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ARMED UPRISINGS IN THE EAST OF THE KAZAKH SSR AS A RESULT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

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Abstract. This article examines the socio-economic and demographic consequences of collectivization and dekulakization policies in Kazakhstan, focusing on the Eastern region. A comparison of census data from 1926 and 1939 reveals a sharp decline in the Kazakh population due to famine, mass migration, and changes in the ethnodemographic structure. Archival materials enable an analysis of the scale of resettlement to China, the increase in the number of orphaned children, mortality rates, as well as the forms and methods of peasant resistance to the coercive policies of the Soviet authorities. Special attention is given to armed uprisings and mass migrations, including the Tolstoukhov Rebellion of 1930, its organizational features, slogans, and the role of its leader, Fyodor Tolstoukhov. It is shown that despite official classifications of these protest movements as «kulak - bandit formations», middle peasants and poor peasants also participated in them. The methods of suppression by the OGPU – including punitive operations, intelligence work, repressions, and the division of insurgent groups – are analyzed in detail. The study concludes that peasant resistance in Eastern Kazakhstan was driven by the destruction of the traditional structure of rural society, forced collectivization, and the confiscation of property, which gave the protests a mass and spontaneous character.

Keywords: famine; Eastern Kazakhstan; peasant uprisings; socio-economic consequences; agrarian reforms; collectivization; agricultural modernization; popular movements; social transformation.

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Introduction

The history of Eastern Kazakhstan in the late XIXth and the first third of the XXth century represents a complex and multifaceted process, reflecting both the social contradictions of an agrarian society and the consequences of modernization reforms in agriculture. A defining feature of this period was the occurrence of peasant uprisings, triggered by rising social tensions, land redistribution, increasing tax burdens, and the crisis of traditional farming practices. Among the most notable uprisings was the revolt led by F. Tolstoukhov, which became a vivid expression of peasant protest against administrative pressure and the deterioration of economic conditions.

Alongside social unrest, the region experienced tragic hardships associated with the famines of the 1920s and early 1930s. Eastern Kazakhstan was among the hardest-hit regions: widespread food shortages, the devastation of households, epidemics, and high mortality rates left a profound imprint on the demographic and cultural history of the area. The famine not only altered the social structure of the population but also triggered migration processes, exacerbating the crisis of the rural economy.

Thus, the study of peasant uprisings and the consequences of famine in Eastern Kazakhstan allows for the identification of the specific features of the region's historical development during a period of economic modernization. It also enables tracing the transformation of traditional social structures and understanding how social catastrophes influenced the formation of regional identity and collective memory.

Materials and Methods

literature reflecting the socio-economic processes in Eastern Kazakhstan during the period of agricultural modernization and famine. The primary sources include archival documents from the Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan, regional archives of the East Kazakhstan region, as well as journalistic materials and official reports from that time.

Particular attention is given to documents recording peasant uprisings, statistical summaries on agriculture, demographic data on population decline due to famine, and materials from local party organs.

The methodological framework of the study is grounded in the principles of historicism and systems analysis, which allow peasant movements and social transformations to be examined in their connection with state economic policies. Comparative-historical analysis, historical-genetic, and historical-typological approaches were applied, enabling the identification of the specific features of peasant uprisings in Eastern Kazakhstan and their interrelation with the consequences of famine.

Discussion

The issue of famine and peasant movements in Eastern Kazakhstan during the period of agricultural modernization occupies a special place in both domestic and international historiography. For a long time, research on this topic was fragmentary and largely influenced by the ideological frameworks of the era. Beginning in the late 1980s, in the context of perestroika and the subsequent independence of Kazakhstan, scholars gained the opportunity to approach the study of these tragic events more objectively.

In domestic historiography, works have emerged focusing on the socio-economic preconditions of the famine, the scale of demographic losses, and the role of collectivization and resettlement policies in Eastern Kazakhstan. Special attention has also been given to local studies, including analyses of peasant uprisings, archival documents from local authorities, and eyewitness testimonies. The introduction of new allowed for the reconstruction of a more comprehensive picture of famine and peasant uprisings in Eastern Kazakhstan.

Since the 1990s, the central archives of Kazakhstan have begun publishing collections of documents from various years. However, it should be noted that in these publications, materials concerning the period of agricultural collectivization were

presented in a limited scope. Some archival documents were included in the collections

«*The Tragedy of the Kazakh Village, 1928–1934*» (Tragediya kazahskogo, 2013) and «*Forced Collectivization and Famine in Kazakhstan, 1931–1933*» (Nasilstvennaya, 1998). Later, in 2021, thanks to the meticulous work of domestic historians, previously unpublished materials were compiled and published in the collection «*Asharshylyk. Famine, 1928–1934*» (Asharshylyk, 2021).

