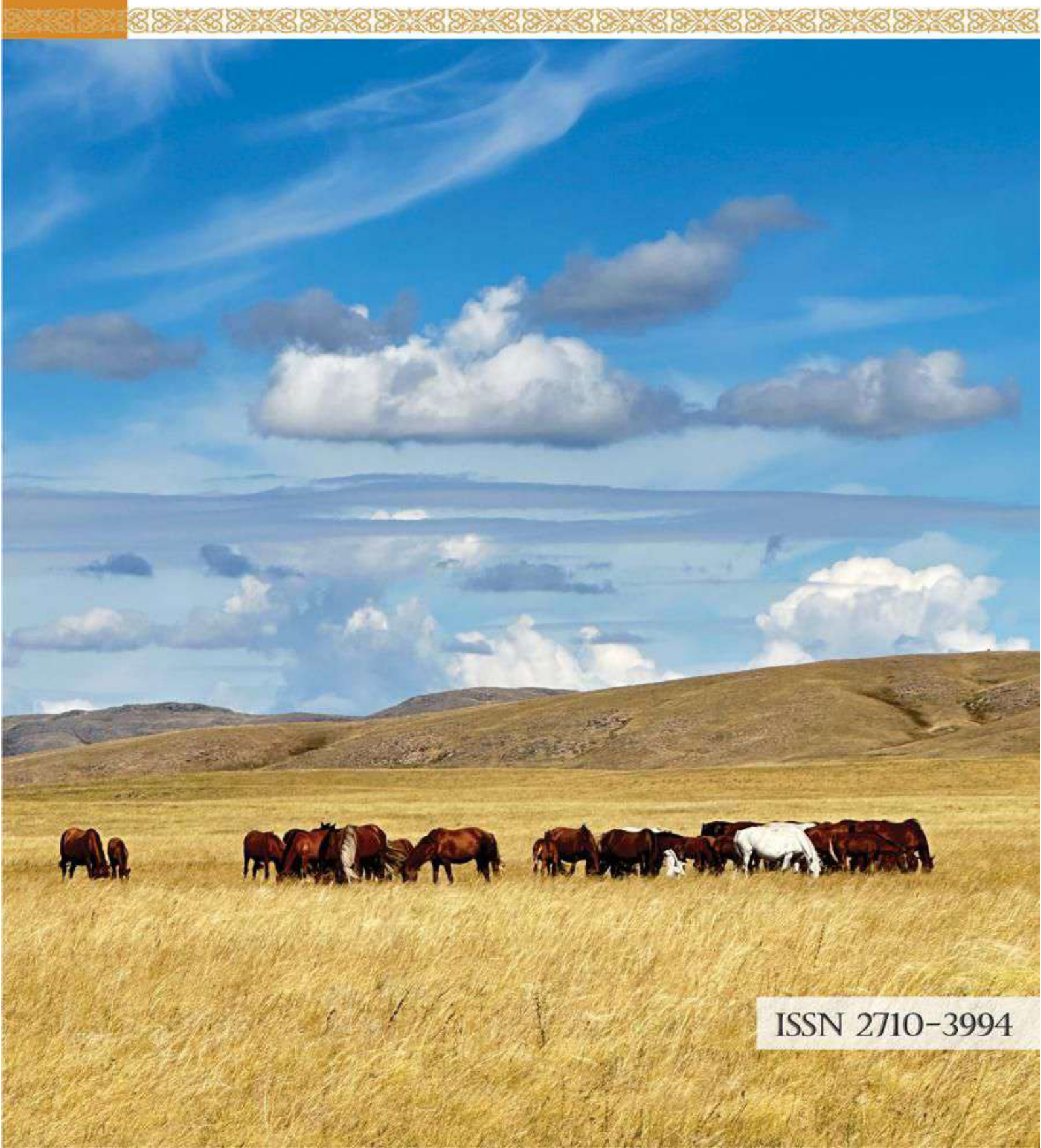


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## THE PROBLEM OF FAMINE AND HOMELESS CHILDREN IN EARLY 1920S (BASED ON AKTOBE ARCHIVE)

*Ismagulov Uzakbai<sup>1</sup>, Konbay Yerke<sup>2\*</sup>*

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**Abstract.** *Introduction.* The article focuses on the fate of neglected and homeless children in Aktobe region during the famine in 1921–1922. As a result of famine suffering from the loss of their parents, children – the most vulnerable generation – became one of the most pressing issues on the authorities’ agenda. Therefore, the issue became a significant subject of study in domestic historiography. *Goals and objectives.* Based on the recent data and materials from archival collections, the article comprehensively reveals the situation of children in Aktobe province, in particular the severe conditions caused by the lack of food, clothing and shelter in orphanages; the spread of infectious diseases; their tragic consequences; and the actions of the authorities to eliminate them, as well as the work of the authorities to regulate these existing problems. *Results.* Along with adults, it was tough to regulate the hundreds of thousands of children suffering from hunger. It was necessary to open a lot of orphanages for homeless children who were living on the streets. The number of orphanages increased during certain periods, while at other times they were closed due to lack of funds, and the number was reduced. Therefore, the authorities were forced to organize overnight stays and dining rooms for homeless people. The death rate among children has increased from various infectious diseases. One way to help starving children was to relocate them to other regions of the country, as well as outside the country. *Conclusion.* 1921–1922 famine brought difficulties for many nations, including children. Urgent measures had to be taken in order to solve the issue of homeless children. In the Soviet Union, economic challenges in Kazakh society created difficulties in addressing children’s issues. This stage remains a tragic chapter in the history of the country.


