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**The Crisis of Soviet Power in Central Asia:
The 'Uzbek cotton affair' (1975-1991)**

PhD Program in Political History XXVIII Cycle

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*My mother is a poem
I'll never be able to write,
though everything I write
is a poem to my mother*

Sharon Doubiago

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Personal prologue

The story of this research is a kind of existential adventure that in many respects has changed my life. I was not a historian, I had never travelled to Central Asia before and when I entered my PhD course at IMT Lucca in February 2013, I had other ambitions. I had worked as a political analyst in Moscow and I had followed the debates on the strategic issues related to the former Soviet area. Thus, I wanted to continue my studies focusing on the geopolitical role of post-Soviet Central Asia in the 21st century and I had a vague idea of how to start. Hence, I went to Turin to speak with a famous scholar specializing in Central Asian history. He was a well-known historian and smiled at my ambitious and naïve words. Nevertheless, he kindly invited me to study the basic literature and to understand the limitations of the research in this field. My solid convictions became weak ideas in less than one hour. However, I felt very excited by the possibility of adding something new to the field. Thus, I devoured most of the existing literature with the aim of understanding the main features of the Central Asian context. The more I read the more I realized that the answers I was claiming to have were just simplistic.

The process of intellectual growth is not obvious and requires time, dedication and above all a guide to understand the right path to take. I had no idea where to start. On a cold sunny day in April 2013, I found myself in Lucca where I attended a seminar on the history of revolutions. I already knew of the discussant, not least by reputation. A famous Italian scholar specializing in Soviet history, I had studied his books and indeed had already met him on one formal occasion. After his seminar, we had a small chat and then he invited me to have lunch together to discuss it further. I was very shy and, frankly, quite nervous. Nevertheless, I was fascinated by the enthusiasm he had showed in seminars and in particular the interest he took in the subjects that I and my classmates were studying. He was very forthcoming with further questions to the many queries we posed to him. Apparently, he was not challenging our expertise but rather provoking our curiosity. Thus, in spite of my bashful character, I accepted his invitation to lunch without reservation and with few expectations. Little did I realize my life was about to change that day. Not

expecting him to take too much interest in my work, I was taken aback when he asked me over lunch *“what would you like to do in the future?”* I stuttered something related to my previous job in Moscow etc. and unexpectedly I responded with a childish affirmation: *“I want to study something that I am interested in.”* Apparently, I was wasting an occasion to be serious and to some extent I felt ashamed at appearing so flippant. Nevertheless, he gave credit to my vague reply and said: *“well, and do you know what would you like to study?”* Somehow liberated by his encouragement, I simply said: *“No Sir, I don’t...”* Effectively, I had no idea of my research, and looking at my colleagues I realized that I was not alone. Everyone who starts a PhD is full of vague notions and conjectures, waiting for Godot to find inspiration or a guide who might explain the basics of the research in its ethical and ontological nature.

During our lunch, he talked about the work of the historian with the persuasion of those who really believe in what they say. Honestly, I respected the historians but I had never considered this a vocation I would be interested in. Historians, after all, seem to be too focused on meticulous details, on old documents, on dingy places like archives and on re-covering well-trodden ground. I was still hoping to be the next Kissinger and I did not believe I had any potential for adding anything to the existing historiography. Despite my misgivings, he seemed to understand my feelings. Thus, he told me *“only geniuses are self-taught and do not need any guide... however, I never met one in my whole life. Do not hesitate to write me if you need some advice.”* I was glad of his consideration and encouragement. However, I could not understand why this person was treating me with the same devotion with which a doctor might attend a dying patient. I couldn’t understand what would motivate this kind of humanity and concern for the wellbeing of a junior scholar. Sometime later, he explained it to me: *“you know, this is just my job and I did it many times. It is a matter of professionalism towards students to give them a chance and to follow their steps. Someone did it for me, now I do it for you and hopefully you will do for the next generation.”*

Basically, he asked me to consider the potential of history and to reflect on a research vocation in which every day would hold the possibility of some amazing discovery, where every file in an archive might be a treasure trove and where every apparent dead end might prove over time to be a new avenue of discovery. I was impressed by his description of a career in which I would find intellectual challenge and intellectual honesty in equal measure. Little did I realize at the time that from that day, this person would become a mentor for me, one with whom I would come to share the enthusiasm, the victories and

defeats of the best profession and existence I could ever imagine. As I reach the end of this particular journey, I am unable to mention every person who has contributed to the end result, although many have done so.

Thus, in the summer of 2013, my journey learning the basics of the methodologies of the historiographer began. I also had to formulate a concrete research proposal. I was naively attracted to some ‘charming’ topics, such as the Niyazov regime in Turkmenistan, the congress of Baku in 1920 and the saga of Mikhail Frunze and Enver Pasha in the early ‘20’s. I explored all these possibilities and I discussed them with a very important expert in cold war history who communicated his doubts. In his view, most of these themes were ‘suggestive’ but hardly worthy of an extended research effort. I was disappointed by this apparent setback, but his reasons were convincing and the criticism was helpful to my intellectual growth. Then he made a suggestion: *“why not focus on the opaquest period of Soviet history at the end of Brezhnevism?”* Some months later, my Russian supervisor would enthusiastically comment Brezhnevism as a crucial and - for many aspects - revelatory period to research on, in order to find the roots of the present post-Soviet societies. Hence, I posed all this to above mentioned ‘mentor’ in the hope he would be able to help me sort through my options. He pondered on this quietly at some length and then, looking at his white hairy cat, said: *“have you have ever heard about the ‘cotton scandal’ in Uzbekistan?”*

His question prompted some vague recollection from my readings about inflated cotton data, vicious party purges, mafiya stories and a media controversy. Really, I knew very little about that episode but I bade him continue: *“It was really quite significant”,* he told me, *“a real Soviet ‘Tangentopoli’!¹ However, there is no specific literature on this issue and I think that you might go and do a preliminary search for material in Moscow. Go, and let me know what you find. If you find enough primary sources to begin, we can think about. Nothing may turn up, of course, but ... give it a shot! Believe me, you will have fun!”* I was a little skeptical about this topic and scared about the lack of literature. Where to begin? Some weeks later, I went to discuss this idea with the Turinese professor. He was excited and mocked me saying: *“Well, it*

¹ *Tangentopoli* (Bribesville) is a journalistic term indicating the period of judicial investigation into political corruption in Italy during the early the 1990s. David Nelken, “A Legal Revolution? The Judges and Tangentopoli,” in *The New Italian Republic: From the Fall of the Berlin Wall to Berlusconi*, ed. Stephen Gundle and Simon Parker (London-New York: Routledge, 1996).

will be an uphill climb; I doubt you will find anything. Anyway, good luck, I want to be your first reader." Then I left his office and went straight to apply for a Russian visa.

So, in November 2013, I set out on my preliminary archival mission. With less than a month in various archives I quickly realized that there was something there, 'there'. I returned to Rome and I organized with my IMT supervisor a program to collect primary sources in Moscow. After giving me the methods of political history, he was enthusiastic about the possibility lying in the archives and recounted a sentence that I will never forget: *"Being the first to lay a hand on some newly declassified material is a great responsibility... and this is the dream of every historian... I envy you, onwards to success!"* His kind way of heartening my research encouraged me to make this leap in the dark.

Finally, I arrived in Moscow where I spent a year between 2014-2015 to collect all sources I could find. At that time, I was based at the HSE where I could expand the scope of my research, enriching it with social sciences methods and new ideas. On that occasion, I had coordinated my work under the advice of a famous Russian scholar specialized in public administration. His accurate and friendly way of prompting challenging questions and his mathematic attitude warned me of the risks of making axiomatic conclusions. Then, he invited me to open new fronts of the research evaluating the biographic context and the interpersonal phenomena among the elites. He affirmed: *"well, to understand the dynamics of the purges one must evaluate not simply the top of the bureaucratic organization but also - and perhaps mostly - its lower levels. This is where the clearest answers are to be found."* From that helpful moment, I kept extending the base of my research and its ambitions.

Hence, in 2014-2015, I also spent time in Russia, Uzbekistan, USA and Europe to extend as much as possible the horizons of the research and to collect newly declassified unpublished sources and to conduct oral history. The more time I spent in Moscow/Tashkent, the more it became possible to find new sources, and to explore new themes. Most importantly of all, this wide ranging research gave me the horizons to extend one famous case of corruption into a story tracking the consolidation and the crisis of Soviet order in Uzbekistan as well as the emergence of an anti-Soviet national myth when Uzbekistan finally became independent in 1991. This process, in many respects, is still ongoing.

Credits

I do not know how to put into words my gratitude for all the people who have supported this research. I would like to express my deep thankfulness to Prof. Giovanni Orsina (IMT Lucca) and Prof. Alexey Barabashev (NRU-HSE) - my research supervisors - for their patient guidance, enthusiastic encouragement, useful critiques and for helping me in formulating some of the best ideas emerged in this research. I would also like to express my very great appreciation to Prof. Marco Buttino and Prof. Vladislav Zubok who had reviewed the first draft, offering important comments to further improving this research.

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All these people I have mentioned were important and had a role in supporting this research. Nevertheless, I must consider with a particular regard some of those figures who had never left me alone. Above all, I do not have words to express my gratitude for the closest people I had in these four years: my parents, for their encouragement throughout my study; Prof. Andrea Graziosi, who has shared his enthusiasm and has effectively supervised every singular step of this research, by becoming my mentor and a real friend; and Maria Sole, who has tolerated my shrewish presence during the final year. With her, I do not want to write history, but a future together.

PREFACE

Ҳар бир халқга тарих керак ва ҳар бир тарихга ҳужжат керак - ЎзРМДА²

Synopsis and Research Questions

This research – entitled *“The crisis of Soviet power in Central Asia: The ‘Uzbek cotton affair’, 1975-1991”* – aims at reconstructing and interpreting the final phases of Soviet political history and its effects in Uzbekistan. To this end, the reconstruction of the ‘Uzbek cotton affair’ – a judicial and political case linking the falsification of cotton production data and corruption that involved thousands of party and state officials in the republic – is something of a case study in evaluating Moscow’s grip on the ‘periphery’ of its empire. This case tracks the life story of Uzbekistan from its consolidation as a Soviet republic, through crisis and ultimately its transition into an independent state. Thus, we can identify ‘the Uzbek cotton affair’ as a critical³ reason for the transformations within republican political society.⁴ At the same time, it can be read as a symptom of a greater incurable disease within the whole Soviet Union itself, a system that collapsed when this kind of top-down hierarchical order – led by ideology, elite politics, social forces and interest groups and even administrators and bureaucrats⁵ – cracked down.

² "Every people needs a history and every history needs a document." This sentence was reported on a banner in the Tashkent based archive TsGARUz.

³ In its German-tradition connotation, the term crisis can be intended as a challenging moment of transformation, implying positive and negative implications. Melvin Richter and Michaela W. Richter, "Introduction: Translation of Reinhart Koselleck’s ‘Krise,’ in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67, no. 2 (2006): 343–56.

⁴ This case is useful to interpret the Soviet history of Uzbekistan; but it is a marginal issue in the whole USSR where the systemic crisis was determined in terms of relations among the elites, the administration, the economic system and cultural patterns.

⁵ Steven Solnick proposes a theory that even considers the role of bureaucrats and administrators in a “neo-institutional” approach. Steven L. Solnick, *Stealing the State, Control and Collapse in Soviet Institutions* (London & Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

This dissertation is divided in three parts with a total of seven chapters. The first part is introductory and aims to contextualize the Uzbek ‘periphery’ within the Soviet state, at both the political and at socio-economic level. In the first chapter, I introduce the political features that determined the consolidation of Soviet power in the UzSSR. After the formation of Uzbekistan, the Stalinist terror and the destalinization transition, the Soviet leadership transitioned to a peaceful, decentralized and tolerant pattern of control over the farthest regions of the USSR. During the 70s, the Moscow leadership and the republican party cadres built a patrimonial system that relied on local figures who could ensure loyalty to the central state. This led to the creation of autonomous client networks inside the republic and the mediation of the FS CPUz between Moscow and the national elites. This approach was particularly evident during the long ‘reign’ of the FS CPUz Sharaf Rashidov (1959-1983), a controversial figure at the center of the Cold War who – as we will see in the second chapter – turned Uzbekistan into a ‘cotton republic.’ In fact, the UzSSR became the main supplier of ‘white gold’ and from the ‘60s it essentially doubled down on cotton monoculture as a strategic task for ‘building communism’: for the tenth FYP (1976-1981), Soviet planners demanded an annual production of six million tons of raw cotton from Tashkent and reaching this target at any cost became a matter of political stability and legitimacy for the Uzbek ruling elite.

The second part is argumentative and focuses on the three phases of the ‘Uzbek cotton affair.’ Hence, the third chapter analyzes the context of the second economy in the USSR and the features related to corruption and falsification of cotton production data in Uzbekistan. The rise of Andropov and his ‘moralization campaign’ would see an attempt to legalize, cleanse and – ultimately – revitalize a system in which stagnation and fraud had reached unprecedented levels. In 1983, the so called ‘Bukhara affair’ exposed the level of ‘official corruption’ and overwhelmed the higher echelons of the party and state of the UzSSR. Nevertheless, this ‘silent phase’ – characterized by preliminary inquiries, the preservation of power structures in Uzbekistan and general institutional silence – culminated in the death of Rashidov, the subsequent struggle among local elites and a nominal transformation of the patrimonial system. Thus, in the fourth chapter we analyze the ‘systemic phase’ of the Uzbek affair (1984-1985), when Moscow’s moralizing campaign was extended during the XVI plenum CPUz to map on to discord within the national party elites, the *donos* (complaints) wars and the internal struggles within the bureaucracy in post-Rashidovian Uzbekistan. The fifth chapter analyzes Moscow’s subsequent ‘trusteeship’ over the republic, reflected in the

‘krasnyi desant’ campaign endorsed by the CC CPSU, the derashidovization crusade, and the zenith of internal struggles in the wake of the ouster of the FS CPUz Usmankhodzhaev and his replacement with the Moscow loyalist Nishanov who attempted and failed to destroy local patrimonial networks.

Third and final part is aimed at evaluating the results of the Uzbek cotton affair in the center and in the periphery, and see if this story became a factor determining the collapse of the Soviet system as in Moscow as in Tashkent. The sixth chapter focuses on the investigators Gdlyan and Ivanov who became a symbol of the prosecution of the ‘big fish’ and alleged prominent members of the CC CPSU – and even Gorbachev – of being in collusion with the ‘Uzbek mafiya.’ The case, the related media circus and the political campaign of the two radical mavericks threatened the credibility of Gorbachev and the legitimacy of the CPSU, the state and its survival in a time of serious changes and great internal challenges. Democrats and the inner opposition to the Gensek in the CPSU exploited the ‘Gdlyan-Ivanov affair’, and the whole case became a symptom of the collapsing system. The seventh chapter deals with the myth-building of the ‘Uzbek cotton affair’ in early Karimov’s Uzbekistan, where the story was narrated using critical discourse – such as ‘colonial,’ ‘purge,’ ‘terror,’ ‘new 1937,’ and even ‘genocide’ – in a Republic that had once been considered one of the most loyal within the Soviet system. Thus, the ‘Uzbek affair’ became a crucial event of Karimov’s ‘ideological shift’ from communism to Mustaqillik – the ideology based on the values of the Uzbek independence – and a sensitive identity issue of revenge/resistance against the former rulers, investing in a post-colonial trauma that contributed to legitimize the president’s regime and his relations with local power networks.

Thus, dealing with recent Soviet times still represents a great challenge for contemporary historiography. The last decades of USSR history are still debated, defining a period that needs more work still to understand the characteristics, the limits and the contradictions that led to the end of the Soviet system. In that sense my primary goal in reconstructing these crucial and still obscure events here has been historiographical and it is intended at using primary unpublished sources, literature and oral history to uncover opaque aspects of the past. Relatedly, this research aims at offering a non-centrally oriented historiographical reconstruction of the final decades of the Soviet system, analyzing the evolutions of patrimonialism in USSR and the impact of perestroika, the dynamics of the purges and the symptoms of the collapse in the periphery of the empire in order to fill a gap that has been well described

by Laruelle when she affirmed that “research on perestroika in Central Asia is [...] practically nonexistent.”⁶

Furthermore, this research aims to recompose the framework of the ‘Uzbek cotton affair’ beyond its existence as a ‘simplistic label’ created by the media and too often related to the ‘Gdlyan-Ivanov affair’ only. Nevertheless, the case proceeded at different levels involving the party, prokuratura, MVD, KGB and soviets at the local and even at the central level, while only a part of the corruption and the other ‘negative phenomena’ revealed in the republic were related to cotton and a great part of the involved officials were not Uzbeks. Finally, this research aims at interpreting the last decades of Soviet history through a new interpretative key to understand how collapse-symptoms that had been exploited in Moscow and in Tashkent in order to avow the split from the USSR.

Methodology

Studying a one-party system implies the inevitable evaluation of the role of the Communist party in events. Thus, it is useful to proceed through the tools of political history, “leaving out the independent relevance of ideologies, languages and mental worlds that guide humans in the interpretation of material reality.”⁷ To this end, we must consider the party’s political discourse, ideology, doctrine, and policy as key enablers of a “public space” that, in a context of deprivation of liberty, constituted a political system⁸ ‘from above.’ The transition “from the history of the parties to the history of the political space” – which reconnects the three analytical areas of “geographical dimension of politics,” “permanent political conflicts,” and “the changing relevance of the subjects acting in the political arena”⁹ – is worthless in the Soviet context. In fact, all these dimensions are found within the same entity –

⁶ Marlène Laruelle, “What We Have (Not) Learned about Twentieth-Century Central Asian History,” *Demokratizatsiya* 20, no. 3 (2012): 222.

⁷ Giovanni Orsina, “Il Dito E La Luna. Politica, Cultura E Società Nella Storiografia Inglese Degli Anni Novanta,” in *Fare Storia Politica. Il Problema Dello Spazio Pubblico Nell’età Contemporanea*, ed. Giovanni Orsina (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2000), 116.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁹ Gaetano Quagliariello, “La Storia Dei Partiti Politici Nella Contemporaneistica Italiana Del Secondo Dopoguerra,” in *Fare Storia Politica. Il Problema Dello Spazio Pubblico Nell’età Contemporanea*, ed. Giovanni Orsina (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2000), 112.

the CPSU. Therefore, this political history must have the party as its main protagonist becoming the narrative device we use to introduce such a complex phenomenon. However, party events are not one-dimensional facts and it will be necessary to consider elements of economic, social and cultural history as a fundamental – albeit indirect – part of this story.

To proceed with scientific historiographical research about this topic, it was necessary to collect (mostly unpublished) materials abroad. As mentioned, I spent over two years in archives and libraries in Russia, Uzbekistan, Denmark and the United States. Contrary to what is typically pursued to make a national historiography, this research led to additional difficulties regarding the subject. In fact, this topic is still very sensitive in Uzbekistan where the last decades of Soviet history were characterized by judicial and political persecutions against a socioeconomic (and political) elite that was then restored and to some extent rules the country to this very day. Thus, even considering its illiberal regime, primary sources related to this investigation in Uzbekistan are still classified – as are many other political issues after the '30s – and most of the relevant documents are contained in the inaccessible APRUz and O'zROSJA archives. Meanwhile, during a visiting to Tashkent in spring 2015, it was possible for me, after a very long procedure, to access the collection of the TsGARUz where I found documents of the SM UzSSR.¹⁰ In parallel, in Uzbekistan I could evaluate the contemporary memory and historiography in those rare publications available in NLU and FATi or in the MMVR. Conducting oral history in Uzbekistan was made very difficult by the fact of the non-liberal regime, where even common people typically refrain from talking about political issues or against those cadres that are still in charge.

The best solution to define this research was therefore in the former imperial center¹¹ where such a sensitive case could be carefully approached. Considering the common 'difficulties' involved in contemporary historical research, I was implementing this task in Moscow – where I spent two visiting research periods in May-December 2014 and September-December 2015 – using all the available sources for a historiographical reconstruction. In fact, the

¹⁰ Since 1987, the TsGARUz fond related to SM UzSSR does not contain the justice department documents.

¹¹ It is also necessary to keep in mind the shape of the former Soviet system, a hyper-centralized structure that was ruling peripheries from above and by the center: in facts, most of Soviet official sources are still living in Russia (especially in Moscow) and a relevant part of materials is available and declassified.

research has been structured on three main pillars: primary, secondary and tertiary sources.

For primary sources, I mainly drew on materials available in the Russian archives, such as the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) that keeps valuable information in the form of state administration documents and where it is possible to find political papers and information in attachments.¹² Another important archive is RGANI that collects the CC CPSU materials since 1953 and where it is possible to find political materials in f. 1 (CPSU Congress materials), 2 (CPSU Plenum materials), 5 (CC CPSU Commission for Agriculture Affairs) and 89 (mixed materials until 1991). Unfortunately, most declassified material reaches only 1964. Indeed, working on the Brezhnev period (and the late Soviet period in general), requires patience and time to find good documents among those few declassified materials. Up to 1984, fond 5 is partially declassified in its Central Asian, agriculture and propaganda sections. The f. 89 is crucial for its collection of interesting miscellaneous political files mostly from the period 1985-1991. Since 2013, RGANI even started to open personal fonds of those key figures of the '70s and '80s – such as Brezhnev (f. 80), Suslov (f. 81), Andropov (f. 82) and Chernenko (f. 83) – that are partially declassified and where it is possible to find personal correspondence of these leaders, their notes and communications to the CC CPSU organs and notes about their personal activities.

Against all expectations, the best party sources were in RGASPI, an archive that mostly collects political documents of the comintern, cominform and CC CPSU up to 1953. Nevertheless, this archive contains some excellent 'exceptions' to the chronological order: its f. 71 contains the materials of the ideological departments associated to the Institute of Marxism-Leninism and its regional branches. Also f. 653 (personal fond "N.I. Ryzhkov") contains extensive documents related to the former chairman of the SM USSR (1985-1991). Above all, f. 17 keeps materials of the 'CC CPSU organizational department – information office', containing the reports from local parties and surprisingly protocols from republican parties (such as the CPUz), oblasts and also, on the occasion of party congresses, raikom and gorkom (for the years 1971, 1976, 1981, 1986, 1991). Every inventory (*opis*) of f. 17 is structured in

¹² GARF keeps a variety of information about the CC CPUz and the UzSSR in fonds: P-5446 (SM USSR), P-7523 (SS USSR), P-8131 (Prokuratura USSR), P-9492 (MJ USSR), P-9527 (PCC), P-9654 (CPDSU) and even in the fonds 10115, 10147, A-259, A-260, A-358, P-4459, P-5674, P-7522, P-7676, P-8009, P-8300, P-9474, P-9501, P-9606.

two volumes, one dedicated to the RSFSR and the second to the other Republics. In every *opis* thousands of *dela* are listed and no description of material. Therefore, working on this fond required time and patience, because protocols had to be checked one by one. Apart from the very interesting plenums and congresses, 90% of these protocols were just 'empty' bureaucratic papers, that nonetheless occasionally contained small treasures – such as the buro, secretariats, special commissions debates' transcripts (stenogrammy). Unfortunately, f. 17 is no longer accessible; since August 2015 it has been officially “*na ekspertisu*” (under examination). I had the occasion to work intensively on the 1983-1991 period, meanwhile I could just take a quick look at the period 1975-1982. Technical data and official production indexes were found in the RGAE; while in the Gorbachev Fond (GF) there were few materials among those memoirs and notes of Mikhail Gorbachev, and minutes taken during the politburo session of CC CPSU (1985-1991) by Anatoly Chernyaev, Vadim Medvedev, Georgy Shakhnazarov in the period 1985-1991. A part of these materials has been published in a volume,¹³ while the other five parts are still waiting for publication and were not accessible for consultation. Unfortunately, it was not possible to work in the APRF since special permits and a legitimate and motivated interest are required to gain access.

For secondary sources, I considered all the accessible publications¹⁴ in English, Russian, Uzbek, French and Italian. Unfortunately, there is no scientific historiography, and the available literature is very biased. However, the memoirs and the journalistic accounts provide chronological reconstruction and can be considered as sources of information. Other important sources are newspapers, journals and periodicals¹⁵ from the Soviet era in order to

¹³ Gorbachev Fond, *V Politburo TsK KPSS...* (Moskva: Gorbachev Fond, 2008).

¹⁴ On the topic, there is a limited literature in English, while there are dozens of interesting books in Russian and Uzbek languages, that I have mostly collected in RSL and SPHLR in Moscow, NLU in Tashkent, AUL in Aarhus, Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library, Grossman Library, Pusey Library in Harvard, Library of Congress and Gelman Library in Washington DC, Biblioteca di Storia Moderna e Contemporanea and Biblioteca Nazionale in Rome.

¹⁵ The mainly interesting newspapers in which I found hundreds of interesting articles for the period 1983-1991 were: *Argumenty i Fakty*, *Bakinskiy Rabochiy*, *Delovoy Mir*, *Ekonomika i Zhizn*, *Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta*, *Ekho Litvy*, *Ekspress Kronika*, *Izvestiya*, *Inzhenernaya Gazeta*, *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, *Knizhnoye Obozreniye*, *Kommersant*, *Kommunist*, *Kommunist Tadzhikistana*, *Komsomol'skaya Pravda*, *Leningradskaya Pravda*, *Lesnaya Promyshlennost'*, *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, *Narodnoye Slovo*, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, *Moskovskie Novosti*, *Pravda*, *Pravda Vostoka*, *Pravda Ukrainy*,

reconstruct the events and their evolution even if they are often lacking analytical substance or extensive quantities of data.

For tertiary sources, I consulted all the available published memoirs of Soviet leaders, online materials – such as commentaries and published interviews – oral history (from the main living witnesses) and personal interviews. Trying to get in touch with these personalities was one of the hardest tasks in this research. First, I had to search for published interviews – even online – and publications to find contact details. Then, I wrote to the editors publishing the interviews and in around 30 per cent of cases I was successful in locating my target interviewee. I had the occasion to contact some of them directly and personally by phone (as with Gdlyan, Ivanov, Sboev).

On a couple of occasions, fate played a hand and I simply stumbled upon them (Gorbachev in GF in December 2013 and Ryzhkov at an exhibition in RGASPI in December 2014). In Uzbekistan, it was useful to draw on informal connections – through scholars, members of FATi, or other institutions – for introductions and first contacts with the people to interview. Anyway, it was then important to establish a basic level of trust and confidence to proceed with questions. Interviews were important because they provided an important point of view and a direct testimony of the events. Unfortunately, these sources are, obviously, extremely biased, inaccurate and often do not go beyond those official versions that were already confirmed in their previous memoirs and statements.

The complexity, the diversity and the reliability of these sources, need to be analyzed in terms several methodological problems. In fact, dealing with late Soviet history is a difficult task and I had to critically analyze all the collected sources. For this task, I could use the Graziosi's critical method¹⁶ that analyzes the problems related to archival materials in Russia and identified three main critical fields.

Rabochaya Tribuna, Sel'skaya Molodezh, Sel'skaya Zhizn', Smena, Sovetskaya Belorussiya, Sovetskaya Kirgiziya, Sovetskaya Kul'tura, Sovetskaya Rossiya, Sovetskaya Torgovlya, Sovetskaya Estoniya, Sotsial'naya Industriya, Trud, Turkmenistanskaya Iskrai; and all the available Uzbek local press as *Ishonch, Komsomolets Uzbekistana, Sovet O'zbekiston, Tashkenskaya Pravda, Qishloqhaqiqati, Yosh leninchi, Positsiya, Dialog Narod I Demokratiya etc.* In Uzbekistan, it was seriously dangerous to search for the opposition publications of *Birlik, Erk, Erkin yosh* and *Tumaris*.

¹⁶ Andrea Graziosi, "The New Soviet Archival Sources," *Cahiers Du Monde Russe : Russie, Empire Russe, Union Soviétique, États Indépendants* 40, no. 1–2 (1999): 13–63.

First, I had to deal with the problem of the lacunae of sources. Unfortunately, there is no possibility to get any political document after the coup of August 1991 and it is still hard to get most material from the CPSU Politburo of the perestroika years. Then, I had to critically compensate for these lacunae using all the other available sources. Further, it was hard to face the problem of “legendary documents” that would confirm or dispel some mythical events (such as something proving Rashidov’s murder or suicide) or to reconstruct the kind of informal episodes that had not been documented or that the regime tried not to report. Quite often, I had also to deal with those common “official lacunae,” when I was critically reviewing formal information covering other facts not reported or presenting another truth to the public. In these cases, it was important to confront the information (and even the speeches) matching newspapers, party material and transcripts and using analytically the testimonies and memoirs of those people who were acting in that period.

The second field of problems I had to face relates to biases. The ideological biases are a hard trouble, because I had always to keep in mind that I was reading something that was typically the output of an intentional distortion of reality. In a totalitarian system such as the Soviet one, “official lies” were common instruments to cover the truth and where – unfortunately - were often the only available resources. Furthermore, the hyper ideologization of its structures led to serious misinterpretations of the reality. Just to give one example, in June 1989, after the clashes in Fergana valley, the KGB was seriously convinced that these manifestations were solely due to “bandits and hooligans”, ignoring the ethnic tension among the communities. Then, I had always to consider that I was reading about a season of political struggle, ideological shifts and the moralistic ridiculing of public figures as caricatures, where words, concepts and interpretations were intentionally exaggerated, reduced and distorted (such as the idea of ‘godfathers’ or ‘Uzbek genocide”).

In this field of ideological biases, I also had to be careful when considering ‘Solzhenitsyn’s surprises’, those situations when we spend our time, searching among the papers, for non-existent ‘conspiracy truths’ that are the results of other counter-biases. The second family of biases is related to the ‘nature of the compiler’ and to the bureaucracy’s characteristics, interests and the cultures of the redactors of those documents. For example, Uzbek society had a strong Muslim tradition (deeply compromised during the Soviet experience), but I should not to be surprised that in Uzbek documents, even if there were several references to Uzbek culture and society (as the *makhalla*), there was

never a cultural reference related to Islamic values. This kind of attitude is clear if we follow the ideological developments of the Republic, and its official rhetoric from Soviet communism to Independence (*Mustaqillik*). These bureaucratic biases were influential also considering the different legal framework to describe the same events. For example, to describe these criminal cases, KGB referred to “theft of socialist property”, while the Prokuratura and ministry of justice were using the terms ‘additions’ and ‘falsification,’ and the political organs were just commenting on ‘negative phenomena.’ Even those social structures based on patronage and kinship that had been discovered in Uzbekistan are described with different terms. Soviet authorities were describing them as ‘clans,’ while Uzbeks elite defined these as ‘loyalties/trustees’ and the journalists and political actors (such as Gdlyan in his first books) with the popular word ‘*mafiya*.’

The third family of biases deals with the economic and other data. Thinking about this falsification case that presents a huge mass of fake/corrupted data – sometimes even overlapping or contradictory – we must analyze critically the information we have, understanding who produced it, when and to whom it was referred. Another problem is related to the value of some quantitative data. For example, is it necessary to understand the value of money in the USSR, a non-market system where it was not always possible to buy consumption goods, but where money was paradoxically a matter of social status. Thus, dealing with the USSR can be tricky using the market efficiency perspective. It was very interesting to see how the final price of cotton was determined, without knowing anything about its production costs, which does not permit us to evaluate that system as a loss or a surplus. More reliable and very interesting are the demographic data that, during the whole Soviet experience, had been extensively reported to the party and the state apparatuses. Related to the “Uzbek affair” – the result of a huge falsification and hidden system that last until 1984 in the party and state apparatuses – it is evident that I had to read and compare the data before and after the moralization campaign as the cause and the consequence of this case.

The third field of critical analysis of sources is related to the limited individual dimension in the USSR. Considering the nature of the Soviet system, this means that there is a general lack of private – of, from and about people – sources and materials because most of the information is institutional-bureaucratic in nature. In the former Soviet Union, there was a general lack of private archives, such as those ones of unions, civil society organizations, religious associations etc. that we find in abundance in the Western world.

However, during the perestroika transformation, Soviet society started to experience “civil society” initiatives. From this period on, then, I could find many interesting letters, petitions, complaints and demands containing interesting information and interpreting the people’s feelings. However, all this material coming from people had to be critically evaluated. It was interesting to weigh the anonymous letters often biased and full of strongly defamatory tones – denouncing presumed sex scandals, drug addictions, luxury lifestyles and other ‘immoralities’ – which were symptomatic of the morality campaigns and the political struggle within the party and the state in the last decade of the USSR.

To face these historiographical troubles, I had to find several remedies related to general critical consciousness, that should always contextualize the sources and the facts and has to consider biases and point of views of the documents’ compilers. Matching information and proceeding with a cross-evaluation among bureaucracies and witnesses was a useful way to find a conclusion that confirms, denies, or evaluates those facts.

ABBREVIATIONS AND EXPRESSIONS

<i>ACP(B)</i>	All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) - Всесоюзная Коммунистическая Партия (Большевиков) ВКП(б) - was the name of CPSU before 1952
<i>AN</i>	Academy of Sciences (Akademia Nauk, in Russian Академия Наук)
<i>APRF</i>	Archive of the President of the Russian Federation - Архив Президента Российской Федерации (АПРФ), Moscow, Russia
<i>APRUz</i>	Archive of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan - Архив Президента Республики Узбекистан (АПУз), Tashkent, Uzbekistan
<i>ASSR</i>	Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of the Soviet Union (Russian: Автономная Советская Социалистическая Республика, АССР)
<i>Arik</i>	Small canal
<i>Avlod</i>	Uzbek word translatable as 'clan'
<i>AUL</i>	Aarhus University Library, Aarhus, Denmark
<i>Blat</i>	Practice of informal exchange/procurement of favors
<i>Buro</i>	Bureau
<i>CC CPSU</i>	Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Центральный комитет Коммунистической партии Советского Союза – ЦК КПСС
<i>CC CPUz</i>	Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, in Russian: Центральный комитет Коммунистической партии Узбекистана – ЦК КПУз, in Uzbek: O'zbekiston Kompartiyasi Markaziy Qo'mitasi
<i>Chistka</i>	Purge (in Russian Чистка)

<i>Cominform</i>	Communist Information Bureau
<i>Comintern</i>	the international communist organization called “Communist International” or the “Third International” (1919-1943)
<i>CPC</i>	Committee of Party Control (in Russian: Комитет партийного контроля)
<i>CPDSU</i>	Congress of People's Deputies of the Soviet Union (Съезд народных депутатов СССР), the highest body of state authority of the Soviet Union from 1989 to 1991.
<i>CPSU</i>	Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Коммунистическая партия Советского Союза, КПСС
<i>CPUz</i>	Communist Party of Uzbekistan; in Russian: Коммунистическая партия Узбекистана (КПУз); in Uzbek: O‘zbekiston Kommunistik Partiyasi (O‘zKP)
<i>CSD</i>	Central Statistical Directorate (Russian: Центральное статистическое управление - ЦСУ)
<i>d.</i>	<i>delo</i> (дело), archival file
<i>Dessiatina</i>	Russian measure of land, roughly 1.1 hectares
<i>Donos</i>	Complaint
<i>FATi</i>	Institute of History of Academy of Sciences of Republic of Uzbekistan - Tarix instituti O'zbekiston Respublikasi Fanlar Akademiyasi, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
<i>f.</i>	<i>fond</i> (фонд), archival fond
<i>FS</i>	First Secretary (in Russian: Первый секретарь)
<i>FYP</i>	Five-Year Plan (in Russian: Пятилетний План)
<i>GARF</i>	State Archive of the Russian Federation - Государственный архив Российской Федерации (ГАРФ), Moscow, Russia
<i>Genprokuror</i>	Prosecutor General of USSR, the attorney general who headed the system of official prosecution (Prokuratura) in courts

<i>Gensek</i>	General Secretary of the CPSU, in Russian Генеральный секретарь (Генсек)
<i>GF</i>	Gorbachev Fond, Moscow, Russia
<i>GKChP</i>	<i>State Committee on the State of Emergency. Государственный комитет по чрезвычайному положению, ГКЧП</i>
<i>Gorispolkom</i>	Executive committee of city soviet - городской исполнительный комитет
<i>Gorkom</i>	City communist party committee
<i>Gorpromtorg</i>	office of the municipal industrial trade (Горпромторг)
<i>Gaskhoz</i>	Specialized sovkhos for seed-growing and cattlebreeding
<i>Gaskomtsen</i>	State Committee on Prices (Russian: Государственный комитет цен при Совете Министров СССР - Госкомцен)
<i>Gosplan</i>	State Planning Committee, (in Russian: Государственный комитет по планированию - Госплан)
<i>GSE</i>	The Great Soviet Encyclopedia
<i>Ishan</i>	Title given to the leader of a local Sufi group
<i>Khlopkorob</i>	Cotton grower
<i>KM</i>	Cabinet of Ministers, Kabinet Ministrov
<i>Kolkhoz</i>	Collective farm
<i>Komsomol</i>	<i>All-Union Leninist Young Communist League (Russian: Всесоюзный ленинский коммунистический союз молодежи - ВЛКСМ)</i>
<i>Korenizatsiya</i>	“Nativization/indigenization” policy: “korenization”
<i>Krasnij desant</i>	Red troopers, referred to russification of the local party and the administration
<i>Khlopkarob</i>	Cotton grower (хлопкароб), to not confuse with the pun khlopkarab (хлопкараб) that means Cotton slave
<i>Krugovaya poruka</i>	mutual protection
<i>L.</i>	<i>list</i> (лист), archival sheet

<i>Makhalla</i>	Uzbek quarter, neighborhood
<i>Mafiya</i>	Mafia
<i>MCC</i>	Ministry of Cotton Cleaning industry, Министерство хлопкоочистительной промышленности
<i>MID</i>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Министерство Иностранных Дел
<i>MJ</i>	Ministry of Justice, in Russian: Министерство юстиции
<i>Millat</i>	The urban Muslim community
<i>Mestnichestvo</i>	localism
<i>MMVR</i>	Museum of “Memory of Victims of Repression” - “Qatag'on qurbonlari xotirasi” muzeyi, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
<i>MVD</i>	Ministry of Internal Affairs, Министерство Внутренних Дел
<i>Mustaqillik</i>	Independence (in Uzbek)
<i>ND</i>	People’s Deputy, member of CPDSU
<i>Nomenklatura</i>	Soviet-era elite linked to party appointment system
<i>Nachalnik</i>	Bureaucratic superintendent
<i>NLU</i>	National Library of Uzbekistan named after Alisher Navoi - Alisher Navoiy Nomidagi O‘zbekiston Milliy Kutubxonasi, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
<i>NSA</i>	National Security Archive, Washington DC, USA
<i>Oblispolkom</i>	Executive committee of oblast (regional) soviet - Областной Исполнительный Комитет
<i>OBKhSS</i>	Agency for fighting the theft of socialist property and speculation. In Russian: Отдел по Борьбе с Хичениями Социалистической собственности и Спекуляцией (ОБХСС)
<i>Obkom</i>	regional (oblast) communist party committee
<i>Okrug</i>	territorial circumscription
<i>op.</i>	<i>opis</i> (опись), archival inventory
<i>OrgOtdel</i>	Secretariat's Organization and Instruction Department, in Russian: Организационный отдел (Орготдел)

<i>O'zROSJA</i>	Archive of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Uzbekistan - O'zbekiston Respublikasi Oliy Sudi Joriy Arkhivi, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
<i>O'zSE</i>	The Uzbek Soviet encyclopedia (in Uzbek: O'zbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi)
<i>PCC</i>	People's Control Committee (in Russian: Комитет народного контроля)
<i>Pokrovitel'stv</i>	Patronal protection (Покровительств)
<i>Prokuratura</i>	Procuracy
<i>Pripiska</i>	Distortion of the data (in Russian: приписка)
<i>PV</i>	Pravda Vostoka was the main newspaper of the UzSSR and official organ of CC CPUz, Supreme Soviet UzSSR and Soviet Ministrov UzSSR.
<i>Qawm</i>	The tribal community
<i>Raikom</i>	district (<i>raion</i>) communist party committee
<i>Raispolkom</i>	Executive committee of raion (district) soviet - Районной Исполнительный Комитет
<i>RAPO</i>	District Agro-industrial Unit
<i>RGAE</i>	Russian Government Archive of Economic History - Российский государственный архив экономики (РГАЭ), Moscow, Russia
<i>RGANI</i>	Russian State Archive of Contemporary History - Российский государственный архив новейшей истории (РГАНИ), Moscow, Russia
<i>RGASPI</i>	Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History - Российский государственный архив социально-политической истории (РГАСПИ), Moscow, Russia
<i>Rodstva</i>	Kinship
<i>Rodstvenniki</i>	Relatives or/and people from the same place
<i>RoU</i>	Republic of Uzbekistan

<i>RSFSR</i>	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (Russian: Российская Советская Федеративная Социалистическая Республика)
<i>RSL</i>	Russian State Library - Российская государственная библиотека, Moscow, Russia
<i>SC</i>	Supreme Court, in Russian: Верховный суд
<i>Semeistvennost'</i>	Nepotism
<i>Shefstvo</i>	Informal use of armed forces in the civil administration and productive system.
<i>Sharafrashidovshina</i>	derogatory expression used as a synonym for nepotism, corruption, clientelism, self-celebration, etc. meant to say "at the Sharaf Rashidov's way" (in Russian: Шарафрашидовщина)
<i>SM</i>	Soviet Ministrov, Council of Ministers
<i>SN</i>	Soviet of Nationalities, the lower chamber of the SS USSR
<i>Sovkhoz</i>	State-owned farm
<i>Sovnarkhoz</i>	Regional Economic Soviet, Совет Народного Хозяйства (Совнархоз), literally Soviet of National Economy
<i>SPHLR</i>	State Public Historical Library of Russia - Государственная Публичная Историческая Библиотека России, Moscow, Russia
<i>SS</i>	Supreme Soviet, in Russian: Верховный Совет
<i>SSR</i>	Soviet Socialist Republic, in Russian: Советская Социалистическая Республика
<i>TaASSR</i>	Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, in Russian: Таджикская Автономная Социалистическая Советская Республика
<i>TaSSR</i>	Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic, in Russian: Таджикская Советская Социалистическая Республика, in Tajik: Республикаи Советии Социалистии Тоҷикистон

<i>Tolkach</i>	Pusher, middleman – now, these figures are mainly known as ‘reshala’ (resolvers)
<i>TsGARUz</i>	Central State Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan - Центральный Государственный Архив Республики Узбекистан (ЦГАРУз), Tashkent, Uzbekistan
<i>Tufta/tukhta</i>	Falsification of work results
<i>Turkvodkhoz</i>	Turkestan Board of Water Management
<i>TuSSR</i>	Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic, in Russian: Туркменская Советская Социалистическая Республика, in Turkmen: Türkmenistan Sowel Sotsialistik Respublikasy
<i>Urugh</i>	clan, descent group (in Uzbek)
<i>USSR</i>	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, in Russian: Союз Советских Социалистических Республик (СССР)
<i>UVD</i>	Internal Affairs Directorate, local police command. In Russian: Управление Внутренних Дел (УВД)
<i>UzSSR</i>	Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, in Russian: Узбекская Советская Социалистическая Республика (УзССР), in Uzbek: O`zbekiston Sovet Sotsialistik Respublikasi (O`zSSR)
<i>VBA</i>	Vladimir Bukovsky Archive
<i>Verst</i>	Russian unit of length, roughly 1066.8 meters
<i>VSNKh</i>	Supreme Soviet of the National Economy (Высший Совет Народного Хозяйства, ВСНХ)
<i>Vzyatochnik</i>	Bribe taker
<i>Zastoya</i>	Stagnation
<i>Zemlyachestvo</i>	Friendly society of people united by belonging to the same place of origin
<i>Zindan</i>	Persian word for "prison" or "dungeon", used in Russian to intend the traditional underground gaols or pits used to imprison hostages

PART I

INTRODUCING SOVIET UZBEKISTAN

1 THE CONSOLIDATION OF SOVIET POWER IN THE UZSSR

In this first chapter, it is necessary to introduce some essential points in order to contextualize the political history of the UzSSR prior to 1975. The main aim is to define a framework that, in spite of the different stages of Soviet history, has evolved following some specific trends. In fact, the narrative about Soviet rule in Uzbekistan had been characterized by different moments that closely correspond to the various phases of Soviet Union history. However, there are some specific peculiarities that should be presented in the next paragraphs. Hence, we want to understand whether the Soviet system in Uzbekistan can be considered a historical continuum, or if it represents an evolution of Soviet history. To a large extent, we suppose that the peculiarities of rashidovian patrimonialism were not to be found in the cultural framework of Uzbek society but rather in the political culture spread during Brezhnevism.

1.1 Making Uzbekistan: The birth of the UzSSR

Despite a rooted tradition and a millenary cultural history, a state or a nation now known as Uzbekistan never existed before the USSR.¹ Until the Russian colonial expansions in Central Asia – that were justified through a defensive and civilizing mission narrative² – in the XIX century during the so

¹ Cf. Edward A. Allworth, *The Modern Uzbeks: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present : A Cultural History* (Stanford: Hoover Press, 1990). In his recent book Adeeb Khalid argues that Uzbekistan emerged in the intersection between Soviet national policies and the aspirations of the Central Asian Muslim intelligentsia. Cf. Adeeb Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan. Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); Grigol Ubiria, *Soviet Nation-Building in Central Asia: The Making of the Kazakh and Uzbek Nations* (London & New York: Routledge, 2015).

² A memorandum that Aleksander Gorchakov, Foreign Minister of the Russian Empire, wrote to his diplomats in November 1864 – when the Central Asian conquest was entering its most active phase – stated: "The situation of Russia in Central Asia is similar to that of all civilized states that come into contact with half-savage nomadic tribes without a firm social organization. In such cases, the interests of border security and trade relations always require that the more civilized state have a certain authority over its neighbors, whose wild and unruly customs render them very troublesome. It begins

called 'Great Game'³, there were three khanates – Khiva, Kokand, and Bukhara – that ruled their territories and populations autonomously. Due to the Russian conquest of Tashkent (1865), Saint Petersburg created a new administrative entity called Russian Turkestan, a Governorate-General of the Russian Empire that was established in 1867 and comprised mainly the territories of the former Kokand Khanate.⁴ Then in 1873, after a successful military campaign, Russian diplomacy was able to formalize protectorates on what remained of the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva-Khorezm.⁵ These two entities preserved a certain degree of independence and were not to be entirely submerged under Russian influence until Soviet rule in the '20s.⁶ Thus, the

first by curbing raids and pillaging. To put an end to these, it is often compelled to reduce the neighboring tribes to some degree of close subordination. Once this result has been achieved, the latter take on more peaceful habits, but in their turn they are exposed to the attack of tribes living farther off [...] The state therefore must make a choice: either to give up this continuous effort and doom its borders to constant unrest, which would make prosperity, safety, and cultural progress impossible here, or else to advance farther and farther into the heart of the savage lands, where the vast distances, with every step forward, increase the difficulties and hardships it incurs. Such has been the fate of all states placed in a similar situation. The USA, France in Africa, Holland in its colonies, England in the East Indies—they all were inevitably driven to choose the path of onward movement, not so much from ambition as from dire necessity, where the greatest difficulty lies in being able to stop." This translation is reported in Claire Mouradian, "The Origins of a Colonial Vision of Southern Russia From the Tsars to the Soviets: About Some Imperial Practices in the Caucasus," in *Development in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Migration, Democratisation and Inequality in the Post-Soviet Era*, ed. S. Hohmann et al. (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 25–26; Andreas Kappeler and Alfred Clayton, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History* (Harlow: Longman, 2001).

³ Martin Ewans, *The Great Game: Britain and Russia in Central Asia* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004); Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (New York: Kodansha International, 1992); Karl Meyer, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and Race for Empire in Central Asia* (Washington D.C.: Counterpoint, 1999).

⁴ Vladimir Nalivkin, *Histoire Du Khanat de Khokand* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1889).

⁵ Khorezm is the Russian transliteration of Хорезм, the large oasis and historical region on the Amu Darya delta. This region has also been known as Khwarezm, Chorasmia, Khwarezmia, Khwarizm, Khwarazm, Khoresm, Khorasam, Kharazm, Harezm, Horezm, and Chorezm.

⁶ N. Abduprakhimova, "Uzbekistan v Sostave Rossijskoj Imperii," in *Ocherki Po Istorii Gosudarstvennosti Uzbekistana*, ed. D A Alimova and É V Rtveladze (Tashkent: Shark, 2001); Seymour Becker, *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865-*

Turkestan Krai became a territory under direct control of the Russian Empire, and it was then divided into five oblasts.⁷

1.1.1 The early Soviet Uzbekistan

The outbreak of the Russian Revolution, the systemic crisis,⁸ and the civil war divided peasants and urban societies,⁹ colonizers and colonized, during a temporary vacuum of authority that lasted until the restoration of Russian authority¹⁰ throughout a phase that was defined by Marco Buttino as the “Revolution upside down.”¹¹ The Bolshevik military campaigns during the Russian civil war (1917–1924) and the repression of the *Basmachestvo*¹² barely

1924 (London & New York: Routledge, 2009); Daniel Brower, *Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire* (London & New York: Routledge-Curzon, 2003).

⁷ After 1899, Turkestan was divided into five oblasts: Syr-Darya Oblast (Capital: Tashkent); Fergana Oblast (New Margelan/Skobelev, which was part of the Kokand Khanate until 1876); Semirechye Oblast (Verny, which until 1882–1899 was part of the Governor-Generalship of the Steppes); Samarkand Oblast (Samarkand - until 1886); Zeravsh okrug (in the occupied east territories of the Emirate of Bukhara), and; the Transcaspian Oblast (Askhabat, which until 1898 was part of Caucasus Governorate-General).

⁸ Cf. P. Alekseyenkov, “Natsional’naya Politika Vremennogo Pravitel’stva v Turkestane v 1917 G.,” *Proletarskaya Revolyutsiya* 8, no. 79 (1928); Marco Buttino, “Study on the Economic Crisis and Depopulation in Turkestan 1917–1920,” *Central Asian Survey* 9, no. 4 (1990); Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia’s Continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Hasan Oraltay, “The Alash Movement in Turkestan,” *Central Asian Survey* 2 (1985); Edward Sokol, *The Revolt of 1916 in Russian Central Asia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1954).

⁹ Andrea Graziosi, *La Grande Guerra Contadina in URSS. Bolscevichi E Contadini, 1918-1933* (Napoli: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1998).

¹⁰ Alexander Garland Park, *Bolshevism in Turkestan, 1917-1927*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957).

¹¹ Marco Buttino, *La Rivoluzione Capovolta. L’Asia Centrale Tra Il Crollo Dell’impero Zarista E La Formazione dell’URSS* (Napoli: L’Ancora del Mediterraneo, 2003).

¹² The Basmachi revolt against Russian/Soviet rule began in 1917. These groups of nationalists, Muslim traditionalists, and “bandits” challenged the Red Army in Central Asia, settling primarily in the Ferghana valley and in the Pamir mountains. They managed to gain credit for the cause of Pan-Turkism, recalling even the intervention of Enver Pasha who died in Central Asia in 1922. At the end of the Russian Civil War, the Red Army was able to better regroup and launched a massive military campaign to “reconquer” Central Asia. By 1926, the Basmachis had been officially suppressed, although the final uprisings were tamed only in 1931. Cf. Stephen Blank, “The Contested

restored Russian authority and introduced a Soviet system¹³ through the creation of the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Republic on 30 April 1918. Then, the successful military campaigns of the Red Army led to the annexation of the remaining parts of Khiva and Bukhara – reconstituted as the Bukharan SSR and the Khorazmian SSR¹⁴ – and the proclamation of the Turkestan ASSR on 24 September 1920. This new entity had a recognized constitutional status within the RSFSR, becoming in 1922 part of the USSR.

Terrain: Muslim Political Participation in Soviet Turkestan, 1917–19,” *Central Asian Survey* 6, no. 4 (1987); Marie Broxup, “The Basmachi,” *Central Asian Survey* 2, no. 1 (1983); Marco Buttino, “Ethnicité et Politique Dans La Guerre Civile: À Propos Du Basmacestvo Au Fergana,” *Cahiers Du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 38, no. 1–2 (1997); Joseph-Antoine Castagné, *Les Basmachi: Le Mouvement National Des Indigènes D’Asie Centrale Depuis La Révolution d’Octobre 1917 Jusqu’en Octobre 1924* (Paris: Éditions E. Leroux, 1925); Helene Aymen de Lageard, “The Revolt of the Basmachi According to Red Army Journals (1920–1922),” *Central Asian Survey* 6, no. 3 (1987); Walter Darnell Jacobs, *Frunze: The Soviet Clausewitz, 1885–1925* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969); Richard Lorenz, “Economic Bases of the Basmachi Movement in the Ferghana Valley,” in *Muslim Communities Reemerge: Historical Perspectives on Nationality, Politics, and Opposition in the Former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia*, ed. Andreas Kappeler et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994); Alexander Marshall, “Turkfront: Frunze and the Development of Soviet Counter-Insurgency in Central Asia,” in *Central Asia. Aspects of Transition*, ed. Tom Everett-Heath (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2003); Martha Brill Olcott, “The Basmachi or Freeman’s Revolt in Turkestan, 1918-24,” *Soviet Studies* 33, no. 3 (1981); Hasan Bülent Paksoy, “The Basmachi Movement from within: An Account of Zeki Velidi Togan,” *Nationalities Papers* 23, no. 2 (1995).

¹³ Cf. Akmal’ Akramov and Kulmamat Avliyakov, *V.I. Lenin, Turkkommissiya I Ukrepleniye Sovetskoy Vlasti v Sredney Azii* (Tashkent: Uzbekiston, 1991); V. Lopukhov and Sh. Murayevskiy, “Iz Istorii Kommunisticheskoy Partii Turkestana: Vtoroy Turkestanskiy S”yezd RSDRP,” *Kommunist. Organ TSK Kompartii Turkestana* 7–8 (1922); V.P. Nikolaeva, “Turkkommissiya Kak Upolnomochenny Organ TSK RKP(b),” *Voprosy Istorii KPSS* 2 (1958); Emmanuel Aronovich Voskoboinikov and Aleksandr Izrailevich Zevelev, *Turkkommissiya VTSIK I Sovnarkoma RSFSR I Turkburo TsK RKP(b) v Bor’be Za Ukreplenie Sovetskoi Vlasti v Turkestane: M.V. Frunze, V.V. Kuibyshev, L.M. Kaganovich v Turkestane* (Tashkent: Gos. izd-vo UzSSR, 1951).

¹⁴ Cf. Glenda Fraser, “Alim Khan and the Fall of the Bokharan Emirate in 1920,” *Central Asian Survey* 7, no. 4 (January 13, 1988): 47–61; Ḥwārizmī Mūnis, *Firdaws Al-Iqbāl: History of Khorezm* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999); A.M. Malikov, “The Russian Conquest of the Bukharan Emirate: Military and Diplomatic Aspects,” *Central Asian Survey* 33, no. 2 (May 27, 2014): 180–98; Svatopluk Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Following the X Congress of the CPSU in 1921, the Soviet regime encouraged the policy of *korenizatsiya* (nativization) in order to include indigenous people in prominent positions in the party, government, agriculture, and industry. In fact, Buttino remarks how “the [Soviet] regime wanted to prevent posts of power and responsibility from being covered exclusively by Russians, so as to avoid an openly colonial position in the Republic. Therefore, it had no alternative but to involve the natives.”¹⁵ In Central Asia, the communist parties had a rural base¹⁶ and imposed the ‘proletarianization’ of the cities and the massive collectivization of the rural areas. As we will analyze in the second chapter, this ‘ruralization’ proceeded together with indigenization: “the result [...] was that the social base of the party cadres transferred from the town to the countryside [...] and] urbanization tended to operate mainly in favor of ‘Europeans’.”¹⁷ This policy enforced the first distinction between a rural community – constituted by natives – and an urban society supported by the old and new ‘colonizers’¹⁸ from the rest of the country.

Korenizatsiya played a central role in the determination of an Uzbek national consciousness. Meanwhile, the Soviet regime repressed and physically eliminated a community of native elites – the famous campaign against the so-called *jadids*¹⁹ in the 1920-30s – replacing them with the first generation of

¹⁵ Marco Buttino, *Samarcanda. Storie in Una Città Dal 1945 a Oggi* (Rome: Viella, 2015), 23.

¹⁶ Regarding the rural dimension of CPUz is interesting to note the peasant participation within party and state institutions. Alimov offers some interesting figures: “of the total number of 58,826 deputies to the local Soviets of Uzbekistan who were elected in March 1959, nearly 10,000 are workers and about 27,000 are peasants; more than 20,000 are women. Of the 444 deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek Republic, who also were elected last March, nearly half are workers or peasants directly engaged in production.” Arif Alimov, *Uzbekistan. Another Big Leap Forward* (London: Soviet Booklets, 1960), 24.

¹⁷ Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia. The Creation of Nations* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 103.

¹⁸ Cf. Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967).

¹⁹ The *Jadids* were part of Turkestan’s native intelligentsia, and like those of the Pan-Turkist movement, were inspired by nationalist, Islamic, and reformist principles. They were gradually ostracized, purged, and physically eliminated by the Soviet regime. Cf. Ravshan Madjidovich Abdullaev, *Natsional’nye Politicheskie Organizatsii Turkestana v 1917-1918 Gody* (Tashkent: Izdatel’stvo Navro’z, 2014); H  l  ne Carr  re d’Encausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire: Reform and Revolution in Central Asia* (London: Tauris,

natives who were directed by Moscow and who could loyally serve the Soviet cause. The empowerment of this new indigenous elite implemented a vertical relationship with Moscow that was cemented through Marxist–Leninist ideology and facilitated by material benefits for the participants. After 1924, the implementation of the Soviet “affirmative action”²⁰ policy and the endorsement of national consciousness²¹ led to the creation of national republics in order to strengthen the national identity and the role of the titular groups within defined borders.²² Therefore, Uzbekistan was so created – through the direct intervention of Stalin – with the aim of including those ‘other

1988); H el ene Carr ere d’Encausse, *R eforme et R evolution Chez Les Musulmans de l’Empire Russe, Bukhara, 1867-1924* (Paris: A. Colin, 1966); St ephane A. Dudoignon and Fran ois Georgeon, “Le R eformisme Musulman En Asie Centrale. Du ‘premier Renouveau’   La Sovi etisation 1788-1937,” *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 37, no. 1–2 (January–June) (1996); Gero Fedtke, “Jadids, Young Bukharans, Communists and the Bukharan Revolution: From an Ideological Debate in the Early Soviet Union,” in *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries. Vol. 2, Inter-Regional and Inter-Ethnic Relations*, ed. Michael Kemper, Anke von K ugelgen, and Allen J Frank (Berlin: Schwarz, 1998); Shoshana Keller, *To Moscow, Not Mecca: The Soviet Campaign Against Islam in Central Asia, 1917-1941* (Westport: Praeger, 2001); Adeb Khalid, “Nationalizing the Revolution in Central Asia: The Transformation of Jadidism, 1917-1920,” in *A State of Nations. Empire and Nation Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Adeb Khalid, “Tashkent 1917: Muslim Politics in Revolutionary Turkestan,” *Slavic Review* 55, no. 2 (1996); Adeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Buttino, *Samarqanda. Storia in Una Citt  Dal 1945 a Oggi*.

²⁰ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

²¹ Joseph Stalin, *Marksizm I Natsional’no-Kolonial’nyii Vopros: Sbornik Izbrannykh Stateii I Rechei* (Moskva: Partizdat TsK VKP (b), 1937).

²² Sergey Abashin et al., “Soviet Rule and the Delineation of Borders in the Ferghana Valley,” in *Ferghana Valley: The Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S Frederick Starr (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2011); Evgenia Grigorevna Belen’kaa, *Istoria Uzbekistana. Obrazovanie Uzbekoj SSR Postroenie, Uprochenie I Razvitie Socialisticheskogo Obshestva v Uzbekistane : Ukazatel’ Sovetskoj Literatury 1924-1985 Gg.* (Ta skent: Fan, 1987); A.M. Bogoutdinov, *Istoria Kommunisticheskikh Organizacij Srednej Azii* (Ta skent: Uzbekistan, 1967); Boris Vladimirovich Lunin, *Istoria Uzbekistana v Istochnikah* (Ta skent: Fan, 1984); Kamilla Vasil’yevna Trever, Aleksandr Jur’evic Yakubovskij, and Maksimilian Emmanuilovich Voronets, *Istoria Narodov Uzbekistana* (Taskent: AN UzSSR, 1950).

Turks' regions that could be considered culturally 'Uzbek',²³ giving preferential treatment to indigenes that "fostered the elevation of local national executives officers in newly created national–administrative units."²⁴ Then, on 27 October 1924, the Turkestan ASSR was partitioned into two SSRs – the UzSSR and the TuSSR. Hence, Uzbekistan was thus formally created as a national entity for the Uzbek people with the full status of a constituent republic.²⁵ On 13 May 1925 at the III Congress of Soviets of the USSR, Uzbekistan was officially incorporated as a constitutive republic of the Union. Thus, its constitutive status and the territorial delimitations were reiterated in the Soviet constitution of 1936.²⁶

1.1.2 The Uzbek Sovietization

The UzSSR rapidly became a subject of the sovietization process that, through a series of stages, also imposed in this new republic the same forms of organization of public and political life, "the same institutional system of political rituals, the same official culture, and the same information and propaganda."²⁷ As in many other regions of the former Russian Empire, the new Soviet system secularized the traditional costumes and swept away many pre–Soviet institutions, thus imposing an infrastructure that fused party and state through communist ideology. In 1925 the Communist Party of Uzbekistan

²³ The conceptualized territory of Uzbekistan had to include the "Uzbek parts of Bukhara", Fergana, Andijan, Namangan, and Tashkent (formerly part of the Khanate of Kokand), and Khorezm (formerly part of the Khivan Khanate). Cf. "Notes of I.V. Stalin about Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan" (June 1, 1924) and "On national delimitation of Central Asia" (9 October 1924) in RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 467. Karakalpakstan was integrated into the UzSSR on December 5, 1936, with the status of an ASSR.

²⁴ Tetsuro Chida, "'Trust in Cadres' and the Party-Based Control in Central Asia during the Brejnev Era," in *Development in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Migration, Democratisation and Inequality in the Post-Soviet Era*, ed. Sophie Hohmann et al. (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 47.

²⁵ At the same time, the UzSSR was incorporating vast areas that were inhabited by ethnic Tajiks who were mainly concentrated in the autonomous republic of TaASSR. On 5 December 1929, the TaASSR was separated from the UzSSR and upgraded to the status of a SSR. However, the UzSSR kept important regions that were densely populated by Tajik ethnics, such as Bukhara, Samarkand, and Surkhandarya. Cf. Rahim Masovich Masov, *Istoria Topornogo Razdelenia* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1991).

²⁶ Art 26 of the 1936 Soviet Constitution declares: "*The Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic consists of the Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent, Ferghana, and Khorezm Regions, and the Kara-Kalpak Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic*".

²⁷ Buttino, *Samarcanda. Storie in Una Città Dal 1945 a Oggi*, 23.

(CPUz) was established as a national branch of the CPSU, becoming the only ruling party of the UzSSR.

Through the party, Moscow was able to maintain effective and precise control on the peripheries of the state through the selection of party leaders and by directing the cadre machine to select trustees with an acute sense of the internal balances of power among Uzbek social groups.²⁸ The party was prominent in the system - more politically powerful than the state apparatus - and deeply rooted at each administrative level. Hence, it had a republican base that was even locally branched in obkoms, gorkoms, raikoms, kolkhozes and villages, creating a vertical, hierarchical structure.²⁹ Every territorial branch was territorially organized into subunits: its main core organ was the Central Committee (CC) of the CPUz, while below there was a network of local committees that reached and connected all parts of the country. At each

²⁸ In fact, Moscow was able to directly choose its trustees reflecting the balance of power among Uzbek territorial clans: Akmal Ikramovich Ikramov, (from Tashkent) became the Uzbek FS in 1929, Fayzulla Khojaev (from Bukhara) served as chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the UzSSR, and Yoldosh Okhunboboyev (from Fergana) was President of the SS of the UzSSR. After Stalinist purges, Tashkent and Fergana elites became the main providers of native cadres in the Party and the state apparatus. Usmon Yusupov (from Fergana) became the FS of the CPUz in September 1937 and Abdujabbor Abdurahmonov from Tashkent became the Chairman of the SM UzSSR in 1938. Both remained in their posts until 1950 when they were transferred to Moscow. During this period, cadres from Samarkand and Bukhara were appointed only to secondary positions. In 1947, during Yusupov's tenure, Amin Niyazov (who was from Fergana) became the President of the Supreme Soviet, becoming the FS of the CPUz from 1950 to December 1955, when he was replaced by Nuriddin Akramovich Mukhitdinov (from Tashkent) with the support of Khrushchev. Cf. Donald S. Carlisle, "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev," in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation*, ed. William Fierman (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991); Donald S. Carlisle, "Islam Karimov and Uzbekistan. Back to the Future?," in *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership*, ed. T J Tucker and R C Colton (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).

²⁹ In the UzSSR, as in the other SSRs (with the exclusion of the RSFSR), there was a republican party ruled by its CC. The decision-making and highest organ of the party was the buro of the CC, headed by the FS. The membership of the buro was generally conferred on the Secretariat of the CC, the Chairman of the SM and his deputies, the top local military figure, and the Chairman of the Presidium of the SS. Below the buro were, in descending order, the CC Secretariat (and its subordinate organs for political, economic, social, and cultural affairs and control of the execution of central plans and directives), the obkoms (with the inclusion of the Tashkent gorkom); the other gorkoms, and; the raikoms of urban and rural districts.

administrative level, an appropriate executive body of the party (buro) was assigned to “originate policies, distribute tasks, select and distribute personnel and maintain strict supervision over the execution of its orders.”³⁰ The more the unit was dimensionally ‘local’, the more it was representative of the ethnic configuration of the territory.

At the top of the republican party, there was the First Secretary (FS) who had the function of coordinating the local organs with the central CPSU directives, supervising the activities of the national party, and representing, symbolically, the republic as a sort of ‘chief of state.’³¹ The Second Secretaries had a lower profile, assuming the powers of the FS in his absence. However, their role was far from being marginal. In fact, these supervisors could be considered as a sort of the ‘party watch-dogs’ that were directly responding to Moscow: therefore, especially after Brezhnev’s recentralization attempts in 1971,³² these figures became generally non-native (mainly ethnic Slav) appointees of the CC CPSU who maintained powerful control over the FSs, the republican party apparatus, and the state administration through the system of nomenklatura.³³ Furthermore, the second were reporting information

³⁰ Cf. Bureau of Social Science Research, “Handbook of Central Asia, Vol. III” (New Haven: Human relations Area Files Inc, 1956), 824.

³¹ Jerry F. Hough, *The Soviet Prefects. Local Party Organs in Industrial Decision-Making* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969).

³² Christian Dueval, “Changing Patterns in the Top ‘Watchdog’ Appointments to the Union Republics,” *Radio Liberty Research Bulletin* 365 (1976).

³³ The nomenklatura was the system regulating the appointment of thousands of cadres to key positions in the soviet system, from the central government to the local soviets. The “names” were managed by the CPSU through two lists regulating the appointment and transfer of party officials at any central republican or obkom level: the first was the basic list (osnovnoi) for key positions that the committee and its department had responsibility for filling; and the second registered (uchetnyi) list for potential candidates suitable for those positions. Basically, the system of nomenklatura allowed for permanent control of the ruling elite “from above”, at every level of power, creating what Milovan Djilas defined as a “new class” of ruling bureaucrats. The key to maintaining loyal supporters was to control the nomenklatura, thus encouraging the patronage of those who had the power of appointment and their clients/affiliates in a pyramidal system where an official could be both a client (in relation to higher-level patron officials) and a patron (to other lower-level client officials). Thomas Henry Rigby, “Staffing USSR Incorporated: The Origins of the Nomenklatura System,” *Soviet Studies* 40, no. 4 (November 6, 1988); Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (New York: Praeger, 1957).

continuously to Moscow and controlling 'strategic sectors'.³⁴ Despite *korenizatsiya*, the party was led by non-native figures³⁵ until 1929, when Akmal Ikramovich Ikramov, an Uzbek ethnic from Tashkent, became the FS of the CPUz. From that moment, the dominance of political influential groups from Tashkent/Ferghana began and the party increasingly reinforced its territorial ties at regional level.

During the '30s, the Stalinist 'revolution from above' also imposed on Central Asia a planned economic system through industrialization (in 1913, heavy industry represented 2% of Uzbek economy but 1940 it represented 13% of economic output),³⁶ collectivization, urbanization, cotton intensive monoculture, and a new society that was eradicating the previous one through the 'dekulakization', 'denomadization', and 'sedentarization' of locals.³⁷ During the first FYP (1928–1932) there was an "assault on traditional classes [that] created new social clusters. The early victims were the Muslim version of Russia's kulaks" and the notables generally as the *bai*, *manap*, and *kishlak*.³⁸ In their place new figures were imposed from above on the newly established collectivist society. Hence, in a rural scenario such as the UzSSR, the kolkhozes' social order was imposed, creating "a soviet-oriented rural aristocracy",

³⁴ From the second secretary depended, as a rule, strategic sectors such as the local apparatus of the KGB, the industry executives and other key sectors. Cf. Viktor Zaslavsky, *Il Consenso Organizzato. La Società Sovietica Negli Anni Di Brežnev* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1981), 158; John Miller, "Cadres Policy in Nationality Areas. Recruitment of CPSU First and Second Secretaries in Non-Russian Republics of the USSR," *Soviet Studies* 29, no. 1 (1977): 3–36.

³⁵ Between 1925 and 1929 there was a rapid succession in the party leadership, with four Russian ethnics in the position of General Secretary of the CPUz: Vladimir Ivanovich Ivanov (1925–1927); Kuprian Osipovich Kirkizh (1927–1929), Nikolay Fyodorovich Gikalo (April–June 1929), Isaak Abramovich Zelensky (June – December 1929).

³⁶ William Fierman, "The Soviet 'Transformation' of Central Asia," in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 19.

³⁷ In contrast to other traditionally nomadic Central Asian societies – such as the Kazakh, Turkmen and the Kyrgyz -, Uzbeks became mainly sedentary from the XVI century onwards, developing an allegiance to the land they inhabited. In Central Asian history, the forced sedentarization of nomads is arguably the most tragic aspect of Kazakh sovietization and there is an interesting historiographical debate about the nature of what was defined as the "Kazakh genocide". Niccolò Pianciola, *Stalinismo Di Frontiera. Colonizzazione Agricola, Sterminio Dei Nomadi E Costruzione Statale in Asia Centrale (1905-1936)* (Roma: Viella, 2009).

³⁸ Carlisle, "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev," 99.

meanwhile *Mullahs* and *Ishans* were replaced by *nachalniki*.³⁹ Indeed, as in many other peripheral regions of the USSR, the Stalinist period coincides with a time of the 'forced modernization' of Uzbek society and the development of the major cities and industrial areas of the country, pursuing the needs of the planned economy and changing the urban social framework. In 1930, the UzSSR capital was relocated from Samarkand to Tashkent, enforcing even more the dominance of the ruling Tashkent–Fergana leadership at political and administrative levels.⁴⁰ This political move encouraged the development of the new capital that would double the number of its inhabitants within a decade.⁴¹ These urban transformation processes⁴² were followed by social changes, while korenization proceeded until the great purges of 1937-1938.

During this period of massive terror, the Soviet system eliminated the first generation of native Uzbek elites that grew within the party-state system.⁴³

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Oliver Roy adds: "The relative balance between regions disappears with the new team of 1937: now the Fergana faction takes charge. The following key figures all had a Fergana background: Osman Yussupov, first secretary of the party (1937-50); Amin Nyazov, president of the Supreme Soviet from 1947 to 1950 and then first secretary of the Communist Party from 1950 to 1955; two successive presidents of the Council of Ministers, S. Segizbayev (1937-8) and A. Abdurrahmanov (1938-50); and the man who was the president of the Supreme Soviet up until 1943, Akhundbabayev. Such a homogeneity cannot be purely fortuitous. The Fergana group established an alliance with the group from Tashkent, an alliance which still makes sense today; so it was that Siraj Nuritdinov entered the seraglio (born in Tashkent in 1911, he became first secretary of the province of Tashkent in 1947 and joined the Politburo of the Uzbek Communist Party in 1949). This is not the expression of a 'traditional' alliance. One can only say that these two regions embody the most 'Uzbek' and least Persian part of the country." Roy, *The New Central Asia. The Creation of Nations*, 110.

⁴¹ In the period 1926-1939 the urban population of Tashkent rose from 314,000 to 556,000 inhabitants. In the same period, Samarkand had a more modest population increase from 105,000 to 136,000 inhabitants. Cf. Buttino, *Samarqanda. Storie in Una Città Dal 1945 a Oggi*; A.S. Sadikov et al., *Tashkent Geograficheskii Atlas* (Moskva: GUGK - Glav. upr. geodezii i kartografii pri Sovete ministrov SSSR, 1984); GSE, "Tashkent," *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (Vol. XXV) (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 393; GSE, "Samarkand," *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (Vol. XXII) (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 574–75.

⁴² Marco Buttino, *Changing Urban Landscapes: Eastern European and Post-Soviet Cities, since 1989* (Roma: Viella, 2012).

⁴³ John P. Willerton, *Patronage and Politics in the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

The Stalinist purges of 1937-1938 were so severe that a large part of the republican establishment – even Ikramov and his predecessors⁴⁴ – was eliminated and replaced with Stalinist loyalists. In sum, Moscow was gradually centralizing its control over Uzbekistan, blocking the autonomy of elites and increasing the patrimonial cooptation of loyalists.

In this phase, there was a campaign of Russification of the native elites⁴⁵ that would last – assuming different tones, modes, and speeds – for the whole Soviet period.⁴⁶ In fact, at the end of the '30s, Moscow slowed down *korenizatsiya* and reinforced its control over the party, even doubling the number of non-Central Asian members in the CPUz buro from five in 1937 to nine in 1940.⁴⁷ Therefore, the post-1937 system was structured on a top-down/center-periphery pattern where the 'central Soviets' – mainly Slavs – preserved a fundamentally important role, occupying the key positions in the party, in Komsomol, and in the bureaucracy of every SSR. Besides these supervisory central positions, "higher authorities placed only outsiders at the top of certain sensitive offices [...including] those of the attorney general, CP organizations, CP administrative agencies and [...later the] KGB throughout Central Asia. Considering the pervasiveness and persistence of that parallel system, Central Asians seemed relegated to superficially prestigious token positions."⁴⁸ The new Uzbek leadership, which emerged after the great purges,

⁴⁴ Ivanov, Zelensky, Ikramov and Khojaev were arrested in 1937, and tried in the last of the "Moscow Trials" (the Case of the Anti-Soviet "Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" or "the Trial of the Twenty-One"). Gikalo was accused of plotting against the Soviet state and executed on 25 April 1938. See Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Isaac Deutscher and Tamara Deutscher, *The Great Purges* (Oxford-New York: Blackwell, 1984); John Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Andrea Graziosi, *L'Urss Di Lenin E Stalin. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1914-1945* (Bologna: Il mulino, 2007); Vladimir Khaustov and Lennart Samuelson, *Stalin, NKVD I Repressii 1936-1938 Gg.* (Moskva: Rosspen, 2009); Aleksandr Isayevich Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago Three 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation.*, vol. I-II (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

⁴⁵ Speaking Russian was a prerequisite for elites in order to be integrated into the system. Roy, *The New Central Asia. The Creation of Nations*, 109.

⁴⁶ Carlisle, "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev," 100.

⁴⁷ Donald S. Carlisle, "The Uzbek Power Elite: Politburo and Secretariat (1938-83)," *Central Asian Survey* 5, no. 3-4 (1986): 130-32.

⁴⁸ Edward A. Allworth, "The New Central Asians," in *Central Asia: One Hundred Thirty Years of Russian Dominance, A Historical Overview* (Durham: Duke University Press,

had the same geographical origins as their disgraced predecessors (Tashkent/Fergana).⁴⁹ However this new generation of leaders assumed a wider discretion in the selection of the subordinate cadres through the appointment system of nomenklatura and a hierarchized party system, albeit remaining under vertical control by the center in economic and political decision-making.⁵⁰ Basically, the patrimonial scheme was much more enforced within the party-led system, and Moscow legitimized the loyal local establishment that could provide stability to the regime.

The Second World War⁵¹ also helped to change the political, economic, and social framework of the UzSSR. As in the rest of the USSR, war had a tragic impact in terms of the number of deaths in Uzbekistan. Despite its distance from the front, the republic took its share of sacrifice with some 300-500 thousand soldiers⁵² dying on the European battlefields. Furthermore, due to the advance of the German army into Soviet territory, more than 100 productive complexes and industries which were originally located west of the Ural Mountains were repositioned to Uzbekistan.⁵³ This process therefore contributed to the industrialization of Central Asia and reshaped the social framework of the Uzbek urban context. Almost two million evacuated Russian refugees were relocated with industry, settling in Uzbek cities and altering the demographics of the main industrial cities as Tashkent, Bukhara, and Samarkand.⁵⁴ Additionally, thousands of those accused by Stalin of disloyalty and collaboration with the enemy during wartime were deported to Uzbekistan. These masses of exiled Koreans, Crimean Tatars, Meskhetian

1995), 553; Michael Rywkin, "Russian Party Apparatus in a Muslim Republic. The Case of Uzbekistan," *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, no. 2 (1987): 226–67.

⁴⁹ After the purges, the new Fs were Usman Yusupov – who ruled from 27 September 1937 to 7 April 1953 – and Amin Niyazov, who emerged as a late Stalinist and remained in power until 22 December 1955.

⁵⁰ Z. Mieczkowski, "The Economic Regionalization of the Soviet Union in the Lenin and Stalin Period," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 8, no. 1 (May 5, 1966): 117–22.

⁵¹ "The same date for the opening of [Tamerlane's] tomb in Samarkand and the invasion by Germany of the territory of the USSR was a coincidence that assumed symbolic importance among the general public because of the long historical associations between bad luck and opening the tomb, which was forbidden." Timur Dadabaev, *Identity and Memory in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Uzbekistan's Soviet Past* (London & New York: Routledge, 2015), 63.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 64.

⁵³ Fierman, "The Soviet 'Transformation' of Central Asia," 19.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Turks, Volga Germans, and Chechens⁵⁵ constituted large communities of minorities within the UzSSR. The war had also implications in terms of culture and identity, uniting together the peoples of the USSR behind a common cause and contributing further towards the ‘Sovietization’ of the Uzbek people. New external actors were further complicating an already complex system.

1.1.3 The post-war period in Uzbekistan

Despite minor successive purges⁵⁶, we could say that the ‘Great Purges’ and the ‘Great Patriotic War’ represented the final episodes of massive state–violence in Soviet Uzbekistan. In fact, the post–war period was characterized by a stabilization of the party and a resumption of korenizatsiya,⁵⁷ creating new opportunities for native elites. Then, Stalin’s death inexorably led to the end of the terror machine and the implementation of a more peaceful pattern of regulating the party life of a republic, defining its political, economic, social, demographic and territorial framework. Stalin’s death thus coincided with the end of a system based on violence.⁵⁸

Khrushchev’s subsequent leadership encouraged a new climate of détente through destalinization, the end of terror (and mass purges) and concessions

⁵⁵ The 1967 general amnesty for many of those convicted of ‘treason’ – allowing them to go back to their homelands – did not apply to Crimean Tatars and Meskhetians who were forced to remain in Uzbekistan until 1989. Alexander C. Diener, *Homeland Conceptions and Ethnic Integration among Kazakhstan’s Germans and Koreans* (Lewiston: E. Mellen, 2004); Daniel Kim, *Formulating Missiological Approaches through the Analysis of the Korean Minority Identity in Uzbekistan* (Deerfield: Trinity International University, 2008); John H. Miller, “Putting Clients in Place: The Role of Patronage in Cooption into the Soviet Leadership,” in *Political Leadership in the Soviet Union*, ed. Archie Brown (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989); Aleksandr Nekrich, *The Punished Peoples: The Deportation and Fate of Soviet Minorities at the End of the Second World War* (New York: Norton, 1978); J. Otto Pohl, *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR, 1937-1949* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999); Tom Trier and Andrei Khanzhin, *The Meskhetian Turks at a Crossroads : Integration, Repatriation or Resettlement?* (Münster & London: Lit, 2007); Brian Williams, *The Crimean Tatars: From Soviet Genocide to Putin’s Conquest*, 2015.

⁵⁶ Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Vital’evich Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945-1953* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁵⁷ Roy, *The New Central Asia. The Creation of Nations*, 102.

⁵⁸ Stéphane Courtois, *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin’s Purge of the Thirties* (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

of more autonomy to the native elites within all SSRs. In Khrushchev's times, instead of terror and direct control, the UzSSR was ruled by a regime of 'controlled autonomy' in which local and central powers were balanced. This new political pattern was also harmonizing power among the most influential groups that were balancing their representation and interests within party and state. This policy eased Moscow's burden on the peripheries by starting a slow and gradual decentralization process in different fields and to a large extent restoring patrimonial dynamics and local autonomies.

A crucial element was the decentralization of the planned economy and the struggle against ministerial 'departmentalism' that led to the replacement of the central ministries with local authorities. In May 1957, regional economic soviets (*sovnarkhozy*)⁵⁹ were introduced and local party organs started to play "a stop-gap role, chasing up inputs for local producers"⁶⁰ and implementing a certain decentralization of economic decision-making.⁶¹ This economic decentralization process had implications in the political framework inasmuch it was conceding more management power to local leaders.⁶² Thus, this passage represented a key moment in Soviet history, resulting in the reaffirmation of a central determinant of the neo-patrimonial system in the

⁵⁹ Khrushchev reorganized and reduced the number of ministries and the USSR was divided into 105 economic regions, where *sovnarkhozes* became the operational and planning organs. Paul Cocks, Robert Vincent Daniels, and Nancy Whittier Heer, *The Dynamics of Soviet Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 111; Philip Hanson, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Economy: An Economic History of the USSR From 1945* (London: Longman, 2003), 58.

⁶⁰ Peter Rutland, *The Politics of Economic Stagnation in the Soviet Union: The Role of Local Party Organs in Economic Management* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 75; Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Ordzhonikidze's Takeover of Vesenkha: A Case Study in Soviet Bureaucratic Politics," *Soviet Studies* 37, no. 2 (1985); Oleg Khlevniuk, "Sistema Tsentra-Regiony v 1930-1950-E Gody. Predposylki Politizatsii Nomenklatury," *Cahiers Du Monde Russe : Russie, Empire Russe, Union Soviétique, États Indépendants* 44, no. 2-3 (2003): 253-68; Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR* (London: Penguin Books, 1989). These new entities were subordinated to the SS of the National Economy (VSNKh) that was reestablished in 1963 under the SM USSR.

⁶¹ David Tredwell Cattell, "Local Government and the Sovnarkhoz in the USSR, 1957-1962," *Soviet Studies* 15 (1964): 430-32.

⁶² "Under Khrushchev local communist leaders were allowed to plan their industrial development according to their real needs. [This] decentralization increased industrial production in Central Asia". Ahmed Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia, Islam or Nationalism?* (London: Zed Books, 1995), 62-63.

Soviet Union, as well as events related to agriculture that will be analyzed in next chapters. However, the reforms proposed by Khrushchev did not give the expected results and were opposed by the 'Stalinist old guard.' Therefore, it was necessary for the Soviet leader to proceed with a reshuffle of power, ensuring the loyalty of leading cadres, ousting possible opponents and renewing a system that, after the Stalinist terror, had not been able to reform itself.

At the end of '50s, with the emergence of the disruptive 'Ryazan Affair'⁶³ and with Khrushchev's anger at not being supported in his 'small leap forward',⁶⁴ there was a harsh campaign conducted by the Soviet leader against nationalism, *zemlyachestvo*, corruption, and clientelism in the USSR that presented a perfect opportunity to purge and replace a large part of the leadership that had emerged under Stalin. This campaign assumed a systemic level in Central Asia,⁶⁵ especially during the purges of the Tajik leadership,

⁶³ The "Ryazan Affair" (also called the "Ryazan Miracle") was a scandal that testifies to the arrogance of propaganda and the limits of the Soviet planned economy. The purposes of "Catch up and overtake America", announced by Khrushchev in 1957, had to be realized also through the implementation of a prior medium-term goal: to triple the amount of meat production in the USSR over the next three years. In 1958, Alexei Larionov, the FS of the Ryazan obkom, promised publicly to reach this goal within the next year. This initiative drew enthusiasm from Khrushchev, who gave to the oblast several awards in advance (such as the Order of Lenin in February 1959). These high expectations were betrayed at the end of 1960, when the agricultural failures in the Ryazan region and in the country as a whole compelled Khrushchev to repudiate the 'meat leap-forward'. "In many regions, including Ryazan, checks began to be made that uncovered massive cheating. Larionov could not cope with his unmasking and killed himself. In October 1964 the Ryazan scandal would be one of the accusations laid against Khrushchev as he was removed from power." Oleg Khlevniuk, "The Economy of Illusions: The Phenomenon of Data Inflation in the Khrushchev Era," in *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and Government in the Soviet Union, 1956-1964*, ed. Jeremy Smith and Melanie Ilic (London: Routledge, 2011), 171.

⁶⁴ Andrea Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), 191–241.

⁶⁵ After the 'Baltic affairs' in 1956-1959, there were intensive political purges in Central Asia that removed the Turkmen FS S. Babaev on 14 December 1958, Kamalov in Uzbekistan in March 1959, and then were followed in April-May 1961 with the dismissal of the Moldavian FS Z.T. Serdyuk, the Kyrgyz FS I Razzakov and the Tajik FS T. Uldzhabaev. "Only in the Tajik republic did the purge extend to other leading party and state officials" Jeremy Smith, "Leadership and Nationalism in the Soviet Republics,

which was uprooted and discredited⁶⁶ during a campaign against corruption, nepotism, and cheating in cotton production.⁶⁷ This was one example of a broader intervention by Moscow in seeking to address serious systemic issues at this time, even at the local level.⁶⁸

The Khrushchevian decentralization also had effects on the inclusion policies of the national elite. Indeed, this new course coincided with a revival of korenization, legitimizing the native leadership at the FS level. By the early '60s, the nativization of cadres was implemented in all Central Asian republics, appointing a new generation of indigenous leaders who would rule their republic for around a quarter of a century.⁶⁹ In fact, pursuing the narrative of

1951-1959," in *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and Government in the Soviet Union, 1956-1964*, ed. Jeremy Smith and Melanie Ilic (London: Routledge, 2011), 89.

⁶⁶ Nazarov reports the discredit against these figures as appeared on the literature of that time: "Former Secretaries of the CC Uldzhabaev and Obnosov and Chair of the Council of Ministers, Dodukhov did a poor job managing agriculture. At the same time, they began to deceive the Party and State, admitting to misrepresenting reports on plan implementation and creating the appearance of prosperity. In 1961, the CC CPSU exposed and suppressed the anti-party, anti-state activities of the former republic leaders" in Ravshan Nazarov and Pulat Shozimov, "The Ferghana Valley in the Eras of Khrushchev and Brezhnev," in *Ferghana Valley: The Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S Frederick Starr (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2011), 159; Bobodzhan Gafurovich Gafurov and Boris Anatol'yevich Litvinskiy, *Istoriia Tadjikskogo Naroda*, vol. 3 (Moskva: Akademia Nauk Tadjikskoi SSR, 1965), 157.

⁶⁷ According to Khlevniuk, already under Khrushchev "cheating over cotton in the Central Asian republics was significant. Thus, just in Tajikistan, the revealed cheating amounted to 28,700 tonnes in 1958, 37,100 the following year, and 55,600 in 1960. The overall delivery of cotton according to the official figures was 4.34 million tonnes in 1958 and 4.65 million in 1959. Thus the Tajik cheating alone represented about 12 per cent of the overall growth of cotton production in 1959 over 1958". Khlevniuk, "The Economy of Illusions: The Phenomenon of Data Inflation in the Khrushchev Era," 184–85. Cf. RGANI, f. 3, op. 12, d. 907, l. 23.

⁶⁸ Then, in July 1961 with a decree of the Presidium of the SS of the USSR, the agency Goskontrol was established in order to check the systemic inefficiencies and waste and to eradicate "corruption, falsification, mestnichestvo" in order to create a direct connection with prokuratura. For the same purpose, the party control commission was also provided with greater powers. Pravda, 23 July 1961, p. 1.

⁶⁹ The UzSSR was the only Central Asian Republic entrusted with a native FS after 1929. In the other Central Asian republics, Dinmukhamed Konayev became the FS of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (in office 19 January 1960 – 26 December 1962; and 7 December 1964 – 16 December 1986); Dzhahar Rasulov the FS of the Communist Party

destalinization, the new Soviet leader endorsed a change of leadership, replacing the old Stalinist establishment with loyal native figures.⁷⁰ Thus, following the korenization process, by the time of the XX Congress of the CPSU, seven of 14 republican party FSs were replaced (as well as 41 of 69 obkom FSs within the RSFSR).⁷¹

The promotion of loyal native figures had wider implications at local levels and became the key to encouraging a patronage system, considering that the new generation of FSs in power brought their clique (or 'clan' affiliates), who had previously served in the same obkom or raion, to the republic level. Furthermore, it is fundamental to note that the system started to devolve more economic authority from the State to party figures, enforcing the Republican and obkom FSs with more managerial powers than ever before. Therefore, the local FSs started to control the economy and the distribution of supplies and resources from the center,⁷² also circumventing the prerogatives of the Second Secretaries in relation to appointments – as even factory and kolkhoz managers – through the nomenklatura system.⁷³

In Uzbekistan, this new framework reinforced the power of FS's networks within party and state institutions, defining an immense power for a figure who

of Tajikistan (12 April 1961 - 4 April 1982); Turdakun Usubaliyev the FS of the Communist Party of Kirghizia (9 May 1961 - 2 November 1985), and; Muhammetnazar Gapurov the FS of the Communist Party of Turkmenistan (24 December 1969 - 21 December 1985).

⁷⁰ In this substitution campaign, Khrushchev was mostly promoting his loyal "clients" as three of the republican FSs and six of the obkom FSs were his former subordinates from Ukraine. Cf. Gordon Smith, "Gorbachev and the Council of Ministers: Leadership Consolidation and Its Policy Implications," *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 14, no. 3 (1987): 343–363.

⁷¹ Considering the career of Khrushchev and his successor Brezhnev, it is interesting to note that the "Ukrainian" group had been strengthened, becoming a dominant component in the Soviet leadership from the '60s. In 1951 no Ukrainians were in the Politburo, whereas in 1971 there were four ethnic Ukrainians out of 14 voting members. Cf. Thomas Henry Rigby, "The Soviet Politburo: A Comparative Profile 1951–71," *Soviet Studies* 24, no. 1 (November 6, 1972).

⁷² Hough, *The Soviet Prefects. Local Party Organs in Industrial Decision-Making*.

⁷³ The second secretaries were still working as the (effective) junction between the CC CPSU and the local party. Also in Uzbekistan in 1980, the republican second secretary and all but one of the obkoms' second secretaries were non-native. Ben Fowkes, "The National Question in the Soviet Union under Leonid Brezhnev: Policy and Response," in *Brezhnev Reconsidered*, ed. Edwin Bacon and Mark Sandle (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 79.

acted as an intermediary between Moscow and the republican apparatus and who, at the same time, enjoyed a wide autonomy that allowed him to assert his clients within the state and party organs. The implementation of destalinization⁷⁴ policies and research for new loyal figures overwhelmed also the CPUz. Khrushchev, returning from his Asian tour with Bulganin in December 1955, supported the replacement of Niyazov, and appointed Nuritdin Mukhitdinov⁷⁵ as the FS of the CPUz,⁷⁶ accelerating korenization and endorsing destalinization at the local level. The main aim replacing the previous generation of Stalinist obkom FSs.⁷⁷ Hence, Mukhitdinov was considered as a 'client' and an open supporter of Khrushchev's candidature: he opposed Khrushchev's attempted demotion in 1957 and, in return, he rose "rapidly to posts that no Central Asian politician had reached before him",⁷⁸ becoming in

⁷⁴ Polly Jones, *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era* (London & New York: Routledge, 2006); Donald A. Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and De-Stalinization: The Consolidation of the Modern System of Soviet Production Relations 1953-1964* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Donald A. Filtzer, *The Khrushchev Era: De-Stalinization and the Limits of Reform in the USSR, 1953-1964* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993).

⁷⁵ Nuritdin Akramovich Mukhitdinov (6/19 November 1917 – 27 August 2008) started his political career in the '30s in Uzbekistan and then within the Soviet army. During WW2, he was wounded during the Battle of Stalingrad where he had the opportunity to get closer to Khrushchev. After his demobilization in 1946, he returned to Uzbekistan where he served as FS of the Namangan obkom (1948-1950) and the Tashkent obkom (1950-1951). In 1951, Mukhitdinov was officially reprimanded by Stalin for poor management of cotton crop. He became member of the CC CPUz (1952-1956) and, on 18 May 1951, he started to serve as chairman of the SM UzSSR until 6 April 1953 when he was demoted by Lavrenti Beria, one of his major opponents. He took that post back on 18 December 1954 and, after a Khrushchev visit in Tashkent, he was promoted to FS CPUz in December 22, 1955. On 27 February 1956 he became a Candidate member of the 20th Presidium CC CPSU, becoming a full member that (on 17 December 1957) and a member of the 20th Secretariat until 17 October 1961. His rise was due to his proximity to Khrushchev and he became the first Uzbek to reach such a high rank in the USSR, representing the major Central Asian minority in the Presidium of the party.

⁷⁶ Carlisle, "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev," 104.

⁷⁷ Destalinization of local elite also involved the replacement of the key Obkom FSs: Arif Alimovich Alimov became the FS of Samarkand obkom (1957-1958), Tursun K. Kambarov FS of Ferghana obkom (1954–1965), Sirodzh Nurutdinov of Tashkent obkom (1956–1961) and Rasul Gulyamov the FS of Tashkent gorkom.

⁷⁸ Idil Tunçer-Kilavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan* (London & New York: Routledge, 2014), 59.

1957 the first Uzbek full member of the CPSU Presidium and the secretary responsible for Central Asia within the CC CPSU.

In this period, Mukhitdinov started to promote ethnic Uzbeks to higher party and state offices – maintaining a predominance of figures from Tashkent and Ferghana in the CC CPUz – and encouraging heavily use of the Uzbek language for official purposes.⁷⁹ However, in a context of decentralization, the Uzbek leadership also had to deal with possible internal threats. In order to weaken the weight of possible opponents and internal competitors – such as the Tashkenters Sirodzh Nuritdinov (FS of the Tashkent obkom), his wife Yadgar Nasriddinova (deputy chairwoman of the SM UzSSR),⁸⁰ Sabir Kamalov⁸¹ (chairman of the SM UzSSR), and Mansur Mirza–Ahmedov (first deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR) – Mukhitdinov sought to hold off rivals within his own regionalist faction by colluding and co-opting personalities from ‘rival’

⁷⁹ In Moscow, Mukhitdinov was supposed to better defend the Uzbek cause and on 1 July 1959 he proposed in the Presidium the use of the Uzbek language as the official language of the UzSSR. In so doing, he acknowledged that this would demand use of both languages if put into effect administratively. However, this proposal was largely symbolic in practice, and Russian remained the main language of communication within the CPUz branches. Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Fursenko, *Arkhivi Kremlya, Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964. Chernovye Protokol'nye Zapisi Zasedanii. Stenogrammy. Tom 1* (Moskva: Rosspen, 2015), 387.

⁸⁰ Yadgar Sadikovna Nasriddinova (26 December 1920 - 7 April 2006), was the wife of Sirodzh Nurutdinov (1911-1966). She was appointed first secretary of the Tashkent Obkom in 1946, serving on the CC CPUz for much of the 1940s, then first secretary of Kirov raikom in Tashkent and Minister of Industry and Building Materials for the UzSSR in 1952. She finally became the deputy chairwoman of the SM UzSSR (1955-1959), then she succeeded Rashidov as Chairwoman of the Presidium of the SS of the UzSSR (24 March 1959 - 25 September 1970). Rashidov was accused of plotting against her though a sex scandal, sending Mikoyan Nasriddinova's adopted daughter, who told Moscow that she had been raped by her foster mother's husband, to Anastas.

⁸¹ Sabir Kamalovich Kamalov (1910-1990) was an exponent of the Tashkent/Fergana group who entered the CC in 1950. He was appointed chairman of the SM UzSSR in 1955 and finally became the FS of the CPUz in 1957. The new Chairman of the SM, Mirza-Akhmedov, created a sort of countervailing power in 1959, by expanding the authority of Presidium of the SM UzSSR, composing it of all vice chairmen, including the vice chairman of Gosplan and the Ministers Finance and Agriculture. Cf. Robert C. Tucker, “Field Observations on Soviet Local Government,” *The American Slavic and East European Review* 18, no. 4 (1959): 526–38.

groups,⁸² such as the prominent writer Sharaf Rashidov (from Jizzak)⁸³ who was affiliated with the Samarkanders. According to Carlisle, at that time Rashidov appeared as a weak figure in the hands of an expert leader such as Mukhitdinov who thought that he could manage him as a puppet.⁸⁴ However, the story took a different course.

In December 1957 Mukhitdinov was transferred to Moscow in order to cover higher positions, and Sabir Kamalov took his place as the FS of the CPUz for fifteen months. At the end of the '50s the destalinization process was close to being completed, considering that in 1959 the CC CPUz buro had dramatically changed and only four members – Alimov, Murtazaev, Rakhimbabeva, and Rashidov – of the previous 1956 group remained; this had the effect of increasing the presence of Samarkanders and doubling the number of Slavic members from three in 1956 to six in 1959.⁸⁵ In this phase of great transformations - defining a complex relationship between decentralization, patrimonialization and replacement of administrative cadres - there was no such thing as foregone conclusion.

⁸² Tunçer-Kılavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*, 76; Roy, *The New Central Asia. The Creation of Nations*, 111.

⁸³ Rashidov was one of those Uzbek writers emerged in the '50s – as well as Zulfia, Abdulla Kahhar, Gafur Gulyam and Musa Aibek – who have won recognition in Soviet Union and even abroad.

⁸⁴ Carlisle, "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev," 108.

⁸⁵ The CC CPUz buro in 1956 was composed of: A. Abdurazakov (from Tashkent); A. Alimov (Tashkent); A.P. Byzov (Non-native); S.K. Kamalov (Tashkent); A.A. Luchinskii (Non-native); R.E. Melnikov (Non-native from Moscow); M. Mirza-Akhmedov (Kazakh Turkistan); K. Murtazaev (Kashkadarya); N. Mukhitdinov (Tashkent); Z. Rakhimbabeva (Andijan); Sh. R. Rashidov (Samarkand/Jizak). Meanwhile, the CC CPUz buro in 1959 was composed of Sh. R. Rashidov (Samarkand/Jizak); F. E. Titov (Non-native); M. A. Abdurazakov (Namangan); G. A. Gabril'yants (Non-native); Z.R. Rakhimbabayeva (Andijan); Ya.S. Nasriddinova (Ferghana); A. A. Alimov (Tashkent); R. G. Gulamov (n.a.); G. F. Naimushin (Non-native); I.I. Fedyuninskii (Non-native from Sverdlovsk); A. N. Rudin (Non-native); K.M. Murtazaev (Kashkadarya); I. P. Burmistrov (Non-native). Cf. Carlisle, "The Uzbek Power Elite: Politburo and Secretariat (1938–83)," 130–32.

1.2 The ‘reign’ of Sharaf Rashidov

On 14 March 1959, during the XI plenum of the CC CPUz,⁸⁶ the chairman of the SM UzSSR, Manzur Mirza–Akhmedov, was dismissed in response to allegations of malfeasance, nepotism, and abuses of power. He was replaced by Arif Alimov. On that occasion, the FS CPUz Sabir Kamalov was also removed from his post and replaced by Sharaf Rashidov,⁸⁷ one of the most prominent leaders to have emerged from the new and young generation of figures that arose during wartime. He was not a technician or an industrial worker, but rather – like Usabaliyev, Ovezov and Gapurov – he was an ideological worker with a pedagogical career.

1.2.1 Rashidov’s rise to power

Sharaf Rashidovich Rashidov was born in Jizzak on 6 November 1917 – the day before the October Revolution – in a “poor peasant family.”⁸⁸ He was strongly encouraged by his uncle Hamid to continue in literary studies and after graduating at the Jizzak Pedagogical School in 1935, he worked as a teacher in the local secondary school. In 1937–1941, he served as executive secretary, deputy chief editor, and editor of the Samarkand regional newspaper *Lenin Yolu* (Lenin’s way) and in 1939 he joined the ACP(B). In these years, Rashidov started to write his first poems, which were devoted to Uzbek cotton farmers and builders.⁸⁹ In 1941, Rashidov graduated from the Faculty of Philology of the Uzbek State University in Samarkand and in 1948 from the Higher Party School of the CC of the ACP(B) through a correspondence course.

In November 1941, he joined the Soviet Army, fighting in the Battle of Moscow in the North–Western sector, and on the Volkhov front. At the end of 1942 he was seriously wounded on the battlefield and, after a long recovery at the Sverdlovsk evacuation hospital, he was finally demobilized from the front in 1943. In 1944 he served as secretary of the Samarkand obkom and in 1947 became the editor of the republican newspaper *Qizil O‘zbekiston* (“Red Uzbekistan”) in Tashkent. As in the journalistic and literary spheres, Rashidov’s

⁸⁶ Fursenko, *Arkhiivi Kremlya, Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964. Chernovye Protokol’nye Zapisi Zasedanii. Stenogrammy. Tom 1*, 1068.

⁸⁷ The main biographical contribution regarding Rashidov is Saidakbar Rizaevich Rizaev, *Sharaf Rashidov. Shtrikhi K Portretu* (Toshkent: Yozuvchi, 1992).

⁸⁸ Sharaf Rashidovich Rashidov, *Soviet Uzbekistan* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1982), 3.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

advance in the political sphere was clear, and he became secretary of the Samarkand obkom and chairman of the Union of Writers of Uzbekistan (1949–1950) under the protection of the FS of Yusupov.⁹⁰ In the early '50s, Rashidov was able to establish himself as a writer committed to the dissemination of culture and modernization of Uzbek society, receiving praise from the party establishment. In 1950, he was appointed secretary of the CC CPUz and on August 21, 1950, he became Chairman of the Presidium of the SS of the UzSSR and Deputy chairman of the Presidium of the SS of the USSR, beginning to assert his political role and prominence within the CPUz buro. After 1956 Rashidov became a candidate member of the CC CPSU and a delegate at the CPSU Congresses, receiving the appreciation of Khrushchev for his charming, erudite manners.

His appointment to the post of FS of the CPUz in 1959 was a compromise achieved by coopting the support of rival clans' figures – such as Murtazaev (Kashkadarya), Abdurazakov (Namangan), Gulyamov, Sarkisov, and Alimov from Tashkent – with the support of the Jizzak–Samarkand group. Backing from that group drew heavily on those people with whom Rashidov had established work connections and relationships of mutual support developed while at the Samarkand obkom. Norling reconstructs the entity of this group, listing:

the Minister of Internal Affairs Khaidar Yakhyaev served as department head in the obkom in 1944 when Rashidov held the cadre portfolio. Likewise, the KGB head Leon Melkumov was stationed there as secretary of Komsomol together with Rashidov but when Yusupov was dismissed in 1950 he was dispatched to Moscow. A year after Rashidov came to office in 1959, Melkumov returned to Uzbekistan and was instated KGB officer in [the] Samarkand oblast. Bektash Rakhimov, First Secretary of [the] Samarkand oblast in the 1970s, had been a co-worker with Rashidov in the obkom 30 years earlier. And N. Makhmudov from Kokand in [the] Ferghana Valley, one of Rashidov's closest confidantes, was yet another acquaintance from this time. Also a writer, Makhmudov, penned articles for *Shavot Khakikati* in the 1930s and was First Secretary of Samarkand in the decade thereafter (1943–48). In 1963, with Rashidov's patronage, he assumed the post of First Secretary of Syr Darya obkom which he held until 1969, when he was put in charge of the People's Control Commission (Komiteta Narodnogo Kontrolya).⁹¹

⁹⁰ Roy, *The New Central Asia. The Creation of Nations*, 111; Rashidov, *Soviet Uzbekistan*, 4; Rizaev, *Sharaf Rashidov. Shtrikhi K Portretu*, 13.

⁹¹ Nicklas Norling, "Myth and Reality: Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan" (Johns Hopkins University, 2014), 193–94.

Substantially, Rashidov proceeded in the same way as Brezhnev did when he included in his clique individuals from Dnepropetrovsk. Furthermore, his literature background was a fundamental element in his rise to power, making possible and credible his candidacy against stronger competitors and careerists such as Nuritdinov, Kamalov, or Mirza–Akhmedov.⁹² Despite the opposition of technocrats⁹³ and of a fragmented group of Tashkenters, his appointment in 1959 was the result of a ‘general compromise’⁹⁴ among the factions that was changing the geopolitics of the UzSSR. In fact, Rashidov was able to break the Tashkent–Fergana monopoly⁹⁵ that had ruled since the ‘30s, thus finally becoming a promoter of an alliance between Samarkand (a minority faction)⁹⁶ and some members of the capital.

Rashidov was considered a patriot and a loyal communist whose agenda was aimed at “the one–sided development of [the] Central Asia[n] region, employment problems and the need to create jobs and, last but not least, irrigation.”⁹⁷ His balance among his soft nationalism, patriotism and devotion to the Soviet cause, and intellectual profile were functional to Khrushchev as well: according to Roy, it seems that Moscow wanted to reshuffle the power

⁹² Carlisle, “The Uzbek Power Elite: Politburo and Secretariat (1938–83),” 105–6.

⁹³ During his election, Rashidov opposed the technocrats inside the party such as Mirza–Ali Mukhamedzhanov, an agronomist who served as deputy chairman of the Soviet Ministry of Uzbekistan. In a letter sent to Moscow in July 1968, the following accusation was laid out: “Rashidov in fact knows neither agriculture nor industry nor construction, since he never worked before in lower party, Soviet and economic organizations. His level of knowledge and experience is ill-suited to the post of first secretary.” After Rashidov’s rise, Mukhamedzhanov was ‘exiled’ to Afghanistan as an advisor for agriculture and irrigation. He also criticized Rashidov for the unfair dismissal of Khabib Abdullaev, the president of the AN of the UzSSR in 1962, and for selecting his cadres on the basis of “kinship, homeland and personal loyalty.” RGANI f.5, op. 60, d. 3, ll. 94–103 and Chida, “‘Trust in Cadres’ and the Party-Based Control in Central Asia during the Brejnev Era,” 66–67.

⁹⁴ Rizaev reconstructs the days before Rashidov’s appointment, underlining a general consensus among the decision-makers, with the exception of the Deputy Chairman of the SM UzSSR, Mirzaali Valiyevich Muhammadjonov, who supported the candidacy of Arif Alimov. Rizaev, *Sharaf Rashidov. Shtrikhi K Portretu*.

⁹⁵ Pauline Jones Luong, “Sources of Institutional Continuity: The Soviet Legacy in Central Asia,” in *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (August 31–September 2, 2000)* (Washington, D.C., 2000), 19.

⁹⁶ In terms of party members, the Tashkent oblast counted 53 thousand people, Samarkand 21 and Fergana 19. RGANI, f.6, op. 6, doc. 1106.

⁹⁷ Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (London: Doubleday, 1996), 135.

balance in the republic in order to avoid the development of hegemonies within the CPUz. For this reason, Khrushchev supported the appointment of the Samarkander 'outsider' at the same time as his main adversary Nasriddinova took his previous post as Chair of the Presidium of the SS of the UzSSR. Rashidov grew rapidly in his political career even at the central level: in fact, he became a member of the CC CPSU, a candidate member of the Presidium of the CC CPSU on 31 October 1961 – keeping this position in the Politburo until his death in 1983 – and a member of the Presidium of the SS of the USSR in 1970.

At the internal level, Rashidov's rise to power was a slower and a more complicated process. In fact, in 1961, on the occasion of the XVI congress of the CPUz, Rashidov's role was not dominant and he still had to face those opponents within the party buro that were slowing his consolidation of power. In that year, the enmity with Nuritdinov and his wife Nasriddinova was enflamed, and on 27 September 1961 he had to find a compromise with the former ruling group, accepting the appointment of Rakhmankul Kurbanov⁹⁸ as Chairman of the SM UzSSR in order to respect the balance of power.

Meanwhile the role of Mukhitdinov was going in to rapid decline.⁹⁹ In October 1961 Rashidov had the occasion to bring the contest to an end, even

⁹⁸ Rakhmankul Kurbanovich Kurbanov, the chairman of the SM UzSSR (1961-1971), was a Bukharan politician who spent his entire career in Fergana. "Although he was from Bukhara and would be expected to be close to [the] Samarkandi faction, he was a rival of Rashidov and an ally of Nasriddinova [acting] with her against Rashidov". Tunçer-Kılavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*, 76.

⁹⁹ After the XXII CPSU Congress (1961), Mukhitdinov lost Khrushchev's support and was demoted from the Presidium. He was relegated to the lower office of deputy chairman of *Tsentrosoyuz* and in 1968-1977 he served as First Deputy Chairman of the State Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries of the SM USSR. Between 1968 and 1977 he served as Soviet ambassador to Damascus and was responsible for the military alliance of USSR with the Syrian regime of Hafez al-Assad and the opening of a Soviet base in Tartus in 1971. Cf. *Dialog*, 1, January 1991, pp. 48-55. Merle Fainsod, *How Russia Is Ruled* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963); Nuritdin Mukhitdinov, *Gody Provedennyye v Kremle* (Tashkent: Kadyry, 1994); O'zSE, "Nurutdin Mukhitdinov," *O'zbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi* (Toshkent: Uzbekistan SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1976); Roy, *The New Central Asia. The Creation of Nations*, 110; Nikolay Aleksandrovich Zen'kovich, *Samyye Zakrytyye Lyudi: Entsiklopediya Biografii* (Moskva: Olma-Press, 2002), 394–97.

with his predecessor Sobir Kamolov, who was relegated to the Fergana obispolkom until January 1962, when his political career effectively ended.¹⁰⁰ However, his main opponents were still powerful and active: besides Nasriddinova and Kurbanov, there was also the expert secretary of the Tashkent gorkom, Kayum Murtazaev,¹⁰¹ and the young chairman of the Tashkent gorispolkom, Rafik Nishanov.¹⁰² Conversely, his major allies were the Narmakhonmadi Khudaiberdiyev,¹⁰³ Kallibek Kamalov,¹⁰⁴ Nazar Matchanov,¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Carlisle, "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev."

¹⁰¹ Kayum Murtazaevich Murtazaev was an expert careerist in the Uzbek Soviet political scene. Born in 1926 in the Tajik village of Karinabar in the Fergana Valley, he rapidly rose through party ranks, becoming the FS of the Komsomol Fergana obkom (1951-1952), FS of the Uzbek Komsomol (1952-1958), secretary of the Komsomol of the USSR (1958-1960), FS of the Tashkent Gorkom (1960-1965), and FS of the Bukhara obkom (1965-1977).

¹⁰² Rafik Nishanovich Nishanov became chairman of the Tashkent gorispolkom in 1961. In 1963 he was appointed secretary of the CC CPUz and in 1966 was elevated as a buro member. However, in 1970 he was removed and exiled from his posts.

¹⁰³ Narmakhonmadi D. Khudaiberdiyev was a Samarkander close to Rashidov's group. In 1955, he was the deputy chairman of Bukhara oblispolkom and then the FS of the Bukhara obkom (1955-1957). In 1957, he was appointed as head of the agricultural department in the CC CPUz and in 1959 he became the second secretary of the Bukhara obkom. In 1960 he was appointed deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR and in 1961 he became the FS of the Surkhandarya obkom. In 1962 he was elevated to the secretariat of the CC CPUz and in 1965 he became minister of agriculture of the UzSSR. In 1970, Khudaiberdiyev became the FS of the Syrdarya obkom and on 25 February 1971 he was finally elevated as chairman of the SM UzSSR.

¹⁰⁴ Kallibek Kamalov had been deputy chairman of the SM Karakalpak ASSR (1951-1952) and chairman of the Nukus gorispolkom (1952-1953), after which he became Minister of Public Utilities (1953-1956), and Minister of Road Transport and Highways (1956-1958) of the Karakalpak ASSR. In 1958 he became the secretary of the Karakalpak obkom and in 1959 chairman of the SM of the Karakalpak ASSR. On March 1963 he became the FS of the Karakalpak obkom covering that position until March 1984 when he was "exiled" as a General Consul in Constanta, Romania.

¹⁰⁵ Nazar Matchanov was a khorezmian who became chairman of the Bukhara oblispolkom in 1961, then FS of the Bukhara obkom (1962-1965), and finally Chairman of the Presidium the SS of the UzSSR (1970-1978).

Nasir Makhmudov,¹⁰⁶ Mirzamakhmud Musakhanov,¹⁰⁷ and, later, Asadilla Khodzhaev,¹⁰⁸ who was rising steadily in the 1970s.¹⁰⁹

As we have seen, Rashidov's rise had the full support of Khrushchev. However, Rashidov directly contributed to his ouster in 1964 by criticizing the leader for his errors in economic planning.¹¹⁰ Khrushchev's dismissal and the consequent de-khrushchevization process triggered a domino effect that even affected the FS of the CPUz. In fact, in December 1964 during a Tashkent obkom conference, Vali Usmanov, the deputy head of the Organizational-Party Department of the Tashkent obkom gave a 25-minute speech where he denounced the attachment of Rashidov to Khrushchev, and his clientelism and zemlyachestvo.¹¹¹ In response, several participants intervened, including a member of the SS of the UzSSR, Akhmad Kadyrov, defending Rashidov as an honest man, defining his critics as demagogues, and trashing the charges against him. Rashidov, too, defended himself, explaining that the controversial appointments had come directly from the CPSU.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ Nasir Makhmudov was a talented khorezmian politician who covered the posts of FS of the Samarkand (1943-1948), Fergana (1950-1951), Tashkent (1951-1952), Karakalpak (1956-1963), and Syrdarya (1963-1969) obkoms. From 1969 until 1984 he kept the post of Chairman of the People's Control Committee of the Uzbek SSR.

¹⁰⁷ Mirzamakhmud. M. Musakhanov was a Tashkenter who rose through the ranks of the republican profsoyuz until 1961 when he became chairman of the SS of the UzSSR and first deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR in 1965. In 1970 he became FS of the Tashkent obkom, keeping the post until January 1985.

¹⁰⁸ Asadilla Ashrapovich Khodzhaev (1920-1983), who had served in many key posts in the republic, became FS of the Namangan obkom (1968-1973) and FS of the Tashkent gorkom (1973-1978).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹¹⁰ Vladislav Martinovich Zubok, *A Failed Empire. The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 390; Rudolf Germanovich Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 1, Quarante Ans D'après-Guerre* (Longueuil: les éditions Kéruss, 2007), 466.

¹¹¹ In that speech, "three examples were cited: Sarvar Azimov, then deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers; N.D. Khudayberdyev, then Secretary of Uzbekistan's Central Committee; and his brother Sahib Rashidov, head of the Party-State Control Commission under the Central Committee and Council of Ministers -- all of whom came from Rashidov's native Jizzak." Norling, "Myth and Reality: Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan," 188.

¹¹² Rizaev, *Sharaf Rashidov. Shtrikhi K Portretu*, 48–63; Fedor Razzakov, *Korrupsiya v Politbyuro: Delo "Krasnogo Uzbeka"* (Moskva: Eksmo, 2009).

Rashidov is widely reported to have been a favored 'client', a protégé and a close friend of Leonid Brezhnev who reserved for him the "kid-glove" treatment.¹¹³ However, this famous interpretation is not supported with any kind of substantial empirical evidence. There were surely cordial and friendly relations between Rashidov and Brezhnev, much evidence of which can be found in the personal correspondence between the two figures.¹¹⁴ However, the Uzbek leader was not in a particularly strong position within the top leadership and he never became an influential figure within the CC CPSU. He remained a lower-profile candidate member of the Politburo, excluded from the deep core of Soviet power and based outside of Moscow.¹¹⁵ We can support this interpretation also considering the internal debates within the politburo in which the opinion of Rashidov was required only on those issues closely linked to the Central Asian context or to his diplomatic missions.¹¹⁶ However, his close connection with Brezhnev was undeniable.¹¹⁷ According to Chazov – the 'Kremlin's doctor' – it seems more likely that Rashidov was indirectly linked to Brezhnev¹¹⁸ though having very close ties with some of his most trusted collaborators, such as Podgorny, Suslov, and perhaps Chernenko,¹¹⁹ thus making him as an important background figure within the Soviet regime.¹²⁰ Substantially, Rashidov was able to opportunistically follow

¹¹³ Yegor Kuzmich Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996); Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹¹⁴ Rizaev, *Sharaf Rashidov. Shtrikhi K Portretu*.

¹¹⁵ Willerton, *Patronage and Politics in the USSR*, 107–8.

¹¹⁶ Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Fursenko, *Arkhivi Kremlya, Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964. Postanovleniya 1959-1964. Tom 3* (Moskva: Rosspen, 2015); Fursenko, *Arkhivi Kremlya, Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964. Chernovye Protokol'nye Zapisi Zasedanii. Stenogrammy. Tom 1*.

¹¹⁷ Ligachev reports that, despite his minor role, Rashidov did not have to wait in the waiting room to see Brezhnev and directly came in. Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 213.

¹¹⁸ According to Willerton, there were 6 people within politburo and CC CPSU secretariat affiliated to Rashidov. Besides the Uzbek leader was not in a particularly strong position within the top leadership, he "also benefited from the long-term patronage of the General Secretary." Willerton, *Patronage and Politics in the USSR*, 51, 107, 277.

¹¹⁹ Evgeniy Ivanovich Chazov, *Zdorov'ye I Vlast'. Vospominaniya «kremlevskogo Vracha»* (Moskva: Novosti, 1992), 23–24.

¹²⁰ It is interesting to note the tone of the letters that Rashidov wrote to the politburo members in order to evaluate the intimacy of their relations. He addressed Brezhnev as "Dorogoi Nash Leonid Ilich" ("Our Dear Leonid Ilich"), and took a very pandering tone

the course of Soviet political developments, and to catch the winds of destalinization in his favor.¹²¹ According to Carlisle:

[Rashidov] had benefited from Mukhitdinov's anti-Stalinist campaign and now he harvested the fruits of his predecessor's earlier efforts [by playing...] the end of de-Stalinization to his advantage and [by using...] the fall of Mukhitdinov and Khrushchev to consolidate his position locally.¹²²

Such a task was working even in the official narrative of the CPUz. In fact, since the beginning of the '60s, Rashidov proceeded in the way of destalinization, rehabilitating those prominent figures who had been part of Uzbek political history in previous decades. In the first official history of the CPUz published in 1964,¹²³ the purges of 1937–1938 were presented, rehabilitating Ikramov and Khodzhaev and denouncing Yusupov as the main culprit of Stalinist terror in the UzSSR. However, this figure would be rehabilitated during the “de–destalinization” of Brezhnev’s years¹²⁴, as well as another prominent Stalinist like Abdurakhmanov who received in the second half of the '60s a ministerial post.¹²⁵ This dual rehabilitation of victims of Stalinism – and then of its culprits – was in line with the Brezhnevian partial rehabilitation of Stalin.¹²⁶ In fact, from the second half of the '60s, destalinization was assuming less emphasis and Brezhnevian ‘inclusiveness’ started to reinterpret, at least informally, the Stalinist era. Here, the inclusion of both Stalinists and anti-Stalinists occurred to ensure a wider basis of power

with Suslov and Chernenko, addressing them as "Dorogoy brat" ("Dear Brother"). Meanwhile he was more formal towards Andropov, whom he addressed as "Dorogoy Yuri Vladimirovich". Cf. Rizaev, *Sharaf Rashidov. Shtrikhi K Portretu*, 128–35.

¹²¹ Smith, “Leadership and Nationalism in the Soviet Republics, 1951–1959,” 90.

¹²² Carlisle, “Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev,” 108–9.

¹²³ KPUz, *Ocherki Istorii Kommunisticheskoy Partii Uzbekistana* (Tashkent: Uzbekistan, 1964).

¹²⁴ In fact, the sins of Yusupov disappeared in the second edition of the volume in 1974, and the Stalinist leader was presented as a “devoted son of the party”. Then, the party decided to give Yusupov’s name to a raion in Kashkadarya and to the main Fergana canal, indicating the new course of “de–destalinization”. PV, 19289, 112, 14 May 1980, p. 1, Carlisle, “Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev,” 125.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹²⁶ Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 1, Quarante Ans D’après-Guerre*, 561–65.

legitimation in a period that sought to present Soviet history as a continuous stream of success.¹²⁷

‘Inclusiveness’ in the UzSSR was also a consequence of the minority legitimation base from which Rashidov emerged, implying his need to establish a broader consensus for his rule, even co-opting members of the rival group. This attitude would last until the end of the ‘60s, when a series of dramatic events afforded Rashidov the opportunity to strengthen his power and to gradually marginalize his opponents, mainly represented by the Fergana/Tashkent clique led by Nasriddinova and Kurbanov. Hence, Rashidov was able to promote Samarkand/Jizzak figures within the party and state apparatus, to reinforce the influence of his group, and to support the rise of his closest ally Khudayberdiyev. Then, during the XVII Congress of the CPUz (3–5 March 1966), Rashidov further strengthened his position, reserving a greater share of power for his group and replacing almost a quarter of the members of the CC CPUz and several obkom secretaries, even as he consolidated support from among the surviving members of the buro.¹²⁸ However, the real political opportunity arrived with one of the most dramatic episodes of contemporary Uzbek history.

1.2.2 The 1966 Tashkent earthquake’s spillovers

On 26 April 1966, a 7.5-magnitude earthquake struck. With its epicenter in the center of Tashkent, it caused massive destruction to over 80% of the city and 78,000 homes, officially killing 15 people and leaving 300,000 homeless and razing most of the historic quarter of the city (which predated 1917)¹²⁹ that

¹²⁷ CIA, “Intelligence Report HR70-14 (U), The Stalin Issue and the Soviet Leadership Struggle, 5 July 1968,” 1968; William J. Tompson, *The Soviet Union under Brezhnev* (London & New York: Routledge, 2003), 27.

¹²⁸ Premendra Agrawal, *Silent Assassins Jan 11, 1966* (Ramsagarpara: Agrawal Overseas, 2012), 289.

¹²⁹ These figures appear underestimate in terms of victims and overestimate in terms of destruction. Hence, this ‘exaggeration’ was functional to a reconstruction policy that was already considering the renewal of the city. Anna Christensen, “New Old Collide in Tashkent,” *Deseret News*, 1984; Sadikov et al., *Tashkent Geograficheskiy Atlas*; Serge Schmemmann, “Big Tremor Rocks Central Asia Area,” *The New York Times*, 1984; Paul Stronski, *Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City, 1930–1966* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010); GSE, “Tashkent.”

was mostly inhabited by Uzbeks.¹³⁰ In the immediate aftermath, Rashidov was invested in the recovery operations and even Brezhnev and Kosygin flew to Tashkent to evaluate the condition of the city. However, such a disastrous situation was also an important political occasion for the Uzbek leader to affirm his operations and to get consensus from Moscow. Indeed, the reconstruction of Tashkent was an opportunity for Rashidov to weaken the opposition¹³¹ and to leave his own trace in order to rebuild the city in a more modern Soviet style, with large boulevards, parks, monuments, large apartment block complexes, and even the first subway system in the whole of Central Asia.¹³² The reconstruction program brought forth the idea of a new "Tashkent Renaissance."¹³³ The reconstruction campaign and the efforts that the party brought to this task were publicized to great fanfare, accrediting Rashidov as a thoughtful leader who was sensitive to the needs of the population and a devoted communist for Moscow.

In fact, the Tashkent earthquake of 1966 – and the subsequent reconstruction of the city – had a wide media reach that sensitized Soviet public

¹³⁰ Tashkent followed the typical colonial development of urbanization. According to the 1959 census, the Uzbek capital had a total population of 911,930 people from which 42% were 'Muslims' (Uzbeks 307,879, Tatars 64,242, Kazakhs 8,158, Tajiks 4,585) mostly settled in the ancient Northern part and 58% Non-Muslims (Russians 400,640, Jews 50,445, Ukrainians 24,562 and Armenians 10,500) that were mostly concentrated in the modern area down of the Chirchik river. Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 56.

¹³¹ After the Tashkent earthquake, several high-ranking officials – such as Gayk Gabrieliants, Mirzamakhmud Musakhanov, deputy chairmen of the Soviet Ministry of Uzbekistan and Malik Abdurazakov, the first secretary of the Tashkent obkom – were accused of abusing their position to get additional subsidies to repair their apartments and houses. On that occasion, the CC CPSU didn't send a representative to Tashkent to conduct investigations, and the accused officials "received the lightest penalty 'pointing out' their dishonest behaviors." RGANI f.5, op. 59, d. 3, ll. 8-9 and Chida, "'Trust in Cadres' and the Party-Based Control in Central Asia during the Brezhnev Era," 67.

¹³² In 1968 the construction of the seventh metro line in the USSR and the first in Central Asia was planned. The construction on the first line of the Tashkent metro, known as the "Chilonzor" line, began in 1972 and it opened on November 6, 1977 with nine stations. A second line, "Uzbekiston", was added in 1984. Dilorom Agzamovna Alimova and Margarita Ivanovna Filanovich, *Toshkent Tarihi: Kadim Davrlardan Bugungi Kungacha: Kajta Ishlangan va Tuldirlgan Ikkinchi Nashri* (Toshkent: Art Flex, 2009); Sadikov et al., *Tashkent Geograficheskiy Atlas*.

¹³³ Rizaev, *Sharaf Rashidov. Shtrikhi K Portretu*, 88–109.

opinion and the central authorities, bringing the forces of the whole Soviet system to the task of reconstruction. The CPSU was directly invested in this task, issuing resolution n° 456 of the CC CPSU–SM USSR (14 June 1966), “On the assistance of the Uzbek SSR in the aftermath of the earthquake in Tashkent.” The resolution was welcomed by Rashidov who was thankful for the aid from other republics as “an expression of fraternal feelings from throughout the republics towards our country.”¹³⁴

In the summer of 1966, ‘battalions of fraternal peoples’ were recalled to rebuild Tashkent and thousands of workers and urban planners from the other SSRs came to Uzbekistan to assist in the reconstruction. After that moment, Tashkent consolidated even more its multiethnic shape, improving a social safety net that was absorbing problems of housing and social exclusion across the whole USSR. Indeed, a great part of the thousands of ‘volunteers’ that came to rebuild Tashkent settled in the very apartments that they were supposedly building for Uzbeks,¹³⁵ creating a climate of mistrust and disaffection between local communities and new settlers.¹³⁶ As observed by Hanks, “the improvements in these aspects of life did not offset the repressed resentment many Uzbeks felt toward not only the Soviet system but in some cases toward Slavs themselves.”¹³⁷ Therefore, the reconstruction process was felt not only in the transformations that Tashkent underwent at an architectural level but also in the political and social dynamics that it was creating. The earthquake challenged but also strengthened Rashidovian patrimonialism as a successful

¹³⁴ A copy of the Resolution of the CC CPUz and the SM UzSSR n° 345 of 29 June 1966 is showed in an exhibition billboard at the 'Monumental Museum Sh. Rashidov' in Jizzak.

¹³⁵ On the aftermath of the earthquake, in Tashkent about 100,000 new homes were built by 1970. Sadikov et al., *Tashkent Geograficheskii Atlas*, 60–64.

¹³⁶ Comparing the pre (footnote 130) and post-earthquake data we can observe that, despite an effective increase of non-native settlers after the 1966 earthquake, the share of native and Muslim population grew with faster rates. In fact, in 1970, the Tashkent population reached a total of 1,384,509 people from which 46.9% (649,715) were Muslims (Uzbeks 512,962, Tatars 98,834, Kazakhs 15,231, Tajiks 7,999, Uighurs 5,884, Bashkirs 3,806, Azeris 3,411, Karakalpaks 1,488) and 53.1% (740,794) non-Muslims (Russians 564,584, Jews 55,758, Ukrainians 40,716, Armenians 13,364, Byelorussians 5,924, Mordvinians 9,343, others 51,105). Therefore, besides the positive demographic trends in each group, the Muslim population was evidently growing faster than the non-Muslim, and changing the share of Tashkent demographics. Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide*, 56.

¹³⁷ Reuel Hanks, *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 32.

system of leadership in solving problems. Nevertheless, from this premise comes the third dramatic event.

In the spring of 1969, during the so called 'Pakhtakor incidents'¹³⁸ there were a series of violent clashes in Tashkent among Uzbeks, Russians, and other Slav groups that lasted for several weeks.¹³⁹ The events started on April 4, 1969 during the football match between Pakhtakor Tashkent and Dynamo Minsk in the Pakhtakor stadium when banners appeared with nationalist slogans (such as *Russkie von!* – Russians out!), gestures which were exacerbated by verbal skirmishes between supporters.¹⁴⁰ After the match – lost by the local team with the score 0–1 – there were fights among supporters, and groups of Uzbeks that were blocking the traffic on the main Navoi avenue – located next to the stadium – and assaulting 'Europeans' or Uzbeks that were dressed in Western clothes. Pogroms against 'Slavs' continued for several days, while the police operations to suppress the riots were late and ineffective, necessitating the intervention of the MVD and army troops that arrested more than 150 rioters for "petty hooliganism."¹⁴¹ Similar events took place on 8 April, after a football match between Pakhtakor Tashkent and Spartak Moscow, and in September 27 during the match between Pakhtakor Tashkent and Krylya Sovetov Samara. Despite the gravity of the events, further manifestations of intolerance were recorded in the following years.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ However, the Pakhtakor name would be remembered for another tragic event in Uzbek history: in August 1979, seventeen Pakhtakor football players and staff members died in an air crash.

¹³⁹ Similar incidents between settlers and local communities emerged earlier, from 1966 in Kazakhstan and Kirghizstan, but on a lesser scale. Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 326.

¹⁴⁰ Peter Reddaway, *Uncensored Russia. The Human Rights Movement. The Annotated Text of the Unofficial Moscow Journal. A Chronicle of Current Events* (New York: American Heritage Press, 1972), 402–3.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² The ethnic tensions between natives and settlers and the sabotages against the Soviet regime also persisted in the '70s. As Lubin reminds us: "in Chirchik (a small industrial town outside Tashkent) in 1978, a new chemical factory blew up only one day after its construction was completed. Although the incident was hushed up and the exact facts were hard to come by, rumor had it that it was 'not accidental'. During that same spring, part of the film theatre which had housed an Asian and African film festival blew up on closing night - again, 'not accidental'. And the trial of the Crimean Tatar Reshat Dzhemilev outside Tashkent in 1979 for the first time witnessed *listovshchiki*, or placards, pasted on the walls of buildings in certain regions of Tashkent." Nancy Lubin,

The Pakhtakor episodes remained in the memory of the Tashkent citizens, but were not disclosed by the media and created deep embarrassment for the Uzbek leader, who complained about the loopholes in the security system and proceeded with a series of purges and replacements of top police officials.¹⁴³ Consequently, the secretary of ideology at the CC CPUz Rafiq Nishanov – a member of the Kurbanov–Nasriddinova group – tried to shift responsibility to Rashidov for the incidents in order to oust the FS. As Simis had remarked, in this phase "the main tactic employed by both sides [...] was sending revelatory denunciations to Moscow."¹⁴⁴ Conversely, the FS took the opportunity to blame his strongest opponents,¹⁴⁵ such as Nasriddinova¹⁴⁶, Nishanov¹⁴⁷ – who were removed from their post and 'exiled' to Moscow. The list of his enemies also included Kurbanov, who was accused of misusing his official position and illegal activities, and was finally sentenced to ten years in prison for fomenting violence.¹⁴⁸ Rashidov's main allies were put in their place: Nazar Matchanov became the new chairman of the presidium of the SS of the UzSSR on 25 September 1970 and Narmakhonmadi Khudayberdiyev the chairman of the SM UzSSR on 25 February 1971, keeping that post until 1984. With this maneuver,

Labour and Nationality in Soviet Central Asia: An Uneasy Compromise (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 241.

¹⁴³ Some scholars have supported the conspiracy theories, arguing that these violent incidents were not spontaneous but had been prepared several months earlier with the consent of the police. Cf. Razzakov, *Korrupsiya v Politbyuro: Delo "Krasnogo Uzbeka."*

¹⁴⁴ Konstantin Simis, *USSR - The Corrupt Society. The Secret World of Soviet Capitalism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 60.

¹⁴⁵ It did not require any political maneuvers to take Nuritdinov out of the Uzbek political scene. In fact, Nasriddinova's husband, and one of the most feared opponents of Rashidov, who had already been expelled from political life in 1964, died in June 1966.

¹⁴⁶ At the end of the '60s, Nasriddinova was marginalized from local power struggles, moving her career to the center of Soviet power. A member of the CC CPSU (1956-1976) and a deputy in the SS of the USSR (1958-1974), from 14 July 1970 (until June 16 1974) she covered the position of Chairwoman of the Soviet of Nationalities of the SS of the USSR and, in the period 1974-1978, she became Deputy Minister of Construction Materials Industry of the USSR and Chairman of the Committee for Asian and African countries. After her retirement in 1978, she was also involved in the "cotton scandal" and excluded from the CPSU on 18 November 1988. The charges were not confirmed and, on April 3 1991, she was readmitted to the party.

¹⁴⁷ Then, in 1970, Nishanov was 'exiled' as Soviet Ambassador to Sri Lanka. Demian Vaisman, "Regionalism and Clan Loyalty in the Political Life of Uzbekistan," in *Muslim Eurasia Conflicting Legacies*, ed. Yaaev Roi (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 115–16.

¹⁴⁸ Carlisle, "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev," 112.

the Uzbek leader could offer the highest offices of the state to his major allies and to finally consolidate his power within the UzSSR institution, by ousting those figures who had been the main opponents to his rise and relegating the Tashkent/Fergana group to secondary positions. As Carlisle reminds us:

thus, by 1971, Rashidov and allies held the three key native positions in the leadership [thus becoming] the completely dominant Uzbek political figure. The Buro appointments announced at the 1971 and 1976 Congresses reflect this.¹⁴⁹

In the mid-'70s, Rashidov was also able to promote his ally Asadilla A. Khodzhaev to the position of FS of the Tashkent gorkom (1973–1978), which saw him emerge as Rashidov's possible successor, becoming as he did a sort of 'second FS'¹⁵⁰ in the political life of the republic. In 1978 he became secretary of the CC CPUz and on 14 March 1980 Chairman of the SS of the UzSSR. However, his rise would be slowed by the emergency of an external figure: on 22 December 1978, Nazar Matchanov resigned from his post for health reasons, and was replaced as the chairman of the Presidium of the SS of the UzSSR by Inamdzhani Usmankhodzhaev, an outsider from the Fergana elite who had never served in the Uzbek Secretariat posts.¹⁵¹ However, thanks to his

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ On this issue, Carlisle confirms: "the post he held, his prominence, and the publicity afforded him clearly confirm this." However, the Rashidov's dauphine suddenly died in September 1983 – before his patron – and the defined dynastic line was never followed." Ibid., 126.

¹⁵¹ Inamdzhani Buzrukovich Usmankhodzhaev (in Uzbek: Inomjon Buzrukovich Usmonxo'jayev) was born on 21 May 1930 in Fergana. In 1955, he graduated at the Central Asian Polytechnic Institute and in 1958 he joined the CPSU. After 1962, he advanced his career in the party institutions, serving as chairman of the Fergana city soviet, secretary of the Syrdarya obkom and in Moscow as an instructor in the All-Union Party Secretariat (1969-1972). In 1972-1974 he was chairman of the Namangan oblispolkom and in 1974-1978 he became FS of the Andijan obkom. In 1978, he became the chairman of the Presidium of the SS of the UzSSR and, from 18 April 1979 to 20 December 1983, he also served as Deputy Chairman of the Presidium of the SS of the USSR. He became a full member of the CPSU (3 March 1981 - 28 on November 1988) and served as Deputy of the SS of the USSR (1974-1989) and member of the Presidium of the SS of the USSR (11 April 1984 - 24 May 1988). After Rashidov's death, he was appointed FS of the CPUz on 3 November 1983, keeping that post until 12 January 1988 when he was removed due to his involvement in the "cotton affairs". He was sentenced to 12 years in prison on 27 December 1989. However, his case was amnestied, he was released from jail in 1990 and after that time he retired to Fergana and largely disappeared from public life. According to some internet sources and Nabi

father's fame,¹⁵² his name was not new within the Uzbek political scene and his centrally-oriented credentials made him an important connection between the Uzbek elite and the cadres of the CC CPSU. Indeed, as we will analyze in the next chapters, Usmankhodzhaev played a key role in the last decade of the UzSSR's history.

1.2.3 Rashidov's literary factor

Besides the power struggles within the CPUz, the Rashidov period was in line with the rest of the USSR in terms of the process of nativization renewal. In fact, in the UzSSR there was also a general softening on national cadres' appointment which – until then – had assured the direct control of the central government. Indeed, korenization was functional to the regime's stability. It was based on a loyal political and administrative corpus consisting of natives inserted in a system that was co-opting sovietized elites and traditional social forces in that cultural context typical of the late soviet period. This process sought to endorse national culture within the Soviet internationalist framework and the narrative of 'devoted national elites serving the Soviet cause' became a legitimizing issue endorsed even by the Uzbek FS in his literary works. In fact, paralleling his political rise, Rashidov continued a prominent literary career that presented the triumphs of Uzbekistan within the Soviet framework.

Just to mention his major works, in 1945 he published his first collection of poems entitled *Moy gnev* ("My anger") and in 1950 a collection of journalistic articles entitled *Prigovor Istorii* ("The verdict of history"), in which the compatibility and integration of Uzbek national traditions within the Soviet framework was a major leitmotiv. In fact, Rashidov was rediscovering national cultural roots at a time when it was finally becoming possible to encourage

Saidkarimovich Ziyadullaev, Usmankhodzhaev died in 2011. N.YA Petrakov, Nabi S. Ziyadullaev, and M.A. Lukichev, *Said-Karim Ziyadullayev. Epokha I Sovremennost'* (Moskva: Rossiyskaya Akademiya Nauk. Otdeleniye Obshchestvennykh nauk. Sektsiya Ekonomiki, 2014).

¹⁵² His father, Buzrukkhodzha Usmankhodzhaev (1896-1977) was considered as a respected luminary in the Fergana Valley. He served as chairman of the Fergana obispolkom, as a member of the CC CPUz and, between 1952-1977, he became the director of the Great Fergana canal, the main irrigation system of Uzbekistan. Carlisle, "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev," 113, 126.

Uzbek as a language of literature¹⁵³ and as a consolidated aspect of the integration of the UzSSR within the great socialist family. His devotion to his national culture led the Uzbek leader to recover the memory of Amir Timur, Ulug–bek and Babur and to restore the role of some pre–revolutionary traditional institutions such as the *makhalla*, which after 1959 even consolidated a minor part in the raispolkom.¹⁵⁴

In 1951 Rashidov published the first book of his trilogy: *Pobediteli* (“The Victors”),¹⁵⁵ which was probably his most famous novel, covered three main characters during the war and the post–war ‘conquest’ of virgin lands. In this book Rashidov presented communism as the most important development for Uzbek society, a system which allowed the country to hold on to its traditional peculiarities while also enabling it to become ‘modern’. Rashidov’s cloying narrative was indicative of his utopian ideology, strongly focused on the communist project as the only way for the Uzbek people to redeem their backwardness. In describing the miracle of electrification, one of his character’s exclaims:

Look at all those lights! [...] 'How bright they are! It's the light of communism shining on us from tomorrow. Oh, Alimjan–aka, all this happiness is ours!¹⁵⁶

In 1956 he published the romantic novel *Kashmirskaya pesnya* (“Song of Kashmir”)¹⁵⁷ – reflecting on the struggle for the liberation of the Indian people

¹⁵³ Although the great majority of Uzbeks spoke the national language, "Uzbek was used during Soviet times as a literary language, instead of Chagatay Turkic or Persian, [and] Russian was [...] favored in the media. About 80 per cent of all scientific and technical articles were in Russian. One-third of the more than 200 newspapers published in [Uzbekistan] were in Russian." Therefore, the colonial language remained the preferred by the national intelligentsia and upper classes and the first great manifestation of language nationalism emerged only in the late 80s. Martin C. Spechler, *The Political Economy of Reform in Central Asia: Uzbekistan under Authoritarianism* (London & New York: Routledge, 2008), 13; William Fierman, *Language Planning and National Development the Uzbek Experience* (Berlin-New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991).

¹⁵⁴ David Abramson, “Identity Counts: The Soviet Legacy and the Census in Uzbekistan,” in *Census and Identity the Politics of Race, Ethnicity, and Language in National Census*, ed. David Kertzer and Dominique Arel (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹⁵⁵ Sharaf Rashidovich Rashidov, *The Victors* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Pub. House, 1958).

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 201.

¹⁵⁷ Sharaf Rashidovich Rashidov, *Song of Kashmir* (Tashkent: Gafur Gulyam Literature and Art Publishers, 1983).

– and in 1958 the second part of the trilogy entitled *Sil'neye buri* (“Stronger than the storm”) that reconsidered the personalities of *Pobediteli* in their rural dimension. In 1964, Rashidov published the novel *Moguchaya volna* (“The Mighty Wave”),¹⁵⁸ dedicated to the heroism of the Soviet people during the Great Patriotic War and in 1967 a book entitled *Znamya druzhby* (“The Banner of Friendship”),¹⁵⁹ a collection of his critical articles dealing with topical issues of Soviet literature, particularly in the frame of the ‘brotherhood’ among Soviet peoples. Finally, in 1971 he composed *Zrelost'* (“Maturity”), the final part of the trilogy, and, in 1979 he published an opera omnia of all his works in five volumes.¹⁶⁰ This final collection of Rashidov’s works had a circulation of 150,000 copies, establishing a typical case of ‘sekretarskaya literatura’.¹⁶¹ His final book, *Sovietsky Uzbekistan* (1982), was dedicated to the conquests of socialism in the republic¹⁶² and can be considered a political testament to the Uzbek leader.

Even though his literary contribution was arguably a great and positive contribution to his political one, and although his novels were continuously proposed and played on radio, in theaters, and on television, the quality of his literary work was inevitably exaggerated by Uzbek literary society and its reception heavily influenced by his status. However, he was considered both as a promoter and as a protector of national literature. On this regard, Allworth commented:

¹⁵⁸ Sharaf Rashidovich Rashidov, *Moguchaia Volna* (Moskva: Sov. pisatel', 1965).

¹⁵⁹ Sharaf Rashidovich Rashidov, *The Banner of Friendship* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969).

¹⁶⁰ Sharaf Rashidovich Rashidov, *Sobraniye Sochineniy v 5 Tomakh* (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1979).

¹⁶¹ 'Sekretaskaya Literatura' is a term used to indicate those books – usually with print runs of hundreds of thousands of copies – that were written by prominent political figures. However, in a non-market system, the literature offer was not determined by effective demand but depended on the level of promotion that the party wanted to pursue. Therefore, thousands of copies were printed, sold to libraries and bookshops, and massively abandoned in the shelves, waiting for readers who would never arrive. This system was very expensive, totally inefficient, and produced a negative economic and ecological impact with thousands of rubles and tons of paper wasted. At the same time, the writers received royalties for the printed copies that were not based on the final purchase but on the selling price to bookshops, feeding the writer’s political caste. Lev Dmitrevich Gudkov and Boris V. Dubin, *Literatura Kak Social'nyj Institut : Stat'i Po Sociologii Literatry* (Moskva: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 1994).

¹⁶² Rashidov, *Soviet Uzbekistan*.

While politician–Rashidov rose in the hierarchy, author–Rashidov decreased his literary output. [...] Regardless of Rashidov’s tenuous claims to literary respect, on his death in the autumn of 1983, more than one UzSSR writer expressed fears [...] that the first secretary’s demise would inflict a painful blow to Uzbek authors and poets, who regarded Rashidov as an ally and protector.¹⁶³

Thus, Rashidov had given much space to art and literature as a vehicle for ideological promotion. In fact, at both the political and literary level, he also had the great responsibility for balancing and encouraging the different national components of UzSSR culture. He was considered a ‘patriot’ who – following the lines of the post–war korenization revival – sponsored the ‘Uzbekization’ of cadres in the key posts of party and state. On this matter, it is important to reveal some demographic trends which can be derived from statistical data.

1.2.4 The ‘Uzbekization’ of cadres

From the mid–’60s, Soviet life expectancy began to fall dramatically and the ethnic composition of the country also began to shift accordingly.¹⁶⁴ Uzbek society itself saw the first stage of a demographic boom that, in less than 30 years, would more than double the population of the UzSSR.¹⁶⁵ A comparison between the UzSSR and the RSFSR is instructive. Between 1970 and 1980 the population of the UzSSR increased 33.6% compared with a 6.4% increase in Russia. This posed a tremendous demographic challenge, which even Khudayberdiyev and the whole SM UzSSR could not ignore. From the early ‘80s, central investments in industrial development were sought and demands for "prompt action" from the center (in the form of aid from the USSR Gosplan)

¹⁶³ Allworth, *The Modern Uzbeks: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present: A Cultural History*, 266.

¹⁶⁴ Between 1959–1979, the percentage of Slavs (Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians) had dropped from 76.2% to 72.2% while that of ‘Muslims’ (such as Uzbeks, Kazakhs and Azerbaijani) grew from 6 to 9.4%. Graziosi, *L’Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1945–1991*, 328, 394.

¹⁶⁵ The UzSSR population amounted to 6.551 million in 1940, 8.119 in 1959, 11.799 in 1970, 15.389 in 1979 and 19.810 in 1989. The percentage growth rate was 23.9% in 1940–59, 89.6% in 1959–79 and 28.7% in 1979–89. Nancy Lubin, “Implications of Ethnic and Demographic Trends,” in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 38.

were presented in order to provide social services¹⁶⁶ in one of the most backward republics of the USSR.¹⁶⁷ Therefore, as the table below shows, the portion of the population that was considered 'Uzbek' rose from 62.1% in 1959 to 71.4% in 1989, as the share of 'Russians' declined from 13.5% to 8.3% during the same period. The disparities within the ethnic demographic trends were the result of birth rates among Uzbeks - almost double those of Russian families in the UzSSR¹⁶⁸ - and due to the first flows of Slavs emigrating from Uzbekistan in the early '70s.

This situation would inevitably produce significant social and political consequences, even considering that in 1970 half of the UzSSR population was less than 16 years old and the presence of Uzbek nationals in institutions, schools, and the academy was rising faster than for Russians,¹⁶⁹ implying that a new generation of educated native elites had more cause to access the party and the top managerial posts in the Republic. Furthermore, following the korenization revival of the '60s, these new demographic trends implied a reshuffle – in terms of national belonging – also within the party and state apparatus in the UzSSR.

As already mentioned, the phenomenon of 'Uzbekization' was not a new trend, and it had different stages. In the CPUz, the membership of Uzbeks accelerated in the late '20s – reaching a highpoint of 64% – but fell during the purges of late '30s to 47%. During World War II it stood at 34%¹⁷⁰, when the CPUz was in fact deliberately over-populated with Russians by the imposition

¹⁶⁶ Jan Åke Dellenbrant, *The Soviet Regional Dilemma: Planning, People, and Natural Resources* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1986), 16, 90–91.

¹⁶⁷ In 1970 the average national income per capita was 805 rubles in Uzbekistan, 1558 in Russia and 1382 in the USSR. Also investments per capita in the UzSSR rose from 265 rubles (1970) to 365 (1982) while in Russia they almost doubled, from 375 rubles in 1970 to 644 in 1982. Additionally, the share of the employed population (of the total) in the UzSSR was only 36% in 1970 and 40.8% in 1979 including 38.4% of the female population and 37.7% of the rural population. *Ibid.*, 56, 146, 156–57.

¹⁶⁸ In 1979 in Uzbekistan the average family size was 5.5 people. But in Uzbek families the rate was 6.2 per family, while Russian families on average contained 3.3 people. Further, while the percent of families with seven or more children overall was 32.2%, 43.2% of Uzbek families and just 1.7% of Russian families in Uzbekistan had seven or more children. Lubin, "Implications of Ethnic and Demographic Trends," 47.

¹⁶⁹ Buttino, *Samarcanda. Storie in Una Città Dal 1945 a Oggi*, 27.

¹⁷⁰ Tunçer-Kılavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*, 57.

of centrally-appointed cadres. In the post-war period, this figure grew again, reaching 49% in 1959 and reaching a majority in 1960 with 51%. During Rashidov's reign there was a faster acceleration of Uzbekization that led Uzbeks to represent almost 59% of the CPUz membership in 1978¹⁷¹ – 70% if considered alongside other Central Asians¹⁷² – and 61% in 1981, confirming a positive and increasing trend even during the '80s.¹⁷³ In terms of leader figures – FSs and chairmen of state and public organizations – the share of Uzbeks and other Central Asians was even more marked.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Fierman, "The Soviet 'Transformation' of Central Asia," 25.

¹⁷² Allworth, "The New Central Asians," 551.

¹⁷³ In 1986, 71% of newly accepted members of CPUz were Uzbeks, and in 1990 Uzbeks accounted for 66 percent of the party ranks. Tunçer-Kılavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*, 57.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.; James Critchlow, "Prelude to 'Independence': How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow's Grip on Elite Recruitment," in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation*, ed. W Fierman (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 139.

Nationality Composition of the UzSSR in 1959, 1970, 1979, and 1989¹⁷⁵

	In thousands				In percentage of Total				Percentage Variations		
	1959	1970	1979	1989	1959	1970	1979	1989	1959–1970	1970–1979	1979–1989
<i>Uzbeks</i>	5038	7725	10569	14142	62.1	65.5	68.7	71.4	153	137	133.8
<i>Karakalpaks</i>	168	230	298	412	2.1	2.0	1.9	2.1	137	130	138.3
<i>Russians</i>	1092	1473	1666	1653	13.5	12.5	10.8	8.3	135	113	99.3
<i>Tatars</i>	445	574	649	657'	5.5	4.9	4.2	3.4	129	113	101.2
<i>Kazakhs</i>	343	476	620	808	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.1	139	130	130.3
<i>Tajiks</i>	331	449	595	934	3.8	3.8	3.9	4.7	144	133	157.0
<i>Koreans</i>	138	148	163	183	1.7	1.3	1.1	0.9	107	110	112.3
<i>Ukrainians</i>	88	112	114	153	1.1	0.9	0.7	0.8	127	102	134.6
<i>Kirgiz</i>	93	111	142	175	1.1	0.9	0.9	0.9	119	128	123.0
<i>Jews</i>	94	103	1002	65	0.2	0.9	0.6	0.3	104	97	88.6
<i>Turkmen</i>	55	71	92	122	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.6	129	130	131.7
<i>Other</i> ¹⁷⁶	254	328	381	—	3.0	2.7	2.6	—	129	116	—

¹⁷⁵ Lubin, "Implications of Ethnic and Demographic Trends," 43.