In the broader context of the history of collectivization in the Soviet Union, valuable sources have been documents extracted from Russian state archives and published in collections such as «*The Tragedy of the Soviet Village: Collectivization and Dekulakization*» (Tragediya sovetskoj, 2000) and «*The Soviet Village through the Eyes of the VChK, OGPU, NKVD*» (Sovetskaya derevnya, 2000). These publications provided rich factual material, shedding light on the events of the period under study.

Among other significant works are the collection «*Unknown Pages in the History of the Semipalatinsk Irtysh Region (1920s–1930s)*» (Neizvestnye stranicy, 2002), as well as materials compiled in 2022 within the framework of research conducted jointly with the State Commission for the Full Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repressions (Sayasi, 2022). These publications extensively present documents related to Soviet policies in the Semipalatinsk region, including the confiscation of property from well-off households, their deportation, and the implementation of agricultural collectivization.

At present, Kazakhstani authors K.R. Zhirindinova, A.S. Zhanbossinova, and B.Zh. Atantaeva, in their article «*Social Adaptation of Kazakh Nomads during the Period of Forced Collectivization*» (Zhirindinova, Zhanbossinova, Atantaeva, 2019), published in a peer-reviewed journal, scientifically demonstrated the impact of the transformations of this period based on an analysis of historical sources and presented their conclusions regarding the process of social adaptation of the population under conditions of forced collectivization.

In contemporary Kazakh historiography, the attention of several researchers has focused on the study of socio-economic processes during the period of forced collectivization. Drawing on a wide range of domestic and foreign archival materials, they have identified the specifics of the social adaptation of rural populations and demonstrated the impact of these transformations on the dynamics of peasant movements in Eastern Kazakhstan. Significant contributions to the study of this topic have been made by Kazakhstani historians A.S. Zhanbossinova (Zhanbossinova et al., 2023: 62–72; Zhanbossinova et al., 2023: 180–202), E.E. Saylaubay (Saylaubay et al., 2024: 1171–1178), and S.O. Smagulova (Smagulova et al., 2023: 160–171), among others. Their works allow for a comprehensive understanding of the consequences of collectivization policies, the social reconstruction of agriculture, and their effects on the peasantry and regional social structure.

Results

In the history of Kazakhstan, the consequences of collectivization became one of the most significant issues affecting the socio-economic spheres of the 1920s and 1930s. Among these, the most tragic phenomena were famine and mass population flight. To assess the demographic situation caused by famine, this study relies on

population census data from 1926 and 1939 for Eastern Kazakhstan. These censuses reflect the outcomes of the inhumane social experiment conducted in Kazakhstan during the 1920s and 1930s.

Regarding the demographic situation in Eastern Kazakhstan during this period, determining the number of famine victims presents certain difficulties. This is due to the fact that the territorial-administrative system of the region underwent several changes during the specified period.

In January 1928, the Semipalatinsk Governorate was abolished and replaced by the Semipalatinsk District. Former counties and volosts of the governorate were reorganized into districts of the Akmola, Karkaralinsk, Pavlodar, Syrdarya, and Semipalatinsk districts. The Semipalatinsk District included the following districts: Zharkent, Zaisan, Zyryanovsk, Katon-Karagay, Kurchum, Markakol, Ridder, Samar, Tarbagatay, Ulan, Ubin, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Shyngystai, and Shemonaikha.

In February 1932, according to the resolution of the 2nd session of the 8th convocation of the Central Executive Committee of Kazakhstan, the territory of the republic was divided into the East Kazakhstan, Karaganda, South Kazakhstan, Alma-Ata, West Kazakhstan, and Aktobe regions. The East Kazakhstan Region was established on February 20, 1932, with its center in the city of Semipalatinsk and initially included 21 districts.

In 1938, Pavlodar Region, with its center in the city of Pavlodar, was separated from the East Kazakhstan Region. By the end of 1939, the administrative-territorial divisions in Kazakhstan were undergoing consolidation, with new regions and districts being created. As a result, by the end of 1939, the East Kazakhstan Region was divided into East Kazakhstan (centered in Ust-Kamenogorsk) and Semipalatinsk (centered in Semipalatinsk) regions. At that time, East Kazakhstan Region included 14 districts.

This situation creates numerous difficulties when comparing administrative-territorial boundaries between 1926 and 1939. Several factors directly affected population numbers: the confiscation of property from wealthy and well-off households accompanied by repression against peasants, the elimination of kulaks as a class, deportations, a poorly structured tax policy based on coercive measures by the Soviet authorities, the mass exodus of Kazakhs beyond the country in search of relief from famine, and, of course, the great tragedy itself – the famine.