**Key words:** Famine, homeless children, orphanage, help for the hungry, orphans




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## 1920-ЖЫЛДАРДЫҢ БАСЫНДАҒЫ АШАРШЫЛЫҚ ЖӘНЕ ПАНАСЫЗ БАЛАЛАР МӘСЕЛЕСІ (АҚТӨБЕ АРХИВІ ДЕРЕКТЕРІ БОЙЫНША)

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**Аңдатпа.** *Kіріспе.* Мақала бұрын өз алдына бөлек тақырып ретінде зерттелмеген 1921–1922 жылдардағы ашаршылық кезінде Ақтөбе өңіріндегі қамқорсыз, панасыз қалған балалар тағдыры мәселесіне арналған. Аштық салдарынан ата-анасынан айырылып, қасіретті де қайғылы жағдайда қалған қоғамның ең әлсіз буыны – балалар мәселесі билік орындары отырыстарының күн тәртібінде бірінші кезекте тұрған күрделі сұрақтар қатарында болды. Сол себепті де көтеріліп отырған мәселе отандық тарихнамадағы өзекті де маңызды мәселе болып табылады. *Зерттеудің мақсаты мен міндеттері.* Архив қорларындағы тың деректер мен материалдар негізінде Ақтөбе губерниясындағы балалар жағдайы, атап көрсеткенде балалар үйлеріндегі азық-түлік, киім-кешектің жетіспеушілігінен туындаған ауыр жағдайлар, жұқпалы аурулардың таралуын, оның қасіретті нәтижелерін және билік орындарының оны жою жолындағы әрекеттерін, сондай-ақ билік орындарының қалыптасқан сол проблемаларды реттеудегі жұмыстарын жан-жақты ашып көрсету болып табылды. *Нәтижелер.* Ересектермен қатар аштыққа ұрынған жүз мыңдаған балалар жағдайын реттеу оңайға тимеді. Көшеде қалып қойған панасыз балалар үшін балалар үйлерін көптеп ашу керек болды. Балалар үйінің сандары бір кезеңде артып отырса, келесі бір жағдайда қаржы жетіспеушілігі салдарынан жабылып, саны қысқарып кетті. Сол себепті де билік орындары панасыздар үшін түнеме орындарын, асханалар ұйымдастыруға мәжбүр болды. Балалар арасында аштықтан, түрлі жұқпалы аурулардан өлім көбейді. Аштыққа ұшыраған балаларды аман сақтаудың бір жолы – оларды республиканың басқа аймақтарына, сондай-ақ республикадан тыс жерлерге көшіру шаралары да жүргізілді. *Қорытынды.* 1921–1922 жылдардағы аштық халыққа, оның ішінде балаларға ауыр тиді. Ата-анасыз, панасыз қалған балалар жағдайы шұғыл шаралар қолдануды қажет етті. Кеңестік мемлекетте, оның ішінде қазақ қоғамындағы экономикалық жағдайдағы қайшылықтар балалар мәселесін шешуде қиыншылықтар туғызды. Бұл кезең – ел тарихындағы қайғылы да қасіретті кезең болып қала береді.


**Түйін сөздер:** Аштық, панасыз балалар, балалар үйі, ашыққандарға көмек, жетім балалар


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# ГОЛОД НАЧАЛА 1920-Х ГГ. И ПРОБЛЕМЫ БЕСПРИЗОРНЫХ ДЕТЕЙ (ПО ДАННЫМ АКТЮБИНСКОГО АРХИВА)

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**Аннотация.** *Введение.* Статья посвящена судьбе безнадзорных и беспризорных детей Актюбинской области в период голода 1921–1922 годов. В результате голода, страдая от потери родителей, дети – наиболее уязвимое поколение – стали одним из самых острых вопросов в повестке дня властей. Соответственно, этот вопрос стал значимым предметом изучения в отечественной историографии. *Цели и задачи исследования.* В статье на основе современных данных и материалов архивных фондов всесторонне раскрывается положение детей Актюбинской губернии, в частности тяжелые условия, вызванные нехваткой продовольствия, одежды и крова в детских домах; распространение инфекционных заболеваний; их трагические последствия; действия властей по их ликвидации, а также работа властей по регулированию этих существующих проблем. *Результаты.* Наряду со взрослыми, трудно было регулировать сотни тысяч детей, страдающих от голода. Для беспризорных детей, живущих на улице, пришлось открыть множество детских домов. Количество детских домов в определенные периоды увеличивалось, в другие периоды они закрывались из-за нехватки средств, и их число сокращалось. Поэтому власти были вынуждены организовывать ночлеги и столовые для бездомных. Увеличилась смертность среди детей от различных инфекционных заболеваний. Одним из способов помочь голодающим детям было переселение их в другие регионы страны, а также за пределы страны. *Заключение.* Голод начала 1920-х годов принес трудности многим народам, особый урон нанес по детям. Необходимо было принять срочные меры для решения проблемы бездомных детей. В Советском Союзе экономические трудности в казахском обществе создали трудности в решении проблем детей. Этот этап остается трагической страницей в истории страны.

**Ключевые слова:** Голод, бездомные дети, детские дома, помощь голодающим, дети-сироты  
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## Introduction

Historically one of the sufferings of our people is the famine in 1921–1922. In general, these famine, which covered the western region of Kazakhstan, killed millions of people.

