

Panic on the Grain Market: Tashkent in the Autumn of 1893^{*}

ПАНИКА НА ЗЕРНОВОМ РЫНКЕ: ТАШКЕНТ ОСЕНЬЮ 1893 ГОДА

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Abstract: In this research article, an attempt is made to analyze the reasons for the appearance and course of a sharp increase in grain prices in the grain markets of large cities of the Turkestan Governor-General, primarily in Tashkent in the autumn of 1893. In the study of this socio-economic crisis, which took place in the administrative center of the province, various sources and scientific literature were involved. Valuable materials from the National Archive of Uzbekistan, periodicals and scientific literature, including in foreign languages, made it possible to better understand the motives and mechanisms of such a phenomenon, as well as in other large cities of the province, such as Kokand, Samarkand, Verny, etc. ... They also critically analyzed information from the above sources regarding the role and influence on the emergence, price regulation and conflict resolution of the officials of the colonial administration. From this study, it becomes clear how vulnerable the

colonial administration system was and the ambiguous participation of some of its representatives in the regulation of this process.

Keywords. Grain, Bazaar, Prices, Panic, *Batman*, Tashkent, Officials, Quartermaster, Colonial Administration.

Аннотация: В данной исследовательской статье сделана попытка проанализировать причины появления и течения резкого повышения цен на зерно на зерновом рынках крупных городов Туркестанского генерал-губернаторства, прежде всего г. Ташкента осенью 1893 года. В исследование данного социально-экономического кризиса, имевшего место в административном центре губернии были вовлечены разнохарактерные источники и научная литература. Ценные материалы Национального архива Узбекистана, периодика и научная литература, в том числе на зарубежных языках, позволили глубже понять мотивы и механизмы протекания подобного явления, а также и в других крупных городах губернии, таких как г.Коканд, Самарканд, Верный и т.д. Также были критически проанализированы сведения из вышеперечисленных источников относительно роли и влияния на возникновение, регулирования цен и разрешения конфликта чиновников колониальной администрации. Из данного исследования становится ясно, как уязвима была система колониальной администрации и неоднозначное участие некоторые ее представителей в урегулировании данного процесса.

Ключевые слова. Зерно, базар, цены, паника, *батман*, Ташкент, чиновники, интендант, колониальная администрация.

In the second half of the 19th century the Russian Empire conquered Central Asia and founded on this vast territory the Turkestan General-Governorship. In 1876 the former Kokand Khanate was

dissolved and transformed into the Fergana *oblast* and the Khanates of Khiva and the Bukhara became protectorates with limited rights. By the end of the 19th century Turkestan General-Governorship consisted of five *oblasts* or provinces: the Transcaspian , Semirech'ie , Samarkand, Fergana and Syrdarya. The last three were also known as core provinces.

From the beginning of conquest, i.e. since 1865 Tashkent became the military- political, socio- economic and cultural center of Turkestan. The new colonial government began actively transforming the administrative center of Turkestan –Tashkent – as a result the city was divided into two parts - the Asian and Russian. In the Russian part the colonial authorities began building broad and straight streets, various institutions, banks, hotels, hospitals and other buildings of European design. Kaufman and the leading tsarist administrators had designed Tashkent as a symbol of Russia which had the status of a powerful and advanced western empire(Jeff Sahadeo , 2007, p.2).

In the period from 1865 to 1897, the population of Tashkent had doubled, from 76053 to 155673 people (F.Azadaev, 1959, p.128). Already in 1887 14289 military troops were stationed in Tashkent. Also as a result of the resettlement policy 3500 families, mostly landless and land-poor peasants from the interior provinces of the metropole managed to resettle, in the *uezds* of Syrdarya *oblast*. Since its inception in Russian Turkestan the first settlement in 1874 to 1906, i.e. for more than 30 years, the colonial authorities established 65 settlements (A.M.Aminov, 1959, p.125). The following graph provides an idea of the intense growth of the area planted with cotton in Turkestan. From 1888 until 1913 cotton crops increased: In Syrdarya *Oblast* from 25841 to 62691 i.e.by 242%, in Samarkand *Oblast* from 7980 to 31858 *desiatin*, i.e. by 399%, and in Fergana *Oblast* from 34669 to 278897 *desiatin*, i.e. 804%(ibid, p.143).