There is ample evidence confirming the occurrence of famine in Eastern Kazakhstan. For instance, in the diary of S. Amanzholov, commissioner of the Kazraykom for the Shyngystau District of the Semipalatinsk Region, it was noted: «...People, leaving their homes in search of food, died right on the roads...». The mass death of adults from hunger led to a sharp increase in the number of orphaned children. As of March 20, 1933, there were 7 234 homeless children in the Aktobe Region alone. On March 25 1932 at a meeting of the Special Commission of the Council of People's Commissars on homeless children, a decision was made to distribute 3000 children through the People's Commissariats of Health and Education, of whom 1,100 were sent to Semipalatinsk and the remainder to other cities of the republic. Despite these measures, many children suffered from infectious diseases. Even among those placed in orphanages and boarding schools, mortality remained high. For example, in the Ayagoz District, 401 children died in an orphanage over the course of several

months (Khaidulin, 2001:46).

Such mass mortality sharply reduced the demographic indicators of the region. In the 12th aul of the Abai District, for instance, 1,062 people died in November 1932, while only 82 children were born; in December of the same year, mortality reached 1102 people with only 84 newborns. These data vividly illustrate the catastrophic decline in population numbers (Aymbetov, 1999:65).

As a member of the collegium of the city and district councils of Ust-Kamenogorsk, the director of the Kazakh school, Kusain Orintayuly, was appointed responsible for the placement of settlers arriving from famine-stricken districts. According to him: «The destitute and emaciated people arriving from the Abai and Abralin districts were disembarked from the steamboat onto the shore of the Irtysh opposite the village of Menovnoe. One could not look at them without shuddering – their condition was so terrible. Carts arrived from all directions, and the settlement into Russian villages began. The settlers were accommodated in the settlements of Berezovka, Predgornoye, Glubokoye, Bobrovka, Tarkhanka, Ulbastroy, and during this period Russians and Kazakhs found common ground, jointly making a significant contribution to the revival of the local economy» (Orintayuly, 1997:2).

The policy of pressure on the population and excessive authoritarian dictatorship not only undermined agricultural production but also led peasants in several regions of Kazakhstan to take up arms in protest. Particularly large-scale unrest occurred in the Semipalatinsk District. Between February and May 1930, uprisings spread across Zyrjanovsk, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Samar, Shemonaikha, and Katon-Karagay districts.

In early February 1931, in Village No.6 of the Abralin District, aggrieved peasants led by Yssaq Kemirbayev and Uayda Turgambayev were compelled to openly protest against Soviet policies. A central headquarters of 11 people was established to lead the uprising. By February 14, the movement had spread to all villages of the district, and the number of insurgents reached 700. To suppress the uprising, an operational detachment from the 66th Cavalry Division was sent from Semipalatinsk. In the combat clashes in the mountains, 37 insurgents were killed. In total, 274 people were arrested, and the OGPU collegium issued special verdicts against them during 1931: 86 were sentenced to execution, 137 to 3-10 years in corrective labor camps, 10 received suspended sentences, and another 10 were exiled to various regions of Kazakhstan for 3–5 years.

In February 1931, a popular uprising against Soviet policies also occurred in the Shyngystau District of East Kazakhstan Region (present-day Abai District, EKR). It was led by Saniyaz Medeuov and Emilzhan Toraygyrov, and more than 200 people joined the movement. The uprising was suppressed by the Red Army within the same month. In total, 189 people were arrested, of whom, by the decision of the OGPU «Special Troika» on May 15, 1931, 47 were sentenced to execution, 105 to imprisonment in labor camps, 13 were exiled within Kazakhstan for 3-10 years, and 23 received suspended sentences.

Another large-scale uprising occurred in the Shubartinsky District of Semipalatinsk Region in the first half of March 1931. The primary cause was that heavy meat procurement quotas were placed predominantly on the shoulders of middle and poor peasants. The uprising involved approximately 600 people who rose against Soviet

authorities.

The entry of a punitive communist detachment into the district prevented the uprising from spreading widely. In Village No. 8, the main forces of the insurgents confronted the punitive units and resisted. During the clash, due to the poor armament of the insurgents, seven people were killed. Participants of the uprising faced severe punishments. By the verdicts of the OGPU «Special Troika» on May 14 and June 29, 1931, and June 19, 1932, 28 leaders of the uprising were sentenced to execution, 66 to 3-10 years in corrective labor camps, and 17 were exiled within Kazakhstan for 3-5 years (Omarbekov, 1997:204).

