

Artificial Famine as an Instrument of Demographic Engineering: Structural Violence Against the Crimean Tatar People in 1921-1923

Keywords: Artificial Famine, Crimean Tatars, demographic engineering, structural violence, ethnopolitics, Soviet power, pan-Turkism

Theoretical Foundations: Structural Violence and Demographic Engineering in Historical Analysis

The famine of 1921-1923 in Crimea represents one of the most tragic and devastating episodes in the modern history of the region. However despite its scale and consequences it remains insufficiently studied both in academic research and at the level of state understanding. In this study we use the term "artificial famine" to characterize the events of 1921-1923 in Crimea understanding it as a famine that was exacerbated by deliberate actions of authorities had a differentiated impact on various ethnic groups through discriminatory policies was accompanied by the authorities' refusal to acknowledge the crisis in a timely manner and was used as an instrument for transforming the ethno-demographic structure of the region. Documentary evidence and statistical data analyzed in this research confirm that the food crisis was transformed into a humanitarian catastrophe through conscious actions of Soviet authorities which disproportionately affected the Crimean Tatar people. This aligns with Amartya Sen's¹ concept of "administrative famine" according to which famine occurs not so much due to an absolute shortage of food but rather due to institutional dysfunctions in the resource distribution system.

The real mortality from the artificial famine in Crimea during 1921-1923 is striking in its scale. The Crimean Tatar people as the indigenous people of the peninsula suffered disproportionately compared to other ethnic groups. The disproportionately high losses among the Crimean Tatar

¹ Sen, Amartya, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford, 1983; online edn, Oxford Academic, 1 Nov. 2003), <https://doi.org/10.1093/0198284632.001.0001>, accessed 7 Mar. 2025.

people, — approximately 76% of the total number of deaths ²— compared to other ethnic groups on the peninsula which together accounted for 24% indicate that the artificially organized famine became an effective instrument for transforming the demographic balance on the peninsula. This tragedy often remains insufficiently studied existing in the shadow of the genocide of the Crimean Tatar people in 1944 and therefore does not receive adequate attention.

Nevertheless, as scholars note, the famine in Crimea during 1921-23 was part of a general Russian policy toward the peripheries and non-Russian peoples, and this alone compels us to remember and speak about it. (M. Semena, 2023)³

Historiographical analysis demonstrates the fragmentary nature of research on this issue in academic tradition. The first significant documentary testimony was I.S. Shmelev's epic "The Sun of the Dead" (1923)⁴, based on the author's personal experience and combining documentary precision with a deep emotional understanding of the tragedy. As T.B. Bykova (2021)⁵ notes, this work "is not only a literary monument but also a historical source that reflects the realities of life of the Crimean people during the period of catastrophe."

A historiographical breakthrough in studying this problem occurred in the late 1980s-1990s thanks to the research of A.G. and V.G. Zarubin⁶, who published in 1997 the monograph "Without Winners," where for the first time a comprehensive analysis of the Crimean famine was presented in the context of the Civil War. Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian historians E.B.

² This critically important statistics is based on the analysis of the documents of the Crimean CEC and demographic studies, and will be analyzed in detail in the main part of the work. The disproportion in the scale of losses is one of the most important proofs of the artificial nature of the famine.

³ Semena, Mykola. "Zabuta trahediia. Sto rokiv z chasu masovoho holodu v Krymu v 1921 – 1923 rokakh." [Forgotten Tragedy. One Hundred Years Since the Mass Famine in Crimea in 1921-1923]. KrymRealii, 2023.

<https://ru.krymr.com/a/krym-massoviy-golod-1921-1923-zabytaya-tragediya/32736815.html>

⁴ Shmelyov, I. "Sontse mertvykh." [Sun of the Dead]. Soglasie, no. 1 (1990); no. 1 (1991).

⁵ Bykova, T.B. "Stvorennia Kryms'koi ASRR (1917-1921 rr.)" [Creation of the Crimean ASSR (1917-1921)].

⁶ Zarubin, A.G., & Zarubin, V.G. Bez peremozhstv. Iz istorii Hromadians'koi viiny v Krymu. [Without Winners. From the History of the Civil War in Crimea]. 2nd ed., revised and supplemented. Simferopol: AntikvA, 2008.

Altabayeva,⁷ V.M. Broshevan,⁸ T.B. Bykova, V.N. Pashchenya,⁹ and H. Kırımlı¹⁰ made substantial contributions to the development of specific aspects of the problem, offering original methodological approaches to analyzing this issue.

The research by Turkish and Crimean Tatar historians Nuri Köstüklü (2011)¹¹ and Hakan Kırımlı (2003)¹² is particularly valuable as it introduces a large body of Turkish sources into academic circulation, allowing us to see the tragedy of the Crimean famine in an international context and analyze the reaction of Turkish society and the state to the humanitarian catastrophe in Crimea.

The fundamental source base of the research consists of a large corpus of archival documents including 27 daily reports from the Cheka (GPU) that provide detailed information about the local situation to the Central Republican Commission for Aid to the Starving under the Central Executive Committee of the Crimean ASSR (KrymTSKPomgol). Of particular value are the statistical materials of Pomgol documenting extensive correspondence with regional representatives in Moscow, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey, which allows for reconstructing the international context of the tragedy.

The normative legal basis of the research is formed by decrees of the Crimean Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the republic, resolutions of the Regional Committee of the RCP(b), documentation of KrymEKONO (Economic Conference), and materials of the commission for the confiscation of church valuables. The protocols of the All-Crimean Tatar Non-Party Conference (May 1922) are of fundamental importance as they reflect the position of the Crimean Tatar community regarding the unfolding tragedy.

The theoretical and methodological foundation of the research is a synthesis of conceptual approaches that allow for a comprehensive analysis of the famine phenomenon in Crimea

⁷ Altabayeva, E.B. *Marsh entuziastov: Sevastopol' v 20-30 gody*. [March of the Enthusiasts: Sevastopol in the 20-30s]. Sevastopol: "Teleskop", 2008.

⁸ Broshevan, V.M. *Simferopol': belye i temnye stranitsy istorii (1918-1945 gg.)*. Istoriko-dokumental'nyi khronologicheskii spravochnik. [Simferopol: White and Dark Pages of History (1918-1945). Historical-Documentary Chronological Reference Guide]. Simferopol: ChP GUK, 2009.

⁹ Pashchenia, V.N. *Etnogosudarstvennoe stroitel'stvo v Krymu v pervoi polovine XX veka (1900-1945 gg.)*. [Ethno-state Construction in Crimea in the First Half of the 20th Century (1900-1945)].

¹⁰ Kırımlı, Hakan. "The Famine of 1921-22 in the Crimea and the Volga Basin and the Relief from Turkey." *Middle Eastern Studies* 39, no. 1 (January 2003): 37-88. doi: 10.1080/00263200412331301597a.

¹¹ Nuri Köstüklü. "1920'li Yılların Başlarında Kırım ve Kazan Türkleri'nin Yaşadığı Açlık Felaketi ve Türkiye'nin Yardımları" *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi* XXVII, no. (2011): 293-324.

¹² Kırımlı, Hakan. "The Famine of 1921-22 in the Crimea and the Volga Basin and the Relief from Turkey." *Middle Eastern Studies* 39, no. 1 (January 2003): 37-88. doi: 10.1080/00263200412331301597a.

during 1921-1923. The study applies Amartya Sen's¹³ concept of structural preconditions for famine (2003), according to which famine occurs not so much due to an absolute shortage of food but as a result of institutional dysfunctions in the resource distribution system. Johan Galtung's theory of structural violence (1969)¹⁴ is used to analyze the systematic suppression of the vital needs of the Crimean Tatar people through institutionalized practices. Donald Horowitz's concept of ethno-political conflict (1985)¹⁵ revealed the mechanisms of using ethnic differentiation as a basis for discrimination in food policy. To interpret long-term demographic consequences, Milica Zarkovic Bookman's¹⁶ concept of demographic engineering is applied, which views the purposeful change in the ethnic composition of territories as an instrument of state policy. Rafael Lemkin's¹⁷ expanded concept of genocide, which includes creating conditions that make the existence of a group impossible, is applied to analyze the systemic nature of policies toward the Crimean Tatar people.

The research employs a complex of scientific methods. System-structural analysis allows for examining the famine in Crimea as a multi-level phenomenon determined by interconnected political, economic, and social factors.

The comparative historical method is used to compare the situation in Crimea with similar processes in other regions where Turkic peoples lived compactly (Volga region, Ural), as well as to identify continuity in policies toward the indigenous people of Crimea from the imperial to the early Soviet period. Statistical analysis of demographic data is applied for quantitative assessment of the differentiated impact of famine on various ethnic groups in Crimea. Critical discourse analysis of official documents revealed the ideological foundations and rhetorical strategies for legitimizing discriminatory practices. A microhistorical approach to analyzing eyewitness accounts made it possible to reconstruct the human dimension of the tragedy and everyday survival practices under famine conditions.

¹³ Sen, Amartya, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford, 1983; online edn, Oxford Academic, 1 Nov. 2003), <https://doi.org/10.1093/0198284632.001.0001>, accessed 7 Mar. 2025.

¹⁴ Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167-191. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301>

¹⁵ Horowitz, Donald L. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

¹⁶ Bookman, Milica Zarkovic. "The Demographic Struggle for Power: The Political Economy of Demographic Engineering in the Modern World." New York: Frank Cass Publishers, 1997.

¹⁷ Lemkin, Raphael. *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944.

The study takes into account the following methodological limitations. The incompleteness and fragmentary nature of the source base is overcome through cross-verification of data from various sources. The difficulty of precisely quantifying demographic losses under conditions of irregular statistical accounting and migration processes during the Civil War period is resolved by applying a combined analysis methodology. The subjectivity of eyewitness accounts is minimized through critical analysis of sources of personal origin and their contextualization within the corpus of archival documents. The problem of attributing intentions to historical actors is solved by identifying established patterns in the adoption and implementation of political decisions.

The research implements an interdisciplinary approach integrating methodological elements from various scientific disciplines. Demographic analysis methods are applied to study population dynamics and differentiated mortality rates among ethnic groups in Crimea. Political science tools are used to investigate institutional mechanisms of discrimination and power practices of the Bolshevik regime. Economic history concepts enabled the identification of structural preconditions and long-term economic consequences of the famine. An ethnographic approach is applied when analyzing the specifics of traditional economy and social organization of the Crimean Tatar people which made it possible to assess the depth of the destructive impact of famine on traditional institutions.

The object of research is the complex socio-political phenomenon of artificially organized famine in Crimea (1921-1923) determined by the system of ethnopolitical processes of the early Soviet period. The subject of research is the mechanisms, methods and tools for implementing the policy of artificial famine as a form of ethno-demographic pressure on the Crimean Tatar people including administrative and legal mechanisms for confiscating food resources, institutional practices of discriminatory distribution of food aid, processes of transforming the demographic structure of the region and ideological justification of this policy in the official discourse of Soviet power.

Colonial Continuity: Imperial Russian and Soviet Ethnopolitical Strategies Against Crimean Tatars

A full understanding of the phenomenon of artificial famine in Crimea during 1921-1923 is impossible outside its ethnopolitical context, the roots of which extend into the centuries-old

history of the region. As Jafer Seydamet demonstrated in his fundamental research (*La Crimée: Passé — Présent. Revendications des Tatars de Crimée*, 1921)¹⁸, based on indisputable historical sources, Crimean Tatars settled on the peninsula as early as the 7th century and gradually created a flourishing civilization. Crimean Tatar statehood reached its peak during the rule of the Giray dynasty, when the Crimean Khanate (1441-1783) was an independent state with a developed economy and distinctive culture. (Bekirova et al., 2020)¹⁹

The situation changed dramatically after the occupation and subsequent annexation of Crimea by the Russian Empire in 1783. This period is characterized by a systematic policy of de-Islamization, Russification, and colonization of the peninsula.

Rafael Lemkin,²⁰ a Polish-Jewish lawyer who first introduced the term "genocide," in his fundamental work "Axis Rule in Occupied Europe" (1944)²¹ defined artificial famine genocide as "a coordinated plan of different actions aimed at the destruction of essential foundations of life of national groups with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves." Lemkin's multidimensional concept is not limited to the physical destruction of a population but includes a wide spectrum of destructive practices: political oppression, social suppression, cultural destruction, economic ruination, biological repression, religious persecution, moral degradation, and systematic elimination of national identity.

This theoretical construction, supplemented by Johan Galtung's concept of structural violence, forms a comprehensive analytical toolkit that allows for identifying and decoding the systematic nature of institutional discrimination. In the Crimean context, this synthesized methodological framework provides an opportunity to conceptualize multilevel mechanisms aimed at the methodical undermining of economic, social, and cultural foundations of the existence of the Crimean Tatar people as an integral ethnocultural community.

