unconditionally everywhere, at home, in madrasahs, offices, official and unofficial everywhere and at every moment" (Məmmədli, 2007: 40). M. Farzana developed the idea of the immortality of the national language and the longevity of the national spirit of the people in the series of writings entitled "Memories for our first language and national existence" and connected it with historical factors (Məmmədli, 2000: 161]. T. Ganjayi in his articles "Turkish language in the court of Safavids in Isfahan" and "Turkish in Persian poetry before the Mongols" (گنجہ ای, 1999: 76) proved that the Azerbaijani language performed at the same level as the ancient literary languages of the East and was an important means of communication. H. Nitqi's article, written together with GulamrzaSabriTabrizi, dedicated to the issues of the development of the Azerbaijani language, entitled "A comparative view of the folk Turkish poetry language, "Heydar babayasalam", and the classical Persian poetry language" is also interesting. According to Dr. G. SabriTabrizi and Dr. H. Nitqi, the work "Heydar babayasalam" strongly demonstrated the resistance of Azerbaijani Turkish to assimilation. The authors noted that although the Persian way of thinking took a strong place in Azerbaijani Turkish in canonical literary examples, the national purity of the language was preserved in the style of oral folk poetry (Məmmədli, 2000: 179).

In the literary environment, the activity of writers for the sake of their first language was remarkably extensive. In total, between 1979 and 1985, about 188 books were published in the Azerbaijani language in Iran (Gökdağ, Heyat, 2004). After the revolution, in the works of M. Shahriyar, H. Shagaghi, F. Hasarli, H. Khatibi and other writers, Azerbaijani Turkish is the main subject, those who show indifference to their first language and speakers of a foreign language are criticized, and the discriminatory policy of the state is conveyed indirectly through the characters (Əmirov, 2000: 124, 134). A number of HuseynSadiq's works containing ideas related to the promotion of national identity and national revival, including "Memories of the Sunny Homeland" (Sədiq, 1360), a book of poems under the correct pseudonym, were published.

In 1989, Mohammad Deyhim and HeydarAbbasi (Barishmaz) conducted a study on the study of the Azerbaijani language based on folklore examples. In 1991, the book "Listen to me in Iran" was published, which developed the idea of reforming the Arabic alphabet. During this period, all the poems in the Azerbaijani language published by the "Literary Center" were works praising Azerbaijanism, related to examples of Azerbaijani folklore (شاعر, 1385: 160). At the same time, the works of well-known northern Azerbaijani writers such as A. Sahhat, S. A. Shirvani, M. A. Sabir, M. Mushfiq, N. Ganjavi, S. Vurgun, N. Khazri, M. Ibrahimov, S. Rustam were converted into the old alphabet and published in South Azerbaijan. After the revolution, the relationship between North and South Azerbaijani writers, the closeness of purpose and action in their creativity can be considered as one of the authoritative pages of the wholeness (Əmirov, 2000: 137). These relations existed in the Pahlavi period and were one of the unshakable reasons for the nation's national-spiritual integrity.

On June 18, 1986, at the seminar "Research on Azerbaijani Turkish and Literary Language" held at the University of Tabriz, Dr. J. Hayet and H. Nitgi proposed the issues of the regulation of literary language and history of literature in Azerbaijani Turkish, creation of a complete and perfect dictionary, teaching language and literature in universities (Tağıyeva, Rəhimli, Bayramzadə, 2000: 378). The issues raised were welcomed by official government representatives who attended the seminar, and the Turkish language was included in the curriculum in 1991 at Allamey-Tabatabai University in Tehran and Tabriz University. However, that decision remained on paper and was not implemented.

