"The Cotton Case" - the Last Repressive Policy of the Authoritarian Soviet Regime

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Abstract:
The article analyzes the information about the political and social campaigns "cotton case" and "Uzbek case" that took place in the Uzbek SSR in the 80s of the 20th century. This campaign, which was part of the process of "reconstruction" of the entire former Soviet Union, was analyzed using archival documents, scientific papers and literature.

It is known that the "Cotton Affair" was investigated by several thousand investigators under the guidance of "paratroopers. More than 4,500 of the 20,000 agricultural workers under their investigation were found guilty and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.

In fact, all those convicted in the "Cotton Affair" became accomplices. A broader look at the matter makes it clear that the raises and other abuses were due to the former center's excessive assignment of the annual cotton plan.

In the 1960s, the Soviet state put forward the concept of an "advanced socialist society," and it was concluded that if society did not pass this stage, it would not be possible to "jump" to communism. This socialism was called "mature socialism." This characteristic of socialism was expressed in the preamble to the 1977 Constitution of the USSR. Later, on November 12, 1982, Y. V. Andropov, having become General Secretary of the CPSU, put forward the idea of the concept of "developed socialism" in relation to the existing reality and recognized the presence of national problems in the Soviet society. He decided to solve the existing problems by "bringing order" and accelerating scientific and technological progress. He was convinced that the state could not limit itself to...
"decorative" reforms, and as a result of deep systemic and structural transformations it was necessary to bring the country to the stage of modern technical and social development within a certain period of time. Y.V. Andropov decided to begin these changes by stopping the arbitrariness of the party top brass.

Y.V. Andropov's work in this field was carried out by his enemies - USSR Minister of Internal Affairs M. Schelokov, previously L.I. It began with the death of S. Medunov, the first secretary of the party committee of the Krasnodar region and a close friend of Brezhnev. His next attack was the first head of Uzbekistan; He was aimed at Sh. R. Rashidov. He had a strong spy network in Uzbekistan. According to his information, Andropov believed that the party ethics in Uzbekistan were severely violated. He was given photographs of the living conditions of party leaders in Khorezm, Bukhara, Karakalpakstan and Kashkadarya provinces. After the meeting held in Moscow in January 1983, He summoned Sh. R. Rashidov to the CPSU Central Committee and expressed his serious objections to him. While leading the republic since 1957, who had not been reprimanded by party leaders before Andropov, Sh. R. Rashidov was deeply moved by this attitude.

Sharof Rashidovich Rashidov headed the Uzbek SSR in 1957-1983. He N.S. Khrushchev, L.I. Brezhnev, Y.V. Andropov, and K.Y. Chernenko led the republic when he was general secretary of the CPSU Central Committee.

February 3-5, 1981, the 20th Congress of the CPSU was held. According to its conclusions, Sh. Rashidov (1st Secretary), G. Grekov (2nd Secretary), N. Khudoyberdiyev (Chairman of the Council of Ministers), I. Usmonkojaev (Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet), A. Khojaev (Secretary of the Central Committee), M. Musakhanov (1st Secretary of the Tashkent regional party committee), L. Melkumov (Central Committee Chairman), Y. Maximov (commander of the Turkestan Military District), I. Anisimkin (Secretary of Central Military District), A. Salimov (Secretary of Central Military District), E. Aitmuratov (Chairman of Council of Ministers of Karakalpak ASSR), T. Oseitov (First Deputy Chairman of Council of Ministers), K. Kamalov (1st Secretary of Karakalpak Regional Committee), N. Mahmudova, U. Umarov Central Committee Bureau approved for membership*.

According to congress documents, the national income of the republic is 15 billion dollars. 857 million rubles. Having made up 600 thousand soums, in the next year it grew by 6.6%, the gross social product increased by 6.4%†.

The leaders of all the republics of the Union were dependent on the CPSU and other central authorities. The republics had to follow the same path as the center. National peculiarities and symbols were not given special attention. But despite this, in the early 70s, Sh. R. Rashidov put the issue of reducing the cotton production plan by several times in the center. Because the center did not have the resources to supply the necessary cotton raw materials. Naturally, in this case, it was possible to add

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inscriptions to the imported cotton crop.

