

Kazakh Koshke Kemenger

In the 19th century Kazakhstan's total dependence on Russian Empire brought drastic changes into all spheres of life of Kazakh society. Those changes were called forth by colonial policy of the Russian Empire, i.e. habitual mode of life was ruined, the process of Russification started, Kazakh steppes were turned into province and raw materials base of Russian industry, and imperial colonial policy affected education.

Historical researches of Koshke Kemenger are of special importance for exposing the essence of these problems. In the period from 1915 till 1930, a prominent representative of national democratic intelligentsia Koshke Kemenger had been working on developing Kazakh literature, dramaturgy, journalism and science. At the time, he had been taking part in national liberation struggle of Kazakh nation against Russian oppression.

He was a member of the first Kazakh youth society "Yedinstvo" (Unity), an editor of the "Balapan" journal. In 1917 he took part in establishing Alash-Orda committee in Akmolinsk region; in 1918-1919 he was an editor of "Zhas azamat" newspaper, after establishment of the Soviet power from 1924 till 1930 he was engaged in teaching. In thirties, when Koshke Kemenger was prolifically working in sphere of science, education, literature, a period of repressions against Kazakh intelligentsia started.

In his research "From Kazakh history", the analyst described historical revolution of Kazakh nation, starting from society, living under leadership of khans up to the period of the soviet power establishment; he paid special attention to problems of Kazakhstan accession to Russia. As a representative of national intelligentsia, he emphasized colonial character of the accession, which led to loss of Kazakh independence. In his works he presented important data about Shokan Ualikhanov, Ybyray Altynsarin, Abay Kunanbayev, writers, poets and public figures, living in the early 20th century.

In particular, K.Kemenger criticized educational policy of the Russian Empire. The colonial policy was not confined to economic goals, a particular importance was attached to spiritual and cultural dependence, whose main goal was to Russianize native population, and thereby to eliminate them as nationality and turn remote areas into a part of the empire.

For achieving its goals and strengthening its influence in the sphere of public education, Russian Empire started opening schools with Russian as the language of tuition. Russians' main goal in that sphere was to educate children in such way so that they would serve the Russian Empire unquestioningly. The content of elementary education programme was to be composed in accordance with requirements of the tsarist power; processes of economical and cultural development of Kazakh nation were not included into that programme. "If you take a look at it from the outside, you may believe that everything is being done for the sake of Kazakh nation; but if you take a look inside, then you will see that there is some catch. While educating children they are not going to put good sense into their heads. Their aim is to turn children into propagators of the Russian idea and foster Russian spirit in them by separating them from motherland". According to K.Kemenger, people let their children go to Russian schools because "they should know Russian language if they want to wear shoulder straps". Khans and senior sultans started sending their children in Russian schools. There was a period when Kazakhs began rejecting Russian school. K.Kemenger explained it as follows, "From a historical point of view, distancing Kazakhs from science and arts is a natural phenomenon. First children of Kazakhs, copying Frenchmen, were able only to have fun. Living in generals' houses they learned to waste time in indolence and not to be properly educated. After children returned

home, their behavior seemed strange to everyone. Fearing that their descendents would finally refute them, the elite stopped sending their children to Russian schools”.

Kemengeruly wrote that there were some representatives of the elite youth who had inclination for studying and for science, but their number was very scarce. Shokan Ualikhanov, a noble representative of intelligentsia, who had got Russian education, was the most prominent person among them. According to Koshke Kemenger words, colonial tsarist policy in sphere of public education, especially after adoption of 1867-1868 administrative reforms, exacerbated a rush of indignation among Kazakhs. In compliance with the reform, uyezd schools were to be opened and Kazakhs had to send their children there, but boarding schools were meant for children of the poor folk. Quality of education was low, so after leaving school with low marks, graduates would become illiterate interpreters and lawyers, interested only in money and wealth.

In the second half of the 19th century first agricultural schools for nomadic Kazakhs and for supporting Russian population, were opened on the basis of boarding schools. Koshke Kemenger wrote, “...later, in 1889, boarding schools were turned into agricultural schools. The government was forcing Kazakhs to recognize settled way of life. Male population was being taught horticultural skills, while women and girls were getting lessons of fancywork”.

Summing up the results of tsarist government’s policy in educational sphere, Kemenger singled out its main goals, i.e. “suppression of Kazakhs, conversion to a new religion, and absolute Russification”.

The scientist has comprehensively studied colonial policy of the tsarist government in his works and expressed his personal opinion. He exposed the bitter truth about his native history so that everyone willing would be able to learn this lesson and take the road to bright future. At the same time Koshke Kemenger assessed learning and mastering of Russian language as a progressive vector. He said that learning Russian language is a chance to study Russian culture and get access to the world culture.

By way of example he mentioned friendship of Abay Kunanbayev and Shokan Ualikhanov with Russian democrats, “Shokan’s friendship with Dostoevsky, Durov, Semenov, and Abay’s friendship with Mikhayelis resulted in literary heritage left for descendants”. In his works he described faith of friendship and kinship between nations, and acted as an active herald of culture. At the age of 18 he started making translations of Pushkin and Nikitin’s poems.

K. Kemenger had always consistently adhered to the opinion about Russian language learning, to be exact about its voluntary learning. If national schools use native language for tuition, then Russian language should not replace it, but in can be taught simultaneously. In this case it will be useful to the people. Naturally, such principle ran counter to educational policy of the tsarist government, as the goal of that policy was to Russianize Kazakh people and eliminate their national identity.

The tsarist government was interested in giving only elementary education to Kazakh children, it stood up against opening professional schools and higher educational institutions; was intimidated by growth of Kazakh intelligentsia and self-consciousness, which could have become the driving force of development.

On the other hand, hopes that Russian-speaking Kazakhs would serve for tsarist government faithfully have never been justified. A major part of Kazakh intelligentsia had consistently worked for their nation’s sake. Educator, researcher and scholar Koshke Kemenger was a real

ideologist of the national struggle waged by Kazakh people against colonial policy of the tsarist government.

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