

The Famine in the Fergana Valley in the Firth Years of Soviet Government

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Abstract: This article describes the peculiarities of the economic situation in the Fergana Valley in 1917-1918, the establishment of the Soviet regime in the valley and the essence of the Bolshevik economic policy, the aggravation of the problem of food security in the valley, the mistakes of the Soviet authorities, the terrible famine in the Fergana Valley. the tragic landscape is analyzed on the basis of statistical collections, archival materials and scientific literature.

Keywords: Fergana Valley, Turkestan, Tsarist Russia, agrarian policy, cotton monopoly, food, famine, Bolsheviks, “military communism”, the Soviet regime, national leaders.



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One of the almost unexplored problems in the history of pre-independence Uzbekistan is the terrible famine in the Fergana Valley between 1917 and 1924. In the history of the Soviet era, a lot of research has been done and literature has been published on the problem of famine in the Volga region and Kazakhstan in the 20-30s of the XX century. But there is no comprehensive study on the famine in the Fergana Valley, which is no different in its horrors and scale. Therefore, the dissertation chose the economic situation and famine in the Fergana Valley in 1917-1924 as the object of research. The urgency of the topic is further based on the fact that this problem requires in-depth scientific and objective research in the light of today’s requirements.

Methods and level of study: The article is based on generally accepted historical methods - historical, comparative and logical analysis, consistency, objectivity, which reveals the economic situation in the Fergana Valley in 1917-1918 and the causes of famine. Although there is no comprehensive study on the famine in the Fergana Valley, the historical literature and dissertations created to date contain more or less relevant information on the problem. We can chronologically divide the research on the subject into four conditional periods.

The first period covers the 20-30s of the XX century. Literature and periodicals published during this period included speeches and articles by statesmen and public figures on the famine in the Fergana Valley. In particular, T. Brochures and articles by statesmen such as Risqulov, N. Turakulov, G. Safarov's “Colonial Revolution”, P. Alekseenko's “Christian Rebellion in Fergana” reflect the horrors of famine and the difficult economic situation in the Fergana Valley. The main feature of the literature of the 20-30s of the XX century is that they are not based on archival

sources, but on the memories of eyewitnesses and periodicals. Therefore, this information is often distinguished by its reality.

Historical literature published in the second period, which covers the late 1930s and early 1950s, is largely influenced by the dominant communist ideology. In particular, more emphasis is placed on the solution of these problems and the role of Soviet and party organizations in this process, rather than on the problem of food and famine. The third period of study of the problem covers the late 50s and 80s of the last century. During this period, historians of Uzbekistan and the Central Asian republics conducted and published many volumes of research. Although these publications focus on current issues in the history of Turkestan, the issue of famine in the Fergana Valley is not reflected. In addition, the candidate's and doctoral dissertations defended in the 60s and 70s revealed the content and essence of the food policy of the Soviet government. However, the above research was also created under the influence of the requirements of that period

The fourth period of research includes literature and research published in the years following the independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan. In 1991, V.A. The dissertation defended by Semenyuta is the first comprehensive study of the problem. But the chronological boundary of V.A. Semenyuta's dissertation covers the years 1917-1920, and mainly covers the subject of solving the food problem in the early years of Soviet rule.

Results of the study: After the conquest of Turkestan by Tsarist Russia, the region became a source of raw materials for metropolitan factories. As a result of the construction of the Orenburg and Caspian railways for the transportation of raw cotton grown in the country, cotton growing intensified and the harvest was sent to the Center. In particular, according to 1914 data, the transportation of cotton accounted for 10% of the total freight turnover on these railways [1].

Farmers in Turkestan, particularly in the Fergana Valley, have been forced to expand their cotton fields to make ends meet. According to archival data, in 1913, 274,891 desiatins of land were planted in the Fergana Valley, in 1914 - 303,150 desiatins, in 1915 - 333,658 desiatins, and in 1916 - 348,525 desiatins. To visualize the area allocated for cotton, it should be noted that in 47 out of 84 volosts in Fergana region, cotton accounted for 50% of the total sown area, in 9 volosts - 90%, in 4 volosts - 80%, and in the remaining 23 volosts - 70%. [2].