National spirited intellectuals opened unofficial schools, Azerbaijani-Turkish language courses, prepared brochures and cassettes for the promotion of the mother tongue. Dr. M. T. Zehtabi wrote about the teaching of his mother tongue and his interest in it: "...After the victory of the revolution, I returned to my homeland and started teaching Azerbaijani Turkish and other languages at Tabriz University. After thirty years of being among my people, as a result of close acquaintance with hundreds of young Azerbaijani girls and boys while teaching at the University of Tabriz, I found the pulse of a pedagogical truth that our people did not know at what level and to what extent they were ready to grasp, I felt that the language and level of the book "The Use of Iranian Turkish" that I published abroad is high. Therefore, I simplified the language level of the copies I made by teaching our first language. Universities were closed, copies were left unfinished. But I continued to find a way to learn our mother tongue. I wrote a simple book called "Let's learn our mother tongue" for young people who apply to learn our language" (Zehtabi, 2004: 8). Textbooks sent from North Azerbaijan were also used in courses opened by South Azerbaijani intellectuals. In a letter sent from Tabriz, it was said: "I used BayramBayramov's novel "Jıdırduzu" as an alphabet - native language textbook. Every morning, I read a page from this novel to 17

Azerbaijani children who want to learn their first language” (Ədəbiyyat və İncəsənət, 21.04.1989: 2). The books "Let's talk Turkish" (Bağçevan, 1981) by Bağçebani and "Mokalemat: ruzmareyeTurki-Farsi", which were sold together with two cassettes, were also used to teach the Azerbaijani language freely.

After the Islamic revolution, especially during the Iran-Iraq war, the movement at the socio-political level in South Azerbaijan was completely weakened, but despite the bans, the main core of intellectuals' national enlightenment, literary and scientific activity was the process of restoration of national identity, national language, including Turkish ethnonym, Turkish identity and the concept of Turkish language in Iranian socio-political thought (Mustafayev, 2014: 274).

Thus, a very short-term condition created by the Islamic revolution for the southern Azerbaijanis to declare their national self-awareness became one of the main factors in the process of revitalizing the national identity and language, being the legal and moral basis for the next stage. Another of the factors affecting this process was the increase of interest in the processes taking place in South Azerbaijan in North Azerbaijan - Azerbaijan SSR. Although this revival was carried out with the permission of official Moscow, it was in accordance with the centuries-old aspirations of Azerbaijanis on both sides and met their national interests. The resurgence of the South Azerbaijan theme in the north of Azerbaijan has not even escaped the attention of some Western authors. G. Riaux claims that the national themes in South Azerbaijani literature were exported from Soviet Azerbaijan. He considers the "incitement of the ethnic movement" in Iran-Azerbaijan to be the work of the Soviets and draws attention to the fact that books were prepared for Iran-Azerbaijan in the Azerbaijan SSR, and even calls the South Azerbaijani intellectuals Sadiq and Zehtabi "cultural smugglers", who influenced the scientific activity of the Soviet Union and were distinguished by the structure of some publications and the special activity they sent to Iran (Riaux, 2012: 51). It is true that the subject of South Azerbaijan became relevant again in the Azerbaijan SSR in the mentioned years. During the mentioned period, the departments "History of South Azerbaijan" and "Literature of South Azerbaijan" were opened at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Azerbaijan SSR, and "Literature of South Azerbaijan" at the Institute of Literature, scientific researches were conducted on the literature and history of South Azerbaijan, and classes on the press of South Azerbaijan were taught at the Faculty of Journalism of the Azerbaijan State University. In those years, the theme of the unification of South Azerbaijan and North Azerbaijan occupied a wider place in the works of writers and poets. However, the continuation of the national struggle at the literary and cultural level within the conditions of the time and the wide spread of this trend could not happen only with external influence. It should also be taken into account that in those years close relations and free movement between the north and south of Azerbaijan were not possible, as the USSR-Iran border was under strict regime control from both sides. Taking into consideration the despotic control prevailing in Islamic Republic of Iran, under such circumstances, it was impossible for publications produced in Soviet Azerbaijan to be freely delivered to Iranian Azerbaijan and distributed there without hindrance. Another Western author, B. Shaffer, opposes these claims of G. Roux, and is of the opinion that the literary process motivated by the national struggle in Iran-Azerbaijan is spontaneous (شافر, 1385: 127).