Mass migration of Kazakhs abroad had a significant impact on the ethno-demographic situation in the region. In April 1930, the district office of the OGPU reported the following information on households that relocated to China: «As of February and March 1930, 269 households from the Makanchin District migrated, of which 191 were exclusively collective farm households; from the Zaisan District – 503 households; from the Tarbagatay District – 56 households (data may be incomplete); in total, over two months from the two districts (Makanchin and Zaisan), including the Irtysh-adjacent territories of Semipalatinsk, 839 households relocated, of which 772 were households of poor and middle peasants» (TsDNIVKO. F.578. T.1. D.58. L.16). The same collection of documents notes that from January 1, 1932, to January 1, 1933, 4,460 people (162 households) migrated from the border Tarbagatay District to China, taking 1,865 head of livestock with them. At the same time, it is noted that 741 returnees came back to Kazakhstan from this district (Istoriya Kazahstana, 2005: 65). To corroborate these figures, it is necessary to consider facts recorded in archival materials of the time. In the spring of 1932, a tense political situation developed in the border villages Nos. 4, 5, 6, and 1 of the Tarbagatay District. Within 20 days, 20 households from Village No. 6, along with their livestock, migrated (TsDNI VKO. F.578. T.1. D.58. L.14).

Signs of famine were observed in these villages. The bureau, addressing the issue, issued orders to provide food to collective and individual farmers, as well as to supply them with fish. Thus, the bureau's decision indicates that famine indeed occurred in remote border villages, which forced part of the population to leave the country.

The funds of the regional state archive preserve numerous records of residents from border districts – Katon-Karagay, Zaisan, and Tarbagatay – fleeing to China. Those who resisted arrest were subjected to legal prosecution, while the rest were reviewed at the presidium of the district executive committee and, by its decision, were relocated inland, over 100 kilometers from the border, primarily to the Kokpektinsky District.

In 1931-1932, the population of the Tarbagatay region, unable to endure famine and pressure from the authorities, attempted to migrate to China. The majority were residents of the settlements of Kokpekti, Aksuat, Ayakoz, and Urdzhara. At the border, Red Army soldiers opened fire, and those who survived were forcibly compelled to settle and continue living on their former lands. For instance, part of the population of Aksuat District, who had left the fertile lands of Kyzyltas and Kyzylkesek, were stopped at the border and relocated to Koktal. Their total number was approximately 500 families, or 1,374 people (TsDNI VKO. F.578. T.1. D.58. L.4).

T. Omarbekov, in his book «The Tragedy of Kazakhstan in the 1920s-1930s», provides a detailed account of the problem of migrants abroad. In particular, he gives a brief description of the border districts with China. In 1931, their total number amounted to 11 (previously 16). These were: Alakolsky, Lepsinsky, Oktyabrsky, Zharkent, Kegen, Katon-Karagay, Zaisan, Tarbagatay, Urdzhara districts, as well as parts of the Taldykorgan and Aksu districts close to the border. The total population of the border districts in 1931 was 505 701 people, or 7,33% of Kazakhstan's population. Their social composition was as follows: workers – 25 510; employees – 25 318; collective farmers – 228 387; poor peasants and laborers – 101 924; middle peasants – 79 264; and kulaks – 45 298 (Omarbekov, 1997:206).

A comparison of the 1926 and 1939 population censuses reveals a sharp decline in the number of Kazakhs in East Kazakhstan. By 1939, their number had decreased by 60,000 people compared to the 1926 census, or by 34%. Overall, during this period, the republic lost 1,798,000 Kazakhs, representing 45.8% of the total population. Other nationalities also suffered significant demographic losses, although determining their exact numbers is more difficult due to active migration processes. For example, the Ukrainian population in East Kazakhstan declined by 28.8%, primarily due to famine, migration, and assimilation, as many Ukrainians began to identify as Russian during that period.

Between 1926 and 1939, the total population of the region increased by 7.3%. The main reason was the growth of the Russian population by 97,300 people, or 37%. During these years, the number of Tatars, Germans, and other nationalities also increased. Overall, the Russian population more than doubled, and in the southern districts, it increased 4.1 times. Despite this, the proportion of Kazakhs in the region's total population decreased relative to other groups: from 35.5% in 1926 to only 21.9% in 1939, while the share of Russians, on the contrary, rose from 53.5% to 68.3%. In 11 out of 13 districts (including Ust-Kamenogorsk), the Russian population was the majority. Kazakhs were mainly concentrated in the Tarbagatay, Zaisan, and Ulan districts. According to the 1939 census, the proportion of Kazakhs in East Kazakhstan was 21.6%.

During this period, industrialization led to an increase in the number of towns and workers' settlements. In such settlements, Kazakhs accounted for only 10.8% of the population. Overall, Kazakhs remained predominantly a rural ethnic group, as 89.2% of them lived in villages across East Kazakhstan. Between the 1926 and 1939 censuses, significant changes occurred in the social structure of Kazakhstan's population. The main social groups became workers, employees, and collective farmers. The number of workers and employees increased by 36-48% (Alekseenko, 1994: 7). However, this growth largely bypassed Kazakhs. The reason was that many recent nomads, often illiterate or fluent only in Kazakh, could not become skilled workers. Their labor was primarily used for heavy and unskilled jobs.

