



THE EVENTS OF 1916 IN TURKESTAN

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ABSTRACT. This article examines, from a scientific and theoretical perspective, the interpretation of the protest uprisings that occurred across Turkestan in 1916 as a result of the decree issued by Russian Emperor Nicholas II, as reflected in modern historiography. The article also presents information about the events that took place in Turkestan in 1916.

KEYWORDS: *Tsarist Empire, uprising, Jizzakh uprising, Minister A. N. Kuropatkin, The Jizzakh Uprising epic, eshan, uyezd, volost*

Introduction. As is well known from history, the uprisings that took place in 1916 left an indelible mark on the pages of history. We can learn about these events from the works of historians, scientifically grounded historical studies, and documented facts.

Turning to the uprisings in Turkestan in 1916, on June 25, 1916, Russian Emperor Nicholas II issued a decree “On the mobilization of the non-Russian male population of the empire for labor in the construction of defensive fortifications and military communication routes in the active army zone, as well as for other works necessary for state defense.” This decree became the final catalyst that triggered mass unrest in Turkestan. According to the decree, 250,000 non-Russian men aged 19 to 43 from Turkestan were to be mobilized for rear-line labor. However, even experienced Tsarist officials, including the former Minister of War A. N. Kuropatkin, understood that the decree could not be realistically implemented in Turkestan. Kuropatkin informed his deputy, General Frolov, that since Russia had already been engaged in a prolonged war for two years without any visible end, imposing such a mobilization – especially in the remote regions – was inappropriate and impractical.



The issue of mobilizing men aged 19-43 for wartime labor had not been properly resolved, making its application in Turkestan particularly unjustified [1,6].

According to the decree, 87,000 laborers were to be sent from Syrdarya Province, 38,000 from Samarkand, and 50,000 from Fergana. The ominous news of the Tsar's decree spread across Turkestan at lightning speed, shaking the already suffering and oppressed working population. This was because only the sons of the poor were planned to be conscripted for forced labor.

The compilation of labor conscription lists was entrusted to volost administrators, village elders, and heads of tens (ellikboshi). They used this responsibility for their own benefit. In exchange for large bribes, local officials excluded the sons of wealthy landowners and officials from mobilization, while adding the children of poor families to the lists. Furthermore, with the permission of the colonial authorities, wealthy people and officials were allowed to hire others to replace their own sons in forced labor. Such injustice, inequality, and fraud overflowed the patience of the already impoverished masses, forcing them to rise up. Thus, the nationwide uprising known in history as the Jizzakh Uprising broke out in Turkestan.

The uprising first began on July 4, 1916, in Khojand, Samarkand Province. A crowd of approximately 6,000-7,000 people surrounded the police station and declared their refusal to go to forced labor. Among the leaders were Abdumadaminov, Dadaboy Masharipov, Yahyokhon Qori Alimkhanov, and Eshonkhan Mirza O'rakov, prominent representatives of the people. Women and children also participated. The police opened fire on the demonstrators, killing three people and wounding four. News of this spread rapidly throughout Samarkand Province and beyond.

On July 7, inspired by the Khojand events, an uprising broke out in Dahbed village of Samarkand Province. Several thousand people participated under the leadership of Mullah Usmon Abdurahmonov, Gadoy Abduqodirov, Xolmo'min Xolmurodov, Azizqul Murodov, and Mukhtor Hafizov. The rebels killed Qobulov,



the clerk of the district administrator. Thirty participants led by Usmon Abdurahmonov were arrested and imprisoned. The main center of the uprising was the city and uyezd of Jizzakh.

The people of Jizzakh rose against the humiliating colonial policies of the Tsarist administration. According to the decree, 10,531 people were to be mobilized for labor from Jizzakh Province: 655 from Jizzakh city, 731 from Zomin volost, 2,891 from Sangzor volost, 508 from Sintob volost, and 2,311 from Bog'dod volost. However, these mobilization measures were rejected by the working population, and public anger and hatred grew, turning into a mass uprising.

During this uprising, true heroes who devoted their entire lives to the happiness of the working people emerged, including Nazirkhoja Abdusalomov, Mullah Muhammad Rahim, Ziyokori Abdullayev, Mamasharif Hasanov, M. O'rinhojayev, Musabek To'rabekov, Abdulla Ochilov, and others. During the Soviet period, biased historians distorted and falsified the true nature of the Jizzakh Uprising, portraying it as a purely religious movement [1,7].

