

History of the Life and Socio-Political Activities of Nazir Turakulov

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Abstract:

This article examines the life and socio-political activities of the statesman, the first Uzbek diplomat Nazir Torakulov. The historical legacy of Nazir Torakulov is analyzed, its influence on the education of the youth of modernizing Uzbekistan and its significance in their social life are analyzed. The article also reveals the role of the statesman and cultural figure Nazir Torakulov in the sociocultural development of the Turkic peoples.

Keywords: society, youth, national question, education, ideology, education, education, science, loyalty to the Motherland, responsibility, hard work, national economy, public life, Turkestan, N. Torakulov, land reform, new reforms.

The changes that occurred in society during the 1920s are closely related to the social, political, and cultural transformations of that period. During this time, political changes had a direct impact on various sectors of social and economic life.

The statesman, publicist, linguist, renowned diplomat Nazir Turakulov was born in October 1892 in the Kalvak neighborhood of the city of Qo‘qon, into a wealthy cotton merchant family. He initially studied at an old school, then at a "new method" – Jadid school, as well as at a Russian-native school. In 1913, he graduated from the vocational training institution in Qo‘qon and continued his higher education at the Commercial Institute in Moscow. However, in 1916, due to World War I, he was sent to the Western Front along with other students in his third year. It was during this period that N. Turakulov was drawn into political struggle and became a member of the secret society "Erkin Dala" formed in Minsk by revolutionary-minded students and teachers [1. 42-46].

Undoubtedly, N. Turakulov's political worldview was greatly shaped by his awareness of the issues arising in Turkestan, which remained under colonial oppression.

In October 1922, Nazir Turakulov was summoned to Moscow by the Central Committee of the RKP(b) and appointed as the head of the Central Publishing House of the Soviet Peoples (Tsentroizdat), under the USSR Central Executive Committee, where he served until the mid-1928. His talents as an organizer and journalist were clearly demonstrated in this role. He edited numerous books in Russian and Turkic languages for the peoples of the USSR [2]. Special publications were printed with his forewords. The famous writer Sadriddin Ayni's book on the history of the Bukhara revolution, "The Revolutionaries of Bukhara," was published with a substantial foreword by Nazir Turakulov, in which he provided a thorough historical and political evaluation of the events in Bukhara.

Nazir Turakulov, a person always striving for knowledge, could not overlook the issue of school education. During his leadership roles, this matter occupied a central place in the policies of the republic's government. This was linked to a number of objective factors, the most significant of which was the unprecedented rise of educational initiatives among the population during the early years of Soviet power. However, the republic and local authorities were practically unable to meet the growing demand for primary education, as they failed to provide the necessary specialists, financial resources, and proper educational facilities for the newly established schools. All of these issues were reflected in the resolution adopted at the 1st All-Union Congress of Teachers in 1925, based on Nazir Turakulov's speech "National Question and School." Here are the main provisions of the resolution:

1. "...1. Unify the existing network of national cultural and educational institutions and gradually expand it with funds from the republican budget.
2. Prioritize the construction of buildings for national schools in regions where the need is most acute.
3. Give serious attention to the development of women's education in national republics and regions (such as the Central Asian republics, Azerbaijan), where women are unable to attend general education schools due to daily obstacles.
4. Organize all types of societies to promote national schools, with active participation from folk teachers, and widely utilize the general public's already observed desire for education through local Soviet authorities.
5. Pay particular attention to the development of vocational and agricultural schools, which are of immense importance for the economic development of national republics, regions, and national minorities.
6. Urge all national pedagogical cadres of the USSR, alongside the Russians, to actively participate in the social life of rural areas (curricula, literacy societies, cooperatives, and others).
7. In addition to the general work of pedagogical technical schools and teacher qualification improvement institutes, organize annual and systematic retraining courses for current professors and teachers, focusing not only on social-political education but also pedagogical skills.
8. Take all necessary measures to nominate the best national and minority schools and teachers systematically; in the local press, present the issue of educating nations as a pressing problem for modern Soviet society.
9. Seriously focus on strengthening publishing and printing work both centrally and locally, ensuring national schools are fully supplied with textbooks, books, educational-methodological manuals, and special publications for teachers. Take all necessary measures to ensure their use and encourage the activities of various national cooperative publishers and organizations" [3. 26-27].

It should be emphasized that Nazir Turakulov, as a steadfast supporter of Marxist ideology, held a distinct view on the influence of Islam on the history of humanity, which set him apart from many leaders who, after the establishment of Soviet power, took a more rigid stance on religious matters. During his time as Chairman of the Turkestan Republic's Revolutionary Committee (May 1921 – June 1922), he undertook significant efforts to achieve a rational compromise between the new government and religion. His decision to shift the official day of rest from Sunday to Friday in all Turkestan Republic organizations is itself an indicator of his civic courage and foresight.