When studying changes in the number and social structure of Kazakhs between 1926 and 1939, it is necessary to consider the consequences of the Soviet economic and social policies of the 1920s-1930s. These measures were the primary factors leading to the reduction of the Kazakh population. Famine and mass migration abroad directly affected both the size and social composition of Kazakhs in East Kazakhstan.

Peasant Protest Movements

The methods and practices used to implement the plans of socialist construction in the regions during the 1920s-1930s triggered an uncontrolled wave of peasant protests, directed against violence and arbitrariness during collectivization, grain procurement campaigns, and other actions of Sovietization in villages and rural communities. Peasant resistance to the violence inflicted upon them took various forms, including mass migration abroad and armed uprisings.

In 1928, the authorities planned to dismantle the traditional structure of Kazakhstan by confiscating property and relocating large livestock owners from the indigenous population. The government's actions provoked a mass migration of Kazakh families to China. During the first ten days of August 1928 alone, 260 yurts (families) from the Tarbagatay District migrated (AP RK. F.141. Op.1. D.2067. L.40)

The Semipalatinsk operational sector reported in March 1931 that as a result of the conducted operational measures, the so-called «bandit formations» in the Chingistausky and Abralinsky districts had been largely eliminated. The report stated that in armed clashes, 77 «bandits» were killed, 26 wounded, 199 captured, and 389 people arrested (AP RK. F.141. Op.1. D.5049. L.22-28).

During this period, so-called «bands» operated in East Kazakhstan, including those led by Jizbaev-Kemperbaev with up to 100 members, Balgabayev with up to 200 members, Dmitriev and Kamysov with up to 80 members, among others. Kemperbaev S. K. had once served as a volunteer in the Alash regiment and later worked as an instructor. A rebel headquarters was established within his detachment, directing all actions of the insurgents. The Chingistausky and Abralinsky districts, where the first peasant uprisings occurred, subsequently became the foundation for further rebel movements in eastern Kazakhstan.

Starting from February 1930, the files of those arrested by the security forces began to include charges under Article 58-2, such as «participant in a bandit detachment», «member of an armed rebel organization», «participant in an armed uprising» and similar accusations. The largest uprising in the east was the Tolstoukhov Rebellion, which the OGPU reports referred to as an «incursion of a kulak band». The uprising is considered to have begun on the night of February 19–20, when the OGPU reported that the villages of Krestovka, Proletarka, and Pikhtovy Klyuch were engulfed by a «kulak» uprising led by F. Tolstoukhov, a proponent of Bukharin's theory of the «integration of the kulak into socialism».

Interestingly, as early as December 1929, the party cell of Pikhtovy Klyuch declared: «We, the Pikhtovo-Klyuchevskaya cell, are ceasing all political work disagree with the general line of the party; the party is leading the peasantry to ruin, and therefore we consider ourselves non-party and will be guided by revolutionary conscience». Party documents of the time noted that the anti-Soviet, counter-revolutionary cell «under the strong leadership of F. Tolstoukhov developed its mass work and drew the poor and hired laborers into a «kulak» armed uprising against Soviet power» (AP RK. F.141. Op.1. D.3292. L.131-132).

The Pikhtovy Klyuch cell, in full composition under the leadership of the cell secretary Bochkov, along with three Komsomol members, two party members, demobilized Red Army soldiers, and members of the party from the village of

Krestovka, actively participated in the armed «kulak» uprising. It is doubtful that the label «kulak» accurately applies to this uprising.

Subsequently, Zyryanovsky District was described as a site of the grossest and most egregious distortions of party policy regarding peasant issues, collectivization, and completely intolerable excesses against middle peasants, which escalated into forms of overt criminal abuse and horrific executions. The term «horrific execution» referred to the arbitrariness of local officials in the village of Kutikha, who on 12 March 1930 executed two middle peasants. An excerpt from the minutes of the bureau meeting of the Semipalatinsk Regional Committee of the VKP(b) stated that «the fact of the execution of peasants in the village of Kutikha indicates the infiltration into the cells of this district by alien criminal kulak-bandit elements» (AP RK. F.141. Op.1. D.3292. L.64–66).

The regional party leadership did not address the issue of local authorities' arbitrariness; instead, it focused on the corrosive influence of a counter-revolutionary element that had accidentally come to power, blaming F. Tolstoukhov for having completely «corrupted the party cell». Fedor Tolstoukhov, born in 1887 in the Livensky Uyezd of Oryol Governorate, in the Bogomolo-Platonova volost, was an unusual and interesting figure who ended up in the Bukhtarma region by chance: he was exiled as an SR (Socialist Revolutionary) in 1909. By origin, he was a petty bourgeois, by profession a public school teacher.

During the establishment of Soviet power, he became a communist, a member of the Bukhtarma Revolutionary Committee, and worked in the planning and economic department of the Zyryanovsky District Executive Committee. In defense of Soviet power, he participated in partisan movements, served as commissar of the partisan detachment «Red Mountain Eagles of Altai», and for a time led the Bukhtarma CHON. He was even awarded the Order of the Red Banner.

