



THE EMERGENCE OF THE UZBEK PRESS IN TURKESTAN (UZBEKISTAN), THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

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Abstract

This article discusses the establishment of the first national publications in Turkestan and the actions taken against them. It provides information about the measures of the Tsarist government, which occupied Turkestan, against the first national newspapers published in 1906 and the closure of these newspapers.

Keywords: Newspaper, Jadid, press, colony, Tsarist government, Okhrana.

Introduction

The first newspaper in Turkestan (Uzbekistan) was founded in 1870. This newspaper was founded by the Turkestan Governor-General of the Russian Empire, who occupied Turkestan. Of course, this newspaper played an important role in the implementation of colonial policy. The local people's press appeared 36 years after the founding of the tsarist publications. The history of the publication of the national press and the struggle for its survival can be called a reflection of the fate of the colonized peoples, their struggle for freedom and independence. Even before the national press saw the light, the Russian government perceived it as a serious threat to its colonial policy. It took all measures to prevent this. However, the acceleration of information exchange in 1901-1906: the introduction of dozens of foreign newspapers into the life of the colonial population, pilgrimage and trade trips of the local population expanded the opportunities for observing and evaluating political processes in Russia and the countries of the East.



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The Turkestanis were particularly keen to read the newspaper "Tarjimon". The fact that Hamza Hakimzade Niyazi read this newspaper "in the dark rooms of the madrasah, where the cauldrons were, waiting from the inside for the door, and even then with fear" [3] was also typical for other representatives of the intelligentsia. Indeed, the distribution of the newspaper "Tarjimon", which caused serious changes in the lives of the Turkestanis, undoubtedly alarmed the Russian government.

"In a letter to the police department of the military governor of Syrdarya region in 1901, he reported that "Ismoilbek Gasprinsky is trying his best to distribute his newspaper "Tarjumon". This is mainly done by contacting Tatar intellectuals living in Tashkent by letter and by personally visiting the Turkestan region to make acquaintances" [3].

The newspaper "Turkestanskije Vedomosti" wrote that after Gasprinsky's first trip to Turkestan (1893), he came to Bukhara to propose to the emir to publish a newspaper in Russian and local languages. Having read this news, I. Gasprinsky refuted it through the newspaper "Okraina", saying that "Last May and June we went to the main cities of the Turkestan region, including Bukhara, but we did not talk about the establishment of a newspaper either with His Excellency the Emir or with anyone else, and we did not hear any initiative in this direction" [3]. It seems that the main goal of the government in Turkestan was to prevent the national press.

We do not observe in the sources any attempts by the local people to publish a newspaper until 1906. However, the fact that the intelligentsia in Turkestan joyfully welcomed the October Manifesto of 1905, which declared freedom of speech and the press to the entire Russian people, means that there was no possibility of publishing a press until that time. In particular, Munavvarkari calls the declaration of the manifesto "Freedom". "Freedom, autonomy were granted" [4], he said.

The example of Ismail Gasprinsky's "Tarjimon" newspaper shows that the Russian authorities do not even allow the peoples under their control to publish newspapers and magazines. Recalling the difficulties in publishing a newspaper, Gasprinsky said: "In 1883, permission was granted to the newspaper "Tarjimon".



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For this, two governors and three ministers were visited three times, and St. Petersburg was visited four times...”[4]

It is known that Gasprinsky managed in 1883, for the 100th anniversary of the transfer of Crimea under Russian rule, to establish the publication of the newspaper “Tarjmon”, which opened the eyes of the new Turkestan people, on the condition that it would be published in Russian and Tatar languages [4].

The second reason that prevented the formation of a national press, scientists said, was the economic backwardness and conservative mentality of the Turkestanis, which differs sharply from the mentality of other Muslim peoples [1].

Mahmudhoja Behbudi, in his article published in the newspaper “Ulfat” in February 1906, when the first national newspapers had not yet been published, pointed out that the Khiva khan and courtiers subscribed to the newspaper “Ulfat”, and until that time reading scientific literature was a sin, but now our judges began to use newspapers”[8]. In the article, Behbudi wrote that in Serbia, a country a quarter the size of Bukhara, there were more than sixty newspapers for a population of two million, more than 200 for two million Greeks, and not a single newspaper for the nearly 9 million Muslims of Central Asia, and he said: “If only one or two newspapers were published in our Turkestan in the near future.”

It seems that Behbudi attributed the lack of a national press not to government obstruction, but to the nation's failure to understand the essence of a newspaper. It should be noted that at the time when the first national publications were published (1906), the press was a novelty for the majority of the Turkestan people and a new activity for the Turkestan intelligentsia. Although the "Turkestan Viloyati Gazeti" had been published for more than 30 years, the population of a large region, not to mention progressive thinkers in the cities, did not read newspapers, "did not even touch them." Even when Soviet power was established and came into force in 1924, it was reported that "there are still many people among our people who have not seen a newspaper."

The first national publications, such as "Taraqqiy", "Khurshid", "Shuhrat", "Tujjor", which appeared in a "dark" era when "the people were ignorant and the government was extremely treacherous", it should be said that with lightning speed, they awakened and alerted all strata of society - the colonists, the upper



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and lower classes of the local people. The reason for this is that the national press was published not in imitation of the Russian press that had been published in the country for many years, but rather in continuation of the progressive ideas and traditions of the Muslim press, such as "Tarjumon". The strong critical spirit of the national publications was in harmony with the ideological struggle of the "Tarjumon" newspaper for development and preservation of national identity. The press's harsh criticism of the local people's ills, as well as its half-open, half-veiled articles that deeply revealed the true state of the Russian Empire, which was portrayed as powerful to the colonial peoples, infuriated both groups in Turkestan society against the press. This prompted them to carry out pressure and agitation against the newspapers, and to close them as soon as possible.

