

## “THE COTTON AFFAIR” (THE UZBEK AFFAIR): REPRESSIONS AND POLITICAL IMPACTS IN THE SOVIET PERIOD

**Batirova Barno**

Associate Professor of the Department of Social and Humanitarian Sciences,

Andijan State Pedagogical Institute

**Abstract:** This article analyzes the “Cotton Affair” (also known as the “Uzbek Affair”) of the 1980s, examining corruption within the cotton system, political persecutions carried out against officials and cotton growers, as well as the impact of these events on society. The aim of the study is to analyze the influence of the repressions of that period on Uzbek society and to identify the social, economic, and legal consequences of political repression.

**O‘zbekcha :**Ushbu maqolada 1980-yillardagi “Paxta ishi” (shuningdek, “O‘zbek ishi” nomi bilan tanilgan) tahlil qilinadi. Unda paxtachilik tizimidagi korrupsiya holatlari, amaldorlar va paxtakorlar ustidan olib borilgan siyosiy ta’qiblar, shuningdek, ushbu voqealarning jamiyat hayotiga ko‘rsatgan ta’siri yoritiladi. Tadqiqotning asosiy maqsadi o‘sha davrda amalga oshirilgan repressiyalarning o‘zbek jamiyatiga ta’sirini tahlil qilish hamda siyosiy repressiyalarning ijtimoiy, iqtisodiy va huquqiy oqibatlarini aniqlashdan iborat.

**Ruscha:**В статье анализируется «Хлопковое дело» 1980-х годов (также известное как «Узбекское дело»). Рассматриваются коррупция в системе хлопководства, политические преследования в отношении должностных лиц и хлопкоробов, а также влияние этих событий на общественную жизнь. Цель исследования заключается в анализе воздействия репрессий того периода на узбекское общество и в выявлении социальных, экономических и правовых последствий политических репрессий.

The “Cotton Affair” (“Uzbek Affair”) of the 1980s entered history as one of the most severe manifestations of the repressive policy of the Soviet Union. Under the pretext of exposing corruption and crimes that had arisen within the cotton production system, not only officials but also the Uzbek people engaged in cotton farming were subjected to persecution. The “Cotton Affair” (the “Uzbek Affair”) represented the third wave of systematic repressions carried out against the Uzbek people.

During the Soviet period, cotton growing in Uzbekistan was a sector of great importance not only economically but also politically. Cotton constituted the foundation of the economy of the Uzbek SSR and accounted for a significant share of the country’s export potential. Therefore, problems that emerged in the cotton sector led to serious consequences.

In 1983, large-scale repressions began in Uzbekistan, carried out by special investigative groups sent from Moscow, known as “desantniki” (“paratroopers”). These groups dismissed personnel working in the party, Soviet, and administrative-economic bodies of the Uzbek SSR and replaced them with cadres appointed to high leadership positions. Between 1983 and 1987, nearly 1,000 such “desantniki” worked in leadership roles. In addition, more than 3,000 investigators opened criminal cases related to alleged “overreporting” in cotton production. Under the leadership of investigators Gdlyan and Ivanov, investigative groups fabricated false crimes and repressed



thousands of people. During the investigation process known as the “Cotton Affair” between 1984 and 1989, more than 40,000 individuals were accused; the majority were held in detention centers without prosecutorial sanction, and about 5,000 people were criminally prosecuted on fabricated charges. Throughout these processes, human rights were systematically violated, and thousands of innocent citizens were punished.

Through persecutions and repressions implemented by the Soviet center, the economic and political structure of Uzbekistan was weakened. Changes in the cotton system led to serious contradictions within many social and economic structures.

The “Cotton Affair” (the “Uzbek Affair”) had a profound impact on social life. Honest leaders and ordinary people who worked in the cotton sector suffered greatly. Under the fabricated accusations organized under the label of “Rashidovism,” Sharof Rashidov and other leaders were discredited. These processes damaged the historical reputation of the Uzbek people. High-ranking positions were mainly occupied by communist loyalists sent from the center, who stood at the forefront of these repressions. Through cooperation between the “desantniki” and the local political leadership, the repressions were further intensified. In articles published in the central press, the Uzbek people were defamed, the issue was deliberately politicized, and it was turned into the so-called “Uzbek Affair.” At the same time, many traitors, fearful individuals, and local politicians actively participated in these processes.

As a result of the “Cotton Affair” (the “Uzbek Affair”), unjust punishments were imposed. Innocent individuals were persecuted during the investigative processes, human rights were violated, and many people experienced physical and psychological pressure. The political leadership of Uzbekistan and investigative bodies carried out these persecutions.

The “Cotton Affair” (the “Uzbek Affair”) was one of the largest repressions of the Soviet era and led to serious political, economic, and social fragmentation of society in the republic. Corruption and crimes in the cotton sector harmed not only officials but also cotton growers and society as a whole. The Cotton Affair and the Uzbek Affair remained in history as symbols of the repressive policy of the Soviet regime. These political repressions resulted in the loss of public trust, the weakening of the economic system, and the erosion of social stability.

## Literature:

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