The main causes of familiarity in the domestic historiography were considered to be the newly established Soviet power and the Bolshevik party's conflict policy in the economy and the consequences of the natural disasters at that time.

The famine brought the tragedy especially to the weaker joint of society to the fate of the children. Homeless, careless children who lost parents were in tough life situations. It must be

admitted that the Civil War and later in the case of the occupied chaos the party and the Soviet authorities were able to pay attention to the issue of homeless children.

From the first days of famine the authorities helped the homeless children and opened orphanages. In addition, special bedrooms and food canteens were organized in cities, district centers and rural areas.

Another responsible measure on homeless children's issues was to move them to the regions and outside of the country via railways.

It is known that regulating children's situation moved in tandem with the famines of adults. The lack of food, the prevalence of various infectious diseases among the population has led to a majority of deaths among adults.

We believe that considering the results of the activities of the federal, republican, and local authorities in connection with the tragic period that has occurred on the example of a separate province, namely Aktobe province, which has not previously been studied as a single entity, demonstrates the relevance of the issue.

### **Materials and methods**

Archive materials were widely used in the preparation of the proposed article. Materials related to the topic were mainly received from the state archives of Aktobe region. The documents received from the archive are new and updated. The article was used in the collection of special documents and materials related to the article.

The research methodology is based on the principles of historicism and objectivity. In accordance with the principle of objectivity, the causes and consequences of the famine were analyzed, as well as its impact on the most vulnerable part of society – children. For a comprehensive study of the problem, the study used general scientific methods: analysis, synthesis, statistical analysis and specific historical approaches: historical-comparative, historical-typological, historical-systematic.

### **Discussion**

The peculiarity of the topic is that in Aktobe region, the state of homeless children in the 1921–1922 hunger is previously unprecedented.

In general, it is known that the problem of the famine itself, not to mention the situation of homeless children during the famine of 1921–1922, began to be investigated late. It is no secret that in the post-independence period, the famine of 1931–1933 was often the main subject of research. However, the causes and consequences of the famine of that time are highlighted in the works of historians M. Koigeldiev, T. Omarbekov, and others. Over time, the issue of famine during that period began to receive widespread attention and dissertations were defended. Especially on the eve of the 100th anniversary of the famine, a large number of special studies and scientific articles were published. Among them, S. Smagulova's research on the famine of that period is particularly noteworthy (Smagulova, 2019). Also, E. Khaidarov (Khaidarov, 2021), O. Isenov (Isenov, 2021), A.B. Aman (Aman, 2021:142–148), D.K. Abenov (Abenov, 2021: 53–65), A.T. Maden (Maden, 2021:30 – 37), A.S. Sarsenov, G.K. Kairgalieva, D.Z. Alipova (Sarsenov, et al, 2022: 24–34). Their scientific articles mainly analyze the causes and consequences of famine in the western region. Even though it is not aligned with the main topic, these works generally focus on the plight of children during famine. The issue of helping the famine is revealed in the article by M.M. Kozybayeva (Kozybayeva, 2022: 27–37). The issue of children in 1921–1922 that we are raising is comprehensively considered in the special studies of G.B. Sugiralimova (Sugiralimova, 2006), Z.G. Saktaganova, G.B. Karsakova (Saktaganova, Karsakova, 2018: 49–56).

### **Results**

The looming famine in the Aktobe province was observed in July 1921. At that time, due to a natural disaster that struck the Kazakh steppe, 90% of the harvest failed (ARSA, F. 3., Inv. 1., C. 604., P. 1).

On July 4, 1921, the chairman of the Aktobe provincial committee, Rykov, sent a telegram to the Food Commissariat of Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Central Executive Committee regarding the current situation, which contained the following content: "The First Aktobe Provincial Congress recognized the Aktobe province as being in a threatening food situation: Temir, Irgiz, Uil and the southern part of the Aktobe region have no bread, the population has been starving for a long time, and there is no grain harvest in sight. It petitions to transfer the province to a consuming one and asks that the grain available at the grain collection points be reserved by the Committee for Aid to the Starving of the Aktobe Province, and that its export from the province be suspended. Now release seventeen and a half thousand grains to one hundred thousand starving people (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 600, P. 41)."

In total, in 1921, the Aktobe province consisted of 135 townships. According to the five-point system, the crop yield was 1/2, and the hay yield was 1 bal. Crops were sown in Aktobe district and some parts of Temir district. Due to drought and pests, the crops failed. In 15 townships of Irgiz district with a population of 120.000, in 27 townships of Temir district with a population of 95.079, and in 13 townships of Oyil district with a population of 63.000, there was no grain at all. Grass growth was also below average. The population of these districts was mainly Kazakh. Last winter, 90% (in some places 95%) of their livestock was lost. The Kazakh population without food and livestock was in a very difficult situation. The chairman of the regional committee told the chairman of the emergency commission for assistance to the starving population under the Kazakh Central Executive Committee, S. Mendeshev described an incredible situation "According to the information available to the regional committee, the number of starving people is 300 thousand, and their number is growing every day due to the lack of food" (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 600, P. 42 rev.).

The Commission for Aid to the Famine, established in July 1921, made tireless efforts to convince the leadership of the Republic and the Center to include the province among those suffering from drought and famine.

Finally, from August 1, the province was included in the list of those sufferings from famine. This situation led to the province being exempted from paying various taxes and being included in the category of those in need of assistance. The commission, which worked day and night, determined that only on October 16, 56% of the population was in need of assistance. It is estimated that by January 1, 1922, the number of people in need of such assistance could reach 361.051 (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 604, P. 1).