¹⁷⁶ Other nationalities include Byelorussians, Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Georgians, Bashkir, Uyghurs, Moldavians, Chuvash, Germans, Turks, Ossetians, peoples of Dagestan, and Gypsies.

Conversely, in 1950-1978 the share of Russian members decreased from 31 to 20%.¹⁷⁷ However, this figure remained anyway higher than the real share of the population and similar trends are observed within the republican institutions.¹⁷⁸ In fact, until the mid-'60s the representation of non-native deputies in soviets was proportional (around 15%) and reflected their share within the republican population. This trend would be reversed in the '70s when the Uzbeks would have an even greater representation within the soviets than the non-natives.¹⁷⁹ In sum, the political representation of the national groups within the party was not reflecting the real ethnic composition of the UzSSR. In the next table, Buttino¹⁸⁰ estimates the national composition of the CPUz, demonstrating a general positive trend toward Uzbek representation.

National Composition of the CPUz: Members & Candidates

Years	Total	Slavs ¹⁸¹	in %	Uzbeks	in %	Others ¹⁸²	in %
1940	63,847	17,550	27.49	31,952	50.04	14,345	22.47
1945	82,505	23,609	28.62	35,205	42.67	23,691	28.71
1946	96,981	50,732	52.31	44,057	45.43	2,192	2.26
1950	132,336	41,076	31.04	57,901	43.75	33,359	25.21
1955	143,878	41,373	28.76	67,679	47.04	34,826	24.21
1960	202,865	53,268	26.26	102,663	50.61	46,934	23.14
1965	314,279	80,215	25.52	163,982	52.18	70,082	22.30
1970	412,321	96,680	23.45	226,357	54.90	89,284	21.65
1975	472,342	102,991	21.80	271,736	57.53	97,615	20.67
1978	518,350	106,029	20.46	306,324	59.10	105,997	20.45

¹⁷⁷ Buttino, *Samarcanda. Storie in Una Città Dal 1945 a Oggi*, 328.

¹⁷⁸ In a memorandum of CC CPUz to the CC CPSU (2 February 1982), it was indicated that the ethnic division within the UzSSR where more than 120 nationalities live that in local soviets there were: 73% Uzbeks, 8.3% Russians, 4.4% Kazakhs, 3.7% Tajiks, 3.1% Tatars, 2.7 Karakalpakhs and others. In the SS of the UzSSR, 69% Uzbeks, 18% Russians, 1.4% Tatars and others. In the apparatus of the CC CPUz, 55% Uzbeks, 36% Russians and Ukrainians. Among the top managers of ministries and republic institutions, 61% Uzbeks, 25% Russians and Ukrainians. RGANI, f. 5, op. 88, d. 119, ll. 3-4.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 329.

¹⁸¹ Slavs: Russians, Byelorussians, Ukrainians

¹⁸² Others: Kazakhs, Tajiks, Kirgiz, Turkmen, Tatars, Jews.

Rashidov encouraged an 'Uzbekization' of the elites and was aware of the multiethnic situation in the republic. Nevertheless, he did not endorse a pure, exclusive and radical Uzbek nationalism. Rather, he was incorporating the influences – and individuals – coming from other national groups in order to approve an inclusive and larger interpretation of Uzbek nationality, coopting and including the ethnic minority groups in a system that was prioritizing the titular nationality. However, the consequence was a further Uzbekization of non-Uzbeks. As Roy comments: "the Bukhara and Samarkand factions, albeit more 'Persian' [...] pursued a policy of Uzbekisation to the detriment of the Tajik identity."¹⁸³

As mentioned, the Rashidovian soft nationalist attitude was also due to his faith in Soviet 'internationalism' that sought to implement a lowest common denominator between the USSR populations under the banner of brotherhood between peoples. In fact, the revisions of the Uzbek–Kazakh borders in the early '60s – apparently in favor of Uzbekistan – also followed the aspirations of Khrushchev to eliminate national borders in a future communist society¹⁸⁴ and were not indicated as a recognized conquest of the Uzbek nation but were welcomed by Rashidov who was devoted to the 'Soviet national cause' and honestly accepted the role of the Russian language as a meeting point between nations. Thus, following the guidelines of the XXIV Congress of the CPSU (1971) sanctioning the birth of a new historical community of "the Soviet people," the reference to the 'fusion of nationalities' which held that peoples of the USSR were going to "flourish and to approach" progressively in a non-specified manner was lost.¹⁸⁵ Hence, there was a renewal of the Russification policy – due to the major campaign for the 'fusion of peoples' launched in 1956 – trusting that it was a vehicular factor of sovietization.¹⁸⁶ On this matter, even Rashidov had an active role in implementing the cultural "soft-russification"¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ Roy, *The New Central Asia. The Creation of Nations*, 110.

¹⁸⁴ This attitude towards Kazakhstan would persist even in later years. During the celebrations for the 60th anniversary of the Kazakh SSR and the Kazakh communist party in Almaty, where Rashidov gave a speech referring to the friendship between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in the framework of communism. He exclaimed: "our peoples for centuries remained in poverty, [and] feudalism and tsarism strangled and uncoupled them. A real friendship shines only now, in the soviet period". PV, 19377, 200, 30 August 1980, p. 3.

¹⁸⁵ Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 305.

¹⁸⁶ Buttino, *Samarcanda. Storie in Una Città Dal 1945 a Oggi*, 23.

¹⁸⁷ Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 393.

of Uzbek society, sponsoring the role of Russian language in Uzbekistan as a “language of friendship and brotherhood” that created convergence among nations.¹⁸⁸ On 30 January 1978, he even wrote to the secretary of the CC CPSU Ivan V. Kapitonov reminding him of the importance of the Russian language as “a value in international communication and for strengthening the friendship and brotherhood of the peoples of the USSR”, confirming his commitment to enforce the teaching of Russian language in the schools, universities, kolkhozes, and sovkhozes, and in the army of the republic.¹⁸⁹ Substantially, Rashidov acknowledged that the Russian language was the main condition to access the highest posts, determining a typical post-colonial situation where even the most devoted localists were forced to use – or simply become accustomed to using – the colonial language. The Russification campaign in Uzbekistan was finally formalized in October 1978, when SM USSR approved the decree “on measures for further improving the study and teaching of the Russian language in the Union Republics.”¹⁹⁰ Such a measure was very welcomed by Rashidov who, in his political testament, recognized the Russian primacy within the Union. In his words:

The role of the Russians in the fraternity of equal nations is determined in the first place by the fact that the Russian nation carried the brunt of the struggle against tsarism and the bourgeois-landowner system, the struggle for social progress and the happiness of mankind. The Russian people shed much blood and made many sacrifices for the common cause. The invaders who sought to destroy the freedom and sovereignty of our country were crushed by joint efforts of all nations, and first of all the Russian nation. The Russian people have provided the best examples of selfless aid to other nations big and small. They were the main force in the building of socialism in our country and are the main contributor to the building of communism. The Russian nation led by the Communist Party was the cementing force that Consolidated the friendly family of all Soviet nations. It was Russia that made the groundwork of the united multinational state of a new type, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The unity of the peoples of our country, their indestructible friendship, is a major accomplishment of Soviet power, the Communist Party.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ *PV*, 17916, 247, 22 October 1975, p. 1.

¹⁸⁹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 75, d. 158, ll. 1-2.

¹⁹⁰ John Staples, “Soviet Use of Corruption Purges as a Control Mechanism: The Uzbekistan Case,” *Past Imperfect* 2 (1993): 40; Roman Solchanyk, “Russification to Be Stepped Up,” *Soviet Analyst* 9 (1980).

¹⁹¹ Rashidov, *Soviet Uzbekistan*, 82–83.

In the end, Rashidov endorsed a Soviet (inclusive) interpretation of the (mild) Uzbek nation that reflected that ‘compromise’ between nations, ethnic communities, language groups, and clans. This approach was demagogically publicizing Uzbekistan as a model of integration between peoples of USSR – and even for other countries – but at the same time it strengthened the characteristics of a colonial society whose level of sovietization was the highest. This model was presented as a success, a beacon of modernity.

1.3 The ‘Uzbek modernity’ model abroad

The figure of Sharaf Rashidov as an intellectual native integrated in the communist system and the UzSSR as an example of a modern, Muslim and eastern country were key arguments of the Soviet political discourse, and the narrative of ‘Uzbek modernity’ was also functional to Soviet foreign policy during the Cold War. As Baku in 1920 claimed to be the reference point for those Eastern peoples oppressed by colonialism and struggling against imperialism, through to the Bolshevik example, in the Cold War scenario Tashkent claimed to assume the same role for those Third World countries emerged from the decolonization process.

1.3.1 Rashidov’s Cold War

In fact, the launch of the ‘Soviet Central Asia model’ of economic and cultural development became even more emphasized after the mid-’50s, when Khrushchev was publicizing the progress of these republics as an archetypal model for the developing countries and a response to those critics that emerged in Bandung Conference against the USSR and its ‘colonial’ policies for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Due to the Marxian interpretation, the word ‘empire’ assumed a negative connotation – of political, economic and cultural exploitation and referred to the czarist past or the present Western capitalist world¹⁹² – and communism publicized its anti-colonial struggle,

¹⁹² Dominic Lieven, *Empire. The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000); N. Khodarkovsky, *Russia’s Steppe Frontier. The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Kappeler and Clayton, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History*.

sponsoring the myth of socialist progress and the USSR under the banners of “friendship between peoples” and “incubator of nations.”¹⁹³

Substantially, Khrushchev wanted to demonstrate that the USSR was not a colonial system but something that was remaking the human experience and that could represent a model of multinational integration for a common humanistic cause. In this task, the non-Slav elite within the CC CPSU would play a key role to demonstrate how Muslim peoples mattered in the Soviet system. Functional to this strategy was the already mentioned promotion of Nuritdin Mukhitdinov as a full member of Politburo¹⁹⁴ in order to guarantee a power quota in the main political organ of CPSU that was representing Muslim Central Asia and a way for Soviet power to get accreditation to the Muslim third world. As Kalinovsky comments:

the new international situation meant that Moscow needed someone at the center who knew how to reach out to the world’s Muslims. [Rashidov as well] lobbied for more investment in the restoration of mosques and other architectural sites by pointing out that they could be used to counter western propaganda aimed at Muslim countries that portrayed the USSR as oppressing religion.¹⁹⁵

This ‘external task’ of Rashidovism clearly functioned to enforce the internal patrimonial system and coopting the traditional elite. Furthermore, after his visits to Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, and Burma in the mid-’50s, Rashidov also had an active role in this process. He had the idea that, due to Anglo-American propaganda,

people were under the impression that the USSR repressed religion, ignored national culture, and trampled on people’s rights. One of the best ways to counter this would be to open Central Asia to people from these countries, to show them mosques, madrasas, and other religious institutions, and to revive publications about Soviet Muslims such as the outlet of the Spiritual

¹⁹³ Mouradian, “The Origins of a Colonial Vision of Southern Russia From the Tsars to the Soviets: About Some Imperial Practices in the Caucasus.”

¹⁹⁴ Rashidov had the support of Khrushchev and when Mukhitdinov lost his place in the Politburo, the new Uzbek leader replaced his predecessor becoming a candidate member on 31 October 1961.

¹⁹⁵ Artemy M. Kalinovsky, “The Cold War in South and Central Asia,” in *The Routledge Handbook of the Cold War*, ed. Artemy M. Kalinovsky and Craig Daigle (London-New York: Routledge, 2014), 180.

Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan and Central Asia, suspended in 1948.¹⁹⁶

In this task, Rashidov's mission was clear. In fact, the Uzbek leader started to organize several meetings at an international level in order to show that religious freedom and practice survived in the Soviet context¹⁹⁷ where impressive funds were invested at central and republic level, for restorations of monuments and for developing those academic institutions that studied local cultures¹⁹⁸ and endorsed non-conformist art.¹⁹⁹ From 1964, Tashkent became the emblem of the Brezhnevian positive entente between socialism and Islam²⁰⁰ representing a major tolerance towards underground Islamic organizations.²⁰¹ Van Gorder adds:

Tashkent became a mecca for international Arab and Muslim students as well as a show-case city for the USSR to show its toleration to Muslim Central Asia. [However, this process was] largely superficial. By 1980, only 200 masjids had

¹⁹⁶ Artemy M. Kalinovsky, "Not Some British Colony in Africa: The Politics of Decolonization and Modernization in Soviet Central Asia, 1955–1964," *Ab Imperio* 2 (2013): 204.

¹⁹⁷ Especially after Khrushchev's antireligious campaigns of 1959, during Brezhnevism, Islam started to be more tolerated and mini mosques, chaykhanas (traditional Uzbek tea rooms) and semi-recognized religious centers opened. Fierman, "The Soviet 'Transformation' of Central Asia," 27.

¹⁹⁸ Kalinovsky, "Not Some British Colony in Africa: The Politics of Decolonization and Modernization in Soviet Central Asia, 1955–1964," 205.

¹⁹⁹ In fact, under Rashidov Uzbekistan was also becoming a landmark for independent culture in the USSR: i.e. the independent theater Ilhom in Tashkent and the Nukus Museum of Art that had an extensive collection of 'non-conventional' avant-garde refuting the 'official' socialist realism. Lucille Lisack, "Le Théâtre Ilhom À Taškent. Retour Sur Les Premières Années D'un Théâtre Devenu Légendaire," *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 54, no. 3–4 (2013); Amanda C Pope, Tchavdar Georgiev, and Miriam Cutler, *The Desert of Forbidden Art* (Cinema Guild, 2010).

²⁰⁰ Sébastien Peyrouse, "De La Mort de Staline À La Perestroïka (1953-1991)," in *Histoire de l'Asie Centrale Contemporaine*, ed. Pierre Chuvin, René Létolle, and Sébastien Peyrouse (Paris: Fayard, 2008), 162.

²⁰¹ Ashirbek Muminov, Uygun Gafurov, and Rinat Shigabdinov, "Islamic Education in Soviet and Post-Soviet Uzbekistan," in *Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States*, ed. Michael Kemper, Raoul Motika, and Stefan Reichmuth (London: Routledge, 2010).

been opened across the area—a mere fraction of the more than 20,000 masjids that had been in operation before the Soviet revolution.²⁰²

Furthermore, after the years of strengthening atheism, in 1970 the Soviet regime did not hinder Shaikh Ziauddin Babakhan, the mufti of the Muslim Spiritual Directorate of Central Asia assisted by the Council of Ulemas, to organize in Tashkent the first international Islamic conference in Soviet history.²⁰³ The event was even publicized by Rashidov, who wanted to show the tolerant Muslim face of the USSR. This appeasement between Islam and USSR would be seen as credible up until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which severely damaged the reputation of the Soviet Muftis: in fact, the Tashkent conference to celebrate the fifteenth century of the Hejira in September 1980 was generally boycotted and only 76 of over 500 invitees attended the event.²⁰⁴

The Rashidovian approach would be evident even with the special status he accorded other Islamic countries and its leaders. In fact, the FS of the CPUz became the main reference of the Persian, Afghan, Pakistani and Arab communists who had often a landmark in Tashkent before facing the center of the USSR. The Afghan leader Babrak Karmal, for example, had very close ties with Rashidov, especially during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan when the FS CPUz became a great sponsor of the Saur Revolution and the UzSSR became the main logistic point for approaching the country. In fact, from 1979, Tashkent was the command–control–communication center of the Red Army involved in the Afghan war and Termez the main entry point of the Soviet ground troops though the ‘Friendship Bridge’ on the Amu Darya river.

²⁰² A. Christian Van Gorder, *Muslim–Christian Relations in Central Asia* (London-New York: Routledge, 2008), 70.

²⁰³ Dilip Hiro, *Inside Central Asia: A Political and Cultural History of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Iran* (London & New York: Overlook TP, 2011), 128; Dilip Hiro, *Between Marx and Muhammad - The Changing Face of Central Asia* (London: Harper-Collins, 1994).

²⁰⁴ As a consequence, “over the following two years Brezhnev replaced three of the four Soviet Muftis with much younger men, who have since come to be acknowledged as obvious agents of Soviet, as opposed to Islamic, ideology.” Staples, “Soviet Use of Corruption Purges as a Control Mechanism: The Uzbekistan Case,” 40; Alexandre Bennigsen, *Soviet Strategy and Islam* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), 58–61.

During his reign, Rashidov conducted a number of business trips abroad, visiting some 33 countries²⁰⁵ and conducting key missions that would redefine the Cold War scene. One of his main results was his involvement in 'Operation Anadyr': on 29 May 1962, Sharaf Rashidov arrived in Havana for a ten day mission with a Soviet delegation of agricultural and irrigation experts.²⁰⁶ However, the group also included the Soviet Ambassador Alekseev, the Marshal Sergei Biryuzov – commander of the strategic rocket forces (RVSN) who went by the name of 'Engineer Petrov' – and the Lt. General of the Soviet Air Force Sergei Ushakov.²⁰⁷ Indeed, Rashidov's delegation covered the military officials who came to Cuba to discuss the deployment of Soviet short and intermediate range ballistic missiles, medium–range bombers, and a division of mechanized infantry to Cuba. He also had a direct role in negotiations with Castro,²⁰⁸ trying to convince the Cuban leader about such an opportunity.²⁰⁹ It seemed that "Rashidov was confident that the missiles could be hidden, claiming that they could be placed so as to blend in with the palm trees."²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ As it is reported in an exhibition billboard at the 'Monumental Museum Sh. Rashidov' in Jizzak, the Uzbek leader visited: Finland (1954), Mongolia (1955, 1956), China (1955, 1956), Vietnam (1955, 1956, 1976), Burma (1955, 1956), Indonesia (1955, 1965), Afghanistan (1956, 1983), Pakistan (1956), India (1956, 1975), Egypt (1957), France (1959, 1967), Guinea (1959, 1967), Cuba (1962, 1966), Ireland (1962), Canada (1962), Algeria (1963, 1964, 1972, 1981), Yugoslavia (1963), Italy (1964), Mali (1964), Ceylon (1965), Austria (1969), Chile (1971), Brazil (1971), Argentina (1971), Senegal (1971), North Korea (1972), Iraq (1973), Lebanon (1973), Bulgaria (1975), Czechoslovakia (1976), Zimbabwe (1980), Angola (1980), Mozambique (1981).

²⁰⁶ On June 10, 1962 Rashidov informed the presidium CC CPSU about his trip to Cuba, the discussed economic issues and the negotiations for the defense of the island. Cf. RGANI, f. 3, op. 18, d. 63, ll. 1-2 & d. 74, l. 2 and Fursenko, *Arkhivi Kremlya, Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964. Postanovleniya 1959-1964. Tom 3*, 283, 311, 381–84.

²⁰⁷ Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 1, Quarante Ans D'après-Guerre*, 408.

²⁰⁸ See AP RF, f. 3, op. 65, d. 873, l. 24 and Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 74–75; Mark J. White, *Missiles in Cuba: Kennedy, Khrushchev, Castro, and the 1962 Crisis* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997), 41–47; Aleksandr Ivanovich Alekseev, "Karibskiy Krizis. Kak Eto Bylo," *Ekho Planety* 33 (1988): 26–37.

²⁰⁹ Parallel, the Second Secretary CPUz F.E. Titov was in charge to discuss the economic issues with Cuba. Fursenko, *Arkhivi Kremlya, Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964. Chernovye Protokol'nye Zapisi Zasedanii. Stenogrammy. Tom 1*, 1120.

²¹⁰ James H. Hansen and CIA, "Soviet Deception in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Learning from the Past," *Center for the Study of Intelligence - Studies in Intelligence* 46, no. 1 (2007).

Castro responded that the idea was “interesting” but he had to consult with his group before providing a final answer. The epilogue of this story is well known.²¹¹ The friendly relations between Castro and Rashidov were also confirmed during the latter’s 40-day trip in the USSR, which included a stop in Uzbekistan (May 8–10 1963).²¹² Castro visited Tashkent, the ancient wonders of Samarkand, the ‘modern wonders’ of the Virgin Lands and of mechanized agriculture near Yangiyer. After this last trip, the *Lider Maximo* suggested renaming the Hungry Steppe the “Steppe of Abundance” and declared in Uzbek, “Long live the Kzyl Kolkhoz of Uzbekistan!” before leaving Uzbekistan for Siberia.²¹³

1.3.2 Tashkent and the Third World

At the same time, the Uzbek leader encouraged in third world countries the Soviet cause of anti-imperialism. Already at the 1957 Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference in Cairo, Rashidov was able to present the USSR as an anti-imperialist force and a friendly ally of decolonizing peoples.²¹⁴ In this framework, Sharaf Rashidovich labelled himself as a powerful leader from Central Asia who could represent the values of internationalism abroad, presenting the experience of the UzSSR as a model for the cultural, political, and economic development²¹⁵ of the third world bloc and becoming a

²¹¹ Aleksandr Ivanovich Alekseev, “Istoriya Ne Perepisyvayetsya,” in *U Kraya Yadernoy Bezdny: Iz Istorii Karibskogo Krizisa 1962 G. Fakty. Svidetel’stva. Otsenki*, ed. A. I. Gribkov (Moskva: Gregori-Peydzh, 1998), 188–94; Aleksandr Ivanovich Alekseev, “Zapiski Posla,” in *Operatsiya «Anadyr’»: Fakty. Vospominaniya. Dokumenty*, ed. V. I. Yesin (Moskva: Tsentral’nyy izdatel’sko-poligraficheskiy kompleks Raketnykh voysk strategicheskogo naznacheniya (TSIPK RVSNI), 1997), 84–90; Aleksandr Ivanovich Alekseev, “Zapiski Posla,” in *Strategicheskaya Operatsiya «Anadyr’»: Kak Eto Bylo*, ed. V. I. Yesin (Moskva: MOOVVIK, 1999), 71–76; Fursenko, *Arkhivi Kremlya, Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964. Chernovye Protokol’nye Zapisi Zasedanii. Stenogrammy. Tom 1*, 1118.

²¹² Among the official tacky gifts that Rashidov received from Castro there was also an embalmed crocodile, a typical example of ‘kitsch diplomacy’. Now it is on display at the ‘Monumental Museum, Sh. Rashidov’ in Jizzak.

²¹³ PV, 11 May 1963, pp. 1-2.

²¹⁴ Masha Kirasirova, “‘Sons of Muslims’ in Moscow: Soviet Central Asian Mediators to the Foreign East, 1955–1962,” *Ab Imperio* 4 (2011): 126.

²¹⁵ On 26 February 1959, Khrushchev presented Uzbekistan to the Iraqi delegates as a development example even for the cultures of cotton, corn and cereals and for the agrarian reforms. Fursenko, *Arkhivi Kremlya, Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964. Postanovleniya 1959-1964. Tom 3*, 837, 841.

prominent political figure in those para-diplomatic missions of the USSR that were aimed at bringing the world of non-aligned countries closer to the Soviet bloc. Such a struggle for liberation against international imperialism had to assume, according to the Uzbek leader, revolutionary tones. As was stated in a CIA secret report, "Rashidov unveiled the particularly militant definition that Moscow's peaceful coexistence doctrine did not apply in the underdeveloped world where people are fighting for their 'liberation.'"²¹⁶ In a Jakarta speech in late May 1965, he voiced the calls of Brezhnev and Brezhnevism's chief ideologist Suslov²¹⁷ for united action of all "anti-imperialist forces"²¹⁸ and even during his second visit to Cuba he reaffirmed this line during the inauguration of the Tricontinental Conference of People's Solidarity – between Asia, Africa, and Latin America – in Havana (On 3 January 1966) where he was at the head of the Soviet delegation and stated:

We believe that relations between sovereign states with different social structures should be based on peaceful coexistence. However, it is quite clear that there is no peaceful coexistence, nor can there be peaceful coexistence between the oppressed peoples and their oppressors – the colonialists and the imperialists, between the imperialist aggressors and their victims.²¹⁹

On that occasion, he praised the armed struggle of the Venezuelan, Peruvian, Colombian, and Guatemalan "patriots" against the lackeys of imperialism. He also expressed the solidarity of his government with the peoples of British, French and Dutch Guyana, as well as with the Antilles in general, and Puerto Rico. Also he said that his country was providing aircraft, ammunitions, and artillery to the guerrillas of the Viet Cong in South Vietnam. Sharaf Rashidov reiterated Soviet support for Cuba and asked the representative delegates from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, to form a

²¹⁶ Directorate of Intelligence - CIA, "Intelligence Report. Policy and Politics in the CPSU Politburo: October 1964 to September 1967 (Reference Title: CAESAR XXX). 31 August 1967. RSS No. 0021/67," 1967, 90.

²¹⁷ Nikolaj Mitrohin, "Back-Office Mikhaila Suslova Ili Kem I Kak Provodilas' Ideologiya Brezhnevskogo Vremeni," *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 54, no. 3–4 (2013).

²¹⁸ Directorate of Intelligence - CIA, "Intelligence Report. Policy and Politics in the CPSU Politburo: October 1964 to September 1967 (Reference Title: CAESAR XXX). 31 August 1967. RSS No. 0021/67," 90.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

“United front” against the common enemy: international imperialism, led by the United States of America.²²⁰

Rashidov also played a key role with India,²²¹ the main ally of the USSR in southern Asia, relaunching the role of Tashkent – a city that had already been fundamental to the development of Indian communism²²² – as a base for regional diplomacy. In fact, the FS CPUz – who had already accompanied Khrushchev in India during an official visit in 1955²²³ and who had dedicated to Indian romance the novel *Kashmirskaya Pesnya* in 1956 – proposed that Tashkent host a peace mediation between India and Pakistan on 4 January 1966. The Chairman of the SM USSR Alexei Kosygin moderated the negotiations between the Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri²²⁴ and the Pakistani President Muhammad Ayub Khan, ending with the Tashkent Declaration. Thus, the peace agreement signed on 10 January 1966 resolved the Indo–Pakistani War of 1965. The positive effect of this mediation was only temporary²²⁵ but would have produced a positive spillover in Uzbekistan because its political leader was affirmed as a promoter of regional peace. Similarly, Rashidov also played the role of mediator during the Mozambican civil war: in fact, in 10–15 November 1981 he arrived in the African country to meet the FRELIMO leaders

²²⁰ Pepita Riera, *Servicio de Inteligencia de Cuba Comunista* (Miami: Service Offset Printers, 1966), 126; Aragorn Storm Miller, “Precarious Path to Freedom: Venezuelan Communism and International Intervention, 1964-1968,” in *28th Annual ILASSA Conference on Latin America*, 2008, 8–9.

²²¹ For their cultural proximity, Central Asians were considered the Soviet interlocutors for Indian communists and Rashidov was particularly appreciated and invited to represent the USSR and to participate at the congresses of the Communist Party of India (CPI). He personally gave a speech at the X congress of the CPI, speaking about “peace, cooperation and brotherhood” between the two peoples. PV, 17693, 25, 30 January 1975, p. 2.

²²² In fact, the first Communist Party of India was founded in Tashkent on October 17, 1920, soon after the Second Congress of the Communist International. N.E. Balaram, *A Short History of the Communist Party of India* (Kozikkode: Prabhath Book House, 1967); Gangadhar M. Adhikari, *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India: Volume One, 1917-1922* (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1971).

²²³ Roy, *The New Central Asia. The Creation of Nations*, 111.

²²⁴ On 11 January 1966, Lal Bahadur Shastri mysteriously died in Tashkent after the event. In India conspiracy theories about his poisoning are very popular. Agrawal, *Silent Assassins Jan11, 1966*.

²²⁵ The hostility between India and Pakistan would again explode in 1971 on other fronts.

on an official visit “over a level of fraternal cooperation [that was] aimed at sharing experiences in building a socialist political party and to discuss international questions.”²²⁶ Even then, the effect would not have been decisive.

More important were the international cultural platforms that Rashidov initiated in Tashkent. In fact, during the Cold War, the Soviet Union was even competing culturally with the capitalist world in order to draw credit from the non-aligned third world. In this task, the Uzbek capital became an internationally recognized landmark: in 1958 Tashkent hosted the International Meeting of Writers of Asia and Africa,²²⁷ in 1968 the first International Film Festival of Asia and Africa – that in 1976 became the Asian, African, and Latin American Film Festival²²⁸ – and several international meetings and seminars of intellectuals, writers, poets, and journalists from the third world that had a very high political content.²²⁹ Furthermore, due to Rashidov’s initiative, Tashkent was even selected to host the XI meeting of the Presidium of AAPSO – the Asia and Africa Peoples’ Solidarity Organization – in October 1982. On that occasion, presented in the press with great fanfare, the Uzbek leader proclaimed the USSR to be the very picture of peace, brotherhood, and solidarity among peoples and socialism as a universal value uniting people without depersonalizing them as was often claimed in the west.²³⁰ This ideological–narrative package would be part of our protagonist’s attitude until his last day.

²²⁶ Federal Research Division, “Summary of Commentary in Pravda on Sub-Saharan Africa, Report 19960827/018, December 1981,” 1981, 8.

²²⁷ PV, 18813, 233, 11 October 1978, p 1-2.

²²⁸ Elena Razlogova, “Listening to the Inaudible Foreign : Simultaneous Translators and Soviet Experience of Foreign Cinema,” in *Sound, Speech, Music in Soviet and Post-Soviet Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 164.

²²⁹ During his message at the VII conference of Asian and African writers in Tashkent on 29 September 1983, even Andropov gave a message where he was welcoming the event in a city that was representing a forefront in the struggle against imperialism on the part of those countries that had liquidated the consequences of colonialism. RGANI f. 82, op. 1, del. 50, l. 7.

²³⁰ Rashidov added: “the creative power of the Leninist national policy is well demonstrated by the example of Uzbekistan. Brezhnev in a speech in Tashkent in March of this year [1982] said “life demonstrates that despite the slander of our enemies, socialism does not lead to the loss of its people’s personal, cultural and traditional unity, but it raises to a new height of originality and makes it available to other nations.” PV, 20008, 233, 12 October 1982, pp. 1-3.

1.4 Clans, regionalism and neopatrimonialism

The description of the Rashidovian power framework was functional to arrive at the conclusions offered by Buttino who underlines how nativization (and the parallel process of sovietization), nomenklatura, selection and appointment powers, cooptation of clan affiliates, patronage, and political legitimization were very inter-related issues, determining a typical power scheme of the Brezhnevian system.²³¹ There is a wide literature and an interesting theoretical debate²³² that proposes that this re-elaborated 'colonial-like' system was something that was limiting the totalitarian nature of the Soviet regime in Central Asia, where traditional informal power practices

²³¹ Buttino, *Samarcanda. Storie in Una Città Dal 1945 a Oggi*, 27.

²³² Marco Buttino resumes the debate on the imperial/colonial nature of USSR, citing Ronald Grigory Suny, "The Empire Strikes Out: Imperial Russia, 'National' Identity, and Theories of Empire," in *A State of Nations. Empire and Nation Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigory Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Terry Martin, "An Affirmative Action Empire: The Soviet Union as the Highest Form of Imperialism," in *A State of Nations. Empire and Nation Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigory Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). The fundamental volume on the policy of minorities' involvement in the Soviet policy is Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Abeer Khalid affirms that the use of the colonial category for USSR is misleading Abeer Khalid, "Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective," *Slavic Review* 65, no. 2 (2006): 231–51. Similarly, see Laura Adams, "Can We Apply a Post-Colonial Theory to Central Asia?," *Central Eurasia Studies Review* 7, no. 1 (2008): 2–8; Deniz Kandiyoti, "Post-Colonialism Compared: Potentials and Limitations in the Middle East and Central Asia," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34, no. 2 (2002): 279–97; Anatolii Remnev, "Kolonial'nost, Postkolonial'nost I Istoricheskaia Politika' v Sovremennom Kazakhstane," *Ab Imperio* 1 (2011): 169–205. The opportunity to converge post-colonial and post-soviet studies in order to overcome the limits of the Cold-war approaches is argued by Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery, "Thinking between the Posts: Postcolonialism, Postsocialism, and Ethnography after the Cold War," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 1 (December 16, 2008); Morgan Y. Liu, "Central Asia in the Post-Cold War World," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40 (2011). Abashin analyzes the debate along the political use of the past. Sergey Abashin, "Nations and Post-Colonialism in Central Asia: Twenty Years Later," in *Development in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Migration, Democratisation and Inequality in the Post-Soviet Era*, ed. Sophie Hohmann et al. (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014); Buttino, *Samarcanda. Storie in Una Città Dal 1945 a Oggi*, 12.

and logics survived.²³³ Indeed, despite the systemic upheavals that the Soviet regime introduced in Central Asia, clan politics persisted, diminishing and even subverting “the primacy of party loyalty and Leninist doctrine in cadre appointments and promotions.”²³⁴ In order to face this issue, we should remind ourselves of the two main socio–political approaches to inquiry on the informal power relations in Uzbekistan and Central Asia: the first one focuses on the concept of ‘clan’; the second analyzes ‘patronage–client’ relations.

1.4.1 ‘Clan politics’

The term ‘clan’ generally refers to a group united by kinship, denoting some kin–based division of society. However, considering Central Asian societies as complex phenomena, the categorization of ‘clan’ is often contested. In fact, this terminology appears misleading because it is denatured in a general interpretation that comprehends many different kinds of relationships such as political, social, and business networks, family and kin relationships, neighborhood, *zemlyachestvo*,²³⁵ and other forms of local ties. Following this corollary, elite groups are not typical territorially-based clans, but networks established among the ruling class to maximize the interests of the participants. Instead, at lower levels of Uzbek society, ‘clans’ are an affiliation among a small territorial community – village or *makhalla* – involving “horizontal linkages and [...] based on solidarity among people from the same locality [...] or region [creating] affiliation”.²³⁶ A first major contribution in this debate arrived in 1986 with the American scholar Donald S. Carlisle²³⁷ who identified regionally-based power groups in Uzbekistan, defining them as ‘regional group politics’ – rather than ‘clans’ –based on “local loyalties and regional roots.”²³⁸ In his essay, the author matched biographical and career data of Uzbek officials, evidencing the political dynamics within specific territorial groups corresponding to the regions of Tashkent, Ferghana Valley,

²³³ David Gullette, “Theories on Central Asian Factionalism: The Debate in Political Science and Its Wider Implications,” *Central Asian Survey* 26, no. 3 (September 14, 2007).

²³⁴ Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, 104.

²³⁵ Collins defines “*zemlyachestvo*” as the “practice of appointing and promoting one’s trusted friends and kinsmen” *Ibid.*, 354.

²³⁶ Tunçer-Kılavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*, 70.

²³⁷ Carlisle, “The Uzbek Power Elite: Politburo and Secretariat (1938–83).”

²³⁸ Carlisle, “Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev,” 92.

Samarkand–Bukhara, Khorezm–Karakalpakya, and Kashkadarya–Surkhandarya. These issues were then reconsidered by Olivier Roy²³⁹, who investigated the dynamics of the ‘solidarity groups’ – mainly place–based in the local dimensions of *millat*, *qawm*, *makhalla*, or *avlod* – in Central Asia. These concepts have been deepened by Kathleen Collins – who contributed to the evaluation of what she defined as ‘clan politics’²⁴⁰ – and Pauline Jones Luong, who formulated a theory of ‘regionalism’,²⁴¹ defining the transformation of the pre–revolutionary tribal society into a system that was managed by obkom FSs. Following these interpretations, clans are not simple actors within the system, but become an essential part of it.

1.4.2 The Patronage relations

The second approach draws on an aspect widely studied in both Sovietology and political science: patron–client relationships.²⁴² This macro–field takes into

²³⁹ Roy, *The New Central Asia. The Creation of Nations*.

²⁴⁰ According to Collins, clans are not just patron–client networks but organizations with an identity dimension mainly based on the concept of *zemlyachestvo*. Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*.

²⁴¹ According to Pauline Jones Luong, “Soviet policies and institutions in Central Asia created, transformed and institutionalized regional political identities, while at the same time eliminating tribal, religious, and national identities, weakening them, or confining them to the social and cultural spheres”. Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia, Perceptions and Pact* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 52.

²⁴² Geoffrey A. Hosking, “Patronage and the Russian State,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 78, no. 2 April (2000); Alisher Ilkhamov, “Neopatrimonialism, Factionalism and Patronage in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan,” in *Neopatrimonialism in Africa and Beyond*, ed. Daniel C Bach and Mamoudou Gazibo (London & New York: Routledge, 2012); David Stuart Lane, *Elites and Political Power in the USSR* (Aldershot, England–Brookfield, USA: Elgar ; Distributed in the U.S. by Gower Pub. Co., 1988); Miller, “Cadres Policy in Nationality Areas. Recruitment of CPSU First and Second Secretaries in Non-Russian Republics of the USSR”; John Miller, “Nomenklatura. Check on Localism?,” in *Leadership Selection and Patron-Client Relations in the USSR and Yugoslavia*, ed. T H Rigby and B Harasymiw (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983); Miller, “Putting Clients in Place: The Role of Patronage in Cooption into the Soviet Leadership”; Thomas Henry Rigby and Bohdan Harasymiw, *Leadership Selection and Patron-Clients Relations in the USSR and Yugoslavia* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983); Thomas Henry Rigby, *Political Elites in the USSR: Central Leaders and Local Cadres from Lenin to Gorbachev* (Worcester: Billing & Sons, 1990); James C. Scott, “Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southern Asia,” *The American Political Science Review* 66, no. 1 (1972);

account the study of all those connections and links among vertically-organized elite figures. These relations involve loyalties, reciprocal favoritism, and protégé network ties, friendships etc. As will be explicated in the next paragraphs, in the USSR these relations were functional to the stability of the cadres' careers and were based on personal connections, professional ties, neighborhood, zemlyachestvo and other kinds of localism and developed especially in the post-war period.²⁴³ Then, these groups differ from the 'clan' interpretations because there is not a necessary kinship or affiliation in solidarity groups and they can be based on a simple 'exchange of favors' in purely functional relationships.

Both interpretations are relevant in the UzSSR context: although the clan dynamics are a typical aspect of Central Asian societies, the patronage relations were held throughout the whole the USSR, a non-competitive system where the struggle for scarce goods, services and resources was held within the party and far from market logics. Therefore, it can be argued that the Uzbek/Central Asian phenomenon was nothing more than a reflection of the larger Soviet reality – a closed, non-competitive, extremely statist and party-dominated system based on personal ties. These typically Soviet phenomena can be detected in the neo-traditional doctrine²⁴⁴ that interprets the Soviet power system as a structure based on those 'archaizing phenomena' as "petitioning, patron-client networks, the ubiquity of other kinds of personalistic ties like *blat*, ascribed status categories, 'court' politics in the Kremlin, the mystification

Tunçer-Kılavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*; John P. Willerton, "Patronage Networks and Coalition Building in the Brezhnev Era," *Soviet Studies* 39, no. 2 April (1987); Willerton, *Patronage and Politics in the USSR*.

²⁴³ Hosking, "Patronage and the Russian State," 315; Joel Moses, "Regionalism in Soviet Politics: Continuity as a Source of Change, 1953-1982," *Soviet Studies* 37, no. 2 April (1985): 201; Daniel T. Orlovsky, "Political Clientelism in Russia: The Historical Perspective," in *Leadership Selection and Patron-Client Relations in the USSR and Yugoslavia*, ed. Thomas Henry Rigby and Bohdan Harasymiw (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), 174-99; Michael E. Urban and Russell B. Reed, "Regionalism in a Systems Perspective: Explaining Elite Circulation in a Soviet Republic," *Slavic Review* 48, no. 3 Fall (1989): 426-27; Willerton, "Patronage Networks and Coalition Building in the Brezhnev Era," 177.

²⁴⁴ Ken Jowitt, "Soviet Neotraditionalism: The Political Corruption of a Leninist Regime," *Soviet Studies* 35, no. 3 (November 6, 1983): 275-97; Terry Martin, "Modernization or Neo-Traditionalism? Ascribed Nationality and Soviet Primordialism," in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (London & New York: Routledge, 2000).

of power and its projection through display, and so on.”²⁴⁵ Phenomena that affected the entire Soviet history and, depending on the spatiotemporal contexts, were modulated in various Soviet eras as in Latvia as in Uzbekistan, but assuming, every time, a different guise. In fact, patronage networks pervaded in all areas of the state and party²⁴⁶ in the USSR and were an instrument to vertically control the nomenklatura through loyal and affiliate figures. Furthermore, in the UzSSR, the above mentioned ‘party rurality’ would be a determinant in these dynamics at the microscopic level and can be interpreted as a dominant characteristic of the CPUz political culture, influencing the whole history of the communist party in Uzbekistan.²⁴⁷ Nevertheless, patrimonialism cannot be confined solely to the party element. It became a system that ruled even the administrative, social and cultural institutions.

1.4.3 The Neo-patrimonial approach

Thus, both interpretations are suggestive and can be partially used as keys to read the developments of political history in Soviet Uzbekistan. However, they suggest several questions in terms of their empirical application in the Uzbek context. In fact, ‘clan’ is a tribal concept which is claimed to apply to an elite community – especially at the highest levels – with a territorial dimension. However, this could work at the micro-level but finds several limitations when discussing the nature of an elite group at the republican level that was dealing with a wider spectrum of consent. Nonetheless a simple patron–client interpretation does escape the influence of tradition on a system that is pervaded with cultural peculiarities. Therefore, a good compromise comes from a third political school that approaches the study of the Soviet Central Asian power system through the ‘patrimonial’ and ‘neopatrimonial’ concepts.

²⁴⁵ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalinism: New Directions* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), 10.

²⁴⁶ However, Mote and Trout argue that the political territoriality was stronger at the party than the state-governmental level. Victor L. Mote and William Trout, “Political Territoriality and the End of the USSR,” *Space and Polity* 7, no. 1 (2003): 25.

²⁴⁷ According to Roy, “it goes hand in hand with the establishment of territorialized solidarity groups. Regionalist factionalism is explained by this double transformation: the recomposition of solidarity groups, and the ruralisation of the party’s cadres. Even when, in the 1950s, the educational level of cadres rose significantly (at that time they were all engineers), the fact of their rural origins, of rootedness in their district, and their links with the structure of the kolkhoz remained very strong” Roy, *The New Central Asia. The Creation of Nations*, 103.

Patrimonialism is a Weberian concept of pre-bureaucratic patriarchal domination that is based on a “strict personal loyalty.”²⁴⁸ Analyzing contemporary societies, neopatrimonialism can be simplistically considered

as a variant of patrimonialism [that] stresses the function played by vestiges of traditionalism and informal politics in newly emerging modern bureaucratic regimes. A starting point for neopatrimonial regimes is the crystallization of power in the center in relation to the periphery. Central elites establish control over political entities, which were created mainly by previous colonial powers, and as such attempt to structurally and ideologically transform the periphery.²⁴⁹

Alisher Ilkhamov observes how the neopatrimonial concept perfectly suits the Uzbek experience²⁵⁰, where the state ideology and propaganda were functional to legitimize the patrimonial state. According to the author, the origins of such a system are pre-1917, with the institution of *tanho* (license) offered from the Emir of Bukhara to the local *beks* (governors) “to collect from local peasants taxes designed to fulfil both their private needs and the maintenance of local administration.”²⁵¹ In exchange, the Emir received allegiance, military support, and part of the revenues collected.²⁵² Such a system of tax collection imposed by a 'suzerain' upon his 'vassals' can be interpreted as the precursor of the Soviet neopatrimonial redistributive system that institutionalized in an official framework the patron-client ties within the party and bureaucracy, which expanded during the late Stalin era. Thus, these categories become relevant in order to analyze the Brezhnevian period.

1.4.4 The cadres' stability

During the 'reign' of Leonid Brezhnev (1964–1982), there was a new compromise with those party elites that had been heavily disillusioned by

²⁴⁸ Max Weber, *Economy and Society an Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968).

²⁴⁹ Rico Isaacs, *Party System Formation in Kazakhstan: Between Formal and Informal Politics* (London & New York: Routledge, 2011), 22.

²⁵⁰ Ilkhamov, “Neopatrimonialism, Factionalism and Patronage in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan”; Alisher Ilkhamov, “Neopatrimonialism, Interest Groups and Patronage Networks: The Impasses of the Governance System in Uzbekistan,” *Central Asian Survey* 26, no. 1 (2007).

²⁵¹ Ilkhamov, “Neopatrimonialism, Factionalism and Patronage in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan,” 189.

²⁵² Sergey P. Tolstov, Saul M. Abramzon, and Nikolay A. Kislyakov, *Narody Srednei Azii I Kazakhstana. Tom 1* (Moskva: Izdatelstvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1962), 175.

Khrushchev. “Brezhnev’s moderation, his desire to avoid problems and his allergy to adventure guaranteed him the largest popularity among bureaucrats who had badly endured the Khrushchevian inclination towards risk and change.”²⁵³ Indeed, the new Soviet leader was responding to the need for peace and stability that the Soviet elite was demanding after the turbulent period that preceded Brezhnev. And ‘stability of cadres’ itself became a pivotal issue that enforced the local patrimonial system and stabilized the power networks on the long-term. As Tompson reminds us:

Brezhnev had become party leader largely because of the party elite’s hostility towards Khrushchev’s frequent reorganizations and even more frequent redeployment of subordinates.²⁵⁴

The Brezhnevian peaceful reaction against the destalinization ‘soft terror’ was based on the slogans “Stability of cadres”, “Trust in cadres”, and “Respect for cadres”, as response to the Khrushchevian cadre reshuffling policy that had been exacerbated during the 1960–1961 ‘bloodless purges’ when about two-thirds of the RSFSR obkom secretaries were replaced.²⁵⁵ Indeed, the stability of cadres – even enforced during the XXIII congress in 1966 that eliminated the requirement of rotation in some political offices²⁵⁶ – was automatically implying the continued reelection of the previous teams,²⁵⁷ the local promotion of officials – within the same organization or region – and so an excessive longevity of the cadres and the consequent aging of the ruling elite.²⁵⁸ At the local level, the ‘stability of cadres’ policy

had a threefold meaning for national republics: stability of elite’s incumbency, stability of intra–elite relations and stability of center–republican relations.

²⁵³ Graziosi, *L’Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 298.

²⁵⁴ Tompson, *The Soviet Union under Brezhnev*, 22.

²⁵⁵ William A. Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 126–29.

²⁵⁶ Graziosi, *L’Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 308.

²⁵⁷ The 1971 CPSU Congress reelected 81% of the CC members who had been appointed in the previous Congress (1966). This trend increased and reached 89% in 1976 and in 1981 89% again. Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 132.

²⁵⁸ The average age of full members of the Politburo was 58 in 1966, 62 in 1972, and 71 in 1981. Also in the CC CPSU, the median age rose from 53 in 1961 to 62 in 1981, with the proportion of members older than 65 increasing from three percent in 1961 to 39 percent in 1981. *Ibid.*, 131; Robert Vincent Daniels, *Russia’s Transformation: Snapshots of a Crumbling System* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 53.

Concurrently, liberation from ad hoc intervention from above in local personnel matters steadily pushed forward the centrifugal process of republican politics. Political autonomy in national republics was enhanced.²⁵⁹

However, the major consequences of this stability path were indirect and negative, since this mechanism created greater opportunities for patronage and for “corruption than had previously existed, particularly in outlying republics with long-serving leaders”.²⁶⁰ In fact, during Brezhnevism, local officials at obkom, gorkom and raikom levels spent their careers in the same regions, facilitating the development of long-term relation, clientelism, patron-client networks, localism and personal allegiances, enforcing the basis of patronage politics²⁶¹ in the USSR and contributing to “strengthening of regional allegiances and to the development of region-based networks among political elites.”²⁶² As Markowitz comments:

Patronage politics at the base of the Soviet state was by no means static. Local political offices were often where political careers were established in the context of shifting alliances, which had yet to congeal into long-term relationships.²⁶³

This trend was even enforced by the fact that Brezhnevism endorsed a double complementary trend: meanwhile since the mid-’60s, the Soviet leadership sponsored a new (and formal) centralization of the party, it supported a regime that was de facto recognizing major autonomy to the

²⁵⁹ Chida, “‘Trust in Cadres’ and the Party-Based Control in Central Asia during the Brejnev Era,” 71.

²⁶⁰ Tompson, *The Soviet Union under Brezhnev*, 25.

²⁶¹ Willerton, “Patronage Networks and Coalition Building in the Brezhnev Era”; Rigby and Harasymiw, *Leadership Selection and Patron-Clients Relations in the USSR and Yugoslavia*; Miller, “Putting Clients in Place: The Role of Patronage in Cooption into the Soviet Leadership”; Hosking, “Patronage and the Russian State”; Ilkhamov, “Neopatrimonialism, Factionalism and Patronage in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan”; Ilkhamov, “Neopatrimonialism, Interest Groups and Patronage Networks: The Impasses of the Governance System in Uzbekistan”; Willerton, *Patronage and Politics in the USSR*; Orlovsky, “Political Clientelism in Russia: The Historical Perspective”; Miller, “Nomenklatura. Check on Localism?”

²⁶² Tunçer-Kılavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*, 56.

²⁶³ Lawrence P Markowitz, *State Erosion. Unlootable Resources and Unruly Elites in Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 36.

republics and the SSRs achieved a level of “quasi-independence.”²⁶⁴ This set was a response to the guidelines of the XXIII Congress of the CPSU in 1966, where Brezhnev affirmed the right of every nationality to be sovereign in their own homelands.²⁶⁵ Thus, in the whole of the USSR, republican leaders substantially received “a broad autonomy of action in exchange for loyalty and anti-nationalism”²⁶⁶ and their power was “equivalent to that of provincial governors in the Roman Empire.”²⁶⁷ About this policy, the Kazakh FS Dinmukhamed Kunaev remembered Brezhnev for having granted to the republics “the ability to act independently” by creating a pact of fidelity between local elites and Moscow where the FS served as a mediator.²⁶⁸

Brezhnevism denounced terror as a matter of course²⁶⁹ in order to indorse what Gorbachev later defined as a tolerant and peaceful “gentlemen’s agreement” in which the center “endowed the first secretaries with almost unlimited power in their regions, and they in turn had to support the General Secretary, praising him as leader and chief.”²⁷⁰ This ‘quasi-feudal’²⁷¹ system

²⁶⁴ Carlisle, “Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev,” 94.

²⁶⁵ This line seemed to lead to new openings and was dramatically misunderstood in Czechoslovakia where the Prague Spring was brutally crushed by Soviet tanks in August 1968.

²⁶⁶ Roy, *The New Central Asia. The Creation of Nations*, 111.

²⁶⁷ Ben Fowkes, *The Disintegration of the Soviet Union. A Study in the Rise and Triumph of Nationalism* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 1997), 94; Donald S. Carlisle, “Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks,” *Problems of Communism*, 1991, 29.

²⁶⁸ Graziosi, *L’Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 314; Dinmukhamed Akhmetovich Kunaev, *O Moem Vremeni: Vospominaniya* (Almaty: Daur, 1992).

²⁶⁹ Brezhnevism delegated Soviet authority to republican leaders de facto even in relation to internal investigations. As Chida comments, “The Brejnev regime obviously ceased ad hoc intervention in personnel matters in republic in search for criminals or frauds among the republican officials. This sort of policy line was significantly different from that of the Khrushchev regime. Much less, Moscow never dispatched their officials to the district or city level over personnel matters [...]. There were the general tendencies of ‘trust in cadres’ in Central Asia” Chida, “‘Trust in Cadres’ and the Party-Based Control in Central Asia during the Brejnev Era,” 54, 69.

²⁷⁰ Geoffrey A. Hosking, *Russia and the Russians: A History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 542; Mikhail Sergevich Gorbachev, *Zhizn’ I Reformy. Tom 1* (Moskva: Novosti, 1995), 180.

²⁷¹ The Russian scholar Alexei G. Barabashev, used a famous anecdotal metaphor to describe Brezhnevian in the USSR. “It was a huge dinosaur with a small, slow, and limited brain that could hardly control the farther parts of its body without noticing they were

allowed Moscow to rule according to the strategic priorities of the state and on ideological issues while the republics had freedom in the administration of extensive rural areas and in controlling the distribution of posts – particularly at local levels in oblasts and raions – and much of the economic resources coming from the center. This autonomist attitude was particularly evident in Central Asia²⁷², where Moscow delegated its power to a group of loyal clients that ruled through a system based on what Tunçer–Kılavuz defines as ‘territorial networks’. These groups were not just ‘clans’ based on kinship, nor purely ‘regional alliances’ but represented a very complex phenomenon that is not restricted to clan–based and regional affiliation but draws “on various loyalties including ties of family, friendship, work, education and patron–client relationships.”²⁷³ This kind of dynamic was evident at both party and bureaucratic levels. In these semi–autonomous and personalistic systems – which were ruled at lower levels by the territorial power networks based within the party and republican institutions – patronage intensified and there were negative consequences, such as corruption, rent seeking, *blat*, and *zemlyachestvo*.²⁷⁴ However, these conditions were not new elements within the USSR, but they were accelerated during Brezhnevism even assuming a systemic character. On this matter, Marco Buttino offers a clear corollary where he states:

The patrimonial nature of the Soviet state was probably the ripe fruit of the revolution from above of the Stalinism years. At that time, the economy was developing through large mobilization campaigns, the apparatus followed the implacable will of the leadership, pandering to it and feeling threatened by it. The system was able to mobilize people, but few knew the reality of the country because all those responsible, at every level, gave the information that the

very sick.” In order to control the peripheries, it implemented a situation of “quasi-feudalism” where “the local secretaries pretended to act in the framework of a feudal system - ruled by the center - and to govern the provinces in its name while, for the most part, behaving autonomously.” Personal interview with Alexei G. Barabashev, Moscow, 15 December 2014.

²⁷² Graziosi reviews the Pikhoya data, observing how in 1975 the RSFSR and Ukraine could withhold 42-43% of the tax collected on sales on their territory while in Azerbaijan these figures were more than 70%, and in Central Asia more than 90% with rates of capital investment that were 2-4 times higher than in the other republics. Graziosi, *L’Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 432.

²⁷³ Tunçer–Kılavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*, 11, 51, 70.

²⁷⁴ Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, 105.

central authorities wanted to hear from them, rather than the truth. Purges and unlimited violence by the State served to spur mobilization, eliminate those undecided and force the culprits to justify their failures. The compromise of the Brezhnev years made the country more peaceful, but did not provide to the state a modern bureaucracy. It continued the cycle made of personalism, clientelism and corruption, followed by scandals and purges. The state, which was unable to know the country and to control the apparatuses, and which could no longer use unlimited violence, began the path to decline in those years.²⁷⁵

In fact, due to the Brezhnevian peaceful and autonomist path, the stability of the system depended on the level of cooptation of local elites through the *nomenklatura* system that empowered them²⁷⁶ to recruit their protégés and which was determining the remuneration of labor and the allocation of privileges.²⁷⁷ A leader that was able to coopt elites by redistributing status and

²⁷⁵ Buttino, *Samarconda. Storie in Una Città Dal 1945 a Oggi*, 33.

²⁷⁶ In soviet society, forged by ideological egalitarianism and characterized by difficulty consuming and enjoying free time, upper classes nevertheless did emerge: elites, who invest everything in their status in labor. Inequality was, de facto, existing at all levels of redistribution and access to status. The elite is formed by virtue of a special process called “choice and distribution of leading cadres”, which is the prerogative of the party organs. Registration to the CPSU is essential as well as belonging to the *nomenklatura*, with a specific mechanism by which the party bureaucracy forms the administrative elite and therefore itself. 20-25% of the administrative elite belonging to the *nomenklatura* could be represented in the form of three lists: the first list is about those places that guarantee a certain level of power could determine the fate of many individuals. The appointment of this list is done directly by the party committee at the corresponding level (or with its approval). The second list includes places available to each party committee. The third list includes the actual people who are chosen among the men who occupy managerial posts. They can also be used for persons not included in the third list, but the sanction of the party is still mandatory. Local political elites are formed/selected in the core of the *nomenklatura* and coopted/recruited into the system. For this, we could say that *nomenklatura* was a real ruling class in the country born from an equalitarian revolution. Cf. Zaslavsky, *Il Consenso Organizzato. La Società Sovietica Negli Anni Di Brežnev*, 75–76, 159; Maria Hirszowicz, “Is There a Ruling Class in the USSR? A Comment,” *Soviet Studies* 28, no. 2 (1976): 262–73; Alec Nove, “Is There a Ruling Class in the USSR?,” *Soviet Studies* 27, no. 4 (1975): 615–38; Miller, “Nomenklatura. Check on Localism?”

²⁷⁷ The remuneration of directors comprised two unequal parts: the remuneration in money – which in itself already far exceeded that of the average worker – and compensation in kind (dachas, cars, apartments, shops and more) which, accompanied by various types of privileges (access to information, travel abroad, etc.) were on the

socio-economic privileges would ultimately create a bond of loyalty and dependence that would guarantee the stability of his post²⁷⁸, and this dynamic was present from top to bottom – and vice-versa – in a self-conserving vicious circle. This scheme was then defined in a quasi-pyramidal shape,²⁷⁹ the apex of which was the leadership of the CC CPSU. It had clients at the central and SSR levels, which proceeded downwards. Then the republican parties were mediating between the CPSU and the obkoms,²⁸⁰ which can be considered as the effective central institute of the Brezhnevian decentralized system, exercising “considerable influence over distributions of resources from the state to local economic units within their jurisdiction.”²⁸¹ In fact, the obkom FSs “held power over appointments and resources in their oblasts [...and] were the distributors of political and economic benefits, with the power to appoint or dismiss local officials in their region”.²⁸² Basically, these lower-level party leaders could be considered as the effective entry points for access to inputs – raw materials, technology, and specialized labor – for the productive and redistributive operations. Hence, Markowitz argues:

[the obkom FSs] embodied political authority and served as points of access to state rents, they were highly sought after by local economic actors (such as collective farm chairs), who viewed them as means of converting their resources into rents as well as a way to influence government policies.²⁸³

Substantially, they were warranting an ostentatious (and maybe not fully honest) political loyalty to the republican power in exchange for an unlimited

whole much more relevant as compensation than money, even if is possible to hoard. For this reason, the Soviet system created a real bond of dependency as this structure of the pay system did not allow the local elite to amass a wealth that would allow it to feel more independent; but on the contrary, the job loss caused a catastrophic collapse in terms of income and well-being. Zaslavsky, *Il Consenso Organizzato. La Società Sovietica Negli Anni Di Brežnev*, 157–58; Aron Katsenelinboigen, *Studies in Soviet Economic Planning* (Sharpe: White plans, 1978), 150.

²⁷⁸ Scott Radnitz, *Weapons of the Wealthy: Predatory Regimes and Elite-Led Protests in Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

²⁷⁹ We can define this scheme as quasi-pyramidal inasmuch there often were ‘power breaks’ represented by the autonomous local potentates that interrupted the hierarchic sequence from the Gensek to the villager (and viceversa).

²⁸⁰ Hough, *The Soviet Prefects. Local Party Organs in Industrial Decision-Making*.

²⁸¹ Markowitz, *State Erosion. Unlootable Resources and Unruly Elites in Central Asia*, 34.

²⁸² Tunçer-Kılavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*, 55.

²⁸³ Markowitz, *State Erosion. Unlootable Resources and Unruly Elites in Central Asia*, 31.

control over appointments and resources in their own oblasts, giving great power to a small number of ruling elites and helping to “consolidate regionally based networks of elites who were free to promote their ‘loyal kinsmen’”²⁸⁴ even using the opportunity “to benefit themselves and their friends, families, and others in a position to provide reciprocal benefits.”²⁸⁵ Therefore, oblasts were the main bases of benefits exchange and the obkom FSs the principal clients of the central republican party and the main providers of resources – employment, promotions, assistance, welfare, permits, access to important goods and services, land²⁸⁶ – and career advancement, creating in turn patron-client relations with the elites in their regions – as kolkhozes,²⁸⁷ managers of

²⁸⁴ Roland Dannreuther, “Creating New States in Central Asia” (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies - Adelphi Paper 288, 1994), 13.

²⁸⁵ Rigby and Harasymiw, *Leadership Selection and Patron-Clients Relations in the USSR and Yugoslavia*, 6.

²⁸⁶ Tunçer-Kılavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*, 76. Cf. Scott, “Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southern Asia,” 91–113.

²⁸⁷ Even the kolkhozes were, in fact, put under the direct surveillance of local party committees, and became central units even in ruling the rural territories and populations. “The kolkhoz was the main source of its members’ work, social welfare and social services, income, irrigation, and housing. The Soviet system gave the brigadirs (kolkhoz brigade leaders) immense powers within the kolkhoz they directed. The brigadirs had control over the economic resources in the kolkhoz and the power to distribute these resources as they wished. They enjoyed the sole authority to distribute benefits to the people in the village. The brigadirs were also responsible for meeting the agricultural production quotas set by the state and mobilizing *kolkhoznikis* (kolkhoz peasants) to achieve this aim [...] By controlling the benefits and their distribution, they were able to maintain control over the population within the kolkhoz [using] the distribution power under their control in order to create clients, and thus to build support. They also established connections in the Party through network relationships” Tunçer-Kılavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*, 52. For a history of kolkhozes and sovkhoses in Uzbekistan, cf. Rakhima Khodievna Aminova, *Uzbekiston SSR Kolkhoz va Sovkhoslari Tarikhi Zhamoatchilik Instituti* (Tashkent: Fan, 1983); Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power. A Study of Collectivization* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968); Valentin Letvin, *The Soviet Agro-Industrial Complex. Structure and Performance* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1968); James R. Millar, *The Soviet Rural Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971); Rigby, *Political Elites in the USSR: Central Leaders and Local Cadres from Lenin to Gorbachev*; Robert F. Miller, *One Hundred Thousand Tractors. The MTS and the Development of Controls in Soviet Agriculture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970); Cynthia S. Kaplan, *The Party and Agricultural Crisis*

factories and district leaders – in which protection and access to resources was exchanged even for illicit incomes. Finally, Critchlow comments Rashidov's mestnichestvo and lack of inter-oblast mobility. In his words:

Under Rashidov, cadre practices allowed officials at the gorkom/raikom level to spend much of their careers in the same oblast, facilitating development of a network of personal ties. The cohesion of personnel networks based on oblasts during the Rashidov period is made particularly striking by examination of the biographies of gorkom/raikom officiate in the group elected to the republican Supreme Soviet in 1975. Previous employment in the same oblast had played a significant role in furthering advancement to their present positions. Of 47 in the group, nearly all had either been recruited from the oblast in which they were serving or had served in it at an earlier point in their careers. This lack of inter-oblast mobility was probably attributable to the role of the oblast committees in controlling the city and district nomenklatura. Whatever the case, it helped to pave the way for "localism" and lasting personal allegiances within the oblast. [...] Of 31 oblast-level officials included in the 1975 Supreme Soviet deputies' directory, 23 had held a previous post in the same oblast. While this may reflect a tendency to assign people to areas with which they were familiar, it also suggests that oblast interests were able to prevail even in Tashkent.²⁸⁸

The author continues his evaluation, underlining how in the party selection preferred non-worker white collar citizens instead of blue collars workers, and there was a low participations of women, considering that "of the 245 persons in leadership or other elite positions elected to the republican Supreme Soviet in 1975, only 19 (7.8 percent) were women" as well there were not enough young representatives: on that sum, nobody was under 35 years old and the average was of 50 years old, reflecting a continuation in the aksakalism (with-beard) tradition.²⁸⁹

Management in the USSR (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Neil J Melvin, *Soviet Power and the Countryside. Policy Innovation and Institutional Decay* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

²⁸⁸ Critchlow, "Prelude to 'Independence': How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow's Grip on Elite Recruitment," 142.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 143.

1.4.5 The 'social contract'

In this framework, the socialist orthodoxy was undermined and the informal Brezhnevian 'social contract'²⁹⁰ – “under which the state provided material security in return for political quiescence and compliance”²⁹¹ – became the main functional factor to 'cadre stability'. Meanwhile, the situation was accentuated in which the Soviet leadership's “disinterest in direct governance [which] allow[ed] clan networks to develop vast patronage networks that relied on the state and to become deeply entrenched”.²⁹² This structure was reflected the indirect rule of Moscow and the party over the political and economic system in Central Asia through local trustees. Once mass terror was denounced, this tolerant and 'pacific' way, which dovetailed well with the social dimension of Central Asia, was the only possible solution to keep the regime stable: for this reason, the party had to be aware of how to respect and to exploit the dynamics in the intra-clan/regional balance of power and its representativeness.²⁹³ The resulting corrupt and lax atmosphere became the triggering factors of an economic and political system that had started to be founded on lies and delusional concordance. Il'ia Zemtsov describes a system in which regional politicians were in a position to extract unusually large sums of money from local economic actors within their jurisdiction. In his words:

the secretary of the party committee of an industrial region accumulates sums that far exceed his formal salary. This illicit income is derived from obligatory tributes and dues from various enterprises and from sums given by administrative organs – the police, judges, procurators. The secretary of the party committee of a rural region accumulates about as much, the loss of industrial income being compensated for by payments from collective and state farms.²⁹⁴

²⁹⁰ The Brezhnevian "social contract" involved the construction of a vast and expensive system of welfare and redistribution that led to huge levels of consensus among the Soviet population. Cf. Linda J. Cook, *The Soviet Social Contract and Why It Failed. Welfare Policy and Workers' Politics from Brezhnev to Yeltsin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

²⁹¹ Tompson, *The Soviet Union under Brezhnev*, 88.

²⁹² Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, 112.

²⁹³ About this, Collins comments that “top Party posts in each Central Asian republic – the FS, the chairman of the republic's Supreme Soviet (the legislature), and the chairman of the central committee (head of state) – were often filled with representatives of different clans.” *Ibid.*, 107.

²⁹⁴ Ilya Zemtsov, *The Private Life of the Soviet Elite* (New York: Crane, Russak & Company, 1985), 36.

According to Markowitz, in exchange for this income,

party secretaries provided protection for those within their jurisdiction—particularly from organs of local law enforcement that were formally responsible for exercising control and surveillance over these economic operations. The fact that police, judges, and prokurators also paid bribes to obkom first secretaries demonstrates how informal relationships encompassed and undermined formal mechanisms of social and political control—what were known as ‘family circles of local elites.’²⁹⁵

The administrative organs themselves were involved in the mechanism, even receiving bribes or favors from local economic heads, which they passed on to the obkom FS. The party leaders – of republic, obkom, gorkom, and raikom – protected the system by colluding with police and Prokuratura, receiving bribes, and warning *tolchaki* (pushers/intermediators) in good time in order to impede inspections.²⁹⁶ Parallel, local party secretaries could get protection, even passing “on a portion of their income to higher ups in the state apparatus to ensure the distribution of production inputs and local budget funds from the republican center”.²⁹⁷ These parallel informal systems extended upward to the republican central committee FS who was in turn beholden to Moscow.²⁹⁸ This pyramidal patronage system was in this way colluding from the lowest levels of the local party to the highest cadres of the republican party and, then, to the heart of the CPSU. Through this kind of informal network, the Brezhnevian system reinforced (and further entrenched) in the UzSSR those above-mentioned power networks/clans that had persisted even after the Bolshevik reconquest.²⁹⁹ As Collins comments:

Soviet policies ‘modernized’ clans, by driving them underground and linking them with corruption, mafioso activities, and the second economy, but did not seriously attempt to eradicate them.”³⁰⁰

²⁹⁵ Markowitz, *State Erosion. Unlootable Resources and Unruly Elites in Central Asia*, 35.

²⁹⁶ Cf. Zemtsov, *The Private Life of the Soviet Elite*, 39–40.

²⁹⁷ Markowitz, *State Erosion. Unlootable Resources and Unruly Elites in Central Asia*, 35.

²⁹⁸ Gregory Gleason, “Fealty and Loyalty: Informal Authority Structures in Soviet Asia,” *Soviet Studies* 43, no. 4 (1991): 613–28.

²⁹⁹ Tunçer-Kılavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*, 49; Roy, *The New Central Asia. The Creation of Nations*; Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia, Perceptions and Pact*.

³⁰⁰ Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, 102.

The political hierarchy of regions in the Soviet system – in which some regions were more important on political and economic levels – increased the dominance of certain regions and elite groups inside the republics. In Uzbekistan, this hierarchy depended on the influence of the clans – Tashkent, Fergana, and Samarkand based – and the importance of their elite that “enjoyed greater opportunities for promotion to significant posts than the elite from other regions of the republic.”³⁰¹ These three groups had had in fact shared the positions of the party and the republic respecting a balance of power. At the same time, the elites from other regions also received a significant share of power within the framework of various alliance/cooptation relationships, but they were excluded from the top positions.³⁰² In Uzbekistan,

the nomenklatura system encouraged a diffusion of patronage in the republic. By 1967, 590 gorkom and raikom secretaries and raispolkom chairs passed through the Tashkent High Party School’s inter–republic programs of study, coming from all provinces. The same year, the school created six–month ‘inter–oblast’ courses in Tashkent, Fergana, and Samarkand, and in its first year approximately nine hundred staff members of district party committees and soviets were trained at the three sites. For elites from across Uzbekistan, these inter–republic and interregional courses were sites at which contacts could be established and relationships formed.³⁰³

As we have seen, during Rashidov’s reign the CPUz tried to satisfy all groups, without excluding some from the system’s benefits, by coopting potential rivals that could challenge the existing power in the top posts. This compromise worked until 1969–1971 – with the removal of Nasriddinova–Kurbanov – after which Samarkanders and their affiliates slowly rose to the top of the party and state posts.

In a generally shared interpretation of Rashidovism, the Uzbek leader was a loyal Brezhnev client who “played the role of a ‘nineteenth–century khan’ delivering resources to the tsar while ruling independently within his territory.”³⁰⁴ During his ‘reign’, his clan predominated even in an institutionalized dimension by the creation of the Navoi (1982) and Jizzak

³⁰¹ Tunçer-Kilavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*, 58.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 66.

³⁰³ Markowitz, *State Erosion. Unlootable Resources and Unruly Elites in Central Asia*, 47; Mavlyan Gafarovich Vakhobova, *Torzhestvo Leninskogo Kooperativnogo Plana v Uzbekistane* (Tashkent: Uzbekistan, 1970).

³⁰⁴ Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, 112.

oblasts (1973) – which were dissolved after Rashidov’s death.³⁰⁵ By establishing new provinces Rashidov wanted to enforce his patronage base. However, Rashidovism can be read as a typical derivation of the Brezhnevian patronage system with the peculiarities of Uzbek ‘transformism’ that was based on clan dimensions, dividing oppositions and to co-opting members of other rival clans just to create a strong network of loyal figures all around UzSSR. In fact, Rashidov was able to divide the front of Tashkenters, coopting a part of them: i.e. were the Tashkenter buro members as Musakhanov and Salimov – who spent their previous careers in Tashkent and Moscow – or Khojaev, who became a new member in 1976, and rose his career in Samarkand and Namangan.³⁰⁶ As we have seen, this loyalty was more career/personal than territorial based, defining a typical case of institutionalized patrimonialism of the top republican leadership that was directly linked to the FS. As Norling clearly notes:

the vast majority of Uzbek obkom First Secretaries under Rashidov were parachuted into these positions from elsewhere and did not rise through the oblasts in question. Of the 32 obkom First Secretaries for whom complete data are available under Rashidov, only 10% percent had served in the oblast of appointment immediately prior to being named First Secretary, only 4% remained in the province after terminating service, and around 45% came from a position in the republic-level government. Notably, more than 76% of these obkom First Secretaries had served in more than three oblasts during their careers and only 21% were natives of the oblast in which they served [...] Finally, 72% of the obkom First Secretaries under Rashidov served in both parts of Uzbekistan’s historical divide, the former Khanate of Kokand and Emirate of Bukhara."³⁰⁷

Such a ‘nation building experiment’ clearly demonstrates how influential the FS was and how the obkoms were not necessarily ruled by locals; this downplays the persuasiveness of different assumptions made about the clans’

³⁰⁵ On 29 December 1973, Sharaf Rashidov made his hometown of Jizzak - formerly part of Samarkand oblast - into a separate oblast, presumably in order to expand the bases of Jizzak elites. The Jizzak oblast became a symbol of the Rashidovian elite and was abolished by Rafiq Nishanov during his derashidovization course in September 6, 1988. It was reestablished by Islom Karimov on 16 February 1990 during the rehabilitation of Rashidov.

³⁰⁶ Tunçer-Kilavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*, 120.

³⁰⁷ Norling, “Myth and Reality: Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan,” 198–99.

territoriality.³⁰⁸ Rashidov's transformism, paternalism, and his attitude to satisfy the needs – with resources that patronage relations provided – of almost all of the elite groups led to a huge consensus toward his regime, avoiding his clients competing or looking for patronage elsewhere. Furthermore, another base to build Rashidov's network was related to personal and family ties, infiltrating his relatives and friends into important government positions: two of his daughters married important men affiliated to the Muminov clan who had a decisive influence on the Samarkand and Bukhara regions. His son was also married to a daughter of Kallibek Kamalov - the FS Karakalpak obkom (1963–1984) - also maintaining a firm influence over the Karakalpak clan. This 'patrimonial contract' offered protection and was set in general terms and not in details, allowing sort of 'fluid' relationships and discretionary autonomy at lower levels.

As we have seen, patronage was a typical informal power practice in the USSR and particularly tolerated in Uzbekistan, where it could combine with some traditional elements of the Uzbek society – such as the clans – defining that sort of neo-patrimonial situation we have described above. However, it had to be functional to the center's interests. As Everett underlines: "if Moscow depended upon them to a degree [...] they were dependent ultimately upon Moscow for their tenure of power."³⁰⁹ This interdependence relation clarifies that, ultimately, Moscow tolerated these proto-states (or 'reigns') within Soviet borders, but it could define their limits and their own persistence if they became counterproductive to the central state. In the next chapter, we will analyze the main legitimation factor of Rashidov's tenure – the improvement of cotton monoculture in the UzSSR – and then the origin of the 'Uzbek cotton affair', as a dramatic example of how all these dynamics combined, creating the preconditions for a critically irreversible situation where Moscow imposed once again its authority in Central Asia, retracting 'from above' that local-level autonomy.

³⁰⁸ Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia, Perceptions and Pact*.

³⁰⁹ Tom Everett, *Central Asia, Aspects of Transition* (London & New York: Routledge, 2003).

2 THE ‘COTTON REPUBLIC’

*Золотые руки делают белое золото!*¹

Brezhnev: “Round it off to six million, Sharafchik!”

Rashidov: “Yes sir, Leonid Illich!”²

Cotton has been defined as an element of social “proletarianization” across the world, characterizing the history of human development as well as international economic and power relations.³ In Soviet history, cotton also became a crucial element at the center of economic, social and even political dynamics. In fact, cotton emerged as an issue to be exploited by local politicians in order to legitimize their power towards the center of the empire. The Russian conquest and the later Soviet experience imposed a new political, economic, and social system in Central Asia where Uzbekistan became a region for intensive agricultural production. In Soviet times, the region became hyper-specialized in cotton monoculture and related products,⁴ requiring the improvement of artificial irrigation networks as well as industrial machinery (sowers, harvesters, cultivators) and processing plants (to clean cotton and to produce cottonseed oil), chemicals (for fertilizers, pesticides, defoliants),

¹ “Golden hands make white gold” was a famous expression - often attributed to Brezhnev – used to thank Soviet cotton-growers.

² This alleged conversation between Brezhnev and Rashidov in the late ‘70s, became a famous anecdote that was even reported in an interview in Pravda (17 July 1988) with former Uzbek Party officials in prison in Moscow on charges of corruption. James Critchlow, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic’s Road to Independence* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 63, 74.

³ Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A New History of Global Capitalism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014).

⁴ In the age of ‘developed socialism’, Soviet Central Asia produced “approximately 95 percent of the USSR’s raw cotton and cotton fibers, 15 percent of its vegetable oils, 100 percent of its machinery and equipment for cotton growing, more than 90 percent of its cotton gins, a large quantity of looms, and equipment needed for irrigation.” Boris Z. Rumer, “Central Asia’s Cotton Economy and Its Costs,” in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 63.

textile mills, military industry etc. The origins of cotton monoculture lie in the colonial period. However, the CPUz received a strong push from the mid-1970s when Uzbek cotton became the main social, economic, and political strength of the republic within the Soviet system. Therefore, the following analysis of the history of the imposition of cotton monoculture in Uzbekistan has numerous functions. Through cotton development in the UzSSR it is possible: to follow the steps of the ‘technological modernization and economic development of a backward region’ narrative; to understand how, from a political history perspective, cotton became the key component of maintaining legitimacy and stability for local cadres; to identify the environmental characteristics that led to a redefinition of the ecosystem, and one of the worst environmental disasters in human history; and finally, to understand the roots of the interdependence of the center and the periphery of the Soviet system and – as will be taken up in more detail in the next chapter – how this became highly salient in the course of the ‘Uzbek cotton affair’.

2.1 The origins of cotton monoculture

The imposition of cotton monoculture in Uzbekistan proceeded gradually over the last century. Its origins are identifiable in the colonial system of Tsarist Russia. However, this policy was exponentially pursued during the Soviet period through a series of phases.

2.1.1 The Tsarist cotton in Turkestan

The cotton plant is endemic in Central Asia, and has been used and cultivated for centuries. During the colonial period, Russians encouraged the cultivation of cotton in the region,⁵ promoting irrigation and land improvement⁶ and consolidating the trade between Turkestan and Saint

⁵ The main areas of cotton cultivation in Central Asia included the Syrdarya basin in the Fergana Valley, the Turan Lowland in Khorezm, the Hungry Steppe between Tashkent and Samarkand, the Zeravshan Basin close to Samarkand, the Surkhandarya area between Bukhara and Afghanistan, Chirchik, and the northern suburbs of Tashkent, Murgab (in Tajikistan), Tedzhen (in Southern Turkmenia), and the lands of the middle Amu Darya and parts of its lower course. *Ibid.*, 87.

⁶ Akmal Bazarbaev, “XIX Asr Oxiri-XX Asr Boshlarida Turkistonda Er Egaligi An’analari va Transformatsiya Jarayonlari,” in *O’zbekiston Qishloq Xo’jaligi Masalalari: Tarix va Taraqqiyot* (Samarqand: O’zReFATI, 2016), 85–95.

Petersburg during the “cotton boom”.⁷ In 1885, this led to the first large importation of cotton from Turkestan – 67 tons in total.⁸ In very warm and dry climatic conditions with low rainfall, the implementation of cotton cultivation went in parallel with the irrigation process⁹ that diverted the two main Uzbek rivers – the Amudarya and the Syrdarya – to the fields.¹⁰ In fact, Russians encouraged the irrigation of Uzbekistan in particular, as it was considered functional for cotton cultivation. In 1886, Grand Duke Nikolai Konstantinovich organized the construction of the Khiva-Aryk and the Bukhar-Aryk canals – which in 1896 were extended to form the Nikolai I Canal¹¹ – in the Hungry Steppe. One year later, the post of regional irrigator “for management of large irrigation canals in the region” was established by the Turkestan General-Governor and in 1892 the post of Official for Special Missions in irrigation was established by the General-Governor. In 1896, the construction of a canal of 300 versts (320 km) began, in order to connect Amu Darya waters to the lands of Bukhara Emirate. As well as this, in 1901 the construction of a colossal canal that was projected to irrigate 45,000 dessiatinas in the northeastern part of the Hungry Steppe began, and the work was completed in 1913. Later, the Romanov canal – “the first successful irrigational project in all Turkestan”¹² – began, irrigating 32 thousand dessiatinas with waters from the Syr Darya.¹³ The opening of irrigation canals became strategically important and also served as a diplomatic lever: in 1912, Russia wrested further allowances from the Bukhara Emirate, thereby acquiring its first irrigation concession there, totaling 72.5 thousand dessiatinas. At the same time, cotton production expanded throughout the empire, and 1913 was considered “the best year in the period before the revolution” with a production of 518,000 tons of cotton in what will

⁷ Beatrice Penati, “The Cotton Boom and the Land Tax in Russian Turkestan (1880s–1915),” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 14, no. 4 (2013).

⁸ Igor S. Zonn et al., *The Aral Sea Encyclopedia* (Berlin: Springer, 2009), 252.

⁹ Irrigation became a fundamental modernizing technique to reduce the costs of cotton culture. In fact, due to Central Asia’s hot and dry climate, 570 m³ of water was needed to produce a quintal of cotton, and in some regions of Uzbekistan, such as Khorezm, even 700-800 m³ because of the high salinity of the soil. However, this could be reduced to 400 in some regions – as in the Hungry Steppe – where more advanced dripping irrigation technology was installed. Rumer, “Central Asia’s Cotton Economy and Its Costs,” 79.

¹⁰ Zhores Aleksandrovich Medvedev, *Soviet Agriculture* (New York: Norton, 1987), 231.

¹¹ The Nikolay I canal had a throughput of 11 m³/s, length 70 versts (75 km), and an area of irrigation for 7,000 dessiatinas. Zonn et al., *The Aral Sea Encyclopedia*, 253.

¹² *Ibid.*, 254–55.

¹³ Vasili Barthold, *A History of Irrigation in Turkestan*, 1963.

be Uzbekistan.¹⁴ As grand as this seems, production was to further increase tenfold in less than seventy years.

2.1.2 The Bolshevik recipe for Uzbek cotton

The development of cotton and irrigation in Central Asia continued under the Bolshevik regime. In 1918, a decree from Lenin assigned “50 million rubles for irrigational works”, creating the Turkestan Board of Water Management (*Turkvodkhoz*) and a Technical Irrigational Committee to manage water issues in the region. In that moment, all main canals and irrigation construction in the Turkestan Republic were placed under the jurisdiction of the People’s Commissariat of Agriculture of Russia.¹⁵ Then, in 1920, a decree of the Council of People’s Commissars of the RSFSR “about restoration¹⁶ of cotton culture in the Turkestan and Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republics”¹⁷ laid the foundations for the imposition of cotton monoculture in Uzbekistan. The logic was for each region of the country to specialize in one output, which would maximize labor efficiency and promote the development of the socialist state in a context of permanent economic interdependence. The Bolshevik campaign for improving cotton cultivation and irrigation in Turkestan was even followed at the ideological level. Indeed, in 1921 Lenin remarked on the importance of irrigation as a base for building socialism, championing “irrigation, for more than anything else it will revive the area and regenerate it, bury the past and make the transition to socialism more certain.”¹⁸ Hence, cotton production became a state matter and had an impact on the formation of a special management system.

¹⁴ Arif Alimov, *Uzbekistan. Another Big Leap Forward* (London: Soviet Booklets, 1960), 15.

¹⁵ Zonn et al., *The Aral Sea Encyclopedia*, 255.

¹⁶ Restoration was a proper term, considering that the production of raw cotton dramatically decreased during the civil war, and only in 1928 the pre-war levels were reaffirmed again. In fact, the production of white gold fell from 517.2 thousand tons in 1913 to 205.8 in 1924 and recovered during the first FYP reaching 533.3 in 1928, 744.3 in 1930 and 785.8 in 1932. Azizur Rahman Khan and Dharam P. Ghai, *Collective Agriculture and Rural Development in Soviet Central Asia* (London: Macmillan Press & ILO, 1979), 21.

¹⁷ Zonn et al., *The Aral Sea Encyclopedia*, 256.

¹⁸ Vladimir Ilich Lenin, “To the Comrades Communists of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Daghestan, and the Mountaineer Republic,” in *Collected Works, Vol 32* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 318.

In Uzbekistan, Stalinism would further accentuate the features of what was to become the main base for Soviet cotton. In fact, collectivization was initiated first in the cotton sector, starting in 1925 in the fertile Ferghana Valley.¹⁹ Parallel to this, in 1928 the first plan for the industrial reconstruction of the republic was announced in great fanfare as the main goal to purpose²⁰ and collectivization started to take massive proportions, encompassing the whole of the Uzbek agricultural system. At that time, Soviet propaganda supported the campaign of modernization of Uzbek rural areas and even the Soviet playwrights Ilf and Petrov, in their “Twelve Chairs” (1928), had Ostap sarcastically declare that in the USSR everyone “drank to public education and to the irrigation of Uzbekistan.”²¹

As the Soviet system was erected in Uzbekistan, the Zarafshan and Ferghana Valleys emerged as the main agricultural centers and, after collectivization, as the primary areas in which economic resources were developed.²² In that period, the economic planning regime was implemented and Uzbekistan became the first region in the Soviet economy for the production of cotton. As a result, all economic and social energies were focused on cotton. Traditional economic patterns were abandoned and most of pastures and agriculture fields were destroyed to open space for the ‘white gold’ monoculture that, after 1931, was directly controlled by Moscow planners.²³

The Stalinist recipe - based on collectivization and forced settlement, and aimed at boosting cotton production - contributed to the rural character of society in Uzbekistan.²⁴ The sovietization of the agriculture sector – in which

¹⁹ Alimov, *Uzbekistan. Another Big Leap Forward*, 14.

²⁰ According to Alimov, the construction of “new industries had been started, including coal, chemicals, farm machines and electric power” and in the first FYP (1929-1933) alone more than 200 industrial complexes were built, and the Turkestan-Siberian railway and the chemical plant in Chirchik completed. *Ibid.*, 7.

²¹ Ilya Ilf and Evgeny Petrov, *Dvenadtsat Stulyev* (Moskva: ZiF, 1928).

²² Lawrence P Markowitz, *State Erosion. Unlootable Resources and Unruly Elites in Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 32.

²³ In 1931 control over cotton production was transferred from the Sredazkhlopok to the national cotton boards and the Narkomzem – the People’s Commissariat for Agriculture – in Moscow was reorganized to have direct links with the cotton producing Central Asian republics. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 871, l. 17.

²⁴ In the late '50s, almost 40% of the labor force was absorbed by kolkhozes and sovkhozes and only 25% was employed in industry. RGANI, f.6, op. 6, d. 1106.

millions of rubles in field development programs were invested throughout the 1930s – was implemented through two systems that integrated and collectivized rural society inside the system. The first were the kolkhozes - collective farms that were mainly composed of populations of the same region, strengthening regional identities. The second was the sovkhozes – or state farms. Both became key factors for including and collectivizing rural society inside the system. In fact, “these farms were critical instruments of social control through which state power was extended over the countryside”²⁵ and were hierarchically organized and put under the dual control of state and party. According to Markowitz:

the regime came to rely on farm chairs as agents of the state for mobilizing rural labor, distributing resources, utilizing technical equipment and fulfilling agriculture production plans. This provided farm chairs with informal authority as large-scale operations and economic resources were placed under their control.²⁶

During the second FYP (1933-1937), massive investment in irrigation infrastructure of some 27.1 million rubles occurred, mainly concentrated in those oblasts where cotton production was more intensive, such as Khorezm, Ferghana, Samarkand, Tashkent, and Bukhara. Also, a plan to develop the desert lands of Karakalpakya was promoted and in 1935 the *Kyzketken* – the main canal of the oblast, with a length of 25 km and a charge of 210 m³/s – which drew water from the Amu Darya was constructed. Parallel to this, the Soviet regime formalized incentives for cotton cultivation in Central Asia through the *premiï-nadbavok* (premiums) and the *kontraktsionnyi dogovor* (contractual agreements).²⁷ These projects set the stage for a systemic and intensive regimen of land use aimed at the cultivation of cotton in the region.

However, besides these large innovations, the real turning point came in the period 1937-1939 with the completion of major infrastructure projects. In 1938, “investments in these regions [...] alone amount[ed] to more than 7 million rubles, which is a significant amount when viewed alongside the total investments in Uzbekistan for the five years prior”.²⁸ In 1939, the CC ACP(B)

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Grey Hodnett, “Technology and Social Change in Soviet Central Asia: The Politics of Cotton Growing,” in *Soviet Politics and Society in the 1970's*, ed. Henry W Morton, Rudolf L Tökés, and John N Hazard (New York: The Free Press, 1974), 68.

²⁸ In 1938, the total irrigation investment in Khorezm amounted to 2,055,000 rubles, in Ferghana 1,665,000, in Samarkand 1,000,000, in Tashkent 868,000, and in Bukhara

approved a decision “about measures on the further increase of the cotton industry in Uzbekistan”²⁹ that allocated heavy investments for irrigation in the UzSSR: five million rubles for completing the Large Ferghana canal – a colossal infrastructure project that the regime celebrated as “the victory of man over the desert”³⁰ – and another 10 million³¹ for the Southern and Northern Ferghana canals, the Tashkent canal, the Kattakurgan water transfer facility in Samarkand, the Tash-Sakin canal in Khorezm, and the unification of the Su-Eli and Lenin-Yab canals in Karakalpakstan into one large canal named after V.I. Lenin.³² These innovations contributed towards a Soviet production record of cotton that was about 2.24 million tons annually in the early ‘40s.³³ Then, during wartime, the industrialization of the UzSSR and the relocation of industries in the region went alongside the development of the cotton sector as well. This increasing demand was also due to the fact that cotton was a strategic resource for the war effort. In fact, the military textile industry drew heavily on this cotton for producing cheaper and resistant uniforms, for camp logistics, and for the manufacture of explosives. In fact, cotton was used to produce gunpowder and blasting material for explosives such as nitrocellulose, pyroxylin, and the so-called ‘gun cotton.’³⁴

720.000. Meanwhile, the other seven provinces received just 922,000 rubles. Cf. Markowitz, *State Erosion. Unlootable Resources and Unruly Elites in Central Asia*, 40–41.

²⁹ Zonn et al., *The Aral Sea Encyclopedia*, 257.

³⁰ Alimov recalls the event, stating: “None of us will ever forget the summer of 1939, when 160,000 peasants from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan set to work to build the 170-mile-long Ferghana Canal. They did it in forty-five days” Alimov, *Uzbekistan. Another Big Leap Forward*, 13.

³¹ Markowitz, *State Erosion. Unlootable Resources and Unruly Elites in Central Asia*, 41.

³² The “Lenin” canal - 110 km long and with a head charge of 240 m³/s – was constructed to irrigate the Hodzhely and Kungrad regions, on the left bank of the Amu Darya.

³³ Critchlow, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic’s Road to Independence*, 63.

³⁴ Pikhoya comments: “The cotton had a significant importance for the military industry complex, and in particular for the production of gunpowder. It was generally a scarce and highly demanded raw material for many productions, that was long-awaited by Moscow that prompted to produce more cotton and never met the effective demand, from gunpowder to be pillowcases. Therefore, cotton was included in the category of scarce (defitsyt) goods.” Personal interview with Rudolf Germanovich Pikhoya, Moscow, 10 December 2015. Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A New History of Global Capitalism*, xii–xiii; Rudolf Germanovich Pikhoya, *Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii Boris Nikolayevich Yel’tsin* (Moskva: Komsomol’skaya Pravda, 2015).

2.1.3 The post-war cotton planning

In order to further enforce the cotton sector in the UzSSR, action was taken even before the war had ended. In 1944 the CC ACP(B) approved a decision "about measures for reconstruction and development of the cotton industry in Uzbekistan" and in 1945 the Sovnarkom of the USSR accepted the "measures on restoration and the further development of the cotton industry in Uzbekistan" providing "plans and actions for restoration and further rise of the cotton industry in Uzbekistan for the period of 1946–1953."³⁵ "The importance of cotton in the Soviet economy was emphasized in Stalin's speech of 9 February 1946, in which he mentioned cotton together with metals, fuels, and grains as products which were to constitute the bases for the postwar economy [...Then,] in February 1949 a decree was promulgated by the Soviet Council of Ministers to cope with the problem of increasing cotton production. The object of this decree was to create a cotton base which would attain and surpass the prewar level considerably."³⁶

In fact, even after WW2, Moscow reaffirmed the importance of developing cotton as well as other agriculture and livestock in Central Asia as strategic issues of the Soviet economic system. The goal was to promote the construction of large hydric infrastructures in order to maximize irrigation and agricultural production and to develop hydropower in Central Asia. In 1948, the Farhad hydrosystem³⁷ was constructed and in 1950, under Stalin's initiative, the proposal of the SM USSR to construct the Turkmen canal was approved to divert Amu Darya waters to the Western part of the Karakum desert. A year later, the construction of the Amu-Bukhara canal began, meanwhile, in 1952 the SM USSR approved a decision (N° 3975) about irrigation and land-reclamation for the further development of cotton production in the Andijan, Namangan, Ferghana, and Surkhandarya regions of the UzSSR. In 1954, the CC CPSU promoted plans for further development of cotton production in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan for the period 1954–1958.³⁸ In fact, after the '50s the Uzbek irrigation system began to use pumps and automated

³⁵ Zonn et al., *The Aral Sea Encyclopedia*, 258.

³⁶ CIA, "CIA/SC/RR94 - Soviet Cotton Production in the Postwar Period," 1955, 3, 7.

³⁷ "A hydroelectric power station and water reservoir of daily regulation with useful volume of 0.15 km³, [...] providing a main water draw-off from Syrdarya for irrigation of all the Hungry and Dalverzinsk steppes". Zonn et al., *The Aral Sea Encyclopedia*, 258.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 259.

machines,³⁹ proceeding parallel to a major campaign for the exploitation of Central Asian steppe and desert territories that was following the policy encouraged by the new Soviet leadership. Indeed, after 1953, Khrushchev heartened the “conquest” of the ‘Virgin lands’ of the Kazakh steppes. This plan redefined agriculture in Soviet Central Asia – later becoming a huge propaganda theme under Brezhnevism.⁴⁰ While the Virgin Lands campaign emphasized mainly the production of grain, it would echo across the whole Central Asian agricultural system, heavily affecting the cotton production as well as upsetting the path of Syr Darya.

At the same time as his agricultural programme, Khrushchev tried to bring the administrative apparatus closer to agriculture production, devolving authority to lower levels of the state and to collective farms.⁴¹ This plan of reforms sought to “reduce administrative agents' shirking of responsibilities by assigning them specific (as opposed to overlapping) duties, [and] these changes unintentionally provided collective farm chairs with increased maneuvering room within the soviet state apparatus.”⁴² Therefore, from the ‘50s, the managers of collective farms were enjoying such autonomy from the state farms that they could purchase and own “all the inputs used in agriculture

³⁹ Asat Niyazovich Abdullaev, “Uzbekistonda Paxta Yakkahokimligi va Uning Oqibatlari (1917-1991 Y.y.)” (Tarix fanlari doktori ilmiy darajasini olish uchun taqdim etilgan dissertasiya. Toshkent., 2010), 181.

⁴⁰ Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, *Trilogy. Little Land, Rebirth, The Virgin Lands* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1980).

⁴¹ During the Stalinist period, responsibility for exercising control over collective farms was divided between the rayon party committee (*raikom*) and the machine tractor station (MTS). Although these organizations commanded considerable formal authority, effective administrative controls over collective farms were not established. The Khrushchevian decentralization reforms would inevitably change this pattern.

⁴² From 1953, “all those functions originally assigned to the inspection apparatus of the USSR Ministry of agriculture were transferred to a system of inspectors at the provincial level, placing them under the authority of specialized organs within obkom offices. This turned the Ministry into a coordinating apparatus with much less authority to intervene in agricultural production. Further, [after] March 1954, collective farm chairs were placed on the *nomenklatura* of the provincial party (obkomy) and republican central committees, which reflected the fact that a much larger proportion of farm chairs were members of the party. Then, in the late ‘50s farm chairs received more autonomy when Khrushchev abolished machine tractor stations and transferred their personal and equipment to collective farms”. Markowitz, *State Erosion. Unlootable Resources and Unruly Elites in Central Asia*, 33.

production, determine the wages of farm workers, sell production to the state, and retain surplus income.”⁴³

As mentioned, the production of cotton was a strategic issue for the USSR and it became a key material even in the Cold War, to the extent that Soviet adversaries even commented on the issue. A top secret CIA report dated 1955 noted:

Edible oils, livestock feed, clothing and cloth of all types, canvas, fertilizers, lacquers, paper, plastics, tires, and explosives are but a few of the many diverse products derived from the processed cotton fibers, seeds, and linters. Cotton plays an important part in consumer goods production. Cotton cloth is the basis of the Soviet textile industry, constituting over 85 percent of textile production in the postwar years. [...] Cotton seed is the basis of about 25 percent of the production of the Soviet vegetable fats and oils industry. Cottonseed meal supplements the shortage of fodder crops in the important meat and dairy industries.⁴⁴

Until the '70s, Soviet cotton could compete for quantity and quality⁴⁵ with other international producers – such as the USA, Pakistan, India, Egypt, and China – and it was functional to the edification of the Soviet military machine. With the outbreak of the Cold War, cotton proved a necessary resource for the military sector – as mentioned, it was fundamental for producing explosives and gunpowder, and for the development of the ballistic industry because it was also used to produce double-base solid propellants for rockets and missiles. Data and statistics on these ‘special availments’ – supposedly

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ CIA, “CIA/SC/RR94 - Soviet Cotton Production in the Postwar Period,” 4.

⁴⁵ In a memorandum from the UzSSR Ministry of Light Industry on 7 September 1977, the agency Gosstandard defined the quality and the seasonal schedule for the cotton crop. In fact, the quality depended on the maturity of the cotton flower and first quality cotton was taken from a cotton flower matured to 50-60%; the second quality from a flower matured to 20-30%, and the third quality remained in the fields to be processed with the machines. TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 4424, ll. 56-57.

collected in the Minsredmash⁴⁶ and Minobmash⁴⁷ files – are still classified and is difficult to estimate the share of cotton – as well as the activity of the “closed factories”⁴⁸ – that was devoted to the development of the Soviet military programme. Therefore, ensuring continuous and expanding cotton production became a key issue for the Soviet cadres in order to compete in the arms race on a global scale.

During the “60s – the so-called “golden age of socialism,”⁴⁹ defined by Graziosi as the “last vital decade”⁵⁰ of the USSR – the Soviet command economy consolidated cotton monoculture in Uzbekistan, in order to provide “cheap raw material for industry elsewhere” in a colonial-like system that paid scant heed to return on capital investment and environmental costs.⁵¹ At this time, Moscow’s strategy was aimed at modernizing cotton culture to avoid using manual labor or other phenomena as *shefstvo*⁵² which illicitly used a

⁴⁶ The Ministry of Medium Machine Building (Minsredmash) was established in 1953 to supervise the Soviet nuclear industry, including production of nuclear warheads. Its apparatus was directed from the center and operating within the republics. Ligachev describes Minsredmash as “a state within a state, an industrial empire with its own factories, institutes, even cities.” Its archives are collected in RGAE, f. 8115 (but just for the period 1939-1946) and in RosAtom archives. Yegor Kuzmich Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev’s Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 216.

⁴⁷ Ministry of General Machine Building (Minobmash), established in 1965 for space and ballistic issues.

⁴⁸ Buttino reconstructs the story of the Kinap, a ‘closed factory’ in Samarkand that was producing military equipment and that was apparently famous for its production of loudspeakers. Marco Buttino, *Samarqanda. Storie in Una Città Dal 1945 a Oggi* (Rome: Viella, 2015), 323.

⁴⁹ Nikolaus Katzer, “Dans La Matrice Discursive Du Socialisme Tardif. Les «Mémoires» de Leonid Il’ič Brežnev,” *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 54, no. 1–2 (2013).

⁵⁰ Andrea Graziosi, *L’Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), 235.

⁵¹ Jack F Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire : The American Ambassador’s Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1995), 21–22.

⁵² The word *shefstvo* literally refers to “the creation of patronage relations between units of the armed forces and local governments”. These human resources were informally used in civil administration and productive systems (such as the cotton harvest) and the term takes on a broader meaning. Elisabeth Sieca-Kozłowski, “The Inextricable Ties Between Society and The Army in Post-Soviet Russia: The Resurgence of Shefstvo Under Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin,” *The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies*, no. 8 (2008).

labor-force that was already occupied.⁵³ The recipe was easy: the improvement of mechanization – especially from 1958⁵⁴ - and irrigation⁵⁵. Therefore, the Soviet regime continued to pursue a number of projects for the development of cotton cultivation, completing at the end of the '50s several irrigation and hydric works for improving cotton culture, such as the Katta-Kurgan⁵⁶ reservoir between Bukhara and Samarkand, the Kampyr-Ravat dam irrigation network (which brought water to about 500,000 acres), the Northern and Southern

⁵³ A US intelligence report followed the *shefstvo* phenomenon in the UzSSR, reporting an interesting passage: “In December 1959 Khrushchev attended a party meeting in Uzbekistan. As the main speaker of the occasion, Sh. R. Rashidov, the first secretary of the Uzbekistan Communist Party, described the progress made in the agriculture of Uzbekistan and offered several optimistic forecasts on future farm production. At one point in his speech, while he was elaborating on the progress being made in the changeover to machine labor on the kolkhozes and sovkhoses of Uzbekistan, Khrushchev interrupted him: “It would be a good thing if pupils, students and soldiers were not used at the harvest.” Rashidov replied: “In 1960 not a single student or pupil, not a single soldier will work at the harvest.” Whereupon Khrushchev said: “We would welcome that.” This passage is interesting because it exposes an informal practice that remained in place throughout the Soviet period. In fact, even in the following years the calls to participate in the ‘cotton battle’ drew heavily on military and paramilitary staff. For example, in 1976 during the 5th Congress of the Uzbek DOSAAF – Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Fleet, a very famous paramilitary sport association in the USSR – attendees were directly reminded of the commitments of the paramilitary ‘volunteers’ for the production of Uzbek ‘white gold.’ R. Kolkowicz, “Memorandum RM-3360-PR - The Use of Soviet Military Labor in the Civilian Economy: A Study of military ‘Shefstvo,’” 1962, 1; FBIS, “Translations on USSR Military Affairs. No. 1262,” 1977, 47.

⁵⁴ Richard Pomfret, “State-Directed Diffusion of Technology: The Mechanization of Cotton Harvesting in Soviet Central Asia,” *The Journal of Economic History* 62, no. 1 (2002): 170.

⁵⁵ In these years, the CC CPSU and the SM USSR adopted a number of decisions to increase irrigation and cotton production, particularly n° 1059 (6 August 1956) “About irrigation of virgin lands of the Hungry Steppe in Uzbek and Kazakh SSR for increasing cotton production”, and n° 645 (14 June 1958) “about the further expansion and acceleration of works on irrigation and land-reclamation in Uzbek SSR, Kazakh SSR and Tadjik SSR.” Zonn et al., *The Aral Sea Encyclopedia*, 260.

⁵⁶ The CPUz reported that it “contains 760 million cubic yards of water. It improved the water supply of 1 million acres and irrigated for the first time more than 150,000 acres”. Alimov, *Uzbekistan. Another Big Leap Forward*, 13.

Ferghana canals,⁵⁷ and the big irrigation scheme between Surkhandarya and the TaSSR embodied in the construction of the large Gissar Canal etc.

The results were publicized prominently. Within the first 40 years of Soviet power, 2 million acres of new fields in Uzbekistan were irrigated,⁵⁸ assuring a victory over the desert that Arif Alimov, chairman of the SM UzSSR (1959-1961), presented in glowing terms:

Each big canal and each hydro-technical development means another oasis, new thousands of acres of cotton, new villages, new orchards and vineyards.⁵⁹

All these efforts were channeled to cotton production and in turn 'white gold' became the main means of legitimizing the ruling elite. In fact, after the late '50s purges mentioned in the first chapter – which stripped Central Asian parties that were not able to satisfy Moscow's demands (in particular the Tajik party) – it became clear that fulfilling the plan, at any cost, was a matter of survival for local ruling elites, who had to positively demonstrate their commitment to the Soviet cause, inexorably influencing the fate of the republic's development. Therefore, the seventh FYP⁶⁰ planned a final target of 3.6-3.8 million tons of cotton in 1965 and a further growth of cotton fields.⁶¹ Initial results were on target, with a record crop of 3,150,000 tons in 1959 that was publicized with great fanfare by the CPUz. This first triumph of 'Rashidov's reign' confirmed the newly appointed FS as a credible partner for Moscow. When forecasts suggested the plan would be exceeded and would reach 4 million tons by 1965,⁶² Khrushchev was encouraged in his belief in the 'leap forward' of the Soviet economy, reinforcing his optimism about prospects of the Soviet economic system against the capitalist world.⁶³ At that time, Alimov stated:

⁵⁷ Officially these two canals had "improved the irrigation of about 200,000 acres and given water to 35,000 acres of land never irrigated before." Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 13.

⁶⁰ The seventh FYP plan lasted for seven years (1959-1965) and was called *semiletka*.

⁶¹ In 1940, the land under cotton in Uzbekistan was 923,500 acres, in 1950 1,098,100, and in 1965 1,549,900. William Fierman, "The Soviet 'Transformation' of Central Asia," in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 20.

⁶² Alimov, *Uzbekistan. Another Big Leap Forward*, 16.

⁶³ At the XXI Congress of the CPSU in January 1959, Khrushchev launched his challenging competition with capitalist economies declaring: "Let's lay out our 'wares'. Let the socialist and capitalist worlds each lay out their own. And let each system show where and how long the working day is; how many material and spiritual benefits are received

Today we are making another big leap forward. We know there could have been no seven-year plan, nor any page in this plan devoted to Uzbekistan, if the October Socialist Revolution had not been victorious in Russia, if we had not covered a long and difficult, but joyous, path of struggle and victories.⁶⁴

The Uzbek victory was then presented in numbers. In 1960, almost 14,000 km² of Uzbek land was officially declared to be under cotton⁶⁵ and there were more than 80,000 km of irrigation canals and 28,000 km of collector and draining networks.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, central planners increased the cultivation of fruit, vegetables, rice, jute, kenaf, tobacco etc. Irrigation was the key priority⁶⁷ and the cotton sector attracted most of the UzSSR investments. Then, on the eve of the '60s, the conversion of kolkhozes into sovkhoses was progressing,⁶⁸ and crop mechanization was becoming a priority in the agro-industrial development of the UzSSR. Republican complexes such as the *Tashselmash* in Tashkent were officially producing for the seventh FYP “28,000 cotton-picking machines, 52,000 tractor-drawn seeders, 75,000 cultivators, 70,000 tractor-drawn implements, a large number of tractors, and many other machines.”⁶⁹ In addition, at that time cotton-related industrialization was also implemented, producing for the same period “6,000 roving machines, more than 2,000 twiners, almost 3,000 spinning machines, and other machinery”⁷⁰ for cotton transformation in order to increase the output of cotton products.⁷¹

by the working man; what housing he is provided with; what chances he has of getting an education, what part he plays in government, in the political life of his country, and who is master of all the material and cultural wealth—the man who works, or the man who doesn't work but possesses capital.” *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁶ Sharaf Rashidovich Rashidov, *Soviet Uzbekistan* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1982).

⁶⁷ This position was kept through a series of steps. In 1961, the Karshinskiy canal and Self-flowing South Hungy Steppe canal (length 127 km, head charge 360 m³/sec) named after A.A. Sarkisov were completed. Zonn et al., *The Aral Sea Encyclopedia*, 260.

⁶⁸ By 1 January 1961, in UzSSR alone 54 kolkhozes were proposed to be converted in sovkhoses out of a total of 1146 kolkhozes. The number of sovkhoses created on the basis of the kolkhozes in 1954-1960 was 94. Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Fursenko, *Arkhivi Kremlya, Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964. Postanovleniya 1959-1964. Tom 3* (Moskva: Rosspen, 2015), 153–54.

⁶⁹ Alimov, *Uzbekistan. Another Big Leap Forward*, 10.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ “During the seven-year period output of cotton fabrics will rise 40 per cent; manufacture of silk fabrics will go up from 21 million yards in 1958 to 94 million yards in 1965.” *Ibid.*, 11.

2.1.4 Cotton for Communism construction

However, the real “revolution” arrived during the XXII Congress of the CPSU (17-31 October 1961) with Khrushchev's program of “Communism in 20 years”⁷² that directly challenged the capitalist development model and that claimed the Soviet Union would enter “the period of full-scale communist construction”⁷³ by 1980. There, the necessity to improve irrigation and “to extend the area planted to cotton and increase its per-hectare yield”⁷⁴ as well as an acceleration in consumer good productions, science, industry, culture and, clearly, agriculture were highlighted. Among the cultures that the USSR was going to develop – including corn for which Khrushchev assumed the nickname *Kukuruznik* – cotton had a great importance in Soviet development and in the construction of communism. Recalling Soviet cotton production of 4.3 million tons in 1960, the FS CPSU presented an ambitious plan to reach an annual production of 8 million tons in 1970 and 10-11 million by 1980.⁷⁵ Substantially, Khrushchev was promoting monocultures at the republican level, assigning the corn and grain to Kazakhstan⁷⁶ – the center of the Virgin Lands campaign – and to Uzbekistan the status of major supplier of cotton in the USSR. The Soviet leader also stressed the importance of mechanization in order to reduce cotton harvest costs and gave a pragmatic example:

Cotton growing. An average of 52 hours at a cost of 25 rubles 30 kopeks is expended by the state farms of Uzbekistan to produce a centner of cotton. In the meantime, Comrade Kuchiev's comprehensively mechanized team, of the Malek State Farm, Tashkent Region, takes 10 hours at a cost of 7 rubles 30 kopeks.⁷⁷

⁷² Khrushchev's original quote from his speech at the Congress was “Мы руководствуемся строго научными расчетами. А расчеты показывают, что за 20 годы мы построим в основном коммунистическое общество.” From this time, ‘Communism in 20 years’ became a very famous slogan. William J. Tompson, *Khrushchev: A Political Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 238.

⁷³ Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, “Report of the Central Committee of the CPSU Delivered by N. S. Khrushchev, October 17, 1961,” in *Documents of the 22nd Congress of the CPSU. Vol I* (New York: Crosscurrents Press, 1961), 63.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁷⁵ Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, “Report on the Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,” in *Documents of the 22nd Congress of the CPSU. Vol II* (New York: Crosscurrents Press, 1961), 57.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 63–67.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 75.

Since that moment, the development of cotton monoculture and opening of new cultivated lands, mechanization, irrigation,⁷⁸ and the introduction of chemicals proceeded in parallel, becoming substantial pillars of the program that the CPSU was enforcing at the republican level.⁷⁹ However, the Khrushchev plans did not achieve significant success, failing to reach short term goals. In 1963, the drought halved crop yields in the virgin lands because of the intensive exploitation of monoculture – affecting especially wheat and thus the supply of bread. Therefore, the Soviet Union was forced to use 372 tons of its gold reserves for food imports, an embarrassing failure for the political establishment, which had unquestionably invested in the economic leap forward.⁸⁰ These bad results became one of the major reasons that the current soviet leader was ousted. In any case, his successor Brezhnev sought a change in ‘the settings’ of Soviet agriculture development but not its ambitions. He expressed his enthusiasm in 1964, when the UzSSR finally reached production of four million tons of raw cotton.⁸¹ Then, during the CPSU plenum (24 March 1965) devoted to agriculture, a new ‘efficient’⁸² and ‘managerial’ approach⁸³

⁷⁸ In 1963, began the construction of the Takhiatash hydro-unit on Amudarya, which guarantees water-security for up to 900 thousand hectares of grounds in the lower reaches of Amudarya basin; and on 24 December the decree 2540 of SM USSR “About spade-work for irrigation and land-improvement of steppe Karshinsk in Uzbek SSR and steppes of Kyzyl-Kum in Kazakh SSR.” was approved Zonn et al., *The Aral Sea Encyclopedia*, 260.

⁷⁹ This line was later confirmed by Khrushchev who, after his Central Asian trip in 1962 (29 September - 5 October) wrote a note to the CC CPSU on 12 October where he stated that the implementation of irrigation and canal building in Karshi and in the Hungry steppes had to proceed parallel to infrastructure building, particularly roads and railways. Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Fursenko, *Arkhivi Kremlya, Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964. Chernovye Protokol'nye Zapisi Zasedanii. Stenogrammy. Tom 1* (Moskva: Rosspen, 2015), 625; CPSU, *Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York: International Publishers, 1963), 82–91.

⁸⁰ Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 261–62.

⁸¹ Zonn et al., *The Aral Sea Encyclopedia*, 76.

⁸² George Feiwel, *The Soviet Quest for Economic Efficiency Issues, Controversies, and Reforms* (New York: Praeger, 1967).

⁸³ This was one of the pillars of the Kosygin economic reforms (1965-1971) that centralized the economy by re-establishing several central ministries, decentralizing the incentive systems for good performance, and redefining prices. Brezhnev promoted a line that sought improvements in the efficiency of the Soviet system by increasing investment in heavy industry, agriculture, and defense. Kosygin's reforms in agriculture gave considerable autonomy to the kolkhozers, recognizing their right to the contents

was finally defined that the Soviet agriculture policy had to follow during the next XXIII, XXIV and XXV congresses of the CPSU, confirming the duties for cotton production, also through an increase in scientific production through fertilizers, pesticides, defoliants and herbicides.⁸⁴ According to Rashidov, the important 1965 plenum was the “first occasion on which fundamental problems facing agriculture were being tackled in a business-like manner”⁸⁵ and a prompt for further mechanization,⁸⁶ irrigation, land improvement and the opening of new lands, which had a strong impact on the Uzbek agricultural system.⁸⁷ However, even if Brezhnev declared an output increase for many agricultural products (but not for cotton), the Soviet planners were not formulating a clear strategy for increasing the production and quality of white gold. In other words, Moscow demanded without giving a receipt and then the periphery had to find the solution.⁸⁸

of private farming. As a result, during the seventh FYP (1966–1970), large-scale land reclamation programs, construction of irrigation channels, and other measures, were enacted. However, the reform substantially failed and no major reforms were initiated on the economic and social levels. Meanwhile, the Soviet state was trapped in Cold War competition, having to sustain high expenditures on defense, thus privileging military expenditure over civil investments and other consumer goods. Robert Service, *History of Modern Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-First Century* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 380; Abraham Katz, *The Politics of Economic Reform in the Soviet Union* (New York: Praeger, 1972); Jan Adam, *Economic Reforms in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe since the 1960s* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989).

⁸⁴ Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 309.

⁸⁵ Ihor Gordijew, “Soviet Agriculture and the March, 1965, Plenum of the C.P.S.U.,” *The Australian Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (1967): 60.

⁸⁶ However, it seems that, until 1965, agricultural machines were not properly working for the supposed aims and cotton was preferred to be picked by human hands. From 1965, these lacks started to be solved, improving the mechanization and new technology. Abdullaev, “Uzbekistonda Paxta Yakkahokimligi va Uning Oqibatları (1917-1991 Y.y.),” 176.

⁸⁷ 1965 was a key moment in Uzbek agriculture. In the UzSSR, 600,000 hectares of new fields were opened between 1946-1965, and this process was accelerated during 1966-1985 with 1.6 million hectares of new lands opened and 160 new sovkhozes. According to Uzbek historiography, from 1965 to 1985, the agricultural production of Uzbekistan more or less doubled. Uzbekiston Fanlar akademiyasi Tarix instituti, *Uzbekiston Respublikasi Fan va Texnika Davlat Qummitasi. Tarix Shohidligi va Saboqlari* (Toshkent: Sharq, 2001), 292–93.

⁸⁸ Gregory Gleason, “Between Moscow and Tashkent: The Politics of the Uzbek Cotton Production Complex” (University of California, 1984), 109–10.

Another important moment for cotton development in Uzbekistan came just after the XXIII congress of the CPSU – which promoted the idea of “developed socialism”⁸⁹ – with the May 1966 CC CPSU plenum that was devoted to water engineering⁹⁰ and land reclamation.⁹¹ On that occasion, Brezhnev exclaimed:

We ourselves must be conscious and tell confidently the entire Party and the entire nation that this is not a transient campaign, this is a program in agriculture designed for a long period, a program requiring enormous efforts and no small amounts of capital investment and material and technological supplies. It is based on scientific and practical knowledge and on the potentialities that the Soviet economy now actually has.⁹²

Rashidov stressed the importance of economic development and in 1967 also used the expression “leap forward” to refer to Uzbek industrial and agriculture advances.⁹³ In such a way, he was able to ask for more funds and investments for the UzSSR - while the CPSU engagement in local issues

⁸⁹ This expression was used to define a threshold of USSR development sufficiently advanced that the country would advance ‘naturally’ to communism in an unspecified period.

⁹⁰ “The resolution of the May Plenum of CPSU CC (1966) defined a new stage of land irrigation development that was principally different from all past ones. For the conditions of Central Asia and Southern Kazakhstan, it meant, first of all, that better, more efficient irrigation was the most important precondition for further increase of the yields of technical, fodder, and forage crops as well as the extension of areas under irrigation for greater yields of raw cotton. In 1966–1986, the construction of water management projects and commissioning of Central Asia’s largest irrigation canals (such as Karakum, Karshi, Amu-Bukhara, and others) was pursued aggressively. Their headwater intake varied from 200 to 500 cu. m/s and more. Such large reservoirs as Andijan, Charvak, Chardarya, Tuyamuyun, and Nurek were constructed and put into operation (all in all, there were 80 reservoirs with a total capacity over 100 mln cu. m). This enabled regulation of river flows in this region. In 1965–1988, as a result of wide-scale irrigation works in the Central Asian republics and Kazakhstan, over 3 mln ha of new lands were developed and water supply to a greater part of previously irrigated areas was improved.” Zonn et al., *The Aral Sea Encyclopedia*, 241.

⁹¹ Rashidov, *Soviet Uzbekistan*, 55.

⁹² Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, *Leninskim Kursom, Rechi I Stat’i, T. 1* (Moskva: Izdatel’stvo Politicheskoy Literatury, 1970), 397.

⁹³ Directorate of Intelligence - CIA, “Intelligence Report. Policy and Politics in the CPSU Politburo: October 1964 to September 1967 (Reference Title: CAESAR XXX). 31 August 1967. RSS No. 0021/67,” 1967, 90.

increased.⁹⁴ In the UzSSR alone, the budget for the improvement of irrigated lands passed from 861 million rubles in the seventh FYP (1959-1965) to 4.57 billion in the ninth (1971-1975) and 6.061 in the tenth⁹⁵ in a sector that was attracting more and more investment from the center in a long term strategy.⁹⁶

The Brezhnevian path of agriculture development proceeded through the '70s. In his statement to the XXIV Congress of the CPSU, Brezhnev reported that over in the previous decade, the average annual production of Soviet cotton grew from 5 million (1961-1965) to 6.1 million (1966-1970) and just in 1970 it reached a record yield of 6,900,000 tons,⁹⁷ with an average productivity of 25 centners per hectare.⁹⁸ This output was presented as the result of the ongoing financial investments,⁹⁹ and as a product of mechanization,¹⁰⁰ water engineering¹⁰¹, irrigation and other gigantic projects that were even planning

⁹⁴ As the 1967 decision of the CC CPSU noted: "About the urgent measures on increases in production of rice, increases of water-security, and ameliorative improvements of the grounds of collective farms and state farms in the Karakalpak SSR", the 1970 decision n° 482 "About acceleration of works on irrigation and land development of the Karshinskaya steppe in Uzbek SSR," or the 1972 decision of CC CPUz and SM UzSSR "About measures on the further rise of agriculture in the Karakalpak SSR." Zonn et al., *The Aral Sea Encyclopedia*, 261-62.

⁹⁵ Rashidov, *Soviet Uzbekistan*, 55-56.

⁹⁶ In the years 1966-1986, 17.1 billion rubles were provided for improving the water system of UzSSR. Abdullaev, "Uzbekistonda Paxta Yakkahokimligi va Uning Oqibatlari (1917-1991 Y.y.)," 181.

⁹⁷ In a meeting with the republican party active on 8 September 1970 Brezhnev celebrated with Uzbeks who had exceed the plan by 300-400 thousand tons. RGANI, f. 80, op. 1, d. 389, l. 31.

⁹⁸ *Pravda*, 31 March 1971, p. 2

⁹⁹ An evident consequence of the Brezhnevian recipe was that Soviet agriculture's share of total capital investment grew from 15.5% (1961-1965) to 17.2% (1966-1970). Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 309.

¹⁰⁰ In the period 1966-1970, the Uzbek agriculture system was officially provided with 106,000 tractors, 31,700 cotton picker machines, 42,000 trucks, 33,500 sowing machines, and 22,000 cultivator machines. M. Iskanderov and R. Razzakov, "Povyshenie Effectivnosti Tekhnicheskogo Progressa v Promyshlennosti," *Kommunist Uzbekistana* 11 (1971): 22.

¹⁰¹ In 1970, the construction of the Tuyamuyunskiy hydro-system - 452 km from the mouth of the Amudarya - began, enabling irrigation of 500 hectares of land. With the hydro-system, three coastal water reservoirs were constructed: Kaparas - with full capacity of 1 km³, Sultanshanjar at 2.7 km³ and Kosibulak at 1.5 km³. In 1971 the construction of the Large Karshinskiy canal began. It drew 5 km³ of water annually and

to divert the water course of Siberian rivers to Central Asia. From the summer of 1966, plans to finally realize the '*perebroška*' were announced. The *perebroška* was a project to divert the course of Siberian rivers southwards, such as the Ob-Irtysh - or the Tobol, Ishim and others - in order to irrigate the Turgay lowlands, and then to reach the Amudarya, the Syrdarya and the Aral Sea through a gigantic infrastructure 2550 km long (130-300 meters wide and 12-15 deep and a capacity of 1,150 m³/s) called the 'Sib-Aral' canal, with preliminary costs amounting to 32.8 billion rubles. The project was aimed at creating an intensive agriculture area that could supply food for a 200 million people.¹⁰² During the congress, the realization of this futuristic infrastructure – for which nuclear charges had been planned for civil purposes, presenting gigantic financial (and probably ecological) costs – was embraced by Central Asian leaders who hoped to increase the water base in their republics.

its six pump stations lifted water 150 m above the Amudarya with a charge of 240 m³/s for about 5 km³/yr. In 1973, Amudarya's water finally reached the steppe of Karshi. Zonn et al., *The Aral Sea Encyclopedia*, 262.

¹⁰² Douglas R. Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom: Russian Nature Protection from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 415.

However, the realization of the project was delayed indefinitely¹⁰³ and hindered by a part of Russian intellectual society.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ The project to turn part of the Siberian rivers water goes back to the XIX century, when a debate within the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences started among geologists, agronomists and engineers. The project would be seriously considered in Soviet times and in November 1933 a special conference of the AN USSR approved a plan for a "reconstruction of the Volga and its basin", which included the diversion into the Volga of some of the waters of the Pechora and the Northern Dvina. In the early '70s started the diversion of the Pechora through Kama River toward the Volga and the Caspian Sea in the south-west of Russia and was promoted the idea of expanding the navigation through the 'Asia Channel' that could connect the Kara Sea-Caspian Sea-Persian Gulf. In 1971, during a IAEA conference in Vienna, was announced that for that task had been 'pacifically' used three 15-kiloton nuclear devices spaced 500 feet apart. In the wake of these successes - and hopes - also the Sib-Aral project was reconsidered in the early '70s. In 1971, was completed the irrigation and watering channel Irtysh – Karaganda, a first section of a possible project that was ensuring water to central Kazakhstan. In the same year, on the basis of a decision of the CC CPSU and the SM USSR (16 April 1971): "About measures on the further development of land reclamation and their agricultural development on 1971–1975", Gosplan USSR instructed the Ministry of Water Management of the USSR to develop actions to organize research and design work to transfer part of the run-off of northern rivers into the riverine basin of the Volga River and of Siberian rivers into the basins of the Syrdarya and Amudarya Rivers. In 1976, at the XXV Congress of the CPSU the final design was selected from the four proposed the preliminary work on the project started. The decision of the CC CPSU and the SM USSR to "carry out research and design work on the problem of transferring northern and Siberian rivers to the southern areas of the country" was accepted in 1978. This project appealed to Central Asian leaders and to the Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Resources of the USSR who saw an opportunity to manage huge investments. During the XXVI CPSU congress in 1981, the Turkmen, Uzbek and Kazakh delegates suggested that the project should be initiated during the XI FYP and the debate on the "Project of the Century" was followed even in the press. However, in the plan guidelines was stated that scientific preconditions had to be investigated before proceeding and even the chairman of SM USSR Tikhonov postponed the realization of the plan during a CC CPSU plenum in October 1984. Therefore, the huge costs of such a gigantic project and the opposition by Russian nationalist, ecologist, and reformist elements led to significant delays. Finally, on 14 August 1986 during a special meeting of the Politburo, it was decided to stop the work and the project was definitively dropped with a decision of the CC CPSU and the SM USSR "About stopping the work to transfer parts of the northern and Siberian rivers run-off." Jan Åke Dellenbrant, *The Soviet Regional Dilemma: Planning, People, and Natural Resources* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1986), 93, 182; Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*; Michael H. Glantz, *Creeping Environmental Problems and*

During the Congress, Brezhnev directly addressed the priority of increasing the cotton yield in Uzbekistan. In his words:

the expansion of reclaimed land and the introduction of crop rotations in Central Asia, primarily in Uzbekistan, will make it possible to increase the production of such a valuable crop, necessary to the country, as cotton.¹⁰⁵

Over the next decade, these aims would be implemented, defining the fate of Uzbek history in which cotton assumed once again an increasingly critical role. At the congress, Rashidov also “spoke about the upsurge in cotton production in Uzbekistan, about the construction of irrigation facilities on an unprecedented scale, about the extraction of gas,¹⁰⁶ a new sector in the Republic's economy. Uzbek gas is now conveyed to the neighboring Republics, to the Urals and to the central regions of the Russian Federation.”¹⁰⁷

Sustainable Development in the Aral Sea Basin (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 169; Edward A. Allworth, “The New Central Asians,” in *Central Asia: One Hundred Thirty Years of Russian Dominance, A Historical Overview* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 566; Milo D. Nurdyke, “The Soviet Program for Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Explosions” (Livermore, CA, 1996); Martha Brill Olcott, Lubomyr. Hajda, and Anthony Olcott, *The Soviet Multinational State: Readings and Documents* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1990), 143–46; Frederic Golden, “Making Rivers Run Backward,” *Time*, June 1982; M. I. Zelikin, *Istoriya Vechnozelonoy Zhizni* (Moskva: Faktorial press, 2001); NA, “Saving the Caspian,” *Time*, 1975.

¹⁰⁴ Dejevsky comments: “The press also started to attack cherished myths: in 1987, the project to divert the flow of the great Siberian rivers from north to south so as to provide irrigation to the desert lands of Central Asia was halted after a campaign waged by intellectuals on ecological grounds, partly in the columns of learned journals, but also in the press.” Mary Dejevsky, “Glasnost’ and the Soviet Press,” in *Culture and the Media in the USSR Today*, ed. Julian Graffy and Geoffrey A Hosking (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 31.

¹⁰⁵ Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, “The Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,” *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press* 23, no. 13 (1971): 9.

¹⁰⁶ Prior to launching full production of oil and gas fields in the Urals, the Caspian, and the Russian Far East, Uzbekistan was one of the main natural gas producers in the USSR, producing 250 bcm of gas in the decade 1960-1970 and exporting 70% of this to other republics of USSR. Saidakbar Rizaevich Rizaev, *Sharaf Rashidov. Shtrikhi K Portretu* (Toshkent: Yozuvchi, 1992), 68.

¹⁰⁷ CPSU, *24th Congress of The Communist Party Ff The Soviet Union. March 30-April 9, 1971. What the Congress Discussed and Decided* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1971), 23.

Therefore, in the early 1970s the basis of the next leap forward was laid, in so doing integrating increasing cotton production, economic development, and the political legitimization of the UzSSR. Moscow played a key role here: in the age of 'developed socialism', the central planners were demanding more cotton and undermining other cultures in the republic, reinforcing the UzSSR's de-facto economic dependence on a single sector: 65% of gross economic output of the republic, 60% of all Uzbek resource consumption, and 40% of the Uzbek labor force were dedicated to cotton.¹⁰⁸ The regime was also offering an illusion of 'honorable' inclusiveness to Uzbek leaders and people. This binding dependence was reinforced by a relationship of mutual 'adulation'¹⁰⁹ between the paternal Moscow leaders and their republican leader-children. Besides the aforementioned 'patronage' interpretation, this kind of relation between the center and the periphery was a typical key for reading the peaceful 'inclusiveness' of the Brezhnevian regime. In the early '70s, the Gensek described the republic in terms of Leninist modernity, declaring:

In the blossoming Uzbekistan of today we proudly see the results of the Party's titanic work, the selfless endeavor of millions of workers and collective farmers, scientists and intellectuals. It is a joy to see your splendid cities, your modern factories and mills, your well-cultivated fields and your blossoming orchards.¹¹⁰

Therefore, Uzbekistan was represented by the central authorities as a model republic and was awarded with the 'banner of friendship of people' in 1973. Brezhnev personally arrived in Tashkent to give the award and to confirm the duties of 'cotton republics'.¹¹¹ After noting the successes of the previous years, Moscow planners declared the ambition to increase total Soviet cotton production to 8 million tons per year (an output that was already expected to

¹⁰⁸ Ahmed Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia, Islam or Nationalism?* (London: Zed Books, 1995), 59; Rumer, "Central Asia's Cotton Economy and Its Costs."

¹⁰⁹ William A. Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1993).

¹¹⁰ Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, *Following Lenin's Course: Speeches and Articles, 1972-1975* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), 280.

¹¹¹ In a meeting on the activity of the party and agricultural issues of the 'cotton republics' held in Tashkent on 24 September 1973, Brezhnev asked for improving cotton production and irrigation and Rashidov confirmed the party commitments to produce at least 4,85 million tons for the third year of the current FYP. Turkmenistan had to provide 945 thousand tons, Tajikistan 775, Azerbaijan 450, Kazakhstan 300, and Kyrgyzstan 200. RGANI, f. 80, op. 1, d. 392, p. 47, 107-108 and KPUz, *Vernost Velikomu Soyuzu Bratskikh Respublik* (Tashkent: Uzbekistan, 1973).

be achieved in 1970), forecasting for 1973 production of 7.5-7.7 million tons – with Uzbekistan alone accounting for 4.9-5 million.

Annual Soviet production of cotton (thousand tons)¹¹²

	1961-1965	1966-1970	1970	1971	1972
USSR	4,996	6,099	6,890	7,101	7,296
UzSSR	3,337	3,982	4,495	4,511	4,709

During the award ceremony, on 27 September 1973 in Tashkent, the Gensek made a speech noting the great results of the UzSSR.¹¹³ He also announced a new ambition for UzSSR agriculture, setting a new production goal of five million tons. Therefore, the campaign for ‘inclusiveness’ and gratification proceeded parallel to a major request for Uzbek ‘white gold’ and to a broader call to modernize Soviet agriculture, even by using fertilizers and importing equipment from the West.¹¹⁴

In 1974, the campaign to increase cotton production in the UzSSR had a new impetus. On 30 April, Gosplan USSR added new priority tasks for Uzbekistan in its report to the SM USSR. The construction of hydropower and electro-stations, a new chemical complex in Ferghana in 1975-1976 – able to produce 40 thousand tons of chlorate-magnesium defoliants – and investment of at least 10 million rubles for building plants for cleaning cotton were

¹¹² RGANI, f. 80, op. 1, d. 390, ll. 155, 167, 170.

¹¹³ Brezhnev came to Uzbekistan for the ceremony of friendship of people (24 September 1973). The award was principally in recognition of Uzbek success in cotton production. It was noted that the UzSSR had surpassed the plan and supplied the state with 4.7 million tons, representing more than two thirds of Soviet cotton. Officially, this result made USSR the world’s top cotton producer in 1970. RGANI, f. 80, op. 1, d. 391, ll. 1, 7, 101.

¹¹⁴ In the early '70s, a new campaign to increase the use of fertilizers and agriculture equipment was promoted. This involved significant imports from the West. “In 1970, Soviet agriculture used only two-thirds as much fertilizer as American agriculture, although the sown area in the USSR was more than 70% larger. Soviet efforts to increase the supply and upgrade the quality of Chemical fertilizers in the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1971-75) clearly reflect[ed] Brezhnev’s resolve to raise crop yields—one of the key planks in his farm program.” Therefore, output of plant nutrients grew by 47% during 1971-74 and was scheduled for a further increase of 15% in 1975 to 22.2 million tons. CIA, “Intelligence Report. ER IR 75-7. Soviet Fertilizer: Expansion of Output and Exports. March 1975,” 1975, 1, 4, 10.

listed.¹¹⁵ In this accentuated phase, the Uzbek party and government were very active in seeking investments from the center and increases in the budget of the UzSSR, promising in return a greater supply of cotton. In June 1974, Rashidov and Khudayberdiyev requested an average increase of +15% in the sale price of raw cotton and a bonus of +50% outputs exceeding the plan. Such a request was not entirely improper; Uzbek cotton was sold at a low-middle level compared to other purchase prices for Soviet cotton. On July 2, the SM UzSSR and the CC CPSU agreed to increase prices to match Turkmen levels. Higher prices were argued to lead to higher profitability in Uzbek kolkhozes from 26 to 33% and in sovkhozes from 31 to 36%, but were also needed to ensure coverage for additional expenses, providing the state budget with 125 million rubles more. The measure was formalized on 5 July 1974 with SM USSR decree n° 551. Kosygin noted that it was possible to increase the average price of raw cotton by increasing the purchase price by 5% and due to this policy it was necessary to demand from the state budget extra 125 million rubles.¹¹⁶ The demands of the Uzbek leadership were therefore met, with a pledge in return to honor production plans. These dynamics triggered a process of reciprocally-increasing demands between Moscow and Tashkent that would explode in the following years.

In his speech in Tashkent for the 50th anniversary of the UzSSR on 22 October 1974, even Suslov congratulated the great success of the republic, noting particularly that despite a deep cultural history and literature, the "domination of feudalism" had made success even more unlikely. He noted how in 50 only, cotton production grew from 200,000 tons to five million tons. For this "great success" the republic was awarded with the Order of the October Revolution.¹¹⁷ On that occasion, the role of Uzbekistan and its leaders in the significant increase in raw cotton production in 1973 (4.9 million tons) and in 1974 (5.3 million tons) was clearly acknowledged. On 30 December 1974, the Presidium of the SS USSR recognized the "outstanding achievements in the management of the party organizations of the republic and for the implementation of the recommendations of XXIV Congress of the CPSU on the development of agriculture" - awarded Rashidov with the title of Hero of Socialist Labor, investing him with the Order of Lenin and the Hammer and Sickle gold medallion.

¹¹⁵ GARF, f. 5456, op. 108, d. 892, ll. 1-2.

¹¹⁶ GARF, f. 5456, op. 108, d. 892, ll. 8, 9, 12, 20.

¹¹⁷ RGANI, f. 81, op. 1, d. 210, ll. 5-9.

2.2 The road towards ‘6,000,000’

1975 was an emblematic year. It is generally recognized as the apogee of Rashidov’s efforts at regime consolidation, in which Uzbek ‘mature development’ was at the peak of its momentum and in which the UzSSR reached the height of its inclusiveness within the Soviet system. Ironically, it was also probably the beginning of the end, since a crisis in the Soviet system in Uzbekistan was just around the corner. 1975 was, in other words, the moment when the ‘chickens came home to roost’. In fact, in 1975 it became clear that the Soviet production system was drifting towards illusion and self-complacency, coming dangerously close to being unable to guarantee food self-sufficiency for the country.¹¹⁸ This self-illusive trend manifested poetically in the declining health of the Soviet leader¹¹⁹ and in the obvious general degeneration of the entire system.

2.2.1 The Soviet economic stagnation

Since the mid- ‘70s, economic stagnation¹²⁰ was masked by the triumphs of Soviet geopolitics in the ‘Global Cold War’¹²¹ competition and by the rhetoric of ‘mature’ or ‘developed socialism’. Agriculture, which had grown positively in the ‘60s and in the early ‘70s, saw the ratio of growth to investment decline precipitously. The increase in state debt produced by this state of affairs was exacerbated by further transfers to shore up the rural productive system.¹²²

¹¹⁸ The disastrous Soviet grain harvest of 1975 (140.1 million tons) sent a clear signal of this. Fortunately, the positive yield of 1976 (223.8 million tons) helped to remedy the situation. USDA Foreign Agriculture Service, “Agricultural Situation. Review of 1978 and Outlook for 1979: USSR” (Washington D.C., 1979), 3.

¹¹⁹ In 1975, Brezhnev suffered his first stroke.

¹²⁰ Gorbachev introduced the concept of *Period zastoya* (“Era of Stagnation”) to describe the lack of growth in the economic, social, and political spheres during the Brezhnevian era. Edwin Bacon and Mark Sandle, *Brezhnev Reconsidered* (Houndmills & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

¹²¹ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War : Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹²² In the decade 1965-1975, the number of kolkhozes in USSR decreased from 37,000 to 29,000, while the number of sovkhoses rose from 11,700 to 18,100, increasing government spending considerably. In parallel, the countryside began to empty; already in 1966, up to 53% of Soviet citizens was living in urban areas. Graziosi, *L’Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 320–21.

Graziosi concludes that the growth of the Soviet economy had been deliberately overestimated and, taking into account dramatic Soviet population growth, was effectively negligible on a per capita basis. The table below presents Graziosi's summary of the data collected by Mark Harrison – who compared official Soviet data (TsU) with CIA estimates, and those of Mortseen & Powell – and the evaluations of economist Grigory Khanin, who in 1987 calculated the true extent of Soviet stagnation and decline.

The Soviet economic stagnation (in % variation)¹²³

Period	Soviet output			Inflation		Labor productivity	
	Tsu	CIA, Mortseen & Powell	Khanin	TsU	Khanin	TsU	Khanin
1965-1970	7.7	4.9	4.1	1.9	4.6	6.8	3
1970-1975	5.7	3.0	3.2	0	2.3	4.6	1.9
1975-1980	4.2	1.9	1.0	-0.2	2.7	3.4	0.2
1980-1985	3.5	1.8	0.6	na	na	3	0

The Russian sociologist Viktor Zaslavsky also argued that, despite the brilliant official announcements in the Soviet press and propaganda, evidence of the stagnation and decline of the Soviet economy could not be found with Western (market) econometric indices. Instead, he pointed to other social indicators such as life expectancy, the median age and other demographic trends, infant mortality, the number of abortions, statistics on alcohol consumption and drug abuse, increasing crime, and so on.¹²⁴ Accurate data and a realistic debate on Soviet economic decline would have to wait, however, until the '80s. For the time being, the Brezhnevian recipe remained the only option in a state that was slowly collapsing under its own weight. The illusory self-satisfaction born of success in the 1960s remained the key mantra of a system incapable of seeing the truth and reforming itself.

The official narrative that the CPUz was promoting gave no hint of a warning. At the beginning of 1975, Rashidov – through *Pravda Vostoka*¹²⁵ –

¹²³ Ibid., 440; Mark Harrison, "Soviet Economic Growth Since 1928: The Alternative Statistics of G. I. Khanin," *Europe-Asia Studies* 45, no. 1 (1993): 146–47, 149–51.

¹²⁴ Viktor Zaslavsky, *Storia Del Sistema Sovietico. L'ascesa, La Stabilità, Il Crollo* (Roma: Carrocci, 2001).

¹²⁵ *Pravda Vostoka* (PV) was the main Russian language newspaper of the UzSSR and the official press organ of the CC CPUz, the SS and the SM UzSSR.

proclaimed with great fanfare the completion of the fourth year of the ninth FYP (1971-1975)¹²⁶ ahead of time,¹²⁷ and the “finish” was literally announced in all fields of production.¹²⁸ At the XVIII plenum of the CC CPUz (1 July 1975), Rashidov announced that during the final four years of the ninth FYP, the USSR was supplied with 19.5 million tons of Uzbek raw cotton – “2.1 million more than required in the plan” – and that in 1974 alone, Uzbekistan had produced 5.33 million tons (of which 2.715 had been harvested mechanically), recording productivity of 30.8 tons per hectare.¹²⁹

However, the media campaign did not report the deterioration in harvest quality, and the FS CPUz had to justify this qualitative shortage to the CC CPSU.¹³⁰ Meanwhile, the CC CPUz, the SM UzSSR and the Presidium of the SS UzSSR promoted the idea of a “labor victory”, declaring that 105% of the plan had been realized and that production in 1974 was +8,7% more than 1973, that productivity growth of 4% had been achieved, and even that the quality of cotton production had apparently increased. The party reported yet another record in annual cotton production, claiming that in 1966-1970 it had averaged 3.982 million tons per year and in 1974 alone delivered a record yield of 5.3301 million tons.¹³¹ In any case, the CPUz warned agricultural workers about the risks of water scarcity (recent seasons had been very dry) in the next year, inviting them to make more efforts in irrigation¹³² in order to open new

¹²⁶ The ninth FYP was considered, ex post, as a poor result for Soviet agriculture, which was hit by chronic drought and bad weather. This situation meant grain production was 70 million tons short of the planned target. William Burroughs, *Does the Weather Really Matter? The Social Implications of Climate Change* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 89.

¹²⁷ PV, 17672, 2, 5 January 1975, p. 1.

¹²⁸ PV, 17673, 3, 6 January 1975, p. 1.

¹²⁹ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 143, d. 2135 and PV, 17821, 153, 2 July 1975, pp. 1-2.

¹³⁰ In addition to these data, on 8 July 1975, the CC CPUz informed the CC CPSU that the quality was not satisfactory. In the last three years the share of top-grade cotton was 2.174 million tons (or 46.2%) in 1972, 2.2855 (46.6%) in 1973, and 2.399 (45%) in 1974. Meanwhile, second-grade cotton rose from 17.5 to 19.6%. This negative trend was presented as temporary, and the qualitative commitments for the following years were reiterated. RGANI, f. 5, op. 68, d. 1011, ll. 19-20.

¹³¹ PV, 17692, 24, 29 January 1975, pp. 1-2.

¹³² PV, 17676, 6, 8 January 1975, p. 1.

irrigated fields and canals and to have a greater provision of water¹³³ for improving the quality of cotton products.¹³⁴

In order to increase cotton production, Uzbek planners were still investing huge resources on improving fields and in the mechanization, which was seen as the best solution for improving quality and harvest speed.¹³⁵ The mechanization goal for 1975 was three million tons of cotton cropped by machines¹³⁶ and the Uzbek media started to promote this ‘revolution’, reporting successful stories of kolkhozes and villages that drastically improved their productivity in a very short time.¹³⁷ However, the results of mechanization were the reverse because the machines often broke the cotton fibers and significantly worsened the quality of the crop. For this reason, many kolkhozes and sovkhoses in the republic preferred to disobey the planners’ guidelines, sabotaging the machines and recurring to the traditional manual crop.¹³⁸ Furthermore, the party registered problems with the production of fine fiber cotton, targets for which were not realized in any districts.¹³⁹

Percentage of Cotton Harvested by machines in UzSSR¹⁴⁰

Year	1965	1970	1975	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
%	23	33	46	63	68	54	34	31	40	42	45	47

¹³³ *PV*, 17689, 21, 25 January 1975, p. 1.

¹³⁴ *PV*, 17677, 7, 9 January 1975, p. 3.

¹³⁵ *PV*, 17698, 30, 5 February 1975, p. 1.

¹³⁶ According to the plan for 1975, the UzSSR regions had to crop cotton as follows: Karakalpak ASSR, 350 thousand tons (of which 250 by machines), Andijan 600 (300), Bukhara 510 (235), Jizzak 280 (220), Kashkadarya 400 (200), Namangan 430 (200), Samarkand 530 (320), Surkhandarya 450 (220), Syrdarya 350 (265), Tashkent 430 (324), Fergana 585 (235) Khorezm 415 (250). *PV*, 17705, 37, 13 February 1975, p. 1.

¹³⁷ I.e. *PV* was reporting that due to mechanization, the kolkhoz “Kommunism” in Gulistan recorded an increase of productivity by 7%, corresponding a quintal of raw cotton by 1,8 man/day, a field productivity of 40 quintals per hectare, and picking 90% of its total production (4500 ton) with machines. *PV*, 17864, 196, 21 August 1975, p. 2.

¹³⁸ During my field research periods in Uzbekistan (August 2013, May-June 2015), I have collected dozens of stories from former rural workers who testified these practices in UzSSR.

¹³⁹ *PV*, 17699, 31, 6 February 1975, p. 1.

¹⁴⁰ Peter R. Craumer, “Agricultural Change, Labor Supply, and Rural Out- Migration in Soviet Central Asia,” in *Geographic Perspectives on Soviet Central Asia*, ed. Robert A.Lewis (London: Routledge, 1992), 156.

2.2.2 More cotton to the fatherland

From 1975, Moscow's call to increase cotton production in the republic had a wider echo: the XVII plenum of the CC CPUz of 6 February 1975¹⁴¹ received the orders of the plenum of the CC CPSU of December 1974 to increase the production of cotton even more.¹⁴² On that occasion, Rashidov was personally committed to ensuring further success in Uzbek agriculture and, following the guidelines of the XXIV CPSU congress, the CC CPUz fixed the productive goals for 1975. At the end of the year, the UzSSR had to produce 5.2 million tons of raw cotton (not less than three million by machines) and 600,000 tons of grains. The expectation was that the plan would be realized before December 20, 1975 and that it would exceed projections by 500 million rubles.¹⁴³ Rashidov was categorical: the republic had to honor the commitments made to the central state at any cost. At the same time, he always recalled the sacrifices that had been made by the republic and the excellent results that had been achieved in previous years. He noted the request to the plenum of the CC CPSU of March 1965 for technical innovation, chemical fertilizers,¹⁴⁴ high yielding seeds, and irrigation networks in order to increase cotton production. The results were that, from 1965 to 1974, the cotton production of the UzSSR increased from 3.746 million tons to 5.33, field productivity per hectare increased from 24.1 quintals to 30.8, the gross income of collective farms from 1.626 billion to 2.571 billion rubles, and the average individual income of farmers from 754 to 1156 rubles.¹⁴⁵ The party also announced and celebrated the construction of new canals in order to pursue its mission in cotton production.¹⁴⁶ At this point, Rashidov was ready to renew the republic's commitments for the next FYP, mobilizing the CPUz for its participation at the XXV congress of the CPSU (24

¹⁴¹ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 143, d. 2134.

¹⁴² *PV*, 17700, 32, 7 February 1975, p. 2.

¹⁴³ The party also fixed the goal of qualifying 240 Uzbek products with marks and of realizing the housing plan for 3,480,000 units before 29 December 1975. *PV*, 17704, 36, 12 February 1975, p. 1.

¹⁴⁴ At the beginning of the '60s, while Uzbek agriculture faced gigantic development requirements, the internal production of chemical fertilizers was still limited. I.e. in 1960, the Chirchik plant was capable of producing 'only' 2.2 million tons of mineral fertilizer per year. Alimov, *Uzbekistan. Another Big Leap Forward*, 9.

¹⁴⁵ *PV*, 17737, 69, 23 March 1975, p. 3. Despite the undeniable success of Uzbek cotton production, this economic data should be read with caution. In the Soviet system these statistics were often 'massaged' – and sometimes 'fake' – and did not consider costs or inflation indices.

¹⁴⁶ *PV*, 17750, 82, 8 April 1975, p. 2.

February 1976) and declaring that the Uzbek party would reach that “worthy meeting” even exceeding the plan by at least 10,000 tons in 1975, implementing mechanization and completing the crop within 30-35 days.¹⁴⁷ A hard commitment, the Uzbek leader nevertheless affirmed that the republic could meet it. Furthermore, Rashidov renewed the commitment with voters (for the election of 15 June 1975), promising improvements in new infrastructure, housing,¹⁴⁸ services, factories,¹⁴⁹ and more welfare to every Uzbek family.¹⁵⁰ Rashidov’s commitments seemed to be satisfying Moscow as much as the Uzbek population and cotton looked as if it was as a glue that linked the central state, the Uzbek government, and its people, creating in the process a complex system of mutual legitimation. Rashidov’s logic was focused on concentrating the republic’s efforts to the cause of Soviet cotton and, in return, obtaining from Moscow investments that would be redistributed – at least in part - for UzSSR civil infrastructure, thus simultaneously earning the legitimacy of CPSU cadres and the local population. Such a system – with the republican FS in the role of mediator at the center – would in fact work for years.

The CPUz leadership played on the triumphalism of the Uzbek people, reminding them of the gratitude that was expressed by the central leadership to the remote province of the Soviet system. Even Brezhnev, in a speech at the meeting of the Bauman electoral district, congratulated Uzbek cotton pickers for their hard work,¹⁵¹ and the CPUz declared that Uzbekistan was becoming a “model for cotton production organization” for both the other republics – such as Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan - and foreign countries.¹⁵² In exchange, the Uzbek party and government called for “More cotton to the

¹⁴⁷ PV, 17772, 104, 5 May 1975, p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ During Rashidov's reign, dozens of newly refurbished cities, including Navoi and Zarafshan, Yangiyer and Gulistan appeared on the map of Uzbekistan.

¹⁴⁹ In the mid-'70s an ambitious infrastructural and industrial plan was promoted, leading to the creation of hundreds of paved roads and bridges, the realization of hydropower stations on the Syrdarya, several cotton factories in Bukhara and Andijan, the development of industrial complexes for a silk-processing factory in Namangan, a carpet factory in Khiva, cement in Navoiy, leather in Kokand, porcelain in Kuvasai and Samarkand, lifts and fridges in Samarkand, several complexes for cotton-cleaning, textile- and rubber-processing, shoe manufacture, and a large electrochemical plant in Navoi. Rizaev, *Sharaf Rashidov. Shtrikhi K Portretu*, 69.

¹⁵⁰ PV, 17793, 125, 30 May 1975, p. 1.

¹⁵¹ PV, 17809, 141, 18 June 1975, p. 1.

¹⁵² PV, 17851, 183, 6 August 1975, p. 1.

fatherland!”, commanding “to all kolkhozers, sovkhosers, specialists, communists, komsomol’tsy and agriculture workers of the republic” to provide at least 5.2 million tons of raw cotton within the year¹⁵³ and to deliver better quality at a lower cost, inviting all the state and political parts to play a role.¹⁵⁴ The Uzbek scientific community was accorded an important role in the development of sector, and the AN UzSSR started to experiment with new “good” defoliant and fertilizers produced in loco that, apparently, would have no impact on health or the ecosystem and were not limited in their use.¹⁵⁵

Thus, in 1975 propaganda was already being produced which attempted to change public opinion on the results achieved and continued to declare the success of those ‘virtuous’ regions – such as Tashkent¹⁵⁶ – that had finished the FYP in advance and had moved on to the next plan. It is interesting to note that any activity of the republic seemed to need to be functional to cotton and even in the XIX plenum of the CC CPUz (30 September 1975), discussing the “measures to further strengthen party and state discipline and socialist law”; it was remarked that “the fatherland waits from us no less than 5,200,000 tons of ‘white gold’.”¹⁵⁷ Additionally, even law enforcement statements and injunctions against corruption etc. were framed within the context of cotton, leading inexorably to a partisan interpretation of the law in a context in which defending cotton was the highest priority.

At the start of the 1975 harvest in September, the party again went to great lengths to mobilize the population. The rhetoric was reminiscent of the fascist ‘battle of grain’¹⁵⁸ and workers were extolled to work for a ‘heroic exploit’ for the fatherland. Each million tons cropped was cast as a great victory by the Uzbek people for the Soviet cause, and workers were enjoined to “take all the yield”, even if the plans had already been completed.¹⁵⁹ Finally, on 30 November 1975, the fifth million ton of cropped cotton was announced¹⁶⁰ and the day after, during the plenum of the CC CPSU (that approved the plan of

¹⁵³ PV, 17813, 145, 22 July 1975, p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 143, d. 2135 and PV, 17821, 153, 2 July 1975, pp. 1-2.

¹⁵⁵ PV, 17871, 203, 29 August 1975, p. 1.

¹⁵⁶ PV, 17874, 206, 2 September 1975, p. 1.

¹⁵⁷ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 143, d. 2136 and PV, 17897, 229, 1 October 1975, p. 1.