The five-year plans of the Soviet government paid special attention to the development of cotton production. In particular, in 1976-1980, the main objectives for the development of the USSR national economy with regard to cotton production in Uzbekistan were the following, in particular, to bring cotton production to 5.8 million tons by 1980‡.

In 1966, Uzbekistan supplied 4 million tons of raw cotton. Crossed the tonnage threshold. 5 million in 1974. Tons, and in 1978 5 million. 500,000 tons of raw cotton was grown. Of course, this was an incredible increase. Such leaps and bounds could not have been achieved without writing. As a result of the reduction of cultivated areas under cotton for other agricultural products, cotton, alfalfa and other crops increased in Tashkent, Khorezm, Syrdarya and Surkhandarya regions. Of course, during the time of Leonid Brezhnev, they turned a blind eye to this.

The level of corruption in Uzbekistan under Leonid Brezhnev was no higher than in all the Soviet republics. Rich tyrants mocked the intelligentsia: they could give 20,000 sums to tell them jokes or sing songs... Only they can live life to the fullest. Breathing becomes difficult in the face of gross spoiling. There are trials - one is sentenced to prison, and the other takes his place§.

But despite this, Y.V. Andropov, general secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, decided to start fighting corruption in Uzbekistan. Of course, there were reasons for this. Initially he was. He began to lose major leaders close to Leonid Brezhnev. Instead, he began to bring in his own people (including in 1983, he made the first secretary of the Tomsk Regional Committee E.K. Ligachev an official for the selection and placement of personnel in the USSR, and he was also appointed head of the personnel department). In the fall of 1983, Y.K. Ligachev called Sh. Rashidov and showed him thousands of complaints and applications lying on his desk, allegedly from Uzbekistan**. Y.V. Andropov Sh.R. Rashidov was also considered one of Brezhnev's closest people. There were many representatives of the Caucasian republics in high positions in the CPSU, the Council of Ministers and other state bodies. Since the populations of Ukraine and Belorussia were composed of Slavs, they had the same spiritual and political privileges as Russians. Since the leaders of the Baltic republics were prone to separatism, it was rather dangerous to start a purge from them. The head of Kazakhstan was a member of the Politburo of the Party Central Committee. That is why it was very convenient to start work in Uzbekistan.

In February 1983, a commission led by Telman Gdlyan and Nikolai Ivanov of the General Prosecutor's Office to investigate abuses in cotton production in Uzbekistan was established by decision of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee. They began their work on April 25 of that year††. The first

case they took over was that of the criminal prosecution of employees of the Bukhara oblast executive committee's internal affairs department and Kudratov, director of the Bukhara city's merchandise trade. These persons were under the patronage of the first secretary of the party committee of Bukhara oblast A. Karimov and "brought him up". Karimov, in his turn, was in close contact with Sh. Rashidov.

Therefore, Melkumov and his henchmen tried to expose Muzaffarov and Kudratov to A. Karimov and then through Karimov to "target" Sh. Rashidov. In 1983, Muzaffarov and Kudratov were imprisoned for a pre-planned and conducted "operation" in Bukhara. They turned out to be the first Uzbek millionaires known to the public. These investigations were called the "cotton case". But on October 31, 1983 Sh. R. Rashidov died suddenly. Alexander Sukharev, Doctor of Law, Professor, who served as Prosecutor General of the USSR in 1988-1990, describes the situation in Uzbekistan at that time: "Orders came from the center to increase cotton production. In response, the leadership led by Rashidov was forced to increase irrigation of fields and cotton yields. Later it turned out that this situation does not correspond to reality. Production was artificially inflated, the increases ranged from half a million to 3 million. Tons of cotton (3 million tons of cotton grown in total). At the beginning of 1983, Andropov verbally apologized to Rashidov. After that, it was decided to check the state of cotton production in Uzbekistan, and the situation heated up‡‡.

At the end of 1983, the situation in the republic was very complicated. At first, under the guise of fighting crime, various investigative groups were consistently thrown out of the former center. Cadres from various parts of the former Soviet Union began to arrive in leadership positions in our republic. Anishchev was appointed Second Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, Ogarok was appointed First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Romanovsky was appointed Deputy Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, and the fate of Tashkent was entrusted to Satin.