From the first days of the famine, the central, republican and local authorities, along with the adult population, paid special attention to the fate of children, a particularly vulnerable social group in society. Meanwhile, a huge burden fell on the orphanages that had already been operating and those that were being built.

On July 28 in 1921, a commission was created in the Aktobe province to improve the lives and conditions of children. On the instructions of the provincial commission, commissions in this direction were also established in the districts. As mentioned above, the commissions were engaged in providing starving children and orphanages with financial and food support. However, due to the lack of a relief fund in the province, requests were not fulfilled.

As a result of the work to identify starving and homeless children in the Aktobe province by August 15 in 1921, there were 685 children in 5 orphanages in the Aktobe district, 611 in 4 orphanages in the Akbulak district, 640 in 5 orphanages in the Mozharovsk district, 116 in 2 orphanages in the Temir district, 180 in 2 orphanages in the Oyil district, 150 in 1 orphanage in the Irgiz district, 50 in 1 orphanage in the Shalkar district, 47 in 1 orphanage in the Karabutak district, that is, a total of 2479 children in 21 orphanages (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 604, P. 191). It is worth noting that about a thousand of these children were of Kazakh nationality.

The authorities were carrying out a number of works related to the situation of children, however, the results were not quite satisfactory. Homeless children were arriving in Aktobe continuously and their number was growing every day. At the Aktobe station, there was a concentration of people who arrived from the Omsk region and from the Samara region to be sent to the Turkestan Republic.

Meanwhile, many children were dying from hunger and wandering the streets. There were attempts to place them in orphanages. During October, the orphanage was 200% full, and 1875 completely homeless children were registered (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 604, P. 191 rev.).

Interestingly, by September 1, 5.743 homeless children were registered in Aktobe. Realizing that the upcoming autumn would be difficult if their problems were not resolved now, the local authorities repeatedly sent telegrams to the Center asking to relocate the children to other areas. But there was no answer. The local authorities, by their own decision, began to send children to the Republic of Turkestan and Ukraine. From August 1 to October 15, 7877 children are transferred to those places (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 604, P. 191 rev.).

At the end of November, with the permission of the Center, the children were finally transferred to Samarkand. The statement of the Aktobe provincial department of public education dated November 22, 1921, states that 1251 children were sent to the southern provinces and 2935 to Tashkent. The children were sent in groups of 30–60 people (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 8, P. 49).

Due to the famine, 3513 children were evacuated to the Turkestan Republic and 75 to Ukraine. In 1921, 21.540 children were evacuated and resettled to other provinces.

In general, the measures to relocate homeless children to grain-rich provinces were considered an attempt to minimize the consequences and burdens of this problem on the province, to save the lives of children.

Indeed, the overwhelming influx of homeless children put an additional burden on orphanages. On October 1, 1921, the number of orphanages increased from the previous 21 to 25, and the number of children living in them was 3090. The reason for this was that due to the increase in the number of homeless children, it was necessary to open additional orphanages one by one in Aktobe, Akbulak, Temir, and Oyil. In November, the number of children in the 25 orphanages in the province reached 4,087 (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 604, P. 191 rev.).

The number of deaths due to such actions had decreased, and on the eve of December 1, the situation in orphanages was also somewhat stabilized. At this time, there were 2.432 children in 27 orphanages in the province (one each in Aktobe and Oyil districts), and the number of children in November decreased by 1655 (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 60, Pp. 191–192 rev.).

However, although the relocation of homeless children to grain-rich provinces helped to resolve the problem to a certain extent, it is known that the famine that gripped the province continued to intensify in 1922.

On the eve of January 1, 1922, 97.309 children (under 16 years old), 263.742 adults, a total of 361.051 people were starving. This was 65% of the entire population of the province (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 8, P. 28). At that time, 6 catering establishments, 10 children's canteens, and 27 orphanages were operating in the province.

In February 1922, the number of starving people was 48.000, among whom 30.000 were children. At that time, improving the conditions of children was one of the most difficult problems. The lack of food did not allow opening new orphanages. There was a shortage of clothes and shoes in orphanages, especially in the districts. There were many child deaths. There were 4000 children in the orphanages at that time. But food was provided to fewer than 1500 children. The rest had to be distributed by the provincial famine relief commission and they had a meager supply of food.

Due to bad weather and repeated storms, information on the situation of children in the province and orphanages was only available on March 1. At that time, there were a total of 21 orphanages in Aktobe (10 houses), Akbulak (5 houses), Temir (2), Irgiz (2 houses), Shalkar, and Karabutak districts, with 3336 children. Since the Oyil district was under the control of gangs at that time, no information was obtained. As it turned out later, only one orphanage (70 children) remained due to gang attacks. Others were dispersed due to lack of food, their property and equipment were looted. The situation was very difficult in March. Children were arriving every day. Hungry, naked, emaciated, and sick children had to be housed with healthy children due to lack of space (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 604, P. 193).



In March, the number of homeless people was 262.514, of which 160.500 were adults and 102.014 were children. In April, the number of homeless people increased from the March figure to 300.000. This constituted 78% of the total population.

The information report on the famine in Aktobe province, prepared on March 25, 1922, contains a number of details about the situation at that time. At that time, the province consisted of 7 districts (uyezds). According to the data of December 1, 1921, the population was 526.023 people, of which 306.023 were adults and 220.000 were children.

