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LINGUISTICS IN SOVIET TURKMENIA

Before the October Revolution the Turkmenian language was almost unknown to science. Papers which appeared on rare occasions dealt mainly with belles-lettres and folklore, but rarely with the language as such. Apart from the brief notes, mainly on the written language, which we find in the works of I. N. Berezin G. Vamberi, N. Ilminsky, A. Volodin, A. N. Samoilovich, F. E. Korsh, and a few other research workers, no single work published before the revolution was devoted specially to the study of the Turkmenian language.

The scientific value of the few text-books of Turkmenian for Russians published before the revolution was not very great.

The October Soviet Revolution resulted in a tremendous economic and cultural progress among the people of Turkmenia. The cultural progress made great demands of the national literary language, which had to convey new, modern ideas. One of the great benefits brought to Turkmenia by Soviet power, therefore, was the rationalization of the art of writing, the development of the literary language and the enrichment of its vocabulary.

The first steps in the linguistic field were of an extremely difficult nature, not only because the old Turkmenian language did not answer present-day requirements but also because only a very small minority of the population of Turkmenia had mastered even the barest elements of reading and writing.

The absence of qualified workers in the field of Turkmenian philology meant that the early work (up to 1926) was of a crude empirical nature and was of an entirely utilitarian character.

Planned research work on the Turkmenian language began after the peoples of Central Asia formed their Soviet republics. The guiding philological body in the Turkmenian Soviet Socialist Republic was the Senate of the People's Commissariat of Education, which in 1926 worked out the fundamental principles for writing Turkmenian with a Latinized alphabet, and in 1927 field work began in the study of Turkmenian dialects. In 1928 the Senate and the Turkmenian Research Institute were reformed as the Institute of Turkmenian Culture, whose Language Sector directed all the research work on the Turkmenian language. In 1932 the Sector of Humanities of the Institute was reorganized as the Turkmenian State Institute of History, Language and Literature, which divided into two independent institutes in 1936—the Institute of Language and Literature and the Institute of History. In 1940 these two institutes were again merged and in 1941 became part of the newly organized Turkmenian Branch of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., again taking the name of the Institute of History, Language and Literature. In addition to the studies carried on in the above institutes, the Department of the Turkmenian Language and General Linguistics of the Ashkhabad State Pedagogical Institute has done considerable research in the sphere of Turkmenian philology since 1931.

In the earlier period, prior to 1935–6, research work was naturally confined to the collection and analysis of the necessary linguistic material without any general conclusions or summaries being made. At the Language Conference held in 1930, which had as its object the regulation of the orthography and terminology of the Turkmenian language, the influence of the new linguistic research centre was

scarcely felt, although by 1934 the reform of the Turkmenian alphabet which led to the suppression of several superfluous letters (such as the retracted variants of the velars 'g' and 'k') was successful only on account of the careful theoretical preparation which had been made.

Linguistic expeditions to almost all districts of Turkmenia, carried out between 1927 and 1935, obtained extensive material in phonetic transcription on the main Turkmenian dialects (Yomud, Tekin, Hoklen, Ersarin, Sadyr and Saryk) as well as of a number of minor dialects. At the same time the phonetics laboratory of the Institute of Turkmenian Culture laid the foundation of the experimental study of Turkmenian philology; amongst the more important work done was the making of 180 phonological recordings and an analysis of the articulation of separate sounds in the Turkmenian language by means of palatograms. In addition to the work done by the local scientific bodies the Academy of Sciences sent an expedition to Merv in 1930 (Professor N. K. Dmitriev and his colleagues).

The success achieved in the scientific study of the language and its dialects made it possible to raise the question of a radical re-examination of the Turkmenian literary language in order to provide it with a firm basis in accordance with the concepts of the New Linguistics. The First Turkmenian Linguistic Congress, held in Ashkhabad in 1936, was called for this purpose and was attended by a number of leading linguists from Leningrad, Moscow and from republics of the Soviet Union in addition to our local specialists.

Lengthy and comprehensive preparations were made for the congress. Amongst the field work undertaken was a series of expeditions directed by Professor S. E. Malov, Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., to study the general tendencies of speech development of the Ashkhabad industrial workers and the most advanced collective farm peasantry of all parts of the Republic. The language of the press was discussed, the results of the former linguistic expeditions were summarized, etc. The Congress laid down the main principles for the further development of the Turkmenian literary language, to ensure, on the one hand, the all-round employment of the potentialities inherent in the language itself and, on the other hand, the possibility of enriching the vocabulary of the language by the introduction of international scientific and technical terminology; new, detailed rules of orthography and rules for the adaptation of new loan words were adopted.

The decision taken by the Congress to bring the Turkmenian literary language closer to the languages of the sister republics of the Soviet Union, particularly as regards the Russian language, found expression several years later in the adoption of a Russianized alphabet in place of the former Latinized alphabet, a measure that was carried out on the initiative of public bodies in Turkmenistan.