An attempt to expel him from the party for behavior inconsistent with the norms of communist moral construction was made early in the Soviet period in the district, though the actual expulsion occurred somewhat later. He resided in Pikhtovy Klyuch, Zyryanovsky District. Fedor Tolstoukhov was one of many who believed in the social ideas of the revolution and one of the few who managed to understand how distant communist ideals were from practice. In 1922 he was expelled from the party, and despite a petition from the Pikhtovy Klyuch cell in 1925 to reinstate him, Tolstoukhov himself did not seek to restore his party status.

Mengali Musin, in his work «An Island in the Gulag Archipelago», notes that Tolstoukhov was expelled from the party for «self-interest», and that his wife, a staunch communist, left him (Musin, 2009:16–17).

The aforementioned data do not correspond with the information provided by one of the researchers of peasant uprisings in Eastern Kazakhstan, Alexander Lukhtanov, who reports that Fedor Tolstoukhov, out of great love for another woman, left his first wife. So, who was Fedor Tolstoukhov? Lukhtanov writes: «A farmer, an educated teacher, a local political figure? Perhaps he can be called a people's hero, a defender of the oppressed, and a fighter for justice – a sort of Bukhtarma Robin Hood of the 20th century. In any case, he was a bright personality with a strong character and firm convictions» (Lukhtanov, 2005:17).

In February 1930, the Semipalatinsk OGPU operational office noted in its reports the activities of a counter-revolutionary organization in the Ust-Kamenogorsk, Zyryanovsk, Bukhtarma, Samara, and other districts of Eastern Kazakhstan. The operational summary stated that the organization was led by a former village teacher, a former member of the VKP(b) expelled due to disagreements regarding party policy in the countryside, and a former Red partisan, F. Tolstoukhov. The organization operated under the slogans: «Down with the Communists, long live free labor», «Down with collectivization», «Down with the Five-Year Plan», «We are not against power, but against violence», «Long live a pure Soviet government».

These slogans, used in the uprisings of the 1930s, advocated for Soviet power without Communists, reflecting the thoughts and aspirations of the peasants – an understanding that Tolstoukhov clearly grasped. Active assistants of F. Tolstoukhov included former White officers Klinovitsky, Zenkovsky, and former SR Pautov.

The main goal of this “counter-revolutionary organization” was the overthrow of Soviet power, the dictatorship of the proletariat and Communists, and the restoration of peasant authority. At the beginning of February 1930, during the first operations in the Zyryanovsk district against Tolstoukhov’s group, 92 people were arrested, and 19 weapons of various systems were seized, including 8 rifled weapons and 200 three-line cartridges, among other arms. The uprising, intended to take place simultaneously in all districts, was scheduled to begin on February 16, but OGPU actions disrupted the plans for the organized rebellion. According to unverified OGPU data, approximately 900 people participated in Tolstoukhov’s group, of whom 160 were killed, 70 wounded, 3 committed suicide, and 597 were taken prisoner (AP RK. F. 141. Op. 17. D. 455. L.43–60).

The countermeasures undertaken by the OGPU narrowed the geographical scope of the planned uprising, which affected the villages of Vasilyevka, Zubarevka, and Chistopolye in the Ust-Kamenogorsk district. OGPU reports contained information about a mutiny of the band in the village of Vasilyevka, numbering 50 people; a similar phenomenon was observed in the village of Kondratyevka. From the Ust-Bukhtarma station, a detachment of local activists was dispatched to eliminate the «bandit formation». During the ensuing combat, the detachment was forced to retreat, losing its commander.

Despite the disruption of the initial plans, F. Tolstoukhov’s detachments occupied the villages of Altai, Vasilyevka, and Zubovka. It was only in early March, under the pressure of regular Red Army forces and OGPU units, that they were forced to withdraw. To further prevent Tolstoukhov’s detachments from advancing into the Zyryanovsk and Katon-Karagay districts, a detachment of cadets was sent from Ust-Kamenogorsk to occupy Ust-Bukhtarma, Gusinaya pier, and the villages of Kondratyevka and Zubovka.

With the remaining forces, F. Tolstoukhov moved toward the border with China and was located near the Khabarosuiysky crossing, 145 versts from Chuguchak. As a result of subsequent military clashes, Tolstoukhov was forced to flee to China. The position of the Chinese authorities was noteworthy: on the one hand, they refused to extradite F. Tolstoukhov to the authorities of the Semipalatinsk district, providing him with assistance to return to Eastern Kazakhstan; on the other hand, they issued orders

to their border garrisons to prevent Tolstoukhov's «band» from entering the Xinjiang province (AP RK. F. 141. Op. 17. D. 455. L.186).