As noted by the renowned Kazakh scholar R. Berdiboev: "...Nazir Turakulov's intellect and high civic sense are far superior to the local princes who merely chanted 'Religion is the opium of the people'; he was worse than any enemy who would bend backward to deprive the people of freedom, faith, and honor..." [4. 28].

At the beginning of the 1920s, Nazir Turakulov declared the three days of the Muslim holiday of Kurban (Eid al-Adha) as official rest days. This decision further demonstrates his elevated moral and intellectual standing. In his article "On the Issues of Anti-Religious Propaganda in the East" ("Kommunistik revolyusiya" magazine, 1925, No. 20), he critiques activists with limited knowledge of religious foundations. For example, when referring to E. Fyodorov's work "On the Religious Direction of Central Asia", he points out the superficial and unsubstantiated conclusions made, criticizing individuals who, without studying the history of Islam, began to boast as self-proclaimed experts. In the same article, he stated: "...In the backward countries of the East, progressive-minded mullahs have played a positive, and sometimes even revolutionary, role in the development of these countries" [4. 26].

As a pedagogue and publicist, Nazir Turakulov was deeply concerned about the fate of national language and linguistic construction in Turkestan. He ardently supported granting the local languages of the nationalities state status, the transition of administrative work into the local population's language, the proliferation of national schools, book production, and the expansion of mass media. As the head of the new Turkic alphabet commission, he actively advocated for the necessity of switching from the Arabic alphabet to the Latin alphabet. Defending his principles on this issue, he engaged in passionate debates with prominent figures such as A. Baytursinov and Turkologist scholars Chobanzoda and Agamali-oglu. At the same time, he did not demand the resolution of this issue through administrative command methods.

Recognizing that Latinization would impact all Turkic peoples, their national sentiments, and their written culture, he emphasized that the main task during the preparatory phase was to focus on the reasons for promoting Latinization, strengthening local organizations advocating for the change, and ensuring the scientific foundation for transitioning to the new Turkic alphabet.

In March 1926, at the First All-Union Turkological Congress in Baku, Nazir Turakulov stated: "...First of all, I want to emphasize that the Turkological Congress was an extremely progressive revolutionary truth for the entire Turkic world. In this congress, no one supported the old Arabic script, and if the speakers avoided this topic, it should be understood as a rejection of the old Arabic script. The old Arabic script is condemned by history and is permanently and completely rejected."

Now, transitioning to the current state of the issue, it is clear that only two alphabets are currently in competition: the reformed new Arabic alphabet and the Latin alphabet. The essence of the reform, or more precisely, the surgical operation carried out on the Arabic alphabet, lies in artificially adding upper and lower symbols to fill the missing characters for Turkish phonemes. However, this reform was not unprecedented; there were already several graphic systems, multiple alphabets, and writing systems present in the Turkic republics and regions. For instance, Tatarstan adopted one system, Kazakhstan another, Turkmenistan a third, and so on. In Kazan, as the previous speaker detailed, there was an attempt to focus on a system called "Bash-harf," or a system of basic letter

forms. It must be noted that the system created by the Tatar Republic government was essentially defeated [2. 102-104].

In his special article "New Tasks" (January 1928), N. Turakulov, who actively worked on the issues of updating written language in Soviet Eastern nations, emphasized:

"...At the same time, it is impossible to ignore the important issue of the public and progressive society's attitude toward the introduction of the new Turkic alphabet in the Soviet East" [2. 136-141].

It should be pointed out that from the First All-Union Turkic Congress, the outcry raised by the Kazan Arabists and their foreign "friends" (the speech of the Tatar white émigrés in Turkey) has now subsided. The opponents of Latinization were not silent because of sudden doubts or concerns, nor did they lack confidence in the necessity and timeliness of the writing reforms. Instead, they fell silent because their arguments about the "religious roots of Islam" and "the historical connection of the Qur'anic alphabet" turned out to be nothing more than a bluff, false accusations, and a complete misjudgment.

The supposed attack by the Arabists, which was expected to tear everything and everyone apart in the first attempt at reform, was ignored by the masses of Soviet East. The sky did not fall, the earth did not open, and the new Turkic alphabet was being gradually implemented at an accelerating pace. The "spiritually national" alphabet, which was supposed to hold all the necessary "historical roots," turned out not to be the Qur'anic alphabet but rather the new Turkic alphabet based on Latinization. This new alphabet allowed for the creation of a completely modern written language on cultural and technical foundations. The slogan of Soviet Eastern society became the idea of acquiring knowledge and technology from the West. This shift was exemplified by the increasing demand in national republics and regions for learning the Russian language, which was now seen as a key to entering modern culture and society.