As a result, other crops, especially cereals, which are the main source of livelihood for the population, were pushed out, and the valley's dependence on imported grain was strengthened. In addition, the expansion of cotton production in exchange for cereals and fodder crops has led to a severe shortage of bread and fodder in Turkestan. For example, in the Fergana Valley, the area under cereals decreased from 603,206 desiatins to 354,325 desiatins in 1917 compared to 1907, while the area under cotton increased from 199,944 desiatins to 336,525 desiatins during the same period [3]. Therefore, the import of grain to Turkestan increased from 34,300 tons in 1908 to 225,238 tons in 1914 [4].

With the outbreak of the First World War, it became clear that the Russian Empire was not ready for war. The transport and food crisis that began in the territory of the empire began to affect Turkestan as well. As a result of the crisis, the supply of grain from the metropolis to the country was reduced, but then stopped altogether. According to archival sources, 18,202,000 pounds [5] of grain was brought to the Fergana Valley in 1910 alone. Apparently, the fate of the people of the valley depended on imported grain. By the middle of 1916, grain imports from the Volga region, the North Caucasus, and Siberia, which supplied the Fergana Valley with grain, began to decline sharply. In addition, the drought of the summer of 1916, in which most of the crop was lost, exacerbated the situation. To imagine how deplorable the situation is, it is possible to quote the prices of grain in those years. For example, if in 1914 1 pound of grain was 1.5 rubles, by 1917 this figure had risen to 47 rubles. As a result of the reduction of fodder production and a sharp decline in imports in the livestock sector, the number of livestock was severely affected. Fodder

shortages have led to the mass extinction of livestock. This has exacerbated the plight of nomadic farms in particular.

The situation was aggravated by the almost complete destruction of the grain crop as a result of the bitter cold of the winter of 1917 and the drought of the summer. Famine began to threaten Fergana. In such a difficult situation, the Turkestan Committee of the Provisional Government, which came to power in the country after the February Revolution of 1917, became helpless. In the face of the growing famine in Turkestan, they had no choice but to send telegrams to the Center.

The chairman of the Turkestan Committee, Nikolai Shchepkin, wrote in a telegram to the Provisional Government on April 25, 1917: "The food situation in Turkestan is deplorable, we have nothing for May. A similar situation can be seen in the activities of the representatives of the Provisional Government in the Fergana Valley. There are no grain and flour products in the warehouses" [9]. If we take into account that in those years the population of Kokand was 120 thousand, and in the district - 400 thousand, it is not difficult to imagine how serious the situation was in Kokand alone. On October 21, 1917, the Kokand City Food Committee sent a telegram to the Fergana Regional Food Committee requesting that the city be provided with bread. "We could only tell them that there was no bread, that the provincial food department could only send grain. However, not a single bag of bread has been distributed to Sart (local residents) neighborhoods for two days. We get only 12-15 wagons of grain a month to meet the 500,000 population of the city and county. In such a situation, our committee has no choice but to sympathize with the plight of the townspeople and weep together. However, we hope that the provincial food department will send bread." [10] According to this information, the population of Kokand was starving in the autumn of 1917. The general crisis in the Turkestan economy has led to a sharp decline in arable land throughout the region. In particular, the area under cotton decreased from 533.7 thousand desiatins in 1916 to 416 thousand desiatins in 1917, and the area under food and fodder decreased from 2,668,761 desiatins in 1915 to 1,893,037 desiatins in 1917 [11]. It was a tragedy that the bread shortage in Turkestan, whose fate depended on imported grain, reached 60 million pounds in 1917. As a result, it was natural that per capita consumption of bread and bakery products in the region would decrease significantly.

The food problem in Turkestan, which began in 1917, was of great concern to progressives and Jadids at the time. They opened various charities and associations with the help of the rich and wealthy, trying to distribute food to the population and prevent famine. Abdullah Qadiri, who later became a well-known writer, worked for the Food Committee in Tashkent. Mahmudhoja Behbudi, the founder of the Jadid movement in Turkestan, also served on a similar committee in Samarkand from 1917 to 1918. In the recently published book "Hunger, famine, famine in Turkestan" published in Tashkent (compiled and prepared for publication by Khandamir Kadyri, grandson of the famous writer Abdullah Qadiri, based on articles published in the Turkestan press in 1917-1924), the "Charity Society" The kitchen opened for the hungry by the Charity Society in Margilan is showing good results, and the poor people are very happy with the donations. From December 28 to January 14, 30,678 soums and 96 tiyins were collected and 14,951 soums and 65 tiyins were spent" [12].