## II. Activities of intellectuals in 1989-1997

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the geopolitical processes in the world and in the region became a positive impetus for the struggle for the first language of the southern Azerbaijani intellectuals and the national-enlightenment activities. If from the 1920s to 1991 the struggle of

Southern Azerbaijanis for language and cultural rights was mostly autonomous, from the mentioned stage, this struggle can no longer be imagined without the North Azerbaijan factor. In January 1993, the article titled "President of the Republic of Azerbaijan: Unite Azerbaijanis of the World" published in "Keyhan-e Havayi" newspaper emphasized: "If we unite with Azerbaijanis living abroad, we can protect their rights. Our real goal is to ensure cultural, national and spiritual unity." Although the author very skillfully presented this news in the article as ordinary information, in fact, it instilled the idea of unity among Iranian Azerbaijanis, and also reflected Baku's sense of attachment to Iranian Azerbaijan (شافر, 1385: 188). The struggle of South Azerbaijanis in Iran for language and national rights brought South Azerbaijan closer to North Azerbaijan. The independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the tracking of Turkey and Baku channels made the issue of national identity among Azerbaijanis more urgent and made them feel the great need for their mother tongue, which is the main element of national identity. The intellectuals' researches on the history, language, and national identity of Azerbaijan partially eliminated the literary crisis in the native language. "Morphology of Azerbaijani Turkish", "Lexicology of Turkish", "Syntax of Turkish", "Knowledge of the Mother Tongue" by Dr. M.T. Zehtabi, "Turkish-Persian Dictionary", "Persian-Turkish Dictionary", "Persian-Turkish colloquial language", "Turkish Grammar", "Language and Linguistics", "The Inner Face Of Language" by linguist Ali HuseynzadeDashgin, "Mother language" and "Turkic language study center" by Ibrahim Rafrat should be evaluated as important publications for southern Azerbaijanis to learn the Turkish language. The need to increase the publication of such books, as in the past, arose not only from the interest of the intellectuals, but also from the common people's first language.

At this stage, there is an increasing tendency for intellectuals to unite around a single center for regular, mutually beneficial activities. The Azerbaijan Center of Civilization and Culture, established in Tabriz in 1991 by Azerbaijani national intellectuals (Dr. M. Zehtabi, Reza Sarraf, Reza Gaffari, YagubTakavi, SamadSardariniya, etc.) was one of such institutions. The institution held seminars on the Azerbaijani language, history, and culture, and closely participated in the promotion and preaching of Turkish books. Organized by Dr.MuhammedtaghiZehtabi and Rahim Javadbeyli, in 1993, an action was started in Tabriz with the slogan "Let's clean up nature" written in Turkish. The main purpose of going to the places where the people are concentrated, mainly to recreation parks such as Aynalimountain, Shirinja and Yam, and carrying out cleaning work was to share thoughts about Turkishness and national identity by opening the way for the society, and to educate the people by spreading notices. In 1996, the National Movement Organization established by M. Chohraganli and R. Javadbeyli operated for a short time, and then the National Islamic Movement and following that the Azerbaijan National Liberation Front were formed. However, under the influence of the current political situation in Iran, the existence of these organizations became only episodic.

In the mentioned period, the special activity of South Azerbaijani students in the struggle for the right to use their first language is noteworthy. The joining of Azerbaijani students to the struggle for national rights mainly coincides after the Iran-Iraq war, when the Persian tendencies in the state's politics were strengthened. The disregard of the national feelings of the Azerbaijanis by the ruling regime of Iran, as well as its dual policy in relation to the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and its comprehensive assistance to Armenia, disregarding the principle of Islamic brotherhood, directly encouraged the activation of southern Azerbaijani students (Röyter, 25.05,1992). In the early 1990s, the events in North Azerbaijan and social and political processes in the world had a serious impact on the struggle of Azerbaijani students. The

students brought a new quality and dynamics to the struggle of the southern Azerbaijanis, a different approach to the national issue. Current processes in the world and in the region sharpened their attitude to the concepts of mother tongue, national identity, and national culture, and encouraged them to explore the international principles of solving the problem. Acquaintance with 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, 1960 Declaration on the Rights of National Freedoms, International Mother Language Day (February 21), etc. documents gave students legal grounds to expand their activities. Although the students first demanded the realization of the rights established in Article 15 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the subsequent development process, they began to demand the implementation of Articles 19 and 48 of the Basic Law (Mustafayev, 2007: 30). The demand for the fulfillment of Articles 19 and 48 was openly and continuously put forward by the students, showing that the younger generation took a more advanced position in the national movement, and at the same time, it showed the weakness of the national movement as a whole until then.