This contrasts with the past, when learning the Russian language, along with "Russian" attire and behaviors, was considered a betrayal and was met with hatred by the lower classes and the privileged, exploitative elite. In the past, the old Russian state, its landowners, and capitalists brought oppression, exploitation, and violence, which made Russian culture very unpopular among Eastern peoples. Today, however, without any external pressure, the desire to learn Russian is growing among the masses, as it provides an opportunity for the Eastern person to join modern culture and society.

The superstitions connected to everything "Russian" (learning the language, wearing "Russian" clothing, etc.) are now gradually becoming a thing of the past.

With the overall rise of the culture and economy of our Union, the connections and labor cooperation among the peoples living in it are becoming more consolidated. This is also true for the Soviet Turkic-Tatar peoples, whose cultural cooperation should be accepted with satisfaction and not interrupted. The economic and cultural ties between the Soviet Turkic-Tatar peoples (we are talking about those who are linked due to territorial proximity and common markets, such as Tatars and Bashkirs, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and others) demand the creation of an adaptable writing system that would allow them to communicate with each other while maintaining their dialects (languages). However, unfortunately, this issue has not yet been resolved by our new script. The new Turkic-Tatar alphabet still lacks a scientifically developed, mutually agreed solution that would provide a satisfactory answer to this vital problem.

Indeed, the first plenary meeting of the "New Turkic Alphabet" Central Committee of the USSR, held in Baku in July 1927, was dedicated to uniting these alphabets. However, it should be noted

that this unification should be viewed more as a graphic and technical one, rather than a meaningful linguistic unification [5. 246-256].

During this period, changes in social life had a direct impact on the fields of language, particularly in the area of terminology. The educational reforms in schools, the development of trade relations with foreign countries, and the positive shifts in science and industry led to the emergence of new words and terms in the Uzbek language. Additionally, the prominence of the Russian language in understanding the foundations of science, particularly in economics and politics, made it necessary to provide translations of Russian-language terms in the form of dictionaries. As a result, lexicographic work aimed at creating bilingual dictionaries for social-political terms began, with N. Turakulov's "Political and Economic Dictionary of Russian and Uzbek" [6. 87] being one of the initial works in this field.

N. Turaqulov, as the head of the Central Publishing House (Sentroizdat) under the Central Executive Committee of the USSR, understood very well the importance of his work for the development of national cultures in the new Soviet state. At the anniversary meeting dedicated to the fifth year of Tsentroizdat in June 1928, he proudly emphasized:

"... Sentroizdat created the foundation to introduce the multi-million peoples of the Union to Soviet culture, and in a short time, it established a base for book production, which became fully recognized in other countries. Over five years, it published more than 59 million copies of textbooks, popular science, social-political, artistic, agricultural, and other literature in more than 50 languages of the Union's peoples. Tsentroizdat, alongside creating and strengthening non-periodical publications, paid close attention to creating, improving, and distributing national periodicals. Currently, it publishes 21 periodicals in 12 languages" [7. 349].

Sentroizdat played a significant role in introducing the new Turkic (Latinized) alphabet to the public. It published works in Turkic-Tatar languages based on the Latin script, including textbooks and other literature, and worked on Latinizing Tatar newspapers and journals.

Looking at the short but eventful life of N. Turakulov, it is clear that from a young age, he exhibited qualities of a political leader, distinguished scholar, publicist, and talented diplomat. His youth, during the tumultuous revolutionary period, was not easy and straightforward. In the current historical context, courage, composure, integrity, discipline, ideological loyalty, religious tolerance, and even readiness for self-sacrifice were all demanded of him. These qualities were shaped by the proper upbringing in his family, his education at the commercial institutes in Kokand and Moscow. At the start of his conscious life, as a future diplomat, he encountered people dedicated to their work and ready to serve the interests of the people. His political struggle experience during the difficult years of World War I, the Civil War, and the formation of Soviet power in Turkestan all played a crucial role in shaping his future diplomatic career and were invaluable when he later rose to high state positions.

In conclusion, it can be said that N. Turakulov's future successful diplomatic career in the Near East was based on his previous activities in Central Asia and Moscow. He proved to be a true enlightener, armed with deep knowledge and a broad worldview. Life's hardships gave him confidence in his abilities, instilled in him a sense of responsibility, courage in all its forms, and a readiness to serve the interests of his country. N. Turakulov's short but productive work and creative activity awaits further study. His participation in state governance and his journalistic legacy, in particular, are subjects that merit further investigation.

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