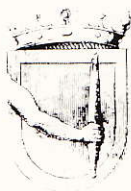


Nation & Ideology:

Essays in honor of Wayne S. Vucinich

Edited by Ivo Banac, John G. Ackerman,
and Roman Szporluk

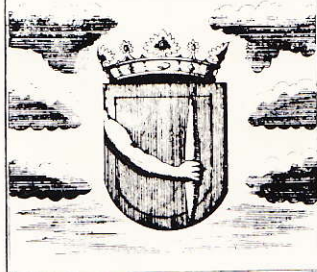
HERCEGOVINA.



Hoc fatale tibi fuerat, Chodvergia, Scutum:
Nudata genitur lancea fracta manu.
Illi hinc promissi iuncta inclista ligua valoris;
Fractis namque armis vis ipoliata jacet.

JACO.

ХЕРЦЕГОВИНА



Смъ шитъ тѣбѣ додѣти дѣла въ сѣмъ оубо
Прѣстоу . Кѣнѣ Нѣстоу рѣстоу .
Смъ естъ рѣдѣсти Сѣмъ тѣмъ цѣна
Оубо стѣмъ сѣмъ пѣтѣжѣна

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AHMAD KASRAVI AND THE "PURIFICATION"
OF PERSIAN:
A STUDY IN NATIONALIST MOTIVATION

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Common to all the diverse efforts which have been made for "purification" of Persian since the last quarter of the nineteenth century—be they the caprices or crusades of individuals, arbitrary promulgations of self-appointed associations, or the officially sponsored and enforced decisions of the *Farhangestan*¹—is an ill-defined but unmistakable hostility to Arab influence on Persia. The present essay is concerned not with the linguistic aspects of these arbitrary manipulations of a language, but instead approaches them as a tangible index for the understanding and analysis of nationalism. Openly avowed or tacitly implied in the arguments of all such advocates of "purification" of language—from the ludicrous de-Latinizers of English, to Adamantios Korais and his pleas for the *katharevousa*, to his counterparts among virtually every Balkan nationality in the Ottoman realm, to the "Yeni Turan" and its organ, the *Turk Yurdu*, and to the Nazis and their predecessors in Germany—is an assertion or evocation of a sense of national superiority. "Purification" of language is not only motivated by nationalism, but it is also one of the more definable symptoms of that complex ideology.

The study of the relation of movements for the "purification" of language to nationalism is particularly instructive as it permits one to deal with an actual historical phenomenon, and also allows one both to gain insight into a crucial phase in the genesis of nationalism and to understand the characteristics of one of its components. In such a study one must carefully distinguish between the sense of cultural attachment and pride which is attendant on and perhaps resultant from philological studies

and literary revivals, and the impassioned endeavors to "purify" a language by eliminating alien words and influences and replacing them with unfamiliar or synthetic words from a purportedly superior past. This distinction is, in fact, central to any analysis of the origins, the stages of development, and the distinguishing properties of nationalism.

The growth of nationalism in Persian is generally corroborated by comparative examples, particularly by those drawn from central and southeastern Europe and from the Turkish and Arab parts of the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, Istanbul, and to a lesser extent Beirut and Cairo, often provided direct stimuli for developments in Persia. Early literary revivals preceded and gave a considerable impetus to the emergence of nationalism. But the efforts for "purification" of language crystallized later, and from the start were symptomatic of the newly emerging modern nationalism. In their open hostility to Arab influences and their thinly veiled ambivalence toward Islam, in their evocation of a glorified past and their assertions of superiority over all neighbors, these efforts displayed some of the insoluble tensions and pernicious tendencies that have characterized modern nationalism.

When the historian subjects the totality of nationalism to analysis he is tempted to begin, and perhaps to remain, on broad plans of generalization. This approach also entails a dangerous conceptual and methodological pitfall, for it tends to elevate the ideology of nationalism above its concrete historical context, and to endow it with a life of its own. But in fact, the very considerations that are paramount for analysis of the genesis of nationalism, a grasp of the pragmatic, temporal, and existential context of ideological change, do not lend themselves to purely intellectual abstractions. These factors can be fruitfully examined in the study of a particular event or a historical movement, and still more revealingly, in the analysis of the interactions between such movements and the men who are responsible for shaping, leading, or transforming them. A sensitive pursuit of the growing resonance between the man and the movement, the idea and the event, then, is a suitable conceptual framework for historical inquiry into the origins, nature, and development of nationalism.