Table No. 1. Orphanages in the province and the number of children in them:  
(ARSA, F. 6, Inv. 1, C. 26, P. 4). (Data of January 1, 1922)

Districts	Orphanages	Number of children – Russian	Number of children – Kazakh
Aktobe	10	703	193
Akbulak	4	125	496
Mozharovsk	5	434	100
Temir	3	157	34
Oiyl	2	110	170
Yrgyz	1	20	130
Shalkar	1	70	80
Karabutak	1	-	70
Total	27	1.619	1.273

During the above period, special canteens were organized. 1,900 children were fed in 3 canteens opened in Aktobe, 777 in 4 canteens opened in Mozharovsk, 112 in 1 canteen in Temir, 473 in 1 canteen in Shalkar, 98 in 1 canteen opened in Irgiz, a total of 3,360 children were fed in 10 canteens (ARSA, F. 6, Inv. 1, C. 26, P. 4).

In March 1922, the work of the Commission for Aid to the Famine (CAF) was in a difficult situation. At that time, the number of starving people was growing, and on the other hand, food aid to the districts was stopped. The situation in the Temir district also became tense. Many canteens were closed due to the lack of food. Only the Temir, Zhuryn, Konzhar, Kalmakkyrgan townships, and the Emba settlement, which borrowed 600 poods of grain from the Adai-tabyn revolutionary committee, were still working. They had 4,238 starving people.

Due to the reduction in food distribution to the district and the closure of canteens, the number of hungry people in Temir began to increase sharply, their number increased from 1,800 to 2,298, and the growth continued.

There were 5 canteens in Temir. Since it was not possible to feed everyone at the same time, the canteen was divided into two shifts. There was an orphanage in the city with a capacity of 120 children. Due to the lack of special food (rations) for those suffering from hunger, the amount of bread for children increased by 1/2 pound and two meals were taken. This measure was taken due to the fact that children were starving and began to die.

Due to the overcrowding of people in the hostels in Temir, the number of sick people increased. The Committee for Aid to the Famine was forced to organize hospitals. 50% of those who fell ill were among the starving. 97 people died during the reporting month.

There were 101 registered canteens in the district for 37,596 hungry people. Of the hungry, 22,558 were adults and 15,638 were children. There were also 20 food outlets.

The seed fund in the district was registered only in private farms of Russian residents. The seed crops were distributed from the province to the district amounted to 63 thousand poods. Taking into

account the losses of farms, the allocated seed volume satisfied only 70% of the district's needs.

Speaking about the progress of the sowing campaign, attention was drawn to the fact that due to the early arrival of spring, seed crops were being harvested late. Even then, only 20% of the crops had been harvested by that time.

As for the issue of helping children, the public education department opened 11 orphanages in the province. The General Committee for Helping the Famine organized assistance to an orphanage with a 120-bed dormitory and a canteen in the city of Temir. Also, a dormitory and a canteen for 200 people were prepared for children in the building of the Konzhar school. The number of canteens organized by the American Relief Administration (ARA) is 45, where 6,538 children could eat.

As for medical assistance, the General Relief Committee did not have medical personnel. The victims were provided with assistance by 2 doctors and 4 paramedics from the health department.

There was a migration of residents to other areas. The migrants mainly moved to their former places of residence. This situation was especially noticeable among the resettlers. At the same time, there was a migration towards the Turkestan region. Due to the lack of staff, work was not carried out to keep the migrants in their places. Also, the local authorities, although they left them in their places, could not guarantee their successful future (ARSA, F. 6, Inv. 1, C. 35, Pp. 1–2 rev.).

Table 2. The amount of income and expenditure of monetary and material assets (ARSA, F. 6., Inv. 1., C. 35., P. 2 rev.).

Cereals	Balance for March 1 poods/f	Income for March poods/f	March outbreak poods/f	Balance for April 1 poods/f
Wheat	-	600 p.	418 p., 28 f.	181 p., 12 f.
Rye wheat	91 p., 13,5 f.	134 p., 02 f.	226 p., 31 f.	1 p., 12 f.
Flour	22 p., 04,5 f.	5 p.	8 p., 04 f.	19 p., 0,5 f.
Millet	36 p., 24 f.	-	36 p., 24 f.	-

We would like to note that the absence of the remaining 134 p., 2 f. of wheat as of March 1 is due to its valuation in terms of rye.

In February 1922, 4 canteens were operating in the city of Temir. Their population coverage was as follows: canteen No. 1 – 582 people, canteen No. 2 – 633 people, canteen No. 3 – 735 people, canteen No. 4 – 90 people (ARSA, F. 6, Inv. 1, C. 36, P. 1).

The chairman of the Temir district hunger relief commission, in a statement sent to the CAF under the provincial food committee: "I ask the Famine Committee of the Provincial Food Committee to pay special attention to the starving people of the Temir district who suffered from crop failure more than in other districts, a request to release food for the starving people of the Temir district for February because the consequences of starvation are becoming an unprecedented period in a person's life, and also a request to release funds for the equipment of public catering. The funds received from you in the amount of one hundred million rubles have been spent, for which a report on the expenditure will be given" (ARSA, F. 6, Inv. 1, C. 36, P. 1 rev.).

The famine relief commission did not work in Emba township. On the eve of January 15, 1922, there was only one public catering facility in the township for 97 children aged 5 to 14. The total number of people suffering from hunger in the township was estimated at 300. Adult hungry people did not receive food from the catering point. The Temir district famine relief commission provided only 47 poods of wheat. Since there were no catering facilities in 3 villages, the raw flour was distributed. In Emba, hot meals were not prepared, but bread was baked, and children were given 1/2 f. per day.