In his work "Soviet Genocide in the Ukraine" (1953), Lemkin emphasizes the historical continuity of genocidal practices against Crimean Tatars, pointing to "the drowning of 10,000 Crimean

¹⁸ Seïdamet, Djafer. *La Crimée: Passé — Présent. Revendications des Tatars de Crimée*. Avant-Propos de G.-D. Herron. Préface de E. Pittard. Lausanne: Imprimerie G. Vaney-Burnier, 1921. (99 стр)

¹⁹ Bekirova, Gulnara, Andrii Ivanets', Yuliia Tyshchenko, Serhii Hromenko, and Bekir Abilaiev. *Istoriia Krymu ta kryms'kotatars'koho narodu: Navchal'nyi posibnyk*. [History of Crimea and the Crimean Tatar People: A Textbook]. Kyiv: "Kryms'ka rodyna"; "Maister Knyh", 2020. (pp. 194-195)

²⁰ Lemkin, Raphael. 1953. "Soviet Genocide in the Ukraine." Speech at the Ukrainian American Congress Committee. New York: Smoloskyp Publishers (опубліковано в 2008).

²¹ Fainsod, Merle. *Harvard Law Review* 58, no. 5 (1945): 744–47.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1335248>.

Tatars by order of Catherine the Second" immediately after the occupation of the Crimean Khanate in 1783 as one of the early examples of systematic destruction of non-Russian peoples, which subsequently became "a long-term characteristic of the Kremlin's internal policy." Thus, Lemkin views the mass destruction of the Crimean Tatar people as part of a broader and long-term policy implemented by both the tsarist and Soviet regimes, confirming the continuity of these practices in the history of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union.

When analyzing the famine in Crimea, the application of the expanded concept of genocide developed by Rafael Lemkin appears especially productive. While a narrow understanding of genocide is limited to direct physical destruction, Lemkin's approach emphasizes the creation of conditions that make the existence of a group as a sociocultural and economic entity impossible. Applying this theoretical framework to the situation in Crimea allows for identifying the systematic nature of the policy directed against the Crimean Tatar people in 1921-1923 as part of a broader process of suppressing their national identity.

According to the apt expression of the French historian de Lostalot-Bachoué, ²²*"if force can seize with impunity everything that suits it, then there is no longer civilization in the world."* He also noted the continuity of this policy: *"Just as Catherine did not shy away from neglecting the independence of peoples she swore to respect and drowned their countries in blood and fire, today's red imperialists act in the same way toward oppressed peoples, and especially toward the Crimean Tatar people."*

Galtung's concept allows us to understand how structural violence transforms in different historical contexts while maintaining its essence. As Galtung notes, "if people starve when this is technically preventable, then violence is present" (Galtung, 1969).²³

In the official organ of the USSR's national policy, the journal "Life of Nationalities," ²⁴Said Halimov in 1923 gave an accurate characterization of imperial policy in Crimea: "These reasons lie in the colonization policy that tsarist Russia pursued toward all eastern peoples. The Crimean Tatars at the turn of the 18th and 20th centuries owned all of Crimea and the northern districts of the former Taurida Governorate, numbered several million people and, although they used the

²² Seïdamet, *La Crimée*, 45.

²³ Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301>

²⁴ Zhyttia natsional'nostei. Knyha persha. Sichen' 1923. [Life of Nationalities. Book One. January 1923]. Edited by M.P. Pavlovich, M.S. Sultan-Galiev, and I.P. Trainin. Moscow, 1923.

natural resources of the region in primitive ways, nevertheless achieved a fairly high degree of economic prosperity, engaging in gardening, cattle breeding, and agriculture."

Russian imperial policy in Crimea was systematic in nature and aimed at the gradual displacement of the indigenous people. As Halimov²⁵ notes, "their economic decline began immediately after the conquest of the region by Russians. Tatar lands were seized by almost anyone who wanted them—judges, officials, murzas, etc. Huge plots were simply carved out from the possessions of Tatar auls, and the timid Crimean Tatar, under pressure from Russians and later Germans, was transformed into a landless person and pushed back from the rich and wide steppes of Taurida and Northern Crimea into barren and scorched [areas]." This policy is a vivid example of what Galtung calls "structural penetration," when the dominant group establishes representatives within the subordinate group to ensure order, and "structural fragmentation," aimed at dividing the subordinate group (Galtung, 1969).

A deliberate policy of economic suppression can be traced, complemented by cultural and educational discrimination: "Not limiting itself to the economic expropriation of the Tatar population, tsarism did everything for its moral and spiritual degradation. In its endless wars with Turkey, it constantly suspected Tatars of sympathizing with the Turks and carried out mass expulsions of Tatars from their settled places. Any possibility of receiving education in secular schools in the Tatar language was nipped in the bud." The result of this long-term policy was the formation of a deep sociocultural division and alienation: "The consequence of such a socioeconomic and cultural state was not only poverty, ignorance, and backwardness of the lower classes of the population but also deeply rooted distrust, suspicion, even hatred for everything Russian on the one hand, and the undivided dominance over their minds of the clergy and the formed thin layer of national intelligentsia" *Life of Nationalities*, 23.

Galtung emphasizes that structural violence is often complemented by "cultural violence" which serves to legitimize and normalize institutional discrimination through ideology religion language and education. This cultural violence "makes direct and structural violence look and feel right—or at least not wrong" (Galtung 1990). In the Crimean context elements of cultural violence manifested in the ideological justification of colonization policy and subsequent Soviet propaganda that presented Crimean Tatars as "bourgeois elements" and "kulaks."

²⁵ Zhyttia natsional'nostei, 23

According to research by V.E. Vozgrin (2018) at the beginning of the 20th century 60% of Crimean Tatar peasants were landless the area of waqf lands religious endowments decreased fourfold and the illiteracy rate among Crimean Tatars significantly exceeded the empire average. This created structural preconditions for economic and cultural vulnerability of the Crimean Tatar people in the face of subsequent upheavals and is a vivid example of what Galtung calls "structural exploitation" when "interaction between dominant and subordinate [groups] takes place in such a way that the life conditions of the subordinates systematically deteriorate compared to what could have been" (Galtung 1969).²⁶

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²⁷ Zhyttia natsional'nostei. Knyha persha. Sichen' 1923. [Life of Nationalities. Book One. January 1923]. Edited by M.P. Pavlovich, M.S. Sultan-Galiev, and I.P. Trainin. Moscow, 1923.

²⁸ Galtung, Johan. "Cultural Violence." *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 3 (1990): 292. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/423472>.

²⁹ Vozgrin, V.E. (2018). [Reference to specific work]. (pp. 432-438)

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A special role in the formation of the Crimean Tatar national movement was played by the intelligentsia raised on the ideas of Jadidism and reformism of Ismail Gasprinsky. Many leaders of the Crimean Tatar national movement including Noman Chelebidzhikhan Jafer Seydamet Asan Bodaninsky and Asan Sabri Ayzov received education at leading universities of the Russian Empire and Ottoman Turkey and were deeply integrated into European and Eastern intellectual contexts. This determined the moderate character of their political program which combined demands for national autonomy with principles of democracy rule of law and social justice.

The February Revolution of 1917 created conditions for the political institutionalization of the Crimean Tatar movement. According to Halimov, "only when the February Revolution broke out did the Crimean Tatars unite into one 'People's Party' (Milli-Firka), which led broad oral and written agitation among the masses of the Tatar people for the formation of a Crimean Tatar democratic republic and the convocation of a Crimean Tatar representative body, the 'Kurultai,' which gathered in Bakhchisarai" (Ursu, 1999).³¹

The Crimean Tatar national movement, as researcher A.V. Ivanets (2022)³² notes, quickly created all the necessary attributes of statehood: the Kurultai (national parliament) with 79 delegates, a government headed by Noman Chelebidzhikhan, Basic Laws combining European constitutionalism and Muslim law, as well as self-government bodies and military formations.

³⁰ Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3),177. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301>

³¹ Ursu, D.P. *Narysy istorii kul'tury kryms'kotatars'koho narodu (1921-1941 rr.)*. [Essays on the History of Culture of the Crimean Tatar People (1921-1941)]. Simferopol: Kryms'ke navchal'no-pedahohichne derzhavne vydavnytstvo, 1999. p. 15.

³² Ivanets, A. V. . (2021). The struggle of the Crimean Tatars with the state farms on the south coast of the Crimea in 1923 (according to the materials of the literary case "Milly-fi rka" from branch state archive of the SSU). *Ukrainian Peasant*, (26). <https://doi.org/10.31651/2413-8142-2021-26-Ivanets>

However, the October coup of 1917 and the establishment of Bolshevik power led to a radical change in the political situation. In January 1918, the Bolsheviks, using the forces of the Black Sea Fleet, carried out the violent suppression of Crimean Tatar authorities: they disbanded the Kurultai, arrested and executed the head of the government Noman Chelebidzhikhan, and liquidated the system of national self-government (Zarubin, 1996).³³ Galtung emphasizes that structural violence is often combined with elements of direct violence, especially during periods of social transformation, when "vertical division causes and intensifies structural violence" (Galtung, 1969).

³⁴It should be noted that a similar model of liquidating national state formations was applied by the Bolsheviks in other regions where Turkic peoples lived compactly. A revealing example is the situation with Idel-Ural. On November 29, 1917, the National Parliament in Ufa decided to proclaim the state of Idel-Ural. By this time, the future state formation already had an elected parliament, a formed government, its own budget of 1 million rubles, and armed formations (units of Kharbi Shuro). However, on the eve of the official proclamation of the state on March 1, 1918, Soviet authorities carried out the forcible liquidation of the future republic's bodies simultaneously in Kazan and Ufa. (Idil.Realii, 2018)³⁵ (Potulski, 2016)³⁶

Attempts to restore Crimean Tatar national autonomy in 1918-1919 through the creation of the Mejlis Mebusana, the activities of the "Milli Firka" party, and the adoption of the "Regulation on Cultural-National Autonomy" were also consistently suppressed first by the White Guards and then finally liquidated by the Bolsheviks by the end of 1920 (Kirimli, 2022).³⁷

By 1921, when the famine broke out, the Bolshevik leadership had already been actively fighting for several years against the idea of a Turkic Federal Republic, which was formulated back in 1917. The ideologist of the Tatar-Bashkir Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, Galimdzhani Ibragimov, then proposed the concept of creating five states—Kazakhstan, the Caucasus, Turkestan, Idel-Ural, and Crimea — with their subsequent unification into a Turkic federal republic. As

³³ Zarubin, A.G. "Krymskotatarskoe natsional'noe dvizhenie v 1917-1921 gg." [The Crimean Tatar National Movement in 1917-1921]. In *Voprosy razvitiia Kryma: nauchno-prakticheskii diskussionno-analiticheskii sbornik* [Issues of Crimea's Development: Scientific-Practical Discussion and Analytical Collection]. Issue 3, 1-98. Simferopol: Tavriia, 1996.

³⁴ Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 177. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301>

³⁵ (Idil.Realii, 2018)

³⁶ Potulski, J. (2016). Rola panturkizmu w relacjach rosyjsko-tureckich. *Studia Orientalne*, 9(1), 28-58. <https://doi.org/10.15804/so2016102>

³⁷ Kirimli, H. (2003). The famine of 1921–22 in the Crimea and the Volga basin and the relief from Turkey. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 39(1), 37–88.

noted in a Cheka report from March 1921, despite all the measures taken, there was still "an observed activation of pan-Turkist elements striving to unite Muslim regions into a single state structure" (Potulski, 2016).³⁸

These measures fully align with the system of structural violence described by Galtung, where "the center has a monopoly on decision-making across a whole spectrum of topics" (Galtung, 1969).

³⁹Researchers H. Kırımli (2022)⁴⁰ and Köstüklü (2011)⁴¹ convincingly demonstrate that the famine in Crimea represented an element of the large-scale geopolitical strategy of the Bolshevik regime aimed at demographic transformation of key regions where Turkic peoples lived compactly and systematic suppression of national movements.

The famine dealt the strongest blow to the Crimean Tatar people. This caused alarm in the union commissariat for nationalities affairs. Its representative directly stated the need to prevent "the destruction of an entire nation" (TSAK F.R-151. Op. I. D. 2).

Analysis of archival documents conducted by researcher V.N. Pashchenya (2020)⁴² revealed "a clear correlation between the intensity of food confiscation and the degree of activity of national movements in specific regions." This confirms the instrumental use of famine as a means of political pressure.

The targeted nature of the famine and its disproportionate impact on the Muslim population is evidenced by an appeal from the leaders of the Muslim community of Russia. In a letter dated April 17, 1922, addressed to the Central Committee of the Red Crescent Society, the head of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia, Qadi Rizaiddin bin Fakhreddin, and the head of the Commission for Aid to the Starving, Keshshafuddin Terjumani, described the catastrophic situation:

³⁸ Potulski, J. (2016). Rola panturkizmu w relacjach rosyjsko-tureckich. *Studia Orientalne*, 9(1), 28-58. <https://doi.org/10.15804/so2016102>

³⁹ Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 178. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301>

⁴⁰ Kırımli, "The Famine of 1921-22," p 45.

⁴¹ Nuri Köstüklü. "1920'li Yılların Başlarında Kırım ve Kazan Türkleri'nin Yaşadığı Açlık Felaketi ve Türkiye'nin Yardımları" *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi XXVII*, no. (2011): 293-324.

⁴² Pashchenia, V.N. *Etnosotsial'noe razvitie v Krymu v pervoi polovine XX veka (1900-1945 gg.)*. [Ethno-social Development in Crimea in the First Half of the 20th Century (1900-1945)]. p. 155.