In four years (1980-1983) 780 cases of theft, embezzlement and bribery were fully investigated and sent to court; 4000 people were prosecuted, including 600 officials (criminal cases against 13 thousand people were terminated). The former minister of the cotton industry of Uzbekistan, his 5 deputies, the heads of the ministerial departments, the heads of the regional departments, the high-ranking representatives of the power chain - 2 former secretaries of the Central Committee of the Uzbek Communist Party, 400 deputies of the local councils, 8 deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the Republic, the former chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic, 6 generals of the Interior Ministry were among the accused. In 1987, the First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR L.I. was suspected of corruption in the "Uzbek case". Brezhnev's son-in-law Yuri Churbanov was imprisoned.

During this period, cotton fiber exported by the center from Uzbekistan was paid at low prices. The lower grades of medium-fiber cotton were paid 260 sums per ton, while high grades were paid 600-700 sums per ton. The most interesting is that prices were set centrally.

Of course, since the Soviet Union was in a period of stagnation and the socialist system began to rot,


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corruption was widespread in all republics, including among the top leadership. Nor were the investigators of the USSR General Prosecutor’s Office who came to Uzbekistan to investigate.

The issue of the "cotton case" and the "extra writing" came up in 1983 after the XVI Plenum of the Uzbek Communist Party Central Committee and Inomjon Usmonkhodjaev’s request to the Center to "help" Uzbekistan with human resources§§.

In a short period of time, the highest and most important positions of the Uzbek SSR Prosecutor's Office, up to and including regional and district prosecutors, were replaced by representatives sent to work permanently from the Center. The number of these "socialist landing parties" sent to Uzbekistan exceeded a hundred.

In 1984, people from the Center were appointed to the posts of prosecutor of the Uzbek SSR, three deputy prosecutors and heads of major departments. Not limiting themselves to this, gradually prosecutors at the regional level - the prosecutor of Bukhara Region (Matyushov G.N.), the prosecutor of Samarkand Region (Eremenko V.I.), the prosecutor of Khorezm Region (Titarenko A.D.), Navoi Province prosecutor (A.P. Sukharev), Surkhandarya Province prosecutor (V.M. Zhetkov), Karakalpoga, Estonian ASSR prosecutor (V.V. Donsov), and Tashkent city prosecutor (G.P. Filipenkov) were also seconded by Moscow. At the next stage, the position of district prosecutors was also vacated for "guests"***.

In 1985, there were 338 criminal cases against 2,272 people in the "cotton case", 213 of whom were prosecuted were heads of collective and state farms, 49 were directors of cotton refineries, and 13 were Party and Soviet officials†††.

As of January 1, 1986, the criminal cases prosecuted in the 1981-1983 cotton case by province of the republic were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>Number of criminal cases initiated</th>
<th>Writing on the absorbent cotton by initiated criminal cases (thousand tons)</th>
<th>Number of persons brought to criminal responsibility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tashkent</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>39691</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Andijan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6910</td>
<td>70</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Bukhara</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>63756</td>
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<td>Jizakha</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>120</td>
</tr>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>103</td>
<td>191139</td>
<td>639</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Navoi</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ferghana</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30950</td>
<td>180</td>
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††† O’zR MDA, R.1714-fond, 9-ro’yvat, 452-ish, 1-varaq.
In the "The Cotton case", representatives of industries unrelated to cotton production were also criminally prosecuted. Bakhshillo Sayilkhanov, a special correspondent of UZSSR TV and radio broadcasting, allegedly received a bribe from I. Barnoev, the first secretary of the Karakol district party committee and reported that cotton was being intensively harvested in Korakol district. Bukhara region, and there is a high level of success in this area, was prosecuted for making a short documentary film about the achievement of indicators. The basis for his criminal liability is the fact that the amount of cotton added to Karakol district was 4146 tons, the first secretary of the district party committee I. Barnoev and others were prosecuted for this.

There were even cases when school teachers were prosecuted for cotton. In 1982, teachers of School 27 in Shakhrisabz District of Kashkadarya Region, Torayev, Sultanov, Akhmedov, Rakhimov, Ismailov, Kayumov, and Polatov were accused of signing payrolls for adding cotton to cotton and were held criminally responsible.

As of January 1, 1986, 110 criminal cases initiated under the "Cotton Affair" were completed and judgments were pronounced against 679 people found guilty. Of the 679 convicted, 363 were CPSU members, 14 were members of the Communist Party of Ukraine, and 37 were previously convicted. These works were carried out on 40 collective farms, 25 state farms, 45 cotton-cleaning factories and cotton picking stations. Fifty-three of the convicts were awarded Union orders, 97 were awarded medals, and 21 were local Soviet people's deputies.