High-modernist aspirations of new colonial authorities had significantly affected in the agriculture of Turkestan. Favorable climatic conditions guaranteed prosperous business in the commercial

monocultures, especially in cotton growing. After the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861, cotton prices skyrocketed. Russian industrialists petitioned the government to increase the extraction of cotton from Turkestan's Fergana Valley, and, to a limited extent, the government obliged (Matthew J. Thrasher, 2010, p.33). The colonial government of Turkestan, under pressure of big manufacturers from the metropole began making plans for the transformation of Turkestan into a large cotton-growing area. "A state mainly concerned with appropriation and control ... over the workforce and its income, the opportunity to select cropping patterns and techniques, and, finally, direct control over the production and profit of the enterprise" (James C. Scott, 1998, p.338) Russian scientists and travellers as well as state officials who visited or were specially sent to Turkestan, like N.A.Maev (Maev N.A., 1893

), Khoroshkhin A.P. (Khoroshkhin A.P., 1876), Shakhnazarov A.I (Shakhnazarov A.I, 1908), I.I.Geier (Geier I.I., 1882), Girs (Girs Otchet revizuiushchego, 1882), Palen K.K., (Palen K.K., 1910) on behalf of their government before and after the conquest of Turkestan by Russians left important information about the economy of the region, as well as agricultural issues being of high importance.

Of course one can argue about how good or bad Russian Empire was to the peoples of Central Asia during the colonial period. Most of the researchers of the Soviet period exaggerated progressive significance of Russian conquest of Central Asia and diminished its political and socioeconomic consequences (Muhammedzhanov A.R. and Nematov T, 1957; B.I.Iskandarov, 1958; Yu.A.Sokolov, 1965). After achieving national independence it became possible to critically review the recent past history of our country. During these years it was published a series of monographs covering the history of the country through the lens of a critical rethinking of the colonial past (Kh.N.Bababekov, 1990; H.Z.Ziyaev, 1998; D.A.Agzamova, 2008; N.R.Mahkamova, 2009; B.M.Babadzhanov, 2010, etc.)

But my aim is not to support one or another side of this debate. In this study, I will try to give a critical analysis of the socioeconomic consequences of policies of colonial authorities. I'd like to find answers to the following questions:

- To what extent the colonial authorities of Turkestan wanted to collaborate with local communities in the implementation of their modernist projects?
- How did these plans to transform local agriculture address the needs of local population in other crops, such as grains?
- What were the social and economic consequences of cotton production at the expense of grains?

As it is known from ancient times cereals are the basis of traditional food of most people in many countries. This thesis is more than applicable to the inhabitants of the colonial Turkestan. I'd like to introduce my case with reference to Prof. James C. Scott's famous and provocative work "Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Conditions Have Failed".

I will argue - on the example of my presentation - about the social and economic consequences of colonial policies carried out by colonial authorities in agriculture, more precisely the consequences of forcibly introduced cotton monoculture, which increasingly displaced crops - the basis of livelihood of inhabitants of Turkestan.

The Panic: But the situation prevailing on grain markets of Tashkent in the autumn of 1893 is different from similar cases of shortage and high prices of grain which time after time had occurred in previous years at least by three factors: the location, scale, and initiators of the panic. The latter were represented by different branches of the colonial power and therefore of greater interest. With a broad mandate and using administrative and enormous financial resources these individuals were, in my opinion, the initiators and organizers of unprecedented panic on grain market in Tashkent, which had enormous