The life and labors of Ahmad Kasravi, and his impact upon the modern Persian scene are by no means limited to the category of nationalism. Nor are his views on reform of the Persian language exclusively "purificatory"

and therefore, related only to nationalism. But his growing concern with "purification," and the course of his struggles for that cause, as well as the considerable response that he evoked, provide us with a remarkable opportunity to inquire into the forces and ideas that affected the birth and development of modern Persian nationalism. Kasravi is the more eligible for such a scrutiny as he was no mere intellectual critic and theoretician, but an intense and courageous activist. His relatively short life embraced the full range of collective and cumulative experiences that had evolved through the lives of three generations of Persian intellectuals and political activists, from liberal awakeners to revolutionary nationalists. In the end he was struck down in the struggle against a milieu that had refused to keep pace with him.

We are afforded a vivid panorama of this encompassing experience in Kasravi's labors on behalf of the Persian language. His initial steps were self-taught and random forays into some of the dialects of Persia, studies that display a precise temperament and a surprising degree of scholarly merit. There followed a relatively mild phase of interest in "purification" and a tenaciously self-sustained campaign to reform Persian by battling the high degree of imprecision, inexpressiveness, and sterile verbosity of the contemporary language. And finally, he embarked upon a self-righteous crusade for "purifying" Persian, or eliminating from it all traces of Arabic. The three phases of Kasravi's career were nearly synchronous with the 1920s, 1930s, and the first half of the 1940s.

Nationalistic tendencies and motives are increasingly present and perhaps paramount in all three phases of Kasravi's preoccupation with the Persian language. We must consider the personal experiences, the external influences, and the pragmatic circumstances that surrounded periods of gradual or abrupt change in Kasravi's development if we are to learn anything about the nature and influence of nationalism, and the interaction of events and ideas.

Ahmad Kasravi was born in the Hokmavar section of Tabriz, a poor area of urban lower class and farm laborers, on the first of October 1890. He was the first surviving son in a family of *mullas*. His father, although he had received the education of a *mulla* and was very devout and pious, had forsaken the ancestral calling and lived as a merchant. Family tradition, however, survived this solitary lapse, and everyone, including the

father, awaited a son to continue the tradition of religious learning and to resume the family birthright to the spiritual leadership of Hokmavar. Ahmad grew up with a conscious sense of destiny and even as a young boy he felt the deference and the expectations reserved for a man of religious learning.²

His future views on language were influenced by the traditional education required for a person of his social calling, as well as by his Azarbaijani identity. A recurrent theme of bitter and discouraging school experiences runs throughout his gloomy recollections of childhood. He recalled that in the *maktab*³ "after the *Qur'an* we had to read the *Golestan*, *Jam-e Abbasi*, *Nisab*, *Tarrasul*, *Abwab al-Janan*, . . . and other similar texts. These were our school primers. Books that were not written for classroom use by children, and some of which were replete with very difficult Arabic words and phrases, were put in the hands of children. I, who knew neither Persian nor Arabic, had to struggle with these books. And as the *akhund* was also ignorant of Persian, I had to learn to read these books at home with the help of my father or other relatives."⁴

Kasravi's Azarbaijani provenance must also be sensitively considered in any analysis of the views that bear upon his contribution to the formulation of Persian nationalism, and nowhere is this consideration more germane than in the elaboration of his views on the Persian language. A discussion of the contributions that Azarbaijanis have made to Persian letters is outside the purview of this study. Nevertheless, the quality and quantity of these contributions, both in creative belles lettres and critical scholarship, particularly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, has been a potent issue in the volatile complex of mutual attitudes developed by Turkish-speaking Azarbaijanis and Persians. Among these sometime facetious and often acrimonious attitudes characteristic of educated Azarbaijanis and Persians, a feeling that the Persian language is superior to the Turkish constitutes at once the sharpest weapon in the armory of the Persian and the most vulnerable spot in the defense of the Azarbaijani. Not until late in the nineteenth century did any of the Azarbaijanis in Persia respond to this challenge with a concerted effort to place Turkish on an equal literary footing with Persian. When they did, their response echoed voices in Baku, Tiflis, and Istanbul, and was far from the representative response of the educated Azarbaijanis of Persia. The latter's

usual reaction to the taunts of the Persians was to point to the vast company of Azarbaijanis who had added luster to the Persian language.