¹⁵⁸ Benito Mussolini, *La Battaglia Del Grano*. (Roma: Libreria del Littorio, 1929); Luciano Segre, *La “battaglia Del Grano” : Depressione Economica E Politica Cerealicola Fascista* (Milano: CLESVA, 1984).

¹⁵⁹ PV, 17939, 270, 19 November 1975, p. 1.

¹⁶⁰ PV, 17948, 279, 30 November 1975, p. 1.

economic development in the state budget for 1976), Brezhnev thanked Uzbekistan for its results, exclaiming his famous motto “golden hands make ‘white gold’” and declaring that “Uzbek cotton pickers enlarged the socialist competition to meet the request of XXV congress with honor, doing their internationalist duty in front of brother peoples of the country, providing to the fatherland five million tons of cotton and exceeding the plan for 280,000 tons”. Therefore, the party was honoring the ‘Uzbek victory’ of the previous ten years. In fact, comparing the ninth FYP with the eighth, it was reaffirmed that

in these years the country received 24.5 million tons of Uzbek ‘white gold’ and this sum exceeded the plan[ned figure] for 2.3 million tons [...]. In the IX FYP the production of cotton increased by 4.6 million - or 23% - compared with the previous plan [...]. In the struggle for the ‘grand cotton’, the workers of the republic had always felt the support and help of the CC CPSU and the Soviet government. [Since the implementation of the plenum’s resolutions (March 1965 and May 1966) and the XXIV CPSU congress decisions (1971)] there were continuous improvements in agriculture in terms of investments and techniques, fertilizers and other material resources for agricultural development.¹⁶¹

These triumphs were reported and publicized with great fanfare across the republican media. At the same time, the Soviet government approved new measures to develop agriculture in the USSR, where cotton was again a crucial yield to be increased by mechanization.¹⁶² The Soviet state budget provided Uzbekistan with 4,298,696,000 rubles for 1976. This figure was higher than for other peripheral republics of the USSR, but less than what was planned for Kazakhstan (about 6.7 billion rubles) and significantly smaller than the budget for the RSFSR (with over 54 billion).¹⁶³ This was an indication that, despite the triumphalist narrative, Uzbekistan had a marginal role in the Soviet economy, relegated to raw material production.

¹⁶¹ PV, 17949, 280, 2 December 1975, p. 1.

¹⁶² In a declaration about the plan of economic development of USSR for 1976, Nikolai Baibakov - Deputy chairman of the SM USSR and President of Gosplan USSR - declared that the state wanted to further invest in the mechanization of Soviet agriculture - supplying 380 thousand tractors, 270 thousand trucks and 97 thousand threshers - and in mineral fertilizers (78.6 million tons) in order to increase the production of potatoes, fruits and vegetables, and cotton. PV, 17950, 281, 3 December 1975, p. 2.

¹⁶³ PV, 17952, 283, 5 December 1975, p. 1.

The ninth FYP was scheduled for completion and the CPUz publicized the great results of Uzbek agriculture that were, officially, exceeding the plan in any sector.¹⁶⁴ During the XX plenum of the CC CPUz (10 December 1975), Rashidov also congratulated planners and workers of the republic for the excellent results that had gone beyond expectations and “gave courage for the future.” During his speech, the Uzbek leader recalled that, in following the directives of XXIV CPSU congress, the Uzbeks had realized more than 500,000 hectares of new fields, produced 24.5 million tons of cotton – exceeding the eighth FYP (1966-1970) production (19.9 million¹⁶⁵) by 4.6 million, and the ninth FYP by 2.3 billion – and building over 24 million m² of housing space.¹⁶⁶

Indeed, in the mid-1970s Uzbek agriculture production was officially increasing, and the party redoubled its efforts in cotton. Rashidov, once again, welcomed central planners’ requests for improved cotton output, laid out in the SM USSR ‘directives for the development of the Soviet economy for the years 1976-1980’ that set a target of at least 9 million tons of cotton per year in the USSR. For Uzbekistan, a 35-39% improvement in industry and a 21-24% improvement in agriculture were pushed, with the aim to reach 5.8 million tons (+22.9%) of cotton per year in 1980.¹⁶⁷ The tenth FYP (1976-1980) also targeted fertilizer growth – from 90 million tons in 1975 to 143 million in 1980.¹⁶⁸

2.2.3 Enthusiasm and delusions: the tenth FYP

In 1976, during the ‘start’ of the tenth FYP plan (1976-1980), the ecological limits of Uzbek cotton production were starting to become clear. The leadership had been warned about the drying of the Aral Sea basin and in

¹⁶⁴ The ninth FYP (1971-1975) expected a lot from UzSSR agriculture, and in the end official targets were exceeded as follows (in million tons): The cotton target was 22.132 (but the effective result was given as 24.460); wheat 2.274 (2.3595); fruit 0.582 (0.724); vegetables 3.547 (4.376); melons 1.528 (2.091); grapes 1.007 (1.059); meat 0.841 (0.8638); milk 2.042 (2.142); raw silk 0.102039 (0.113457) and eggs 2.025 billion (2.208). PV, 17953, 284, 7 December 1975, p. 2. During the ninth FYP (1971-1975), agricultural production in the UzSSR officially increased for meat (+30%), milk (+60%), eggs (+120%), rice (+78%), wheat (+14%), fruit (+120%), vegetables (+55.5%), grapes (45.4%), melons (21.4%) and corn (more than 25 times). PV, 17992, 20, 25 January 1976, p. 3.

¹⁶⁵ PV, 17992, 20, 25 January 1976, p. 3.

¹⁶⁶ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 143, d. 2137; PV, 17957, 288, 12 December 1975, p. 1; and *Pravda*, 11 December 1975, p. 2.

¹⁶⁷ PV, 17959, 290, 14 December 1975, pp. 4-6 and PV, 17963, 294, 19 December 1975, p. 2.

¹⁶⁸ PV, 17970, 301, 28 December 1975, p. 2.

January 1976 the last serious attempt at water deviation to address the drying of the Prearal basin was announced. A 75km branch was added to the main Lenin canal and was greeted with the slogan “Amu Darya returned to Muynak!”¹⁶⁹ As we will see later, this attempt was unsuccessful and the ecological deterioration continued. This project was one small measure in a larger effort in the mid-70s to turn desert areas into prosperous irrigated lands. Indeed, the tenth FYP envisaged a series of irrigation projects to add four million hectares to Soviet irrigated lands, of which 462 thousand were planned in the UzSSR and 1.5 million hectares reached by water had to be devoted to pastures.¹⁷⁰

Despite the alarming ecological situation, Rashidov was still determined to pursue the Moscow line about agriculture in Uzbekistan, including for cotton. During the opening speech of the XIX congress of CPUz (3-5 February 1976),¹⁷¹ he was effusive, recalling that cotton production had increased by 23% in the ninth FYP. He noted growth also in wheat (+15%), rice (+78%), and corn (2500%), and how the republic was able to exceed the plan by 300 thousand tons of ‘white gold’.¹⁷²

The Uzbek leader’s speech drew applause from the local party, but Moscow’s approval would have to wait until XXV congress of CPSU (24 February - 5 March 1976) where the dismal performance of Soviet agriculture weighed heavily on the minds of delegates. Here, the divisions between conservatives and critics within the communist party emerged. The latter – including Kosygin who was later marginalized – highlighted the obvious signs that the USSR was entering into a critical phase, while the former – including Rashidov – waxed lyrical about the Soviet system, emphasizing the unity of Soviet people, the stability of the political and economic situation, and the prospects of continued success. This was simple delusion. For his part, Brezhnev enforced a conservative approach and in his speech he cast a positive note:

Objective historical reasons have prevented large investments in agriculture until recently. Of [the] 320 billion rubles invested in agriculture under Soviet power, 213 billion were invested during the past two five-year periods, concentrated in three main areas. Mechanization: In this decade collective and state farms received over three million tractors, 900,000 harvester combines, 1,800,000 trucks and special purpose vehicles and billions of rubles’ worth of

¹⁶⁹ *PV*, 17980, 8, 11 January 1976, p. 1.

¹⁷⁰ *PV*, 17983, 11, 15 January 1976, p. 2.

¹⁷¹ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 145, d. 2227.

¹⁷² *PV*, 18000, 28, 4 February 1976, p. 3.

other farm machinery. Power per worker has doubled. Land Improvement: 6,400,000 hectares of irrigated land and over 8,000,000 hectares of drained land were cultivated. Chemicalization: a more than 180 per cent increase in the use of fertilizers, over 100 per cent increase in [the] use of plant protection chemicals. All this has meant [a] 40 per cent increase in grain yield, a rise of 58 per cent in labor productivity, and nearly 25 per cent growth in farm products per capita despite [...] population growth of 23 million. Much remains to be done; 41 billion rubles more is to be invested in the new five-year plan [...]. That will mean millions of tons more [of] fertilizers, comprehensive mechanization of grain farming and a higher level in livestock, a vast increase in reclamation including large-scale improvement in the Non-Black Soil Zone, large new irrigation systems in Central Asia and Kazakhstan, as well as in the South and Southeast of the European part of the country.¹⁷³

At the XXV congress, even Rashidov had a short speech to thank the party – in which he defined Brezhnev as an “exceptional person”¹⁷⁴ – and to broadcast the excellent results of Uzbek agriculture. Emphasizing the role of the republic for the Soviet cause, the FS CPUz declared:

As before, the Communist Party of Uzbekistan concentrates its main attention on cotton growing. [...] Without any exaggeration, the work of our glorious cotton growers can be called a heroic exploit. And this heroic exploit was [made] possible [...]by the fraternal help that is always forthcoming from all the many peoples living in our homeland. In our Party and in our land there is a wonderful atmosphere of mutual faith, mutual respect and friendship among all the peoples [and] all the nationalities. The stronger our friendship and mutual fraternal ties become, the greater will be our successes in economic, social, and cultural growth and in creating a new highly-developed human being.¹⁷⁵

However, in the XXV congress Rashidov - as Gapurov and Kunaev did - also denounced the water-sources problem and directly recalled the need to divert part of the flow of Siberian rivers into the Aral Sea Basin and into the Central Asian region, reaffirming their support for the already mentioned 'project of

¹⁷³ Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, “Report of the CPSU Central Committee and the Immediate Tasks of the Party in Home and Foreign Policy, February 24, 1976,” in *Building a New Society: The 25th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, ed. Jessica Smith, David Laibman, and Marilyn Bechtel (New York: NWR Publications, 1977), 54.

¹⁷⁴ PV, 18019, 47, 27 February 1976, p. 2.

¹⁷⁵ Sharaf Rashidovich Rashidov, “Speech of Congress Delegate,” in *Building a New Society: The 25th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, ed. Jessica Smith, David Laibman, and Bechtel Marilyn (New York: NWR Publications, 1977), 107–8.

the century.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, on that occasion Rashidov committed Uzbekistan to yet another new objective. Presenting it as a decision of the XIX congress of the CPUz, he promised “to reach, by the end of the tenth FYP, annual production of 6 million tons.”¹⁷⁷ This was obviously an over-ambitious – if not unrealizable – figure that would haunt Uzbek planners for the next decade. In this way, Rashidov reaffirmed his loyalty to Brezhnev - who did nothing but ask *davai, shest' millionov!* - and to a party in which he was hoping would help advance his career. Then, during the II plenum of the CC CPUz (10 may 1976), the first after the XXV congress CPSU, Rashidov announced the challenge to further develop cotton production in Uzbekistan, recalling how the

new targets are more difficult and ambitious than past ones. The most important and the most challenging goal is the improvement of cotton production. Cotton is a great source of the country and of the republic. Every year the demand for cotton increases. [...] CC CPSU and the Soviet government are always involved in the increase of cotton production in our republic, which always has been, and remains, the main base for cotton in the country. [...] During the XXV congress of party, L.I. Brezhnev [exclaimed] that “*we have to offer good words to our cotton pickers [...] as every year of the FYP good results in the cotton crop have been achieved.*”¹⁷⁸

In this plenum speech, after reaffirming the commitments made by the CC CPUz, the Uzbek leader repeated the need to improve irrigation and field improvements. He noted how the state expected more Uzbek cotton still and was growing its investment in irrigation infrastructure: 2.2 billion rubles during the eighth FYP (1966-1970), 4.5 during the ninth (1971-1975) – when 511 thousand hectares of new irrigated and new canals in Karshi, Namangan and Karakalpakstan were opened – and allocating 5.9 for the tenth FYP (1976-1980). This plenum was where the ambitious “6 million” medium-term target was set. This agenda required:

- 1 – The promotion of cotton production and the improvement of its quality for the tenth FYP as a core target for the party organization, the soviets, the agricultural organs, and the kolkhozes and sovkhozes. By 1980, the target of 6 million tons of cotton was set;
- 2 – Improvements inside the party in efficiency and effectiveness of cotton production, particularly in regard to cost-control;

¹⁷⁶ Alexander Dallin, *The Twenty-Fifth Congress of the CPSU: Assessment and Context* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1977), 112.

¹⁷⁷ PV, 18019, 47, 27 February 1976, p. 2.

¹⁷⁸ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 145, d. 2230 and PV, 18081, 109, 11 May 1976, p. 1.

- 3 – Proper use of [agricultural] resources in order to improve fertility, to intensify technology-use, and the use of mineral fertilizers;
- 4 – Continuous improvement in the structure of the cotton growing areas;
- 5 – Field improvements to enhance productivity;
- 6 – Use of the latest techniques of agriculture. Kolkhozes must be managed with advanced techniques;
- 7 – Planting of new, more resistant, varieties of cotton that harvest sooner;
- 8 – Improving fiber quality and crop technology;
- 9 – Improvements in the management of agriculture in obkoms, raikoms, kolkhozes, and sovkhozes.¹⁷⁹

Rashidov wanted to show he could effectively liaise between Moscow and the CPUz and reported with enthusiasm to the CC CPSU that the republican party fully agreed with the Moscow's line in an event that was

devoted to the important commitment and the primary value of continuously raising cotton production in the republic [...] The total unanimity of plenum participants has confirmed that every day the stimulating and inspiring strength of the decisions that represent the incarnation of political wisdom and foresight of the CPSU are spread, having the powerful and material force that accelerates progress. Expressing the view of the communists and all the workers of Uzbekistan, the participants of the plenum stressed the importance of the role of the general secretary of the CPSU L.I. Brezhnev in solving all important issues for our people. For 1976, we will produce 5.3 million tons of raw cotton and, based on decisions at this plenum, will reach 6 million tons by 1980. Foreseeing by the end of this plan 1,880,000 hectares¹⁸⁰ of fields planted with cotton, and providing then an average crop of 32-33 quintals per hectare, with 60% of cotton harvested through an increase of productive efficiency [due to mechanization]. During the tenth FYP, the republic will be provided with 92,000 tractors, 30,000 harvesters, 35,000 trucks, 73,000 trailers for tractors, and many other machines and equipment. For 1976, we want to collect 270,000 tons of fine-fiber cotton¹⁸¹ and by the end of the plan 400,000 tons – 50,000 tons more than foreseen in the plan.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ PV, 18082, 110, 12 May 1976, p. 1.

¹⁸⁰ To understand the effective size of this area, it is possible to translate this figure into 18,800 km² that is a little smaller than the territory of Israel (20,770 km²).

¹⁸¹ For this task, the Ministry for agricultural mechanization of the USSR sent a memorandum to CC CPSU on 1 June 1976 confirming that 200 new machines for cropping fine-fiber cotton should be delivered by the end of the year. RGANI, f. 5, op. 69, d. 1111, l. 14.

¹⁸² RGANI, f. 5, op. 69, d. 1111, ll. 9-11.

In terms of substance, this agenda required the party to direct most of its energies to cotton production and the narrative of the “six million” started to absorb the press and the media, mobilizing the entire population to the great cause of “cotton for the fatherland.” Everything else the CPUz did was framed through the prism of the “battle for cotton” and the need to stimulate the enthusiasm of the population to the cause of the Uzbek “victory.” During the III plenum of CC CPUz (13 June 1976)¹⁸³ the slogan “two FYs in one” was advanced, tying the cause of cotton to the development of mechanization, industrialization and housing,¹⁸⁴ and proposing mutual cooperation between the various kolkhozes and sovkhozes for the realization of their “socialist duties”¹⁸⁵ for a range of other products.¹⁸⁶ The sacredness of that task was stressed by the constant slogans and appeals of the party that emphasized a “holy duty to provide to the fatherland no less than 5,300,000 ton of ‘white gold’”.¹⁸⁷ As one had it: “Cultivators of Uzbekistan! Let’s perform the requests of the XXV CPSU congress: we will provide more field products to the fatherland”.¹⁸⁸ Cotton itself took on a sacred significance, becoming “our glory, our pride, our priceless treasure!”¹⁸⁹ Every additional ton was announced as a step forward, a won battle, a victory for the Uzbek people that was increasingly showing its ability to wrest fertile ground from the desert.¹⁹⁰ It is interesting to note how the enthusiasm for the great cotton challenge was also confirmed at the popular level through dozens of – probably orchestrated by the CPUz - letters and telegrams that Brezhnev received from Uzbek kolkhozes and

¹⁸³ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 145, d. 2231.

¹⁸⁴ PV, 18133, 161, 11 July 1976, p. 1.

¹⁸⁵ PV, 18147, 175, 28 July 1976, p. 1.

¹⁸⁶ The triumphalist tones in the commitments of the CC CPUz were also for other agricultural products: on 11 August 1976, the Uzbek party committed to exceed the plan by 10 thousand tons of meat, 60 thousand tons of milk, and 50 million eggs. The committee wrote directly to Brezhnev (18 October 1976) to announce a record crop of wheat of more than 1 million tons. RGANI, f. 5, op. 69, d. 1112, l. 16.

¹⁸⁷ PV, 18153, 181, 4 August 1976, p. 1.

¹⁸⁸ PV, 18177, 205, 2 September 1976, p. 1.

¹⁸⁹ PV, 18192, 220, 19 September 1976, p. 1.

¹⁹⁰ Resolution n° 551 of the CC CPUz and SM UzSSR (23 September 1976) stated that “in 1971-1975 alone, 510,000 hectares of new irrigated lands were opened, 787,000 hectares were improved, and 457,000 hectares were put in regime for the plan [...] During the ninth five year plan, more than 24.5 million tons of raw cotton had been produced, registering a surplus of 2.3 over the target. TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 3959, l. 1.

sovkhozes where the workers and managers were confirming their pledges for 1976 to produce more cotton.¹⁹¹

This triumphalist narrative continued even in the following years: during the V plenum of the CC CPUz (28 January 1977), Rashidov was proud to announce the official results of the 1976 cotton crop as another success of UzSSR agriculture: the republic officially produced 5.3375 million tons, 6,5% more than 1975,¹⁹² and reaffirmed its commitment to reach 6 million tons of raw cotton by 1980 as well as to increase the production of ‘fine fiber’ cotton.¹⁹³ Like a beating drum, the party was promoting the annual agricultural goals for cotton workers, recalling “the milestones of the jubilee year:¹⁹⁴ cotton growers of the republic have pledged to produce 5,360,000 tons of raw cotton, of which 275 thousand tons are of fine fiber cotton, and to collect with machines no less than 3,200,000 tons.”¹⁹⁵ Likewise, such appeals were also promoted for other “minor productions”¹⁹⁶ and to prevent water wastage.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹¹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 69, d. 1112, ll. 1-13, 17-70.

¹⁹² These data presented improved results in 1976 also for: cereals 2.0266 million tons (87.8% more than 1975), rice 357 thousand tons (+22,6%), vegetables 1.7149 million tons (+21.4%), grapes 389.2 thousand tons (+4.5%). Meanwhile the production of fruit officially declined to 592.7 thousand tons (-7.7%). RGASPI, f. 17, op 146, d. 2324 and PV, 18301, 24, 29 January 1977, p. 2.

¹⁹³ ‘Fine fiber’ is a superior quality of cotton that is used in more sophisticated textile production, as well as in the military sector (for example, the manufacture of uniforms and parachutes). In March 1977, the CC CPUz and SM UzSSR approved a resolution to extend the production of fine-fiber cotton up to 400 thousand tons by 1980. Targets were set for the oblasts of Surkhandarya (230), Kashkadarya (126), Bukhara (34) and Namangan (10). PV, 18341, 64, 19 March 1977, p. 1.

¹⁹⁴ 1977 had been considered across the USSR as a ‘Jubilee year’, marking the 60th anniversary of the ‘Great October Revolution’.

¹⁹⁵ PV, 18316, 39, 16 February 1977, p. 1.

¹⁹⁶ I.e. “the milestones of the jubilee year: grain growers of the republic are pledged to: perform 2.500.000 tons of grains in which 945 thousand ton of corn and 415 thousand ton of rice” (PV, 18317, 40, 17 February 1977, p. 1); “the milestones of the jubilee year: vegetable growers of the republic are pledged to: perform 1.100.000 ton of vegetables, 510 thousand ton of melons and 185 thousand ton of potatoes” (PV, 18321, 44, 22 February 1977, p. 1); “the milestones of the jubilee year: silk producers of the republic are pledged to: perform 24 thousand ton of cocoons” (PV, 18325, 48, 26 February 1977, p. 1).

¹⁹⁷ “Farmers! Protect and effectively use every liter of water! All water sources, including wells and springs, should be strictly monitored. Apply for irrigation purposes, where possible, sewer and waste water. Remember: respect for the security of the

Cotton had such a central role in the UzSSR system that it was even mentioned among the pillars of the new socialist society following the approval of the 1977 Soviet Constitution, an document that was praised by Rashidov as being “golden pages in the glorious political history of the Soviet state, in the history of all world revolutionary process.”¹⁹⁸ At the IX convocation of the VII Special Session of SS USSR, Rashidov even pronounced:

this constitution is a symphony of intellect, happiness of free labor and authentic humanism. The new constitution is a veritable ode to the Soviet person, a hymn to the Soviet system, a hymn to the Soviet lifestyle, a hymn to our international brotherhood, a hymn to the indestructible and eternal friendship of the Soviet peoples.¹⁹⁹

At the same time, the Uzbek leader increased the expectations of the Soviet planners, setting the mechanization of the cotton crop as a fundamental objective to be implemented with a minimum threshold of at least 70% of total production,²⁰⁰ a result that came only rarely, as well as the improvement of chemical defoliation, crop techniques, and inter-ministerial integrated cooperation in the agriculture sector as it was reaffirmed in the VII plenum CC CPUz (15 September 1977)²⁰¹ in order to concentrate “any technique to the cotton fields.”²⁰²

The efforts that were made in Uzbekistan were again recognized and appreciated in Moscow. On 3 November 1977, Brezhnev wrote a congratulatory note to the three main leaders of the UzSSR - Rashidov, Khudayberdiyev, and Matchanov - on the 60th anniversary of the revolution, noting the brilliant results of Uzbek agriculture:

Dear comrades, I read your message on the execution of plans and duties on grain, cotton, kenaf, vegetables, fruits, grapes, potatoes, melons, silk with a feeling of deep satisfaction and pride. This is a good gift for the 60th jubilee year of the Great October Revolution.²⁰³

water-performing high-socialist commitments adopted for the jubilee year of October!” PV, 18364, 87, 15 April 1977, p. 1.

¹⁹⁸ Rashidov’s speech at the 4th session of SS UzSSR. PV, 18421, 144, 23 June 1977, p. 3.

¹⁹⁹ PV, 18510, 233, 6 October 1977, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ The CC CPUz and SM UzSSR resolutions (July 1977) also required to repair and to fully make available all the cotton pickers and cleaning machines by August 15. PV, 18444, 167, 20 July 1977, p. 1.

²⁰¹ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 146, d. 2326; and PV, 18494, 217, 16 September 1977, p. 1.

²⁰² PV, 18497, 220, 20 September 1977, p. 1.

²⁰³ PV, 18534, 257, 4 November 1977, p. 1.

The day after (4 November 1977), the presidium of the SS USSR assigned to Rashidov an 'Order of Lenin' and the second gold medal 'Hammer and Sickle'.²⁰⁴ These latest honors seemed to present the Uzbek leader as a father of the nation, a progressive modernizer, a devoted patriot, and a loyal Soviet leader who had managed to modernize the republic and to ensure that Moscow had all the raw materials it needed. The honors he received seemed then to act as an ornamental sweetener in a context where there was a tendency to reward and to create affiliation and affinity with the empire and its symbols.²⁰⁵ 1977 would thus have been a wonderful year for the Uzbek cotton and for Rashidov, who sang its praises. In his article entitled "getting more and more", the Uzbek leader declared the latest fantastic results of the republic:

[This year], the cotton pickers [of UzSSR] have passed another frontier, and for the first time they provided to the state 5.43 million tons of cotton, exceeding the plan by 780,000 tons. Almost 95% of the crop is of first quality. In the entire history of cotton cultivation, our republic has never collected so much, and Uzbekistan has never fulfilled its socialist duties in such a short time as in this year. Kolkhozes and sovkhoses of the republic plan to provide a further 100,000 tons of cotton before the year is out. [Moreover, just] today at the storage points more than 5.65 million tons have been delivered [...] ten times the production of cotton in the pre-revolutionary period in the Turkestan krai. The area under cultivation has increased fourfold and is 1.8 million hectares.²⁰⁶

In this phase of development, the party sought increased investment from Moscow. The USSR state budget for 1978 assigned 4,636,061,000 rubles (about 7.84% more than in 1976) to the UzSSR at the VIII plenum CC CPUz (19 December 1977).²⁰⁷ However, this increase was merely nominal and inferior compared to other republics like the RSFSR that received a bigger increase – 60 billion rubles (about 11.11% more than 1976). In order to reaffirm his role, Rashidov continued to reassure Moscow about the successes of agriculture in Uzbekistan and he was again rewarded for his efforts. On 5 January 1978, the Uzbek leader - along with other prominent communists such as Mikhail Suslov, Pyotr Demichev, Nikolai Ogarkov, Nikolai Shchelokov, and Boris Bugaev –

²⁰⁴ PV, 18536, 259, 6 November 1977, p. 1.

²⁰⁵ This consideration reminds, in part, the analysis of 'ornamentalism' exposed by Cannadine about the British Empire. David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

²⁰⁶ PV, 18548, 271, 23 November 1977, p. 1.

²⁰⁷ RGASPI, f. 17, op 146, d. 2327 and PV, 18570, 293, 20 December 1977, p. 1.

received from the hands of Brezhnev the above mentioned awards.²⁰⁸ The Gensek exclaimed that:

Under the leadership of the CC headed by you, Sharaf Rashidovich, the communists and all workers of Uzbekistan obtained very important results in the implementation of XXV party congress' resolutions in the struggle for "great cotton" for the country. Your role in this task has made you eligible for the 'Order of Lenin' and the second gold medal 'sickle and hammer'. Congratulations and best wishes for new successes in the struggle for the tasks of this five-year plan for the quality and effectiveness of labor.²⁰⁹

Flattered in this way, Rashidov recalled the work of the UzSSR cotton pickers who "gave to the homeland more than 5.68 million tons", thanked Brezhnev, and declared that "success has been possible thanks to the help, care and attention of the CC CPSU, of the politburo and of personally [you], L.I. Brezhnev, [...] who personify the best qualities of a Soviet Communist, the greatest authority of our Party and the State."²¹⁰ This type of narrative substantially repeated the same celebratory carousel of previous years.

After this solemn (and pomp) ceremony acknowledging Rashidov's merits, the Uzbek leader pledged even more to promote the realization of the plans in the republic, proposing faster implementation of the socialist tasks for the third year of the tenth FYP in relation to mineral fertilizers – requiring 150,000 tons more by 1978²¹¹ – and irrigation. In the spring of 1978, the Uzbek leader publicized the construction of new canals in the Hungry Steppe to complete an effective irrigation network of 158,000 km and an increase in agricultural production in the region, recalling the positive results of the republic: "just in the last seven years the USSR has obtained from Uzbekistan 35.5 million tons of 'white gold' [...] exceeding the plan by more than 4 million tons."²¹²

²⁰⁸ From the second half of the '70s, prizes, medals and awards took on an increasingly important role in the Soviet regime, becoming a matter of status. More and more medals "delighted an increasingly vain Brezhnev, who was proud and believed to deserve them" and who, after his second stroke in 1976 made himself Marshall of Soviet Union and got an Order of Victory (1978), 7 Orders of Lenin, 4 Heroes of USSR, a Gold Medal of Karl Marx, a Lenin Prize for Peace and even for literature. Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 425–26; Paul McDaniel and Paul J. Schmitt, *The Comprehensive Guide to Soviet Orders and Medals* (Arlington: Historical Research, 1997).

²⁰⁹ PV, 18585, 5, 6 January 1978, p. 1.

²¹⁰ Ibidem.

²¹¹ PV, 18615, 35, 10 February 1978, p. 1.

²¹² Pravda, 17 May 1978; and PV, 18693, 113, 18 May 1978, p. 2.

Agricultural success was twinned with other gains. Indeed, considering the strategic importance of the republic as the main supplier of Soviet cotton – as well as other ‘strategic products’ like gold²¹³ and uranium²¹⁴ – the CPUz also promoted heightened decentralization and more autonomy for Uzbekistan. With constitutional reform in the USSR after 1977 the UzSSR also elaborated its own set of fundamental principles. From March 1978, a committee at the VI special session of the IX convocation of the SS UzSSR was established for the preparation of a constitution draft for the republic based on the Soviet Constitution. The project was approved during the IX plenum of the CC CPUz (17 April 1978).²¹⁵ On that occasion, Rashidov made a long speech describing the event as a

new stage in the development of socialist statehood and democracy [, representing the] indestructible unity the party and the people”. The Uzbek leader was directly referring to a text that was “uniting peoples [...] under the banner of proletarian internationalism [...] in the fraternal family united for the builders of communism.”²¹⁶

The final draft was approved by the SS UzSSR on 19 April 1978 and was largely incorporating the principles expressed in the 1977 Soviet Constitution, such as art. 6 – which vested the central power of the political system in the

²¹³ The UzSSR was also extracting about one third of Soviet gold. The giant Muruntau Gold deposit - the world's largest open pit gold mine - was discovered in 1958 but mining commenced only in 1967, and production has been continuous ever since. Other important gold mines were developed in Okzhetypes, Kochbulak, and Amantaitau–Daughyztau. Fierman, “The Soviet ‘Transformation’ of Central Asia,” 20; Richard Flynn and CIA, “Estimating Soviet Gold Production. A Case Study of the Muruntau Gold Plant,” *Center for the Study of Intelligence - Studies Archive* 19, no. 3 (1994); Blackmon Pamela, “Back to the USSR: Why the Past Does Matter in Explaining Differences in the Economic Reform Processes in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan,” *Central Asian Survey* 24, no. 4 (2005): 395.

²¹⁴ The extraction of uranium in Uzbekistan commenced in 1958 in the desert region of Central Kyzylkum province (Navoi), particularly in the Uchkuduk deposit (after 1961), which led to the discovery of subsequent deposits. In 1964, mining began in Nurabad, in 1966 at the Sabyrsay deposit in Samarkand, in 1971 in Zafarabad, in 1977 at the Sugraly deposit near Zarafshan, and in 1978 at the Ketmenchi deposit. The UzSSR supplied the USSR with an annual productive peak of 3,800 tU of uranium in the mid-’80s. A.A. Burykin, A.A. Iskra, and V.P. Karamushka, “Radiation Legacy of the USSR Enterprises for Mining, Milling and Processing of Uranium Ores: Conservation, Decommissioning and Environmental Rehabilitation, IAEA-TECDOC-1280,” 2002.

²¹⁵ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 147, d. 2343, PV, 18668, 88, 18 April 1978, p. 1.

²¹⁶ PV, 18669, 89, 19 April 1978, pp. 1-4.

communist party – and the art. 16 recognizing the Uzbek economy as a component part of the united economic complex of the USSR. In essence, the new basic law changed nothing. In fact, the document merely formalized and reaffirmed those principles that had dominated the USSR over the previous sixty years and those bonds that had defined the relations between center and periphery in de facto terms. However, Rashidov presented the Uzbek constitution as a great opportunity that would have a big impact on the economic, political, and social development of the republic.²¹⁷

2.2.4 ‘White Gold’ at any cost

Until summer 1978, Uzbek agriculture seemed to follow the general positive production trend across the USSR in that year. 1978 was supposed to be “a very good year for agriculture, and Brezhnev had every reason to think that his strategy of industrializing agriculture within a collectivist structure was correct.”²¹⁸ This attitude was reflected during the CPSU plenum (3 July 1978 plenum), a “meeting [...that] gave a new impetus to the intensification of agricultural production”²¹⁹ where the Soviet leader reviewed the achievements that his policies had engendered, reminding attendees how the gross cotton crop in the USSR had grown from 4.84 million tons – with an average productivity of 20.6 quintals per hectare – from 1959-1965 to 7.91 million tons and 27.7 quintals per hectare in 1971-1977.²²⁰ The conquests of Soviet cotton – as well as for other agricultural products – were still lauded widely by the regime. However, a minority of the party – including the young Gorbachev who was appointed to the Central Committee's Secretariat for Agriculture in July 1978 – pointed out the critical aspects of Soviet agriculture, noting the importance of carrying out effective and systemic reforms. This line was marginalized within the party. Rashidov also confirmed a conservative approach, pursuing the ‘Brezhnev route’ and continuing to acclaim the results of a system that was presented as ‘infallible’ and that would guarantee Uzbek cotton for the fatherland at any cost.

However, even the ‘infallible’ system had to deal with the objective conditions of agriculture and the problems related to climatic circumstances.

²¹⁷ PV, 18670, 90, 20 April 1978, pp. 1-6.

²¹⁸ Stephen Wegren, *Russia's Food Policies and Globalization* (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 52.

²¹⁹ Rashidov, *Soviet Uzbekistan*, 53.

²²⁰ PV, 18731, 151, 4 July 1978, p. 1.

Therefore, during the X plenum of the CC CPUz (25 July 1978),²²¹ Rashidov took a more cautious line, assuming the bad weather conditions that had affected Uzbek agriculture during the summer might cause some delays in cotton production. However, he reaffirmed to the party the importance of honoring the commitments provided for in the plan, and he seemed to directly reassure Brezhnev on the positive results that Uzbek agriculture would reach, declaring that at any cost “all forces must be devoted to this purpose [in order to supply] not less than 5.7 million in 1978 and 5.85 in 1979.”²²² The cadres of the CPUz, realizing the unfavorable conditions of Uzbek agriculture in 1978, seemed very concerned about this commitment from their FS. For this reason, in August a relentless media campaign to seriously engage as much as possible all the forces of the republic in the cotton crop and to achieve the promoted results at any cost began. Again, the preferred solution seemed to be in the mechanization of the harvest – not less than 70% of the total²²³ – while trying to not neglect quality.²²⁴ As we have mentioned before, a fast harvest, mechanization, and high quality would prove mutually exclusive objectives in the end. For the 1978 harvest, slogans such as “all the technique in the fields”,²²⁵ “not a single hour of inactivity, not a single gram loss”,²²⁶ “let’s work with no delays, effectively and with higher quality”²²⁷ were calling for maximum efficiency in the cotton crop, recalling militarist rallying of past battles. The CPUz was essentially encouraging everyone to do his duty on “the cotton field - our striking front”²²⁸ in order to “assault the last million!”²²⁹ Even in mid-November, the promised result of 5.7 million seemed to be a distant prospect: on November 19, it was announced that only 5.2 million had been cropped²³⁰ and – with winter approaching – the CPUz mobilized a final effort among all UzSSR workers to “pick cotton in any weather”.²³¹

The triumphalism of previous years was notably absent. On December 12 – well after the ‘finish’ of the normal harvest season – the party announced a

²²¹ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 147, d. 2344.

²²² PV, 18749, 169, 26 July 1978, pp. 1-4.

²²³ PV, 18784, 204, 6 September 1978, p. 1.

²²⁴ PV, 18807, 227, 4 October 1978, p. 1.

²²⁵ PV, 18814, 234, 12 October 1978, p. 1.

²²⁶ PV, 18818, 238, 17 October 1978, p. 1.

²²⁷ PV, 18820, 240, 19 October 1978, p. 1.

²²⁸ PV, 18821, 241, 20 October 1978, p. 1.

²²⁹ PV, 18830, 250, 1 November 1978, p. 1.

²³⁰ PV, 18844, 264, 19 November 1978, p. 1.

²³¹ PV, 18847, 267, 23 November 1978, p. 1.

total crop of 5.5 million tons,²³² making no mention of plan targets. During the XI plenum of the CC CPUz (19 December 1978) Rashidov made no announcement on Uzbek cotton – as he had done conspicuously in previous final year plenums – focusing instead on other socio-economic issues.²³³ Clearly, silence was the preferred strategy – the harvest was so clearly below expectations that not even ‘massaging’ could hide the fact that production had come in well below target. The positive trends of cotton production both in the USSR and Uzbekistan – which had reached a production peak in 1977 – had suddenly stalled. To some extent, refusing to raise the stakes on cotton production seemed a sign of mutiny.

Official figures of raw cotton production in the USSR and in the UzSSR (in tons)²³⁴

Period	1971-1975	1976-1978	1976	1977	1978
USSR	7,670,000	8,510,000	8,280,000	8,760,000	8,500,000
UzSSR	4,894,400	5,520,600	5,335,600	5,676,400	5,550,020

However, if the production of cotton upstream suffered a setback, the manufacture of cotton products in the republic continued to produce brilliant results. For 1979, the MCC UzSSR forecast outcomes surpassing the plan by 19.5 thousand tons of cotton fiber, 2.1 thousand tons of linc fiber, 12 thousand m² of fabrics for packaging, 320 tons of kenaf fiber, 12 tons of spun fiber and 30 tons of rope.²³⁵ Substantially, the party was still mobilizing enormous resources in cotton production but its importance – in terms of propaganda – was less, compared to the other achievements of the republic.

The ‘*annus horribilis*’ of late Rashidovism passed soon enough, and the party refocused all of its energies on the sacred goal of ‘six million’ by 1980. The productive goals of the UzSSR for 1979 were then defined during the XII plenum of CC CPUz (26 February 1979). Here, organization of the party for the “socialist competition” for the timely commissioning of production facilities²³⁶

²³² PV, 18863, 283, 12 December 1978, p. 1.

²³³ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 147, d. 2345.

²³⁴ Data elaborated from PV, 18895, 16, 20 January 1979, p. 2, PV, 18901, 22, 27 January 1979, p. 2.

²³⁵ PV, 18915, 36, 13 February 1979, p. 2.

²³⁶ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 148, d. 2348 and PV, 18927, 48, 27 February 1979, p. 1.

was discussed. Meanwhile, during the XIII plenum (8 June),²³⁷ the debate was mostly focused on the ideological, political, and educational duties of the party. However, also on that occasion, the CC CPUz discussed the possibility of crop rotation, challenging the official program of cotton monoculture - a point that would hardly be welcome in Moscow. Then, the development of mechanization for the cotton production was again reaffirmed – in 1978 3.430 million tons (i.e. 62.4% of the total production) were collected with machines, 1.138 million tons more than in 1975.²³⁸ This intensive mechanization was probably the basis for the cotton production increase after 1975 but, as we will see, this process would present a high cost in terms of quality. The previous year's failure in the cotton crop led the Uzbek leadership to mobilize the republic in a greater effort in order to wash away the shame of 1978. The unceasing appeals of the CC CPUz, the Presidium of the SS UzSSR and the SM UzSSR to speed up the cotton crop and to complete the plan – in order to reach 5.7 million tons and 70% of production with machines - continued throughout the summer even as the party sought to develop other sectors of agriculture and livestock breeding.²³⁹

In late August the cotton harvest started. This time, there was less triumphalism and appeals to the 'cotton war', with a fatalistic rhetoric taking its place which called "everybody to the field, where we determine the fate of the crop!"²⁴⁰ and to the "heroic exploit"²⁴¹ in order to stream "all forces to implement the plan and the Socialist duties."²⁴² Thereby, the CPUz referred to the moral duties of the Uzbek *khlopkaroby*, declaring that "picking all the cotton is our duty, our honor, our conscience"²⁴³ while in the republic's field the wartime rhetoric of *Ni shagu nazad!* (Not one step back!) was enforced. At the same time, to the commitments made by the operators and the increasing harassment of workers was added weather conditions that were better than in

²³⁷ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 148, d. 2349.

²³⁸ PV, 19010, 131, 10 June 1979, p. 1.

²³⁹ During the XVI plenum CC CPUz (31 August 1979) livestock breeding issues were discussed, in order to develop structures for 1981-1985 that could manage 110 thousand head of cattle, 82.5 million birds, 594,000 pigs, and 67,400 dairy cows. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 148, d. 2350; PV, 19080, 201, 1 September 1979, p. 1.

²⁴⁰ PV, 19100, 221, 26 September 1979, p. 1.

²⁴¹ PV, 19131, 252, 1 November 1979, p. 1.

²⁴² PV, 19133, 254, 3 November 1979, p. 1.

²⁴³ PV, 19134, 255, 4 November 1979, p. 1.

the previous year and the party was able to optimistically announce positive results to Moscow's cadres.²⁴⁴

Finally, it was possible to proclaim again positive results in the cotton crop and on 6 December 1979 the "excellent victory of the Uzbek cotton pickers" that cropped more than 5.72 million tons²⁴⁵ was announced. On the same day, party leaders met immediately during the XV plenum CC CPUz where Rashidov thanked Brezhnev for the "care" and "for the high consideration of our work".²⁴⁶ Basically, the party was again able to assess the positive results of the republic and the Uzbek FS, during a "triumphal" meeting with the representatives of UzSSR workers, declared that Uzbekistan had again achieved a record production of 'white gold.'²⁴⁷ After the 1978 flop and the temporary burying of cotton production data, the Uzbek government was again able to announce record results in 1979.

²⁴⁴ In a memorandum of the CC CPUz to the CC CPSU on 29 November 1979, an annual average production of cotton of 5.504 million tons was announced, representing an increase of 610 thousand tons over the ninth FYP. Wheat production also doubled, and there was an increase in vegetables (+40%), fruit (by 1.6 times), and grapes and melons (about 1.3-1.4 times). During the 1976-1978 period, even annual average meat production increased 22%, 31% for milk, and eggs (by 1.5 times). In that year, the wheat target was exceeded by 412 thousand tons, grapes by 400 thousand tons. Also, fruit and vegetable production was up and 28,300 tons of silk cocoons were delivered, exceeding the plan by 112.5%. For cotton, 5.7 million tons were cropped, with an average yield of 21 quintals per hectare. The gross production of kolkhozes for 1979 was 2,785 million rubles, exceeding the plan by 111 million and previous results by 153 million rubles. The republic's productivity had increased by 6.2%. RGANI, f. 5, op. 77, d. 410, ll. 7-10.

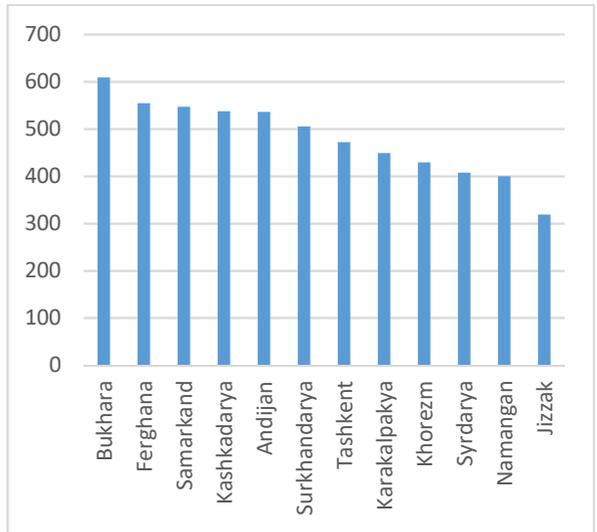
²⁴⁵ PV, 19159, 280, 6 December 1979, p. 1.

²⁴⁶ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 148, d. 2351 and PV, 19160, 281, 7 December, pp. 1-3.

²⁴⁷ PV, 19162, 283, 9 December 1979, p. 1.

Cotton Production per region (in thousand tons) in 1979²⁴⁸

Bukhara	609
Ferghana	554
Samarkand	547
Kashkadarya	537
Andijan	536
Surkhandarya	505
Tashkent	472
Karakalpakya	449
Khorezm	429
Syrdarya	407
Namangan	400
Jizzak	319
Total	5764



Indeed, Rashidov seemed to have brilliantly reconfirmed Moscow's trust and he continued to thank the Soviet leadership for the results that had been achieved in the republic. In his speech to the electorate entitled "party and peoples united", the Uzbek FS said that "in all the successes and in all the results of the republic, the brotherly help of all Soviet peoples and, particularly, of the great Russian people is manifested."²⁴⁹ Even during the XVI plenum of the CC CPUz (14 March 1980), Rashidov referred to the letter that had arrived from Moscow to acknowledge the positive results of the Tashkent oblast as "an act of care from the party and personally from Brezhnev"²⁵⁰ stressing that the positive scores were due to local efforts as well as to Moscow planners.

For the results obtained in 1979 and for the realization of the plan, the UzSSR was awarded for the seventh time the "Red Banner". On that occasion, Rashidov acclaimed "this triumphant act [as] the acknowledgement by the

²⁴⁸ The results of 1979 were presented by the chairman of SM UzSSR Khudayberdiyev during the meeting of the "first" farmers of the republic. PV, 19240, 63, 16 March 1980, p. 2.

²⁴⁹ PV, 19202, 25, 31 January 1980, p. 1.

²⁵⁰ RGASPI, f.17, op. 149, d. 2419, and PV, 19239, 62, 15 March 1980, p. 1.

party and by the state of the contribution of the Republic's workers in strengthening the country's economic potential".²⁵¹ Once again, the Uzbek FS was carrying on increasingly advanced commitments, promising for 1980 a cotton production of 5,850,000 tons,²⁵² a number that became a slogan and the main leitmotiv of the 1 May 1980 celebrations.²⁵³ A major commitment to increase the production of fine-fiber cotton significantly during the eleventh FYP followed. According to Gosplan UzSSR, the planned quantity of raw and fine fiber cottons was (in thousands of tons):²⁵⁴

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
<i>Raw Cotton</i>	5,840	5,880	5,920	5,960	6,000
<i>Fine-Fiber Cotton</i>	370	390	410	430	450

The Uzbek party and government confirmed the healthy situation of cotton production in the republic and asked the central state and the CPSU to pay extra attention in terms of investments devoted to the improvement of cotton in the UzSSR.²⁵⁵ Furthermore, a decree of CC CPUz and SM UzSSR - entitled "on

²⁵¹ PV, 19241, 64, 18 March 1980, p. 1.

²⁵² The UzSSR plan for 1980 also demanded three million tons of wheat, 1.22 million tons of vegetables, 860,000 tons of milk, 288,000 tons of meat, 26,500 tons of silk cocoons, 995 million eggs (PV, 19252, 75, 30 March, p. 1), 200 thousand tons of potatoes, 517,000 tons of rice, 702,000 tons of fruit and grapes, and 550 thousand tons of melons (PV, 19254, 77, 2 April 1980, p. 1).

²⁵³ PV, 19279, 102, 2 May 1980, p. 3.

²⁵⁴ The memorandum n° 14/11-145 of Gosplan UzSSR to the SM UzSSR of 11 April 1980 is available at TsGARUZ, f. 837, op. 41, d. 5275, l. 15.

²⁵⁵ On 21 April 1980, Rashidov and Khudayberdiyev wrote the memorandum M-21/4-37 for the CC CPSU and the SM USSR, where they reported that following the directives of XXV congress CPSU and the CPSU plenum of July 1978, the cotton production of Uzbekistan was positive and that in the previous four years the republic had produced 22.725 million tons. In 1979 alone, they reported, 5.763 million tons, with a productive average of 31.3 quintals per hectare, were delivered. The memo noted that fully 34.4% of cotton cropped could be transformed into fibers. According to the report, in 1979 alone, Uzbekistan produced 323,500 tons of cotton fiber, and machines cropped 3.557 million - while in 1975 the corresponding figure had been only 2.283 million tons. This represented an increase in machine crop share from 46% to 61.7%. For 1980 a crop of 5.850 million tons of raw cotton – of which 3.8 million (or 65%) to be cropped by machines - and 355,000 tons of fibers was expected. These results were thus presented

the preparation of kolkhozes and sovkhozes, cotton factories and procurement centers of harvesting, and harvesting of raw cotton in 1980” – set a target of 355,000 tons of fine-fiber cotton for the current year²⁵⁶ and 3.85 million tons to be harvested by machines, placing incentives (awards, cars, and monetary prizes from 200 to 2,000 rubles) for the best mechanized pickers. They were reminded of the necessity of repairing the agricultural machinery before the

with pride by the Uzbek party and government, underlining how the new discoveries in terms of cotton varieties improved production. Then, they stated how, in the previous five years, 14 cleaning stations, 57 warehouses and 82 small cleaning centers, installing more than 3000 technologic instruments and 5000 spinneret tools had been built or repaired. In 1976-1977, about 70% of cotton was of first- or second-grade quality and only 10% was of fourth-grade. Uzbek cotton had been exported to 29 states, of which 18 were capitalist economies. Due to bad weather in 1978-1979, the harvest had been largely postponed in November and this is why only 51-56% of the whole production was of the top two grades of quality, and the 1979 harvest had even continued into April 1980. After presenting the results, the Uzbek party and government demanded that the ministry of agriculture USSR and the state technical committee for agricultural improvements progress both technique and scientific research in chemistry. They also asked for more tractors to kolkhozes and sovkhozes, agricultural technologies, transport means, spare parts, petroleum products, and an improved selection of seeds. A request to the ministry of light industry was made so that 62 new factories for cotton-cleaning, 12 seeding centers, 80 warehouses, and 90 small cleaning centers and 60 mini-centers for seeding and 156 laboratories could be built. Furthermore, given most cotton was stocked outdoors, they asked for materials to build new 600 silos that could each contain up to 1,000 tons. In order to support the cadres, materials to build new 60,000 m² of housing, and 3000 places in kindergarten were requested. From the ministry for wheat, 161 million rubles to reconstruct the stations for cotton-cleaning and materials to complete 3000 m² of factories were requested for 1981-1985. From USSR Minpribor (Ministry of Instrumentation, Automation and Control Systems) support to reorganize the new equipment and new technologies was also requested. TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 5275, ll. 66-72.

²⁵⁶ This task resulted as one of the most difficult to realized, considering the difficulties and the necessary care for this crop. However, on 14 April 1980, the CC CPUz announced to Gorbachev positive results also on this sector stating that during the past 4 years of the current plan, the production of fine fiber cotton increased from 240 to 324 thousand tons, so increasing of 35%. RGANI, f. 5, op. 77, d. 410, l. 39. Then, on 21 April 1980, the CC CPUz and the SM UzSSR announced to the CC CPSU and the SM USSR that in the past 4 years of the plan have been harvested 22.275 million tons exceeding the plan for half million ton. The actual record was in 1979 with 5.763 million tons and a productivity of 31.3 quintals per hectare. RGANI, f. 5, op. 77, d. 410, l. 43.

harvest season.²⁵⁷ The order was: “strive for quality, defoliation, and improved rhythms of the ‘white harvest’. Quickly prepare the front of cotton picker machines”²⁵⁸ in order to observe a plan that, according to the CPUz, had been already respected for other agriculture issues, such as irrigation.²⁵⁹

2.2.5 Announcing the ‘cotton miracle’

1980 marked the peak of cotton monoculture in Uzbekistan. Excellent weather made the difference and the 1980 cotton harvest proceeded with faster rhythms than previous years and the call “through the victory of labor!” seemed to galvanize the entire Uzbek population.²⁶⁰ Despite the very public, triumphalist announcements, Rashidov had a cautious attitude and warned Moscow to be thankful for what had been achieved and not press further as the limits of what the republic could do were approaching.²⁶¹ At the same time, he knew that in 1980 had been a stellar year. On 1 November 1980, the miracle was announced: the UzSSR had officially produced 6,000,000 tons of ‘white gold’ for the first time.²⁶²

For this “outstanding victory of labor”, Brezhnev exclaimed: “cotton growers deserve the warmest words. Their selfless work of great skill, efficient organization of work at all stages of the harvest has been crowned with great

²⁵⁷ In 16 June, about 16,000 cotton harvest machines, 11,000 tractors, 6,000 cleaning separators, 5,000 stripper machines, 1,300 mechanical pickers, 600 cotton loaders had to be repaired or put back into operation. PV, 19331, 154, 4 July 1980, p. 1.

²⁵⁸ PV, 19389, 212, 13 September 1980, p. 1.

²⁵⁹ Already in summer 1980, the CPUz stated that the FYP was almost complete for irrigation, with more than 105 thousand hectares of new irrigated lands. PV, 19398, 221, 25 September 1980, p. 1.

²⁶⁰ PV, 19408, 231, 7 October 1980, p. 1.

²⁶¹ On 18 September 1980, a politburo meeting approved Uzbekistan’s target, a decision later confirmed by the CC CPSU and the SM USSR. The figures were confirmed in a memorandum of 14 October 1980, where Rashidov politburo members, secretaries of the CPSU and Chernenko, foreseeing a gradual increase in the cotton crop: 5.840 million tons in 1981, 5.880 in 1982, 5.920 in 1983, 5.960 in 1984 and finally 6 million in 1985. On this occasion Rashidov warned that the Gosplan request to increase these figures by another 150,000-200,000 thousand tons would be difficult, arguing “the implementation of this request would be harmful to the development of the entire agriculture [...] The plan is already extremely stressed out.” Thus, the Uzbek leader was declaring that Gosplan was exaggerating and – despite promises – it could not go overboard in requests. RGANI, f. 5, op. 77, d. 410, ll. 52-53.

²⁶² PV, 19429, 252, 1 November 1980, p. 1.

success.”²⁶³ Rashidov took the victory personally, and was acclaimed as a “champion of socialism” who had been able to fulfill the commitments with Moscow. Even during his speech for the anniversary of the revolution – entitled “to you, homeland, the labor of golden hands of cotton workers” – the Uzbek FS declared “our victory is the inexhaustible combination of hard work and inspired craftsmanship, strong will, high creative activity of professionals in agriculture and water resources and all the working people of Uzbekistan.”²⁶⁴ Rashidov’s commitment to the Soviet cause were also reconfirmed during the XVIII plenum of the CC CPUz (10 November 1980) dedicated to the UzSSR’s socio-economic development plan for 1981 and to the execution of the CC CPSU plenum guidelines that had been defined by Brezhnev.²⁶⁵ Then, on November 12 another record was announced by the CC CPUz, the Presidium of SS UzSSR and the SM UzSSR hailing the “heroism” of Uzbek workers who had cropped 6,150,000 tons of raw cotton (of which 3,900,000 with machines and a new record of 350,000 tons of fine-fiber cotton).²⁶⁶

2.3 Resting on laurels

On 14 November 1980 the Presidium of the SS USSR awarded the UzSSR with the ‘Order of Lenin’, commenting:

the outstanding successes, achieved by the working people of the Uzbek SSR in implementing the decisions of the 25th Congress of the CPSU in cotton production, the sale to the state of 6,150 thousand tons of raw cotton in 1980, and for fulfilling ahead of schedule the Tenth Five-Year Plan in sale of cotton, grain, vegetables, melon crops, potatoes, grapes and other fruit, and hemp²⁶⁷

On that occasion, Brezhnev expressed his gratitude to Uzbek workers, suggesting that the mission was not fully accomplished and that the USSR was expecting further efforts from the UzSSR for the construction of communism.²⁶⁸ In fact, in the definition of the new horizons of building

²⁶³ PV, 19432, 255, 5 November 1980, p. 1.

²⁶⁴ PV, 19433, 256, 6 November 1980, pp. 1-2.

²⁶⁵ RGASPI, f.17, op. 149, d. 2421 and PV, 19436, 259, 11 November 1980, p. 1.

²⁶⁶ PV, 19437, 260, 12 November 1980, p. 1.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 49.

²⁶⁸ In Brezhnev's words: “The CPSU Central Committee expresses its firm belief that rural workers in Uzbekistan, based on the increased material and technical equipment of kolkhozes and sovkhoses, will aggressively fight for a further increase in the yield of all crops and livestock productivity, increasing production, efficiency and quality of work, consolidating the results achieved, will welcome new successes in construction of

communism, the CC CPSU was forecasting an increase of annual cotton production in the USSR to 9.2-9.3 million tons by 1985, also improving the cultivation of better quality cotton varieties and fibers.²⁶⁹ This long-term development plan for the 1990 USSR economy had direct implications for the UzSSR, where the Soviet planners were hoping to increase industrial production by 28-31% and agriculture by 17-19%.²⁷⁰ In a meeting with the Uzbek top cadres on 7 December 1980, Brezhnev congratulated the republic for the brilliant results and demanded a further increase in the realization of the plan for 1981-1985. On that occasion, Rashidov received the Lenin Prize and thanked the Soviet leader, confirming the commitments of the party and the republic for more cotton during the following FYP.²⁷¹

By 1981, communism was supposed to have been operational and at a final stage, but this goal had been postponed indefinitely. The new year had to represent the beginning of a new era of welfare that would be implemented through the eleventh FYP (1981-1985) and under the guidelines of the XXVI congress CPSU and the XX congress CPUz for producing ever-more cotton.²⁷²

communism, to meet adequately the 26th Congress of the CPSU". PV, 19441, 264, 16 November 1980, p. 1.

²⁶⁹ On 11 December 1980, the Ministry of agriculture of the UzSSR wrote to Gosplan UzSSR the memorandum 18-19-110 where it was reported that the fiber produced with the cotton cropped with machines was inferior in terms of quality and fiber resistance. The resistance of a fiber was classified on the basis of its strength and the weight that it could hold. A first-quality fiber could hold 3.9 grams and more, a second-quality fiber 3.5-.8, a third-quality fiber 3.1-3.4 and a fourth-quality fiber 3 grams or less. TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 5580, ll. 65-66.

²⁷⁰ While the total annual output in 1960 was 4,800 million kw/h, this program proposed a target by 1985 of 44-45 billion kw/h, to produce 560-570 million m² of cotton and silk fabric, 480-485 thousand tons of vegetable oil, 1-1.1 billion units of canned fruit and vegetables, no less than 5.9 million tons of cotton (of which 400-420 thousand tons of higher quality), 2.8-3 million tons of grain, 2.4-2.5 million tons of vegetables, 400-410 thousand tons of meat, 2.5-2.7 million tons of milk, 20-21 thousand tons of wool, 2.25 million lambskins, and to continue the development of the Karshi and Jizzak steppes also putting in operation 450-465 thousand hectares of irrigated land and irrigating 1.5 million hectares of pastures. PV, 19452-19453, 275-276, 2 December 1980, pp. 4, 7. Alimov, *Uzbekistan. Another Big Leap Forward*, 10.

²⁷¹ RGANI, f. 80, op. 1, d. 393, ll. 1-3.

²⁷² In 1980, 9,100 picker machines and 9.96 million tons of raw cotton were officially produced in the whole USSR. This share was divided among: Uzbekistan (6.24), Turkmenistan (1.26), Tajikistan (1.01), meanwhile 1.45 was produced in minor

The commitments for Uzbek cotton had to be executed, as well as additional duties. In fact, even the Uzbek MCC – which was already promoting a plan to partially break the dependence relation with the center, processing more Uzbek cotton within the republic²⁷³ - planned in 1981 to increase the production by 4.9% and to sell more than 80 million rubles of planned production.²⁷⁴ At the same time, mechanization remained a major ambition and the CPUz promoted the production of cotton pickers²⁷⁵ and other agricultural machines in the republic in those industrial complexes that were defined using the moniker “Uzbek excellence” (i.e. the Tashkent tractors factory Tashselmash).²⁷⁶

2.3.1 The climax of Soviet Uzbekistan

Therefore, on the eve of the 1980s, the UzSSR was publicized as a model of development from backwardness for socialist, post-colonial and even capitalist countries. The picture of the (apparently excellent) situation was directly offered by Rashidov in his self-referential book *Sovetskiy Uzbekistan*²⁷⁷ – translated also into English, Spanish and French – where the Uzbek FS promoted Uzbek achievements during his ‘reign’ and presented the fulfilment of the tenth FYP as the final triumph. In his words:

dimensions in other republics, such as Azerbaijan, Kirghizstan and Kazakhstan. PV, 19495, 20, 24 January 1981, p. 2.

²⁷³ In fact, the chairman of the MCC UzSSR, Usmanov, in his memorandum 14-3-3402 to the SM UzSSR of 8 April 1980 wrote about the commitments of the ministry to improve cotton fiber quality, declaring that in 1976-1980, 14 new cotton-transformation factories, 57 warehouses and 82 cleaning stations had been built or repaired and more than 3000 technologic machines had been installed in the factories and plants as well as 5000 spinneret-instruments to improve cotton quality, planning to build by 1985 new factories that could process up to 7.2 million tons of raw cotton and up to 600,000 tons of cotton fiber. The plan was mainly focused on the Karakalpak, Bukhara, Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya and Jizzak oblast. It was also planned to increase the investments for technologies in order to obtain 260,000 tons more. Usmanov was then asking for an extra investment of at least 8.6 million rubles each year levels in order to improve the technologies of cotton processing plants. TsGARUZ, f. 837, op. 41, d. 5275, ll. 21-24.

²⁷⁴ PV, 19493, 18, 22 January 1981, p. 2.

²⁷⁵ The cotton harvest machines in Uzbekistan increased from 8,300 in 1960 to 21,800 in 1965, 26,100 (1970), 28,700 (1975), 36,600 (1980), 37,900 (1986). Craumer, “Agricultural Change, Labor Supply, and Rural Out- Migration in Soviet Central Asia,” 157.

²⁷⁶ PV, 19488, 23, 28 January 1981, p. 3; and Rashidov, *Soviet Uzbekistan*, 38.

²⁷⁷ Rashidov, *Soviet Uzbekistan*.

A very great deal has been accomplished during the 10th Soviet five-year plan periods. An age-old backwardness, poverty and illiteracy have been overcome, and all forms of oppression and exploitation of working people have been liquidated, as well as all forms of social and national inequality. The Soviet Union has never been as powerful as it is today, and it is confidently paving the way to further social progress. But this is only one aspect, even though an important one, of our achievements. Another, which is not less important, is that prosperity and happiness have entered firmly into each home and each family.²⁷⁸

This narrative was directly related to the cotton campaign,²⁷⁹ marked as the triumph of “internationalism, the banner of our epoch”, a full conquest for the whole of Central Asia, which had left behind centuries of oppression, feudalism, war, division, backwardness and exploitation.²⁸⁰ The UzSSR was presented as an example of development also for technology, education, modernization and industrialization.²⁸¹ However, cotton remained king. The FS CPUz reminded the whole world how in 1940 Uzbek annual cotton production amounted to 1.386 million tons, 2.824 in 1960, 3.746 in 1965, 4.495 in 1970,

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 7.

²⁷⁹ “The working people of Uzbekistan are justly proud of the highest yields of cotton in the world and the enormous gross harvest of 6 million tons obtained in 1980.” Ibid., 9.

²⁸⁰ The same narrative that condemned pre-revolutionary conditions – of feudalism, slavery, backwardness, exploitation, subsistence – and which presented the Soviet path as the progressive and civilizing strength of the Uzbek people, was typical of the 1960s as well. In fact, even Alimov reported: “The position of the Uzbeks was particularly hard in the years preceding the Great October Socialist Revolution. They were brutally oppressed by the emir, khans, beks and tsarist officials. Possessing neither land nor water, the working people had to toil all year round for the beys, receiving in return only scraps of food that barely kept them alive [...] As a result of the October Revolution the power passed into the hands of the working people. All the wealth they had created—the factories, mills, mines, railways and banks—became the property of the working people.” Alimov, *Uzbekistan. Another Big Leap Forward*, 6; Rashidov, *Soviet Uzbekistan*, 10–28.

²⁸¹ Rashidov was publicizing that at the eve of the 80s, there were over 100 branches of production and 1500 large industries in the republic, 210 mechanized and automated enterprises and 5,200 mechanized assembly lines. According to the Uzbek leader, from 1940 the fuel industry grew by 87 times, chemical and petrochemical by 265 times, engineering by 860 times, ferrous and non-ferrous metallurgy by 6,600 times meanwhile, from 1960, gas production increased by 81 times, reaching 36 bcm per year at the eve of the 80s. During the X FYP capital investments increased by 5 billion rubles (amounting to more than 24 billion) and were built the first 15 km and 12 stations of the first metro in Central Asia in Tashkent. Ibid., 38–39, 42.

and finally reaching 6 million in 1980. On the eve of the '80s, he noted, Uzbekistan had built 869 collective farms and five fishing farms - increasing their fixed assets by 2.6 times, and gross income and remuneration of farmers by 1.6 times over the 1965 level - and 900 irrigation systems with a total length of 158,000 km and drainage of 75,000.²⁸² On the improvements of irrigation and the fields, Rashidov repeated that, after the-above mentioned May 1966 CC CPSU plenum, 1.2 million hectares of newly-irrigated land had been inaugurated, increasing water supply on 2.3 million hectares of irrigated land and, only during the tenth FYP, more than 500,000 hectares were made arable.²⁸³ In his words: "Such well-developed irrigation and land reclamation systems as those of Uzbekistan do not exist in any capitalist country with irrigation-based agriculture."²⁸⁴ This was a triumph for which the Uzbek leader was self-congratulating.

Cotton sown in UzSSR (thousands of hectares)²⁸⁵

1940	1950	1960	1965	1970	1980	1985	1988
924	1,098	1,387	1,550	1,709	1,878	1,990	2,017

Reading this narrative, it seems that, at the beginning of the '80s, the 'developed socialism' conquests came to their climax in the UzSSR, and the whole Soviet system was able to boast or pretend about internal and external successes, and the prospect of problems seemed to be deferred over a longer period. This propensity inexorably emerged during the XX Congress of CPUz (3-5 February 1981)²⁸⁶ when Rashidov's speech was focused on the triumph of Uzbek economic development.²⁸⁷ In his call for the next FYP, the Uzbek FS stressed the importance of "fully using intensive factors to develop industry [considering that] in the last five years the industrial production increased by 27.4% [and] the investment in new machineries grew 1.3 times more than the previous FYP", implying a mechanical cotton crop of four million tons in 1980.

The Uzbek leader was also reciting the necessity to improve the technical base in mineral fertilizers – a sector in which 25 billion rubles had been invested

²⁸² Ibid., 48, 54, 56.

²⁸³ Ibid., 56–57.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 56.

²⁸⁵ Craumer, "Agricultural Change, Labor Supply, and Rural Out- Migration in Soviet Central Asia," 144.

²⁸⁶ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 150, dd. 2477 and 2478 (appendices).

²⁸⁷ Dellenbrant, *The Soviet Regional Dilemma: Planning, People, and Natural Resources*, 105.

(1,3 times more than the previous FYP) - and to capitalize on the capital investment (that were 22-25% more than the previous FYP) in order to “aggressively implement the Party's agrarian policy.” In fact, agriculture was again a crucial aspect for the CPUz, considering that in the UzSSR the production officially grew by 25.4% during the last FYP - surpassing the growth forecast of 22% - as well as cotton (16.5%) – with 28.5 million tons during the X FYP, 4 more than IX FYP -, grains (twice), vegetables and potatoes (1.6 times), grapes (1.7 times). During the X FYP, 27 million m² for housing and implemented further progress of science and technique were realized in a republic that hosted a claimed figure of 35,000 people involved in scientific research, 900 doctors of sciences and 12,800 candidates of sciences. The statistics about the alphabetization of the Uzbek population – as well as the attention on women - were also sensational, publicizing issues that the CPUz leader exploited to legitimize his operation.

During the CPUz congress, Rashidov remarked on the importance of improving governance and management methods within the party - that was branched in 290 filial involving almost 30,000 people – in order to “improve the effectiveness of ideological and educational work” of the party. Just at the beginning of the ‘80s, the Communist Party of Uzbekistan was even more enlarged and bureaucratized than it used to be before - since 1976, there were 116,000 new CPUz affiliates, reaching a total of 570,000 members, about one tenth of workers - and all the efforts flowed into cotton production, as well as it was also confirmed by the speeches of all the other participants²⁸⁸ of a congress that confirmed the leadership of Rashidov and the previous establishment of power.²⁸⁹

At this stage of peaceful development of the USSR, long debates on ideological issues and the prospects for the 'developed socialism' in the Soviet Union were raised, and Brezhnev was presented as an authentic and paternal guide for such a cotton miracle.²⁹⁰ Just three weeks after the Uzbek congress,

²⁸⁸ PV, 19504, 29, 4 February 1981, pp. 1-6.

²⁸⁹ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 150, d. 2480.

²⁹⁰ On 9 February 1981, the Bukhara obkom said that during the conference (held in 9-10 January), was thanked Brezhnev “for the constant paternal care on the improvement of the Soviet people and for the titanic work for the strengthening of world peace.” RGANI, f. 5, op. 84, d. 57, l. 177. Also a letter from the Karakalpak obkom of 7 February 1981 was reporting the results of the 27th obkom conference where was announced a production of 1.253 million tons, exceeding the current plan for 113.5 thousand tons and the previous IX FYP for 266 thousand tons. RGANI, f. 5, op. 84, d. 57, l. 185.

the CPSU was also going to host another event that would confirm the positive trends that had been followed in the past years: the 26th Congress CPSU (23 February - 3 March 1981) where the UzSSR was represented by 166 delegates (3.3% of 5002 total).²⁹¹ On that occasion, Brezhnev's speech was mainly focused on the development of the "world socialist system", the cooperation among socialist countries and with newly-free countries, and also on the relations with the capitalistic West.²⁹² Meanwhile, on an economic level, the CPSU Gensek ensured the further improvement of the Soviet people's well-being and claiming the best results ever stating:

on the whole, the seventies may be summed up as a major step in developing the national economy of the country, of all the union and autonomous republics [...] Our great country has become stronger, richer, and more beautiful!²⁹³

Also the chairman of the SM USSR, Nikolai Tikhonov, in promoting the *Guidelines for the Economic and Social Development of the USSR for 1981-1985 and for the Period Ending in 1990*²⁹⁴, declared a victory of Soviet agriculture and cotton, stating that "despite the unfavorable weather during three of the five years [...] in 1980 the cotton crop amounted to nearly ten million tons."²⁹⁵ The conditions of Soviet development were, however, less positive than expectations²⁹⁶ and less impressive than propaganda was publicizing, and the

²⁹¹ Marilyn Bechtel, David Laibman, and Daniel Rosenberg, *Peace, Plan and Progress : The 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York: NWR Publications, 1981), 217.

²⁹² Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, "Report of the Central Committee of the CPSU to the XXVI Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Immediate Tasks of the Party in Home and Foreign Policy. February 23, 1981," in *Peace, Plan and Progress : The 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, ed. Marilyn Bechtel, David Laibman, and Daniel Rosenberg (New York: NWR Publications, 1981), 51–67.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁹⁴ This program had been already debated and accepted during the plenum CPSU of 20 February 1980. PV, 19517, 42, 21 February 1981, p. 1.

²⁹⁵ Nikolai Aleksandrovich Tikhonov, "Guidelines for the Economic and Social Development of the USSR for 1981-1985 and for the Period Ending in 1990. February 23, 1981," in *Peace, Plan and Progress : The 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, ed. Marilyn Bechtel, David Laibman, and Daniel Rosenberg (New York: NWR Publications, 1981), 88–89.

²⁹⁶ David Laibman, "Incentives, Planning and Socialist Construction. Some Thoughts on the 26th CPSU Congress and the Start of the 11th Five-Year Plan," in *Peace, Plan and Progress : The 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, ed. Marilyn Bechtel, David Laibman, and Daniel Rosenberg (New York: NWR Publications, 1981), 23.

planned results were clearly below the targeted levels.²⁹⁷ Just in the 1975-1979, the USSR had to import about 95 million tons of wheat, as well as meat and other food products, making clear that the country was not able to satisfy the basic needs of its citizens.²⁹⁸ This deficit in the trade balance contributed to drastically reduce Soviet gold reserves from 1221 tons (1975) to 502 (1980).²⁹⁹

The critical circumstances of Soviet agriculture were even denounced by the CC CPSU Secretary for Agriculture, Mikhail Gorbachev, who described a situation in which the kolkhozes in crisis were receiving funds as lost – meanwhile while those that were virtuosos were forced to fend for themselves – and that guaranteed salaries to the peasants had taken away the incentive to work.³⁰⁰ In order to respond to the situation, as soon as 1980 – much before his acknowledged success in the post of Gensek – Gorbachev realized a first plan of reforms that was aimed at stopping the expensive transformation of kolkhozes in sovkhoses and conceding, since 1981, almost a hectare for each kolkhoz family. Substantially, these reforms realized an inheritable private property right, promoting an atmosphere that reconsidered the collectivization of fifty years before.³⁰¹ These results were also brought to attention during the congress, where – apparently – a substantial minority of the party was

²⁹⁷ Also Brezhnev in his statement, admitted that the “Central Committee of the CPSU at the same time clearly discerns the difficulties, the shortcomings, and the unsolved problems. Not all of the targets set were achieved. Not all of the ministries and enterprises fulfilled their plans. There are still bottlenecks and disproportions in the national economy.” Brezhnev, “Report of the Central Committee of the CPSU to the XXVI Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Immediate Tasks of the Party in Home and Foreign Policy. February 23, 1981,” 67.

²⁹⁸ Furthermore, in 1981 USSR produced only 158 million tons of cereals and had to import additional 46 million tons. In 1982-1983 the annual importations of cereals were below 40 million, meanwhile it raised again in 1984 with 46 million tons. Parallel, the “production costs” (or selling costs) were raising, while consumer prices were firm since 1962. Graziosi, *L’Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 472.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 442–45.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 445.

³⁰¹ In May 1982, the plenum of the CPSU launched a food program - which would last until 1990 - which nullified farm debt, preferred small projects targeted - rather than the previous pharaonic plans - and favored the spread of a kind of contract work. *Ibid.*, 473.

concerned about the economic situation in the country and started to champion the idea of reform.

Despite this new, albeit modest, critical climate that was veiling a certain pessimism among Soviet planners, Rashidov defended the results of his work and disavowed those negative trends that did not seem to progress the UzSSR indexes. On that occasion, Rashidov could fully assess the results of the UzSSR cotton production. In his speech, he recalled the record of the previous year – 6.237 million tons – and described the cotton pickers of Uzbekistan as high contributors that showed “the best features of soviet character and socialist lifestyle”. On this regard, he also quoted the Soviet anthem and the Brezhnev’s words “where there is success of the party there is the victory [about] the remarkable results achieved by the people under the leadership of the party in the last five years.”³⁰² Due to his confirmation, the Uzbek leader even claimed a stronger position to demand for an increase of cotton and cotton products prices,³⁰³ justifying such request due to an increase of productive costs.³⁰⁴

³⁰² PV, 19521, 46, 25 February 1981, p. 3.

³⁰³ During Rashidov’s reign, cotton prices rose - as well as for other products such as cotton seeds. As emerges in the memorandum 05-13 of 10 April 1981 sent from the state committee for prices - Goskomsen - of the UzSSR to the SM UzSSR, the new prices of seeds had been defined in base of their quality: first-quality seeds were purchased for 220 rubles per ton, second-quality for 200 rubles and third quality for 172. These prices were paid by the state and were redefined by Khudayberdiyev who increase them respectively from 135, 120 and 95 rubles per ton. TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 5580, ll. 96-99

³⁰⁴ In an official memorandum of CC CPUz to CC CPSU of 13 April 1982, Rashidov asked to the secretary Gorbachev to increase the purchase price of cotton, because the material and technical costs for kolkhozes to produce one ton had raised from 384 to 455 rubles in the 1970-1980 and in 1981 became 466, decreasing the profitability of kolkhozes to 27% and of sovkhoses to 15% determining the phenomenon of unproductive kolkhozes and sovkhoses that in 1980, the year of record production, were 122 on total of 1218 collective and state farms in UzSSR. In 1981 this phenomenon rose and were 253 the unproductive farms of the republic. Considering also the average levels of salary per capita in Uzbekistan - only 52.5 rubles against the Soviet 83.5 – he also demanded to rise the purchase price of cotton to 680 rubles per ton and to reconsider also the prices of silk cocoons. After an evaluation of the case, the CC CPSU answered to Rashidov on 5 October 1982 was declaring that could rise the purchasing price of cotton for 11%, for fine fiber cotton 16-20% but could not for silk cocoons. RGANI, f. 5, op. 88, d. 481, ll. 3-17.

After the great 1981 event, the FS CPUz then confirmed the agricultural commitments for 1981,³⁰⁵ and during the II plenum CC CPUz (28 May 1981)³⁰⁶ Rashidov also exposed the need to further improve the selection and arrangement of training of cadres following the XXVI congress of CPSU, confirming such line also in his speech at the SS UzSSR.³⁰⁷ Probably, the Uzbek leader wanted to give the impression that he had an effective control over the party and the state in order to clench his leadership and to marginalize those potential factors of internal instability. However, the Uzbek leader was fearing the CPSU more than internal opponents and therefore he had to satisfy again the demands of the center in order to confirm his power. Not surprisingly, cotton was, again, the key of Rashidov's political legitimation and the main argument to attract more funds and investments from the center as well as technical support for agriculture.³⁰⁸

At the beginning of summer 1981, the party and the state were directly appealing the UzSSR machinists to be prepared for the cotton crop, confirming the target of at least 5.9 million tons of which was 3,9 harvested mechanically.³⁰⁹ These indications were also confirmed during the III plenum CC CPUz (11 September 1981)³¹⁰ that was functional to implement the guidelines of the XXVI CPSU and XX CPUz congresses and to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the USSR. For such aims, the party was stressing the importance to improve quantity and quality of Uzbek cotton and related crop techniques, irrigation, mechanization and chemicals. The fast implementation of mechanization was directly recalled by Rashidov, who congratulated some

³⁰⁵ By 1981, the Soviet planners were expecting from the UzSSR a production of 5.9 million tons of cotton, 2.5 of grains, 1.3 of vegetables, 0.95 of milk, 0.32 of meat and 27.5 thousand ton of silk cocoons and 1.05 billion eggs. PV, 19528-19529, 53-54, 5 March 1981, p. 1.

³⁰⁶ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 150, d. 2481.

³⁰⁷ PV, 19600, 125, 30 May 1981, p. 1.

³⁰⁸ In a memorandum sent from Rashidov and Khudayberdiyev to Gorbachev on 22 June 1981, was stated that in April there was a bad weather to seed cotton and had been damaged 2.057 million hectares of agricultural soil from which 1.873 devoted to cotton. 600,000 hectares had been seeded again and 300,000 in a later moment. For this task, the CC CPUz required 50,000 tons of nitrogen and 30,000 of phosphorus fertilizers. RGANI, f. 5, op. 84, d. 364, ll. 24-25.

³⁰⁹ PV, 19663, 188, 15 August 1981, p. 1.

³¹⁰ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 150, d. 2482.

districts where almost 90-95% of the harvest had been done by machines.³¹¹ Even Brezhnev was congratulating the CPUz and some of its local leaders – such as Musakhanov, FS of Tashkent obkom³¹² – for “the victory in the cotton crop” that officially was exceeding 6 million tons also in 1981, exclaiming during the plenum CC CPSU (16 November 1981) “as usual, good job cotton growers of Uzbekistan!”³¹³ On that occasion, Rashidov expressed his gratitude recognizing the “high socialist liabilities”³¹⁴ of the Uzbek cotton workers.

Despite the great announcements of the current and previous harvests,³¹⁵ the Soviet agriculture was not facing its best moment: the production of 1981 was officially registering a -2% deficit over the previous year’s levels,³¹⁶ but the negative figures of the Soviet agriculture crisis were up to twice as bad. However, this negative contingency did not extend to Uzbek cotton. In 1981 the republic officially reached a new productive record of 6.23 million tons, of which 387 thousand tons was of the higher fine-fiber quality³¹⁷ and an average productive quota of 32.2 quintal per hectare.³¹⁸ In parallel, the other sectors related to cotton were also mobilized to increase even more the production: for 1982, the MCC UzSSR announced the target of +3,8% and a value of about 80 million rubles more than planned.³¹⁹ The Uzbek triumphalism for agriculture

³¹¹ During the plenum, Rashidov recalled that in the previous FYP (1976-1980), kolkhozes and sovkhoses of UzSSR had 87,000 tractors, 76,000 tractors trailers, more than 30,000 cotton crop machine, 28,000 seeding machines, 44,000 tillage machine. PV, 19686, 211, 12 September 1981, pp. 1-2. However, these figures seemed to have been reconsidered downward by Uzbek historiography, estimating that between 1976-1982, were assigned to UzSSR just 3,973 tractors, 4,983 cultivators and 1387 fertilizer-spreaders. Uzbekiston Fanlar akademiyasi Tarix instituti, *Uzbekiston Respublikasi Fan va Texnika Davlat Qummitasi. Tarix Shohidligi va Saboqlari*, 291.

³¹² PV, 19722, 247, 25 October 1981, p. 1.

³¹³ PV, 19746, 271, 24 November 1981, p. 1.

³¹⁴ PV, 19747, 272, 25 November 1981, p. 1.

³¹⁵ The results of 1980 were even publicized with great fanfare by the CC CPUz and SM USSR that wrote to Gorbachev on 22 September 1981 an enthusiastic letter declaring that in 1980 were produced 6.245 million tons of “white gold” and 357,000 tons of fine fiber cotton. RGANI, f. 5, op. 84, d. 364, l. 39.

³¹⁶ PV, 19795, 20, 24 January 1982, p. 1.

³¹⁷ PV, 19796, 21, 26 January 1981, p. 1.

³¹⁸ PV, 19828, 53, 4 March 1982, p. 1. However, in 1981, the AN UzSSR estimated that due to the new technologies, the productivity per hectare had recorded peaks of 35.6 quintals in 1981 that was about 150% of the 1965 levels and 140% of 1970. TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 5580, ll. 136-138.

³¹⁹ PV, 19798, 23, 28 January 1982, p. 2.

was complete. At the beginning of 1982, the CSD UzSSR was referring to SM USSR an extraordinary agricultural output for the first year of the XI FYP³²⁰, listing – as follows in the table below - a production that was exceeding in all cultivation sectors:

Production	Unit	Expected for 1981	Realized in 1981	Variation (%)
Cotton (raw)	Thousand tons	5840	6022,7	103,1
Wheat	Thousand tons	900	1290	142,3
Vegetables	Thousand tons	1480	1786,5	120,7
Melons	Thousand tons	560	626,8	111,9
Fruit	Thousand tons	265	347,1	131
Grapes	Thousand tons	370	429,9	116,2
Livestock and Poultry	Thousand tons	270	270,5	100,2
Milk	Thousand tons	760	788,8	103,8
Eggs	Million pieces	940	989,3	105,2
Wool	Tons	26500	30094	113,6
Silk cocoons	Tons	27200	31873	117,2

In 1982, Rashidov finally approached the peak of his political success. The Uzbek leader had been able to confirm the party's commitments to the Soviet cause, and to consolidate his power behaving and assuming a paternal role with state and party officials.³²¹ This success had a wide echo even in Moscow where, by decree of the presidium of SS USSR, Rashidov was awarded on 5 March 1982 with the 'Order of the October Revolution' – for his "organizational skills for communism" and his "success in completing plans and socialist duties" – and the 'hero of socialist labor' - for the "increase of production and selling

³²⁰ On 25 March 1982, the CSD UzSSR was referring to SM USSR such extraordinary production to SM USSR on the report n° 30-02. See TsGARUZ, f. 837, op. 41, d. 5906, ll. 49-53.

³²¹ This particularly emerged in his latest speeches at the VI congress of the union of the journalists of Uzbekistan, in the local party filials, in the Komsomol, unions and other "school of communism," in the factories, in the kolkhozes and sovkhoses of the republic etc. See PV, 19801, 26, 31 January 1982, p. 4 and PV, 19805, 30, 5 February 1982, p. 1.

of cotton and other products of agriculture”³²² - acknowledging from above the prestige of the Uzbek leader.³²³

2.3.2 A bad omen

On 22-25 March 1982, Brezhnev had a short trip in Uzbekistan.³²⁴ He arrived in Tashkent to personally deliver the awards to the UzSSR³²⁵ and to Rashidov for his “great managerial and political work and the socialist commitment for cotton production”³²⁶ in the difficult context of Uzbekistan where, according to the Gensek, it was necessary

much experience and loyalty to the Party's work and organizational talent, to be critical and to [properly] appreciate the results, to have the will to achieve the goals, to know people well and to have passion for them. All these qualities helped Rashidov and the entire Soviet leadership, promoting the success of the republic.³²⁷

³²² PV, 19830, 55, 6 March 1982, p. 1.

³²³ During his career, Rashidov was awarded ten Orders of Lenin in 1950, 1957, 1965, 1967, 1971, 1973, 1974, 1976, 1977 and 1980, an Order of the October Revolution in 1982, a Red Banner of Labor in 1951, two orders of the Red Star in 1942 and 1946, a Badge of Honor in 1944, a Lenin Prize in 1980 and two medals of Hero of the Socialist Labor in 1974 and 1977. As Clark comments, “for his part, Rashidov presented valuable tokens of homage to Brezhnev and massaged the latter’s insatiable ego in public. His reference to Brezhnev at the 1976 Twenty-fifth Party Congress as “the most outstanding and most influential political figure of contemporary times,” is but one of a large number of outlandish examples of Rashidov’s toadyism toward the general secretary.” Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 188; Jerry F. Hough, “The Brezhnev Era: The Man and the System,” *Problems of Communism* 25, no. 2 (1976): 2–3.

³²⁴ In that occasion, Brezhnev came to the prizegiving ceremony and visited the CC CPUz, the Tashkent tractors and aeronautic factories, the kolkhoz named after Lenin in the Ordzhonikidzsky raion and met workers, peasants and engineers “confirming the unity between people and party.” RGANI, f. 80, op. 1, d. 393, ll. 63-67.

³²⁵ At that moment, UzSSR had already been awarded for its efforts in the Soviet cause with a first ‘Order of Lenin’ in 1939 for the development of agriculture and cotton production, a second one in 1956 for the high harvest and high quality of agriculture production, an ‘Order of friendship of peoples’ in 1972 for the 50th anniversary of the USSR, an ‘Order of the October Revolution’ in 1974 for the increase of cotton production, and a third ‘Order of Lenin’ in 1980 for the incredible results of 6 million. PV, 19843, 68, 22 March 1982, p. 2.

³²⁶ RGANI, f. 80, op. 1, d. 393, l. 29.

³²⁷ RGANI, f. 80, op. 1, d. 393, l. 31.

Brezhnev was thus confirming the trust in Rashidov waiting for "more victories."³²⁸ The award ceremony was organized in March 24, a day that Rashidov defined as:

a golden page in the chronicles of the UzSSR. it will go down as a celebration of universal jubilation and emotion, as a demonstration of the triumph of Leninist national policy of the communist party, a powerful life-giving power of friendship between the peoples of the USSR.³²⁹

During the gala meeting in the same day, Brezhnev gave a speech where he thanked Rashidov – for the great result of the republic that had provided more than 6 million tons to the fatherland – and defining the UzSSR as one of the most impressive examples of development in Orient and a great example of internationalism. Referring to Tashkent, the Soviet leader exclaimed:

Shines the star of the East in the constellation of the republics' capitals as a symbol of brotherhood and friendship of the peoples of the USSR [...] More successful years ahead Tashkent.³³⁰

Then, suddenly the Soviet leader changed his pledging narrative and admonished the CPUz, stating: "it is necessary to pay special attention to improving the cotton quality [...] the first qualities [first and second] of the cotton you do from year to year decreases [...] passing from 70 to 46%."³³¹ The Brezhnev call was in line with the non-publicized statistics about the cotton quality crop that had drastically decreased in the last decade.³³² It is possible to elaborate this trend in the table below:

Period	I quality (%)	II quality (%)	III quality (%)	IV quality (%)
1976-1980	48	13	25	14
1980	47	12	28	13
1981	32	14	36	18

This reduction in terms of quality was an alarming issue that was, at that time, ignored, being glossed over by a 'quantitative' triumphalism rather than being realistic about 'qualitative' factors. Indeed, party and cotton workers

³²⁸ RGANI, f. 80, op. 1, d. 393, l. 32.

³²⁹ PV, 19846, 71, 25 March 1982, p. 2.

³³⁰ RGANI, f. 80, op. 1, d. 393, ll. 12-14.

³³¹ TsGARUZ, f. 837, op. 41, d. 5906, l. 150 and RGANI, f. 80, op. 1, d. 393, ll. 7-8.

³³² TsGARUZ, f. 837, op. 41, d. 5906, l. 52.

were obsessively committed to fulfilling the plan in terms of quantity, investing all the energies to reach the 'magic numbers'. As a consequence, in the period of 'hard mechanization' (1971-1982), the quality of the cotton fiber drastically decreased³³³ and 865 million rubles were substantially lost.³³⁴ However, this trend was not just imputable to the intensive use of machines - that factually was in lower levels than publicized³³⁵ - but also depended on the human factor. In fact, cotton pickers, in order to achieve the ambitious harvest quotas, were harvesting also other parts of cotton plants, mingling stones, soil, or other dirt with cotton, or were wetting the cotton with water, oil or other liquids in order to make it heavier. The Brezhnev admonishment seriously embarrassed Rashidov at a moment when, in front of the whole CC CPUz, the Uzbek leader was receiving an award for his efforts. However, the small size and the non-public dimension of Brezhnev's admonishment hinting that the Soviet leader would have turned a blind eye this time, and the quantitative approach seemed to be appreciated anyway.

The ceremony proceeded and Brezhnev personally gave Rashidov the 'Order of the October Revolution' for his commitments and success in completing the plans.³³⁶ On 25 March, the tones became critical once again when Brezhnev, during his speech at the CC CPUz, denounced that in the last

³³³ As suggested by the MCC UzSSR, due to mechanical crop, the cotton quality was drastically decreased year by year: the share of first-quality cotton was 70.3% in 1963, 35.6% in 1970, 23.2% in 1971, 13.9% in 1972, 20.4% in 1973, 13.6% in 1974 and 17.8% in 1975. This decrease was prospected even by Ministry of Finance UzSSR that reported the Soviet production of first-quality cotton of 53.1% of its total in 1976, meanwhile in 1979 it declined to 44.2%. Furthermore, during this period sharply declined the share of first-quality cotton cropped by machines from 32% to 19.8%. In the same report, the Ministry also reported a first-quality cotton crop in the whole USSR of 5.263 million tons – by which 3533 from Uzbekistan – in 1979. However, it was forecasting for 1980 a Soviet production of 4.051 (about 1.212 less than previous years) by which 2.4 from UzSSR (about 1.133 less). This meant that the decrease of first-quality cotton was expected practically in the lonely Uzbekistan. The memorandum n° 05/26-7 of Ministry of Finance UzSSR to SM UzSSR of 29 October 1979 is available at TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 5275, ll. 38-40.

³³⁴ Abdullaev, "Uzbekistonda Paxta Yakkahokimligi va Uning Oqibatlari (1917-1991 Y.y.)," 179.

³³⁵ According to Dzhurabekov, at the eve of the '80s, the mechanized crop consisted of 35% of the all production (the rest was harvested manually), meanwhile in 1985-1987 was 40%. N. Dzhurabekov, "Eshe Raz O Sortirovke Khlopka-Syrza Promyshlennym Sortam," *Khlopkovodstvo* 12 (1987).

³³⁶ PV, 19847, 72, 26 March 1982, p. 1.

years a fourth of the state companies did not realized the plan - procuring a deficit of about 400 million rubles – and that the growth of industrial productivity had stalled.³³⁷ Rashidov, who had just been awarded, seemed to sadly regret the rebuke, and promised to follow slavishly Brezhnev's tips in future.³³⁸ These remarks, with strongly pedagogical tones, seemed to further confirm the paternalistic relationship between the two leaders.³³⁹ To some extent, this relation was verifiable at any level of party and bureaucratic administrations.

It is interesting to note the reasons for Brezhnev's change of rhetoric in those days: he arrived in Uzbekistan full of good words and left Tashkent - after just a few days - visibly annoyed and bothered by certain facts. Indeed, the last of Brezhnev's visits to Uzbekistan was remembered for other events. Firstly, it promoted a new course in the Cold War dynamic, representing a first step in the normalization of Sino-Soviet relations.³⁴⁰ However, despite the importance of the event, this is another story. The Tashkent tour is evoked here because it was one of the last public glimpses of the Soviet leader, and for a famous event that was not reported in the Soviet press. After visiting the Tashkent tractors factory and the kolkhoz named after Lenin,³⁴¹ on March 23 Brezhnev was visiting an aircraft parts factory with Rashidov. Suddenly, the scaffolding bearing numerous onlookers collapsed, hurting the Soviet leader and his staff.³⁴² Brezhnev broke his collarbone and was visibly shocked after the accident, meanwhile Rashidov had a slight bruise. The area was rapidly

³³⁷ RGANI, f. 80, op. 1, d. 393, ll. 35-36.

³³⁸ RGANI, f. 80, op. 1, d. 393, l. 51.

³³⁹ Such kind of relation emerges even in the memorandum 405 directed to the CC CPSU, where Rashidov was reporting about the General Secretary's trip to Tashkent (22-25 March). The FS CPUz was commenting the Brezhnev's speech at CC CPUz (24 March, during the award ceremony) as "indelible [...] reinforcing our efforts for ten times" to overcome the plan for next years and to improve quality as well. The FS CPUz concluded declaring that "all the merits of Uzbekistan are linked to the attention of CPSU and personally of Brezhnev". RGANI, f. 80, op. 1, d. 393, ll. 63-67.

³⁴⁰ Sergey Radchenko, *Unwanted Visionaries : The Soviet Failure in Asia at the End of the Cold War* (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

³⁴¹ PV, 19845, 70, 24 March 1982, p. 1.

³⁴² Among the members of Brezhnev's security staff were also concussed Aleksandr Ryabenko and Vladimir Sobachenkov who was standing next to the Soviet leader and managed to protect him from a direct hit. He was injured at the head, hospitalized and readily dismissed in order to rejoin Brezhnev after one hour. Vladimir Medvedev, *Chelovek Za Spinoy* (Moskva: Russlit, 1994), 167-68.

evacuated and the leader's injuries were disguised. The next day - March 24 during the awards' ceremony – both leaders seemed somewhat shaken and masked their discomfort due to the tragic event of the day before. Also in the following days, Rashidov was visibly mortified and embarrassed over the incident and wrote on 7 April a personal letter to Brezhnev where he stated his concern for the incident that is

like an incurable wound, a large scar on the heart that does not give us peace. [...] if we can, we ask for your forgiveness [and we want to] sincerely and daughterly thank our dear and much loved father Leonid Ilich for his arrival in Uzbekistan and to send along with the trusted words.³⁴³

Despite the not marked age difference and the friendly relations between Brezhnev and Rashidov, on this occasion the latter politician behaved like a mortified child who could not find the right words to direct towards his severe father. This demonstrated how the paternalistic relationship that Brezhnev had with Rashidov, particularly emerges around the terms “father” and “daughterly”. The Tashkent accident could be read as a bad omen for two leaders who were allegorically crushed by the weight of a heavy and fragile system that was collapsing on themselves and that in a few years would disappear completely. To some extent, this episode could also be considered a critical moment for the patrimonial system, and maybe the beginning of a rebellion against the Center by a periphery in search of a wider autonomy.

On April 26, during the V plenum of the CC CPUz,³⁴⁴ Rashidov gave a somewhat vacuous and self-celebrating speech during which he repeated the same triumphalist data. The agenda was to focus the party organization and the beginning of the plan implementation that – according to Brezhnev - had a “positive start.”³⁴⁵ Also during the VI plenum CC CPUz (15 June 1982),³⁴⁶ the triumphalism that had been typical of the previous meetings was even more heavily stated and Rashidov argued that, “cotton will continue to lead areas of the economy [...] We are obliged to comply strictly with plans and commitments for cotton production,”³⁴⁷ confirming those promises that had attracted so much trust and attention to the CPUz. Cotton thus became a sort

³⁴³ Rizaev, *Sharaf Rashidov. Shtrikhi K Portretu*, 136.

³⁴⁴ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 151, d. 2320.

³⁴⁵ PV was publicizing how “the highest score is the feeling of satisfaction and joy. At the same time, it increases our responsibility for further development of agriculture and increase the harvest of cotton.” PV, 19873, 98, 27 April 1982, p. 1.

³⁴⁶ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 151, d. 2321.

³⁴⁷ PV, 19915, 140, 16 June 1982, p. 1.

of laurel with which the Uzbek leader was crowned, continuing even in the VII plenum CPUz (17 September 1982),³⁴⁸ to commit even more energies to the noble cause of ‘white gold’. The meeting focused on the implementation of high effectivity of scientific research and strengthening the link between science - that was defined by Rashidov as a “direct productive force” - and production.³⁴⁹ Until his last days, Brezhnev frequently thanked UzSSR institutions and the CPUz for the cotton production successes,³⁵⁰ continuing until the end of that circus comprised of thanks, gifts, and promises. This tandem would, however, be interrupted with the disappearance from the political stage of one of the two protagonists. On 10 November 1982, the 75-year-old Leonid Ilich Brezhnev died of a heart attack. His death was reported in the media much later, while television deluded citizens playing concerts and even PV only announced such a dramatic event for the Soviet regime as late as November 12. Despite the claims of personal friendship between Brezhnev and Rashidov and the propaganda in Uzbek newspapers, the Uzbek leader had a marginal role in the farewell funeral, having lost someone who was apparently a father figure, supporter, and most of all, a protector. To play again the political card of ‘cotton success’ and to redefine a tied relation with the next Gensek would be very difficult - if not impossible – for the Uzbek leader, who rose his career in that very establishment. Thus, Brezhnev’s death was clearly not the end of *the* world, but certainly the end of *a* world.

2.4 The collateral costs of cotton

As we have seen, cotton and its glorification narrative became the key issues promoted by the CPUz and its leaders to get a certain degree of political legitimation in the Soviet system. However, the party leadership and the whole republic became victims - and at the same time perpetrators - of a system that was mutually enforced in accordance with the directives of Moscow, implementing a vicious circle - or maybe a trap - that was becoming unsustainable on economic, social, administrative and ecological levels.

2.4.1 Economic dependence

The imposition of cotton monoculture and the implementation of such a specialized economy constituted what Rumer considered to be an “agrarian

³⁴⁸ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 151, d. 2322.

³⁴⁹ PV, 19989, 214, 18 September 1982, p. 1.

³⁵⁰ PV, 20021, 246, 28 October 1982, p. 1.

colonial model”³⁵¹, or a ‘colonial-like’ system³⁵² of dependence between the periphery – that was providing raw material - to the center that, in exchange, was exporting the transformed production as well as all the other products that the republic was not able to autonomously provide for its citizens. These kinds of ties created a dependency between the periphery and the motherland – letting as highly undesirable any attempt for independence - and dangerous

³⁵¹ Rumer, “Central Asia’s Cotton Economy and Its Costs,” 79.

³⁵² I will not go into the debate on the colonial nature of the Soviet system, referring readers instead to the following studies: Deniz Kandiyoti, “Post-Colonialism Compared: Potentials and Limitations in the Middle East and Central Asia,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34, no. 2 (2002): 279–97; Sergey Abashin, “Nations and Post-Colonialism in Central Asia: Twenty Years Later,” in *Development in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Migration, Democratisation and Inequality in the Post-Soviet Era*, ed. Sophie Hohmann et al. (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014); Paolo Sartori, “Introduction: Dealing with States of Property in Modern and Colonial Central Asia,” *Central Asian Survey* 29, no. 1 (March 28, 2010): 1–8; Claire Mouradian, “The Origins of a Colonial Vision of Southern Russia From the Tsars to the Soviets: About Some Imperial Practices in the Caucasus,” in *Development in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Migration, Democratisation and Inequality in the Post-Soviet Era*, ed. S. Hohmann et al. (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014); Laura Adams, “Can We Apply a Post-Colonial Theory to Central Asia?,” *Central Eurasia Studies Review* 7, no. 1 (2008): 2–8; Marco Buttino, *Changing Urban Landscapes: Eastern European and Post-Soviet Cities, since 1989* (Roma: Viella, 2012); Marco Buttino, *La Rivoluzione Capovolta. L’Asia Centrale Tra Il Crollo Dell’impero Zarista E La Formazione dell’URSS* (Napoli: L’Ancora del Mediterraneo, 2003); N. Khodarkovsky, *Russia’s Steppe Frontier. The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Jean Bernard, *Soviet Colonialism* (Calcutta: Institute of Political & Social Studies, 1961); Olaf Caroe, “Soviet Colonialism in Central Asia,” *Foreign Affairs* 32, no. 1 (1953): 135; Walter Kolarz, *Communism and Colonialism Essays* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1964); Michael Pap, *Russian Empire: Some Aspects of Tsarist and Soviet Colonial Practices* (Cleveland Ohio: Institute for Soviet and East European Studies John Carroll University and Ukrainian Historical Association, 1985); Jeff Sahadeo, *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent: 1865-1923* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 2007); Kathleen Stahl, *British and Soviet Colonial Systems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951); Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Adeb Khalid, “Nationalizing the Revolution in Central Asia: The Transformation of Jadidism, 1917-1920,” in *A State of Nations. Empire and Nation Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Andrea Graziosi, *L’Urss Di Lenin E Stalin. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1914-1945* (Bologna: Il mulino, 2007).

consequences when the motherland was not able to guarantee resources to the periphery. However, the risks linked to the concepts of “monoculture” and “super-specialization in cotton” were neglected as much as they were perceived as a bourgeois western propaganda made by sovietologists to criticize the Soviet planned system.

The imposition of cotton monoculture in Uzbekistan reflected the planned Soviet system, where each republic was hyper-specialized in certain productions and primary goods, creating an interdependence tie between the center that provided manufactures and peripheries that supplied raw materials. In this scheme, every Five Year Plan (FYP) saw Moscow demand progressively more Uzbek cotton production, with Uzbekistan’s role limited to cotton growing. In fact, fiber processing was not in the UzSSR’s duties and it was done elsewhere: indeed, Uzbekistan created just 6.5% of Soviet textile manufacturing, and most of Central Asia's cotton was taken out of the region to be turned into textiles in mills located in European areas of the USSR.³⁵³ Uzbekistan also extracted other raw materials – gold, uranium and natural gas – for export to the center, later reimporting much higher-value added manufactures, food products, machinery, and even textiles.³⁵⁴ Especially from the mid-70s, propaganda campaigns posited Uzbek cotton as the greatest victory for the republic, and the source of the entire Union’s wealth, and Uzbek leadership opportunistically exploited this to maintain their power. This

³⁵³ In fact, Uzbekistan had a negligible share of textile output – 2.7% in 1940, 3.7 in 1960, 2.8 in 1980, and about 4% in 1984. Only 5-6% of Uzbek cotton remained in the republic while the rest was shipped to industrial complexes in the European part of the USSR - mostly in the Moscow, Ivanovo and Vladimir oblasts. This situation was due to the Soviet planner's idea that it was cheaper to ship raw cotton than textiles and more convenient to produce textile closer to the main consumption sites. However, there was no evidence to support this theory and the lack of data in terms of shipping costs make accurate calculation difficult. However, considering that cotton - in terms of produced textiles - had to be reshipped back to central Asia in order to clothe more than 50 million people, such a theory does not seem convincing, a point made often by Central Asian economists such as I. Iskanderov. Fierman, “The Soviet ‘Transformation’ of Central Asia,” 21; Leslie Dienes, *Soviet Asia: Economic Development and National Policy Choices* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 123; Rumer, “Central Asia’s Cotton Economy and Its Costs,” 83–84; Ibragimzhan Iskanderovich Iskanderov, “Eshche Raz O Vtoroi Tekstil’noi Baze Strany,” *Ekonomika I Zhizn* 3 (1966): 25; Ibragimzhan Iskanderovich Iskanderov, “Ekonomika Respubliki v Ramkakh Edinogo Narodno-Khoziaistvennogo Kompleksa Strany,” *Ekonomika I Zhizn* 2 (1986): 9.

³⁵⁴ Dienes, *Soviet Asia: Economic Development and National Policy Choices*, 123–25.

triumphalist narrative over ‘white gold’ was in real terms translated into continuous growth. Nevertheless, this system - determined by a symbiosis of the ambitions and the relations of the elite - was out of any economic criteria and it did not include costs and losses.

Cotton Production (thousands of tons of raw cotton)³⁵⁵

Year	UzSSR	USSR	Uzbek share (%)
1913	517	744	69.5
1940	1,386	2,237	62
1953	2,432	3,853	63.1
1956	2,857	4,332	66
1960	2,949	4,289	68.8
1965	3,904	5,662	69
1970	4,495	6,890	65.2
1975	5,330	7,864	67.8
1980	6,245	9,962	62.7
1985	5,382	8,755	61.5
1988	5,365	8,689	61.7

In 1975, the whole Soviet cotton sector was worth around 26 billion rubles and cotton became the Soviet Union's single largest agricultural export (representing about 3% of total Soviet exports).³⁵⁶ This success would last until the late '70s, when increasing demand for synthetic fibers, deterioration in the quality of Soviet cotton, and China's entry into the market drove the cotton price down and reduced the Soviet share of the world market from 30 to 24%.³⁵⁷ However, it would continue to be the main determining factor in Soviet Uzbekistan: in fact, in the early '80s, production rose to 65% of the republic's gross output, and the whole sector was consuming 60% of resources and employing about 40% of the labor force. In 1983 alone, Uzbekistan officially produced as much cotton as the entire United States of America (US) - and the

³⁵⁵ Pomfret, "State-Directed Diffusion of Technology: The Mechanization of Cotton Harvesting in Soviet Central Asia," 175.

³⁵⁶ John Staples, "Soviet Use of Corruption Purges as a Control Mechanism: The Uzbekistan Case," *Past Imperfect* 2 (1993): 31; Rumer, "Central Asia's Cotton Economy and Its Costs," 62; USDA Foreign Agriculture Service, "U.S. Team Reports on Soviet Cotton Production and Trade," 1977.

³⁵⁷ Rumer, "Central Asia's Cotton Economy and Its Costs," 76.

USSR as a whole was the second largest producer in the world, after China but before the US – and Uzbek cotton was exported to more than 30 countries abroad.

Parallel to this, in 1965-1983 the Soviet share of world cotton fiber production rose from 15 to 21 per cent,³⁵⁸ adding cotton to the list of notable world-class Soviet exports (others of which included caviar, vodka, and Kalashnikovs). However, cotton production was not economically efficient and was very labor intensive, requiring a quantity of labor per hectare on average six times higher than for grain in the kolkhozes of the UzSSR. For sovkhoses – which were supposed to have generally a higher degree of mechanization and a lower degree of labor intensity as compared with kolkhozes – the difference in labor requirement between cotton and grain was even greater.³⁵⁹ Khan and Ghai sum up these conclusions, showing how in 1976 the man-hours of labor required per hectare of cotton cultivated in Uzbekistan was 1089 in a kolkhoz and 666 in a sovkhos, while for grain the averages were 181 and 58, respectively.³⁶⁰ Parallel to this, in Uzbekistan the man-hours of labor required to produce one ton of output were as demonstrated in this table:³⁶¹

		1965	1970	1975	1976
Cotton	Kolkhoz	380	370	350	330
	Sovkhos	300	300	270	260
Grain	Kolkhoz	155	96	124	74
	Sovkhos	84	46	78	43

As already mentioned, the huge labor costs were exacerbated further by the expensive and the inefficient use of machines³⁶² and prices that, in a planned economy system, were kept artificially low while the ‘productive costs’ remained high. Despite the fact that these costs are not easy to compute in a non-market system, we can analyze increasing state spending though the procurement prices for raw cotton in Uzbekistan that nominally increased from

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 62–74.

³⁵⁹ Khan and Ghai, *Collective Agriculture and Rural Development in Soviet Central Asia*, 27.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² The manual cotton harvest had a cost of approximately 1,000 man-hours on each hectare although mechanization could reduce this rate to 600. However, mechanization increased humidity and impurity in the cotton and dramatically decreased the quality of the yield. Rumer, “Central Asia’s Cotton Economy and Its Costs,” 78.

435.6 rubles per ton in 1965 to 539.8 in 1970, 544.0 in 1975, and 561.6 in 1976.³⁶³

Therefore, investments in cotton absorbed a huge share of a scarce level of capital without producing the expected output, in a state that was already struggling to satisfy the basic needs of citizens and to produce an adequate volume of consumer goods. Eventually, the effects of cotton monoculture became clear during the economic crisis of late '80s and even in the Soviet press the imposition of monoculture started to be perceived as a "tragic experiment". The cause of such a tragedy was identified as being an excess of specialization:

Specialization should be reasonable. In Uzbekistan, it has degenerated into the dictatorship of a single crop, indeed one so highly specific as cotton. It first became a monoculture in a psychological sense, when it drove all the other needs of the region from the minds of certain leaders. Then it crowded the normal crop rotation from the fields and pushed everything else out of the plan. By being transformed into virtually one great cotton plantation, Uzbekistan embarked on a long, tragic experiment—to determine the capacity of a monoculture to corrode not only agriculture, but also industry, education, health, and finally public morality [...] Cotton, to which everything was sacrificed (including the normal life of townspeople, who were incessantly dispatched to work on cotton), had the same harvest in 1984 as in 1969. Only the production costs had increased. And how they had increased, warping the economy of the entire republic! To this very day the return on capital continues to decline; the construction of new housing is being cut back. After beginning with cotton, the leprosy of inflated reports permeated the entire republic, spread to the social sphere, and did not pass by culture and law enforcement organs. It is said: Make no idols. But they made one here: cotton, and cotton alone. It degenerated into a deception of society and themselves, into false honors, into bribery.³⁶⁴

By diverting all the republic's energies to cotton production, the communist regime of the UzSSR strongly condemned the Uzbek economy for its lack of self-sufficiency and for causing a decrease in the living standards of Uzbeks during the '70s.³⁶⁵

³⁶³ Khan and Ghai, *Collective Agriculture and Rural Development in Soviet Central Asia*, 23.

³⁶⁴ Literaturnaya Gazeta, 11 February 1987, p. 12, translated in Rumer, "Central Asia's Cotton Economy and Its Costs," 80–81.

³⁶⁵ Abdullaev, "Uzbekistonda Paxta Yakkahokimligi va Uning Oqibatlari (1917-1991 Y.y.)," 173.

2.4.2 The ruralized society

The imposition of cotton monoculture had evident effects on an Uzbek society that had essentially preserved its rural profile. It is useful to compare the demographic trends of the USSR, Soviet Central Asia,³⁶⁶ and Uzbekistan in terms of population, the share of rural population, and the natural rate of growth (NRG)³⁶⁷ in order to get a picture of Uzbekistan and its degree of rurality.

Population (in million), Rural population (%), NRG³⁶⁸

Year	USSR			Central Asia			Uzbekistan		
	Pop	Rural %	NRG	Pop	Rural %	NRG	Pop	Rural %	NRG
1913	159.2	82	1.64	7.274	81	-	4.334	76	-
1940	194.1	67	1.32	10.906	75	1.91	6.551	75	2.06
1959	208.8	52	1.78	13.682	65	-	8.119	66	-
1966	232.2	47	1.09	17.487	63	2.86	10.399	64	2.88
1970	241.7	44	0.92	19.792	62	2.75	11.800	63	2.81
1977	257.8	38	0.89	24.161	60	2.76	14.474	61	2.82

As is evident, while in the rest of USSR the share of rural population was decreasing from the pre-revolutionary period – from 82% in 1913 to 38% in 1977 – such diminution was not substantial in Uzbekistan (from 76% to 61%) where a positive NRG saw the population more than triple. Additionally, the population was mainly settled in the rural regions of intensive agriculture, such as the Ferghana Valley.³⁶⁹ Therefore, besides the high rates of urbanization, the vast majority of Uzbek society remained rural.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁶ The weighted averages for Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kirghizstan indicators.

³⁶⁷ The NRG (Natural Rate of Growth) is the differences between birth and death rates.

³⁶⁸ Khan and Ghai, *Collective Agriculture and Rural Development in Soviet Central Asia*, 8.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁷⁰ In some intensive agricultural regions, a demographic boom was evident: in just 30 years (1959-1989), the population of Ferghana oblast almost doubled (from 1.139 million to 2.153) as well as the Karakalpak (from 510 to 1,214 thousand) while the Khorezmian population tripled (from 381,000 to 1.016 million). Similarly, in the same period the oblasts containing the biggest cities also enlarged: Tashkent oblast passed

Year	Births (per 1000 inhabitants)	Deaths (per 1000 inhabitants)	NGR
1940	33.8	13.2	2.06
1965	34.7	5.9	2.88
1970	33.6	5.5	2.81
1975	34.5	7.2	2.73

The rural population of the UzSSR became an integrated part of the Soviet productive system and was gradually absorbed into its large collective agriculture facilities.³⁷¹ At the same time, the regime imposed and maintained an economic system that employed a great deal of labor intensively. Proportionally, in 1970 kolkhozniki, laborers and white collar workers made up 31.1% of UzSSR population and this figure even rose to 32.1% in 1976.³⁷² Furthermore, during the first period of 'hard' monoculture (1966-1976), the population of sovkhhozniki almost doubled.

Workers in collective agriculture in the UzSSR (thousands)³⁷³

	Kolkhozniki	Sovkhhozniki
1965	971.7	343.3
1970	1029.4	392.2
1975	1046.6	572.9
1976	1045.8	607.9

The soviet regime thus enforced an agricultural productive plan – substantially based on cotton – absorbing the lion’s share of the population. However, besides the “coverage for the collective farmers initiated in 1965 when social security benefits for all collective farms were unified and through a series of subsequent measures (e.g., lowering of retirement age to 60 years for men and to 55 years for women and the raising of overall and minimum

from 1,349 to 4,236 million; Samarkand from 1,148 to 2,135 and Bukhara from 585 thousand to 1.141 million. Jan Lahmeyer, “Uzbekistan. Historical Demographical Data of the Administrative Division,” *Populstat*, 2001.

³⁷¹ In Uzbekistan the average number of households per kolkhoz was 866 and the average of workers 1110. Khan and Ghai, *Collective Agriculture and Rural Development in Soviet Central Asia*, 96.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 44.

pensions),”³⁷⁴ the overdependence on “white gold” had dramatic effects on the rural society. Considering the “seasonal” nature of the cotton harvest, most of the workforce that was absorbed by it risked unemployment in the remaining months of the year³⁷⁵ in a society where the annual salary of an Uzbek peasant³⁷⁶ was lower than the Soviet average in the mid-’80s.³⁷⁷ In parallel, the redistribution was inferior than the average Soviet rates. In fact, as evidenced in the following table, the payment from the public consumption fund (PPCF) in Uzbekistan was also lower than the Soviet average.

PPCF (rubles per head per year)³⁷⁸

	1965	1970	1975	1976
USSR	182	263	354	370
UzSSR	126	192	260	269

Furthermore, as we will see in the next chapter, often these nominal salaries were not even properly granted by the *kolkhozniki* whose labor conditions were not far from ‘serfdom’ – or from ‘slavery’ in some terrible cases that will be described in the next chapter – in many instances. In parallel, the plague of the auxiliary labor – often falling heavily on university students and school children who spent more than 60 days out of the school year in the cotton fields³⁷⁹ – resulted in very serious consequences for rural communities. This overdependence on cotton defined a myopic approach – a direct legacy of the communist culture – that would be difficult to eradicate from the Soviet mentality and could only be reversed in the medium-to-long term.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 19–20.

³⁷⁵ The estimates that are provided by the FATi are alarming: in 1979–1986, the unemployment had a range between 16–29%, with peaks of 35.5% in 1970, 46.7% in 1979 and 50% in 1986. Uzbekiston Fanlar akademiyasi Tarix instituti, *Uzbekiston Respublikasi Fan va Texnika Davlat Qummitasi. Tarix Shohidligi va Saboqlari*, 98.

³⁷⁶ In Uzbekistan payment per man-day in an average Kolkhoz in 1976 was 4.96 rubles. The lowest such payment in any Kolkhoz was reported to be 3.50 rubles while the highest known rate was 11.00 rubles, the ratio of the highest to the lowest being 3.14. Khan and Ghai, *Collective Agriculture and Rural Development in Soviet Central Asia*, 82.

³⁷⁷ In 1986, the average annual salary of an UzSSR peasant was 1297 rubles, which was lower to the Soviet (1630) and the RSFSR (1796) levels. Abdullaev, “Uzbekistonda Paxta Yakkahokimligi va Uning Oqibatlarini (1917–1991 Y.y.),” 205.

³⁷⁸ Khan and Ghai, *Collective Agriculture and Rural Development in Soviet Central Asia*, 18.

³⁷⁹ Yash Leninchi, 11 November 1988 cited in Rumer, “Central Asia’s Cotton Economy and Its Costs,” 83.

The role cotton played in the proletarianization of the (rural) Uzbek society is clear. At the same time, we can indirectly interpret ‘white gold’ as a key factor in forging the contemporary idea of the Uzbek nation, a concept that has to be read through the diffusion of the national language.³⁸⁰ This hypothesis is grounded in the following corollary. The Soviet regime promoted cotton monoculture in Uzbekistan and the realization of collective agriculture facilities where the Uzbek rural communities – that were generally more conservative and traditionalist – were greatly absorbed and where the Russification was slower than the cities. This was evident even because the non-native communities of the UzSSR were mainly settled in the cities and constituted minor communities in the Uzbek rural framework. In the following table we can observe the concentration of the national communities within the urban framework, in order to understand how much an ethnic group was urbanized in the UzSSR. Conversely, from these data we can also deduce the share of ‘ruralized’ communities.

Urbanization by republic and nation (%)³⁸¹

	Total		Indigenes		Russians	
	1959	1970	1959	1970	1959	1970
Uzbekistan	34.1	36.7	20.1	22.8	83.7	89.1
Kazakhstan	43.7	50.3	24.3	26.3	59.0	69.1

As evident, the majority (89.1%) of Russians in the UzSSR were settled in the cities in 1970 while the 77.2% of ethnic Uzbeks were in the countryside (where only 10.9% of Russians were based) – ethnic Uzbek society was thus predominantly rural. These figures indicate the ethnic concentration of the Uzbek and Russian communities in the USSR but are not indicative of the effective compositions of UzSSR cities where Uzbeks were anyway the majority group. This aspect is, in fact, evidenced in the following table where a positive trend for the titular community emerges and a negative one for non-native Russians.

³⁸⁰ As usual, also the Uzbek ‘Nation’ is a concept referred to self-conscious human collectivities that individuate themselves through the shared language.

³⁸¹ Robert J. Kaiser, “Nations and Homelands in Soviet Central Asia,” in *Geographic Perspectives on Soviet Central Asia*, ed. Robert Lewis (London & New York: Routledge, 1992), 285.

National composition of the urban population³⁸²

	Indigenes		Variation	Russians		Variation
	1959	1970	1959-70	1959	1970	1959-70
Uzbekistan	37.2	41.1	3.9	33.4	30.4	-3.0
Kazakhstan	16.7	17.1	0.4	57.6	58.4	0.8

Uzbek rural communities, isolated from the Russianized cities and pushed into the countryside for the cause of the ‘white gold’, enforced much more a national identity – through the use of the national language, tradition, and religion and consequently even nationalism – than the urbanized Uzbeks. Not surprisingly, the most traditional and nationalist communities were set in those areas – such as the Ferghana valley – where intensive agriculture had been enforced and where the sovietized/collectivized communities were less Russianized than their urban counterparts.

Once again, in order to reconstruct this process, it is useful to analyze some figures. The great results of the Rashidovian russification campaign³⁸³ had different impacts on the urban and rural societies of UzSSR. In fact, in the countryside it was less necessary to speak Russian, and the Uzbek kolkhozniki used the Uzbek language as the essential and informal mode of communication while the ‘colonial’ language was endorsed just in formal relations with the ‘colonial’ institutions. At the local level, even party and state institutions were even formally using local languages in the ordinary course of business, while the ‘colonial’ language was used in communicating with Moscow. The data on bilingualism in urban and rural communities are truly indicative: the cities were substantially more integrated within the Soviet system in terms of language while the rural peripheries were traditionalist and less Russianized. At the same time, the non-native community of urban Russians was not even integrated into the national society.³⁸⁴

³⁸² Ibid., 286.

³⁸³ In 1970, 19.6% of ethnic-Uzbek men and 9.3% of women were bilingual, rising to 53.9% and 44.6%, respectively, in 1979. Robert J. Kaiser, “Social Mobilization in Soviet Central Asia,” in *Geographic Perspectives on Soviet Central Asia*, ed. Robert Lewis (London & New York: Routledge, 1992), 258.

³⁸⁴ The number of non-natives, including Russians, claiming fluency in the Uzbek language was 12.4% in 1970 and 13.5% in 1979. Without Russians, the figures were 17.8 and 20.2%, respectively. Kaiser, “Nations and Homelands in Soviet Central Asia,” 292.

Bilingualism in the UzSSR in 1970 (%)³⁸⁵

	Urban	Rural
Monolingual	12.9	32.9
Prebilingual	12.4	16.8
Incompletely bilingual	21.0	20.1
Completely bilingual	34.0	14.3
Postbilingual	9.0	5.5
Developing bilingual	33.4	36.9
Developed bilingual	43.0	19.8
1970 census results	33.4	7.3

Another interesting set of data concerns the preservation of the traditional ethnic integrity within Uzbek families. In fact, in 1978 the rate of exogamy among Uzbeks was pretty low in cities (8.2%) and minimal in the countryside (2.3%),³⁸⁶ further defining a situation of de facto segregation that recalls other colonial societies where cities developed in a schizophrenic pattern of social division and would have dramatic consequences due to the ‘Uzbekization’ enforced in post-1991 Uzbekistan.³⁸⁷ Cotton, then, was the mainstay of ruralization in a society that nationalized - or better, resisted Russification - in the countryside and then became a catalyst for the spread of the Uzbek language and nationalism enforcing the natives' identity and the sense of Uzbekity, especially in the rural areas. At the same time, the cities remained more ‘cosmopolitan’ and integrated into the Soviet system, even culturally

³⁸⁵ These categories have been reinterpreted by Kaiser: Monolinguals in general do not speak in a second language; prebilinguals speak a second language with great difficulty; incompletely bilingual speakers have with some difficulty; completely bilingual speakers generally speak fairly freely; postbilinguals speak completely freely, and think in the second language. Mikhail Nikolaevich Guboglo, *Sovremennyye Etnoyazykovyye Protsessy v SSSR* (Moskva: Nauka, 1984); Kaiser, “Social Mobilization in Soviet Central Asia,” 257; Tsentral’noye Statisticheskoye Upravleniye SSSR, *Itogi Vsesoyuznoy Perepisi Naseleniya 1970 Goda, Tom 4* (Moskva: Izdatel’stvo “Statistika,” 1973), 205–208, 277–278, 318–319.

³⁸⁶ Kaiser, “Nations and Homelands in Soviet Central Asia,” 294.

³⁸⁷ An example of a reshaped city is Samarkand where great masses of urban Slav settlers abandoned the city, leaving places for Uzbek peasants from the countryside. Buttino, *Changing Urban Landscapes: Eastern European and Post-Soviet Cities, since 1989*; Buttino, *Samarcanda. Storie in Una Città Dal 1945 a Oggi*.

speaking. Not surprisingly, the areas where national identity roots were rediscovered were predominantly those of high agricultural concentration.

Above, I reported in the tables some data referring to Kazakhstan. This consideration was not by accident but rather underpins a final comparative consideration. As is evident, the Soviet regime enforced cotton in Uzbekistan and kept the Uzbek population rural and tied to native language, developing consequently a strong nation and nationalism. In contrast, Kazakh society was much more urbanized and integrated within the urban-industrial complexes that absorbed the labor force and russified the Kazakh population more than their southern neighbors. Then, in the Kazakh SSR – where a huge Russian minority had settled - language, nation, and nationalism had a weaker role in the post-Soviet scenario. Anyway, that is another story.

2.4.3 The ecological costs

Much more serious were those collateral damages at the ecological level that would present fatal and irreversible consequences for the Uzbek ecosystem. Despite the huge investments that the Soviet state provided for land improvements,³⁸⁸ the results of cotton monoculture imposition were dramatic: monoculture destroyed the classic cycle of crop rotation and land management – cotton-alfalfa-manure-cotton – and the fertility of land drastically decreased in the UzSSR. Consequently, in the years of ‘hard monoculture’ (1975-1983), land productivity decreased by about 20%.³⁸⁹ Furthermore, the massive abuse of fertilizers, pesticides and water deviations had their worst and evident effects in salinization,³⁹⁰ inflow waters,³⁹¹ pollution and drainage of Aral Sea,

³⁸⁸ Between 1971-1985, 2,063 million rubles were invested in UzSSR for land improvements. Uzbekiston Fanlar akademiyasi Tarix instituti, *Uzbekiston Respublikasi Fan va Texnika Davlat Qummitasi. Tarix Shohidligi va Saboqlari*, 291.

³⁸⁹ Data elaborated from Kh. Madzhitov, “Effektivno Ispol’zovat’ Oroschaemye Zemly,” *Sel’skoye Khozyaystvo Uzbekistana* 12 (1984): 2–5.

³⁹⁰ “Salt problems occur because of both the high salt content of many irrigated soils, especially newly reclaimed ones, and the high level of salinity in irrigation waters” as well as inadequate drainage measures. Craumer, “Agricultural Change, Labor Supply, and Rural Out- Migration in Soviet Central Asia,” 135.

³⁹¹ Amu Darya in Karakalpakya had 1.5 grams mineral contents per liter. “In 1985–7 [...] the net accumulation of salts in the basins of these two rivers was about 20 to 25 million tons per year” Murray Feshback and Alfred Friendly, *Ecocide in the USSR: Health and Nature under Siege* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 77; Craumer, “Agricultural Change, Labor Supply, and Rural Out- Migration in Soviet Central Asia,” 136.

creating a plethora of environmental problems that degenerated in one of the worst ecological disasters of human history entailing the creation of the 'Aralkum' man-made desert.³⁹²

In 1960, the Aral Sea had an absolute level of +53.40 m with an inflow of water – only from Syrdarya and Amudarya - of 56.0 km³,³⁹³ and a mineralization rate of at 7.2 g/l.³⁹⁴ Since 1961, due to “cottonization,”³⁹⁵ the water inflows started to be ever more polluted and Aral Sea began to dry up while its absolute level inexorably kept dropping for the next years.³⁹⁶ In 1970, navigation across the Aral Sea substantially decreased and the Soviet government started to be worried about the situation,³⁹⁷ organizing in Tashkent in 1975 a First

³⁹² Glantz, *Creeping Environmental Problems and Sustainable Development in the Aral Sea Basin*; Siegmar-W. Breckle, *Aralkum- A Man-Made Desert. The Desiccated Floor of the Aral Sea (Central Asia)* (Berlin-Heidelberg: Springer, 2012); Michael R. Edelstein, Astrid Cerny, and Abror Gadaev, *Disaster by Design the Aral Sea and Its Lessons for Sustainability* (Bingley: Emerald, 2012); Marinus G. Bos, *The Inter-Relationship Between Irrigation, Drainage and the Environment in the Aral Sea Basin* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996).

³⁹³ In 1960, the total inflow of water reaching Aral Sea amounted at 62 km³ of water, 40 in 1970 and only 0.9 in 1985. E. Yusupov, S. Ziyadullaev, *Aralu zhit'! Priaeal'yu - razvivat'sya*, PV, 21308, 130, 7 June 1987.

³⁹⁴ Zonn et al., *The Aral Sea Encyclopedia*, 260.

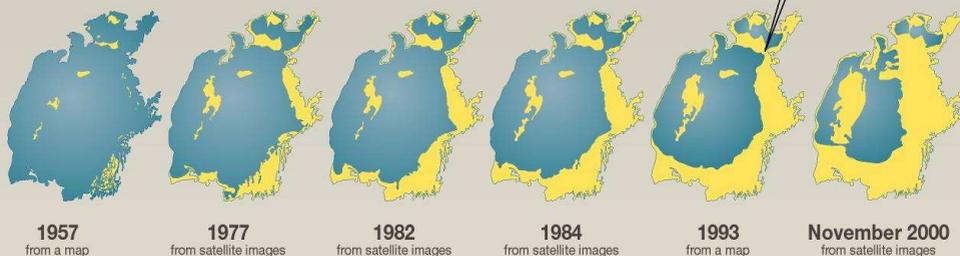
³⁹⁵ Igor S. Zonn, “Reasons for the Environmental and Socio-Economic Crisis,” in *The Aral Sea Environment*, ed. Andrey G. Kostianoy and Aleksey N. Kosarev (Berlin: Springer, 2010), 79.

³⁹⁶ The gradual decrease of Aral Sea in terms of absolute level can be summarized with the following data: 53.3 m. (1961), 53 (1962), 52.6 (1963), 52.5 (1964), 51.9 (1966), 51.6 (1967), 51.3 (1969). In 1970 it reached 51.4 m - with a surface of 60,300 km² and a water volume of 964 km³ – and kept decreasing: 51.1 (1971), 50.5 (1972), 50.2 (1973), 49.9 (1974), 49.0 (1975), 47.6 (1977), 47.1 (1978), 46.5 (1979). In 1980 Aral Sea level was 45.8 m – with a surface of 51,700 km² and a volume of 644 km³. 45.2 (1981), 44.4 (1982), 43.6 (1983), 42.8 (1984), 41.9 (1985), 41.1 (1986). In 1987 its level was 40.3 m – with a surface of 41,100 km², a volume of 401 km³ and a mineralization rate of 20 g/l. The level kept decreasing with 39.7 (1988), 39.1 (1989), 38.2 (1990, with a surface of 32,000 km², a volume of 350 km³ and a mineralization rate of 28–30 g/l.), 37.7 (1991), 37.3 (1992), 36.9 (1993), 36.6 (1994), 36.1 (1995), 35.5 (1996), 35.1 (1997), 34.8 (1998), 34.0 (1999), 33.3 (2000), 32.1 (2001), 30.5 (2002), 30.5 (2003), 30.1 (2004), 30.4 (2005), 29.6 (2006), 29.1 (2007). Zonn et al., *The Aral Sea Encyclopedia*, 260–82.

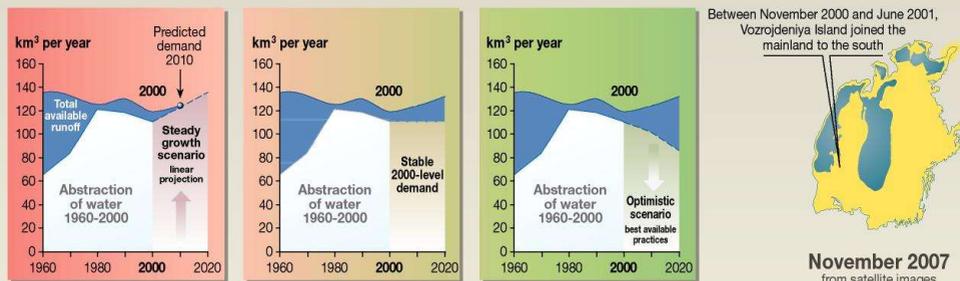
³⁹⁷ “For the first time, the future of Aral Sea is considered in the report “Perspectives of development of land reclamation for 1971–1985, regulation and redistribution of the rivers run-off,” prepared by the State Planning Committee, the Ministry of Agriculture,

Coordination Meeting on studying the influence on the environment and on estimating the socio-economic consequences of the Aral Sea level decrease.

What has happened...



What could happen...



Sources: Nikolai Denisov, GRID-Arendal, Norway (especially for the graphics below); Scientific Information Center of International Coordination Water Commission (SIC ICWC); International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS); The World Bank; National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA); United States Geological Survey (USGS), *Earthshots : Satellite images of environmental change*, United States Department of the Interior, 2000.

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Then, a second conference was organized in Almaty in 1977 and an All-Union summit entitled “Scientific bases of actions for prevention of negative consequences of the Aral Sea level decrease” in Moscow. In 1980, Nukus hosted a session of the Presidium of the AN USSR convened in the form of scientific-practical conference that was devoted to the “Problems of the Aral Sea and Amudarya delta.”³⁹⁸ However, the Uzbek government could not interrupt the cotton monoculture, and the scientific recommendations had been often ignored, while the course of river waters kept being deviated to cotton fields. Since the mid-’70s, water substantially ceased to reach the Aral

Minvodkhoz of the USSR, and VASKhNIL and approved by the Central Committee of CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR on 24.07.1970 (No. 612). *Ibid.*, 261.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 263–64.

Sea.³⁹⁹ In 1988-1990 the Aral became two isolated seas (large and small Arals) with a dry cutoff wall appeared between them, and in 2001 the famous Vozrozhdeniya Island⁴⁰⁰ joined the mainland to the south.⁴⁰¹ Since the 2000s, Uzbek and Kazak governments promoted several attempts to rehabilitate, at least in part, the Aral Sea but sadly the situation seems to be irreversible.⁴⁰² The disappearance of the Aral Sea was an almost apocalyptic ecological disaster that, however, has directly involved a remote – and not very densely populated – area of the republic. More serious were the consequences in the regions of high agricultural production.

In fact, cotton monoculture not only implied a set of irrigation networks – that were diverting waters from their natural flows, changing the ecosystem – but also an intensive over-use of biochemical agents such as fertilizers, defoliant, and pesticides. Fertilizers were improving the salinity of the land and were often polluting and changing the chemical composition of the soil. More dangerous were antibiotic agents as defoliant that were used to

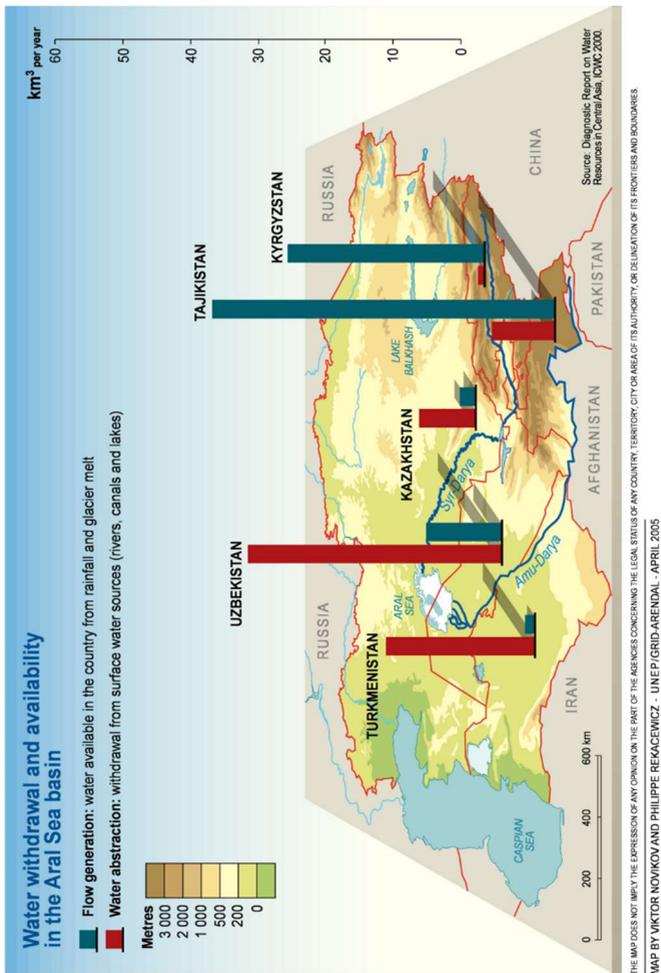
³⁹⁹ “Due to nearly complete utilization of the Syrdarya water for economic needs and construction of several dead earth-fill dams on the main river channel within its delta, the inflow into the sea practically stopped. [From] 1982 the diversion of the Amudarya waters to [the Aral Sea] along the main channel was stopped; near Kyzyljar settlement, a dead earth-fill dam was constructed. The residual flow was directed to irrigation of lands on the left bank of the river and to water supply to the dried water bodies in the delta. A small portion of water ran to the sea along small arms and via a system of lakes. [...] In 1987, flow of the Syrdarya into [Aral Sea] ceased completely. Small quantities of water got into the sea only in relatively water abundant years, for example 1988–1994.” Ibid., 39.

⁴⁰⁰ Vozrozhdeniya Island was a famous place because in 1948 a top-secret bioweapons laboratory that was testing biologic agents as anthrax, smallpox, plague, brucellosis, tularemia and the terrible nerve gas ‘Novichok’ was established there. In 1954, the site was expanded and named Aralsk-7, becoming a key structure in the Soviet biological warfare program. In 1971, an accidental release of weaponized smallpox from the island infected ten people, of whom 3 died. In the 1990s, the defector Ken Alibek - the former head of the Soviet Union's bioweapons program - promoted an awareness campaign to clear the island, along with its dangerous content, which was in a state of neglect. Tom Mangold and Jeff Goldberg, *Plague Wars: The Terrifying Reality of Biological Warfare* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 2001); David Hoffman, *The Dead Hand: The Untold Story of the Cold War Arms Race and Its Dangerous Legacy* (New York: Doubleday, 2009).

⁴⁰¹ Zonn et al., *The Aral Sea Encyclopedia*, 39.

⁴⁰² Philip P. Micklin, N. V. Aladin, and Igor Plotnikov, *The Aral Sea : The Devastation and Partial Rehabilitation of a Great Lake* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2014).

facilitate the mechanized cotton harvest and were massively spread in those fields were millions of Uzbeks worked.



The demand for defoliants started in the mid-’60s and increased mainly in the late ’70s.⁴⁰³ The most famous defoliant was Butifos, an organo-phosphate chemical agent that left behind a nauseating and unmistakable stench in the

⁴⁰³ TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 4143, l. 27.

fields and villages and that was unofficially abused in most Uzbek fields.⁴⁰⁴ In Uzbekistan the 2,4,5-T a component of the more infamous 'agent orange' used by US troops in Vietnam was also largely experimented with. Similarly, in the UzSSR there was a massive abuse of pesticides which was intended to increase the agricultural production. Nancy Lubin estimated an average share of 20-25 kg of poisonous chemicals for every hectare in Soviet Central Asia - while the Soviet average figure was 3 kg – corresponding to 7-8 kilograms of poisons per capita.⁴⁰⁵ However, this statistic was destined to dramatically increase in those rural areas with high population density – as the Ferghana Valley⁴⁰⁶ – that was mostly occupied in agriculture where these figures could reach “upwards of 230 kilograms of fertilizer per acre [...] Pesticide usage per hectare of arable land in places exceeds the safe level of 1.3 kilograms per hectare by 40-50 fold, and the USSR average by 26 times.”⁴⁰⁷ Concretely, the abuse of these chemicals would cause devastating effects for the ecosystem and the health of millions of Uzbek workers who had been exposed in the fields to these poisonous agents for years. Indeed, the toxic legacy of chemical fertilizers, defoliants and pesticides would determine terrible environmental and health consequences

⁴⁰⁴ Butifos was blamed locally for the "exceptionally high rate of infant mortality (46.2 per thousand in Uzbekistan in 1986) and birth defects among children born to the women who work in the cotton fields." It was officially banned in 1989, when it was replaced with other equally dangerous substitutes. Yash Leninchi, 10 January 1989 and NS, "Soviet Cotton Threatens a Region's Sea-and Its Children," *New Scientist*, 1691, November 1989, 22.

⁴⁰⁵ Nancy Lubin, "Implications of Ethnic and Demographic Trends," in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 56.

⁴⁰⁶ In 1979 UzSSR, the density of population varies from the arid deserts of Karakalpakya - with average density of 5 people per km² (now 7.5) - to the very highly populated areas of the Ferghana Valley where, for example, it reached 308 people per km² in 1979 and nowadays it exceeds the 660 units per km². Khan and Ghai, *Collective Agriculture and Rural Development in Soviet Central Asia*, 1.

⁴⁰⁷ Nancy Lubin, "Environmental Resources and Constraints in the Former Soviet Republics: Uzbekistan," 1994, 8; Aleksei Yablokov, "Notes on the Environmental Situation in Russia," *Environmental Policy Review* 6, no. 2 (1992): 1–20.

on the population,⁴⁰⁸ as the dramatically high rates of tumors, malformations and the mother and infant mortality in the UzSSR.⁴⁰⁹

The narrated facts were just a part of the unintended consequences of cotton monoculture in the UzSSR and were already known in Soviet times. In fact, since the mid-70s, several appeals to the Uzbek party and government came from the national academy (AN UzSSR)⁴¹⁰ even mobilizing parts of intellectuals and civil society⁴¹¹ to the ecological issues related to the dramatic situation in the Aral, warning on the serious risks of monoculture in the Ferghana valley,⁴¹² or even requiring to implement organic solutions instead of chemical poisons in the fields.⁴¹³ Other calls of the republican party were addressed to the CC CPSU and asked for institutional measures.⁴¹⁴ However, these calls received little media attention and were not followed up, relegated

⁴⁰⁸ Rumer reports: "A study of Akkurgansk raion (Tashkent oblast) in the 1970s found that inhabitants who lived in areas of the raion where cotton was planted were 60 percent more likely to suffer from disorders of the nervous System than those who lived in other parts of the raion." Furthermore, the high incidence of acute intestinal disorders and jaundice in children has also been linked to cotton. Rumer, "Central Asia's Cotton Economy and Its Costs," 82.

⁴⁰⁹ During the years of high cotton monoculture, the infant mortality - children dying before the age of one, per thousand children born - in Uzbekistan was dramatically increased, reaching rates of 31 in 1970, 47 (1980), 45.3 (1985), 46.2 (1986), 45.9 (1987), 43.3 (1988), 46 (1989), meanwhile the RSFSR figures were about half: 23 in 1970, 22.1 (1980), 20.7 (1985), 19.3 (1986), 19.4 (1987), 18.9 (1988), 19 (1989). Lubin, "Implications of Ethnic and Demographic Trends," 57.

⁴¹⁰ TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 4695, ll. 102-123.

⁴¹¹ TsGARUz, f. 2742, op. 1, d. 258.

⁴¹² TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 6978.

⁴¹³ In an American intelligence report on the Central Asian situation in 1983, appeared that "because defoliants and other chemical preparations are spread from early spring to late fall a number of farmers have begun to fear going near fields [...] Also, in recent years, the application of excessive amounts of mineral fertilizers has led to cases of poisoning from eating contaminated vegetables and melons." FBIS, "JPRS 84130 - USSR Report. Political and Sociological Affairs No. 1445 - Central Asian Press Surveys - 16 August 1983," 1983.

⁴¹⁴ On 20 November 1984, the CC CPUz wrote a memorandum to the CC CPSU declaring that "air, water and soil of the republic are contaminated" and considering the weakness and the scarce sensibility on these issues in the ministries, it was created in the republic the "soviet for defense of nature." Even at political level, the CC CPUz requested at CC CPSU on 8 April 1985 to create a party committee for defense of nature in Uzbekistan." RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, ll. 92-94.

among to the minor issues and remaining behind the legitimizing cause of cotton for the fatherland. However, these problems started to be seriously considered by the Uzbek leadership in the late '80s, once their grave environmental consequences – and their media following - became more substantial and tangible. At that time, Moscow's grip was weaker and the new Uzbek leadership was in search of legitimation at a popular level, condemning the monoculture regime and approaching the ecological demands of the people. In this great game of political opportunism, the legitimation pattern shifted from 'self-glorification' to 'self-victimization' and cotton was once again key. Therefore, we have seen how cotton determined the fate of the republic at economic, political and social levels. The pertinence of these three dimensions would continue into the next decades, when the condemnation of economic dependence and the food shortage crisis and other supply problems, the ecological disasters, the repressions during the cotton affair – that we will see in the next chapters – and then the transformation of Uzbek society and nation, characterize cotton as the pivotal key to read the history of the contemporary Uzbekistan.

PART II

THE THREE PHASES OF THE 'UZBEK COTTON AFFAIR' (1983-1989)

3 THE ANDROPOVIAN ORIGINS OF THE 'UZBEK COTTON AFFAIR'

The victory of the Revolution marked a turning point in the history of the peoples of our country. The cleansing wind passed over Turkestan as well, sweeping away with it the dirt and the scum of the old world, a world of cruel social and national oppression, feudal and capitalistic exploitation, the tyranny of the khans, rich landowners and tsarist officials, and lack of rights for the working people.¹ – Sharaf Rashidov

One of the peculiarities of the black market [in the USSR] is that, because there is no private property, the merchant sells goods that don't belong to him and the buyer doesn't become the owner of what he buys.² – Lev Timofeev

To contextualize the 'cotton scandal', we need one more premise, introducing some elements of the informal Soviet economic system and the crucial passage of Soviet history, with the end of Brezhnevism and the rise of Yuri Andropov. The name 'Uzbek cotton affair' is useful for defining a season of purges, judiciary scandals, and power reshuffles that related to the UzSSR in the period 1983-1989. However, such terminology is not always proper because the 'affair' was not a singular case but a plethora of these phenomena within the republic. Moreover, only sometimes were these directly related to cotton and a part of the revealed corruption and system of privileges and protections related to the revealed patrimonial system. However, as we have seen, cotton was the key element of power legitimation and for this reason it

¹ Sharaf Rashidovich Rashidov, *Soviet Uzbekistan* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1982), 15–16.

² Lev Timofeev, *Russia's Secret Rulers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 58.

was the main source of money that consistently became the origin of bribes. Anyway, in the many 'Uzbek cotton affairs' we are going to analyze, only a part of the bribes was directly connected to cotton.

Often the 'Uzbek cotton affair' is presented as an "Andropovian" move against Rashidov – a loyal client of Brezhnev – and Uzbekistan as an exemplary test site (a 'polygon') in which to experiment the 'moralizing' measures of the Andropovian bloodless terror. This is partly true. However, it responded to a long tradition of Soviet politics where anticorruption campaigns – as were the appeals for increasing economic growth³ – were typical factors of legitimation that the new leaders wanted to promote in order to demonstrate their realism and pragmatism and to proceed with political struggle against rivals. We saw this pattern in Stalinist times, then during destalinization, Brezhnevism and, for sure, it became a key issue in the post-Brezhnev framework when 'moralization' assumed even a key ideological dimension. In the post-1982 period, Uzbekistan was not an isolated case of a corrupted system and the Andropovian anticorruption campaign to clean up the USSR would assume massive tones on the entire Soviet system⁴ and the consequences would be unexpected. Therefore, we want to understand if the 'Uzbek cotton affair' presented some specific peculiarities or was effectively the manifestation of Andropov's campaigns in the republic. My contention is that the 'Uzbek cotton affair' had its origins in Andropov's policies but, however, assumed its peculiarities only later, when this journalistic definition – that intended a whole season of scandals that overwhelmed Uzbekistan from 1983 until 1989 - was spread during perestroika and assumed a different importance within Soviet public opinion in terms of media coverage, political manipulation and consequences, inexorably effecting the political life of the republic.

³ Leslie Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 191.

⁴ Anti-corruption cases including those against embezzlement and theft of socialist property rose from 4,039 arrests in 1975 to 6,024 in 1980 and 10,561 in 1985 registering an increase of 50% just for embezzlement. Andrea Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), 426.

3.1 The 'informal' Soviet system

In the USSR there was a wide spectrum of shades of 'grey' – or 'underworld'⁵ - economies that contributed to distort the Leninist orthodoxy with which the communist planned system was conceived. Grossman estimated that in the second half of the "70s, private profits constituted almost 30% of family incomes and 10-12% of the Soviet labor force was employed in the second economy.⁶ In what Graziosi has defined as a situation of "proto-capitalism," Soviet citizens were engaged in systems out of law to provide those goods and services that the state was not able to provide and, therefore, the second economy even worked as a lubricant of an inefficient system and that would soon become a determinant cause of the Soviet crisis.⁷

The main tool of this informal system was 'corruption' – a social phenomenon that can be generally intended as the use of public office for private advantages⁸ – in its various forms. In the USSR, corruption was

⁵ Gavriil Popov writes: "In our country, the principal manifestation of the underworld economy is what the West calls normal, everyday business: buying and reselling to make a profit. Such activities become part of the 'underworld' because they operate outside official, nonmarket channels for distributing goods, and outside the system of state prices. The success of such activities is no accident: they flourish because of shortages that force the buyer to overpay the underworld economy for goods that are hard to get the official way. Indeed, it was such shortages that created the stimulus for the underworld economy to spring up in the first place. [...] Another major activity of the underworld economy is the illicit production, from state raw materials and using state equipment, of goods that are in great demand [...] Yet another is administrators' selling 'permissions' to the general public. Our country's endless maze of bureaucratic regulations offers the opportunity to trade power for bribes, to profit from one's right to allow something or not. [...] Of course, we also have the 'classical' forms of 'underworld' activity, from drugs to racketeering. But, on the whole, our underworld economy is the inevitable result of the nonmarket nature of our economy, and of universal state-ification and bureaucratization." Christopher Cerf et al., *Small Fires: Letters from the Soviet People to Ogonyok Magazine, 1987-1990* (New York: Summit Books, 1990), 284–85.

⁶ Gregory Grossman, "The Second Economy in the USSR," *Problems of Communism* 26, no. 5 (1977). According to Vaksberg, in the 80s the Soviet black economy was worth between 200-400 billion rubles, or representing a quarter of Soviet GDP at the time. Arkadii Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 133.

⁷ Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 440.

⁸ According to Friedrich "Corruption can be said to exist whenever a power-holder who is charged with doing certain things [...] is by monetary or other rewards not legally

common, well known, and generally tolerated within limits. The term *korruptsiya*,⁹ however, was reserved for egregious examples and officially indicated decay, venality, and bribery

practiced in the bourgeois world among officials, politicians, high-ranking officials. Although *k[orruptsiya]* is regarded by the legislation of many capitalist countries as a criminal offense, in practice it is not always and not fully punished. *K[orruptsiya]* has been particularly widespread in recent years in the US, Japan and others capitalist countries.¹⁰

Indeed, instead of using *korruptsiya*, the formulation “negative phenomena” (*negativnyye yavleniya*) or “violations of Party and state discipline” (*narusheniya partiynoy i gosudarstvennoy distsipliny*) was preferred to suggest a wide spectrum of economic crimes related to bribery (*vzyatochnichestvo*), speculation (*spekulyatsiya*), squandering and theft/embezzlement of socialist property (*razbazarivaniye i khishcheniya sotsialisticheskoy sobstvennosti*), false additions, falsifications and report-padding (*pripiski*), and abuse of power (*dolzhnostnoye zloupotrebleniye*). In all these forms, corruption became a pillar of the informal system. Besides the

provided for, induced to take actions which favor whoever provides the award and thereby does damage to the public and its interests.” Carl J. Friedrich, “Political Pathology,” *Political Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (1966): 74; Leslie Holmes, *Corruption: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). See also Paul Heywood, *Routledge Handbook of Political Corruption* (New York: Routledge, 2015); Arnold J. Heidenheimer, Michael Johnston, and Victor T. Le Vine, *Political Corruption: A Handbook* (New Brunswick u.a.: Transaction Publishers, 1989); Susan. Rose-Ackerman, *International Handbook on the Economics of Corruption* (Cheltenham UK ; Northampton MA: Edward Elgar, 2006); Seppo Tiihonen, *The History of Corruption in Central Government* (Washington, DC: IOS Press, 2003); Charles A. Schwartz, “Corruption and Political Development in the USSR,” *Comparative Politics* 11, no. 4 (July 1979): 425; Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*; Michael Clarke, *Corruption: Causes, Consequences and Control* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1983); Kelly M. McMann, *Corruption as a Last Resort : Adapting to the Market in Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014); Holmes, *Corruption: A Very Short Introduction*.