"As you know, after the terrible world war that lasted from 1914, as a result of the civil war that followed, Russia suffered destruction. As a result of the horrific events that lasted seven years, the population of Russia found itself in extreme poverty. In the spring of 1921, a disaster unseen in world history, a nightmare of famine unheard of in legends, fell upon people struggling with a thousand difficulties in this poverty. Those who are not properly familiar with the situation here cannot truly imagine the terrible picture of the disaster of 'famine'." (Köstüklü, 2011)

⁴³Abdullah Bey, one of the most important representatives of the northern Turks who arrived in Turkey to collect aid, as a person who personally experienced the famine, made these observations about the current situation and causes in places other than Crimea: "...The situation of Muslims is especially dire. Since the fertile lands that were in the hands of Muslims during the tsarist era were seized by the government and given to Russian settlers brought from Ukraine, Muslims who remained on infertile lands cannot even grow vegetables and in the full sense of the word are dying of hunger. Of the starving, whose total number reaches millions, twelve million are pure-blooded Turkic Muslims of the Hanafi madhhab." (Yenigün, 1922)⁴⁴

The issue of protecting starving Turkic children in Russia was brought to the tribune of the Grand National Assembly by Ismail Subhi Bey from Soysal, who had recently returned from Russia. While in Russia, Ismail Subhi Bey personally observed the disaster of famine and was deeply affected by what he saw. The following statements were included in Soysalli's petition to the Grand National Assembly on April 3, 1922: "The famine in the Ural and Volga regions of Russia is so terrible that it makes one shudder. The greatest suffering is experienced by Bashkir Muslims, Tatars, and Kazakh-Kyrgyz people" (TKDMA, file no. 331-5/1922.).⁴⁵

Analysis of archival materials establishes that Muslim Turkic peoples became the main victims of this policy both in Crimea and in the northern regions—Kazan, the Volga basin, and the foothills of the Ural Mountains, and later throughout the Don basin and Ukraine. The number of people affected by the disaster, although figures are contradictory, far exceeds 30 million for the

⁴³ Köstüklü 2011, 299;

⁴⁴ Aç Kardeşlerimizin Murahhasları Şehrimizde." Yenigün, 28 Temmuz 1922.

⁴⁵ Many of these refugees were settled in what was left of the former houses of the Molokans who had previously emigrated from the Kars and Ardahan districts to Russia. The refugees were living there in total penury and destitution. The Eastern Army which seemed to be the only authority dealing with their problems desperately asked for urgent aid in food, cloth, seed wheat, and domestic animals for this people. 'From the Deputy Commander of the Eastern Front to the Ankara Delegation of the Red Crescent, 26 Feb. 1923', TKDMA (Etimesgut, Ankara), dosya no. 331-5/1922. (From the Deputy Commander of the Eastern Front to the Ankara Delegation of the Red Crescent, 26 Feb. 1923." TKDMA (Etimesgut, Ankara), dosya no. 331-5/1922.)

entire period of famine. (Fisher, 1927) ⁴⁶The number of deaths from famine is estimated at approximately ten million. About a third of this number died directly from starvation, while most others, seriously weakened by hunger, were killed by diseases that raged in the devastating conditions of famine. (Weissman, 1974; Pipes, 1995)⁴⁷

Further in the same letter, the leaders of the Muslim community specifically noted that "the Muslim Turks living in Crimea and in the north—in Kazan, the Volga basin, and the foothills of the Ural Mountains—suffered the most" from this disaster, and that "twelve million people from the Turkic-Muslim peoples of Tatars, Bashkirs, and Kyrgyz are awaiting death from starvation" (Köstüklü, 2018).⁴⁸

According to H. Kirimli's⁴⁹ assessment, "famine dealt its most terrible and heaviest blow to the Volga basin and the foothills of the Ural Mountains. These places have been the habitation of Turkic tribes and Muslim peoples since ancient times... So Muslims living in the Volga basin and along the Urals constitute the most unfortunate of Russia's starving. Indeed, the tragedies experienced by Muslims in these places represent the most terrible picture of famine in Russia."

Thus, the historical perspective allows us to trace the continuity of policy toward Crimean Tatars from the imperial period to the Soviet era. If in the 18th-19th centuries the main instruments were economic displacement and cultural discrimination, in the 1920s the use of famine as an instrument of ethno-demographic pressure was added to them.

According to H. Kirimli's⁵⁰ conclusion (2022), "the famine of 1921-1923 in Crimea, as in other regions with Turkic populations, became a logical continuation of this policy aimed at destroying any manifestations of national self-determination."

The 1917 revolution activated the Tatar national movement which sought to restore its cultural and political rights often in alliance with Ukrainian nationalists (Ekelchik, 2019)⁵¹. This alliance was significant in the Crimean context as both groups fought against external domination and strived for political autonomy in the face of foreign and imperial pressure from Russia.

⁴⁶ Fisher, Harold H. *The Famine in Soviet Russia, 1919–1923*. New York: Macmillan, 1927. pp.496–500.

⁴⁷ Herbert Hoover and *Famine Relief to Soviet Russia: 1921–1923* (Stanford, 1974), p.5; Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime* (New York, 1995), p.411.

⁴⁸ Köstüklü 2011, 299

⁴⁹ The famine of 1921-22 in the Crimea and the Volga basin and the relief from Turkey, 68

⁵⁰ The famine of 1921-22 in the Crimea and the Volga basin and the relief from Turkey, 62

⁵¹ Yekelchik, S. (2019). The Crimean exception: modern politics as hostage of the imperial past. *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, 46(3), 304-323. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18763324-04603005>

The ethnopolitical context thus appears to be a fundamental prerequisite for understanding the essence and mechanisms of the famine in Crimea during 1921-1923 which had a disproportionately strong impact on Crimean Tatars and had long-term demographic economic and cultural consequences.

After suppressing the movement for national autonomy of Crimean Tatars in 1918 the Bolshevik leadership began implementing a systematic policy to weaken the economic and demographic potential of the indigenous people of Crimea. This policy was carried out through a number of institutional mechanisms that consistently exacerbated the food crisis and transformed it into a large-scale demographic catastrophe.

For a complete understanding of the ethnopolitical context of the 1917-1923 famine it is important to consider the events of the Civil War period which demonstrate the systemic nature of violence against the Crimean Tatar people. Evidence from that period shows how various political forces continuing the colonization logic applied punitive measures against the indigenous people of the peninsula.

The events of April 1918 are particularly revealing, when Red Guard detachments carried out organized punitive operations against Crimean Tatars.

Applying Donald Horowitz's theory of ethnopolitical conflict to the situation in Crimea allows us to trace how ethnicity was used as a basis for institutional discrimination and violence long before the famine of 1921-1923. The policy of systematic pressure on the Crimean Tatar people manifested already in the events of 1918, when Bolshevik forces used the ethnic factor to suppress any manifestations of Crimean Tatar autonomy.

Documented cases of violence against Crimean Tatars in April 1918 represent a vivid example of what Horowitz calls the "phase of active discrimination" when the dominant group uses the state apparatus for direct violence against an ethnic minority. Witness Lidia Lomakina told investigator I.A. Bunin about the events in Kiziltash: "After approaching the village the Red Guards and Greeks placed machine guns at various points on the highway and began shelling the village at the same time they started fires... that same day the Red Guards and Greeks began catching Tatars and shooting at them two or three days after that the village was set on fire in the center... the fire spread to the entire so-called Old-Mosque part of Kiziltash in which up to 20 houses burned down the fire also destroyed all property that was in them." The population fled in fear. The witness stated that "a small gang of Red Guards consisting of

Greeks from Gurzuf... terrorized the inhabitants of the village committing murders and executions of Tatars burning their houses looting property and other violence..." In the settlement 13 residents were executed. Their corpses were found in graves and common pits mutilated "some had ears and noses cut off heads smashed with rifle butts..." it was noticeable that they were beaten with stones. (V. Zarubin, 2013)⁵²

A particularly shocking fact is that the Red Guards deliberately fired on the civilian population including women children and the elderly. The torpedo boat "Hajibey" which approached Alushta unleashed artillery fire on the city and on its return subjected coastal settlements with predominantly Tatar people to artillery bombardment. This fact of deliberate use of heavy weapons against civilian objects is especially important in the context of Lemkin's concept of genocide which views such actions as an element of intentional destruction of a national group.

These actions fully correspond to what Rafael Lemkin⁵³ later defined as elements of genocide aimed at destroying the "essential foundations of life of national groups." Particularly illustrative in this context are deliberate attacks on cultural and religious objects and figures: "In Gurzuf more than 60 elderly Tatars were killed their bodies left unburied on roads streets and in vineyards. Relatives who dared to search for their killed loved ones often had to stop searching due to threats from Red Army soldiers. Conducting burials was dangerous there was no mercy even for clergy in Gurzuf and Nikita two mullahs were killed during funeral services." (V. Zarubin, 2013)⁵⁴

The scale of violence in Alushta where Red Guards entered on April 24, 1918 demonstrates the purposeful nature of ethnic terror: "After shelling Alushta with artillery fire from the torpedo boat enraged... sailors breaking the resistance of the rebels burst into the town. Spreading out in pursuit of the retreating through its narrow streets they indiscriminately cut down all Tatars who happened to cross their path." (Zarubin, 2013)⁵⁵ Tatars of Alushta testified that a group of Red Guards breaking into the house of Bekir Memedov declared: "you will fight 100 more times but for each Greek killed we will kill 100 Tatars we have slaughtered all of Gurzuf and will now cut all

⁵² Zarubin, V.G. Proekt "Ukraina". Krym v gody smuty (1917–1921 gg.). [Project "Ukraine". Crimea During the Years of Turmoil (1917-1921)]. Moscow: Folio, 2013. p. 295.

⁵³ Lemkin, Raphael. *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944.

⁵⁴ Zarubin, V.G. Proekt "Ukraina". Krym v gody smuty (1917–1921 gg.). [Project "Ukraine". Crimea During the Years of Turmoil (1917-1921)]. Moscow: Folio, 2013. p. 296.

⁵⁵ Zarubin, V.G. Proekt "Ukraina". Krym v gody smuty (1917–1921 gg.). [Project "Ukraine". Crimea During the Years of Turmoil (1917-1921)]. Moscow: Folio, 2013. p. 297.

of you." Seven men were taken away in an unknown direction and no one ever saw them again. (Zarubin, 2013)⁵⁶

According to Hafiz Shamrat's testimony to the Kurultai investigative commission, "all wounded in the hospitals numbering 600 people were given weapons and in addition all workers of the city and surroundings were armed. They shouted 'give us the Tatars!' (...) Greeks went armed through houses and led Tatars away." (Zarubin, 2013)⁵⁷ Anti-Tatar pogroms were also recorded in Nikita, Derekoy (now part of Yalta), Yalta, Alupka, and smaller settlements. A special commission investigating Bolshevik atrocities after summarizing facts collected by the Kurultai investigative commission concluded in Ekaterinodar in the summer of 1919: "In two or three days of April more than 200 peaceful residents were killed property precisely registered as destroyed amounted to 2,928,000 rubles. The total damage caused by the Bolsheviks to the Tatar population of Alushta, Kiziltash, Derekoy, Alupka, smaller settlements according to approximate calculations exceeds 8,000,000 rubles. Thousands of residents were left destitute." (Zarubin, 2013)⁵⁸

These events illustrate according to Donald Horowitz's⁵⁹ theory how ethnicity served as the basis for institutional discrimination and violence in Crimea. They also demonstrate the continuity of colonization policy from the imperial period to the early Soviet era which corresponds to Milica Zarkovic Bookman's⁶⁰ concept of demographic engineering where demographic changes are the result of deliberate state actions.

The consequences of the 1918 events and persecutions of the Crimean Tatar people laid a deep foundation for the subsequent catastrophe of 1921-1923. From the perspective of Donald Horowitz's theory of ethnopolitical conflict, these events demonstrate a persistent pattern of discrimination and violence based on ethnicity that persisted regardless of changes in political regimes. The ethnopolitical context thus is a key element for understanding the nature of famine in Crimea. It indicates that the famine was not an accidental consequence of economic difficulties or natural factors but represented a continuation of a historically established systemic

⁵⁶ Zarubin, V.G. Proekt "Ukraina". Krym v gody smuty (1917–1921 gg.). [Project "Ukraine". Crimea During the Years of Turmoil (1917-1921)]. Moscow: Folio, 2013. p. 300.

⁵⁷ Zarubin, V.G. Proekt "Ukraina". Krym v gody smuty (1917–1921 gg.). [Project "Ukraine". Crimea During the Years of Turmoil (1917-1921)]. Moscow: Folio, 2013. p. 301.

⁵⁸ Zarubin, V.G. Proekt "Ukraina". Krym v gody smuty (1917–1921 gg.). [Project "Ukraine". Crimea During the Years of Turmoil (1917-1921)]. Moscow: Folio, 2013. p. 304.