The financial assistance allocated from the CAF was 1,000,000. The amount of money received from voluntary assistance to the hungry was also not satisfactory. Such a source of funds came from the funds collected once a week in the village and daily from the railway station markets. The station

market was also transferred to the Volost Executive Committee (VEC) of the Townships due to the provision of dry food to the children of railway workers. It is worth noting that VEC employees did not take any action to regulate public catering establishments.

The Commission for Aid to the Famine in the Zhuryn township was established on December 27, 1921. From that time until March 15, 1922, only one feeding station was organized. It served 842 hungry people in December, 23,313 in January, 12,541 in February, and 14,810 in March. Starting in March, the Mikhailovsky district, consisting of 4 settlements, joined the Zhuryn township. One food pantry was opened in each settlement. Since their opening, 46,367 hungry people have been served at all food pantry locations. Food supply: in December – 252 p., 20 f. wheat, 50 p., 36.5 f. meat, in January – 170 p., 39 f. wheat, 137 p., 20 f. meat, in February – 110 p., wheat, 31 p., 26 f. meat, in March – 64 p., 28 f. wheat, 27 p., 23 f. meat, in April 1 – 144 p., 35 f. wheat, in total – 743 p., 3 f. wheat, 267 p., 25.5 f. meat (ARSA, F. 6, Inv. 1, C. 36, P. 9 rev.). In addition, the volost CAF provided food for 900 hungry Kazakhs placed in carriages at the Zhuryn township who were to be evacuated to the Republic of Turkestan, for a month.

By mid-April 1922, the Volost Commission for the Relief of the Famine provided 1,864 people with food in registered food establishments. The small number was due to attempts to sort people out due to lack of food. As a result of the sorting, 791 of the starving were removed from the list. This sorting has had a very hard time for the hungry. Many peasants were left without help, unable to work in the fields. A small amount of hot food provided at the food distribution centers was enough to satisfy their hunger. Now, as a result of the sorting, they lost even more. 33,000,000 rubles provided by the Temir district CAF was spent in full.

The condition of the working vehicles in the Soviet Union was also poor. Most of the horses were slaughtered due to hunger and used as food.

In mid-April 1922, a representative who went to inspect public catering in the Bolshevsk region said that specific assistance should be provided to these areas, otherwise the population, especially the Kazakhs, could die before the new grain harvest. It is also proposed to open an orphanage and a food pantry for migrants in the Emba settlement, and an orphanage, a nursing home, and a food pantry for migrants in Zhurin (ARSA, F. 6, Inv. 1, C. 36, P. 10).

The residents of the Karabutak district considered the period from March to mid-April to be not bad. It can be said that the livestock generally survived the winter. There was a decrease in slaughter due to hunger, there were no wolf attacks and there were no infectious diseases. The mortality rate in the district was 5%. Due to the work of the district health department, the number of people with diseases also decreased. However, state aid to the hungry has not been successful. In January, 525 p. of grain were received. This grain is distributed to 9 food establishments, two per each volost and one at the head of the Karabutak settlement. The main assistance is expected from the state. Only 40 p. of grain have been reserved in the district CAF. Grain is also being collected through local bartering. Its stock was estimated at 100 p.

The number of people suffering from hunger reached 14,509. The main hope was in May. It was believed that most of the hungry would have access to dairy products.

There were cases of deaths among children in the district's orphanages due to lack of medical care until March. Later, after the provision of care was regulated, the deaths stopped (ARSA, F. 6, Inv. 1, C. 36, P. 11 rev.).

In the villages and villages of the Shalkar district, there were no catering establishments or canteens at the beginning of April. The food distributed to the population by the Shalkar district CAF was not used. According to some of the starving people, the majority of the population was from the well-to-do and middle classes, and the number of the poor was very small. 1200 p. of grain were distributed to 12 villages of the district. However, doubts arose about the distribution of this food, since the starving people complained that they did not receive any help (ARSA, F. 6, Inv. 1, C. 36, P. 12).

On December 20, 1921, a meeting of the Commission for Aid to the Famine under the Aktobe Provincial Food Committee was held. It adopted a resolution on the establishment of the Commission for Aid to the Famine and its commencement of work on December 20, 1921. It also adopted a

resolution on the establishment of local commissions for aid to the hungry, including the head of the preparation office (chairman), the heads of the general affairs department and the inspectorate bureau, and on the opening of catering establishments in the Oyl, Temir, Mozharovsk, Shalkar and Irgiz districts (ARSA, F. 6, Inv. 1, C. 36, P. 15).

The relocation of homeless children to grain-producing provinces continued in 1922.

From January to mid-February 1922, due to a further increase in the number of homeless children, in mid-February, due to repeated requests, a sanitary train arrived and 194 Muslim children were sent to Bukhara.

In April, 73 children were sent by sanitary train from Shalkar to Turkestan Republic. In May, 527 children were sent to Chernigov and 360 children to Zhitomyr.

On June 4, 1922, 360 children were evacuated to other areas by ambulance train.

According to inaccurate data, the number of orphanages in the province and the number of children in them in April was as follows: 4 houses in Aktobe city – 1672 children, 4 houses in Aktobe district – 465 children, 3 houses in Temir district – 320 children, 1 house in Shalkar district – 80 children, 2 houses in Oyl district – 600 children, 4 houses in Akbulak district – 700 children, 1 house in Karabutak district – 154 children, 1 house in Irgiz district – 200 children (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 8, P. 58 rev.).