Ahmad Kasravi was hardly a typical man, but in his views on the relative merits of Persian and Azari Turkish he was more akin to the traditional Azarbaijani than to the new "separatist" Azarbaijani literati. Both in the intellectual development of his position on Persian language, and through the experiences surrounding and affecting that development, there runs a thread of modern Persian nationalistic motivation—a motivation that, far from submerging his Azarbaijani identity, often produced a fascinating and revealing paradox of reactions. He left no doubt of his love for the Persian language and his conviction of its superior merits: "Persian is one of the best languages. Of the seven or eight languages with which I am familiar Persian is the most beautiful and the least complicated. I do not say this thoughtlessly, nor out of patriotic fervor."⁵ On occasions he went even further, advocating an active campaign to eradicate the various dialects in Persia,⁶ including his own mother tongue, Azarbaijani Turkish,⁷ as a necessary step for removing elements of disunity in the nation.

Indeed, the occasion that marked the first prominent involvement of Ahmad Kasravi in the political arena was precipitated largely by his adamant stance on the use of Persian in Azarbaijan. At a meeting of the leaders of the Democratic Party in Tabriz in 1918, Kasravi, then twenty-eight, led a successful protest against the dubious patriotism of certain fellow Democrats. The Party also approved two resolutions chiefly as result of Kasravi's persuasion: (1) that "Mirza Taqi Khan, who had gone to the Ottoman camp, had published a newspaper in Turkish and in the Ottoman interests, had composed a Turkish panegyric to Khalil Pasha and recited it at the ceremony for the arrival of the Ottoman commander in the Tabriz railway station, be expelled from the Party for his hypocrisy;" (2) that "all the proceedings and speeches at the meetings of the Party be in Persian; and the Party accept as its policy the growth and dissemination of Persian in Azarbaijan."⁸ His success on that day led to a bitter rivalry with Shaikh Mohammad Khiyabani, the leader of the Democratic Party, and eventually resulted in the formation of a faction known as *tanqidiiyun* (The Critics), galvanized and led by Kasravi.⁹

Still, Kasravi frequently voiced indications of the characteristic Azarbaijani contempt for the lethargy and indolence of the Persians. These

attitudes emerged clearly when he condemned the Persians for the debasement of their own language. It was as though he, an Azarbaijani, galled by the linguistic snobbery of the Persians, condescended to save their language: "So far research in the history and language of Persia has been the preserve of a band of European orientalists, and Persians have come to believe that only Europeans are capable of such work. . . . This conviction of the Persians. . . is based on nothing but ineptitude. . . . I take pity on this miserable helplessness of Persians and wish to tear up this veil of cowardice and inferiority."¹⁰ So wrote Kasravi in 1928-29, a year of fundamental crisis and profound change in his outlook, in the preface to a small volume on toponymy. He was also apt to point to the comparative explicitness and precision of Turkish, thereby demonstrating the absence of those qualities in Persian.¹¹ But there was never a tinge of Pan-Turanism in Kasravi and he constantly disparaged Mongol and Tatar impacts on Persia. The immediate seed of his nationalist motives, however, must have been the natural and traditional anti-Ottomanism of the *shī'ih* Azarbaijani.

Kasravi's professional career, marked as it was by his crusading effort, was a mosaic of intense conflicts with the human and institutional frailties that surrounded him. The immediate irritations and the specific incidents that led to these struggles were often precipitated by his own unbending independence, his headstrong integrity, and his willful and temperamental pursuit of reason and action. Indeed, to ignore his highly personal sense of the moral categorical imperative¹² would be seriously to misrepresent Kasravi; it was the chief facet of his personality. Nevertheless, underlying many of these clashes was a strong current of nationalist motivation, and many of them stemmed from his preoccupation with language.

A brief and unhappy stint as the *mulla* of Hokmavar, a year as teacher of Arabic in the American Presbyterian mission school in Tabriz, and a period of restless inactivity during the final year of the Great War, were followed in 1919 by Kasravi's inadvertent entry into the Ministry of Justice. He spent nearly eleven fitful and contentious years in that Ministry. Brief periods of high responsibility, uncommon accomplishment, and personal satisfaction interrupted an otherwise continuous record of clashes—clashes with jealous and vindictive *ulama* whose hold over the administration of justice was being challenged by the Ministry, conflicts

with local magnates, feuds with ubiquitous rivals for his authority, wranglings with colleagues, and bitter frustrations suffered at the hands of his superiors. He left the service of the Ministry in 1930 after a courageous stand against pressure from the royal court in a case involving expropriation of land. Kasravi never accepted another official post.