Researchers have written that local people also demanded that the government close the newspapers. The Russian-language newspaper Turkestan at the time wrote: "The mullahs and judges of Tashkent tell us that they are extremely dissatisfied with the newspaper "Taraqiy". They begged the governor to close the newspaper and forbid Gabidov from publishing any newspapers, saying: "The people are not listening to us. Now they completely distrust us. We can completely lose our influence and trust in them, which means that this is not beneficial for the government either" [6].

Mahmudkhoj Behbudi also said about this in one of his articles: "Several newspapers were published in Tashkent, but their closure was more due to the locals than the government. Ninety-nine percent of us want to return to the era of fifty years ago" [8].

Of course, the "honest service" of Russian officials, such as N.Osroumov, also played a big role in the local people's opposition to the national press. As soon as the first issue of "Taraqiy" was published, the "Turkistan Viloyati Gazeti" (TVG) launched an information war against it, inciting the people. In response to Munavvarkari's article "Our ignorance is complicated," the tsarist newspaper "Turkistan Viloyati Gazeti" published an article. In it, "Munavvarkari insulted the teachers who have taught our children from ancient times to the present day with the phrases "ignorant, and complicated in anger, and oppressors," and the children's fathers with the words "unprotected and unfaithful," and this



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newspaper incited the people against Munavvarkari, saying that it was shameless and impudent to publish such a thing in this newspaper” [2].

The government did not allow national newspapers to be published under any circumstances. The newspapers "Taraqiy", "Khurshid", "Shuhrat" and "Osiyo" were closed between the 8th and 20th issues. This disappointed the young intellectuals who had started their work with great hopes. For example, after the closure of the newspaper "Khurshid", Munavvarqari wrote an article seeking a way to return the money of his subscribers, saying, "For a year now, my pen has been mute due to the oppression of the falconer, and I myself am lying in a corner of silence, confused and dying." He wrote that on November 16, the "city police chief" had signed a statement saying that the newspaper had been suspended, that "Khurshid" was a "moderate" newspaper and that the court had found it innocent because it "did not contain any oppositional words," and that the government had withheld his application for re-publication for three months, and then received a response that "since your application was suspended by the Cherezvichaynaya Okhranka, you will not be allowed to continue until this force is lifted” [9].

The fate of the newspapers "Shukhrat" and "Osiyo", which were published after the newspaper "Khurshid", was also similar.

Thus, even in the process of the emergence of the national press, it was subjected to pressure and opposition from the tyrannical government and representatives of the local people.

After the closure of the national newspapers, the underground newspaper "Molot" of the Socialist Revolutionaries wrote with regret: "With the signature of an absolute tyrant, the progressive cultural newspapers of the natives "Taraqiy", "Khurshid" and "Osiyo" were closed. Today... in Turkestan, which consists of five regions, on whose territory dozens of European countries could easily fit, and in a country where the local population makes up 90 percent, there is not a single private newspaper in the local language. The population is deliberately kept in forced ignorance, because Russian newspapers do not reach them,” [11] he wrote with regret.

Why was the Russian government so afraid of the national press? Because the awakening reform movement was becoming a powerful ideological movement. Compared with the tyrannical goal of the empire, this idea was stronger than any



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goal; from the constant, secret and open actions of the Jadids, one could see the birth of an idea that would give strength to overcome slavery and any obstacles. The press was the means of conveying and spreading this idea. That is why the tsarist government, although it allowed newspapers, used various methods to close them.

However, local rulers also sought to keep the people of the region in political ignorance. Local rulers, fearing the loss of power, imposed bans on any innovation and increased the number of secrets. For example, one of the secretaries of tsarist Russia, commenting on the political level of the people of Bukhara, reported that “they are afraid to talk about politics because of the emir's secrets, because the emir's secrets are so many that if they hear anything political, they will be arrested and immediately imprisoned”[5].

Major Lacoste, a French intelligence officer who studied the activities of political parties in Turkestan, wrote in a confidential letter sent to his country in 1906: “The most respected and promising political force in Turkestan is not the Social Democrats (Bolsheviks and Mensheviks), not the Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs), not the Cadets and liberals, but the Uzbek Jadids” [7].

It seems that Turkestan intellectuals have started to stick together, their activeness in social life has attracted the attention of outside observers as well.

“In June 1907, an official of the Ministry of Internal Affairs was sent to the Turkestan region to manage political investigations. He headed a special department established that year under the Chancellery of the Governor-General of Turkestan. At the end of 1907, the Turkestan department was established instead of this special department and was headed by a gendarmerie colonel. The Okhranka department was engaged in political investigations in the region. The Okhranka's activities also included the Fergana region. The departments of the gendarmerie police departments were subordinate to it” [5].

Thus, the Okhranka constantly monitored the subsequent publications of the Uzbek press until 1917, and on its initiative, newspapers published in the later period were also closed. The struggle of the Uzbek people to publish their own press continued for many years.



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