⁹ The Soviet government did not recognize the word ‘corruption’, allowing it to enter into use only in the late ‘80s. Instead, the terms ‘bribery’, ‘abuse of power’, ‘embezzlement’ etc. were preferred. According to Satarov, by rejecting the term, the notion and so the nature of the phenomenon itself was effectively denied. Georgiy Satarov, *Antikorruptsionnaya Politika: Uchebnoye Posobiye* (Moskva: RA “SPAS,” 2004), 40.

¹⁰ N.A. Polyakov, *Kratkii Politicheskii Slovar’* (Moskva: Politizdat, 1983), 156.

difficulties in measuring the extent of the phenomena¹¹ and the risks to misinterpret the statistics about the Soviet context,¹² corruption and generally the 'second market' were key factors in the Soviet system. Then, corruption could be considered as a "lubricant"¹³ of the Soviet machine with which Brezhnevism transformed the Stalinist terror machine in a tolerance system that also had positive implications because, above all, it limited the use of systemic violence,¹⁴ turning a blind eye to a structure that, although – ideologically, morally, and materially – corrupt, ensured a peaceful stability and

¹¹ The problem of objectively measuring corruption is very difficult. On the one hand, it is very tricky to measure something that – apart from the odd rare case – does not manifest any clear evidence. Therefore, corruption is generally measured through corruption perception indices. However, these indices are not related to the socio-cultural context and are inherently subject to social biases. Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index 2010 Long Methodological Brief," 2010.

¹² A more objective measure is related to the statistics of the revealed criminal cases. However, these measures are also relative to the context and are not comparable given the differences in legal systems. Even in the USSR, where the law was supposed to be homogenous across the federative republics, the anticorruption campaigns had been exploited due to political opportunity, and these comparisons can therefore be inconsistent. Indeed, comparative studies analyzing corruption revealed how, in Brezhnevian times, 25% of the corruption cases appeared in Russia. This is a relatively low share, considering the population dimension and that the key central administrative bodies were in Moscow. In second place there was Azerbaijan with 15.5%, followed by Uzbekistan 12%, Georgia 8.2%, Ukraine (5.8%) followed by Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan at 5.5%, while for Belarus and the Baltics was only 0.7% each and Tajikistan 0.3%. In the post-Brezhnev period (1983-1987), the RSFSR was at 29% followed by Uzbekistan with 21.3% – huge considering the share of the republic's population compared with Russia – Kirghizstan 9.7%, Kazakhstan 6.5% and Georgia 5.8%. Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*, 146; F. J. M. Feldbrugge, "Government and Shadow Economy in the Soviet Union," *Soviet Studies* 36, no. 4 (1984): 541.

¹³ Heller defined corruption as "a lubricant that makes possible the operation of a machine that combines total and permanent control and permanent falsification." Mikhail Heller, *Cogs in the Wheel: The Formation of Soviet Man* (New York: Knopf, 1988), 139.

¹⁴ William Clark finds corruption in the Soviet system as the main factor of distortion of capital and investment, decreasing the legitimacy and the administrative capacity of the system. However, the author revealed some positive aspects related to the bureaucratic flexibility, the increase of capital formation and managerial/entrepreneurial behaviors, and a general decrease of violence William A. Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 208–14.

both provided economic advantages and disadvantages that – to some extent – was blind eyed because it was useful to supplement the inefficiencies of the planned redistributive system.¹⁵ This tolerance seems to represent Mandeville's idea of societies that need both vices and corruption in their moral – but not criminal – manifestations.

Konstantin Simis – a Soviet dissident who defected from the USSR and in 1982 wrote the first illuminating book on the phenomenon¹⁶ –describes corruption as a functional element of the Soviet 'second economy',¹⁷ the impact of which had been revealed since Stalinist times.¹⁸ Therefore, Simis defined corruption as an endemic phenomenon within the Soviet system, inside economics and politics within the ruling elite at central and local levels, in the Soviet justice and law enforcement system, and, finally, in common life.

To understand the logic of the second economy and corruption we should remember that in the USSR goods and services were scarce and distributed

¹⁵ According to Critchlow, corruption "helped to make the system work, by stimulating initiative, cementing working relationships, and easing popular dissatisfaction with the state-controlled sector of the economy." James Critchlow, "Corruption, Nationalism and the Native Elites in Soviet Central Asia," *The Journal of Communist Studies* 4 (1988): 144.

¹⁶ Konstantin Simis, *USSR - The Corrupt Society. The Secret World of Soviet Capitalism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

¹⁷ Bribery and blat found their dimension within the bureaucracy that, through the nomenklatura system depended on the party. Grossman, "The Second Economy in the USSR"; Gregory Grossman, *The Second Economy in the USSR and Eastern Europe: A Bibliography* (Bala Cynwyd: WEFA Group Special Projects, 1990); Aron Katsenelinboigen, "Coloured Markets in the Soviet Union," *Soviet Studies* 29, no. 1 (1977); Alena V. Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favors: Blat, Networking, and Informal Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Morris Bornstein, *The Soviet Economy, Continuity and Change* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1981); Maria Łoś, *The Second Economy in Marxist States* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990); Vladimir Treml and Michael V. Alexeev, "The Second Economy and the Destabilizing Effect of Its Growth on the State Economy in the Soviet Union : 1965-1989" (Bala Cynwyd: The WEFA Group, 1993).

¹⁸ To some extent, the practice of *pripiski* developed during the 'revolution from above' period, when industrial productivity was claimed to raise annually by impossible rhythms of 10-20% and falsification was seen as a natural source of survival. In this framework, de facto corruption was institutionalized. Elena Aleksandrovna Osokina, *Za Fasodom "stalinskogo Izobiliya": Raspredeleniye I Rynok v Snabzhenii Naseleniya v Gody Industrializatsii 1927-1941* (Moskva: Rosspen, 1997); Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928-1941* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1990), 95.

through a planned system that was not able to efficiently provide them to its citizens. Thus, in a non-free market society, a person who needed a determined good or service preferred to pay an extra 'informal cost' to officials who could help, support, or provide the requested things. In this context, *blat*¹⁹ and *tukhta*²⁰ became the main currency of such an informal system and *tolkachis* its main intermediators.²¹ All these elements formed a 'black', 'grey', 'shadow', 'underground', 'secondary', or just 'informal' system that illicitly provided assistance to citizens to access all those goods and services that the Soviet state was not able to efficiently supply.²² In a system where nothing beholds to anyone and everything is the property of the state, corruption and embezzlement were developed in this way so as to bypass the system's shortcomings. The confession that Brezhnev made to his counselor Aleksander Bovin is exemplary:

You do not know life. [Here], nobody lives on his salary. I remember when I was young [...] we worked to unload wagons. And how did we do? Three bags – or three boxes – to the state and one for us. In this way, everybody lives in this country.²³

The fact that Soviet power was de facto tolerating these practices – as well as other illegalities like *blat*, *tukhta* or *tolkachis* – reflected the "elite perceptions that these forms of corruption often perform vital systemic functions."²⁴ This attitude could be considered as a form of "passive reform" or

¹⁹ The concept of *blat* refers to the procurement of mutual favors, nepotism, protection etc. determining the capability to acquire (even illegally) favors, goods, and services that were in short supply. Cf. Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favors: Blat, Networking, and Informal Exchange*.

²⁰ In the Soviet Union, the "greatest single source of inefficiency in the economic sphere was the inflated work norms, which forced people to falsify their work reports in order to survive. The term used to describe this practice was *tukhta*". Cf. Stephen Carter, *The Politics of Solzhenitsyn* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1977), 43.

²¹ Alena V. Ledeneva, *How Russia Really Works: The Informal Practices That Shaped Post-Soviet Politics and Business* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

²² According to Ed A. Hewett, in the mid-80s around 20 million Soviet citizens were engaged fully or part time in 'underground' activities. Edward A. Hewett, *Reforming the Soviet Economy. Equality versus Efficiency* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1988), 190.

²³ Andrea Graziosi, *L'Unione Sovietica in 209 Citazioni* (Bologna: Il mulino, 2006), 156.

²⁴ John M. Kramer, "Political Corruption in the USSR," *Western Political Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1977): 221.

a "substitute for reform"²⁵ in a system that did not seem to be reformable. In fact, just referring to the '70s, James Millar conceptualized 'Brezhnev's Little Deal,' which tolerated

the expansion of a wide range of petty private economic activities, some legal, some in the penumbra of the legal, and some clearly illegal, the primary aim of which was the reallocation by private means of a significant fraction of Soviet national income according to private preferences.²⁶

On this purpose, Clark added:

that general argument is extended to the class of officialdom, which operated under an increasingly informal and explicit "little deal" of its own. A large number of informal and technically illegal measures appropriate for the maintenance of economic growth and, by extension, the stability of the regime, would be permitted and in some cases encouraged by the Soviet leadership.²⁷

Brezhnev promoted this new peaceful²⁸ and tolerant control pattern, which was, in fact, based on loyal patrimonial networks, fostering nepotism, corruption, and corporatism.²⁹ However, "the regime's willingness to tolerate a great deal of deviant behavior that would previously have been punished. Lax policing of the second economy and the turning of blind eyes to report padding and corruption on the part of managers constituted a part of the regime's 'Little Deal', a tacit accommodation between the regime and its increasingly acquisitive subjects".³⁰ The pursuit of that compromise between all the social forces was functional to "ensure peace, order and tranquility within both the leadership and society at large".³¹

²⁵ Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 64, 92.

²⁶ James R. Millar, "The Little Deal: Brezhnev's Contribution to Acquisitive Socialism," *Slavic Review* 44, no. 4 (1985): 697.

²⁷ Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 96.

²⁸ Brezhnev that since 1964 was promising a "peaceful" development exclaiming that "The Soviet people should live in peace in order to work quietly" Graziosi, *L'Unione Sovietica in 209 Citazioni*, 150.

²⁹ Cf. Valerie Bunce, "The Political Economy of the Brezhnev Era: The Rise and Fall of Corporatism," *British Journal of Political Science* 13, no. 2 (1983): 129–58.

³⁰ William J. Tompson, *The Soviet Union under Brezhnev* (London & New York: Routledge, 2003), 90.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 117.

The Brezhnev era was then characterized by a high level of systemic “metacorruption”³² that did not create either culprits or innocents, and denied that part of the resources were being channeled for purely private purposes. Nonetheless, it was an integral part of the Soviet productive system, even though it was illegal. Corruption then increased even more during stagnation and it was functional to keep in the illusions of efficiency of a huge drifting state and was unofficially tolerated at lower-individual scale.³³

However, in the early ‘80s, the CC CPSU started to seriously analyze the phenomenon as a systemic risk for the country,³⁴ testifying that tolerance ended when the level of machinations, bribery, and embezzlement emerged at

³² Anton Koslov defined “metacorruption” this way: “When terror is stopped and the process of corruption begins, what can be seen on its periphery is metacorruption: corruption becomes the norm, and the non-corrupted is viewed as an aberration from the norm. Metacorruption is a stage beyond; it is the corruption of the corrupters, when corrupt power no longer conceals its corruptness. [...] We could say that this is a new form of anomie, anomie squared.” Anton Koslov, “Afterword,” in *Russia’s Secret Rulers*, ed. Lev Timofeev (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 163–64.

³³ In this regard, the criminal dispatches of the KGB that were full of banalities, and often self-comforting that did not trace the level of real concern that the Brezhnevian group had, are interesting. The ‘boss’ still ensured stability and peace and pursued the way of self-delusion in the considerations of a country that was drifting. Graziosi defined this as the “triumph of hypocrisy.” Graziosi, *L’Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 427–28.

³⁴ The memorandum of the party-organizational department of the CC CPSU and the CPC (Committee of Party Control) date 21 May 1981 “on strengthening the fight against bribery in 1975-1980” revealed that in 1980 alone more than 6000 cases of bribery were registered - which is 50% more than in 1975 - and the emergence of organized groups. It also listed the basic registered offenses: vacation of scarce goods; the selection of equipment and materials; adjustment and reduction of planned targets; appointment to positions of responsibility; concealment of fraud. The reasons shall include: serious shortcomings in personnel work; bureaucratism in front of legitimate requests of citizens; poor performance in front of complaints and citizens’ letters; gross violations of the state, planning and financial discipline; tolerance towards bribe-takers; the poor performance of public opinion. It reported punishment towards leading party workers at gorkom and raikom levels for condoning bribery. It was proposed to adopt a resolution of the Central Committee. According to Satarov “then, there is a strict correspondence between the lack of understanding of corruption phenomena, primitive explanation of their causes and inadequate means of combating them.” Satarov, *Antikorruptsionnaya Politika: Uchebnoye Posobiye*, 40–49.

high-scale and appeared as a threat to the system's stability and security.³⁵ In this context, corruption was contrasted by specific ad-hoc campaigns that had that 'demonstrative' attitude that we will examine in the next pages. To determine the level of tolerance towards corruption, Clark described a chromatic spectrum. According to the author,

a final informal rule that helps comprise the ideology of administration and govern the behavior of Soviet officials states that "black" forms of corruption will not be tolerated. In this case, "black" corruption was seen by the authorities as the most dangerous and threatening to the System. It involved large and boldly conspicuous material gains, high living, and a blatant disrespect for Soviet law. Again, the scale of the corrupt activities is important here. Small-scale corruption within limits set by the authorities would be tolerated. Large-scale corruption and sizable accumulation of wealth would bring severe criminal penalties. Bribery for personal gain was a serious criminal offense in the Soviet Union, and officials who abused their position to accumulate vast stores of wealth were subject to the death penalty.³⁶

Clark underlines how the massive anti-crime campaigns were generally neutral, meanwhile the arbitrariness in the regime's response to corruption were centrally directed struggle against determined officials as well as the subsequent discrediting campaigns in the press and media.³⁷ Therefore, although corruption was a systemic phenomenon, it could be

³⁵ "The Committee [KGB], in all the state security agencies is critical, in the spirit of the high requirements of the party analyzed the state of the operational activity, planned structural measures on unconditional fulfillment of Party and state tasks. The main efforts of the KGB, the Committee focuses on issues that are critical in ensuring the security of the Soviet Union and the socialist community, to further strengthen political, economic and ideological foundations of socialism, strengthening the defensive might of the USSR. [...] All the work but the selection, placement and training of personnel was based on Leninist principles, and XXV Party Congress decisions. Much attention was paid to improving the level of management and control, serial approval at all levels, in all areas of activity of the KGB of the Leninist style of work, a party, a competent, creative approach to business. Purposefully and complex work was carried out on the ideological, moral, and ethical injection frames, to improve their professional skills, education of high responsibility and rigorous demands for timely and full implementation of the Party and government directives, public safety facilities and measures." KGB annual report to the CC CPSU, 28 February 1977, NSA, Box 22, R9935, ll. 2, 10.

³⁶ Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 42.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 146-47.

convicted/punished according to political opportunity.³⁸ In fact, anti-corruption campaigns were functional to blame the culprits – rather than eradicating the vicious circles and the causes of corruption – and to maintain the regime’s stability or to promote policy changes.³⁹ As we have seen with the Ryazan or the Tajik affairs in the early ‘60s, corruption was often a political tool that had even stronger moral implications rather than judicial.⁴⁰ Corruption allegations had been, in fact, a traditional means to discredit leaders, politicians, managers etc. and to carry out a reshuffle of cadres or, more brutally, internal purges within the apparatus. Following the corruption corollary proposed by Satarov, even anti-corruption campaigns become an instrument of political struggle and power affirmation. In fact, the author comments that even

an anti-corruption campaign in totalitarian regimes, substitutes ostentatious struggle against corruption, instantly it degenerates into a struggle for corruption markets, for the opportunity to extract the selfish advantage of official position.⁴¹

In order to fight corruption in all its manifestations, there were specific organs that had to supervise the party (CPC), the state bureaucracy (PCC) and the society (OBKhSS). Then the prokuratura had the power to instruct the cases and could work in parallel with the KGB investigations. The KGB – the committee for state security famous for its espionage and counterespionage activities during Cold War – had a minor role against economic crimes until the end of the ‘70s when the “state within the state”⁴² was provided with extra powers to fight against corruption, embezzlement, and any violations of the

³⁸ In his article, Schwarz evidences the link between politics and corruption in USSR. He also affirms: "The Soviet meaning of corruption is best described as an alliance of law and informal political rules. Law is by all accounts the weaker ally" Schwartz, "Corruption and Political Development in the USSR," 429.

³⁹ Satarov cites the big corruption case of Lenminvodtorg in 1961 – that led to a political purge in the Leningrad apparatus – as one of the first massive anticorruption cases due to a political struggle. Satarov, *Antikorruptsionnaya Politika: Uchebnoye Posobiye*, 43.

⁴⁰ "The cry 'You are corrupt!' is moral and political more than a legal accusation, and the connotations of decay, depravity, secretiveness and self-interest are well understood as being incompatible with official position in public office: public trust is betrayed." Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 4; Clarke, *Corruption: Causes, Consequences and Control*, xiv.

⁴¹ Satarov, *Antikorruptsionnaya Politika: Uchebnoye Posobiye*, 45.

⁴² Evgeniya Al' bats, *KGB: State Within a State* (London-New York: I.B. Tauris, 1995).

socialist law.⁴³ In fact, from the first great scandals of late '70s, the KGB considered corruption – especially at high levels – as a dangerous threat to the security of the state that could discredit the Soviet government so much externally as internally as the dissidents' issue.

3.1.1 A system for 'statusnye'

As we have said, the main reason for corruption in the USSR was in the inefficiencies of the non-market economic system inefficiencies. At the top of the Soviet redistribution machine were the *statusnye* – members of the party, high bureaucrats, artists, people awarded with socialist prizes and generally the intelligentsia – which thanks to their status received goods and services in a more, better, and faster extent. Officially, they were not much richer in terms of money, but they had a valuable status precondition that guaranteed them material privileges. Aleksander Minkin – theater critic and investigative journalist who became famous for writing the first articles about Uzbekistan in late '80s – comments:

If you were a simple person and you had a low salary, you had little choice. [...] But if you were a *statusniy*, you could choose furniture, books, cars, TV and get everything you wanted in priority [...Thus] distribution depended on the status among the leaders. However, if you were neither the top nor a simple person – so if you were 'in the middle' – and you had a little bit of money, you could buy what you wanted, resorting to corruption with bribes, and finally even the status.⁴⁴

Then, Minkin seems to give the interpretation of corruption as the key to accede the distribution of goods and services by the Soviet 'middle class', so defining a 'mediocre' system that is enforced by people 'in the middle' and that was 'liberalizing' those goods that people did not want to sell at lower fixed prices. Therefore, corruption became the effective tool to seek opportunities and to access those limited public resources and it could be considered as a 'last resort' of individual survival, especially for lower classes.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, despite various and legitimate doubts about the usefulness of money in a non-market system, with money it was possible to buy everything in the USSR. This is true even of status – the origin of the material benefits – which was often on sale. Corruption thus became an important factor of social mobility in a system

⁴³ Luc Duhamel, *The KGB Campaign against Corruption in Moscow* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010).

⁴⁴ Personal interview with Aleksander Viktorovich Minkin, Moscow, 7 December 2015.

⁴⁵ McMann, *Corruption as a Last Resort : Adapting to the Market in Central Asia*.

that had officially claimed to have destroyed social classes, because it permitted one to climb the social hierarchy by buying status⁴⁶ and getting automatically better living standards and a priority in accessing scarce goods and services. In other words, “a political career in the party apparatus was seen as the quickest way to make a fortune.”⁴⁷ Especially in the ‘Southern regions’, the ‘costs’ of these positions are as follows:

toward the end of the 1970s, a first secretaryship in a district Party committee (raikom) cost[ed] 200,000 rubles (at a time when the average monthly salary was about 150 rubles), while a second secretaryship cost[ed] 100,000 rubles and an office in the raikom secretariat around 10,000. Within the state apparatus, a Trade or Light Industry ministership ranged somewhere between 250,000 and 300,000 rubles. Those who were wealthy enough to afford this could eventually charge 100,000 or 150,000 rubles for the position of department chief in their ministries.⁴⁸

The minimal precondition to access political life – i.e. CPSU membership – could be sold for 1,000 rubles.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, not only political posts were ‘on sale’: even the directorship of a theater could cost from 10,000 to 30,000 rubles, a rayon prokuror around 30,000, chairman of kolkhoz 50,000 and chairman of sovkhoz 80,000 rubles, rector of a university about 200,000 rubles.⁵⁰ Furthermore, Minkin comments how even awards were on sale and were functional to the ‘glory’ and to better living standards. One way was bartering production quotas with other kolkhozes and sovkhozes. In this way, the managers of the production centers made sure, through production units in other centers, the fulfillment of the plan and in return received medals. In his reconstruction of the situation in Uzbekistan, he interprets the pattern with which these awards were conferred:

Everyone wanted medals, Lenin's orders, the heroes of labor etc. and every year the directors of the kolkhoz met to decide to whom had to be assigned the awards. And so there was a particular trade [or barter in time] of cotton that

⁴⁶ It could be considered as a good investment: “the position of authority is the ultimate good on the Soviet black market. The “commodity of power” is the most expensive commodity but the most profitable.” Timofeev, *Russia's Secret Rulers*, 58.

⁴⁷ Virginie Coulloudon, “Russia Adrift. Twenty Years of Anticorruption Campaigns,” in *Corrupt Histories*, ed. Emmanuel Kreike and William Chester Jordan (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 253.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 281; Timofeev, *Russia's Secret Rulers*, 59.

⁴⁹ Sergey Plekhanov, “Delo Gdlyana. Anatomiya Politicheskogo Skandala,” *Klub «Olimpas»*, 1991, 15.

⁵⁰ Satarov, *Antikorrupsionnaya Politika: Uchebnoye Posobiye*, 44.

was exchanged with colleagues and 'lent' to those kolkhozes that had been intended to receive the award. This system so, worked in turns every year. The cotton was harvested, put in the trucks and arrived in the cotton cleaning factories where all the trucks declared that they were coming from the kolkhoz that was intended to win the award. Then, the cotton was downloaded and weighed. [...] in this way, the predestined kolkhoz could declare that it had fulfilled the plan – and even over-exceeded it for 500% – getting glories and awards.⁵¹

Therefore, it seems that a part of the nomenklatura encouraged abuses, black business, and corruption to preserve its privileges, disavowing the Leninist idea of a new man – who was honest and devoted to the common cause⁵² - and was the main pivot of corruption in the USSR and regarded the power relations among elites. In conclusion, corruption was not only a factor of social mobility but also a conservative measure for the preservation of privileges in a society that was supposed to be conceived on the basis of fairness and equality. As mentioned, at the end of the '70s, the situation became outsized and out of control and corruption assumed the forms of "patronage, cronyism, or nepotism in the political milieu; gift giving, bribery, and embezzlement in both the political world and the bureaucracy; and systematic rule evasion and falsification of data (*pripiski*) in industry."⁵³ In fact, these phenomena were directly connected to other illegal activities that were typical in the planned economy, such as report padding, over-reporting, or falsification of statistics.

3.1.2 Report-padding, data falsification, additions

Report-padding, data falsification, false reporting, distortions, additions etc. are all aspects – and synonyms – of *pripiski*, an untranslatable Russian word⁵⁴ referring to the practice of misreporting production data in order to inflate the official results, such as typical infringements within individual production units. As it had been admitted by Nikolai Nikiforovich Tarasov, the former minister of light industry in the USSR (1965-1985), and the former chairman of the SM UzSSR Khudayberdyev, the practice of *pripiski* was an

⁵¹ Personal interview with Aleksander Viktorovich Minkin, Moscow, 7 December 2015.

⁵² Hélène Carrère D'Encausse, *La Gloire Des Nations Ou La Fin de l'Empire Soviétique* (Paris: Fayard, 1990), 39.

⁵³ Coulloudon, "Russia Adrift. Twenty Years of Anticorruption Campaigns," 249.

⁵⁴ During our narrative, we will mostly translate *pripiski* as 'falsifications'.

"open secret" that was well known in the party leadership.⁵⁵ Vaksberg adds that even Brezhnev well knew about falsification but good results were functional to his – and his protégée's – legitimation.⁵⁶ Anyway, tolerated or not, these practices were spread in the Soviet productive system and even in industry. However, Ryzhkov declared that probably the publicity that was given to the fight against *pripiski* in Andropovian times was perhaps even more enflamed that their real effectiveness on the Soviet economy.⁵⁷ However, as we shall see, this practice would have a devastating importance on the Uzbek cotton sector. The phenomenology of falsification⁵⁸ finds its explanation in the peculiarity of a system where fulfilling the plan was the final and necessary goal that had to be reached at any cost⁵⁹ – even resorting to any kind of dishonest

⁵⁵ Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*, 101–2.

⁵⁶ Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, 114–15.

⁵⁷ Ryzhkov declares that "pripiski were also in the industrial plants. For example, when due to some reasons were still needed two or three more days to conclude a process, sometimes it was reported in documents that the work was already completed and ready, even if it was not. Very strict measures were taken against these tricks, and [the culprits] were severely punished and some were excluded from the party." In his comments to my questions, Ryzhkov reduces the impact of report-padding on the collapse of Soviet economy: "pripiski existed, but I cannot say that these were enormous. However, there was a great campaign against them [as a part of the Andropovian policies. However,]. I think that is absolutely not correct to say that these led to the collapse of Soviet system. [Undoubtedly,] they affected our lives, our economy, but to say that they hit the Soviet Union so much that made it to collapse it is not absolutely correct. The destruction of the Soviet Union had other reasons, both internal and external, but not those of whom we are talking about now." Personal interview with Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov, Moscow, 22 December 2014.

⁵⁸ Joseph S. Berliner, "The Informal Organization of the Soviet Firm," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 66, no. 3 (1952): 342–65.

⁵⁹ "A key element in this system of organized corruption was the Five Year Plans drawn up by the state and Party organs. Anyone, from the minister to the chief executive officer at an enterprise, was professionally and politically evaluated according to his ability to achieve the goals of production imposed by the plan. This was also the fundamental criterion of promotion to the upper rungs of the bureaucratic ladder. These plans did not only establish targeted output volumes for each single enterprise, but also determined the type and the quantity of raw materials it was allocated. They also established what equipment the plant should receive from which suppliers, as well as to whom, and in what quantities, it would sell its output [...] Soviet industrial managers were not allowed to spend their budgets as they saw fit for their factories. On the contrary, their duty was to fulfill the Plan at any cost—not only because this

means⁶⁰ – in order to maintain the regime’s stability and was a direct responsibility of the FS, and the price for that failure would be “disgrace, demotion, or even worse.”⁶¹ And even lies and self-illusion become central elements for that purpose. In the early ‘90s, Nikolai Ryzhkov, one of the protagonists of perestroika dramatically commented on Brezhnevism:

The stuffiness of the country had reached a maximum; after that only death [...]. Nothing was done with care [...]. We were stealing from one another, we took and gave bribes, we lied in our reports, in the newspapers, from the high podiums, wallowed in our lies, conferring medals one another. And all of this from top to bottom, and from bottom to top.⁶²

According to Oleg Khlevniuk,

Various book-keeping falsifications and the concealment of the true state of affairs can be encountered in any social-economic system. However, in the Soviet Union there were additional incentives for falsification: the unlimited power of the state in the economic sphere, economic adventurism and the cruel (at some periods extremely criminalized) methods of managing the economy. Putting forward unattainable economic goals, the state gave the producer a choice: either suffer a harsh punishment for failure to fulfil the plan, or look for fraudulent ways out. The best-known and most extreme form of this model of adaptation to the system (or rather, survival inside it) is the so-called *tufta* (trash – production of false results) in the Gulag economy. The intensity of cheating

would advance them in their own careers but also because, if the plan was fulfilled, workers would receive bonuses that augmented their annual wages by about 20-25 percent." Coulloudon, "Russia Adrift. Twenty Years of Anticorruption Campaigns," 246; Simis, *USSR - The Corrupt Society. The Secret World of Soviet Capitalism*, 133–34.

⁶⁰ "If the manager "gives the plan" as they say, he will be forgiven a multitude of sins— even outright violations of the law, including the criminal code. But if he "wrecks the plan," then nothing can help him, not even the fact that the plan was wrecked [from the very beginning]. This happened so often that it can be said that, as a rule, the Soviet planning and supply organs not provide construction projects with enough equipment and materials. Managers faced with the need to procure, by any means, everything not supplied by the state, everything without which their plans [could not] be fulfilled." Ibid., 135; Coulloudon, "Russia Adrift. Twenty Years of Anticorruption Campaigns."

⁶¹ Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk under Soviet Rule* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 76.

⁶² Then, Ryzhkov continues declaring: "We cannot live like this any longer. Everything must be done in a new way." Graziosi, *L'Unione Sovietica in 209 Citazioni*, 161; Martin McCauley, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 397; Nikolaï Ivanovich Ryzhkov, *Perestroika : Istoriya Predatel'stv* (Moskva: Novosti, 1992).

was directly connected with the phases of continually repeating cycles in the Soviet economy, where the leap forward (*skachok*) is standard.⁶³

This practice was typical in agriculture in general (and cotton in particular), and cheating on productive figures was relatively easy. A first way was to negotiate a different quota with party and state officers through gifts and bribes. An effect of this was that the shortcomings of some production units were foisted to other unfortunate people who were not in the good graces of planners. Then, it was possible to distort quantitative cotton output data directly by reporting false data about nonexistent cotton into the accountability's registers and bribing – paying 260-700 rubles per non-existent ton of cotton⁶⁴ - those officers who were in charge of controlling in order to covering the shortcomings.⁶⁵ At the local level, it was also possible to make the raw cotton heavier, adding dirt, stones and other parts of plants in the harvest. However, this ploy was clearly visible and evident. Therefore, watering was preferred. Indeed, for its absorptive capacity, cotton can absorb more than 25% its weight in water, and such a variation could remain unnoticed at first glance. In the same way, it was possible to falsify data on the quality of cotton that could be diluted with other fibers or cutting agents. On some occasions the output of production was not distorted, but rather the means by which the result was obtained, and this was typical of the falsification of yield-per-

⁶³ Oleg Khlevniuk, "The Economy of Illusions: The Phenomenon of Data Inflation in the Khrushchev Era," in *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and Government in the Soviet Union, 1956-1964*, ed. Jeremy Smith and Melanie Ilic (London: Routledge, 2011), 172.

⁶⁴ Plekhanov, "Delo Gdlyana. Anatomiya Politicheskogo Skandala," 22.

⁶⁵ "Falsification was rampant from the national level down to individual farms. The heads of kolkhozes and sovkhoses simply bribed the procurement inspectors to inflate the amount delivered, both on the delivery receipts and in reports to their superiors. Another type of deception was to expand the area under cultivation and then to conceal this from both the planning and statistical office." These practices were also confirmed by Nishanov. Boris Z. Rumer, "Central Asia's Cotton Economy and Its Costs," in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 81; Rafik Nishanovich Nishanov, *Derev'ya Zeleneyut Do Metelei: Rafik Nishanov Rasskazyvaet Marine Zavade I Yurii Kulikovu* (Moskva: Molodaya Gvardiya, 2012), 237.

hectare⁶⁶ figures that were publicized – and probably pushed⁶⁷ – in order to offer an image of efficiency in each kolkhoz.

As we have analyzed in the previous chapter, from the tenth FYP (1976-1980), the Soviet demand for cotton increased to the highest levels and claimed just for the UzSSR an annual production of six million tons of raw cotton. The planned figures became more and more difficult to reach in every productive unit and, especially from 1978 – when Soviet agriculture had to face a difficult moment also related to the bad weather conditions – pripiski became a solution to fulfill – at least officially – the plans. Investigations showed that during the intensive falsification period (1978-1983), every year it was reported a crop between 500,000 and 900,000 tons greater – for a total of 4.5 million tons of Uzbek raw cotton had been produced just in paper and 2 billion rubles⁶⁸ – about 30% of the republic annual budget⁶⁹ – embezzled.⁷⁰ Again, data falsifications could be read as a way to compute and determine the effective price of goods in a non-market system.⁷¹

⁶⁶ On this regard, Khlevniuk defines: "the most widespread method of improving yield-per-hectare figures (for grain and especially cotton) was to remove from the accounts a certain part of the sown area". Then, the author gives an example, stating that just in Uzbekistan, the kolkhozes and sovkhoses concealed 30,000 hectares of cotton cultivation in 1961, 38,000 in 1962 and 42,000 in 1963. Khlevniuk, "The Economy of Illusions: The Phenomenon of Data Inflation in the Khrushchev Era," 181, 188.

⁶⁷ Lipovsky comments: "crude pressure applied to kolkhozes in an attempt to force them to go all lengths in order to raise their yields to 30 centners per hectare (when a realistic yield would have been no more than 25) led to the local leadership reporting false and distortedly high results" Igor P. Lipovsky, *Central Asia: In Search of a New Identity* (North Charleston: CreateSpace, 2012), 121.

⁶⁸ These figures appeared for the first time in 1983. However, as we will see in the next chapter, they were destined to grow.

⁶⁹ In order to evaluate the entity of the scam we should remind that the budget for UzSSR in 1984 was 7.244 billion rubles Jan Åke Dellenbrant, *The Soviet Regional Dilemma: Planning, People, and Natural Resources* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1986), 150.

⁷⁰ James Critchlow, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Independence* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 41; Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*, 101; Timofeev, *Russia's Secret Rulers*, 61; Graeme Gill and Roderic Pitty, *Power in the Party. The Organization of Power and Central-Republican Relations in the CPSU* (Houndmills & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 150.

⁷¹ Timofeev argues that the case of inflating data is an interesting example to determine the effective marked price - determined by demand and supply – in a non-marked system. In his oversimplified example, it was possible to assume that whether the state

The origin of the cotton scams was in the cotton cleaning factories that were receiving and processing the 'ghost cotton' from the kolkhozes and that was inserting the falsified figures directly into the state economic system. The data may be falsified - with the complicity of management - directly at the cotton cleaning factories' accountant by paying a bribe,⁷² or otherwise a staging system could be organized. Minkin gives a description of what he defined as the "cotton carousel" and explains how it worked:

A kolkhoz truck arrived, claiming to deliver a quantity of cotton from a certain kolkhoz, downloaded it, and registered the figure in the delivery registry. Then, the same truck went around the factory at its warehouse, reloaded another load of cotton - that had been already deposited at the factory - by paying a bribe. It did a round of the building, and delivered the 'new cotton' at the same factory. Doing it this way, the kolkhoz had documents that claimed to have supplied much to the state [...] and won orders and monetary awards that were used to cover the costs of corruption.⁷³

Later, factories and warehouses had to justify the lack of cotton reported and very often denounced that their storage rooms were lost, robbed or 'mysteriously' caught fire, losing the precious – and nonexistent – stock of 'white gold'. The practice of mysterious fires of warehouses was very diffused in the 'white gold' sector:⁷⁴ in fact, as cotton fiber – being highly flammable – hardly leaves a trace of the crop destroyed, it was not easy to estimate the amount of the damage that, therefore, was defined in official figures.⁷⁵ This kind of scam to the Soviet economic system was so typical – even becoming

was annually acquiring for five million tons of raw cotton but was paying for six million tons, it meant that "the results is that the actual cotton turns out to be one sixth more expensive than supposed." According to Timofeev, even bribes were also "a special instrument for balancing price in accordance with supply and demand." Timofeev, *Russia's Secret Rulers*, 62, 64.

⁷² Bribery was the engine of this system which "progressively forced Party officials and industrial managers to participate in a system of organized corruption." Coulloudon, "Russia Adrift. Twenty Years of Anticorruption Campaigns," 246.

⁷³ Personal interview with Aleksander Viktorovich Minkin, Moscow, 7 December 2015.

⁷⁴ Nishanov, *Derev'ya Zeleneyut Do Metelei: Rafik Nishanov Rasskazyvaet Marine Zavade I Yurii Kulikovu*, 237.

⁷⁵ These stories were confirmed by the personal witness of Shavkhat (he did not want to give me his surname), a former khlopkarob who worked in the '70s in a small cotton farm based in the Namangan oblast. On 28 May 2015, the 68 year-old Shavkhat was working as a taxi driver in Tashkent and, a little intimidated by my curiosity, he has misunderstood my questions and asked me if Albano and Romina were still together.

the topic of comedies⁷⁶ – and diffused from local kolkhozes, to district warehouses, and then to the processing factories in Uzbekistan and in Russia.

3.1.3 The Pyramid

So we analyzed the elements of this vicious cycle where, following the payment of bribes, it was possible to fake production data, fulfill the plan and get financial rewards from the state that allowed bribes to be paid and to endlessly repeat the cycle of scam. However, it is evident that this system required the complicity of supervisors to operate, and also the bribed supervisors had to justify all of this from the bottom to the top of the Soviet system, building a network of malfeasance that implied the neopatrimonial assets (described in the first chapter) and the above-mentioned economic offenses, defining so the elements of the story we are about to narrate. As Timofeev comments:

For many years, the Uzbek Party and economic leaders reported inflated indicators to the central authorities. They would add millions of tons to the actual amount of raw cotton turned over to the government. The money received for the nonexistent cotton was embezzled. These stolen billions finally ended up being injected into shadowy black-market dealings, including the purchase and sale of official positions, which fostered universal corruption in the republic.⁷⁷

At the bottom of the pyramid there were the directors of collective farms who, from the '60s onwards, emerged as powerful local actors, able to establish circles of mutual protection at the local level, even during Stalinism.⁷⁸ In a general description of this system in the USSR, Merle Fainsod argues:

⁷⁶ In the 1965 film entitled "Operation 'Y' and Shurik's Other Adventures" by Leonid Gaidai, there was a warehouse manager who, trying to cover up his theft, hired three petty criminals to stage a break-in.

⁷⁷ Timofeev, *Russia's Secret Rulers*, 61.

⁷⁸ Belov witnesses that already at the end of '40s kolkhozes were forced to bribe the raion officials in order to get services and fundamental goods: "To be able to function effectively and obtain the minimum necessary supplies, legally or illegally, the kolkhozes had to remain on good terms with the raion officials [...] During 1948 our kolkhoz, which was regarded as not at all liberal in its bribes, was obliged to supply the following quantities of farm products to raion officials: To the chairman of the raion executive committee for furnishing an order for an automobile: Flour (2 centners), Oats for his horse (5 centners), Fish (20 kilograms), Honey (5 kilograms); To the secretary of the raion Party committee: Flour (1 centner), Fruit (2 centners), Fish (30 kilograms), Pig, slaughtered (1), To the chief of the raion MGB section: Potatoes (6 centners), Fruit (2

management had its prerequisites, illegal and quasi-legal, and many kolkhoz chairmen sought to protect them from exposure by installing their own clique in strategic positions in the kolkhoz, by absorbing the chairman of the village soviet, the store manager, and other leading village personalities into a common network of shared privileges, and by bribing the relevant raion officials where possible to keep quiet.⁷⁹

It seems that collective farms were acquiring greater influence over agricultural policy and several agro-industrial complexes and associations were developed in the 1960s to enhance coordination of agricultural activities. These new structures established an “institutional base from which farm chairs could extend their authority over an entire district's rural economy [...]. Farm chairs and other enterprise managers had emerged as Soviet style local strongmen, with few checks on their authority”.⁸⁰ These unrivaled figures were able thus to convert resources into rents, requiring “protection and access to the patronage networks spanning the state's institutional framework.”⁸¹

This dynamic even increased in early '80s, when the collective farms of the republic started to receive even more funds for their cotton. In fact, since the late-'70s, there was an increase of financial availability of UzSSR kolkhozes and sovkhozes based on the law amendments of 1980 that defined new price standards. In fact, with the introduction of the Decree CC CPUz and SM UzSSR decree of 14 November 1980 on the “improvement of economic planning and stimulation of the production and preparation of agricultural products” were

established new sales prices. [... Since then] prices have on average increased by 15% as well as those of the extraordinary supplies above average quality [that

centners); To the chief of the raion MVD section: Hay (5 centners), Watermelons (5 centners); To the raion prosecutor: Shoats (2), Fish (15 kilograms), Honey (5 kilograms), Flour (50 kilograms); To the inspector of flour-mills: Flour (2 centners), Vegetable oil (10 kilograms), Fish (10 kilograms); To the chief of the raion agricultural department: Turkeys (4), Flour (1 centner), Hay (3 centners), Vegetables (2 centners); To the director of the MTS: Shoats (4), Fish (10 kilograms); To the director of the fuel depot: Fish (kilograms), Sugar (10 kilograms), Potatoes (5 centners); To the head of the construction department: Flour (1 centner), Fat (5 kilograms), Sugar (10 kilograms); To the raion automobile inspector: Honey (15 kilograms), Fish (10 kilograms).” Fedor Belov, *The History of a Soviet Collective Farm* (New York-London: Routledge, 1998), 66–67, 216–17.

⁷⁹ Fainsod, *Smolensk under Soviet Rule*.

⁸⁰ Lawrence P Markowitz, *State Erosion. Unlootable Resources and Unruly Elites in Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 34.

⁸¹ Ibid.

was expected] in the X 5YP, for 50% of its price. [... due to this introduction], in 1982, the kolkhoz and sovkhov of Surkhandarya received 106.4 million rubles more, Bukhara 59.8 and Namangan 26.1. [... In fact], in 1982 the cotton [ton] cost an average of 180-350 rubles more than the previous year, for a final product that was worth from 890 to 1930 rubles per ton depending on the quality.⁸²

This further increase in prices provided greater financial base for agriculture of the UzSSR. In this way, Moscow would pay more and more for Uzbek cotton expecting, however, amazing results. This larger availability of finances inevitably provided a larger base for illicit purposes and to produce bribes. In fact, already in 1982, Simis publicized the common practice in Uzbekistan of directors of kolkhozes and sovkhoves who were illicitly paying regular tributes to the republican leaders – in the form of money, gemstones, handmade rugs, and other valuables – in return for protection. Also Nancy Lubin, after a fieldwork in the late '70s in Uzbekistan affirmed how:

Activity in agriculture, for example, not only provides access to private earnings from one's private plot, or opportunities for the theft of tools, fodder or working time; it also provides easy access to larger-scale illegal activities. Since farms are often subject to less stringent controls than are other state-owned enterprises and organizations, they can frequently provide illegal undertakings with their premises, transport, labor or with regard to, say, currency conversions. As several émigrés have pointed out, an entire system of under-reporting harvests and over-reporting losses has also evolved, with the remainder of agricultural produce sold through private channels. Close connections with local industries also provide the collective farm leadership with goods and services in exchange for part of that agricultural produce.⁸³

The source of this money was the funds of the collective farms and often the salaries of their workers. In this regard, Minkin offers us an exemplary story: in 1978, when he was working as a columnist for the newspaper *Moskovsky Komsomolets*. An Uzbek arrived in the newspaper redaction and told terrible stories about corruption and its relation with the machinations of wages in the structures such as kolkhozes and sovkhoves that were, substantially, out of legal state control. In these structures, the accountants were working as secretaries of the directors and were managing the controls

⁸² Prot. 58/1983, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 152, d. 2324, l. 14.

⁸³ Nancy Lubin, *Labour and Nationality in Soviet Central Asia: An Uneasy Compromise* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 191.

on the base of the directors' will. During a business trip in Central Asia,⁸⁴ Minkin collected many stories and describes a typical situation during the payment of salaries:

Too often, workers were forced to sign in the payment registry that they had received, for example, four rubles from the kolkhoz's management. They deceived the simple peasants! Then, the accountant was writing figures on the left - for example '20' in order to have a final result of '204' – or easier adding a couple of zeros on the right, making it appear that the employee had taken 400 rubles. The difference was always to the advantage of the system because the remaining 396 were put in the kolkhoz treasury and served to fill someone's pockets or was sent to those figures who were at the top. This means that many *kolkhozniki* were simply working as slaves, forced to sell their labor for some miserable kopeks and were often blackmailed by the kolkhozes' management that – in addition to the salary – could remove other primary services to the

⁸⁴ Minkin could craftily publish some parts of these stories already in 1979. However, he had to face censorship and even the anger of some people who did not want him to publish anything about. He tells of an incredible adventure: "In 1979, I was a young and hopeful idiot who did not understand the size of the scandal I was facing. In November I was on a business trip in Central Asia to make theater reviews and take inspiration for some corruption stories. One evening I was in a hostel in Urgench and suddenly I started to feel very bad. The innkeeper brought the thermometer. I put under my arm and it indicated 39.5°! Then, the lady exited the room and went to call a doctor. Suddenly, the telephone in the room rang. I took the phone and I heard an unknown voice with an Uzbek accent saying *"now a doctor will come, he will take you to the hospital, and no one will see you alive anymore!"* It seemed that someone had poisoned me and someone else knew about this attempt and was warning that if I went to the hospital I would never exit that place alive. In silence I kept listening to the stranger's voice that indicate me: *"go out of the hotel, a black car is coming... don't say anything and jump inside."* I did not have time to think and no other option than trusting him. I had nothing particular with me, I just took my bag, and I went out of the hostel where I saw a Volga [the typical KGB car]. I jumped into the car and sped like a rocket from Uzbekistan to Tashaus in Turkmenia [Tashaus is named Dashoguz now] and immediately to the airport where I realized that there was a plane full of people who were waiting just for me. When passengers suddenly saw the Volga rushing on the airstrip and me with straight hair like crazy, they were all surprised. There, an airport employee brought me a bag full of melons and another full of watermelons. And so it flew to Moscow." Therefore, Minkin is convinced that somebody wanted to poison and kill him, but a call saved his life, deporting him from Uzbekistan (where airports had already been warned to stop him leaving the republic), managing to delay a large passenger aircraft (that was two hours waiting for him) and such an incredible one-night adventure. Personal interview with Aleksander Viktorovich Minkin, Moscow, 7 December 2015.

workers and their family. [...] The story of [Akhmagian] Adylov was just a case in a myriad of injustices that afflicted Uzbek kolkhozniki.⁸⁵

Thus, often the chairmen of collective farms were extracting money from their employees⁸⁶ and they kept huge amounts of these sums to give the money to the highest leaders of the republic. As mentioned in the consideration about *statusnye*, those people in power had a conservative approach that was functional to preserve – or to increase – their benefits and privileges and a good result in the economy was functional to the survival of politicians from the top⁸⁷ to the bottom in a quasi-feudal regime where local leaders were holding the effective economic power. As mentioned, during Brezhnevism, the local parties were even more autonomous and – as Moscow's proxies – were effectively ruling the periphery of the Soviet state.

According to Simis, in the republic every activity had been politically patronized and parceled⁸⁸ and in Uzbekistan – a society that had been characterized even by Muslim traditional elements⁸⁹ – he gives an example of the corruption level within the local party where:

bribes were also paid for the provision of specific services: appointments to lucrative and prestigious jobs, not-guilty verdicts in trials, and academic degrees. Chairwoman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Uzbekistan Nasreddinova, for example, traded in pardons, and her rates were well known:

⁸⁵ Personal interview with Aleksander Viktorovich Minkin, Moscow, 7 December 2015.

⁸⁶ Also Ryzhkov comments: "Some of kolkhoz and sovkhoz leaders virtually have become people who have turned their people into slaves and been enriched enormously [from this system]". Personal interview with Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov, Moscow, 22 December 2014.

⁸⁷ Simis is lapidary: "Corruption, even in the highest stratum of the Soviet ruling elite, has become a fact, and not even a rare fact." Simis, *USSR - The Corrupt Society. The Secret World of Soviet Capitalism*, 47.

⁸⁸ I.e. according to Simis, in the 60s, all the small shops and stalls in the Alai bazar in Tashkent were paying tributes to Kurbanov, chairman of SM UzSSR. However, there were underground secrets as the illegal drugs that were making payments to everyone within the party and the state. *Ibid.*, 61.

⁸⁹ As we have seen in the first chapter, the traditional paternalism and kinshipism of Islamic society led to rampant nepotism in an institutionalized framework, forging a typical neo-patrimonial system in Uzbekistan. Cf. John Staples, "Soviet Use of Corruption Purges as a Control Mechanism: The Uzbekistan Case," *Past Imperfect 2* (1993): 30; Michael Rywkin, *Moscow's Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia*, Rev. ed. (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1990), 150; Boris Z. Rumer, *Soviet Central Asia: "A Tragic Experiment"* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 147.

for the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet to issue an official pardon after someone had been convicted of a serious felony the cost would be 100,000 rubles. Pulat Khodzhaev, President of the Supreme Court, charged from 25,000 to 100,000 rubles for a verdict of not guilty.⁹⁰

Therefore, in what has been defined in the following years as a ‘pyramid’ system,⁹¹ illicit means – and, as ever, bribery – were the oil to lubricate the mechanism of the system, from a *kolkhoznik* to the Gensek CPSU. In this power structure, the FS of the national party was thus the connector between Moscow⁹² and the republic. In fact, he was protected in Moscow and, at the same time, was shielding his power network at the republican level in a process that Graziosi defines as a “feudalization process” where the protégées were promoted in the ranks of nomenklatura.⁹³ Pikhoya adds that it is necessary not to underestimate the high level of autonomy⁹⁴ of local authorities, that were more afraid of Tashkent than of Moscow because in the local capital there were management cadres who were redistributing sources within the republic and local elites. “These funds served as a loyalty price of local elites to the Moscow authorities and were at the base of the relationships between the local and Tashkent authorities in a system of very complex and not always formalized relations. Anyway, everybody knew the rules of the game”⁹⁵ in a system where autonomy was the “price for loyalty,”⁹⁶ a concept that has been reinterpreted

⁹⁰ Simis, *USSR - The Corrupt Society. The Secret World of Soviet Capitalism*, 62.

⁹¹ Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan, “Piramida,” *Strana I Mir* 3 (1989); Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan and Yevgeniy Yuriyevich Dodolyev, *Piramida-1* (Moskva: MTA, 1990).

⁹² The FS was showing a formal face to Moscow, speaking its language and showing sincere trust, and another with the local cadres whereby it was ruling in almost complete arbitrariness. Then, it seems that the control of the center was even weaker in the rural areas where the KGB was not consistently present and was in part colluding with the local systems. Graziosi, *L’Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 257.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 429–30.

⁹⁴ “A colonial system upside-down” that was favoring an unequal redistributive system of resources. As we have mentioned in the first chapter, while Russian and Ukrainian taxes were redistributed in all republics, most of the Uzbek taxation remained within the republic. Personal interview with Rudolf Germanovich Pikhoya, Moscow, 10 December 2015.

⁹⁵ Personal interview with Rudolf Germanovich Pikhoya, Moscow, 10 December 2015.

⁹⁶ Pikhoya adds: “Even the opportunity to study in the central universities was greater because the USSR republics had the set quotas for entering into most prestigious universities in Moscow and Leningrad. Obviously, it was a non-competitive system. In the North Caucasus, there were proportionately twice as many graduates than in the

also in contemporary Central Asian politics where the fair redistribution of resources among the elites and corruption are functional to stability and to avoid struggles.⁹⁷

Too often, there had been an abuse of the word 'mafia' (in Russian, *mafija*) within the literature on the Soviet second economy. This term has generally become a widespread neologism to refer to the criminal implication of consistent party groups of any illicit activity managed by an organized criminal group.⁹⁸ In the USSR, this semantic was fully politicized and was used for the first time in the Soviet press to define the level of malfeasance in Moscow commercial scandals.⁹⁹

Needless to say, the issue is real and serious, and a comparison with the Italian mafia is not pertinent. The mafia, in its original Italian connotation, it is not just a group of organized crime networks but a determined system that is rooted in a society and that has specific rules, dynamics, and even its own rituals.¹⁰⁰ However, in many books and sometimes even in the scientific – or

rest of Russia. In return, Moscow had the total and absolute loyalty of the republics and so the dangers of nationalism, Islamic fundamentalism etc. were avoided and no space for dissent and dissidents was provided. This was the price of loyalty." Personal interview with Rudolf Germanovich Pikhoya, Moscow, 10 December 2015.

⁹⁷ Analyzing the contemporary Kyrgyz scenario, Radnitz affirms that, in an informal context, if all elites are satisfied they do not struggle. When there are struggles they proceed with orchestrated protests that led to the 'colored revolutions.' Scott Radnitz, *Weapons of the Wealthy: Predatory Regimes and Elite-Led Protests in Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

⁹⁸ Besides some criminology and sociological studies dedicated to the Italian mafia, the transliteration of the Italian word mafia was not used in common language and practically did not exist in the literature before the mid-'70s when a number of literature titles reporting the word *mafija* emerged. The use of the term "mafija" in Russian literature increased by sixteen times in 1975-1991. Analysis of the word "mafija" in Google Ngram Viewer.

⁹⁹ Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 486.

¹⁰⁰ Gaetano Mosca, *Che Cosa È La Mafia* (Bari: Laterza, 2002); Leonardo Sciascia, *La Storia Della Mafia* (Milano: Barion, 2013); Michele Pantaleone, *Mafia E Politica: 1943-1962* (Torino: Einaudi, 1962); Gaetano Falzone, *Storia Della Mafia* (Milano: Pan, 1975); Mario Centorrino, *L'economia Mafiosa* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1986); Giovanni Falcone and Marcelle Padovani, *Cose Di Cosa Nostra* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1992); Salvatore Coluccello, *Challenging the Mafia Mystique: Cosa Nostra from Legitimation to Denunciation* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); John Dickie, *Cosa Nostra: A History of the Sicilian Mafia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Henner Hess, *Mafia*

self-styled scientific – literature, that provides good argumentations and corollaries there is an improper use of the term *mafiya* that does not match the characteristic of the famous Italian criminal organization.¹⁰¹ In this literature ‘mafia’ misinterpretations about the cotton scam in Uzbekistan were common. For example, McCauley even identifies Rashidov as the inventor of the scam and the godfather – “Il Padrone”, but he probably meant “Il Padrino” – of the ‘Uzbek mafia.’¹⁰² However, these exaggerated words were more common for their narrative appeal than for an effective analogy with the mafia. Besides, the party was definitely the place of Soviet malfeasance, scandals, and corruption, and so to speak about the party in the USSR meant to speak about the Soviet system itself and it was not an organ explicitly delegated to a criminal function. Crime was crime and as such was considered, treated, and repressed.

Telman Gdlyan – one of the main characters of this story who massively abused the semantic space of *mafiya*¹⁰³ for his political attacks in the late ‘80s (see chapter 6) – also seems nowadays to partially repudiate this term, commenting that, besides the magnitude of the corruption scandal in Uzbekistan, these were similar cases, sometimes connected, but that nevertheless did not constitute a single system. He justifies the use of the term by declaring that in the ‘80s the Italian series called “La Piovra” – “The Octopus”, in Russian *Sprut* – was very popular. This series broadcast mafia stories - and even used the related semantic – and made it famous among the Russian public. In his words, “when these films appeared, the phenomenon

& *Mafiosi: Origin, Power, and Myth* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Salvatore Lupo, *History of the Mafia* (New York : Columbia University Press, 2009).

¹⁰¹ Just to give some examples, we can remind Virginie Coulloudon, *La Mafia En Union Soviétique* (Paris: J.C. Lattès, 1990); Steve Goldstein, “Unveiling A Mafia In Uzbekistan,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1988; Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*; D’Encausse, *La Gloire Des Nations Ou La Fin de l’Empire Soviétique*; Ilya Zemtsov, *Partiya Ili Mafiya. Razvorovannaya Respublika* (Paris: Les éditeurs réunis, 1976); Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan and Yevgeniy Yuriyevich Dodolyev, *Mafiya Vremën Bezzakoniya* (Erevan: Izd-vo AN, 1991); Werner Raith, *The Red Mafia: The Eastern European Mob* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1996); Arkadii Vaksberg, *La Mafia Russe: Comment on Dévalise Le Pays Depuis 70 Ans* (Paris: A. Michel, 1992); Alain Lallemand, *L’organizatsiya, La Mafia Russe À L’assaut Du Monde* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1996); Vitali Vitaliev, *Die Rote Mafia: Recherchen Im Kriminellen Untergrund Der UdSSR* (Düsseldorf ;;New York: Econ Verlag, 1990); Valerïi Karyshev, *Russkaya Mafiya, 1988-2005 : Kriminal’naya Khronika Novoi Rossii* (Moskva: ÉKSMO, 2005).

¹⁰² McCauley, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union*, 370–71.

¹⁰³ Gdlyan and Dodolyev, *Mafiya Vremën Bezzakoniya*.

assumed the name of mafiya.”¹⁰⁴ To conclude, in the USSR the involvement of party figures, who were in charge of managing the economic system, is not in doubt. However, this is far from what might be described as a ‘mafia’ ruled by the party and infecting the state. The party was the pivotal element of the Soviet state, and maybe it would be more pertinent to consider it as a clandestine –until the 1977 Constitution that formalized its primacy within the state – masonic outfit whose active participation was a necessary condition for access to the political and social life of the country. Some respectable scholars have also invested in the idea that the Bolsheviks were a sort of illegal conspiratorial organization that took the power and ruled the Russian/Soviet state for more than 70 years.¹⁰⁵ However, none of these considerations help us to describe the phenomenon that took hold in Uzbekistan and that we want to describe without value biases and as objectively as possible.

3.1.4 The Rashidovian ‘anticorruption’ campaigns

As we have seen, both corruption and anticorruption were typical elements of Soviet politics and were functional both to stability and to legitimation. Both developed in parallel and political leaders opportunistically followed their course. Also in Uzbekistan, the FS CPUz Rashidov was undoubtedly aware of the *pripiski* in the republic and tolerated a situation that guaranteed stability for his power that – as we saw in the previous chapter – depended on how the republican leadership was able to manage the Uzbek economy and to provide cotton ‘at any cost’ to the Soviet state. At the same time, Rashidov opportunistically followed the Khrushchevian campaigns against kinship, localism, and *zemlyachestvo*,¹⁰⁶ and played the card of anti-corruption campaigns to fire political rivals. However, in Uzbekistan, the campaign against *mestnichestvo* was less harsh because the FS obkoms were slightly more rooted to their own territory, not serving in their native regions for prolonged periods of time or even had a complete lack of native ties to the territory; and

¹⁰⁴ Personal interview with Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan, Moscow, 17 October 2014.

¹⁰⁵ Viktor Zaslavsky, *Storia Del Sistema Sovietico. L’ascesa, La Stabilità, Il Crollo* (Roma: Carrocci, 2001).

¹⁰⁶ The cases of corruption, extortion and embezzlement by public officials were just under forty thousand in 1956 and had fallen to less than twenty-nine thousand in 1959. However, the new campaign had the effect to undercover new cases that so jumped to 63.400 in 1961 and 73.350 in 1962. Graziosi, *L’Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 245.

rapid inter-oblast mobility from the oblast after the end of their mandate¹⁰⁷ so as to weaken the zemlyachestvo tendencies. Then, these careers did not allow roots in the districts. However, the risks related to "groupism"¹⁰⁸ were identified in Uzbekistan as well as in the rest of the USSR.

Already in the summer of 1959, the new FS CPUz expressed strong criticism of localism, nepotism, deception, and fraud and was able to sack the first and second secretaries of the Tashkent obkom and proceed with a purge in the upper party throughout 1960 and 1961, especially in the Tashkent, Ferghana, Bukhara, and Surkhandarya obkoms where power reshuffles followed.¹⁰⁹ In spring 1961, the FS proceeded to reshuffle the Karakalpak obkom – where a scam in the cotton harvest was revealed¹¹⁰ – the Chirchik gorkom, and the

¹⁰⁷ Donald S. Carlisle, "The Uzbek Power Elite: Politburo and Secretariat (1938–83)," *Central Asian Survey* 5, no. 3–4 (1986).

¹⁰⁸ Milton Lodge, "Groupism in the Post-Stalin Period," *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 12, no. 3 (August) (1968).

¹⁰⁹ In February 1961 the FS Tashkent obkom Rasul Gulamov was replaced by Malik Abdurazakov; in February 1962, the FS Ferghana obkom Tursun Kambarov was replaced by Gaik Gabriel'yants; in May 1962, the FS Bukhara obkom Akhmadali Rizaev was replaced by Nazar Matchanov. In July 1962, the FS Surkhandarya obkom Aruf Khakimov was replaced by the future head of the UzSSR government Khudayberdiyev.

¹¹⁰ In Karakalpakstan there was a first example of fraud over the cotton harvest: in 1960, S. Turemuratov, first secretary of the Amu-Darya raikom, was denounced in a letter for having illegal luxury things, to have padded the volume of cotton in the sovkhos "Mangit" that was buying it in other districts to camouflage the production. The accusations proceeded by stating that Turemuratov was operating under the auspices of Nasyr Makhmudov, FS of the Karakalpak obkom. (RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 146, ll. 39-43). Then, the *OrgOtdel* of the CC CPSU sent an instructor to Karakalpakstan and the buro of the CC CPUz adopted a resolution in May 1960 to severely reprimand Turemuratov but that didn't remove him from his post. In January 1961, D. Seitniyazov, secretary of Karakalpak obkom, alerted Moscow to Makhmudov's defects in his service, suspecting that Sharaf Rashidov afforded protection to him. Makhmudov was the immediate superior of Rashidov – when he served as the first secretary of Samarkand obkom from 1943-1948 and Rashidov was the obkom secretary on ideology from 1944-1947 – and probably he was well aware of the facts in Amu Darya and took no measures (RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 170, ll. 186-190). Then, the CC CPSU sent two officials to conduct and inspection jointly with CC CPUz that at the end led the CC CPUz buro to adopt a resolution that dismissed Turemuratov and other raikom first secretaries, expelling them from the party. (RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 170, ll. 177-178). This resolution accused the Karakalpak obkom of "intolerable liberalism" (RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 170, l. 176) while Makhmudov and other leading officials received just a "severe reprimand" and kept their posts. Makhmudov served as first secretary of Karakalpak obkom until 1963,

Tashkent oblasts that were criticized for “appointment of toadies, the covering up of poor performance, the selection of cadres on the basis of familyism, kinship, personal devotion or common region of origin, servility, mutual covers-ups, and the plundering of public property.”¹¹¹ This was the first reshuffle of power for which the FS, through the usual allegations, was able to clean the party and to affirm more loyal figures. This process continued during the XVI CPUz congress in September 1961 when Rashidov criticized “the reliance on a narrow circle of people, the movement of cadres from place to place, reliance on people who lacked political or professional qualities, deception and false reporting, abuses and infringements of leadership collectivity.”¹¹² This attitude lasted through the long wave of Khrushchev’s purges in early ‘60s and were then resumed during Brezhnev’s era in a weaker way. In fact,

In Uzbekistan the prevailing tenor of discussion of party life during the Brezhnev period was not characterized by a vigorous criticism of abuses. Rather it focused upon the sort of standard criticisms of party functioning: the weakness of higher-level leadership, poor economic leadership, bureaucratic slipups and malfunctioning, and the weakness of criticism. The problem was generally seen as not being abuse of position but bureaucratic deficiencies.¹¹³

Anyway, Rashidov used these arguments as a key to combat his political rivals. In late 1964, Rashidov kept criticizing the Tashkent obkom – apparently the main base of his opposition – and continued in a minor scope. During the “the XVII CPUz Congress in March 1966 Rashidov claimed that cadre questions had always been resolved collegially and that the republican CC regularly reviewed the activities of obkoms.”¹¹⁴ However, the criticism became harsher and inflamed again in early 1968 against the Andijan obkom, which was accused of poor economic and political performance, careerism, and

and then became first secretary of Ferghana obkom (1963-1969) and then Chairman of the CPC UzSSR (1969-1984). RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 170, ll. 177-185. Tetsuro Chida, “‘Trust in Cadres’ and the Party-Based Control in Central Asia during the Brejnev Era,” in *Development in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Migration, Democratisation and Inequality in the Post-Soviet Era*, ed. Sophie Hohmann et al. (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014), 51–52.

¹¹¹ Gill and Pitty, *Power in the Party. The Organization of Power and Central-Republican Relations in the CPSU*, 25–26.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 26.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

toadyism.¹¹⁵ On that occasion Bektash Rakhimov became FS Andijan obkom. Gill comments that

this criticism coincided with Brezhnev's qualification of the 'trust in cadres' principle [...], but it was not sustained. Criticism reverted to the standard line of inadequate leadership, collecting too many reports and providing too little assistance to lower party organs. In Samarkand obkom during 1970 there was a lot of criticism and self-criticism but then no action; whilst questions of intra-party life were rarely discussed at party meetings, this failing was not regarded as serious enough to require changing the obkom leadership.¹¹⁶

In the early 1970s, other critics alerted the party with particular regard to economic performances, which the party had started to supervise more. This was confirmed at the XVIII CPUz Congress in March 1971, where there were complaints about "passivity and complacency, a liberal attitude toward those who infringed party rules and failed to carry out their responsibilities, [and] abuse of the faith placed in responsible people and deception."¹¹⁷ As mentioned above, criticism and commitments for economic improvements had both the demonstrative aim of improving the image of pragmatism for the Uzbek leader and to confirm his leadership's legitimacy even against his rivals.

¹¹⁵ In 1968 the buro of the CC CPUz dismissed all the Andijan obkom secretaries – both Uzbeks and Slavs – for a corruption scandal (RGANI, f.5, op. 60, d. 3, ll. 10-11). Some scholars argue that this happened because of the frictions between the Samarkand-Jizzak clans and the Tashkent-Ferghana factions. However, Rafik Nishanov, the secretary of the CC CPUz at that time, provides an opposite view about the ouster of the provincial party leaders, recalling in his memoir that he himself exposed corruption scandal in Andijan Province, although Rashidov asked him not to go deeply into the incident. Demian Vaisman, "Regionalism and Clan Loyalty in the Political Life of Uzbekistan," in *Muslim Eurasia Conflicting Legacies*, ed. Yaaev Roi (London: Frank Cass, 1995); Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia, Perceptions and Pact* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Nishanov, *Derev'ya Zeleneyut Do Metelei: Rafik Nishanov Rasskazyvaet Marine Zavade I Yurii Kulikovu*, 98–99; Chida, "'Trust in Cadres' and the Party-Based Control in Central Asia during the Brejnev Era," 67.

¹¹⁶ Gill and Pitty, *Power in the Party. The Organization of Power and Central-Republican Relations in the CPSU*, 47.

¹¹⁷ In early 1972 a discussion of the role of cadres in the economy noted that party committees had to rebuff any lack of principle, lack of responsibility and abuse of position for profitable ends. It was also said that not only those who committed abuses but those who had recommended them for high office should be called to account, while national narrow-mindedness, localism and careerism must be combated. *Ibid.*, 48.

As we saw in the first chapter, at the beginning of the '70s, the struggle between two main factions – headed by Rashidov from one side and Kurbanov-Nasriddinova in the other – reached its zenith when both sides started to send reciprocal revelatory denunciations¹¹⁸ to Moscow.¹¹⁹ However, Brezhnev probably wanted to avoid another Georgian case and, as we have seen in the first chapter, “tried [his] best to avoid an open, scandalous wholesale exposure of the ruling elite of Uzbekistan”,¹²⁰ removing Nasriddinova and appointing her as chairwoman of the Council of Nationalities of the SS USSR (1970-1974).

After ousting his main rivals on the eve of the '70s, Rashidov kept up small criticisms in order to reshuffle the party cadres. This situation led to the open accusation against the Tashkent gorkom in early 1973 and to a general campaign in which “inertia, passivity and complacency seem to have been the most serious faults mentioned.”¹²¹ Then, in 1975 Rashidov collected with the

¹¹⁸ The practice of *donos* – complaints to the authority often in anonymous form – was a typical institution carried over from the Russian empire. As Alexei Barabashev commented, the practice of *donos* is typical when two factions, internal to the same administration (party or bureaucracy) and struggling for their survival, proceed with reciprocal denunciations/complaints and act as the players of the Prisoner's Dilemma in game theory. This practice was typical in Ancient Rome and was institutionalized in the Russian Empire. In Soviet times, *donos* was seen as the pettiest act of cowardice and was at the base of political conspiracies. Effectively, when there was a presage of purges, it was common that many anonymous letters appeared in the local CC and executive committees against bureaucrats, politicians, or even artists. These letters were carefully written and seemed to follow a rhetorical protocol. After the late '70s they were even full of moralism and ethical accusations. Yevgeniy Yuriyevich Dodolyev and Mikhail Lesko, “Deti Sifilisa,” *Ogonek*, January 2013; Leonid Kaganov, “O Donosakh, Stukachakh I Yabedakh,” *Razgovor*, 2008; Pavel Nerler, *Slovo I «Delo» Osipa Mandel'shtama. Kniga Donosov, Doprosov I Obvinitel'nykh Zaklyucheniy* (Moskva: Petrovskii Park, 2010); Vitaliy Shentalinskiy, *Donos Na Sokrata: Kniga O Repressirovannoy Russkoy Literature* (Moskva: Formika-S, 2001); Irina Svetsitskaya, “Donoschik I Filosof (Rimskaya Imperiya I — Nachalo II v.),” *Kazus: Individual'noye I Unikal'noye v Istorii* 5 (2005): 77–91.

¹¹⁹ Simis, *USSR - The Corrupt Society. The Secret World of Soviet Capitalism*, 60–61.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹²¹ In March 1973, in the Tashkent oblast, “a raikom first secretary was accused, among other things, of failing to act against cases of infringement of rules and financial discipline, eyewash and deception. He was also accused of choosing cadres on the basis of friendly relations and personal sympathies rather than professional and political qualities, of defending people convicted of abuse of official position, illegal activity and immoral conduct, of surrounding himself with fawners and toadies who would fulfil any

assistance of the Uzbek KGB a body of evidence of the corruption of his opponents and there were purges and open trials in 1976-1977 against Kurbanov and Pulat Khodzhaev – the chairman of the SC UzSSR – against whom ad hoc trials were orchestrated.¹²² The first was sentenced to ten years and the second to eight. Investigations against Nasriddinova – a public and relevant figure at the central level – would be counterproductive and she was saved from these inquiries and arrests by the plea of Brezhnev.¹²³ However, she was de facto ‘exiled’ to minor post of Deputy Minister of Construction Materials Industry of the USSR and chairwoman for the Asia and Africa Committee (1974-1978). At the same time, the party was enforcing a healthy image of an organization that was sensitive to criticism.¹²⁴

As seen in the previous chapter, the tenth FYP committed the republic to the most onerous of duties in cotton production – the famous 6,000,000 tons by 1980 – and despite the greatly publicized results of agriculture, production was deeply decreasing in terms of quality (because of the abuse of mechanization), and quantity due to the bad weather conditions of 1978, a year that had affected the cotton harvest negatively. In this season alone, the falsifications and report-padding – a practice that we have seen existed across the Soviet system – became systemic in order to fulfill the plan at any cost. In that year the first warning from the Prokuratura USSR to the SM UzSSR even

wish, and of using his position for personal profitable ends." Gill and Pitty, *Power in the Party. The Organization of Power and Central-Republican Relations in the CPSU*, 48–49.

¹²² The nature of these ad hoc processes was underlined by Simis who wrote: "The investigators on the case put a stop to any attempts by witnesses or defendants to extend the range of instances being examined and, consequently, the range of possible defendants." Simis, *USSR - The Corrupt Society. The Secret World of Soviet Capitalism*, 83.

¹²³ Ibid., 63–64; Dmitry Gordon, "Byvshiy Sledovatel' Po Osobo Vazhnym Delam Pri General'nom Prokurore SSSR Vladimir Kalinichenko: 'Vsesil'nyy Ministr MVD SSSR Shchelokov Prinyal Resheniye O Moyem Fizicheskom Ustraneni. V Otvet Na Eto Andropov Prikazal gruppe 'Al'fa' menya Okhranyat'," *Bul'var* 46, no. 473 (2004).

¹²⁴ In a memorandum of CC CPUz to CC CPSU of 5 September 1975, it was reported how the heavy situation registered in the wood sector of Tambov oblast was comparable to the situation in Namangan, Bukhara, and Khorezm where industrial plans were not properly satisfied and there was not an atmosphere of criticism and self-criticism and cases of abuse of power within the party and Soviet organs: "the critic from below is not developed and besides the deficiencies observed in the plenums of Ferghana obkom, in the Andijan and Nukus gorkoms, in the Altyarykskiy, Dikanbadskiy, Zadarinskiy and Khazarapskiy raikoms there was no critic towards them, the secretaries and the departments." RGANI, f. 5, op. 68, d. 271, l. 10.

appeared, referring about Kolkhozes and sovkhoses that were trading cotton in order to fulfill the plan and cases of cotton disappearances from warehouses. After these preliminary checks, the judicial organs were planning to proceed with further controls.¹²⁵

Even in 1979, problems in agriculture officially appeared. On 16 April 1980, before the miraculous crop that led to the official sixth million record, Khudayberdyev reported to Ziya N. Nuriev – the Bashkir deputy chairman of the SM USSR who also headed the SS USSR presidium's commission on agriculture – that the MVD and the Minister of Finance USSR had recorded many irregularities in the quality and in the quantity of cotton, violations in the state, and problems in delivering cotton. Then, the head of Uzbek government said that workers were not responding to the qualitative criteria – because they were quantitatively committed to the cause of white gold – and asked for more funds to improve mechanization, defoliant, plants and harvest quality and to reduce the shortcomings. In parallel, even Rashidov wrote directly to Gorbachev to justify the shortcomings and to ask for more funds.¹²⁶ The paradox is that in order to justify the shortcomings, the Uzbek leadership was asking for more money from the center.

In late 1970s, rumors about corruption in Uzbekistan started to circulate and Andropov¹²⁷ was accumulating material against the party and the possible involvement of the Uzbek FS.¹²⁸ Stories of scholars and apparatchiki who

¹²⁵ Prokuratura reported that at the end of 1978, had been organized 1500 controls, 480 had been publicly reprimanded (verbally), 263 officially reprimanded, 240 punished with administrative sanctions, 124 with fiscal sanctions, and 41 implicated in criminal cases. Memorandum 9/40-78 of the Prokuratura USSR (UzSSR department) to the SM UzSSR. TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 4695, ll. 210-212.

¹²⁶ Memorandum Khudayberdyev to Nuriev n° 10/12-54 (16 April 1980) and letter from Rashidov to Gorbachev n° SGKh-1-384 (April 1980). TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 5275, ll. 52-59.

¹²⁷ Matlock probably exaggerates stating that Andropov even “used his knowledge of corruption to weaken the Brezhnev faction and to claw his way to power.” Jack F Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1995), 48.

¹²⁸ According to McCauley, “in 1977, Andropov had evidence that Rashidov had bribed a deputy chair of Gosplan with mink coats and other presents to site an airport near his home. On another occasion, Rashidov had sacked the Uzbek KGB chief for arresting corrupt Party officials without first getting permission from the local Party committee. Rashidov kept Leonid Brezhnev happy. He bought the Soviet leader at least half a dozen luxury European sports cars to add to his collection. He also built several expensive

became dissidents¹²⁹ were already reported in the international literature¹³⁰ and also in the official press where “eulogistic self-reporting and deception, and embezzlement were reported, but there was no republic-wide campaign as these problems were said to be under control.”¹³¹ In that moment, while the KGB was already collecting materials on the case,¹³² an early warning of the situation also appeared in 1980 in a dispatch written by A. Buturlin – the head of the Investigation Department of the USSR Prokuratura – who was sent to Uzbekistan in July 1980 to inspect on the alleged corruption. However, it seems that Rashidov was warned about the situation and applied pressure to cover the case up.¹³³ As we have seen, in 1980 the weather contingencies were positive and the party and republican organs asked the cotton pickers to make all the efforts to get the hoped results of six million tons of white gold. However, prokuratura was still seeing violations in cotton production, even

hunting lodges for the Gensek to cater for his passion for hunting." McCauley, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union*, 371–72.

¹²⁹ An example of an author denouncing corruption in Uzbekistan is Boris Kamenetskiy, a Russian native from Odessa, who emigrated to Tashkent during WW2, remaining in Uzbekistan where he became public prosecutor of the UzSSR until he emigrated to Israel in 1978 where he started to write articles in the journal "Kontinent" and to release interviews to Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty. Boris Kamenetsky and Alexandra Alexandrovna, "Ispoved Zhenshchiny," *Kontinent* 38 (1983): 209–20; Donald S. Carlisle, "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev," in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation*, ed. William Fierman (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991).

¹³⁰ During her stay in the UzSSR between 1978-1979, Nancy Lubin witnessed that corruption was widespread in the UzSSR in the '70s and every post – from ministries to kolkhozes – could be bought and sold and the shadow economy was supplying those consumer needs that were not met by the planned economy and were almost 20% of official trade, and the theft of goods from the work/public places was de facto tolerated and then these products were for sale on the black-market. As well, Simis gave an important contribution about the specific Uzbek situation. Lubin, *Labour and Nationality in Soviet Central Asia: An Uneasy Compromise*, 169–96; Simis, *USSR - The Corrupt Society. The Secret World of Soviet Capitalism*.

¹³¹ Gill and Pitty, *Power in the Party. The Organization of Power and Central-Republican Relations in the CPSU*, 49.

¹³² Fedor Razzakov, *Delo, Vzorvavshee SSSR* (Moskva: Algoritm, 2012); Fedor Razzakov, *Korruptsiya v Politbyuro: Delo "Krasnogo Uzbeka"* (Moskva: Eksmo, 2009).

¹³³ Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*, 228.

related to the presence of livestock in the fields, improper use of the machines, and several losses of cotton during the various phases of transport.¹³⁴

Publicly, Rashidov still pushed public opinion with a healthy image of the party and also during the XX Congress CPUz in 1981 – the last attended by Rashidov but not the last in which he would be an important protagonist – when he claimed that the situation of the republic was improving and "described complacency, weak supervision of party organs and irresponsible leaders as being isolated problems."¹³⁵ Even after Brezhnev's visit to Tashkent in March 1982 – that we recalled for its drama in the previous chapter – the FS CPUz promoted a new emphasis on

the need to struggle against all negative phenomena – abuse of official position, embezzlement of socialist property, eyewash, bribery, drunkenness, and a liberal attitude toward those who infringe the norms of communist morals. This was clearly only ritual advice, since the actual conduct of the republican party leadership set a very different example. Serious criticism of the failures of party organs to both improve economic leadership and ensure discipline only occurred in Uzbekistan after Rashidov died.¹³⁶

Between 1977-1982 there was a rash of demotions and firing in the Uzbek upper echelons that led to a reshuffle of power figures who lost their posts, such as the FS of Bukhara (Murtazaev in February 1977), Samarkand (Rakhimov in February 1982), and Ferghana (Shamsudinov in December 1978) obkoms, the chairman of the Presidium of the SS UzSSR (Matchanov in December 1978), the MVD UzSSR (Yakh'yaev in July 1979), the Minister of Forestry (Tairov in December 1979), and the First Secretary of the Board of the Writer's Union (Yashen in November 1980).¹³⁷ These efforts were even proudly communicated to the CC CPSU that received from Rashidov a memorandum on 3 March 1980 where the FS CPUz stated that

in the organization of the CPUz there is the practice to widely study the personnel before their appointment in managerial posts. Firstly, the political, moral and managerial skills are evaluated and also their character, organizational skills and their ability to build relations with the employees,

¹³⁴ Memorandums of Prokuratura to the SM UzSSR, 9/23-80 and 9/25-80 of 10 and 22 October 1980. TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 5275, ll. 131-135.

¹³⁵ Gill and Pitty, *Power in the Party. The Organization of Power and Central-Republican Relations in the CPSU*, 49.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹³⁷ Staples, "Soviet Use of Corruption Purges as a Control Mechanism: The Uzbekistan Case," 40.

combine the rigor with a careful attitude to people and be self-critical about the results of the work, taking into account the opinion of the Party organizations [...] All this provides an objective representation about the person and allows solving the issue of virtually error-free appointments [...] In the posts of FS of gorkoms and raikoms are appointed people younger than 45 and for the second secretaries younger than 40. Obkoms, gorkoms and raikoms collegially control these appointments. Removing these leaders takes place only when it is clear that they cannot perform their job well [...] all the FSs obkoms and chairmen of oblispolkoms are graduates, and 45.7% are engineers, 24.3% are specialists in agriculture and of the 12 FS obkoms, 11 are economists [...] In the past 4 years due to several violations in party and state discipline and for abuses 142 people of the party, soviets and agriculture managers from the nomenklatura of CC CPUz have been removed, among which there were the former FS Jizzak obkom, the Minister for forestry policies UzSSR S.M. Tairov, the former secretary of the Fergana obkom M. Umarov, the former deputy minister for geology of the UzSSR B.I. Bykov, and others. For abuses of power related to the distribution of cars and public funds the former chairman of the Sovietabadskii raispolkom in the Samarkand oblast K. Mamedov has been removed.¹³⁸

On that occasion, the Uzbek leader also reported the growth of the party nomenklatura that was supposed to be a positive figure¹³⁹ that had to impress the Gensek. However, the tolerance towards Rashidov would last as long as his protector in Moscow was alive. As Gorbachev recalls: "Brezhnev preferred to spare his comrades-in-arms in the 'upper echelons', on whom he was dependent in one way or another. Was criticism of [...] Rashidov [...] ever to be permitted? It was simply unthinkable."¹⁴⁰ With the new Gensek, who had a less apologetic approach,¹⁴¹ the story changed even for the "Uzbek khan".

¹³⁸ RGANI, f. 5, op. 77, d. 90, ll. 2-4, 13,

¹³⁹ "In the past 10 years, the CC CPUz nomenklatura increased for 847 people and 3680 within the obkoms [...] The secretaries of the main party organization in 1970 were 13,523 (by which 56.1% Uzbeks) and in 1980 17,936 (60% Uzbeks)." RGANI, f. 5, op. 77, d. 90, ll. 14, 17.

¹⁴⁰ Mikhail Sergevich Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (London: Doubleday, 1996), 203.

¹⁴¹ Martin Ebon, *The Andropov File: The Life and Ideas of Yuri V. Andropov, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983).

3.2 The new course of Andropov

As a staunch communist who had chaired the KGB since 1967,¹⁴² Yuri Andropov¹⁴³ became a key figure of the Soviet regime, especially after 1975 when Brezhnev suffered his first heart attack and a debate about the possible succession of the leader started within the CC CPSU. Andropov was a minor candidate compared to others – such as Kirilenko and Chernenko – but due to

¹⁴² Andropov chaired the KGB from 18 May 1967 until 26 May 1982, when he was promoted as secretary responsible for ideological affairs, succeeding the defunct Mikhail Suslov.

¹⁴³ Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov was born on June 15, 1914 in a small town of the Stavropol' kraï. At 16 years old, he joined the Komsomol in Mozdok, in the North Ossetian ASSR, and he became full-time Secretary of the Water Transport Technical School Komsomol in Rybinsk, in the Yaroslavl oblast. In 1938 he became the FS of the Yaroslavl oblast Komsomol and in 1940-1944 the FS of Komsomol in the Soviet Karelo-Finnish Republic. During WW2, he took part in partisan guerrilla activities in Finland and in 1944 he joined the CPSU. In 1947 he became Second Secretary of the Communist Party of the Karelo-Finnish SSR and in 1951 he joined the staff of the CC CPSU in Moscow. In 1954 he was appointed Soviet Ambassador in Budapest and he played a key role in crushing the Hungarian uprising in 1956. In 1961, he became a full member of CC CPSU and in 1962 was promoted to the secretariat. On 18 May 1967, he became chairman of the KGB and a candidate member of the Politburo, becoming a full member in 1973. Under Andropov, the KGB increased its organization and activities, expanding its operative horizons – with “prophylactic” measures to limit the negative phenomena – inside and outside the Soviet boundaries. He was convinced that only suppression of dissidents and the use of armed force could ensure the survival of Communist regimes. After Budapest (1956), he played a key role also in the implementation of the Brezhnev Doctrine, subduing the uprising in Prague (1968), Kabul (1979) and partially in Warsaw (1981). Jaures Medvedev, *Andropov Au Pouvoir* (Paris: Flammarion, 1983); Zhores Aleksandrovich Medvedev, *Andropov. An Insider's Account of Power and Politics within the Kremlin* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984); Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov, *Ot Andropova K Gorbachevu: Dela I Dni Kremliia* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1986); BRE, “Andropov, Yuri Vladimirovich,” *Bo'shaya Rossiyskaya Entsiklopediya. Tom 1*, 2005; Vladimir Solov'ev and Elena Klepikova, *Yuri Andropov, a Secret Passage into the Kremlin* (New York ;London: Macmillan, 1983); Ebon, *The Andropov File: The Life and Ideas of Yuri V. Andropov, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*; Arnold Beichman and Mikhail S Bernstam, *Andropov, New Challenge to the West* (New York: Stein and Day, 1983); Roy Aleksandrovich Medvedev, *Andropov* (Moskva: Molodaya Gvardiya, 2006); Yuri Andropov, *Sulla Strada Del Socialismo* (Milano: Mondadori, 1984); Leonid Mikhaïlovich Mlechin, *Andropov* (Moskva: Prospekt, 2006); Al'bats, *KGB: State Within a State*; Rudolf Germanovich Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L'aigle Bicéphale* (Longueuil: Éditions Kéruss, 2007), 7.

his primary position in the KGB and his honest perception of the country's situation¹⁴⁴ he could act as a sort of "grey cardinal" of the Soviet regime with the complicity of those figures like Ustinov, Gromyko, and Suslov who feared that Brezhnev's removal would spark a succession crisis and who were thus keen to help maintain the status quo.

The country, which had officially reached a stage of 'developed socialism,' stood for years in a state of systemic 'stagnation', undermined by economic development and socio-demographic indices that were in rapid decline. Andropov was well aware of the level of corruption and the endemic problems of the Soviet system¹⁴⁵ and he thought that this was the worst evil that afflicted the system. In order to redeem the USSR and to save the country from a tragic epilogue, Andropov expanded the praxis of 'prophylaxing measures'¹⁴⁶ and started to promote a new policy to clean the system from its internal 'speculators'. His security agent background was a necessary precondition to the Andropov figure: during his long career in the KGB, he was able to collect all those pieces of evidence and compromising materials against enemies, opponents, or simply competitors that could be drawn out when needed.

Just after the 'Gierek affair'¹⁴⁷ in Poland, the CC CPSU approved a resolution against official corruption in September 1980. Considered a risk of delegitimization to the entire Soviet system – which had touted its infallibility over the previous sixty years – this act was not openly announced in great

¹⁴⁴ In his memoirs, Gorbachev recalled that when Andropov was in power, he and Nikolai Ryzhkov (the chairman of Gosplan), asked the Soviet Leader for access to real budget figures. He replied that those data were "off limits", even for them. Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 147.

¹⁴⁵ According to Graziosi, Andropov was able to read the problems of the USSR but he did not have a recipe to resolve them and he did not have any basic knowledge of economics. Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 484–85.

¹⁴⁶ In the KGB annual report of 1978 (4 February 1979) it was reported that within the year, 15,590 Soviet citizens had been "profilaxed". This document is among the Volkogonov papers in NSA, Box 23, file R9041, p. 7. However, until the late 1970s, the KGB did not expose a particular interest in economic crimes. In fact, these kinds of crimes were not mentioned in the Report on KGB work in the 1959-1974 period. This document is among the Volkogonov papers in NSA, Box 21, file R9034; Box 22, file R9935; Box 23, files R9037, R9936, R2986.

¹⁴⁷ In September 1980, Edward Gierek, FS of the Polish United Workers Party, was ousted and indicted for corruption. Medvedev, *Andropov. An Insider's Account of Power and Politics within the Kremlin*, 92–93.

fanfare. However, it was spread and repeated at every federal level within the USSR¹⁴⁸ and in addition to confirming the mandate of the OBKhSS, it also increased the powers of the KGB, which hitherto had not generally been involved in the struggle against economic crimes.¹⁴⁹ Therefore, the involvement of the KGB in such a war indicated the dramatic and systemic extent of corruption inside the Soviet system, at the federal as well as at local levels.¹⁵⁰

During the XXVI Congress of CPSU in February 1981, the need to enforce discipline, criticism and self-criticism, and to struggle against parasitism, bribery, and speculation were reaffirmed by the Party¹⁵¹ and it was further enforced on 16 October 1981 when the CC CPSU adopted a resolution for "strengthening the struggle against bribery, theft of socialist property, and speculation."¹⁵²

This line, which had already been implemented during the regional scandals in the early and late '70s, was now having a systemic echo. In fact, it proceeded those massive investigations and arrests that, after September 1978, flustered the trade organizations and the Soviet fishing ministry during the so-called 'caviar affair'. This scandal directly implicated even the FS of the Krasnodar Kraikom, Sergey Fedorovich Medunov, who was protected from Brezhnev without allowing any operation of the KGB against his group.¹⁵³ However, when his collaborator was arrested in the summer of 1982, things changed also for Medunov.¹⁵⁴ This was the heyday of the "Sochi-Krasnodar affair" that

¹⁴⁸ Medvedev, *Andropov Au Pouvoir*, 110, 157.

¹⁴⁹ In December 1980, Andropov asked for extra powers and got on 30 December a resolution from the secretariat of CC CPSU granting the KGB greater autonomy to combat crimes. VBA, f. 2, op. 2, d. CT243/8.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 157–59.

¹⁵¹ Marilyn Bechtel, David Laibman, and Daniel Rosenberg, *Peace, Plan and Progress: The 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York: NWR Publications, 1981); Avtorkhanov, *Ot Andropova K Gorbachevu: Dela I Dni Kremliia*, 17–39.

¹⁵² GARF, f. 8131, op. 28, d. 6044, l. 27.

¹⁵³ Duhamel, *The KGB Campaign against Corruption in Moscow*, 74.

¹⁵⁴ The 'Medunov affair' was prepared directly by the former KGB chief, who was de facto ruling the party in the last months of Brezhnev's life. On 20 July 1982, Andropov chaired a meeting of the secretariat where the affair was defined and participants included V.I. Vorotnikov, the Soviet ambassador in Cuba who would take Medunov's place at FS Krasnodar kraikom, three days later. Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L'aigle Bicéphale*, 14–15.

discovered a high level of corruption, embezzlement, and violations of socialist law in these touristic regions of the USSR and led to the dismissal of more than 5000 officials and the punishment of about 1500 figures.

Therefore, Andropov emerged as the real figure of the regime's power, that could even challenge the leader – now in terminal state – and his powerful family. In January 1982, Andropov revealed to Suslov that Semyon Tsvigun, the First Deputy Chairman of the KGB and Brezhnev's brother-in-law, was shielding Brezhnev's children – Galina and Yuri – from corruption investigations. Suslov immediately asked Tsvigun to report the situation and even threatened to remove him from his post and expel him from the CPSU. Nevertheless, Tsvigun – who was seriously ill with lung cancer – committed suicide¹⁵⁵ on 19 January 1982 before he could challenge Suslov's statement. Incredibly, also Suslov had a coronary two days later, and died on 25 January of arteriosclerosis and diabetes.¹⁵⁶ Suslov's death started a minor purge against his former clients¹⁵⁷ and a new battle for Brezhnev's succession in which Andropov – who assumed Suslov's post of Second Secretary CPSU and secretary responsible for ideological affairs – emerged as the effective leader of the Soviet regime, sidelining Kirilenko and Chernenko during the last days of Brezhnev's rule.¹⁵⁸ As result, after these deaths Andropov had a broader range of operation in order to affirm his power and to affect those figures that had been protected.

In January 1982 there were the first attacks against Brezhnev's family, with the "diamonds affair", when several prominent jewelry smugglers – who all had links with Galina Brezhneva – were arrested. In this scandal the actor – and Galina's friend – Boris Buryata (nicknamed "Boris the Gypsy") and the circus

¹⁵⁵ Tsvigun's suicide is in the same line of other relevant officer-suicides in the security apparatus, such as Vikto Paputin, first deputy MVD USSR who committed suicide on 29 December 1979 after the coup against Amin in Afghanistan, and Sergey Krylov, head of MVD USSR academy and opponent to Churbanov, who shot himself on 19 April 1979 to protest against that "world of slaves, toadies and careerists." Leonid Mikhaïlovich Mlechin, "Zavety Shchelokova," *Novaya Gazeta*, August 16, 2010; Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, 107.

¹⁵⁶ Christian Schmidt-Häuer, *Gorbachev: The Path to Power* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1986), 73.

¹⁵⁷ Aleksei Ivanovich Shibaev was at the head of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions after 1976 and was considered a protégé of Suslov. In the immediate week after the latter's death, he was arrested with corruption allegations and defamed by sex scandals. Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 166.

¹⁵⁸ Schmidt-Häuer, *Gorbachev: The Path to Power*, 78.

lion tamer Irina Bugrimova were also implicated, in connection with their possession of stolen tsarist diamonds. Additionally, the director-general of Gostsirk (the Soviet state circus) Anatoly Kolevatov – in whose apartment millions in cash and diamonds were found – and his deputy Viktor Gorskiy were hit. They were arrested just after Suslov's funeral. The allegations of embezzlement, corruption and diamond smuggling forced Brezhnev's daughter to a sort of "exile". Meanwhile, her brother, Yuri Brezhnev – who was forced to resign from the post of First Deputy of the Ministry of Foreign Trade – and her husband Yuri Churbanov¹⁵⁹ – who was Deputy chairman of the MVD USSR (1980-1983) – were then both arrested on charges of corruption.¹⁶⁰ In May 1982, quitting his post at the top of the KGB, Andropov effectively became the second secretary and the effective regent of the regime.¹⁶¹

In summer 1982, when Brezhnev was on holiday at his dacha – and Andropov was in charge – there was a massive operation during the "Sochi-Krasnodar affair" that led to the removal of Medunov,¹⁶² a symbolic figure who

¹⁵⁹ Yuri Mikhailovich Churbanov was a career chekist who entered the MVD in 1967. In 1971 he married Galina Brezhneva and was rapidly promoted, becoming Deputy (1971-1975) and Head of the Political Directorate of the MVD (1975-1977) and then Deputy (1977) and First Deputy Minister of the MVD USSR (1980). He rapidly rose through the military ranks becoming Colonel in 1971, Major-General in 1974, Lieutenant-General in 1977 and finally Colonel-General in 1981. He also was a member of the Central Auditing Commission CPSU (1976-1981), a candidate member of the CC CPSU (1981-1986) and a deputy of the SS USSR. On 14 January 1987 Churbanov was arrested during the "Uzbek affair" for bribery and embezzlement and for covering up investigations of CPUz in spring 1983. He was even accused of threatening the Gdlyan's life. After the trial (5 September - 30 December 1988) he was sentenced by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court to 12 years' imprisonment with confiscation of property and deprivation of military rank, awards, and orders. In 1990 Galina filed for divorce and division of property and in 1993 Churbanov was released 'on parole', with the cancellation of the probation period of three years. Yuri Mikhailovich Churbanov, *Ya Rasskazhu Vse, Kak Bylo* (Moskva: Izdatel'skii tsentr "Liana" sovместno s izd-vom "Nezavisimaja gazeta," 1993); Yuri Mikhailovich Churbanov, *Moï Test' Leonid Brezhnev* (Moskva: Algoritm, 2013); Larisa Nikolaevna Vasil'eva, *Kremlin Wives* (New York: Arcade, 1994).

¹⁶⁰ Yevgeniy Yuriyevich Dodolyev, *Galina Brezhneva. Zhizn' Sovetskoy Printsessy* (Moskva: Zebra-E, 2013); Yevgeniy Yuriyevich Dodolyev, *Delo Galiny Brezhnevoy. Brillianty Dlya Printsessy* (Moskva: Eksmo, 2013).

¹⁶¹ Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L'aigle Bicéphale*, 5.

¹⁶² Sergey Fodorovich Medunov had been the FS Krasnodar kraikom since 1973 and was famous for his arrogance and love for luxury. During the "Sochi-Krasnodar affair", Medunov was removed from his post in the party on 23 July 1982 and was transferred

was well known among the Muscovite power figures that spent their holidays in the most fashionable resorts on the Black Sea.¹⁶³ Then, on 9 November 1982 Yuri Sokolov¹⁶⁴, the director of Gastronom n°1 *Eliseevskiy* - the famous historic store on Tverskaya street in Moscow, his wife, his deputy Nemtsev, as well as the heads of departments Svezhinsky, Yakovlev, Kon'kov and Grigorev were arrested on charges of bribery and embezzlement of food on a large scale. Also on that occasion, the participation in criminal activities by Galina Brezhneva and her group was suggested.¹⁶⁵

3.2.1 Andropov's team

After effectively leading the country from 'behind the scenes' and becoming the designated successor, Andropov became the Gensek on 12 November 1982, two days after Brezhnev's death.¹⁶⁶ Finally, the new Soviet leader had full autonomy to act promptly to restore the Soviet system in a new moral framework and to intervene in the upper management of the party in order to promote his trusted allies. He had emerged from the post-revolutionary generation of Soviet politicians that would define the next epoch of Soviet political history. In fact, due to Andropov, the figures of Mikhail

to minor post as Deputy Minister of Fruit and Vegetable production. In the scandal was also implicated the Vyacheslav Voronkov, the mayor and chairman of the Sochi gorispolkom. Peter Frank, "Political Succession in the Soviet Union: Building a Power Base," in *Process of Political Succession*, ed. Peter Calvert (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987), 109; Ilya Zemtsov, *The Private Life of the Soviet Elite* (New York: Crane, Russak & Company, 1985).

¹⁶³ Medvedev, *Andropov Au Pouvoir*, 114–15.

¹⁶⁴ Sokolov was arrested "for food theft in large quantities" and after assessment of "the nature of the crimes committed and the level of their danger to society", he was sentenced to death on 24 November 1983 and executed in July 1984. Rodolfo Brancoli, "A Morte Il Re Gastronomo Che Fece Ombra Ad Andropov," *La Repubblica*, July 18, 1984.

¹⁶⁵ Anatoliy Rubinov, "Magazin Yeliseyeva," *Nauka I Zhizn'* 8 (2001); P. V. Pyatnov, "Etot Znamenityy Yeliseyevskiy Na Tverskoy," *Sovremennyye Problemy Servisa I Turizma* 2 (2012).

¹⁶⁶ Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L'aigle Bicéphale*, 6.

Gorbachev¹⁶⁷ and Nikolai Ryzhkov¹⁶⁸ were reinforced – and Andropov entrusted to them the task of studying the country's economic reform. As well, also Yegor Ligachev,¹⁶⁹ Vitaly Vorotnikov,¹⁷⁰ Mikhail Solomentsev,¹⁷¹ Viktor

¹⁶⁷ Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev had been the FS Stavropol kraikom from 1970 until 1978 when he was appointed to the Central Committee's Secretariat for Agriculture in 1978, replacing the defunct Fyodor Kulakov. The future Soviet leader emerged as a technocrat and had Andropov's appreciation for his critical and reform-minded vision.

¹⁶⁸ Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov was born on 28 September 1929 in Dzerzhynsk, Ukraine. A member of the CPSU since 1956, he was a technocrat who rose through the ranks at the Uralmash. In 1975 he was appointed First Deputy Minister of Heavy and Transport Machine Building and in 1979 First Deputy Chairman of Gosplan, becoming a member of the CC CPSU in 1981 and the next year he became the Head of the Economic Department of the CC. On 27 September 1985, he succeeded Tikhonov and became chairman of the SM USSR, becoming one of the main perestroika promoters. Borys Illich Oliinyk, Valentin Sergeevich Pavlov, and Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov, *Gorbachev: Anatomiya Predatel'stva* (Moskva: Algoritm, 2013); Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov, *Na Rubezhe Eepokh : Razmyshleniya* (Moskva: Izdatel'skiĭ dom "Ekonomicheskaiā gazeta," 2013); Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov, *Glavnyi Svidetel'* (Moskva: Algoritm, 2009); Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov, *Tragediia Velikoĭ Strany* (Moskva: Veche, 2007).

¹⁶⁹ Yegor Kuzmich Ligachyov was the FS Tomsk obkom (1965-1983). On 29 April 1983, Andropov appointed him as the head of the Organizational-Party Work Department of the Central Committee – replacing Kapitonov – “to take charge of personnel assignments as part of the effort to combat corruption.” In December 1983, Ligachev became a Secretary of CC CPSU and on 23 April 1985 he rose to the post of full member of the Politburo. Yegor Kuzmich Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996); Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire : The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 56.

¹⁷⁰ Thanks to Andropov, Vitaly Ivanovich Vorotnikov could come back from his 'Cuban exile' as Soviet Ambassador to Havana (1979-1982). He replaced Medunov in the post of FS Krasnodar obkom on 23 July 1982 until his appointment as chairman of SM RSFSR on 24 June 1983. He also became a full member of the Politburo on 26 December 1983. Stephen White, *Understanding Russian Politics* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 9.

¹⁷¹ Mikhail Solomentsev, a secretary of the CC CPSU since 1966 and chairman of the SM RSFSR, was elevated by Andropov and became the director of the CPC at the CC CPSU on 15 June and a full member of the Politburo on 27 December 1983. Under Gorbachev initiative, he was forced to retire by both posts on 30 September 1988. Mikhail Sergeevich Solomentsev, *Veryu v Rossiyu* (Moskva: Molodaya Gvardiya, 2003).

Chebrikov,¹⁷² Grigory Romanov,¹⁷³ Eduard Shevardnadze,¹⁷⁴ and Geidar Aliyev were promoted to the higher ranks.¹⁷⁵ The latter two were considered a part

¹⁷² Viktor Mikhailovich Chebrikov was Deputy chairman of the KGB under Yuri Andropov from 1968-1982. On 17 December 1982, he replaced Fedorchuk – who became chairman of MVD USSR – and became the 6th chairman of KGB USSR, holding that post until 1 October 1988.

¹⁷³ On 16 September 1970, Grigory Vasilyevich Romanov became the FS of Leningrad oblast. In 1976, he became full member of the politburo and the secretariat of the CC CPSU, and in 1977 he promoted the removal of Podgorny – the second most powerful man in the Soviet Union – from his post in the politburo and, then, as Chairman of the Presidium of SS USSR. This move would have eliminated a political competitor fostering, inexorably, the rise of Andropov in succession to Brezhnev. Robert Vincent Daniels, *Russia's Transformation: Snapshots of a Crumbling System* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998).

¹⁷⁴ Thanks to the Andropov's support, Shevardnadze – who was at the head of Georgian MVD since 1965 – was able to mount a corruption scandal against the Georgian leadership and to replace its 'stalinist' FS, Vasil Mzhavanadze, on 18 December 1972. Simis, *USSR - The Corrupt Society. The Secret World of Soviet Capitalism*, 57; Gerald Mars and Yochanan Altman, "The Cultural Bases of Soviet Georgia's Second Economy," *Soviet Studies* 35, no. 4 (1983): 546–60; Solov'ev and Klepikova, *Yuri Andropov, a Secret Passage into the Kremlin*, 105; Louise I. Shelley, Erik Scott, and Anthony Latta, *Organized Crime and Corruption in Georgia* (London-New York: Routledge, 2007).

¹⁷⁵ Many aspects of Aliyev's early life are obscure. Heydar Alirza oghlu Aliyev (in Russian: Geidar Aliyevich Aliyev) was born in Nakhchivan on 10 May 1923 and joined the local NKGB in 1944. He rapidly rose through the ranks of the security committee and he became a deputy chairman of Azerbaijani KGB in 1964, and its chairman in 1967. In 14 July 1969, he became FS of Communist Party of Azerbaijan in 1969 – after the dismissal of Veli Akhundov for corruption allegations – and on 5 March 1976 he became a candidate member of the Politburo (and full member from 22 November 1982 until 21 October 1987). Aliyev promoted a purge in Azerbaijan during an anticorruption campaign between 1977 and 1982 that resulted in ninety-three convictions and garnered him the nickname "hammer of the mafia". His rise to power had been defined by Andropov's sponsorship to the post of First Deputy chairman of SM USSR on 10 October 1982 and full member of the Politburo on 22 November 1982. However, during perestroika, his role was marginalized by Gorbachev and, after his forced retirement in 1987, Aliyev reinvented himself as a moderate nationalist and was subsequently elected as a deputy to the SS of Azerbaijan SSR. However, his name is mostly remembered because, after the dramatic season of instability of the early '90s, Aliyev succeeded Abulfaz Elchibey, becoming the 3rd President of Azerbaijan from 24 June 1993 until 31 October 2003 and affirming himself as a symbol of 'Azerbaijani independence' and a 'father of the Azeri nation'. Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 157–58; Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*.

of the Andropovian “Caucasian strategy.”¹⁷⁶ In parallel, in order to promote a systemic debrezhnevization course,¹⁷⁷ Andropov started to reshuffle part of the previous establishment: i.e. the replacement of the Minister of railroads Ivan Pavlovski with Nikolai Konarev, the promotion of Boris Pastukhov as Chairman of the USSR State Publishing Committee replacing Boris Stukalin, the dismissal of Stepan Khitrov – who chaired from 1967 the Ministry of Rural Construction of the USSR – and Alexander Struev, Minister of trade of the USSR from 1965. At the same time, some key figures such as Andrei Alexandrov-Agentov, Viktor Sharapov, Viktor Grishin and even Tikhonov who succeeded Kosiyn as the chairman of the SM USSR since 1980 were confirmed.¹⁷⁸

To reconstruct the attempts made by Andropov to reform the Soviet system, it is useful to read this still mysterious period through the lens of the Russian historian Rudolf Pikhoya.¹⁷⁹ He comments that corruption in the USSR was not a mystery in the KGB, and the operation to ‘clean’ the country – and Uzbekistan as well – was just a part of a major campaign to reform the system. Andropov’s reform was based on two pillars: on the one hand, the new Gensek wanted to ‘restore order’ and to strengthen the administration, its discipline, and responsibility even recurring to a ‘demonstrative actions’ (far from the Stalinist systemic terror); on the other hand, he probably wanted to advance a first wave of reforms that effectively were not enforced during his short reign and that started only in 1987 during perestroika. In the first reading key – the ‘demonstrative actions’ – we can observe the struggle against the Brezhnevian group within the Kremlin. Otherwise, in Uzbekistan the campaign was to some extent just ‘demonstrative’ and had real and systemic implications.

¹⁷⁶ The Andropovian Caucasian strategy corresponded to the appointment of loyal figures in the Transcaucasian republics, such as Geidar Aliev, FS of Azerbaijan (1969-1982), Eduard Shevardnadze, FS of Georgia (1972-1985), Karen Demirchyan, FS of Armenia (1974-1988). Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 151–59; Graziosi, *L’Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*.

¹⁷⁷ As Colloudon comments, “De-Brezhnevisation was becoming systematic: Gennadi Brovin, one of Brezhnev’s three personal secretaries, was accused of misuse of power and corruption and sentenced to nine years in a labor camp. High-ranking officials of the ministries of Railroads and Aviation, as well as some others previously in charge of organizing international exhibitions, found themselves under arrest” Coulloudon, *La Mafia En Union Soviétique*, 187–88.

¹⁷⁸ Medvedev, *Andropov Au Pouvoir*, 139–46, 164.

¹⁷⁹ Personal interview with Rudolf Germanovich Pikhoya, Moscow, 10 December 2015.

At the same time, the second 'reformist' aspect finds its evidence in analysis of the Uzbek affair. According to Pikhoya, "under Andropov the Pandora vase of information was opened " and in it could be found the roots of Glasnost, deliberately publishing – in the press – the summaries of the politburo sessions and the negative results about economic crimes.¹⁸⁰ Along this trend we can interpret the huge media campaigns that were enforced to describe the arrests of the above mentioned Sokolov, the director of the GUM mall, B.S. Tveritinov, the directors of the Okean, the suicide of Sergey G. Noniev, director of Gastronomy 2 in Smolenskaya etc. All these cases were the first to be published in the Soviet press with such a deep scandalous narrative – on this occasion the idea of mafiya in the USSR¹⁸¹ appeared for the first time – and were responding to a specific tactic Andropov had to discredit malfeasance and corruption in the country, believing that socialism would develop more swiftly if corruption and fraud were exposed. In this 'soft terror' strategy, Andropov acted swiftly and predictably to attack inefficiency, absenteeism, and corruption, even tasking the *militiya* to check shops and cinemas to see if people were avoiding work. In fact, from 1983 a huge inspection campaign in the enterprises and in those places was organized to find the people that were supposed to work and were not. Then, the fight especially in the trade system in Moscow began, which led in June 1983 to the arrest of N.P. Tregubov – head of the central administration of commerce of the Moscow gorispolkom and close friend of Grishin¹⁸² – who was sentenced to death.¹⁸³ In the Moscow trade administration alone, 15,066 people were prosecuted, of whom 1221 were leaders of various ranks.¹⁸⁴

However, his 'demonstrative terror' needed big fish to be exposed. The main occasion was on 17 December 1982 with the dismissal of Nikolai Shchelokov, an old friend of Brezhnev and a member of the Dniepropetrovsk clique, who had been chairman of MVD USSR since 1968. Shchelokov had been Andropov's longtime rival since the late '60s – when stepped up his criticism

¹⁸⁰ Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L'aigle Bicéphale*, 9–10.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 13–14.

¹⁸² Gorbachev was preparing his political field mounting a scandal against one of his main rival, Viktor Grishin, when in summer 1984, *Izvestiya* published an article about corruption in food stores in Moscow that was even implicating Grishin. The Gensek also underlined the merciless of Grishin that dragged the terminally ill Chernenko out to vote in early 1985. Joseph Gibbs, *Gorbachev's Glasnost: The Soviet Media in the First Phase of Perestroika* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 82.

¹⁸³ Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L'aigle Bicéphale*, 12–13.

¹⁸⁴ Razzakov, *Delo, Vzorvavshee SSSR*.

against KGB authoritarianism and disagreed on the role of judiciary organs¹⁸⁵ – representing one of the main obstacles to the rise of Andropov's KGB. Now, the new Gensek had the occasion to permanently get rid of his old adversary, discrediting him with allegations of mismanagement of public safety and moral criticism on his private habits. In fact, Shchelokov - who was famous for his love for luxury – was accused for being the main culprit of the high levels of corruption within the police, the OVIR, and the other organizations under the MVD.¹⁸⁶ He was replaced by Vitaly Fedorchuk – head of the Ukrainian KGB in 1970-1982 and famous for his hardline approach towards dissidents¹⁸⁷ – and fell into disgrace.¹⁸⁸ Similarly, even Konstantin Zotov, the chairman of the OVIR of Moscow, was arrested with other officials¹⁸⁹ in what seemed to become a war between the KGB and the MVD. Just to give an example of the supremacy of the first organ over the second, after Shchelokov's dismissal, his post had been occupied by Vitaly Fedorchuk, the chairman of the KGB who had succeeded Andropov in May 1982. Further, it is indicative to note that the day after Shchelokov's dismissal, the politburo devoted the attention of the prokuratura USSR for fighting corruption within the ruling class and reinforced the sanctions against corruption, embezzlement, and profit, thus disproving the contribution of the regular police forces and even calling for a better work of the prokuratura to defend socialist legality.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ Duhamel, *The KGB Campaign against Corruption in Moscow*, 48–49; Mlechin, *Andropov*.

¹⁸⁶ His name had been discredited to the point of becoming a synonym for corruption. Also in the next years, Shchelokov started to be – post-mortem – at the center of intrigues and conspiracy theories. For example, in 1988 the Uzbek author Raul Mir-Khaydarov argued that Shchelokov could be considered even as the 'godfather of the Uzbek mafiya'. Raul' Mirsaidovich Mir-Khaydarov, *Peshiye Progulki* (Moskva: Molodaya Gvardiya, 1988).

¹⁸⁷ Jonathan Steele and Eric Abraham, *Andropov in Power: From Komsomol to Kremlin*, 1st ed. (Garden City: Anchor Press, 1984), 145.

¹⁸⁸ Shchelokov was transferred to a very minor post in Siberia and dismissed from the CC CPSU in June 1983 and in November 1984 his military rank of army general was withdrawn by the state. He committed suicide on 13 December 1984 and no mention of it was made in the Soviet press. Yuri Vasilevich Feofanov and Donald D. Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 53; Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 172–75.

¹⁸⁹ Medvedev, *Andropov Au Pouvoir*, 164.

¹⁹⁰ D'Encausse, *La Gloire Des Nations Ou La Fin de l'Empire Soviétique*, 40; Medvedev, *Andropov Au Pouvoir*, 164.

The war against corruption in the upper echelons of the Soviet system became one of the key elements of the Andropovian agenda that was functional to his consolidation of power and perhaps also a consequence of his health.¹⁹¹ In fact, as we have seen, this ‘moral mission’ had two implications: first, the anticorruption campaign was an instrument to ‘reform’ a rotten system that had been based on patronage, clientelism, and corruption in order to keep its structural integrity in a phase when the USSR was likely to drift. Second, this restyled ‘soft’ – or ‘bloodless’ – terror was a weapon against his political adversaries.

The new ‘moral path’ to legalize the USSR was definitively on the way and was constantly being reaffirmed at a political level. Indeed, at a meeting of the Presidium of the SS USSR in January 1983, Andropov kept calling for a “more vigorous struggle against embezzlement, abuse of office, bribe-taking and other forms of corruption”¹⁹² and on 7 January a CC CPSU meeting demanded a strengthening of the discipline of labor. Additionally, on 9 January, the Genprokuror through Pravda announced the end of tolerance for the ‘negative phenomena’ and on 12 January the SS USSR demanded to the Prokuratura USSR a more rigorous control of the security organs in a persecution against dishonesty that had the tone of a witch hunt, fueling complaints from citizens - even in the private form of *donos* - and facing the alarming increase in crime in the early 80s.¹⁹³ Considering the warning data on increasing crimes registered in the USSR in 1980-1984,¹⁹⁴ the Andropovian attempts to increase Soviet rigor and to keep the ideological integrity were clear.

Furthermore, at the beginning of 1983, the CPC was even reinforced to proceed in investigations with unlimited measures¹⁹⁵ as a part of the Andropovian line that even became a key ideological issue within the party. Therefore, during the 14 June 1983 plenum of CC CPSU, the Gensek further argued that there was a need “to completely eliminate such phenomena as instances of the use of state and public property and official positions for

¹⁹¹ According to Chazov, the 'Kremlin's doctor and then Minister of Health of the USSR 1987-1990 – the bad health conditions of Andropov influenced his choice of a hard hand against corruption in his last and most sober year. Evgeniy Ivanovich Chazov, *Zdorov'ye I Vlast'*. *Vospominaniya «kremlevskogo Vracha»* (Moskva: Novosti, 1992), 184.

¹⁹² Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*, 224.

¹⁹³ Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 491.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L'aigle Bicéphale*, 16.

purposes of personal enrichment.”¹⁹⁶ On that occasion, Chernenko harshly condemned the already marginalized figures of Medunov and Shchelokov who had severely violated party discipline and who were on the “way of corruption for personal aims.”¹⁹⁷ Parallel to the party dimension, also at the state level the Andropovian line was strongly endorsed: in March 1983 the chairman of the MVD USSR Fedorchuk followed the Andropovian path, announcing new measure to improve discipline and responsiveness to citizens’ complaints and to strengthen the OBKhSS. Furthermore, the ministry was reorganized and became subject to much more scrutiny by the party that was creating CPSU ‘political agencies’ within its departments. Then, in late 1983 was the criminal legislation even reformed, increasing the punishment for corruption.¹⁹⁸

The next key passage in the moralization campaign passed even through the end of the ‘stability of cadres’ policy, formalized by Andropov in August 1983.¹⁹⁹ In fact, a system characterized by the stability and longevity of cadres ensured by the nomenklatura system²⁰⁰ indirectly promoted an extensive growth of corruption at every level.²⁰¹ The concept of making again the cadres ‘fallible’ would have been a dramatic and effective choice to eradicate, as far as possible, those figures that were set up as local potentates. At the same time, it would definitely interrupt the “little deal” that guaranteed stability and the loyalty of the provinces to Moscow.²⁰² In fact, during the Andropovian anticorruption campaigns, 18 ministers, and 37 FSs of obkoms, kraikoms and leaders of republican parties were dismissed and replaced with loyal figures.²⁰³ As a consequence of the interruption of the Brezhnevian peaceful-tolerant path, the Andropovian policy was in fact stopping the practice that a part of the budget was de facto redistributed among national elites. When this

¹⁹⁶ Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*, 224–25.

¹⁹⁷ Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L’aigle Bicéphale*, 15–16.

¹⁹⁸ Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*, 224–25.

¹⁹⁹ Moshe Lewin, *Le Siècle Soviétique* (Paris: Fayard/Le Monde diplomatique, 2003), 335–36.

²⁰⁰ As mentioned, the nomenklatura system was appointing loyalties and – without effective check & balance instruments and free press - was characterized by the substantial immunity of party officials.

²⁰¹ Medvedev, *Andropov. An Insider’s Account of Power and Politics within the Kremlin*, 90.

²⁰² Millar, “The Little Deal: Brezhnev’s Contribution to Acquisitive Socialism.”

²⁰³ BRE, “Andropov, Yuri Vladimirovich,” 742.

agreement was denounced by the center, patrimonialism lost a base to be set and there was a new rise of nationalism.²⁰⁴ As Satarov comments, “the persecution of corrupt government officials in the republics was perceived by them as a signal of a unilateral termination of the implicit contract between the fatherland and the colonies. The stability of the Soviet empire was maintained on the basis of an agreement, according to which regional elites retained the loyalty of the center, and the central elites turned a blind eye to regional affairs, while fear and force were no longer applied— as had been the case in Stalin's time. The persecution of corruption was simply contrary to this agreement.”²⁰⁵

Indeed, the Andropovian policy had implications not just centrally but also locally. The Gensek was effectively calling for a fight against corruption even in the republics and in that endeavor had the participation of ‘honest’ local figures – such as Shcherbytsky in Ukraine, Shevardnadze in Georgia,²⁰⁶ and Aliyev in Azerbaijan – each of whom had the occasion to purge part of the apparatus.²⁰⁷ At the same time, this campaign had the effect of eliminating the figures that were not welcome in Moscow anymore. And this was apparently the case in Rashidov’s Uzbekistan where the campaign lasted for five years after his demise and assumed a systemic – and not just demonstrative – dimension. Furthermore, we do not have sufficient elements to understand whether Uzbekistan deliberately became an experimental polygon²⁰⁸ or a scapegoat to be sacrificed by the Andropovian politics of ‘soft terror,’ also because Andropov - who was acknowledged to be the main promoter of the ‘Uzbek purge’ - was already dead in wake of the most acute season of purges in the republic. We can therefore consider Andropov as the initiator of a campaign that, as we will see in later chapters, was enforced by his successors, when the results of the ‘moralization campaign’ in Uzbekistan assumed even a public/media dimension and the republic became an emblematic - and probably the most famous - case of corruption in the USSR. In fact, due to the

²⁰⁴ Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L’aigle Bicéphale*, 63.

²⁰⁵ Satarov, *Antikorrupsionnaya Politika: Uchebnoye Posobiye*, 45.

²⁰⁶ In 1984 extensive corruption and crimes were reported even in Georgia and the local party renewed its commitments to fight against these phenomena. NSA, Box 25, file R 13689 and RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 1902, ll. 153-181.

²⁰⁷ Graziosi, *L’Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 494.

²⁰⁸ Also Nishanov, who reminded how cotton additions were common also in Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan – or in Georgia for tea - believes this typically Uzbek version of the story. Nishanov, *Derev’ya Zeleneyut Do Metelei : Rafik Nishanov Rasskazyvaet Marine Zavade I Yurii Kulikovu*, 234.

publicity and the size of the scandal that we are going to describe in the following pages, Uzbekistan in the '80s became a synonym of corruption, nepotism, kinship, patronage and even 'mafiya.' However, one of the main protagonists of this story, Telman Gdlyan, referred to Uzbekistan not as 'black hole' but as an objective example of the high corruption that was systemic in many other parts of the USSR:

the situation in the UzSSR was not far from the other Central Asian and Caucasus republics as well as in the oblasts of Stavropol, Krasnodar, and the Northern Caucasus, Adygea, and the Black Sea coastal districts, Southern Ukraine, and finally Moscow, where corruption flourished. However, we cannot say that the entire Soviet Union was similarly covered by corruption.²⁰⁹

Indeed, it is possible to read the Uzbek cotton affair – and the publicity that it got in the following years – as one of those attempts to regain control over the republics that had been greatly weakened during Brezhnevism. Pikhoya comments that one of the first victims of the Andropovian 'demonstrative terror' was Estonia where the Genprokuror and KGB sent an investigative group headed by Gdlyan. Then the case was shifted to Uzbekistan where – because of the enormous deficits in the cotton system – it was easier to promote a 'demonstrative' campaign.²¹⁰ During these controls – functional to Andropov's objective to restore Moscow's control over the republics – the KGB and prokuratura investigators "found the ax under the bench",²¹¹ as the saying goes, thereby pursuing a moralization campaign that would assume a systemic dimension.

²⁰⁹ Personal interview with Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan, Moscow, 17 October 2014.

²¹⁰ According to Pikhoya, in Estonia had to be investigated on a pretext the development of the cooperative sector, and the case of a professor who had organized a dairying enterprise, the best on the market that enjoyed great popularity. The production was in the form of state-cooperative and had the consent of the Estonian government. On that occasion, Gdlyan organized a criminal case against this activity. Estonians reacted so sharply with protests that Gdlyan was removed from the case of Estonia and was sent to Uzbekistan. We will see the details of the 'Hint affair' in the fifth chapter. Personal interview with Rudolf Germanovich Pikhoya, Moscow, 10 December 2015.

²¹¹ "Найти топор под лавкой" (to find the ax under the bench) is a typical Russian expression used when a negative obvious fact that everybody has long known is finally 'revealed' or 'discovered'.

3.3 The ‘silent phase’ of the ‘Uzbek affair’

As we have mentioned in the second chapter, Brezhnev’s demise represented the end of a world. The experienced Rashidov - who rose through the party ranks during late stages of the Stalin period, affirmed his leadership under Khrushchev and inexorably followed the steps of Brezhnevism, ruling the republic for almost a quarter of century – was convinced that he could also easily and opportunistically ride the new Andropovian course. Just in the first weeks, the FS CPUz presented himself as a loyal communist and devotee of the new course of Soviet policy. During the VIII plenum CC CPUz (29 November 1982),²¹² the FS CPUz directly referred to Andropov and his directive declaring that “in his speech there was a brilliant analysis of the Soviet economy [...] a principled assessment of our successes and failures and deficiencies identifying urgent tasks.”²¹³

Probably, Rashidov wanted to satisfy the Gensek, offering some scapegoats to the moralization cause and to show his devotion to the new Andropovian course. However, he ignored the fact that those measures would be intensified against the UzSSR and he kept announcing the brilliant results of the Uzbek cotton harvest – another 6 million tons also for 1982²¹⁴ – and celebrating the “joyful and solemn” 60th anniversary of the USSR, keeping the same narrative of cotton to the fatherland in the name of brotherhood among nations.²¹⁵ Such rhetoric did not work anymore and from 1983 the republic entered a new season of criminal cases, purges, and power reshuffles among the CPUz, which were orchestrated by Moscow and which inexorably prejudiced the equilibrium between Moscow and Tashkent.

Besides discussing the political implications of the Uzbek cotton scandal (in chapter five), this case was inexorably political because it was mainly assailing the UzSSR ruling elite. In fact, the risk was that – if following literally and strictly the law – it was possible “to put in the dock practically the whole population of the republic.”²¹⁶ As Nikolai Ivanov – one of the main investigator in the case – commented, in Uzbekistan “millions of people gave and took bribes, and for honest people this is amoral. As well [it is even amoral] to take the

²¹² RGASPI, f. 17, op. 151, d. 2323.

²¹³ PV, 20049, 274, 30 November 1982, p. 2.

²¹⁴ PV, 20052, 277, 3 December 1982, p. 1.

²¹⁵ PV, 20067, 292, 22 December 1982, p. 3.

²¹⁶ Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, 115.

responsibility of so many of them."²¹⁷ This is why, according to the former investigator in the case, only the top 'organizers' of the cotton scam were involved. Thus, besides reconstructing the dramatic – and sometimes comical – personal stories of the culprits, we will mainly focus on the political aspect, the debate within the party, and the responses to the investigations in Moscow and in Tashkent, in order to understand if this story contributed to a political disaffection between the motherland and the periphery of the empire.

During the first 'silent phase' (1983-1984), the 'cotton affairs' were still not publicized as a systemic case and were so intended – and even publicized – as a series of separate cases in the framework of the Andropovian moralization campaign. In this first stage, these cases were not perceived as a systemic attack against the local ruling elite and the factions within the CPUz used the campaign to prove their loyalty to Moscow against their discredited rivals.

3.3.1 Staging Andropovism and triumphs

1983 is the year that is generally marked as the beginning of the "Uzbek cotton affairs" when the case was initiated – almost at the same time – at different levels before combining in a unique stream. In fact, in 1983, at the beginning of the investigations, three main channels were pursued: at the political level, the party initiated its own investigation activity (CPC) that entrusted loyal figures and sought to take back the control over the rebellious periphery; at the security level, the KGB – which was under the direct influence of Andropov – played a crucial role, especially in the first phase, in ousting the MVD, in collecting materials, and in instructing the cases that were perceived as threats to state security; finally, at the civil prosecution level, the USSR prokuratura (also thanks to the PCC) proceeded in the judicial investigation before passing the cases to the judiciary.

Just on the eve of 1983, the Uzbek party wanted to give the image of a healthy organization that was following Andropov's directives in order to implement the decisions of the XXVI congress of the CPSU and to reinforce the "struggle against any violation of party, state and labor discipline". It noted that there were "many shortcomings due to weak discipline and failures in meeting targets of technological development that are in the ministries of light industry, ministry of cotton industry and food industry and in the metallurgic enterprises, non-ferrous metallurgy, gas and mechanic industry."²¹⁸ Therefore,

²¹⁷ Nashe Kino, *Kremlevskie Pokhorony. Sharaf Rashidov* (Russia: NTV, 2008).po

²¹⁸ PV, 20076, 2, 4 January 1983, p. 1.

the CC CPUz demanded that the vicious practice of adjusting the plans towards decreases should be halted, and that the violation of the Kolkhozes' charter should also be ended.²¹⁹ However, in this statement, cotton – the main product of the republic – was not even mentioned.

In Moscow, Andropov was aware of *prpiski* in the Uzbek cotton sector and it seems that – when he was head of the KGB – he even ordered the Uzbek cotton field harvests to be photographed with reconnaissance satellites.²²⁰ He probably wanted to establish order within the republic and advocated a Mzhavanadze-like solution,²²¹ thus prompting Rashidov for his resignation by the end of the year. A widely diffused version of the facts claims that in January 1983, between the politburo sessions Andropov had a very tough discussion with Rashidov in his office which can be seen as a suggestion that he should resign if he was not able to produce a record crop the next autumn.²²² Whether this episode was real or just fictional, surely Andropov wanted to understand the situation in Uzbekistan and Rashidov tried to follow the Gensek's vision or – at the very least – align with his narrative. In the last months of his “reign”, the Uzbek leader showed apparently sound results and a willingness to go along with the CC CPSU. “In January 1983 the CC CPUz called on party organizations to [fight] against uneconomic practices, slackness, squandering and waste of socialist property, eyewash [insincere discourse], drunkenness and hooliganism, while the following month the plunder of socialist property, bribery and speculation came under criticism.”²²³ On 28 January 1983, the CPUz Secretariat admitted that in 1982, 137 members had been expelled from the party, of which a quarter had been ejected for criminal offenses. This was

²¹⁹ PV, 20076, 2, 4 January 1983, p. 2.

²²⁰ Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 43, 188–89; Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 67.

²²¹ In 1972, the powerful FS of Georgia Vasil Pavlovich Mzhavanadze was publicly accused of corruption and replaced by Shevardnadze. Then, he was sacked from his post in the Politburo and forced to retire. He spent the rest of his life in disgrace until his death in 1988.

²²² Razzakov, *Korrupsiya v Politbyuro: Delo “Krasnogo Uzbeka”*; Nashe Kino, *Kremlevskie Pokhorony. Sharaf Rashidov*; Razzakov, *Delo, Vzorvavshee SSSR*.

²²³ Gill and Pitty, *Power in the Party. The Organization of Power and Central-Republican Relations in the CPSU*, 73.

of course a relatively small number, considering it was a national party that had more than six hundred thousand members and candidates.²²⁴

Furthermore, from spring of 1983, Rashidov – who was already discredited by rumors about his personal life²²⁵– tried to identify a number of scapegoats, denouncing weaker episodes of malfeasance in order to demonstrate that Tashkent was committed to cooperation with the CPSU. Generally, these accusations were full of moralism and no major charges were associated with them. However, this effort was presented as proof to the Gensek of the “hard line” of the Uzbek establishment, and also allowed internal purges within the CPUz to proceed. During the CC CPUz buro meeting of 22 April 1983, it was reported that some party members had received illicit incomes from the illegal trade of cars, which was common and widespread practice in the USSR. On that occasion, it was alleged that

over the past three years, 34 executives of the Tashkent rayon bought cars for personal use and one third were resold or donated. Even the FS of Tashkent raikom in 1979 sold two cars and purchased the third on behalf of his wife, and the chairman of an asphalt factory sold three cars and bought a fourth one [...]. Also Valeri Rubenovich Gabrilyan, Deputy Chairman of the Committee of Physical Culture and Sports at the SM UzSSR, [...] traded cars, had illegally got a new apartment with five rooms, every year was going to visit capitalist countries and had not been truthful during party controls. [...For these reasons] he is sanctioned by the party and the SM must pay attention to his case and send him away from his post.²²⁶

However, parallel to his commitments to the hard line, Rashidov tried to pursue the usual triumphalism, emphasizing the republican duty to help maximize Soviet cotton production. During the IX plenum of the CC CPUz of 7 February 1983, Rashidov kept boasting of the victories of the republic in agricultural production, declaring:

²²⁴ In 1982, 25,833 new party members were accepted (of which 18,440 were workers of the kolkhoz and sovkhos, and 6518 were engineers, technicians, and agronomists, doctors, teachers, scientists, intellectuals, and other specialists). Among these, three quarters already joined the Komsomol, and 37.6% were women. On January 1, 1983, the CPUz counted 605,653 people of whom 578,700 were full members and 26,953 were official candidates. Prot. 44/1983, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 152, d. 2348, ll. 4-6.

²²⁵ In 1983 was discovered that almost 14 of Rashidov's relatives worked in the CC CPUz. Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 494.

²²⁶ Prot. 62/1983, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 152, d. 2328, ll. 16, 28-29.

It is the third year that the republic has given the country more than 6 million tons of “white gold”, exceeding the plans also for corn, kenaf, vegetables, potatoes and cucurbits, fruit, grapes, meat, milk, eggs, wool, astrakhan sheep, silk, and other production [...] exceeding the plans and providing 270 thousand tons of raw cotton or more. [...] compared to the annual average of the X 5YP, the production of wheat in the kolkhoz and goskhoz increased by 27%, and vegetables by 20%.²²⁷

On 16 February in Tashkent a conference called “the indestructible brotherhood of the Soviet peoples” was held and Rashidov gave a speech marking the 60th anniversary of the USSR. He stated:

in the multi-centennial history of humanity, there are events that have left an indelible sign for their global meaning, for the strength and depth of their beneficial effect on the world, and on the destinies of the people of our planet. Of all these events, the epochal one was the creation of the USSR.²²⁸

At the CPUz buro meeting of 25 February 1983, the positive economic trends in the UzSSR were further hailed, particularly the record production for the third consecutive year of more than six million tons of raw cotton, as well as its improved quality and a substantial increase in the production of meat, milk, and eggs.²²⁹ This triumphalism was even repeated on 28 February during the congress on the agricultural vanguards of the republic, held in Tashkent, where – under a huge Lenin portrait and banner reporting the figure ‘6,000,000’ – there was a very self-congratulatory event and a long speech by Khudayberdiyev.²³⁰ Also at the CPUz buro meeting of 11 March 1983 it was reiterated that, although there had not been optimal weather conditions, in 1981-1982 more than 12 million tons of cotton had been sold to the state, exceeding the plan by 294 thousand tons.²³¹ The agriculture results presented seemed to meet the party’s requests. However, the CPUz – during the buro meeting of 23 March 1983 – even studied the possibility of further extending the arable areas of the republic, which already officially amounted to 4.1147 million hectares.²³²

²²⁷ Prot. 9/1983, RGASPI f. 17, op. 152, d. 2317, ll. 171-172.

²²⁸ PV, 20144, 40, 17 February 1983, p. 2.

²²⁹ Prot. 58/1983, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 152, d. 2324, l. 14.

²³⁰ PV, 20123, 49, 1 March 1983, p. 2.

²³¹ Prot. 59/1983, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 152, d. 2325, l 35.

²³² These 4.1147 million hectares of cultivated area in the UzSSR were, respectively, intended for the production of wheat (1.233 million hectares and 2.731 million tons), corn (261 thousand hectares and 1.3848 million tons), rice (118.1 thousand hectares and 521.8 thousand tons), technical crops (1.9232 million hectares), cotton (1.887

This contradictory line also emerged in the press: on 20 March 1983, *Sovet Ozbekistoni*, the main newspaper in the Uzbek language, published a call for people to strengthen discipline and to act as ‘party soldiers’,²³³ while at the same time trumpeting the achievements of the Rashidovian regime. On 18 April 1983, Khudayberdiyev reported to the SM USSR an article that had appeared in *Izvestiya* entitled “*ne syrez, a volokno*”²³⁴ where the great results of an average annual production of 6.012 million tons in 1981-1982 (exceeding the plan by 5.3%) were reported. The Uzbek government was still publicizing the great results of the past,²³⁵ in an attempt to live off the glory of the Brezhnev past that had already long passed in Moscow, if not in Tashkent. The triumphalism of Rashidov – who seemed to sincerely believe in cotton’s place in the civilizing mission of the UzSSR – was confirmed even with foreign officials, as occurred during his speech in Kabul on 26 April for the 5th anniversary of the (Saur) ‘April revolution’,²³⁶ and also during the Honecker and DDR delegation official visit in Tashkent on 6 May 1983.²³⁷ At the VII conference of the association of writers of Asian and African countries, Rashidov continued this line to foreigners, giving a long speech about the vigor of the ‘Tashkent spirit’ that had been awakened for over a quarter century.²³⁸

CPUz triumphalism was not only about agriculture but also other sectors of the economy. In fact, Khudayberdiyev, in the plenum of the CC CPUz of 30 May 1983 repeated that, for the previous two years of the current 5YP, the light industry production volume had risen by 15.2% and textile production of

million hectares and 5.930 million tons), fine fiber cotton (143.2 thousand hectares and 410 thousand tons). Cf. Prot. 60/1983, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 152, d. 2326, l. 67.

²³³ “When communists fail to act as the party's soldiers the healthy atmosphere of labor collectives is destroyed and indiscipline, disorganization, toadyism, and eyewash increase. Communists must be exacting in their observation of party rules and intolerant of individuals who violate party, state, and labor discipline, who do not observe Leninist norms of party life, who neglect their party obligations, and who use their party membership to create special privileges for themselves [...] No matter where or in what position communists work they are obligated to unceasingly observe this sacred law.” FBIS, “JPRS 84130 - USSR Report. Political and Sociological Affairs No. 1445 - Central Asian Press Surveys - 16 August 1983,” 1983, 32.

²³⁴ *Izvestiya*, 17 March 1983.

²³⁵ TsGARUZ, f. 837, op. 41, d. 6190, ll. 37-38.

²³⁶ PV, 20171, 97, 28 April 1983, p. 1.

²³⁷ PV, 20179, 105, 7 May 1983, p. 1.

²³⁸ PV, 20297, 223, 27 September 1983, p. 1.

cotton by 34%.²³⁹ As well, in August the CC CPUz and the SM UzSSR announced that the MCC was also improving and in the previous two years of the eleventh FYP five new factories had been built, as had 30 outlets for cotton preparation and several stations for drying and stock. New technologies to increase the quality level had also been introduced.²⁴⁰

Internally, the CPUz was already anticipating some purges in the regional establishments. In the CPUz buro of 10 June 1983 A.P. Shendrik, the Second Secretary of the Andijan obkom was accused of having built an illegal home and of giving to his two sons apartments that had another allotment. He was punished with party sanctions.²⁴¹ At that point, the extent of the corruption phenomenon was not clear, as these serious episodes were still lumped in with the small-scale speculation and fraud carried out in the collective farms. In fact, in the meeting of the party-economic aktiv of CPUz held on 28 July 1983, several cases of malfeasance and black market speculation were denounced:

the director (Malikov) and the General Accountant (Ravshan) of the kolkhoz "Gulistan" in Akdar'inski raion falsified financial documents in the amount of more than 100 thousand rubles, declaring that such money was granted as prizes to workers [...]. In the first six months of this year, the organs of the MVD in Moscow, Sverdlovsk, Novosibirsk, Chelyabinsk, Tyumen, and Omsk oblasts arrested 141 people of Uzbekistan on charges of speculation in agricultural production. Of these, 21 were from Tashkent oblast, 16 from Fergana oblast, 16 from Namangan oblast, 11 from Tashkent city, and 78 from Andijan oblast²⁴².

At the same time, it became clear that these phenomena of corruption and malfeasance were assuming a systemic nature. In fact, similar trends were also detected in the health system, in universities, in municipal services, and in other departments of the economy.²⁴³ Corruption, then, was revealed as an intrinsic phenomenon in the UzSSR where "it was possible to buy everything and to pay for everything".²⁴⁴ Of course, the party preferred to publicize only the merits of the republic, but this narrative could never hide from Moscow that something untoward was going on behind the scenes.

²³⁹ Prot. 10/1983, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 152, d. 2318, l. 11.

²⁴⁰ PV, 20263, 189, 19 August 1983, p. 1.

²⁴¹ Prot. 65/1983, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 152, d. 2331, l. 12.

²⁴² Prot. 16, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 152, d. 2372, ll. 9-10.

²⁴³ Prot. 16, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 152, d. 2372, l. 20

²⁴⁴ Interview with a former official of the UzSSR Ministry of Education in the late '70s who prefers to remain anonymous. Moscow, 26 November 2014.

3.3.2 “Who do you think you are talking to?”

Parallel to Rashidov’s triumphalism and the commitments of the FS CPUz, Andropov wanted to have the clearest view possible of what was going on in Uzbekistan. Then, the Gensek instructed the ‘mediation’ of one of the most talented rising communists of the moment. On 29 April 1983, Andropov replaced Kapitonov at the head of the Party Organization Department of the CC CPSU with the former FS Tomsk obkom, Yegor Kuzmich Ligachev. From his first days in office, Ligachev was warned by Viktor Smirnov – the head of Central Asian Department in the CC²⁴⁵ – about the alarming situation in Uzbekistan: especially in the period 1980-1983 the CC was receiving tens of thousands²⁴⁶ of letters from Uzbekistan denouncing corruption, injustice, dishonesty, arbitrariness, and abuse of power of every kind, and that the party simply responded with "official replies" declaring that the accusations were not founded or that measures had already been taken. In some severe cases, the authors of these letters wrote back that they had even been punished for expressing their criticism.²⁴⁷

It is interesting to note how the chronology of the FYP, agricultural outputs, falsifications, and complaint letters perfectly match. The UzSSR that had to fulfill the plan at any cost and had to reach the famous 6,000,000 record. After the failures and problems in agriculture that mysteriously grew even in 1978-1979, falsification in reports, corruption, and abuses of power exponentially developed in order to fulfill the plan at any cost and therefore from 1980 letters began to arrive when the party demanded the best effort from the people in order to realize the plan. As we will see, just in 1978-1983, the level of abuses became so evident and systemic that this was reflected in the letters of an exasperated population. The character of these ‘private reports’ was mostly microscopic and individual, concerning small cases of injustice perpetrated by

²⁴⁵ Smirnov was also the second secretary of the communist Party of Moldavia. According to Gdlyan, he was one of the main protectors of the Uzbek ‘mafioso’ system. Later, he was arrested and charged for bribe-taking during the ‘Uzbek affair’. However, Ligachev believed in his honesty. Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan and Nikolai Veniaminovich Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo* (Moskva: Gramota, 1996); Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev’s Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 210.

²⁴⁶ These huge figures were in part overhauled by Gorbachev in 1989 who announced to the politburo members that from 1978 to 1983 the Central Committee had received on average 736 letters per year from Uzbekistan in a total of 3680 letters over five years. RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 21, l. 1.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 210–12.

local powerful figures – such as directors of kolkhozes, raikom secretaries, managers of shops and in general anyone who was in charge of managing the slightest access to a scarce resource – who acted shamelessly. The content of these letters became starting points for further investigation and sometimes, as we shall see in the following paragraphs, led to the most dramatic consequences.

Ligachev – often described as the honest face of the regime and probably one of the most orthodox Leninists – was a convinced Andropovian and it seems that he really believed in the Gensek's attempts to moralize the Soviet state. From this perspective, it seems that he could not accept the situation and he had no pity for figures like Rashidov, who was described as a sort of 'godfather' protected by Brezhnev,²⁴⁸ and other local leaders who behaved like *bais* in a republic where "nothing could get done without a bribe."²⁴⁹ After reading some of these letters, Ligachev returned home in a bad mood and thought about a possible solution to improve the situation in Uzbekistan. The future number two of the Soviet regime was not powerful enough to directly confront Rashidov: he was not yet a politburo member nor a secretary.²⁵⁰ However, his role as department director was important and he had a direct line to Andropov. Finally, they met and the Gensek listened calmly. Thanks to his interactions with the KGB, the Gensek was fully aware of the situation in

²⁴⁸ It seems that in the Andropovian environments, Rashidov was also defined as "Brezhnev's darling" or "Brezhnev's kid". Oleg Maksimovich Khlobustov, *Neizvestnyi Andropov* (Moskva: Eksmo, 2009); Sergey Semanov, *Predsedatel' KGB Yuriy Andropov* (Moskva: Algoritm, 2008), 62.

²⁴⁹ For example, Ligachev mentions that Rashidov imposed 14 of his relatives in the CC CPUz apparatus. Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 211.

²⁵⁰ Even Ryzhkov recalls how important the hierarchy was and the difficulty of interacting with higher cadres: "one group was composed of the members of the Politburo, a second group was made up of candidate members and the third group was composed of Secretaries. However, there was no communication among these groups." His relation with Rashidov was different and this is maybe due to Ryzhkov's status, given that at that time he was already a CC secretary: "I just know that when Rashidov was in Moscow, we met sometimes with a few questions or for greetings. He always had very good intentions. I do not know him well, but I had the impression that he was a benevolent person. And as he was at the top, I did not know [about his affairs]. Personal interview with Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov, Moscow, 22 December 2014.

Uzbekistan²⁵¹ and insisted Ligachev to invite and to "put Rashidov in his place."²⁵² Then, Rashidov came to Moscow for a business trip and met Ligachev who put a big pile of letters on the table. The Uzbek leader started to glance at them and Ligachev interrupted, stating

Sharaf Rashidovich, the Central Committee is receiving many letters about the outrages in your republic. People are complaining — on major issues — more and more. We send the letters to you to be checked, but you and your comrades reply that the allegations are unfounded. That's hard to believe. Look at how many letters there are. And this is only a small selection of them. The Central Committee has been deluged with letters from Uzbekistan.²⁵³

Ligachev continues, describing how the Uzbek leader, faced with such bold and direct accusations, fidgeted in his chair and tried to find words to account for the situation. At this point, he countered and sought to put Ligachev in his place. Frowning unceremoniously, he demanded "Who do you think you are talking to?"²⁵⁴ Ligachev answered that Andropov had been informed about the letters and he was speaking at the request of the Gensek. Rashidov changed the tone of the conversation and, trying to keep calm, glanced at the letters and said "those letters are full of slander. We have to protect our leaders and give them a chance to work in peace. Uzbekistan must give the country cotton, and not... you know, letters."²⁵⁵ Then, Ligachev proposed a commission authorized by the Central Committee be sent to Uzbekistan in order to evaluate the facts. He sought to mollify Rashidov, assuring him that there was nothing to fear from the commission and that slander would be called out publicly for what it was and the situation would improve anyway.²⁵⁶ After meeting in late

²⁵¹ It seems that KGB had several evidences against Rashidov and his family. Yuriy Drozdov and Vasilii Fartyshchev, *Yuriy Andropov I Vladimir Putin: Na Puti K Vozrozhdeniyu* (Moskva: Olma-Press, 2001), 33.

²⁵² In Ligachev's words: "Whatever the case, I had the sense that Andropov was prepared for my report. After hearing me out, he immediately told me, "Let's do it this way. You meet with Rashidov. Yes, you have to meet with him. Invite him in to see you and have a chat. I don't have to teach you how to ask questions." Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 213.

²⁵³ Ibid., 214.

²⁵⁴ According to Ligachev, "The question could be understood this way: "You, Comrade Ligachev, haven't forgotten who you're dealing with here? Before you sits a candidate member of the Politburo, not to mention everything else. And just who are you?" Ibid., 214–15.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 217.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

August 1983, Ligachev advised Andropov of the meeting.²⁵⁷ The Gensek requested to go deeper and "not to compromise the highest principles while examining all the questions [...] to mean that he wanted to get to the bottom of the matter."²⁵⁸ However Ligachev seemed to agree with the FS CPUz about the opportunity to establish the commission after the cotton harvest season, in order to do not prejudice the republic during its most stressful period or compromise the cotton supply for the state.²⁵⁹ In autumn, the CC Commission, headed by Konstantin Nikolaevich Mogilnichenko – the department's deputy director and "a principled, extremely honest man" – was created and sent to Uzbekistan where it uncovered incredible levels of corruption amongst the party cadres. Parallel to the party investigation, the KGB was already mobilized and discovered incredible facts in the remote UzSSR.

3.3.3 The 'Bukhara affair'

Parallel to the Ligachev's 'mediation', Andropov established other mechanisms via the organ that was closest to his control, the KGB. Indeed, the Gensek authorized Levon Melkumov²⁶⁰ – the head of the Uzbek KGB - to conduct an investigative campaign on the diffused corruption within the UzSSR nomenklatura.²⁶¹ The investigation campaign in Bukhara did not emerge out of nowhere and - despite evidence of malfeasance in the republic – the result was

²⁵⁷ Yegor Kuzmich Ligachev, *Predosterezhenie* (Moskva: Pravda Interneshnl, 1998), 238.

²⁵⁸ Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 218.

²⁵⁹ Leonid Mikhaïlovich Mlechin, *Yuriy Andropov. Poslednyaya Nadezhda Rezhima* (Moskva: Tsentrloigraf, 2008).

²⁶⁰ Levon Nikolaevich Melkumov (Melkumyan) was an ethnic Armenian born in 1924 who built a career in the Uzbek KGB as the deputy chairman for the Samarkand region (1960 - 1966); deputy chairman of the 2nd Department of the republican KGB (1966 - 1968) and then chairman of that office (1968 - 1970), advancing then as Deputy Chairman of the Uzbek KGB (1970) and First deputy chairman (1975 - 1978). From 2 March 1978 to 24 August 1983 he chaired the KGB of the republic. It is interesting how a figure who is considered one of the main initiators of the investigation into the "cotton affairs" served during the period of maximum falsification in the republic, in a moment when Rashidov's autonomy within the republic was at its height. In fact, it is interesting to note that Melkumov replaced Eduard B. Nordman – head of the Uzbek KGB in 1974-1978 – who was famous for his honesty and intolerance against corruption. It cannot be a coincidence that, in 1978, the replacement of Nordman occurred at the same time as the rise in falsification. Chazov, *Zdorov'ye I Vlast'. Vospominaniya «kremlevskogo Vracha»*, 23–24.

²⁶¹ Exaggerating, Vaksberg comments that Andropov directly wanted an action against "the Uzbek mafiya." Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, 117.

not obvious. Melkumov was between the hammer and the anvil: he had to direct a centrally-oriented agency while he was officially under the direct dependence of the SM UzSSR. Indeed, in a republic were the party and the informal patrimonial politics were deeply consolidated in the power structure, it was not easy to operate against the local party. Already in 1981, Melkumov together with the Second Secretary CPUz Grekov, prudently initiated the investigation on the diffused corruption in the highest echelons of the Bukharan party nomenklatura, including the FS Bukhara obkom Abduvakhid Karimov who was famous for his patrimonial attitude and for including his friends within the oblast administration, in the UVD, and in the local prokuratura. Karimov – popularly known as the “Emir of Bukhara” for his lifestyle²⁶² - was considered to be a protégée of Rashidov and of the former chairman of the MVD UzSSR Khaidar Khalikovich Yakh'yaev. Thus, a sort of immunity from the security organs – with the exception of the KGB – was in place. However, the KGB - although being a centrally-oriented and highly-favored institution within the USSR – was not powerful enough to legitimize an action against such a high party official.

After Brezhnev's demise and the new course of Soviet politics – which was in a great part dominated by the KGB and its former chairman Andropov – the security committee had a broader remit to act, and the consent of Moscow to proceed. Then, under Andropov, also Melkumov – who did not have direct interests in the Uzbek power networks – followed the "Kremlin globalist" line and was able to start a case in the republic.²⁶³ According to Gdlyan and Ivanov, the idea to start the case exactly in Bukhara was strongly political. Considering the non-idyllic relations between Karimov and Rashidov, it was seen as potentially the safest option to pursue and the easiest place to hit in order to have the weakest resistance by the FS CPUz.²⁶⁴ The first signs of malfeasance were in the dozens of denunciations of some of the Bukhara residents who approached the regional KGB and protested against racketeering by the Bukhara police. Therefore, for almost three months the operation to catch – red-handed, if possible – one of the main figures responsible for the situation, the head of the Bukhara oblispolkom's OBKhSS, Akhat Muzaffarov, was in

²⁶² Ibid., 121.

²⁶³ Razzakov, *Delo, Vzorvavshee SSSR*.

²⁶⁴ According to Gdlyan and Ivanov, although the relations between Karimov and Rashidov were not the easiest and the latter did not like so much the first, Karimov nevertheless regularly paid his tribute – in terms of bribes – to Rashidov. Gdlyan and Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo*, 13.

operation. For this purpose, the KGB had engaged a woman who had to give him a bribe of 1,000 rubles to release a convict from prison.

The operation started in the afternoon of 27 April 1983, when Muzaffarov was caught red-handed and arrested. A treasure worth 1,131,183 rubles²⁶⁵ in cash, gold, diamonds, watches, and jeans – an excess of wealth in a country where the average salary was between 165-190 rubles per month – was found in his home.²⁶⁶ After denying his illegal activities, the investigators showed him the collected evidence – such as the recorded serial numbers of banknotes that he had received as a bribe – and he realized he was caught. Then, the former OBKhSS understood that KGB had collected much evidence against him and he decided to collaborate with the investigations and give other names. Among these were the FS Karimov, Kudratov - the director of the Bukhara *gorpromptorg*, and Davydov - the deputy chairman of the MVD UzSSR.²⁶⁷ According to Vaksberg, Rashidov understood the danger of the case and wanted to cut all ties to the case, thereby closing Muzaffarov's mouth forever²⁶⁸ and relegating the case to the MVD²⁶⁹ which was supposed to be under his control. However, this plan did not work. Within a few weeks eight high officials of Bukhara were also arrested, among whom was the head of the UVD. In fact, just after Muzaffarov's first criminal case (the famous N°18/58115-83),²⁷⁰ the arrests of the arrogant S. Kudratov²⁷¹ (3 May) and D. Sharipov proceeded,²⁷² as did also the head of the UVD of the Bukhara

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 15.

²⁶⁶ Timofeev, *Russia's Secret Rulers*.

²⁶⁷ Gdlyan and Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo*, 16–20.

²⁶⁸ Vaksberg argues that in Uzbekistan the price for a political (“Mafioso”) murder was between 10,000 and 200,000 rubles, meanwhile the indirect price of a son's life – to do not send him to Afghanistan – was about 4,000-8,000 rubles. Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, 120–21.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 118.