His tenure in the Ministry of Justice was characterized by frequent reassignments which took him to virtually every corner of Persia, and by periodic resignations or dismissals which afforded him ample time for developing his avocations. His professional peregrinations profoundly influenced the development of his views on language and nationality. Two interrelated fields of activity, both of them related to nationalistic motivations, constituted the pragmatic setting for his formative ideological period: (1) an avid interest in the various Iranian dialects which he encountered at his numerous posts, and (2) his personal response to the Pan-Turkist claims concerning Azabaijan and the Arab assertions regarding Khuzestan (which until 1924 was known as Arabestan). He studied dialects in Azarbaijan, Mazanderan, Khuzestan, and Lorestan with the aid of indigenous speakers as well as historical, literary, philological, lexicographic, and geographical sources.

Kasravi's first work (in what was to be an amazing torrent of publications) appeared in 1925. It was an investigation into the Azari dialect, the pre-Turkish language of Azarbaijan. He explicitly said that the furor created by Pan-Turkist claims and Persian counterclaims over the identity of Azarbaijanis had led him to make his study.¹³ Evidence of an Iranian dialect superseded by Turkish in relatively recent centuries was a significant catalyst in the development of Kasravi's nationalistic ideology. The implications of this objective knowledge were heightened by a subjective experience of achievement and self-importance, for it was this first publication that brought him a measure of international recognition and respect, earned him membership in the British and American Oriental Societies, and enlisted the patronage of Teimurtash, the powerful court minister of Reza Shah.¹⁴

He had spent a tenuous year (1924) as the chief of judiciary in Khuzestan, where actual control by the Arab Shaikh of Muhammara (*Khi'ail*) rendered Kasravi virtually impotent, and where his daring attempts at exercise of authority actually endangered his life. Out of this period of personal frustration came his studies in local history and the Iranian dialects of Khuzestan.

It is doubtful that Kasravi had an integrated and far-reaching nationalistic ideology while he was engaged in these linguistic and historical enterprises. Recalling these labors in his autobiography, written in 1944, two years before his death, however, he was explicit on the need to eradicate all these dialects as a step toward national unity.¹⁵

Our focus on the interactions between Kasravi's experiences and the development of his ideas should not deflect us from the monumental event of his generation, this is, the apparently radical change in the concrete historical situation of Persia occasioned by the accession of Reza Shah Pahlavi. On the surface it appears that there should have been a basic harmony between Kasravi and the emerging ideological tone of Reza Shah's regime. The intense patriotic fervor, the appeal to national pride, the evocation of a glorified ancient history, the growing secularism, the officially promoted language "purification," and above all, the activism that characterized the new regime—all appeared to be in harmony with the ideas of Kasravi. More concretely, it was to extend the power of Reza Shah's government to Khuzestan that Kasravi was assigned to that province in 1924; and it was Reza Shah's "conquest" of Khuzestan which delivered Kasravi from probable death. Later, the patronage of Teimurtash, Reza Shah's closest adviser, kept Kasravi's enemies at bay and procured him high office in the Ministry of Justice. No doubt the experience of Reza Shah's regime constituted the overwhelming existential context of Kasravi's ideological development.

Yet, Kasravi's was a dissonant and dissatisfied voice in that era of the "savior of the nation." His dissatisfaction sprang from a series of personally disillusioning and frustrating experiences, but the dissonance was due to a deeper sense of rebellion against the basic moral void and ideological vapidness of that tinsel period in the modern history of Persia. Soon after the establishment of Reza Shah's power in Khuzestan, Kasravi clashed with the rapacious and omnipotent officers of military government and was brushed aside. There followed three years of forced retirement (1925-28) with severe material hardship and privation. During his final two years on the bench (1929-30), he succeeded thoroughly in making himself a persona non grata by refusing to bend before the gathering force of Reza Shah's despotism.