In 1991, when the 900th anniversary of Nizami Ganjavi was celebrated in the "Vahdat" Palace of Tabriz University, Azerbaijani intellectuals and students made speeches on national identity issues in the poet's example, and the issues of Turkism were raised. In September 1992, a linguistic seminar was held in Tabriz, attended by Southern Azerbaijani intellectuals, Abdul Alizadeh, the Governor of East Azerbaijan Province, and linguists from the Republic of Azerbaijan. After this seminar, students gathered in groups in houses and open places and offered programs related to the national movement (Yonar, 2012: 60).

On April 13, 1993, the commemoration ceremony of Karabakh martyrs held in Tehran University mosque turned into a crowded demonstration of Azerbaijanis living in Tehran, attended by about ten thousand people. In the unauthorized demonstration held on Ingilab Street in the center of Tehran, they protested against the Iranian regime's decision to take the name of Azerbaijan over Ardabil province, in addition to expressing their hatred for the criminal policy of Armenia (Məhəmmədi, 2012: 166). Following these events, in May, the students of Tabriz University held protest rallies under the slogans "Death to the Armenian Dashnaks, blood is flowing in Karabakh, people in Tabriz are just watching, blood is flowing in Karabakh, the student is only watching" (Yonar, 2012: 60). These events reflected students' commitment to their national identity and strengthened national unity among them.

The reaction of the ruling regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the activities of the national forces, which have strengthened both in terms of quantity and quality, and the development of Azerbaijani Turkish ethnicity, from ideological, political and cultural points of view, was observed in the new editorial office. The "innovation" made by the ruling regime in the ideological, social and journalistic field was bringing up the term "Azeri" again. The terms Azeri ethnicity\ethnos\people, Azeri Turkish, Azeri language, and Azeri identity began to be used more often (Mustafayev, 2014: 275). In addition to changing the name of Ethnos, the circles distinguished by their chauvinist position in the official and semi-official media and institutions again began to show insulting attitude towards the Turks. In May 1995, in a survey conducted by the Iranian Television and Radio Company, which humiliated the dignity of Azerbaijanis, Turks were presented as unusual creatures, and the issue of living together and building a family with them became the subject of public discussion. In a book published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran in 2000, the meaning of the word Turk was given as "one who does not wash his hands", "one who sweats and does not pray" (Məhəmmədi, 2012: 83). Such events are repeated



from time to time in the following years, even to this day. Such a reaction of the ruling regime did not weaken the movement, on the contrary, its boomerang effect resulted in the further strengthening of the element of Turkism in the National movement.

In 1994, the students of Urmia University protested the broadcasts insulting the Turks in the Iranian media and demanded an increase in the time of Turkish-language programs on local television and the teaching of the mother language in secondary schools and universities. On May 9, 1995, the students of Tabriz University held a protest demonstration against the above-mentioned survey on the territory of the university, wrote a letter to the president, parliamentarians, Azerbaijan, Zanzan and Ardabil ostanies and imamjumas, asking them to patronize the establishment of the Azerbaijani language department at Tabriz University and put forward the demand for critique of the survey (شافیر, 1385: 190). In the 5-point appeal sent by the Azerbaijani students of Tehran University to the elected representatives of the Islamic Council Assembly from Azerbaijan, the demands mainly consisted of the following: the importance of the representatives of the assembly from Azerbaijan responding to the insulting and humiliating broadcasts of the State Television and Radio Company in relation to Turks; According to Article 15 of the current Basic Law, "The issue of teaching Turkish, the language of 27 million Iranians, in schools and the transition to bilingual education; The absence of the word "Azerbaijan" in the name of the newly created port and the importance of changing the name of "Ardebil port"; Azerbaijan's gradual decline in economic and other fields; Arrangement of programs in Turkish in Tabriz, Urmia, Zanzan, Ardabil and Hamadan centers of the State Television and Radio Company. At the end of the appeal, it was emphasized that despite the fact that these issues have been repeatedly raised by the national forces, they have not yet been resolved (Nəsibli, 2014). The letter of protest sent by the South Azerbaijani poets, writers and artists to all state bodies of Iran regarding that questionnaire stated: "I request the officials of the legal bodies, honorable members of parliament and the authorities to quickly catch up on this matter and bring those who prepared and distributed such surveys to the courts and deal with them legally. We want them to condemn this despicable act that weakens the morale of the heroic Turkic-speaking nation. At the same time, we protect the wishes of the students and demand the implementation of Article 15 of the Constitution" (Mühacir, 1995, No134). Mass speeches and written protests against this survey in Tehran and Tabriz resulted in the suspension of the survey in East Azerbaijan and the withdrawal of the central government (Mustafayev, 2007: 31). After that incident, it was agreed to teach the Azerbaijani language at Ardabil University (21 Azər, 29.06.1996). However, these innovations happened sporadically and did not last long. In fact, this policy of the government, on the one hand, created a conflict between Azerbaijanis and Persians, strained the inter-ethnic relations in the country, and on the other hand, it caused the people to stick more firmly to their national identities and cause massive protests against the regime.