²⁷⁰ The verdict of the SC UzSSR of 13 May 1986 sentenced to death, and confiscation of property, S. Kudratov and A. Muzaffarov while other persons had been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. PV, 21426, 158, 20 June 1987, p. 3.

²⁷¹ Shody Kudratov was the director of the Bukhara city organization for trade in manufactured goods (*gorpromptorg*), in whose house had been found more than 4.000.000 rubles in cash and gold. Gdlyan defines him a briber who proudly declared: “the law, it's me, Shody Khudratov” Gdlyan and Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo*, 15–20; Nashe Kino, *Kremlevskie Pokhorony. Sharaf Rashidov*.

²⁷² Sharipov was the, director of the provincial administration of the state committee for material and technical supply.

oblistpolkom A. Dustov, the OBKHSS officials B. Gafarov and H. Dzhumaev, and the chairman of the district consumer cooperative, M. Bazarov.²⁷³ In parallel, the KGB was already running pre-operative investigations, sending more than 150 officials in the city²⁷⁴ and defining the scope of a gigantic case that, were the law to be followed literally, could result in the arrest of many thousands officials from the party authorities, the Ministry of Interior, etc.²⁷⁵

Still, in early June the KGB gave reason to delay the consolidation of the first phase of work in order to expand the scope of the investigation with another 40 missions in Bukhara. Substantially, the KGB wanted to collect all the evidence of the case and so did not pass the investigation to the prokuratura. According to Gdlyan, the KGB – despite being a formidable organization against spies, dissidents, and religious figures – did not have a consolidated practice for this kind of investigation. Therefore, precious time was lost, giving the ‘mafiosi’ the chance to organize themselves and to hide the valuables and to secure any evidence that might implicate them. These valuables were hidden in remote rural villages or, in case of cash and obligations, were just destroyed. Gdlyan recalls the Bukhara’s *Kostrы iz storublovok* (fires of one-hundred-ruble-bills),²⁷⁶ or even figures such as Dustov who had left only the nails on the walls and cheap carpets on the floor.²⁷⁷ Connected to Bukhara, in June 1983 the ‘Tashkent Affair’ – related to the theft of oil on a large scale – emerged when it appeared that some officials enforced criminal activities maintaining ties with some leaders of law enforcement agencies and the State Committee for oil products. Then, the director of a petrol station S. Zakiryaev, the head of the Traffic Police Department of Tashkent UVD A. Madaminov and 13 tank farms and the gas station employees were arrested, accused of trying to bribe the chairman of the MVD UzSSR Kudrat Ergashev, who was removed from his post on 30 June 1983 – officially for retirement – and was replaced by Nimatzhan Ibragimov.²⁷⁸ As we have seen above, this was not the first time that the KGB investigations were targeting the MVD and its heads. In fact, the Uzbek cotton affair was, as well, part of a struggle between the two agencies and the heads

²⁷³ Gdlyan and Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo*, 20.

²⁷⁴ Plekhanov, “Delo Gdlyana. Anatomiya Politicheskogo Skandala,” 12.

²⁷⁵ Satarov, *Antikorrupsionnaya Politika: Uchebnoye Posobiye*, 46.

²⁷⁶ Gdlyan and Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo*, 9.

²⁷⁷ However, he was arrested for receiving gifts and monetary bribes – as well as support for getting faster construction materials – and for racketing the party raikoms and the consumer unions. Gdlyan, “Piramida,” 58–63; Gdlyan and Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo*, 17.

²⁷⁸ Razzakov, *Delo, Vzorvavshee SSSR*.

of the MVD were seen as the main figures that were receiving bribes to ignore corruption, in Uzbekistan as in the rest of the USSR. In fact, during the investigations it emerged that a large proportion of the bribes was addressed to the Uzbek MVD and, from there, directly to Shchelokov and Churbanov. The political nature of this strategy is therefore undeniable and helps us to perfectly interpret the Uzbek cotton affair – or at least its first ‘silent phase’ - in the framework of the Andropovian moralization campaign, in which the MVD became one of the main ‘victims’.

Rashidov’s reaction to these facts was again that of a leader who wanted to downplay the negative phenomena in the republic, showing his commitments to the Andropovian cause. In fact, Rashidov did not want to extend the scope of the case and defined it merely as an isolated case on which the party and state organs would have to clarify. During the CPUz buro meeting of 27 May 1983, Rashidov proceeded to pass the buck, commenting as follows:

the organs that should enforce the law often lack a sense of responsibility and there are people who go on the road of corruption, such as the executives of the Bukhara OBKhSS UVD, of the Khorezm oblispolkom, and the Tashkent gorispolkom. These people should be involved in the struggle against theft of socialist property. [...Then,] the MVD, the Prokuratura, the MJ and the SC UzSSR do not work in a sufficiently active way to strengthen the fight against corruption, speculation, and theft and must improve collaboration with the state and people's control organs, improving the effectiveness of the CPSU work that is committed to the fight against theft of socialist property.²⁷⁹

However, Rashidov was probably furious and tried to play the card of the moralization campaign in his favor, blaming those figures who were at the base of the investigations for the negative results in the republic. The Uzbek leader was still powerful enough to push through the removal of the second secretary CPUz Leonid Grekov²⁸⁰ on 8 July 1983. At that post arrived Timofey Nikolaevich Osetrov, an expert politician who had served from 1970 as First Deputy Chairman of the SM UzSSR. This initial pyrrhic victory for Rashidov was followed

²⁷⁹ Prot. 64/1983, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 152, d. 2330. ll. 6, 8.

²⁸⁰ Leonid Ivanovich Grekov was the Second Secretary CPUz (1976-1983). When the corruption allegations were confirmed and the CC CPSU was ready to launch a wider anticorruption campaign over Uzbekistan, Grekov was dismissed from his post and sent to Sofia as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the USSR in Bulgaria. A.A. Gromyko et al., “Grekov, Leonid Ivanovich,” *Diplomaticheskii Slovar’*. Tom 1 (Moskva: Nauka, 1986), 271; Carlisle, “Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev.”

by another incredible dismissal: on 24 August 1983, the head of the Uzbek KGB Melkumov was also dismissed from his post and transferred as Minister-counsellor at the Soviet Embassy in Prague. As well, his deputy, General Valentin N. Lagunov was also transferred to Tambov on 30 November and the rest of the Uzbek KGB top investigative department was substantially pensioned off.²⁸¹ Probably, Rashidov believed that the dismissal of Melkumov could ease the tensions in the republic. Improbably, the harder General-Mayor Golovin took up the post of chairman of the KGB UzSSR²⁸² and appealed to the General Prokuror to take the investigation and not to let the local authorities influence it in any way.²⁸³ In fact, from April 1983, the prokuratura USSR was warned of the KGB cases in Uzbekistan but was still not instructed to follow them. This precautionary line – to send the KGB on to make preliminary inquiries then allow the central prokuratura to immediately carry out the criminal cases – seemed to be necessary in a republic where – as we have said – the party controlled the security apparatus and justice could be readily bought and sold. Indeed, the ‘Uzbek cotton affairs’ had been investigated by exogenous agents such as the centrally controlled KGB, the central Prokuratura of the USSR. Additionally, the most important trials – also considering the rank of the accused – took place not in normal courts but in the SC USSR. Thus, to send exogenous investigative groups from Moscow seemed to be the preferable solution, even considering that the Genprokuror USSR seemed not to trust the professionalism of the UzSSR investigators.²⁸⁴

Therefore, on 18 August 1983 the investigations over the criminal case n. 18/58115-83 (the "Bukhara affair") passed from the KGB to the USSR prokuratura, which created a special investigation team that became operative on September 1.²⁸⁵ The original investigative group on special cases was

²⁸¹ According to Gdlyan, the first victims of the cotton affair were the workers of KGB UzSSR, also considering that some of them were sent to Afghanistan. Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, 119; Gdlyan and Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo*, 22.

²⁸² Vladimir Aleksandrovich Golovin has been a long careerist in the central KGB USSR. He chaired the KGB UzSSR until his death in 29 January 1989 and practically stayed for the whole ‘Uzbek affairs’.

²⁸³ Personal interview with Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan, Moscow, 17 October 2014

²⁸⁴ In February 1982, the Prokuratura and the PCC USSR revealed deficiencies and shortcomings in the prosecuting apparatus, revealing that in the Prokuratura UzSSR the majority of investigators and prosecutors in the republic was basically low qualified. GARF, f. 8131, op. 28, d. 5972.

²⁸⁵ Nevertheless, "Five investigators from Uzbekistan's KGB continued to provide assistance in the investigation of the case until November 1985." *Nedelya*, 17, 24-30

composed of three people: Telman Gdlyan²⁸⁶ at the head, Nikolai Ivanov as the effective deputy of Gdlyan, and Ravil Tuktarov, whose responsibility it was to examine the first 14 volumes of materials. This was the original formation of one of the most famous investigative groups of Soviet history – something comparable to the Italian ‘Pool di Milano’ during the *Tangentopoli* affair – that just six years later was composed of more than 200 investigators and collected about one thousand volumes of materials.²⁸⁷ According to Razzakov, the investigations were transferred at the very moment that the Bukhara case was considered almost over and Gdlyan was asked to enlarge the case. Conversely, Gdlyan revealed to us that within the space of just three months after arriving in Uzbekistan he was asked by the Genprokuror to end the case as soon as possible,²⁸⁸ while in the meantime his investigative group was collecting other materials in order to enlarge the case and to hit the main culprits.

Despite the narrative and the myths that were later created about Gdlyan’s legendary groups, we should remember that it was the most famous but not the only team of the USSR prokuratura that was working on the case. As well, there were hundreds of inspections that exposed the ‘cotton’ situation in the kolkhozes and sovkhoses of the republic to monitor the harvest season. In autumn 1983, the Prokuratura USSR informed the SM UzSSR about the disappearance of large amounts of cotton, as well as the failure in the use of machinery and defoliants detecting waste and inefficiency – such as the presence of cattle in the cotton fields – and the fact that several people in September and October did not show up at their official offices because they were working in the cotton fields. Seeing the tip of the iceberg, on 7 October, the prokuratura committed to broaden the investigation and by 14 October 1983, more than 500 controls had been organized, of which 110 were in

April 1989, p. 7 in FBIS, “JPRS-UPA-89-038. Soviet Union - Political Affairs - 8 June 1989,” 1989, 50.

²⁸⁶ In his very pleasing and well written books, Telman Gdlyan offers good reconstruction of the investigations in Uzbekistan and his experience as prosecutor: Gdlyan and Dodolyev, *Piramida-1*; Gdlyan and Dodolyev, *Mafiya Vremën Bezzakoniya*; Gdlyan and Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo*.

²⁸⁷ Nikolay Ivanov, *Sledovatel’ iz Provintsii* (Sankt Peterburg: Shans, 1995), 59; Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev’s Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 221; Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L’aigle Bicéphale*, 16.

²⁸⁸ Personal interview with Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan, Moscow, 17 October 2014

kolkhozes and sovkhozes.²⁸⁹ Just a couple of weeks later, the first results of the investigations were produced.²⁹⁰

Although Gdlyan and Ivanov were not the only investigators in the Uzbek cotton affairs, their role in the initial stage of the Bukhara affairs was the most prominent. In fact, they were finally able to involve even the FS of Bukhara oblast (and Rashidov's friend) Abduvakhid Karimovich Karimov²⁹¹ who was dismissed from his post on 4 January 1984, replaced by Ismail Dzhabbarov, and transferred to Tashkent where he covered a minor post as deputy minister of land reclamation and water resources. The Gdlyan's group had collected evidences against his criminal activity²⁹² and organized an operation to give him to justice. On 11 August 1984, when the 'Emir emeritus' was holding a party in his mountain dacha in Karshi, in the middle of the night, a squad headed by Ivanov arrested him. In that incredible night,²⁹³ Karimov was deported by helicopter to Tashkent – and later to Moscow's Lefortovo prison – and his

²⁸⁹ On that occasion, there had been verbal reprimands, and 54 case had been reported to the party, 166 people removed from their duties, 52 people accused of making errors in the state budget, 16 criminal cases had been opened, and official complaints against 74 people had been lodged. Memorandum n° 7/31-83 of the Prokuratura USSR (UzSSR department) to the SM UzSSR. TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 6190, ll. 69-73.

²⁹⁰ 137 people were found responsible for bad discipline, 167 culprits of violating law, 537 punished with administrative sanctions, and 15 criminal cases made against 23 people. These cases were about individual and small quantitative of cotton that had stolen or not been harvested. Memorandum n° 7/34-83 (28 October 1983) of the Prokuratura USSR (UzSSR department) to the SM UzSSR. TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 6190, l. 74.

²⁹¹ Karimov had served as the FS Bukhara obkom since February 1977. In January 1984 he was removed from his post, expelled from the party and arrested on 11 August. He was sentenced to death by firing squad for abusing his office by systematically taking large bribes from officials (for about 6 million rubles) and by bribing a number of persons himself. Karimov was finally pardoned. *Los Angeles Times*, 4 June 1987. Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 90; Coulloudon, "Russia Adrift. Twenty Years of Anticorruption Campaigns," 254; Timofeev, *Russia's Secret Rulers*, 56.

²⁹² By June 1984, Gdlyan's group had evidence of Karimov's bribes in the amount of half a million rubles, and of Ergashev's bribes for 380 thousand, as well as of other abuses. Gdlyan and Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo*, 29.

²⁹³ Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, 122; Razzakov, *Delo, Vzrovavshee SSSR*; Razzakov, *Korrupsiya v Politbyuro: Delo "Krasnogo Uzbeka"*; Gdlyan and Dodolyev, *Piramida-1*; Gdlyan and Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo*; Ivanov, *Sledovatel' Iz Provintsii*.

treasure confiscated in the following days.²⁹⁴ On 13 Odylov, a mysterious figure we will analyze in the next paragraphs, was arrested and on 15 August, just four days after Karimov's arrest, General-Lieutenant Kudrat Ergashev – the former chairman of the MVD UzSSR – committed suicide.²⁹⁵ This serious episode was just the first of a trail of blood and suspicious suicides among many eminent figures who wanted to save their honor and the heritage of their families.²⁹⁶ The most famous case is the suspicious death (officially acknowledged as a suicide) of the first deputy chairman of the MVD UzSSR, Gennady Davydov, who was found on the night of 17-18 May 1985 with three bullets in his head. Usually it only takes one, but perhaps his will to die had allowed him to shoot a further two bullets after the first had killed him. In any case, the Bukharan 'soap opera' did not end there. In fact, even Shamsi Abdullaevich Rakhimov, chairman of the Bukhara UVD was arrested for bribery and in May 1986 sentenced to 14 years in prison.²⁹⁷

As we have seen, besides the seriousness of the facts, the Bukharan affair kept a very internal dimension and was not publicized in great detail in the Soviet press. In fact, the information of these facts emerged only in the late '80s during the 'Gdlyan-Ivanov affair' that we will analyze in the sixth chapter. This first story was probably the main case that remained almost confined in the judicial dimension and its politicization would emerge later, during the next stages of the cotton affair. As we had the occasion to examine, at the beginning of the Bukhara affair only low-middle level personnel were taken, while the main 'bosses' of the corruption machine emerged only after autumn 1983. What was the connection between these trends and these dates? What happened later? As we have seen, even the powerful KGB found many problems in conducting investigations in Uzbekistan where high-level officials

²⁹⁴ The treasury of Karimov was hidden in Shakrisab by a trustee nicknamed Kulol-bobo, and in an operation on 11 November 1984, milk cans filled with jewels, asbestos cement pipes packed with gold coins, coffee cans with rings and necklaces, for a value of more than 6 million rubles were discovered under the trees. For this seizure a helicopter was even used. His treasure corresponded to more than 100 kilograms of gold, more than 5,000 imperial mint gold coins, about 12,000 jewelry items, five cars, 11 TV sets, 20 stereo systems, hundreds of furs, tableware and tea-sets, chandeliers, coats, leather jackets, and millions in cash. Gdlyan and Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo*, 43–50; Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, 123.

²⁹⁵ Mukhammed-Babur Malikov, "Uzbekistan: A View from the Opposition," *Problems of Post-Communism* 42, no. 2 (1995).

²⁹⁶ Nashe Kino, *Kremlevskie Pokhorony. Sharaf Rashidov*.

²⁹⁷ Gdlyan and Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo*, 25.

enjoyed the political protection of Rashidov. Things changed when the 'Uzbek khan' left the stage.

3.3.4 An unhappy ending

September 1983 was a dramatic moment for the FS CPUz. After a hard battle against the KGB and an initial pyrrhic victory in the republic – the removal of Grekov and Melkumov – the investigative teams of the USSR prokuratura were spread, and Gdlyan took a case that was directly threatening the stability of Rashidov's regime. The Uzbek leader was prompted by Moscow to resign from his office, and a possible succession proved highly problematic when his predestined successor Khodzhaev suddenly died.²⁹⁸ Another bad omen arrived on 21 September 1983 when the famous Machine operator Tursunoi Akhunova from the Kirov kolkhoz died at only 47 years old. Akhunova had become a symbol of the Rashidovian cotton triumph and her death was something of a portent of the end of the Rashidov era.²⁹⁹

While the first effects began to bite in the Tashkent regime, the CC CPUz kept his agenda full of commitments, and on September 11 he left the republic for an official visit in Ethiopia and prepared to welcome delegations from Mongolia (23 September) and from Germany (28 September) that were coming to Tashkent. At the same time, as usual, the Uzbek leader started on October 1 his usual period of business trips around the republic to supervise and to encourage the local cotton pickers: on October 1 he gave a speech at the Plenum of the Syrdarya obkom, on October 6 did the same at the Plenum of the Jizzakh and on October 13 he participated in the Plenum of the Navoi obkom. In the meantime, on 10 October 1983, the Secretariat CPUz made a budget of losses due to violations that had been discovered in the kolkhoz and in the sovkhoz of the republic - especially in Samarkand - revealing that:

In the Samarkand oblast, many kolkhozes and sovkhozes purchased cattle from the people at market prices and causing losses of more than 2 million rubles in 1981 and about 4 million rubles in 1982. In many kolkhozes and sovkhozes appear violations of financial activity, [...] statements and reports by workers in the party organs and in the soviets. Just in the years 1981-1983, the CC CPSU, the CC CPUz and the Samarkand obkom received 670 reports and statements

²⁹⁸ PV, 20288, 214, 18 September 1983.

²⁹⁹ Tursunoi Akhunova was a sort of Uzbek Stakhanov and she became famous in the late '50s, when in one season she collected 210 tons of cotton. She was twice awarded with the Hero of Socialist Labor (1959 and 1978), three Lenin orders (1959, 1975 and 1978) and a Lenin Prize (1967). Razzakov, *Delo, Vzorvavshee SSSR*.

[to denounce these events. Therefore], the debt of the kolkhozes is 38 million rubles and the debt of sovkhos is 54 million. In 1981, 1982 and in the first nine months of 1983, in the oblast have been replaced 95 directors of the kolkhozes and sovkhoses, that is 49% of the total³⁰⁰.

Substantially, the CPUz revealed evidence of malfeasance in the republic and a first purge was conducted against the Samarkand agrarian leadership. This was an event that was as curious as it was important because it was carried out by the Rashidov leadership, a politician who was supposed to help and represent the Samarkand/Jizzak group. Then, on 17 October Rashidov received the CPSU secretary Kapitonov who came to Tashkent probably trying to convince him to not delay his retirement. Together they traveled the republic, visited the Andijan and Tashkent regions and on 19 October they came to visit that aircraft plant that just a year before had offered Brezhnev the worst of Uzbek hospitality.

In those days, Rashidov was visibly very tired and seemingly depressed. Also at the buro meeting of 21 October 1983, one of the last party meetings attended by the increasingly nervous Rashidov, the pitch of the allegations became even more heated. On this occasion, the party acknowledged that mistakes had been made and that the republic was affected by the spread practice of making falsifications and additions. The shown data presaged a warning framework:

in the fight against counterfeiting in the first semester of 1983, had been verified data of 1567 companies, institutions and organizations of the republic. [...] Controls showed that were frequent episodes of falsification detecting in 34% of checked cases and only 7% of which would be unintentional. [...] in Surkhandarya falsifications amounted for 12.7%, 11.9% in Namangan, 10.9% in Fergana and 9.5% in Samarkand.³⁰¹

The emerging circumstances and the doubting messages from Moscow worried the Uzbek leader who felt the psychological pressure of the party and of the KGB, most clearly represented by Andropov and his ally and former KGB official, Gaydar Aliyev, whose name became much more famous in the '90s when he became the President of Azerbaijan. At that time, Aliyev was a full member of the Politburo and had a strong influence on the KGB. A not totally fictional version of these facts – also confirmed by the impressions of Ryzhkov - claims that Aliyev had a role in warning Rashidov about the fact that Andropov

³⁰⁰ Prot. 59/1983, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 152, d. 2363, ll. 8-9.

³⁰¹ Prot. 75/1983, RGASPI, f. 17., op. 152, d. 2341, l. 23.

was preparing a judicial campaign against him and maybe also in initiating – or at least threatening – investigations in the UzSSR.³⁰² Apparently, the influential Aliyev wanted to focus on Uzbekistan in order to divert the attention of the moralization campaign from his republic. In fact, it was estimated that Azerbaijan had – proportionally - the highest corruption and patrimonialism rates of the whole USSR,³⁰³ and this was not something new.³⁰⁴ However, Aliyev was able to successfully cover up an eventual ‘Azeri cotton scandal’³⁰⁵ and was

³⁰² Dilip Hiro, *Inside Central Asia: A Political and Cultural History of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Iran* (London & New York: Overlook TP, 2011), 131.

³⁰³ Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 86; Satarov, *Antikorruptsiennaya Politika: Uchebnoye Posobiye*, 44–45; Zemtsov, *Partiya Ili Mafiya. Razvorovannaya Respublika*.

³⁰⁴ In 1969, the FS Azerbaijan party "Veli Akhundov, was eventually blamed for the economic crisis, accused of corruption, and removed in 1969. Akhundov's replacement was Heydar Aliyev [...] who had climbed through the ranks of the KGB in Nakhichevan. Aliyev promoted growth of nonpetroleum-related industry but also consolidated Azerbaijani control of dominant positions in the political and economic administration. Though appointed to root out corruption, he replaced Akhundov's corruption with his own patronage system. In 1982 Aliyev became the first Azerbaijani appointed to the Politburo, but he was ousted from that post in 1987 because of his toleration of corruption and opposition to Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms." Bernard A Cook, "Azerbaijan," in *Europe since 1945: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Bernard A Cook (New York-London: Garland, 2001), 70; Viktor Andrianov and Guseynbala Miralamov, *Geydar Aliyev* (Moskva: Molodaya Gvardiya, 2005).

³⁰⁵ In 1978, during a session of the SS Azerbaijan, Gambay Aleskerovich Mamedov – the former head of the investigation department of the republican KGB, prosecutor of Azerbaijan, and a veteran of the Battle of Stalingrad – came unexpectedly to the podium session and denounced the criminal responsibility of Aliyev for the deficiency in agriculture and industry in the republic. In particular, he referred to 'additions' in the Azeri cotton production system – which had been unable to produce the claimed annual production of one million tons of raw cotton – and corruption in the upper echelons of the republican authorities. Aliyev was able to cover the case up and Mamedov was discredited by a campaign of anonymous letters that denounced his honesty and finally he was removed from his post, exiled to Moscow, and three years later expelled from the party. All the evidence of his investigations was destroyed and the episode forgotten. Only recently have opposition circles in Azerbaijan resurrected the case in order to discredit the Aliyev 'dynasty'. Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, 176–87; Azadliq Radiosu, "Gambay Mamedov Protiv Geydara Aliyeva," *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, October 14, 2009; Gordon, "Byvshiy Sledovatel' Po Osobo Vazhnym Delam Pri General'nom Prokurore SSSR Vladimir Kalinichenko: 'Vseshil'nyy Ministr MVD SSSR Shchelokov Prinyal Resheniye O Moyem Fizicheskom Ustraneni. V Otvet Na Eto

at that point riding the moralization campaign against another veteran of the Brezhnevian regime.

Also the writer Georgy Markov, who met Rashidov in those late October days, confirmed that the Uzbek leader was very depressed and visibly worried.³⁰⁶ The same impression is given by Ryzhkov who at the end of October joined a Soviet delegation to Vietnam headed by Aliyev³⁰⁷ – one of the main trustees of Andropov, show hospitalization was imminent. The delegation halted for a technical stop in Tashkent and:

We arrived, we were welcomed by Rashidov, without much celebration. Then they took us to the residence where there was a banquet. There were few people, about 10-15 on one side and we were 5-6 on the other. The lunch went well. I was sitting next to him [Rashidov], and in front of us there was Aliyev. In that moment, I noticed he changed his mood. He was a completely different person. Not that cheering, charming and elegant man I had seen in Moscow [with a] funny and interesting [attitude]. He was visibly depressed and silent. I had the feeling as if there was something depressing him, as he was seriously ill, or something else. However, it was pretty obvious that he was depressed. The dinner was over, we spent the night, the morning after we left [for Vietnam]. He accompanied us to the airport and the atmosphere was the same [heavy]. He was not himself. He said that he also had to make a trip in the republic's oblasts because the cotton harvest had already begun. That's how we left. Two days later in Vietnam, we were informed that he was dead. Then, there were rumors that he committed suicide: For me it is still not clear, and, to be honest, I have never been interested in this issue. Apparently, someone knows, but as they say, 'it is not known if it's worth digging up the past.'³⁰⁸

During his visits to the cotton fields in Karakalpakya, Rashidov suddenly felt bad: he had a heart attack about seven o'clock in the evening on 30 October. His physician Boris Naumov noted a sharp re-extensive myocardial infarction, in which there was an acute sharp heart disorder. "Rashidov could no longer be saved, and the next day at five o'clock in the morning he died. [...] Death

Andropov Prikazal gruppe 'Al'fa' menya Okhranyat''"; Maksim Solopov, "Ubiystvo Na Zhdanovskoy. Kak Smert' Mayora KGB Ot Ruk Militzionerov Privela K Krizisu Pravookhranitel'noy Sistemy SSSR," *Mediazona*, March 29, 2016.

³⁰⁶ Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 219.

³⁰⁷ The idea that Aliyev, on behalf of Andropov, discussed with Rashidov the latter's resignation and that the Gensek had already collected a full dossier on Uzbekistan to fire the FS was mentioned at the Tashkent meeting on 27 October. *Nashe Kino, Kremlevskie Pokhorony. Sharaf Rashidov; Razzakov, Delo, Vzorvavshee SSSR*.

³⁰⁸ Personal interview with Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov, Moscow, 22 December 2014.

occurred in a train. During his trips, he usually slept not at the hotel and stayed in a cabin-wagon, where he had his wife, a doctor, and a personal chef.”³⁰⁹ In the official medical report it is stated that he suffered from

coronary artery disease and ischemia, atherosclerosis of the coronary vessels, cardiosclerosis post-heart attack. On October 30, 1983 at 19 had an acute infarction, repeated and extensive infarction and as a result has happened an acute cardiac event and 31 October at 5 in the morning his heart stopped.³¹⁰

Then, on 31 October 1983 – 22 years to the day after Stalin's body was removed from Lenin's Tomb, symbolizing the end on an era – the UzSSR was shocked by a tragic political event. The passing of a leader who had ruled the republic for almost a quarter of century was also the end of an era. As was already mentioned by Ryzhkov, Rashidov's death recalls the similar and mysterious deceases of Fedor Kulakov in 1978, and Pyotr Masherov in 1980 who seemed to be worried just days before their deaths.³¹¹ Since the very first moments, stories about his suicide – or even his murder – started to circulate in most parts of Soviet regime, in the tabloid press, and even in contemporary reconstructions.³¹² Even Ligachev gives the impression that something was strange because during their meeting at the CC Rashidov had appeared "in robust good health."³¹³ In order to formulate a credible hypothesis it is better for us to proceed by way of Occam's razor, to say that these rumors came directly from those opponents who wanted to discredit him as guilty and were then echoed in a society that is generally prone to conspiracy theories. In fact, there is no evidence to suggest his committed suicide, and also his colleagues in Uzbekistan and in the CC CPSU – such as his alleged rivals Nishanov³¹⁴ and

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ PV, 20324, 250, 1 November 1983, p. 1.

³¹¹ Ofira Seliktar, *Politics, Paradigms, and Intelligence Failures: Why so Few Predicted the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 95.

³¹² Mlechin, *Yuriy Andropov. Poslednyaya Nadezhda Rezhima*.

³¹³ Ligachev does not give any judgement on the Rashidov figures but concludes that "the Moloch of deceit, intrigue, and demagoguery ultimately consumes its creators" Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 219.

³¹⁴ Nishanov – who identifies Rashidov as a despot and the cause of Uzbek backwardness – believes that the "servile and obsequious" Rashidov died of natural causes: he did not resist emotional stress and hopelessness, or fear looming revelations, and those who were there in the train failed to help him. Nishanov, *Derev'ya Zeleneyut Do Metelei : Rafik Nishanov Rasskazyvaet Marine Zavade I Yurii Kulikovu*, 216, 227.

Gdlyan³¹⁵ – exclude this hypothesis. However, is probable that Rashidov felt the psychological pressure of the situation in the republic, and he understood that the game was going to be over for him.³¹⁶ As Nishanov comments, Rashidov was like a “hovering cloud”³¹⁷ who had just suffered a stressful political condition and psychological conflict with Andropov. Added to this, his poor health – on account of his injuries on the front and his cardiac illness, which required a strict diet – and his practice of making numerous trips to visit cotton fields, his very early morning starts, and even the head injuries he got during the Brezhnev visit in Tashkent, it is clear he had sufficient pre-conditions for death. As the Russian historian Yaroslav Listov commented, to work as a mad man – as Rashidov did – could be seen as an indirect way of committing suicide. Then, Nikita Petrov, historian of the society “memorial”, said that it

³¹⁵ Gdlyan – a figure who could opportunistically use the argument of suicide against ‘the Uzbek Khan’ – totally excludes any conspiracy against Rashidov's life. He told me that Rashidov “died of natural causes [...] probably he knew that everything could finish bad and perhaps this concern fostered his death”. Gdlyan also excludes the hypothesis of murder saying that “It is not true, because he died in the presence of his relatives, in their own hands. This is just to say that [he died] close to those people who were not interested in his death and who knew that the end of Rashidov could weaken their position. [In front of such allegations] the FS of Karakalpakya, Kalibek Komalovich Komalov, a very intelligent man, laughed, saying that these rumors are taken from the clouds and have nothing to do with reality. His daughter, after all, was married to the son of Rashidov. It's evident that they had a good relationship. All these rumors about the death of Rashidov, have nothing to do with the truth.” Personal interview with Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan, Moscow, 17 October 2014. Conversely, Ivanov – who was the conspiracy theorist of the group – did not exclude the possibility of suicide or murder. *Nashe Kino, Kremlevskie Pokhorony. Sharaf Rashidov.*

³¹⁶ In a historic documentary for Russian TV the last days of the ‘Uzbek Khan’ are reconstructed, probably with some element of fiction,. On 29 October, the FS Khorezm Khudaibergenov reported to Rashidov that his oblast had harvested 300,000 tons. The day after, from the train he used to travel around Uzbekistan during the cotton harvest season, Rashidov called Andropov to announce this victory and he was expecting to hear from the Gensek some praising words, but Andropov answered very drily “we will check your information.” From that moment Rashidov started to feel bad. The documentary also reports versions of his suicide – without providing any significant elements – and the journalist Akram Murtazaev – one of the last people to had a contact with him by phone for an interview on Komsomolskaya Pravda – declared that Rashidov was calm at the phone and he is skeptical about suicide. *Ibid.*

³¹⁷ Nishanov, *Derev'ya Zeleneyut Do Metelei: Rafik Nishanov Rasskazyvaet Marine Zavade I Yurii Kulikovu*, 216.

was a natural death and after Rashidov's death the politburo warned its member to take better care of their health.³¹⁸

Rashidov's official post-mortem released on PV on 1 November 1983 – signed by both Soviet and Uzbek party and state authorities³¹⁹ – praised him as a devoted Soviet figure, "an eminent personality who spent all his life in the great activity of building communism,"³²⁰ stating:

In all parts of the party, state and society, Sh. R. Rashidov showed wholeheartedly his dedication to communism, [his] will and perseverance in the realization of Party policy. He has been characterized by a sense of innovation, by the ability to solve the problems of life of the party and the state in a creative way, to gather and organize people, leading the organization of the republic party for nearly a quarter of a century. He has dedicated his rich life experience, organizational development skills of economy and culture in the republic. During these years, strong industrial and technical-scientific potential have been created in Uzbekistan, leading the development of new branches of industry, and agriculture has become greater and mechanized. Uzbekistan has become the main base for the country's cotton. Sharaf Rashidovich Rashidov is a famous writer and journalist. A series of novels, stories, theoretical works on current problems of literature, international education and friendship of the peoples were born of his pen. He is the member of the writers' union of the USSR. For the great merits in front of the Communist Party and the Soviet state, Sh. R. Rashidov was twice awarded with the Hero of Socialist Labor. He also got several state honors: Order of Lenin, Order of the October Revolution, the red banner of labor, red star, a mark of honor and other medals. The venerated memory of Sharaf Rashidovich Rashidov, loyal son of the Communist Party and the Soviet

³¹⁸ Nashe Kino, *Kremlevskie Pokhorony. Sharaf Rashidov*.

³¹⁹ The document was signed by Yu.V. Andropov, G.A. Aliyev, M.S. Gorbachev, V.V. Grishin, A.A. Gromyko, D.A. Kunayev, G.V. Romanov, N.A. Tikhonov, D.F. Ustinov, K.U. Chernenko, V.V. Shcherbitskii, V.I. Vorotnikov, P.N. Demichev, V.I. Dolgikh, V.V. Kuznetsov, B.N. Ponomarev, M.S. Solomentsev, E.A. Shevardnadze, M.V. Zimyanin, I.V. Kapitonov, K.V. Rusakov, N.I. Ryzhkov, T.N. Menteshashvili, E. Ajetmuratov, I.G. Anisimkin, Yu.P. Maksimov, V.K. Mikhailov, M.M. Musakhanov, T.N. Osetrov, A.U. Salimov, I.B. Usmanhodzhayev, N.D. Khudayberdiyev, K. Kamalov, N. M. Makhmudova, U. Umarov, R. Ashuraliyev, R.G. Gaipov, V.P. Yesin, M. Kamalov, A. Karimov, A.K. Karimov, S. Mamarasulov, Kh. Umarov, V.A. Khajdurov, M. Khudaibergenov, Kh. A. Shagazatov, G.M. Markov, A.S. Sadykov, Kh. Rustamov, N.P. Zheleznov, D. Yusupov, S.A. Azimov. PV, 20324, 250, 1 November 1983, p. 1.

³²⁰ PV, 20324, 250, 1 November 1983, p. 1.

people, flaming patriot and internationalist, will always remain in the hearts of the Soviet people.³²¹

On 1 November in Tashkent, the farewell to Rashidov³²² - held in the Palace of Friendship - was attended by thousands of people who formed long queues to pay homage Rashidov's body and occupied for hours the center of the Uzbek capital.³²³ Then, a special commission was created to organize a state funeral,³²⁴ which was held on November 2 in the central Lenin square of Tashkent just in front of the Lenin Museum in a very solemn ceremony. On that occasion the candidate member of the politburo Vladimir Dolgikh participated, and also from Moscow Khudayberdiyev read a eulogy almost in tears where he kept promising that the country would provide the requested 6 million. On that occasion, also Usmankhodzhaev exclaimed:

The wise, greatly experienced comrade, friend, brother that we have loved so much for his great dedication to the activity of the revolution – with which he had the same age - the rare goals, the heightened sense of responsibility, the undoubted modesty is no longer with us. it is impossible to list everything that Sharaf Rashidovich has done for the organization of the Republic Party, which he had ruled for nearly a quarter century of our native Uzbekistan.³²⁵ [Then it seems that he informally exclaimed] “his glorious deeds, his bright examples will remain with us forever.”³²⁶

Rashidov's body was buried on the central square in Tashkent, close to the Lenin memorial where the huge Lenin statue stood. Then, a project to build a memorial complex was developed, which could become a place of pilgrimage

³²¹ PV, 20324, 250, 1 November 1983, p. 1.

³²² At Rashidov's farewell, the head of the cotton brigade of the sovkhos 'Ulyanov' Kh. Rustamov, the head of the Komsomol youth brigade Tashkent aviation production association E. Mirkamilov, the President of the AN UzSSR A. Sadykov, the FS of Turkmenistan M.G. Gapurov, the Commander of the Turkestan military district, the General Yuri Maksimov, and the secretary of the Union of Soviet writers A. Ananiev also participated. Tsifrovaya Biblioteka Ukrainy, "Pokhorony Sharaf Rashidovicha Rashidova" (Kiev, 2013).

³²³ PV, 20325, 251, 2 November 1983, p. 1.

³²⁴ The decision to organize a state funeral for Rashidov was announced with the resolution n° 628 (31 October 1983) of the CC CPUz, Presidium of the SS UzSSR and the SM UzSSR. It was implemented by the CPUz buro of 3 November 1983. Prot. 76/1983, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 152, d. 2342, l. 38.

³²⁵ PV, 20326, 252, 3 November 1983, p. 1.

³²⁶ Razzakov, *Delo, Vzorvavshee SSSR*.

for the workers.³²⁷ Just after the demise of the Uzbek leader it seemed that the whole republic had lost its most spiritual guide, a sort of semi-god to whom everybody was devoted. Just in the aftermath of Rashidov's funeral, measures to protect his memory were implemented, such as renaming streets in Tashkent and Jizzak, entitling to him a raion of the Kashkadarya oblast – Sharafrashidovsky – and three higher education institutions (in Tashkent and Jizzak), as well as the renaming of a textile plant in Tashkent, a kolkhoz in the Karakalpak ASSR, the regional library of Jizzak, a memorial room in the State Museum of the peoples of the Uzbek SSR. Moreover, several plaques on buildings in Tashkent, Jizzak, and Samarkand were set.³²⁸ Rashidov died in a very delicate moment for the Soviet political life when also Andropov – who has been permanently hospitalized from August 1983 – was entering his terminal phase. Despite his short reign, Andropov's legacy survived.

³²⁷ Nashe Kino, *Kremlevskie Pokhorony. Sharaf Rashidov.*

³²⁸ Razzakov, *Delo, Vzorvavshee SSSR.*

4 THE SYSTEMIC PHASE (1984-1985)

*You see, this is the first general law of real socialism: leaders lie, always, even when it is not necessary. The second is that agriculture does not work. Never, in any of these countries. Third, pay attention – he said this to me very seriously – communist candies always stick to the paper.*¹ – Berlinguer

*The bribe is a dangerous enemy of the revolution and of the new system*² – Osetrov

*“Ты не посадишь – тебя посадят. Ты не уберешь – тебя уберут”;*³ *“Не подмажешь – не поедешь”*⁴ – Russian proverbs

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Rashidov tried to ride the Andropovian moralization campaign in order to oust his rivals or to blame his opponents, and to keep scandals as limited and isolated episodes that would not taint the healthy image of the republic. However, he proved to be unable to control the indirect effects that the various campaigns of the KGB, the prokuratura and the PCC had on the CPUz and, indeed, the republican administrative apparatus as a whole. In fact, the emergence of these scandals sensitized the Uzbek party to the need to clean – or maybe to purge – the

¹ The FS of the Italian communist party, Enrico Berlinguer, to the young secretary Massimo D'Alema in Moscow on 13 February 1984, before entering the mortuary of Yuri Andropov. Massimo D'Alema, *A Mosca L'ultima Volta : Enrico Berlinguer E Il 1984* (Roma: Donzelli, 2004), 61.

² The second secretary of the CPUz, T.N. Osetrov, in the aftermath of the XVI plenum. Prot. 18/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2509, l. 18.

³ “If you don't pitch [them], you will be pitched [put in jail], if you don't pick them, you will be picked [taken out].” This is a reinterpretation of a famous Russian joke told in Khrushchevian times about corn: Почему опасно иметь дело с кукурузой? Ее не посадишь - тебя посадят! Ее не уберешь - тебя уберут!

⁴ “If you don't grease [the wheels, the cart] won't go.”

malffeasance that had been diffused inside the party and the state. In this moment of agony for patrimonialism, Moscow claimed to identify the responsible of the situation and, on the aftermath of Rashidov's death, a self-destructive witch hunt began within the CPUz to identify scapegoats in a moment when local scandals turned into a systemic case at party and state level. However, Rashidov died before the systems he had built over the course of 24 years collapsed under a series of exogenous and endogenous factors. With the death of the 'khan', the 'silent phase' was almost over and the CPUz entered a stage with a new FS, who tried to keep the stability of the party and to proceed with systemic internal purges. The new head of the Republic did not understand that in trying to confront the patrimonial system he would further destroy the existing system of management. Patrimonialism was under attack. The former was done because the falsification/corruption cases were no longer considered to be local and isolated but rather as a republican problem. Was this the effect of an internal struggle for Rashidov succession or maybe was it the result of the new aggressive policy that Moscow was enforcing to retake control over the republic? Both interpretations are pertinent to the Uzbek cotton affair and, as we will see, the first depended on the effectivity of the second. Substantially, after Rashidov demise, the role of Moscow in setting the Uzbek agenda increased drastically and the CPUz ended to execute the central orders, while, at the same time, the new establishment was blaming the former regime and searching for sacrificial victims to be exhibited. The local apparatus was trembling.

4.1 The Post-Rashidov UzSSR

As we have noted, after Rashidov's death, the 'Uzbek cotton affair' essentially took on a systemic character. The criminal cases themselves were separate and often unrelated to cotton. Nevertheless, the new FS CPUz – who in this first stage did not deny the prestigious role of Sharaf Rashidovich – chose not to further minimize their relevance and progressively started to present these cases as a systemic problem to be dealt with inside the party. His strategy was again functional to his legitimation and assured him – in this phase – a semblance of stability. However, the consequences would become dramatic and uncontrollable as the case would spread among the public.

4.1.1 The rise of *Sekretar nol'*

In the final years of Soviet Uzbekistan there were many jokes about the fact that there was only ever an eternal and charismatic first secretary (Rashidov) and his successors could only aspire, at best, to be a *sekretar nol'* ('zeroth secretary'). Indeed, this nickname was given to the next FS CPUz and reflected his low charisma,⁵ his servility towards Moscow, and maybe his weakness within the various factions of the republican party. Indeed, the search for Rashidov's successor was a complex event: in that moment, the CC cadres had the delicate task of designating a candidate who could strengthen Soviet sovereignty in Uzbekistan and continue the investigations in order to remove all of those who had been guilty of crimes against socialist property. Most importantly, the CPSU wanted to invest in a controllable figure that could brace Moscow grip's over the Central Asian republic.

In the immediate aftermath of Rashidov's death, the plenum of the CC CPUz of 3 November 1983 paid a long tribute to the defunct leader. On that occasion, the second secretary, Osetrov, recognized the importance of Rashidov within the party and the state, devoting "all his life and his talent to the construction of communism". He also declared that:

all of us members of the CC are grateful to the fate that gave us the happiness to work together with Rashidov, under his leadership, and to realize the predestination of the Lenin party, [...] In these almost 25 years, Rashidov sincerely and selflessly served the party, the motherland and the Soviet people. [He was a] person of exceptional operability and a tireless worker, a good organizer, and talented manager. A fighter for the general line of the party, strong and virile. During every move, he recalled the ideals of communism [...]. He was an example of modern Leninist leadership [...as it was] reiterated by the Secretary of the CC CPSU Vladimir Ivanovich Dolgikh. All the victories of the workers of the republic for the last two decades, and even today's affairs, shine with the name of Sharaf Rashidovich, his patriotic affairs, and his energy. During these years in Uzbekistan, a strong industrial and technical-scientific potential has been created, leading to a new phase of industrial development. [... furthermore] the republic became the main cotton source for the Soviet state.⁶

⁵ Gdlyan commented: "Usmankhodzhaev with his quality could not be compared with Rashidov. Rashidov was smarter and cunning, while Inamdzhan Buzrukovich was quieter, not harmful and to some extent naive." Personal interview with Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan, Moscow, 17 October 2014.

⁶ Prot. 12/1983, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 152, d. 2320, ll. 4-5.

During this occasion, the aforementioned Inamzhon Buzrukovich Usmankhodzhaev⁷ – a respected Uzbek, devoted communist, and centrally oriented Soviet figure⁸ who was the chairman of the Presidium of the SS UzSSR – was appointed FS of the CPUz⁹ and made a speech that was as ambiguous as it was worrying. In fact, in thanking the participants, the new leader recalled how – to honor the memory of Rashidov – it was necessary to improve the situation of the party, taking a collaborative position with the requests of the Central Party. Specifically, Usmankhodzhaev declared:

⁷ The official biography reported: "Inamzhon Buzrukovich Usmankhodzhaev was born on 21 May 1930 in the village of Baghdad, in the Baghdad raion of the Fergana oblast, Uzbek. Higher education: in 1955 graduated from the Tashkent Polytechnic Institute. Member of the CPSU since 1958. At the XXVI Congress of the Party recruited member of the Central Committee of the CPSU. Member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan. Deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek SSR, honored builder of the Uzbek SSR. Since 1955, he worked as an engineer trust "Ferganavodstroy", head of a construction site trust, the chief architect of the city of Margilan. In 1960-1965, he was the instructor of regional party committee, the head of the regional administration for the construction of the collective farms, the deputy chairman of the regional association "Selhoztehnikav", the chairman of the executive committee of Fergana. From 1965 he was the secretary of the Syrdarya obkom, and from 1969, the instructor of party organizational work of the Central Committee of the CPSU. In 1972-1974 he was the chairman of the Namangan oblispolkom, and in 1974-1978 years, the FS of the Andijan obkom. From December 1978 he became Chairman of the Presidium of the SS UzSSR. Deputy Chairman of the Presidium of the SS USSR. He was awarded the Order of Lenin, the October Revolution, two Orders of Red Banner of Labor, the Order "Badge of Honor" medal." PV, 20327, 253, 4 November 1983, p. 1.

⁸ According to Ligachev, the appointment of Usmankhodzhaev was also welcomed by Chernenko, Gorbachev and the politburo. Ligachev confirmed his appreciation but rejects any accusation of patronage. Yegor Kuzmich Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 242.

⁹ Officially, Osetrov proposed to Andropov the candidacy of Usmankhodzhaev. However, Ligachev discusses the somewhat cryptic circumstances of Usmankhodzhaev appointment and gives the responsibility to Chernenko "who was handling personnel matters for the hospitalize Andropov." Probably with Ligachev's advice and the support of Gorbachev – who "took active part in the review of candidates" – put forth Usmankhodzhaev's candidacy to the Politburo. As was regular practice, at this point the Politburo merely approved the appointment. Cf. Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 220, 242.

Now that with us there is no more our dear Sharaf Rashidovich Rashidov, when his warm heart has stopped beating, we with you, under the leadership of the CC CPSU, will make the general line of the party, concentrating all forces for the resolution of the key problems that the organization of the republic party and also all workers of Uzbekistan have to face. Sincerely trusting in their help to solve these problems and to support the activity of the republic party. In this hard moment, their duty is their vocation, even more to close our ranks around the CPSU. [...] Doing so, it will be the best tribute to the memory of Rashidov who has passed away. [...] Success, of course, is determined by cadres. Improving the selection of cadres, their deployment, their education at Obkom, Gorkom and raikom levels [...] and improving their work in an atmosphere of criticism and self-criticism.¹⁰

This call sounded like a warning to the whole party and seemed to announce that something immense was going to happen soon. However, in the aftermath of Rashidov's demise, the lack of a determined strategy was clear, and the CPUz was in any case committed to pursuing the predecessor's way. Furthermore, the name of the deceased leader also seemed to be destined to point the way to communism and to resound for the following months. Already during the meeting of CPUz buro on 18 November 1983, the draft of a Rashidov commemoration proposed by CC CPSU was approved.¹¹ Therefore, in this very delicate phase, besides the serious and evident legacies of the former Uzbek regime, Rashidov's name remained a respected symbol in the political life of the UzSSR. In fact, based on the resolution n. 1227 of the CC CPSU and SM USSR of 23 December 1983, during the CPUz buro meeting of 5 January 1984, the resolution n. 9 of the CC CPUz and SM UzSSR that confirmed the memory for the defunct leader and gave his name to many places in the republic was approved.¹² Then, on the same occasion – on the

¹⁰ Prot. 12/1983, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 152, d. 2320, ll. 9-10.

¹¹ Prot. 78/1983, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 152, d. 2344, l. 22.

¹² 1 - entitling Rashidov to the Tashkent textile complex, the regional library of the Jizzakh oblast, the sovkhos 'Madanyat' in the Karauzyakskii raion (Karakalpak ASSR); 2 - placing memorial plaques on the building of the number 68 in the Garman Lopatin street in Tashkent and in the state university building in Samarkand; 3 - building a memorial on the Rashidov's grave – on the duty of Tashkent gorispolkom, ministry of culture and of the union of artists and architects of the UzSSR; 4 - the Tashkent gorispolkom has to rename Ulitsa Uzbekskaya in 'Prospekt imeni Rashidova'; 5 - assigning his name to a ship of the Ministry of the Navy fleet. Prot. 82/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2454, l. 47. Then, in March the Ministry of sea fleet of the USSR entitled a liner ship - 62,000 ton and 262 meters long - to Sharaf Rashidov. PV, 20440, 67, 18 March 1984, p. 2.

basis of the resolution of SM USSR of 25 November 1983 – the SM UzSSR also defined a special regime of benefits also for Rashidov's family.¹³ At the end of 1983, Rashidov was dead but his name and his political methods seemed to be very much alive. However, in November 1983, while the party was renewing to great fanfare the commitments to cotton production – which were very similar to those that were publicized in the previous years¹⁴ and probably again tolerating the illicit practice of additions¹⁵ – the prokuratura referred to the Uzbek government about other irregularities found in the cotton fields where criminal cases had been opened also for embezzlement of small quantities of cotton, the presence of animals in the fields, misuse of

¹³ According to the SM USSR resolution of 25 November 1983 and the following resolution of SM UzSSR on Rashidov's family material protection was defined a special regime of benefits that included a personal pension to Rashidov's widow, Khursan Gafurovna Rashidova, of 250 rubles per month, giving to her and to her daughter Svetlana with her husband and niece (who lives in Moscow), and also the other daughter Gulnara with family (in Moscow with her husband and two grandchildren) the right to benefit the First Polyclinics and General Hospital of the Ministry of health of the USSR [a privilege that was reserved to the top cadres of the CPSU], leaving to the widow the apartment n. 17 in German Lopatin street 68 in Tashkent and condoning the excess square meters. To assign to the widow the dacha and the car driver for 30 hours per month and for all the members of Rashidov's family the right to benefit from the Tashkent Central Polyclinics sited in Zhukovskii street 7. Prot. 82/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2454, ll. 122-124.

¹⁴ Are indicative the PV titles that present a less triumphalist rhetoric but anyway renovating the republic's duties: "the homeland expects 6 million tons of cotton. Our duty is to perform the socialist requirements" (PV, 20331, 257, 10 November 1983, p. 10); "The word was given - let's keep it! The workers of the republic are determined to implement their internationalist duties" (PV, 20334, 260, 13 November 1983, p. 1); "On the field, until the complete victory! Our word is invariable: despite the bad weather, give homeland 6,000,000 tons of cotton!" (PV, 20244, 270, 27 November 1983, p. 1); "Our goal - 6,000,000! The workers of the republic are determined to implement their socialist duties on the preparation of cotton for the state" (PV, 20248, 274, 2 December 1983, p. 1).

¹⁵ On this purpose, Nishanov is categorical: "Uzbekistan never gave six million tons of cotton. Maximum of five by superhuman efforts could be harvested using a flap torn ground. Everything else was added. One year 400 thousand tons and in another 700, and after the death of Rashidov, perhaps also a million was added" Rafik Nishanovich Nishanov, *Derev'ya Zeleneyut Do Metelei: Rafik Nishanov Rasskazyvaet Marine Zavade I Yurii Kulikovu* (Moskva: Molodaya Gvardiya, 2012), 240.

machines etc.¹⁶ At the end of the month the controls even increased,¹⁷ referring to the “distracted workers” that were cheating on the weight of the crop adding water, dirt and stones. In December, controls revealed that most of these situations were imputable to kolkhozes’ and sovkhoses’ brigadiers and that investigations had to be extended. At the end of the year, Prokuratura advised the Uzbek government that in 1983, 1020 controls had been organized, 297 people had been publicly reprimanded, 914 punished with administrative and fiscal measures, 38 criminal cases had been opened against 44 people and 243 people had been found culprit of violating law.¹⁸ It seems that despite the conspiracies theorized to oust Rashidov, nothing had substantively changed.

However, Usmankhodzhaev started to promote a new generation of post-Stalinist technocrats that had become the face of post-Rashidovian CPUz: on 20 December 1983 Akil Umurzakovich Salimov¹⁹ was appointed as Chairman of the Presidium of SS UzSSR.²⁰ Not coincidentally, Usmankhodzhaev, Salimov,

¹⁶ The report was referring that since the beginning of the harvest season had been completed 605 controls, 172 people had been publicly reprimanded and 178 found guilty for violations of law, 660 punished with administrative sanctions and 20 criminal cases against 24 people had been opened. Memorandum n° 7/38-83 (9 November 1983) of the Prokuratura USSR (UzSSR department) to the SM UzSSR. TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 6190, ll. 79-84.

¹⁷ 928 controls, referring about 267 people publicly reprimanded, 857 punished with fiscal and administrative sanctions, 209 people violating law and 29 criminal cases opened against 35 people. Memorandum n° 7/39-83 (22 November 1983) of the Prokuratura USSR (UzSSR department) to the SM UzSSR. TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 6190, l. 85.

¹⁸ Memorandum n° 7/41-83 (1 December 1983) of the Prokuratura USSR (UzSSR department) to DM UzSSR. TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 6190, ll. 90-93.

¹⁹ Akil Umurzakovich Salimov, born in Tashkent on 24 December 1928, was a famous academic and vice-rector of the Tashkent Polytechnic Institute. Member of CPSU since 1957, he enforced his career in the CPUz, becoming Head of the Department of Science of the CC CPUz and Secretary of the CPUz (1970-1983). On 20 December 1983, he became the Chairman of the Presidium of SS UzSSR, keeping that post until 6 December 1986. Parallely, we became deputy chairman of the presidium of SS USSR (11 April 1984 - 29 June 1987), and candidate member of the CC CPSU (1986-1988). On October 1988 he was arrested for the "cotton affairs" and lost his posts. On June 1989 he was liberated due to unfoundedness of the allegations.

²⁰ PV, 20364, 290, 21 December 1983, p. 1.

and Khadyrov²¹ were formed at the Tashkent Polytechnic Institute. Meanwhile Anisimkin, a senior Russian member of the Secretariat, was the director of the Chirchik Hydroelectric complex. According to Carlisle, this marked a return of the Fergana/Tashkent group to power that “also strengthened Moscow's hold locally for it brought to power young, well-educated, and technically trained natives who were beholden to the center, linked career-wise to all-Union development priorities, and oriented principally toward Moscow.”²²

In these first months in power, this new establishment had to consolidate a power that in the previous 24 years had been based on a charismatic figure who had been able to find a compromise between the various factions. This had, of course, suddenly vanished with his demise. Despite having the support of Moscow, the new FS had to find a way to get rid of the internal opposition, and the solution could be in opportunistically leveraging the moralizing campaign enforced by Andropov and to conduct a purge against the inner opponents. It was a case of two birds with one stone.

However, Usmanhodzhaev had to be aware of how to manipulate the situation to his advantage in order to remain on the right side of the fence. Just after Rashidov's death, there was a new wave of *donosy* (complaints) in the form of hundreds of letters²³ to the CCs in Moscow and in Tashkent denouncing corruption and malfeasance in various sectors of the republic.²⁴

²¹ According to Carlisle, Khadyrov "was the clearest illustration of the emergence of the post-stalinist generation". This technocrat was born in 1939 and since 1970 he held secondary posts, becoming FS Chirchik gorkom in 1975 and, in 1979, head of the department of Heavy Industry and machine building of the party secretariat. Donald S. Carlisle, "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev," in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation*, ed. William Fierman (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 114.

²² Ibid.

²³ Boldin reveals how it was common in the USSR to write letters of complaints to the party leadership. He reveals that annually about a million of letters were sent to the CC CPSU and passed through the CC general department. Only in 1987 the letters became 1.2 million and about 300,000-400,000 were sent from abroad. Valery Boldin, *Ten Years That Shook the World: The Gorbachev Era As Witnessed by His Chief of Staff* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 192.

²⁴ In mid-December 1983, a letter denouncing to the CC CPSU and Pravda that scandals were not just in corruption, falsification and shortcomings, but even in the abuse in the cotton fields - where kolkhozes and sovkhoses are no more engaged in cotton, and there is the intensive labor of citizens, children, students, employees,

While Rashidov tried to use as his advantage the Andropovian moralizing course – minimizing the importance of the complaints and continuing to promise cotton at any cost – Usmankhodzhaev proposed himself as an Andropovian proxy in the region: at a moment when the CPUz lost part of its authority in the republic, the newly appointed FS CPUz seemed to satisfy the Moscow conditions was becoming – again – increasingly necessary in order to stay in power. When the CPSU was still strong, this precondition seemed to be more important than balancing the internal equilibrium. In this new framework, Usmankhodzhaev played the very dangerous role of the ‘collaborator’, giving Moscow what she wanted, and telling her what she wanted to hear. In this phase of witch-hunts and complaints, the solution was in critically presenting to Moscow the results on the ‘negative phenomena’ and then pretending to offer a credible solution to these.

4.1.2 The size of a Soviet problem

At the end of 1983, the severity of the situation was finally exposed when controls revealed that between 1978 and 1983, 4.5 million tons of cotton were produced just on paper, causing a cost of hundreds million rubles every year.²⁵ In this regard, Clark calculates an overall amount of 3 billion rubles wasted in the 1976-1983.²⁶ However, these figures were destined to rise when it became clear that the cotton scandal was not limited to the Uzbek affairs. In fact, at the beginning of 1984, a ‘Russian cotton affair’ – a separate criminal case that was nevertheless linked to the Uzbek one – was also opened in the cotton processing plants of RSFSR. This outcome echoed in Uzbekistan.

On 26 January 1984, four almost empty rail wagons supposedly to transport cotton arrived in the textile factory of Serpukhov in the Moscow oblast. However, these were filled up, instead, with leftovers and other

kindergarten teachers, doctors, nurses etc.". V.S. Solutunov so denounced how in hospitals there were no more doctors, because all the energies were devoted to cotton. Then, the party replied that children and students were regularly engaged due to the resolution of SM UzSSR PP-22337 of 25 November 1983 and the turns in hospitals were regular. RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, ll. 2-6, 24.

²⁵ Leslie Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 101.

²⁶ William A. Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 187.

rubbish.²⁷ The documents attached to the wagons declared that they were full of processed raw cotton from Jizzak cleaning plants. The head engineer of the Serpukhov textile factory went to the KGB and declared that three people from the cleaning factory of Jizzakh offered him a bribe of 40,000 rubles – good money with which it was possible to buy four apartments in Moscow – to forge documents in order to make it appear that the Uzbek enterprise had delivered 150 tons of cotton.²⁸ The three corrupters were arrested and 300,000 rubles in cash were seized, which they were keeping for bribes. The central KGB instructed its Uzbek department to investigate and Grigorii Bindasov – former head of investigative department of the KGB UzSSR – remembers that four investigations in the Jizzakh oblast were enforced, where 1.5 million rubles in money and obligations and a lot of gold had been found. Then, the Serpukhov case was sent to the Prokuratura USSR and led to 800 criminal cases²⁹ in which there were several directors of cotton cleaning and textile factories in the oblast of Moscow, Vladimir, and Ivanovo. At that time, Vladimir Kalinichenko – an investigator for particularly important cases of the General Prokuror USSR from 1979 – was at the head of the investigations.³⁰ He found that the Soviet state was paying for non-existent cotton from Uzbekistan with the complicity of directors of Russian factories, who received big sums of money in exchange for letting the process take place. He discovered that for registering the delivery of "an empty wagon the price was around 10,000 rubles and, for a half-empty one between 5,000 and 6,000."³¹ Kalinichenko had estimated the cost of this combined Uzbek-Russian system that confirms Clark's estimation. According to him, the Soviet budget had paid about 3 billion rubles for Uzbek cotton in the previous five years, defining a scam that involved the periphery and the center of the Soviet

²⁷ Martin McCauley, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 370; Fedor Razzakov, *Delo, Vzorvavshee SSSR* (Moskva: Algoritm, 2012).

²⁸ McCauley, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union*, 371.

²⁹ Kinokompaniya Pigmalion, *Zoloto Dlya Parii. Khlopkovoe Delo* (Russia: Rossiya Telekanal - RTR Planeta, 2010).

³⁰ According to Vaksberg, Kalinichenko was apparently working on the corruption cases in Uzbekistan but he was recalled to Moscow and was well experienced and known for his incorruptibility. This move was allegedly orchestrated by Kunaev who, later, would become one of his victims. Arkadii Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 138.

³¹ Dmitry Gordon, "Byvshiy Sledovatel' Po Osobo Vazhnyim Delam Pri General'nom Prokurore SSSR Vladimir Kalinichenko: 'Vsesil'nyy Ministr MVD SSSR Shchelokov Prinyal Resheniye O Moyem Fizicheskom Ustraneni. V Otvet Na Eto Andropov Prikazal gruppe 'Al'fa' menya Okhranyat','" *Bul'var* 46, no. 473 (2004).

productive system.³² Investigations proceeded and the CC CPSU started to stress the CPUz even more, in order to get a proper response to the problem. Indeed, the crisis in the cotton sector – in terms of quantity and quality – did not regard just Uzbekistan but all of the cotton republics. Then, on 19 January 1984, even a CC CPSU Politburo meeting was devoted to the cotton problems and noticed:

The CPSU Central Committee draws attention to the abnormal situation created by the production, the organization of collecting and processing of raw cotton when, while its billet output of cotton fiber from crude fell from 32.5% in 1971-1975 to 31 in 1976-1980, 29.6% in 1981 to 28.6% in 1983, while the share cotton low weight [fourth quality] varieties during this time increased to 40 percent compared to [the previous] 25-30 percent.³³

The resulting resolution ordered to the republican party CCs and SMs of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan – as well as the central Soviet ministries of agriculture, water management, light industry – "to consider these issues, to take the necessary measures to eliminate existing shortcomings, to increase the responsibility of managers of agricultural and procurement agencies and enterprises of cotton industry for the quality of cotton products."³⁴ Substantially, the whole cotton sector of the USSR was being scrutinized by the CC CPSU.

In Uzbekistan one of the most difficult periods for the longstanding republican establishment henceforth began. While the corruption scandals inside the party and state organs ranged and spread, the new Uzbek leader clumsily tried to dismiss the facts as a serious, but essentially isolated, phenomenon and tried to opportunistically satisfy Moscow with what she wanted. Indeed, Usmankhodzhaev pretended to provide guarantees to Moscow and, after years of Rashidovian triumphalism, the XIII CC CPUz plenum of 9 January 1984 denounced the shortcomings of the Uzbek agricultural system, admitting that many of the investments made for the development of the cotton did not have an effective return. In fact:

In the previous year, four oblasts did not realize the cotton plan: Jizzak, Sirdarya, Namangan and Andijan as well as 45 raions. In the last three years

³² Of these 3 billion rubles, 1.6 billion was spent on infrastructure and "1.4 billion in salaries, which no one has received [...] In other words, only the robbed additions over five years costed at least 1.4 billion rubles. These funds were distributed in bribes from bottom to top" and at the end of the process, came to Moscow. Ibid.

³³ NSA, Box 25, file R7428, p. 1

³⁴ NSA, Box 25, file R7428, p. 2.

the irrigated lands have been expanded to 275,000 hectares but the area devoted to cotton amounted only at 10 thousand hectares, that is 3.5%. [...] Just in Kashkadarya were invested 685 million rubles and created 55 thousand hectares of irrigated land but the cotton increase, compared to 1980, amounted only for 37,000 tons. A similar situation was found in Jizzakh and Syrdarya. [...] For the improvement of agriculture in the oblast of Surkhandarya, Namangan and Khorezm for years of the current FYP were invested nearly 200 million rubles in each oblast. In Surkhandarya and Khorezm, cotton production increased respectively by 16 and 24 thousand tons, but in Namangan decreased by 51,000 tons.³⁵

In any case, on that occasion the annual party commitment to provide to the Soviet state 5,965,000 tons of raw cotton and 430,000 tons of fine fiber cotton,³⁶ and to invest 2.455 billion rubles in the sector,³⁷ was also reaffirmed. In this very early phase, the attitude of the new Uzbek leader was still cautious. On the one hand, Usmanhodzhaev tried to use once again the card of the 'cotton growth miracle' to legitimize his power, while on the other hand he was enforcing the purge that Moscow was implementing in the whole country. It was impossible to obtain the results on cotton – even on paper, as had been previously done. Moreover, as we will see, the consequences of this schizophrenic attitude would be disastrous. The main results were, then, obtained in terms of ostracism. In fact, in that plenum, Usmanhodzhaev made a public accusation against a figure who had been powerful, feared and protected by Rashidov's regime³⁸: the former chairman

³⁵ Prot. 13/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2447, ll. 19-20.

³⁶ The plan was forecasting the production dividing it on oblast basis: Karakalpak ASSR had to provide 400 thousand tons of raw cotton, Andijan 590, Bukhara 485.7, Jizzakh 381, Kashkadarya 620, Navoiy 185.83, Namangan 455, Samarkand 492.47, Surkhandarya 525, Syrdarya 425, Tashkent 425, Fergana 575, Khorezm 405. Cf. Prot. 13/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2447, l. 61.

³⁷ Prot. 13/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2447, l. 62.

³⁸ "The case against Yakhyayev had begun under Brezhnev, with the Uzbekistan Prosecutor's Office, the team of investigators led by the Prosecutor of the Uzbek SSR, now the Deputy Prosecutor of the RSFSR A.V. Buturlin. The case file consisting of six volumes, and identified many heinous crimes. However, at the request of Rashidov, addressed to Brezhnev, it was decided to terminate the investigation on Yakhyaev. On 30 December 1980, the Genprokuror USSR Rudenko ordered to withdraw from the USSR Prosecutor's Office of Uzbekistan the team and banned A.V. Buturlin to continue the investigation." GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 34.

of the Uzbek MVD, Khaydar Khalikovich Yakh'yayev,³⁹ who was identified as a guilty individual who:

abused his power, violated socialist law, had an amoral lifestyle with a family and so many lovers [to whom] he gave jobs in the MVD organs, conferring titles and official high rank positions. Illegally, he gave them apartments and residence in the city of Tashkent [...]. For all that, he had no rights. When he wanted to get rid of these women, he organized provocations and persecution against them for subsequent allegations of speculation and corruption, organizing hidden photo shoots and even wiretaps and other illegal actions. Without any legitimate reasons, those who knew about his unjust behavior were blackmailed and underwent inspections without even the consent of the prokuror. When he was in the people's control committee, he did not work well, behaving amorally and making unacceptable transgressions. All this has created damage to the authority of the people's control bodies and their workers. [...] The buro of the CC CPUz assumes that Yakh'yayev has betrayed the trust of the party and cannot be a member of the CC CPUz. His expulsion is, therefore, voted by 100% of the CC members.⁴⁰

A great figure of Rashidovism had thus been marginalized. However, the CPUz denied that the problem was systemic, and continued to sing its praises about the miracles of Uzbek agriculture. Nevertheless, the practice of reporting with great fanfare the results of the republic to the CC CPSU continued. Indeed, in a memorandum sent on 10 January 1984, Usmankhodzhaev informed the CC CPSU about the results of the above-mentioned plenum, announcing to Moscow the great results of Uzbek industry: the plan had been allegedly fulfilled already on 26 December 1983, had been exceeded in financial terms for 304 million rubles, with industrial output increasing by 5.1%. In this official statement, Usmankhodzhaev also confirmed a crop of 5.930 million tons of raw cotton in 1983. At the same time, Usmankhodzhaev reported that, as a result of the plenum, the work style and methods of some party committees and ministries - that "worked with obsolete methods, without initiative and without trying to improve" -

³⁹ Khaydar Khalikovich Yakh'yayev (1927 - 2013) was a military from Samarkand, member of CC CPUz since 1966, Minister of MVD UzSSR (11 March 1964 – 5 July 1979) and first deputy chairman of peoples' committee of control of UzSSR until December 1983. He was considered a right-hand man of Rashidov, ruthless and able to hold off domestic opponents. Over allegations of abuse of power and unethical behavior, buro CC CPUz chides and removed him from his post in December 1983. Prot. 13/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2447, ll. 98-99.

⁴⁰ Prot. 13/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2447, ll. 98-99.

had been criticized, and gave a first list of the cadres to be reshuffled.⁴¹ Then, on 31 January 1984, a CC CPUz buro meeting discussed the dramatic situation in Bukhara and the necessary removal of the FS Bukhara obkom, A.K. Karimov, revealing the how the local ruling elite⁴² was covering the serious shortcomings of the oblast.⁴³ Thus, the Karimov example became a sort of 'school case' by which the party set the need to improve the work style of its cadres at the central and, especially, at the local level. The course that the Uzbek dynamics was following mapped on to the evolution of the Soviet party. Then, 1984 appeared as a year of 'controlled chaos', with the republican leadership that was renovating its commitments for the annual production of cotton⁴⁴ and the Soviet Gensek that was pretending to rule the country from a hospital room. Then, after five months spent in agony, the "fiery patriot of the socialist homeland"⁴⁵ Yuri Andropov died on 9 February 1984 and Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko took his post, betraying the hopes of the new generation of Communists who hoped for authentic change.⁴⁶ The

⁴¹ As a result of the plenum, A.U. Salimov was removed from the CC CPUz secretariat and became the chairman of the presidium of the SS UzSSR, Rano. Kh. Abdullaeva, became a member of buro of the CC CPUz as well as G.K. Kadyrov who became a new member of the buro. The former chairman of Uzbek MVD (1964-1979), Khaidar Yakhyaev was expelled from the party "for errors in the work and personalists behavior." RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, ll. 3-6. Yakhyaev became a key figure in the Uzbek cotton affair and was arrested in August 1985. He declared to that he gave bribes to Shchelokov and Churbanov. For this connection, in 1988 the Uzbek writer Raul M. Mir-Haidarov argued that Shchelokov was the effective 'godfather' of the Uzbek mob. Raul' Mirsaidovich Mir-Khaydarov, *Peshiye Progulki* (Moskva: Molodaya Gvardiya, 1988).

⁴² On 22 February 1984 Vidadi Izzatov - the head of the traffic police of Bukhara oblast - was arrested in his office together with Murtazaev, the chief of the Bukhara oblast KGB. Izzatov was sentenced to 13 years of imprisonment. Sergey Plekhanov, "Delo Gdlyana. Anatomiya Politicheskogo Skandala," *Klub «Olimpas»*, 1991, 12, 23.

⁴³ The extract of the document is reported in the appendix. Prot. 83/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2455, ll. 164-168.

⁴⁴ K.A. Akhmedov, first deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR confirmed the commitments of the republic to produce at least 5.930 million for the homeland. PV, 20382, 9, 11 January 1984, p. 2. Also in early March, during the meeting of the party-economic active was reminded the commitment for 6 million tons. PV, 20436, 63, 13 March 1984, p. 1.

⁴⁵ PV, 20409, 36, 11 February 1984, p. 1.

⁴⁶ According to Boldin, Ustinov was proposed for the Andropov's succession. However, he declined and agreed to support Gorbachev as the Chernenko's deputy, in the post

famous quote of Chernyaev to describe the general disappointment is emblematic: “The miracle didn't happen. Chernenko was elected.”⁴⁷ Basically, no one believed that Chernenko could make a substantial contribution to the Soviet cause and, as was apparent soon after his appointment, he did not. His leadership has been remembered as one of the emptiest in terms of its contents,⁴⁸ also considering the advanced age (72) of a person who was already in a state of terminal illness.

Chernenko is generally considered a Brezhnevian who wanted to reverse his predecessor's policies.⁴⁹ This is partly true, considering that the new Gensek did not have a determinant role in cleaning and reforming campaigns and also the Andropovian ‘demonstrative actions’ were substantially slowed down.⁵⁰ At the same time, besides the idea that ‘old times were coming back’ and the KGB had weakened its activity, Gdlyan affirms that the “poorly talented country ruler and seriously ill Chernenko seemed not intended to change anything [however,] Andropov's line was continued by inertia”⁵¹ and the new Gensek gave the ‘go-ahead’⁵² in anticorruption policies. In fact, Chernenko – apparently not a resolute figure and probably under the guide of personalities like Ligachev – continued the Andropovian anti-corruption policy and under his brief reign Medunov, Shchelokov and Churbanov were finally pursued. Nonetheless, he was too weak – physically and even charismatically – to leave the image of a leader who wholeheartedly fought corruption. He

of chairman of the secretariat CC CPSU. Boldin, *Ten Years That Shook the World: The Gorbachev Era As Witnessed by His Chief of Staff*, 180.

⁴⁷ Anatoly Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 6.

⁴⁸ In his program, Chernenko was advancing a ‘fundamental’ ideological debate on redefining what type of socialism existed in the Soviet Union: developed socialism or developing socialism? McCauley, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union*, 370.

⁴⁹ However, some scholars do not agree on this interpretation, finding a more tolerant approach in Chernenko retaining the Andropovian moralization campaign as a parenthesis in Soviet history. Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*, 45; F. J. M. Feldbrugge, “Government and Shadow Economy in the Soviet Union,” *Soviet Studies* 36, no. 4 (1984): 528–43.

⁵⁰ Rudolf Germanovich Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L'aigle Bicéphale* (Longueuil: Éditions Kéruss, 2007), 60.

⁵¹ Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan and Nikolai Veniaminovich Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo* (Moskva: Gramota, 1996), 28.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 25–30.

did what he could. At an electoral meeting in Moscow in March 1984, the new Gensek pointed out that:

the Party and the state have intensified the struggle against such disgraceful manifestations as the squandering of state funds, hoodwinking and the abuse of office, embezzlement and bribery. This is not a temporary campaign [...]. In this there will be no special allowance for anyone.⁵³

Even later, he reminded the party of the need to put an end to the practice of bribery, speculation, squandering, abuse of office, and theft of socialist property, arguing corruption was “one of the factors hindering economic reform and rises in productivity.”⁵⁴ Besides, the new Gensek did not have the particular charisma necessary to present himself as a paladin of socialist morality. Yet, he was able to give the message that anticorruption campaigns in Uzbekistan were not ending and Moscow wanted to see clearly over the republic, to uproot the local patrimonial structures and to gain back that power that seemed to be lost in the previous decades.

4.1.3 A cold spring

As mentioned, besides the lower profile of the new Gensek, the most peculiar operations at a political level were enforced during his short reign and the CPUz welcomed the course of the new Soviet leader, confirming the previous commitments. Indeed, the buro CC CPUz of 16 February 1984 finally brought to bear evidence of the systemic inefficiency and malfeasance within the Ministry of cotton cleaning industry (MCC) of the UzSSR, the administration that had become the base of the systemic scam that was investing Uzbek kolkhozes and the processing plants in the European USSR. In the meeting was evidenced how:

The collegium of the MCC UzSSR has not taken the decisive steps on strengthening the state discipline in cotton preparation system. In 1983, during the period of cotton processing, the workers of a series of harvest points and cotton preparation stations in Andijan, Bukhara, Kashkadarya, Samarkand, Surkhandarya and Ferghana violated the requirements of state standards and the basic instructions during the cotton storage and cotton deliveries. [...] All this has distorted the [cotton] conditional weight concealing a cotton that had atrocious quality. The MCC UzSSR, V. Usmanov and his deputy A. Akbarov, knowing that these violations were ruthless, did not adopt

⁵³ *Pravda*, 3 March 1984, p. 2, reported in Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*, 225.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

the measures for the elimination of these phenomena. The ministerial collegium did not reveal the responsibility for textile factories' leaders and tolerated violations of state productive and planning discipline throughout the system and allows the lack of control over the industries and organizations activities⁵⁵ as well as in accounting and implementation of directives and after that some dishonest workers abuse their power, deceiving the state and making theft of socialist property. [The MCC] does not take the measures to create stable cadres. [In response,] in 1983, in the textile factories, one fifth of the directors has been changed - as well as a sixth of general engineers - and many managerial figures had been removed from their posts. In some cases, incompetent persons even became directors of factories without any special education and experience in the system work.⁵⁶

This report at the buro produced evidence of a situation where, besides the triumphalist announcements of the previous years, the cotton processing sector was decreasing in a republic where the production of the fibers in the tenth FYP dropped compared to the eleventh FYP by an average of 2.12%.⁵⁷ In a moment when the republic had to face a political (and even a physical)⁵⁸ earthquake, the CPUz assumed a cautious attitude that balanced between a harsher criticism and a weaker triumphalism, even in the next meeting. Therefore, during the XIV plenum of the CC CPUz (20 February 1984) the typical economic triumphalism⁵⁹ was promoted and this narrative was

⁵⁵ Prot. 86/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2459, l. 15.

⁵⁶ Prot. 86/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2459, l. 16.

⁵⁷ Prot. 86/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2459, l. 39.

⁵⁸ Meanwhile a political storm was overwhelming Uzbekistan, the republic was even hit by a real earthquake of 9th Richter grade that on 20 March 1984 damaged the oblasts of Bukhara, Navoi, Samarkand and Khorezm for which the Uzbek government and party were demanding 265.7 million rubles for reconstruction. In the memorandum of the CC CPUz and the SM UzSSR to the SM USSR, was reported the balance of the earthquake damages for which officially 2 people died, 385 injured and 23 hospitalized and had been damaged 4.506 million m² of housing, schools for 382,000 places, hospitals for 19,300, policlinics for 12,400, pharmacies for 290, 354 for obstetrics, 74,900 for pre-school institutions, 703 distribution points, 2,700 offices places, 12,700 in people's food points, 244 clubs, libraries for 3.6 million books, 388 municipal services, 170 administrative buildings, 286 km of water, gas and telephone networks. GARF, f. R-5446. op. 155, d. 309, ll. 1-26.

⁵⁹ In the plenum was affirmed that "in the last three years had been delivered in advance to the plan 293 thousand tons of cotton, wheat by 366 thousand tons, 964 thousand tons of vegetables, 223 thousand tons of fruits and berries, 253 of grapes, 35 of milk and 50 million eggs. [...However] for three years, the volume of gross agricultural production compared to the previous three years has increased only 8%

encouraged to an even greater extent in the press, which kept promising excellent results in agriculture, which seemed to remain the *raison d'être* of the republic.⁶⁰ Therefore, the schizophrenic game to report as much good as bad news to Moscow continued, but the latter would have survived on the first and probably this strategy was functional to Usmankhodzhaev who wanted to demonstrate how the republican organs were engaged in the struggle against the 'negative phenomena.' Nevertheless, a clear strategy was not.

In fact, on 12 March a meeting of the party-economic aktiv was held and the republican economic leaders exposed the critical situation of cotton production, revealing how in 1983, 46 raions, 400 kolkhozes and sovkhozes did not realize the cotton plan and in 19 raions the cotton harvest was less than 25 quintals per hectare.⁶¹ This data was effectively disavowing the triumphalism of the previous decade. Moreover, a meeting of the CC CPUz secretariat on 30 March 1984 revealed the dramatic situation of crime that, after staying stable for a number of years, was dramatically rising in the cities. In the city of Tashkent alone, "crime detected through the criminal investigations in the last year it has risen by 33.3% in general, and for the most serious offenses 43.8%. [...] in 1983 were 16 unsolved murders, 27 serious injuries, eight rapes and 39 highway fatalities."⁶² Besides the seriousness of these facts, these stories still were still presented in smaller terms, while the systematic nature of the scams would be revealed by the organs – mainly centrally oriented – that were investigating in the republic.

Therefore, during the meeting of the CC CPUz buro of 23 April 1984 was diffused a report – annex 1 – that announced the results of the joint work of

instead of 11% that was expected in the plan." Prot. 14/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2448, l. 12.

⁶⁰ For the 60th anniversary of the UzSSR, still appeared the - maybe impossible - agricultural promises to reach 5.980 million ton of raw cotton, in which 450,000 tons of fine fiber cotton; 2.950 million ton cereals in which 565,000 ton rice; 1.356 million ton vegetables; 370,000 ton fruit, 530,000 ton grapes, 360,000 ton meat and 1.020 million tons milk; 30,000 ton silk cocoons and 1.17 billion eggs. PV, 20447, 74, 28 March 1984, p 3. At the same time, in the post-Rashidov, the press started to be less celebrative towards the FS CPUz and even the figure of Usmankhodzhaev was less publicized.

⁶¹ Prot. 17/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2508, l. 18.

⁶² Prot. 70/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2491, l. 2.

the TsSU, PCC, and prokuratura. This incredible document⁶³ reveals the systematic dimension of the scam in some regions, where other sectors were involved and where *priviski* spread to all levels within the party and the state organs. This warning note was destined to extend the scope of the internal investigations and, then, of the purges against the negative phenomena in all the sectors of the republic. Then, during the XV plenum CPUz (4 May 1984), the card of purges was used, denouncing Vali Muratkhodzhaev – the former Minister of finances of the UzSSR – who was accused through a series of simple and sharp allegations that were foreshadowing a climate of purges against the former Rashidovian establishment. On that occasion, Muratkhodzhaev was openly criticized for:

abusing power, violating party discipline, behaving immodestly and making unacceptable actions to resolve personal issues related to housing and cars. [...] His house, 220 square meters, was donated to his sons, and in 1981 he used false documents to receive another flat with 4 rooms. In 1977, he helped a daughter to illegally receive a three-room apartment albeit had already been allocated a house to her family. Muratkhodzhaev and his son were trading cars. [...] Also his son Mukhitdinov was treacherous for producing false documents and for trading cars and, in 1972, he was even sentenced to 10 years. [...] For these reasons] Muratkhodzhaev is dismissed from his posts.⁶⁴

This kind of ‘soft motivation’ – far from the mass frauds and millionaires’ treasures that we have seen previously – identifies the trend that had been set within the republic. Here we are speaking about the fact that we have seen a moralization campaign that could serve as an exceptional opportunity to rid the system of internal enemies. Sometimes it was simply enough to use accusations of moral inadequacy — accusations that were typical of a society now entering a phase of decline where there existed a simultaneous anger about the future and a sinister nostalgia. Then, on 12 May, while the King of Spain arrived in Uzbekistan for an official visit, the UzSSR was still keeping in commemorating Rashidov. A plaque commemorating him was put on a building at the Samarkand University,⁶⁵ while memories of him continued to

⁶³ The document was elaborated by the economic department, the department of party organizational work, the general department of the CC CPUz and the department of administrative bodies of the CPUz. It was signed by D. Makhmudov, deputy head of the protocol sector of the general department of the CC CPUz. Prot. 91/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2464, ll. 21-25. The document is fully reported in the appendix.

⁶⁴ Prot. 15/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2449, l. 93.

⁶⁵ PV, 20483, 110, 13 May 1984, p. 1.

influence the initiatives that the defunct leader had implemented in his political career. Therefore, his name was remembered also on 23 May 1984 during the inauguration of the VIII festival of Asian, African, and Latin American cinema.⁶⁶

The risky strategy of the *sekretar nol'* to balance a weaker triumphalism – with a good dose of nostalgia – and the commitments of the CPUz to clean the republic would give distorted results and were effectively impossible to be implemented in the short term. In fact, this narrative did not reflect the actual real situation of Uzbek agriculture. In reality, the situation was much more in conflict with Moscow than Usmankhodzhaev's commitments and promises suggested. Uzbek agriculture was, in fact, entered in a new critical phase due, again, to the unfortunate weather conditions. In late May, many cases of poor cotton seeding (requiring a second round) were recorded because the land remained frozen and it was necessary to repeat the process, causing a material damage in terms of scheduled times,⁶⁷ production, and costs.⁶⁸

4.1.4 The 'veteran' and the 'pentito'

In the spring of 1984, while investigations spread all around Uzbekistan, which uncovered cases of laxness, inefficiency, and dishonesty, a very serious case interested Kashkadarya obkom and led to a political storm in the whole oblast that hit the longstanding FS of the local obkom, Ruzmet Gaipovich Gaipov. Gaipov was a famous war veteran who became a very powerful figure protected by Rashidov, who appointed him to the top post of Kashkadarya in 1968. Already in the previous summer, the situation in Kashkadarya was under the lens of the party who sacrificed the head of the regional government: in fact, during the plenum of CC CPUz of 4 July 1983, was announced the dismissal of B. Elbayev,⁶⁹ chairman of Kashkadarya obispolkom, who was denounced as a person who

⁶⁶ PV, 20491, 118, 24 May 1984, p. 1.

⁶⁷ Essentially, the maturation of cotton was delayed in 10-12 days' growth raising fears a worse outcome in terms of quality and quantity. PV, 20541, 168, 24 July 1984 p. 1.

⁶⁸ PV, 20501, 128, 5 June 1984, p. 1.

⁶⁹ "Kashkadarya's former oblispolkom chairman, B. Elbayev had built luxurious housing for his children and the erstwhile party raykom First Secretaries N. Khikmatov, T. Tillayev, D. Khushnazarov, A. Umirov, Kh. Kalilov had engaged in deception and falsification" Nicklas Norling, "Myth and Reality: Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan" (Johns Hopkins University, 2014), 227.

behaves immodestly and abuses power for personal interests, living in Karshi in a beautiful house of 250 m² and in Kitab where he built the house for the children to whom were illegally given two parcels of land that were exceeding more than six times the norm. [Furthermore,] he helped his relatives to obtain land, cars and the building materials⁷⁰.

Again the theme of houses and living standards became a moralizing issue to get rid of inconvenient figures. Besides, if this was to be a method legally applied to all offenders, it meant that the entire Soviet nomenklatura had to be ousted. Such allegations were symptomatic of a purge. More seriously, on the same occasion N. Kholmatov, the FS of Shakhrisab raikom, was also accused, which violated the discipline of the state, by falsifying the data of the cotton harvest and creating the illusion of prosperity in his work.⁷¹ At that time, Rashidov probably preferred to sacrifice these two minor scapegoats in order to prove the effects of his 'demonstrative' actions, and still had enough power to defend Gaipov. However, when the first died, the second lost any protection from above. The situation in the region was so dramatic that in December 1983, a party controllers group of the CPC – headed by I.V. Krakhmalov – arrived in Kashkadarya and revealed a huge mass of negative phenomena in the oblast and asked for more actions to uproot the malfeasance from the region.⁷² Considered a situation that was creating too many embarrassments with Moscow – that as we have seen was constantly updated by the judicial and party supervisory bodies – Usmankhodzhaev had no choice but to intervene against Gaipov. Then, in the meeting of the CC CPUz buro on 6 February 1984, it was deliberated:

R.G. Gaipov, the FS Kashkadarya obkom, was appointed in 1968 and in the first years of work had positive initiative but later he became responsible of many shortcomings in leading the party organization, in the economic and cultural development and in the selection and education of cadres [...He was] immodest and due to the checks that have been made after many complaints and the declarations of the oblast's workers, it was revealed that the leaders of some sovkhoses and kolkhozes in the rayon were implementing *prripiski* on the preparation of cotton and other agricultural productions. Also there were violations of the principles of the labor party with cadres. To the important management posts were put people who were personally affiliated [to Gaipov] who did not have political, moral and managerial qualities. [...] The workers who have compromised were protected from the critics and sanctions, and

⁷⁰ Prot. 11/1983, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 152, d. 2319, l. 116.

⁷¹ Prot. 11/1983, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 152, d. 2319, l. 117.

⁷² RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, l. 41.

kept their posts in the nomenklatura. Gaipov must be fired from his job and expelled from the party and sanctioned by the CPSU. [However,] whereas he is a veteran of WW2 and hero of socialist work, [it is prudent] to implement this [resolution] for the reason of his retirements.⁷³

This indicated that, besides acknowledging the guilt of the ‘veteran’, the party did not want to create a moral scandal and pushed for his official retirement. This situation led to the removal of Gaipov on 17 February 1984 and his replacement by Narmumin Turapovich Turapov. However, despite the hoped results of the moralization campaign in Kashkadarya, the situation was much more serious and had deep roots. In a special report – appendix 9 - circulated at the CC CPUz buro on 29 February 1984, it was indicated that a clique of workers that were overlapping their posts and were affiliated to Gaipov, constituting the ‘executives’ of the falsification machine in Kashkadarya did actually and truly exist. From this warning report so it emerged that a part of the population – probably patronized under local figures - was colluded in supporting the falsification machines.⁷⁴ Thus, in the aftermath of Gaipov’s dismissal, dozens of letters from the region started to arrive to the CC CPSU in Moscow, denouncing the high levels of corruption in the previous establishment and targeting mostly the former FS. Besides revealing the high level of corruption within the oblast, the beginning of investigations did not only open the Pandora’s Box, but did other things as well. In the ‘Uzbek cotton affairs’, the worst emerged during the subsequent *donos* wars that, in most of the cases, were very politicized and were occasions for the local opposition to struggle for the succession or to take revenge on the ruling establishment. The dynamic was straightforward: once a figure had been dismissed, there was a rain of complaints from people who wanted to link their misfortunes, or denouncing affiliates, against a person who was already considered a culprit, sending any kind of accusations and compromising materials in a *bellum omnium contra omnes*. And this was typical in the Soviet system where, besides the subsequent verifications and trials, a dismissal, a replacement, and a retirement were automatically seen as evidence of guilt. However, unfortunately for the accused, often these slanderous statements were confirmed by investigations.

⁷³ Prot. 84/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2457.

⁷⁴ This condition is reminiscent of some parts of southern Italy, where the powerful local camorra clans get the support of a population that is essentially absorbed by a criminal system. We know from examples like southern Italy that this happens when, in some very difficult social and economic contexts, state power is missing.

For example, after Gaipov's dismissal, an anonymous letter – very detailed but written in poor Russian - was directly sent to Chernenko and Usmankhodzhaev on 12 March 1984 and reported about the diffused corruption in the oblast where cadres were not appointed by merit but by money and where the post of the FS of a raikom could be bought for 100,000 rubles and chairman of a sovkhos between 20 and 40 thousand rubles. In the letter, the anonymous complainer was revealing facts that, in a while, would be at the center of a judicial investigation that was again managed by Gdlyan's team.⁷⁵ The document also gave important examples of the 'cotton scams' and detailed the prices for bribes, stating that besides the removal of Gaipov, in the oblast there were still many crimes that had been "just liberally" – to intend easily - reprimanded and there were still more than 100 millionaires that were out of control. Thus, the anonymous author directly addressed his complaints to the Gensek and to the FS CPUz, demanding to send for another month the controllers of Krakhamalov and to finally make order in the oblast.⁷⁶ For its minutia in detailing the facts, this letter became a

⁷⁵ According to the letter even the second secretary of the obkom, I.I. Golovachev - that was the responsible for cadres - in 16 years in power had accumulated more than 2 million rubles and other valuable items that were stocked in his driver's house. To remove the people that were not liked by Gaipov he used anonymous slanders and blackmail, and he helped Gaipov in the machinations and had an immoral lifestyle helping his two lovers G. Khamraieva and S. Niyazmativa who worked in the obkom CC and illegally obtained their houses. The letter then declared that also B.P. Kunchenko, the secretary for agriculture, replaced the 'honest' Kh. Tashev who was sent to Tashkent to cover a minor post [it is not improbable that the person who writes is one of the 'honest' removed people or one of their affiliates]. According to the letter, Kunchenko as well had many lovers and for his immoral behaviors was nicknamed the 'cock'. All this was tolerated by Gaipov who laughed about, and Kunchenko helped Gaipov for machination and supported him to get prizes and awards. RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, l. 39.

⁷⁶ The letter keeps denouncing also Ya.I. Iliadi, the director of technique of oblast's kolkhozes and sovkhos, had a trader soul and did profit - made millions in cash and gold - selling machines and spare parts. He bought from Gaipov the post of FS Karshi gorkom - replacing the 'honest' A.I. Bityukov who was sent to Tashkent to cover a minor post - and he worked for Gaipov as his intermediary for bribery. The fourth millionaire of the oblast was the FS Karshi raikom, I. Achilov, who became rich with cotton falsifications. Under his order, the factories of cotton cleaning of the raion were selling to kolkhozes and sovkhos false receipts. Every year were falsified in the oblast about 15-20,000 tons and every kilogram costed 30-40 kopeks. [This meant that, according to these figures, every year just in Karshi raion cotton cleaning plants,

political case that passed under the lenses of the CCs in Moscow and in Tashkent. In fact, in a memorandum of the CC CPUz and CC CPSU of 29 March 1984 it was reported that the last party controls led to further replacements⁷⁷ in Kashkadarya oblast – where, from the beginning of the investigations the FS obkom had been removed, the chairman and the secretariat of the oblispolkom, five FS raikom and one chairman of raispolkom – while the party was still evaluating the removal of the obkom's second secretary.⁷⁸ Substantially, the whole Kashkadarya elite was under the review of party and judicial organs and the situation was aggravated by a mysterious person – presumably from the local nomenklatura – who spilled the secrets of local power. As mentioned, the very powerful Gaipov was dismissed after 15 years in power. However, his adventure was not finished there, since he was directly investigated during the 'cotton affairs' campaign. The rest of the story is well known. On 25 March 1985, the investigative group led by Gdlyan went

the scam was annually amounting from 4.5 to 8 million rubles and then these figures were destined to rise when they reached the top of the pyramid in the Soviet top management]. In 1983, Achilov went in competition with the FS of Kamashinski raion, Allayarov, declaring that he had – in theory – fulfilled the plan for first. To surpass Allayarov, everyday Achilov was inflating data for 450-500 tons and did the same also for milk and meat, "living as an American millionaire", with 5 houses, 7 cars, an amoral lifestyle and many women lovers as Z. Sharipova - raikom instructor who even had a baby from him - and R. Barnaieva - secretary of the sovkhoz 'Avrora'. Just in the last four years, the Karshi cotton factory registered more than 65,000 tons of 'cotton waste' and the Beshkenskaya factory 15,000 determining damages for more than 12 million rubles. Thanks to his and Golovache's bribes, Achilov's brother became the director of the obkom orgotdel, determining the access to the party due to a payment. These machinations had been found in the Chirachinki raikom and in the Kashi gorkom and raikom, where he also put his relatives in the management posts and he built his own house spending more than 140,000 rubles. RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, l. 40.

⁷⁷ Indeed, it was revealed the workstyle weakness of the Achilov brothers and of another FS raikom, A. Umirov, who were all removed from their posts.

⁷⁸ In fact, the party reported that were not registered violation in the cadres' appointment policy in the Karshi raion and Golovachev did not have lovers, cars and dachas, he lived with his family in a normal house and he did not have a rule in the purge against the former obkom's second secretary G.G. Svetlenko. However, "the controls have confirmed the involvement of Golovachev in the defects revealed in the oblast and the CC was evaluating his removal. RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, ll. 42-44. The dismissal of Golovachev was even more supported by the controls that the responsible of CPSU orgotdel, E. Ponomarev, effected in the oblast, revealing that Golovachev was appointing cadres out of the party principles. The decision on the fate of the second secretary was thus postponed to the CC CPUz. RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, ll. 45-46.

to arrest Gaipov in his house in Khorezm. They were welcomed in the lounge while the former FS went into his bedroom, took a precious oriental knife, and stabbed himself several times, dying a few hours later. When the group entered into the room, Gaipov was soaked in his own blood but still alive. Meanwhile, his wife and daughter were shocked and realized the guilt of the former FS.⁷⁹ Another suicide was added to the list of the 'cotton affairs' culprits and another treasure was discovered.⁸⁰

The Kashkadarya affair is a typical case of a purge – and massive judicial investigations – against a member of the former Rashidovian establishment.⁸¹ However, the main basis for a struggle against that was Jizzakh, where Rashidov's clan was supposed to be based.⁸² The oblast, that had substantially become untouchable during the previous FS's regime, was already at the end of a war that can give space to possible conspiracy scenarios. In early 1984,

⁷⁹ In the immediate aftermath, his son, pilot commander of the Aeroflot division in Tashkent brought to prokuratura office "half a million rubles and a chest full of gold rings and bracelets. Incidentally, this did not serve to save him from being arrested himself." Then, were found valuables and money in the amount of more than a million rubles. In October 1985, in connection with the identified facts of bribery, embezzlement and other crimes, Gaipov's sons Arslan – Head of the Tashkent airport – and Adylbek – Deputy Director of Karshi gorpromtorga – were arrested. Given the severity and specific socially dangerous acts committed by Gaipov, a decree of the Presidium of the SS USSR (8 December 1987) deprived post mortem Gaipov of all his awards including a Hero of Socialist Labor (1980), four orders of Lenin (1957, 1973, 1976 and 1980), an Order of the October Revolution (1971), two orders of Red Banner of Labor (1965 and 1973), a Red Star (1946), a medal of Glory '3rd degree' (1944) and a medal "for courage" (1945). Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, 122.

⁸⁰ About Gaipov's treasure McCauley reports that "one estimate put it at tens of millions of rubles, mainly in gold. One of his raion Party secretaries returned 600,000 rubles and gold bonds worth 500,000 rubles to the state. One of his daughters was unfortunate. She was caught red-handed trying to hide a sack that contained 300,000 rubles." McCauley, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union*, 373.

⁸¹ Carlisle, "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev," 94–95.

⁸² Jizzakh was a small oblast that was established by Rashidov at institutional level. According to Carlisle, such formation had no meaning to exist as a separate oblast and "did not exist as a separate administrative unit until it was officially created on December 29, 1973. Located in central Uzbekistan, there seemed no apparent economic or other grounds for it being singled out in this fashion unless we postulate Rashidov's personal intervention. The Jizzakh oblast constituted 4.6% of the republic's territory and only 3.3% of its population. Its ethnic make-up was 75% Uzbek and 8% Russian. It contains no major cities or centers of republic-level importance." *Ibid.*, 126.

the CC CPUz warned the CC CPSU about the theft from the Jizzakh obkom archive of 13 secret personal files, an inventory, four reporting presentations (*predstavlenie*), and three resolutions of the obkom. This theft of secret documents was alleged to be connected with certain personalities – in or from the obkom where Rashidov was a native – who wanted to get rid of some evidence in a moment when the party was going to move to the next step in the investigations.⁸³ At that moment, the usual slanderous letters that were sent to the central committees in Moscow and in Tashkent also appeared and some of them, in the same detailed and anonymous format, were directly accusing the (supposedly rival) factions within the party and specifically indicating the influence of the Jizzakh-Samarkand groups.⁸⁴ Against these hypotheses, Usmanhodzhaev replied declaring the effective low influence of that group in the party.⁸⁵ In this way, the ‘Ferghaner’ Usmanhodzhaev seemed to defend the minority of Samarkand-Jizzakh - that was supposed to be his main opponent faction⁸⁶ – while at the same time also Moscow did not show a clear strategy.

⁸³ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 31.

⁸⁴ A letter directly sent to Chernenko from "the workers of the CC CPUz" on 13 March 1984 requested to act against corruption and embezzlement within the Uzbek party, especially in the party control commission - where the director U. Atakusiev and his two deputies were accused of being responsible of covering falsification on cotton and other agricultural production in change of huge sums of money - in the obkoms of Samarkand and Jizzakh and against the prevailing influence of these groups within the CPUz. RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, l. 48.

⁸⁵ Usmanhodzhaev directly responded on 20 April 1984, stating that in the CC CPUz apparatus there were 229 managers and from them four from Jizzakh oblast (1.74%) and 12 from Samarkand oblast (5.24%), who were covering the posts of: a director of department, 2 deputy directors of department, a member of the party commission, 3 directors of section, 1 secretary assistant and eight instructors. All of them were graduated and have experience in the party work. The CC CPUz did not have compromising material on them and, about Atakulov, were not revealed abuses of power and not objective solutions to problems. RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, l. 49.

⁸⁶ This is testifies to how there was cooptation of rival factions in the Uzbek power system and how often – besides the brilliant corollaries – the territoriality of clan politics has been often exasperated in political science literature. Demian Vaisman, "Regionalism and Clan Loyalty in the Political Life of Uzbekistan," in *Muslim Eurasia Conflicting Legacies*, ed. Yaaevov Roi (London: Frank Cass, 1995); Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*; Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia, Perceptions and Pact* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

In the Kashkadarya affair we have seen how complaining (*donos*) letters became revelatory and helped to conduct the investigations and to orient the purges against those elements that were considered guilty by the party. In the Jizzakh case, the story followed also the dynamics of the '*pentito*' (repentant), a typical figure of the Italian '*antimafia*,' indicating those former mafia members who – after being arrested – decide to 'repent' and to collaborate with the judicial system in order to help the investigations.⁸⁷ Also in Uzbekistan something similar happened and led to extraordinary results.

On 28 February 1984, Kayum Shadieiev Shadieiev – a famous local figure who was director of a cotton factory in Jizzakh from 1950 to 1960, rose his career within the party and then in 1978 became the director of Dzhizakzavodkhlopkoprom, the cotton processing industry of Jizzakh – was arrested. His case was directly linked to the aforementioned '*Russian cotton affair*' that we have seen became a state affair under the lens of the CC CPSU. On 14 March 1984, the KGB reported to the Central Committee in Moscow, the self-complaint that Shadieiev gave on 5 March. In this very well formulated document, the director stated that in the ten centers of cotton processing he discovered ten criminal cases and more than five million rubles had been hidden/embezzled from the budget. In 1981 he denounced five cases to the prokuratura but without results as well to the raikom secretaries but no measures were taken at that time, probably because of political protection. In the results of the 1982 plans, there were additions for 32,000 tons and he, the general accountant V.A. Kharchenko, and the director of the department R.A. Byelousov had been invited several times by the MCC V.U. Usmanov and by the general accountant of that ministry Deridovich to manipulate and 'correct' the reported figures.

Then, Shadieiev declared that, at that time, he had refused and, according to him, even the chairman of the SM UzSSR Khudayberdiyev intervened and demanded that he correct the figures, while he again rejected the invitation. However, he declared that at the end he also accepted to become an active part in the machinations in that vicious system, receiving from 1979 annual bribes from the cotton factories. He listed all the taken bribes with dates, names of the directors, and the monetary sum. In his description, it seems that the size of bribes – 49,000-150,000 rubles each – depended on the quantity, the period – before or after processing – and the factory, realizing a

⁸⁷ Alison Jamieson, *The Antimafia. Italy's Fight Against Organized Crime* (London: Macmillan, 2000).

total of 730,000 rubles. Then he declared that – from that sum – he also spent a great deal of money to bribe superior officials in the ministries and, again, listed all his ‘upper’ bribes: 10,000 rubles in 1982 and in 1983 to the deputy MCC UzSSR T.A. Normukhamedov, 10,000 in 1983 to the obkom director of transports Yuldashev Mirzakhmetov, and 35,000 in 1979 to the former obkom FS Tukhtamish Baimirov⁸⁸ – and then 50,000 in each year (1980-1982) – to whom he gave the sums directly in his office or in the lift. The total sum of these bribes was 225,000 rubles. In this confession, Shadiev wanted to give the image of a conscientious man and declared himself destroyed by remorse and depression. He unconditionally put himself at the disposal of the investigative and judicial authorities and also provided a detailed list and all the contacts and the places where the remaining 605,000 rubles were kept and that he wanted to return.⁸⁹

This collaborator of justice had, then, contributed to the investigations about the high corruption in the region and in the cotton sector and opened new scenarios. Indeed, the prokuratura notified to CC CPSU (12 April 1984) that due to the Shadiev case were implicated in the criminal case I. Muminov – director of the Uchitepinskiy factory, S.S. Sultanov – director of the cotton preparation station, and M. Khalmatov – the classifier of the preparation point. These figures were systematically making fake receipts and embezzling more than 1,870,000 rubles in the 1980-1983. Also Shadiev himself embezzled by taking bribes from the directors of cotton cleaning for more than a million rubles, so much more than what he declared. Similar cases were opened in the rest of Uzbekistan as well as in Azerbaijan and in RSFSR.⁹⁰ The Shadiev case represented a real earthquake in the political implications during the cotton affair. The case was then followed by the Prokuratura USSR that on 29 April 1984 reported to the CC CPSU the situation and confirmed the sum and the implication of the MCC UzSSR Usmanov, his deputy Normukhamedov, as well as the former FS Jizzakh obkom Baimirov and the chairman SM UzSSR Khudayberdiyev in the falsification of state accountability on the plan for cotton cleaning. The investigation was extended to more than 100 top managers in the republic and a group with the best elements of MVD

⁸⁸ After the creation of the oblast in 1973, Seit Memotovich Tairov became the FS Jizzakh obkom until 1978 when he was replaced by the ‘Rashidovian’ Tukhtamish Baimirov who ruled the obkom until 1980. Then, Parda Ismailov took that post until 1983 when he was replaced by Khabibulla Abdumazhit Shagazatov.

⁸⁹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 1067, ll. 3-7.

⁹⁰ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 1067, ll. 13-14.

and prokuratura headed by Aleksey Vasil'yevich Chizhuk – deputy director of the investigative department of prokuratura USSR – was created. The prokuratura document ended by stating that Usmankhodzhaev had been informed on the developments of the case.⁹¹ This meant that, substantially, the FS CPUz could follow the developments of the story but, despite his position, he could not intervene.

Finally, in a memorandum of the CC CPSU of 26 May 1984 it was reported that Normukhamedov has been arrested and the Shadiev sons – one, a director of a Jizzakh obkom department and the other, a director of a department in the CC CPUz – were fired from their posts. However, the fate would be more generous just a decade later for some of them.⁹² Even the secretary of Jizzakh obkom B. Shakarov, the director of the CPC N. Kushakov, and the FS Jizzakh gorkom Ubaidulla Turakulov were expelled because they were relatives of Shadiev. As well, the directors of the party organizational work department and another obkom department director were fired. Investigations were also needed to determine the involvement of Khudayberdyev, Baimirov, and Usmanov.⁹³ As we will see, besides the Shadiev case there seemed to be a local Jizzakh affair, it had a broader echo on the whole republic⁹⁴ and gave elements to enlarge the case against the Uzbek government and other figures in the SM UzSSR. This was, in other words, just the tip of the iceberg.

⁹¹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 1067, ll. 8-9.

⁹² Shadiev had seven sons: Khakim, Nabi, Kasym, Fazyl, Raul, Kabul and Fattakh (Patokh). The latest is a London-based Uzbek oligarch with Belgian citizenship who made his fortune through the business of mining, metals, oil, gas, and banking. He is currently one of the top 300 richest people in the world on the Forbes list of billionaires.

⁹³ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 1067, l. 11.

⁹⁴ In summer was discovered that the housing enterprise Dzhizakstroi received from the ministry of housing UzSSR extra budget expenses – that was fixed to 24.5 million rubles and in the last three years had been spent 3.8 million rubles in salaries from which 2.2 million had been illegally taken because were the outputs of falsification and in 1982-1983 about 100,000 rubles in salaries were provided through false documentation. PV, 20551, 178, 5 August 1984, p. 2.

4.2 The XVI plenum CPUz and its aftermath

The size of the investigations on the 'cotton affairs' and the related purges within the CPUz assumed a systemic dimension: just between July 1983 and May 1984 five top officials were expelled from the CC CPUz,⁹⁵ and the party proceeded more aggressively to oust the previous generation of politicians. In the buro CC CPUz meeting of 13 June 1984, where it was revealed that in the latest years increased theft, over-spending and resources losses throughout the republic - in 1981 was 3.9 million rubles in 1983 to 5.1⁹⁶ - was again enforced the grip of the party over regional leaders and a power reshuffle of cadres. Then, on 18 June 1984 when Viktor Alekseevich Khaidurov, the FS Syrdarya obkom since 1974, was replaced by V.A. Antonov - a Russian ethnic who was sent from the central organs in Moscow - it became evident that much of the dynamics of the Uzbek cotton affair depended on exogenous factors. In fact, the CC CPSU wanted to reaffirm its grip over the republican party and state organs and, when became clear the size of the corruption scandals, it orchestrated a major event that overwhelmed the CPUz during what appeared as an 'extraordinary' CC CPUz plenum where the results of the mentioned CC Commission led by the CC CPSU official Mogilnichenko were presented and that passed the baton, in terms of purges, from central to local levels.

The XVI plenum of CPUz was held in Tashkent on 23 June 1984. Ligachev - who in the meantime became CC Secretary in December 1983 - chaired that meeting representing the CC CPSU, declaring that substantially Moscow was passing the case on the republican communist party active. In his questionable words, "the center didn't dictate policy and play[ed] the role of the Supreme Court."⁹⁷ This statement is plausible at this stage of the story. There is a lot of mystery - and also speculation - surrounding this extraordinary event. In any case, we have the occasion to match the very real contents of the materials, crisscrossing the publications with the original verbatim reports.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Graeme Gill and Roderic Pitty, *Power in the Party. The Organization of Power and Central-Republican Relations in the CPSU* (Houndmills & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 149.

⁹⁶ Prot. 95/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2469, l. 13.

⁹⁷ Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 219.

⁹⁸ The materials of the XVI plenum CC CPUz had been even published in a special edition - confidential and just destined for the only CC CPSU members - that was

The XVI plenum was officially devoted to the strengthening of “discipline, cadres' formation and the need to improve the frame and the managerial methods of the party, the economy, culture and education of people.” On that occasion, the FS CPUz Usmankhodzhaev stated:

it is necessary to watch and to reevaluate the party activity in contrasting the negative phenomena [in a republic where emerged] an atmosphere of self-celebration, ignoring the principles of collegiality, there was no criticism and no self-criticism [...] and where had been violated the principles and enthusiasms of the party [...it is] important to keep the struggle with no compromise in order to exclude the causes of these defects in the life of organization of the republican party.⁹⁹

According to the FS, the worst situation was revealed in the cotton cleaning sector where, year by year, the plans had not been fulfilled, the quality of produced fibers dramatically decreased, and the wastage increased. In Usmankhodzhaev's words:

There are multiple causes but the most serious is that V. Usmanov, the appointed minister [MCC], was not only not taking adequate measures but he was also camouflaging the reality and misinformed the management of the republic where persisted an organized system of theft, falsification embezzlement and theft to the workers of the republic [where] corruption was covering many categories of workers and managers of ministries, companies, and fields¹⁰⁰

Then, he publicly revealed how in the oblasts of Jizzakh, Khorezm, Kashkadarya and Bukhara, dozens of workers of cotton cleaning sector had been arrested and millions of embezzled rubles had been confiscated by investigators. He commented:

This is a black stain on the good name of the republic and our shame [...] Cotton was, is and will be our pride and our point of honor [...] Dirty hands do not have to touch 'white gold.'¹⁰¹

Furthermore, the FS declared something that countered previous trends, by revealing that the situation in the cotton sector in the UzSSR – even

anyway reducing the full contents. Anyway, I found the way to find and to get the full original verbatim report of the plenum that is available in RGASPI.

⁹⁹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 53.

¹⁰⁰ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 54.

¹⁰¹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 54.

locally¹⁰² – was not so optimistic, thereby constituting a money-losing agricultural system. He stated that in 1983, 347 sovkhoses finished the year at a loss and many kolkhozes and sovkhoses survived because of subsidies and credits, recording a total debt that amounted to 2.8 billion rubles,¹⁰³ recording shortcomings even in Tashkent's housing, where in the last three years 340,000 m² had not been completed and more than 30,000 people were still without a home. The fault was given to the Tashkent gorkom and gorispolkom and to the official responsible for housing, U.U. Umarov. Then, the FS declared that in the previous eight years, the party controls organs had realized more than 72,000 controls in the republic, verifying enterprises, organizations, institutions, kolkhozes and sovkhoses and in a third of them has been revealed to be report-padding and 700 people had been put in front of party responsibility for their guilt. Besides announcing that the struggle against scam had been strengthened, he affirmed that the efforts were still not enough to eradicate the negative phenomena. According to the FS, the scam of *pripiski* had been conceived to

create the illusion of wealth and on this base the theft of socialist property increased. It cannot be tolerated that the people involved in these thefts are in a great part managers. In the last four years, due to theft of socialist property had been dismissed more than 900 heads of state companies, organizations, kolkhozes and sovkhoses. and almost 4,000 managers of industry, brigadiers, accountants. A ninth of the thefts of socialist property is done by top managers. In a Tashkent textile factory, there was a group of 'swindlers' that produced unregistered clothes that were sold on the black market, producing a damage to the state for 12 million rubles. In that factory had been pursued 59 people. As well, the deputy director of Kashkadarya court has been arrested for corruption and many the workers of courts in Bukhara and Samarkand oblasts. Just in the last year, the commercial rules had been violated in a third of the shops, [...As well] were discovered 3000 cases of speculation over Uzbek agriculture products that are sold on the black market at special prices and just in the Tashkent oblast the number of crimes has increased by 20% from 1981. As well, in the last year for the negative phenomena had been fired almost 900 people from which 135 pursued with criminal allegations, while in the law enforcement and political cadres 1225 communists had been sent.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² During the XVI plenum CPUz, also the FS Namangan Radzhabov, confirmed that the oblast was in financial debt towards the state for the cotton production, denouncing also the diffused familism and zemlyachestvo. Prot. 16/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2450, l. 78.

¹⁰³ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 55.

¹⁰⁴ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, ll. 56-57.

Thus, according to the FS, the recipe to strengthen discipline consisted in sending 'communists' to cover the management posts, intending that a replacement of cadres was in process, with the support of CC CPSU that was sending experts in Uzbekistan in the famous *krasnyi desant* campaign that will be considered in the next chapter in order to define a transition under external control. In his speech, the FS CPUz even stated that the republican communists had great faith of the CC CPSU and "everybody of us with his own activity must deserve this trust."¹⁰⁵ Then Usmankhodzhaev reprimanded the typical attitude of politicians to interfere with investigations of the judicial organs and stated: "the workers of party and soviets do not have to interfere with the activity of investigative organs. For example, the former FS Leninabad raikom had intervened by exonerating two criminals"¹⁰⁶ and was dismissed from his post for his actions. Then, Usmankhodzhaev continues the list of negative examples that had been discovered in the republic and proceeded to publicize some facts that we have already analyzed. In fact, he stated that in Kashkadarya:

B. Elbaev, the former chairman of Kashkadarya oblispolkom was illegally building houses for him and for his family as well as did his deputy A. Mustafaev and the former FS of the Shakrisab raikom N. Khikmatov that was a 'forger' who was pursuing anyone who criticized him. Even the FS of Chirakchin, T. Tillaev, lied officially to the party and the FS Andijan raikom, D. Khuzhnazarov was finally removed for his immoral behaviors as well as the former FS Ulianovsk raikom, A. Umirov who had a primitive approach in work and in personal behaving and did falsifications.¹⁰⁷

Then, he also provided the greatest example of malfeasance in the Kashkadarya oblast, blaming directly the former 'boss' of the obkom Gaipov. In the FS's words,

the subjectivism of the FS Kashkadarya obkom, R. Gaipov, and the arbitrary methods of work created an atmosphere for many negative phenomena. The vicious workstyle in the obkom damaged the economy and the organization of the party in the oblast where had been recently invested 675 million rubles for its development but did not bear any fruit.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 62.

¹⁰⁶ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 57.

¹⁰⁷ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 58.

¹⁰⁸ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 58.

As well, in the Bukhara oblast:

The principles of cadres' policy had been violated even in Bukhara, where the decisions were based on zemlyachestvo and personal kinship. The former FS Bukhara obkom, A. Karimov, put in the posts of oblast prosecutor and in the top management of local UVD and OBKhSS those people with whom he had close ties of friendship. They were corrupted and made several thefts and from them the investigations had been sequestered cash and goods form more than 7 million rubles.¹⁰⁹

With regards to Karimov, the harshest comments were made in a speech made by S. Gainev – FS Gizhduvan raikom and member of CC CPUz – who condemned the former FS Bukhara. He had chosen

the leaders to familyism, kinship and personal dedication. All officers of the administrative bodies were affiliated, and all these people were the groups of corrupters. The example to Karimov was so taken by others. During the years of Karimov, prospered the 'bare board,' authoritarianism and disrespectful attitude towards other opinions. Obkom and raikom interfered in the businesses of all the agriculture organs.¹¹⁰

Even in the same occasion, Usmankhodzhaev commented the critical situation in the Jizzakh oblast – that did not fulfill the plan in 1983¹¹¹ – where had been revealed

abuses of power, familyism and thefts related to cotton. The former FS Jizzakh obkom, Tukhtamish Baimirov, and other members of the obkom buro had been found guilty for violations in the cadres' policy and for covering falsifications. Even the former FS Jizzakh gorkom, U. Turakulov covered people who violated law as the director of a milk factory who was saved from the first's intervention even giving him as a present a zhiguli car from the gorkom.¹¹²

Another interesting point is that the FS revealed falsifications even in the Navoi oblast that – as we have seen in the second chapter – was not an agriculture-based oblast and was therefore indirectly denouncing the shortcomings in the strategic sector of mining as well. Then, the FS CPUz denounced other negative phenomena that had been discovered in the republic. For example, three obkom secretaries, seven FSs obkoms, 48 secretaries of raikoms and gorkoms as well as several members of Komsomol

¹⁰⁹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 59.

¹¹⁰ Prot. 16/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2450, l. 75.

¹¹¹ Prot. 16/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2450, l. 88.

¹¹² RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 59.

did not fulfill the productive duties and were working badly. Moreover, many managers were violating the constitution for several causes and were exonerating their sons from military service, as well as 76 party and soviet nomenklatura members that were abusing their power. In General, many management cadres were denounced for having “the aspiration for private property and suffered from greed and accumulation”. Among them, Usmankhodzhaev reported that even the former ministers of food industry V.S. Sadykov, finance V. Muratkhodzhaev, the director of Goskomizdat (the State Committee for Publishing, Printing and Book Trade) Z.I. Yesenbaev and the general director of Uzbekneft, A. Ismailov and others “abused of power, implemented falsifications and enforced the management of not qualified workers who were granted with material benefits.” He also reported that many managers had been only formally punished for their abuses and then were reinstated in other top management posts. In his words, just in the “Samarkand and Ferghana oblasts, a third of the managers that have been dismissed from the previous positions were recollected in new managerial posts and similarly did a half of those dismissed in Syrdarya.”¹¹³ Then, he gave a final account of the top management purges, declaring that

in the current year alone, five executives of CC CPUz had been expelled from the party and seven deputies of SS UzSSR had been expelled from the their posts as had three FS obkoms and eight from gorkoms and raikoms. [However,] not everything is ok in the work of the nomenklatura and its reserves in the CC CPUz and in the obkoms and the nomenklatura [lists] are often unfairly enlarged, and in the formation of reserves there is formalism and often there are no [names] worthy of a possible appointment and therefore there are several cases of cooptation. In the last FYP, among the secretaries of obkoms, gorkoms and raikoms the level of coopted [cadres] amounted to 54% and in the last three years it rose to 69%.¹¹⁴

The FS CPUz was in this way denouncing the systematic size of the negative phenomena in some key sectors and oblasts of the republic. Apparently, we could think that this was a strategy to enforce a purge rivals. However, on this occasion it seems that Usmankhodzhaev was just following the course of the investigations and probably he did not have much discretion in guiding the purges. To some extent, *Sekretar nol'* was hostage of the CC CPSU and the central judiciary organs, while the internal war within the CPUz cadres raged in its higher dimension. Continuing his long intervention, he also

¹¹³ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 60.

¹¹⁴ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 60-61.

gave examples of the shortcomings and waste, such as with A.K. Irgashev, the director of *Uzbekgidroenergostroi*, who had inflated the request for the reconstruction of the administrative building for more than 600,000 rubles¹¹⁵ and observing how, besides the previous enthusiasms, from the beginning of the current FYP, 470,000 tons of cotton fiber and 51 million m² of fabrics had not been realized.¹¹⁶

In the plenum other figures intervened who related their speech to the same issues, presenting similar denunciations even from below. An example of this was the speech made by N.M. Zheleznov, a worker employed at the railway repairs, who stated that in the city of Tashkent and throughout the republic there was speculation, toadyism, amateurism, and large-scale thefts in the system of the Ministry of Light Industry and in the MinZag (Ministry of the produced goods) and in the MCC. “But the list can be endless and the concern of the CC CPSU to Uzbekistan is understandable.”¹¹⁷ Then, V.A. Golovin, the head of the KGB UzSSR and a member of the CC CPUZ, revealed that corruption, theft, and the heart of the fraud system was in the cotton cleaning and processing industries. He gave the example of Shadieiev – the Jizzakh ‘pentito’ who directed the Dzhizakzavodkhlopkoprom – revealing the results of the further investigations on the facts that we have introduced in the previous paragraph. In his speech, Golovin stated that investigations on Shadieiev and Dzhizakzavodkhlopkoprom proceeded under the instruction of the CC and together with the prokuratura organs. “It is an example of the exponential scale of thefts because it was also implicating a merchandiser. During Shadieiev’s arrests gold had been seized, as had diamonds and cash worth 300 thousand rubles.”¹¹⁸ He then commented that:

the organs of prokuratura investigate the mechanism of the crime but now it is clear that these thefts of state funds were allocated for the production of various agricultural outputs that never existed. These plunderers manufacturing falsifications and paying with bribes, dragged into crime also [the simple] workers. The chief of these thieves was Shadieiev, the former director of Dzhizakzavodkhlopkoprom, who confessed to taking bribes for more than 1.2 million rubles. In 1948, this guy, when he was leader of the cotton factory, had already been sentenced to two years in prison for abuse of power and in 1961 in the personal file showed a rebuke because he built a house with excesses and building abuses. In all this time, and even after, he

¹¹⁵ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 62.

¹¹⁶ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 65.

¹¹⁷ Prot. 16/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2450, l. 36.

¹¹⁸ Prot. 16/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2450, l. 61.

remained as director until 1962 when he was the manager of the Samarkand Zagotkhopkotrest¹¹⁹ and was involved in an investigation of the analog case on which he was arrested by the KGB now, with the difference that in 1962 he managed to avoid prosecution for still unclear reasons, because at that time all its workers, 27 people were sentenced from 1 to 15 years. The Samarkand obkom buro, on 24 May 1962 had decided to expel him from the job, but he always remained in his post, and in 1969 he even became the zagotkhopkotrest executive of Gulistan and in 1980 and has become the "Dzhizakzavodkhopkoprom" director from where he was expelled like a millionaire in 1984, after his arrest by the organs of the KGB.¹²⁰

Then, the KGB head opened a polemic, stating "but where was the vigilance? Why did this biography [meaning CV] give the right to so high a post?"¹²¹ This question suggested that the KGB was probably not satisfied enough with the actions of the CPUz and called for further action on the apparatus of the state and the party. Then, P. Kayumov – chairman of the technical and labor educational committee of the UzSSR – confirmed the importance of educating the cadres on criticism and self-criticism.¹²² Finally also Yegor Ligachev – who was chairing the plenum and representing the CC CPSU for this important event – underlined the importance of strengthening discipline and making order in all the spheres of social life and how Uzbekistan – where the Soviet state has invested more than 43 billion rubles in the last eight years – was important for the Soviet cause. The calm words of Ligachev appeared as a renewal of trust for the CPUz.¹²³ However, in the second part of his speech, the CC CPSU secretary, who was acting as a sort of deputy to Chernenko, harshly denounced the environment of diffused malfeasance in the republic, where the familial ties and circular dynamics were tolerated in an atmosphere of indulgence where some communists abused their power, had massive houses and many cars.¹²⁴ Therefore, Ligachev recognized that corruption was under the struggle and there had been changes in the past 18 months,¹²⁵ concluding his speech by declaring that Chernenko had asked him to say that

¹¹⁹ *Zagotkhopkotrest* was the local management unit for cotton processing.

¹²⁰ Prot. 16/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2450, l. 61.

¹²¹ Prot. 16/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2450, l. 62

¹²² Prot. 16/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2450, l. 96.

¹²³ Prot. 16/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2450, ll. 102-103.

¹²⁴ Prot. 16/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2450, l. 106.

¹²⁵ John Staples, "Soviet Use of Corruption Purges as a Control Mechanism: The Uzbekistan Case," *Past Imperfect* 2 (1993): 29.

the Politburo of the CC CPSU retains that the party's active and the Communists of the republic under the leadership of the CC CPUz can and must enforce order, and CC CPSU will help for this task.¹²⁶

With this conclusion – that also sounded like a threat - it seemed that Moscow did not fully trust the CPUz and wanted to put Tashkent under stricter control. Even Ligachev would remember that due to the commission investigation that presented its results at the XVI plenum CC CPUz, the CC CPSU chose to send "many party and government economic officials from various regions of Russia, Ukraine and Byelorussia to normalize the situation",¹²⁷ constituting a physical tie between the republic and the Staraya Ploshad. Another interesting point is that, despite a general misunderstanding on this event, the name of the departed Rashidov was never mentioned.

In the aftermath of the Tashkent plenum, despite the protocol and the encouraging narrative used there, Ligachev reported his real impressions to the CC CPSU. In his memoirs, Chernyaev reports his impressions, stating that an,

example of the regime's decay was contained in a report that Ligachev gave, "The Situation in the Uzbek Republican Party Organization." The evidence of corruption was horrifying. The amount of cottonseed harvested was supposedly increasing, but that of fiber produced was dropping from one year to the next. The state had been robbed of hundreds of millions of rubles. Up to 340,000 tons of cottonseed was "withheld" every year through false reporting. A minimum bribe was 10,000 rubles, while an average annual salary was about 2,000 rubles. In Tashkent, the Uzbek capital, Party bosses had villas, estates, and even palaces built for themselves. A panel in one metro station cost two million rubles. In the meantime, half a million people were living in clay huts with no water, gas, sewage, and very often no electricity. The same in Samarkand, Uzbekistan's second-largest city. All kinds of "administrators" had two to five houses, some of them country estates. They owned up to five personal cars. Over the past three years the CPSU Central Committee had received 30,000 letters from Uzbek citizens about this. Not a single one was looked into. In the Kashkadarinskaya region alone, Ligachev reported, the entire Internal Affairs staff had to be arrested. Up to seven million rubles' worth of valuables were confiscated from those "police." Another fraud was exposed in the republic-wide Ministry of Internal Affairs: 700 "dead souls," nonexistent communists made up to bolster the local party's apparent significance. Nepotism was also rampant, with relatives holding all major

¹²⁶ Prot. 16/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2450, ll. 106-113.

¹²⁷ Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 220.

posts. Several thousand administrators had already been fired, and about 1,500 taken to court.¹²⁸

4.2.1 In the aftermath of the plenum

Hence, the XVI plenum constituted a watershed in recent Uzbek history and would be one of the first major occasions when Moscow would comply Tashkent to intensify its efforts against the 'negative phenomena.' A first event but, as we shall see, not the last. In the immediate aftermath of the XVI plenum, there was another important meeting, this time of the CPUz party-aktiv, on 30 June 1984. On that occasion, the plenum commitments were confirmed and while other details to the line to follow were provided.¹²⁹ Substantially, the plenum was defining the guidelines of the new strategy, but now the party was supposed to elaborate a tactic. From that moment, Moscow formally claimed the end of patrimonial system in the periphery of the empire while Tashkent was searching for scapegoats to offer to the CPSU. However, the result would be a harsher attack against the local establishment and a self-destructing war within the Uzbek apparatus. After confirming the commitments of the party, Usmankhodzhaev yielded the stage to the second secretary Osetrov, who confirmed how:

¹²⁸ Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 11.

¹²⁹ The protocol reported: "to increasing the responsibilities of management and of the law enforcement bodies in the fight against crime and in the conformity of socialist law stemming from the XVI plenum solutions that demonstrated the incompatibility with the flaws, strong criticism and self-criticism, mistakes in work and determination to strengthen discipline in the light of the requirements of the XXVI CPSU congress and the CPSU plenums of February and April 1984.¹²⁹ [...] the same Chernenko during his meeting with the voters said that: *"the party and the government have strengthened the fight against negative phenomena such as the squandering of public funds, fraud, abuse of power, corruption and theft. This is not a temporary campaign; this is a line that will be followed in a continuous and rigorous manner. There is no mercy for anyone and we will not show mercy; no one should have any illusions on this point. There is a need for high responsibility and the requirement of managers is to focus. Standing on these questions of the party organizations and collectives of workers, all Soviet people, is the effective work of the people's control organs, organs of law, and order and justice."* Prot. 18/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2509, ll. 3-4.

Today, unfortunately, the style and methods of work of the organs of the prokuratura, the MVD, and Justice do not correspond to the [party] needs, and this is why they were criticized during the XVI plenum of Uzbekistan.¹³⁰

The 'Moscow watchdog' then recalled the cases of massive theft in Kashkadarya, Bukhara, Jizzakh, Khorezm e Tashkent and in Karakalpak ASSR, and in particular he reminded to the party-aktiv the case of Aslanov – a former director of the consumer union of the Romitan raion – from whom were seized nine kilos of gold, 3.5 kilos of pearls, 974 gold coins of tsarist minting, more than a thousand jewels, 170,000 rubles in cash and three cars.¹³¹ Osetrov kept his harsh rebuke against the tolerance within the prokuratura UzSSR departments, stating:

in these situations, the prokuratura of UzSSR showed no hardness and did not define its role and, in particular, that of N.B. Burikhodzhaev [the prokuror of the UzSSR]. The prosecutor should not think that he can permit everything, but also must have the harsh opinion to act the decision when state interests require this. And if our prosecutors would behave as provided by law and would check on a timely eradication of theft of state and people's property, corruption, speculation, then we could not have the consequences that are now in the industry of cotton cleaning, in trade and other departments of the economy.¹³²

In this very confidential meeting, Osetrov also criticized the activity of the OBKhSS departments – and the MVD organs in general – that were not doing enough to prevent crimes in the republic.¹³³ Thus, the second secretary criticized also the inefficiencies in the justice system, declaring that:

¹³⁰ Prot. 18/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2509, l. 4.

¹³¹ Finally, Aslanov was accused of bribery and speculation and was condemned to the death penalty by the SC UzSSR, while his collaborators had been imprisoned. PV, 20820, 147, 29 June 1985, p. 4.

¹³² Prot. 18/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2509, l. 5.

¹³³ The second secretary CPUz commented: "the orders of the party, government and MVD on the protection of socialist property are not performed sufficiently and the OBKhSS forces are focused on small and obvious cases and only in half a year, there were 377 cases of speculation, and only 20% of theft cases have been completed during last year while the prevention of crimes decreased compared to 1982, in 18% less. The companies of the agroindustrial complex are not seriously controlled. [... Parallel to this] It increases the number of intentional homicide, theft and other crimes, and in the last 3 and a half years have been made in 2,500 murders, 2,193 rapes, 3,520 robberies and burglaries and 20,000 thefts of citizens' property. [...Thus, the second secretary condemned the incompetence of the security organs and

Also courts often tolerate violations of constitutional rights of citizens [and just in the last months] have not been imprisoned for 42% of people who were convicted of speculation [and] for large-scale thefts in the republic only 2% of the defendants found guilty are condemned to the maximum punishments.¹³⁴

Thus, Osetrov evidenced the systemic size of the problem that was – in his opinion – starting from the cadres’ policy and then reflected on the administration. Nevertheless, he did not believe that the nature of the problem was in the cadres’ policy, but rather in the management system. Hence, he finally stated:

we must say that these defects are caused by the weakening of the party leadership and the flaws in the selection, placement and education of cadres, the development of critical and self-criticism, the organization of control and verification of the execution of accepted solutions.¹³⁵ In the MVD organs was diffused the practice of the appointment to executive posts people who had no political, moral and organizational qualities. And this practice had been implemented by the former Ministers of the republic and Yakhyayev and Ergashev [...] in 1983-1984 for abuse of power and unethical behavior had been expelled 46 top managers from the police and 371 were punished. [Even locally,] many abuses had been implemented by the UVD of Kashkadarya, Navoi, Surkhandarya and Syrdarya and in the MVD of the Karakalpak ASSR.¹³⁶ [The defects in the cadres’ policy was also reflected in the local prokuratura departments because] the constitutional term of the prosecutor's work is 5 years, but many worked for 10, 15 and even 20 years in the same location.¹³⁷ [For example], a former prosecutor of the Dzhambai raion, T. Kadyrov, was corrupt and extorted large sums of money for covering plunderers and

brought the landmark case of] a guy [who] has been condemned six times, in the last he was arrested for drug possession and was liberated by an investigator of the OVD. In the same day, this guy murdered a person. [...Then, he reaffirmed the commitments of politics to do not interfere in the investigations] During the XVI plenum, I.B. Usmankhodzhaev has underlined that “the intervention of party and soviets’ workers in the operating activities of investigative bodies must be terminated.” [and condemns the example of] Kurbanov, the former FS Leninabad raikom, has personally released two criminals.” Prot. 18/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2509, ll. 6, 7, 9, 12.

¹³⁴ Prot. 18/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2509, l. 13.

¹³⁵ Prot. 18/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2509, l. 14.

¹³⁶ Prot. 18/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2509, l. 15.

¹³⁷ Prot. 18/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2509, l. 17.

speculators. [...] The bribe is a dangerous enemy of the revolution and of the new system.¹³⁸

After the Osetrov accusations, the stage passed to a figure that effectively appeared overloaded with responsibility for the misdeeds. In fact, in the party-aktiv meeting the chairman of the MVD UzSSR, N.I. Ibragimov, also intervened. He declared that the security forces have applied the measures in the performance of operating activities and, from the XVI plenum, the controls over the managers' activity were further strengthened.¹³⁹ To some extent, the chairman of the Uzbek police wanted to underline that an increase in the revealed case was linked to an improvement of the MVD work. Indeed, he confirmed how,

in the last six months has increased the number of revealed thefts cases for +6.2%, corruption for +34.6% and speculation for +3.8% and were revealed groups of looters who did their business in the industry of cotton cleaning, sovkhoses, kolkhozes, state commerce, consumer cooperatives, financial bodies, construction and other sectors of the economy. From these criminals had been seized money and valuables for more than 6 million rubles.¹⁴⁰

Then, also the deputy prokuror of Syrdarya, V.S. Surganov, tried to follow the same narrative and declared that was fired the former deputy prokuror of Gulistan, K.E. Karashev and even the investigator of the same department Kh. Kholdarov for discrediting reasons, as well as 127 police men in the last year and a half.¹⁴¹ Therefore, the measures to struggle against these "negative phenomena" were still intended as insufficient: on that occasion S.A. Shishkov - deputy general prosecutor of USSR – also intervened, denouncing a general lack of punishment in Uzbekistan, indicating how the many responsible of these crimes were not fired and trialed but were just moved to other posts.¹⁴² Then, he confirmed the criticism towards the UzSSR organs, stating:

measures are badly taken on material damage compensations, and this follows the irresponsibility and waste, and the final result of all this can be seen in cases like the theft of several million in the productive unit 'Guzal' [...] Many of these forgers, even after the court decisions, remain in the same posts. The mandate of the deputy [that guaranteed a certain grade of immunity] has

¹³⁸ Prot. 18/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2509, l. 18.

¹³⁹ Prot. 18/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2509, l. 25.

¹⁴⁰ Prot. 18/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2509, l. 27.

¹⁴¹ Prot. 18/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2509, l. 33.

¹⁴² RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2509, l. 62.

become an indulgence for the absolution of sins.¹⁴³ [Then he proceeds, denouncing the rotten that was also within the prosecution organs] for example, the prosecutors of Uliyanov and Chirakchin rayon - in the Kashkadarya oblast - under the influence of local leaders have refused to open criminal cases of falsification of cotton in the two sovkhoses of the Uliyanov raion – receiving a sum of 890,000 rubles – and in the kolkhoz of Chirakchin raion for 520,000 rubles. And these examples are not unique.¹⁴⁴

Thus, this party-aktiv meeting was the completing event that together with the XVI plenum defined a watershed moment in UzSSR history. In fact, from this moment, the CPSU started to enforce its grip over the Uzbek leadership more strongly, suggesting that the negative phenomena were a systemic problem, and putting the CPUz under the effective supervision of the CC CPSU that seemed to demand a deeper cleaning. Usmankhodzhaev then reaffirmed the commitments of the party to strengthen the discipline and thanked for the support of ‘communists’ who had replaced the vicious workers.¹⁴⁵ This implication of ‘communists’ appears a little enigmatic. Did he intend that the CPUz – or a part/faction of it – was reaffirming its influence on the administration of the republic or a new generation of ‘communists’ was arriving from the rest of USSR to cover the posts that before had been granted by the korenization to the native Uzbeks? Both trends were actual in Uzbekistan and both hypotheses will be verified in the following paragraphs where, as we will see, the reshuffle of cadres would have serious effects on the political life of the republic.

The calls for cleaning the republic were finally publicized in the press and media, adding another dimension that would confirm a hypothesis of legitimation through moralization campaign by the FS CPUz. In fact, Usmankhodzhaev wanted to reassure Moscow about its commitments to improving the cotton situation as well as in other sensible agricultural productions and other speculative sectors, such as the consumption goods’ distribution,¹⁴⁶ gold¹⁴⁷ and construction sites.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, these

¹⁴³ Prot. 18/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2509, l. 62.

¹⁴⁴ Prot. 18/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2509, l. 63.

¹⁴⁵ In the conclusive intervention at the party-aktiv, the FS CPUz specified that just from March 1983, in the MVD UzSSR were sent more than 1,600 communists. Prot. 18/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2509, l. 71.

¹⁴⁶ In May 1984, the PCC registered irregularities - such as like theft, losses and bad warehousing - even in ministry of trade, the consumption goods distribution and the final shops in the UzSSR, registering a damage for 2.685 million rubles just in 1983. GARF, f. 9527, op. 1, d. 8299.

demonstrative actions seemed to formally act for the FS CPUz consent rather than in substantial effects.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, after the XVI plenum even in newspapers there were more public calls to “increase discipline and responsibility of cadres”, reporting the commitments within the Tashkent obkom IV plenum, as well in the Tashkent gorkom VI plenum, and in the V plenum of Kashkadarya obkom.¹⁵⁰ This moral mission was justified as a measure to evolve “from feudalism to developed socialism.”¹⁵¹ The effect of this publicity that was mobilizing the public opinion – and probably many political speculators – was a new wave of *donos* that flooded the CCs in Moscow and in Tashkent. The logic of *donos* – which we have already come across in the previous chapter – seems to correspond to the logic of a famous Russian joke that was cited at the beginning of this chapter¹⁵² and to some extent to the prisoner’s dilemma. In a moment of witch-hunts, it seems to be good to be the first to accuse. However, it depends on how in-depth the initiator – in our case the party – is determined to go with its purges.

Finally, in July the former MVD UzSSR, Kh. Yakhyayev, was accused and sanctioned for gross misconduct¹⁵³ when G. Shamshiyev, the Secretary of the PCC UzSSR, alleged that the former chairman of the republican MVD had

¹⁴⁷ Already in May 1983, the PCC was indicating the increasing thefts of socialist property also in the gold sector - especially in the state enterprise "Uzbekzoloto" – that just for 1983 already amounted for more than 1.5 million rubles, while for the 1980-1982 were on an average of 852 thousand rubles and in 1977-1979 742 thousand. GARF; f. 8131, op. 28, d. 6044, l. 1.

¹⁴⁸ In the memorandum 5/471 addressed to Chernenko, Usmankhodzhaev and Khudayberdiyev wanted to reassure the center about the situation in the republic also about housing and the use of the funds that had been destined for the Tashkent reconstruction after the 1966 earthquake stating that productivity increased by 64% during the years of the tenth and eleventh five-year plan, taking advantage of the 6.8 million square meters of completed buildings and 78,000 new places in schools, 31,800 places in nurseries and kindergartens and 4370 hospital beds, developing municipal services, transport and, very quickly, the subway. Considering that in 1990 the Tashkent population will reach 2.4 million inhabitants – from 2 million in 1983 – was effectively presenting the need for more funds in order to develop services and structures for that new mass. RGANI, f. 83, op. 1, d. 128, ll. 66-69.

¹⁴⁹ Leon Aron, *Yeltsin: A Revolutionary Life* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2009), 133.

¹⁵⁰ PV, 20534, 161, 15 July 1984, pp. 1-2.

¹⁵¹ PV, 20544, 171, 27 July 1984, p. 3.

¹⁵² Ты не посадишь – тебя посадят. Ты не уберешь – тебя уберут.

¹⁵³ In October 1985 Yakhyaev was finally arrested and became part of the ‘trial of the century.’

engaged in systematic abuse of his power, amoral ways of living, toadyism, and other rascal behavior.¹⁵⁴ Then came the turn of another notorious corrupter – the above mentioned Usmanov – who had been at the center of previous debates. The situation for him would change during the CC CPUz buro meeting of 25 July 1984. In fact, on that occasion, the work of the MVD was discussed, as were the improvements in its organs – such as the OBKhSS – revealing how in 1983-1984 461 dangerous groups of looters and 32 corrupters were found, and just during the last year and a half 377 criminal cases had been made on speculation and about 20% of cases of robbery had already been completed.¹⁵⁵ One eleventh of thefts had been conducted by the same chief officer (manager) of the group, revealing that in a year and a half had been found 331 officials implicating. three quarters of these groups held these activities for many years.¹⁵⁶ According to the report, just in the last year, 217 criminal cases on speculation in agricultural products had been opened and about 60 tons of fruit and vegetables were seized by speculators. In February 1984, some residents of the kolkhoz "50-letya UzSSR" in Tashkent were prosecuted and 2,845 kg of apples were seized.¹⁵⁷ Just in 1983 from the OBKhSS 40 people were fired, of which 20 were members of the CPSU, and 19 for violation of discipline and law and some of them had brought criminal proceedings and 79 were punished for disciplinary violations.¹⁵⁸ Then, the 25 July buro meeting also confirmed the dismissal of Usmanov, the MCC who had been at the center of a polemic in the past months. The MCC UzSSR – who was also a deputy of the SS UzSSR elected in the circumscription n° 238 of Kitabski, in the Kashkadarya oblast – had been criticized in the previous plenums and now was finally dismissed with a resolution of the buro from the post of MCC and expelled from the CPSU

for the admission of serious mistakes in choosing leadership and positioning of cadres and the failure to adopt measures to suppress the phenomena of falsification, abuse, theft of socialist property and corruption that had widely spread in industry. [...] Also, for not having fulfilled the trust of his electors, he resigned from his post in the SS UzSSR.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ PV, 20537, 164, 18 July 1984, p. 3.

¹⁵⁵ Prot. 99/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2473, l. 44.

¹⁵⁶ Prot. 99/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2473, l. 45.

¹⁵⁷ Prot. 99/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2473, l. 46.

¹⁵⁸ Prot. 99/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2473, l. 47.

¹⁵⁹ Prot. 100/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2474, l. 29.

In an additional document that was reporting the effective motivation for his removal – appendix 5 – was added:

the deputy of the SS UzSSR, V. Usmanov, being the MCC of the republic, did not take the appropriate measures for suppressing the serious violations of the discipline of the state during the processing of raw cotton. As a result, at many processing points, falsifications of cotton were spread and the spurious increase in the quality and manufacturing false receipts. As a result, from 1981 to 1983, were not delivered 294 thousand tons of spun fibers and its production decreased to 27.5%, while the plan was expected to be at 28.9%. The weak control over the activity of the cotton factories, the low level of the control-revision work resulted in the fact that many industrial workers have been involved in criminal groups that cared for the theft of socialist property on a large scale. [...] Evidence of these phenomena are discovered in the oblast of Jizzakh, Bukhara, Kashkadarya, and Khorezm. With the resolution of the CC CPUz buro of 25 July 1984, he is removed from the ministry and expelled from the CPSU. The Department of party-informational work thinks that V. Usmanov has lost the voters' trust and cannot perform the duties of deputy.¹⁶⁰

Therefore, the CC CPUz buro estimated the level of falsification for 294,000 tons even in the fiber production just for the period 1981-1983, determining the dismissal and the prosecution of Vakhab Usmanov¹⁶¹ for his responsibilities.¹⁶² The warning results of the cotton industry in UzSSR was therefore directly alarming the SM USSR.¹⁶³ Far from casually – just the day

¹⁶⁰ Prot. 100/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2474, l. 132.

¹⁶¹ Vakhab Usmanov was imprisoned in Lefortovo prison where he spent his last days in depression waiting for his destiny. His cellmate, Lev Timofeev, evidenced how Usmanov was feeling frustrated of his accusations describing him as “faithful to his professional duties and a conscious manager” who was simply playing the game of socialist shadow economy. He felt as a scapegoat of a system where high cadres were familiar with phenomena like bribes, falsification and embezzlement were “normal, everyday, customary economic practice” and was not seen as a guilt. During his period in Lefortovo, he collaborated with investigators, denouncing more than 400 people from whom he received or to whom he gave bribes. Finally, he got an exemplary punishment when in August 1986 he was sentenced to the highest measures of punishment: death by firing squad. Lev Timofeev, *Russia's Secret Rulers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 52–70.

¹⁶² RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2454, l. 132.

¹⁶³ A special commission instructed by the presidium of the SS USSR defined the productive inefficiencies in the cotton industries of UzSSR in 1983, denouncing defects and shortcomings for 30,738 tons of cotton thread - for a value of 90.7 million rubles - and for 219,891 m² of fabric for a value of 136,5 million rubles. GARF, f. P-5446, op. 144, d. 797, l. 11.

after the Uzbek buro meeting that led to such harsh accusations against the system of cotton cleaning that was then identified as the pivot of the scam – on 26 July 1984, the CC CPSU and SM USSR approved the resolution n° 808 “about the means to improve the quality of raw cotton and cotton products” that was putting new strict rules to warehouses, depots and factories on the procedures to receive cotton.¹⁶⁴ This measure seemed to be necessary in order to limit the embezzlement and the falsifications related to ‘white gold.’ After the plenum, a first measure was to link the payment to the effective supply – in terms of quality and quantity – of cotton.¹⁶⁵ However, the central institutions would have a skeptical attitude to provide further credit to kolkhozes and Sovkhozes of UzSSR. Then, the SM USSR disposed on 13 September 1984 to the Gosplan and ministries of finance, agriculture, Gosbank, and CSD of USSR that wanted to identity financial performance of kolkhoz and sovkhozes in Uzbekistan on the basis of 90% of revenues for the raw cotton delivered to the state, specifying that it was not possible to give credit for undelivered cotton.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, the Uzbek leadership was reporting shortcomings in terms of quality¹⁶⁷ and was asking for a flexible approach and to provide financial support to the republican farms.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ In the memorandum 3M-4170 of 24 August 1984 of the deputy chairman of Goskomtsen to Sm UzSSR, TsGARUZ, f. 837, op. 41, d. 6724, l. 10.

¹⁶⁵ In the memorandum N° 10-12-140 of the CC CPUz and the SM UzSSR (14 September 1984) addressed to Gosplan USSR, and Soviet ministries of agriculture, light industry and finance advised that had been taken the priority measures implemented in the regulations of the CC CPSU and the SM USSR of 26 July 1984 n. 808 in order to "increase production, reduce losses, improve quality of raw cotton and cotton products" that was linking the payment of raw cotton depending on the quality and content of fibers. According to the Gosplan, the republic had to supply for 1984 a quantity of 5.965 million tons from which had to be produced 1.7725 million tons that equals to 29.72% of fiber, against the 27.27% of the period 1980-1983. GARF, f. R-5446, op. 144, d. 944, ll. 1-2.

¹⁶⁶ These measures found the opposition of kolkhozes and sovkhozes that were presenting the risk of labor unprofitability in the Uzbek farms. However, the central government did not want to assure other credit, considering that still in 1984, sovkhozes and kolkhozes of UzSSR did not delivered raw cotton for a value of 355 million rubles. GARF, f. R-5446, op. 145, d. 999, ll. 1-3.

¹⁶⁷ The quality decrease had been explained by the memorandum 10-12-148 of the CC CPUz and Soviet Ministrov UzSSR to the SM USSR (17 September 1984) where it was reported that quality was higher when cotton was cropped manually and from 1971 it had started to be cropped mechanically. As well, there were problems related to the intensive monoculture that was reducing the fertility and quantity of hummus. As well,

Evidently, the scandals related to bribery went deeper, entering in all levels of patrimonialism within the republic. The scandals kept overwhelming the local leaderships¹⁶⁹ and were reported in the press at both local and national levels. For example, at the end of July 1984 PV revealed a situation in Bukhara where several scandals related to cotton and the difficult situation in the agricultural sector emerged,¹⁷⁰ resulting in the reaction of the IV plenum of the Bukhara obkom that assumed measures for strengthening the cadres, revealing poor economic standards in cotton production, and the prosecution of many officials among which 56 were fired because of their financial culpability. Even some officials employed in factories, as the manager I. Mamatov of the Bukharazagotkhlomprom – the Bukhara cotton processing complex – had been sanctioned by the party as well as the directors of the Gizhduvanski, Peshkunski and Karakulski complexes – respectively M Samatov, D. Muyasarov, S. Sadullaev. This complaint has been made by the FS Romitan raikom, Kh. Saidov who also denounced that in 1981 he was director of a sovkhos that declared it had fulfilled the plan while, in reality, it had

there was the 'Vilta' infection that was withering plants and hit almost 30% of the productive areas. The results were weaker fibers and more salinized lands. As well, was registered a reduction of fertile minerals in land – that in 1983 reached 0.5% while the demanded standard was 0.8% – and also the intensive use of pesticides made cotton weaker. Also the implementation of the quality mark GOST 1971 was not bettering the quality of cotton and created a disorder in wages of machinists and manual croppers. GARF, f. R-5446, op. 144, d. 944, ll. 8-9.

¹⁶⁸ The CC CPUz and the SM UzSSR were informing Nuriev and the whole SM USSR (17 September 1984) that "However, in many farms of the republic from the first day of raw cotton harvest, was substantially missing the first industrial quality cotton. The commission – established by the SM UzSSR to analyze the numerous figures of cotton from different farms of the republic – showed that raw cotton for a normal growth plant (with high yield and boll opening in strength fiber) do not have a first and basically refers to the third industrial grade, with the processing of the first industrial batch gave 30-33% yield of fiber and high absolute seed weight. Experts and scientists are studying from the reasons of low strengthens cotton fiber, but were not able to well and fully establish the nature of this problem." Substantially, the Uzbek party and government were demanding more money to the republican kolkhozes and sovkhoses saying that the quality of cotton was too low and needed for more funds. GARF, f. R-5446, op. 144, d. 944, l. 6.