It was in those three years, 1925 to 1928, that Kasravi began his prolific literary output. He launched his first serious attempt to learn a

pre-Islamic Iranian language (he began studying Pahlavi with E. Herzfeld) in 1927, a year that marked the nadir of his career with both the bitterness of apparent professional failure and poverty pressing upon him.¹⁶ The year 1928, both by Kasravi's own assertion and by the external evidence of his changing style and focus (from scholarly works to social and ideological themes), was the year of a sudden and intense psychological metastasis. His own references to this phenomenon are elliptical and uninformative: "It was in this year [1928] that a severe upheaval appeared in my mind; and when I journeyed to Gilan that upheaval became ever so stronger."¹⁷ One thing is certain: this transformation, which ushered in the less rational and more expansive phase of his ideological development, took place under adverse subjective circumstances. Clues revealing the nature and direction of this soul-searching are to be found in abundance in *A'yn*, a short book that Kasravi published in 1932. It had taken the quick-writing Kasravi three years to shed his scholarly reserve and to gather his psychic energies for this passionate commentary on the predicament of modern man. It is a quixotic assault on "Western" civilization and its soul, the machine. It is a ringing, Jeremiah-like warning to the "East" to preserve its soul and its ways, and to triumph over the forces of materialism by the power of religion. (At the end of the book it turns out that his notion of religion is a peculiarly Western blend of deism and humanism.) *A'yn* took many Persians by surprise, and it proved a great source of embarrassment to the regime. Although it seemed to echo the xenophobic official mood, it was in fact a clear condemnation of the haphazard westernization and Kemaalist imitations characteristic of Reza Shah's regime.

In 1933 Kasravi founded the monthly periodical *Peyman*, which served as the organ of his personal crusade to invest the sterile atmosphere of Reza Shah's Persia with an ideology and a sense of moral conviction. Although there was no conscious rapport between Kasravi and the arbiters of the regime, the latter sensed the need to fill the gaping ideological void, and partly tolerated this persistent and courageous gadfly.

From the start *Peyman* was written in a "semi-purified" Persian which while consciously avoiding Arabic words, was still comprehensible and even graceful. The barbarous *zaban-e pak* (the pure language) of the 1940s was yet to appear, but from its first issue *Peyman* served as Kasravi's

platform for the exposition and dissemination of "purification" of Persian.

Kasravi entered upon the stage of language "purification" not as a pioneer but as a reformer; he was to leave as a law-giving prophet. Sporadic attempts at writing "pure" Persian, that is, free from Arabic words, are encountered throughout the history of the Persian language. Sometimes such reform is a worthy effort to endow Persian with technical and philosophical terminology, such as in Ibn Sina's *Daneshname-ye Ala'i* (10th century A. D.). Often the purification is the caprice of a poet or a scribe, and sometimes it is carried out in the spirit of "Iranism." Such is the case with the *Dasatir*, an allegedly ancient text, actually forged in India by a group of parsee zealots in the 17th century; it has served as the inspiration of many a "purifier" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The so-called literary renaissance of the early Qajar period (1820s to 1850s), with its emphasis on writing simpler prose, was not so much a result of novel social and ideological forces, as a consequence of the inevitable and staggering collapse of basic communication—a mere stylistic detour, necessitated by the sheer impasse of the old style. Simplification also meant avoidance of unassimilated and obscure Arabic words, but the link with the patriotic caprices of the late nineteenth-century "purifiers" was only fortuitous. The Revolution of 1906 gave an impetus to the development of modern Persian nationalism, and "purification" of Persian found new exponents.

The chief external influences upon the Persian "purifiers" of the Constitutional era (1905-11) came from Istanbul, where many Persians were quick to absorb and reflect the example of the "Yeni Turan" ideologists (and where Persian language newspapers such as *Akhtar* carried these reflections back to Persia), and from the relatively recent parsee emigres in India. In 1922 a certain Abol-Qasem Azad of Maraghe returned from a sojourn of several years in India and founded a periodical dedicated to the cause of "Parsi sareh." He was both a native Persian, and a Muslim, which meant that he could denigrate the Islamic heritage of Persian with greater impunity. The advent of Reza Shah with his frequent emulations of Kemalist programs prepared the ground for the disease of "purification."