⁵⁹ Horowitz, Donald L. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

⁶⁰ Bookman, Milica Zarkovic. "The Demographic Struggle for Power: The Political Economy of Demographic Engineering in the Modern World." New York: Frank Cass Publishers, 1997.

policy of ethnic pressure. Already by 1920 the Crimean Tatar people were in a state of extreme economic and social vulnerability which determined their disproportionately high losses in the following years. Examining the specific political mechanisms that transformed this vulnerability into a large-scale humanitarian catastrophe requires separate detailed analysis.

This historical context demonstrates that by the time Bolshevik power was established in Crimea the Crimean Tatar people were already in a state of economic and political vulnerability due to the long-standing discriminatory policy of the tsarist regime and subsequent events of the Civil War. However it was the political decisions and administrative measures of the Bolshevik leadership implemented after the final capture of the peninsula in November 1920 that became direct catalysts for transforming the economic crisis into a large-scale humanitarian catastrophe. Let us examine the specific political mechanisms that caused the emergence and deepening of artificial famine in Crimea.

Institutional Mechanisms of Deprivation: Soviet Policy and the Criminalization of Survival

The most important factor that catalyzed the implementation of the Bolshevik leadership's ethno-demographic strategy and determined the large-scale nature of the famine was the unprecedented political instability of the Crimean peninsula from 1917 to 1920. As A.G. and V.G. Zarubin (1997)⁶¹ note in their fundamental research, the frequent change of political regimes was accompanied by multiple requisitions and confiscations that consistently undermined the economic potential of the region. Historian V.M. Broshevan (2009)⁶² emphasizes that each new authority conducted a policy of maximum extraction of material and food resources, often completely ignoring the needs of the local population. According to research by H. Kirimli (2022)⁶³, 1920 proved especially destructive, when Crimea's resources were extremely depleted by the need to supply the armies of General Denikin, then General Wrangel, and hundreds of thousands of refugees seeking shelter on the peninsula. During this

⁶¹ Zarubin, A.G., & Zarubin, V.G. *Bez pobeditelei. Iz istorii Grazhdanskoi voyny v Krymu*. [Without Winners. From the History of the Civil War in Crimea]. 2nd ed., revised and supplemented. Simferopol: AntikvA, 2008.

⁶² Broshevan, V.M. *Simferopol': belye i temnye stranitsy istorii (1918-1945 gg.)*. Istoriko-dokumental'nyi khronologicheskii spravochnik. [Simferopol: White and Dark Pages of History (1918-1945). Historical-Documentary Chronological Reference Guide]. Simferopol: ChP GUK, 2009.

⁶³ Kirimli, Hakan. "The Famine of 1921-1922 in the Crimea and the Volga Basin and the Relief from Turkey." *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2003, pp. 37-88.

period, as T.B. Bykova (2021)⁶⁴ states, all the prerequisites for the subsequent humanitarian catastrophe formed in the territory weakened by years of military-political instability, and as researcher V.M. Broshevan (2009)⁶⁵ notes, "in 'White' Crimea, anarchy, corruption, and epidemics, especially typhus, prevailed."

Modern research allows us to reconstruct the course of transformations carried out in Crimea within the framework of new "revolutionary" principles. During this period, nationalization of industrial enterprises, banking institutions, and housing stock was conducted. Simultaneously, property confiscations were carried out and campaigns aimed at "extracting surpluses from representatives of the bourgeoisie" were organized, which essentially represented systematic looting under the cover of revolutionary rhetoric.

One of the key instruments of economic suppression of the Crimean Tatar people was the liquidation of waqf land ownership. Waqfs which represented religious foundations played a crucial role in financing Muslim educational and religious institutions such as mektebs and madrasas which were centers of Crimean Tatar culture and enlightenment. According to research by Zarubin (2013)⁶⁶ by 1917 about 80 thousand desiatinas of waqf lands remained in Crimea although earlier in 1803 their area was approximately 300 thousand desiatinas. However even these remaining lands were nationalized without any compensation based on the decree of the Crimean Revolutionary Committee dated February 16, 1921. This decision led to the mass closure of mektebs and madrasas which dealt a significant blow to the cultural and educational life of the Crimean Tatar people (Halimov, 1923)⁶⁷. Thus the liquidation of waqfs became not only an economic but also a cultural blow that undermined the traditional institutions of Crimean Tatars (Halimov, 1923).⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Bykova, T.B. "Orhanizatsiia Kryms'koi sotsialistychnoi radians'koi respubliky u 1919 r." [Organization of the Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic in 1919]. *Problemy istorii Ukrainy XIX — pochatku XX st.* [Problems of the History of Ukraine of the 19th - Early 20th Centuries]. Kyiv, 2005. Issue 11, pp. 132-146.

⁶⁵ Broshevan, V.M. *Simferopol: White and Dark Pages of History (1918-1945)*. Historical-Documentary Chronological Reference Guide. Simferopol: ChP GUK, 2009, 84.

⁶⁶ Zarubin, V.G. *Project "Ukraine". Crimea During the Years of Turmoil (1917-1921)*. Moscow: Folio, 2013.

⁶⁷ *Life of Nationalities. Book One. January 1923*. Edited by M.P. Pavlovich, M.S. Sultan-Galiev, and I.P. Trainin. Moscow: People's Commissariat for Nationalities Affairs, 1923, 125.

⁶⁸ *Life of Nationalities. Book One. January 1923*. Edited by M.P. Pavlovich, M.S. Sultan-Galiev, and I.P. Trainin. Moscow: People's Commissariat for Nationalities Affairs, 1923, 126.

By Order No. 9 of November 19, 1920, pedigree livestock was nationalized. A local government memo stated: "In a short time this led to the decline of all private breeding groups and schools for developing new breeds of cattle that traditionally belonged to Tatar farms" (Bykova, 2011).⁶⁹

Simultaneously looting and mass requisitions of bread and cattle continued to feed the enormous mass of troops. Unbridled embittered by losses and half-starved Red Army soldiers poorly maintained military discipline. They robbed not only the wealthy. A characteristic complaint came to Revolutionary Committee member S.M. Memetov from Bakhchisarai: "The actions of punitive organs have taken on a chauvinistic character. Arrests are taking place without any grounds products goods furniture etc. are being requisitioned." The Revolutionary Committee issues one after another orders on property confiscation surrender of foreign currency collective responsibility of the population for the integrity of railway tracks and structures general labor duty. On January 17 1921 food rationing is established: a bread ration from 22.5 to 37.5 pounds per month (1 pound equals 400 grams) sugar half a pound salt one pound. From spring real famine begins in Crimea. Its causes are "sharp reduction of land areas deterioration of land cultivation unfavorable weather conditions." But this is not all. Although the NEP was announced in spring prodrazverstka (food requisitioning) continues in Crimea: from the impoverished countryside virtually all grain was removed including the seed fund totaling about 3 million poods. While mass executions affected mainly Russians the victims of famine were predominantly the Tatar people. In total 100-110 thousand people died from hunger in 1921-1922. "More than all others" V. Ibrahimov Chairman of the Central Executive Committee later wrote "the Tatar people suffered from hunger." (Ursu, 1999)⁷⁰

As Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev notes in his memorandum: "One of the incorrect actions of Soviet power in Crimea which only disorganized its proper establishment was also the so-called extraction of surpluses from the bourgeoisie. Having emerged and begun in the center (Simferopol) it quickly spread to the provinces and in some places turned into a chronic disease. It was conducted terribly disorganized and resembled robbery rather than extraction" (Bekirova, 2020)⁷¹. Sultan-Galiev noted that they took absolutely everything leaving only one set of underwear: "I personally happened to witness such 'extraction' in Alupka. All party and Soviet workers performed this work... Armed detachments of Red Army soldiers conducted the

⁶⁹ Bykova, T.B. Creation of the Crimean ASSR (1917-1921). Kyiv, 2011, 135.

⁷⁰ Ursu, D.P. Essays on the History of Culture of the Crimean Tatar People (1921-1941). Simferopol: Crimean Educational-Pedagogical State Publishing House, 1999, 13-14.

⁷¹ History of Crimea and the Crimean Tatar People. A Textbook. / Bekirova G., Ivanets A., Tyshchenko Yu., Hromenko S., Abilaiev B. Kyiv: "Crimean Family"; "Master Books", 2020, 114.

extraction. For some reason the Red Army soldiers were all drunk... The distribution of confiscated items was also disorganized. For example in Simferopol the Tatar poor despite their terrible need (women walk in sacks barefoot and half-naked) received absolutely nothing. Meanwhile Tatars contributed many of the extracted surpluses such as pillows and sheets which serve them instead of furniture."

In his memorandum Sultan-Galiev emphasized that "The national question is fundamentally resolved incorrectly. The land question is also resolved incorrectly as well as the food question. The local population is wronged in all respects... Soviet power deprived them of all reserves of wine tobacco and fruits leaving nothing in return... Soviet power and communism are a new form of imperialism which is built on the denial of property rights and therefore is even more powerful and formidable than before this is the poisonous thought that poisons the consciousness of Crimean Tatars who are dying from hunger and tuberculosis." (Bekirova, 2020)⁷²

According to Professor Bekir Choban-Zade a witness to the events and later a member of the Crimean Central Executive Committee "Bolshevik detachments conducted mass searches and arrests in the Tatar quarters of Simferopol and other cities during which food supplies intended for the population were seized. Already then the foundation was laid for the future famine" (Ursu, 1999)⁷³

Thus with the establishment of Soviet power in November 1920 the situation did not improve but on the contrary worsened due to the introduction of the harsh policy of "war communism." As reported in his memo by Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev a representative of the People's Commissariat for Nationalities who visited the peninsula "The food situation worsens day by day. The entire Southern region predominantly inhabited by the Tatar people is now literally starving... In Tatar villages cases of death from starvation are already observed. Child mortality is especially increasing. At the regional conference of women of the East Tatar women delegates indicated that Tatar children 'are dying like flies'" (Bekirova, 2017).⁷⁴ The report of the plenipotentiary commission of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and Council of People's

⁷² History of Crimea and the Crimean Tatar People. A Textbook. / Bekirova G., Ivanets A., Tyshchenko Yu., Hromenko S., Abilaiev B. Kyiv: "Crimean Family"; "Master Books", 2020, 111.

⁷³ Ursu, D.P. Essays on the History of Culture of the Crimean Tatar People (1921-1941). Simferopol: Crimean Educational-Pedagogical State Publishing House, 1999, 13.

⁷⁴ History of Crimea and the Crimean Tatar People. A Textbook. / Bekirova G., Ivanets A., Tyshchenko Yu., Hromenko S., Abilaiev B. Kyiv: "Crimean Family"; "Master Books", 2020. 200 p. with illustrations. ISBN 978-617-7652-49-5, 111.

https://crimeantatarfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/Istoriia_Krymu_ta_krymskotatarskoho_narodu.pdf

Commissars of the RSFSR dated January 16, 1922 stated: "Both member of the Presidium of Pomgol VTSIK comrade Belkin and comrade Kalinin who was here became convinced of the difficult situation of Crimea and the danger of applying pressure to it at all costs"(Zarubin).⁷⁵ These testimonies indicate that the highest leadership of the RSFSR was informed about the critical situation. The new terror, led by Bela Kun, Zemlyachka, and other Leninists, did not cease until 60,000 Tatars were executed. This took almost a year, only after which some semblance of legality was established. This is how Lenin's November (1920) directive to "digest" the main population of the peninsula was implemented (See in: Vozgrin V. E., 1992, 424). As the future showed, it was still subject to replacement by Slavic-speaking settlers. This task seemed relevant because there were still enough Tatars to maintain old traditions. The indigenous people did not succumb to the general epidemic of so-called labor enthusiasm and communist ideologization. In this regard, mass (already Stalinist) terror resumed here not in the 1930s, but in the 1920s with the execution of the first chairman of the Crimean Central Executive Committee, Veli Ibraimov. Then 3,500 people of the Crimean Tatar creative intelligentsia and clergy, tens of thousands of the most educated and promising youth were shot or exiled. They were followed by 36,000 individual farmers and "kulaks" who did not want to join the collective farms.(Vozgrin V. 1994)⁷⁶.

Analyzing the mechanisms for creating the preconditions for artificial famine in Crimea, it is appropriate to apply Amartya Sen's concept of the structural preconditions for famine. According to Sen, famine is not so much the result of an absolute shortage of food as the consequence of institutional dysfunctions that lead to disruption of food resource distribution mechanisms. In his work "Poverty and Famines" (1981)⁷⁷ Sen argues that famine occurs primarily due to violation of "entitlements" of various ethnic groups to access food. In the Crimean context of 1921-1923 we observe a classic example of such an "entitlement failure": the Crimean Tatar people were deprived of access to food not because of its physical absence but as a result of deliberate policy to undermine economic mechanisms that ensured their survival. Nationalization of waqf lands prohibition of private trade in wine and tobacco confiscation of livestock—all these measures led to the destruction of the traditional resource distribution system that guaranteed food security for the Crimean Tatar people. As Sen emphasizes such institutional intervention

⁷⁵ Zarubin, Vyacheslav. Project "Ukraine". Crimea During the Years of Turmoil (1917-1921).

⁷⁶ Vozgrin, Valeriy E. "Empire and Crimea - a long path to genocide." Bakhchisarai, 1994. <https://leylaemir.org/history-page/valeriy-vozgrin/valeriy-vozgrin-imperiya-i-krim.php>.

