

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE «COTTON AFFAIRS» POLICY (A CASE STUDY OF SURKHANDARYA REGION)

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Abstract: The article analyzes information about the «cotton affair» and «Uzbek affair,» a socio-political campaign that took place in the Uzbek SSR, including the Surkhandarya region, in the 1980s. This company, which was part of the «perestroika» process in the Soviet Union, was analyzed using archival documents, researched scientific works, and literature.

Keywords: raw cotton, social crisis, corruption, personnel policy, court, criminal liability, imprisonment, deprivation of liberty, rehabilitation.

Introduction. By the 80s of the last century, political, socio-economic problems, encompassing the internal life of the Soviet Union, began to engulf agriculture. Since the Uzbek SSR was also a region of the country that mainly produced raw materials, the development of the republic's agriculture was under the influence of rather difficult and contradictory processes compared to other union republics.

Excessively centralized management and the policy pursued under the guise of «national interests» significantly worsened the agricultural sector of the Uzbek SSR, including the social and economic situation of the population employed in this sector in the Surkhandarya region. The development of the region's agriculture around the «cotton» raw material complex began to have a negative impact in these years. Along with agriculture, primary processing industries predominate in industry, while industries producing finished goods, primarily consumer goods, have a negligible share[1, p.47].

The transition to cotton farming significantly changed not only the economy but also the social structure of the villages. Cotton, as the German historian Jorg Baberovsky wrote, «disrupted the internal structure and traditional relations in peasant society,» «changed living conditions and the rhythm of labor,» «destroyed traditional methods of subsistence.» Under such conditions, working on a collective farm was unprofitable for collective farmers, but cotton was a crop that required state development, so labor mobilization became almost mandatory[2, p.346].

Research methodology. The article is based on generally accepted historical methods - historicity, comparative-logical analysis, consistency, objectivity principles, and covers the socio-economic processes of the 1980s using historical sources and works of the «cotton affair,» repression policy, archival documents of this company, which was part of the «perestroika» process in the Soviet Union, researched scientific works and literature.

Analysis of literature on the topic. Information on the socio-economic life of the Surkhandarya region in the 80s of the last century can be found in funds 58, 86, 1714 of the National Archives of Uzbekistan and in funds 12, 45, 72, 77, 100, 361, 446, 580 of the Surkhandarya Regional Archives. Also, when writing the article, in addition to archival



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documents, the memoirs and recollections of historians who conducted research on this period - N. S. Abashin, I. Khakimov, Kh.E. Yunusova, S. Tursunov, E. Kobilov, T. Pardayev, D. Yakubova, S.K. Ziyadullayev, I.M. Musatov, B. Egamov, Sh. Ergashev, K. Ergashev, A. Khazratkulov, as well as V. Ilyukhin, I. Yuldashev, Y. Khodzhamberdiyev, K. Egamberdiyeva, published in the newspapers «Pravda Vostoka,» «Qishloq haqiqati,» «Surkhan tongi» and periodicals were used.

Discussion and results. Over the years, the party's five-year plans for increasing cotton yields began to lead to incomplete land development, «delivery» of land on time, deterioration of the land's melioration condition, and the sequential planting of the same crops, resulting in large expenditures. However, these expenses were not justified, and the center persistently demanded the fulfillment of the five-year cotton plan. As a result, the real income received was incomplete, authoritarianism, strict control, and pressure intensified, and shortages, theft, internal control, and improper accounting increased.

These circumstances exacerbated the vice of overwriting throughout the country. In the research work of H. Yunusova, it is noted that, according to calculations conducted by scientists of the USSR Academy of Sciences, additions amounted to 3% of the total volume of products produced in the country. In the areas of raw material delivery, overwriting ranged from 5% to 25%[3, p. 197]. Difficult conditions in the country's economy were also observed in other Union republics.

However, the essence of all negative phenomena in the socio-economic and political life of the country has not been analyzed and revealed. On the contrary, they were assessed only as a national, regional reality in connection with the activities of some local personnel. These cases were considered one of the main factors that led to the rise of abuse of office, bribery, and falsifications[4, p. 51].

Because Uzbekistan was the country's main supplier of raw cotton, Uzbekistan was considered the «developed» place for the vice of falsification, and large-scale movements against falsification began nationwide, with Uzbekistan becoming one of the first republics targeted. At this point, it should be noted that, indeed, falsifications in the national economy existed in Uzbekistan, and in most cases, falsifications by officials of collective and state farms were carried out by drawing up non-commodity invoices for the delivery of unprocessed and undelivered cotton to the procurement organizations of cotton ginning enterprises. Such additions were based on the data of intra-farm accounting, compiled in the brigades, departments of the collective and state farms, and then on the non-commodity receipts of the factory cotton point, balancing the data of the state report on the fulfillment of the plan by the collective and state farms, on the one hand, and the cotton ginning industry enterprise, on the other. The director and accountant of the plant used these data to increase the reporting data on the fulfillment of the plan and submitted them to the Ministry of the Cotton Ginning Industry of the republic and the Statistics Department[5, p. 530].