The uprising was suppressed already in March 1930, but its echoes continued to manifest across Eastern Kazakhstan. OGPU operational reports occasionally noted attempts by individual members of Tolstoukhov's «band» to infiltrate Kazakhstan. The size of Tolstoukhov's detachment in China reached up to 350 people. Repeated efforts were made by the insurgents to reorganize uprisings, incite border villages and settlements, and obtain food and armed assistance.

In May 1930, a small group of armed men sent from China to the village of Sarsenbai in the Zaisan district to procure provisions was intercepted by a detachment of the 50th border unit. During the ensuing gunfire, a resident of the village of Panteleymonovka, Stepan Yakovlevich Borisov, a participant in Tolstoukhov's «band», was killed. In June, Tolstoukhov's reconnaissance unit crossed the border approximately 50 kilometers southeast of Lake Markakol and moved toward Medvedka in the Katon-Karagay district. Tolstoukhov, together with Klinovitsky, visited several villages in the Zyryanovsk and Ust-Kamenogorsk districts. In September, an OGPU operational group located Tolstoukhov in the area of the Turgusun and Khamir rivers; however, he and his group managed to evade capture.

To eliminate Tolstoukhov's «band», regional authorities carried out work along three main directions. Armed Komsomol detachments and operational groups were established. In parallel, covert intelligence operations were conducted; OGPU agents were embedded within the «band» to internally destabilize it. Efforts were also made to secure Tolstoukhov's voluntary surrender to the OGPU, including sending letters from the Semipalatinsk OGPU district office and from his daughter, Tamara Tolstoukhov.

The Semipalatinsk OGPU district office carried out the final stage of the operation, and as a result of an ambush organized on September 28, 1930, the «Bukhtarma Robin Hood», Fedor Tolstoukhov, was killed. It is possible that, had the planned uprising not been disrupted by the timely operational intelligence obtained by the OGPU, it could have spread more widely. According to archival materials concerning the detainees who were considered by law enforcement agencies to be involved in armed uprisings in the region, including Tolstoukhov's rebellion, Fedor Tolstoukhov consistently maintained contacts with anti-Soviet elements both in Eastern Kazakhstan and in Siberia. The scale of this uprising could have encompassed Eastern Kazakhstan, the Altai region, and Siberia.

According to OGPU reports, 240 kulaks, 252 middle peasants, 92 poor peasants, and 6 hired laborers participated in Tolstoukhov's uprising; among them, 85 middle peasants, 25 poor peasants, and 1 hired laborer were forcibly mobilized (AP RK. F.141. Op.17. D.455. L.43-60). However, it should be noted that during the implementation of the dekulakization policy, villages could not recruit the prescribed 3–5% of kulak households, so these figures are likely unreliable.

On October 19, 1930, a closed session of the Zyryanovsk District Party Committee bureau was held, during which a report on the political situation in the district in connection with the liquidation of the Tolstoukhov movement was presented. The bureau's resolution identified the causes of the uprising as follows: resistance of the

kulak class and counter-revolutionary elements to socialist construction, the presence of extended kinship and a wide economic base among kulaks in the district, the presence of returning «bai» re-emigrants, repressed kulaks from other regions of the republic, and the characteristics of the border area. Notably, there was no mention of violations of legality or the use of violence against the peasantry.

It was proposed that judicial and investigative authorities strengthen repression against the kulak element, which had intensified its counter-revolutionary activity. At the same time, understanding that peasants participated in the uprising, the bureau recommended exercising particular caution in applying repression to poor and middle peasants involved in counter-revolutionary cells, limiting punitive measures only to the organizers within these cells. To prevent future rebellions, the OGPU apparatus was expanded, with its maintenance financed by the local budget (GAVKO. F.139p. Op.1. D.22. L.217).

Conclusion

The history of famine and peasant movements in Eastern Kazakhstan during the modernization of agriculture represents one of the most tragic chapters of the twentieth century. Forced collectivization, accompanied by mass confiscations of property, violent resettlement, and the destruction of the traditional nomadic way of life, led to catastrophic consequences for the rural population of the region. The famine of 1931-1933, mass migration beyond the country's borders, the demographic crisis, and the disruption of the social structure of the aul were direct outcomes of Soviet policies.

Peasant uprisings, which erupted in response to excessive pressure from the authorities and grain requisition measures, occupy a special place in this history. The uprisings in the Abiralinsky, Shyngystausky, Shubartinsky, and other districts of Eastern Kazakhstan demonstrated that collectivization policies encountered not only covert discontent but also open resistance. Of particular note is the uprising led by Fedor Tolstoukhov, which became a symbol of mass protest against Soviet policies and a testament to the peasants' determination to defend their traditional way of life and their right to exist. However, harsh suppression measures by the OGPU and the Red Army resulted in significant human casualties and further strengthened the repressive apparatus.