In addition to Margilan in Fergana region, similar charities were established in Kokand, Andijan, Namangan and other cities. According to the Workers' World magazine published in Tashkent in 1918, "in Khokand (now Kokand), the respectable statesmen began to open a society called 'Zakoti Khairat' to help the needy and the poor." The newspaper "El Bayrogi" (published in Kokand in 1917-1918, which later became the official publication of the Turkestan Autonomous Government) reports on the activities of the "Zakoti Hayrot" society in Kokand. The Society of Zakat and Charity was established with the aim of becoming It was this society that started working, building pots in 16 places in the city and feeding the needy and the poor. Pilaf is served

once a week, and meat and butter are served once a day. Expenditure will be from the things collected from the people through zakat and impartial donations. With the help of the rich, the narrations of the scribes, and the services of the youth, they did the same. Success is expected" [14]. The Central Council of Muslims of Turkestan (Kraymussovet) was established under the chairmanship of Mustafa Chokay at the First Congress of All-Turkestan Muslims held in Tashkent on April 16-23, 1917 [15]. Meanwhile, Turkestan's progressives Ubaydulla Khodjaev, Mustafa Chokay, Obidjon Mahmudov, and others traveled to Petrograd, Moscow, Orenburg, and other cities to urge the Russian government to send grain and other foodstuffs to Turkestan. According to the Ulug Turkiston newspaper, Ubaydullahoja [Ubaydullahoja Asadullahojaev or Ubaydulla Khojaev], who had visited Petrograd and Moscow councils on the issue of grain, made a report at a meeting in Tashkent by representatives of Komarov and Namangan. End the monopoly on food, down (cotton), leather and other similar items, and distribute them in the production committees. Whether it is food, the other is for necessities, and the taqsa (price or fixed price) is completed" [16].

The Prime Minister of the Turkestan Autonomous Government, Mustafa Chokay, visited Orenburg in December 1917, where the food committees of the Orenburg and Turgai regions and the Cossacks discussed the term Dutov and discussed the issue of sending grain and food products to Tashkent. An article in the Ulug Turkiston newspaper on December 31, 1917, entitled "The Problem of Food," reads: He said that the food coming to Turkestan was seized by the Bolsheviks at the Chilabi and Buzovlik stations. He said that if the food was taken out of these stations, it would be sent directly to Turkestan without stopping in Orenburg" [17]. Armed soldiers, i.e. guards, were assigned by the Orenburg Muslim Military Committee to guard the food. Even when the Provisional Government of the Turkestan Autonomy appealed to Dutov and said that postal passenger trains should be used to send food from Orenburg faster, the victory of the Autonomous Government was also satisfied. On December 18, 1917, 6 wagons of food, first shipped from Orenburg, were sent by mail train. It is these six wagons that Mustafa Chokay personally brings to Tashkent in one train [18]. The Bolsheviks, who seized power as a result of the October coup, made serious mistakes in economic policy in the first period, which aggravated the current situation. In particular, the ban on free trade in grain in the Turkestan region from January 21, 1918 and other documents were published in the 37th issue of "Nasha Gazeta" on February 28, 1918 by the chairman of the ICC F. Kolesov [19].

The decree on the confiscation of cotton fiber and raw cotton was, in the words of military historian D. Zuev, "a thunderbolt in the skies of Fergana." According to the decree, 3.14 million pounds of cotton fiber, 6 million pounds of raw cotton, 600,000 pounds of cottonseed oil, 4 million pounds of seeds, and 1.1 million pounds of kunjara passed to the Soviets free of charge. This includes 3 million pounds of cotton delivered to ginneries in the Fergana Valley. As a result, farmers did not receive a penny for the cotton delivered to the ginneries and lost their last source of livelihood. [20]

The Soviet government in Turkestan tried to take a number of measures to overcome the difficult situation. Thus, in accordance with the decree of January 23, 1918, the Provincial Food Committee was abolished and replaced by the Food Department and its regional organizations under the Council of People's Commissars of Turkestan Province. There are also a number of food processing establishments in the Fergana Valley, one of which is the Fergana Food Procurement Bureau, headed by V. Chaikin, a representative of the Provisional Government and a member of the Workers' Party. The bureau, set up by V. Chaikin, buys various goods from the People's Commissariat of Food of the RSFSR in the amount of 30 million rubles for the purchase of food for the Fergana Valley at its own expense. However, Chaykin later used the Fergana bureau to abuse his position.