It should be noted that one of the characteristic features of the student movement in this period was the expression of national demands in their appeals to the ruling circles of Iran. The students mainly expressed their demands regarding national rights, including the realization of the rights to use their mother language, in their appeals addressed to the higher authorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan and various officials. South Azerbaijani researcher VidadiMustafayev characterizes this period of the student movement as "the stage of petitions (Mustafayev, 2007: 31).

Another letter addressed to the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran by Azerbaijani students stated: "It is time to implement Article 15 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and bilingual schools should be established. Because we are all Muslims and Iranians, not only in language. We should know that if we do not consider the language issue of the Iranian people and do not see their cultural and other aspirations, we will experience its bitter consequences in the future. People preparing cultural and educational programs should urgently pay attention to non-official languages, especially the Azerbaijani language" (شافەر, 1385: 190). In an open letter addressed to the authorities, the students of Meshkin demanded to be given the social, political and cultural rights established by the Basic Law (شافەر, 1385: 202). Ardabili students issued a statement following this appeal. In the statement defending the open letter of Meshkini students, strong objection was expressed to the removal of the word "Azerbaijan" from the name of Ardabil province. Both documents condemned the position taken by Ardabil radio-television and stated that this mass media disfigures the Azerbaijani language and Azerbaijani culture: "The 15-minute program prepared for the local population is also conducted in Persian. An illiterate Azerbaijani villager who wants to use social, cultural and educational programs of radio and television has the right to watch the program in the language he understands" (شافەر, 1385: 203). Letters with approximately the same content were also written by Azerbaijani students of Urmia and Tehran universities. This round of petitions continued until 1996.

In the mentioned period, the use of Azerbaijani Turkish as the main language on radio and television and the opening of schools in the mother language were put forward as the need of the day in South Azerbaijan. These documents clearly reveal the essence of the intellectuals' struggle in the mentioned years, and show that their demands are fair and in accordance with Iranian laws, and most importantly, the students act as representatives of the socio-political interests of the Azerbaijani people. Thus, in these years, the unity initiatives observed in politically oriented forces were also manifested in the activities of intellectuals, especially students. In addition to the expansion of the function of Azerbaijani Turkish, intellectual national forces promoted the problem of assimilation of the language itself as a more urgent issue against the background of other issues.

In 1995, Azerbaijani students also created a new organization in Tabriz - New Southern Azerbaijan National Awakening Movement (New GAMOH). The organization created under the leadership of a student named LatifHasani declared that it will work in the direction of recognition of Turkish national identity, modernization, secularism and ensuring freedom of religious beliefs ([www.yenigamoh.com](http://www.yenigamoh.com)). The new GAMOH expresses its attitude to the socio-political and cultural events that took place in the country, and stood out for its special activity, acting as an organizer or close supporter of a number of events (Marches to Babak Castle, annual commemoration days of Sattarkhan, The National Government). The organization operated completely secretly, only in 2002 an office abroad was established. In 1997, an organization called Association of Azerbaijani Biliterates (AzBilTop) was established in Tehran in order to centralize and develop the activities of the South Azerbaijan student movement. AzBilTop was created as an institution with clearly defined goals (creating a consensus among Azerbaijani students and youth, fighting for the development, dissemination and promotion of the Azerbaijani Turkish language, expanding Turkish publications, organizing or supporting political-social, cultural, scientific seminars). AzBilTop created a scientific institution called the Research Center of the Community of Azerbaijani Bilinguals. The organization founded a press called "Federaliz", the publication of which was banned by the state (İsalı, 2012). Both organizations - both New GAMOH and AzBiLTop were institutions operating for the sake of the national-social, national-cultural interests

