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Tajikistan in collapse

In recent months, food prices in Tajikistan rose by approximately 30%. Such a drastic increase will deepen the socio-economic collapse which the poorest of the post-Soviet republics is undergoing.

Prices for basic foodstuffs rose after Russia increased the export duty on the crude oil (by 5%) and petrol (by about 44%) which it exports to Tajikistan. The price increases were also affected by the appreciation of food prices on world markets, speculation on the Tajik market, and neighbouring Uzbekistan's continuing rail blockade of the country. In response to the high prices, the government in Dushanbe undertook a series of propaganda actions (introducing price limits on selected goods and penalties for speculators), and also released US$13 million for the purchase of wheat and fuel, together with US$58 million in aid for the poor.

According to World Bank data, almost half the Tajik population lives in poverty (on US$2.50 per day or less). The current price rises have made the material situation of the population significantly worse. The government's reactions have been spontaneous and ill-considered, and will not improve the situation in the long term; the country's socio-economic collapse is long-term and fundamental in nature. Many families' basic livelihoods depend on remittances from economic migrants in Russia (40% of the country's GDP). Despite the public's enormous frustration, we should not expect any significant public protests, although that scenario cannot be ruled out in the future, especially if the economic situation of the country continues its extreme deterioration. <Jlan>