Compared with the ludicrous views and activities of the self-appointed "purifiers" of the 1920s, Kasravi's articles in *Peyman* appear temperate and well reasoned. He exorcises his contemporaries for their unscientific

approach, for their anarchic word-coinages, and even for their nationalistic bias and their anti-Islamism.¹⁸ The temperate appearance of Kasravi's articles, however, does not conceal their rank contradictions, the faulty logic of the arguments, the fanciful linguistic theories, and the arbitrary historical constructions, which may be understood only in terms of nationalistic motivation: "When a language is formed it must achieve independence and maintain its separateness. It must do this by closing its gates on words from other languages even if they be from its own mother language. . . . The language which does not shut its doors in the face of foreign words loses its independence very much as the nation which does not guard against foreigners loses her independence."¹⁹ "It is a scientific fact that every language must have words of its own, otherwise it loses its independence; as our Persian has lost its independence."²⁰ Already a peculiar and deep-rooted facet of modern nationalism in the Near East is apparent: the yearning for an inviolate and transcendent symbol. Language is not a permutating tool of human communication. It is endowed with organic life of its own. The purpose of that life is to symbolize national independence.

Kasravi explains that the influx of Arabic words into Persian was the work of pretentious writers who did not know Arabic well and wished to conceal that fact by the profuse and indiscriminate use of Arabic words in Persian.²¹ (He took pride in his own thorough knowledge of Arabic.) Kasravi, the meticulous historian of only recent times, now ignores historical proof and is satisfied with this intuitive behavioral supposition. He passes scathing judgment on such well-known works of Persian prose as *Kalila va Dimna*, *Tarikh-i-Vassaf*, and *Tarikh-i-Juvaini*, remarking that "those who have pride of Iranism should read these works and sigh in grief. . . . This is the language which a handful of ignorant scribes have bequeathed to Persia, a language that may be condemned as the vilest and the most tortuous of languages. . . and which is absolutely not fit to be used by a people like the Persians."²² Earlier in the same article Kasravi had criticized the nationalistic bias of other "purifiers."

Grappling more directly with the issue at hand, Kasravi argues that the border between Arabic and Persian must be guarded, "otherwise the Persian language will not exist, as it does not exist today."²³ But this vigilance is to be retroactive. It is not enough to bar the entry of new aliens; old, settled, and naturalized ones must be uprooted and driven

out. "The only solution is to reverse the course that has brought us to this impasse and return the language to its state of a thousand years ago."²⁴ Still, all is not obduracy and rampant autonomy in the writings of Kasravi of the mid-1930s. He concedes the need to keep a certain number of "familiar" Arabic words "whose Persian equivalents have disappeared." He warns the young to follow the example of recognized authorities. He cautions against haste. And, most ironic of all, he denounces the synthesizing of words.²⁵ Instead, he directs the "purifier" to glean beautiful but abandoned Persian words from such classics as the *Golestan* and *Asrar al-Tauhid*, which abound in Arabic vocabulary.²⁶ Furthermore, he recognizes the need for coordination of efforts and exercise of central and final authority by the Ministry of Education.²⁷

The *Peyman* articles drew the criticism of several prominent members of the scholarly "establishment," among them: Mohammad Qazvini, Mohammad 'Ali Forughī, and Siyyid Hasan Taqizadeh. These men were exponents of tradition in Persian letters, and they were deeply offended by "purification." Kasravi's sense of single-handed messianic combat was enhanced by the fact that his opponents were ranking members of the government and close advisers of the Shah. But the Shah seldom took the advice of his scholar-ministers, and the chauvinism of the regime gave official sanction to the mania for "purification." In 1935 the *Farhangestan* was created. Its members included most of the reluctant traditionalist opponents of Kasravi, but he himself was snubbed. From its inception Kasravi clashed with the new institution. The disagreements were based on philological differences of opinion. The *Farhangestan* tried to use its official authority to compel Kasravi to abandon his own "purified" vocabulary and use its official adoptions. Numerous directives from the *Farhangestan*, the Ministry of Education, and the Office of the Prime Minister were sent to Kasravi to force his compliance. Kasravi responded with a long and defiant letter to Mahmud Jam, the prime minister at the time, protesting his higher loyalty to "science."²⁸ In the late 1930s nearly all publications were censored before going to press. Often the censor would make deletions and insert *Farhangestan*-approved words in Kasravi's manuscripts, only to have him cross out the censor's emendations and print the original version.²⁹ (There is perhaps an inherent measure of comic laxity in the grimmest of Near Eastern totalitarianisms.)