¹⁶⁹ On 28 July 1984, during the IV plenum of Andijan obkom was reported that the FS Balykchinski raikom, D. Malikov, had built his house with illegal means. RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 74

¹⁷⁰ Just in the Bukhara raion, none kolkhozes on eleven were in debt. PV, 20561, 188, 17 August 1984, p. 2.

produced only 34% of the planned share. Then, he complained that the production had officially risen from 35 to 47 quintals per hectare in 1977-1981, but in actual fact this increase was only "on paper." Saidov also complained that the organization of the party turned a blind eye to the negative situations that were happening in the whole of Uzbekistan where, in the last eight years, had been invested in agriculture improvements 581 million rubles, but this did not give any substantive result. Similarly, also in the Andijan obkom it was revealed that a reduction in production from the planned figures had taken place. Moreover, 18 tons of raw cotton more than planned had been used for the production of fiber, and 28,000 tons of unusable cotton were wasted. Also in this case, the directors of the cotton processing plants had been fired.¹⁷¹ Meanwhile, during the V plenum of the Syrdarya obkom, it was declared that some of the party officials were corrupt and had an "immoral" lifestyle, abusing the power for their positions. Thus, the chairman of the Gulistan gorispolkom, Sh. Davidkhodzhaev, the manager of the Yangiervodstroi trust called N. Kozub, the director of the sovkhos "Ruzkoi" M. Kushbakov and the member of the oblast consumer union T. Faizev—amongst others—were all dismissed from their positions. It was also reported that the former director of the sovkhos 'Leningrad' B. Shavkiev put his relatives in important posts as specialists and that deficiencies in cotton production were covered by some directors who committed "crimes against socialism". Furthermore, the FS Gulistan raikom was pushing the prosecutor to close the case.¹⁷²

On the one hand, the party was actively publicizing its results in cleaning the situation in the republic while, on the other hand, these press campaigns risked discrediting the CPUz. In fact, the Usmankhodzhaev's strategy, aimed at enforcing massive purges and consequently getting legitimation from Moscow -, was likely to backfire. In fact, in some cases the party adopted tones which were reminiscent of the tabloid press and created bad feelings between the party, the population and even the press that in many occasions was accused of inciting discontent. In fact, at the end of July an argument between the Pravda editor V.G. Afanasiev – who was seen as responsible for publishing overly critical articles in July 1984 – and the CC CPUz emerged on the risks of discrediting the party commitments in the struggle against the negative phenomena. Thus, on 2 August 1984 Usmankhodzhaev wrote a letter to Chernenko, to reassure him about the normalization of the situation

¹⁷¹ PV, 20547, 174, 31 July 1984, p. 2.

¹⁷² PV, 20551, 178, 5 August 1984, p. 2.

in the republic where the party was "improving the level or organizational discipline, and responsibility of cadres." For demonstrating firmness, perseverance, and proximity to the CC CPSU line, Usmanhodzhaev thanked Chernenko declaring that the units of CC CPSU are "very helpful and always their assistance and support [...] at the same time, I cannot say the same about the difficulties that we met on our way. Some days ago, we ran into a strange and unpleasant fact of which Radzhabov, FS Namangan obkom, has already informed you recently [When he spoke] at the CC CPUz plenum, he did not criticize the redactor of the newspaper but he has proposed to improve the contents of published materials in the central press and to apply an objective approach in rising problems."¹⁷³ On this polemic, on 27 November 1984 a memorandum of CC CPSU signed by Ligachev and Zimyanin, gives reason to the Uzbek party and defends Usmanhodzhaev and Radzhabov. Parallel to this, even Afanasiev apologized.¹⁷⁴ In the October 1984 plenum of the CC CPSU, Usmanhodzhaev confirmed his commitments to enforce the organizational party work of CPUz in order to fight the negative phenomena and to keep the cotton production.¹⁷⁵ Despite the fact that Moscow had wanted to agree with Usmanhodzhaev, the first counterproductive effects of a campaign that threatened to claim victims and alienate the population were clearly evident. However, the climate of heaviness and uncertainty that was spreading in Uzbekistan concerned the Uzbek party that, especially from that moment, would cautiously assume a more tolerant view towards traditional institutions linked to religion and local power dynamics. In fact, parallel to the commitments to uproot 'feudalism,' the party was also presenting a narrative that was rediscovering, tolerating and re-institutionalizing with a wider publicity the traditional institutions like the *makhalla*.¹⁷⁶ Apparently, this was the psychological response that the party had in this moment of deep crisis for the patrimonial system.

In August 1984, while the CPC UzSSR revealed similar cases of inefficiency, violations of property, thefts and shortages even in wheat, grain and also in

¹⁷³ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 134, l. 20.

¹⁷⁴ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 134, l. 22.

¹⁷⁵ Inamzhon Buzrukovich Usmanhodzhayev, *Resheniya Oktyabr'skogo (1984 G.) Plenuma TSK KPSS - Programma Deystviy Partiyonoy Organizatsii Uzbekistana Po Dal'neyshemu Po'yemu Sel'skokhozyaystvennogo Proizvodstva, Vsey Ekonomiki Respubliki* (Tashkent: Izd-vo TSK KP Uzbekistana, 1985).

¹⁷⁶ Pravda, 20545, 172, 29 July 1984, p. 3.

leather productions,¹⁷⁷ a new wave of purges and arrests overwhelmed the political leadership of the UzSSR. On 11 August, the former FS Bukhara Karimov was finally arrested¹⁷⁸ and on 13 August was the turn of Odilov.¹⁷⁹ After the initial investigations, the Namangan oblast KGB department reported on 19 August 1984¹⁸⁰ to the newly appointed FS Namangan obkom Nazir Radzhabovich Radzhabov that during the investigations in the Papski raion many 'negative phenomena' had been revealed. The negative situation was caused by Akhmadzhan Odilov, the former general director of the 'Lenin' Agroindustry unit and whose honesty was being disputed in the party.¹⁸¹ Meanwhile, the KGB was also having operative problems in dealing with that figure, considering his powerful ties and the fact that his relatives and

¹⁷⁷ GARF, f. 9527, op. 1, d. 8163.

¹⁷⁸ His treasure amounted to 6 million rubles and 130 kg of gold. Cf. RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 18.

¹⁷⁹ Akhmadzhan Odilov – whose name is often transliterated in Russian as Adylov – is one of the most famous cases of the "Uzbek cotton affair." Odilov (born in 1925 in Namangan oblast) was a powerful figure of Soviet Uzbekistan, involved in cotton agriculture. In the 60s, he directed the Lenin kolkhoz in the Papski raion and rose his career under Rashidov's support. In 1965, he became Hero of Socialist Labor and got 3 Orders of Lenin (in 1965, 1971 and 1973) and an Order of the October Revolution (1976). He was well integrated in the Soviet institutions, becoming a member of the Central Auditing Commission of CPSU (1966-1971) and a delegate at the XXIII, XXIV, XXV CPSU Congresses, deputy at the SS USSR (1974-1984) and for three times at the SS UzSSR, and even member of the Presidium SS USSR. During the "cotton affair campaign" he was arrested and his case became very famous. In the late '80s, 'adylovshchina' became a new term to describe inhumane cruelty and his story was diffused in the press as a scandal related to the Uzbek cotton affair. After his arrest in 1984, he was still waiting in prison to have a trial and refused to collaborate, never confessed and protested for his illegal detention. In fact, the Presidium SS USSR extended the pre-trial detention of 9 months (the longest possible period of custody) and he contested the competence of a court that was not the Uzbek one. His trial started in the SC USSR in April 1991 when he rejected the accusation against him. After the coup in August 1991 the case was transferred in Uzbekistan because of the request of the Uzbek president Islom Karimov was. Then the state collapsed and the case was dropped. In 1993 he was again arrested for stealing five tons of fertilizer and then sentenced also for the crimes committed in Soviet times and drug possession. On June 5, 2008 at the age of 83 years Ahmadjan Odilov was finally released. Yuri Vasilevich Feofanov and Donald D. Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 138–50.

¹⁸⁰ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 78.

¹⁸¹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 79.

affiliates wanted to organize protests to dissent against his arrest.¹⁸² The KGB report was even indicating that in the days after the local obkom plenum, many goods were transported from the agroindustrial complex to Tashkent. Furthermore, after the arrest of Odilov's son other things were transported through Puncan. In parallel, Odilov destroyed some documents, and in 1982 only, he ordered to inflate productive data on the development of lands in order to obtain 600,000 rubles.¹⁸³ Then the KGB department of Namangan sent on 24 August 1984 a report to the FS Namangan obkom Radzhabov, literally entitled "The History of a Kapo"¹⁸⁴ that we want to fully report in the appendix because of its extraordinary and indicative contents, revealing a situation of abuse and semi-slavery for thousands of people under Odilov's power.

Odilov was a close affiliate of Rashidov and was well inserted in the falsification system. After his arrest in 1984, his diary containing hundreds of contacts was found in Uzbekistan and in Russia. Some of them were famous people, and near some names there was the letter "p" that indicated the Uzbek word *pora* ('bribe').¹⁸⁵ His story of sadism became so famous in USSR that in 1988 Uzbeknauchfilm even made a film called "*Plata*" about him, collecting memoirs of victims that remembered his whipping, tortures, and abuses on workers that were treated as his own properties by the sadistic leader who could with impunity take scalps of his victims. The images of the apparently simple guy who built his own private empire with roughly 30,000 subjects, his personal militia, his large underground 'private jails' and his collection of knives, whips and torture instruments he used are terrifying.¹⁸⁶ For the breadth of the scandal that undermined the sensibility of the Soviet society, the 'Odilov affair' became crucial and will also be considered in next chapters.

¹⁸² RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 80.

¹⁸³ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 81.

¹⁸⁴ It is very interesting the semantic use of the word 'kapo', that wants to indicate a cruel and sadistic figure who managed a concentration camp. However, even the inner significance is interesting. Kapo were prisoners who were collaborating with the Nazi SS guards to supervise forced labor or to carry out administrative tasks. They were collaborationist prisoners. Indeed, such word that is as much victim as a perpetrator. In this case, the Namangan KGB did not want to defend the idea that Odilov was also a victim, but we could say that this term fits with the idea of collaborator. With whom?

¹⁸⁵ Kinokompaniya Pigmalion, *Zoloto Dlya Parii. Khlopkovoe Delo*.

¹⁸⁶ Feofanov and Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era*; Nancy Lubin, "Uzbekistan: Challenges Ahead," *Middle East Journal* 43, no. 4 (1989).

In parallel to the Odilov's arrest, on 13 August also Kallibek Kamalov – FS Karakalpak obkom since 1963 and one of the main allies of the former FS CPUz¹⁸⁷ – was also removed from his post and 'exiled' as Consul General of the USSR in Constanta (Romania).¹⁸⁸ Also, American intelligence carefully followed the purges in the remote periphery of the USSR, reporting the content of Usmankhodzhaev's speech at the 60th anniversary of the Karakalpak ASSR in Nukus on 26 December 1984.

It seems, we have every reason to say today that the autonomous republic's party, soviet, and economic organizations have drawn the correct conclusions from the plenum's resolutions. They are persistently struggling to eradicate existing deficiencies and are mobilizing all of their reserves and resources for the subsequent raising of the level of public production. Allow me to express my firm conviction that the united and determined Karakalpak party organization is handling the assigned tasks honorably.¹⁸⁹

The document specifically reported that at the ceremony the new generation of FSs was participating. This included U.U. Umarov, FS Tashkent gorkom, S.M. Nesterenko, second secretary of the Tashkent obkom, I. D. Dzhabbarov, FS of the Bukhara obkom, V.P. Yesin, FS of the Navoi obkom and M. Khudaibergenov, FS of the Khorezm Obkom.¹⁹⁰ The story of the Karakalpak

¹⁸⁷ In order to indicate the link between these two figures, we should remind ourselves and anyone else who is interested that the son of Sharaf Rashidov married the daughter of Kamalov, and Kamalov's son married the niece of Rashidov. During the interrogation, Kamalov confessed a relation with Rashidov based on bribes and gifts, stating: "I gave bribes and gifts to Rashidov [...he] gave those 400.000 roubles to Moscow in four tranches of 100.000 rubles. Then, I gave 350.000 to Rashidov's wife. [Totally, I gave 750,000 rubles to Rashidov's family. [...] you could add 2%, 3%, 1 million... half billion per year, 5 billion at 7-8 years, and you live quietly and think that you are a communist." Kinokompaniya Pigmalion, *Zoloto Dlya Parii. Khlopkovoe Delo*.

¹⁸⁸ At the post of FS Karakalpak obkom, Kamalov was replaced by Kakimbek Salykovich Salykov, a Kazakh poet with sensitivity to ecological issues who was representing an example of Soviet statesman close to both Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uzbek cultures. In 1987, Kamalov was convicted for the "cotton affair" and on 15 June 1990 by a Presidential decree of USSR, he was deprived of all awards with the among which were a Hero of Socialist Labor (1973), three Orders of Lenin (1971, 1973 and 1976), an Order of the October Revolution (1980), an Order of the Red Banner of Labor (1965), two "Badges of Honor" (1949 and 1957), two medals "For Labor Valor" (1949 and 1959). In 1995, a court decision, rehabilitated and restored in all the awards.

¹⁸⁹ FBIS, "JPRS-UPS-85-022, 12 March 1985, USSR Report. Political and Sociological Affairs," 1985, 63.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 64.

FS, his level of autonomy in ruling the 'republic within the republic' and then the size of the purges is indicative of the general decentralization that the state assumed in the Brezhnevian years and that was going to be recentralized in the 80s, indicating the defects that were not typical of the agriculture but also of other economic sectors within the republic. In fact, the CC CPUz buro meeting of 15 August 1984 approved the resolution 437/54 of CC CPUz and SM UzSSR that was conceived to struggle against the shortcomings also in the gold sector, where there had been revealed serious defects that did not meet modern requirements: "with very slow rhythms advances the modernization of active mines and gold extraction factories, and efficiently using the technological equipment."¹⁹¹ Also considering these defects in the republic, the buro kept its mission of cadres' reorganization "according to the XVI plenum directives, discuss the tasks on increasing the responsibilities of management, the executive bodies for the fight against crime and pursuant to the socialist law,"¹⁹² and "approving the methods on the strengthening of the labor inspection by the law enforcement organs."¹⁹³ The buro even prepared a memorandum addressed to the prokuratura, MVD and SC and the MJ of the UzSSR in order understand the reasons and reviewing criminal cases to proceed with further investigation - with a particular attention to the cases of theft, forgery and corruption.¹⁹⁴ Nevertheless, this 'bacchanalian' approach did not seem to present an effective management strategy.

4.2.2 The last cotton battle

As usual, in August the preparation for the cotton harvest season started. However, this cotton harvest would not assume the same level of enthusiasm of the Rashidovian years and the republic seemed to be more committed to unveiling scandals in the economic and political life of the UzSSR. Just after the arrest of Usmanov, a new wave of scandals and criticism proceeded again in the cotton cleaning system that was not efficiently fulfilling the hoped output after the increasing investments¹⁹⁵. This had the effect of exposing the

¹⁹¹ Prot. 100/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2474, l. 45.

¹⁹² Prot. 100/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2474, l. 48.

¹⁹³ Prot. 100/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2474, l. 49.

¹⁹⁴ Prot. 100/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2474, l. 51.

¹⁹⁵ An exemplary case is that of the cotton cleaning factory 'Uzunski' that, after receiving significant capital investments to improve the technical level, had worsened

fake enthusiasm of previous years. This was also evident in the press, where there were enforced calls to “lead defoliation”¹⁹⁶ in the “white way”, a formulation that since mid-80s started to be preferred to the ‘white gold’ narrative that dominated in the past.¹⁹⁷ Therefore, in the light of the ‘negative phenomena’, the calls in the press to improve efficiently the cotton processing and the work of the cadres proceeded,¹⁹⁸ while the CPUz restated the commitments to award the merits of the most virtuous kolkhozes and soykhozes with financial prizes.¹⁹⁹ Thus, the party stressed the importance of properly using the machines – an investment that was not payed back in terms of qualitative results – and invited the local party organizations and the unions to take adequate measure about.²⁰⁰ Then, the triumphalist calls and the patriotism demanded for the ‘cotton battles’ was, substantially over, leaving space to the field of criticism that was, anyway, getting the support of the Soviet organs.

1984 then witnessed a shift in narrative that the CPUz was endorsing, with a clear criticism that, along the lines proposed by the CC CPSU, was functional to the legitimation of the new post-Rashidovian leadership of Uzbekistan. After the triumphalism of the previous years, now, in the middle of the cotton harvest season, the party was admitting shortcomings and delays in the harvest and invited the workers to better the rhythms of crop, exalting the most virtuous raions and making daily statistics about them, as a sort of ‘Medals table’ on the cotton harvest, designed to show the actual efforts and encourage workers, and providing banners, medals, and material prizes to the most Stakhanovist workers.²⁰¹

This criticism was, however, enforced by the pressure that Soviet judicial organs put to the UzSSR party and government. In August 1984, the SC of USSR and UzSSR were called to punish more severely the crimes against socialist property and during the plenum of the SC UzSSR, the supreme court of the republic called to ordinary courts to fight against those who do not work and do not contribute to the common cause and even against those

its production on the quality and quantity and creating ‘unacceptable inefficiencies’ by producing up to 5% of waste. PV, 20572, 199, 31 August 1984, p. 2.

¹⁹⁶ PV, 20575, 202, 4 September 1984, p. 1.

¹⁹⁷ PV, 20586, 213, 16 September 1984, p. 1.

¹⁹⁸ PV, 20595, 222 del 27 September 1984, p. 1.

¹⁹⁹ PV, 20597, 224 29 September 1984, p. 1.

²⁰⁰ PV, 20599, 226 2 October 1984, p. 1.

²⁰¹ PV, 20611, 238, 16 October 1984, p. 1.

who drink that should be sent in care. The courts must also check the requirements of the construction code. But not all courts conformed with the guidelines of the XVI plenum CPUz.²⁰² Then, on 3 October 1984, the prokuratura also put pressure on the Uzbek government, informing that new investigative groups had been constituted to fight “against the losses and thefts of cotton” also reporting the cases of officials who were inflating cotton with water. Just in Bukhara, were investigations that had been intensified during the ‘Bukharan affair’, and where more than 150 tons of totally watered cotton and several losses were found.²⁰³ Even during the XVII plenum CC CPUz (20 October 1984) there was a call to “increase efforts to strengthen discipline and restore order” and to implement the points of the XVI plenum.²⁰⁴

However, the internal debate appeared much harsher than in the press, and during the plenum, Usmankhodzhaev informed the party about the latest developments in the moralization campaign and declared that lately had been changed 22 secretaries of obkoms – including five FSs – more than 70 secretaries of gorkom, raikom of which 30 FSs.²⁰⁵ Then, he declared that the first secretary of Tashkent gorkom, Sh. Faiziev, abused his power and moved to a big private house where three families once lived and expanded it with *banya* and a swimming pool, spending more than 10,000 rubles. His sons and other relatives – from the university years – had been admitted into the party and promoting their careers faster. He was removed from his post. Then, Usmankhodzhaev revealed that, during the investigations on the thefts in the Bukhara oblast, had been discovered a group of former local party and government leaders – from which there was also the former FS A. Karimov who confessed of taking bribes for more than a million rubles.²⁰⁶ As well, on that occasion Usmankhodzhaev denounced the already-ousted

R.G. Gaipov, the former FS Kashkadarya who had defects in the work, in economic development, and culture of the oblast, in the choice of cadres and as well for his immodesty he was relieved from office. Similarly, Z.I. Esenbaev - director of the Committee for publications – abused his power, violated the party and the state discipline and he illegally gave apartments to his sons by

²⁰² PV, 20566, 193, 23 August 1984, p. 1.

²⁰³ Memorandum 7/30-84 (3 October 1984), prokuratura to the SM UzSSR. TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 6462, ll. 201-204.

²⁰⁴ PV, 20616, 243, 21 October 1984, p. 1.

²⁰⁵ Prot. 17/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2451, l. 16.

²⁰⁶ Prot. 17/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2451, l. 17.

drawing on the committee funds. He gave the job to his sons and helped them in their career growth. He violated the financial discipline and during the planning and the release of some literature, he was pursuing his personal benefits. On 15 May 1984, he was ousted from his posts.²⁰⁷

In addition, the FS CPUz recalled the cases of U. Turakulov, FS Jizzakh gorkom, who “abused his power, violated the principles of cadres, protected the people who he had compromised with, was immodest of resolving housing issues of his family and relatives. He was also ousted on May 15.”²⁰⁸ Also M. Kamalova – former FS of the Kirov raikom of Tashkent city – abused power and was immodest of enhancements to her housing situation. She was removed, too. T.R. Tillaev was the FS Chirakchinsk raikom and violated the requirements of the CPSU charter and the principles of the cadres' selection. He was lifted from the post on 29 February 1984. Also the member of the CC CPUz, A.K. Karimov was found to have abused his power and to have acted corruptly. He was dismissed from his posts,²⁰⁹ along with A. Odilov, a member of the CC CPUz, who abused of his power and violated the socialist law and the norms of the morality of the party and the former MCC V. Usmanov, was indicated for the mistakes in management, the selection of cadres, fraud, and corruption.²¹⁰ At media level emerged from the plenum, the call of the FS CPUz to make a general check on those 115,000 people who work in the CPUz. In Usmankhodzhaev’s words:

Communists who had sharply and radically analyzed shortcomings and their roots, have made concrete proposals to strengthen discipline and order, improve the Party's leadership of the national economy, the improvement of organizational and ideological work, the creation of the spirit that rejects the deviations from the norms of party life [...] In the struggle for the improvement of the situation included all parts of the political system. Taking concrete practical measures to eradicate bribery and profiteering, waste and theft of socialist property, abuse of officials to intensify the struggle for the strengthening of the rule of law. for the improvement of law enforcement. Increased responsibility of executives, all the frames for the overall organization called discipline. In his speech at the meeting of the Union of People's Controllers CPSU General Secretary Comrade KU Chernenko named

²⁰⁷ Prot. 17/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2451, l. 55.

²⁰⁸ Prot. 17/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2451, l. 55.

²⁰⁹ Prot. 17/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2451, l. 56.

²¹⁰ Prot. 17/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2451, l. 57.

Uzbekistan one of the regions. which made an important and fairly step to eliminate the negative phenomena.²¹¹

Thus, after this plenum, the party was publicizing a link between the negative phenomena to the failure of the industrial plan and even denouncing the defects found in other sectors as the worse quality of primary goods as the bread products.²¹² Furthermore, in the autumn 1984, besides the wider manifestations of tolerance, the party seemed to be visibly worried about the diffusion of Islamism within the small communities of the republic, inviting the youth, their educators and mass media to struggle against something that seemed to be a spillover from the backwardness of neighbouring Afghanistan, where Soviet troops were involved in a bloody war.²¹³

While negative phenomena were still discovered in the cotton sector,²¹⁴ on 9 November 1984 there appeared a huge appeal in the PV calling for patriotism of the Uzbek people in the cotton fields.²¹⁵ Such a measure indicated that besides all the measures that had been implemented to improve the cotton crop in the republic, the situation remained critical and required all the efforts of the population. However, while agriculture could not be determined in terms of yield and climatic conditions the party could carry on the domestic front with which to please Moscow and proceed with purges in order to impose figures that were more liked to Staraya Ploshad: an example was the power reshuffle in the Ferghana obkom with the Russian Aleksander I. Barulin becoming the new second secretary to assist the longstanding FS Umarov.²¹⁶ As well, on 19 November the longstanding chairman of the SM UzSSR was officially removed from his post, as was one of Rashidov's main allies Narmankhonmadi Khudayberdyev.²¹⁷ At the head of

²¹¹ PV, 20617, 244, 23 October 1984, p. 1.

²¹² PV, 20624, 251, 31 October 1984, p. 1.

²¹³ PV, 20614, 241, 19 October 1984, p. 1.

²¹⁴ Ibragim Yunusov director of kolkhoz Sverdlov has abused its position by improperly behaving within the important kolkhoz that just in 1983 missed the delivery of 3,000 tons of cotton. PV, 20615, 242, 20 October 1984, p. 2.

²¹⁵ PV, 20632, 259, 9 November 1984, p. 1.

²¹⁶ PV, 20634, 261, 12 November 1984, p. 1.

²¹⁷ Narmankhonmadi Dzhuraevich Khudayberdyev, the historical ally of Rashidov, was removed from his post of chairman of SM UzSSR on 19 November 1984 and expelled from the party on 27 July 1986. Khudayberdyev was prosecuted for the "cotton affair" on charges of bribery. On 23 February 1987 he was arrested and confessed: ""Rashidov was easily giving promises at different levels, and when he had to fulfill

the UzSSR government was appointed Gayrat Khamidullayevich Kadyrov, who kept his post until October 1989 when he became deputy minister of electrotechnical production and instrumentation of the USSR. The ousted Khudayberdyev – who became one of the top-level accused in the cotton affair showed that the Uzbek cotton affair was becoming even more systemic and political.

The witch-hunt tones became evident even considering that in the normal plenums – that were devoted to other political, social and mainly economic issues – it was often remembered the data on the purges and the size of the scandals. Indeed, also in the XVIII plenum CC CPUz of 22 November 1984 was revealed the arrest of Berdy Karimov, director of the kolkhoz "Komsomol" in the Urgench raion, who had been caught in the act of taking a bribe of 3,000 rubles. He had leased more than 100 hectares to the people and took from them not the production but the money [he administered as if it were his stuff] because he had to buy false receipts of cotton [non] produced and during inspections have found more than 147 thousand rubles and bonds with a 3% loan.²¹⁸ The purge continued in Tashkent as well, where the PCC of the city reported that in 1983 and in the first nine months of 1984, 360 managers had been prosecuted for embezzlement and other 96 had been expelled from their posts.²¹⁹

Then, also during the celebrations for the 60th anniversary of the UzSSR, Usmankhodzhaev that declared to represent everybody in the republic – from which 630,000 members of CPUz where are represented 84 national groups – made a very long speech, where he mentioned the commitments revealed from the XVI plenum as the main political priority for the republic. In his words, the plenum

revealed serious shortcomings in the management of the economy of the republic, in the work with the staff, the education of the people. These weaknesses negatively affected the efficient use of productive capacity

these obligations and commitments, he called people [...] and he was not interested whether it could be done or not and how." *Kinokompaniya Pigmalion, Zoloto Dlya Parii. Khlopkovoe Delo*. Then, on 6 September 1989 Khudayberdyev was sentenced to 9 years in prison to be served in a labor camp in strict regime, with confiscation of property and deprivation of the right to hold positions related to the execution of organizational and regulatory or administrative and economic functions for a period of five years. In March 1991 he was freed from custody.

²¹⁸ Prot. 18/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2452, l. 23.

²¹⁹ PV, 20647, 274, 29 November 1984, p. 4.

created in the republic. Decision XVI Plenum became a turning point in the life of the Republican Party organization. They called warm approval all workers, provide positive changes in party political work in the social and economic life and public consciousness. The decisions of the plenum endorse a full utilization of existing production potential, favorable climatic conditions, rich labor resources." The implementation of these tasks results, have been slow and hesitant, especially in the lower levels. Still affected by fear of the new, inertia in economic thinking heads of several ministries and departments, lack of initiative, perseverance, responsibility for their work.²²⁰

After thanking Chernenko and the CPSU, he stated that: "We assure that we will continue to firmly pursue a policy of further enhancing organization, strengthening discipline and order in all spheres of life and activity."²²¹ What seemed to opportunistically follow the Andropovian course then became a priority in the political agenda and maybe also an identity issue for the Uzbek political community of mid-1980s. Then, on 13 December, even the Minister of Finance Karimov ensured in PV the commitment of the financial administration in fighting against negative phenomena²²² while it was always more evident that a main scapegoat was not found. Neither the deceased Rashidov, whose name remained highly respected and seemed to represent a mark of efficiency, was pilloried. Conversely, for the good results in production, on 14 December the Tashkent textile factory entitled to his name was also awarded, emphasizing the role of Rashidov to the cotton cause.²²³ However, the times were changed and in just one year the nostalgia for the former leader and the 'six million battle' was over. The search for a scapegoat became an evident issue that was manifested also on 20 December when PV published an amazing declaration by Golovin, the head of the Uzbek KGB who, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Uzbek Cheka-KGB, indicated the attempts of Western conspirators to take advantage of the situation in the republic. He stated:

²²⁰ PV, 20655-20656, 282-283, 9 December 1984, p. 4.

²²¹ PV, 20655-20656, 282-283, 9 December 1984, p. 4.

²²² "Ministry of Finance insure that politically mature and competent people, who possess high moral qualities and a feeling for what is new and who are intolerant toward any display of wastefulness and bad management, head all key sections." FBIS, "JPRS-UPS-85-022, 12 March 1985, USSR Report. Political and Sociological Affairs," 73.

²²³ PV, 20648, 289, 15 December 1984, p. 1. Further, it was announced in great fanfare that it was exceeding the planned figure of 18 ton of fiber. PV, 20678, 5, 6 January 1985, p. 1.

the Western special services did not give up their hopes of taking advantage of certain negative aspects of our reality either. The XVI plenum of the CC CPUz determinedly identified and censured cases of violations of state discipline and developed fundamental measures to prevent similar occurrences in the future. KGB organs drew the necessary conclusions in connection with the basic points advanced at the 16th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Uzbek Communist Party.²²⁴

Therefore, after Rashidov's death, 1984 became a second watershed moment in the history of the 'Uzbek cotton affair' with agricultural production drastically decreased – thanks to the difficult weather situation and probably also because of a limitation amount of pripiski – the increasing scandals also at local level,²²⁵ and a purge within the party that was assuming a systematic dimension. The responsibility of the situation could not be attributed to a leader who was dead, but it was true that those higher officials of the old regime that just under Rashidov had made their political and, perhaps, economic fortune was effectively involved. On this regard was emblematic the *donos* campaign – reported in the appendix - against Rano Khabibovna Abdullaeva, the mild face of the former Rashidovian establishment and the person responsible for ideology inside the CC CPUz, who was also deputy chairwoman of the SM UzSSR.²²⁶

²²⁴ Ibid., 69.

²²⁵ Also at the end of December, the CC CPUz buro discussed the specific situation in the Balykchinskiy raion (Andijan) where the party took “decisive steps to eliminate the shortcomings and derelictions. [...] It is necessary to regard the results of its work with higher principles and more exactly and to be more energetic in putting all sections of the economy's organizational development and the indoctrination of people in order. The selection, assignment, and training of personnel and the consistent struggle against any type of negative phenomenon and tendency should occupy a special place in the activity of the rayon's party committee and the primary party organizations. [...] The Central Committee Buro required the ministry to eliminate existing shortcomings and to take effective steps aimed at raising the role of economic propaganda in the struggle for the fulfillment of state plans and socialist obligations.” Ibid., 75–76.

²²⁶ Cf. Rano Abdullaeva personal file. TsGARUZ, f. 837, op. 41, d. 6396.

4.3 A new wave of purges in the UzSSR

At the beginning of 1985, the party renewed its commitments and duties to heal the situation in the republic in order to eliminate the ‘negative phenomena’ and to transform the cadres in efficient and dynamic figures. However, such a narrative of ‘formalism’ and ‘bureaucratism’²²⁷ became a further allegation against a part of the Uzbek leading society and a pivotal issue in the Uzbek purges. These allegations were typical arguments that the party used to clean the nomenklatura lists and to exclude some undesirable names. Similarly, the typical anti-traditionalist arguments were used in order to defend the priorities of state atheism. Thus, the republic that had been slave of the Rashidovian narrative of the ‘great cotton’ and the ‘six million tons’, was now replacing this mythology with the moralization’s one, while the party kept stressing the socialist duties of the Uzbek SSR workers for 1985, and the need to concentrate all the forces on improving the quality of cotton and on giving effective profits to the country.²²⁸ Nevertheless, an effective reform of the system was little more than a vague mirage.²²⁹

4.3.1 The ‘zero tolerance’ approach

In early 1985, scandals started to emerge also in the Tashkent productive system – that was supposed to be the main industrial complex of the republic and probably the most controlled – when from mid-January 1985, testing statistics in the kolkhoz and factories were noting many misrepresentations in the productive registers and parts of production had been concealed. For example, the Tashkent textile factory in the production volume had added 1,770,000 rubles more than the real share, claiming in the plan of January-April 1984 to have produced the 100% of the plan, while in real there were shortcomings and defects and the production had not been realized for 6%.²³⁰ The effects of these new scandals were predominantly at an organizational

²²⁷ With accusations of bureaucratism the former FS Balykchy raikom D. Malikov and the second secretary of Dekhkanabad raikom, S. Alimov had been fired. PV, 20681, 8, 10 January 1985, p. 1.

²²⁸ PV, 20685, 12, 15 January 1985, p. 1

²²⁹ In parallel, systemic solutions that could overthrow patrimonialism were studied, becoming a part of the next perestroika agenda: among these plans, there were reform programs aimed at transforming collective farms in a more autonomous regime of benefits and production, linking the benefits to the quality of produced cotton and organizing tenders of procurements.

²³⁰ PV, 20686, 13, 16 January 1985, p. 3.

level, and a reshuffle of power posts within the UzSSR government. During the CPUz buro meeting on 16 January 1985 it was also suggested that in Surkhandarya they were not endorsing the radical and hoped changes in the working methods and style of the obkom, gorkoms, raikoms and primary party organizations, and the obkom buro did not control the implementation of the XVI plenum decisions.²³¹ The first effects of these new scandals were that, on the same day, a decree of the presidium of the SS UzSSR unified the MCC within the ministry of agriculture and put also the cotton cleaning and processing jurisdiction under the leadership of A.I. Ikramov.²³² The day after, there was another change in the UzSSR government and B.G. Alimdzhanov was appointed MJ UzSSR, M. Rakhimov the first deputy chairman of the PCC UzSSR, and Kurbanbayev deputy of the same organ.²³³ On 18 January, Sh. Khajdarov became the chairman of the state committee of the UzSSR and also at party level the Russian Yu. P. Gudkov²³⁴ was appointed the second secretary of the Khorezm obkom.²³⁵ Similarly, on 23 January, V.A. Smeyushchev was appointed second secretary Andijan obkom.²³⁶ The size of these new scandals – that were reporting financial movements in some kolkhozes of Tashkent oblast where money was stolen or destined to other purposes – also hit a prominent figure, Mirzamakhmud Mirzarakhmanovich Musakhanov²³⁷, the FS Tashkent obkom in power from 1970 who was forced to retire. In his place was appointed Timur Agzamovich Alimov²³⁸ on 22 January 1985.²³⁹

In that moment, the situation seemed to be particularly serious, and the FS CPUz started to endorse at local levels the necessity of these measures in order to improve the situation of the whole republic. After the Rashidovian

²³¹ Prot. 112/1985, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 154, d. 2505, l. 35.

²³² PV, 20687, 14, 17 January 1985, p. 1.

²³³ PV, 20688, 15, 18 January 1985, p. 1.

²³⁴ As we will see, the appointment of a new second secretary in an obkom was always a bad sign, because it could be considered as Moscow's Trojan horse to proceed within the local structures. Indeed, Gudkov would have a particular role in managing the purge within the Khorezmian party committee and also against its FS.

²³⁵ PV, 20689, 16, 19 January 1985, p. 1.

²³⁶ PV, 20693, 20, 24 January 1985, p. 1.

²³⁷ As we will see, he also was implicated in the Gdlyan's criminal investigations.

²³⁸ Alimov kept the post of FS Tashkent obkom until 10 September 1988 when he was replaced by Mirakhmat Mirhadzhievich Mirkasymov who lasted until 28 October 1989 when Salidzhan Mamarasulov replaced him.

²³⁹ PV, 20692, 19, 23 January 1985, p. 1.

cotton triumphs, the new commitments that Tashkent was demanding to the peripheries was in terms of purges. Emblematic was Usmankhodzhaev's speech at the Karshi electoral district for the elections in soviets on 24 February. In the capital of Kashkadarya – where the former ruling establishment related to Gaipov had been uprooted – the FS CPUz declared that the controls found numerous additions in reporting on procurement of raw cotton and other agricultural products and the XVI plenum CPUz "criticized the vicious style and methods of the former leadership of the Kashkadarya region." However, he noted how the oblast improved his situation after the V plenum of Kashkadarya obkom, where also the local communist started the way of criticism:

They laid the foundation for the great work on improvement of the entire economic-economic, ideological, political, and moral situation in the region [...], identifying the causes and origins of many of the negative phenomena in the main correctly apprehended and vigorously supported by the Communists and all working people in the area. [Then he demanded for an increase of measures] However, we must frankly say that the line XVI Plenum of the Central Committee on strengthening the discipline, organization, order, increasing the responsibility of cadres in some places is enforced inconsistently, without the proper dedication and focus. Accumulated over the years, bliss, muddy trends, inertia of thinking and work are still strongly affecting the work of individual organizations and officials. [...] It must be said clearly and unambiguously. Return to the old methods will not. Party Heading for the comprehensive strengthening of order in all spheres of production, social relations, education is irreversible, it is strongly and actively supported by the people, and the Central Committee, relying on party committees, primary Party organizations, all working people of the republic, will continue to put it into effect.²⁴⁰

In his long speech, Usmankhodzhaev finished by demanding an impossible task, namely fulfilling the excessively onerous plans honestly:

[I'm] not pleased with us and the situation in agriculture. In the past year, all districts of the region have not fulfilled the plans of cotton pieces. Cotton yields remain low. But the increase in returns per hectare remains mainly in the intensification of agricultural production, the implementation of the Food Program. Serious deficiencies exist in other sectors of agriculture. In 1984, no region has not ensured the implementation of plans of grain, the area did not cope with the plans pieces of fresh fruit and grapes. Some managers tend to justify failures in the fact that they refused to implement the plan at any price,

²⁴⁰ PV, 20697, 24, 29 January 1985, p. 2.

not engaged in fraud and postscripts. This is nothing but an attempt to distort the line XVI Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan. It is necessary to faithfully and honestly fulfil plans.²⁴¹

Basically, the FS CPUz saw no other management strategies, or was afraid of them. Finally, he demanded improvements in a situation that had not given brilliant results and had registered shortages even in industry, construction, housing,²⁴² electricity, water, heating, and public structures, such as hospitals and schools where generally "it remains low quality of public services provided to the population."²⁴³ In this way, the FS CPUz manifested the open criticism for the negative practices of the previous years and a new zero tolerance attitude that was far from the triumphalism of the previous years. However, typical of some weak leadership with a poor perception and a weak grip, Usmankhodzhaev was claiming results but was not able to identify a strategy nor a final aim at which point his mission could be considered completed, assuming both a systemic and, indeed, a monstrous size. Under his leadership, from the beginning of the cotton affairs in 1983 to January 1985, 40 of the 65 oblast Party secretaries, ten of the 13 obkom first secretaries, and 260 gorkom and raikom secretaries had been removed from their posts. One-third of the chairmen and their deputies of the oblispolkoms, gorispolkoms and raispolkoms were removed in this period and "ninety new officiate were also brought into the top echelon of the republic ministries and state apparatus."²⁴⁴

In February, the reshuffle of cadres proceeded and involved the general accountability of the republic²⁴⁵ and the FS CPUz renewed its commitments to proceed with deeper purges, but he began to understand that this battle was creating unrest and leading to several issues in terms of legitimacy. However, he was overshadowed by a typical political myopia – or perhaps from opportunism – that identified the problem as one that was essentially

²⁴¹ PV, 20697, 24, 29 January 1985, p. 2.

²⁴² Parallel to the cotton affairs, in the mid-80s in the UzSSR appeared many scandals related to the allocation of housing and people that they got houses without even having registered in the queues or unjustifiably receiving some greater sizes than expected. PV, 20706, 33, 8 February 1985, p. 2.

²⁴³ PV, 20697, 24, 29 January 1985, p. 2.

²⁴⁴ Carlisle, "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev," 114.

²⁴⁵ As well, in early February 1985, also the chairman of the department of statistic of the UzSSR was changed and replaced with M.K. Sadykov. PV, 20710, 37, 13 February 1985, p. 1.

‘upstream’ and not in heavy measures that had been enforced in the cadres’ policy. Then, on 27 February a CPUz buro meeting was held, in which a document – annex 6 – was circulated where the situation in the republic about the struggle against the negative phenomena that was evidently deteriorating the morality frame within the republic was reported:

the XVI plenum made the realistic analysis of economic, social and socio-political situation of the republic, and the evaluation of the activity of the party organs, of the soviets putting the task of increasing all the forces of the Party organizations and workers to eradicate the phenomena and the negative trends and to restore the moral and psychological situation of the republic.²⁴⁶

The report also specified that in 1984 the buro had regularized the CPUz nomenklatura that was reduced by 1302 units and on 1 January 1985 counted cumulatively 3990 units,²⁴⁷ and according to the FS, this reduction was functional to the moralization campaign. Nevertheless, such an attitude would inexorably irritate the local elite. As it was reported in the document:

The CC CPUz in 1984 has performed the decisive measures on the resignation of several executives who have not confirmed in the trust. Just from the CC CPUz had been removed Muratkhodzhaev, Yakhyaev, Khikmatov, Gaipov, Turakulov, Yesenbayev, Kamalova, Anpilogov, and the from the control commission Tillaev, as well had been expelled from the party [CPSU] Karimov, Usmanov and Odilov who had compromised [their situation] with errors in work and in personal behavior, and 73 were removed from being deputies at the SS UzSSR and at local soviets. For negative reasons, during this year have been fired 47 workers of the party organs within soviets that were part of the CC CPUz buro and secretariat nomenklatura. Just after the XVI plenum had been replaced eight obkom secretaries, 70 secretaries of gorkom and raikoms, 25 chairmen of ispolkoms of oblasts, cities and raions. It was strengthened the leadership of the SM UzSSR within the ministries and institutions. [...] Proceed the measure to strengthen the organs of prokuratura, courts and police at republican, oblast, cities and raion levels with the cadres that have been trained. The party organizations and collectives of workers sent 3,600 persons in the MVD organs of the republic and also more than 770 communists.²⁴⁸

A purge of this magnitude not only created discontent among the local elite but also created problems about their inclusion within the regime. As we saw in the first chapter, the inclusiveness was – and is still nowadays – a fundamental feature of the politics in the Central Asian polities, a potentially

²⁴⁶ Prot. 116/1985, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 154, d. 2509, l. 60.

²⁴⁷ Prot. 116/1985, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 154, d. 2509, l. 62.

²⁴⁸ Prot. 116/1985, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 154, d. 2509, l. 63.

explosive context. However, this time the party did not seem to know about that.

In late February 1985, the effectiveness of the Soviet regime was in doubt, given that the Gensek actually disappeared from the political stages and was visibly dying. In the PV of 1 March 1985 was published an alleged meeting of Chernenko with the candidates of the elections of the RSFSR soviets. However, the figures in the picture were visibly actors in makeup. Besides the tragicomic show of the late weeks of Chernenko in life, there were a part of lower ranks figures that were effectively managing the drifting Soviet state, as in Moscow as in Tashkent. Indeed, on February 28 there was a meeting of second secretaries of the UzSSR gorkoms and raikoms that met to discuss the implementations of the XVI plenum guidelines. Substantially, the 'Moscow watchdogs' were defining the new stages of the purges in the local units of the Soviet periphery.²⁴⁹ A first result of this new phase of 'local purges' emerged during the XXVIII plenum of Karakalpak obkom where the second secretary A.I. Balakin was replaced – officially for 'changing job post' – by D.D. Berkov and the obkom secretary K.E. Yusupov was removed for scarce results in works and replaced by M.K. Aralbayev, while K Rizaev – a member of the local CC – was expelled.²⁵⁰ This new course of local purges would not even save the same judicial organs: in early March, the former prosecutor of Dzhabbai raion (T. Kadyrov) was sentenced for bribery, the Samarkand city prokuror (A. Alibayev) was fired and arrested as well as the chairman of the OVD in the Pastdargom raion (N. Akhralov) was fired for falsifying documents and housing abuses.²⁵¹ As a result, also the CPUz denounced problems in the justice apparatus – as in the SC UzSSR that was not analyzing the cases in their depth²⁵² – and even in the Uzbek academic society where were revealed too many ties of kinship or special privileges.²⁵³

Despite the typical criticism, the purges within the justice apparatus assumed harsher tones in 1985. In fact, after the dismissal of M.T. Tursunov, the deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR, followed a series of purges that decimated the SC UzSSR: on 25 January 1985 Bakhshulla Aviezovich Navruzov, the chairman of SC UzSSR was removed from his post and replaced by Sadikzhan Zhigitalyev; on 31 January another member of the SC - Vakhid

²⁴⁹ PV, 20725, 52, 1 March 1985, p. 1.

²⁵⁰ PV, 20729, 56, 6 March 1985, p. 1.

²⁵¹ PV, 20731, 58, 8 March 1985, p. 2.

²⁵² PV, 20732, 59, 10 March 1985, p. 2.

²⁵³ PV, 20738, 65, 17 March 1985, p. 3.

Mamadzhonov – was fired as well as A.L. Gorenkova on 16 February. At their place were appointed A.D. Ishmyetov, A. Rakhmanov and M. Safayev. On 28 February 28 were removed from the SC UzSSR also M. Kuranov and Yu.Kh. Nasimov while were elected as members of the republican SC, R. Abdulkhasanov, A.A. Kadyrov, A. Sarabyekov and T. Shamiyeva. On 18 March was also removed K. Nasirov.²⁵⁴ The seriousness of this phase appeared also in the SC UzSSR plenum of May where the SC's commitment to severely punish any of its members who had been involved in corruption was reiterated.²⁵⁵

Parallel to the purges in the justice organs, the criticism towards agriculture was also pursued. In a long speech at the presidium SS UzSSR meeting devoted to the situation of agriculture in the republic (2 March 1985), Usmankhodzhaev presented the results of 1984 in the light of the decisions of the XVI plenum, confirming the unity of the republic with the party and the Union. The FS CPUz exclaimed that

At the enterprises of industry, construction and transport organizations in the fields and farms, collective and state farms are now more widely deployed socialist competition for the successful implementation of the plans of 1985 and the 11th Five-Year Plan as a whole.²⁵⁶

Then, confirming the political commitments of the agricultural issues, he announced the situation in the republic where

Only in the last four years on the development of agroindustrial complex of Uzbekistan had been spent about 10 billion rubles of state capital investments. [...] The average annual gross agricultural output has increased in the current five-year plan by 11 per cent compared with the tenth five-year plan. Our country has fulfilled the plans of four years for the procurement of grain, kenaf, tobacco, potatoes, vegetables, melons, fruits, grapes, wool, astrakhan smushek and silk cocoons. [...About cotton he affirmed], during the past year it has been very difficult for agriculture. And yet, despite this, Tashkent, Andijan, Fergana, Namangan and Syrdarya oblasts coped with cotton productive plans. Honorably discharged plans 53 raions, 382 kolkhozes, 155 sovkhoses, 25 raions have produced 35 and more quintals of raw cotton per hectare. Among them – Moskovskiy. Leninskiy, Buvaydinskiy, Namanganskiy. Turakurganskiy,

²⁵⁴ PV, 20751, 78, 2 April 1985, p. 2.

²⁵⁵ PV, 20776, 103, 4 May 1985, p. 3.

²⁵⁶ PV, 20727, 54, 3 March 1985, p. 1.

Angorskiy, Leninyul'skiy, Galabinskiy, Kommunisticheskiy, Leningradskiy, Khivinskiy, Khankinskiy and others.²⁵⁷

Then, the FS admitted that there had been a reduction of cotton production. However, he wanted to affirm that besides the quantity decrease there had been significant improvements in cotton quality and in the produced fiber:

Last year, the republic had prepared 5.292 million tons of cotton. As a result of the approved Politburo and the Federal Government of a new system of payment for cotton harvested by the final result, based on fiber yield and quality increased responsibility of managers, specialists and workers of all farms. fiber yield compared to previous years has increased significantly, and the losses have decreased. All this made it possible to get from the available raw 100 thousand tons of fiber more, collective and state farms of the republic it has brought an additional 528 million rubles.²⁵⁸

Far from the previous years' triumphalism, the Uzbek leadership seemed to be able to renegotiate the cotton productive commitments:

CPSU Central Committee, the government of the country, and personally the Comrade KU Chernenko treated with great attention to our request. We are all well aware how important place is occupied by the cotton in our country's economy. The need for the industry in the cotton fiber is increasing every year. Providing them the textile and other industries is an extremely serious problem. Nevertheless, the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Federal Government have met our request, have accepted our offer, thus again showing great attention to the concerns of cotton growers of Uzbekistan. In 1985 the cotton productive plan for the republic is established in the amount of 5.700 million tons, or 300 tons less than the job five years. In terms of fiber it is more than 100 thousand tons. I wish that all correctly understood that it means a reduction plan. Cotton - the pride of our country, its priceless wealth. People's well-being, beauty and prosperity of our villages - are all connected with cotton.²⁵⁹

However, Usmankhodzhaev kept following the balance between positive and negative results that we have characterized as a typical issue of post-Rashidovian CPUz narrative. Indeed, the FS CPUz focused on the shortcomings revealed during the XVI plenum and stated:

²⁵⁷ PV, 20727, 54, 3 March 1985, p. 1.

²⁵⁸ PV, 20727, 54, 3 March 1985, p. 2.

²⁵⁹ PV, 20727, 54, 3 March 1985, p. 2.

As a result, the country was unable to fulfill the plans of the past four years, five-year plan for the production and procurement of cotton, meat, milk, eggs. We did not match the results of 1984, and we did not deliver the plan for 673,000 tons of cotton, 316,000 tons of grain, 150 thousand tons of fruit and grapes, 26 thousand tons of meat, 100,000 tons of milk and some other products. 82 district, 697 collective and state farms have not coped with the plans in terms of pieces of cotton. [...] Comrades! We are facing a very big problem. Resolving them requires of each of us honest, fair labor, mobilizing all available opportunities.²⁶⁰

Again, the FS pointed out the problem but was not able to offer an acceptable method of resolution. Nevertheless, he anticipated some of those themes that would be central in the next Gorbachevian path of technologic 'acceleration' even for cotton harvest - that seemed to be still lowly technologized.²⁶¹ In his words:

Comrades! The capacity of the cotton production is in improving its quality - the main source of income of the collective farms and state farms, all workers of the village. Therefore, the primary task is to improve agricultural technology, timely and qualitative execution of all agricultural activities, widespread adoption of the practice of cotton science and technology, the experience of the foremost. They will ensure rapid development of the industry, to obtain early and high cotton harvest.²⁶²

Then, Usmanhodzhaev, indicating the negative trends of Uzbek agriculture, affirmed the party commitments to the Soviet agriculture

In 1985, should not remain a single loss-making farm in the country [...We should keep in mind the words that] Comrade KU Chernenko [stated]: *"from all the leaders are required the highest partisanship and ideology, competence*

²⁶⁰ PV, 20727, 54, 3 March 1985, p. 2.

²⁶¹ Despite the number of cotton machine was substantially doubled in twenty years, there was a lack of technology for cotton mechanization and this technology officially provided 60-65% of the whole production, meanwhile the real data was much lower. Modernization was substantially slowed down. From 1965 to 1985, the number of tractors in UzSSR increased from 89,900 to 188.900, the cotton-picker machines from 21,600 to 39,600, the threshers from 4,700 to 11,400 and trucks from 28,900 to 58,000. In the period 1981-1985, 400 scientific projects were studied but only 120 of them came into practice. Uzbekiston Fanlar akademiyasi Tarix instituti, *Uzbekiston Respublikasi Fan va Texnika Davlat Qummitasi. Tarix Shohidligi va Saboqlari* (Toshkent: Sharq, 2001), 291. Asat Niyazovich Abdullaev, "Uzbekistonda Paxta Yakkahokimligi va Uning Oqibatlari (1917-1991 Y.y.)" (Tarix fanlari doktori ilmiy darajasini olish uchun taqdim etilgan dissertasiya. Toshkent., 2010), 176–77.

²⁶² PV, 20727, 54, 3 March 1985, p. 2.

and responsibility, ability to work with people." Following these instructions of Comrade Chernenko, the party organization of the republic consistently and persistently implements decision XVI Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan on improvement of qualitative composition of the cadres. [...] I must say that we firmly get rid of those managers whose activities do not meet the increasing demands and of those who do not listen the opinion of the Party organizations, ignores it, and use their official position for personal gains. For the serious mistakes in the work of overcoming a number of heads of ministries and departments as well as the chairmen of kolkhozes and sovkhoses.²⁶³

Then, Usmankhodzhaev discussed the perpetual need to improve cadres among the party, evidencing a managerial impotence of the republican leadership that was not able to find a solution. In his words:

We cannot tolerate the fact that within the 466 workers in the official nomenklatura of agriculture, only 79% have a college degree, and about 20 percent of the leading specialists have only a secondary education. In the departments and offices of the ministry there are people who absolutely do not know anything of the situation or needs of agriculture, and have neither experience nor diplomas in agricultural universities. And in Minplodoovoshchkhov [ministry of fruit and vegetables production] only one third of the managers and specialists has higher education, and likely only half is specialized with secondary education. More than 80% of agronomists, livestock specialists, veterinarians, and 85% of economists in the kolkhozes and sovkhoses of the republic have no special higher education. The statistics shows how needed are highly skilled agricultural profiles. These facts should not but cause concern. For example, in Bukhara region, 20% of the chairmen of collective farms and 40% of the directors of state farms related to the Minplodoovoshchkhov have no agricultural education. It is characteristic that [negative phenomena] did not decrease over the last four years, [because of] the increasing number of managers of agricultural production without special education. All this should not, but in fact does, affect negatively the work.²⁶⁴

4.3.2 The rise of Gorbachev

Besides the commitments for purges and improvements in agriculture, in March 1985, the Soviet political scene was shaken by a revolutionary event. The old and sick Chernenko died on 10 March 1985. Despite the eulogy for an

²⁶³ PV, 20727, 54, 3 March 1985, p. 3.

²⁶⁴ PV, 20727, 54, 3 March 1985, p. 3.

old man who had been defined “the last Bolshevik,”²⁶⁵ nobody was seriously worried about this news, presaging the cynical idea that it could not get any worse than this. To the post of the Gensek was appointed the young and energetic Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, the last Soviet leader who tried to save the USSR through his ambitious plan of reforms – *perestroika* and *glasnost*²⁶⁶ – enforced after 1987.

In this context, we will not get into the details of Gorbachev’s reformism nor his ‘universalistic’ appeasement strategy with the West during the closing stages of the Cold War. Notwithstanding the importance of the new course that Soviet politics followed with the election of Gorbachev, we will mainly focus on the effective course of perestroika in the UzSSR assuming that, despite the hopes of the ‘winds of change’, authentic change never arrived in Uzbekistan in any shape more substantial than slogans. Or rather, the change of perestroika was effective in terms of massive change of the ruling class. Curiously, this political phase that would lead to what was probably the most liberal phase of contemporary Russian history, is remembered in the opposite way in Uzbekistan, where Gorbachevism seemed to assume for some extends a Neo-Stalinist appearance,²⁶⁷ representing the continuation of heavy moralizing campaigns that had been endorsed by Andropov just two years before. In this regard, Holmes comments that the new Gensek “breathed new life into the anticorruption campaign [...making] it clear in a number of ways that Andropov was his role model among recent Soviet leaders, and this was reflected in the adoption of many of his predecessor’s policies.”²⁶⁸ In fact, especially in the first years of his leadership, Gorbachev also had the problem

²⁶⁵ Ilya Zemtsov, *Chernenko: The Last Bolshevik: The Soviet Union on the Eve of Perestroika* (New Brunswick N.J. U.S.A.: Transaction Publishers, 1989).

²⁶⁶ During the first stage of perestroika (1985-1987) the energies were devoted to the acceleration and the implementation of economy through investments in technology and human capital. However, from 1986, the economic situation began to deteriorate and from January 1987 the rate of production dropped sharply, there were all the signs of the economic crisis. The second stage 1987-1990 was devoted to the social reconstruction of society through democratization, transparency and a gradual introduction of multiparty system.

²⁶⁷ Holmes is cautious in evaluating this Gorbachevian attitude, commenting: “The full-blended anti-corruption campaign did not emerge immediately after Gorbachev’s accession to power, however. At first the emphasis tended to be more generally on strengthening socialist legality.” Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*, 225–26.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 225.

to relaunch a 'healthy' image of a party that appeared so rotten after so many corruption scandals. He adopted a propagandistic approach that was aimed to publicize even more loudly the corruption cases, to condemn openly the culprits and to take distance from them. In this way, Gorbachev seemed to be able to affirm his personal power²⁶⁹ and to demonstrate the honesty of his maneuvers and to legitimize his power with that self-critical narrative typical of perestroika. Gorbachev initially did not understand that the economic system had to be changed, thinking that the solution could be in rooting out corruption and tightening control. As Colloudon comments

By identifying the "bad guys" and by offering a moral explanation for corruption, the Kremlin was obviously trying to demonstrate that the blame should not be put on the entire system.²⁷⁰

It can seem odd but, to a different extent, Gorbachev could draw inspiration from Usmankhodzhaev's strategy of 'blaming and criticizing' in order to strengthen the legitimacy of your position. For both this strategy would be catastrophic within a few months.

As Rashidov did with Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Andropov, Usmankhodzhaev also was experiencing, in less than two years in power, the third Gensek in his career at the post of FS CPUz. Again, he tried to opportunistically follow the course of Moscow's politics, linking the purges to the slogans of *uskoreniye*, *glasnost* and *perestroika* while continuing the strategy of criticism and purges within the party and state apparatuses.

Just after Gorbachev's appointment, on 20 March 1985 the former deputy minister MVD UzSSR Kakhramanov was arrested, defining the implication of the MVD USSR and CC CPSU in the scandal,²⁷¹ hinting that the Uzbek affair had a 'Soviet' dimension. Then, at the XIX plenum of the CC CPUz (29 March 1985), the FS CPUz confirmed the commitments of the party to eradicate the

²⁶⁹ Even for Gorbachev the struggle against corruption was a mean to affirm his personal power. This emerged with the dismissal of the above mentioned Grishin, or other figures as V. Suchkov, deputy minister of foreign trade and G.D. Brovin, secretary of the bureau. Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L'aigle Bicéphale*, 58.

²⁷⁰ Virginie Coulloudon, "Russia Adrift. Twenty Years of Anticorruption Campaigns," in *Corrupt Histories*, ed. Emmanuel Kreike and William Chester Jordan (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 254.

²⁷¹ Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L'aigle Bicéphale*, 60.

negative phenomena, narrating a battle “without compromise” as the main effort of the Uzbek party in the name of the CPSU. In the FS’s words:

The XVI plenum revealed serious faults in the various spheres of economy and social life of the republic, violations in the style and methods in the leadership of the party, and the Leninist principles in the selection and education of cadres. We analyzed the mistakes and expanded the uncompromising fight against negative phenomena, and eradication of everything that interferes to move forward.²⁷²

Then, the FS reported the power reshuffle within the CC CPUz, indicating that from January 1984, 10 new workers became the heads of the CC departments, while 31 obkoms and 187 gorkom and raikom secretaries had been removed. In total, in this period 88 senior executives had been replaced and were included in the CC CPSU nomenklatura as well, and more than a thousand that were part of the CC CPUz nomenklatura. He added that,

lately, the CC CPUz and the obkoms have taken the decisive measures on the leadership of the Party committees. From the beginning of last year, have been replaced 73 FS of gorkoms and raikoms. It was done a great job in the organizations of the Kashkadarya, Bukhara Karakalpak obkoms where, in the posts of FSs were chosen the most loyal people [affiliated to the FS obkom] on the base of zemlyachestvo, subservience and personal loyalty.²⁷³

Then, the misdeeds of figures like K. Yusupov – the former secretary of the Karakalpak obkom who was responsible for the ideological work – were denounced. The latter “violated the moral norms and abused his power. In the last year, he renovated his apartment three times [...] these phenomena are possible because the party committees are spineless.”²⁷⁴ Then, Usmankhodzhaev denounced serious defects also in the academy where the “phenomena of corruption were discovered in the Universities of Samarkand, in the Tashkent technological, textiles and medical universities and in the Bukhara technological university.”²⁷⁵ Then, the FS CPUz was again leveraging the course of the Soviet politics, announcing that,

enforceability of the work on strengthening the discipline depends on glasnost. And we must use the media and propaganda in a more active way. [...] Almost it has been completely revamped the leadership of the MVD and of the prokuratura UzSSR and similar efforts have been done in the MJ and the SC

²⁷² Prot. 19/1985, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 154, d. 2502, l. 7.

²⁷³ Prot. 19/1985, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 154, d. 2502, l. 12.

²⁷⁴ Prot. 19/1985, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 154, d. 2502, l. 18.

²⁷⁵ Prot. 19/1985, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 154, d. 2502, l. 20.

UzSSR and in their departments. [...] The prokuratura enforced about 4500 notices to various different level executives on the inadmissibility of law violations.²⁷⁶

He also presented the bill of the purges on the economic and justice sectors of the republic, stating that

for theft, forgery and corruption and other abuses in the last year they were sentenced 315 directors of enterprises, more than 900 chairmen of departments of industries and almost 500 accountants. [...] Recently in the MVD, the prokuratura and the court organs were dismissed 450 officers who had been compromised and more than 150 of these were convicted for various crimes.²⁷⁷ [...] only in the cotton industry, there was damage to the state for more than 190 million rubles, and from the criminals convicted for these cases were seized in addition to values over 35 million rubles.²⁷⁸

During the plenum, Mogil'nichenko - the deputy head of the party organizational department of the CC CPSU that we encountered in the previous chapter²⁷⁹ also intervened – revealing how the CC CPSU was attentive in observing the developments of the republic's political life. He added that from the previous year in the UzSSR 139 criminal cases against managers of kolkhozes and sovkhoses had been opened and 535 had been condemned. However, he disavowed the rumors on a possible enlargement of the criminal responsibility on minor posts. In his words, "nobody is going to lead to criminal responsibility those persons who have been involuntarily involved in dishonest methods of work." He was exonerated the workers from the criminal aspect of the cases and commented the necessity to strengthen the training of the workers. For this reason, "due to the request of the CC CPUz, one hundred workers of the republic had been sent in the party schools of other regions."²⁸⁰ This was presaging a sinister 're-educational mission' of the Soviet party for the workers of the UzSSR. However, he confirmed our suppositions about how Moscow wanted to hit just the responsible culprits of the machinations – and so the 'big fish' of the scandals – while reserving for the minor culprits some inferior punishments and reprimands. This attitude confirmed the 'politicity' of the 'Uzbek cotton affair'

²⁷⁶ Prot. 19/1985, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 154, d. 2502, l. 21.

²⁷⁷ Prot. 19/1985, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 154, d. 2502, l. 22.

²⁷⁸ Prot. 19/1985, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 154, d. 2502, l. 23.

²⁷⁹ K.N. Mogil'nichenko was at the head of the CC CPSU special commission that in autumn 1983 endorsed the party investigation against the negative phenomena in Uzbekistan which results were reported during the XVI plenum.

²⁸⁰ Prot. 19/1985, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 154, d. 2502, l. 78.

more than an extended criminal case. The indications of the plenum were received at state level that proceeded with a further power reshuffle. Then, on 30 March, during the first session of the SS UzSSR, was elected the presidium, the SM and also the PCC and the SC UzSSR, affirming a step forward in ousting figures that appeared compromised.²⁸¹

Also at local (raikom), at unions', at soviets²⁸² and at managerial levels there was a reorganizations of cadres that were implemented 'along the guidelines of the XVI plenum.'²⁸³ An immediate result was the appointment of a new FS Jizzakh obkom – on 3 April, Khabibulla Shagazatov was replaced by Islam Sultanovich Umarov²⁸⁴ – and many power reshuffles at the regional level. The results of the purges were announced with great fanfare in the plenums that were held in the first weeks of April in every obkom of the republic,²⁸⁵ while cases of incredibly diffused malfeasance and very local scandals²⁸⁶ were reported also by the official newspapers that – besides promoting the socialist 'truth' – were often endorsing the features of the tabloid formats.

Parallel to the criminal-corruption scandals, the prokuratura UzSSR was still revealing in spring 1985 serious counterfeiting episodes of livestock and

²⁸¹ PV, 20750, 77, 31 March 1985, p. 2.

²⁸² On 9 April 1985, the memorandum 39 of the Presidium of the SS UzSSR to the SS USSR informed that just in these first months of 1985 there was a reshuffle of leading posts within the local soviets of Uzbekistan. Indeed, on 1603 chairmen, 1705 deputy chairmen and 1604 secretaries changed 307, 274 and 197 and were compromised 89, 82 and 43 respectively. GARF, f. R-7523, op. 145, d. 2100, l. 50.

²⁸³ As reported in PV, in Charvak were removed the deputy chairman of the local profsoyuz and I. Ratman, deputy director of the management in Charvakgesstroj was fired for abuse of power, and the chairman of the local ispolkom, L. Sharapov. PV, 20752, 79, 3 April 1985, p. 2.

²⁸⁴ Umarov kept the post until the Jizzakh obkom absorption by the Syrdarya obkom in September 1988 when the oblast was dismembered. The oblast - and the obkom - were restored in March 1990 by the president Karimov and Erkin Tursunov took the post of FS Jizzakh obkom.

²⁸⁵ PV, 20753, 80, 5 April 1985, pp. 1-2; PV, 20754, 81, 6 April 1985, p. 2; PV, 20755, 82, 7 April 1985, p. 2; PV, 20761, 88, 14 April 1985, p. 2; PV, 20762, 89, 16 April 1985, p. 2.

²⁸⁶ For example, it was revealed in PV that just in 1984 in the Bayat raikom, 45 members of the local CC had been implicated in party liability as well as 24 directors of local enterprises and 2 were expelled from the party. PV, 20759, 86, 12 April 1985, p. 2.

food production data by some kolkhozes' directors in the regions of Jizzakh and Andijan where, moreover, Ruzimatov the accountant of the kolkhoz 'Pravda' had declared more than 842 tons of food goods that had never been produced and also 315 tons of silage and 10 tons of flour.²⁸⁷ Indeed, the effects of pripiski on the economy seemed to worry more the government that the offenses of the criminal cases, revealing a deeply critical situation: on 19 April, the SM UzSSR exposed that already in the first quartile of 1985, 65 industrial complexes in the republic had not realized the plan.²⁸⁸

The importance of improving the economic production standards was not underestimated, even in Moscow where the new Gensek advanced an ambitious plan to clean the country from corruption and alcoholism, to establish a more effective rule of law and to reach the international economic standards. A programme that was defined by Yakovlev as the "statement of nonsense."²⁸⁹ Indeed, on 20 April 1985, during a famous CPSU Plenum, Gorbachev announced the *uskoreniye* (literally "acceleration"), a political slogan intended to promote the acceleration of social, technological and economic development of the Soviet Union. This line thus encouraged a straightening of the cadres' discipline and became an imperative order which was revived in the next party meetings. As a consequence of this new line, on April 23, the CC CPSU approved a resolution to reform economic management and elected Chebrikov, Ryzhkov and Ligachev as full members of the politburo.²⁹⁰ Substantially Gorbachev was carrying out the reform agenda that Andropov had hoped for, but he was not able to carry it to fruition, due to an evident lack of time. In terms of purges, the Andropovian line as well lingered and this was reflected in this reshuffle of cadres that not just in Uzbekistan but also in Moscow was promoting a new generation of politicians who seem to have repudiated the Brezhnevian methods and presented themselves with a more managerial approach. Also in Uzbekistan, Gorbachev's calls had a wide echo and were enforced by the CPUz as a renovated legitimizing narrative. In the name of *uskoreniye*, *glasnost* and *perestroika* – that were upgrading the Andropovian concept of moralization

²⁸⁷ PV, 20759, 86, 12 April 1985, p. 3.

²⁸⁸ PV, 20765, 92, 20 April 1985, p. 2.

²⁸⁹ Andrea Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), 513–14.

²⁹⁰ Jack F Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire : The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1995), 746.

campaigns also in terms of efficiency of the economy and politics – the purges in the UzSSR apparatuses had a renovated vigor.

At the end of April, the Party control organs detected inefficiencies on all levels of the UzSSR economic system: just the Dustlikski raikom plenum exposed that many kolkhozes - that had already received large investments in terms of technical modernization in last years - had unnecessarily lost an additional 30 million rubles, maintaining a negative productive trend in the production of cotton, milk and meat²⁹¹ while in parallel cases of accountants guilty of embezzlement and *pripiski* were discovered.²⁹² Also in Namangan, in an important cotton cleaning factory, falsified documentation on the cotton deliveries was still found.²⁹³

The situation in the economic sectors of the republic kept warning the party that kept endorsing a cure that was based on purges of responsible. Substantially, Usmankhodzhaev preferred to cut the patient's leg rather than disinfect the wound. During the XX plenum CC CPUz (14 May 1985), the FS CPUz justified the cadre reshuffles stating that

the goal of these cadres' changes that were made after the XVI plenum is to clean [or better to purge] the compromised persons - stratifications of the past - to restore social justice and to redress the situation.²⁹⁴ [...however, we are] concerned by recidivists of corruption. In the first trimester of the current year, 100 corrupters and 60 scammers had been condemned as well as a thousand of officials who made thefts and abused their power. It still continues the speculation in agricultural products and the majority of these facts occur in the oblasts of Andijan, Tashkent, Namangan, and Ferghana.²⁹⁵

The day after, during a buro session circulated a document – annex 8 – that added another scandal related to housing in Khorezm:

on the party-organization work in Urgench, a city where there are still abuses of power during distribution of houses. In the last two years, were illegally distributed 93 apartments, many of which were assigned to the local leaders, as A. Bulgachev - the deputy director of the agency Sredazinspektsiya, A. Sabirov – the former FS of the gorkom Komsomol, K. Inoyatov - the raion prokuror, R. Tyan the chairman of the traffic police department of the

²⁹¹ PV, 20770, 97, 26 April 1985, p. 2.

²⁹² PV, 20771, 98 27 April 1985, p. 3.

²⁹³ For these facts, the director A. Tadzhibayev had been convicted. PV, 20791, 120, 25 May 1985, p. 1.

²⁹⁴ Prot. 20/1985, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 154, d. 2503, l. 9.

²⁹⁵ Prot. 20/1985, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 154, d. 2503, l. 25.

oblispolkom UVD and others.²⁹⁶ [...just in Urgench] in the period 1981-1985, 72 communists had been condemned and over the past four years, had been dismissed 15 workers that were included in the gorkom nomenklatura for negative phenomena and 37 for defects in the work.²⁹⁷

Thus, in Khorezm as well were discovered many of typical cases of malfeasance within the local elite²⁹⁸ that would lead to a systemic purge and to a change of the obkom's FS within a few months. After the calls of the previous months against the speculations and the jobbing of the directors of enterprises that were violating law and socialist morality, the struggle against the 'negative phenomena' was again enforced at the center of the CPUz agenda. Indeed, the buro meeting of 14 June 1985 presented a resolution of the SM UzSSR that evidenced how the measures on the eradication of speculation in agricultural and flowers products was insufficient, denouncing how in some kolkhozes and sovkhoses managers allowed the squandering of land and gave it for rent, creating profit for themselves. Furthermore, the speculators bought products from the people to resell them in the official agricultural system or in the black market: indeed, episodes of flowers purchased from the peasants and resold at higher prices in the major cities around the country were revealed.²⁹⁹

Linked to the negative situation in the republic were also some cultural issues. In fact, despite the scandals and changes within the party, is also interesting that in these years the use of the Uzbek language started to be even more recalled by a local elite that, at least at cultural level, was manifesting impatience towards Moscow. Indeed, is interesting to reveal the

²⁹⁶ Prot. 122/1985, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 154, d. 2515, l. 129.

²⁹⁷ Prot. 122/1985, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 154, d. 2515, l. 130.

²⁹⁸ In the Khorezm oblast were spread cases of malfeasance within the local administrators. An example was given in the press on 6 August when were accused many people who acted with impunity and acted as 'mafioso-like' protectors, racketing even simple people. In the list of names there were the sovkhos director I. Kur'yazov who claimed - without any right to do so - a 100 rubles 'fee' from each household inhabitant of his sovkhos to accelerate the supply of facilities, gasification, and other services. Furthermore, he used construction materials that were destined for the sovkhos to build and to expand his home. He also purchased without authorization 20,000 bricks, 14 tons of cement, ten cubic meters of wood and 27 square meters of stained glass for windows for a cost of 2996 rubles that came from public funds. For these facts he was condemned to five years of imprisonment. PV, 20850, 177, 6 August 1985, p. 3.

²⁹⁹ Prot. 124/1985, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 154, d. 2517, l. 60.

diffusion of the great Gorbachev's speeches and announcements in the national idiom³⁰⁰ as a way to catch the attention – and maybe the support – of a rising nationalism within the republic. The almost usual criticism of the party was furthermore searching for external scapegoats to blame: as Golovin in the XVI plenum blamed the Western conspirators that were taking advantage of the negative phenomena in Uzbekistan, the CC CPUz was now individuating the US as promoters of Islamic fundamentalism in the republic.³⁰¹ While, in the first hypotheses we can find most of the causes of the 'Uzbek cotton affairs' in the Soviet planned economy and it seems difficult to argue theories of foreign conspiracies, the second hypothesis, related to the Islamic revival linked to the war in Afghanistan probably was not far from reality. However, this is another story.³⁰²

³⁰⁰ The echo of uskoreniye was spread all around the USSR and arrived also in Uzbekistan where the party published in Uzbek the materials of the CC CPSU plenum of April (PV, 207772, 99, 28 April 1985, p. 1). Also the Gorbachev's speech for the 40th anniversary of Victory in Great Patriotic War was translated into Uzbek (PV, 20786, 113, 17 May 1985, p. 3) as well as the famous Gorbachev's announcement "go ahead" of 17 May (PV, 20804, 131, 8 June 1985, p. 2), and the Gensek's speech of 11 June "the issue of the party's political economy" (PV, 20824, 151, 5 July 1985, p. 2).

³⁰¹ On 13 June 1985 appeared an article on PV warning about the dangers of the 'Islamic factor' revival in the republic as an issue that was functional of the American imperialist strategy against USSR and that was passing through the Termez border from the Afghan front. PV, 20808, 135, 13 June 1985, p. 3.

³⁰² Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1995); Amin Saikal and William Maley, *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Cambridge ;New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); M. Hasan. Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982* (Berkeley, Calif. : University of California Press, 1997); Vladislav Tamarov, *Afghanistan: Soviet Vietnam* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1992); Vladimir Solov'ev and Elena Klepikova, *Yuri Andropov, a Secret Passage into the Kremlin* (New York ;London: Macmillan, 1983); Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Ahmed Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia, Islam or Nationalism?* (London: Zed Books, 1995); Martha Brill Olcott, "Roots of Radical Islam in Central Asia," *Carnegie Papers - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, no. 77 (2007); Kathrin Lenz-Raymann, *Securitization of Islam: A Vicious Circle: Counter-Terrorism and Freedom of Religion in Central Asia* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2014); Vitaly V. Naumki, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle* (Bolder: Bowman and Littlefield, 2005); Bakhtiar Babadzhonov, "Islam v Uzbekistan: Ot Repressii K Bor'be Identichnosteil," in *Rossiiia-Sredniaia Azia Politika I Islam v XX - Nachale XXI v.*, ed. A Kokoshin (Moskva, 2011); Johan Rasanayagam, *Islam in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan; The Morality of Experience*

4.3.3 UzSSR between criticism and purges

Despite the scandals related to the cotton falsification and corruption in Uzbekistan, the anticorruption policy had been implemented at All-Union level, becoming a pillar of Gorbachev's early period in order to oust rivals within the party and heal – at least symbolically – a country adrift. In fact, also in Moscow there was a consistent party reshuffle and on 1 June the Gensek was able to oust Romanov, one of his main rivals, who was removed from the politburo while Shevardnadze became a full member and the day after replaced Gromyko in the MID USSR while the latter became the chairman of the Presidium of the SS USSR.³⁰³ In this structure, also Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin – the former FS Sverdlovsk obkom and the future President of Russian Federation³⁰⁴ – was promoted to the secretariat of the CC CPSU. Due to corruption scandals in the Moscow trade sector – already mentioned in the previous chapter – Yeltsin, the rising star of Staraya Ploshad, was finally called to clean out the corruption in Moscow city and was finally appointed on 23 December the FS of the local gorkom – effectively "Mayor" of the Soviet capital – replacing the compromised Grishin³⁰⁵ who had lately been marginalized from the Soviet political echelons. Also Yeltsin had a determinant role in the Uzbek cotton affair, representing the CPSU power in the UzSSR. In late 1985, during a Party Conference in Tashkent, under the instruction of Gorbachev, he forcefully demanded "criticism and self-criticism" within the Uzbek Party, and for "new cadres of party leaders". He

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Alexandre Bennigsen, *Soviet Strategy and Islam* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989); Galina M. Yemelianova, *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London: Routledge, 2010); Yaacov Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union : From the Second World War to Gorbachev* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

³⁰³ Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire : The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 746; Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 514.

³⁰⁴ Timothy J. Colton, *Yeltsin : A Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2008); Aron, *Yeltsin: A Revolutionary Life*; Rudolf Germanovich Pikhoya, *Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii Boris Nikolayevich Yel'tsin* (Moskva: Komsomol'skaya Pravda, 2015); George W Breslauer, *Gorbachev and Yeltsin as Leaders* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

³⁰⁵ According to Boldin, Gorbachev probably had a role in linking the Moscow commercial department and the party apparatus in order to target Grishin. Boldin, *Ten Years That Shook the World: The Gorbachev Era As Witnessed by His Chief of Staff*, 183.

called for admitting to “unprincipled behavior, corruption, and patronage of careless workers, friends, and relatives of mercenary motives.”³⁰⁶ On that occasion, Yeltsin accused the members of the CPUz of “making bribe-taking a habit”³⁰⁷ demanding for a full internal reform and a better selection of the CC cadres. These harsh calls – that probably frightened also Gorbachev³⁰⁸ - had an immediate effect for Usmanhodzhaev that had no other choice than obeying and to ensure good - or at least real - results in agriculture.

A first manifestation of enthusiasm for the minor improvement in the UzSSR cotton sector was in late June 1985 when the party started to announce that the fiber production in the republic had qualitatively increased from 28.2% in 1983 to 31.5% in 1985, and this good result was further allocating to the UzSSR kolkhozes an additional budget of nine million rubles.³⁰⁹ Then, in summer 1985, Usmanhodzhaev kept the enthusiasms for Gorbachev reformism³¹⁰ and followed its narrative patterns. In fact, on 5 July a meeting was held of the party-economic aktiv, that was devoted to the *uskoreniye* of the scientific and technological progress and automation to develop the economy. On that occasion, the FS CPUz, confirmed the commitments for the economic reconstruction (*perestroika*) and more technological development, and finally made an announcement that was partially recalling the tones of developed socialism era. Indeed, in his words, “the basic foundations of our economy is more than 74 billion rubles. In industry, there are more than 1,500 enterprises and associations, including

³⁰⁶ Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, 114.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁸ According to Timofeev, Gorbachev feared a possible delegitimization and manipulation by his internal opponents. Therefore, he probably wanted to end the case "designating it as a local matter (which it should have been from the outset). The irresponsible proposals of other politicians to investigate the matter to the end only irritated him. For instance, Yeltsin toured Uzbekistan while a Central Committee secretary and reported on the corruption upon his return: "Suddenly, Gorbachev became angry, saying that I didn't understand anything at all, and that Usmanhodzhaev was an honest Communist, and that he had simply been forced to fight against Rashidovism, and the old mafia was vilifying him with false denunciations and slander." Timofeev, *Russia's Secret Rulers*, 67; Boris Yeltsin, *Against the Grain: An Autobiography* (London: Summit Books, 1990).

³⁰⁹ PV, 20818, 145, 27 June 1985, p. 1.

³¹⁰ In July 1985 the Gensek even endorsed a formal resolution of the SS USSR for the protection of socialist legality. Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*, 226.

about 240 comprehensively mechanized and automated."³¹¹ However, this call was just the introduction for something more, while triumphalism had been definitively buried in the past. Indeed, Usmankhodzhaev concluded his speech thought the now ritual criticism, saying that the only way to implement the socio-economic acceleration was through new honest people taking responsibility and leadership:

On the improvement of indicators in the economic development beneficial impact unfolded throughout the struggle against negative phenomena, firm and consistent line on strengthening the party and government discipline and improvement of work with the staff. During the implementation of decisions XVI Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan implemented decisive measures to strengthen the Party, government, government, law enforcement and economic bodies loyal to the Party, honest people. Uncompromisingly undertaken against anti-social manifestations, particularly malfeasance.³¹²

Substantially, the FS CPUz was so linking the purge campaign with the replacement of a new generation of cadres (who would impose their own patrimonial networks) as a final aims of perestroika. This ideological revision was then working and legitimizing the unpopular internal measures and the fashionable slogans that Moscow was proposing also to reduce defects and to restore a healthy image of the cotton and its related sectors.³¹³ Therefore, from summer 1985, Usmankhodzhaev started to find accreditation for his policies, linking them with the need to respond properly to the increasing environmental problems – a subject that potentially collects the condemnation of everyone – that were so seriously threatening the republic.

³¹¹ PV, 20826, 153, 6 July 1985, p. 1.

³¹² PV, 20826, 153, 6 July 1985, p. 1.

³¹³ Also in light industry sector, the party increased its surveillance on the industry of cotton-processing and its machinery. Also in this sector, many serious facts had been discovered in 1985 as the case of the Tashkent Uzbekhlopkomash that just in 1984 benefited from 190 thousand rubles more than they should because its managers declared a sale price (495.6 rubles) higher than planned (485.5) and did not complete the plan. Also the Tashkhlopkomash delivered five uncompleted production lines at the price of 3,785,000 rubles despite it registered the planned production as completed. The factory manager had always claimed to have executed the plans, but finally was confirmed the machination. However, he was not sentenced nor fired on the spot, as he admitted the mistake committing to recover the lost production. Then, after failing to honor his commitments, he was finally fired from his post. PV, 20838, 165, 23 July 1985, p. 3.

To a minor extent, the struggle against the abstract category of ‘polluters’ assumed an increasing prominence and would forge a key issue in central Asian politics that Tashkent would be exploited also in the next decades. A third element typical of Gorbachevism and that Usmankhodzhaev tried to exploit at his advantage was *glasnost*, the transparency reform that was aimed at allowing more intellectual freedoms and opening the information of the party and the state issues.³¹⁴ This new line – that as we have seen had its origins in the Andropovian era – was so revealing scandals of corruption, *blat*, and other second economy phenomena also in the lower-medium of the republic’s bureaucracy.³¹⁵ As mentioned, these stories cannot be considered as a part of the ‘Uzbek cotton affair’ – that we have identified for its highly political dimension – but are anyway indicative of the environment of dishonesty prevalent among the offices of the country’s power. The witch-hunt, the will to purge, and the search for scapegoats to offer to the public had some bizarre implications and was symptomatic of a party that was able to organize an informational machine to reveal the criticism within the republic but that, however, was not able to find a care to the problem and was just repeating the Moscow’s slogans that the CC CPSU wanted to hear – with a balance between the positive results in economy and commitments of the party to clean the negative situation in the republic. Indeed, the CPUz was so keeping in publicizing the virtuous sectors of the republic,³¹⁶ while was reaffirming the XVI plenum commitments also in occasions where such call appeared odd. For example, the FS CPUz recalled the duties derived from the XVI plenum also in speech that was focused on the youth culture and sports in the UzSSR.³¹⁷

³¹⁴ PV, 20834, 161, 17 July 1985, p. 1.

³¹⁵ PV started to report cases of widespread corruption especially within the mid-levels apparatchiki that were extorting bribes from the population in exchange for favors - such as help from a public officer on the allocation of the home that could cost from 200 to 3000 rubles. PV, 20838, 165, 23 July 1985, p. 4.

³¹⁶ PV stated that in the first half of 1985, the Uzbek industrial system was more efficient than expected, producing 48.3 million rubles more, and fulfilling 107.4% of the planned level. This record was imputable especially for energy and chemical industry. At the same time were revealed that the production of consumer goods decreased for an estimated value of 40.4 million rubles. PV, 20842, 169, 27 July 1985 p. 3.

³¹⁷ PV, 20843, 170, 28 July 1985, p. 2.

Then, in August 1985, another cadre reshuffle was enforced personally by Usmankhodzhaev³¹⁸ and interested the higher spheres of some very strategic – and cotton intensive – oblasts. In fact, on 3 August 1985, Abdukhalik Karimovich Karimov – a deputy of the SN USSR and the FS Surkhandarya obkom since 1977 – was replaced in this latter post by Salidzhan Mamarasulov,³¹⁹ who left the same position in Andijan where, in his place, was appointed on 5 August Makhmut Maripovich Aripzhanov.³²⁰ At this juncture, Usmankhodzhaev had the occasion to kill two birds with one stone: in order to implement purges and to get rid of those figures who were under attack for their honesty – or maybe for their political rivalry with the FS CPUz – while he could also avoid that bosses' remained too long in a post in the same region, creating dangerous patronage relations that, as we have seen, have led to the shocking facts of Bukhara and Kashkadarya. As usual during the changes of FSs in the obkoms, a new *donos* war continued in the form of anonymous letters. Substantially, as it was in the ancient Rome, this informal practice of quarrel was not just tolerated but was also protected – and maybe fostered – because these letters were considered as a useful tool of information for the party and judicial organs and got their protection against any intervention against them.³²¹ Thus, the CPUz buro session of 14 August

³¹⁸ PV, 20849, 176, 4 August 1985, p. 1.

³¹⁹ Mamarasulov kept that post of FS Surkhandarya until 2 December 1989 when he was replaced by the 'Karimovian' Eshbaevich Khakim Berdyev.

³²⁰ Aripzhanov replaced the FS Andijan obkom Salidzhan Mamarasulov who had worked in that post from 1978 when he took the place of Usmankhodzhaev. His dismissal was motivated by the shortages in the food production system in an oblast that was less efficient in producing meat and milk. PV, 20851, 178, 7 August 1985, p. 2. He kept that post until Karimov's power reshuffle in 1990 and was considered a man who was formed in the CC CPSU apparatus and had a deep devotion to Moscow. PV, 20850, 177, 6 August 1985, p. 1.

³²¹ In fact, there were many illegal attempts to cover up cases and to limit *donos*. These letters arrived to the CC CPUz from all the oblasts of the republic, denouncing abuses of power of bureaucrats and officials. However, these were often ignored to the point that exasperated citizens preferred to write to the magazines and local newspapers. According to a complaint received by the CC CPUz, U. Atakulov and his deputy G.V. Nasal, were kicked out of the CC CPUz buro for not taking into account and ignoring these complaints and for their ruthlessness in their evaluation of the cases. Also V.A. Zortov, who was the first deputy prokuror of the UzSSR, was fired because he had tried to prosecute R. Dil'muratov, a professor at the Karshi Technical University who had published a complaint on Literaturnaya gazeta on 18 September 1985; and also the former investigator of the prokuratura UzSSR A. Alibayev who was

1985 discussed this practice,³²² further demanding to the judicial organs to enlarge the investigations in order to define whether these accusations were mere slanders or were effectively facts based on real evidence. Then, the SC UzSSR confirmed its commitments to better check more thoroughly the cases of abuse of power and misappropriation of public funds and embezzlement.³²³

New scandals emerged in other sectors: in summer frauds to the air companies were revealed, with officers that used to tout plane tickets on the black market,³²⁴ and was also endorsed a harsher campaign against soviets' deputies that often were not responsible in checking activities and did not perform audits on their work.³²⁵ Parallel to the purges, in August there was a government reshuffle and some prominent figures affiliated to the post-Rashidovian establishment were promoted to higher offices of the SM: after Khodzhaev's dismissal,³²⁶ on 16 August, the trusted deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR, V.G. Dukhanin, became the minister for social housing, managing a sector that was at the center of many controversy; and the day after, the minister for land improvements and irrigation,³²⁷ I. Kh. Dzhurabyekov,

going to open a case against Dil'muratov, was arrested and sentenced. PV, 20964, 291, 20 December 1985, p. 1.

³²² According to the internal report, just in 1984 and in the first semester of 1985 more than 7,400 anonymous letters – 21.5% from the total amount of the letters – arrived to the CC CPUz and in 46.7% of these in 1984 – and 37.6% in 1985 – were reported facts that had been verified by the investigative organs and were enforced proper measures about.³²² The party so reported that in this period, has increased the amount of anonymous letters with declarations of abuse of power that just in the current year amounted to 1783 letters. After the checks had been dismissed 252 executives of the party soviets and agricultural organs. Prot. 129/1985, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 154, d. 2522, l. 38.

³²³ PV, 20857, 184, 14 August 1985, p. 3.

³²⁴ PV, 20859, 186, 16 August 1985, p. 4.

³²⁵ PV, 20861, 188, 18 August 1985, p. 1.

³²⁶ Akram Rustamovich Khodzhaev - a geolog and long-time leading figure in the state administration - from 1965 served as deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR and rose in the Uzbek political echelon after the disgrace of Nasriddinova.

³²⁷ This ministry kept a crucial importance also in mid-'80s when the irrigation network of the republic was 197,000 km. From this number there were 25,800 km of *ariks* and 142,000 km of canals operative in UzSSR. Abdullaev, "Uzbekistonda Paxta Yakkahokimligi va Uning Oqibatlari (1917-1991 Y.y.); Uzbekiston Fanlar akademiyasi Tarix instituti, *Uzbekiston Respublikasi Fan va Texnika Davlat Qummitasi. Tarix Shohidligi va Saboqlari*, 292; Asat Niyazovich Abdullaev, "Khlopkovaya Monokul'tura v

became deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR,³²⁸ on 19 August M. Salakhitdinov became the minister of education,³²⁹ on 28 August, B. K. Kasymkhodzhaev became the minister for food production,³³⁰ on 20 September, the Russian ethnic (from Chelyabinsk) Boris Fedorovich Satin was appointed as FS Tashkent gorkom, and on 25 September T. Nabiv became the minister of agricultural housing, as well as many senior management of the construction plan of Tashkent had been changed.³³¹ Then, following the Soviet government changes – on 27 September Ryzhkov replaced Tikhonov and became the chairman of the SM USSR – also in the UzSSR, I. Kurbanov was appointed deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR on September 29,³³² on 8 October K. Sapayev became the minister for land improvements and irrigation of the UzSSR,³³³ on 26 October Matbua Amirsaidovna Akhmedova the minister of culture³³⁴ and on 29 October V.I. Ogark became the deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR³³⁵ as well as Kh. Dzhurabyekov on 11 December.³³⁶ This SM reshuffle seemed so to resolve a question of executive stability, ensuring to the party a number of loyal figures – and supposedly honest – in some sectors that had been the center of political controversy in the previous months.

However, the main warning signs remained in agriculture³³⁷ where more scandals – also about laxity and mismanagement in work³³⁸ – were inflaming

Uzbekistane I Ee Posledstviya (1917–1991 Gg.). Avtoreferat Dissertatsii Na Soiskaniye Uchenoy Stepeni Doktora Istoricheskikh Nauk.” (Akademiya Nauk Respubliki Uzbekistan Institut Istorii, 2010).

³²⁸ PV, 20861, 188, 18 August 1985, p. 1.

³²⁹ PV, 20862, 189, 20 August 1985, p. 1.

³³⁰ PV, 20870, 197, 29 August 1985, p. 1.

³³¹ PV, 20893, 220, 26 September 1985, p. 1.

³³² PV, 20897, 224, 1 October 1985, p. 1.

³³³ PV, 20904, 231, 9 October 1985, p. 1.

³³⁴ PV, 20921, 248, 27 October 1985, p. 1.

³³⁵ PV, 20923, 250, 31 October 1985, p. 1.

³³⁶ PV, 20957, 284, 12 December 1985, p. 1.

³³⁷ Far from the '6 million triumphalism' of the beginning of the 80s, the annual cotton crop decrease in 1980-1985 from 5.579 million to 5.3818, wheat from 2.5183 to 1.5412, rice from 0.5046 to 0.4817, vegetables from 2.4591 to 2.3856 and melons from 1.0463 to 0.7909. Uzbekiston Fanlar akademiyasi Tarix instituti, *Uzbekiston Respublikasi Fan va Texnika Davlat Qummitasi. Tarix Shohidligi va Saboqlari*, 294.

³³⁸ Emblematic was the case of Kasym Karimov, director of the kolkhoz "Esh Leninci" who was accused of serious mismanagement. In the previous year, his kolkhoz had only achieved 66% of the plan and the director had left at the mercy of events the

the republic while the CPUz was demanding again for more efforts in the cotton fields³³⁹ – as well as in the silk production³⁴⁰ – and imperative honesty in the cotton processing factories in order to increase the quality of produced fiber.³⁴¹ This final condition in work was a sine qua non that party had even reaffirmed in the CPUz buro meeting of 25 September,³⁴² while Usmankhodzhaev promised to Moscow to deliver at least 5.730 tons of raw cotton.³⁴³ For the day of the revolution's anniversary there was a regurgitation of Rashidovism, and the fifth million ton of cotton harvested was announced with great fanfare in Uzbekistan.³⁴⁴ Evidently, the old means of propaganda, although no longer useful with Moscow, served to bring

whole production because he never went to work. He was immediately fired. PV, 20875, 202, 4 September 1985, p. 3.

³³⁹ Again there were calls in the press to for improve and speed up with defoliation. PV, 20885, 212, 15 September 1985, p. 1.

³⁴⁰ As mentioned, silk was another key agricultural production of the UzSSR. However, also this sector presented several shortages and pripiski. In October 1985 was revealed that a spinning company had produced false receipts claiming to have received 2,380 kg of silk cocoons and taking for it a sum of 12 thousand rubles. PV, 20914, 241, 20 October 1985, p. 2. A scandal invested the small center of Margilan that is considered the center of Uzbekistan's silk producing industry. During the XXXVII Margilan party conference, 62 communists were sanctioned and expelled from the party: of these, 20 were expelled - including S. Bakhramov, director of the local health department and R. Kasymov, director of a company manufacturing silk cocoons. PV, 20938, 265, 19 November 1985, p. 2.

³⁴¹ In its calls in the press, the CC CPUz reminded to the readers the latest stories of those officials in the cotton cleaning factories who had abused power and were replaced by new cadres that had sense of initiative, were honest and organize work according to modern requirements. Now, the cotton industries have changed the cotton receiving conditions according to new criteria of quality and fiber content. Then, was affirmed that in 1984, from 5.292 million tons of Uzbek raw cotton had been produced 1,599,200 tons of fiber, recording a higher production of 100 thousand tons from the previous year when officially had been harvested 5.921 million tons of cotton. PV, 20886, 213, 17 September 1985, p. 2.

³⁴² In the buro session of 25 September was reported that Kakhramon Sabirovich Sardiev, general manager of the textile factory in Bukhara, was fired from his because compromised with unacceptable work style. Prot. 133/1985, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 154, d. 2526, l. 21.

³⁴³ PV, 20914, 241, 20 October 1985, p. 1.

³⁴⁴ PV, 20928, 255, 6 November 1985, p. 1.

people together in the effort for the great cause of cotton³⁴⁵ and maybe were more popular than the moralizing calls³⁴⁶ or the purges within the party.³⁴⁷ Furthermore, the narrative of perestroika and the 'time for changes' was spread in the internal party debate and in the official press³⁴⁸ intertwined with the calls to adhere to the guidelines of the XVI plenum, and these demands had a deep echo also at local level,³⁴⁹ and in the ministries. For example, in announcing the budget for the 1986, the minister of finance

³⁴⁵ In 1985 (the first year under Gorbachev's leadership) investment in Uzbekistan fell by 4 percent (from 7.145 to 6.811 billion rubles). However, "all other areas of the economy [were still] sacrificed to increase the cotton output." Boris Z. Rumer, "Central Asia's Cotton Economy and Its Costs," in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 71.

³⁴⁶ In November 1985 still appeared the stories denouncing the effective sophistication mechanisms of the falsifications – that we have already mentioned in the third chapters. For example, A.A. Babadzhanov, the director of the Mangitski cotton processing factory, in September-October 1985 received money from representatives of the sovkhos 'Mangit' and from the kolkhozes 'Lenin' and 'Akhunbabayev'. In return, the director declared to have received 300 tons of cotton that was never delivered. All the culprits were arrested. PV, 20936, 263, 15 November 1985, p. 1.

³⁴⁷ As mentioned, the party imposed tolerance zero for the officials who intervened in the investigations to cover their or some of their friends' activities. In Dhambai were fired some prominent party members among whom there was also B. Yunusov, FS Dzhambai raikom - because he did not declare and covered his brother who had been involved and convicted for embezzlement. At his place was appointed A. Sattarov. PV, 20942, 269, 23 November 1985, p. 2.

³⁴⁸ PV, 20948, 275, 30 November 1985, p. 3.

³⁴⁹ Following this line, during the XXVIII conference of the Yakkabag raikom, 43 people were removed from their posts, 22 expelled from the CPSU, 8 removed from the apparatus of raikom. S. Bakyev, FS of the raikom was convicted for fraud, abuse of power, misappropriation of public funds and for his irresponsibility. He was fired and condemned. Were also sentenced M. Khudayberdiyev - the director of the kolkhoz 'Engels', and the directors of district textile companies M. Avlaev and R Dzhuraev. (PV, 20952, 279, 5 December 1985, p. 2). Similarly, Abdi Umirov, the FS Ulyanovsk raikom in Kashkadarya, was expelled from the CPSU after 35 years of career, because he was accused of fraud, abuse of power and for immoral behavior. He had built a network of blackmail in which forced the kolkhozes to make false statements in production, threatening to fire their managers if they did not fulfill it or to denounce them for being unpatriotic. As well, some directors of sovkhoses and kolkhozes had been convicted. PV, 20955, 282, 8 December 1985, p. 2.

UzSSR Islam A. Karimov – the future FS CPUz and president of the Republic of Uzbekistan – stated that:

Through consistent implementation of the policy guidance XVI Plenum of the CC CPUz during this period in the republic there has been some change in the methods of management, more began to be used prudently allocated material and financial resources to stabilize the financial and economic situation of collective farms and state farms and ginneries.³⁵⁰

1985 ended with the greatest results of purges³⁵¹ in the UzSSR establishment. However, it is interesting to note that the replacements were substantially all around the republican parties and just in Central Asia Gorbachev pushed to 'retire' – for corruption scandals and mismanagement that were followed by purges³⁵² – three of the republican FS: on 2 November, the Kyrgyz FS Turdakun Usubaliyev – in power from 1961 – became at the center of a corruption scandal – 'the Kyrgyz livestock affair'³⁵³ – and was

³⁵⁰ PV, 20958, 285, 13 December 1985, p. 4.

³⁵¹ On 19 December 1985, the two former FSs obkoms and deputies at the SN USSR, U. Umarov (former FS Tashkent Gorkom and elected in the electoral district 116) and A. Karimov (the former FS Surkhandarya, elected in the electoral district 112) resigned from the SN USSR. PV, 20964, 291, 20 December 1985, p. 3.

³⁵² William Fierman, "The Soviet 'Transformation' of Central Asia," in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 26.

³⁵³ In RGANI, I found evidence of a non-famous case that I wanted to call the 'Kyrgyz livestock affair' related to the production of sheep – officially 11 million while hundreds million cattle 'disappeared' – and horses which number decreased in the early 1980s, while the number of cows did not increase as expected in the plans. There were many cases of rustling that happened in the state companies for meat production and were implicating also the participation of Tursunov, the ministry for meat and milk production. Usubaliyev – the FS of Kyrgyzstan from 1961 – was alleged to tolerate this system, to abuse his power also in promoting his literature activity and to promote his family and affiliates in the nomenklatura - his cousin was at the head of the KGB, his son was the dean of the University, his brother in law directed the department of party history and other relatives in the direction of the magazine *Selkhoziasst*, or in the scientific institute of pedagogical research, in the republican ispolkom etc. for a total of 23 relatives in the top echelon of the Kyrgyz SSR as well as 38 FSs raikoms were alleged to be his of his wife's relatives. These facts were denounced in a letter to the prokuratura USSR that forwarded it to the CC CPSU on 26 July 1984. RGANI, f. 50, op. 90, d. 49, ll. 52-69. Then, in a memorandum of 28 September 1984, the CC CPSU effectively revealed the responsibility of Tursunov – who was fired – and cases of affiliation and kinship in the party nomenklatura and in Usubaliyev whose books were published not completely with licit methods. RGANI, f.

finally replaced by Absamat Masaliyev.³⁵⁴ Then, on 14 December the Tajik FS – in power from 1982 - Rakhmon Nabiev was replaced by Kahar Mahkamov and on 21 December 1985 the Turkmen FS Muhammetnazar Gapurow – in power from 1963 – was replaced by Saparmurat Niyazov. Rashidov probably would find the same fate of his colleagues but - perhaps luckily for him - he died before.

Substantially, the emergence of the new Moscow leadership partially changed the narrative of the CPUz that kept stabilizing its double legitimizing discourse that linked the Gorbachevian reformism to the aim of cleaning the republic. As we have seen, fall 1985 was probably the climax the systemic phase, which began with appointment of Usmankhodzhaev as FS CPUz in November 1983, had a breakthrough during the XVI CPUz (June 1984), and reached its climax with these final purges in late 1985 within the Uzbek party and state administrations. However, this was just the beginning of the heaviest season of the Uzbek cotton affair, which we will analyse in the next chapter during what we can interpret as ‘Moscow’s receivership,’ when the media case was spread in the whole Soviet society and when the party endorsed the de-Rashidovization course. Although the ‘Uzbek khan’ had died and been buried with all honours, his legacy was still influential in the political life of the UzSSR and was blacklisted.

50, op. 90, d. 49, ll. 71-73. Another memorandum of the CC CPSU revealed that from the party was receiving more than three thousands letters every year from Kirghizstan and a third of them contained denounces, while the share of anonymous letters - revealing abuses in the party and state organs - had more than doubled from 1982. These abuses were carried out in the personal interest (like beautiful houses, dachas, costly repairs, sales of cars, rudeness at work and in personal life, cruelty and immorality, choice of cadres based on kinship, zemlyachestvo and personal loyalty) or not taking measures against their behavior, as in the case of the son of the deputy minister for meat and milk, D. Chokoieva, who was arrested for rape. Some complaints had been verified and led to arrests and seizures of property. As well, were revealed cases of buildings abuse or kolkhozes and sovkhoses that were not fulfilling the plans and made forgery and theft. RGANI, f. 50, op. 90, d. 49, ll. 74-80. This situation reflects the impressions of Buttino who collected in Central Asia different stories about the state of abandonment of farms and livestock - that in many cases starved - in the early 80s.

³⁵⁴ Lately in 1986, during the XVI congress of Communist Party of Kirghizstan was revealed that about 500 managers were dismissed. As well, in Tajikistan were also removed about 400 high managers. Sébastien Peyrouse, “De La Mort de Staline À La Perestroika (1953-1991),” in *Histoire de l’Asie Centrale Contemporaine*, ed. Pierre Chuvin, René Létolle, and Sébastien Peyrouse (Paris: Fayard, 2008), 169.

5 THE 'UZBEK RUBICON' (1986-1989)

Everything is rotten, through and through! – Gorbachev¹

'Sharafrashidovshchina' became a synonym of intrigue and blasphemy, hypocrisy and ambiguity, disgrace and corruption, empty rhetoric, and self-glorification – Nishanov²

After my treatment, I will be ready to work together with you and make a contribution to our common cause – Usmankhodzhaev³

In this chapter, we will analyze the third and final stage of the 'Uzbek cotton affair'. As mentioned, in the first, 'silent' phase in 1983, Rashidov tried to follow Moscow's moralization narrative while investigations had an inner/local dimension among separate minor cases. Substantially, the longstanding Uzbek leader believed he was able to manage this crisis and to turn it in his favor. However, his death inexorably changed the situation. In the second stage, under Usmankhodzhaev, the CPUz followed the course of the greater investigations of the prokuratura USSR, endorsing a systemic campaign of purges against the party and state establishment. In the third phase, the Uzbek establishment proceeded with internal purges on a truly

¹ With this famous expression, Gorbachev privately expressed his views to his associate Eduard Shevardnadze in 1985. Dmitrii Bal'termants, Theodore Hermann Von Laue, and Angela Von Laue, *Faces of a Nation : The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union, 1917-1991* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 1996), 211.

² The expression 'Sharafrashidovshchina' had a negative connotation and it could be translated as 'in Rashidov's way' in order to define a sort of 'Sharafrashidovity,' the essence Rashidovism. This singular affirmation was made during Nishanov's speech in Tashkent on the occasion of the commemoration of the 117th anniversary of Lenin's birth. PV, 21362, 94, 24 April 1987, p. 2.

³ These were the latest words that Usmankhodzhaev uttered before his dismissal from the post of FS CPUz in January 1988. Prot 8/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2007, l. 6.

grand scale, laying the blame for this squarely at the feet of the former FS CPUz Sharaf Rashidov. Just as Khrushchev had denounced Stalin and his personality cult three years after his death, a similar dynamic emerged in relation to Rashidov. Indeed, at the XXI CPUz Congress in January 1986, Rashidov became the main scapegoat of the entire panoply of republican failures and the CPUz promoted a new ideological dispensation, under which the memory, symbols – and, indeed, the remaining faction – of the former FS CPUz bore the brunt of a comprehensive program of de-Rashidovization.

However, in this last phase of the ‘Uzbek cotton affair’, the ‘moralizing policies’ simply backfired against their key protagonists, initiators and paladins of Andropovian severity. These figures essentially became victims of their own belligerent system. Subsequently, the latest ‘properly Soviet’ leader of the UzSSR, Rafik Nishanov, seemed to be trapped by the need to respond to Moscow ahead of local concerns. This, in turn, led to resentment and a rather heavy political atmosphere as Uzbekistan essentially became a trusteeship of the Soviet power. Rather quickly, signs of impatience emerged among the Uzbek elite and the general population that – after decades of peaceful Brezhnevism – seemed increasingly reluctant to accept interference from Moscow and its negation of korenization.

Therefore, we have the impression that Nishanov – who was probably the most loyal Soviet statesman in the Soviet Uzbek scenario – returned from the north in something akin to Julius Caesar’s March on Rome. In crossing the ‘Uzbek Rubicon’⁴ he sought to affirm his power with his own ‘army’ – the Moscow-oriented red troopers (*krasnyi desant*) – in the ‘peripheral center’. Indeed, we can read this last Soviet Uzbek story as a kind of caesarean tale ‘in reverse’, in which the ‘center’ – represented by Nishanov – returned triumphantly to the peripheral homeland where he expected to find the support of the elite – which to quite an extent had many features in common with the Roman senate – and to impose his ‘illuminated dictatorship’ and a reformist program, much as Julius Caesar had done after his return.

⁴ The second secretary of the CPUz, Vladimir Anishchev, used the expression ‘Uzbekistani Rubicon’ to describe his experience in Uzbekistan in 1986-1989, during which time he ascended to this high post. According to him, the Uzbeks had called on Moscow to address the situation in the republic in a context in which the people had a lot of confidence in the party. The beautiful title of his long book betrays to an extent the expectations that make no relevant comparisons with the caesarean history. Also his analogy of the river Rubicon is not entirely clear. Vladimir Petrovich Anishchev, *Vostochnyi Ornament* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo A2-A4, 2009), 509–53.

However, just as soon as those elites started to feel like victims of an intrigue, the signs of discontent towards Soviet power exploded into violence, and they were finally able to push Nishanov off the political stage. Therefore, as had Julius Caesar before him, the Uzbek ‘illuminated dictator’ was ousted by a conspiracy of political events. While the Uzbek ‘ides of March’ did not put to an end Nishanov’s life, they nevertheless heralded much violence for the republic. Even though the ‘Uzbek cotton affair’ has been narrated as a direct offensive campaign from Moscow, we can partially reject this interpretation. We know – from the available archival material covering discussions from the politburo – that the Uzbek problem was simply not a priority in Gorbachev’s political agenda. He, as is well understood, had more pressing concerns at this time. Rather, the Uzbek cotton affair is better understood as the effect of a power struggle within the CPUz, in which the leading figures opportunistically followed what they read to be Moscow’s imperatives in order to maximize their own political advantage.

5.1 De-Rashidovization

In this delicate phase, the Uzbek ruling leadership had to demonstrate to Moscow that the situation was under control and that it was properly fighting to eradicate the ‘negative phenomena’ from the republic. However, the dramatic calls that emerged in the XVI plenum of 1984 did not bring decisive results in terms of purges. At the same time, even agricultural production was poor. Uzbekistan, a republic that was supposed to be ‘agriculture intensive’, was thus unable to provide even the minimal food requirements for its population.⁵

5.1.1 Showdown

On the eve of 1986, the UzSSR awarded its most deserving scientists while at the same time it was endorsing a purge against the republican intellectual and scholar society.⁶ Behind an apparent tranquility, the republic was

⁵ FBIS, “JPRS-UAG-86-012. 16 May 1986. USSR Report. Agriculture,” 1986, 21–24.

⁶ The purges of intellectuals began with the dismissal of important figures related to the ideological work of the CPUz, such as Ziyat Esenbaev – chairman of the Uzbek State Commission for Publishing Houses, Printing Plants, and the Book Trade (January 1984), Sarvar Alimdzhanovich Azimov – chairman of the UzSSR Writer’s Guild (April 1984), and Abid Sadykovich Sadykov – chairman of the AN UzSSR (September 1984). Then, from January 1986 a number of prominent figures in the Uzbek intellectual

entering a new turbulent year when the measure⁷ to fight more efficiently against the negative phenomena had been hardened and the purges against the ruling leadership taken with a decisive impact.

Therefore, 1986 started with the news of the dismissals of the minister of health of the UzSSR S.M. Bakhramov (30 December 1985) and the appointment of Uchkun Sadykovich Rakhimov as the new chairman of the MVD UzSSR (31 December 1985). Apparently, Ibragimov's use of Andropovian methods simply was not sufficient to get results on the moralizing campaign. So, the party dismissed a figure who had been one of the first supporters of investigations and purges,⁸ becoming the first hero and the first victim of the purge machine that he himself had constructed in the previous months.

Parallel to these sinister signs, the first cases of injustice - towards figures who had been removed, badly prosecuted, exonerated, and finally rehabilitated - emerged.⁹ This situation thus emerged as a case of 'falsifications of falsifications' and confirms the hypothesis that often, behind the investigation and subsequent purges, there were political interests and struggles between local elite groups – of which the *donos* letters were the clearest evidence – as well as competition for resources. Thus, in this scenario, the 'Uzbek cotton affairs' were highly politicized and did not always result in the actual culprits being caught or effective honest leaders being appointed, but often lead to the opposite result.

society were also dismissed. Salim Pulatov – minister of higher and specialized secondary education (August 1985) was the first key example. He was followed by Uktam Aripov – Rector of the Tashkent Medical Institute (November 1985), Saidkarim Kadyrkhanov – professor of economics at the Tashkent economics institute and deputy secretary of the institute's party committee (January 1986), Anvar Agzamkhodzhaev – dean of the law faculty at Tashkent state university and member of the AN UzSSR (January 1986), A. Shamaksudov – dean of the department of journalism at Tashkent state university (January 1986), and Nikolai Timofeev – editor-in-chief of the PV (January 1986). John Staples, "Soviet Use of Corruption Purges as a Control Mechanism: The Uzbekistan Case," *Past Imperfect* 2 (1993): 33–34, 44–45.

⁷ In 1986 the laws of criminal procedure against abuse and other negative phenomena in the republic were also hardened. GARF, f. R-7523, op. 145, d. 2739.

⁸ PV, 20974, 1, 1 January 1986, p. 1.

⁹ One case involved the former FS Namangan gorkom, Ibrakhim Kamalovich, who was removed from his post for misusing party resources for private purposes. However, he was rehabilitated and restored in his post because it was discovered that the criminal proceedings against him had been falsified. PV, 20977, 4, 5 January 1986, p. 3.

In the very week after Ibragimov's dismissal, a similar fate befell another figure who had played a leading role in initiating the purges associated with the 'Uzbek cotton affairs'. On 7 January, the second secretary of the CPUz – Timofei Nikolaevich Osetrov¹⁰ – was replaced by Vladimir Petrovich Anishchev.¹¹ This was quite a strange dismissal: despite Osetrov was appointed in June 1983, he was considered an honest face of the late Rashidovism, acting in the republic as an effective 'Moscow watchdog.' Then on 8 January, a buro meeting revealed that the former first deputy prosecutor of the UzSSR has also been expelled from the party because he had poorly evaluated the case of a former deputy director of the CC CPUz commission (R. Dylmuratov). For this fact, the members of the SS UzSSR S. Usmanov, V. Mamadzhonov, Kh. Atakusiyev were also sanctioned.¹² Therefore, within a week, some of those key protagonists that could be considered the initiators of the 'Uzbek cotton affair' were purged by the system that they had created.

¹⁰ The dismissal of the experienced Osetrov followed the 'classic' course seen throughout the cotton affairs. Osetrov had been accused of bribery, dismissed from political posts, arrested on 13 December 1986, and kept in the special facility n° 4 of the MVD USSR in Moscow. The FS Bukhara obkom, Abduvakhid Karimov, testified to his bribery and even Yuri Churbanov stated he had received from him a bribe of 25 thousand rubles. Osetrov denied these accusations in all his 14 confrontations with investigators. In May 1987, he was accused of having overseen some 52 bribes totaling 1,002,298 rubles. On 30 May 1989, Osetrov was released from custody and the case was dismissed. The prokuratura USSR then offered him a formal apology, restored his membership in the party and confirmed a pension for him. See his personal file in www.centrasia.ru and Viktor Ivanovich Ilyukhin, *Vozhdi i Oborotni. Prervannoye Rassledovaniye* (Moskva: Paleya, 1994); Viktor Ivanovich Ilyukhin, *Oborotni: Kak Bylo Nadumano "Uzbekskoe" Delo* (Tashkent: Uzbekiston, 1993).

¹¹ Vladimir Petrovich Anishchev (born in Voronezh, 24 July 1935), graduated from the Voronezh Aviation College (1954), the Mechanical Department of the Voronezh Institute of Civil Engineering (1970), and from the Academy of Social Sciences under the CC CPSU (1978). In 1961 he was the FS Levoberezhni Komsomol raikom, rose to the post of deputy head of the raikom in 1972, and in 1974 became FS of the Leninski raikom. In 1978 he chaired the Voronezh gorispolkom and in 1979 became the FS Voronezh gorkom. In 1980 he was appointed as deputy of the SS RSFSR. In March 1985 he was appointed inspector of the CC CPSU and in January 1986 he became the second secretary of the CPUz until 1989, when he came back to Russia and became the chairman of the PCC RSFSR. After his dismissal, Anatoly Stepanovich Efimov, became the second secretary of the CC CPUz. Anishchev, *Vostochnyi Ornament*.

¹² Prot. 142/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2304, l. 20.

The desultory state of the Uzbek economy was revealed the next day. On 9 January 1986, during the CPUz plenum, Usmankhodzhaev gave a speech stating that just 5.38 million tons of raw cotton had been collected in 1985.¹³ Despite some weakly positive results, seven oblasts and half of the raions and kolkhozes had not realized the plan.¹⁴ For these evident failures, the FS blamed the organs, citing inefficient application of the plan's indicated discipline. Summing up the situation, he noted:

Was there any possibility to realize the investment plan for 1985? Yes, if the party, soviet organs and kolkhozes, directors, and specialists of kolkhozes had followed the FYP discipline[!]¹⁵

Then, the FS CPUz also provided evidence of many defects in the livestock breeding system¹⁶ and exclaimed: "The point that we have now reached is simply unacceptable."¹⁷ Finally, he gave the word to the representative of Moscow, the newly appointed second secretary CPUz. On that occasion, Anishchev gave a long speech recalling the commitments made in the XVI plenum and invited those people who betrayed the trust of honest people and acted against the moral integrity of the party to resign.¹⁸ Then, he blamed some compromised figures who had been effectively recycled into other positions of power and were thus not actually punished. Thus, he finally

¹³ These figures were much lower than the over 6 million tons that had been announced with great fanfare just five years before. However, Leslie Dienes suggests that this reduction might not reflect a decrease in productivity at all, but simply an increase in the honesty of the official reports. Despite the simplicity of this statement, it does – at least in part – appear plausible. In actual fact, a number of articles emerging after 1987 actually claim that, despite the great investments made, Uzbek cotton production basically did not grow after 1969. Leslie Dienes, *Soviet Asia: Economic Development and National Policy Choices* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 143; Boris Z. Rumer, "Central Asia's Cotton Economy and Its Costs," in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 71.

¹⁴ Although these figures fell well short of the promises given previously, he recalled how the oblasts of Ferghana, Namangan, Tashkent, Syrdarya, Andijan, and Surkhandarya – as well as 66 raions, 664 kolkhozes and sovkhoses, and more than 16,000 brigades – had nevertheless done their job and that the quality of the cotton had increased. However, he reported that in the republic still 152 companies were in productive deficit, while the agro-alimentary industry's productivity had not increased. Prot. 21/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2298, l. 6.

¹⁵ Prot. 21/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2298, l. 9.

¹⁶ Prot. 21/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2298, l. 10.

¹⁷ Prot. 21/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2298, l. 13.

¹⁸ Prot. 21/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2298, l. 41.

proposed the expulsion of prominent personalities in the party¹⁹ and gave some practical examples of scandals and purges within the CC CPUz that had been implemented in the previous months.²⁰ His report highlighted the

¹⁹ "I.I. Golovachev, second secretary of the Kashkadarya obkom, who has violated the rules of life of the party and its principles, [...] promoting many prominent people of the oblast who are now on trial. These people were chosen on the basis of patronage and servility and protection prospered in the oblast [...]. In the kolkhozes of the oblast many cases of falsified data and corruption had been recorded. Golovachev knew everything but did nothing, nor was he honest. In March 1984 he was relieved from his post. [...] I. Achilov, former director of the sovkhos "50" in the Nishan rayon [was dealt with similarly]. Between 1975-1984, he was the FS Karshi raikom and violated the rules of party life, did not listen to the opinion of the buro, was conciliatory towards those important people who were guilty of fraud to the government. [Finally, he was] arrogant [with his subordinates], forcing them to write false data on grain production, and exceed by a factor of two the actual volumes produced. [Substantially] only 40% of the milk plan was effectively achieved [...] these anti-government activities in 1983 led the kolkhozes and sovkhos of the raion to be in deficit for 700 thousand rubles. Also K.B. Mamedov, who was the FS Chinaz raikom, indulged in falsified data in agricultural production. [Furthermore, under his responsibility] the practice of blank receipts, corruption and theft of government resources in very high numbers prospered. For these crimes, on 5 December 1985, he was relieved of his duties. [...] Also S. Marasulov, FS Kirov raikom, stacked the receipts and protected his son who had killed a child of three years old in a car accident. He was finally removed on 26 September 1985. D.V. Bobokulov, FS Alat raikom, cheated the productive data on production and made errors in choosing cadres. P. Kurbanov, FS Nishan raikom, in 1983 falsified cotton production data, increasing the harvest data artificially, recording losses of almost 3 million rubles, and embezzling public funds. On January 1985 he was fired." Prot. 21/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2298, ll. 42-44.

²⁰ "in the Namangan oblast disappeared 3.5 million rubles, and there were many violations of socialist law as corruption, forgery and even in the judicial organs - as Rakhimov, director of the Justice Department of the oblast - in the courts' staff and in the college of lawyers. For these facts, were fired and expelled from the party 70% of members of raions' and cities' judicial cadres. [As well,] Atakulov, member of the CC CPUz, was dismissed on 18 December 1985, as well as U. Asatov was fired 22 November 1985 because he systematically received bribes and embezzled public funds. [...] Also R. Makhmanov member of the CC CPUz and FS Khatyrchi raikom lost the sense of responsibility for his district, falsifying data and implementing frauds for 10,000 tons of cotton in three years, leading to misappropriation of public funds. He was expelled on 27 December 1985. A. Primov, in 1977-1984 was the FS Ellikkali raikom and violated rules, discipline and the moral of the party and state, abusing his power and stealing 80,000 rubles. Tursunmurat Umarov, manager of the CC CPUz general affairs, received bribes and had covered up a number of cases, protecting the

systematic dimension of the ‘negative phenomena’, implicating party officials at the highest levels in the widespread malfeasance. Apparently, this statement created a sense of bewilderment among the leading establishment – and for Usmankhodzhaev personally – who stood publicly accused of having not done enough to eradicate malfeasance in the republic. In turn, the FS CPUz seemed to blame the ministerial bodies and the local parties, in which in the meantime a parallel purge persisted at all administrative levels.

Indeed, on the eve of 1986, entire regional leaderships and ministries were being reshuffled. During the XXII Samarkand obkom conference, for example, the previous leading group was dismissed and a new FS – Rashid S. Ashuralyev – and a new second secretary – Yu. S. Fasil'yev – were elected. Additionally, the other obkom secretaries were replaced.²¹ Then, on 13 January 1986, Kh. R. Kujbakarov became the new minister of bread products and T. Shayakubov the new minister of geology while the FS Navoi obkom, Vasili Pavlovich Esin – who had been in power since the foundation of the oblast (and the obkom) in 1982 – was replaced by the former FS Vyborg gorkom Anatolii Stepanovich Efimov.²²

Soon enough, another political earthquake would hit another longstanding figure: Mad'yar Khudaibergenovich Khudaibergenov, the FS Khorezm obkom since 1968. Already in the aftermath of Rashidov's death, the very powerful ‘Khan of Khiva’ was under a hailstorm of perfectly crafted

FS Bukhara obkom A. Karimov, the general manager of the agro-industrial complex Odilov and other managers of law enforcement. On 26 October 1985, he was expelled from the party. [Also] M.G. Khvan, director of the kolkhoz “Politotdel”, in 1983 he falsified the data for 400 tons of cotton obtaining bribes and giving in return to those workers who had falsified the data a sum of 70,000 rubles. In turn he bought a car with the money of the employees of the kolkhoz. On 16 December, he was expelled from the party. [For similar stories], N. Khikmatov, FS Kyzyltep raikom was expelled on 27 December 1985.” Prot. 21/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2298, ll. 48, 53-56.

²¹ PV, 20983, 10, 12 January 1986, p. 2.

²² The Leningrader Efimov formally kept the post of FS Navoi obkom until September 1989 when the oblast and the obkom were integrated into their Samarkand counterparts. Then, he was appointed as chairman of PCC UzSSR and in June 1989 he became the second secretary CPUz, a deputy of CPDSU and member of CC CPSU in 1990. It is interesting to note how the Navoi oblast, far from agricultural issues and central for strategic production items, such as uranium, gold and copper mining, was directly ruled by non-natives.

donos letters.²³ At that time, the CC CPSU opened a political case and took evidence from the second secretary CC CPUz, T.N. Osetrov, who said that the slanders had not been confirmed.²⁴ However, the investigative group headed by Gdlyan worked on this case, and was able to collect evidence against Khudaibergenov²⁵ - and his malfeasance with Rashidov²⁶ - pushing for his removal. Finally, on 13 January 1986, the FS Khorezm was replaced by Mirakhmat Mirkhadzhievich Mikrasymov, the former FS Almayk gorkom. As

²³ A group of 'party veterans' wrote an anonymous letter in January 1984 denouncing the situation in Khorezm where Rashidov spent the last days of his life and where there was an evident "rise in the number of millionaires and of real Khans and landlords." The group essentially suggested that the FS Khorezm obkom Mad'yar Khudaibergenov was responsible for this. Under his example corruption mushroomed. Falsifications, fraud and the appointment of people close to him in positions of upper management – such as the FSs raikoms, of the UVD, of the trading depots, and of the cotton cleaning factories – were the principal charges. All these figures had worked together with him for at least 15-20 years. Every year these people had been giving valuable items, such as diamonds and kilograms of gold – and yet "this had not been not enough for him. [...Khudaibergenov] was responsible for other immoral actions typical of capitalist societies". In this framework, the director of a cotton cleaning factory became the director of the kolkhoz 'Akhumbabaiev' and his son a secretary of the oblast's Komsomol. These posts had been bought from Khudaibergenov for 50,000 rubles each as well as other posts in the management of cotton cleaning factories in Khorezm oblast where every year 100,000 tons of non-existent cotton were realized on paper. Then, the letter reported that every year the FS Khorezm obkom received 100,000 rubles from the FS of each raikom, 50,000 from the director of every cotton cleaning factory, 25,000 from each top manager in housing and trade, and from each director of the kolkhozes. The letter ends by stating: "The person responsible for these actions should be shot!" RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, ll. 31-32.

²⁴ In the aftermath of these *donos*, the Khorezm obkom had taken measure, and in 1983 alone expelled from the CPSU 35 workers, 12 managers and 248 citizens condemned for theft and speculation, 359 workers were investigated under suspicion of wrongdoing, of whom 22 were fired from their posts. RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, ll. 33-34. Then, on 25 February 1984 the CC CPUz commented that party controls had not revealed the negative phenomena indicated in the *donos*. As well, neither the KGB or the MVD found any evidence, describing Khudaibergenov as a devoted socialist worker. RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, ll. 35-37.

²⁵ Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan and Nikolai Veniaminovich Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo* (Moskva: Gramota, 1996).

²⁶ Khudaibergenov admitted that he was personally gave bribes to Rashidov: something around 1 million rubles in money and half million in gold and jewels. According to Nikolai Ivanov, he was the only real repent of his sins. Nashe Kino, *Kremlevskie Pokhorony. Sharaf Rashidov* (Russia: NTV, 2008).

well, in the same day also the FS Syrdarya obkom, V.A. Antonov, was substituted by Aleksandr Fedorovich Klepikov, another Russian ethnic who was already the second secretary of the obkom. In turn, Antonov was promoted to the CC CPUz.²⁷

The first two weeks of the year thus started with a massive power reshuffle that even included the second secretaries of the obkoms.²⁸ Parallel to the purges, it is interesting to note how the party also changed its narrative related to cotton. After decades of triumphalism surrounding the raw cotton crop, there was a revolutionary change. As we have observed in the previous chapter, the USSR budget started to finance cotton on the base of the qualitative production – namely, in terms of fiber produced. Therefore, the CPUz renovated its commitments to get an annual production of 1.8-1.93 million tons of cotton fiber by 1990, without mentioning the raw production.²⁹

Then, during a CPUz aktiv meeting (22 January 1986), Usmankhodzhaev tried to justify the objectives that the party had accomplished in the previous few months. On that occasion, he stated that effectively in the XVI plenum CC CPUz of June 1984 had been found violations of the standards of party life and were called measures to root out protectionism, corruption, forgery and fraud. All this was simply the beginning of great and difficult work that aimed to prove the Leninist work style of the CPUz.³⁰ Then, the FS CPUz reported that each year in the republic 500,000 tons of raw cotton had been falsified³¹ and this huge falsification happened only as a result of the intense pressure in the '70s to meet the increased demand for cotton production. Moreover, the

²⁷ PV, 20984, 11, 14 January 1986, p. 1.

²⁸ B.A. Allamuradov became the second secretary of Syrdarya - while the other secretaries were S.D. Davlyatov, A.A. Azimbyekov, and Yu.Yu. Yuldashev. In Khorezm, Yu.P. Gudkov was appointed second secretary while E.A. Rakhmanov, G.N. Masharipov, and Z.A. Batyrov were promoted to the obkom secretariat. In Bukhara obkom, the second secretary became Yu.B. Kurochkin while S. Bakhranov, A.A. Isakov, and V.G. Razmaev were promoted to the Bukharan secretariat. In Navoi obkom, D.M. Dzhaniybekov became the second secretary and V.A. Kovalenko, Yu.S. Saidzhanov, Ya. Sultanov were promoted to the secretariat. Then, during the XXII Tashkent obkom conference (18 January 1986) S.M. Nesterenko was appointed as second secretary, and to the secretariat Sh.Z. Kamalkhodzhaev, V.G. Gordyenko and S.D. Sajdaliev. PV, 20989, 16, 19 January 1986, pp. 1-2.

²⁹ PV, 20985, 12, 15 January 1986, p. 2.

³⁰ Prot. 22/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2299, l. 5.

³¹ Prot. 22/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2299, l. 6.

adopted strategy had been to increase the size of cotton fields at the expense of food agriculture.³² Then, Usmanhodzhaev invited the SM UzSSR to improve the style and methods of the resources management.³³ At the same time, he recalled the results of the party cadres' reshuffles, noting that in the preceding two years, 62% of employees of the nomenklatura of the CPSU had been changed as well as 45% of the CPUz staff, underlining the minor but effective commitments of the republican establishment.³⁴ Then, at the end of his long speech, Usmanhodzhaev also affirmed his personal commitments saying that when he was at the head of the control committee, a case related to the CC CPUz member Atakulov had been discovered.³⁵

The Uzbek leader wanted to demonstrate his commitment and good will in combating the negative phenomena. Perhaps this approach was enforced because he also felt threatened by suspicions that he himself had inflamed in the previous months. In the meanwhile, other scandals emerged in the press, narrating in great detail the levels of malfeasance. However, this was functional to prepare the public opinion to accept cadres reshuffle.³⁶

5.1.2 A weighty absence at the congresses

In these first months of Gorbachev's leadership, Moscow's anticorruption campaign intensified, leaving the FS CPUz with little other choice than to obey dutifully. The failures in agriculture and the constant scandals that drew considerable public attention certainly undermined Usmanhodzhaev's credibility as a leader with an effective strategy. At the same time, the *sekretar nol'* wanted to shift the focus of responsibility and argue that circumstances were simply the result of Moscow's hard line. Basically, he wanted to affirm the necessity of these measures in a moment of emergency.

³² Prot. 22/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2299, l. 7.

³³ Prot. 22/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2299, l. 10.

³⁴ Prot. 22/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2299, l. 15.

³⁵ Prot. 22/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2299, l. 32.

³⁶ For example, the story of A. Saitkulov, director of the sovkhos "Timoshenko", got wide traction. Saitkulov had not fulfilled the plan and had also bought false vouchers from the textile factory where he was supposed to deliver raw cotton. PV, 20993, 20, 24 January 1986, p. 3. Other scandals narrated in the press were related to the housing and construction sectors and this was probably designed, at least in part, to prepare public opinion for another reshuffle. Not coincidentally, on 24 January A.G. Manannikov became the new minister for construction of the UzSSR. PV, 20994, 21, 25 January 1986, p. 1.

To justify the persistent negative phenomena and the heavy unpopular measures to contrast them, Usmanhodzhaev elaborated a strategy aimed at finding someone who to blame and to whom upload the responsibilities for the republic's recent failures. Someone who could not reply.

This attitude emerged during the most important political event of the Uzbek cotton affair season. Between 30 January-1 February 1986 was held the XXI Congress of CPUz that would further fluster the republican political scenario. The previous congress had been held in 1981 when both Rashidov and Brezhnev were still alive. Just five years later, the situation had shifted dramatically in Uzbekistan and the CPUz took a stance openly rejecting its inconvenient past and the legacy that Rashidov had bequeathed to the republic. Indeed, explicit criticism of Rashidov – who emerged as the scapegoat for the whole Uzbek cotton affair – became diffuse. In an astounding move, Usmanhodzhaev's opening speech³⁷ to the Congress contradicted in painstaking detail almost every aspect of the glowing eulogy he had delivered just two years before at Rashidov's funeral. Then, after recalling Gorbachev's words at the April 1985 plenum,³⁸ the FS CPUz presented a detailed explanation of the still negative situation in the republic, as follows:

In the CC CPUz, in the obkoms, in gorkoms, and in raikoms, the former FS CPUz Rashidov Sh. had imposed a vicious work style, solemnity, and self-glorification. He, additionally, ignored criticism and self-criticism, showed a loss of modesty – and, in some cases, of sheer decency – and diverted from the personality of the party. All this has caused intrigue, formalism, indifference, abuse of power, theft, and fraud.³⁹ The cadres, of course, were not chosen for their moral, organizational, and political qualities but were selected for family relations, zemlyachestvo, personal loyalty and on the basis of whatever quid pro quo they could provide. The control of the managers was weakened and in some places – especially in Karakalpak ASSR and the oblast of Bukhara and Kashkadarya – was simply non-existent. Some of these leaders were protected from controls and possible criticism and were self-celebratory. These figures who took bribes and stole public money – the traitors of the

³⁷ Inamzhon Buzrukovich Usmanhodzhayev, *Otchetnyy Doklad Tsentral'nogo Komiteta Kompartii Uzbekistana XXI S'yezdu Kommunisticheskoy Partii Uzbekistana, 30 Yanv. 1986 G.* (Tashkent: Uzbekistan, 1986).

³⁸ Graeme Gill and Roderic Pitty, *Power in the Party. The Organization of Power and Central-Republican Relations in the CPSU* (Houndmills & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 75.

³⁹ Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, l. 20.

party – in these conditions were at ease. [This situation] allowed the falsification of facts – deliberate fraud against the central organs – in order to receive prizes and awards. Rashidov protected persons such as Yakh'yayev and Odilov – who were state criminals – and at the same time pursued the honest communists who wanted to catch the offenders and speak the truth. All this has caused great damage to the education of cadres, revealing corruption and protectionism, and triggering the psychology of private property and the accumulation of agricultural goods. Some of the powerful workers diverted on the way of decomposition and moral degeneration. And these persons were members of the buro and secretariats of particular obkoms, workers of the CC, ministers and oblistpolkoms, managers of the city and raion departments and also economic cadres. This dark fraud was hidden by these figures, who masked their maleficence with the façade of the innovative and dynamic workers. From the tribunes, they uttered the right words, claiming to fight against defects. Of course, they could not go back for the progress of the republic. We have to acknowledge that their influence had hurt the life of the party organs, of the Soviet government, and of the economic organs. The communists and the workers accused the CC buro because it was not effectively combatting these antiparty activities. Although this whole situation is difficult, these reproaches are fair and reasonable. Really, you must believe me and the comrades A. U. Salimov, G. Kh. Kadyrov, R. Kh. Abdullaeva, V. K. Mikhailov, who say that all those who today are members of the buro, and even at that time were in jobs as managers and worked in the environment of Rashidov, we were, one might say, under the hypnotic spell of his personality and could not go against his will. We did not have enough civil courage and party principles [to rebel against him]. All of this was the breeding ground for abuse and serious violation.⁴⁰

Usmankhodzhaev, who had sat with Rashidov within the buro CC CPUz since 1978, was effectively minimizing his own responsibility and declaring his total weakness and ignorance – even arguing that he was under hypnosis (!) – about what was going on. Then, in an attempt to exculpate himself, he recalled the above mentioned idea of the ‘emergency situation’:

Today is not easy to talk about this topic. Perhaps for someone such assessments and conclusions seem very strong and sharp. But we have to report everything to the congress, because – while not completely unaware of the stratification of the past – we cannot go forward. I must admit that the CC CPUz had the courage and the strength to reveal the true state of affairs in the republic. Only after the intervention and support of the CC CPSU, was it possible to reveal everything. At the XVI plenum CC CPUz held in June 1984, the clear errors and obvious failures in the management of the economy and

⁴⁰ Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, l. 21.

of the social sphere had been criticized, as had the serious violations in the activity of the party, in the soviet, state and agricultural organs, and in the public organizations of the republic. And the hard work that took place after the plenum showed that the possible abuse and perversion had spread on a large scale. The fight against these things must be acute and without compromise, as is the Bolshevik way. That is why the secretariat and the buro of the CC CPUz were forced to take emergency measures to clean up the party, and the soviet and state organs from compromised individuals, and to strengthen all areas from top to bottom and enhance [the work of the] honest and faithful party workers.⁴¹

Then, the FS CPUz thanked the CC CPSU for its help and support in cleaning the republic up and in forging new class of honest cadres:

The CC CPSU is providing us with a vast and internationalist package of assistance, sending the party workers and Soviet workers from the apparatus of the central organs and other regions of the country [to enforce] the permanent work in the republic. They brought a new approach in the activities of the CPUz and contributed the experience of the great party organizations. [Because of this] we were able – to some extent – to change the moral and psychological situation in the republic, to strengthen party and state discipline, and to bolster all the vigorous forces for the fight against falsification, theft, bribes, and other abuses.⁴²

Pointedly, Usmankhodzhaev called for greater effort against the ‘negative phenomena’ in order to heal the republic from malfeasance.

But evaluating in a sober and real way the situation in the light of modern party needs, we are well aware that what has been recently implemented, should be regarded as a clear set of emergency measures for the liquidation of the obvious failures and the serious violations. Negative phenomena have simply gone too far and we should make a great effort and persevere in our resistance to correct the situation. For a year and a half, the republican CC has struggled to remedy the situation and to restore the Leninist style of work within the party leadership.⁴³

Then, in order to justify the persistent failures, Usmankhodzhaev also admitted strategic errors in the months prior to the speech and drew attention to the role of perestroika as the key to resolve the republic’s problems:

⁴¹ Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, l. 22.

⁴² Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, l. 22.

⁴³ Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, l. 22.

However, it is necessary to admit that many of our cadres under the new [party] conditions have been ready for perestroika, which was pursued by the party [meanwhile] the defects discovered in some places had been liquidated in a blundering, timid, and cautious way by the authorities in the past. In this hard task, some issues remain unresolved and negative consequences persist.⁴⁴

Then, referring to the Uzbek situation, he cited one of the last of Lenin's articles "Better Fewer, But Better"⁴⁵ to suggest that,

the party must not inflate success and exaggerate the importance of what has been done [...] The committees, party organizations, and the management of agriculture will have to undertake more strongly the social processes and to create the dynamic sweeping away of the past that prevents us from moving forward.⁴⁶

Thus, Usmankhodzhaev moved on to discuss economic issues, announcing the results of the eleventh FYP⁴⁷ and the tasks to 'accelerate' the socio-economic development of the republic – or what, in Gorbachevian terms, was being called *uskoreniye*. However, despite he denounced the many defects in the cotton sector,⁴⁸ he reconditioned the previous 'Rashidovian-like' commitments for cotton, setting for the twelfth FYP an annual production of

⁴⁴ Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, l. 23.

⁴⁵ Vladimir Ilich Lenin, "Better Fewer, But Better," in *Lenin's Collected Works. Vol. 33* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 487–502.

⁴⁶ Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, l. 23.

⁴⁷ Announcing the economic results in the last FYP, the FS CPUz evidenced how the growth of gross domestic product was 19%, the national income increased by 23% and reached 21 billion rubles and the volume of industrial production increased by 26%. Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, l. 24. For the twelfth FYP (1986-1990) he announced the goal of increasing the gross national income by +20%, industrial production by +24-27%, and average annual gross agricultural production by +14-16%. Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, l. 25. He followed this with criticism of the local party organizations and particularly those of some oblasts – such as the Samarkand one – which were producing serious inefficiencies and "where the local obkom [wa]s negligent." Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, l. 29.

⁴⁸ The FS CPUz affirmed that cotton growers were good and worked well. However, they still could not reach the commitments made for selling the cotton to the state under the five-year plan. Then, Usmankhodzhaev affirmed that in the previous harvest season alone (1985), 11,000 brigades and half of raions and kolkhozes had not realized the plan. At the same time, he was able to report that 7,500 brigades, 320 kolkhozes and sovkhoses, and 22 raions had realized the cotton plan before 1 November 1985. Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, ll. 32-33.

5.8/6 million tons of raw cotton and to produce 1.8/1.93 million tons of fibers.⁴⁹ The tone of these promises was significantly less triumphal and were presented as mandatory obligations. Usmankhodzhaev recalled how the whole CPUz – some 640,000 members⁵⁰ – was devoted to this duty.

Then, Salimov – the chairman of the Presidium of the SS UzSSR – intervened, denouncing almost all of the FSs of the Kashkadarya and Bukhara local committees, the ministers (and most of the deputy ministers) both of internal affairs or related to the cotton industry, as well as any other leaders he viewed as corrupt and mired in fraud and abuse. According to the Uzbek head of state, certain figures were totally ‘unsuspected’ and it was difficult to detect their guilt because they had very powerful protectors. For example, he recalled the cases of Gaipov, Karimov, Yakh'yayev, and Odilov. Then even Salimov directly referred to the former FS CPUz, stating: “The phenomena that Rashidov fostered must be uprooted and finally they must not appear anywhere anymore.”⁵¹ In this critical posture, the FS Namangan obkom, Radzhabov, also commented on another legacy of the former leadership – the tragic child labor in cotton fields that we have already mentioned in the second chapter. This was, of course, a fact that everybody knew in the republic and that no one could denounce.⁵²

⁴⁹ Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, l. 34.

⁵⁰ Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, l. 56.

⁵¹ Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, l. 89.

⁵² Radzhabov defined this phenomenon as a “strong moral injury and even physical harm to children who are [supposed to be focused on] studying and who are [instead] involved in cotton harvesting.” Considering the size of the phenomena, Radzhabov was touching on a very sensitive issue that embarrassed the whole party. In 1986 a resolution of the CC CPUz forbidding the use of students in the cotton harvest was approved. PV, 21461, 193, 22 August 1987, p. 1. However, despite official prohibitions, child labor seemed to be not merely tolerated by the party, but to a significant extent even institutionalized as a last resort to achieve the harvest at any cost. Finally, it seemed that the best the party could do would be to limit its social effects: “in the last year was decided to involve children for no longer than a month, but not everybody follow this rule.” (Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, l. 100). However, in summer 1986 many cases were reported of children in summer camps and those aged 13 to 16 years being engaged in the brigades to work with adults harvesting cotton for 7 to 10 hours a day. PV, 21271, 3, 4 January 1987, p. 2. Tragically, the problem of child labor was never resolved in any meaningful way, and in fact continued to recur through subsequent decades.

At the congress, criticism arrived also from the other regional leaders.⁵³ Then, also A.V. Buturlin, the chairman of the prokuratura UzSSR, outlined the scope of the investigations, declaring:

during the last six years, data on cotton has been massively falsified, [...] and the state has paid 2.866 billion rubles for cotton that was never produced. [...] Moreover, even 1.178 billion rubles worth of workers' salaries has been recorded but never paid to workers themselves [...For these facts,] about 2500 people and almost the entire management of the MCC UzSSR has been sentenced.⁵⁴

For all the above mentioned defects in the republic, the party congress confirmed Rashidov as the main culprit:

because of Sh. Rashidov, in the Party committees at all levels of management of social and economic development there was a vicious work style, criticism was ignored and there was no self-criticism, and the serious deviations from norms of the party life, social justice and Soviet law were not evaluated. [...] There was [personalism and] violations of the collegiality and of the Leninist principles. The control over the managers' activities has been weakened all over, but especially in some places like Karakalpakstan.⁵⁵ [...] the members of the buro, of the CC, obkoms, gorkoms and raikoms had not always taken a stand against the deviations from the principles of the CPSU charter.⁵⁶

Rashidov was identified as a scapegoat to wash the party conscience and to redeem the sins of a seemingly ineffective leadership. At the end of the congress, the group of the party aktiv demanded that the CC CPSU continue the practice of sending the workers of the central apparatus of the party organizations from RSFSR and other republics to Uzbekistan in order to "enforce an effective management base." Then the congress ended with a directive that ordered a Soviet version of the Latin *damnatio memoriae* to continue in relation to the former FS CPUz:

⁵³ The FS of the Karakalpak obkom, Salykov, admitted that "in the past years the Karakalpak ASSR was falsifying cotton data for about 10% of the Uzbek production and just in 1982-1983 no less than 21 million rubles ended up in someone else's pockets in the form of bribes. Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, l. 114. Also Aripdzhanov, the FS Andijan obkom, stated that 29 directors of kolkhozes and sovkhozes had been ousted from their posts for corruption, and that 29 directors of kolkhozes and sovkhozes and several executives of enterprises had been replaced for the same reason. Prot. T2/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2297, l. 20.

⁵⁴ Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, l. 173.

⁵⁵ Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, l. 215.

⁵⁶ Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, l. 216.

Judging the vicious style and methods of the leadership of the former FS CPUz Sh. Rashidov that have achieved the appearance and spread of many serious shortcomings and negative phenomena, the Congress instructs the CC CPUz to reconsider the perpetuation of the memory of Sh. Rashidov.⁵⁷

According to Allworth, the denigration of the defunct leader and the purge against his establishment had the unintentional but serious consequence of hurting “Uzbekness” and the “Uzbek national self-image”⁵⁸ it would surely exacerbate the 'imperial disaffection' of a part of those cadres that for a quarter of a century had contributed to the cause of the former leader. Nevertheless, the most evident effect of the de-Rashidovization program was in the composition of the republican central committee. Indeed, the new CC CPUz led to an almost complete turnover of the ruling UzSSR elite. In fact, until that moment, 40 of 65 obkom secretaries – including 10 of 13 FSs – and over 260 gorkom and raikom secretaries had been replaced, while a third of the chairmen of the gorisplokoms and raispolkoms faced criminal charges. Only 34 of 177 members of the CC CPUz elected in 1981 were reconfirmed in the 1986 congress, while 76 of the 85 candidates were not reelected, inverting a reconfirmation trend that had been positive in the previous congresses.⁵⁹ Of the 1981 buro only 2 members – Usmankhodzhaev and Salimov – survived after 1986 while “all of the previous buro's candidate members disappeared.”⁶⁰ Similarly, three quarters of gorkom and raikom officials changed from the 1981 to the 1986 congress.⁶¹ However, this reshuffle within the UzSSR was not a merely Uzbek prerogative. As Graziosi evidenced, this ‘generational change’ in the UzSSR was in line with overall Soviet policy where – especially after the XXVII Congress CPSU – just a half of

⁵⁷ Prot. T1/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2296, l. 218.

⁵⁸ Edward A. Allworth, *The Modern Uzbeks: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present: A Cultural History* (Stanford: Hoover Press, 1990), 312.

⁵⁹ "By comparison in 1981 two-thirds of the candidate members from 1976 were reelected. Every Secretary of the Central Committee was replaced between 1981 and 1986, some more than once." Staples, "Soviet Use of Corruption Purges as a Control Mechanism: The Uzbekistan Case," 34.

⁶⁰ Donald S. Carlisle, "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev," in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation*, ed. William Fierman (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 115.

⁶¹ James Critchlow, "Prelude to 'Independence': How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow's Grip on Elite Recruitment," in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation*, ed. W Fierman (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 136.

cadres that had were effective in 1980 kept their posts.⁶² Another interesting consequence of the XXI congress is evinced in the composition of the new buro. In fact, it was more 'russified' considering that the number of non-native central appointees jumped from five (1981) to eight (1986).⁶³ Similar consequences were in evidence in the CC CPUz secretariat and its departments.⁶⁴ In the immediate aftermath of the XXI CPUz congress, there were reshuffles also in the state management.⁶⁵ Events in these first two months of 1986 were just the primary signs of what would emerge as probably the toughest year for the republican elite during the Uzbek cotton affair.

Another wave of de-Rashidovization purges was then implemented after the most important event in the Soviet political system of 1986. During the XXVII CPSU Congress (25 February - 6 March 1986), Gorbachev called for radical economic reforms and endorsed a new campaign to reassert control over recruitment and promotion of cadres. In the Gensek's view, perestroika,

⁶² Andrea Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), 518.

⁶³ Donald S. Carlisle, "The Uzbek Power Elite: Politburo and Secretariat (1938–83)," *Central Asian Survey* 5, no. 3–4 (1986).

⁶⁴ The only people to keep their posts were the native K. Tairov - at the head of the general department - as well as the two non-natives V.I. Suskin - head of the Water Department - and S.A. Asriyants who led the agricultural machine construction department in 1981 and now was in charge of the heavy industry and machine construction. In parallel, two Uzbeks heading departments in 1981 were promoted. Kadyrov (chairman of SM UzSSR) and A.S. Ikramov became full secretaries. Additionally, the two Russians who headed the organizational party work and the administrative organs department (V.V. Okunskiy and G.V. Arkhangelskiy, respectively) were replaced by P.V. Dogonkin (who also became a buro member) and D.A. Usatov. Carlisle, "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev."

⁶⁵ Indeed, on 4 February M.S. Tashpulatov become the new minister for energy and A.A. Azimbekov the minister of automobile transport. PV, 21004, 31, 5 February 1986, p. 1. Similarly, on 12 February, K.A. Akhmetov became a member of the state committee of the UzSSR on price regulation while the prominent technocrat Islam Abduganiyevich Karimov – former minister of finance and director of the republican Gosplan – became the new deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR. PV, 21011, 38, 13 February 1986, p. 1. As well, on 20 February 20, K. Kh. Makhamadalev became deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR and V.I. Antonov become the deputy chairman of the agro-industrial committee. PV, 21017, 44, 21 February 1986, p. 1.

the 'reconstructing revolution' could only occur with a more effective ruling elite.⁶⁶

Gorbachev was openly calling for a revitalization of the system and condemned:

Brezhnev's laxity in dealing with subordinates, his tendency to leave officials in place even after they had gotten too old or demonstrated their incapacity for their jobs [...Moreover,] his complacency in the face of nepotism and corruption had contributed to a serious erosion of the center's power vis-a-vis the major party and government bureaucracies.⁶⁷

In their speeches, both Gorbachev and Ligachev cited corruption in the Central Asian republics, confirming the Andropovian commitment to fight corruption and alcoholism all around the country. This attitude would have its peak with the participation of Ligachev who, especially at this very moment, carried on the cleansing of the nomenklatura. Finally, the Gensek's speech directly recalled the situation in Uzbekistan, stating:

Perhaps in their most glaring form, negative processes stemming from an absence of criticism and self-criticism manifested themselves in Uzbekistan. Having lost touch with life, the republic's former top leadership made it a rule to speak only of successes, paper over shortcomings, and respond irritably to any criticism. In the republican Party organization discipline slackened, and persons for whom the sole principle was lack of principles, their own well-being, and careerist considerations were in favor. Toadyism and unbridled laudation of those "senior in rank" became wide-spread. All this could not but affect the state of affairs. The situation in the economy and in the social sphere deteriorated markedly, machinations, embezzlement, and bribery thrived, and socialist legality was grossly transgressed. It required intervention by the CPSU Central Committee to normalize the situation. The republic was given all sided assistance. Many sectors of Party, governmental, and economic

⁶⁶ A CIA report suggested: "One of the congress's most important results was its authoritative condemnation of the laissez-faire leadership of the Brezhnev era and the articulation of new, more exacting standards for party and government bureaucrats. [In fact,] Without mentioning names, the congress attacked Brezhnev's "irresponsibility, failure to be exacting, and inertia," and damned the failings of top leaders in Moscow, Uzbekistan, and Kirgiziya for the growth of corruption and nepotism. The congress called for continued replenishing of the party with younger cadres and women and for cleansing its ranks of corrupt, inept, or deficient personnel." CIA, "The 27th CPSU Congress: Gorbachev's Unfinished Business SOV 86-10023 - April 1986," 1986, 8.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

work were reinforced with cadres. These measures won the approval and active support of the Communists and the working people of Uzbekistan. There is something else that causes concern. The shortcomings in the republic did not appear overnight, they piled up over the years, growing from small to big. Officials from all-Union bodies, including the Central Committee, went to Uzbekistan on many occasions and they must have noticed what was happening. Working people of the Republic wrote indignant letters to the central bodies about the malpractices. But these signals were not duly investigated.⁶⁸

During the CPSU congress, the FS CPUz Usmankhodzhaev also noted that the “canker of demoralization and degeneracy affected many cadres with the greatest power” and called for a stricter accounting.⁶⁹ Substantially, the Uzbek leader agreed with the criticisms of Uzbekistan made by Gorbachev in his speech, and again blamed the nature of Rashidov's leadership, affirming that a political debate at CC and local level was judging the former leader.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Mikhail Sergevich Gorbachev, *Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Delivered by Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee. February 25, 1986* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1986), 101–2.

⁶⁹ CIA, “The 27th CPSU Congress: Gorbachev’s Unfinished Business SOV 86-10023 - April 1986,” 17; Christian Schmidt-Häuer, *Gorbachev: The Path to Power* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1986); Vladislav Martinovich Zubok, *A Failed Empire. The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Gorbachev, *Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Delivered by Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee. February 25, 1986*; Borys Illich Oliinyk, Valentin Sergeevich Pavlov, and Nikolaï Ivanovich Ryzhkov, *Gorbachev: Anatomiya Predatel'stva* (Moskva: Algoritm, 2013); George W Breslauer, *Gorbachev and Yeltsin as Leaders* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Valery Boldin, *Ten Years That Shook the World: The Gorbachev Era As Witnessed by His Chief of Staff* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Anatoly Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); Mikhail Sergevich Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (London: Doubleday, 1996); Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*.