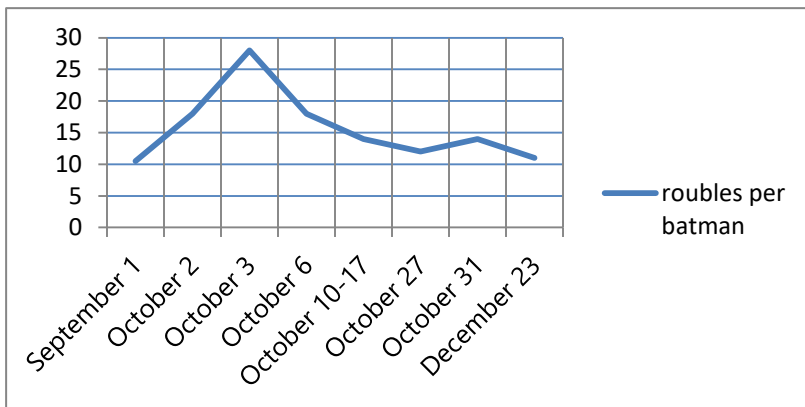
social and economic consequences in all three core *Oblasts* of Turkestan. In the autumn of 1893 grain brought from Semirechie *Oblast* to Tashkent was also exported to neighboring *Oblasts*, particularly to Ferghana, where due to the shortage and soaring of the prices for wheat caused the rise in prices for other food products and services. For example as a statistician of *Turkestanские Вedomosti* under the heading "Local news" wrote - "The people of New Marghelan as the entire Fergana *Oblast*, has been experiencing hard times: already high prices of principal items of goods have been rising day by day. Complaints are heard everywhere; everywhere a question about food is the first issue of the local life (TsGARUz, f.I-17,) ".

So, when the rise in prices of grain started and the dynamics of price increase affected the emergence of panic?

The autumn of 1893 in Tashkent had developed a state of emergency that was associated with extreme increases in grain prices during September and early October, when the price of grain sold in Tashkent markets have risen from 10-11 rubles (September 1) to 28 rubles (October 3) for 1 *batman* of premium wheat (from Aulie-Ata) (ibid) . This has affected all strata of the people in Tashkent, excited abnormally high prices for grain products, especially in the last two weeks (ibid). The market on September 29, 1893 had made a stunning impression on the Kirghiz. The principal suppliers of grains. Most of them, as soon as received money for grain, hurried home to buy more grain in the steppe. A certain trader Mirzabay sent a telegram to Vernyi that the wheat in Tashkent reached 20 rubles and ordered his agents to buy large lot with an emergency delivery in Tashkent. The Kyrgyz promised to bring from Jizzak too, since there wheat was 13-14 rubles for *batman*. On the same day G.Kutateladze, the secretary to the Quartermaster Service, offered Said Karim Said Azimbaev to give him his wheat at 19 rubles, but he refused, despite the fact that he would save

250 *batman* of wheat worth 2,000 rubles (he earlier had bought that wheat at a price of 11 rubles for *batman*).

A certain statistician Baymagomet was sent to the grain market by trade inspector of the Russian Tashkent by a certain Pokaratevskii with a list for collecting some information about prices for food products in Tashkent. He became successively conversing with the Kyrgyz, asking their names and writing down to whom and how much wheat they sold. The mood of the bazaar was so intense that most of these inquiries made even more disturbing action and the price had risen one ruble against what was prior to collecting statistics. The Kyrgyz imagined that the investigation about the sale of wheat by authorities is dangerous and that then they would come to their houses for taking their grains forcibly. In such circumstances the price might rise immediately from the most insignificant reasons. Later the price has increased to 20 rubles and didn't go down that day [16].



During these days the Turkestan District Quartermaster Service officers asked Kazan (Turkestarskie vedomosti No.78, 1893) and Tiflis (Turkestarskie vedomosti No.81, 1893) quartermasters to supply with

provisions, for 27 military units deployed in Tashkent and the surrounding suburbs, and send to Tashkent flour and grits. According to *Turkestan Vedomosti* the Turkestan District Quartermaster Service had asked 10000 *chetvert'* (7 *pud* and 10 pounds (A.M.Aminov, 1959, p.183) of flour and 2000 *chetvert'* of grits from Kazan' and 15000 *chetvert'* flour and 3000 *chetvert'* from Tiflis as well as asked 25000 *chetvert'* of flour and 5000 *chetvert'* of grits were expected to be sent later from the southern *gubernias* of Russia.

The main participants and initiators of the panic

Grain brought to Tashkent bazaars mainly by the Kazakh from Chimkent and Aulie Ata and Vernii *uezds* of Semirech'e *Oblast* were usually purchased by local people to meet their needs as well as wholesale buyers and contractors of Quartermaster Service as provision for the troops stationed in Tashkent.