Thus, the famine and peasant movements in Eastern Kazakhstan cannot be viewed merely as a localized manifestation of the Soviet system's crisis. They were part of a broader Kazakhstani tragedy of the 1920s–1930s, leaving a profound imprint on the collective historical memory of the people. Further study of these events is essential not only for scholarship but also for preserving historical truth, objectively assessing the past, and shaping national identity.

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Istochniki

TsDNI VKO – Tsentr dokumentatsii noveishei istorii Vostochno-Kazakhstanskoi oblasti [Center for Documentation of Contemporary History of East Kazakhstan Region]

AP RK – Arkhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan [Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan]

GAVKO – Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Vostochno-Kazakhstanskoi oblasti [State Archive of East Kazakhstan Region]

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ҚОҒАМДЫҚ-ЭКОНОМИКАЛЫҚ ҚИЫНДЫҚТАРДЫҢ ӘСЕРІНЕН ҚАЗАҚ КСР-ІНІҢ ШЫҒЫС ӨңІРІНДЕ БОЛҒАН ҚАРУЛЫ КӨТЕРІЛІСТЕР

Аңдатпа. Мақалада Қазақстандағы ұжымдастыру және кулактарды қысқарту саясатының әлеуметтік-экономикалық және демографиялық салдары, әсіресе Шығыс өңір мысалында зерттелген. 1926 және 1939 жылдардағы халық санағы деректерін салыстыру негізінде аштық, жаппай көшу және этнодемографиялық құрылымның өзгеруі салдарынан қазақ халқы санының күрт қысқарғаны көрсетілген. Архив материалдары Қытайға көшудің ауқымын, жетім балалар санының өсуін, өлім-жітім көрсеткіштерін, сондай-ақ кеңестік биліктің күш қолдану саясатына қарсы ауыл халқының қарсылық көрсету формалары мен әдістерін талдауға мүмкіндік береді.

Арнайы назар қарулы көтерілістер мен жаппай көшулерге аударылған. Оның ішінде 1930 жылғы Толстоухов көтерілісі, оның ұйымдастырушылық ерекшеліктері, ұрандары және басшысы Фёдор Толстоуховтың рөлі қарастырылған. Ресми түрде қарсылық қозғалыстары «кулактік-бандиттік формирования» деп анықталғанымен, олардың құрамында орта шаруалар мен кедейлер де болғаны көрсетілген. ОГПУ тарапынан қолданылған әдістер: жазалау операциялары, агенттік жұмыс, репрессиялар және көтерілісшілерді іріктеу мен бөлшектеу жан-жақты талданған.

Қорытындылай келе, Шығыс Қазақстандағы шаруалар қарсылығы ауыл шаруашылығының дәстүрлі құрылымының бұзылуы, күштеп коллективизация және мүлікті тәркілеу салдарынан туындағаны, бұл қарсылықтарға жаппай және стихиялық сипат бергені атап көрсетілген.

Кілт сөздер: аштық; Шығыс Қазақстан; шаруалар көтерілістері; әлеуметтік-экономикалық салдары; аграрлық реформалар; коллективизация; ауыл шаруашылығын модернизациялау; халықтық қозғалыстар; әлеуметтік трансформация.

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ВООРУЖЕННЫЕ ПРОТЕСТЫ КАК СЛЕДСТВИЕ СОЦИАЛЬНО-ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИХ ПРОБЛЕМ НА ВОСТОКЕ КАЗАХСКОЙ АССР

Аннотация. В статье исследуются социально-экономические и демографические последствия политики коллективизации и раскулачивания в Казахстане на примере Восточного региона. На основе сопоставления данных переписей 1926 и 1939 годов показано резкое сокращение численности казахского населения в результате голода, массового исхода и изменения этнодемографической структуры. Архивные материалы позволяют проанализировать масштабы переселения в Китай, рост числа беспризорных детей, показатели смертности, а также формы и методы крестьянского сопротивления насильственной политике советской власти. Особое внимание уделяется вооружённым восстаниям и массовым откочёвкам, в том числе Толстоуховскому мятежу 1930 года, его организационным особенностям, лозунгам и роли лидера Фёдора Толстоухова. Показано, что, несмотря на официальное определение протестных движений как «кулацко-бандитских формирований», в их составе участвовали также середняки и бедняки. Подробно рассматриваются методы подавления со стороны ОГПУ – карательные операции, агентурная работа, репрессии и раскол повстанческих групп. Сделан вывод, что крестьянское сопротивление в Восточном Казахстане было вызвано разрушением традиционной структуры сельского общества, насильственной коллективизацией и конфискацией имущества, что придало протестам массовый и стихийный характер.

Ключевые слова: голод; Восточный Казахстан; крестьянские восстания; социально-экономические последствия; аграрные реформы; коллективизация; модернизация сельского хозяйства; народные движения; социальная трансформация.

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