⁷⁰ Usmankhodzhaev revisited part of his speech at the XXI Congress CPUz, affirming that, because of Rashidov's fault “it was diffused a vicious style that ignored the criticism, losing modesty and in special cases also the decency. [...] From this formalism, the work style, indifference, abuse of power and theft degenerated. This rust has involved those people who had many powers. Of course, the party had a lot of damage, and decreased the [...] attention on the organization of industry and on [...] the production quality [...] while] agriculture production data were inflated. [...] Now] we are

Furthermore, as it was remarked in the congress, also security organs, KBG and its chief Chebrikov were ensured with “greater powers to deal with dissent or corruption.”⁷¹ Therefore, during the first two plenums of the CPSU, under the slogan of uskoreniye, the newly elected leadership advanced a clear campaign to combat formalism, corruption, nepotism, and centralism within the party with every means.⁷² This involved the open criticism of the “corruption rings” evidently thriving within the communist parties of Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Turkmenistan, Moldavia, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan.⁷³ On these occasions, Gorbachev called for an increase in “criticism and self-criticism”, claiming it was as critical “for us as air.”⁷⁴ Furthermore, as we saw in the second chapter, for the twelfth FYP (1986-1990), a plan of acceleration (*uskoreniye*) of technology in the economic production was endorsed. However, as we have seen in the second chapter, many great projects related to irrigation were finally dropped – or postponed indefinitely – arousing the discontent of the Central Asians. The plan’s commitments were thus formalized in a declaration of directives for reforms that, despite the Gorbachev’s enthusiasm, were basically unrealistic and tried to do ‘too much’ at once.⁷⁵ Calls to increase the quality of cotton fiber were heard⁷⁶ and – based on the recommendations of the AN UzSSR – the need to break the

in great debt to the government. The production potential and technical-scientific capacity which was created in Uzbekistan with the help of all peoples of the USSR - and especially the great Russian people – did not [produce the return required]. The party now lives because of our promptness on eradicating these violations and on the results of our work [...] With the support of the CC CPSU, in the republic today we have finally reached a normal and healthy atmosphere for the good work. PV, 21024, 51, 28 February 1986, p. 2.

⁷¹ This attitude was defined by western analysts as a symptom of ‘Neo-Stalinism.’ However, Stalin’s terror remained tied to the historical dimension and incomparable with the Gorbachev’s agenda. It seems more pertinent to define this attempt as a form of Neo-Andropovism (i.e. the restoration of the practice of ‘demonstrative’ action). CIA, “The 27th CPSU Congress: Gorbachev’s Unfinished Business SOV 86-10023 - April 1986,” 18.

⁷² Graeme Gill, *The Collapse of a Single-Party System: The Disintegration of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 17.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁷⁵ Graziosi, *L’Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 515.

⁷⁶ Even Usmankhodzhaev recalled that in 1985 100,000 tons of cotton fiber had been produced more compared to previous years. PV, 21024, 51, 28 February 1986, p. 2.

cotton monoculture in the UzSSR was declared.⁷⁷ The many good intentions of the congress would be, in fact, unexpected and the lack of a clear strategy would be revealed in the poor economic results in subsequent years.

5.1.3 The external moralizers: the *Krasnyi Desant* saga

During the cotton affair story, we have often met the expression *krasnyi desant*, which literally translates as ‘red landing’ or ‘deployment of red paratroopers.’ Figuratively, the expression refers to the ‘descent’ into Uzbekistan of communists from the center who were deployed in order to enforce the work of the CPUz cadres as well as Moscow’s control over the periphery. Following our ‘caesarean’ analogy, these communist troopers could be thought of as an additional force crossing the ‘Uzbek Rubicon’ to reinforce a ‘red dictatorship’ of the CC CPSU over the republic. However, there is very little clarity and perhaps a bit of mythology around this story. In fact, political opportunism has seen the expression subject to much misapplication during – and especially after – the Uzbek cotton affairs. Even the term *krasnyi desant* can be read with a distinct negative connotation - i.e. as an unwelcome intrusion into another’s domain - and its application should always be read carefully, with an eye to the purpose of the author employing it. The main theme of the *krasnyi desant* saga is that Moscow was weak in reasserting its authority in cadres’ matters of the CPUz’s organizational work. Then, the CC CPSU started to send centrally-oriented ‘communist reinforcements’ in order to take control over recruitment in the republics and “eradicating ethnic and clan networks among officials.”⁷⁸ As mentioned, there is limited literature dealing with the Uzbek cotton affair. What is available reports how Moscow sent some hundreds of CC CPSU officials to support the work of the CC CPUz during the mid-80s. This fact is generally accepted as credible; many political statements at the plenums and congresses of the CPUz document it. However, we still do not have enough material to evaluate the real extent of this ‘communist army’ but, in any case, we can proceed by analyzing the newly available material.

In the famous XVI plenum CC CPUz of June 1984, Ligachev – the head of the cadres’ organizational department of the CC CPSU – evidenced how the

⁷⁷ TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 6978, l. 81.

⁷⁸ Critchlow, “Prelude to ‘Independence’: How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow’s Grip on Elite Recruitment,” 132.

nativization policy was “fostering abuses.”⁷⁹ He chaired the plenum and he also determined the support of the CC CPSU in order to restore the order in the republic by controlling cadres’ appointments⁸⁰ and also by proposing the “interrepublican exchange of cadres.”⁸¹ To what extent? The vagueness of these affirmations are not helpful. In response, Usmankhodzhaev – as mentioned in the previous chapters – also thanked the CC CPSU for its ‘support’ on several occasions. Again, the indefinite terms used by the FS CPUz do not give a clear indication of the size of the phenomenon. The ‘critical’ literatures – and the Uzbek post-Soviet narrative – propose that Moscow sent even thousands⁸² of ‘Slavs’ – from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus - to Uzbekistan in order to fill the most critical posts of the CPUz, defining a policy that substantially slowed down korenization.⁸³ This practice of cadre replacement with ‘external elements’ had been enforced by both Usmankhodzhaev and Nishanov, who confirmed in their testimonies how just in the period 1984-1987, almost 90.4 % of the party nomenklatura was replaced and about 300 high officials were sent from the Soviet ‘central regions’ to replace the ‘dismissed’ national cadres.⁸⁴ Within this figure, 55 officials were directly sent from departments in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 114.

⁸⁰ Moscow was pushing to strengthen its grip over Uzbekistan and the best way seemed to be the control of nomenklatura. However, this system was often bypassed with the appointment of people who were not on the approved lists. Critchlow, “Prelude to ‘Independence’: How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow’s Grip on Elite Recruitment,” 137; Merle Fainsod, *How Russia Is Ruled* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963).

⁸¹ Critchlow, “Prelude to ‘Independence’: How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow’s Grip on Elite Recruitment,” 134.

⁸² According to Razzakov, about 4,000 ‘troopers’ were sent to Uzbekistan in order to fill several posts of the dismissed Uzbek cadres. Fedor Razzakov, *Delo, Vzorvavshee SSSR* (Moskva: Algoritm, 2012).

⁸³ Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, 115.

⁸⁴ Inamzhan Buzrukovich Usmankhodzhaev, *Prodolzhaia Delo Oktiabria Communist Uzbekistana. Tom II* (Tashkent: Uzbekistan, 1987), 4; Rafik Nishanovich Nishanov, *Derev’ya Zeleneyut Do Metelei: Rafik Nishanov Rasskazyvaet Marine Zavade I Yurii Kulikovu* (Moskva: Molodaya Gvardiya, 2012), 258; Demian Vaisman, “Regionalism and Clan Loyalty in the Political Life of Uzbekistan,” in *Muslim Eurasia Conflicting Legacies*, ed. Yaaev Roi (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 117.

⁸⁵ NSA, Box 26, file R 10052, p. 1.

As mentioned, at the XXI congress CPUz in 1986, Usmanhodzhaev also recalled the need for a “permanent” importation of Party and law enforcement officials from other republics.⁸⁶ However, the official figures appear much inferior than the proposed ‘thousands of red troopers’ narrative. This hyperbolic interpretation has been followed even by some prominent scholar. For example, Allworth argues that, in this period,

Russians and Ukrainians held most positions of power in the hierarchies, whereas Uzbeks sat in many visible seats but had no authority (in this they resembled the Kazak puppet khans placed on the throne of eighteenth-century Khiva by Uzbek tribal politicians). Such an arrangement deprived Uzbeks of the chance to identify with a political organization and leadership of their own.⁸⁷

However, what was the real extent of this exchange of cadres? Analyzing the primary cadre reshuffle within the CPUz and the Uzbek republic, we can assume that the 'Russians' most likely held more key power posts especially, in the upper echelons.⁸⁸ However, the Uzbeks remained formally – and in practice – the dominant majority in the power institutions of the republic. In fact, in 1987-1989 more than 86% of the FS raikoms were natives, indicating

⁸⁶ Critchlow, “Prelude to ‘Independence’: How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow’s Grip on Elite Recruitment,” 136.

⁸⁷ The author continues, declaring: “The continuing debacle in local leadership remained a principal obstacle to Uzbek group cohesion. Soviet political life in Central Asia did not allow Uzbeks to overcome the nineteenth-century legacy of arbitrary rule under Nasrullah Khan and his heirs who, like many subsequent Manghit and Soviet Uzbek leaders, offered conspiratorial, destructive, secretive, venal, antipopular, self-serving, and inhumanly ideological models. By the 1980s, a new Central Asian leader to match the ideal khan or amir had yet to crystallize in the imagination of Uzbeks or other nationalities in the region. Until some features and symbols of actual sovereignty returned to the Uzbek scene in a voluntary relationship between an Uzbek leader and his own nationality, a vision of the good Uzbek leader was likely to remain elusive.” Allworth, *The Modern Uzbeks: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present : A Cultural History*, 312.

⁸⁸ While the native Uzbeks had seven posts out of 11 in the CC CPUz buro in 1981, by 1986 these were six of 13. Similarly, while in 1981 three quarters of the buro candidates were Slavs, this proportion changed in 1986 when three fifths were Slavs. Also in the secretariat, by 1986 Slavs held three of six party secretaryships, while before they had never held more than two. Anne Sheehy, “Slav Presence Increased in Uzbek Party Buro and Secretariat. Radio Liberty Research Bulletin 94,” 1986; Staples, “Soviet Use of Corruption Purges as a Control Mechanism: The Uzbekistan Case.”

that Uzbeks kept a preponderant share of power also at the local level.⁸⁹ At the same time, this 'support from the CC CPSU' was probably the normal practice of the central party in dealing with a republican filial that was facing a critical moment. Indeed, in Uzbekistan there was no evident pretext – such as the Kunaev-Kolbin shift in Kazakhstan – to justify this degree of 'interference' by Moscow in the internal affairs of the republic.

Therefore, in order to define the extent of the problem, we can proceed by analyzing the role of those 'Russians' that replaced the local officials during the 'Uzbek cotton affair'. Among the most prominent *desantniki* – or *desantlar* in the Uzbek language – was the aforementioned B.F. Satin, who directly came from the CC CPSU secretariat to cover the post of FS Tashkent gorkom. He effectively took an office that had heretofore seemed to be reserved for Uzbeks and became the first non-native in that post since WW2. Others are often cited, such as V.G. Kretoy, who came from the Leningrad gorkom to head the *OrgOtdel* of CPUz. That post had generally been reserved for non-natives. Another was Aleksey V. Buturlin who came directly from the Genprokuror office to head the prokuratura UzSSR.⁹⁰ Anishchev came from Voronezh gorkom to take the post of the second secretary CPUz, replacing Osetrov, a Russian ethnic who had been working in Uzbekistan since 1970 and was a clear Russian CC CPSU careerist official in the republic. Anishchev's appointment thus replaced one Russian 'central' official with another. In the list of *desantniki* are usually included also: the secretary of the CPUz, Victor Nikolaevich Lobko; the two members of the SC UzSSR, Aleksandr Ivanovich Lipatov and Svetlana Nikolaevna Mel'chenko; the chairman of the PCC UzSSR, Viktor A. Khaidurov,⁹¹ and; Valintin Ogorok, the first deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR.

All these figures were undoubtedly important but they would not have significantly changed the ethnic composition of the cadres. In fact, as we have mentioned in the first chapter, some secondary/deputy posts were anyway reserved to non-nationals. Examples include the deputy chairmen of the SM, deputy chairmen of the SS, second secretaries of obkoms, gorkoms, and

⁸⁹ Critchlow, "Prelude to 'Independence': How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow's Grip on Elite Recruitment," 146.

⁹⁰ Carlisle, "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev," 129.

⁹¹ See Radio Liberty Research Bulletin 324 (30 August 1984); Radio Liberty Research Bulletin 94 (24 February 1986); Radio Liberty Research Bulletin 333 (3 October 1985); Radio Liberty Research Bulletin 254 (28 June 1984) cited in Staples, "Soviet Use of Corruption Purges as a Control Mechanism: The Uzbekistan Case," 43.

raikoms, deputy chairmen of oblispolkom, gorispolkom and raispolkom. Also, posts in the republican CC secretariat, and the directions of key CC departments – such as administrative organs, organizational-party work and agriculture, in the republican KGB, in the republican PCC, in Gosplan, in Profsoyuz, and in the AN were generally reserved for Russian natives. Critchlow comments that “it is reasonable to assume that these people were representative of the contingent on which Moscow had traditionally relied to protect its interests against the encroachments of nationality and local autarky.”⁹² Nevertheless, the most *desantniki* did not, in fact, fill primary posts, but rather secondary places – often much more powerful in substance than the first ones - that were often reserved to the central appointees in the state administration, in justice and in the police. Another exemplary case was the appointment of Eduard Alekseevich Didorenko to replace Davydov in the post of deputy chairman of the Uzbek MVD, one of the top law enforcement positions.⁹³

Then, we can consider the purges in the UzSSR during the ‘cotton affairs’ as an heterodirected phenomenon encouraged from the center. However, these power reshuffles concerned more directly local actors, rather than external ‘red troopers’, partially refuting the idea that Uzbekistan was simply ‘in receivership’ to Moscow. In this regard, Buttino affirms that

Despite the purge, the Uzbek component continued to be numerically superior in the ranks of the party and retained their ordinary processes of power relations, including the appointments in the apparatus and in positions of responsibility at the local level.⁹⁴

Critchlow adds:

After several years of pressure from Moscow, it was likely that the Central Asian members of the party had been able to defend themselves and to nullify the initiatives from above. Many of the purged local leaders had in fact found

⁹² Critchlow, “Prelude to ‘Independence’: How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow’s Grip on Elite Recruitment,” 140.

⁹³ However, Didorenko became a typical example of those central figures that were poorly tolerated by local communities. He was removed on account of popular protests against his rule in 1989. Robert M. Cutler, “De-Authoritarization in Uzbekistan?: Analysis and Prospects,” in *Owards Social Stability and Democratic Governance in Central Eurasia: Challenges to Regional Security*, ed. Irina Morozova (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2005), 132–33.

⁹⁴ Marco Buttino, *Samarcanda. Storie in Una Città Dal 1945 a Oggi* (Rome: Viella, 2015), 31, 330.

other places of power and many Russians inserted from the outside to control the Party had simply replaced other Russians. In 1989, in the CC CPUz buro there were seven Central Asian and only six Russians. At lower levels, the native prevalence was overwhelming: 86% of the district secretaries (raikom) were Central Asians and, within them, the Uzbeks were dominant. District secretaries had a determining role in regulating and controlling the activities of the Party at the local level and had the power to decide on the admission of new members into the Party and their expulsions. To the purges and the related corruption scandals, the ranks of the Party reacted defensively without great fanfare.⁹⁵

More serious was the issue related to primary posts – such as the FS of the republican party – which, symbolically at least, represented the core metric of korenization success. Indeed, at higher/primary levels, the ethnic composition of the leadership seemed to align quite closely with the ethnic composition of the republic. In 1985, 11 obkom FSs were natives meanwhile only two oblasts – Navoi and Syrdarya – were headed by non-natives. Again, it seems that, despite the *krasnyi desant*, Moscow wanted to respect – or maybe simply had to accept – the korenization compromise.⁹⁶ In any case, it is interesting to note that the Uzbek purges were also directed at some non-natives who had been educated in the Republic⁹⁷ or had spent long periods in Uzbekistan – such as Melkumov or Orlov⁹⁸ – and who had thus had time to establish informal ties. This practice was not new and restyled a political move that was typical in the even in pre-revolutionary Central Asia.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ James Critchlow, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Independence* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 137–55.

⁹⁶ Critchlow, "Prelude to 'Independence': How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow's Grip on Elite Recruitment," 139.

⁹⁷ "Evidently, receiving one's higher education in Uzbekistan was a major factor in co-optation of non-Uzbeks into the elite network controlled by Uzbeks. During the Rashidov era, graduation from a VUZ in Uzbekistan was a prime "channel" of advancement, regardless of nationality. This is demonstrated by the fact that, in 1975, of a total group of 221 leading officials of all nationalities with completed higher education who were elected to the republican Supreme Soviet, 158 (71 percent) were graduates of VUZy in Uzbekistan, mainly those in Tashkent (121) or Samarkand (23)" *Ibid.*, 140.

⁹⁸ Georgy Mikhailovich Orlov was the deputy chairman of the presidium SS UzSSR and director of the organizational department of the CC CPUz. He was also criminally involved in the 'cotton affairs'.

⁹⁹ Konstantin Konstantinovich Pahlen, *Mission to Turkestan, Being the Memoirs of Count K. K. Pahlen, 1908–1909* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 156–57.

Nishanov's recent memoirs provide another window into the situation. In them, he – and also the second secretary Anishchev¹⁰⁰ - claims that Ligachev and Usmankhodzhaev had responsibilities in the *krasnyi desant* strategy. However, he condemned a policy he also supported when he was at the head of the CPUz. Nishanov argues the “absurdity”¹⁰¹ of a party that was “importing” cadres in a context where more than 2 million ‘Russians’ who already “knew the republic” lived.¹⁰² Moscow probably did not want ‘Russians’ as much as it needed ‘loyalists.’ Therefore, we can assume that these measures were not predominantly about ‘ethnicity’ *per se* but were simply about increasing the influence of Moscow on the local party of Uzbekistan through the appointment of ‘central’ Russians or sovietized/centrally-oriented Uzbeks. Nishanov himself was a perfect example of an Uzbek who has spent the greater part of his career out of Uzbekistan and remained thoroughly committed to the Soviet cause.¹⁰³ However, a quarter of a century later, he clumsily tried to promote himself as an illuminate patriot committed to the Uzbek national interest. Apparently, his attempts did not achieve the desired outcome, as he still remains a generally disliked figure in Uzbekistan. Therefore, the issue of *krasnyi desant* – although in all likelihood mythical than real – became a crucial aspect of the rising Uzbek nationalism within the national “prestigious elite.”¹⁰⁴ These groups

¹⁰⁰ According to Anishchev, “the “Russian troops” [campaign] was organized at the request of the CC CPUz. Lately, I read [this story] on the minutes of its meetings which reflected the numerous requests of the CC CPSU on the provision of assistance to the republic with qualified cadres. But as it seemed to me, due to accumulated personal experience [...], the process was initiated and launched in Moscow offices under the direct leadership of Yegor Ligachev.” Anishchev, *Vostochnyi Ornament*, 14.

¹⁰¹ Nishanov, *Derev'ya Zeleneyut Do Metelei: Rafik Nishanov Rasskazyvaet Marine Zavade I Yurii Kulikovu*, 258–60.

¹⁰² The *desant* practice could be read also in terms of Putnam's “elite-mass congruence.” In fact, the possible lack of a linkage between the elite – with scarce knowledge of the context – and the masses created various opportunities of protest and open opposition, especially in the context of *glasnost*, against the newly ruling cadres. Robert D. Putnam, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites* (Englewood: Prentice Hall, 1976).

¹⁰³ In central Asia, many rumors argue that after the Soviet collapse, he remained in Moscow and never came back to Uzbekistan.

¹⁰⁴ This term is used by Critchlow to describe the emerging groups of writers, artists, and scholars who had a special role in affirming nationalism. In his words, the “prestige elite is ancillary to the “conveyor belt” function of the political elite in linking the leadership with the masses, but in performing that function is often found to

started to narrate the *desant* as a way to propagate the notion that Uzbekistan was being placed 'in receivership' to Moscow and as a means to wedge internal 'traitors' conspiring with the center in this. In fact, according to Critchlow, Uzbek

communists were being accused of incompetence and unreliability at all levels of the hierarchy in the republic, and in many cases charged with criminal behavior. At the very top level of power in the republic, former First Secretary Rashidov was posthumously denounced [as a] latter-day Uzbek khan with Party card, golden stars and prizewinners' icons.¹⁰⁵

The 'desant' policy and the related narrative would create a lot of resentment among the frustrated Uzbek elites, becoming then a key factor pursued by Uzbek nationalists¹⁰⁶ that undermined the legitimacy of Gorbachev's perestroika¹⁰⁷ – and its representatives – in the republic, extending the circumstance of 'desantniki' to many other replaced cadres' categories. In fact, we have to recall that at the XXI CPUz congress, Usmanhodzhaev also proposed an "internal" strategy to replace – within the borders of the republic – the ruling elite. In FS CPUz's scheme, it was possible to broaden the pool from which the bureaucratic elite were recruited, proposing a new generation of cadres that included industrial workers, women, youth, and even non-party members, as well as non-natives. Thus, it was also possible to enforce the education and training of the new cadres within structures in the RSFSR or in the other republics of the USSR¹⁰⁸ in order to train a new generation of Uzbek cadres who went to study in the higher Party schools in Moscow, Leningrad, Sverdlovsk, Saratov, and even in Tashkent.¹⁰⁹ To conclude, although the *krasnyi desant* was an effective

pursue its own agenda. In Uzbekistan it has played an enormous role in rallying national opinion to oppose Moscow's policies and directives." Critchlow, "Prelude to 'Independence': How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow's Grip on Elite Recruitment," 133.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 135–36.

¹⁰⁶ According to Rumer, the *desantniki* were interpreted as "the catalyst to a nationalistic backlash." Rumer, "Central Asia's Cotton Economy and Its Costs," 158.

¹⁰⁷ Michael Rywkin, *Moscow's Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia*, Rev. ed. (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1990), 151–54; Michael Rywkin, "Perestroika in Central Asia," *The Nationalities Papers* 17, no. 1 (1989): 51; Staples, "Soviet Use of Corruption Purges as a Control Mechanism: The Uzbekistan Case."

¹⁰⁸ PV, 21348, 80, 8 April 1987. Critchlow, "Prelude to 'Independence': How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow's Grip on Elite Recruitment," 114.

¹⁰⁹ PV, 21403, 135, 4 July 1987. Ibid., 145.

campaign to put Uzbekistan under Moscow's control – or at least to help the local party in endorsing purges and appointing new cadres – it had an unintentionally opposite effect. In fact, Moscow's policy – in its mythical or real form – had anyway the unintentional effect of causing a local resistance in the form of Uzbek/anti-Soviet reactions.

5.1.4 Rashidov's *damnatio memoriae*

In the aftermath of the two congresses, the purges and the power reshuffles in the country continued with much vigor and were mainly focused on those sectors of the party and state that had been considered responsible for mismanagement¹¹⁰ and for tolerating the negative phenomena. On 1 March 1986 the new members of the SC UzSSR were appointed. They condemned the inefficiency of the previous supreme judges of the republic¹¹¹ and pointed critically at the climate of general laxity within the judicial and the law enforcement organs. In spring 1986, the newspapers even started to publish the letters and the personal stories of indignant citizens against the abuses they had suffered. For example, letters were received denounced the lack of controls in agriculture brigades where wastage and abuse of workers were the norm amidst a general climate of silence.¹¹² Other letters were published denouncing the abuses in the distribution of prizes. These awards were often assigned to collective farms that simply overestimated their production and declared false data.¹¹³ Similarly, many stories of kolkhozes' directors were diffused, reporting how wealth was accumulated by drawing on workers' wages or by siphoning the salaries of non-existent workers.¹¹⁴ Pursuing this policy, it seemed that the party – through the press and the media¹¹⁵ – was actively mobilizing the population to denounce the negative

¹¹⁰ On 21 March, U.K. Ismailov became the new minister for local industry. PV, 21044, 71, 22 March 1986, p. 1.

¹¹¹ PV, 21026, 53, 2 March 1986, p. 1.

¹¹² PV, 21037, 64, 13 March 1986, p. 2.

¹¹³ PV, 21038, 65, 14 March 1986, p. 3.

¹¹⁴ PV, 21045, 72, 23 March 1989, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ The need for transparency became more effective and were called even in the press: in an editorial on PV of 11 May 1986 was reaffirmed the need to consider the citizens' letters and complaints with more attention and respect. PV, 21084, 111, 11 May 1986, p. 1.

phenomena and to get more *donos*.¹¹⁶ This strategy would allow the CPUz to acquire new material against perpetrators and also to secure the support of a population by mobilizing it against the ‘plunderers.’ Just three years after the ‘cotton battles’, the party seemed ready in this way to mobilize the population for an internal war between elites. However, despite the warnings in the press, the UzSSR leading cadres were mostly worried about the real condition of the country. Then, in the CPUz buro meeting of 26 March 1986 cases of abuses of power and purges of prominent figures all around the republic were revealed, also at obkom and raikom levels that had seriously compromised the economic production.¹¹⁷ Subsequently, yet more data emerged from PCC USSR that suggested the ineffective work of sovkhoses and irrigation. The results were quite dramatic in the ‘cotton oblasts’ like Kashkadarya, Syrdarya and Jizzakh.¹¹⁸ Given the circumstances, Uzbek

¹¹⁶ Also during the plenum of the SC UzSSR of 25 April 1986, the party requested to the judicial organs be more careful in listening the complaints/requests of the citizens. PV, 21074, 101, 27 April 1986, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ Prot. 4/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2311, l. 19.

¹¹⁸ In the Kashkadarya oblast alone, despite hopes of achieving 25 quintals per hectare, production reached just 13.7 in 1985. It had, in many raions, reached as high as 29-59 quintals per hectare between 1981-1985. The soil increasingly became salinized and less amenable to agriculture. For example, in the sovkhos ‘Kh. Alimdzhān’ in the Oktyabrski rayon, an irrigation network over an area of 4,116 hectares was built, of which 3,110 hectares contained highly saline soil that was not productive at all. And it was impossible to wash salt away. Another 754 hectares were not in use, while drainage systems were inefficient. Similarly, in the sovkhos ‘10’ the irrigated land covered 5034.5 hectares in 1975, but the drainage was built for only 29.6% of that, with the remaining parts only receiving drainage works very late in the piece. As a result, the land that had not been previously drained rapidly salinized. The workers tried to wash the soil with water but it did not really help. The productivity of the salty soils could – at a maximum – achieve 8.9 quintals of cotton per hectare. As a result, in this sovkhos alone the losses totaled some 2.1 million rubles. GARF, f. 9527, op. 1, d. 8978, ll. 7, 14, 21, 28. Also the PCC of the Syrdarya oblast also denounced similar facts, even declaring that cotton production had become more expensive. In 1985, the real cost to produce a ton of cotton was 100.40 rubles, while in the plan it had been set at just 79.39 rubles. The situation was even worse in some of those areas that had been considered as the flagship of the Rashidovian regime: the lands that were ‘reclaimed’ from the desert. In fact, the Golodnii, Jizzak, and Karshi steppes – officially 921,000 hectares under agriculture, 760,000 hectares irrigated and 165 sovkhoses – had seen investment of more than 3 billion rubles. However, this investment – approximately half of the republican annual budget – did not achieve the desired results and productivity remained low. In 1985, the average productivity of

agricultural production seemed destined to rapidly decline. Then, the hunt for culprits began in earnest. The CPUz was looking for a scapegoat for this long-term critical situation and casting it as legacy of the previous regime was an easy fix. At the CC CPUz plenum of 29 March 1986, Usmankhodzhaev gave a speech in which he renounced agricultural triumphalism in all its forms and further endorsed a new wave of clear criticism. He affirmed that “already this year, more than 40 companies have not realized the plan and have not produced for 44 million rubles”¹¹⁹ while the republic is committed to annually produce 1.830 million tons of cotton fiber by 1990.¹²⁰ Then, he confirmed the CC CPUz concerns for the organizations of the obkoms, gorkoms and raikoms,¹²¹ recalling how

cotton was 15.8 quintals per hectare, while a figure of 19.2 had been expected in the plan. Similarly, the productivity of rice was 26.4 (the plan was set at 37.1) and for forage 57.6 (82.9 planned). The aggregate production had thus generally declined and in 1984-1985 alone – when the annual production of cotton was set at 417,000 tons – only 309,200 tons (74% of the plan) were harvested. Indeed, 57 sovkhoses out of 89 actually failed to fulfill the plan. Similar disappointments were recorded for rice: 227,700 tons were planned but only 179,800 (79%) were produced. For this crop, fully 15 out of 16 sovkhoses failed to reach the plan. 40,800 tons of vegetables had been planned, but the final production was just 20,800 (51%); 90% of sovkhoses failed their commitments. For milk production, only 18,900 tons (85% of the plan of 22,200 tons) was achieved, with 51 of 88 sovkhoses failing to meet the grade. In 1985 alone, roughly half of sovkhoses and kolkhoses recorded financial losses – totaling 28.4 million rubles – where a profit of 31.2 million rubles had been expected. GARF, f. 9527, op. 1, d. 8978, ll. 39-41. In Jizzak alone, the weak irrigation system left 4,800 hectares of irrigated fields unusable and 20,000 hectares of irrigated fields (20% of the total) without an effective drainage network. These fields could produce only 7-8 quintals per hectare. A further 7,000 hectares experienced stagnation of dirty water, creating soil salinization. The situation in Karakalpakya was even worse – here, 22 km of irrigation canals and drainage networks were weak and effectively not working. This meant that some 6,000 hectares of irrigated lands were effectively unusable. Criticism from the PCC emerged even in those sovkhoses that did make the grade. In the whole UzSSR where 110 sovkhoses were under construction and only 55 had been built in time while four needed more than 10 years to be finished, 15 need from 5-10 years and even 2 sovkhoses in Golodnii steppe were under construction from 1961 (!). The final warning of the PCC USSR is that too many investments had been destined to open new lands without improving what was already effective and not fully used. GARF, f. 9527, op. 1, d. 8978, ll. 44-45.

¹¹⁹ Prot. 2/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2301, l. 15.

¹²⁰ Prot. 2/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2301, l. 19.

¹²¹ Prot. 2/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2301, l. 23.

leaders of ministries pay attention to violations. In the Bukhara oblast, from 40 managers who had been accused of fraud, only 29 have been charged. In the consumers' union of Ferghana oblast, falsifications of 47,000 rubles were unveiled but the party has not taken action on these facts.¹²²

In this way, Usmankhodzhaev reminded the plenum how, over the previous five years, the party had expelled more than 11,000 Communists of whom 6,000 were put on trial for theft, corruption, and speculation. Of these, some 4,000 had been unveiled just in the previous two years.¹²³ In parallel, the tones became worrisome even at the regional level.¹²⁴ As mentioned, during *perestroika* this 'internal' self-criticism was functional to the political legitimacy. However, it often concealed the more dramatic situation in the country.¹²⁵ For all these problems in the republic, the main culprit was again the defunct Sharaf Rashidov. Then, on 30 April, Usmankhodzhaev wrote memorandum n. 1-726 SS addressed to the CC CPSU in order to report the extent of Rashidov's abuses.¹²⁶ Then, the CC CPSU seemed to be warned on such facts and even demanded for an advice to Chebrikov – head of the Soviet KGB – and Rekunkov - the Genprokuror USSR.¹²⁷ At the same time, some of the *desantniki* were applying pressure to specific figures of the CC CPUz – as Anishchev - in order to extend the criminal cases against other allegedly guilty colleagues related to Rashidov.¹²⁸ Thus, an unsuspecting – and

¹²² Prot. 2/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2301, l. 24.

¹²³ Prot. 2/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2301, l. 32.

¹²⁴ Then, during the Bukhara obkom plenum concerns for industrial production emerged. Production had been modest and lower than the previous years and losses for millions of rubles had been recorded. Additionally, the oblast had failed to fulfill the plan for cotton for the second consecutive year. PV, 21057, 84, 8 April 1986, p. 2. Similarly, in 1985 also in the Tashkent oblast, 20 kolkhozes and sovkhozes and a fifth of the brigades did not fulfill the cotton plan, while in Surkhandarya 80% of the crop was harvested manually and the level of mechanization was seriously backward. PV, 21062, 89, 13 April 1986, pp. 1-2.

¹²⁵ For example, it is interesting to note that, despite the whole world was shocked for the most serious nuclear disaster ever, the Uzbek press was not even reporting the news of the Chernobyl disaster of 26 April 1986 in its aftermath. Also Anishchev reported that such information was just top secret. Anishchev, *Vostochnyi Ornament*, 544.

¹²⁶ The document is fully available in the Appendix.

¹²⁷ The document is fully available in the Appendix.

¹²⁸ In fact, according to Anishchev's account, on 7 May 1986, the investigators Gdlyan and Ivanov arrived to his office with a huge map full of arrows where they presented a very detailed scheme of the bribery system in the UzSSR. For each figure in the

maybe naïve – newly appointed second secretary of the CPUz was put in the midst of a personal struggle within the same CC where Nishanov, the ‘revenant’ returned from a fifteen years exile and imposed his influence to set about coming to terms with his old Rashidovian enemies. This story is an extraordinary example of how, during the Uzbek cotton affair, Moscow promoted some figures who exploited the context for their own political interests. Nishanov was fighting on the Uzbek internal front while – as we will see – Gdlyan and Ivanov, were deploying their forces on the main muscovite battlefield. In both cases, these ‘heroes of perestroika’ would not win, while the country was collapsing under the weight of centrifugal forces.

scheme there was a nickname – boyar, wolf, hare, fox, tiger, snake, bandit etc. – and at the end all arrows converged to Gorbachev. In his memoirs, Anishchev appears as a carefree character and in that moment he jokingly asked where he himself might be named as a person of interest in the scheme. Very seriously, Gdlyan and Ivanov responded that it was not yet there (but might well be placed there as time went on). After that meeting, Anishchev felt pressure to go deeper in the investigations and consulted with Evgeny Z. Razumov, a member of the CC CPSU responsible for streamlining the apparatus. The latter also confirmed the need to bring order in Uzbekistan so as to avoid shortcomings and defects in the cadres. At that moment, Anishchev replied that the situation was under control and he never saw any leader abusing power while Razumov firmly contested that it was necessary in any case to go deeper. Anishchev continues his story, declaring that while many letters denouncing negative facts arrived at the CC CPUz, he was still under pressure from the CC CPSU *OrgOtdel* that was pushing him and Usmankhodzhaev to keep the purges going and to uncover any and all abuses in the republic. Then he reported another very interesting fact. On 9 May 1986, Nishanov came to his office and asked him to create a special control commission to check Rano Abdullaeva, against whom many slanderous letters were arriving. Therefore, Nishanov asked ‘Moscow’s watchdog’ to focus investigations against a person who was the gentle face of late Rashidovism and a powerful figure in the CPUz with the responsibility of heading the ideological department. Anishchev showed his own doubts about the complexity of such a task and Nishanov replied “there is much to be checked and, mostly, we must deal with something not easy.” Indeed, Anishchev knew that Abdullaeva’s reputation was defended by Mogilnichenko and Ligachev and Nishanov replied “no hurry, this is not a criminal case but an investigation of the party. Haste may lead to mistakes and we need the truth.” Finally, the second secretary revealed his effective doubts and asked to Nishanov if there was any personal antipathy between him and Abdullaeva as the rumors suggested. Very firmly Nishanov replied that he knew Uzbekistan, what its people want, who is honest and who is not: “everyone knows the indecent affairs of Abdullaeva, but there are people that polish her shoes.” *Ibid.*, 514–15, 540, 551–52.

The struggle against Rashidovism and its symbols proceeded. On the night of 20-21 May 1986, a corpse was exhumed by soldiers from the Tashkent center.¹²⁹ Rashidov's body was then moved to the Chigatay Muslim cemetery, a strange 'honor' for a Soviet atheist statesman. On 22 May, the politburo discussed the Uzbek mafiya and the role of Rashidov in the scam, concreting the condemnation of his memory.¹³⁰ Finally, while the whole Soviet system enforced the new legislation about corruption,¹³¹ during the CPUz buro meeting of 4 June 1986, the *damnatio memoriae* against the former FS CPUz Sharaf Rashidovich Rashidov was finally applied.¹³² This measure not only blackened and cancelled the name of Rashidov from everywhere but it even condemned removed the benefits to his family. In order to argue such a decision, the decree had an attached document - entitled "Information for the party activities on Sh. R. Rashidov"¹³³ - listing the atrocities of the deceased leader. The results of de-Rashidovization and the *damnatio memoriae* of the former leader were partially presented even in the press,¹³⁴ while in parallel the Politburo endorsed a new managerial approach in agriculture.¹³⁵ At the same time, other scandals¹³⁶ emerged while another

¹²⁹ Kinokompaniya Pigmalion, *Zoloto Dlya Parii. Khlopkovoe Delo* (Russia: Rossiya Telekanal - RTR Planeta, 2010).

¹³⁰ In his memoirs, Vorotnikov was critical of that event, reminding us of his indignation for Gorbachev who, he argued, was supposed to know the Uzbek scam facts. Vitaly Ivanovich Vorotnikov, *A Bylo Eto Tak... : Iz Dnevnikha Chlena Politburo CK KPSS* (Moskva: SI-MAR - Sovet veteranov knigoizdaniya, 1995).

¹³¹ The penalties against corruption and economic crimes were enforced by the SS USSR in late May 1986. Leslie Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 226.

¹³² The Decree of the CC CPUz and SM UzSSR, n. 282-21 (4 June 1986) is fully available in the Appendix.

¹³³ The document is fully available in the Appendix.

¹³⁴ On PV was reported the decree of the CC CPSU and SM USSR of 22 ay 1986, on deleting the perpetuation of Rashidov's memory. Signed by Gorbachev and Ryzhkov. PV, 21107, 134, 7 June 1986, p. 1.

¹³⁵ PV, 21107, 134, 7 June 1986, p. 1.

¹³⁶ In the previous five-year cycle, a quarter of the industries had not fulfilled the production plan and had not replenished the system for hundreds of millions of rubles. In the warehouses of some industries obsolete production to the value of almost 90 million rubles had been accumulated. PV, 21121, 148, 25 June 1986, p. 2.

power reshuffle was pursued in the party and state apparatus against those figures who were alleged to be part of the Rashidovian scheme.¹³⁷

5.2 The (apparent) calm between the storms

Just after the post-mortem denunciation of Rashidov, the FS Usmankhodzhaev faced the hardest moment of his political rise to power. Between mid-1986 and 1987, the party seemed to be on the way to cleaning its cadres, however at the same time the situation became more tense. A part of the Uzbek elite who resented the new course of Usmankhodzhaev was ready to strike back. Additionally, the public opinion was now – in the wake of glasnost – increasingly moved by cases of corruption, identifying the party as an obstacle to legality rather than a defender of it.

5.2.1 Bearing a heavy legacy

In a meeting of the CC CPUz secretariat of 8 July 1986 the relation between the 'negative phenomena' and the defects also in the educational system was discussed and outlined.¹³⁸ Then, in the secretariat meeting of 23 July 1986, another negative trend that was linked with the diffused drug addiction in the republic was exposed.¹³⁹ Similarly, the press reported some

¹³⁷ M. Sherkulov, the FS Samarkand raikom, was fired for failures in his leading role (PV, 21112, 139, 14 June 1986, p. 1), on 25 June V.K. Mikhailov, former deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR became the new minister for housing (PV, 21122, 149, 26 June 1986, p. 1), and on 4 July V.I. Ogark became the first deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR (PV, 21129, 156, 5 July 1986, p. 1).

¹³⁸ On that occasion, it was stated that “in the Moskovski raikom the party did not assess well the officials who then became the school authorities. Over the past five years, in 52 schools 42 principals had been fired not only for problems in the educational and pedagogical method but mainly for “negative phenomena” displayed a poor example for teachers and, therefore, also for students. [...Unsurprisingly then,] teachers also commit crimes, felonies, and [practiced] religious rites and the newspapers and the radio do not report anything of these serious defects. This situation also explains why effective methods from the oblast education departments are not applied.” Prot. 11/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2349, l. 4.

¹³⁹ Indeed, it was revealed that over the previous three years in Karakalpakstan more than a thousand cases of illegal drug cultivation for about 330 hectares had been found. For this, 40 communists, 15 brigadiers of kolkhozes and sovkhoses, and 15 appointed teachers were found to have ignored the phenomenon and not to have acted to stop it. Also 170 poppy culture farms across an area of five hectares had been

dramatic news about agriculture in the cotton region.¹⁴⁰ All these disastrous results were presented as a consequence of the previous regime while in parallel a marginalization of the Rashidovian symbols proceeded. Therefore, in the buro meeting of 24 July 1986, another figure who had been at the center of the UzSSR political life was substantially repudiated by the CPUz. On that occasion, the CC CPUz demanded that the SM UzSSR reconsider its decree of 15 November 1984 “on the material-home care to the comrade N.A. Khudayberdiyev”¹⁴¹ accusing the former longstanding head of the Uzbek government of many abominations.¹⁴² The news appeared just three days later in the newspaper describing the sins of Khudayberdiyev who emerged as a sort of ‘ideologue of the cotton scam.’¹⁴³ In parallel, the press kept reporting minor stories that revealed the high levels of collusion¹⁴⁴ while the cotton harvest was exposed with even minor enthusiasm than the previous

discovered and over 420 kg of narcotics seized. In Karakalpakya alone, the number of drug addicts had increased by one and a half times and it was discovered that there were even three communists and six school teachers among the addicted. Prot. 12/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2350, l. 27.

¹⁴⁰ The Syrdarya oblast – which was supposed to be one of the main cotton producers – registered the worst crop rate of the whole republic (PV, 21137, 164, 15 July 1986). Similarly, also in Khorezm the whole agricultural production – not only cotton – declined by at least a factor of two in 1986 alone, and the regional productive system failed to deliver products with a value of 1.3 million rubles (PV, 21142, 169, 20 July 1986, p. 39).

¹⁴¹ Prot. 15/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2322, l. 2.

¹⁴² As mentioned in the previous chapter, he was already under investigation for the revelations of the ‘pentito’ from Jizzakh. Khudayberdiyev then was removed from the post of chairman of SM UzSSR in December 1984. The Memorandum Buro CC CPUz to SM UzSSR (24 July 1986) is fully available in the Appendix.

¹⁴³ According to the press, “during that buro meeting, it emerged that N.A. Khudayberdiyev offered the false image of a developing economy, especially in terms of welfare, with false and inflated figures. He also led a counterfeiting campaign on the cotton harvesting volumes and other agricultural products, forcing the managers of the party, soviets, and economic organs to fulfill the plans by all means, foul or fair. Therefore, he permitted the emergence of a fake system, state fraud, corruption, and embezzlement of public funds and other abuses, causing considerable economic damage to the republic and even moral damage to the cadres. He has been expelled from the CPSU.” PV, 21147, 174, 27 July 1986, p. 1.

¹⁴⁴ For example, PV reported the story of Kuchkar Umarov, director of the cotton harvest and preparation of the Zagotkhopkprom factory department, who demanded money from factory workers, abusing of his position. PV, 21164, 191, 19 August 1986, p. 4.

years, committing the republic for an increased production in terms of fibers.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, in late August 1986, the former MCC UzSSR, Usmanov, was finally tried and sentenced to death for false reporting, bribery, and protecting thieves.¹⁴⁶ As mentioned, in his 'forger career', he was responsible of reporting annually to the Soviet state 500-900 thousand tons of nonexistent cotton.¹⁴⁷

All the mentioned facts were identified as a consequence of ideological decadence, while in parallel purges and power reshuffles¹⁴⁸ proceeded gradually, entailing even a high level of moralism.¹⁴⁹ Serious kinds of ideological problems were revealed by the party, which now endorsed a new strategy, linking the idea that 'negative phenomena' were "anticommunist factors" that had even undermined the solidity of communist ideology. Indeed, during the III plenum of the CC CPUz on 4 October 1986, Usmankhodzhaev assailed religious influence in the republic,¹⁵⁰ emphasizing

¹⁴⁵ The party reported that in 1983 5.9 million tons of raw cotton had been cropped and 1.5 million tons of fibers produced. In 1985, the harvest figure was reduced to 5.4 million tons while the volume of produced fibers increased to 1.7 million tons. PV, 21193, 220, 28 September 1986, p. 2.

¹⁴⁶ This news was reported in the official Soviet press, indicating an attitude of demonstrative punishment and 'scapegotism', which was typical of the post-Brezhnev USSR. Pravda, 28 August 1986, p 3; Izvestiya 5 September 1986, p 6 and Izvestiya 6 September 1986, p. 3.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 101.

¹⁴⁸ On 16 September 1986, I.I. Mamatisaev became the new minister of finance of the UzSSR. PV, 21185, 212, 18 September 1986, p. 1. Then, on 24 September, B.I. Burov became the minister of consumers' services. PV, 21190, 217, 25 September 1986, p. 1.

¹⁴⁹ For example, following the course of the anti-alcoholism campaign endorsed by Gorbachev, T.K. Rakhmatullaev, the second secretary of Yankingarbad gorkom was accused of alcoholism and expelled from the Tashkent obkom. Similarly, also the FS of the Angren gorkom was expelled because he negatively headed the committee with 'formalism' and 'irresponsibility', ignoring the directives and the discipline of the party and the government. PV, 21190, 217, 25 September 1986, p. 1.

¹⁵⁰ The religious infection revealed at the October plenum was touching even prominent members of the party. In fact, in November Sayid Takherov – a leading Communist and director of the telecommunications center in Tashkent – and Sabir Tarsuenov, leader of the local Komsomol were accused, having been discovered conducting semi-clandestine Quranic studies. Hiro – probably exaggerating – argues that the cotton affair was frustrating the Uzbek people and for this reason the desperate population was seeking refuge in Islam. In 1987 in a survey made at Tashkent university revealed that 60% of the interviewed declared themselves Muslim

the role of atheism and Marxist-Leninist thought as a priority to be advanced as a way to fight against the negative phenomena.¹⁵¹ As well, the head of the Uzbek KGB, V.A. Golovin, reported how the environment of malfeasance was a consequence of the moral deviation in the republic where in two and a half years more than 80,000 specimens of “ideologically harmful literature” had been seized.¹⁵² Then, criticized the bad influence of Rashidov in literature¹⁵³ and concluded the plenum announcing another purge.¹⁵⁴ This plenum then coincided with a renewed antireligious campaign that blamed the intelligentsia for idealizing the past and its figures – such as Timur and Babur – and for attending Islamic funeral ceremonies or for placing Islamic emblems in private spaces.¹⁵⁵ Such a renewed ‘intolerant attitude’ towards the

while 33% said they were hesitant and only 7% stated they were atheist. Dilip Hiro, *Inside Central Asia: A Political and Cultural History of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Iran* (London & New York: Overlook TP, 2011), 133–34.

¹⁵¹ PV, 21199, 226, 5 October 1986, p. 1. Then, the FS reported a case of malfeasance that appeared serious even if the press did not report it: “in the Turkul’ raion almost 20 executives were fired from their jobs. The raikom saw no need to report the reasons for the failure of these persons through the press. However, in the rayon many facts of fraud, theft, forgery and other violations had been discovered, but the newspaper had not reported anything and the same raikom had kept hush.” Prot. 3/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2302, l. 21.

¹⁵² Prot. 3/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2302, l. 60.

¹⁵³ The ideological perestroika seemed to be a priority for the FS CPUz who even gave a speech entitled “on increasing the effectiveness of ideological work in the party at the request of the XXVII Congress of the CPSU” where he stated that too few books on Marxism-Leninism were in print, while atheist literature - and even children's books – were much more widespread. At the same time, he denounced the fact that four of Rashidov’s books had been published with up to 135 editions, and a circulation of more than one million copies. PV, 21199, 226, 5 October 1986, p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ Finally, the plenum decided to expel N.V. Dukhanov – the FS Navoi gorkom – from the CC CPUz because he violated the rules and morals of the party's life. It denounced how, in the previous two years, theft for more than 26 million rubles had been uncovered. He was also accused of being a personal friend of the people who violated socialist law – such as the directors of the cotton factories that had been condemned and given the maximum punishments. The above mentioned M. Sherkulov, FS of the Samarkand raikom, was also denounced for his “political myopia” and for not having implemented the decisions taken forward in the XVI plenum and for not rebuilding (“perestroikizing”) his work. Prot. 3/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2302, l. 126-127.

¹⁵⁵ Critchlow, “Prelude to ‘Independence’: How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow’s Grip on Elite Recruitment,” 146–47.

traditional elements of Uzbek society would lead to further popular disaffection for an increasingly self-referenced party. The conjecture of events would not be the best for the party. Indeed, in a moment when the whole Soviet society was living the enthusiasm of perestroika and entering a phase of transparency, any unpopular measure would be fatal for party legitimacy.

Then, in a meeting of the secretariat of 8 October 1986 defects in the health system of the republic were also reported,¹⁵⁶ while also the meeting of the SM UzSSR of 9 October revealed defects in the republican light industry sector, for which warehouses accumulated low quality and non-demanded goods with a value 112 million rubles.¹⁵⁷ Then, on the buro meeting of 12

¹⁵⁶ As a result, part of the ministry of health management was ousted, including the minister of health A.M. Khudaibergenov, as well as the deputy minister I.A. Savel'ev. Then, it was exposed that in the first semester of 1986 alone, the ministry of the health control revealed non-legal costs, shortages, thefts and embezzlement of almost one million rubles. 32 people were put under investigation by the prokuratura, while 103 were expelled from their posts and 759 received disciplinary punishments. In the medical institutions of the Karakalpak ASSR illegalities and embezzlement for 31,600 rubles were revealed, while 29,200 rubles' worth was uncovered in the Tashkent oblast, 14,900 in Navoi, and in the general management of pharmacies 52,000 rubles. Some officials received salaries twice a month, involving accountants as well as prizes to non-existent people with a value of 16,000 rubles. While the checks also discovered cases of illegal abortions, infant mortality rose. Indeed, in the first seven months of 1986 alone, the death of children reached 45.9 per thousand births, while the rate in 1985 for the same period had been 45.5 and in some areas like Karakalpak ASSR it was even 68.9. To emphasize the poor level of preparation of the health apparatus, it was also stated that from 923 people who were confirmed in 1986, 91 or 9.8% were considered unfit for work and 202 or almost 23% were confirmed with conditions. Prot. 17/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2355, ll. 23-25.

¹⁵⁷ The ministry of light industry was then accused of non-innovating the production and not improving the quality, accumulating debts to Gosbank for half billion rubles. For this situation, the light industry minister M. Kh. Kurbanov was fired (PV, 21203, 230, 11 October 1986, p. 2). Inefficiencies and economic failures were even revealed even in agricultural mechanization. For example, in 1986 the kolkhoz 'Brezhnev' in the Bukhara oblast had achieved less than half of the planned production. Even substantial funding had been invested for the mechanization of the cotton harvesting with the aim to produce at least 1,740 tons. However, only 82 (!) tons were produced. PV, 21215, 242, 25 October 1986, p. 3. Nevertheless, the industrial sector was apparently developing in a positive way and the CPUz announced that in the first 9 months of 1986, the volume of industrial production increased by 6.6% (compared to

November 1986 was revealed that still in 1986, a third of the enterprises did not realize the plan and fell short of production targets to a total value of more than 100 million rubles, while the timing of cotton harvest in the whole republic had slowed down compared to the previous year.¹⁵⁸ In order to cope with Moscow's enormous demand for cotton, 'hidden crops' had been even discovered, cultivating cotton in the fields where it was not supposed to be.¹⁵⁹ The most serious problem evidenced by the CC CPUz was that, fairly often, the local party organs were careless, tolerating the economic inefficiencies or being complicit in fraud.¹⁶⁰

Thus, also in autumn 1986, the cadres' replacements proceeded in the republican SC,¹⁶¹ in the government,¹⁶² and in other state agencies,¹⁶³ while

4.8% of the annual plan), producing more for 292.4 million rubles. Productivity even rose for 4.45%. PV, 21216, 243, 26 October 1986, p. 2.

¹⁵⁸ Prot. 25/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2332, l. 9.

¹⁵⁹ In 1986 alone, in 13 raions of the republic more than 15,000 hectares of illegal fields had been discovered, of which more than 13,000 hectares were claimed to be under cotton. For example, in the Shavat raion, compared to 1984, the space of the 'hidden' fields increased from 283 to 1,288 hectares. Between 1984 and 1986 in Khodzhabad hidden fields rose from 582 to 1,627 hectares of which more than 800 hectares was claimed to be covered by cotton. Prot. 25/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2332, l. 13.

¹⁶⁰ For example, the enterprise "Znanie" was involved in a scandal when it was discovered that its executives falsified data and violated financial discipline, laying off people who might obstruct them. Apparently, the Party organizations and profsoyuz were indifferent to such malfeasance and did not denounce the executives. The first deputy director was fired and expelled from the CPSU. PV, 21231, 258, 15 November 1986, p. 3. Then, the Uzbek prokuratura revealed thefts of 33,000 rubles and T. Belakova, the general accountant, was sentenced to 10 years in prison. PV, 21271, 3, 4 January 1987, p. 2.

¹⁶¹ On 14 October 1986, new members of the SC UzSSR were appointed. PV, 21207, 234, 16 October 1986, p. 1.

¹⁶² On 12 November 1986, V.V. Sudarenkov became a deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR. PV, 21229, 256, 13 November 1986, p. 1.

¹⁶³ Norling comments that: "All of those standing "puzzled" [by] the allegations, the newspaper charged, were in fact guilty: N. G. Kurbanov, the Minister of Rural Construction, had been preoccupied with providing for his family and mistress; Kh.R Rakhimov, previous Director of the Agency of Foreign Tourism, had smoothed the way for his son's acceptance [at] Tashkent University's Oriental Studies division, which had "allowed his son to travel abroad"; U.A. Aripov, the former Rector of Tashkent's Medical Institute, had endowed his five daughters with higher education in the university he was heading; and the then-head of [the] Uzbekistan Writers' Union, S. A.

the CC CPSU established safeguards for citizens against prosecutors' abuses.¹⁶⁴ Basically, it seemed that a phase of active self-defense had started. In that moment, the CPSU wanted to give a strong message of encouragement and on 24 November, Gorbachev even came to Tashkent, confirming the CPSU's trust in the Uzbek party and in republican agriculture. However, the Gensek reaffirmed the need to improve the ideological work – even undermining the growing expressions of open religious piety through an invigorated atheistic propaganda – and to strengthen the role of the 'human factor' in the resolution of social and economic problems. Substantially, Gorbachev seemed to be worried about ideological disaffection among the people generally, which – in his mind at least – were the result of negative phenomena and the spread of radical Islam.¹⁶⁵ This 'war on tradition' was thus brought to bear in a republic in which tales of about clandestine religious expression, low respect for the position of women, and even cases of dowries paid for weddings were widespread.¹⁶⁶

In this phase of uncertainty and constant leadership changes at the upper-medium level, a character that we have already met briefly before finally emerged as a critical protagonist. On 5 December, Rafik Nishanovich Nishanov,¹⁶⁷ diplomat and former head of the MID UzSSR, was finally

Azimov, was charged with reissuing works published years ago (an "operation" valued at 15.000 rubles) and of using public funds to pay for 800 plates of kebab at his son's wedding." Nicklas Norling, "Myth and Reality: Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan" (Johns Hopkins University, 2014), 234–35.

¹⁶⁴ On 20 November 1986, the CC CPSU approved a resolution to significantly increase the level of law enforcement for the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of citizens, while the SS USSR adopted a law on the procedure of appeal to the Court of misconduct by officials accused of infringing the rights of citizens. PV, 21409, 141, 11 July 1987, p. 3.

¹⁶⁵ PV, 21240, 267, 25 November 1986, p. 1.

¹⁶⁶ PV, 21244, 271, 29 November 1986, p. 2.

¹⁶⁷ Rafik Nishanovich Nishanov was born in a peasant family in 1926. A member of the CPSU since 1949, he graduated from the Tashkent evening pedagogical institute in 1959 when he became FS Oktyabrsky raikom. In 1962 he became chairman of Tashkent gorispolkom and in 1963 he was elevated to secretary and buro member of the CPUz. For his antagonism against Rashidov, he was "politically exiled" from Uzbekistan and in 1969 he started a diplomatic career in the MID USSR, becoming Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary USSR Ambassador to Sri Lanka and the Maldives (1970-1978) and Jordan (1978-1985). Between 1985-86 he was Minister of foreign affairs of the UzSSR. On December he finally became Chairman of the Presidium of SS UzSSR and Deputy Chairman of the SS USSR, reversing the situation in which he found

appointed as chairman of the Presidium of the SS UzSSR, while Salimov "went to occupy another post."¹⁶⁸ This was a nice formulation to indicate a radical demotion.¹⁶⁹ This maneuver indicated clearly that the political situation in Uzbekistan at this time was much more complicated than a simple struggle between 'Rashidovians' and 'Post-Rashidovians'. In fact, in this political game, another faction reappeared: the 'Anti-Rashidovians' - the opponents of the former regime who had been exiled to Moscow in the early '70s. after Rashidov's death, they returned in the republic, assuming with new (minor) power posts. Nishanov was indeed the main representative of this category of 'revenants' and, probably, Gorbachev's 'grey cardinal' in the republic. It is likely the case that Moscow simply did not trust Usmankhodzhaev and his group anymore. The poor results in the economy and the inefficacy of the purges - which in many cases simply dispatched wrongdoers to other managerial posts - simply left Moscow cold. Then, the CPSU role was enforced through the appointment of a loyal Soviet statesman as Nishanov who, more than Usmankhodzhaev, was the main responsible of personalization of the anti-Rashidovian campaign, attacking the former leader and his collaborators with a new impetus. Immediately, Jizzakh became a symbolic arena of this war. Indeed, during a meeting of the CPUz secretariat of 10 December 1986, were revealed other cases of forgery and serious deficiencies within the small region.¹⁷⁰ Again, the press was able to reveal

himself in 1970, when Rashidov was consolidating his power and he was ousted and replaced by Salimov.

¹⁶⁸ PV, 21248, 275, 6 December 1986, pp. 1-2.

¹⁶⁹ In fact, in 1986 Salimov became a candidate member of CC CPSU. However, in October 1988, he was incriminated for the "cotton affairs" and was ousted from that post during the Plenum CC CPSU on 28 November 1988. In June 1989 he was finally released. Of these events, Carlisle has commented: "There is much irony in that Salimov had stepped into Nishanov's post in 1970 when he was disgraced! In 1986, the individuals involved were the same and the cause of the change identical. However, the roles of victor and victim were reversed." Carlisle, "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev," 127.

¹⁷⁰ "In the Jizzak oblast, there are falsifications in almost in all sectors of the economy. In 1986 alone, falsifications in more than 60% and concealments in 26% of the cases checked were discovered. These trends increased whereas in 1985 they were respectively 30% and 10%. 1.3 million rubles were added to the volume of industrial production, and 720,000 in the volume of investment capital. The value of manipulations in the implementation of municipal services was 303,300 rubles and in the volume of the retail turnover it was 112,000. Of ten industries that had been checked in January-December 1986, falsifications had been discovered in seven. Some

very serious scams within industry and the building sector, with a special focus also on the Ferghana oblast,¹⁷¹ one of those regions where the former Rashidovian leadership still survived.¹⁷² A very important reshuffle happened in Kashkadarya where the FS obkom Turapov – who replaced the ‘veteran’ Gaipov – was dismissed on 27 December 1986. In his place Islam Abduganevich Karimov – the future President of Republic of Uzbekistan – was appointed, obtaining his first relevant post in the party.

However, these frenetic moves in the Uzbek party were not unique cases. In fact, on 16 December 1986, just before the III plenum of the CC CPSU, the longstanding Kazakh leader Dinmukhamed Kunaev¹⁷³ – a survivor of the Central Asian purges of late 1985 – was also replaced under corruption and allegations of “local cronyism”¹⁷⁴ or, as Boldin referred, for “accept[ing] gifts

managers did not work and this is why they so easily commit abuses. [...] In a cotton cleaning factory in the Dustlik raion deficiencies in the organization of accounting have been discovered. The manager was punished with disciplinary sanctions and instructed to restore order. At the end of the period July-October 1986 data in the volume of output sales, of 126,000 rubles, and in the volume of production of 435,000 were falsified. [...As well,] falsifications in construction in 24 companies out of 26 that had been checked, for a total value of 525,000 rubles had been revealed. [...] In nine months in 1986 33 people had been punished for falsification, of whom 30 received disciplinary sanctions and two, sanctions by the party. One was fired.” Prot. 21/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2359, ll. 6-7, 9.

¹⁷¹ A kind of widely diffuse abuse was pinned on some managers who stole and resold building materials. A very famous case was that of I. Kholmatov general engineer of the Ferghana construction company "Uzmestremstrojmontazh." PV, 21253, 280, 12 December 1986, p. 3. A. Akbarov kept the post of director of the OrgOtdel Ferghana raikom for twenty years. Then, controls discovered a vast network of forgery for which he was fired. Also F. Numonzhonova, deputy chairman of the Ferghana raispolkom had illegally built a disproportionate home and was fired and sanctioned. PV, 21261, 288, 21 December 1986, p. 2.

¹⁷² The FS Ferghana obkom, Khamdam Umarov, in power from 1978, was one of those few Rashidovian who kept his post for most of the “Uzbek cotton affair” and the last to be dismissed, on 22 October 1988.

¹⁷³ Kunaev described his political career in his political memoirs, published in two volumes. See Dinmukhamed Akhmetovich Kunaev, *O Moem Vremeni: Vospominaniya* (Almaty: Daur, 1992); Dinmukhamed Akhmetovich Kunaev, *Ot Stalina Do Gorbacheva: V Aspekte Istorii Kazakhstana* (Almaty: Sanat, 1994).

¹⁷⁴ Jack F Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1995), 157–59; Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*.

from subordinates.”¹⁷⁵ The post was assumed by the ethnically-Russian Gennady Kolbin – the former FS Ulyanovsk – resulting in discontent in the nationalist fringes of the Kazakh population. In fact, this change of leadership was seen as a 'colonialist' move, provoking massive demonstrations and three days of street riots (17-19 December) in Almaty during the famous “Jeltoqsan” protests. Two people died and 1,200 were wounded, of whom 774 were agents of the security organs.¹⁷⁶ These episodes were the first evident signs of ethnic strife during Gorbachev's regime. The dismissed Kunaev was then discredited and ousted from the political life of the republic,¹⁷⁷ while a purge campaign was endorsed in Kazakhstan along Uzbek lines. Although this is another story, the dynamics in the neighboring Kazakhstan were similar to those in Uzbekistan where, similarities notwithstanding, the power remained formally in the hands of native figures.¹⁷⁸

5.2.2 The glasnost effect

1986 was most probably the climax of anticorruption policy in the Gorbachevian era,¹⁷⁹ when purges reached their peak in the Soviet Union, and even in Uzbekistan. However, the policy was still actively pursued in the UzSSR through 1987 by the Uzbek party leadership, even as the intensity of

¹⁷⁵ Boldin, *Ten Years That Shook the World: The Gorbachev Era As Witnessed by His Chief of Staff*, 177.

¹⁷⁶ Rudolf Germanovich Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L'aigle Bicéphale* (Longueuil: Éditions Kéruss, 2007), 138.

¹⁷⁷ His final condemnation happened during the plenum of the Kazakh party in March 1987 when the term ‘kunaevschina’, which directly recalled ‘rashidovshchina’, was invented. Razzakov, *Delo, Vzorvavshee SSSR*.

¹⁷⁸ In 1987, when Uzbekistan was already in the eye of the storm, the investigator Kalinichenko – who had been knee-deep in the Russian cotton affair – went to Kazakhstan on behalf of the Genprokuror USSR Rekunkov to investigate abuses in the road transport system. Later this affair grew into large-scale arrests of party leaders. He recalled that during his first meeting with Dinmuhamed Akhmedovich Kunaev, the former Kazakh leader said: "Vladimir, I have heard of you, but I want you to say just once that Kazakhstan is not Uzbekistan, and that there is no chance that those things will happen here." Dmitry Gordon, “Byvshiy Sledovatel’ Po Osobo Vazhnym Delam Pri General’nom Prokurore SSSR Vladimir Kalinichenko: ‘Vsesil’nyy Ministr MVD SSSR Shchelokov Prinyal Resheniye O Moyem Fizicheskom Ustraneni. V Otvet Na Eto Andropov Prikazal gruppe ‘Al’fa’ menya Okhranyat’,” *Bul’var* 46, no. 473 (2004).

¹⁷⁹ Graziosi, *L’Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 518.

purges dropped off somewhat. In fact, in 1987 Usmankhodzhaev also followed through on his commitments to moralize the party and the republican organs, advancing a wave of minor purges. Despite the limited scope of the witch-hunt, 1987 became a crucial year in the transformation in the political dynamics of the 'cotton affairs'. In fact, during glasnost, the corruption cases had a wider publicity - especially after the 'Kunaev affair'¹⁸⁰ - assuming a much spread dimension in the central media and press. This new media event started to thrill readers in the republic and across the entire USSR in a moment when 'mafia stories' and TV series about organized crime – such as the already mentioned *La Piovra* – were very popular. The effects of this new media dimension of the 'Uzbek cotton affair' were nevertheless ambivalent. On the one hand, the party was able to marshal the support of a population against the republic's black sheep. On the other hand, the party itself was seen as the source of that corrupt environment in the first place and was exposed, even from the population and the newly-emerging civil society organizations, to wider criticism 'from below'. Furthermore, the media dimension inexorably spread through Soviet public opinion the idea that Uzbekistan was basically run by a mafia system. Here, the narrative casted Rashidov as a kind of 'godfather', and the population as a mass of guilty forgers. For all these aspects, the Uzbek criminal saga started to be even more politicized and became the main arena in which was fought a war for power between the alleged heroes and the alleged villains. Parallel to glasnost, in 1987 Moscow enforced new legislation that forbade the party and state organs to reinstate figures who had been punished for bribery, embezzlement, *pripiski*¹⁸¹ as well as other reform attempts presumably to stiffen punishments against corruption¹⁸² and administrative penalties for

¹⁸⁰ Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 163.

¹⁸¹ Critchlow, "Prelude to 'Independence': How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow's Grip on Elite Recruitment," 147–52.

¹⁸² In 1987, the Presidium of the SS UzSSR asked for juridical feedback from the MJ USSR and Prokuratura in order to amend articles 153 and 154 of the criminal code of the UzSSR. Specifically, the proposed reform was aimed at changing the minimum punishment prescribed by law for bribery, which was set at 3-4 years. The SC, the MJ, and the Prokuratura USSR all responded in the negative, excluding this possibility since it contradicted the decree of the Presidium SS USSR of 1962 on the criminal liability of corruption and its reform of 23 May 1986. GARF, f. R-7523, op. 145, d. 2814, ll. 5, 8, 10, 14.

those who committed environmental crimes, sold contaminated products,¹⁸³ or who failed to maintain proper crop rotation.¹⁸⁴

In Uzbekistan in January 1987 the usual – or dare we say ‘traditional’ – New Year’s Eve replacements were announced. To that effect, on 31 December 1986, S. Kurbonov became the new chairman of the MID UzSSR¹⁸⁵ while S.M. Nesterenko was removed from his post as the second secretary of Tashkent obkom.¹⁸⁶ In parallel, improvements in the economy for the previous year and small margins of economic recovery were timidly announced. The press reported that in 1986 national income had risen by 3.4%, productivity by 3.5% and the volume of production by 5.8%.¹⁸⁷ However, these nominal data did not consider inflation and cannot be considered reliable according to market standards.

Hence, the Uzbek cotton affair became a school case and even a (negative) argument in the Soviet political debate. Indeed, on 19 January 1987 during a Politburo session, the Soviet head of state Gromyko debated on how to deal with camouflage in the country and malfeasance within cadres. Then, Gorbachev replied that “cotton in Uzbekistan is the most monstrous expression of what you say. And from the top [i.e. Moscow] there is pressure: Come on! The plan has to be met!”¹⁸⁸ This criticism captured Moscow’s concern about cotton production in Uzbekistan, which in the previous harvest (1986) dropped by another 400,000 tons compared to the previous year, while more than 10% of the republican enterprises failed to realize production plans.¹⁸⁹ In 1986 the plan for the cotton harvest was realized only for 87.5% of them, while 711,000 thousand tons of planned

¹⁸³ GARF, f. R-7523, op. 145, d. 2857.

¹⁸⁴ The presidium SS UzSSR introduced a law to enforce crop rotation on 29 May 1981 that set fines and sanctions for the enlargement of irrigated lands. However, this law did not present consistent results and in a memorandum to the presidium of the SS UzSSR sent from the ministry of land improvements and irrigations of the UzSSR on 12 April 1988, it was reported that the worst damage for agriculture was related to cotton monoculture. GARF, f. R-7523, op. 145, d. 2896, ll. 2-13.

¹⁸⁵ PV, 21269, 1, 1 January 1987, p. 1.

¹⁸⁶ PV, 21272, 4, 6 January 1987, p. 1.

¹⁸⁷ PV, 21281, 12, 16 January 1987, p. 1.

¹⁸⁸ Gorbachev Fond, *V Politburo TsK KPSS...* (Moskva: Gorbachev Fond, 2008), 121.

¹⁸⁹ PV, 21288, 20, 24 January 1987, p. 1.

cotton were not provided to the government.¹⁹⁰ Basically, the republic was not sufficiently satisfying the Soviet planners' commitments.

On 27 January, while the Uzbek party announced other local replacements,¹⁹¹ in Moscow a plenum of the CC CPSU advanced the concept of glasnost with the idea of real elections and a secret ballot.¹⁹² On that occasion, Gorbachev linked the importance of glasnost as a way of fighting against corruption, and stated:

The facts of a scornful attitude towards laws, hoodwinking and bribetaking, and the encouragement of servility and glorification all exert a pernicious influence on the moral atmosphere in society.¹⁹³

This new course also coincided with a major relaxation of press censorship,¹⁹⁴ defining a major step in the definition of an "Uzbek cotton affair" in the public opinion. In fact, this media event was running parallel to the glasnost institutional transformations. According to Critchlow, the most evident results were that:

¹⁹⁰ PV, 21295, 27, 1 February 1987, p. 2.

¹⁹¹ On 27 January 1987 it was announced that 90 local leaders were removed in Bukhara obkom during 1985 and 1986 for deception. A rejection of change and a lack of collegiality remained prevalent. Gill and Pitty, *Power in the Party. The Organization of Power and Central-Republican Relations in the CPSU*, 76.

¹⁹² Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 748.

¹⁹³ Holmes comments that the Gensek, "having referred to the indignation of the masses at the behavior of both corrupt and self-centered state officials [...] singled out regions and ministries where 'the degeneration of cadres' and 'violations of socialist legality' had been particularly acute; the regions/areas listed were Uzbekistan, Moldavia, Turkmenia, a number of Kazakh provinces, Krasnodar Territory, Rostov Province and the city of Moscow, while the two ministries named were those for Foreign Trade and Internal Affairs. Gorbachev then proceeded to criticize the rampant embezzlement, bribe-taking, report-padding (and alcoholism) within the CPSU, following which he explicitly argued that it was these sorts of negative phenomenon that had led to the adoption of the policies of 'acceleration' (of social and economic development – the Russian word is uskoreniye) and perestroika. Thus two of the four domestic policies and buzz-words most directly associated with Gorbachev (the others being glasnost and demokratisatsiya) were here being justified as a reaction, inter alia, to corruption." Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*, 227.

¹⁹⁴ Hiro, *Inside Central Asia: A Political and Cultural History of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Iran*, 133.

Initially, the top leadership's response to Uzbek resistance was to keep on the pressure. For a time, obkom, gorkom, and raikom officials continued to be singled out for censure at Party meetings and in the press. But gradually, as the resistance movement broadened from the bureaucratic elite to embrace the cultural intelligentsia and other strata of Uzbek society, the campaign slackened.¹⁹⁵

In this regard, Coulloudon also affirms that,

one of the most immediate side effects of glasnost was the aggravation of the preexisting lack of confidence in the official structures [...]. The more the Russian press published articles on widespread corruption, the more commonplace it made the phenomenon and the more indispensable the struggle against corruption seemed to be.¹⁹⁶

Indeed, with the media event more and more news also appeared on the purges, which from 1984 were actually claiming victims, while in 1986 alone almost a quarter of the chairmen of the local soviets were involved.¹⁹⁷ However, this improvement in the freedom of information and speech also was manipulated by a party that remained the main filter of evidence against any external¹⁹⁸ or internal¹⁹⁹ 'distortive influence.' Another level of criticism

¹⁹⁵ Critchlow, "Prelude to 'Independence': How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow's Grip on Elite Recruitment," 150.

¹⁹⁶ Virginie Coulloudon, "Russia Adrift. Twenty Years of Anticorruption Campaigns," in *Corrupt Histories*, ed. Emmanuel Kreike and William Chester Jordan (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 257–58.

¹⁹⁷ A report of the presidium SS USSR indicated that, in 1986 alone, within the ispolkoms of the UzSSR, there were 1600 chairmen, 1689 deputy chairmen and 1601 secretaries. From among these 387, 377, and 297, respectively, were replaced. Additionally, 86, 34, and 33, respectively, were ousted on account of having been compromised. Furthermore, in a Resolution of the Presidium of the SS UzSSR (4 February 1987) on the improvement of the organizational work of officials – as required by the XXVII Congress CPSU – it emerged that in the local soviets, in the ispolkoms, and in the standing commissions an atmosphere for the development of criticism and self-criticism was absent. Neither was there a principled evaluation of the main assessment of the activity of organs and officials. Often, they did not have a clear sense of what glasnost implied, and the new managers did not understand the new tasks and worked with old methods without enforcing the acceleration of the social and economic development and of the plans. GARF, f. R-7523, op. 145, d. 2144, ll. 37, 57.

¹⁹⁸ Indeed, another consequence of the media dimension was that critical articles and responses emerged against those international scholars who were engaged in Uzbek studies. For example, on 6 February 1987 the newspaper *Ozbekiston Adabiyoti* va

that appeared in the glasnost period regards illicit activities in dealing with the negative phenomena. The lack of warrants and the scarce respect for the rule of law in the republic were points of criticism: too often even the law enforcement organs were guilty of misapplying the law and abusing their powers. Exemplary was a denunciation that appeared on 11 February in PV where a huge article entitled “Perestroika and law” reported the defects of the judicial organs, denouncing:

The arbitrariness of some detentions, arrests, and criminal prosecutions – the most flagrant violations of the rule of law and law enforcement. Now these facts are rare, and each one becomes an object of investigation, and the perpetrators are brought to strict liability. Much is being done to improve the professional level of personnel, and the development of their high moral position, civic courage, and incorruptibility.²⁰⁰

Pursuing the usual formulation of ‘criticism and self-criticism’, the party admitted the defects in the republic and openly demanded that the law enforcement organs improve their work. In parallel, serious defects in the agriculture were still revealed. For example, in the previous year the republic did neither produced 5 million tons, and the party was admitting its defects and calling on the citizens to trust the judiciary organs as a way to reconstruct the republic and the whole country.²⁰¹ The results find expression in the

San”ati carried many articles criticizing the work of William Fierman and Michael Rywkin that revealed the difficulties of nationalities in Soviet Central Asia. The general tone in response spoke to the usual narrative of ‘brotherhood among nations’ and the commitments of Central Asians to the Soviet cause.¹⁹⁸ Similarly, the Western news agencies were criticized for reports about protests in Kazakhstan, asserting that foreign journalists in the Soviet Union were abetting the CIA in its attempts to spread anti-Soviet propaganda. FBIS, “JPRS-UPA-87-013. 14 July 1987 - 275098. Soviet Union. Political Affairs,” 1987, 8–9. Despite these ‘propaganda wars’ on Central Asian issues, American intelligence started to focus on a much more serious problem related to the traffic of narcotics between Ferghana valley, Bukhara, and Turkmenistan. In February 1987 alone, the Bukharan police seized nearly 100 kg of opiates and *koknar* – a sort of poppy seed tea – and three kg of charas hashish (*nasha*) from passengers on the Bukhara-1 Railroad and registered a warning about the diffusion of drug addicted people in Khorezm. Ibid., 109; Frank Shanty, *The Nexus : International Terrorism and Drug Trafficking from Afghanistan* (Santa Barbara: Praeger Security International, 2011).

¹⁹⁹ An example is the ‘Minkin affair’, a secondary story that will be reported in the final annex.

²⁰⁰ PV, 21301, 33, 11 February 1987, p. 3.

²⁰¹ PV, 21301, 33, 11 February 1987, p. 3.

stories of the former regional ‘bosses’, who were now under arrest. For example, on 13 February, an article appeared in *Sovet Ozbekistoni* that recalled the misdemeanors of the dismissed Khudaibergenov – who was at last under arrest for bribery²⁰² – as well as “M. Vaisov, former first secretary of the Kushkapir raikom, and various rayon farm leaders [had been] expelled from the party and criminally prosecuted for filing false reports on a massive scale and other crimes.”²⁰³

Other criticism emerged during the IV plenum CC CPUz (14 February 1987) where Usmankhodzhaev admitted that in the previous year the republic did not realize the economic plan for a value of 900 million rubles in products and that the average production in Uzbekistan had been four times inferior to the quality produced in the rest of the country.²⁰⁴ The FS CPUz affirmed that, in the previous year, the mechanized cotton harvest had amounted to less than 2 million tons of raw cotton – only scant use of machines in the harvest – with a loss of more than 200 million rubles.²⁰⁵ He continued his report stating that because of the negative phenomena, in 1986 alone 750 managers, eight obkom secretaries, and 100 gorkom and raikom secretaries had been dismissed, as well as and 40 executives of gorispolkoms and raispolkoms, 18 ministers and many other officials from other agencies.²⁰⁶ In his advancing criticism, Usmankhodzhaev commented harshly that, despite the purges, in many places the situation was “as in Rashidov’s times”,²⁰⁷ thereby implying that a new wave of purges would soon overwhelm the republic. He thus invited all the key players to keep their guard up and to persevere through the cleaning work that had already begun. On that occasion, it was shown how the rate of turnover was often so high that officials were covering their posts just for a few months.²⁰⁸ Finally, Usmankhodzhaev, closed the plenum affirming:

²⁰² Khudaibergenov "considered himself a leader who could do anything he wished unchecked by law, and indulged in self-interest and arrogance. He selected cadres without regard to their efficiency or qualifications, but only according to features of personal loyalty, servility, toadyism, and compatriotism." FBIS, "JPRS-UPA-87-013. 14 July 1987 - 275098. Soviet Union. Political Affairs," 4.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ Prot 4/1987, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 156, d. 2062, l. 7, 9.

²⁰⁵ Prot 4/1987, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 156, d. 2062, l. 10.

²⁰⁶ Prot 4/1987, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 156, d. 2062, l. 20.

²⁰⁷ Prot 4/1987, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 156, d. 2062, l. 50.

²⁰⁸ On this purpose, Critchlow comments: “An indigenous official appointed to the key job of oblast executive committee chairman in Navoi oblast had to be dismissed only

With the XVI plenum and the XXI Congress of the CPUz, we have started [to enforce] these traditions of healthy and constructive criticism [that] we must continue and persevere.²⁰⁹

This commitment sounded like a warning. Therefore, an immediate result of the plenum was the long-awaited addition of another big name of the Post-Rashidovians to the list of purges. Salimov - who had been replaced in his post as chairman of the Presidium of the SS UzSSR by Nishanov only months before - was now ousted even from his post at the CC CPUz, again to be replaced by Nishanov.²¹⁰ This indicates that, thanks to Moscow's support, Nishanov was becoming more and more powerful and was even able to marginalize the main allies of Usmankhodzhaev and to enforce a position in the buro and in the appointment of cadres.²¹¹ According to Anishchev's memoirs, Nishanov himself was definitely not a naïve person.²¹² He probably had a Machiavellian political strategy that aimed to preserve Moscow consent, to oust his internal rivals at any cost and to advance his position within the party. This probably would not be too far from reality.

Furthermore, after the February plenum, other purges hit top managerial figures of justice²¹³ and agriculture,²¹⁴ a sector that was still presenting many problems and was again at the center of the CPUz political agenda.²¹⁵ Thus,

eight months later, a raion first secretary appointed in Bukhara oblast lasted only one month longer, and a gorkom second secretary in Tashkent oblast was kept for only three months. All of them were removed for 'negative reasons.'" Critchlow, "Prelude to 'Independence': How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow's Grip on Elite Recruitment," 150–51.

²⁰⁹ Prot 4/1987, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 156, d. 2062, l. 71.

²¹⁰ PV, 21307, 39, 15 February 1987, p. 1.

²¹¹ PV, 21308, 40, 16 February 1987, p. 2.

²¹² Anishchev, *Vostochnyi Ornament*, 552.

²¹³ On 4 March, there was another reshuffle of the SC UzSSR members. PV, 21336, 68, 25 March 1987, p. 1.

²¹⁴ An example was Yu. B. Yuldashev, the director of the agricultural association of the UzSSR who was ousted and criminally prosecuted for abuse of power, and defects in controls and financial statements. PV, 21319, 51, 1 March 1987, p. 2.

²¹⁵ In fact, also in a buro meeting of the CPUz (11 March 1987) it was reported that over the previous six years an additional 48 million rubles for the development of agriculture in the republic had been invested. However, these funds produced very modest returns, while nominally productivity rose by 3.2% and wages by 30% (PV, 21327, 59, 12 March 1987, p. 1). More threatening, the newspapers also reported that in the previous year, the republic had not realized the cotton harvest plan, while many funds and much energy was spent to develop the agricultural sector. According to the

the party wanted to focus on the undeniable difficulties of the country, highlighting them as a necessary step to face in order to implement perestroika. The CPUz publicized the idea that “perestroika is not like walking on an open road, but is, rather, to climb up the mountain on a trail that has never been open.” In order to succeed, it would therefore be necessary to strengthen the responsibility and discipline of cadres and to fight against the negative phenomena that slow the *uskoreniye* down.²¹⁶ This kind of narrative – and maybe ideological program – was also advanced at the central level. During a Politburo session held on 24 March to discuss the situation in the country, Yakovlev recalled how corruption was an All-Union problem, stating: “When we talk about corruption, everyone thinks that it is not in us, but somewhere in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, etc. [but this is not the case].”²¹⁷ However, in 1987 the anti-corruption campaign had already passed its zenith, and these ideological references would often emerge in the public domain as mere slogans. In contrast, in Uzbekistan corruption remained one of the main political points of contention throughout the next months.

During the V plenum of the CC CPUz (28 March 1987), Usmankhodzhaev gave a confused, colorful, and complex speech that was in the typical perestroika style. Some parts had been censored in the press, but we can easily fill the lacunae with archival material in order to represent a very important episode of 1987 in the Central Asian republic. In fact, Usmankhodzhaev’s speech sounded as odd as a desperate message of a leader that was seeking consent from upper and lower levels. The FS CPUz indeed appeared as a lonely leader that was finding himself with scorched earth around and tried to get the Moscow support at any costs. The plenum was also under the supervision of the senior officials of the CC CPSU Ponomarev and Cheremnykh who attended this Tashkent event. Parallel, in the plenum was formalized the appointment in the CC CPUz buro of M. Kh. Khalmukhamedov, a former worker in the apparatus of the CC CPSU who was considered as a loyal communist. In that event, the FS CPUz closely followed the new course of Soviet politics, confirming his total devotion to the implementation of perestroika and glasnost.

news, the party had exhibited hitherto a fundamental unwillingness either to control and demand too much from its cadres, a situation that was no longer tenable in any way. PV, 21330, 62, 17 March 1987, p. 1.

²¹⁶ PV, 21334, 66, 22 March 1987, p. 1.

²¹⁷ Gorbachev Fond, V *Politburo TsK KPSS...*, 150.

According to Usmankhodzhaev, these two ambitious reforms were slowed down by the legacies of “an atmosphere of complacency and permissiveness on a large scale entrenched theft, bribery, profiteering, unearned incomes.”²¹⁸ Therefore, he recalled the need to implement the ideological work of Marxism-Leninism, instructing the cadres to avoid repeating the mistakes of Rano Abdullaeva. In fact, the former secretary protected under Rashidov’s influence, was in the middle of a *donos* war since 1984 and was arrested for bribery and accused of being Rashidov’s mistress. Her expulsion from the republican buro and secretariat was thus formalized²¹⁹ for her

²¹⁸ PV, 21340, 72, 29 March 1987, p. 1.

²¹⁹ As mentioned, Rano Khabibovna Abdullaeva, ‘Rashidov’s pupil’, was in the middle of the political struggle already in 1984, when dozens of slandering letters arrived in the CC CPSU to denounce her misdemeanors. She was born in 1935 to a famous Uzbek geologist, Habib Muhammedovich Abdullaev. In 1955, she started her party career and she became FS of Uzbek Komsomol (1963-1971) and then she became Deputy chairman of SM UzSSR and Secretary of the CPUz on ideology until 1987. In her memoirs, she justified the use of gifts in Uzbek society, narrating the story of her arrest and how she had ‘overcome hell’: She felt to be in the middle of a conspiracy and neither Usmankhodzhaev nor Nishanov saved her, and indeed both acted in concert with Gdlyan who supplied them with this dirty dossier to compromise her. According to Abdullaeva, this was the typical Berian style. Then, she was arrested on 29 October 1987 in her office at the Institute of Party History at the CC CPUz and deported to an old KGB building – which she defined as ‘Gdlyan’s headquarters’ – where she was interrogated by Katusev – Deputy Prosecutor General of the USSR – and Gdlyan. She was pushed to confess that she had received bribes and she even declared the great influence she had on – and that she had been the lover of – the defunct Sharaf Rashidov. This information was given to the Gdlyan-Ivanov team during her confessions on 25 November 1987. Then, she reconsidered her affirmations, stating on 22 December 1987 that she was an honest woman and not Rashidov’s mistress. However, she did reaffirm that she had received bribes from Khudayberdiyev (5000 rubles), from Radzhabov (7000), from Aytmuratov (5000), from Kamalov three times for 10,000 rubles and jewellery (rings) and earrings with diamonds, from Khudaibergenov (5000), from Kanyazov (4000), from Musakhanov (15,000) and from Karimov (12,000). She had several confrontations with the investigators who tried to extort confessions from her as two *beriyantsy* (Beria followers) put psychological pressure on her and threatened to arrest her children in order to extract self-incriminating evidence. Her detention lasted until May 30, 1988 and was then extended to 30 December 1988 (and again to 30 May, 1989), and finally to 31 October 1989. Her main accuser was Khudaibergenov and both accused her and denied their allegations but, after speaking with the KGB colonel Dukhanin – who was probably instructed to end the case and was part of the Gdlyan-Ivanov affair we will see later –

“serious shortcomings in conducting the party’s ideological work”.²²⁰ Abdullaeva was thus one of the latest Post-Rashidovians to be dispossessed and, as we have seen, a part of the ambitious political strategy proposed by the ‘revenant’ Nishanov to oust his rivals.

Again on that occasion, Usmankhodzhaev appeared even more marginalized and lonely in his leadership post and made a very sharp statement that would certainly have inflamed some nationalist minds of the party. Indeed, a very surprising point in his speech was the criticism of national (Uzbek) workers, which presented fake statistics, arguing that they ought to follow the example of the ‘European’ workers who toiled so much more effectively in the industry.²²¹ Basically, in an already very tense context and in a colonial-like society – which was in many ways segregated – the figure who should have been the greatest exponent of the republican ethnic majority ended up glorifying the ‘colonizers’ and blaming those natives that he was supposed to represent. A strange, upside down discrimination thus resulted, whereby Uzbek natives were presented as the main culprits for the negative situation in the republic, including the still very common practices of bribery, corruption, and theft of socialist property.²²² Thus, the FS CPUz evidenced the backwardness and formalism in the republic as a matter of a long-standing local mentality that had to be changed and he gave some practical examples stating:

Let us examine how we work. In the past year in the country per hectare raw cotton was produced on an average of 24.3 quintals per hectare, and in Karakalpak ASSR the yield was 20.8, in Jizzakh oblast 18.6, Navoi 16.9, and Kashkadarya 14.3. Many kolkhozes in the country [produced] fewer than 10 quintals. Judge all this yourself: Do we use the full capacity and the opportunities if we have to capitalize on our growth prospects? The answer

she denied all the accusations against her. Finally, with the judgement of the SC USSR, on 15 January 1990, the charges against her were all dropped for lack of evidence and she was released. Her case was controversial because, according to Ilyukin – and even in her own posthumous version – she was forced to make those affirmations in order to accuse other people. Gdlyan and Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo*; Ilyukhin, *Oborotni: Kak Bylo Nadumano “Uzbekskoe” Delo*; Rano Abdullaeva, *Preodolenie Ada* (Moskva: Monolit, 2009), 19, 39, 56, 60–62, 109–10, 130–32, 134, 136.

²²⁰ PV, 21340, 72, 29 March 1987, p. 1.

²²¹ Prot. 5/1987, RGASPI f. 17, op. 156, d. 2063, l. 9.

²²² Prot. 5/1987, RGASPI f. 17, op. 156, d. 2063, l. 10.

can be only one. [These opportunities] are not used because many of our cadres live and work in the old way.²²³

Then, after listing the shortcomings in several economic sectors of the republic he stated: “All this dictates the urgent need for restructuring of the economic mechanism.”²²⁴ Substantially, he was affirming that even the shortages and economic defects were the consequence of a backward mentality that had somehow survived in the republic.²²⁵ Then, again, the FS recalled the responsibility of Rashidov and those others who had dominated within his territorial base, stating how in Jizzakh in the previous year it had been promised to fulfill the plan for 102% but in reality had just further proven the propensity to ‘falsehood and inefficiency’.²²⁶ Then, he recalled how much, under his leadership, the party had made many efforts to struggle against the ‘official plunderers’, firing in the five years prior alone more than 20,000 people from the apparatus. At the same time, he admitted that the payroll of the party nomenklatura had nevertheless increased from 333,000 to 393,000.²²⁷ Then, Usmankhodzhaev reported how 1986 was the hardest moment and how in that year alone there had been serious cases of bad justice and 2,500 people had been imprisoned without charge.²²⁸ The FS also confirmed that many letters addressed to the party had arrived, as well as petitions and other manifestations of impatience from a part of the population – or the victim’s families – that was mobilized against the perceived injustice during the season of mass purges in the UzSSR. Probably even Usmankhodzhaev saw the danger of this situation, especially in a context of glasnost, where the potential for the public discrediting of party work was now so great.

However, perestroika was affirmed to be the main mission of the Uzbek political agenda and also the FS CPUz affirmed “the main task: to accelerate the widespread development and perestroika, giving it a universal and irreversible scope.” Then, he stated that “the CC and obkoms should pay more attention to the gorkoms and raikoms – linking them to the most important party and helping them to improve the style and methods of

²²³ PV, 21340, 72, 29 March 1987, p. 2.

²²⁴ PV, 21340, 72, 29 March 1987, p. 2.

²²⁵ PV, 21340, 72, 29 March 1987, p. 2.

²²⁶ Prot. 5/1987, RGASPI f. 17, op. 156, d. 2063, l. 12.

²²⁷ Prot. 5/1987, RGASPI f. 17, op. 156, d. 2063, l. 20.

²²⁸ Prot. 5/1987, RGASPI f. 17, op. 156, d. 2063, l. 24.

work.”²²⁹ Fundamentally, in its great contradictions, the CPUz was narrating the perestroika openings²³⁰ and, at the same time, supporting a kind of centralization at party level.

Then, Usmanhodzhaev affirmed that in 1986 alone, 22,000 executives had been denounced, of which more than 2,000 were officially reprimanded and punished with party sanctions. A further 158 leaders were ousted from the party for unsatisfactory reports, in a republic where 90% of kolkhozes and sovkhozes directors had been replaced. Then, at the end of his speech, the FS also confirmed that some of the former top figures of the republic had been arrested for embezzlement and bribery, including Osetrov, Khudayberdiyev, Orlov and five former FS obkoms²³¹ and one of these (Karimov) had even been condemned to death.²³² Finally, the FS CPUz announced measures against those people exploiting the ‘negative phenomena’ against the party, stating:

The buro of the CC [CPUz] considers it necessary to warn that it will not allow anyone to use the ‘fight against negative phenomena’ as a weapon against the people’s trust in the party [...and that] every such attempt shall be punished most severely.²³³

Usmanhodzhaev thus seemed to understand how many political risks were behind the ‘fight against negative phenomena.’ In fact, the argument that helped him to consolidate his power was inexorably becoming a boomerang against a leader that appeared weak and isolated in these tasks. The signs of edginess against him emerged also at the party local level where a call for ‘stability’ was launched, reports of the insufficient training of replacement cadres were presented, and evidence of the critical social situations in some regions where the purges were badly tolerated was

²²⁹ PV, 21340, 72, 29 March 1987, p. 3.

²³⁰ Usmanhodzhaev also mentioned that “[r]ecently we discussed at the meetings in groups and elected more than 9000 people as leaders of various ranks, including 70 directors of industrial enterprises, 18 directors of state farms and 49 chairmen of collective farms, and 8000 team leaders. Developing the practice of electing leaders, party committees should manage these processes, to ensure a proficient atmosphere in the team. It is important to avoid formalism and to advance in democracy.” PV, 21340, 72, 29 March 1987, p. 3.

²³¹ Prot. 5/1987, RGASPI f. 17, op. 156, d. 2063, l. 34.

²³² Critchlow, “Prelude to ‘Independence’: How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow’s Grip on Elite Recruitment.”

²³³ PV, 21340, 72, 29 March 1987, p. 4.

brought forward. An example was the Ferghana valley where the social situation exploded next²³⁴ and where – despite the purges and new opportunities – unemployment rates remained very high.²³⁵

The situation appeared ever more critical and Usmankhodzhaev seemed to not be an effective leader able to heal the republic. As we have seen, he tried to follow Moscow's narrative and the course of the investigations that the central prokuratura was massively enforcing in the republic. In parallel, under glasnost, he began to suffer more and more attacks from a large segment of the cadres – who did not like the radical policies of the FS CPUz – and by the more frequent victims of flawed justice. Similarly, the inner struggles within the party and the media event related to the 'Uzbek cotton affair' – which we will discuss further in the next chapter – would trouble the interethnic relations in the republic. Signs of impatience with the Russians – who were seen as 'colonizers' – and Uzbeks who were considered as 'corruptors' in the rest of the USSR would come to the fore. It would thus be fair to say that the *sekretar nol'*, after four years in power, seemed effectively isolated and under constant attack by those who wanted to liquidate him.

²³⁴ Parallel to the plenum, many protests occurred in the Fergana valley against the Andijan chief judge, who had been appointed by Moscow and was disliked by the local population. PV, 21340, 72, 29 March 1987, p. 3.

²³⁵ In this regard, Critchlow comments: "In the Fergana Valley in 1987, ironically a center of massive unemployment, there were positions for 23,500 economists with higher education filled by only 7,500 incumbents, of whom 2,800 had already reached pension age, and replacements were being received at the rate of only 700 a year. A raikom secretary in Tashkent claimed that by the time he could train instructors and department heads they were snatched away by higher authority [...] Doubts about the impact on the economy were also openly expressed. The first secretary of Surkhandarya oblast questioned whether anything had really changed for collectives who had adopted the new work style: "Based on our experience, you can say it hasn't." In March 1987, the chairman of the Uzbek Council of Ministers observed, "According to all basic indicators, Samarkand oblast has begun to work worse than at the beginning of last year." The first secretary of the Syrdarya obkom commented that in some places "rank-and-file working people are seeing that there is a perestroika in words but not in deed, that everything is as before." The head of an administration in Khorezm oblast was censured in the press for speaking up at an obkom plenum: "They should help us and not criticize. Otherwise there's no desire to work. What's happening is that perestroika is reduced to a settling of scores." Ibid., 148–49.

5.2.3 The fall of *sekretar nol'*

In the aftermath of the V plenum of the CC CPUz, a debate emerged about the inefficacy of perestroika. Apparently, the new course of reforms did not present the expected results, did not reach the agroindustrial sector - that was still mismanaging the fixed-cost methods - and did not change the productive priorities. All these elements were presented as a determinant circumstance that slowed down productivity growth.²³⁶ Similar defects were still revealed in the law enforcement organs and in the MVD where, again, perestroika had essentially not arrived in its 'democratic' dimension: rather, the 'change' was evident in terms of cadres reshuffle, with more than 3,000 officers and most of its leaders had been ousted in the previous two years alone.²³⁷ Substantially, the party revealed a general misunderstanding about perestroika that was schizophrenically considered both as a mean to heal the country and parallel as the main goal to pursue. However, despite the many slogans that were repeated as a 'late Soviet mantra', there was no certain strategy to pursue and probably neither a definition of what perestroika, in effective, was. In any case, it was also presented as a necessary solution to heal Uzbekistan.²³⁸

Similarly, glasnost was presented as an essential mission to pursue. It is interesting to note how PV on 4 April 1987 released an interview of Rafik Nishanov, in which the rising star of the CPUz called for greater enforcement the methods of transparency (glasnost) especially during soviet elections.²³⁹ Effectively, the chairman of the Presidium of the SS UzSSR was acquiring much more relevance also in the press and, trying to garner greater consent from Gorbachev. By exploiting the course of the glasnost narrative, he was progressively overshadowing the unpopular Usmankhodzhaev.

²³⁶ PV, 21342, 74, 1 April 1987, p. 1.

²³⁷ In early 1987, one of them was even arrested while 250 managers were removed from their posts because were considered 'unreliable'. PV, 21343, 74, 2 April 1987, p. 6. Very sharp criticism emerged even against a part of the local MVD that pretended to do a good job just by attending meetings and undertaking bureaucratic activities "on paper." However, they were not working well in the neutralization of crime. PV, 21355, 87, 16 April 1987, p. 3.

²³⁸ The official press pushed the idea that perestroika was a process that was still struggling to be affirmed, and that was still only slowly and timidly enforced. However, it seemed to be necessary, considering the rapid decrease of UzSSR productivity. PV, 21344, 76, 3 April 1987, p. 1.

²³⁹ PV, 21345, 77, 4 April 1987, p. 2.

Parallel to glasnost, the criticism of economic defects in the republic was even more enforced. For example, during the Tashkent obkom plenum on 7 April 1987, it emerged that across the oblast, despite the massive investment in agriculture, cotton production had remained more or less at the same level for 15 years. Criticisms were also levelled against the gorkoms and raikoms for their inefficiency in accomplish economic goals.²⁴⁰ Similarly, the CPC USSR revealed that many anonymous letters had been sent to the SS USSR to denounce shortages and mismanagement in the agriculture and accountability in the Tashkent oblast.²⁴¹ Furthermore, particularly serious problems were also highlighted in water management.²⁴²

As we have mentioned, in the Uzbek cotton affair a great part of the cases were not, in fact, directly related to cotton. Indeed, in the Karakalpak ASSR similar cases in milk and rice production were discovered, even revealing evidence of opium cultivation.²⁴³ Similarly, in the plenum of the Khorezm

²⁴⁰ PV, 21348, 80, 8 April 1987, p. 2.

²⁴¹ I.e. falsification of additions to the agricultural production and of the construction as well as realization of new illegal lands. Of the local department of Gosbank, it was revealed that it was overestimating the value of works completed. GARF, f. 9527, op. 1, d. 9333, ll. 1-11.

²⁴² In 1987, the presidium of the SS UzSSR stated that in the republic the legal requirements on rational and careful use of water resources for irrigation and environmental safety were inadequately enforced. The use of water resources remained "very expensive, ineffective and wasteful of water" because more than 70% of the channels do not have anti infiltration cover and 30% of the water does not reach the fields and 18km cubes of water are of drainage outflow, of which a large part is wasted. GARF, f. R-7523, op. 145, d. 2160, l. 174.

²⁴³ On April 1987, the Presidium of the SS Karakalpak ASSR reported that in the autonomous republic 58,000 hectares of illegal fields were revealed and annually 40,000 tons of non-existent cotton were falsified, as was a fifth of the milk plan. At the same time, the financial damage from thefts associated with cotton corresponded to more than 17 million rubles just in the years 1982-1983. For these facts, in Karakalpakya 36 managers were dismissed and 286 workers of the local MVD fired. Additionally, more than half of the executives of the prokuratura and courts were similarly discharged. In 1982-1983 alone, in the Karakalpak ASSR more than 500 thefts against socialist property were revealed, and a further 700 in 1985-1986, noting an increase in large-scale theft of something like 350%. Additionally, illicit expenses and theft in consumer cooperatives with a value of six million rubles were revealed. The damage done during the "cotton affairs" in 1982-1984 amounted to 22 million rubles. Forgery and thefts were revealed also in rice production and in 1984 alone 22 individuals were criminally prosecuted. 970 tons of stolen rice were seized in these

obkom it was revealed that that the cotton plan had not been fulfilled for three consecutive years and in the oblast even in communications and transport fraud, theft, embezzlements and other crimes were revealed.²⁴⁴

The CPUz was then elaborating a new strategy that could facilitate the criminal prosecution of party officials that – to some extent – had hitherto been protected by a degree of immunity. Indeed, in mid-April 1987, the necessity to expel wrongdoers from the party as a preliminary condition for implementing the judicial measures and arrests was debated in the party. This seemed to be crucial in a republic where ‘negative phenomena’ related to the mismanagement of public resources was still a real and present danger especially at regional level.²⁴⁵ In this phase of unfulfilled hopes and political uncertainties, the role of Usmankhodzhaev was much more marginalized, while Nishanov was even more present in the media and press, presenting himself as a sort of ideological champion of perestroika in the republic. It is interesting to note how he presented the new course of Soviet politics as a real doctrinal duty to Leninism and linked this narrative with the

investigations. For these crimes, in 1985-86 criminal trials for about 800 people were opened. For abuse of power and defects in the work the former FS Karakalpak obkom K.K. Kamalov was expelled from the CPSU and criminally prosecuted, while the Nukus gorkom asked the Presidium of the SS USSR to cancel his title of Hero of Socialist Labor. In addition, the former members of the presidium of the SS and SM of the Karakalpak ASSR, two obkom secretaries and 21 executives of ministries and institutions were punished and expelled from their jobs. In total, for various violations, 189 executives were replaced and seven deputies were expelled from the SS Karakalpak ASSR and 55 from the local soviets. Before, it had been common for executives to forgive lawlessness and violations related to livestock, the illegal opening of new fields, and the illicit use of technology belonging to the state. Various machinations, speculation, and resale of stolen goods were widespread, weakening the fight against tendencies to private property and even incidents of non-business income and livestock shortages. In 1984, in Karakalpakya, 460 instances of cultivation of opium poppies over an area of 215.8 hectares were revealed, rising to 5.46 hectares in 1986. The goal of doing everything to eradicate the phenomenon was thus set in 1987. In any case, the production of cotton fiber had increased to 32.4% compared to 27% in 1984. GARF, f. R-7523, op. 145, d. 2160, ll. 190-194.

²⁴⁴ PV, 21351, 91, 21 April 1987, p. 2.

²⁴⁵ In fact, in April 1987 the press revealed that in Kashkadarya oblast, 88% of obkom nomenklatura and 75% of gorkom and raikom nomenklatura had been recently replaced and 366 leaders were dismissed for ‘negative phenomena.’ PV, 21348, 88, 18 April 1987. Critchlow, “Prelude to ‘Independence’: How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow’s Grip on Elite Recruitment.”

commitments of the moralization campaign in the UzSSR. In his speech in Tashkent for the commemoration of the 117th anniversary of Lenin's birth, Nishanov recalled the transformations in the republic and the defects that were due to the period of 'Sharafrashidovshchina', a neologism that became "synonymous with intrigue and blasphemy, hypocrisy and ambiguity, disgrace and corruption, nonsense rhetoric and self-celebration."²⁴⁶ With his harsh words, Nishanov acknowledged his ideological influence on the party and affirmed that efforts to fight against negative phenomena were effective, but still not sufficient. This criticism was to some extent against the whole party and indirectly against the ruling FS.

In spring 1987, open criticism emerged even on local issues²⁴⁷ and the mismanagement of some of the prokuratura officials who, as mentioned, were often committing errors in evaluating the cases and sometimes were even abusing their power.²⁴⁸ This situation led to a renewed purge within the republican prosecution offices. Similar condemnation emerged also in the parliamentary debates against those agencies that were supposed to internally control the party and state organs as the PCC and PCP.²⁴⁹ Despite

²⁴⁶ PV, 21362, 94, 24 April 1987, p. 2. An extract of the speech is reported in the appendix.

²⁴⁷ The party revealed in the press that, in 1986, the Andijan oblast recorded a plan deficit of 63,000 tons of cotton because 127 kolkhozes and 87 sovkhoses had failed to realize the plan. PV, 21366, 98, 29 April 1987, p. 2.

²⁴⁸ PV reported that many officials of the prokuratura abused their powers for their personal benefit and profit by any means. Many offices of the prokuratura "were even closed to decent and principled workers." In the Samarkand University of Law, there were many children of the local prokuratura officials for whom a good job had already been guaranteed. Even there, facts of violation of socialist law occurred. Then, stories of poorly implemented justice, were reported. For example, K. Yarbabayev was sentenced in 1982 for no reason and was released only in 1986. Cases such as this were all too common. PV, 21381, 113, 17 May 1987, p. 2. Even in the local prokuratura department of Kattarkurgana several cases of poorly implemented justice for individuals unjustly convicted were registered, while the prosecutors did not provide adequate control over the proceedings as well as the Samarkand oblast prokuratura. PV, 21402, 134, 11 June 1987, p. 2.

²⁴⁹ During the XI meeting of the V session of the SS UzSSR, the second secretary of the CC CPUz, and deputy V.P. Anishchev, denounced the case of Yakh'yayev – the first deputy chairman of the PCC UzSSR who was an "odious figure" who committed many crimes. They also denounced Mamatov – director of the PCC of the Altyarik raikom, who was corrupt and an extortionist and for this was condemned to eight years in prison. Finally, they denounced Yuldashev, the chairman of the PCC Chinaz raikom

the 'major purges' seemed to have been relegated to the past, this was just an illusion of normalization. In fact, the republic was facing probably its hardest period in terms of purges²⁵⁰ at mid-high administrative level, while revelations of negative phenomena had even increased. For example, on 2 June, PV announced cases of fraud uncovered had increased in the second semester of 1986 and also in the first quarter of 1987,²⁵¹ while other attacks against the CPUz arrived also from a part of the Uzbek intellectual society that blamed the party leadership for acting too late.²⁵²

In summer 1987, while in Moscow perestroika had started to assume distinct tones of democratization,²⁵³ in Uzbekistan the purges proceeded to great fanfare. It was announced that, in the Tashkent oblast, "hundreds" of culprits had been recently expelled from the party for crimes, corruption, speculation and abuse of power. Nevertheless, Gorbachev seemed to be worried about the inefficiency of the system of replacing cadres, who were often simply laterally moved to other posts within the republic or were

who abused his power and was a cheater and trader in cars. In Anishchev's speech it emerged that in the previous two years alone, 17 workers of the PCC – of whom eight were executives – had been put to trial for the 'negative phenomena' and were ousted from their posts. PV, 21389, 121, 27 May 1987, p. 2.

²⁵⁰ Gill also reports: "Half the workers in the CC CPUz apparat, 40 per cent of obkom, gorkom and raikom secretaries and 45 per cent of ispolkom chairmen were sacked during 1986 and 1987, according to Anishchev, who thought the nomenklatura system of appointments from above needed to be kept in order to ensure that suitable people remained in top jobs." Gill and Pitty, *Power in the Party. The Organization of Power and Central-Republican Relations in the CPSU*, 77.

²⁵¹ PV, 21393, 125, 2 June 1987, p. 2.

²⁵² For example, the scholar Kamil Ikramov, son of the former FS CPUz (1929-1937) executed during the great purges, denounced 'Sharafrashidovshchina' as the origin of the republic's problems and criticized the delay in condemning such an immoral and immodest figure as the former FS CPUz. In fact, Ikramov described Rashidov as a "newly appeared Uzbek Khan with a party card, golden stars, and awards" and reported the already-mentioned history of Gulamov, one of Rashidov's early rivals mentioned in the first chapter. In his criticism, he said that Uzbekistan was following the Marxist evolution from feudalism to socialism bypassing the stage of capitalism. However, according to Ikramov, the republic was still at the first stage. Kamil Ikramov, "I Probil Chas," *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, June 1988.

²⁵³ On 25-26 June 1987, in a plenum of the CC CPSU, Gorbachev linked democratization to economic reforms. On that occasion, also, Yakovlev was elected to politburo. Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 748.

“transferred to other work.”²⁵⁴ Then, in June 1987, a CC CPSU decree about the shortcomings in the Tashkent obkom organization called on party organs to not permit re-admission to the CPUz of “persons expelled from it for bribery, embezzlement, and padding reports.”²⁵⁵ Then in summer 1987, the party had to face also the organized mobilizations of ethnic minorities, who – now that perestroika was in full swing – were claiming their rights. A great example was the massive demonstrations of Crimean Tatars in Moscow and in Uzbekistan on 6 July 1987, who demanded the right to return from exile in Central Asia.²⁵⁶ In the immediate aftermath, on 9 July 1987, the politburo held a discussion about their return to Crimea and as well the possible reintegration of the Crimean Peninsula into RSFSR.²⁵⁷ Both problems would be exacerbated in the next decades, with resulting major violence.

Another issue thrilling the population of the UzSSR at the time (and sometimes even mobilizing part of public opinion) was the misuse of the prosecutory organs. In 1987 these were at the center of a huge debate dividing the public opinion: some felt they were the heroes of law, while another part blamed the entire problem on the dishonest inquisitors themselves. The Genprokuror USSR, Rekunkov, made a direct intervention into this polemic, giving an interview that was published in the Soviet and in the Uzbek press where he announced that 70% of the city and raion prosecutors of the UzSSR – some of whom had themselves been accused of crimes – had been replaced and more than 200 law-enforcement officials had been dismissed. This was a complete failure of the control mechanism. The Prokuratura USSR had assigned 85 staffers to reinforce the upper echelon of Uzbekistan and a further 100 temporary investigators during the summer of

²⁵⁴ In July 1987 was announced that almost 1450 dismissed secretaries of primary CPUz organizations were at large working in kolkhozes and sovkhoses. Critchlow, “Prelude to ‘Independence’: How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow’s Grip on Elite Recruitment,” 147.

²⁵⁵ According to Critchlow: “The revolving door through which dismissed officials were able to continue their career in new positions was evidently due not just to skulduggery but also to the shortage of qualified replacement candidates. [...] The effect of high turnover on cadre replacement was exacerbated by the inadequacy of the reserve pool of candidates, which had allegedly been kept deliberately small by local officials in order to frustrate higher authority.” Ibid., 147–48.

²⁵⁶ Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador’s Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 748; Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L’aigle Bicéphale*, 139.

²⁵⁷ NSA, Box 27, file 2934.

1987 alone.²⁵⁸ Then he mentioned how “these measures were due to “extraordinary circumstances” and were “temporary” and relied primarily on the need to increase the effectiveness of cadres, to educate them, and to improve their professional skills.”²⁵⁹ Rekunkov’s interview looked, to a significant extent, like a kind of *mea culpa* in order to justify the shortages in the republic and the defects of the prosecution organs in fighting the ‘negative phenomena’.²⁶⁰ Then, Rekunkov announced improvements and a normalization of the situation in the republic with a reduction of economic crimes in 1986 that, according to him, was due to the heavy enforcement work of the Prokuratura USSR. However, there was still an environment of tolerance, and in 1986 alone the costs of absenteeism, downtime, and other violations of labor and production discipline cost 105 million rubles. Then, he recalled how, in three years alone, the number of denunciations from complainants in Uzbekistan to the prokuratura USSR had increased by 40%. For this, he argued, reform of the work of the prokuratura was a pillar to enforce perestroika in Uzbekistan and, indeed, across the whole USSR.²⁶¹ Basically, it was necessary to restore the people’s trust in the prosecutorial institutions.

²⁵⁸ Critchlow, “Prelude to ‘Independence’: How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow’s Grip on Elite Recruitment,” 136–37.

²⁵⁹ Therefore, he added: “the law enforcement bodies of Uzbekistan, completely resigned to the situation, not only failed to fulfill the functions assigned to them, but they contributed to the build-up of negative phenomena. Some workers embarked on a criminal path. For bribery, abuse, and other violations of the law many members of the prosecution authorities and MVD officials were brought to justice. More than 2 thousand officials had been fired for discrediting actions. There were those who thought it best to wait and did not participate in the crimes [...] but, nevertheless, did know what was going on, and remained silent and with a clear conscience paid monthly installments to the party and preached from the podium about the truisms of strengthening the rule of law. This is a direct betrayal of the interests of the party and the people – professional degradation caused enormous damage to our common cause, undermining people's belief in social justice.” PV, 21409, 141, 11 July 1987, p. 3.

²⁶⁰ PV, 21409, 141, 11 July 1987, p. 3.

²⁶¹ Holmes comments: At the end of that month, the Supreme Soviet passed legislation designed to increase the rights of ordinary citizens vis-a-vis officials [...] The latter legislation, in particular, was designed to encourage more whistle-blowing, as citizens have since then – in theory, at least – had a greater chance of having complaints against officials both investigated and acted upon. Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*, 227.

Another *mea culpa* arrived directly from Usmankhodzhaev in a meeting of the party aktiv on agriculture. Here, the FS CPUz announced that in the years 1984-1986 the Uzbekistan only managed to produce around 5.2 million tons of cotton annually, a figure that was equivalent the rate achieved in the mid-1970s.²⁶² The Uzbek leader was effectively admitting that, despite the fight against negative phenomena, the party had not been able to satisfy Moscow's demands on cotton. Basically, the Uzbek 'cotton republic' and its leaders admitted their failures to the Soviet cause. However, the major failure seemed to be represented in the inefficiency of the purges that had been implemented in the previous years. In fact, as mentioned, instances of the negative phenomena were still being exposed on a regular basis, while the strong response of the CPUz contributed to create an environment of intolerance in the republic. In fact, the dismissed figures who had not been arrested or imprisoned for the "cotton affair" were anyway able to create problems because their relatives or affiliates were, in the framework of glasnost, more able to organize petitions and protests out of the jails and prokuratura offices. In the critical context of Navoi,²⁶³ a group of party veterans had even organized a protest march to defend a dismissed – and allegedly guilty – official.²⁶⁴ Then, on 3 August, the Politburo sent a memorandum to Usmankhodzhaev and Kadyrov asking for a more resolute approach in the cadres' policy and to resolve the problems in the cotton sector.²⁶⁵

Assailed by the discontent of ever more segments of the national elite, the FS CPUz appeared as isolated in Tashkent as he was in Moscow, where he was rapidly losing the support of the CC CPSU. Then, during the VI plenum of the CC CPUz,²⁶⁶ internal dissent openly emerged within the party against the policies presented with such a great fanfare by the Post-Rashidovian establishment. Indeed, on that occasion Anishchev declared that the problems that had been identified in Tashkent were present throughout the republic, mentioning specifically formalism, protectionism, zemlyachestvo, and mestnichestvo as the origin of favoritism and patronage. Then, he

²⁶² PV, 21427, 159, 12 July 1987, p. 1.

²⁶³ In Navoi in 1986, the overall production decreased by 20.4 million rubles compared to 1985 and the production deficit for cotton amounted to 37 million rubles. PV, 21435, 167, 22 July 1987, p. 1.

²⁶⁴ PV, 21429, 161, 15 July 1987, p. 3.

²⁶⁵ RGANI, f. 89, op. 36, d. 13.

²⁶⁶ Prot. 6/1987, RGASPI, f. 17 op. 156, d. 2064.

declared that too many party committees were too tolerant of abuses and deficiencies.²⁶⁷ He even seemed to criticize the *desant* policy that apparently was against the criterion of arithmetical quotas in implementing recruitment directives and that seemed to violate the principles of korenization.

As mentioned, mythical or real, the party had to reduce the scope of *desantniki* - or at least of its narrative – and was concerned, in the wake of the Kazak riots in Almaty, to avoid the emergence of that kind of scenario in Uzbekistan. As we have seen, even though the effective extent of the krasnyi *desant* policy was symbolically minimal,²⁶⁸ such theme was used against Usmanhodzhaev, who had started to be perceived within the party as a ‘puppet of Moscow’ (“*marionetka Moskvyy*”) and even as a traitor to the national interest. However, in the aftermath of the plenum, the idea emerged that the crisis was becoming chronic in the republic and such a negative situation had to be reformed at any cost. Again, the exploiters of the perestroika narrative had incredible advantages in this delicate phase and had

²⁶⁷ Gill and Pitty, *Power in the Party. The Organization of Power and Central-Republican Relations in the CPSU*, 77.

²⁶⁸ In this regard, Chritchlow comments: “Three years after “interrepublican exchange of cadres” was proclaimed by Ligachev at the 1986 Moscow Congress, there were Slavs in prominent positions in the republic, but nearly all of their posts had been held by Slavs before the Congress, so that change was minimal. Central Asian incumbents retained their earlier slender majority of the Uzbek Party Buro and a majority of the new Party commissions created under the Gorbachev reforms of the Party apparatus. Perhaps the most striking evidence of Moscow’s retreat was the fact that in 1989 those two important Central Asian posts that had been wrested from native control, the Kazakh first secretaryship and the first secretaryship of the Tashkent gorkom, were restored to native tenancy. The preponderance of Uzbeks in obkom first secretaryships—that bulwark of the native elites—also remained unchanged. Indeed, a consolidation of oblasts put through in September 1988, was to reduce the number of non-indigenous incumbents of first secretaryships from two to one. [...] The most telling sign that day-to-day control of the Party machinery remained largely in Uzbek hands was at the level of the raion organizations, whose important functions include recruitment to primary Party organizations, a major determinant of the overall composition of the Party. No comprehensive list of incumbents was available, but in a tally of seventy-one urban and rural first secretaries whose names were gleaned from the press in the latter part of 1987, in 1988, and in the first part of 1989, sixty-one (86 percent) were identifiable by name as Muslims,” and only nine (13 percent) as Slavs, leaving one lone Armenian in neither of those categories.” Chritchlow, “Prelude to ‘Independence’: How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow’s Grip on Elite Recruitment,” 151–52.

a very wide scope to criticize the party leadership for its inefficiencies. In contrast to the triumphs – fake or not – of the early '80s (the 6-million-ton triumphalism being the standout example), for 1987, the official cotton production plan total for the UzSSR was reduced to 5.250 million tons – so about one million less than seven years prior – and it is broken down in the following table.

Cotton Production plan in 1987 in UzSSR (in thousand tons)²⁶⁹

<i>Region</i>	<i>Raw Cotton</i>	<i>Fiber</i>
Karakalpak ASSR	365	115.8
Andijan	515	167
Bukhara	410	134.9
Jizzak	335	106
Kashkadarya	521	166
Navoi	150	47
Namangan	415	133.9
Samarkand	420	136
Surkhandarya	480	148.5
Syrdarya	379	117.5
Tashkent	370	120.8
Fergana	530	171.8
Khorezm	360	114.8
Total	5,250	1,680

Nevertheless, the actual harvest was even lower than expected. In summer 1988, Kadyrov informed the SM USSR that the final crop (1987) reached only 4.858 million and that the share of lowest quality cotton had increased.²⁷⁰ In any event, the republican leadership would pay a heavy price for this shortage. In fact, the reduction of the raw cotton production was something of a disaster for the republican system and provoked the ire of the Soviet leadership, which was already involved in much more serious problems even on its internal front. At central level, there were harsh clashes between

²⁶⁹ The Chairman of SM UzSSR Kadyrov sent the memorandum n° 10-34-149 of 9 October 1987 to the CC CPUz where he reported the production data of cotton in terms of raw crop and fiber. TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 7207, ll. 106-107.

²⁷⁰ In 1986, cotton of the 4th quality represented 9.4% of total production and in 1987, 16.7%. However, the Uzbek government was able to reduce the costs of management from 3.1094 billion rubles to 2.2031 billion for January-August 1988. TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 7412, ll. 7-8.

Yeltsin and Ligachev in the politburo (10 September 1987)²⁷¹ gradually leading to both leaders splitting from the Gensek, while the solidity of the CPSU was rapidly crumbling under the weight of internal struggles. Similarly, in Tashkent there was an analogous scenario with a republican FS who was being forced to become much more transparent and factions exploiting perestroika themes and clashing within the CC CPUz.

Then, Usmankhodzhaev tried to mobilize more popular support enforcing legislation that would remove any doubts about possible 'colonial rule' and would better meet the demands of the nationalist fringes of the UzSSR population. In early September 1987, the CPUz enforced a debate on the use of the Uzbek, Karakalpak, and other national languages, acknowledging that these languages were still poorly studied in the republic. Then, the CC CPUz announced a campaign to raise awareness of local languages and literatures.²⁷² As well, in Moscow the party seemed to be taking heed of centrifugal forces and proceeded to discuss the problems of national groups within the whole country. During the CC CPSU secretariat meeting of 22 September 1987 the lack of representativeness within the CC was discussed:

It was said that among the workers of the apparat that there are no Azeri, Kyrgyz, or Tajiks. Only three departments – organizational party work, governmental advocacy and agriculture – have representatives of the national republics in senior positions, of whom one is Uzbek, two are Moldovan, and one Estonian.²⁷³

The Soviet Union had to be reconstructed on the principle of peoples' representativeness and this directive was evident at the All-Union level and even in Uzbekistan. However, in the UzSSR, besides the national compromise among ethnic groups, also the 'gentlemen's agreement' between the clans seemed to be undermined and the latest wave of purges against the regional establishments created further discontent among the locale elites. In fact, in autumn 1987 the powerful Rashidovian Rashid Salakhutdinovich Ashuraliev was dismissed, having been the FS Samarkand obkom since February 1982. On 3 October 1987 he was replaced by the Nazir Radzhabovich Radzhabov who left his post as FS Namangan obkom, to be replaced by Buri Allamuradovich Allamuradov. This was a big deal. Radzhabov – one of the main Uzbek faces of the perestroika generation – was thus assuming the post

²⁷¹ Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 748.

²⁷² PV, 21477, 209, 12 September 1987, p. 1.

²⁷³ Gorbachev Fond, V *Politburo TsK KPSS...*, 226.

of a powerful Rashidovian in Samarkand, the alleged power center of Rashidov's 'clan'. However, Radzhabov's appointment was a controversial measure inasmuch he was already at the center of a *donos* war from his appointment in Namangan in 1984.²⁷⁴ Thus, the actual FS Samarkand obkom was considered one of the greatest allies of Usmankhodzhaev, representing a famous example of that Post-Rashidovian generation of leaders who emerged after the XVI. Therefore, he was also in the center of an internal political war that, to some extent, attracted the support of the prokuratura investigations. Undoubtedly, his fate was marked.

The 1987 cotton harvest was again disappointing. Production dropped from the previous year by 700,000 tons²⁷⁵ and that was delayed. In November – well behind the usual harvest schedule – the CPUz even mobilized public participation in the cotton harvest to the extent that even high school students were roped in.²⁷⁶ In parallel, another political crisis was about to engulf the Soviet Union. In fact, on 11 November 1987, the influential Yeltsin was ousted from the Moscow gorkom and on 18 November he was appointed first deputy chairman of the state committee for construction.²⁷⁷ Evidently, also at the All-Union level, the party no longer appeared as monolithic as it was supposed to. The signs of crisis were tangible. The recent power reshuffles in the sectors responsible for the myriad defects in cotton production,²⁷⁸ Moscow's impatience with the delays and agricultural failures in the UzSSR, the nationalist claims of the ethnic minorities, and the intolerance of local elites towards Usmankhodzhaev's policy were key factors that would delegitimize the ruling FS CPUz. A further criticism of the ineffectiveness of party policy – and thus indirectly against Usmankhodzhaev – emerged even during the VII plenum CC CPUz of 17 December 1987.²⁷⁹ This was a last and desperate attempt to reaffirm the commitments of the party to improve the situation for the following year. However, at that time Moscow seemed not to trust anymore certain promises from Tashkent.

²⁷⁴ The content of these letters is reported in the appendix.

²⁷⁵ PV, 21516, 248, 28 October 1987, p. 2.

²⁷⁶ PV, 21532, 264, 15 November 1987, p. 1.

²⁷⁷ Undoubtedly a minor post that would not overshadow the political career of a leader who gained popularity in the democratic minority of the party. Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 748.

²⁷⁸ On 10 December 1987, Yu.P. Litvinyenko become the new minister for trade. PV, 21553, 285, 11 December 1987, p. 1.

²⁷⁹ Prot. 7/1987, RGASPI f. 17, op. 156, d. 2065.

Thus, 1987 was an emblematic year that defined the failure of Usmankhodzhaev's moralizing recipe. His inconclusive attitude and his willingness to mediate would be seen as a sign of weakness. The unloved *sekretar nol'* was therefore unable to present an image of determination and anyway failed the main task of the republic: namely, to fulfill the cotton plan for the fatherland. During his short reign, he was able to enforce a purge that was demanded with harsh tones from Moscow. However, these measures became much more functional to his political purposes. Until 1987, 90% of the chairmen of kolkhozes and sovkhoses had been removed from their posts,²⁸⁰ while he himself announced that from 1984 90.4% of the CC CPSU nomenklatura had been replaced as well as 76.6% of the CC CPUz.²⁸¹ As we have seen, in these power reshuffles, thousands of officials were removed, prosecuted, and expelled from the party while 2,600 CPUz officials were even arrested and jailed.²⁸² In place of these dismissed individuals, Usmankhodzhaev had tried to install a new 'post-Rashidovian' generation of politicians that were close to his entourage,²⁸³ and probably he also failed to have the consent of the regional power networks, becoming the main person responsible for the serious situation in a republic that would not heal.

²⁸⁰ Carlisle, "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev," 136.

²⁸¹ Usmankhodzhayev, *Prodolzhaia Delo Oktiabria Communist Uzbekistana. Tom II*; Yaacov Ro'i, *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies* (London-Portland: F. Cass, 1995), 117.

²⁸² William A. Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 188–89.

²⁸³ As Norling noted, "True to form, old colleagues and figures from Namangan and Andijan made notable career leaps under Usmankhodzhaev. Usmankhodzhaev had served as First Secretary of the Andijan obkom, Chairman of the Namangan oblispolkom, and head of the Ferghana gorsoviet; Ibragimov was previously First Secretary of the Ferghana obkom. Other examples of leading figures whose paths came via provincial service are Gairat Kadyrov, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers 1984-1989, who had risen through the Chirchik gorkom and his successor, Mirakhat Mirkasymov, who had served as First Secretary of the Tashkent obkom, prior to which he had been First Secretary of the Khorezm obkom. Makhmud Aripdzhonov, First Secretary of the Andijan obkom 1985-1990, rose through the Almalyk gorkom [As well.] Usmankhodzhaev's deputy chairman of the Namangan oblispolkom in 1974, Shavkat Yuldoshev, was named First Secretary of the Namangan gorkom in 1984 and First Secretary of the Ferghana obkom in 1988. Another Namangan native, Makhmud Salakhitdinov, was designated Minister of Higher and Special Education in 1985." Norling, "Myth and Reality: Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan," 248–49.

5.3 Moscow's viceroy

1988 was an extraordinarily dramatic year for a host of reasons. In the whole USSR, perestroika was entering its 'operative' phase, while in parallel the first signs of nationalism and intolerance within many republics emerged. This was particularly true in Uzbekistan. At the same time, the first indications of insubordination in the Baltic and in the Caucasus emerged. In Uzbekistan, the prospect of arresting decline was held out by the new political course of perestroika and the arrival of a new leadership team.

5.3.1 The rise of Rafik Nishanov

In Uzbekistan, purges and arrests continued to claim victims and the situation was still deeply uncertain. In preparing the next plenum, the secretary of CC CPUz, M. Khalmukhamedov, stressed the need for a radical change in ideological work and in the consciousness and thinking of party officials. Then, he emphasized the great importance of the press as a tool of democracy and transparency, in order to render politics effective, to improve economic education and to strengthen moral edification for public education.²⁸⁴ The wide dissemination of information was critical, and in pursuing this openness the party probably hoped to save its authority and moral integrity. However, a credible strategy to heal the republican situation was still missing and the only apparent solution was that someone had to take a step back. Then, during the VIII plenum of the CPUz (12 January 1988), the secretary of the CC CPSU Razumovsky²⁸⁵ stated that:

The Comrade I.B. Usmankhodzhaev referred to the CC CPSU his resignation as FS CPUz, on account of the state of his health and his intention to retire. The Politburo of the CC CPSU approved the request because Usmankhodzhaev, for more than twenty-six years, had worked in the party and in the soviets and for more than four years was the head of the party organization in a very important moment for the party organs. [In fact, in this period the party organs] developed the fight to heal the life of the party and social life in the republic. Before the plenum, there was a meeting of the CC CPUz attended by most of the first secretaries of the obkom where they approved the decision of

²⁸⁴ PV, 21575, 9, 12 January 1988, p. 2.

²⁸⁵ Georgy Petrovich Razumovsky was the successor of Vorotnikov in the post of FS Krasnodar raikom and was considered an emerging figure within the party. On 6 March 1986 he took the Ligachev's post in the CC CPSU secretariat and then on 18 February 1988 he even became a candidate member of the politburo.

the buro CC CPUz about Usmanhodzhaev.²⁸⁶ [...] CC CPSU has studied well all possible candidates, deeply analyzing all the alternatives, and decided to recommend to the post of FS CPUz Nishanov, Rafik Nishanovich,²⁸⁷ who is the chairman of the Presidium of the republican Supreme Soviet. [...] Nishanov has been invited to the CC CPSU, where the secretaries have talked to him, and was accepted by Gorbachev, with whom he had another meeting and this issue has also been studied in the CC CPSU Politburo meeting that took the decision to release Usmanhodzhaev for retirement and health reasons and to recommend Nishanov. [applause]²⁸⁸

Then, the resigning *sekretar nol'* stated that "in all the places that I covered, I tried to work well and honestly," recalling how he had managed these "difficult" four years in Uzbekistan. He thanked the CC CPSU and the politburo for the support they had given over the years.²⁸⁹ "Now the situation has improved and the struggle that began with the participation of the CC CPSU against all negative phenomena is continuing." Then, he declared his fatigue with the difficult work in recent times and his gratitude to everyone who approved his request to resign. Finally, he stated that he was on the mend but "after treatment I will be ready to work together with you and make a contribution to the common cause."²⁹⁰

Besides the nice utterance, Usmanhodzhaev resigned indicating vague reasons. In his words, there was the melancholy of an incredulous person who probably felt abandoned by the party.²⁹¹ Usmanhodzhaev, in fact, knew well that he was about to face the hardest moment of his life and so resigned to save face. Besides the stories that emerged – which we will consider in the next chapter – after that plenum in January 1988 Usmanhodzhaev substantially disappeared from public life. Now, after Usmanhodzhaev's

²⁸⁶ Prot 8/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2007, l. 3.

²⁸⁷ Rafik Nishanovich Nishanov had been a member of the CC CPUz in 1963-1970. As we have seen in previous chapters, in 1970 he was ousted during the Rashidovian purges. Then he was sent to Moscow to the Foreign Ministry, where he served as ambassador in Sri Lanka and the Maldives until 1978 and in Jordan until 1985. With the end of Rashidovism and the new course undertaken by the UzSSR, in March 1985 he returned to Uzbekistan and was appointed MID UzSSR. PV, 21576, 10, 13 January 1988, p. 1.

²⁸⁸ Prot 8/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2007, l. 4.

²⁸⁹ Prot 8/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2007, l. 5.

²⁹⁰ Prot 8/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2007, l. 6.

²⁹¹ Yegor Kuzmich Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 241–42.

dismissal, the last member of the former Rashidovian establishment was finally ousted. He was the initiator and then became a victim of a system of suspicion and slander that would make him as one of the major accused of the 'Uzbek cotton affairs'.

In his short reign after Rashidov's death, he had to face a very tragic moment in which he felt the attacks – direct or indirect – of those fringes of the party that wanted to manipulate the 'fight against the negative phenomena' for their political interests. The 'revenant' Nishanov, was a clear example. After his return from 'exile,' he rose through the ranks in the republican apparatus and finally ascended to the leadership of the CPUz. If, to some extent, Usmanhodzhaev had been legitimized in his post by his long career spent in Uzbekistan, Nishanov was seen by a part of the Uzbek elite as an outcast, a careerist, and a collaborator in Moscow's officiousness in the internal affairs of the republic. For a part of the Uzbek leadership that was still bound to the old establishment, his appointment seemed to push matters from the frying pan into the fire. Abdullaeva's memoirs show us the partisan view on this leadership change, revealing evidence of the struggle within the CPUz apparatus:

Usmanhodzhaev did not have the courage and the ability to follow the path of renewal. He was the typical leader whose word never converged with the facts. By nature, he was unprincipled and somewhat apolitical. Unfortunately for Uzbeks he was replaced by R. Nishanov – a man prone to deception and forgery. He did his best to hide his predecessor in prison and in this way to take his place.²⁹²

Evidently, Nishanov did not have the support of the local elites but was backed by Moscow to the point of making him a strong candidate. In fact, Rafik Nishanovich appeared as a credible Soviet statesman, a "member of the Tashkent elite and a longtime Moscow-based Party *apparatchik*"²⁹³ who was defending Moscow's demands for higher cotton production. Again, the effective production of cotton was the key issue to be legitimized from the CC CPSU and, in this consideration, even Gorbachev was not so different from his predecessors. Furthermore, Nishanov was personally esteemed by the Gensek who, as we will see, gave tokens of appreciation on several occasions.

Under Nishanov's reign, the purges and the *krasnyi desant* policy remained – and to an extent were even ramped up. Despite the effective

²⁹² Abdullaeva, *Preodolenie Ada*, 24.

²⁹³ Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, 115.

scope of the Uzbek purges,²⁹⁴ Nishanov was criticized to be another sponsor of the ‘Russian-oriented *chistka*.’²⁹⁵ This narrative - enforced by the nationalist forces in Uzbekistan pushing the idea of the ‘Andropov’s polygon’ – created an idea of a republic torn by purges and represented the CPUz as a collaborator of Moscow’s ‘terror.’ Indeed, the new FS CPUz leadership suffered from the ‘weight’ of the glasnost era, when many scandals about the ‘Uzbek cotton affairs’ emerged, sensitizing the population of the republic and creating a further alienation and disaffection towards the Soviet government represented by Gorbachev and Nishanov. According to Collins, this context delegitimized “both the CPU[z] and Nishanov, who was increasingly excluded from the informal functioning of the Uzbek political system.”²⁹⁶

Under Nishanov’s reign, other anti-Rashidov Tashkenters previously disappeared from the political stage²⁹⁷ remerged and were finally rehabilitated and welcomed back to Uzbekistan to take minor posts.²⁹⁸ In any way we want to evaluate Nishanov – loved or hated; statesman or careerist; orthodox communist or political opportunist, etc. – he had to face a very critical situation in the UzSSR and secured the agreement of Moscow to recover what could be saved and to restore a healthy image of the republic after the failures of the preceding establishment. Again, the main strategy to pursue was self-criticism and cotton commitments. Indeed, on 19 January, the tolerance towards the practice of child labor emerged as an inconvenient

²⁹⁴ As mentioned, there was a lot of emphasis on the ‘Uzbekity’ of these facts. We should just remember that the power reshuffle after Brezhnev’s death was a wider phenomenon. As Clark reminds us, “within 6 years of Brezhnev’s death 90% of roughly 150 regional party bosses had been replaced in [the] Soviet Union.” Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 137.

²⁹⁵ Graziosi, *L’Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 494.

²⁹⁶ Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, 115.

²⁹⁷ According to Carlisle, a number of Tashkenters previously shunted aside during Rashidov’s reign re-emerged publicly. These included Rasul Gulamov – a former head of the Tashkent gorkom – Arif Alimov – former chairman of SM UzSSR (1959-1961) – and Nuritdin Mukhitdinov – twice former chairman SM UzSSR (1951-1953 and 1954-1955) and FS CPUz (1955-1957). The latter organized the republican council of veterans of war and labor. Carlisle, “Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev,” 116, 127.

²⁹⁸ Differently, Sabir Kamalov, Rashidov’s predecessor as FS CPUz (1957-1959) outlived his opponent and was able to remain in the republic holding minor posts even during the Brezhnev years. *Ibid.*

issue for the party. Also in PV, the party admitted cases of children who had died or become ill in the cotton fields. Therefore, considering the scarce results obtained from using child labor to harvest the crop – estimated for 1987 at only 250 thousand tons – a political debate to reconsider such practices emerged within the CPUz.²⁹⁹

In parallel, the criticism was then enforced also in agriculture³⁰⁰ and in the ‘white gold’ sector. The CPUz admitted that average annual cotton production was estimated at 5.159 million tons in 1981-1985. The exact figure for 1986 was 4.989 million tons and 4.858 in 1987,³⁰¹ far below the levels that were publicized by Usmankhodzhaev some months before.

On 30 January 1988, during the IX plenum CPUz, Nishanov emerged as an energetic leader fully devoted to the cause of cleaning, moralizing, and healing the republic from malfeasance. He reconsidered the figures of the scam and stated that between 1978 and 1983 over 4.5 million tons of raw cotton had been falsified at a cost of 4 billion rubles. For these facts, “many officials had been punished but some of them were not responsible for this economic sabotage.”³⁰² Substantially, he stated that previous efforts were insufficient to combat against the negative phenomena, and harshly reported other exemplary cases of mismanagement in the party and in the government of the UzSSR. Despite the hard comments against the head of government, Kadyrov was able to keep his post for the whole Nishanov’s mandate.

Thus, criticism against opponents – and even allies - became a pillar of the FS CPUz political discourse. This ‘meta-criticism’ - damning the lack of criticism as the main problem of Uzbekistan - was a way to create a clear boundary from the previous regime. The Rashidovian ‘blind tolerance’ and the lack of effective criticism by Usmankhodzhaev were so denounced by Nishanov who kept prompting his political discourse on an alleged ‘objective’ (and systemic) criticism against everything and everyone at any cost.³⁰³

²⁹⁹ PV, 21581, 15, 19 January 1988, p. 2.

³⁰⁰ It was admitted that in the 1987 economic results no radical changes occurred, but that losses had been incurred, with the total volume of agricultural production decreasing by 1.9% over the previous year. Additionally, both productivity and profitability fell. 233 sovkhoz had finished the year at a loss and the total sum of losses amounted to 132 million rubles. PV, 21591, 25, 30 January 1988, p. 2.

³⁰¹ PV, 21591, 25, 30 January 1988, p. 3.

³⁰² Prot 9/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2008, l. 10.

³⁰³ In the immediate aftermath of Nishanov’s appointment, ‘negative phenomena’ emerged in the police. Many officers were accused of excessive zeal in dealing with

Nishanov's approach had the clear effect of irritating the lower leadership, leading to a culture of criticism downwards that resulted in the middle bureaucracy being the victims of constant reprimand. Similarly, also the first deputy chairman of SM UzSSR, V.I. Ogarov, proceeded with an indirect criticism towards the former FS Usmankhodzhaev and the state administration, revealing how in 1986-1987 alone we were lost 2 billion rubles in economic inefficiencies, and during 1984-1987 alone about 200 officials of the party nomenklatura had been ousted for the negative phenomena, abuse of power and forgery.³⁰⁴

A recipe that was exposed during the IX plenum, was the "democratization of party and social life, affirming and strengthening glasnost in all spheres, criticism and self-criticism, initiative and creative research."³⁰⁵ Nishanov was perfectly following the moral narrative of perestroika and probably for his own purposes, blaming the previous leaderships for the social and economic shortages in the republic. The situation in the republic was so nervous that even Ambassador Matlock, during his visit to Tashkent in February 1988, noticed an atmosphere that due to the Uzbek affair was very tense and generally heavy.³⁰⁶ However, in Uzbekistan, during the bureau meeting held on 24 February 1988, a campaign against 'repositioning practices' was announced on all fronts and Nishanov confirmed his commitments to effectively remove compromised figures. In his report, he stated:

There are still phenomena of the repositioning of the cadres who have been fired for negative phenomena from their leadership posts. [...] Obkoms, gorkoms and raikoms show a liberal attitude and unjustified indulgence to people who were dismissed for forgery, bribery, abuse of power, theft, and other violations. As a result, many of the workers who were fired from the nomenklatura for negative phenomena had reappeared in [other] places of leadership.³⁰⁷

some criminal cases. 300 persons had undergone criminal proceedings for no reason, and of these 45 were acquitted immediately. PV, 21592, 26, 31 January 1988, p. 3.

³⁰⁴ PV, 21594, 28, 2 February 1988, p. 2.

³⁰⁵ PV, 21596, 30, 5 February 1988, p. 1.

³⁰⁶ Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 164. However, this was just a smaller-scale representation of a generally tense situation in the Soviet political arena when on 18 February 1988, a plenum of the CC CPSU removed Yeltsin from the politburo. Ibid., 748.

³⁰⁷ Prot 58/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2016, l. 12.

Then, Nishanov underlined the prevalence of this phenomenon in the obkoms of Bukhara, Jizzak, Karakalpakya, Kashkadarya, Ferghana, and Tashkent, affirming that:

The unscrupulousness that is exposed in the party committees towards the managers who are compromised, the attempts to divert them from their responsibility and to prevent the process of uprooting the negative phenomena in the republic, generate the relapses of forgery, theft and other violations, undermining the confidence of the people in social justice and holding perestroika back.³⁰⁸

Furthermore, he noted that the unjustified rotation of cadres was especially prevalent in the oblasts of Bukhara, Navoi, Tashkent, and Karakalpakya where in 1985-1987 almost a third of the gorkom and raikom secretaries had been in their posts for less than a year.³⁰⁹ Some more data on the phenomenon circulated in a CPUz buro's document (annex 5), revealing:

[O]bkoms, gorkoms and raikoms reconsidered their liberal decisions that had already been made against more than 100 executives who have made violations and that had been reprimanded or sanctioned by the party [...] Recently, more than 360 workers of the obkoms' nomenklatura were fired because they were compromised, as well as 527 figures who did not fulfill their responsibilities and duties [...] At the same time, the analysis of the situation showed that the Party committees did not implement the CC CPUz buro resolutions. As a result, between workers of the nomenklatura of the CC CPUz who were fired for negative phenomena, a quarter of them is still operating, while in the obkom nomenklatura an eighth [of those fired] is still active.³¹⁰

Basically, the 'limited tolerance' of the previous years was over, disappointing all those figures who had been in some way 'forgiven' for their negative behavior. Far ahead, in the buro meeting of 9 March 1988, Nishanov warned of the dangers posed by nationalism in the spheres of economy, culture, and habits of the Uzbek people.³¹¹ Not casually, the moralizing mission of Nishanov was connected with aspects of the Uzbek culture and – in particular – with Islam, which in those weeks was reemerging as a challenging issue.³¹² Similarly, in a CC CPUz meeting on the implementation of perestroika

³⁰⁸ Prot 58/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2016, l. 12.

³⁰⁹ Prot 58/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2016, l. 12.

³¹⁰ Prot 58/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2016, l. 35.

³¹¹ Prot 59/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2017, l. 6.

³¹² In 1986 in USSR were just open 1330 mosques and about 2000 unofficial/illegal mosques were tolerated. On 3 February 1988, there was a manifestation in Lenin square in Tashkent to ask for the release of the grand mufti Shamsutdinkhan

in the party and in the media (16 March 1988), the FS CPUz stated: “the key work to be done by the professional intelligentsia, scholars, and educators during the next stage of perestroika, as the processes of democratization and fundamental economic reform move ahead,” was reconfirmed.³¹³ According to the FS CPUz, the “corruption, nepotism, patronage, squabbling, and nationalistic fervor that have been spreading at our universities are cause for concern.”³¹⁴

As mentioned, Nishanov increased the influence of other ‘revenants’ that were returning from ‘exile.’ A good example is Sarvar Alimdzhanovich Azimov³¹⁵ who returned to Uzbekistan and on 18 March 1988 became the new MID UzSSR.³¹⁶ This was a very delicate post that – as we have seen in the first chapter – had to mediate between the USSR and Middle East, even dealing with the Afghan problem. On 8 February 1988, Gorbachev announced the withdraw of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, and the CPUz and SM UzSSR had the responsibility of managing the first logistics of these operations. Between 6-8 April 1988, Gorbachev even came to Tashkent³¹⁷ to meet with Najibullah and to define the terms of the Soviet withdrawal. On that occasion, Chernyaev reported that Gorbachev also wanted to “show his support for Uzbekistan, whose people had been completely demoralized³¹⁸ by the

Babakhan, accused of corruption and misconduct. Hélène Carrère D’Encausse, *La Gloire Des Nations Ou La Fin de l’Empire Soviétique* (Paris: Fayard, 1990), 194–95.

³¹³ FBIS, “JPRS-UPA-88-022. 15 June 1988. Soviet Union - Political Affairs,” 1988, 1.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

³¹⁵ Azimov. He had been a rival of Rashidov and was the chairman of the writers’ union of the UzSSR (1956-1959), minister of culture of the UzSSR (1957-1959), head of the republican MID and deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR (1959-1969). He had been ousted by Rashidov during the aforementioned ‘post-Pakhtakor purges’. Then he became the Soviet ambassador in Lebanon (1969-1974) and Pakistan (1974-1980) and coordinated the Soviet committee on relations with the writers of Asia and Africa, serving as the deputy general secretary of the international association of writers of Asia and Africa. He criticized Rashidov on several occasions for his literary and political positions.

³¹⁶ PV, 21631, 65, 19 March 1988, p. 1.

³¹⁷ The visit was organized by the CPUz buro and personally committed Nishanov. Prot 61/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2019.

³¹⁸ Kendzior comments: “In 1988, Uzbekistan experienced a series of social and political upheavals that only underscored the disparity between public and private behavior that was mirrored in religious expression. The combination of the cotton scandal and subsequent political purges (which removed Abdullaeva from office, among others), the losing war in Afghanistan, the general economic deterioration and

exposés of corruption there.”³¹⁹ The formal international agreements on Afghanistan were made at Geneva on 14 April and from mid-May the first Soviet troops started to return, passing through the ‘bridge of friendship’ that connects the Uzbek city of Termez with the Afghan hub of Mazar-i-Sharif.³²⁰

Besides Azimov, who in any case has been called to cover Nishanov’s former post in such a delicate moment, there was a further power reshuffle in the UzSSR and Usmankhodzhaev was finally ousted from his post in the presidium for ‘retirement reasons.’³²¹ In addition to news about the leadership change it is interesting to note that, as a consequence of glasnost, the newspapers started to openly report the debates within the party and soviets’ sessions, revealing disconcerting details. For example, during the VIII session of the SS UzSSR, Sh. Yakubov, a member of the department of Gosbank USSR in Uzbekistan, analyzed the critical economic situation, baring that the economic problems were connected with the cadres’ management and to bureaucratic distortions and noting how the failure of the plans had a chronic character and state money was spent in vain.³²² On the same occasion, also Aleksander F. Klepikov, the FS Syrdarya obkom, affirmed that the period of negative phenomena has affected not only the education of the

the hypocrisy surrounding the Soviet elite’s newfound tolerance of Russian Orthodoxy led not, as it ultimately did for other Soviet republics, to an atmosphere of revolution, but to one of profound uncertainty.” Sarah Kendzior, “Redefining Religion: Uzbek Atheist Propaganda in Gorbachev-Era Uzbekistan,” *Nationalities Papers* 34, no. 5 (2006): 536.

³¹⁹ Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 145. On April 10, 1988 Chernyaev wrote in his diary: “Then we had pilaf at the palace from which Najibullah had left shortly prior. Then we flew home. On the airplane we drank tea together for a long time. M.S. was tired and happy with what was accomplished, especially by the fact that he “rehabilitated” the Uzbek people from the blemish and scorn resulting from the Rashid[ov] scandal. (His words to the collective farmers that “it is not the people’s fault” instantly spread through the republic). We all spoke a lot, about everything. Sometimes Raisa Maksimovna led the conversation, at those times M.S. quieted down...” Svetlana Savranskaya, “The Diary of Anatoly S. Chernyaev. 1988. Donated by A.S. Chernyaev to The National Security Archive,” 2008, 17.

³²⁰ Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador’s Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 748.

³²¹ On 6 April, Atadzhanov became deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR (PV, 21645, 79, 7 April 1988, p. 1), and on the 9th Pulat Khabibullaev became chairman of the Presidium of the SS UzSSR. PV, 21648-21649, 82-83, 10 April 1988, p. 1.

³²² PV, 21648-21649, 82-83, 10 April 1988, p. 5.

people but also the social and economic development of the oblast. In his words:

Most of the leaders of the party, soviets, and agriculture organs in the years of *rashidovshchina* were mired in corruption, forgery, and zemlyachestvo. They reasoned according to their personal profit and not according to the people's needs. [...] This lenience passed from the top and established the right to dispose of the property of the kolkhoz and sovkhoz without control. This has resulted in not only in theft, forgery, and violations of socialist principles and social justice, but has also undermined the friendship among peoples.³²³

In parallel, also at state level, criticism had been 'institutionalized,' becoming an issue in the political discourse of the republican bureaucracy. Then, during the plenum of the SC UzSSR, its chairman, S. Zhigitalyev, also reiterated that in some regions of the republic there was wastage of public funds, while groups of corrupters and thieves were firmly rooted in many oblasts. Then, he outlined that the damage they had caused to the economy of the republic, which ran to hundreds of millions of rubles, but in addition emphasized the moral loss that had been done to the consciousness of the people.³²⁴ At the same time, the 'scapegoatism' against the 'monsters' of the past was even exasperated by a part of the Uzbek intellectual elite. Then on 7 May 1988, a meeting was held in Moscow between newspaper editors, writers, and cultural figures. There, the chairman of the USSR State Committee for publishing, printing, and the book trade, Nenashev - he should not be confused with Nishanov - referred about the deformations within the party apparatus, presenting the Rashidov's case as an emblematic example.³²⁵

This critical approach was well appreciated in Moscow. Also Gorbachev seemed to trust Nishanov and believed his honesty was in no doubt. Indeed, on 15 April 1988, during a meeting among the Gensek and the second secretaries of the republics, obkoms, and raikoms, Gorbachev affirmed:

I was in Uzbekistan. I liked Nishanov. Together we went everywhere. I tried to support the people who suffered for *rashidovshchina*. When Rashidov, among other things, [was in power] the following "principle" always prevailed: "Since I'm the first secretary, then the only thing I produce are victories for the economy!". This is a mindset that must be abandoned in every way.³²⁶

³²³ PV, 21650-21651, 84-85, 12 April 1988, p. 7.

³²⁴ PV, 21663, 97, 28 April 1988, p. 3.

³²⁵ Gorbachev Fond, *V Politburo TsK KPSS...*, 370.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 327.