⁷⁷ Sen, Amartya, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford, 1983; online edn, Oxford Academic, 1 Nov. 2003), <https://doi.org/10.1093/0198284632.001.0001>, accessed 7 Mar. 2025.

depriving certain ethnic groups of the opportunity to acquire food by legal means is a key factor in the emergence of mass artificial famine even in the absence of catastrophic crop failure.

Differentiated Extraction: Targeted Confiscation of Crimean Tatar Resources

A significant factor in exacerbating the crisis was the implementation of the Bolshevik program of creating state farms (sovkhozes) based on confiscated landowners' estates. According to researcher V.N. Pashchenya (2020)⁷⁸ state farms occupied up to 1 million desiatinas of land while approximately 40% of peasants in Crimea remained landless. As noted in KrymEKONO documents "this government measure had an overtly adventurous character since the practice of state farm construction in other regions of the RSFSR had by that time shown its low efficiency." As a result state farms particularly negatively affected the situation of the Crimean Tatar people. The non-party Tatar conference held in May 1922 stated that "the creation of state farms led to the confiscation of lands traditionally rented by Tatar peasants from landowners and their transformation into agricultural workers or the unemployed."

The state of emergency established in Crimea in autumn 1920 created additional preconditions for famine. According to the chairman of the Crimean Revolutionary Committee Béla Kun "Crimea is a bottle from which no counter-revolutionary will escape" (Melgunov, 2006)⁷⁹. This policy of isolation deprived the population of the opportunity to leave for neighboring regions or organize trade exchange with other regions.

A telling example of institutional mechanisms that contributed to deepening the crisis is a telegram from the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Crimean SSR S. Said-Galiev dated November 30, 1921 addressed to the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee: "peasants of the Dzhankoy district of the Crimean republic due to the acute food crisis exchange their living and dead property for bread with peasants of the Alexandria province but upon return at the border their bread is confiscated by the Committees of Poor Peasants and Special Points of the Cheka and the peasants of Dzhankoy are left without property and without bread" (Broshevan, 2009).⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Pashchenia, V.N. Ethno-National Development in Crimea in the First Half of the 20th Century (1900-1945): Monograph. Simferopol, 2008, 155.

⁷⁹ Melgunov, S.P. Red Terror in Russia 1918-1923. Moscow: Iris-Press, 2006, 113.

⁸⁰ Broshevan, V.M. Simferopol: White and Dark Pages of History (1918-1945). Historical-Documentary Chronological Reference Guide. Simferopol: ChP GUK, 2009, 84.

Despite the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in March 1921 in Crimea prodrazverstka continued to operate until mid-year due to delays in implementing the new policy locally. Even after the formal transition to prodnalog (food tax) the essence of the policy remained unchanged. It was aimed at maximum extraction of food from the population which particularly severely affected the Crimean Tatar people.

As research shows (Pashchenya, 2020⁸¹, Kondratyuk, 2021)⁸² prodrazverstka had a discriminatory character toward the Crimean Tatar people. Food confiscation in Tatar villages was carried out on a much larger scale than in Russian and German settlements. This is confirmed by statistical data: by June 1, 1921 the plan fulfillment for extraction was: for bread—78%, for grain—51.4%, for cattle—122.6%, for sheep—102.7%, for pigs—80% (TsDAK, F.R-1923, Op.1, D.52). Overfulfillment of the plan for livestock confiscation particularly in the field of animal husbandry had catastrophic consequences for the traditional economy of Crimean Tatars for whom animal husbandry was the main source of income.

Particularly severe consequences of prodrazverstka were observed in areas of compact settlement of Crimean Tatars. As noted by a contemporary of events N.P. Rakitsky (1926)⁸³ "in Tatar villages the percentage of livestock confiscation often reached 80-90% of the total herd which completely destroyed the economic base of farms." These data confirm that prodrazverstka was selective especially regarding the Crimean Tatar people and became one of the key causes of the artificial famine of 1921-1923.

The discriminatory nature of prodrazverstka toward the Crimean Tatar people can be analyzed through the lens of Donald Horowitz's⁸⁴ theory of ethno-political conflict. In his fundamental work "Ethnic Groups in Conflict" (1985) Horowitz shows how ethnicity can be used as a basis for institutional discrimination in resource distribution. According to his concept in multiethnic societies institutionalized ethnic differentiation becomes the ground for unequal distribution of resources and political domination. In the case of Crimea during 1921-1923 we observe how the Bolshevik regime used ethnicity as a key criterion in implementing food policy. As Horowitz notes such a practice of "ethnic ranking" creates a system where belonging to a certain ethnic

⁸¹ Pashchenia, V.N. Ethno-National Development in Crimea in the First Half of the 20th Century (1900-1945): Monograph. Simferopol, 2008, 164.

⁸² Kondratyuk G.N. Crimean Tatars during the famine of 1921-1923. Krymskoe istoricheskoe obozrenie=Crimean Historical Review. 2022, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 31-39. DOI: 10.22378/kio.2022.1.31-39 (In Russian)

⁸³ Rakitskii, N.P. "Expert Capabilities of Crimea"; Kruber, A.A. "Economic Sketch of the Sudak-Uskut Region of Mountainous Crimea." Crimea, no. 2 (1926): 28.

⁸⁴ Horowitz, Donald L. 1985. Ethnic Groups in Conflict. Berkeley: University of California Press.

group becomes the decisive factor in access to vital resources. Statistical data on the confiscation of livestock and grain in Tatar villages which significantly exceeds the norms in Russian and German settlements confirm Horowitz's thesis that in divided societies institutionalized ethnic inequality manifests most vividly during periods of crisis when the distribution of scarce resources becomes a matter of survival.

Analysis of archival documents (Bekirova, 2020⁸⁵, Kirimli, 2022, ⁸⁶Omelchuk, 2003)⁸⁷ shows that the food policy of the Bolshevik regime had a pronounced ethnic orientation. Special decrees systematically deprived the Crimean Tatar people of traditional sources of income undermining their economic independence. As Bykova (2011)⁸⁸ notes "such practice of above-norm requisitions became one of the key factors undermining the agricultural potential of the region and it was applied selectively and with an obvious ethnic emphasis." In a number of cases especially in Crimean Tatar villages of the mountain and foothill zone *prodrazverstka* took the form of mass confiscation which exacerbated the consequences of artificial famine.

One of the most destructive steps for the Crimean Tatar people was the decree of the Crimean Revolutionary Committee dated December 12, 1920, prohibiting private trade in wine and tobacco—the traditional foundation of the economy of Tatar villages on the Southern coast (GARK, f. R-709, op. 1, d. 168, l. 46).⁸⁹ This prohibition according to the chairman of KrymTSIK Veli Ibragimov (TsGAK, F.P-1, Op.1, D.592)⁹⁰ "deprived 90% of Crimean Tatar farms on the Southern coast of the main source of income without offering any alternative in return" (Broshevan, 2021)⁹¹, (Life of Nationalities, 1925)⁹². Thus the economic policy of Soviet power not only undermined traditional sources of income but also exacerbated the socioeconomic crisis that led to mass artificial famine.

⁸⁵ Bekirova, Gulnara, Andrii Ivanets, Yuliia Tyshchenko, Serhii Hromenko, and Bekir Abilaiev. History of Crimea and the Crimean Tatar People: A Textbook. Kyiv: "Crimean Family"; "Master Books", 2020, 91.

⁸⁶ Kirimli, H. Famine in Crimea and Foreign Aid. Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2022, 67-72.

⁸⁷ Omelchuk, D.V. et al. Political Repressions in Crimea (1920-1940). Simferopol, 2003, 22-24.

⁸⁸ Bykova, T.B. Creation of the Crimean ASSR (1917-1921). Kyiv: Institute of History of Ukraine, 2011, 135.

⁸⁹ Kondratiuk, Grigorii. "Crimean Tatars During the Famine of 1921-1923." Crimean Historical Review 9, no. 1 (2022): 31-39. DOI:10.22378/kio.2022.1.31-39.

⁹⁰ Zarubin, V.G. "The Famine of 1921-1923 in Crimea (According to Reports of the Cheka/GPU)." Historical Heritage of Crimea, no. 2 (2003): 18.

⁹¹ Broshevan, V.M. The Crimean Tragedy of 1921-1923. Simferopol: Tavria, 2021, 94-96.

⁹² Life of Nationalities. Book One. January 1923. Edited by M.P. Pavlovich, M.S. Sultan-Galiev, and I.P. Trainin. Moscow, 1923, 125.

Voices from the Abyss: Experiential Documentation of Social Collapse Caused by Famine

Eyewitness testimonies are of particular value for understanding the scale of the tragedy. A resident of the steppe Kerch village of Adjimenov, Abduraman Bariev, recalled: "During prodrazverstka they took almost everything. If the plan for razverstka was not fulfilled they did not issue winter crops for sowing. Over time there were no birds people ate even dead ones cats fallen livestock shoe leather. There were even cases when mothers ate their children." Another witness Nuri Khalilov wrote: "I remember the famine of 1921-1922. Corpses lay throughout the village of Tavdair. Two sons of my aunt died from hunger and then she herself. We children were taken by carts to Simferopol to an orphanage. There were about 40 children. Half of them died from hunger and diseases." (Bekirova, 2020)⁹³. The "Report on the Work of the Crimean Extraordinary Commission for 1922" stated: "...Famine in almost the entire territory of Crimea in January reached its greatest acuteness intensifying every day and brought with it misery and deprivation affecting absolutely all aspects of Crimean life. Cases of death from hunger became more frequent becoming a common phenomenon. For example in the Karasubazar district of the Simferopol region in a town with several thousand inhabitants 121 adults and 123 children died from hunger in one month. Markets in almost all cities of Crimea are filled with beggars and hungry people who openly ask for bread." (Bekirova, 2020)⁹⁴. A resident of the village of Takil-Javanak (now Arkadiivka village in Simferopol district) Zemine Suleymanova recalled: "Crowds of beggars walked through the villages begging for leftovers. People who still had some property were ready to exchange it for food on any terms" (Zarubin, 2008).⁹⁵

In a letter published on July 28, 1923 in the Russian emigrant newspaper "Novoe Vremya" an eyewitness wrote: "...We are dying out everything is perishing there is not a single ray of light. Former prosperity has disappeared. The number of livestock partly due to epizootic partly due to alienations and also due to famine has greatly decreased. People who have a horse or several horses are considered lucky many ride on bulls or cows which was not the case before. Most of the population however has no livestock at all and walks on foot for distances of 50-100 versts... All German colonies have suffered greatly. In Sudak many died from typhus... In the Evpatoria

⁹³ Bekirova, Gulnara, Andrii Ivanets, Yuliia Tyshchenko, Serhii Hromenko, and Bekir Abilaiev. History of Crimea and the Crimean Tatar People: A Textbook. Kyiv: "Crimean Family"; "Master Books", 2020, 114.

⁹⁴ Bekirova et al., History of Crimea, 45, 115.

⁹⁵ Zarubin, A.G., and V.G. Zarubin. Without Winners. From the History of the Civil War in Crimea. 2nd ed., revised and supplemented. Simferopol: AntikvA, 2008, 98.

district the population is starving and half has already died out. The village is completely ruined. Residents sold for nothing not only livestock and movable property but also houses" (Zhevakhov, 2006).⁹⁶

Poet Maximilian Voloshin who lived during these years in Koktebel captured the horrors of the Crimean famine in his poem "Hunger": "Soul was long cheaper than meat. And mothers having slaughtered their children Salted them for reserves. 'I myself gave birth to them I myself will eat them. I will bear others...' "Bread comes from earth and hunger from people They sowed with the shot the seedlings Sprouted with grave crosses The earth grew no other shoots..." These lines reflect not only the physical but also the moral suffering of people who survived the famine. Voloshin emphasizes that the tragedy was caused not by natural but by human factors.

The tragedy of the 1921-1923 famine found deep reflection in the fiction of Crimean Tatar authors. Classics of Crimean Tatar literature Asan Sabri Ayvazov Umer Ipchi and Ablyakim Ilmiy created works that became testimonies to the catastrophe and its impact on the fate of the Crimean Tatar people. Particularly piercing is Ablyakim Ilmiy's story "Memories of Famine. From Syundyus's Diary" (1926) narrated from the perspective of an orphan girl whose life was saved in a Sevastopol orphanage. Through the eyes of a child the author shows terrible pictures of disaster: "Already Akyar. I stand in an alley waiting for Kuddus. And I see a truck leaving the Tatar club fully loaded with dead bodies of Tatar children... before my eyes are the dried-up bodies of the poor thin arms and legs covered with bluish skin dried light and dark heads hanging on thin necks." (Ilmiy, 2007).⁹⁷ The theme of human relationships is analyzed in Umer Ipchi's story "Market in Puddles." Asan Sabri Ayvazov's story "Mother where are you?! Come!..." published in 1927 is filled with tragedy.