The bloodshed of the Turkestan Autonomous Government by the Soviet regime and the subsequent escalation of hostilities in the Ferghana Valley exacerbated the situation in the valley. -50,000 Red Army soldiers. The food supply of these soldiers was at the expense of the people of the valley, who were still in dire straits. As a result of the civil war in Russia, the last wagons loaded with grain arrived in Turkestan in May 1918. After that, the city of Orenburg, which connected Turkestan with the Center, was completely occupied by the Dutov Cossacks on July 3, 1918. The so-called "first Orenburg traffic jam" began in history. According to the data, in January-November 1918, Turkestan received 459 wagons of grain from the Caucasus and 875 wagons from Siberia. Then came the "second Orenburg traffic jam." The whole region was in the grip of a terrible famine. This, in turn, has exacerbated the famine in the Fergana Valley. In particular, as a result of the fact that the residents of Kokand and the district lived in those days with the roots of kunjara and various plants, thousands of people began to die. Unfortunately, it was not possible to fully study how much of Kokand's population died of starvation during this period. This is due to the fact that at that time the valley was the site of military operations and the archival documents on the problem were almost not preserved. However, the census of 1920 can shed some light on the issue. According to him, in 1920, 426,480 people lived in the city and district of Kokand. It can be seen that between 1917 and 1919, the population of Kokand and the surrounding districts decreased by 100,000 people compared to the above data [24]. Most of the losses are the result of terrible famine.

Abdullah Qadiri, in his January 24, 1918 article in the Ulug Turkiston newspaper, described the horrors of the famine around Namangan as follows: were At the same time, there were people who died on the streets with pain. In addition, the villages of Qurghonteppa, Yakdama, Mozorkul, Eskiabad, and Qumboy were also plagued by famine, and the number of those who died of the disease was increasing. "[25] From the spring of 1918, various epidemic diseases spread in the Fergana Valley as a result of food shortages and famine. In particular, plague is on the rise in Namangan and Andijan. "The plague is rampant in Namangan," he said. One hundred and one hundred and twenty people die from the plague every day. There are many corpses left in houses and mosques that can be buried" [26]. A report in the national press on May 3, 1918, entitled "Famine and Plague in Andijan", reads: Every day, about a hundred people say goodbye to the world. Access to the city is prohibited. Measures should be taken to disseminate this message throughout the railway. Do not sell train tickets to Andijan. Only those who live in Andijan with the Andijan delegation can return to Andijan [28]. According to the Italian historian Marco Buttino in his chapter "The Dictatorship of Famine" [29] of his major monograph on the changes in Turkestan in the first quarter of the twentieth century, at the Second Congress of Food Suppliers in Tashkent in July 1918, food issues in the Turkestan ASSR grain stocks and the amount of grain to be harvested from the future crop were discussed. According to the reports made at the congress, the grain shortage in the Syrdarya region amounted to 11,381,730 pounds. The area was inhabited by more pastoralists and nomads. At that time, Fergana region had 68 million pounds of grain and Samarkand region had 5,560,000 pounds of grain. In the Semireche region, grain production fell by 80 percent by 1917 compared to 1914, with two-thirds of the population experiencing a grain shortage.

Conclusions:

In short, the causes of the famine in the Fergana Valley, which began in the spring of 1917, were primarily the defeat of the Russian Empire in World War I, the economic decline and depression associated with the war in the Ferghana region of Turkestan, as well as in the spring and summer of 1917. the climate was very dry, and as a result of hot weather and drought the grain yield was almost non-existent. Formed in November 1917, the leaders of the Turkestan Autonomous Government were seriously engaged in solving the food and grain problem in the region. However, the economic situation in the region deteriorated in February 1918 due to the bloodshed of the Turkestan Autonomous Government by the Bolsheviks and the Soviet regime, the wrong

economic policy of the Soviet government, the arbitrariness and violence of the Bolshevik commissars, and the food crisis worsened. Hundreds of thousands of people died in the Fergana Valley as a result of the famine.

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