Literature review and methods. In writing this article, theoretical-deductive reasoning, analysis and synthesis, and principles of logical consistency were applied.

The national-liberation character of this uprising was deliberately concealed. However, the very Tsarist officers who suppressed the Jizzakh uprising with blood openly acknowledged at the time that it was directed against the Russian government. In a report by the military governor of Samarkand Province, N. Likoshin, we read:

“The protest movement continued to grow; here and there clashes and killings occurred. The explanations and warnings of local officials had no effect on the population. The people had completely lost trust in the authorities, and eventually this movement took the form of an open uprising against the Russian government.”

The recognition by Tsarist Russia that the Jizzakh uprising was a nationwide movement against colonial oppression is also confirmed in other official documents from 1916. For example, one of the indictments issued by the extraordinary military

court established by the Tsarist government to punish the rebels acknowledged that the uprising in the Jizzakh volost was a popular movement.

As stated in that indictment, on 12–13 July the population of Yom Volost in Jizzakh Uyezd rose up and launched a fierce attack – both on horseback and on foot – against the colonial authorities, the volost administrators, and village elders. The policy of intimidation and violence used jointly by colonial and local officials against the people only intensified the hatred and resentment of the working masses [2,28]. “The working people rose en masse in rebellion against national oppression and violence.”

Discussion and results. It has become possible to develop a scientifically grounded and objective interpretation of the history of the 1916 national-liberation struggle in Turkestan. To date, researchers have begun to study this issue in the following main directions [3,78]:

First, reconsidering those aspects of the 1916 uprisings in Turkestan that were previously misrepresented or distorted. Second, examining these uprisings in detail across the three present-day Uzbek regions-Samarkand, Fergana, and Syrdarya and throughout Turkestan as a whole.

In this first direction, particular emphasis has been placed on producing an accurate interpretation of the Jizzakh uprising, which had previously been misrepresented [4,85]. In the press, the Jizzakh uprising–originally a struggle for national liberation–was portrayed in Soviet-era publications as a “reactionary movement.” New data have been published on how the uprising began, developed, and spread to neighboring regions, revealing its tragic consequences.

According to researchers, Soviet literature claimed that the Jizzakh uprising was led only by religious leaders. However, as Hayitboy Haydarov reported, following the decree on forced labor mobilization, 10,531 people were ordered to be mobilized from Jizzakh Uyezd [5,45]. In this situation, the elders of Jizzakh–Ziyokori Abdullayev and Muhammadrahim Abdurahimov–met at Nazirxo‘ja Eshan’s house and agreed to organize uprisings in Zomin, Yangiqurgan, Sangzor,

and Bog'don volosts. That same night, they sent messengers throughout the city to inform the population.

Soviet literature asserted that the uprising was called a "holy war" against Russians by religious figures and that the struggle for national liberation was reactionary. However, such claims are difficult to accept [6,68], as they lack concrete evidence. Many sources that could prove that these movements were aimed at separation from Russia remain unpublished, including the memoirs and documents of Nazir Safarov.

Studies of the 1916 uprisings have so far been concentrated mainly on Syrdarya and Fergana. According to O. Suyunova's research, uprisings in Syrdarya Province were widespread and tragic, although Soviet historiography focused mainly on the July 11 Tashkent events [7,13]. Her work documents mass uprisings in Keles, Chinoz, Qibray, and attacks on railways, as well as harsh repression in Tashkent, Kazalinsk, and Perovskiy uyezds.

Research on the Fergana region also shows that the uprisings were driven not by class interests but by national and popular demands. These conclusions were widely discussed during the 80th anniversary of the 1916 uprisings in 1996, when scholars such as H. Ziyoyev and N. Abdirahimova openly re-evaluated the causes and historical significance of the movement.

Conclusion. In conclusion, the 1916 uprisings in Turkestan arose from the severe hardships faced by the population under Russian imperial rule. Ideological and political oppression caused deep suffering, leaving an indelible mark on the region's history. Further study of these events through newly available sources will continue to reveal new perspectives and historical truths.

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