of Azerbaijanis, based only on democratic values. The cultural activities of student organizations mainly consisted of holding these events: every year Turkish language courses were opened and reading and writing lessons were given; Conferences were held on the genocide of Karabakh and the Muslims of the world, photo exhibitions were shown; poetry and music nights were organized; commemoration ceremonies and symposia of famous historical figures and heroes of Azerbaijan were organized; "Mother Language Day" program was being prepared; Meetings dedicated to modern Azerbaijani literature, Azerbaijani folklore were held.

The characteristic feature of the 1990s was the leading and prominent political motive, during which the struggle for national rights moved to an open political level. Open political-ideological demands for the mother language were made by Dr. MahmudaliChohraganli, a national intellectual and a candidate for deputy, during the elections to the Islamic Shura Assembly in 1995. In his national program, the candidate raised issues such as the involvement of the nationally-minded intellectuals of Tabriz and all of Azerbaijan in state affairs, the prosperity of the economy of this region, the strengthening of the fight against oppressors, the widespread use of the mother language, and other such issues. National forces, including the Azerbaijan Center of Civilization and Culture, South Azerbaijani student organizations and political institutions, showed unity by closely supporting Chohraganli's election campaign. Although MahmudaliChohraganli won a record number of votes in the voting, the ruling regime's anti-democratic and anti-Azerbaijani decision to invalidate the results of the elections in that district caused widespread protests and confrontation (Yeni Müsavat, 30.04.1996). Hundreds of students were arrested. Although the National Movement of South Azerbaijan could not elect its representative to the Islamic Shura Assembly, the events that took place in Azerbaijan showed the emergence of a national movement that unites various social groups and whose main driving force is intellectuals. In this struggle, the student movement united with intellectuals and became the leading force of the national movement.

From this stage, the creation of an objective national concept was started, leaving the limited scope of scientific researches related to the history, identity, and language of Azerbaijan and covering a wider class of intellectuals. M. T. Zehtabi's works "Ancient history of Iranian Turks" (Zehtabi, 1377) and "Language and literature of pre-Islamic Iranian Turks" (Zehtabi, 2004) were a new scientific stage in the study of the ancient period of Azerbaijani history. The author shows that there were 3500 years of magnificent cultures and states in this region before the arrival of the Persian tribes and writes: "The creators of this culture were the Sumerians in Iraq, the Arattas, Ilams, Kassis, Hurris, Guttis, Lullibis, Gilzans, Amerds, Caspians, Mannas, and Urartians in the west and center of Iran, all of Azerbaijan and the south of the Caspian Sea" (Zehtabi, 1377: 2). The author calls the Ittisagi languages spoken by these tribes "grandfather of today's Turkish language". One of the main topics of the second volume of the "Old History of Iranian Turks" is the question of Parthian ethnicity. Dr. Zehtabi opposes Hasan Pirnia, who claims that the Parthians belong to the Aryan race and speak the Pahlavi language, and writes: "The Dahi, who formed the core of Ashkani rule, were a branch of the Sakas and their Turkishness is beyond doubt" (Zehtabi, 1377). The work provides extensive information about the Turkic tribes that moved to this region during the Sasanian period, as well as the Persian-speaking people who were transferred to Azerbaijan by the Sasanian rulers.