Analysis of archival documents conducted by modern researchers allows us to quantitatively assess the scale of artificial famine across different regions of Crimea demonstrating its differentiated impact on various ethnic groups. According to official reports studied in detail in the works of G.N. Kondratyuk A.G. and V.G. Zarubin V.E. Vozgrin and other historians the intensity of artificial famine in different regions of the peninsula varied from 40 to 90% with the highest rates recorded precisely in areas of compact settlement of the Crimean Tatar people:

⁹⁶ Quoted in: Zhevakhov, N.D. The Jewish Revolution. Edited by O.A. Platonov. Moscow: Algoritm, 2006, 305-306.

⁹⁷ Memoirs of the Famine: Works of A. Ilmiy, A. Aivazov, U. Ipchi. Translated from Crimean Tatar by V. Basyrov and E. Velieva; preface and compilation by A. Velieva. Simferopol: Dolia, 2007, 41-42.

"Speaking in the language of numbers one can say that the strength of famine in regions varies from 40 to 90% (in many Tatar settlements of the Biyuk-Onlar region between 75 and 90% are starving)" (DARK, f. R-709, op. 1, d. 135, l. 4rev.). (Kondratyuk, 2022)⁹⁸ These statistical data first introduced into scientific circulation in the post-Soviet period confirm the observed pattern: the most acute manifestations of famine were concentrated in Crimean Tatar settlements which indicates a disproportionate distribution of the severity of the food crisis and strengthens the argumentation in favor of its ethno-differentiated nature.

Comparative analysis of the impact of artificial famine of 1921-1923 on different ethnic groups of Crimea conducted on the basis of archival documents reveals its differentiated character. Documentary evidence convincingly demonstrates the disproportionately high impact of the tragedy on the Crimean Tatar people compared to other ethnic groups of the peninsula.

Secretary of the Crimean Regional Committee Y.P. Gaven who headed the Central Committee of Pomgol in his report at the VI regional conference of the RCP(b) on March 13-16, 1922 acknowledged: "Famine here manifested in very severe forms it is not inferior to the famine in the Volga region. But it is not as noticeable as the famine in the Volga region. This occurs due to some specific Crimean conditions mainly due to national and everyday peculiarities. Crimean Tatars are so connected to their village that even famine cannot drive them away from there. And they die in their villages... famine most severely affected the Tatar people... about 70% of the total number of starving are Tatars" (DARK, f. P-1, op. 1, d. 115, l. 197) (Kondratyuk, 2022)⁹⁹, (Rakitsky, 1926).¹⁰⁰

Comparative analysis of mortality among different ethnic groups also confirms this thesis. While in Crimean Tatar villages such as Great Taraktash Small Taraktash Elbuzli Kozy mortality reached catastrophic proportions — in Great Taraktash out of 2000 people more than 800 died

⁹⁸ Kondratyuk G.N. Crimean Tatars during the famine of 1921-1923. Krymskoe istoricheskoe obozrenie=Crimean Historical Review. 2022, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 31-39. DOI: 10.22378/kio.2022.1.31-39 (In Russian)

⁹⁹ Kondratyuk G.N. Crimean Tatars during the famine of 1921-1923. Krymskoe istoricheskoe obozrenie=Crimean Historical Review. 2022, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 31-39. DOI: 10.22378/kio.2022.1.31-39 (In Russian)

¹⁰⁰Rakitskii, N.P. "Expert Capabilities of Crimea"; Kruber, A.A. "Economic Sketch of the Sudak-Uskut Region of Mountainous Crimea." Crimea, no. 2 (1926): 28.

in Small Taraktash out of 1867 people 715 died — in German colonies although they "suffered greatly" as noted in sources mortality was significantly lower.

In the Karasubazar district populated predominantly by Crimean Tatars the situation was particularly catastrophic. According to the Simferopol District Committee for Aid to the Starving "in Karasubazar alone from January 15 to February 20 [1922] more than 650 corpses were buried" (DARK, f. R-709, op. 1, d. 168, l. 69 rev.). Statistics for the Kokkoz district also indicate significant human losses: "Out of 19,000 population in the district 3,000 people perished" (DARK, f. R-709, op. 1, d. 168, l. 119).

Significant differences were also observed in the nature of aid to the starving. While for the Crimean Tatar people organized state aid "began to arrive from early spring 1922 by which time the number of dead was already enormous" (DARK, f. R-709, op. 1, d. 168, l. 119) for the urban population predominantly Russian and Jewish aid was organized earlier. As Kondratyuk notes "if at the first stage the signs of famine were felt by the poor urban population soon the famine engulfed the entire territory of the peninsula" (DARK, f. R-709, op. 1, d. 135, l. 4 rev.).

By August 1922 according to the Crimean Central Executive Committee large-scale famine led to a reduction in the population of Crimea by 21%. Moreover the vast majority of victims as shown above were representatives of the indigenous people of Crimea. (Bekirova, 2020)¹⁰¹. "Famine put the Crimean Tatar people actually on the brink of humanitarian catastrophe. The death of children called into question the very future of the people" (Kondratyuk G.N., p. 36).¹⁰²

These figures indicate that artificial famine had a pronounced ethnic character hitting the Crimean Tatar people the hardest.

Despite the obvious scale of the catastrophe Soviet authorities for a long time ignored the famine or tried to hide its true causes. As researchers note (Kirimli, 2022¹⁰³, Zarubin, 2003)¹⁰⁴ information about the famine in Crimea was suppressed at the official level and requests for help from local authorities often remained unanswered. Instead of taking emergency measures to save the population the government continued the policy of food confiscation exacerbating the already critical situation.

¹⁰¹ Bekirova et al., History of Crimea, 115.

¹⁰² Kondratyuk G.N. Crimean Tatars during the famine of 1921-1923. Krymskoe istoricheskoe obozrenie=Crimean Historical Review. 2022, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 31-39. DOI: 10.22378/kio.2022.1.31-39 (In Russian) p36

¹⁰³ Kirimli, H. Famine in Crimea and Foreign Aid. Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2022, 67-72.

¹⁰⁴ Zarubin, Vyacheslav. Project "Ukraine". Crimea During the Years of Turmoil (1917-1921).

It is indicative that in the Soviet press in December 1921 the word "famine" regarding Crimea had not yet appeared. "There were practically no reports about the situation in the villages" notes journalist Natalia Dremova who analyzed newspapers from those years "except perhaps information about food deliveries it created the impression that in rural areas people were living if not in abundance then quite well. In reality the peasants had their last possessions taken away" (Dremova, 2011).¹⁰⁵

For example reports of the Crimean Extraordinary Commission for 1922 stated that the famine had reached its peak however the central authorities did not allocate sufficient resources to combat it. Moreover as historian Halimov (2003)¹⁰⁶ points out "instead of organizing food aid the authorities intensified a propaganda campaign aimed at justifying their actions and blaming the famine on 'kulaks' and 'bourgeois elements'."

The Bolshevik leadership deliberately delayed acknowledging the famine in Crimea creating bureaucratic obstacles for international aid. As Hakan Kirimli notes "initially the Soviet government refused to officially recognize the famine in Crimea and actively prevented receiving international aid" (Kirimli, 2022).¹⁰⁷ This policy was based on manipulation of statistical data.

As archival documents testify, deliberately inflated information about the harvested crop was sent to Moscow—9 million poods of grain while in fact only 2 million poods were harvested (Zarubin A.G., Zarubin V.G., 2008).¹⁰⁸ The non-party Tatar conference in its resolution demanded "to investigate those guilty of submitting statistical information that there were 9 million poods of bread in Crimea while in reality there were 2 million" (TsDAK, F.P-1, Op.1, D.133). Only under pressure from catastrophic reports from the localities on February 16, 1922 was Crimea officially recognized as a starving region—when mortality had already reached its peak. Thus in a letter from KrimTsVK chairman Veli Ibragimov to Moscow from 1922 it was stated: "The situation is catastrophic. People are dying in the streets and aid is not arriving. We are forced to note that the central government does not consider the Crimean famine a priority" (TsDAK, F.P-1, Op.1, D.592). However this appeal like many others remained unanswered.

¹⁰⁵ Dremova, N. "Tsar-Famine: In December 1921, Crimea Lived in Anticipation of Tragedy." *First Crimean*, no. 405, December 23/December 29, 2011, 138.

¹⁰⁶ *Life of Nationalities. Book One. January 1923.* Edited by M.P. Pavlovich, M.S. Sultan-Galiev, and I.P. Trainin. Moscow, 1923, 125.

¹⁰⁷ Kirimli, H. *Famine in Crimea and Foreign Aid.* Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2022, 67-72.

¹⁰⁸ Zarubin, A.G., and V.G. Zarubin. *Without Winners. From the History of the Civil War in Crimea.* 2nd ed., revised and supplemented. Simferopol: AntikvA, 2008, 696.

In the moment of official recognition of the famine its scale was already catastrophic. In January 1922, 8,000 people died from hunger, in February—14,413, in March (peak mortality)—19,902 (Zarubin V.G., Zarubin A.G.).¹⁰⁹ Before the official recognition of the famine zone Crimeans had to survive on their own without any assistance from the central government or foreign humanitarian organizations (Hakan Kirimli, 2022).¹¹⁰

The Presidium of KrimTsVK recognizing the extreme nature of the situation on its own initiative created on December 1, 1921 the Crimean Central Commission for Aid to the Starving (KrimTSKPomgol) which from October 19, 1922 to August 1/16, 1923 functioned under the name Posledgol. The first chairman of the commission was the secretary of the Regional Committee of the RCP(b) A.I. Izrailovich and from mid-February 1922 it was headed by Y.P. Gaven with B.S. Shvedov as his deputy. (Zarubin, 2008)¹¹¹

On December 21, 1922 the secretary of the Central Committee of the RCP(b) V.V. Kuibyshev signed a strictly secret document: "To propose to the Crimean Regional Committee to use the credits being transferred for mutual assistance primarily to meet the needs of Communists of starving regions... To propose to the Central Committee of Posledgol to clarify the issue of the possibility of providing assistance to Communists of starving regions of Crimea and if necessary to transfer appropriate funds to Posledgol of Crimea for this purpose." Before this KrimPomgol allocated 1% of available funds to the fund for assisting Communists. In February 1923 the Presidium of KrimPomgol by decision of the center allocated 300 thousand rubles in monetary signs and 10 thousand poods of bread for starving Communists.

Already in October—November 1921 the number of starving in Crimea reached 205 thousand people of which 100 thousand were children. The main burden of famine fell on the Crimean Tatar people of mountainous regions (Ursu, 1999).¹¹² By January 1922 daily mortality reached 500 people and by February increased to 700 people per day. At the same time 90% of the starving were Crimean Tatars (Ursu, 1999)¹¹³. From January to April 1922 the geography of the disaster expanded significantly and the number of deaths continued to rise rapidly.

¹⁰⁹ The Zarubins gave somewhat different death figures: Jan: 8.000, Feb: 14,413, March: 19,902, April: 12,753. They also admit, however, that the figures and the statistical data cited in the contemporary documents of that period were confusing as well as far from complete. Zarubin and Zarubin, p.35.

¹¹⁰ Kirimli, H. *Famine in Crimea and Foreign Aid*. Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2022, 67-72.

¹¹¹ Zarubin and Zarubin, *Without Winners*, 696.

¹¹² Ursu, *Essays on the History of Culture*, 45.

¹¹³ Ursu, *Essays on the History of Culture*, 45.

Statistical data from that period despite the conscientiousness of their compilation cannot be considered absolutely accurate which explains certain dispersion of figures in documents. With the development of the catastrophe the scale of the disaster continued to grow. In May 1922 according to an official telegram signed by Y.P. Gaven and the chairman of the Tatar non-party conference O. Deren-Ayerly to the Azerbaijan Council of People's Commissars "In Crimea more than 400,000 people are starving which is more than 60% of the total population" (Kirimli, 2003)¹¹⁴. This indicates a dramatic deterioration of the situation compared to data from the end of 1921.

Moreover, as researcher Omelchuk (2003)¹¹⁵ notes, "instead of organizing large-scale assistance, the authorities limited themselves to symbolic measures such as distributing small rations in large cities, which could not save the population of rural areas." This led to the famine continuing to take lives even after the official end of *prodrazverstka*.

Institutional mechanisms for organizing the famine also included creating a deliberately ineffective system of aid to the starving. The Crimean Pomgol, despite opening feeding points and shelters for children, was able to provide assistance to only 5% of starving children, while conditions in the shelters were catastrophic: unsanitary conditions, overcrowding, epidemics, and meager rations of 100 grams per day, which led to mass deaths of children (Bekirova et al., 2020)¹¹⁶ (H. Kirimli, 2003).¹¹⁷

The dynamics of providing aid during the peak of famine (March-May 1922) demonstrates a clear discrepancy between the scale of the disaster and the measures taken. At the critical moment of March 1922, when external aid was practically not forthcoming, most of the starving found themselves in a position of absolute abandonment, which led to the peak of mortality.

The most obvious indicator of the problem of differentiated distribution of aid between urban and rural populations is found in documents of the Simferopol District Committee for Aid to the Starving in February 1922. In its official reports, the committee noted that "aid to the village is

¹¹⁴ Kirimli, Hakan. "The Famine of 1921-22 in the Crimea and the Volga Basin and the Relief from Turkey." *Middle Eastern Studies* 39, no. 1 (January 2003): 37-88.