The second half of the 1930s were for Kasravi thankless years of working at odds, but for the same goals, with an increasingly despotic regime. In this period he turned more to the purely linguistic aspects of reforming Persian. His studies and proposals for more precise use of verbs, prefixes, suffixes, and tenses constitute the more positive and valuable side of his efforts on behalf of the Persian language. Yet even here the nationalistic impulse is not hard to detect. In the prologue of an essay on Persian verbs and ways of rendering them more precise, Kasravi says: "Often we read in European books that oriental languages are elastic and vague. They are so adamant on this issue that for centuries they have forced us to recognize as valid only the Western-language version of our mutual treaties when disputes arise. Their pretext is that oriental languages are inadequate. This is a humiliation for every oriental. But what answer can we give? What is true must be accepted. Having accepted, we must act to put our language in order, as I have been doing."³⁰

The end of Reza Shah's twenty-five dictatorship in 1941 was sudden but not violent. The actual circumstances were ludicrous and anticlimatic; but the shock to the psyche of many Persians was of the first magnitude. The exposed moral sham and ideological shallowness of that regime was to many a national humiliation. As the rapid breakdown of political and economic order set in, there were many who sought the strength of a conviction, and so, competing ideological lines were drawn. The tinsel chauvinism of the Reza Shah period was now a debased commodity. The social concern and the "internationalism" of the left vied with the opportunism and the pragmatic defense of the vested interests on the right. Both the political left and the right were at once assisted and handicapped by real and apparent foreign support. But it was the unfulfilled nationalism of some concerned civil servants, university students, teachers, and a revealingly large number of young army officers which suddenly found its focus in Ahmad Kasravi. He had always enjoyed the devoted loyalty of a small coterie, but the aura of dissidence about him in the time of Reza Shah had kept many more away. Now he experienced an exhilarating sense of vindication, and a strong urge to action. A sterile and unresponsive official nationalism had, in fact, brought about the downfall of the nation; now was the moment to labor for its redemption. It was this spark of nationalism which provided Kasravi with an ardent

following and imbued his authoritarian personality with the attributes of a charismatic leader.

He quickly molded his devotees into an organized and active movement known as *Bahmad-e Azadegan* (The Society of the Free). The experience of leading an actual movement, the entrancing resonance between the leader and his followers, and the tantalizing vision of power and actual significance radically affected Ahmad Kasravi. The intensification of his "purification" mania resulted in a self-wrought Persian that is well-nigh incomprehensible to the uninitiated. In place of the defunct *Peyman*, he published *Parcham* as the organ of *Bahmad-e Azadegan*. In it he advocated and practiced a headlong "purification" that grossly violated every condition that he had earlier established for this task in *Peyman*. Between 1941 and 1945 he published more than thirty large and small volumes of books, essays, polemics, and speeches which elaborated his creed and its relation to the exigent problems of the day. His quasi-philosophical or "scriptural" works carry the cult of the *zaban-e pak* to enigmatic extreme. "Purification" had evolved from being a symptom of nationalism to becoming the symbol of its exclusiveness.

In 1945 Ahmad Kasravi was struck down by a Muslim zealot in a courtroom, as he was defending himself against charges of heresy. His movement survives, small but tenacious; galvanized and sustained by the catalyst of nationalism; and active in pursuit of language "purification." Its badge of identity and symbol of mystic communion is the *zaban-e pak*. Perversely, Kasravi's urgent concern for the unity and independence of the nation through the unity and purity of the language has succeeded in creating yet another insular and embattled core of loyalty, kept apart from the rest of the nation by a virtual language barrier. *Zaban-e pak* defeats its own highest nationalist motives, for it acts as a divisive force within Persia, and widens the chasm between the Persians and the Persian-speaking peoples beyond the country's borders.

NOTES

1. A body appointed by the Council of Ministers in 1935, vaguely conceived along the lines of the French *Academie*, but concerned exclusively with purging the Arabic element from the Persian language and

decreeing "pure Persian" vocabulary to take its place. Like many similar enterprises of the Reza Shah regime it dissolved informally in 1941. It was resuscitated in 1962 with broader but vaguer intent, and it has not resumed either its "purificatory" functions or the manufacture of words.

2. Cf. Ahmad Kasravi, *Zendegani-ye man* (Tehran, 1944), pp. 5-6.

3. The term *maktab* has a specific meaning in the Persia of the 19th and the 20th centuries. It is the primary educational institution where teaching is done by a religious functionary—an *akhund*, or *mulla*. For further information see my *The Modernization of Iran* (Stanford, 1961), pp. 86-87.