The main directions of agriculture in the Surkhandarya region of southern Uzbekistan were also specialized in cotton growing, and cotton cultivation occupied 65% of the irrigated land in Surkhandarya[6, p. 366]. In Surkhandarya, the cultivation of unique fine-fiber silk cotton was established[7, p. 368]. Moreover, the fact that the products produced in the republic were sold at prices several times lower than their cost, and most of the produced products were sold as raw materials and transformed into consumer value elsewhere, had a significant impact on the republic's budget.

According to the analysis of economists, in 1985 the market price of 1 ton of cotton fiber was 2700 soums. During this period, 730.7 soums were spent on 1 ton of cotton, 145.3 soums on 1 ton of grain, 244.4 soums on potatoes, 131.9 soums on vegetables of the open method, 2375 soums on beef, 1490 soums on mutton, 343.1 soums on milk, 116.8 soums on eggs, and 6644.6 soums on wool. Having set a very low price for cotton, the Soviet state did not provide Uzbekistan with 14.6 billion rubles (in 1985 1 dollar was equal to 1 ruble) for four years (1984-1988) [8, p. 168]. Interestingly, before the revolution, Russian merchants paid 5 times more than the Soviets for a ton of cotton fiber, i.e., 556 rubles in gold chervon[9, p. 133].

By the 1980s, the task of developing the Surkhan-Sherabad deserts in the Surkhandarya region and growing an average of more than 400 thousand tons of cotton was put on the agenda[10, p. 62]. The required yield per hectare increased year by year, and when it became impossible to fulfill it, a vice called overwriting emerged. In particular, during these years, bribes related to cotton, livestock, and other sectors were not only a method of artificially fulfilling state plans but also a proven method of misusing and embezzling millions of soums of state funds. The main inspirer and organizer of such falsifications and bribery was Moscow itself, and the heads of the republic, regions, districts, directors of state farms, chairmen of collective farms, heads of cotton procurement enterprises and cotton ginning plants were involved in this work.

They were brought to criminal responsibility and convicted. At the same time, hundreds and thousands of innocent people who were not directly involved in the encryption, who were unconsciously or accidentally involved in this work, whose influence and pressure from managers were inevitably combined with deception, and who had no personal material benefit from it, suffered and suffered.

By the decisions of the XVI Plenum (1984) and the XXII Congress of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Uzbek SSR, leading personnel with mature, comprehensive experience in the republic were dismissed. Thousands of people were arrested. So many families were ruined. As a result, people became indifferent and distrustful of the future. The production cycle was disrupted. Political chaos led to a dead end for everything from ordinary family concerns to matters of national importance.

This case escalated after Inomjon Usmonkhojayev appealed to the Center with a request to «help» Uzbekistan with personnel. Hundreds, thousands of personnel were sent to Uzbekistan. These are Anishchev, Ogarok, Klepikov, Satin, Nesterenko, Buturlin, O. Gaydanov, E. Didarenko, Lyubimov, Kalinichenko, Korolyov, Maydanyuk, Mavrin, Litvinenko, Ivanov, Galkin, Kartashyan, and others. Many groups were organized for the «cotton affair.» Officials, well aware of the «character and psychology» of the local population, widely involved local prosecutors and investigators in these groups.

Nevertheless, the Center undertook a risky act, attempting to discredit the entire Uzbek nation, and paid a heavy price for it. With the beginning of the «Cotton Affair,» all the leaders who worked with Sh. Rashidov in Surkhandarya were dismissed on various charges. Repressed leaders used to solve problems based on their reputation and experience.

Moreover, the situation was further complicated by the lack of understanding of local conditions by the «landing personnel» sent from Russia to the republic[11, p. 369]. As a result, the unemployment rate in Uzbekistan increased. There was a shortage of food and consumer goods. Public discontent with the Soviet and party organs grew even stronger[12, p. 9].



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However, the mass repressions caused by the «cotton affair» had already done their job. Decline and depression were felt in all sectors of production[13, p.137].

Under the conditions of the beginning of perestroika, not only the upper strata of Soviet society (creative intelligentsia, dissidents, scientists, leaders) turned out to be highly politicized. Not only the middle level, but also the broad masses participating in the party itself, in a short time, the process of active discussion of systemic reforms went beyond the official ideology of public opinion, in connection with which the party-state leadership could not control the mass and spontaneous processes of social discontent[14, p. 6].

Conclusion. In essence, the Center began this work to teach a lesson to the protesting forces that were rising on a Union scale. Uzbekistan was not chosen for this without reason. Because in the 1920s and 1930s, national liberation movements were barely suppressed in this country, and periodic repressions against national forces were carried out. But under Sh. Rashidov, the situation was completely different.

In short, the «cotton affair,» the «Uzbek affair» policy was a fabrication of the center at a time when the crisis of the USSR intensified and its decline was inevitable. Due to this unjust policy and accusations directed at the Uzbek people, the people of Uzbekistan, including its southern provinces, suffered severe, irreparable material and moral damage.

To acquit those unjustly accused and establish justice, the Uzbek people needed independence, and thanks to independence, the faces of those unjustly accused were brightened, they endured the prisons of the totalitarian regime, and those who survived managed to return to their families. Those who died unable to endure suffering were rehabilitated like victims of repression, their worthy names were restored before their children, and their human values were restored.

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