The South Azerbaijani intellectual Shahmarsi Parviz Zare also puts forward interesting ideas about the place of the Turkish language in the region in recent history (پرویز زاره, 1385: 54), he highlights the emergence of this language as a political issue since the 18th century for the sake

of the interests of international powers (پرویز زاره، 1385: 59). He notes that the Russians sent specialists to Siberia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus to study Eastern languages, especially Turkish, in depth as early as the 18th century. The aim of the Russians in these studies was to check whether the language of the Turks was related to the Mad tribes. The author suggests that the Russians were worried about the spread of the Persian language in the Caucasus. Because the Persian language could connect the Caucasus to Iran (پرویز زاره، 1385: 60). Russians considered religion and language as the main threat and promoted Christianity more. Shahmarsi Parviz Zare, drawing attention to the importance of the Persian language for the British, believes that the problems between Turks and Persians started when the power of the Turkish army worried the British in the Herat war (پرویز زاره، 1385: 63-64). The author mentions the activities of the British to create a Turkish-Persian conflict in order to weaken Iran. The purpose of supporting the Persians and widely propagating the Persian language, and humiliating and weakening the Turks, was to remove the disobedient Turks from power and bring the Persians to power. Thus, the author tries to clarify the main goals of the Russians promoting the Turkish language and the British in researching and promoting the Persian language.

Hasan Rashidi's book "Research on Turks and their History, Language and Identity in Iran" has an important role in the formation of Turkism in Iran. Rashidi, like the above-mentioned authors, notes that there were powerful cultures in the geography of present-day Iran 3000-3500 years before the Achaemenids (راشدی، 1386: 71). The author draws attention to the issue related to the language of the Persians and shows that the Achaemenids used Elam as their official language when they established a state here 550 years before the era. He writes that the languages of the mentioned ancient tribes are radically different from ancient Persian (راشدی، 1386: 70). Hasan Rashidi shows that even Hasan Pirnia, a racist historian, believes that the Sumerian language belongs to the Ural-Altai language group. Firdowsi showed in his "Shahname" that the Achaemenians learned writing from the Elamites (راشدی، 1386: 100-101). The author writes that the Persian language is fundamentally different from the Pahlavi language of the Sassanids: "Those who wanted to get closer to the Seljuk palace first learned the Deri language brought here from Afghanistan and Tajikistan and tried to praise the Turkish rulers in this language and receive gifts in return. In the Turkish empire, this language became the language of officialdom and poetry alongside Arabic, which was the language of science and religion. The Turkish language performed the function of the spoken language of the palace and the army. In a word, contrary to the claims of pan-Iranists, it was not the "Azeri" speaking population of Azerbaijan who changed their local language, but the Pahlavi-speaking population of Pars, the present-day central province of Iran (Farsistan). Persian was brought to them by Turkish rulers. Hasan Rashidi shows that this policy of the Turkish dynasties led to tragedies later in the history of the Azerbaijani Turks: "One of the mistakes of the Turkish dynasties during the last thousand years is that they paid little attention to their language, especially in official and state correspondence" (راشدی، 1386: 36-37). The fact that South Azerbaijani intellectuals resolutely defend their mother language from an ideological-historical point of view should be considered a new phenomenon in the life of national thought.

It should be noted that in this period, in addition to national-minded intellectuals, among the intellectuals of Iranian Turkish origin, there were people living both in Iran and outside Iran, who were carriers of different views, who tried to protect the territorial integrity of Iran, and at the same time reacted very strongly to the desire of southern Azerbaijanis to learn their own language. Hamid Ahmadi, Turaj Atabaki, Sakina Berenjiyan, Tabatabai and others perceived Iran not as a multi-ethnic country, but as a multicultural country. Although they acknowledged the existence of

the threat of violation of the territorial integrity of Iran, they saw its main reason not in the violation of national rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, but in the absence of democratic rights. In order to solve the problem, they believed that only the regime in Iran should change, and they are still promoting those views. The position of Ali Murshidzadeh, another researcher of Azerbaijani Turkish origin, in relation to the national movement is also interesting. He considers extreme nationalism and Persian monopolism to be Iranism and pro-Iranism, and he sees the warm attitude of Azerbaijanis to their mother language and national culture as Turkish nationalism and pan-Turkism, which arose under the influence of foreign factors (مرشدیزاده, 1380: 140).

