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COVERAGE OF SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE IN ASHURALI ZOHIRIY'S LEGACY IN THE PERIODICAL PRESS

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Abstract. The issues of language and spelling have also always been in the center of attention of the Jadids, they defended themselves at the level of national and national security, and fiercely fought against the growing threats to the national language. Mahmudhoja Behbudi, Munavvarkari Abdurashidkhanov, Haji Muin, Abdulla Kadiri, Abdulhamid Chulpan and many other progressives have published hundreds of articles about the national language and spelling, which are important for the era. The reason for the publication of many articles in the national press of Turkestan was that Uzbek became a second language. Historian D. Jamalova writes that this was caused, on the one hand, by the colonization of Turkestan by the Russian Empire. The second reason is the Turkestan people themselves, who suffered from “inattention” to the language.

Keywords: Czar empire, modern schools, innovative schools, nogay schools, material and technical base, "School of Life", “Miftoh ul-alifbo”, “Tahsil-ul alifbo”, textbooks and manuals, “Irfon” (Science) school.

Along with many other Jadids of Turkestan, Ashurali Zohiriy also published dozens of articles on socio-political and economic issues in periodical publications such as *Ishtirokiyun*, *Qizil Bayroq* (Red Banner), *Turkiston*, *Qizil O'zbekiston* (Red Uzbekistan), *Farg'ona*, *Yangi Farg'ona* (New Fergana), *Zarafshon*, *Sharq Haqiqati* (Truth of the East), as well as magazines like *Ishchilar Dunyosi* (Workers' World), *Inqilob* (Revolution), *Inqilob Shulasi* (Ray of the Revolution), *Yer Yuzi* (The Earth), *Bilim Uchquni* (Spark of Knowledge), *Maorif va O'qitg'uvchi* (Education and Teacher), *Mashrab*, *Mushtum*, and other similar periodicals.

Among Ashurali Zohiriy's journalistic legacy, his article titled **"Life, Food, and Clothing – In Fields and Deserts"** holds significant importance. This article was published in issue no. 43 of the newspaper *Mehnat Bayrog'i* (Labor Banner) on April 11, 1921.

In the introduction to the article, the author writes that just as the soul (life-force) is essential for any human who wishes to live and survive in this world, food and clothing are just as necessary for maintaining that soul in a healthy state. Just as food and clothing are meaningless without life, likewise, life cannot exist without food and clothing.

Ashurali Zohiriy emphasizes that during the years of the First World War, the people of Turkestan endured severe hardships. He notes that the nation came to deeply understand the value of the clothes on their backs and the bread they ate. He warns that even greater calamities—namely famine—may lie ahead for the people of Turkestan. He writes:

"...In order to wrestle with the monstrous calamities of hunger and nakedness, the people must head toward the battlefield of struggle. If this is not done—if preparations are not made starting from today—then the worker's hand, the peasant's hoe, the intellectual and teacher's pen, the merchant's wallet,

the grocer's scale, and the butcher's knife will all cease to move. Not only will they be still—they will be utterly useless. The plague of hunger and nakedness will devour us all. It will spare neither the rich nor the poor; neither the hungry nor the full. It will leave no one behind. It will consume and annihilate everything. At that point, regret will be in vain. There will be no remedy to be found"[1].

The famine that Ashurali Zohiriy foresaw was a direct result of the economic policies implemented by the Bolsheviks in the region. As part of this policy, known as the "Grain Monopoly," a decision was made under the pressure of V.V. Kuibyshev and F.I. Goloshchyokin in August 1920 to introduce a food distribution system throughout the territory of the Turkestan ASSR. This food requisitioning, or *razvyorstka*, effectively turned into an open plundering of the population and significantly intensified social tensions. By the end of 1920, 42 food requisition squads composed solely of workers had been organized, with a total of 3,000 members[2].

During the 1920–1921 agricultural year, these squads in the Turkestan ASSR seized 9,708,703 poods of grain, 6,358,144 poods of fodder, 1,606,210 poods of meat, and other products from the local population. The requisitioned food was then sent to Russia. At a meeting of the People's Commissariat for Food held on July 18, 1921, Commissar Malyutin delivered a report in which he read Lenin's urgent directive to send 250,000 poods of food to the center within ten days[3].

The Bolshevik government, having itself engineered the famine, attempted to shift the blame entirely onto speculators and wealthy individuals. By doing so, the Soviet authorities sought to redirect the growing anger of the famine-stricken people of Turkestan away from the state and toward other perceived internal enemies. For example, in an article titled "The Month of

Grain” published in *Qizil Bayroq* on February 11, 1921, the following was written:

“The speculators—greedy parasites of the working peasants—who have hidden the grain in storehouses and in unseen places, hoping to starve the Workers’ and Peasants’ Republic and provoke internal revolt, will be held accountable during this 'Month of Grain' for their villainy” [4].