¹¹⁵ Omelchuk, D.V., M.R. Akulov, L.P. Vakutova, N.N. Shevtsova, and S.V. Yurchenko. *Political Repressions in Crimea (1920-1940)*. Simferopol, 2003, 22.

¹¹⁶ Bekirova, Gulnara, Andrii Ivanets, Yuliia Tyshchenko, Serhii Hromenko, and Bekir Abilaiev. *History of Crimea and the Crimean Tatar People: A Textbook*. Kyiv: "Crimean Family"; "Master Books", 2020.

¹¹⁷ Kirimli, Hakan. "The Famine of 1921-22 in the Crimea and the Volga Basin and the Relief from Turkey." *Middle Eastern Studies* 39, no. 1 (January 2003): 37-88.

provided too insignificantly, while famine in the district is colossal" (Kondratyuk, 2022). In addition, as was noted, "if in cities certain signs of aid are noticeable, in villages the starving are left to their own devices" (Zarubin, *Famine in Crimea*, 2003).

Systematic deprivation of the rural population of aid is confirmed by numerous documentary testimonies. For example, in the village of Elbuzli in autumn 1921, 760 people lived, but at the time of compiling reports, the population had decreased to 400 people due to mortality from hunger. In the village of Great Taraktash in October 1921, there were over 2000 inhabitants, but from November 1921 to April 1, 1922, more than 800 people died from hunger. In the village of Small Taraktash, a case was recorded of digging up a corpse from a grave for the purpose of eating it. As noted above, March 1922 became the peak of mortality from famine. Documents from specific settlements confirm this general trend—for example, in one of the districts, over a thousand deaths were recorded in just 19 days of the second half of March. Also, 3 cases of cannibalism were registered (State Archive of the Russian Federation (DARF), f. R-1318, op. 13, file 4, sheet 28; Kondratyuk, 2022).¹¹⁸

Such disproportion in aid distribution cannot be explained by objective factors which indicates the presence of a deliberate policy that significantly intensified the demographic crisis of the Crimean Tatar people.

The stunning testimony of a contemporary of events M. Voloshin recorded in his letter of March 12, 1922 to V. Veresaev reveals the apocalyptic nature of what was happening: "On the streets are scenes from the 14th century—a city during the Black Death and famine. The dying crawl on sidewalks groan under fences Tatars ('revki' they are called). Unburied corpses lie around. No one to dig graves in the cemetery. Bodies are thrown into a common ditch—naked. From children's shelters they shake them out in sacks. The dead are piled up. On the outskirts of the city along ravines dumping grounds for corpses are arranged. There they see bodies with cut off meat. Corpse-eating was at first a myth then became reality. Sausage and aspic from human meat were detected in the market as well as the theft of corpses for sausage <...>. Americans unload corn for Saratov and transport it through Crimea. None remains here. Around the wagons crowds of boys collecting grains. They are shot at. Yesterday almost before my eyes someone's skull was blown off. In the city garden lay two with broken legs—they were cutting

¹¹⁸ Kondratyuk G.N. Crimean Tatars during the famine of 1921-1923. *Krymskoe istoricheskoe obozrenie*=Crimean Historical Review. 2022, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 31-39. DOI: 10.22378/kio.2022.1.31-39 (In Russian)

trees etc. In the county everything is much worse. Some of the richest villages are dying out completely (Saly Tsurikhtal) Sudak is terrible. Koktebel in comparison is an oasis the village there is not starving. In Sudak people are killed for a few pounds of flour. This is the most terrible and cursed place during these years. No crops anywhere. Horses are eaten. (In all of Sudak one horse.)" Of particular value is Voloshin's indication of the ethnic aspect of famine: "The worst situation is for Tatars. The food tax was taken in full in Crimea and most of the hiding places for bread were discovered. Hence this famine in the villages. Those who do have something hidden now do not dare to take it out" (Voloshin, 2013).¹¹⁹

Documented manifestations of cannibalism mass burials without observance of elementary norms the presence of "corpse dumps" on the outskirts of cities indicate the complete collapse of social and state institutions designed to provide basic humanitarian needs of the population. At the same time a symbolic expression of the cynical policy of the authorities is the fact recorded by Voloshin of the transit of American food aid through starving Crimea to other regions while simultaneously using violence against local residents who tried to collect fallen grains.

It is noteworthy that even against the background of mass deaths of the population the Bolshevik leadership continued to confiscate food. After official recognition of the famine on February 16, 1922 at a meeting of the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Crimean SSR the People's Commissariat of Food of the RSFSR established for Crimea a food tax of 1.2 million poods of grain while prohibiting peasants from sowing fields before paying the tax (T.B. Bykova, 2011).¹²⁰ This policy essentially condemned peasants especially the Crimean Tatar people to starvation.

To ensure the implementation of the food tax authorities actively applied punitive measures. In the village of Novotsaritsynskoye in the Karasubazar district on charges of malicious non-payment of food tax the heads of 14 families found themselves in the dock. During the court session one person was sentenced to the highest measure of punishment four to prison terms from one to three years others were offered a period of up to two weeks to contribute the

¹¹⁹ Voloshin, M.A. Collected Works. Vol. 12: Letters 1918-1924. Compiled by A.V. Lavrov; text preparation by N.V. Kotrelev, A.V. Lavrov, G.V. Petrova, R.P. Khruleva; commentary by A.V. Lavrov and G.V. Petrova. Moscow: Ellis Lak, 2013, 407, 435-436.

¹²⁰ Bykova, Tetiana Borysivna. Creation of the Crimean ASSR (1917-1921). Kyiv: Institute of History of Ukraine, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 2011, 28.

remaining part of the tax. In case of non-payment the property of the convicted was subject to confiscation (Zarubin V.G., 2008).¹²¹

The authorities used the famine as an opportunity for additional extraction of valuables from the population. To create a fund that would allow importing grain from abroad the Crimean Pomgol began selling grain to the starving in exchange for gold and valuables (Baranchenko, 2022).¹²² For this purpose special sales points were opened in towns and villages.

After collecting all the gold that remained in the hands of the population, grain began to be sold for copper. When no copper remained they even used camel wool (ulpaki) which was used to stuff mattresses. Thus victims of famine were deprived of the last remnants of useful things (Hakan Kirimli, 2003).¹²³

The confiscation of church valuables became a special direction of expropriation. As archival documents testify "during the campaign to confiscate church valuables a significant number of religious artifacts from mosques that have historical and cultural value for the Crimean Tatar people were confiscated" (V.G. Zarubin A.G. Zarubin, 2008).¹²⁴

Priceless works of art and other antiquities found in the historical palaces and estates of Crimea were also subject to confiscation. Outraged government officials and scientists called to protect historical monuments appealed to Y.P. Gaven with a request to stop this practice but their protests were ignored (Hakan Kirimli, 2022).¹²⁵

The most difficult situation developed in the Yalta district as well as in Evpatoria Sudak Karasubazar Kokkoz Bakhchisarai and Balaklava regions where practically the entire population was starving.

In the daily summary of the Cheka from February 3, 1922 it was reported: "The food situation in Crimea has not improved at all. In all districts peasants continue to starve. They eat horses that have fallen from lack of feed and diseases. On the grounds of hunger cases of death have

¹²¹ Zarubin, A.G., and V.G. Zarubin. Without Winners. From the History of the Civil War in Crimea. 2nd ed., revised and supplemented. Simferopol: AntikvA, 2008, 698.

¹²² Baranchenko, pp.121 and 123. For example, on 18 July 1922, a Norwegian ship brought 5,000 poods of rye and wheat from Argentina in the name of the Ukrainian Foreign Trade (Vneshtorg) organization. 'Kırım Limanlarında', Yeni Dünya (Akmescit/Simferopol), 25 July 1922.

¹²³ Kirimli, Hakan. "The Famine of 1921-22 in the Crimea and the Volga Basin and the Relief from Turkey." Middle Eastern Studies 39, no. 1 (January 2003): p68

¹²⁴ Zarubin, A.G., and V.G. Zarubin. Without Winners. From the History of the Civil War in Crimea. 2nd ed., revised and supplemented. Simferopol: AntikvA, 2008, 698.

¹²⁵ Kirimli, "The Famine of 1921-22," 45.

become more frequent... In all villages from hunger there are masses of sick swollen people both adults and children. Almost no aid is provided to the starving" (Zarubin V.G., 2003).¹²⁶

The peak of famine occurred in March 1922 when most of the starving remained without any help. Along with the economic catastrophe came a deep moral decline of society. In a report of the Crimean Economic Conference to the Council of Labor and Defense dated April 1, 1922 it was noted: "This stage is characterized by complete destruction of moral foundations and laws of human coexistence robberies thefts murders and fraud are occurring everywhere. Banditry as one of the companions of famine reached its peak" (Zarubin A.G., Zarubin V.G. 2008).¹²⁷

Archival documents testify to the rapid degradation of social norms: "prostitution sharply increased"—many women were forced to sell themselves for a piece of bread (Hakan Kirimli, 2003)¹²⁸. The most shocking manifestation of moral collapse were numerous cases of cannibalism recorded in official reports: "In Karasubazar human flesh eating was again discovered. A mother slaughtered her 6-year-old child cooked her and began eating her together with her 12-year-old daughter" (TsDAK, F.R-1923, Op.1, D.20). There was widespread dulling of empathy and increasing indifference to the suffering of others. As noted by a member of the Central Pomgol I.L. Kramnik: "People have become accustomed to scenes of famine. The painful cry of a young Tatar dying in the Akmeskit market gets lost among the voices of sellers and buyers who indifferently turn away from the dying man" (TsDAK, F.R-1923, Op.1, D.52). This phenomenon of collective dulling of empathic response under the influence of mass suffering corresponds to the psychological mechanism of "emotional exhaustion" in conditions of chronic traumatization and correlates with modern theories of secondary traumatization and "compassion fatigue" (Figley, 1995; ¹²⁹Rothschild, 2006).¹³⁰

In parallel with the intensification of famine the authorities activated repressive policies. In early February 1922 an "Extraordinary Troika for Combating Banditry" and special armed

¹²⁶ Zarubin, V.G. "The Famine of 1921-1923 in Crimea (According to Reports of the Cheka/GPU)." Historical Heritage of Crimea, no. 2 (2003).

<http://old.commonuments.crimea-portal.gov.ua/rus/index.php?v=1&tek=84&par=74&l=&art=266>

¹²⁷ Zarubin, A.G., and V.G. Zarubin. Without Winners. From the History of the Civil War in Crimea. 2nd ed., revised and supplemented. Simferopol: AntikvA, 2008, 697.

¹²⁸ Kirimli, H. (2003). The famine of 1921–22 in the Crimea and the Volga basin and the relief from Turkey. Middle Eastern Studies, 39(1), 37–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263200412331301597a>

¹²⁹ Figley, C. R. (1995). Compassion fatigue: Coping with secondary traumatic stress disorder in those who treat the traumatized. New York: Brunner/Mazel

¹³⁰ Rothschild, B. (2006). Help for the helper: The psychophysiology of compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma. New York: W. W. Norton.

detachments were created (Baranchenko, 1922)¹³¹. Under the pretext of fighting "banditry" mass searches and arrests were conducted in Crimean Tatar settlements. As V.N. Pashchenya notes "this was a peculiar form of 'second prodrazverstka' during which the last crumbs of food were confiscated" (Bekirova et al. 2020).¹³²

Particularly harsh measures were applied in areas of compact settlement of Crimean Tatars. Detachments sent to mountain villages to confiscate "surpluses" acted with special cruelty. According to eyewitnesses "without trial or investigation they shot everyone who was found with more than three pounds of flour" (TsDAK, F.R-1923, Op.1, D.20).

Thus, the institutional mechanisms for organizing famine in Crimea represented a multilevel system of measures aimed at extracting food resources, restricting the freedom of movement of the people, discriminatory distribution of aid, and suppression of any forms of resistance. These mechanisms had a pronounced ethnic character and were directed primarily against the Crimean Tatar people, which led to their disproportionately high losses and long-term weakening of economic and demographic potential.

The long-term demographic consequences of artificial famine in Crimea can be conceptualized within the framework of Milica Zarkovic Bookman's¹³³ theory of demographic engineering. According to Bookman demographic engineering represents a purposeful policy of changing the ethnic composition of territories as an instrument of state-building and consolidation of power. Disproportionately high losses among the Crimean Tatar people who constituted the vast majority of the total number of deaths compared to other ethnic groups (Russians Ukrainians Greeks Armenians Jews and others) indicate that the artificially organized famine became an effective instrument for transforming the demographic balance on the peninsula. As Bookman emphasizes the result of demographic engineering is not only the physical reduction in the number of the target group but also undermining its socioeconomic and cultural potential. In the Crimean context this was manifested in the fact that entire villages of mountainous Crimea inhabited predominantly by Crimean Tatars died out almost completely which led to irreversible changes in the sociocultural landscape of the region. The artificial famine of 1921-1923 thus can

¹³¹ Baranchenko, pp.125 and 128; 'Report sent to Dr Frick at Berlin from Monsieur Yavoroff, member of International Russian Relief Committee, 21 July 1922', PRO (London), F.O. 371/8150

¹³² Bekirova, Gulnara, Andrii Ivanets, Yuliia Tyshchenko, Serhii Hromenko, and Bekir Abilaiev. History of Crimea and the Crimean Tatar People: A Textbook. Kyiv: "Crimean Family"; "Master Books", 2020.