The years that followed the Congress saw a rapid development of research work in the sphere of Turkmenian philology. One of the factors which played an important part in this work was the appearance in the field of a number of young Turkmenian philologists who had received post-graduate training in the Department of the Turkmenian Language and General Linguistics of the Ashkhabad Pedagogical Institute under the direction of the present writer. Amongst these young scientific workers were F. Azimov, B. M. Karryev, H. M. Bailiev, M. N. Hydyrov, M. Kosayev and A. Kekilov. Another five young post-graduate students of philology are at present working on their final theses. Specialists in the Turkmenian language also received training under Professor N. K. Dmitriev at the Institute of Language and Writing in Moscow and under Professor E. E. Bartels,

Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. in Leningrad.

The organization of the Turkmenian Branch of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. in 1941 and the great help given to Turkmenian scientists by the specialists of the Academy had a great effect on the development of Turkmenian science in general and of philology in particular.

Despite the comparatively short time that has elapsed since the scientific study of the Turkmenian language began, the Turkmenian philological school has succeeded in obtaining important results in many spheres of linguistics. The following is a short summary of the work that has been done.

In phonology and phonetics: analysis by means of palatograms of the articulation of the sounds of the Turkmenian language; the phonological recording of specimens of pronunciation of a number of Turkmenian dialects; the determination of the phonetic system of the Turkmenian language; the study of combinatory sound changes and their role in the process of development of the language.

In morphology: the study of affixation as the main feature in word-building and word change in Turkmenian; the study of vestiges of incorporation; the determination of the presence in Turkmenian of multi-functional flectional affixes and the investigation of their origin; the explanation on the basis of Turkmenian of the origin of internal inflexions; study of the main tendencies of the development of the forms of words in Turkmenian; the establishment of the presence in Turkmenian of morphemes having emotional-expressive functions; the laying of the foundations of the study of grammatical categories in Turkmenian; a number of grammatical categories have been established in Turkmenian whose existence was formerly either unknown or little known; a more accurate study has been made of form words in Turkic languages and the specific features of certain types of form words established; the genesis of the past perfect tense of the verb has been explained; the study of the origin of the present tense has been made in detail; the genesis of the verbal personal endings has been explained.

In the field of syntax: the foundations of the scientific study of Turkmenian syntax have been laid; a deep study has been made of the syntactical role of participial, adverbial-participial and verbal noun forms; a theory has been established concerning the main types of complex subordinate sentences in the Turkic languages (analytical, synthetic and analytico-synthetic); the peculiar nature of the formal connexion between main and dependent clauses in the Turkmenian sentence has been dealt with; the problem of the genesis of complex subordinate sentences in the languages of the Turkic system is now being studied; work has been begun on the study of the syntactical role of intonation in Turkmenian; the investigation of the syntactic structure of the Turkmenian language from a stadial-comparative standpoint has been begun (this covers mainly the vestiges of the possessive, locative, affective and ergative structures).

In lexicology: we are collecting material on folk terminology in certain trades and professions; a number of terminological dictionaries (geography, physics, chemistry, medicine, music, automobile, military, etc.) have been compiled; Turkmenian-Russian and Russian-Turkmenian dictionaries have been published; the role of international and Soviet elements in Turkmenian has been studied; the role of homonyms has been studied and a dictionary of homonyms has been compiled; the question of the structure and lexico-grammatical role of compound verbs has been the subject of research (nomino-verbal and compound verbal forms).

In the sphere of the palaeontology of speech: new sources of study have been

found in this field enabling us to throw light on the oldest period of sound speech (at the dawn of its existence) up to and including the incorporated (agglutinative) word-sentence.

In dialectology and dialectography: eight linguistic expeditions have been carried out during which recordings in phonetic transcription of extensive material of all the main dialects of the Turkmenian language and several minor dialects were made; the mutual relationships between Turkmenian dialects from a phonological, grammatical and partly from a lexical standpoint and short descriptions of the dialects have been written (with due allowance being made for the historical past of the Turkmenian people).

In addition to the purely linguistic work considerable attention has been paid to evolving methods of teaching the language in Turkmenian schools.

The theoretical research work of Turkmenian philologists has always gone along hand in hand with the practical side of our work, the compilation of text-books in Turkmenian for elementary and secondary schools. Almost a hundred works of this kind have been published.

The great patriotic war in which the peoples of the Soviet Union are now engaged has claimed some of the younger representatives of our Turkmenian philological school. Akhundov Gurgengi, a scientific worker of the Turkmenian Branch of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., and Begenjov, a post-graduate student of the Pedagogical Institute, died the death of heroes on the field of battle.

Nevertheless, even the vast war effort has not prevented the further growth and development of Turkmenian philological science, which is well aware of its duty to increase its effort and to make its labours fruitful.

A. POZELYEVSKY

ASHKHAHAD

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