It is known from the documents of the investigative process conducted on the cotton case that the majority of those brought to criminal responsibility in this case were brought to criminal cases only to carry out the orders and instructions given from above. Representatives of the grassroots and ordinary people in general did not pursue their personal interests in writing. The following cases may be a vivid example of this.

In July-August 1985, at the Bukhara regional court trial, despite the fact that the defendants had fulfilled the plan of collective farm cotton and in November-December there was no cotton left in the field, the first secretary of the district committee Gamidov T. and the district commissioner, demanded an increase in cotton, they gave instructions that they were forced to add cotton for this purpose to the workers of the cotton factory.

The statement indicated that a number of leading specialists of the collective farm had been imprisoned on charges of plagiarism, as a result the administration of the collective farm was paralyzed by a shortage of professional staff, and it was necessary to release the accused in order to

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Khorezm</th>
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<th>Karakalpak ASSR</th>
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<td>527336</td>
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O‘zR MDA, R.1714-fond, 9-ro‘yxat, 452-ish, 7-varaq.

O‘zR MDA, R. 1714-fond, 9-ro‘yxat, 452-ish, 87-varaq.

develop the collective farm in all directions.††††

Analysis shows that with the arrival at the top of the Union government of the head of the Committee for State Security (KGB) Y.V. Andropov in some republics of the USSR, including Uzbekistan, the old repressive policy manifested itself again. Of course, this was the last attempt by the rotting center from within to prolong its life. "Cotton case" chose the Uzbeek SSR, which turned out to be very weak in self-defense, to intimidate all the republics and stifle the signs of national awakening that had begun in them.

There are different accounts of how many people were imprisoned in the "Uzbek case" and the "cotton case. Some sources indicate that 22,000, 30,000 or even 48,000 people were arrested in others. At the time when the "Uzbek case" was in full swing, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan I. Usmonkhojaev said at a meeting with writers that in connection with the rise of collusion and bribery in the republic, including about 750 heads‡‡‡‡.

By the end of 1988 a new campaign of personnel purges under the slogan "the fight against corruption" began. Since 1983 Uzbekistan was attacked by the punitive organs of the USSR (prosecutor's office, KGB, Interior Ministry). From 1984 to 1988 the republic dismissed 58,000 civil servants, most of them facing criminal prosecution§§§§.

More than 20,000 people were convicted in investigations into the Cotton Works campaign. From the spring of 1986 to 1988, relatives of the convicts staged spontaneous demonstrations. By the spring of 1989, the activities of T. Gdlyan's investigative group sent from the center were investigated by the CPSU Central Committee and the Prosecutor General's Office of the USSR. Because the investigative process started in Uzbekistan, major officials in the center began to get involved. For example, former First Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Uzbekistan I.B. Usmonkhojaev, Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee He began to testify against Y.K. Ligachev*****.

As alarming as it is sensationalist, the repressive policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Uzbekistan did not bear fruit. By the "recovery" period of post-crisis history (almost 2-3 years later), the Uzbek people woke up as a nation and stood up in self-defense. Because the repressive policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was not based on moral and universal values, it created conditions on the eve of independence. Because the era of Stalinism was over. Subsequently, there was a national awakening capable of striving for democratic transformation.

On October 31, 1990 at the third session of the Supreme Soviet of the 12th convocation the first President of Uzbekistan I. A. On the recommendation of Karimov B. Mustafoev was approved as prosecutor of Uzbekistan to end the dependence of the prosecutor on the trade union and ensure the independence of the system. Before recommending B. Mustafoev for the position of prosecutor of the republic, the head of the country summoned him to his office and said: "Your task now is to ensure the priority of the laws of Uzbekistan in our country, to protect the rights of our people, especially the

†††† OzR MDA, R.2454-fond, 6-ro'yxat, 6400-ish, 128-130-varaqlar.
unjust ones prosecuted under the 'cotton case'. He vows that the rights of punished citizens will be restored. The Commission on the "Cotton case" for more than two years has considered 40,000 criminal cases, acquitted more than 3,500 people. Their rights were restored and material damages were compensated†††††.

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