The following data indicates that in recent months the number of orphanages in the province has decreased to 9. The number of children living there was 1,154. The sharp decrease in the number of orphanages was caused by a reduction in state funding. In May, the Zolotonosh and Akkemer orphanages were closed and in June, Kherson and Zhaisan orphanages were closed, and the rest were converted into canteens (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 604, P. 193).

In general, the number of orphanages in the Aktobe province between August 1921 and January-February 1923 varied from 9 to 32. It should be noted that the increase in the number was due to a sharp increase in hunger levels during the famine-stricken autumn-winter months and the concentration of people fleeing hunger from other areas to the Aktobe station, while the decrease in the number was due to the sending of hungry children to other areas by sanitary trains, as well as the closure of orphanages due to lack of funds.

It is known that during the famine of 1921–1922, international organizations organized aid. In the Aktobe province, between January and August 1922, the number of canteens organized by the ARA increased from 319 to 527, and the number of children involved in feeding increased from 25 thousand to 89,718 (Kozybayeva, 2022: 31). As for the Red Cross, by July of this year, 18 canteens and 4 catering establishments were operating, where dry food was distributed to 5,250 people. These people were pregnant women and 14-year-old children (Kozybayeva, 2022:34). Food shortages prompted various actions to cover the hungry as much as possible. In October 1921, –15,043, in November – 36,000, in December – 36,000, in January 1922 – 37,400, and in February – 60,000 people. It may seem that a lot of people were covered. However, this action was out of desperation. Instead of 10 pounds of flour, 7 pounds were allocated. However, in March, when there was no reduction, the number of people covered was only 2,000 (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 604, P. 116).

Orphanages have played a role in solving the problem of homeless children. However, that there was a lot of controversy around these problems and a lot of unresolved issues.

In fact, the orphanages were in a deplorable state. The buildings were old, without doors or windows, and were in an open-air condition. The children did not have outer and inner clothes, hats, shoes, bedding, and even dishes, spoons, and knives in the canteens. The situation of 1921 was repeated, and the number of children in the orphanages was so high that it amounted to 200–250 %. Such unbearable conditions exposed 25% of the children to various infectious diseases, and the most unfortunate thing was that, as we have already mentioned, there were no special isolation facilities, so they were placed with healthy children.

The increasing number of homeless children requires urgent action. The first priority is to repair old buildings. The funds allocated in September and early October were only enough to carry out minor repairs. Instead of windows, they had to use felt, cardboard, and boards.

It is known that the harsh conditions in orphanages lead to the death of children. These cases were repeatedly reported by specially created commissions.

The authorities were forced to conduct special investigations to determine and confirm the causes and consequences of such tragic situations.

On October 6, 1921, a commission consisting of the head (chairman) of the provincial health department, the head of the sanitary and epidemiological department, the head of the medical department, the orphanage's paramedic, and the head of the orphanage's economic department inspected the conditions of orphanages in Aktobe. During the inspection, it was found that the rooms were cold, dirty and had a lot of broken windows, the density of the rooms due to excessive occupancy, as well as the lack of children's clothing and bedding, very poor quality of the food provided, and the lack of rice, millet, and other cereals for cooking porridge, led to the outbreak of infectious diseases and child deaths.

Based on these issues, the commission was tasked with providing children with all types of clothing, providing each child with an individual bed, urgently improving children's nutrition, improving the quality of medical care, etc. (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 215, P. 150 rev.).

On October 22, 1921, the doctor of Aktobe Hospital No. 1 L.M. Liberzon and the paramedic P.M. Fedorov inspected the conditions of the city's orphanages in accordance with the order of the provincial health department dated October 21. The inspection revealed that only 7 out of 16 infants in the home for mothers and babies were in good health. Similarly, among children aged 2 to 5, just 17 out of the 39 were considered healthy. While 5% of the 79 people in orphanage No. 2 were healthy, 44 out of 76 people in orphanage No. 1 were recognized as not having any diseases. 36 out of 71 children in hospital No. 5 were healthy. The commission states that the poor condition of children of all ages is due to malnutrition, that is, they rely on food, and summarizes their opinion as follows: "Even more, the Commission believes that the issue of nutrition is a vital issue, and if in the near future children are supplied with food as they are now, then... the question arises whether it is about liquidating children's homes as [spreaders of] infections or turning them into children's hospitals. ... The Commission still hopes that children's homes will not be turned into children's infectious barracks, and, according to our slogan 'Everything for children,' the relevant authorities will try to make children's homes flourish and improve (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 215, P. 151)".

The dire situation in the orphanages can also be seen in the statement of Romanov, a paramedic from the Aktobe orphanage, to the head of the provincial health department on November 14, 1921. It states that windows were still not installed, the rooms were not heated due to a lack of fuel, the children were without clothes, and were dirty and unkempt. The children's food was poor, the bread was of poor quality, and hot meals were served only once a day. As a result, children were exposed to various diseases. Sick children were not isolated from healthy children. Mortality among children increased. In three weeks, 103 children died from diarrhea and hunger. Recently, 15 people among the staff and children had fallen ill with typhus. The paramedic concludes his speech with the words "With the delay in taking decisive measures, orphanages are threatened with total extinction" (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 600, P. 64 rev.). From June 17 to November 17, 1921, 94 children died from hunger and infectious diseases in orphanage No. 2 in Aktobe (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 8, Pp. 53–54 rev.); from August 1 to November 21–232, from mid-October to the first half of November – 125, from October 21 to November 18–142, and in November – 320. According to archival records, 13,213 children fell ill as a result of hunger, and 2,321 children died. Next, between March and May 1922, 309 children died in the city and district of Aktobe, 103 in the Akbulak district, 83 in the Temir district, 42 in the Irgiz and Karabutak districts, 74 in the Shalkar district, and 8 in the Oyil district – a total of 619 children died (ARSA, F.3, Inv.1, C.604, P.106). Between August and September 10, 10 children died of hunger and 37 from infectious diseases (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 604, Pp. 106, 207). If we analyze the available data, we see that between June 1921 and September 1922, 1,579 children died in the province from hunger and various diseases. Of course, this number is not accurate. It should be noted that this information is taken only from official data received from specialized sources.