¹³³ Bookman, Milica Zarkovic. "The Demographic Struggle for Power: The Political Economy of Demographic Engineering in the Modern World." New York: Frank Cass Publishers, 1997.

be viewed as another stage in a long process of demographic engineering that continued the policy of the imperial period was intensified during the period of collectivization and the "Great Terror" and reached its apogee in the total forced deportation of the Crimean Tatar people in 1944 which led to a fundamental transformation of the ethnic composition of the Crimean peninsula.

Establishing Intent: Forensic Analysis of Differentiated Mortality and Policy Implementation

For convincing argumentation of the thesis about the deliberate nature of famine as an instrument of demographic engineering a systematic analysis is needed focusing on several key indicators of intentionality.

Archival documents irrefutably testify that the Bolshevik leadership was fully informed about the catastrophic consequences of its policy for the Crimean Tatar people. Already in December 1921 a secret summary of the Cheka noted: "In Tatar villages there is mass mortality from hunger with death rates in some villages reaching 30-40 people per day" (TsDAK, F.R-1923, Op.1, D.20). In the report of the plenipotentiary commission of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR dated January 16, 1922 it was directly stated: "Both member of the Presidium of Pomgol VTsIK comrade Belkin and comrade Kalinin who was here became convinced of the difficult situation of Crimea and the danger of applying pressure to it at all costs" (Zarubin V.G., 2003)¹³⁴. This demonstrates that the highest leadership of the RSFSR was informed about the critical situation.

Particularly revealing is the letter from KrimTsVK chairman Veli Ibragimov to Moscow which directly indicated that "famine has turned into an instrument for the extinction of the Tatar population" (TsDAK, F.P-1, Op.1, D.592). This is evidence that even the leadership of the Crimean ASSR perceived the famine as a deliberate policy of ethnic pressure.

A critical indicator of intentionality is the continuation of food requisitions after the authorities became aware of mass mortality. After the official recognition of famine on February 16, 1922 the People's Commissariat of Food of the RSFSR not only did not stop requisitions but

¹³⁴ Zarubin, V.G. "The Famine of 1921-1923 in Crimea (According to Reports of the Cheka/GPU)." Historical Heritage of Crimea, no. 2 (2003).
<http://old.commonuments.crimea-portal.gov.ua/rus/index.php?v=1&tek=84&par=74&l=&art=266>

established for Crimea a food tax of 1.2 million poods of grain prohibiting peasants from sowing fields before paying the tax (T.B. Bykova, 2021).¹³⁵ This decision was made with full understanding that it condemned peasants to continued famine and indicates the conscious use of famine as a mechanism of demographic pressure especially on the Crimean Tatar people which constituted the majority of victims.

In March 1922 at the peak of mortality requisition detachments continued to operate in Tatar villages. As reported in a Cheka summary dated March 20, 1922, "despite mass mortality in the Karasubazar district requisitions continue which causes extreme indignation among the population" (TsDAK, F.R-1923, Op.1, D.20). This is clear evidence that the authorities deliberately exacerbated the situation.

Comparative analysis of government policy toward different ethnic groups in Crimea reveals a clearly differentiated approach. As noted at the VI regional conference of the RCP(b) on March 13-16, 1922, "famine most severely affected the Tatar population... about 70% of the total number of starving are Tatars" (DARK, f. P-1, op. 1, d. 115, l. 197) despite the fact that Crimean Tatars constituted only about 25% of the peninsula's population.

Documents indicate differences in food requisition norms: in Tatar villages they were significantly higher than in Russian and German settlements. For example in the Evpatoria district the rate of livestock requisition in Tatar villages reached 70-80% while in German colonies it was 40-50% (DARK, f. R-709, op. 1, d. 135). Such a difference within the same districts cannot be explained by economic or geographical factors which points to the ethnically-oriented nature of food policy as an instrument of deliberate demographic transformation of the region.

Similarly the distribution of food aid was clearly discriminatory. By spring 1922 when international aid began to arrive feeding points in cities covered up to 60% of the starving while in Tatar villages of the mountain zone only 10-15% (TsDAK, F.R-1923, Op.1, D.52).

Analysis of ideological documents reveals the attitude of the Bolshevik leadership toward the prospect of demographic reduction of the Crimean Tatar people. Particularly telling is a secret directive from the Central Committee of the RCP(b) dated February 1922 which noted that "the

¹³⁵ Bykova, Tetiana Borysivna. *Creation of the Crimean ASSR (1917-1921)*. Kyiv: Institute of History of Ukraine, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 2011, 28.

situation that has developed in Crimea contributes to resolving the national question in a direction favorable to Soviet power" (Kirimli, 2022).¹³⁶ This euphemism unambiguously points to the party leadership's understanding of famine as an instrument of ethno-demographic policy aimed at weakening the Crimean Tatar people as potential carriers of ideas of national self-determination.

Especially indicative is that even at the height of the famine rhetoric continued about "bourgeois nationalist elements" among Crimean Tatars which served as ideological justification for continuing repressive policies. In a GPU report from April 1922 it was emphasized that "despite the difficult food situation it is necessary to continue the struggle against nationalist elements among the Tatar population" (TsDAK, F.R-1923, Op.1, D.20).

Analysis of the totality of historical sources, archival documents and statistical data leads to the well-founded conclusion that the famine in Crimea during 1921-1923 was not merely a consequence of natural factors and economic crisis but the result of a deliberate policy of ethno-demographic transformation. The deliberate delay in recognizing Crimea as a starving region through providing deliberately inflated data about the harvest systematic ignoring of appeals for help continuation of confiscation policy after the onset of mass mortality and parallel processes in other Turkic regions testify to the systemic nature of the policy of artificial famine as an instrument of demographic engineering directed against the Crimean Tatar people.

Demographic Engineering Through Famine: The Long Shadow of Artificial Famine of 1921-1923 on the Existence of Crimean Tatars

Conclusions

The comprehensive study of events of 1921-1923 in Crimea confirms the validity of applying the concept of "artificial famine" defined in the theoretical and methodological part of the work. The evidence presented in the study demonstrates that the famine that engulfed Crimea was exacerbated by deliberate actions of the authorities had a differentiated impact on various ethnic groups through discriminatory policies was accompanied by the authorities' refusal to

¹³⁶ Kirimli, H. Famine in Crimea and Foreign Aid. Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2022, 67-72.

acknowledge the crisis in a timely manner and was used as an instrument for transforming the ethno-demographic structure of the region.

Empirical Findings

Systematic analysis of archival materials, statistical data and eyewitness accounts convincingly demonstrates that the famine in Crimea was not exclusively a consequence of objective factors (drought economic devastation after the Civil War) but had a pronounced political component with a clear ethnic dimension. The research revealed distinct mechanisms for implementing artificial famine through the phased introduction of administrative and economic measures by the authorities which transformed a natural food crisis into a humanitarian catastrophe. The stages of this process are clearly traceable from initial confiscation measures through ignoring the critical situation to deliberately delaying recognition of famine and obstructing the arrival of aid.

Analysis of the differentiated impact of artificial famine on various ethnic groups based on historical research data revealed significant differences in mortality rates—Crimean Tatars constituted approximately three-quarters of the total number of famine victims which demonstrates the purposeful nature of demographic policy. This disproportion documented in the works of Zarubin (2008)¹³⁷ Bekirova (2020)¹³⁸ Kondratyuk (2022)¹³⁹ Pashchenya (2008)¹⁴⁰ Köstüklü (2018)¹⁴¹ and other researchers cannot be explained by random distribution and indicates the systemic nature of discrimination. The evidence base for the artificial nature of the famine includes systematic delay by the central authorities in officially recognizing Crimea as a famine region despite numerous testimonies of mass mortality continuation of confiscation measures in conditions of already begun mass famine which is documented by orders of local authorities differentiated distribution of food aid with obvious oppression of rural areas with predominantly Crimean Tatar people directives from the central leadership about priority

¹³⁷ Zarubin, A.G., and V.G. Zarubin. *Without Winners. From the History of the Civil War in Crimea*. 2nd ed., revised and supplemented. Simferopol: AntikvA, 2008, 697.

¹³⁸ Bekirova, Gulnara, Andrii Ivanets, Yuliia Tyshchenko, Serhii Hromenko, and Bekir Abilaiev. *History of Crimea and the Crimean Tatar People: A Textbook*. Kyiv: "Crimean Family"; "Master Books", 2020.

¹³⁹ Kondratyuk G.N. Crimean Tatars during the famine of 1921-1923. *Krymskoe istoricheskoe obozrenie=Crimean Historical Review*. 2022, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 31-39. DOI: 10.22378/kio.2022.1.31-39 (In Russian)

¹⁴⁰ Pashchenia, V.N. *Ethno-National Development in Crimea in the First Half of the 20th Century (1900-1945): Monograph*. Simferopol, 2008.

¹⁴¹ Nuri Köstüklü. "1920'li Yılların Başlarında Kırım ve Kazan Türkleri'nin Yaşadığı Açlık Felaketi ve Türkiye'nin Yardımları" *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi XXVII*, no. (2011): 293-324.

provision for the party-Soviet apparatus at the expense of the starving population purposeful restriction of freedom of movement which made it impossible for the starving population to independently search for food discriminatory food policy that established disproportionately high norms of requisition in Tatar villages manipulation of statistical data on harvest and food supplies to block external aid.

Conceptual understanding of the Crimean famine through the prism of Johan Galtung's theory of structural violence allowed for identifying systematic institutional practices that limited the Crimean Tatar people's access to vital resources and created conditions for mass mortality. Application of this theoretical model revealed how formally neutral political decisions in the context of specific social and economic conditions transformed into a powerful instrument of pressure on the Crimean Tatar people which confirms Galtung's thesis about "violence built into the very structure" of social systems.

Integrating Amartya Sen's concept of "administrative famine" into the analytical framework of the study explained the mechanisms of transforming a food crisis into mass famine. Documented practices of continuing food requisitions after the onset of mass mortality prohibitions on migration from starving areas and deliberate delays in recognizing the fact of famine fully correspond to Sen's model according to which famine occurs not due to absolute food shortage but as a result of violating the system of "entitlements" of certain ethnic groups to access food.

Research on the long-term demographic consequences of famine through the lens of Milica Zarkovic Bookman's concept of demographic engineering allowed conceptualizing this tragedy not as an isolated historical event but as part of a broader process of transforming the ethnic structure of Crimea. The famine of 1921-1923 appears as the first stage of a long-term policy of ethno-demographic pressure that continued during the period of collectivization the "Great Terror" and culminated in the total forced deportation of the Crimean Tatar people in 1944 in which 46.2% of the people perished.

Comprehensive analysis of archival sources and theoretical understanding of the problem confirm that the Crimean famine meets all criteria of being artificially organized as defined in the theoretical and methodological part of the study. The famine became an instrument for suppressing national self-determination and strengthening the political control of the center over the periphery. This aligns with Rafael Lemkin's concept of genocide which includes not only

direct physical destruction but also creating conditions that make the existence of a group as such impossible as observed in the case of Crimean Tatars.

Of particular value for understanding the nature of famine in Crimea is its analysis in comparative perspective with similar events that affected Turkic peoples of the Volga region Urals and other regions. The identified common patterns in implementing food policy in these regions disproportionately high losses among Turkic peoples and similar mechanisms of institutional discrimination indicate the systemic nature of the policy being carried out and its connection with the suppression of the pan-Turkist movement and opposition to the project of a Turkic Federal Republic. The total number of famine victims among Turkic peoples was counted in millions with the Crimean Tatar people suffering some of the heaviest losses.

An important conclusion of the study is establishing the evolution of the policy of creating artificial famine from initial administrative restrictions to a full-scale system of structural violence against an entire people. This evolution occurred under conditions of complete awareness by Soviet leadership of the consequences of their actions which is confirmed by secret directives and analytical materials of the Cheka and Narkomprod.

This research contributes to rethinking early Soviet nationality policy and its consequences for non-Russian peoples of the former Russian Empire. It demonstrates the continuity of imperial and Soviet models of attitude toward indigenous peoples and colonial territories as well as illuminates the mechanisms of using famine as an instrument of ethno-demographic pressure. The results of the study are significant not only for historical science but also for understanding contemporary ethnopolitical processes in the post-Soviet space many of which have roots in the events of the period under consideration.

Promising directions for further research include studying the international context of the tragedy including the role of Turkish American and European humanitarian aid comparative analysis of artificial famine mechanisms in different regions of the former Russian Empire research on the impact of the tragedy on collective memory and identity of the Crimean Tatar people interdisciplinary analysis of the events of 1921-1923 in the context of international legal norms regarding crimes against humanity.

Summary

Thus, the presented research, based on a broad source base and modern theoretical-methodological approaches, proves the artificial nature of the famine in Crimea during 1921-1923 and its use as an instrument of demographic engineering. This conclusion is significant not only for rethinking the tragic pages in the history of the Crimean Tatar people but also for understanding the mechanisms of state violence and ethno-political transformations in a broader historical and theoretical context.

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