4. Kasravi, *Zendegani*, p. 9.

5. Ahmad Kasravi, *Zaban-e Farsi*, collated and reprinted from vols. 1-4 of *Peyman* (Tehran, 1933-37), by Yahya Zoka' (Tehran, 1955), p. 26.

6. Cf. Kasravi, *Zendegani*, pp. 136, 205.

7. Cf. Kasravi, *Zaban-e Farsi*, p. 37.

8. Kasravi, *Zendegani*, pp. 87-88.

9. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 88-95.

10. Ahmad Kasravi, *Namha-ye shahrha va deyhha-ye Iran*, third edition (Tehran, 1956), pp. 4-5.

11. Cf. Kasravi, *Zaban-e Farsi*, p. 37.

12. The temptation to call it almost neo-Kantian is great. But Kasravi, characteristically, seldom acknowledged his intellectual creditors. That he was an avid follower of European intellectual trends—albeit in their pale and often distorted reflections in Turkish and Arabic journals—is frequently attested in his autobiography (*Zendegani-ye man*, pp. 43, *passim*). The western language he knew best and used most often was English. In his quasi-philosophical work, *Varjavand-e Bonyad* (first published in Tehran in 1943), he reveals a naive Newtonian mechanistic view of the universe, an almost deistic notion of religion, and a rigid humanistic basis of morality.

13. Cf. Kasravi, *Zendegani*, pp. 244-45.

14. Teimurtash had no interest in linguistics but was very sensitive to Persia's prestige abroad. Sir Dennison Ross's abridged translation of Kasravi's booklet, and the recognition of the Royal Asiatic Society alerted Teimurtash and caused him to seek out and bestow his patronage upon Kasravi.

15. Kasravi, as has been noted, seldom identified individual sources of his ideas. It may well be that the watershed for his radical views on unity of language and the nation is to be found in a little event during his last year in the Ministry of Justice. In the winter of 1930 he was sent by the Ministry to western Persia as a member of a mission of general inspection. (Cf. Kasravi, *Zendegani*, pp. 311-12). In 1933 a collection of Persian essays and speeches of Siyyid Jamal al-Din Afghani were published in Tehran under the title, *Maqalat-e Jamaliyeh*. The editor of this volume was one Sefatollah Jamali (the first name, as well as names of his brothers, give a decided indication of Babi persuasion), son of Lotfollah Jamali who claimed to be the nephew of Jamal al-Din, as well as his emanuensis during both of his Persian visits. In a footnote on page 172 of this volume the editor states that Ahmad Kasravi, while he was in Asadabad with the Commission of Inspection in the winter of 1930, spent an evening in his house in order to peruse the manuscripts of Afghani which constitute the contents of the same volume published three and a half years later. The same footnote contains a translation by Kasravi of a verse of al-Ma'ari cited in one of the papers of Afghani, and written by Kasravi on its margin in the course of that nocturnal visit. On pages 75-87 of this volume there is an essay entitled, "The Philosophy of Unity of Nationality and Unity of Language." In it Afghani argues that the only index of national unity is the unity of language, that in fact the two are identical, that unity of language is the prerequisite of national independence, and that unity of language is more meaningful and more enduring than unity of religion. Kasravi in his brief account of the inspection trip of 1930 does not mention his visit to the house of Jamali. Nor should this possible source of influence obscure the obvious influences of Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani, Mirza Ahmad Khan Sur-e Esrafil, Abol-Qasem Azad, and other assorted and occasional heirs of the spurious *Dasatir* tradition and advocates of *Parsi sareh* (straight Persian) upon Kasravi's notions of "purifying" Persian.

16. Cf. Kasravi, *Zendegani*, pp. 231ff.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 275.

18. Cf. Kasravi, *Zaban-e Farsi*, pp. 1-3, reprinted from vol. 1 (1933) of *Peyman*.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

21. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 12.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 29.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

25. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 15.

26. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 18.

27. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 5.

28. Cf. *ibid.*, p. vi. (the editor's introduction).

29. Cf. *ibid.*, p. vi.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 33. Reprinted from vol. 3 (1936) of *Peyman*.

31. Cf. Yahya Zoka', *Farhang-e Kasravi* (Tehran, 1957), p. 12.