The author of the article claimed that at that moment, millions of poods of grain were rotting in the secret warehouses of speculators (in reality, this grain likely belonged to ordinary people who had set it aside for survival – Sh. Mirzamidinova). As a result, the working and peasant population was suffering from famine. He wrote:

“The enemies of the poor workers—the kulaks, the rich, the speculators—have never voluntarily helped[5]. They wish for the poor to perish from hunger. Their aim is that even if the grain rots, it does not matter, so long as the poor starve and some sort of uprising occurs. These are their dark schemes.”

Thus, those within the Turkestani population who possessed grain or were perceived as wealthy were blamed for the famine.

Ashurali Zohiriy foresaw that the arbitrariness and open plundering being carried out by the Bolsheviks would ultimately lead to a devastating famine in Turkestan. Moreover, he emphasized that only the people of Turkestan themselves could rescue the nation from hunger. He urged the local population to increase grain cultivation and make productive use of every inch of land:

“We speak of hunger and nakedness. To escape hunger, we must sow as much grain as possible. Let us make use of the current rains to plant spring wheat even in the hilly uplands and irrigated fields” [6].

In Zohiriy's journalism, the issue of elections was considered one of the most critical topics. He believed that the fairness of elections was directly linked to the development of public socio-political consciousness and, especially, the improvement of the people's economic condition.

In his article titled "*On the Occasion of the Village Elections*", published in *Farg'ona* newspaper on August 9, 1923, Ashurali Zohiriy shared his thoughts on the importance of elections and their role in shaping society.

In the introduction to his article, Ashurali Zohiriy draws attention to the history of the election of judges (*qozis*) in Turkestan during the Tsarist Russian period, emphasizing that the electoral system of that era had fallen into a deplorable state. Although the people were nominally promised the right to elect their own officials—"You may elect them at your discretion"—in practice, individuals driven by self-interest and personal gain were appointed to positions of authority.

The roots of the issue Zohiriy refers to were laid as early as the late 19th century by the Tsarist colonial administration. According to its policy, individuals appointed to judicial posts at the *muezafot* (province), *uyezd*, and *bolis* (district) levels were increasingly selected from among the inexperienced and unqualified, instead of those who had spent many years studying in madrasahs and gaining knowledge and judicial practice. This led to a crisis in the judiciary: judicial offices came to be held by semi-literate, careerist individuals who, prioritizing material benefit and personal ambition over conscience and moral integrity, betrayed their nation and religion and sought these posts through bribery. These officials saw no contradiction in selling their conscience to outsiders in exchange for influence and wealth[7].

Ashurali Zohiriy sharply criticized the judicial elections during the Tsarist period. He wrote:

“Scoundrels who had not the slightest relation to the judiciary, let alone knowledge of *sharia* and *fiqh*, people who could not even sign their own names, shamelessly and brazenly became judges and dared to interpret the law. Men posing as mullahs, shady characters, village scribes, and agents of tax collectors and commissioners paid bribes to become judges and interpret sharia. The position of judge is a great and honorable one. But, like those who obtain gardens and homes through force, many who previously owned nothing came into possession of property through their pursuit of this title. This corruption and injustice continued even into the sixth year of the Revolution. At the beginning of this year, the Central Executive Committee of Turkestan reduced the number of judges, allowing only one per city and between 8 and 11 per *uyezd*, which amounted to a 60% reduction. The reason for this reduction was the continued practice in the judicial offices of bribes, unlawful fees, gifts, and similar abuses, and the exploitation of the poor. Henceforth, judges and their scribes were to be paid salaries from the state treasury so that citizens would no longer bear any costs for legal proceedings. Every penny from the treasury should not be spent on idle posts, for that money is collected from the sweat of the poor artisans and peasants” [8].

Zohiriy stressed that a person elected to the judiciary must be chosen from among God-fearing, honest, and devout individuals, and for this to be possible, a just and fair electoral system must be ensured by the Soviet government. He wrote:

“On the occasion of the elections, we must remember this: a person elected to the judiciary should be proficient in the sciences of *sharia* and *fiqh*, abstinent, one who soothes the foreheads of orphans, widows, and the poor, one who does not act unjustly toward anyone, and a true reformer who desires the

progress of the people. Only in this way will your affairs be correct, and only in this way will the truth of your disputes and conflicts be revealed” [9].

Another highly discussed topic in the periodical press of the 1920s was the issue of *waqf* (religious endowment) properties. Numerous articles such as “We Need Local Initiative” [10], “A Worthy Example” [11], “On the Fergana Waqfs” [12], and “A Few Words on Waqfs” [13] demonstrate how vital and urgent this issue was during that time.

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