In early September 1922, exact information about the orphanages in the province became available, and an order was placed for the necessary amount of food. However, the supply of food



was carried out with great delays throughout September-November. Even then, the bread consisted of additives (flax, millet, beetroot, etc.), which caused children to suffer from intestinal diseases. As a result, child mortality increased from 8% to 25% during these months (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 216, P. 32).

In total, 2,653,340 people lived in the five western provinces that suffered from famine at the beginning of 1922. According to some sources, in 1921–1922, the number of people who died from hunger in these western provinces was 648,777, including 159,000 people (39.1% of the Kazakh population) in the Aktobe province (Sarsenov, 2022: 31). It is clear that among them there were also many child deaths.

In mid-September, a request was made for shoes, hats and warm outerwear for children. However, due to their lack in the People's Commissariat of Education of the Kazakh ASSR and local training centers, the management of the orphanages had to find a way out on their own. Therefore, 1,000 p. of cotton were requested from the provincial food committee, but only 300 p. were provided. Only 3–5 children were provided with warm clothes. The order for other necessary items was not fully fulfilled (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 216, P. 32).

The year 1923 also brought its own hardships for the population. On February 1 of that year, 147,271 of the 357,567 people in the province were starving (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 627.16, P. 31).

During this period, there were 230 children in a 400-person orphanage in the Temir district, and 2,418 children among the homeless (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 603, P. 117 rev.).

Among the hungry, 500 adults and 398 children were registered in the city, and 16,932 adults and 11,611 children in the villages (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 603, P. 114 rev.). In the Irgiz district, there were 99 children in orphanages. The number of hungry people was 8,949 (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 603, P. 127).

In Aktobe district, only 900 people were fed between January 1 and June 1, 1923. At that time, 21,429 adults and 18,049 children were starving (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 603, P. 179).

In January and February 1923, there were 210,760 children in the province, of whom 1,229 lived in orphanages (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 603, P. 195 rev.). At that time, 13 orphanages were operating. 1,372 children lived there (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 46, P. 63 rev.).

The following source states that in 1923/1924 there were 7 orphanages and 1 isolation center in the province. Two of the orphanages were for children with health problems. The list of orphanages is as follows:

1. Orphanage No. 1 in Aktobe (Russian, Tatar, Kazakh) – for 231 children;
2. Orphanage No. 1 in Aktobe (Russian) – for 86 children with health problems;
3. Voznesensky Orphanage (Russian) – for 80 children with health problems;
4. Turgai Orphanage (Kazakh) – for 50 children;
5. Shalkar Orphanage (Kazakh) – for 60 children;
6. Temir Orphanage (mixed) – for 90 children;
7. Akbulak Orphanage (Russian) – for 100 children;
8. Aktobe Isolation Center for Sick Children – for 50 children (ARSA, F. 59, Inv. 1, C. 67, P. 60).

It is likely that there was some improvement in the situation from previous years. According to the decree of the Central Executive Committee of the Kazakh SSR of June 20, 1923, the Commission for Combating Famine and Its Consequences was dissolved as of August 1. Its work was assigned to the Committee for Assistance to Agriculture. Later, a similar committee was also created under the Kazakh SSR.

However, the problem of children left without care and shelter remained a serious one.

In 1920–1924, there were 196 children's institutions with 15,156 children in the provinces of the Kazakh ASSR. According to inaccurate data as of January 1, 1924, the number of homeless children left without any help or care was 45,000. Of these, 2,404 were registered in the Aktobe province (Saktaganova, Karsakova, 2018: 51).

However, some data indicate that in Aktobe province alone there were 24,000 homeless children in 1922 (ARSA, F. 3, Inv. 1, C. 603, P. 195 rev.).

## Conclusion

In summary, the famine that occurred in 1921–1922 brought great suffering to the general population, including children. The fate of numerous children left without parental care and shelter has fallen heavily on the shoulders of the authorities. It was necessary to open many orphanages, organize temporary shelters and canteens. However, there was not enough money, food, and equipment to fully address these issues. The condition of the children in the orphanages was also dire. The lack of adequate food and clothing led to the spread of various infectious diseases among the children. The overcrowding of the orphanages, which had limited capacity, forced sick children to sleep with healthy children. Such conditions led to frequent deaths among children.

Although various actions and measures taken by the authorities helped to somewhat resolve the existing problems, they could not completely resolve the issue. At that time, there were no wide-ranging opportunities for this.

During one of the most tragic periods in the country's history – the famine of 1921–1922 – children who were left without care and shelter were in a very difficult situation and this generation later suffered another terrible ordeal – the famine of 1931–1933, as well as the burden of war of 1941–1945. These trials significantly complicated their life path, influenced the processes of personal development and determined their transformation into witnesses and bearers of tragic pages in the history of Soviet society.

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## МАЗМҰНЫ

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