One of the instigators of the panic, according to reports and records, as reflected in the official correspondence of representatives of the higher circles of the colonial authorities were member of the Tashkent City Duma, a local businessman Arif Khoja Aziz Khojaev and the secretary of the Turkestan District Quartermaster Service certain G.Kutateladze. In many official and private correspondences between the representatives of colonial authorities the names of these individuals most frequently mentioned in connection with their possible role in the panic around the price of grain in city markets.

The former is accused by the city authorities to initiate ruinous games to artificially raise the price of grain to expect in the month of October bids for the supply of the Quartermaster Service food, in particular grain, supplies for the troops, whose contractor he was until recently (A.M.Aminov, 1959, p.183).

Who is Arif Khoja Aziz Khojaev and what is his actual role in this unprecedented situation? First of all, he was a competent and successful entrepreneur, known as son-in-law of *Qadi* Mukhiddin Khoja

who fluently communicated in Russian and often traveled on business trips to European countries. His fortune was close to the mark of one million roubles. His house, located in the Russian part of the city was, by European standards, well furnished (Jeff Sahadeo, 2007, pp.145-146). Who is he - a faithful servant of the "white tsar" or a cunning and enterprising businessman who received lucrative bonuses from cooperation with foreign colonial powers?

Arif Khoja Aziz Khojaev had several times been elected to the Tashkent City Duma and on many issues had his own point of view which was quite different and sometimes contrary to the interests of the majority of Christian faction. When he was accused by some members of the Tashkent City Duma in the speculations with prices in markets, due to panic because of the excessive increase in the price of grain, his opposition to some of the initiatives of the majority of Christian faction has become a profitable circumstance which wasn't neglected of taking advantage of by his adversaries and his and some of his native colleagues were sentenced in absentia to exile in Siberia. In preparing this scenario of events around him particularly zealous was member of Christian faction, certain Billevich (TsGARUZ, f.I-36), who also mentioned Seid Karim Seid Azimbaev, another participant of speculative purchases in grain markets of Tashkent in the autumn of 1893. Arif Khoja Aziz Khojaev survived his "exile" to Siberia and for a number of following years, had successfully been re-elected to the city duma and in the 1910s became even better known now as "cotton baron." Arif Khoja Aziz Khojaev in January of 1893 was awarded a large silver medal for his charitable activities for the residents of Kazala *uezd* during the famine affected by shortage of grain [23].

Later, during sharp rise in grain prices in Tashkent there were rumors in the city very popular among the natives about the possible involvement of Arif Khoja Aziz Khojaev in illegal operations in buying up large quantities of grain. There also were official reports and even

confidential ones addressed to the chief of Tashkent, in particular Lykoshin's. He in his confidential report on September 29, 1893 addressed to the chief of the city of Tashkent reported that Arif Khoja Aziz Khojaev had earlier sent petition to St. Petersburg, which's content wasn't known to others. Apparently it was delayed and not waiting for a satisfactory response to his request, Arif Khoja started speculative purchases of wheat, which were to be stored in his granaries in the outskirts of the city, known as Eski Namazga (TsGARUz, f.I-36).

It is noteworthy that the phenomenon observed in the autumn of 1893, which I call here panic, did not occur in the periphery or in small towns or villages of Turkestan, but in Tashkent, which had already become political and economic as well as cultural center of Turkestan General-Governorship, quickly becoming in real panic and significantly affected the further deterioration of the socioeconomic status of the population not only in the city of Tashkent but in neighboring *uezds* of three core *Oblasts*.

Systematic development of cotton industry had been carried out mainly through the reduction of food crops, particularly cereals, and this had eventually caused a significant rise in the price of grain.

In addition to the causes of meteorological origin, it is important to emphasize the insufficiently considered policy of the colonial authorities aimed at gradual transformation of Turkestan's vast plantations of cotton and relocation of small and landless peasants from the interior provinces of the metropole in Turkestan.

Also, the largest number of settlements was in the Syr-Darya *Oblast*, where the bulk of the settlers were sent: Shymkent *uezd* had already 18 new settlements, in Aulie Ata *uezd* -25, in Perovsk-4 and 11 in Tashkent. Around 3,500 families were settled in these villages increasing the number of consumers of grain.

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