The views of the intellectual RzaBarahani, who holds a common line between the two positions, are also noteworthy. In the book "Secrets of My Land" published in 1987 by Reza Barahani, the issue of dual identity is raised, the author states that he is proud of being an Iranian because he speaks Azerbaijani and is an Azerbaijani, on the one hand, and on the other hand, he is proud of his Iranian traditions. Reza Barahani "What happened in the Iranian revolution and what will happen?" stated in the article that Azerbaijan will never separate from Iran. Because it depends on the will of the people (وزینپور, 1348: 117). It should be noted that the number of intellectuals who actually shared this position, that is, proud of their Azerbaijani Turkish identity, but who did not renounce their Iranian affiliation, was not small. JavadHeyat, one of the prominent and influential intellectuals of the Iranian Turks, who authored the "Varlig" magazine published in Azerbaijani Turkish for many years and various other publications, was also one of the staunch defenders of that position.

When we examine the main directions of democratic ideas in the works of the new generation of writers who were carriers of national-democratic thinking in the mentioned years, it is seen that those writers have a more militant and clear thinking and a modern outlook. The works of SaharArdabili, NushinMusavi, RasulRahimiDizali, Rashid Karbasi, Ibrahim Zahid, Mohammad Reza Malikpour, ValiShahmammadi, Ali Farzizade and Parviz, who were prominent in the literary environment of South Azerbaijan in the 90s, are more characteristic in this respect. Their creativity reflects the richness of their mother language, the greatness of their artistic possibilities, includes objection to the lawlessness of this language, and appeal to the people not to destroy it (Əhməd, 2006: 52-54). In fact, the presence of a large native literary potential of southern Azerbaijanis in Iran proved the failure of the ruling regime's ban on mother language education. If we take into account that the creators of this literature did not study in their mother tongue, it becomes clear how strong the self-protection mechanism of the Azerbaijani language is. The struggle of writers and poets for language was not limited only to the activities in the mentioned framework. NushinMousavi, HasanRashidi and Akbar Azad's "Flower Organization" in Tehran, "Tehran Sahir Literary Association", "Sabir Literary Association", "Young People of Light", YahyaSheydan's "Tabriz Azerbaijan Literary Assembly", "Tehran Azerbaijan Youth Society", institutions such as "Sulduz Poetry and Literature Association", "Gum Literary Center", "Yarpag Culture Society" (Kafkasyalı, 2010: 138) served to spread and promote the Azerbaijani language and culture, and to strengthen the process of national self-awareness among southern Azerbaijanis. At the congress organized by the Tehran "Flowers Group", besides the problems of "creativity", the issue of mother tongue was also reflected. In 1997, the "Turkish language and literature" seminar was organized in Zanzan under the leadership of Muhammad KarimiBaghbani, the editor of "OmideZanzan" newspaper. In the seminar, the study of Turkish language grammar, writing of textbooks, rules of opening Azerbaijani courses and other issues were set (Kafkasyalı, 2010: 138). In those years, the number of informally established Turkish language courses at homes increased (Cavadbeyli, 2014).

In public schools in Tabriz, the fact that some teachers explained the lessons in Azerbaijani, of course, irritated the upper circles. In the order sent by the Minister of Education of Iran to the local educational authority in Tabriz, it was stated: "Despite the fact that we have repeatedly advised our colleagues to speak only in Persian during the teaching process, unfortunately, some of our colleagues still teach in the local language, and the school principals do not take care of this issue" (Ümid, 1998: 105).

In general, even if not at a very high level, the activity of the literary and cultural forces organized around the national idea in the mentioned direction had a great effect on stimulating the sense of national self-awareness among the southern Azerbaijanis. As a result of this process, which continued in an upward direction, it was inculcated to the southern Azerbaijanis that the problem of the mother language was one of the most important and the first issues. Although this way of struggle served to prevent their activities from being labeled with any political ideological stigma by the ruling regime, they faced occasional pressures.

### Conclusion

The influence of internal and external factors on the development dynamics of South Azerbaijanis' struggle for national identity, its main indicator and expression, mother tongue, and national cultural rights is, of course, undeniable. Azerbaijani Turkish ethnicism, born from the desire to recognize one's own nationality, developed as a reaction to insulting and banning of the Azerbaijani Turkish language, history and culture by the Pahlavis and then by the Islamic regime. Events in the world and especially in the region had a direct impact on this struggle and raised national feelings. The adoption of Articles 15 and 19 of the Constitution and the creation of a liberal environment in Iran in the 1990s gave intellectuals a reason to develop the struggle in a secular, objective, and scientific direction.

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