Interestingly, the replacement of Usmankhodzhaev with Nishanov can be read as a symptom of the central political trends marked by the marginalization of the 'conservative' faction. Despite Usmankhodzhaev was probably not a 'conservative,' he was associated with a 'declining figure' as Ligachev and had the support his organizational department for the whole Uzbek affairs. Probably, the replacement of a 'Ligachevian' figure with a 'Gorbachevian' loyalist seemed to locally reflect the divisions of the center. Indeed, Gorbachev clearly appreciated Nishanov's line of 'objective criticism' and trusted a leader who did not pretend to be a champion of the economy. Thus, even Nishanov's modesty became a key legitimizing issue for the Uzbek leadership, following a typical narrative of Gorbachevism.

Hence, the Gensek seemed to accept the principle that it was better to plan for less production, in the knowledge that it would actually be delivered, than inflated promises of plans that would never be fulfilled. He renewed his trust in Nishanov's work to heal the republic and confirmed his mandate. The Gensek probably had no other choice than to trust the new FS CPUz, given he was the only figure demonstrably far from localist mentalities. In this phase, Nishanov seemed also to have won the consent of the CPUz 'old guard' and on 21 April, PV confirmed the support of the party 'veterans' to the Nishanov's policy, repudiating the old leadership of the party.³²⁷ Then, following this narrative, other Uzbek figures of the pre-Nishanov regime were accused. During the CPUz buro meeting of 18 May 1988, the 'Hero of Socialist Labor' awards of the prominent figures Rakhimov³²⁸ and Khamraev³²⁹ were retracted and their moral condemnation enforced.

³²⁷ PV, 21658, 92, 21 April 1988, p. 1.

³²⁸ B.R. Rakhimov was the FS of the obkoms of Khorezm, Andijan and Samarkand. "He exaggerated its merits and hid serious defects". He had received the title in November 1973. Then, when Rakhimov was the deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR, he "had an irresponsible attitude to the leadership of the agro-industrial complex of the republic," and "under the influence of Rashidov showed ruthlessness and condoned voluntary decisions that achieved the stagnation in the development of agriculture." Thus, he had "contributed to the squandering of funds, the spread of theft, corruption, fraud, and forgery that in the cotton industry alone between 1982-1983 came to some two million tons." Prot 64/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2022, ll. 14-15.

³²⁹ N.R. Khamraev, "when he was the director of Gravsredazirsovkhozstroj, had taken the path of systematically violating socialist principles and inculcated the vicious practice of territorial development and diverting funds in the construction of unplanned goods. He did so using the patronage of Rashidov. Additionally, he created a fake atmosphere of welfare while forgery, corruption, and theft prospered. On 16

In the meantime, the press started to publish citizens' complaints. Most of these were related to the need to reform the cadre system,³³⁰ while others narrated incredible stories related to Rashidov's life of luxury.³³¹ While these 'mafia' stories certainly thrilled public opinion, the data on crimes and delinquencies remained alarmingly high. Indeed, on 6 June 1988, the buro discussed the warning data on crime and revealed that in the previous year alone in Uzbekistan, more than 66,000 criminal cases had been opened, with a sixth of them remaining unpunished.³³² This was in line with the warning data of crime at All Union level. According to a US intelligence document:

Crime [in USSR] has become more and more highly organized. The "peak" in reported economic crimes was in 1986-87. In those years 282,800 and 279,000 crimes, respectively, were reported. During that same period 306,600 and 302,300 individuals were prosecuted.³³³

January 1981 he became a hero of the Socialist Labor. However, his misdemeanors and his "noble" [aristocratic] lifestyle were revealed." Prot 64/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2022, l. 15.

³³⁰ An letter published on 11 May 1988 in PV exemplified these. It declared a need to "exclude careerists, people engaging in fraud, liars, pimps, and hypocrites [...and all] those figures for whom the party card had become a passport to personal gain." PV, 21674, 108, 11 May 1988, p. 1.

³³¹ At the same time, many scandalous stories emerged that aimed to discredit Rashidov even more. The former FS CPUz was portrayed as a sort of 'godfather' (or even a 'Khan'), a historical figure with well-known negative connotations in the Soviet narrative. Indeed, on 19 June 1988, an article titled "The Khan's house" appeared in PV. It outlined how Rashidov had acquired many homes around Uzbekistan. According to the article, in 1982 one of these estates was donated by the former FS Jizzakh and was served by a "personal railway station" (connected with a well-paved road up to his residence) so that he could get directly to his home by train. The house had red granite stairs and glass doors, with decorations on the walls, a mosaic parquet floor made of different types of wood, empire-style furniture, a projector room, a billiard room, and a sauna. The article noted the curiosity of the public in finding out exactly how it looked. In the few months following Rashidov's death it was abandoned, and then became a sanatorium. PV, 21708, 142, 19 June 1988, p. 1.

³³² Prot 66/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2024, l. 3.

³³³ FBIS, "JPRS-UPA-90-024. 8 May 1990. Soviet Union. Political Affairs," 1990, 64.

Economic Crimes Reported (number of cases) ³³⁴					
Union Republic	Total			Percentage variation compared to 1987	
	1987	1988	1989	1988	1989
<i>RSFSR</i>	160,361	151,825	146,215	-5.3	-8.8
<i>Ukrainian SSR</i>	34,739	33,555	33,144	-3.4	-4.6
<i>Belorussian SSR</i>	9,847	9,727	9,810	-1.6	-0.8
<i>Uzbek SSR</i>	18,684	16,898	17,295	-9.6	-7.4
<i>Kazakh SSR</i>	21,021	20,344	20,360	-3.2	-3.1
<i>Georgian SSR</i>	6,017	6,061	5,825	+0.7	-3.2
<i>Azerbaijan SSR</i>	5,427	4,686	4,632	-13.7	-14.6
<i>Lithuanian SSR</i>	3,095	2,820	2,688	-8.9	-13.2
<i>Moldavian SSR</i>	2,776	2,550	2,453	-8.1	-11.6
<i>Latvian SSR</i>	2,165	2,145	1,765	-0.9	-18.5
<i>Kirghiz SSR</i>	3,060	3,070	3,198	+0.3	+4.5
<i>Tajik SSR</i>	3,178	2,882	2,947	-9.3	-7.3
<i>Armenian SSR</i>	2,856	1,836	2,039	-35.7	-28.6
<i>Turkmen SSR</i>	2,616	2,260	2,345	-13.6	-10.4
<i>Estonian SSR</i>	1,049	698	757	-33.5	-27.8
<i>USSR</i>	276,891	261,357	255,473	-5.61	-7.74

However, comparing the data on economic crime, we can see how the number of cases in Uzbekistan was actually lower than in Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan and, after reaching a peak in 1987, the number of registered crimes was even decreasing.³³⁵ Nevertheless, the system was suffering much more from other alarming and more serious phenomena that would threaten stability and that would lead to its collapse within a few months.

³³⁴ Ibid., 65.

³³⁵ Despite the easy conclusions on the effectiveness of the moralizing campaign, we can skeptically comment positive results evidencing how this 'decrease' could be due to a general reduction of complaints. Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*.

5.3.2 Hopes of recovery and reform disillusion

Between 28 June and 1 July 1988, the XIX All-Union Conference of the CPSU was held in Moscow. The convocation of such a conference was an extraordinary event: the first from 1941. On that occasion, corruption was a major theme and Yeltsin gave a very sharp speech where he was particularly critical of Mikhail Solomentsev – the chairman of the PCC CPSU – “for being too slack and too tolerant in this regard.”³³⁶ We will consider the event in greater detail also in the next chapter, particularly in relation to its implication in the ‘Gdlyan-Ivanov affair’. For now, it is enough to state that the conference was also central for affirming Nishanov’s political discourse. On 1 July, the FS CPUz confirmed the commitments of the republic for cotton production and to improve discipline in the party work. Nishanov then delivered a sharp message that laid out Uzbekistan’s wretched situation – from which the necessary reconstruction would need to begin – and attempted to justify the ongoing problems in the republic. In his words:

[A]fter decades of fraud and falsification of agricultural production, and especially in cotton, very serious consequences have emerged. Today those responsible have gotten what they deserved. The atmosphere in the republic is purified and the lost faith of the people in truth and justice has been rebuilt. Of course, we have critically [and better] understood the time of stagnation and rashidovshchina, but already now it is clear that the biggest and most tragic mistake was agricultural policy [...] It formed a tangle of problems that has to be resolved, in which there are also ecological issues, concerns about the use of water resources, and problems with the education of cadres. Other agricultural and industrial problems also remain.³³⁷

Nishanov was at pains to point the finger for all this squarely at Rashidov. In his lust for power during a quarter century of rule he had pursued disastrous policies in order to please Moscow and, in particular, Brezhnev. However, Nishanov’s speech thus indirectly brought Moscow into the frame of criticism, and suggested that the Uzbek leadership was no longer prepared to indulge *staraya ploshad* at any cost. In many ways during the XIX conference, history was invoked to build up the notion of Uzbekistan as long-standing victim of Soviet excesses. References to the cult of personality of Shchelokov and Rashidov as negative examples of recent CPSU history were

³³⁶ Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*, 227–28.

³³⁷ PV, 21719, 153, 2 July 1988, p. 3.

common during the proceedings.³³⁸ Nishanov went even further back in time, commenting that:

The people of Uzbekistan have directly experienced the results of cruel diktat and unbridled lawlessness during the reign of Stalin's repressions. A deep moral wound was inflicted on them during the years of the triumphant march backward, when servility, perfidy, and deception allowed a leader and medal grabber like Rashidov to acquire ten Orders of Lenin and two Gold Stars and, on top of that, to pick up a Lenin Prize. Who gave these orders to Rashidov? Brezhnev, of course, and his closest associates. Why did they award them? Simply because they themselves were money grabbers.³³⁹

Thus, many obscure aspects of history were presented by the FS as a kind of Soviet 'original sin,' inherited by recent generations as well as by the leadership called to make order in the republic. This kind of narrative, pushed from a figure who appeared determined – and somehow authoritarian – seemed to strengthen Nishanov's role. However, the image of a corrupt republic - that was an object of mockery - was greater than that of a republic on the mend. Sadder still, there were manifestations of intolerance even at the popular level. For example, during this difficult season even the prestigious Tashkent state university became an object of derision while during the XIX conference, some of the 45 delegates from the UzSSR were attacked for their alleged involvement in the mafiya.³⁴⁰ Evidently, the statements of Nishanov³⁴¹ had a boomerang effect that was thrilling the Russian nationalist about the malfeasance in a parasite peripheric republic of

³³⁸ Similarly, other criticism emerged against the fact that Chernenko could be elected despite being so unpopular among communists and that he became Gensek while gravely ill was an indication of a corrupt system, of which Uzbekistan was an unwilling victim. PV, 21719, 153, 2 July 1988, p. 4.

³³⁹ Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 190; Barukh Hazan, *Gorbachev's Gamble: The 19th All-Union Party Conference* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 279.

³⁴⁰ D'Encausse, *La Gloire Des Nations Ou La Fin de l'Empire Soviétique*, 46.

³⁴¹ On 29 June 1988, in the middle of the conference, TASS reported Nishanov's statement where he declared that, from late 1983, 100 officials in Uzbekistan had been indicted for corruption, 3000 had been demoted and 18,000 party members had been expelled. Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 163; Bohdan Nahaylo and Victor Swoboda, *Soviet Disunion: A History of the Nationalities Problem in the USSR* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 303.

USSR. This excess of self-criticism would inevitably irritate the nationalist, turning a part of the Uzbek establishment against the 'stranger' Nishanov.

The more substantive results of the conference were its reformist plan. In fact, Gorbachev wanted to relaunch a 'healthy' image of a country that was too much limited in its development by bureaucracy. He figured that the solution was a gradual shift of power from party to state organs and he proposed, during the May 1988 CPSU plenum and during the XIX CPSU conference in July, a constitutional reform on four pillars.³⁴² This reformist plan had the ambition to democratize the Soviet Union, given that it was still bureaucratized, centralized and, to a significant extent, authoritarian.

This call for democratization of the Soviet system also heard at the republic level. The CPUz buro meeting of 13 July 1988 was devoted to the implementation of the "urgent executive measures from the decisions of the XIX All-Union CPSU conference." On that occasion, Nishanov recalled how the UzSSR had been criticized for stagnation in agriculture and how the levels of consumption per capita in Uzbekistan were the lowest in the USSR. He noted, also, that central and local organs still received many complaints about disruptions in the supply chain of meat products, milk, fruit and vegetables and on the high prices in the markets.³⁴³ According to the FS, a radical change in productivity, diversification, and improvement in the quality of goods had failed to occur, because many organs of the party, soviets, and agricultural organizations showed sluggishness and political myopia.³⁴⁴

Also during the CPUz buro meeting of 23 June 1988 the latest data on the ethnic composition of the republic were discussed. It was noted that the Tajiks – one of the largest nationality groups – amounted to some 700,000 people while in Tajikistan more than a million Uzbeks were living. This group was represented by 12 deputies in the SS UzSSR while 3.1% of party members were Tajik: 44 Tajik members of the CC CPUz (1.3%), 438 in the obkoms (3%) and 1686 in gorkoms and raikoms (3%). Additionally, it was noted that an official CC CPUz Tajik-language newspaper titled "Khakikati Uzbekiston" was

³⁴² The first was to create a presidential system, followed by the creation of a new parliament based on the CPDSU. Thirdly, the power of local soviets at expense of the communist party would be increased so that the party would be distanced from state economic management in order to discourage corruption. Finally, on 1 July the end of the CPSU monopoly on economic and other non-political sectors was also approved.

³⁴³ Prot 68/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2027, l. 18.

³⁴⁴ Prot 68/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2027, l. 19.

in circulation. The paper came out three times per week, in the Tajik language.³⁴⁵ All of this pointed to the fact that the largest ethnic minority – in 1989 about 4.7% of the UzSSR population³⁴⁶ – was politically underrepresented in the republic.

However, these apparent openings were not met with changes in the old methods with which the UzSSR had been ruled for decades. In this sense, democratization in many ways was something that existed more in theory than in practice. In the immediate aftermath of the XIX conference, Nishanov proceeded with a new wave of reshuffles.³⁴⁷ Then, in summer 1988, the FS CPUz proceeded with a wave of far more unpopular reforms that deeply irritated local elites. To begin, he promoted the adoption of decrees that on 28 July abolished 13 ministries, leading “the office holders in the defunct ministries to be “transferred to production”, in effect losing the privileges they had held in the party nomenklatura.”³⁴⁸ Then, in August, the boundaries of several oblasts and raions were redrawn,³⁴⁹ abolishing many rural districts.³⁵⁰ Of even greater relevance was a fresh hit by Nishanov’s against Rashidov’s network, eliminating the oblasts – and the related obkoms – of Jizzakh and Navoi,³⁵¹ and transferring a part of the Samarkand oblast to the Bukharan one.³⁵² The FS CPUz’s motivation was probably to reduce the

³⁴⁵ Prot 67/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2025, ll. 15-17.

³⁴⁶ Nancy Lubin, “Implications of Ethnic and Demographic Trends,” in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 43.

³⁴⁷ On 28 July, M.A. Zaidov became the new minister of education (PV, 21739, 173, 29 July 1988, p. 2), and on 30 July, I.S. Umarov and V.A. Antonov became the first deputy directors of the Uzbek gosagropom (state agricultural industry). T.A. Alimov was appointed chairman of the UzSSR state committee for the safety of nature, and S.N. Ismailov the chairman of labor and social security committee of the UzSSR (PV, 176, 21742, 2 August 1988, p. 2).

³⁴⁸ Norling, “Myth and Reality: Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan,” 255.

³⁴⁹ In 1988, the UzSSR changed its administrative structure, introducing also territorial changings in kishlaks and raions. GARF, f. R-7523, op. 145, d. 2857, ll. 1-54.

³⁵⁰ Norling comments: “This far-reaching measure affected thousands of Uzbek officials in prominent positions. For example, on August 18, 1988, 20000 specialists were “released to production” following the elimination of rayons.” Ibid.

³⁵¹ With the decree of the Presidium of the SS UzSSR of 6 September 1988, the Navoi oblast is merged with that of Samarkand and Jizzakh in to Syrdarya. PV, 21771, 205, 7 September 1988, p. 1.

³⁵² A decree of the Presidium of the SS UzSSR of 16 May 1989 transferred a part of the Samarkand oblast territory to Bukhara. In this move, the cities of Zarafshan, Navoi,

influence of the patronage networks that Rashidov had overseen – or at least tolerated – during his long reign.³⁵³ Attacks on other prominent figures within the party followed in short order. On 10 September, the FS Tashkent obkom Alimov was replaced by the former FS Khorezm Mirakhmat Mirhadzhievich Mirkasymov. In Khorezm, on 12 September 1988, Rimadzhana Matnazarovna Khudaibergenova became the FS Khorezm obkom, the chairwoman of Khorezm oblispolkom, and the first woman to cover such a high post in the republic.

These unpopular measures shaped a view of Nishanov as a sort of ‘viceroy’ of Moscow in Uzbekistan. However, the FS CPUz tried to explain his policy in several interviews he gave in autumn 1988. For example, on 17 September 1988, PV republished an interview that Nishanov gave to *Argumenti i Fakty* where the Uzbek leader commented his political program – based on “purification with the truth” – and presented his version of the facts. The process of restoring order among the UzSSR cadres, he asserted, had already started in January 1984, when the obkom FSs Karimov and Gaipov were accused of corruption and forgery and expelled from their posts. The group of CC CPSU “specialists” (he was probably referring to the *krasnyi desant*) that came to Uzbekistan to assist the republican party and to restore the Leninist norms of party life was an additional milestone in the rejuvenation narrative he was outlining. This group had uncovered serious violations of law and order, theft, forgery, and corruption. According to Nishanov, this catastrophic situation was the legacy of the previous distorted practice of cadre selection, which had been based not on political and managerial characteristics but on kinship and zemlyachestvo. In his words, he defined a sort of feudal system where,

many secretaries of raikoms felt they were Knyaz [princes] who arbitrarily stole and forgave malfeasance according to their own prerogative. For them it was not hard to force the law enforcement bodies to decline to prosecute somebody.³⁵⁴

Then, following Nishanov’s narrative, the CC CPSU significantly contributed in defining the XVI plenum directives, where it was admitted that

Uchkuduk shifted, as did the raions of Kanimekh, Kyziltep, Navoi, Tamdyn, and Uchkuduk. PV, 21980, 114, 17 May 1989, p. 1.

³⁵³ However, despite the symbolic attack against Rashidov, Nishanov was anyway responding to a broader campaign promoted by Moscow to redefine oblasts in the Union.

³⁵⁴ PV, 21780, 214, 17 September 1988, p. 2.

annually the republican accountants had falsified data for at least 400,000 tons of non-existent cotton. However, also in that occasion

many details had not been revealed because among the participants there were still many perpetrators of these crimes [...] and the old cadres did not have the energy to settle those tasks. [This is why], the main problem was restoring effective cadre policy. [...] In the first phase, it was necessary to oust unconditionally all those persons who had been compromised [with the negative phenomena], and then to change all those officials who appeared as weak workers – even if they were honest – recommending [new cadres] who deserved those posts for their political and managerial characteristics. This process was far more than a day's work and it is still in progress. [...] In the last four years, 58,000 workers have been removed.³⁵⁵

Nishanov – who had already served in the CC CPUz in 1963-1970 – recalled how these phenomena were already well known then. However, 'rashidovshchina' had seen the whole thing tolerated. Thus, Nishanov directly recalled that the honest people who had tried to complain to the center against the local abuses were prosecuted³⁵⁶ and considered the rising nationalism and ethnic tensions in Kazakhstan and in Nagorno Karabakh, stating that also in Uzbekistan there was a similar risk. Thus, he affirmed that such an explosive situation would be again imputable to a depraved cadres' policy that has "hindered the strengthening of intra-national relations." Once more, the responsibility was laid at the feet of Rashidov:

[I]t is now clear to all what kind of writer and manager Rashidov was. As far as international education and cotton cultivation are concerned, there were many falsifications, treating lead as if it were gold, and much ado about

³⁵⁵ PV, 21780, 214, 17 September 1988, p. 2.

³⁵⁶ In his words: "Because of Rashidov's intrigue, the FS Tashkent obkom, R. Gulamov was removed. His letters to the CC CPSU on the situation in the republic were blocked by Rashidov who was, as you know, in good relations with Brezhnev. Now Gulamov is the chairman of the SS UzSSR and the director of the republican council of war veterans and labor." [Similarly he also recalled] M. Mukhamedzhanov and Kh. Abdullaev, the former second secretary of the CC CPUz, R.E. Melnikov, the former director of the SM UzSSR, A. Alimov, and all others who have experienced the anger and revenge of the "noble patron." Anyone who tried to protest and to argue with Rashidov or stick to his own position was immediately removed from the place under one pretext or another. In the late '60s and early '70s, this fate also befell the FSs of the Bukharan (K. Murtazayev) and Namangan obkoms (M. Ibrakhimov)." PV, 21780, 214, 17 September 1988, p. 2.

nothing [...] hiding the negative moments [also in other sectors such as] law enforcement, science, culture, party cadres, and awards.³⁵⁷

According to Nishanov, not just in Uzbekistan but also in Kazakhstan and in the other Central Asian republics it was necessary to define the real situation and the real possibilities of each republic. The goal was to fix the economic priorities along the social development, also balancing the cultural demands of the ethnic minorities - Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, Turkmen and Crimean Tatars - and other nationalities living in Uzbekistan. This call for 'objective criticism' claimed to be a recipe for the whole Soviet problems. Then, he recalled again the importance of the CC CPSU support by

sending to Uzbekistan hundreds of experienced and reliable Communists. These methods of large-scale assistance have been carried out in Uzbekistan for the first time in thirty years. The arrival of new people has helped to accumulate experience of organizational and political work within the party [...] and building an atmosphere of glasnost and democratization [...] In the last year alone, in the plenums, in the aktivs, and in the buros of party committees the role of 2449 party managers was redefined and in the primary organizations of the party 28,872 and about 40,000 managers were elected democratically. [However,] masked supporters of the past [are still active and] are using various kinds of demagogic tricks to fight against perestroika, trying to gamble on the national feelings and mestnichestvo. But is undoubtable that Communists and the workers will see who really fights for perestroika and who, under the guise of glasnost and support for democracy, seeks to reverse this trend.³⁵⁸

Finally, Nishanov denied any interpretation that would identify cotton as a problem for the republic – because of the risks of monoculture and *pripiski* – and confirmed the republican commitments to 'white gold'. He affirmed that:

cotton was and remains an important and internationalist contribution by the UzSSR to the social division of labor as the backbone of the economy. As we recently revealed in the plenum, the food program in any way does not contradict the cultivation of cotton. [However, it is correct to say that] the agricultural mechanism that has existed oriented the farmer not to the focus on quality but on quantity. The work of the cotton grower was focused on the final production of fibers but in terms of raw material harvested. In 1985, the CC CPSU and the SM USSR accepted the offer of the Republic to consider [the final production] in terms of fiber. The MCC - in which departments "clandestine millionaires" held this moonlighting shamelessly plundering the

³⁵⁷ PV, 21780, 214, 17 September 1988, p. 2.

³⁵⁸ PV, 21780, 214, 17 September 1988, p. 2.

state – was abolished. These examples gave [effective] results. In 1983 the production of cotton fiber was 26.6% [of the raw cotton harvested] while in 1987 it rose to 32.2%. Compared to 1983, from cotton processed in 1987 the production of fibers increased by more than 270,000 tons and of oil for 26,000 tons, with a total value of more than 500 million rubles.³⁵⁹

After affirming these improvements in the economy, and in the cotton sector in particular, Nishanov then remarked that unfortunately

the health situation in the republic has been criticized more than once in the pages of newspapers and magazines and in television, but the situation is improving. In the short term, 400 administrative buildings and structures – of which 162 have been put to use as prevention centers – have been delivered to the medical institutions of the republic. The buildings that were built for Rashidov's family and his entourage were also converted into prevention centers for workers of the Tashkent municipality. [...]. A building with 60 apartments in Tashkent has been set aside for the veterans of WW2 and handicapped people.³⁶⁰

Then, the FS CPUz was asked to evaluate the activities of the USSR prokuratura in Uzbekistan and he stated that:

With positive results, we work closely with the workers of the USSR prokuratura and law enforcement agencies of the republic. They have done much and are doing even more to restore order in the republic in identifying and prosecuting corrupt officials in the entourage of Rashidov and all those who have been stained by the ills of forgery, abuse and fraud. The fight is acute and the main weapon in the fight are not words but the facts. But I would like to stress that the organs of the prokuratura could not do an effective job without the strong support and help from a part of the party organs. This support helps to expose the negative phenomena and to correct the errors. The effectiveness of results – and first of all in the improvement of the conditions of people's lives – is a major criterion on which the workers are able to evaluate every one of us.³⁶¹

Nishanov effectively appeared as a firm Soviet leader who had been formed in the Moscow establishment and probably a devoted communist who apparently remained far from the 'clan' logics. However, as we have seen, those dynamics were – and are still – crucial in the Central Asian scenario. Probably, in making his own crossing of the 'Uzbek Rubicon' his aim was not to establish a Caesarean dictatorship. Rather he assumed he could

³⁵⁹ PV, 21780, 214, 17 September 1988, p. 2.

³⁶⁰ PV, 21780, 214, 17 September 1988, p. 2.

³⁶¹ PV, 21780, 214, 17 September 1988, p. 2.

enlist the support of the local 'generals' in order to establish Uzbekistan as a Moscow trust territory. Apparently this happened, but only for a short period. The conjuncture of events and the enmities within the party would result in a conspiracy against Moscow's viceroy. In fact, Nishanov was probably too honest (and perhaps inexperienced) to see how failing to enlist the support of the local elite was a crucial aspect of the internal legitimation that he was progressively losing. However, he kept his promises and supported the Soviet cause while the state was changing its shape.³⁶²

Then, in the middle of the cotton harvest season, new scandals emerged and inflamed the public opinion. On 30 September inefficiencies and falsifications in the Jizzakh area received new publicity. More than 22,000 tons of its produced cotton (11,61%) had apparently been lost, compared to the general wastage rate of 4,76%.³⁶³ This indicated that, also after its dismemberment, the Jizzakh area was condemned to a perpetual moral

³⁶² In fact, the Soviet system was under a new wave of reform that touched also its constitutional structure. From September 1988, a debate on constitutional reforms expanded rapidly, particularly after Gorbachev's appointment to the post of Chairman of the Presidium SS USSR on 1 October 1988. Replacing Gromyko in this position, Gorbachev became the effective head of the Soviet state. Later, on 1 December 1988 a wide constitutional reform was adopted, creating the institution of the "President of the USSR" to which Gorbachev was fully appointed on 15 March 1990. Other important reforms were implemented in spring 1990. Among them, we can recall the "Law on languages of USSR peoples" that in early May established Russian as a "common language" and created a sort of bilingualism in schools, names, and official documents in every republic. This law substantially formalized a situation that was already effective. On 4 June the 'Enterprise Act' was then approved and on 12 June the law on press freedom, in which it was basically stated that the media could have been founded and managed not only by the state, public organizations, political parties and other associations of various kinds, but also by "any citizen above 18 years of age." Moreover, despite censorship in mass media was formally prohibited, a responsibility for officials who communicated information covered by state secret persisted. After 70 years of official atheism and a single party system, on September the "Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" was finally approved as well as the law on political parties that recognized formally those parties with at least 5000 registered members (10 October). Paolo Biscaretti di Ruffia, *1988-1990. Un Triennio Di Profonde Trasformazioni Costituzionali. In Occidente, nell'URSS, Negli Stati Socialisti dell'Est Europeo* (Milano: Giuffrè editore, 1991), 27-95; Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 748.

³⁶³ PV, 21791, 225, 30 September 1988, p. 3.

trial.³⁶⁴ In the Andijan oblast – specifically in the sovkhos Kuibyshev – the massive and illegal use of child labor for the cotton harvest continued,³⁶⁵ as well as in the Yangiyulsky rayon where students were harvesting cotton instead of preparing for their exams.³⁶⁶ Besides these scandals, in mid-October 1988 there was an incredibly dark week of arrests of many of those former CC CPUz officials that had been dismissed from their posts due to poor performance.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ In the late '80s, Jizzakh was regarded as a sort of 'Uzbek Corleone', a capital of the local mafia. In reality, it was just a small city that seemed to be destined to decline after Rashidov's death.

³⁶⁵ PV, 21796, 230, 6 October 1988, p. 1.

³⁶⁶ PV, 21803, 237, 15 October 1988, p. 4.

³⁶⁷ This was probably responding to a strategy where the party – and Nishanov primarily – was ousting many of its members in accordance with the investigative organs of the central prokuratura. We have already seen that Nishanov had a direct role in ousting, with the complicity of the prosecutorial organs, some of his rivals. At the same time, as Anishchev recalled in his memoirs, it is probable that the party leaders were to some extent committed – to do not say forced – to execute the requirements of the prosecutors. All this would lead to one of the most dramatic events of our story. On 19 October 1988, during the 'black Wednesday' of the 'Uzbek cotton affair' the former chairman of the presidium of the SS UzSSR Akil Salimov was arrested. At that moment, he was also rector of the Tashkent institute for irrigation engineers and agricultural mechanization. In the same wave, the former FS CPUz Inamzhon Usmankhodzhaev and the former CC CPUz secretary Abdullaev were also detained. The next day the former FS Tashkent obkom Musakhanov was arrested and a part of the Post-Rashidovian cadres ousted: On 19 October, after one year in the post, the FS Samarkand obkom Nazir Radzhabov was arrested and finished in the investigations of the Gdlyan's groups. According to Ilyukhin, Razhabov was a honest person and a victim of Gdlyan's 'terror'. He was replaced by Anvar Salikhovich Ikramov, while the FS Bukhara obkom Ismail Dzhabbarov was arrested and replaced on 22 October by Damir Salikhovich Yadgarov. In fact, also Ismail Dzhabbarov was implicated in the cotton affairs. On 19 October 1988 he was dismissed from the Uzbek buro, arrested and presented to Moscow authorities who confined him in the prison n° 4 of the MVD USSR. His innocence was revealed on 6 March 1990 when the court released Dzhabbarov. Simultaneously with the verdict Court issued a special ruling addressed the Prosecutor General of the USSR and noted that all the charges, and obtain all of the facts of bribery during the investigation were fabricated, allowed a clear outrage against an innocent person. The court demanded that the Prosecutor General of the mandatory investigation of violations committed Gdlyan and Ivanov and some other investigators. Then, on 22 October, , Khamdam Umarov, one of the survivors of the purges and who has been in the post of FS Ferghana obkom since 1978, was also finally replaced by the former second secretary of Syrdarya obkom,

This is probably the moment when we could say the chickens had come home to roost. The party was officially reporting in the press about the dismissal of officials. However, arrests were confined to a certain level of 'secret zone', and rumors about what was happening in the republic started to circulate, creating a sense of popular disaffection towards the leadership. Amidst all this drama, Moscow's viceroy was probably powerless to do anything but to follow the course of events and to keep describing the situation with the usual 'emergency situation' narrative, while the press was attempting to justify a situation that probably was out of control.³⁶⁸

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³⁶⁸ Indeed, following the spirit of glasnost, PV published an article entitled "there are no zones of silence," about those facts that under the leadership of Rashidov and its affiliates spread: nepotism, corruption and zemlyachestvo were typical element that endorsed disorder in the republic and 'serious ideological deviations'. This article – which emphasized the role of Rashidov and Salimov in creating the conditions for the dramatic events – was a perfect example of how the CPUz leadership was attempting to justify a situation that probably was out of control. It had to show how, "in the years of Brezhnev and Rashidov, in the conditions of distorted consciousness a generation of executives, scientists and cultural workers was formed and [now] competes with perestroika." According to the article, "The personal talent, managerial quality, honesty, decency, and respect for the principles [did not characterized] the "master" who, at first, selected cadres by their servility and dishonesty in order to remain at their posts. In the CC CPUz some posts remained vacant until there were relatives and trustworthy people [to place there]. In the republican AN, elections for leadership posts were reserved for some candidates who did not grow in the scientific [framework...] The apparatus workers who were unwelcome and that dared to criticize the actions of Rashidov and his environment, were treated with the most severe conditions. [Rashidov and friends] blackmailed, slandered, and even physically clashed with [their rivals]. Rashidov and other leaders in the apparatus of the CC planted the seeds of suspicion and discord, and controlled the workers through the apparatus and the administrative bodies. For example, a manager of a department of the CC CPUz was sent to the sanatorium Uzbekistan in Yalta where R. Gulamov spoke about Rashidov and his circle. Gulamov then fell into disgrace because he spoke against Rashidov. Another case is that of an executive who was sent to Moscow to sabotage the dissertation defense of the wife of another opponent, S. Aribov. [...] R. Nazarov was a secretary of the party and the director of the laboratory at the institute of experimental biology. When he was chosen as secretary of the party organizations he was opposed strongly but [survived]." Then the article reported that in 1981, during a council of the institute, all board members were against his reelection, but thanks to Rashidov's intervention he was reelected and his main critic – A. Kuchkarov, the

The massive wave of purges and arrests of senior officials seemed to be a successful step in Nishanov's agenda. Similarly, on 12 November the fulfillment of the cotton plan with a final crop of 5.25 million tons was announced.³⁶⁹ Even Gorbachev - who stopped in Tashkent during a tour to India – met with the CC CPUz buro and congratulated the Uzbek leadership for the positive – or at least tangible – results.³⁷⁰ Evidently, Nishanov was still well appreciated by the center and Gorbachev who considered him as a strong ally in the region. However, the Uzbek leader's popularity within the republic dramatically dropped and the discontent for the moralization policies rose.

Then, during the CPUz buro discussion of 6 December 1988, a new list of 'villains' - reported in accordance with the *OrgOtdel* and the PCC of the CPUz – was added. In the list, other prominent figures were purged, such as Ismail Dzhabbarov (point 45), Radzhabov Nazir Radzhabovich (point 46),³⁷¹ and Akil Salimov Umurzakovich (point 47). They were all expelled from the CPSU for violations of the party rules, abuse of power and corruption. Then, at point 48, further information of the CC CPSU and prokuratura USSR was added, arguing the name of the former FS CPUz. These documents informed that Usmankhodzhaev was already under arrest and on trial for violations of the party rules, abuse of power and corruption. Thus, he was excluded from the CPSU. Therefore, the buro discussed about the opportunity to report this situation in the XII plenum (to be held the day after).³⁷² The decision was positive. Indeed, the shocking news about the former leaders was presented in the incredible plenum held on 7 December 1988. On that occasion, the FS CPUz proved a series of examples of negative phenomena, railing against a part of the nomenklatura that had been dismissed in accordance with the prokuratura. Indeed, on that occasion Nishanov noted how:

I. Dzhabbarov, when he was secretary of the Navoi obkom, took bribes, abused his power and with the decision of the buro CC CPUz was relieved from

author of the article – was ousted and slandered as an alcoholic. He lays a lot of the responsibility also to Salimov, who had just been arrested. PV, 21813, 247, 27 October 1988, p. 3.

³⁶⁹ PV, 21828, 262, 13 November 1988, p. 1. For the first time in recent years the plan was even exceeded for 100,000 tons, reaching a harvest of 5.35 million tons. PV, 21844, 278, 1 December 1988, p. 2.

³⁷⁰ PV, 21832, 266, 18 November 1988, p. 1.

³⁷¹ Prot 75/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2033, l. 20.

³⁷² Prot 75/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2033, l. 21.

the post of FS Bukhara obkom because he was compromised and according to the CC CPSU plenum of November is expelled by the candidates of the CC CPSU. Currently he is in detention and has been convicted. [As well,] Nazir Radzhabovich Radzhabov, when he was secretary of the Bukhara obkom, then chairman of the constructions and housing ministry in the agriculture department, took bribes from several officials. By the decision of the CC CPUz buro, Radzhabov was relieved from his post of FS Samarkand obkom because he is compromised for abuse of power. Currently is detained and has been convicted.³⁷³ Akil Umurzakovich Salimov, when he was secretary of the CC CPUz and chairman of the Presidium of the SS UzSSR, received large bribes from officials. During the CC CPSU plenum of November he was expelled by the candidates of the CC CPSU because he is compromised and now he has been arrested and sentenced. [...] In the CC CPSU the materials of the prokuratura USSR were presented and a copy sent to the CC CPUz. [In this documentation] it was evidenced how Usmankhodzhaev Inamzhon Buzrukovich has been arrested and condemned on corruption charges. The documents indicate that Usmankhodzhaev's guilt for corruption has been confirmed by many testimonies. Usmankhodzhaev, admitting his guilt, gave testimony against himself regarding the true extent of his criminal activity.³⁷⁴

Substantially, the party was following the evolutions of the 'Uzbek trial of the century' - that we will examine in the next chapter – and maybe even the policy (or diktats) of the prokuratura USSR. In the context of glasnost, despite the importance of the news, PV reported in minor fanfare that the plenum of the CC CPUz expelled from the CPSU Dzhabbarov, Radzhabov, Salimov and Usmankhodzhaev "because they were compromised."³⁷⁵ Considering these filtered labels, we can hardly believe in the effective transparency and modest democratic scope³⁷⁶ of glasnost in Uzbekistan where the most serious purge of the perestroika times was still claiming victims. The final tally arrived in late 1988. A memorandum from the prokuratura of Uzbekistan to the central committee outlined the full extent of complicity in the 'Uzbek cotton affair'. It reported that a total of 18,000 thousand people had been involved. Of these, 4,500 people had already been brought to justice. Among the guilty

³⁷³ Prot 12/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2011, l. 14.

³⁷⁴ Prot 12/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2011, l. 15.

³⁷⁵ PV, 21849, 283, 8 December 1988, p. 1.

³⁷⁶ "Only 12 gorkom and raikom secretaries (including five first secretaries) were elected on a competitive basis in 1988, and only two-thirds of PPO [primary party organizations] secretaries and members of gorkom and raikom bureaux in Tashkent city were elected from two or more candidates." Gill and Pitty, *Power in the Party. The Organization of Power and Central-Republican Relations in the CPSU*, 78.

were 69 party and soviet high officials, 84 cotton-cleaning factory directors, 1,640 experts and specialists, and 430 heads of kolkhozes and sovkhozes. The remaining 13,000 foremen and accountants, heads of offices and departments were exempt from criminal liability and punished with measures of social and party action.³⁷⁷

Even amidst all this crisis and drama Nishanov was content. On the eve of his first anniversary as FS CPUz he could reflect on the fact that, during his time in office, he had ousted his main rivals, satisfied the requests of the CC CPSU in terms of cotton, and managed to see through a criminal prosecution of the Uzbek cotton affairs. He no doubt credited himself as an honest, credible, and dutiful communist leader. Nevertheless, whether he was able to see it clearly or not, he had broken the compromise between the clans and sowed discontent among the elite. These people were ready to turn on him at a moment's notice, when the time was ripe.

Thus, Nishanov's political discourse narrated a new version of moderate triumphalism that linked the commitments in 'cleaning' the republic with the production of effective and higher qualitative cotton shares. The publicized result was: in 1989, Uzbekistan would produce and sell to the Soviet state 1.5 million tons of cotton fibers.³⁷⁸ However, it was important to keep production effective. Considering the depletion of the land and the fear of not realizing the plan, there was an increase of 40,000 hectares in the land area sown with cotton³⁷⁹ and a parallel increase in 'illegal lands' under cultivation.³⁸⁰ Moreover, even more shortcomings were revealed in the cotton industrial complex.³⁸¹

³⁷⁷ Kinokompaniya Pigmalion, *Zoloto Dlya Parii. Khlopkovoe Delo*.

³⁷⁸ PV, 21868, 2, 3 January 1989, p. 1.

³⁷⁹ PV, 21877, 11, 13 January 1989, p. 2.

³⁸⁰ In 1988, had been revealed 2,700 hectares of abusive cotton fields. PV, 21865, 299, 30 December 1988, p. 3.

³⁸¹ In January 1989 were reported losses in the industry of the UzSSR. The fault was given to the inefficiency of the Soviet productive system in Uzbekistan, with many obsolete and defective productions. Only in the first semester of 1988, Uzbekistan lost 12 million rubles for failing to comply with the standards required. Therefore, the arbitral court requested 3.2 million rubles from vendors who have been provided with faulty products. Also in 1987, the arbitral court of the Moscow oblast asked a compensation amounting nearly to a million rubles from the cotton factories, and imposed fines for more than 721,000 rubles for the delivery of poor quality fibers. PV, 11, 21877, 13 January 1989, p. 2.

Then, as tradition dictated, the new year saw mass purges in the top posts of the UzSSR,³⁸² while signs of popular impatience leaked out. Above all, nationalism and ethnic claims were challenging the Soviet power with greater momentum. In fact, as in the other republics of USSR, also in Uzbekistan the use of the national language started to be much more discussed even at academic level.³⁸³ Therefore, the CPUz debated on the use of the national (Uzbek) language that, as we have seen in the previous chapters, was the most diffused among the population. The core issue was in compromising the role of a common administrative language - that since the colonial epoch was Russian – and the nationalist claims. The party admitted that in the years of stagnation the Uzbek national language was not effectively taught in the schools, contradicting the spirit of art. 36 of the Soviet Constitution.³⁸⁴ As in the rest of USSR, in Uzbekistan there was a debate on implementing bilingualism and this course was promoted as part and parcel of perestroika,³⁸⁵ constituting a very remarkable movement in the direction of nationalism.

These debates on the national dimension of the UzSSR proceeded parallel to the main results on the ‘Uzbek affair’. On the long wave of the ‘Uzbek trial of the century’, on 9 January the SC USSR condemned the former chairman of

³⁸² On 3 January, A.R. Atadzhanov became the first deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR and director of the republican Gosplan, and P.M. Abdurakhmanov deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR (PV, 21869, 3, 4 January 1989, p. 1). Then, on 6 January, R.A. Giniyatullina and A.Kh. Tadzhiyeva became first deputy directors of the agroindustrial committee of the republic (PV, 21872, 6, 7 January 1989, p. 1).

³⁸³ In December 1988, the Tashkent state university held several conferences on the use of the Uzbek national language. Hiro, *Inside Central Asia: A Political and Cultural History of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Iran*, 135.

³⁸⁴ “Article 36. Citizens of the USSR of different races and nationalities have equal rights. Exercise of these rights is ensured by a policy of all-round development and drawing together of all the nations and nationalities of the USSR, by educating citizens in the spirit of Soviet patriotism and socialist internationalism, and by the possibility to use their native language and the languages of other peoples in the USSR. Any direct or indirect limitation of the rights of citizens or establishment of direct or indirect privileges on grounds of race or nationality, and any advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness, hostility, or contempt, are punishable by law.” SS USSR, *Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: Adopted at the Seventh (Special) Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Ninth Convocation, on October 7, 1977*. (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1977).

³⁸⁵ PV, 13, 21879, 15 January 1989, p. 3

SM Karakalpak ASSR Erezhep Aytmuratov.³⁸⁶ Nishanov presented these results as a first step of a greater and longer campaign against corruption. However, he was probably ignoring the restlessness of the national elite groups that would not bear another wave of purges. The tension between Nishanov and the nomenklatura was much more evident. Then, on 18 January, the prokuror UzSSR D.A. Usatov and the Vice President of the AN UzSSR E. Yu. Yusupov announced in the press that despite the many efforts,

the struggle against the negative phenomena of the past is still not complete. People who have come here to the republic from other regions of the country are providing a great deal of help in this work. They have not only helped us, but have also themselves needed our help and support [...] The negative phenomena of the past has manifested on a wide scale in Uzbekistan and has been uncovered with the help of a large circle of specialists from all regions of the country. For a number of years. Uzbekistan has been the principal – practically the only – laboratory where all the types of negative phenomena from the period of stagnation have been studied. Well-substantiated conclusions have been drawn. The lessons of such “laboratory analysis” have helped to accelerate a clean-up, not only within the republic, but also the country. However, another extreme [consequence] has also appeared. The newspapers intoxicate [the readers] with the terms “the Uzbek affair” and “the Uzbek Mafia.” This is, naturally, demeaning to the feelings, the honor and the dignity of people who have honestly created material and spiritual riches which are necessary to the country. As a result of their own lack of farsightedness, certain people have wanted to ascribe to this process a narrow regional and national coloration. I have spoken about this earlier. It is a good thing that PV was the first to rebuff those who have wanted to clothe the crimes in Uzbekistan in national dress.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁶ Aytmuratov was accused of bribes totaling some 80,500 rubles. In the Abdullaeva's testimony of 27 November 1987 emerged that in 1980 he gave her a 5,000 rubles' bribe for Rashidov because he wanted to take the place of the Secretary of the Central Committee instead of Zh. Kurbanov, the seriously ill secretary for agriculture of the CPUz. Gdlyan and Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo*.

³⁸⁷ In parallel, the interview reported alarming data on violent and organized crime, stating: “Last year there was an increase in all registered crimes and particularly of such serious types as premeditated murder, premeditated serious bodily injury, robberies, thefts, and rapes. Almost every third registered crime is theft of state property and the personal property of citizens. During recent years alone, more than 20 bandit groups have been uncovered. One of them, the Yakubov and Boloshin gang (a total of 33 criminals belonged to it), committed 76 crimes within the republic from 1981 to 1985. Altogether, bandit groups committed 49 murders, nine attempted

These great statements and attitudes did not take account of the fact that the whole republican nomenklatura was exhausted after continuous purges, cadre reshuffles, and unremitting criticism even against the Uzbek intellectual society. Finally, also Pulat Khabibullaev – scientist and chairman of the presidium SS UzSSR – was accused³⁸⁸ with political pretexts and his unavoidable demise was generally regarded as an unacceptable interference against an honest figure. Then, on 6 March 1989, he was finally ousted “for serious defects in his work” and the new ‘head of state’ of the UzSSR became Mirzaolim Ibragimovich Ibragimov.³⁸⁹ Nishanov seemed then to abandon also his closest allies, inflaming protests in the Uzbek intellectual community and leaving just scorched earth around him.

At the eve of 1989, the FS CPUz presented in the press the results of his rigorous economic recipe. Basically, he admitted that Uzbekistan was not able to produce more than 5 million tons of raw cotton. Thus, he demanded a further reduction of the productive figures for about 250-300 thousand tons less.³⁹⁰ This request – disclaiming the Moscow’s demands - seemed to be

murders, 337 robberies, and about 2000 thefts of personal and state property.” FBIS, “JPRS-UPA-89-031. 19 May 1989 - Soviet Union. Political Affairs,” 1989, 31–32.

³⁸⁸ On 20 January 1989, during the buro meeting, M. Zakhidov – deputy party secretary of the Tashkent State University – denounced Khabibullaev, scientist and chairman of the presidium SS UzSSR. According to the first, the latter used his personal connections with former compromised executives and violated the financial discipline when he headed AN UzSSR. Allegedly, he also supported Rashidov's son in law to become the first deputy director of the academy. Then, he also reported that Usmankhodzhaev’s wife was employed in the institute of nuclear physics with a salary of 165 rubles (Prot. 78/1989, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 158, d. 1513, ll. 2-3). Then, Pulat Khabibullaev, chairman of the presidium of the SS UzSSR was ousted from his post because of his involvement in relationships with persons compromised in the 'Uzbek cotton affairs'. According to PV, he also violated financial discipline when he was president of the AN UzSSR. Moreover, it reported that he had helped into the academy the son of Khudayberdiyev and the former right-hand of Rashidov. He had also helped the career of A.I. Muminov, the husband of Rashidov's daughter, who in 1983 became the first deputy director of the Institute of Nuclear Physics of the AN UzSSR. The wife of Usmankhodzhaev had also been placed in the Academy of Sciences as a research scientist, but she never showed for work, produced nothing, and still took the salary. PV, 21885, 19, 22 January 1989, p. 1.

³⁸⁹ PV, 21922, 56, 7 March 1989, p. 1.

³⁹⁰ The FS CPUz declared that in 1988 the volume of industrial production had increased by 3.3% over the previous year as well as the national income by 5.1%. In 1987 it had risen only by 0.8% over the previous year. Then, Nishanov recalled how

necessary. In fact, the party finally acknowledged the impossibility of producing more than that share, evidencing how the republican kolkhozes and sovkhoses in 1988 used any source, energy and piece of land to fulfill the plan.³⁹¹

In parallel, the press published with greater emphasis the calls of the AN UzSSR discussing the disaster of monoculture, and denouncing the ecologic tragedy in the republic where lands were impoverished, while rivers, lakes, land and air became much more polluted. An article concluded that “white gold is both the pride and the pain of the Uzbek people,”³⁹² detailing a situation that everybody wanted to renegotiate with the Muscovite planners. Similarly, other articles pointed to the economic disadvantages of producing cotton compared to more remunerative yields.³⁹³ This kind of problems was even discussed within the politburo – and directly by Gorbachev – with a certain economic sensitivity. Probably still committed to the ideal of a planned and specialized economy, Moscow seemed nevertheless chastened by issues within the periphery and wanted to find a compromise. For example, during a meeting with workers on 14 February 1989, Gorbachev, discussed both central planning and hyper specialization in the Soviet economy, stating:

Uzbekistan provides cotton for our industry. In return it is supplied with meat from Ukraine and from the RSFSR. But the Uzbeks may say, why do we need meat from other republics? We produce “three harvests” in a year, and we can

twice (in 1985 and in 1987) the CC CPUz had asked the CC CPSU and SM USSR to decrease the demand for Uzbek cotton while the twelfth FYP (1986-1990) had planned to reach an annual productive share of raw cotton of 6.25 million tons. However, after the persistent scandals related to falsifications, pripiski, and corruption in the cotton sector, in 1985 the productive goals were reduced to 5.75 million tons. Then, in 1987, the CPUz asked that these commitments be reduced by another 750,000 tons but the CC CPSU agreed to a decrease of only half a million.

³⁹¹ While the plan had set aside an area of 1.97 million hectares for the purposes of reaching the plan target, in the end the collective and state farms had to sow about 2.016 million hectares in order to reach this objective. PV, 21886, 20, 24 January 1989, p. 1.

³⁹² PV, 21888, 22, 26 January 1989, p. 2.

³⁹³ For example, an article announced that despite the selling price of meat and cotton being practically equivalent (1200-1223 rubles per ton), producing a ton of cotton was much more expensive in terms of cost than producing a ton of meat. PV, 21889, 23, 28 January 1989, p. 2.

produce our own meat! And we would not have to steer so much cotton for export!³⁹⁴

These doubts, uncertainties and anxieties were questioning the very essence of the Soviet system and stoking further distrust. This theme reemerged also during the Politburo session of 16 February 1989 when, after mooting the 'Lithuanian knot', the Gensek discussed the redefinitions of national economies and their relation with the center. On that occasion, Gorbachev gave the example of Uzbekistan that

remains a "cotton republic". Such has its history, and our national complex, been defined. But there is a debate [...] on how to irrigate fertile lands, which are now under cotton, in order to grow food, fruits and vegetables, and to get more with less effort. But Uzbekistan will eventually lose a lot if it elects to go down the road of self-sufficiency. Each republic has its own strength. We are detecting issue after issue - large and small ones. So to combine the general and the particular in our great federation, to serve one another. And vice versa.³⁹⁵

Apparently, the Gensek understood the problem and pushed for reforms in Uzbekistan. However, he was not figuring a solution far from cotton monoculture. Then, Kadyrov, the chairman of the SM UzSSR, replied:

our cotton gives the country 70 billion rubles, but we get from the center [just] 1 billion. Previously, 1 million children were used in the harvest, now only 53 thousand. Nevertheless, the press attacks persist against us.³⁹⁶

Kadyrov was essentially arguing that the CPUz had fulfilled its duties while remaining under constant negative assessment by the CPSU and public opinion. Glasnost was exacerbating this, with its focus on relentless criticism. The Uzbek leadership could just reaffirm its commitments to do everything possible to heal the atrocious situation, pointing out that Uzbekistan was slowly recovering its healthy condition. Thus, Nishanov also emphasized the UzSSR's perestroika credentials in the press, representing a republic that was upholding the demands of the XXVII congress CPSU for "improvement of relations between the nations of Uzbekistan with the conditions of democracy and economic and social perestroika." The FS recalled how Uzbekistan was integrated into the Soviet system early, providing the homeland with two thirds of its cotton needs. The tense situation among

³⁹⁴ Gorbachev Fond, *V Politburo TsK KPSS...*, 457.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 463.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

national Uzbeks and the ethnic minorities came up, and Nishanov laid the blame for this on previous leadership too. In his words:

The stagnation of recent decades had a general impact across the country, but in the republic of Uzbekistan it was stronger and in a worse shape. [...] The officials with the assignments were amoral and did great harm to the republic. [...] Rashidov and *rashidovzy* [Rashidovians] proclaimed the tenets of internationalism and equality, but in fact cultivated *mestnichestvo*, protectionism, and the customs and traditions of the lords of the Middle Ages [...] They did not count the needs of the ethnic groups who lived in Uzbekistan, including Tajiks, Koreans, Uighurs, Crimean Tatars and others.³⁹⁷

On 30 March, Pravda published an interview with Nishanov where the FS CPUz congratulated the republic for over-fulfilling the cotton plan - the first time it had even been met in five years.³⁹⁸ On the question about “cotton or food”, he replied that it was not an opt-out choice:

Both cotton and food [are necessary]. Let us not forget that the UzSSR is an integral part of a huge country. We must run our economy in a way that will be good for both ourselves and others.³⁹⁹

Apparently, Nishanov confirmed the cotton commitments - in line with his immediate predecessors - binding the republic to 2.5 million tons of cotton fiber annually, of which 700-800 thousand tons would be available for

³⁹⁷ PV, 21912, 46, 24 February 1989, p. 1.

³⁹⁸ It is not only the weather [that has brought these results]. It is greater organization and discipline. We have moved to contract forms of labor, are introducing intensive technologies and are regulating the harvesting conveyor. This has enabled us to grow a good harvest, to procure over 5.36 million tons of raw materials, primarily of first and second class quality. As calculations show, now it is possible to produce no less than 1.72 million tons of fiber, whereas previously, during the very heat of the fake record-setting mania, no more than 1.6 million tons were produced. Nevertheless, the volume was some 750,000 tons less than the 1983 plan had envisaged. On this, Nishanov explained: “The problem has not been conclusively solved. Of course, the plan amount has been adjusted to take into account that part of previous harvests that were merely falsified in reality. A plan decrease was needed in order to restore reality to the plan. According to calculations we should decrease the sowing area by 200,000 hectares and decrease the production volume of raw materials by another 300,000-350,000 tons in order to bring annual gross yield to 5 million tons. On this question, we find understanding and support in the party central committee and the country’s government.” FBIS, “JPRS-UPA-89-031. 19 May 1989 - Soviet Union. Political Affairs,” 89-91.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

export.⁴⁰⁰ In parallel, the CPUz started to state a reformist plan for the economy and other social services.⁴⁰¹ Then, the Uzbek leader affirmed that cotton was anyway destined to remain a protagonist of the republican economy. These commitments were also confirmed during the plenum of the SC UzSSR (13-14 April) where the need to better assess agriculture, investigations and the evaluation criteria on the selection of managing cadres was discussed as a priority of the judiciary agenda.⁴⁰² Despite the 'moralizing measures' of the 'cotton affair' seemed to be almost over,⁴⁰³ Nishanov recalled that the work of the prosecutors was not finished.⁴⁰⁴ An ambiguous avowal that would bother the impatient nomenklatura.

The enthusiasm and optimism for perestroika seemed to contradict the uncertainty of a turbulent period. Despite the hopes, many dramatic events puzzled the legitimacy of the reforms and were symptoms of an irreversible crisis of a system entered in a terminal stage. The episodes of interethnic intolerance – and their repression - spread all around USSR disproved the narrative of 'wind of change,' recalling the hard methods of the past. On 9 April in Tbilisi the Soviet army fired on protesters, killing twenty people,⁴⁰⁵ the humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh was exploding and Gorbachev was ousting a part of the ruling establishment. This schizophrenia was so evident on 25 April, when the CC CPSU changed 74 members and in parallel the Red Army began leaving Hungary.⁴⁰⁶ These facts show that Gorbachev's

⁴⁰⁰ PV, 21995, 129, 2 June 1989, p. 2.

⁴⁰¹ Nominal growth of industrial production of 7.2% and national growth of 5.4% (PV, 21958, 92, 19 April 1989, p. 2) however, could not hide the ongoing crisis in the republic. In 1989 Uzbek industry was in a difficult phase, could only promise to supply of goods with a value of 100 million rubles. This commitment fell 235 million rubles short of what was needed, including 131 million rubles in agroindustry and 86 million in light industry (PV, 21948, 82, 6 April 1989, p. 2).

⁴⁰² PV, 21957, 91, 18 April 1989, p. 2.

⁴⁰³ PV recalled that the peak of the 'cotton affairs' (1984-1987) had now thankfully passed (PV, 110 21976, 12 May 1989, p. 2) and also Nishanov admitted that the moralization season was almost over, thanking the prokuratura USSR for helping to find the end of the "cotton affair knot." (PV, 21963, 97, 25 April 1989, p. 2).

⁴⁰⁴ For example, PV reported how just in the Shakhrisab gorkom were involved over a hundred communists that were also sanctioned by the party. From those, 64 workers and 19 executives were expelled. However, not all went to trial and some were even reinstated in the party. PV, 110 21976, 12 May 1989, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁵ Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 750.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

'universalism'⁴⁰⁷ was much more towards foreign countries of the communist bloc. However, Moscow wanted to keep the integrity of the country at any cost.⁴⁰⁸ Nevertheless, Uzbekistan was also a potential powder keg and the CPUz tried to calm down ethnic protests and any manifestation of intolerance that might threaten public security. In parallel, through 1989 Nishanov continued his reformist efforts. In the party, a series of measures were proposed to revitalize Uzbek national sentiments and use of the Uzbek language⁴⁰⁹ – in particular by promoting bilingualism⁴¹⁰ – and to discourage any manifestation of racism and ethnic intolerance. On the respect of minorities in Uzbekistan, the party stressed the importance of improving teaching in the native languages of the local communities. 259 schools taught or had courses in the Tajik language, 491 in Kazakh, 52 in Turkmen, 40 in Kyrgyz, and 12 in Greek, also arranging courses in Korean. The use of other languages was also encouraged in universities, in the press, in literature, and in the mass media.⁴¹¹ On these issues, the CPUz acknowledged the rising intolerance and proposed to modify the criminal law to punish more harshly violations of equality of different ethnic groups.⁴¹² Thus, during the 19 May 1989 plenum, Nishanov acknowledged the problems and the difficulties in the socio-political situation in the republic, stating: "while the political and economic reforms achieved the democratization process, the dissatisfaction of the people - for the resolution of the problems related to the social, ecologic and ethnic relations spheres – increases."⁴¹³ Again, the FS CPUz referred to the need to fight against the negative phenomena in order to restore the republican social order.⁴¹⁴ However, the situation degenerated in a matter of weeks, destabilizing the republic and delegitimizing its leadership.

⁴⁰⁷ Silvio Pons, *The Global Revolution. A History of International Communism 1917–1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Silvio Pons, "Western Communists, Mikhail Gorbachev and the 1989 Revolutions," *Contemporary European History* 18, no. 3 (2009): 349; Silvio Pons and Federico Romero, *Reinterpreting the End of the Cold War : Issues, Interpretations, Periodizations* (London & New York: Frank Cass, 2005).

⁴⁰⁸ This contrast between the domestic instability and cooperation abroad was then characterizing the leadership of one of the most controversial figures of the 20th century.

⁴⁰⁹ PV, 83, 21949, 7 April 1989, p. 3.

⁴¹⁰ PV, 21954, 88, 14 April 1989, p. 3.

⁴¹¹ PV, 21963, 97, 25 April 1989, p. 1.

⁴¹² PV, 21956, 90, 16 April 1989, p. 2.

⁴¹³ Prot. 13/1989, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 158, d. 1507, l. 5.

⁴¹⁴ . Then, the Nishanov informed the CC CPUz about the latest documentation received from the prokuratura USSR, revealing that Khamdam Umarov, member of the

Concluding, we can interpret Nishanov – the anti-Rashidovian ‘revenant’ and ‘Moscow’s viceroy’ – as the principal figure in Uzbekistan’s de-Rashidovization course. He was able to exercise his undoubted political skills to take advantage of a very complex situation, to climb the highest rungs of his political career, and to affirm his own power. According to Anishchev, Nishanov was able to pursue his own authority⁴¹⁵ and marginalize any source of counter-power such as the second secretary. During his short reign, the FS CPUz had the consent of Gorbachev, while the CC CPSU did not went into details of the political relations within the Uzbek party.⁴¹⁶ For some extend, the FS had also the support of some prokuratura groups that, with their almost unlimited mandate, could intervene in the political life of the republic. In turn, they ensured a sort of immunity to Nishanov who remained one of the few figures that could remain completely untainted by the ‘cotton affairs’ investigations.

Basically, Nishanov acted as a authoritative leader who intentionally used the card of the ‘Uzbek cotton affair’ to oust his political rivals. The practice of *ad hoc* investigations and the *donos* wars are a clear example of that. Furthermore, as we have seen, the Gensek and the CPSU did not go into the details of the ‘Uzbek cotton affairs’ and the related internal investigations., remaining focused on the cotton supplies. This was the first rule of Moscow-Tashkent relations and the legitimizing condition for any FS CPUz from Stalin times. Such a legitimation issue was then enforced during Rashidov’s reign and was renewed, with a different narrative, even under Nishanov’s leadership. However, the current FS CPUz had been recognized as the leading promulgator of purges and seemed to have violated the informal rule of representation and redistribution of power/sources among the local elites, or clans if you prefer. As would be evident during the ‘Tulip Revolution’ in Kirghizstan fifteen years later, this type of dynamic would lead to the insurrection of an organized part of the population.⁴¹⁷ The wise Soviet

CC CPUz and former FS Ferghana obkom, was accused of bribery. For this he was expelled from the party and arrested. Prot. 13/1989, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 158, d. 1507, l. 71. More openly, the day after the press reported that Umarov had been expelled from the party because he was corrupt and abused power. PV, 21983, 117, 20 May 1989, p. 1.

⁴¹⁵ Anishchev, *Vostochnyi Ornament*, 811.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 799.

⁴¹⁷ Scott Radnitz, *Weapons of the Wealthy: Predatory Regimes and Elite-Led Protests in Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

statesman seemed to be in such violation of the cardinal rule of power in Central Asia that the consequences would be catastrophic in a few weeks.

Therefore, the Moscow oriented Caesar passed the Uzbek Rubicon with his *desantniki* troops hoping to find acclamation to his illuminated dictatorship. After a first and apparent consent, he became victim of a conspiracy elaborated by the rival factions within the CC 'Senate.' With his latest maneuvers Nishanov endorsed many internal discontents within the party and fueled several protests – perhaps organized by his opponents – that in short order would explode into high-scale violence. Thus, May 1989 was the last moment of apparent calm in the UzSSR and was also the moment when the 'Uzbek cotton affair' reached such a peak that it could not be ignored in Moscow any longer. For this reason, we will split the story in two parts, following the different conclusions of the 'Uzbek cotton affair' in the center and in the periphery.

PART III

THE LEGACIES OF THE UZBEK COTTON AFFAIR IN MOSCOW AND IN TASHKENT

6 THE GDLYAN-IVANOV SAGA

*От ленинской партии остался только
портрет Ленина, и то лицом к стенке¹*

Yeltsin, Georgia, Gdlyan... who's next?²

*Gdlyan and Ivanov were the noisy illegitimate
children of glasnost in Andropovian sauce - Pikhovia³*

Гдлян и Иванов? Я помню. Хорошие люди!⁴

*Нет ничего легче, как изображать
несимпатичное начальство, читатель любит
это, но это самый неприятный, самый
бездарный читатель – Chekhov⁵*

Gdlyan and Ivanov are two names inexorably associated with the last phase of perestroika. The most famed investigators of the Uzbek cotton affair became well-known for chasing ‘big fish’ within the criminal system. They

¹ During his six years in Uzbekistan (1983-1989), the investigator Albert Kartashyan worked in the Gdlyan’s group. In his memoirs he recalled the episode of an Uzbek colleague who commented to him, “of the Lenin's party there was only the portrait of Lenin, and the face was [oriented] to-wall.” Albert Isaki K’artashyan, *Daḡe Chakatagrer: Detektiv, K’nnich’i Őragrits’* (Yerevan: Iravunk’, 2010).

² From a poster appearing in Arbat in spring 1989. Svetlana Savranskaya, “The Diary of Anatoly S. Chernyaev. 1989. Donated by A.S. Chernyaev to The National Security Archive” (Washington D.C., 2009), 19.

³ Rudolf Germanovich Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L’aigle Bicéphale* (Longueuil: Éditions Kéruss, 2007), 63.

⁴ When I requested the opis 24 of fond 89 in RGANI, the archivist Lyudmila exclaimed “Gdlyan and Ivanov? I remember! Nice people!”

⁵ In 1899, a wise Chekhov replied to an aspiring writer named Maxim Gorky: “There is nothing easier than to portray unsympathetic bosses – the reader likes this – however he’s the most embarrassing, the most incompetent reader.” Anton Pavlovich Chekhov, *Pis’ma. Tom 26* (Moskva: Nauka, 1983), 3.

followed the idea that the real culprits of the scandals were mostly in Moscow rather than in Uzbekistan. In 1989 they claimed to have opened a wider case that connected the 'Uzbek mafiya' with the Moscow 'bosses' and politburo members in the so called "Kremlin affair." However, Gdlyan and Ivanov were relieved from their duties and subsequently protested in the media, inflaming a media circus that thrilled Soviet citizens in the late '80s and alarmed the Soviet higher echelons. Basically, in 1989 the 'Uzbek cotton affairs' shifted from Tashkent – where investigations had more or less concluded by spring 1989 – to Moscow where Gdlyan and Ivanov achieved incredible notoriety because of the accusations against the CC CPSU leadership. The dynamic was simple: the more the two prosecutors claimed 'big fish' indictments, the more they were thwarted in the institutions. We might ask, therefore, how it was that the Gdlyan-Ivanov affair achieved such great publicity? Why were they accusing politburo members of collusion with 'mafiya' and what was their final objective? Their story radically polarized public opinion between supporters of the 'heroes of perestroika' and opponents who identified them as two populist⁶ 'inquisitors' engaged in rank self-promotion. This squabble thus assumed a highly political dimension and we will analyze the implications of this event in the very delicate period 1989-1991, reconstructing the 'Gdlyan-Ivanov affair' within the historical framework of a USSR in fundamental political transition.

The 'Gdlyan-Ivanov affair' can be divided in three phases. In the first phase (1983-1986), the investigators were actively working in Uzbekistan on corruption cases. At that time, they were mostly unknown to the public. In the second phase (1987-1988), characterized by the first great debates on the Uzbek affair in the press and media, the two prosecutors were unanimously presented as two heroes of perestroika. Then, in 1988, the 'Uzbek trial of the

⁶ For the concept of political populism, see John Abromeit et al., *Transformations of Populism in Europe and the Americas: History and Recent Tendencies* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015); Carlos de la Torre, *The Promise and Perils of Populism: Global Perspectives* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014); Adrian Kuzminski, *Fixing the System: A History of Populism, Ancient and Modern* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008); Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Susan C. Stokes et al., *Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism. The Puzzle of Distributive Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Richard Wortman, *The Crisis of Russian Populism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

century' was symbolically concluding the 'Uzbek affair' while Gdlyan and Ivanov publicly claimed more 'villains' in the upper Moscow echelons and, in parallel, the limits of their investigations and methods emerged. As Feofanov and Barry have remarked, "In the field of law during this period no individuals aroused more controversy – dividing the public into ardent supporters and equally strong critics – than did Gdlyan and Ivanov."⁷ The third phase (1989-1991) was characterized by the expulsion of Gdlyan and Ivanov from the institutions while the related scandals emerged in the press and the demonstrations pro and against the two prosecutors created an embarrassing problem for those in the upper reaches of Soviet power, who had to manage what turned out to be a highly damaging and delegitimizing issue.

6.1 The enlarged investigation (1983-1986)

Both Telman Kh. Gdlyan and Nikolai V. Ivanov were professional investigators within the prokuratura.⁸ As mentioned in the third chapter, in

⁷ Yuri Vasilevich Feofanov and Donald D. Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 102.

⁸ To contextualize the story of the two prosecutors we can offer a few words on their lives. Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan is probably the most famous character of the 'Uzbek cotton affair'. An ethnic Armenian, he was born on 20 December 1940 in the Georgian village of Bolshoi Samsar. From 1949 to 1956 he lived with his grandfather and grandmother in the Rubtsovsk district of the Altai Territory. Then he returned to Georgia – to the Sukhumi district – where he worked on a farm. In 1959-1962 he served in the Soviet army where he joined the CPSU and in 1963 he worked in an educational complex in Saratov. In 1964-1968, Gdlyan studied at the Saratov Law Institute 'D.I. Kurskii' where he was famous for his political commitment within the local party and Komsomol sections and was known widely as 'Tov. Telman.' In 1968 Gdlyan graduated and started to work as an investigator of the Prokuratura of the Barishki district (Ulyanovsk oblast) until 1972 when he was appointed investigator in the Zavolzhsky district. In 1974, he worked as senior of the Ulyanovsk oblast and in 1977-1980 he took an important case investigating clandestine textile shops in the Chechen-Ingush Republic. In 1981 he became investigator for particularly important cases of the Prokuratura of the Ulyanovsk oblast. Then, in 1983, the Gdlyan's career rose further when he was appointed senior investigator for particularly important cases of the General Prokuratura of the USSR. In June, he left Estonia – where he worked on the dairy product scandal and on the Hint case – and went to Bukhara to work on the 'Muzaffarov case'. His main collaborator was the young investigator Nikolai Veniaminovich Ivanov with whom he had already worked on the scandals in

September 1983 the Bukhara affair was transferred from the KGB to the prokuratura and assigned to the investigator for particularly important case T.Kh. Gdlyan. The case had such great implications that the prokuratura sent several officials to Uzbekistan to widen the investigations.

6.1.1 An investigative team in Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, Gdlyan's group became the most famous investigative team dealing with corruption cases related to the cotton affairs. However, his was not the only one. As mentioned, the investigations on the Uzbek cotton affairs had involved party organs, the KGB, the MVD and prokuratura at local and central levels. Nevertheless, given the scale and sensitivity of the corruption issues, the investigations on the judicial front were managed by the central Prokuratura of the USSR which organized 30 investigative groups⁹ headed by the investigators for particularly important cases. The most well-known of these were K.K. Maydanyuk,¹⁰ B.E. Svidersky, V.I. Kalinichenko, T.Kh. Gdlyan, N.V. Ivanov, Yu.D. Lyubimov, K.I. Mavrin, V.Yu. Laptev. Moreover, certain 'veteran' prosecutors, such as G.P. Karakozov,¹¹ were involved. As

the Caucasus. Ivanov was born in 10 December 1952 in Troitsk (Chelyabinsk region). After graduating at the Sverdlovsk Law Institute in 1974, he worked in the Prokuratura of the Chelyabinsk region as an investigator and in 1976 he became assistant prosecutor of Kartaly until 1977 when he was transferred to the prokuratura of Murmansk. Finally, in 1984 Ivanov joined Gdlyan on the most important case of his life – the Uzbek affair – and in November became an investigator for particularly important cases of the Prokuratura USSR. Cf. GARF, f. 9654, op. 3, d. 121, l. 11; GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 32. Nikolay Ivanov, *Sledovatel' iz Provintsii* (Sankt Peterburg: Shans, 1995); Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan and Nikolai Veniaminovich Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo* (Moskva: Gramota, 1996); Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan and Yevgeniy Yuriyevich Dodolyev, *Piramida-1* (Moskva: MTA, 1990); Ezio Mauro, "Così Combatto La Piovra Sovietica," *La Repubblica*, July 22, 1989; Sergey Plekhanov, "Delo Gdlyana. Anatomiya Politicheskogo Skandala," *Klub «Olimpas»*, 1991.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁰ Konstantin Maydanyuk was a famous investigator active in the Sochi-Krasnodar scandal and in the Uzbek affairs. However, in 1988 he resigned from the prokuratura and disappeared from public view, because he felt dishonest for having served the 'Soviet mafioso system.' Lev Timofeev, *Russia's Secret Rulers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 71–75.

¹¹ German Petrovich Karakozov, investigator for particularly important cases of the General Prokuratura USSR, was considered a veteran of investigations in the 'caviar affair', in the 'Sochi-Krasnodar Affair', in the 'Zhdanov murder' and in the bribery and abuse of senior officials in the MVD.

Laptev commented “there was an investigator in every square meter of the Republic.”¹² The investigations led to incredible arrests and seizures of treasures – mentioned in previous chapters – and incredible trials and sentences. In 1985-1987 alone, more than 800 criminal cases were opened, condemning thousands of culprits, including 433 chairmen of kolkhozes and sovkhozes, 85 directors of cotton cleaning factories and all the chiefs of the regional zagotkhlopkoprom.¹³ Then, the purges within the party and state claimed other victims among the nomenklatura of the UzSSR as well. Apparently, Gdlyan’s group was an important cog in a greater machine.

However, the story of the ‘cotton affairs’ has been generally associated with Gdlyan who was wryly defined as the ‘real ruler of Uzbekistan’, who seemingly single-handedly imposed ‘gdlyanovschina’,¹⁴ and whose name has come to personify the whole ‘Uzbek affairs.’ In more than five years of investigations in Uzbekistan, the originally three members group led by Telman Gdlyan – and his deputy Ivanov who had a devotional admiration for the elder official¹⁵ – grew to 35 after the Bukharan affair and by the end counted some 209 investigators.¹⁶ This enlarged size was a product of the incredible results of Gdlyan’s investigations. In fact, his team had investigated the bigger fish in Uzbekistan – 11 members of the CPUz buro, 8 FSs obkom, 9 high ranks MVD – including party ‘millionaires’¹⁷ such as the aforementioned Karimov, Gaipov, Usmankhodzhaev, Khudayberdiyev, Abdullaeva, Davydov, Ergashev, Osetrov, Kamalov, Churbanov, etc. These lofty and important

¹² Interview with the former investigator Vitaly Yuryevich Laptev who worked on the Uzbek Affairs. Nina Selina, “Ob ‘Uzbekskom Dele’, Razvale Strany I Sovremennoy Bor’be S Korruptsiyey,” *Krasnoyarskii Rabochii*, October 12, 2013.

¹³ Interview with the former investigator Vitaly Yuryevich Laptev who worked on the Uzbek Affairs. Ibid.

¹⁴ For some of his ‘victims’ Gdlyan became a sort of grand inquisitor. As Abdullaeva put it: “I would not be mistaken if I said that in the years 1985-1988, Uzbekistan lost more party, Soviet and economic leaders than it had in the thirties and forties.” Rano Abdullaeva, *Preodolenie Ada* (Moskva: Monolit, 2009), 24, 114, 151.

¹⁵ Giulietto Chiesa, “La Mafia Uzbeke Alla Conquista Di Mosca. Due Giudici Sovietici La Sbarrano E Raccontano,” *L’Unità*, August 13, 1989.

¹⁶ The second biggest group – led by Lyubimov-Mavrin – had around one hundred members.

¹⁷ From K. Kamalov cash and goods with a value of 6.8 million rubles were seized, 5.6 million from Khudaybergenov, from A.K. Nurumbetov 1.84 million, from Usmanhodzhaev 1.3 million, and from A. Primov 1.3 million rubles. GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 46.

names made Gdlyan's name. However significant his results, they did not lead to massive numbers of prosecutions. During the investigations in Uzbekistan (1983-1989) Gdlyan's group brought criminal charges against 69 people, led to trial 19 separate cases, and resulted in the conviction of 40 people. Gdlyan's 'spectacular' seizures were worth 22.3 million rubles in cash, and a value of 15 million rubles in jewelry.¹⁸

6.1.2 Looking for the big fish

By luck, or by coincidence, Gdlyan and his deputy Ivanov managed to land the bigger fish of the Uzbek affairs. As we have seen in the previous chapters, in the aftermath of the Bukharan affair – which was originally supposed to last for two or three months – the case was refocused on the republican MVD, then on the MCC UzSSR and finally on the top party and state leaders in Uzbekistan. Therefore, the investigative group had evidence to proceed further and followed a pyramidal scheme¹⁹ from raions to oblast and then to the central party, claiming to find a connection between the Uzbek crimes and the 'mafiya protectors' in Moscow that was supposedly managing millionaire businesses. In their scheme, Gdlyan and Ivanov wanted to turn the investigations on to Brezhnev's son-in-law, Yuri Churbanov (for his connection to the local MVD), on to Usmankhodzhaev (for his role in managing the malfeasance within the CPUz), and Ligachev (for his role in supporting the post-Rashidovian FS CPUz). They also sought to target influential CC CPSU officials, such as Viktor Ilich Smirnov – second secretary of the Moldovan Communist Party and head of the party-organizational department of the CC CPSU responsible for cadre selection in Uzbekistan – and the adjunct officials Mogilnichenko, Ishkov, Bessarabov, Istomin, and Ponomarev.²⁰

¹⁸ "However, this amount includes cash and valuables worth 12.9 million rubles seized by the KGB of the USSR when the investigation began. Several other, smaller investigative teams in Uzbekistan seized about 100 million rubles worth of cash and valuables." GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 45; Pravda, 20 May 1989, p. 3; William A. Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 192; Feofanov and Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era*, 102.

¹⁹ Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan, "Piramida," *Strana I Mir* 3 (1989); Gdlyan and Dodolyev, *Piramida-1*; Gdlyan and Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo*.

²⁰ Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L'aigle Bicéphale*, 60–61; Plekhanov, "Delo Gdlyana. Anatomiya Politicheskogo Skandala," 44.

The pyramidal scheme basically followed the party hierarchic organization from the lowest local units and ended with the Gensek at the top.²¹ Thus, Gdlyan's and Ivanov's investigation focused on the 'organizers' of the scam rather than punishing lower-level corruption, a phenomenon that, as mentioned in the third chapter, implicated wide swathes of Soviet society. Following the law strictly, they could have jailed millions of people across the country under corruption charges. However, their search for 'organizers' led them to extend the case to the upper echelons of the party in Moscow, originating the so called 'Kremlin affair.' In a country where justice, prosecutions and even security were directly dependent on the party, Gdlyan and Ivanov had to face the difficulties of going against a part of the system they were essentially working for.

As mentioned, the Andropovian demonstrative actions had a specific and non-systemic focus, and in the immediate aftermath of the Bukharan affair, there was pressure from the prokuratura to limit the case and to not extend its terms.²² In their reconstructions, Gdlyan and Ivanov from the end of 1985, denounced the heads of prokuratura USSR – the Genprokuror Rekunkov and his deputy Soroka – for intervening to slow down the investigations and to end the cases as soon as possible. According to Pikhoya, the prokuratura was under the clear influence of the CC CPSU and the case evidently became a political affair that "was developing in full conformity with the tradition of Soviet law whereby the party would bend or apply the law in the interests of political opportunism."²³ Evidently, where they were allowed to go further with the investigations, impeaching the higher cadres of the MVD UzSSR, this was only possible if welcomed by the CC CPSU, which endorsed the investigations as a continuation of the Andropovian wars against corruption and malfeasance within the MVD. So authorized, investigations continued and Gdlyan's team grew in size and even in importance. Nevertheless, the investigators' ambitions were greater still.

In 1986, the two prosecutors started to send letters to the CC CPSU – and directly to Gorbachev – informing them of concerns about obstacles to the

²¹ Gorbachev was also a potential suspect, having been CC CPSU head of the agriculture department in late 70s, during the intensive falsification period of cotton figures. Gdlyan and Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo*.

²² Ibid.; Selina, "Ob 'Uzbekskom Dele', Razvale Strany I Sovremennoy Bor'be S Korruptsiyey"; Fedor Razzakov, *Korruptsiya v Politbyuro: Delo "Krasnogo Uzbeka"* (Moskva: Eksmo, 2009).

²³ Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L'aigle Bicéphale*, 61.

investigation. In March 1986, they wrote to the Gensek insisting on the need to keep the investigations alive and to unblock obstacles from the prokuratura.²⁴ Again on 11 April 1986, Gdlyan and Ivanov informed Gorbachev of the serious situation in the republic and demanded the Gensek support proceedings against Usmanhodzhaev, Osetrov and Salimov and to take additional measures in the Uzbek affair.²⁵ Once more, on 11 November 1986, they directly wrote a long report to the Gensek, to the head of the Soviet government Ryzhkov, and to the FS Moscow gorkom Yeltsin²⁶ denouncing the prokuratura USSR for hindering their investigations. In this incredible document – fully reproduced in the appendix – Gdlyan and Ivanov declared that the deputy Genprokuror Soroka ordered them not to extend the scope of the Bukhara case that had initially involved eight people arrested by KGB in April-June 1983. According to their reconstruction, in 1984 they were anyway able to extend the case because of the apparent involvement of the Uzbek MVD in covering shortages in the republic. Their version of events reports that at that time Soroka was irritated and again ordered them to not proceed further. Gdlyan and Ivanov persevered with their investigations and were even encouraged by a part of the local party to proceed against the worst elements in the republic. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the investigations were also welcomed by influential elements within the CC CPUz – such as Nishanov – that wanted to oust rival elements. Then, following their reconstruction, at the end of 1985 Gdlyan and Ivanov tried to report Usmanhodzhaev's role in the malfeasance in the republic to the Genprokur, but they were again stopped from the prokuratura from going further. Thus, they demanded Gorbachev's and the party support in their task to prosecute important figures, such as:

I.B. Usmanhodzhaev; second secretary of the CPUz, T.N. Osetrov; Chairman of the presidium of the supreme soviet of the UzSSR, A.U. Salimov; first secretaries of the Tashkent and Khorezm obkom party, M.M. Musakhanov and M.Kh. Khudaibergenov; second secretary of the CC of the CP Moldavia V.I. Smirnov, who before had been working as manager of the organizational-party department of the CC CPSU; first deputy minister of MVD USSR, Yu. M. Churbanov, and many other managers. During the investigations, the corruption charges were confirmed against the following: K.N. Mogilnichenko, deputy director of the organizational-party department of CC CPSU; the manager for the agriculture sector in the CC CPSU, B.M. Istomin; the deputy

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 18, ll. 18-23. The document is fully reported in the annexes.

²⁶ RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 18, ll. 3-17.

director of the organizational-party department of CC CPSU, I.E. Ponomarev; the instructor of the same department, M.L. Ishkova, the secretaries of the CC CPUz, R.Kh. Abdullaeva and E. Aitmuratov; the chairman of the SM UzSSR, N.D. Khudaiberdiev; the first secretaries of the obkom, N.T. Turapov (Kashkadarya), I.D. Dzhabbarov (Bukhara), V.P. Esin (Navoi), N. Radzhabov (Namangan) and K.K. Kamalov (Karakalpak); the minister of the MVD UzSSR, N.I. Ibragimov and his deputy M.N. Sultanov; deputy director of the HQ of the MVD USSR, V.N. Kriventsov; the manager of cadres of the MVD USSR, I.F. Mel'nik, and others.²⁷

Gdlyan and Ivanov stated in this document that they had collected a great deal of evidence against these figures – especially against Usmankhodzhaev who was also distrusted by Yeltsin.²⁸ They also wanted to proceed against the FS CPUz and other ‘criminals’ who were allegedly protected by the CC CPSU and the prokuratura. Basically, Gdlyan and Ivanov wrote these reports because they needed the party’s authorization to proceed and to circumvent the obstacles laid by the heads of the prokuratura. To justify this approach, they directly attacked the Genprokuror USSR, Aleksandr Mikhailovich Rekunkov, and his deputy, Oleg Vasilyevich Soroka, for muddling the investigations in Uzbekistan, delaying the operations and arrests, and blackmailing the investigators who were following important targets.²⁹ Then,

²⁷ RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 2.

²⁸ After his appointment in 1985, Yeltsin took many trips around USSR. During a tour in Tashkent he was advised by the KGB that things had changed little after Rashidov in terms of bribery and “Usmankhodzhaev, the new secretary, was taking as many bribes as his predecessor”. The KGB gave him evidence about the FS CPUz’s bribery and Yeltsin informed Gorbachev about the event. The Gensek was irritated and replied that Usmankhodzhaev was a devoted communist appreciated by Ligachev. Gorbachev argued that these charges were probably coming from the old mafia to discredit an honest person. Boris Yeltsin, *Against the Grain: An Autobiography* (London: Summit Books, 1990), 100–101.

²⁹ RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 7. Furthermore “Soroka has declared that in an open and categorical way that Usmankhodzhaev I.B., Osetrov T.N., Churbanov Yu.M. and Smirnov V.I. will be never tried for the penal responsibility.” RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 8. An example of obstacles laid by the prokuratura was the much-delayed permission to arrest some important figures. Permission to proceed against Ergashev – the former chairman of the MVD UzSSR – arrived too late, as the suspect had already taken his life. Thus, Gdlyan reports that from that moment he stopped sending all the information to the prokuratura, believing that they could advise the suspects in advance whereby they might escape, be killed, or commit suicide. Another absurdity was the condition that Gaipov could only be arrested within the confines of the prokuratura office. When Gdlyan and Abdurakhimov went to his house to convince

again in the same document, the two prosecutors marked a very interesting point, stressing the importance of focusing on the organizers of the scam (the big fish) and pardoning minor suspects. Thus, they criticize the line assumed by the heads of the prokuratura and commented:

We do not agree with their decision to bring to criminal responsibility several hundred people on our case [These people] who had been forced under severe duress to give bribes to their managers [...] Substantially, these people were simply victims and they had no other choice to survive and stand in those unbearable circumstances [. However, all of this] began with Rashidov and ended with the management of the rayon department, extorting bribes from their subordinates. [Hence,] we are convinced that the arrests of so many people without considering the level of their guilt and the circumstances under which they were engaging in these crimes, is erroneous and politically harmful.³⁰

Thus, in 1986 still, Gdlyan and Ivanov were advising Gorbachev of the risks of massive investigations that could destabilize the country and delegitimize Soviet power. However, after the clashes with Rekunkov in 1986, the Genprokuror gave the coordination of the investigation to German Karakozov. Nevertheless, Gdlyan and Ivanov kept a certain grade of operative autonomy within the republic.³¹

Apparently, this investigators' appeal was understood in Moscow and influenced the Gensek. During the politburo session of 4 December 1986, the party had evaluated the affirmations made by Gdlyan and Ivanov in the letters sent on 11 November and instructed Solomentsev and Razumovsky to check their claims and to report back to the CC CPSU. Indeed, the Politburo – under the influence of Yeltsin who issued a formal memorandum after the investigators' review³² – authorized the continuation of the investigation and consented to the arrest of Churbanov, Osetrov, and others. Thus, 1986 ended

him to sign some papers in the prokuratura – a trap to proceed with the arrest – Gaipov understood their trick and committed suicide. This is why, according to Gdlyan, they had to proceed 'less formally' and arrested Yakhayev in the middle of the night when he was in pajamas and slippers. Mauro, "Così Combatto La Piovra Sovietica."

³⁰ RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 9.

³¹ EG, "Nikolay Ivanov: Skazat' O Churbanove Chto-to Khorosheye Ya Ne Mogu," *Ekspress Gazeta - EG.RU*, June 8, 2016.

³² GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, ll. 88. Mauro, "Così Combatto La Piovra Sovietica"; Selina, "Ob 'Uzbekskom Dele', Razvale Strany I Sovremennoy Bor'be S Korruptsiyey."

with further positive results in the Uzbek saga.³³ However, at that time Usmankhodzhaev – while under suspicion – was safe³⁴ and investigators had to wait to put the leader of the CPUz in handcuffs. This move had seemed to be impossible until his apparent patron in the CC CPSU – Ligachev – lost most of his influence in the party.

6.2 The ‘heroes of perestroika’ (1987-1988)

After the first clashes with the Genprokuror in 1986, Gdlyan and Ivanov wanted to strengthen their position against any potential obstacles and to cultivate support among the public (as a substitute for widespread institutional support). Indeed, they had the occasion to get publicity for their activities in the press and media from 1987, when their stories started to appear widely in the Soviet press, thrilling the Soviet public and publicizing the phrase ‘Uzbek affair’ such that it became common knowledge.³⁵ This evolution was possible only because of certain transformations within the Soviet system.

6.2.1 Gdlyan-Ivanov case reaches the press

The glasnost revolution was manifest in the many scandals, investigative reports, critical articles, and even tabloid articles that from 1987 started to appear in the Soviet press. Desire for information, conspiracy theories or simple curiosity fueled the readers' demand after decades of strong

³³ In May, Muzaffarov and his accomplices were finally sentenced. In August Churbanov was excluded from the ranks of the CPSU, and on 27 October Orlov, the former deputy chairman of the Presidium of the SS UzSSR, was arrested as well as the former second secretary of the CPUz Osetrov on 13 December. Plekhanov, “Delo Gdlyana. Anatomiya Politicheskogo Skandala,” 23.

³⁴ Aleksandr Melenberg, “Na Dmitrovke, 15 — Bez Peremen. Posledneye Delo Prokuratury SSSR,” *Novaya Gazeta*, November 3, 2003.

³⁵ As a result, in 1987-1989, the Soviet press published more than four hundred articles which exposed the “Uzbek mafia” especially in the magazines *Ogonek*, *Sovetskiy Ekran*, *Iskusstvo kino*, *Smena*, *Pravda*, *Izvestiya*, *Argumenty i fakty*, *Moskovskiy novosti*, *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, *Sobesednik*, *Sovetskaya kul'tura*, *Literaturnaya gazeta*, *Sotsialisticheskaya industriya*, *Krasnaya zvezda*, *Moskovskiy komsomolets* and other local issues. Fedor Razzakov, *Delo, Vzorvavshee SSSR* (Moskva: Algoritm, 2012).

editorship. At this moment, magazines such as *Ogonek*³⁶— despite being under the Pravda publishing house — had a certain amount of autonomy to publish thrilling stories. Other ‘independent’ weeklies — such as *Literaturnaya Gazeta* and *Moskovskiy Novosti*³⁷ — created the basis for a new cultural canon in Russia. This process was a product of perestroika and glasnost, which were gradually acknowledging freedom of speech, of the press, of expression and information. Indeed, more than 70 years of almost total control and censorship in mass communication was being broken.³⁸ This journalistic avant-gardism was thus offering a different perspective from the official press — mainly represented by the newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* — and had very high demand among Soviet readers.³⁹ In fact, these magazines

³⁶ *Ogonek* is the oldest weekly illustrated magazine in Russia. It was founded in 1899 and re-established in 1923 under the Soviet government. Despite being part of the Pravda publishing house, during perestroika, under the editor-in-chief Vitaly Korotich, it assumed a more liberal approach and reached the peak of its popularity when thousands of letters received by the editorial board. Christopher Cerf et al., *Small Fires: Letters from the Soviet People to Ogonyok Magazine, 1987-1990* (New York: Summit Books, 1990).

³⁷ *Literaturnaya Gazeta* was a weekly newspaper founded in 1830. In 1947, its format was changed from a purely literary publication into a newspaper that was also dealing with political and social contents and had a certain grade of autonomy. In 1990, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* became an independent collective. As well, during perestroika, Yegor Yakovlev transformed *Moskovskiy Novosti*, the Russian language version of Moscow News, from a propaganda tool into the leader of the liberal press. During his time as chief-editor (1986 to 1991), thousands of people would wait in long lines at Moscow newsstands on Wednesday mornings, hoping to get a copy of the latest issue of *Moskovskiy Novosti*. Nora Buhks, *Le Journalisme de La Pérestroïka : Les Techniques Du Renouveau* (Paris: Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1988); Thomas C. Wolfe, *Governing Soviet Journalism: The Press and the Socialist Person after Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

³⁸ Azhgikhina recalls how at the MGU - in the faculty of journalism where ‘propaganda’ was taught— most of the students were liberals and journalism was considered as a vocation. During perestroika, these magazines became the front lines of freedom of expression and these journalists were devoted to glasnost and freedom of information. Personal interview with Nadezda Azhgikhina, Executive Secretary of the Russian Union of Journalists and Vice-President of the European Federation of Journalists, Venice, 18 June 2016.

³⁹ As Dejevsky comments, “the only newspaper that regularly sold out at news kiosks was *Literaturnaia gazeta*, the paper of the Writers' Union. In the summer of 1987, people would queue from early morning to buy the weekly Moscow News — in whatever language it happened to be available — and the magazine *Ogonek*.” Mary

were the first in breaking taboos, such as the debates on the politics of the '30s and Stalinism generally, the war in Afghanistan, ecological disasters, drug addiction, prostitution, child abandonment, and other social problems.⁴⁰ At that time, a new generation of investigative journalists were reporting 'mafiya stories' about organized crime in Russia and in the peripheral republics of the USSR, thrilling Soviet readers and narrating the investigations – with a high proportion of fiction – against organized crime in the country. The 'Uzbek cotton affair' was a huge source of inspiration for many of these articles and novels. However, the republic was – often and sometimes unfairly – described as a 'black hole' where the mafiya and malfeasance dominated every aspect of the sociopolitical life, exacerbating in the readers a sense of anger and sometimes a prejudice against other cultures, which were thus perceived as doomed to servility and corruption.

In this phase, interviews of the investigators involved in the Uzbek affairs appeared in the press, plumping myths and something of a media circus around the names of Gdlyan and Ivanov who were presented to the public as people's heroes against the mafiya. For example, in June 1987, PV published a full-page article entitled *Anatomiya Vzyatochnichestva* – "The anatomy of bribery" – where "the leading investigation team headed by T.Kh. Gdlyan and N.V. Ivanov that is currently working in the republic" was presented. In this first press appearance, the two investigators explained the origins of bribery and its roots in republican society, recalling its origins in the general lack of control and diffuse mercantilist approach where money became a key ideological issue and the source of common criminal interest. Then, they described the difficulties in dealing with the 'Bukharan affair' and described the typical situation of 'bribery in advance' – the so-called periodical 'bribe-tax' – when money was given not to a purpose but to obtain an affiliation/protection at some unspecified future date. Nevertheless, to be considered as bribes – and not as 'gifts' – it was necessary for investigators to define a condition of intentionality. Thus, Gdlyan and Ivanov explained the hard work of the investigators to join the dots in this task. They stated that they were ready to open a new front against "big corruption" in Moscow and

Dejevsky, "Glasnost' and the Soviet Press," in *Culture and the Media in the USSR Today*, ed. Julian Graffy and Geoffrey A Hosking (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 26.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 27–30.

called for a civic revolution against the rotten system.⁴¹ The investigators were thus presented as 'heroes for socialist legality' in the official press of the CPUz, endorsing a narrative that was functional to legitimize the moralizing Gorbachevian course⁴² characterized by anticorruption policies.⁴³ However, the exposure of the degeneration⁴⁴ presented the contradictions within the Soviet system and, in a context of open debate, to present such phenomena

⁴¹ Basically, they wanted to focus on the big corruption protectors in Moscow. In this regard, Ivanov interestingly defined Karimov, the former FS Bukhara obkom who had been sentenced to death, as a "victim of his leadership." PV, 21426, 158, 20 June 1987, p. 3.

⁴² Endorsing the anticorruption campaign, in 1986 Gorbachev hoped to gain legitimacy both inside the Soviet system and abroad, pointing out "the contrast between its [his campaigns] own implied moral superiority and an earlier regime, [to] enhance its own legitimacy." Leslie Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 211. Therefore, it's evident that at the beginning of his mandate, Gorbachev's moral campaigns were functional to his legitimation and punitive justice was a useful instrument to maximize Moscow's control over the entire Soviet state. However, his aggressive campaign both ignored the intentions of *perestroika* and *glasnost* and in turn its contradictions were exposed by them. Chernyaev notes that "more and more articles came out that subtly, or even openly, pointed out the contradictions in Gorbachev's ideas and policies." Anatoly Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 110.

⁴³ Personal interview with Lev Dmitrievich Gudkov, Moscow, 24 November 2015.

⁴⁴ Gorbachev sought to stir the indignation of the masses at the behavior of corrupt, self-referential and self-centered state officials, singling out a list of regions, administrations and ministries "where the degeneration of cadres and violation of socialist legality had been particularly acute." In this list, Uzbekistan was just the first region in a long list that also figured several areas of Moldavia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and many districts in the RSFSR, such as Krasnodar Territory, Rostov Province, the city of Moscow and the Soviet ministries of foreign trade and internal affairs. Thus, the first stories emerged in the press on a criminal system that falsified cotton in Uzbekistan and in other 'republics' while the CPSU also admitted the presence of organized crime operating in the country. Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*, 227. Craumer notes: "Not all of this padding was in Uzbekistan; in nearby Chimkent Oblast of Kazakhstan, for example, in 1979-84, 138,000 tons of raw cotton were falsely reported [...], and during the last five-year plan in Tadzhikistan raw cotton production was padded by more than 700,000 tons" Peter R. Craumer, "Agricultural Change, Labor Supply, and Rural Out-Migration in Soviet Central Asia," in *Geographic Perspectives on Soviet Central Asia*, ed. Robert A. Lewis (London: Routledge, 1992), 143. *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, 15 March 1987, pp. 1-3.

as systemic⁴⁵ could prove dysfunctional from a legitimation perspective. In this context, the Uzbek cotton affair became an explosive issue.

Through 1987, Gdlyan and Ivanov became much more famous in the Soviet press and media. This circumstance was not an accident. In fact, public interest in the investigators developed out of the incredible details about corruption in the higher echelons of USSR that appeared on the front pages of newspapers. Indeed, one of their best results in the Uzbek affair was to snare Yuri Mikhailovich Churbanov, Brezhnev's son-in-law and a prominent candidate member of the Central Committee and first deputy chairman of the MVD USSR in 1980-1983. Churbanov was arrested on January 14, 1987⁴⁶

⁴⁵ The difference with the previous year's narrative was clear. Despite narrating singular and isolated cases, since 1987 the press presented stories and made connections to describe a systemic phenomenon. This was an effective revolution in Soviet journalism that awakened a slumbering knowledge of facts. Personal interview with Lev Dmitrievich Gudkov, Moscow, 24 November 2015.

⁴⁶ Yuri Mikhailovich Churbanov was born on 11 November 1936 in Moscow. "At the time of the trial he was just past fifty. He had been in the army, and worked as a mechanic, and since 1959 had served in Komsomol work, as an instructor in the Moscow City Committee of the Komsomol. In 1961 he began working for the Ministry of Internal Affairs, first as an instructor at prisons and later as aide to the director of the political section at prisons run by the ministry's division in Moscow oblast. He left the MVD in August 1964 at the rank of "Senior Lieutenant of the Internal Services" to return to the Komsomol, this time taking a position in its Central Committee. He graduated by correspondence from the Philosophy Faculty of Moscow State University. In 1964 he divorced his former wife, leaving her with one son. In April 1971 Churbanov married Galina Brezhnev. He was immediately named deputy director of the political section of the USSR MVD administration for Moscow with the rank of lieutenant colonel. A year later, jumping several rungs on the promotion ladder, he became deputy director of the political administration for all internal troops in the USSR MVD. His progression in rank was no less swift-to colonel, major-general, lieutenant-general and colonel-general. He became Deputy Minister and then First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs. He was chosen candidate member of the CPSU Central Committee and a deputy of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet. He received military orders in peacetime and was awarded a state prize. He had begun to write his memoirs, entitled "My Career." Before fortune smiled on this attractive young man, he was a Komsomol functionary, and then a junior officer working his way gradually up the ranks of Ministry of Internal Affairs. Suddenly this junior had earned the trouser stripes of a general. It didn't take much to figure out what had happened. And when he said in court that he had done nothing, that people brought him money "for no reason at all," I, for one, believed him. It is unlikely that he had what it takes to have organized a criminal gang or become the head of a mafia clan. But he could become a

while other ‘villains’ were also charged as part of the ‘Uzbek mafiya’ and exposed in the press. Hence, the popularity for Gdlyan and Ivanov, the paladins of the struggle against organized crime, rose. The harsh tones used by figures that were supposed to operate behind the scenes and who now appeared in newspapers as heroes using new labels – such as “mafiya”⁴⁷ – were evident symptoms of this transformation.

A very famous interview of Gdlyan and Ivanov was published in Pravda on 23 January 1988 and became a real milestone of the whole Uzbek affair. The article was entitled *Kobry nad zolotom* (Cobras standing watch over gold) and inflamed public opinion, offering revelations by the star investigators that the falsification of statistics in Uzbekistan had caused losses of more than 4 billion rubles. After recounting the stages of the Bukhara affair, Gdlyan finally described the systematic aspect of a scam that involved hopeless managers who had no other choice than to obey – “leave your post or live according to the criminals' laws.” This was justified by the idea that:

Mafiya has no limits, up to and including tacit assent to stepped-up activity by Islam, [a religion that] preaches, as is known, submission [obedience] and nonresistance to senior in rank and age.⁴⁸

Then, Gdlyan and Ivanov stated that the real target of the investigations were the scam organizers described as “contemporary emirs” or affiliates of criminal organizations. In this scheme, “every stolen ruble is earmarked for some future use. A large part of this money goes to bribe officials, while another part is used to expand the criminal enterprise.”⁴⁹ Hence, the investigators severely stated:

son-in-law. And this was sufficient for him to receive sums of 10,000. 30.000 or even 50,000 rubles.” Feofanov and Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era*, 111–12; Yuri Mikhailovich Churbanov, *Ya Rasskazhu Vse, Kak Bylo* (Moskva: Izdatel'skii tseñtr “Liana” sovместno s izd-vom “Nezavisimāia gazeta,” 1993); Yuri Mikhailovich Churbanov, *Moĭ Test' Leonid Brezhnev* (Moskva: Algoritm, 2013).

⁴⁷ An important article on ‘mafiya’ appeared on 20 July 1988 in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. It was an interview by Yuri Shchekochikhin of the MVD official Aleksander Gurov, who was heading a team of specialists on organized crime. Virginie Coulloudon, “Russia Adrift. Twenty Years of Anticorruption Campaigns,” in *Corrupt Histories*, ed. Emmanuel Kreike and William Chester Jordan (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 254, 286.

⁴⁸ G. Ovcharenko, “Kobry Nad Zolotom,” *Pravda*, January 23, 1988.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

In Uzbekistan, crimes such as bribetaking, report-padding and embezzlement have become the norm. There was no real attempt to fight against them. Moreover, all of this was excused and camouflaged by traditional hospitality and the need to fulfill the plan. It involved not only the oblast management, but also the leaders of the republic as well. [...] Corruption, lawlessness, the organized ranks of professional criminals caused by these phenomena – they are looking at us with the merciless eyes of a cobra, rearing its poisonous head over the gold buried away from the state. Take one step, and... But to take this step and to crush the cobra – this is a necessity.⁵⁰

The harsh words used by Gdlyan and Ivanov were inexorably irritating a section of Uzbek society that saw the republic described as a black hole of malfeasance. Also the publicity of the harsh sentence for Usmanov was emblematic – and at least ‘demonstrative’ – of the fight against the mafiya creating a further frustration in a republic that saw a part of its leadership described as mafiya bosses.⁵¹

6.2.2 Showing the mafiya in the XIX CPSU conference

In 1988, the television began presenting stories about the heroic work of the investigators in Uzbekistan⁵² while the press revealed incredible details of the ‘Uzbek mafiya’ related to Rashidov⁵³ and Odilov.⁵⁴ Journalists like

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ On 24 March 1988, the former MCC UzSSR Usmanov was sentenced to death while other members of the “cotton case” sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. Plekhanov, “Delo Gdlyana. AnATOMIYA Politicheskogo Skandala,” 24.

⁵² Anatolii Aleksandrovich Sobchak, *Khozhdenie vo Vlast’: Rasskaz O Rozhdenii Parlamenta* (Moskva: Novosti, 1991).

⁵³ In April 1988, an article appeared in *Moskovskye Novosti* stating that “rashidovshchina [...] became a common noun. Under him corruption, much bribery, oppression of millions of people with the sound of crackling and speeches occurred.” Viktor Loshak, “My Stolknilis’ S Mafiyey — Utverzhdayet Geroy Etogo Ocherka,” *Moskovskiy Novosti*, April 3, 1988.

⁵⁴ Even though the cases are often associated, Odilov’s story was not part of the Gdlyan-Ivanov affair. In fact, despite Gdlyan’s desire to get his hands on Odilov, he was arrested by the Uzbek KGB and prokuratura instead, and directly sent to Moscow. Gdlyan met him in prison and asked for his collaboration, offering in turn protection to his family. Mauro, “Così Combatto La Piovra Sovietica.” As mentioned, Odilov accused of brutal murders and other atrocities. Arkadii Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 134–36.

Likhanov (*Ogonek*) and Dodolev⁵⁵ (*Smena*) started to follow Gdlyan's and Ivanov's deeds, contributing to building the mythology surrounding them.⁵⁶ As mentioned, this narrative seemed to be welcomed by Gorbachev, while – at least until mid-1988 – the party was still able to control, censor and prevent direct attacks.⁵⁷ In parallel, Gdlyan's media circus was endorsed by spectacular shows. To sensitize Soviet public opinion against the 'mafiya' problem and "to bring home to everyone the extent of corruption in Uzbekistan," on 1 April 1988, Gdlyan organized a press conference that broadcast spectacular images of the seized treasures into the homes of Soviet citizens.⁵⁸ A 'theatrical staging', it was 'explosive' in terms of propaganda

⁵⁵ Gdlyan mentions that originally the project was to publish three books (Pyramida 1, 2 and 3): "In 1988 the journalist Evgeniy Dodolev came to the Prokuratura USSR with Dmitry Likhachev, and then we considered the opportunity to write the book "Pyramida", and just immediately to continue the story with "Pyramida 2." We had a conversation where I said that they will not let us to write everything and that I will have a bad ending. At that moment, I had the opportunity to stop and to not take further risk, to avoid this mortal combat, and I knew against what kind of beast I was fighting. I could go back, give up everything, to stop my activity and to get prizes, promotion and so on... but that would have been a betrayal. I could not do this, so I accepted the proposal to write a book, and to leave a mark before violence could reach me. In other words, I want to say that this was all done consciously, with inner conviction that we were doing it for the people, for the good of the country. [...] The case was fully revealed in the last book, 'Kremlevskoe Delo'. Then I wanted to continue to write, but I decided that it was enough. I saw that Russia under Yeltsin had set off down the road of corruption and property seizure endorsed by very unreliable, dishonest, egotistical people. [...] So I lost interest in writing, and I have not continued anymore." Personal interview with Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan, Moscow, 17 October 2014. Gdlyan and Dodolyev, *Piramida-1*; Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan and Yevgeniy Yuriyevich Dodolyev, *Mafiya Vremën Bezzakoniya* (Erevan: Izd-vo AN, 1991).

⁵⁶ Plekhanov, "Delo Gdlyana. Anatomiya Politicheskogo Skandala," 32.

⁵⁷ According to Vaksberg, in 1988 the press was still publishing articles that kept to the party's line, and that Ligachev had ordered the press to censor publicity of the allegations against him –the strong machine of censorship remained in place. In his version of events, Vaksberg claims that already in September 1988 there were rumors that Ligachev had been offered a 500-year-old carpet as a bribe from Uzbekistan. In other words, before the arrest and the confessions of Usmankhodzhaev in October. Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, 128–31.

⁵⁸ Gdlyan "arranged for a special flight from Tashkent to Moscow. On board were eight suitcases of valuables. There was a lot of money; piles of 3 per cent government bonds; valuable jewellery; pendants with 70 diamonds; bracelets; tsarist gold coins and so on. There was 4.7 million rubles in cash; the gold jewellery and artefacts

effect,⁵⁹ revealing the grounds on which the investigations had been based. Apparently, Gdlyan was further credited by the CC CPSU to proceed in his investigations and to display his results in the media while the key obstructionist figures within the prokuratura were replaced.⁶⁰ Thus, the two investigators felt vindicated both within the party and public opinion, and believed they had finally defeated the obstacles within the prokuratura. However, this victory would prove Pyrrhic for them.

Following these results, also the newly established FS CPUz Nishanov benefited from Gdlyan's narrative and he probably had a role in endorsing their campaign.⁶¹ Then, also the official press of Uzbekistan presented the two heroes of perestroika. On April 1988, PV published a large article entitled *Korni zastoya* ("the roots of stagnation") presenting the results of a roundtable organized on the 'Uzbek affairs' and involving some of its main investigators. The meeting was aimed at defining the 'Uzbek affairs' out of its Uzbek contextualization, reframing it as a broader Soviet problem. Basically, the CPUz also wanted to avoid attacks from the local nationalists that – as we will see in the next chapter – were showing signs of impatience towards Moscow and attacking the republican party for collaborating with the 'colonizers.' Hence, Gdlyan explained that the label 'Uzbek affair' was a journalistic mistake and a way to marginalize as a 'local' issue a bigger problem of the whole country – the mafiya in the Soviet upper echelons. Then, the deputy head of the investigative department of Prokuratura USSR

weighed 43.2 kg and were worth at least 4 million rubles." Martin McCauley, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 374.

⁵⁹ Sobchak recalled his amazement in reading a report that appeared in the magazine *Sobesednik*. Sobchak, *Khozhdenie vo Vlast' : Rasskaz O Rozhdenii Parlamenta*.

⁶⁰ On 26 May 1988, the Genprokuror USSR Rekunkov was relieved from his post for reasons of health. He was replaced by Aleksandr Yakovlevich Sukharev. His deputy Soroka was also replaced, by Aleksandr Filipovich Katusev. Nevertheless, Rekunkov continued to work in the USSR Prosecutor's Office, and then became an adviser to the Attorney General of the Russian Federation. Plekhanov, "Delo Gdlyana. Anatomiya Politicheskogo Skandala," 24.

⁶¹ As we have seen in the previous chapter, Gdlyan's and Ivanov's investigative ambitions had been exploited by a part of the Tashkent ruling elite (especially Nishanov) to oust opponents of other factions. This internal game was far from Moscow's interests and was, apparently, supported by Gorbachev who wanted to enforce Nishanov's role in the republic.

Viktor Ilyukhin⁶² also confirmed that the case was at the All-Union level and had already involved 12 directors of cotton factories in the RSFSR⁶³ – three were sentenced to death – and officials of the Ministry of Light Industry of the USSR. He underlined that similar cases had been opened in Azerbaijan, Krasnodar, Rostov, Moscow, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and southern Ukraine.⁶⁴ Consequently, Ivanov endorsed the narrative of the common cause and explained that the investigative group also involved the best and most skilled investigators from Uzbekistan because they were the most able to move within the republican context. One of them – Sakidzhan Bakidzhanovich Dadadzhanov, from the prokuratura UzSSR – stated that most of the bigger investigations in Uzbekistan were over and Ivanov added that the investigations initiated in the republic were leading to Moscow. Gdlyan concluded by announcing that "without public support, without [the people's] help we would not have any affair to send to the court." This call to support the investigations and spread in the media had effectively a political impact for the two formerly 'backstage operators' who subsequently emerged as very visible Soviet paladins of antimafia.⁶⁵

Hence, by the spring of 1988 Gdlyan and Ivanov could complete most of their missions in Uzbekistan, having garnered the consent of the CC CPSU and of the new prokuratura establishment to proceed with further investigations. As mentioned, they were ready to open a new front against the Muscovite mafiya with the 'Kremlin affair' and believed that they could again get the consent of the party. However, the Gensek probably perceived the risks of endorsing these potential 'loose cannons' and was simply not ready to

⁶² Ilyukhin was to be, a few months hence, one of the greatest rivals of Gdlyan and Ivanov and one the responsible for opening the criminal case against them.

⁶³ The Uzbek affair involved even "a number of influential 'local' Russians [...] in the cotton scandal of that time." William Fierman, "Glasnost' in Practice: The Uzbek Experience," *Central Asian Survey* 8, no. 2 (1989): 138; Edward A. Allworth, "The New Central Asians," in *Central Asia: One Hundred Thirty Years of Russian Dominance, A Historical Overview* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 551–52, 556.

⁶⁴ Therefore, Ilyukhin admitted that from the end of 1983 until 1987 – not only in Uzbekistan but at the All-Union level – 780 criminal cases on cotton pripiski had been opened, prosecuting more than 4,500 people. However, Ilyukhin recalled that these criminal investigations almost always involved the peak organizers of corruption and excluded the other 13,000 figures that were eligible to be prosecuted but who were too minor to count. These admissions are interesting if we consider the role that Ilyukhin assumed lately in the Gdlyan-Ivanov affair. PV, 21658, 92, 21 April 1988, p. 2.

⁶⁵ PV, 21658, 92, 21 April 1988, p. 2.

endorse a campaign of two investigators with too much support among the masses against a party that appeared to the public to be obscure and corrupt machine. At that moment, the party urged a halt – or at least a slowing – of their activities within the prokuratura before it was too late. Again, the judiciary organs were responding to the political need of the effective ruling force of USSR. Sukharev, the new head of the prokuratura, refused to sanction the arrest of two obkom secretaries and two managers of the CC CPSU – Mogilnichenko and Smirnov – and in so doing he continued his predecessor's diffidence as head of the supreme prosecutorial organ against the ambitious investigations of Gdlyan and Ivanov. At this point, Gdlyan and Ivanov had just two options: obey the party and drop the charges against top leaders or go against the party and take the consequences. The two investigators seemed to honestly believe in their strategy and embarked on the second, risky solution, turning to the Fourth Estate and public opinion for support. Thus, the Uzbek/Kremlin affair – which would touch even higher figures such as Aliyev, Grishin, Romanov, Solomentsev, Kapitonov, Ligachev and others – became a case that staked a public outcry against most of the important institutions of the party and the state.

Boris Yeltsin was one of the first⁶⁶ and greatest supporter of Gdlyan's investigations inside the CC CPSU and used similar 'cleaning' arguments against a part of the Moscow apparatus in order to consolidate his power.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, in 1988 he was marginalized within the CC CPSU and dismissed from the politburo.⁶⁸ However, the future president of Russia understood that he could use the Gdlyan's ambitions and deploy the same arguments against his main rivals within the party.⁶⁹ Basically, both Gdlyan and Yeltsin

⁶⁶ The early sympathetic relations between Gdlyan-Ivanov and Yeltsin had also been confirmed by Pikhoya who saw their correspondence at the APRF. Personal interview with Rudolf Germanovich Pikhoya, Moscow, 10 December 2015.

⁶⁷ Gdlyan admitted that Yeltsin probably had a role in sponsoring the Uzbek affair within the CC CPSU. In 1987, the future president of Russia was a key figure in getting consent for Gdlyan's cause and corraling a majority of votes in support of the arrests of prominent figures under investigation.

⁶⁸ "The growing Yeltsin-Ligachev conflict exploded into the open at the October 1987 CC Plenum, disturbing the party protocol of unanimity, discipline, and comity." Gordon M. Hahn, *Russia's Revolution from Above, 1985-2000: Reform, Transition, and Revolution in the Fall of the Soviet Communist Regime* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002), 60.

⁶⁹ From 1988 Gdlyan's attacks against Ligachev, one of the main rivals of Yeltsin, and the 'conservative' faction of the party were harsher.

could exploit each other and fight on a common front of anticorruption against the upper echelons of the party, forging a political alliance that would last until the early '90s. The main occasion to relaunch their position was then during the signal event of the year, the XIX All-Union conference of the CPSU (28 June - 1 July, 1988), where the Gdlyan-Ivanov story became a political affair and contributed to polarization of the party scene.

At the “highly exceptional conference, replete with criticism of the leadership and sensational speeches,”⁷⁰ the divisions within the party were exacerbated. Evidently, the party was no more a unite monolith and the Soviet regime appeared to be split between ‘conservatives’ and ‘soft-liners’ while the divisions within the clashing factions would further radicalize the debate.⁷¹ On that occasion, corruption was recalled by many of the participants who criticized the slowness in implementing reforms and denounced the persistence of *zastoya* practices. In this arena, Boris Yeltsin reappeared from his political ‘exile’ and made a long speech⁷² criticizing the Gorbachevian line of slow reforms and effectively pushed the line of Gdlyan and Ivanov. Indeed, Yeltsin attacked the control organs – which were reluctant to bring charges of bribery against senior leaders – and directly the head of the PCC CPSU Solomentsev for being too slack and too tolerant in this regard.⁷³ In parallel, at the conference Gdlyan’s stories became widespread and were exploited as popular – and even populist – arguments to criticize Gorbachev’s leadership. Indeed, during the first day of conference, the chief editor of *Ogonek*, Vitaly Korotych, made a harsh statement announcing that among the conference delegates were four criminals⁷⁴ and presented to Gorbachev a dossier that had been prepared by Ivanov.⁷⁵ Basically, Korotych rehashed a series of idea exposed in a scandalous Gdlyan-Ivanov article –

⁷⁰ Valery Boldin, *Ten Years That Shook the World: The Gorbachev Era As Witnessed by His Chief of Staff* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 230.

⁷¹ Andrea Graziosi, *L’Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), 564–65.

⁷² Yeltsin, *Against the Grain: An Autobiography*, 224–35.

⁷³ Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*, 227–28.

⁷⁴ Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L’aigle Bicéphale*, 63.

⁷⁵ According to Sobchak, there were many rumors on the four names “Three were easily guessed: Solomentsev, Gromyko, Ligachev. There was no convergence in the definition of the fourth candidate.” Sobchak, *Khozhdenie vo Vlast’: Rasskaz O Rozhdenii Parlamenta*; EG, “Nikolay Ivanov: Skazat’ O Churbanove Chto-to Khorosheye Ya Ne Mogu.”

entitled *Protivostoyanie* (Confrontation) – that was published in *Ogonek* just three days before the conference opened.⁷⁶

This was a moment when stories related to the Uzbek affair appeared frequently in the press.⁷⁷ This threw into sharp relief the widespread discussion within the conference arguing that there were bribe-givers among the delegates and that this was just the ‘tip of the iceberg.’ The Gdlyan-Ivanov article denounced systematic corruption in the highest echelons of the Soviet elite and claimed the existence of a ‘Soviet mafiya’ where Brezhnev and Rashidov were bosses and where also four bribers among the delegates had been involved.

This scandal caused a great embarrassment for the whole party which already felt itself under attack. This was just a further reason for concern. Hence, Yakovlev announced that Gdlyan had committed big error in writing the *Ogonek* article. He also claimed that the CPC was already handling this case⁷⁸ and even Boldin mentioned that after the conference Gorbachev "was deeply upset by the torrent of accusations, some of which were aimed at him."⁷⁹ Then, the Gensek "ordered the procurator general and the KGB to stop the slander and report to him on all details of the case. The Uzbek affair was discussed at closed meetings of the Politburo; instructions were issued and, to some extent with Gorbachev's consent, several Central Committee members were arrested and tried."⁸⁰

Evidently the party had to formulate a strategy to contain the blowback from the anticorruption campaign. Ivanov recalls that after the conference the head of the general department of the CC CPSU – Anatoly Lukyanov – proposed to Gdlyan that he be posted to Armenia as a prosecutor, promising that he could keep the investigations of the Uzbek affair. However, during the

⁷⁶ T. Gdlyan, N. Ivanov, *Protivostoyanie*, *Ogonek*, 26, 25 June – 2 July 1988, pp. 27-29.

⁷⁷ In July 1988, *Ogonek* published stories that criticized the defunct FS CPUz Rashidov as a sort of godfather. *Ogonek*, 29, 3 July 1988, pp. 20-23.

⁷⁸ Yakovlev stated: "Does an examining magistrate have the right to determine whether a person is a criminal or not? No. Only the courts can declare a person to be a criminal. This was a most serious error by Gdlyan, who simply declared that they were bribetakers." *Sovetskaya Latviya*, 20 August 1988, p. 3, FBIS, "JPRS-UPA-88-050- Soviet Union. Political Affairs, 10 NOVEMBER 1988," 1988, 139; Chiesa, "La Mafia Uzbeka Alla Conquista Di Mosca. Due Giudici Sovietici La Sbarrano E Raccontano."

⁷⁹ Boldin, *Ten Years That Shook the World: The Gorbachev Era As Witnessed by His Chief of Staff*, 231.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

negotiations, Lukyanov retracted the second part of the proposal and there was no deal.⁸¹ Ivanov adds that, at that point, the case risked being passed in full to the KGB but there was no objective basis for their removal and they were too famous to be touched. Gdlyan argues that by then they had reached a point of no return:

We wanted to liberate the country from that sore, to clean the cadres, the structures of power from the negativity that has been accumulated. Time has shown that it was the first priority for the country. [...] We did a great job [...but] Gorbachev wanted to "buy" me, he praised me with members of the Politburo and then he proposed that I become the prosecutor of Armenia. I agreed with one condition: 'I will take the job if I will stay at the head of the investigative group.' And when the Genprokuror, the little wretch Sukharev, organized the meeting of the college, he told me words that I had never heard before, that I was a genius, an investigator of God, that people like are one in a million, that I have a great future. After that praise, my candidacy as prosecutor of Armenia was approved. Thus, [Sukharev] gave me compliments, congratulations and he promised that within a year and a half I would become the deputy Genprokuror of the USSR. However, he began to say "you know, there's a lot of things to do in Armenia, and this case should be entrusted to the someone else." I replied: "I cannot close this case because I gave my word that I will finish it." Then, I told the board members that I was not on going to "sell myself" and I would not barter the case for the post of prosecutor. Then [Sukharev] tried to convince me, we talked for more than two hours. I said "now please understand, I will go to the end [of this case], I chose this road, I cannot change, people are counting on me, we have to put to an end this damn corruption. I understand that you are following the instructions of the Politburo, but why you want to ruin this case? Future generations will not remember Sukharev with a good word." Then I added "let me offer another way, you should write a letter of resignation from your post so that your name gets no dirt."⁸²

Even though this recounting of the story undoubtedly presents some elements of fiction, in summer 1988 there was in fact no deal between Gdlyan-Ivanov, the prokuratura, and the party. Basically, from that moment, the investigative group was much more marginalized as a potential antisystem threat while the debate converged on the biggest and most famous trial of the entire Uzbek affair.

⁸¹ EG, "Nikolay Ivanov: Skazat' O Churbanove Chto-to Khorosheye Ya Ne Mogu."

⁸² Personal interview with Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan, Moscow, 17 October 2014.

6.3 The Uzbek ‘trial of the century’

At the end of summer 1988, another showdown was about to inflame Soviet public opinion and to further credit Gdlyan’s crusade against the ‘mafiya’. The trial against ‘Churbanov and the others’ was a judicial case that incriminated Brezhnev’s son in law and exposed systemic malfeasance in the upper echelons of Uzbekistan.

6.3.1 A judgement written in the press

Initially, Churbanov collaborated with investigators while during his many interrogations, he retracted many of his confessions.⁸³ Nevertheless, the prosecutors were able to charge him and the trial was set by the prokuratura on 30 May 1988.⁸⁴ This event was announced with great fanfare in the press attracting journalists who had started to speculate on the Uzbek mafiya, the

⁸³ After his arrest, Churbanov collaborated with the investigations and admitted to have taken bribes for 400,000 rubles. Thus, he admitted that a part of money was used to buy stones that were kept by his sister, furnishing the dacha and restoring an apartment. However, he was not able to explain the disappearance of 300,000 rubles at the preliminary investigation. During his deposition on January 24, 1987 he demanded more time to remember, on 25 January he wrote to the Genprokuror that valuables were hidden in his “dacha at Zhukovka, and a sketch of the hiding-places was included. The authorities went there, dug and tapped on walls, both according to the diagram and at random, and they found nothing.” The day after, he said that he gave false testimony and did not know where the money was. On June, he demanded more time because the disappearance of money was linked to other major problems. On 16 July, he declared to have given 300,000 rubles to his wife Galina Brezhneva who spent it on gems but the day after he retreated this admission saying “My previous testimony was given impulsively. I didn't give my wife any money except for my salary.” On July 23, he admitted “The question about the money is very complex. The fact of the matter is that I don't have the right to compromise the family of my late father-in-law and even more so his memory.” On 4 December, he admitted “I passed the money on to Vashkov—300,000 rubles in two leather cases. He told me that he was going to 'do a deal with someone from the world of trade.' And that the money would be returned soon. However, within two months Vashkov unexpectedly died and did not return the money.” The Vashkov in question then held the position of head of the trade section of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs. Feofanov and Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era*, 113–14.

⁸⁴ Plekhanov, “Delo Gdlyana. Anatomiya Politicheskogo Skandala,” 24.

Brezhnevian millionaires, and the 'pyramidal' scheme.⁸⁵ On 30 August 1988, Pravda published a long article entitled "the son in-law and his godfathers"⁸⁶ where Churbanov was described as a mediocre figure who had a 'business' relation with Rashidov and who was protected by a 'constellation' of quasi-criminal figures. According to this reconstruction, about 110 volumes of evidence were collected against Churbanov who "was the portrait of a fully formed careerist and power seeker" at any cost. However, the real news was about the engagement of a member of the former 'first family.'⁸⁷ The defunct Rashidov was also accused of protecting the "criminal clan" and "rashidovshchina remained a monolith of the bureaucratic-criminal" system.

Rashidov and Churbanov were clearly different people. The first claimed to be a writer, an intellectual, a major political and economic leader [...who] spread his cult and enjoyed enormous power. Simple honest workers were his political enemies and were supplanted in the country [...] The second – a relatively young and brash [official] – just started to taste power, privilege and the sweetness of "entering in the sphere." [...] The first was the master of intrigue. The second was an aspiring apprentice.⁸⁸

Churbanov was thus demonized as a godfather (*kumov'ya*) who was covering for the scammers and Aitmuratov as a 'boss' of the mafiya system, while the former top management of the Uzbek MVD was put in the dock together with the former deputy chairman of the MVD USSR.⁸⁹ This

⁸⁵ Evgeny Dodolev, *...I Odná Noch*, Smena, 15, 1988, pp. 4-7, 18-19 and PV, 197, 28 August 1988, p. 3.

⁸⁶ G. Ovcharenko and A. Chernenko, "Zyat' I Yego Kumov'ya. Khronika Odnóy «blístatel'noy» Kar'yery," *Pravda*, August 30, 1988, 6.

⁸⁷ According to Vaksberg – who defined Brezhnev's son in law as a member of the "Rashidov mafia" – Churbanov wanted to publicize himself in the press and it was common for him to buy journalist as a key of success. Churbanov took a 10,000-ruble bribe from Karimov in Bukhara during his inspection trip at Gazli plant in October 1979. After that episode, Churbanov was in a writers conference in Tashkent where he met with Vaksberg proposing him to write a good article and promising any gift, dacha, car, house or whatever he wanted. Churbanov was substantially commissioning good press to accredit his office. Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, 107–11, 132.

⁸⁸ Ovcharenko and Chernenko, "Zyat' I Yego Kumov'ya. Khronika Odnóy «blístatel'noy» Kar'yery," 6.

⁸⁹ Then, the article announced that close to Churbanov were also incriminated the former head of the Uzbek MVD, Kh. Yakhyayev, his deputies P. Begelman and T. Kahramanov, and the heads of the UVD S. Sabirov, Kh. Norbutaev, D. Dzhamalov, M. Norov, and I. Makhamadzhanov. *Ibid.*

spectacular publicity of trials and the scapegotism – typical of many communist regimes – was intended to discredit a living symbol of Brezhnevian nepotism,⁹⁰ corruption and stagnation in the Soviet system. From this case, the defunct Brezhnev was also symbolically put on trial, representing a sort of “godfather”⁹¹ of the decadent past. Again, to establish distance from a previous regime was a typical narrative trend in Russian history and in this case was functional to legitimize Gorbachev and his reformist agenda, becoming a perfect target.

Responding to these hyper-biased articles, the jurist and journalist Yuri Feofanov wrote in *Izvestiya* an impressive article entitled *Prigovor do suda* (“the sentence before the trial”) where he complained of excessive negative biases against the defendants and argued that “some people have already been publicly declared to be criminals and are named in articles, and television programs with thick bundles of stolen money, talking about what is still under investigation as if it has been proven [. Thus, he urged letting] the court decide who's who and what's what. The court and no one else.”⁹² For the first time, the media pillory was criticized, and the need to reaffirm the principles of the rule of law in Russia was supported in the press. In fact, the trial against Churbanov was supposed to be in the typical Soviet style where the verdict had been determined before. However, it was probably the first important case in the USSR where the judge acted according to the law rather than to political orders. Nevertheless, a part of the Soviet public seemed to sympathize with the popular accusers – Gdlyan and Ivanov, who prepared the charges – and their moral mission and “the whole country was awaiting this trial with impatience.”⁹³ Finally, on 5 September 1988 the trial against ‘Churbanov and the others’ started and was followed with rapt attention by media, which were reporting news about the newly dismissed leaders of Uzbekistan and their involvement in the case.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*, 211.

⁹¹ *The Time*, 12 September 1988, p. 22.

⁹² Feofanov and Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era*, 104; Yuri Vasilevich Feofanov, “Prigovor Do Suda,” *Izvestiya*, September 3, 1988, 6.

⁹³ Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, 127.

⁹⁴ The trial was even recorded by cinema operators and broadcast in some parts by Gosteleradio USSR. PV, 21868, 2, 3 January 1989, p. 4.

6.3.2 The arrest of Usmankhodzhaev

Apparently, Gdlyan and Ivanov touched the zenith of their notoriety while another important element was added to endorse their cause. In fact, after three years of investigations, the group finally got the permission to proceed against Usmankhodzhaev and arrested the former FS CPUz on 19 October 1988. The former leader of Uzbekistan was transferred to *Matrosskaya Tishina* ('Seaman's silence'), the famous MVD USSR isolation facility n. 4 in Moscow. During his first interrogations, Usmankhodzhaev admitted to having given bribes to Ligachev and to other CC CPSU officials. These were incredible words that reinforced the investigators' assumptions. Indeed, following the Gdlyan's accusatory scheme, Usmankhodzhaev's confession was the evidence of a corrupted relations between Moscow and the periphery, demonstrating that this dynamic was not only at the MVD level – as it was evidenced with the Churbanov-Yakhyayev affair – but directly involved the higher echelons of the party. This hypothesis seemed to acknowledge a patronage relation between a fallen republican leader and a politburo member who had been gradually marginalized in the CC CPSU and lost his influence to avoid the arrest of his protected clients. Despite these thrilling suppositions, this is not the most relevant aspect of the story.

In fact, within a couple of weeks of the first interrogation, Usmankhodzhaev retracted his confessions, denied he had bribed Ligachev and other CC CPSU members and progressively accused the investigators – and Gdlyan personally – of extorting his confessions.⁹⁵ According to Gdlyan,

⁹⁵ During his interrogation on 23 October – directed by Gdlyan and the assistant investigator Svetlana V. Moskovtseva – the former FS CPUz admitted to having paid bribes to some managers of the CC CPSU as well as to the former Genprokuror USSR Rekunkov and his deputy Soroka. There was no registration of these statements and many doubts emerged on the methods of obtaining such confessions. On 25 October, Usmankhodzhaev confirmed to Gdlyan the previous evidence, admitting also a bribe of 60,000 rubles to Ligachev. The same testimony was offered on 26 October when Usmankhodzhaev – in the presence of Deputy Prosecutor General of the USSR A.D. Vasilyev – confirmed the bribes to Ligachev during the XVI plenum in Tashkent in June 1984 and at the CC CPSU office in November 1984 when he was in Moscow preparing for the 60th anniversary of the Uzbek SSR. After 25 October, Usmankhodzhaev sent a petition to the Genprokuror where he asked the investigation of his case be conducted only by Gdlyan, Ivanov and Karakozov. Nevertheless, on 28 October, in a meeting with the Genprokuror Sukharev, Usmankhodzhaev rejected his testimony while just the day after – in front of Vasilyev, Moskovtseva and Karakozov - he confirmed the version

this reconsideration was due to the intervention of the Genprokuror Sukharev who was ordered by the CC CPSU to slow the investigation on the Uzbek affair and to limit its extent. Usmanhodzhaev's words did not present irrefutable evidence against Ligachev, but it is evident that the party did not want a scandal that could directly touch a politburo member and probably wanted to defend the credibility of the whole system from the potentially slanderous words of the former Uzbek leader and his accusers.

Unfortunately for him, Usmanhodzhaev had become the subject of a political game between the investigators – who pushed him to confess – and the party, which had every interest in dismissing this kind of accusation. Not least, Gdlyan's leadership was challenged in late October 1988, when a dozen KGB members – led by Colonel A. Dukhanin – were brought in to Gdlyan's investigation team and partially took the responsibility over interrogations. This move probably interrupted the 'Gdlyan's evidence machine' and many suspects were transferred from the MVD detention centers to the KGB facilities in Lefortovo, which Gdlyan and Ivanov could not access.⁹⁶ According to the investigator Laptev this was a clear attempt by Sukharev to include "all the King's men" in the investigations⁹⁷ and Gdlyan directly recalled how in his team 70 members had been progressively substituted with shady elements that had contaminated the evidence.⁹⁸ Undeniably, Gdlyan's position was awkward and unwelcomed by those who wanted to obstruct his investigations. Nevertheless, Gdlyan and Ivanov were positively encouraged

given on 26 October. Finally, during the interrogation of 1 November 1988 – held by Vasilyev and Moskovtseva – the former FS CPUZ reevaluated the 'erroneous' accusations against Ligachev but confirmed two bribes of 50,000 rubles to the former Genprokuror Rekunkov and to his deputy Soroka for 20,000 and 10,000 rubles. Then, on 3 January 1989, Usmanhodzhaev confessed a bribe gave to the former minister of the MJ USSR Terebilov (GARF, f. 10147, op. 1, d. 466, l. 3). Nevertheless, on 8 March 1989, Usmanhodzhaev sent a petition to the Genprokuror where he retracted his first allegations and on 8 April, in front of Sukharev, he admitted that he gave false testimony at the demand of Gdlyan and Ivanov. GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 12; Yegor Kuzmich Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 243; Plekhanov, "Delo Gdlyana. Anatomiya Politicheskogo Skandala," 24; Gdlyan and Ivanov, *Kremlevskoe Delo*; Melenberg, "Na Dmitrovke, 15 — Bez Peremen. Posledneye Delo Prokuratury SSSR."

⁹⁶ Melenberg, "Na Dmitrovke, 15 — Bez Peremen. Posledneye Delo Prokuratury SSSR"; Selina, "Ob 'Uzbekskom Dele', Razvale Strany I Sovremennoy Bor'be S Korruptsiyey."

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Mauro, "Così Combatto La Piovra Sovietica."

by their popularity and the positive results in the investigations. They were sure to find a way to embed the members of the supposed 'Muscovite mafia,' and even during Churbanov's trial they hoped to get a further endorsement of their cause. This line was confirmed by the tones of the 'Uzbek trial of the century' that were further exacerbated in the press when people started to send letters demanding more details be published.

6.3.3 Churbanov and the others

In order to reply to the readers' request, on 2 November 1988, Pravda published an interview with the deputy Genprokuror USSR, A.F. Katusev, in which he acknowledged the arrests of Churbanov, Usmankhodzhaev, former chairman of the presidium SS UzSSR Salimov, and the recently dismissed FS Bukhara obkom Dzhabbarov, FS Samarkand obkom Radzhabov and other heads of Uzbek MVD. Then, the article acknowledged that in the previous weeks the press has violated the presumption of innocence principle forewarning that the major perpetrators of corruption in Uzbekistan were under indictment.⁹⁹ The Churbanov case was thus presented as part of a wider story related to the Uzbek affair. Hence, his judgement became the 'Uzbek trial of the century,' an event organized within the SC USSR military collegium – presided over by General Major Mikhail A. Marov¹⁰⁰ – that had various phases. During the first hearings, some of the witnesses and defendants made harsh accusations against Churbanov that ended up as a scapegoat of the malfeasance within the republic. The former secretary of the CC CPUz, Yerezhep Aitmuratov, admitted:

The leadership of the USSR MVD exercised strong influence on the development of corruption in the republic by selecting people that would be useful to it. The role of Churbanov, the son-in-law of Brezhnev? His word was law for the republic organs of internal affairs. This was because the leadership of the republic enjoyed the trust of Brezhnev, and his son-in-law was the first

⁹⁹ G. Ovcharenko, "V Prokuratorie SSSR: Neumolima Logika Zakona," *Pravda*, November 2, 1988.

¹⁰⁰ The tribunal was chaired by Marov, assisted by the General Majors V.Z. Zhevagin and V.S. Sizov as honorary judges. On the side of the public prosecutor was the assistant Genprokuror USSR A.V. Sboev and on the side of the defense lawyers was the college of lawyers of Moscow city. PV, 21868, 2, 3 January 1989, p. 4. According to Feofanov and Barry, Marov's honesty and fairness cost him his post. After Churbanov's trial he was forced into retirement. Feofanov and Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era*, 110.

deputy Minister of Internal Affairs. In turn, Rashidov and his team did anything necessary to protect the organs of internal affairs from criticism or from being checked up on. Many workers in the police organs, from the local inspector to the republic Minister, engaged in extortion.¹⁰¹

Similarly, the defendant Yakhyaev¹⁰² also admitted:

With Churbanov's arrival at the central apparatus of the MVD, corruption began to run wild. A kind of dual power was established in the ministry, but in fact Churbanov ran everything. Both Shchelokov [the Minister] and Churbanov took bribes, but the former was a trained professional while the latter had neither competence in any area of police work nor any desire to learn. It is not by chance that he carried parade drill to an extreme and became a kind of martinet. He began to push forward his favorites, and to treat the real professionals shabbily.¹⁰³

Hence, there was a first turning point during the session of 12-13 December 1988 when Churbanov and his associates were finally charged with bribe taking on a particularly large scale (art. 173 RSFSR criminal code) and abuse of official position for personal gain (art. 170 RSFSR criminal code). The accusations were presented against him, former head of MVD UzSSR Yakhyayev (and his deputies Kakhramanov and Begel'man), and the chairman of the regional UVD departments of Khorezm (Sabirov), Tashkent (Dzhamalov), Kashkadarya (Norbutayev), Namangan (Makhamadzhanov), and Bukhara (Norov). Particularly, Churbanov was indicted for taking bribes totally 680,000 rubles. However, on that occasion the prosecutor asked to exclude a part of them (275,000 rubles) for lack of evidence. Also Yakhyayev was accused of taking 89 bribes (for a total sum of 146,000 rubles) but only 68 (114,000) could be verified. Therefore, the public prosecutor demanded for both Churbanov and Yakhyayev a punishment of 15 years in a strict-regime corrective labor colony (and the first five years in prison for Churbanov) while minor punishment was proposed for the other defendants.¹⁰⁴ However, in the

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 120–21.

¹⁰² According to Vaksberg, Churbanov had an insignificant role in the mafia and was just a symbolic culprit meanwhile, Yakhyaev was the real powerful mafia boss and for this reason he was replaced by Rashidov with a loyal element as Ergashev. Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, 132.

¹⁰³ Feofanov and Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era*, 121.

¹⁰⁴ Kakhramanov was given 13 years, Sabirov, Norbutayev, Makhamadzhanov, and Norov 10 years, Dzhamalov 7, and Begel'man 6. PV, 21855, 289, 16 December 1988, p. 4.

last days of a trail that seemed so to follow a less political and more legal criteria, the charges were partially subverted by the lack of evidence.

After bringing over 200 witnesses to the stand and scrupulously refuting the evidence, the court concluded on 30 December when the final verdict resized the charges. For accepting bribes in the verified amount of 90,960 rubles and for abusing his official position for mercenary purposes, Brezhnev's son-in-law "was sentenced immediately to twelve years deprivation of freedom in a strict-regime corrective labor colony, the confiscation by the state of his personal property, and a fine equal to the amount of bribes received."¹⁰⁵ Also the other crimes were assessed¹⁰⁶ and the other defendants – with the exception of Kakhramanov, whose case was acquitted – received minor punishment.¹⁰⁷ Churbanov, the greatest defendant in the Uzbek affair, was finally in jail. However, the verdict was not a real victory for Gdlyan and Ivanov. Considering the amount of evidence that had not been confirmed at judicial level, the myth of the two invincible investigators was definitively questioned. Furthermore, in that moment, accusations and information about their extortive methods of getting confessions were leaked to the press.

6.3.4 Dismissing the 'queen of evidence'

Feofanov and Barry's analysis reveals how this trial was conducted under a more 'fair' and effective judicial framework that often criticized the validity and the means to obtain evidence in the prejudicial phase. Basically, this

¹⁰⁵ Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 187.

¹⁰⁶ The crimes related to abuse of power, intermediation and bribery. The verified bribes amounted to 90,960 rubles (Churbanov), 45,200 (Begelman), 49,008 (Norbutayev), 21,000 (Dzhamalov), 16,458 (Makhmadzhanov), 26470 (Norov) and 14000 (Sabirov). PV, 21868, 2, 3 January 1989, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷ Norbutayev was condemned to 10 years, Begelman and Norov to 9, Dzhamalov, Mahamadzhanov and Sabirov to 8 years imprisonment with confiscation of property. Kahrmanov was acquitted and the Yakh'yaev case was separated and allocated to further investigation. In fact, the former head of MVD UzSSR was accused of the illegal arrest of people, groundless commitment to a psychiatric hospital, and other crimes, rather than bribetaking, the basic crime of which his co-defendants were accused. Plekhanov, "Delo Gdlyana. Anatomiya Politicheskogo Skandala," 24; Feofanov and Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era*, 123.

episode exposed the limits of the Gdlyan-Ivanov investigations, even demonstrating serious flaws in the criminal procedural law, such as:

the absence of real limits on pre-trial detention and the lack of prompt access to a defense attorney for a person brought in for questioning [and] improper pressures by investigators on suspects over the law. Coercion is normal for this job, but some pressures were over any legality.¹⁰⁸

Evidently, the problem was related to Soviet criminal procedure where confession was considered as ‘auxiliary’ evidence that might enforce and had to be supported by other ‘objective’ evidence. Nevertheless, providing evidence in corruption cases was – and it is still now – extremely complicated because such a verification is directly related to the nature of bribery itself. As mentioned in the third chapter, bribery usually involves just two participants – the giver and the taker – and produces no document or receipt. Therefore, the confession is the main, in fact the only, evidence that is possible to obtain. However, the excessive reliance by investigators (and courts) on confession as proof of guilt recalled the methods of the great purges of the ‘30s when Vyshinsky based most of the trials on confession that was defined as the ‘queen of evidence.’¹⁰⁹ However, with Churbanov’s trial, “for the first time the public demanded that the court act like an organ of justice and not a cog in the mechanism of repression.”¹¹⁰

In the aftermath of the verdict, the public prosecutors Aleksandr Vasilievich Sboev,¹¹¹ offered a version of the facts. He declared that initially the case seemed to be easily resolvable – more than 100 folders of evidence, videotapes and other recordings for more than a thousand episodes of crimes

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 104–5.

¹⁰⁹ Arkadii Vaksberg, Jan Butler, and Robert Conquest, *Stalin’s Prosecutor: The Life of Andrei Vyshinsky* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991).

¹¹⁰ Feofanov and Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era*, 110.

¹¹¹ On 29 October 2014, I was in Moscow and I read this story in PV. Thus, I searched for Sboev’s contact details and I was able to reach him on the telephone. I wanted to ask if it were possible to meet him for an interview or, at least, to have a short comment on the phone and he seemed happy enough to have a young Italian researcher interested in his story. However, when I mentioned Churbanov’s trial and prosecutorial activity in Soviet times, he evidently became embarrassed by my requests and rejected my call stating that he was too old and too intelligent to argue certain facts. Probably, after so much outcry about these issues, he felt the pressure of his responsibility and he declined to recall any fact of his life during the Soviet period.

had been assembled. Additionally, pretty much every defendant had already confessed his guilt. However, when Yakhyayev and Kakhramanov reconsidered their affirmations during the trial – according to Sboev because of “a tactical ploy, a method of protection” – it became harder to define the truth between versions that had been completely distorted. Thus, Sboev recognized the principle such that “the recognition of bribes must necessarily be supported by the other, circumstantial evidence, small, seemingly, details, confirming the reality of our other acts” while the charges that were not objectively arguable were dropped.¹¹² Furthermore, it was hard to make accusations against Churbanov, who admitted “they gave me money for no reason at all,” and bribes thus became a symbol of submission. Evidently, that kind of gift was not in itself a crime¹¹³ and it is difficult to label it as bribery, extortion or another form of corruption.¹¹⁴ As mentioned, a bribe has a *do ut des* nexus. When this mechanism is missed, it is very hard to define the nature of the bribe. Responding to the charges made against him, Churbanov revealed that in the late ‘70s he received many gifts from Rashidov and other figures who wanted to please Brezhnev¹¹⁵ or to “give a good impression”¹¹⁶ to his influential son-in-law. In this regard, Churbanov explained that:

These hangers-on of Rashidov wanted to win me over, and through me to secure the favor of my father-in-law. "I felt uncomfortable." he said, "and wanted to send these sycophants packing and to throw the money in their faces [...] I'd only have to do it once [...] But I couldn't find the civic courage to stand up to the flattery and the bribes."¹¹⁷

¹¹² PV, 21877, 11, 13 January 1989, p. 4.

¹¹³ “The law (article 173 of the RSFSR Criminal Code) is reasonably clear, but as practice has shown, the crime of taking a bribe is somewhat narrowly defined: *for performance or non-performance, in the interests of the giver, of any kind of act.*” *Ibid.*, 119.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 112–15.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹¹⁶ The former chairman of the SM UzSSR Khudayberdiyev admitted that he gave 50,000 rubles to Churbanov because it was a good way to make a good impression. However, he probably wanted to divert MVD investigations out of the republic. Esin (the FS Navoi obkom), Yakhyayev (the former chairman of MVD UzSSR) and other prominent figures of the UzSSR shared the same objectives. The Uzbek-Churbanov bribery “took place during an All-Union Conference of the MVD and the USSR Writer's Union on the subject of “Moral Problems in Fiction” in October 1979. Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*; Feofanov and Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era*, 116.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 116–17.

Additionally, as we have previously seen, many of the defendants started to reconsider their confessions during the investigations and even during the trials.¹¹⁸ This kind of strategy was even possible because perjury – even at juridical level – was not really considered as a criminal offense in the USSR. Furthermore, they justified their reconsiderations, mentioning that they were forced by investigators to give such confessions, that those alleged bribes were a matter of gifts or even that they had admitted guilt by ‘mistake’. It is difficult to determine whether this approach was a strategy devised by their defense attorneys or if they were pushed to reconsider their confessions from above. Both cases are plausible, considering that after Yakhyayev’s and Kakhramanov’s reconsiderations, many other defendants started to disavow their previous confessions in order to contradict their charges. Furthermore, these reconsiderations were possibly encouraged by a part of the central Prokuratura and by KGB officials considering that after meeting with some of the defendants (such as Usmankhodzhaev or Abdullaeva) the confessions were mostly disavowed.¹¹⁹

Thus, after his first confessions in 1987, Churbanov rejected the accusations of bribery during the trial and admitted to have taken money – specifically 50,000 rubles from Khudayberdiyev and 30,000 from Esin – only as a ‘gift.’ Churbanov stated that he was pushed to give names and to admit up to a million rubles in bribes but he could not explain his contradictory confessions during preliminary investigations. In sum,

the major part of the charge against Churbanov was not proven in court, and [...] Kakhramanov was completely acquitted, even though he confessed during the investigation. As I have indicated, I didn't find in the statements of the

¹¹⁸ “When the questioning of Churbanov in court commenced, he did not express this remorse. When the question that always follows the reading of the charge was asked (“Do you admit your guilt?”), five defendants (Begelman, Norbutaev, Dzhamalov, Makhramadzhyanov and Norov) answered in the affirmative, Sabirov admitted partial guilt and Kakhramanov and Iakhsiaev denied their guilt completely. Remember that the last-mentioned was the Minister of Internal Affairs, Kakhramanov was the deputy minister, and the others were oblast heads of the internal affairs administration. Churbanov said that he admitted guilt for abuse of his office, but he denied taking bribes since he considered the money he received to have been given as gifts.” *Ibid.*, 117.

¹¹⁹ Also Ivanov referred how “our suspects began to be sent to the KGB detention centers, where they got the offer to give up their confession.” EG, “Nikolay Ivanov: Skazat’ O Churbanove Chto-to Khorosheye Ya Ne Mogu.”

defendants any persuasive evidence that illegal methods of interrogation were used.¹²⁰

This kind of dynamic did not happen just in the Churbanov trial but also in other cases related to the Uzbek affair. In fact, Khudayberdyev and Abdullaeva also retracted their confessions and further discredited Gdlyan and Ivanov's 'aggressive' methods of obtaining evidence.¹²¹ However, these alleged threats, blackmails and moral pressure were substantially impossible to authenticate "as long as defense lawyers were not permitted to see their clients during preliminary investigation."¹²² As Feofanov and Barry note:

all the defendants complained about the methods of investigators – [with] some in particular – denouncing "psychological pressure" and "testimony being coerced in every way possible." No-one presented concrete evidence to support illegality in the methods of investigation. No-one said that he, for instance, had been beaten, starved, or deprived of sleep. [Thence] investigators from the procuracy did not employ physical torture. There was simply no need to since the distorted legality of the system put instruments of psychological pressure into the hands of the interrogator that a suspect rarely could withstand.¹²³

¹²⁰ Feofanov and Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era*, 123.

¹²¹ Against Rano Abdullaeva, Umarov testified to having given a bribe of 30,000 rubles and she admitted of receiving bribes from 16 people and giving bribes to nine for a total value of 200,000 rubles. When she was arrested, valuables totaling 99,000 rubles were confiscated, including 30,000 in cash and bonds, and jewelry worth about the same amount. As mentioned in the previous chapter, when in May 1989 the investigations against her passed to another group led by the KGB, she refused to confess, stating that she gave bribes "because of the threats and moral pressure of the investigators." During the trial, she reported having made confessions because she was blackmailed. The charges against her thus collapsed and she was acquitted for the last accusation of 5,000 rubles made by Khudaibergenov. Despite investigative methods, the truth or not of confessions and their reconsiderations, Abdullaeva's rights had been seriously violated because she was arrested bypassing the permission of the presidium SS UzSSR in violation of her immunity as an MP. Finally, she was judged innocent. Later, she accused Gdlyan and Ivanov of feeding her confessions, in terms of amounts and names of giver/taker. She also stated that the idea of being Rashidov's mistress was Ivanov's idea and that investigators threatened they would incriminate her son for narcotrafficking and her daughter for hiding diamonds. She was assured that they would find witnesses to testify to these 'crimes'. *Ibid.*, 130–35.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 131.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 118, 126.

Gdlyan and Ivanov's methods were probably not the best in terms of respect for human dignity. They were investigators in the USSR and their job was to uncover evidence at any cost against the suspects. Barry and Feofanov have commented that both Gdlyan and Ivanov were experienced investigators "who had worked at their profession before the heightened attention to the rights of the accused became a matter of open public debate. It would not be surprising, therefore, that their investigative techniques included practices of questionable legality."¹²⁴ Also Vaksberg defined them as "the products of that system of 'socialist legality' (to be more exact, illegality), under which people were none too fussy about exact observation of the procedures which they disparagingly referred to as 'legal formalism'."¹²⁵

After Churbanov's trial, for the first time cases of bribery were also not confirmed by mere confessions. Instead, it was held that "the accusation should demonstrate that the confession was not coerced."¹²⁶ Thus, when the complaints against the investigators arrived in court, Gdlyan's credibility was inevitably compromised and the evidence produced during their preliminary investigations began to collapse as did their scheme of charges. However, Gdlyan was able to counterattack the court's decision commenting that: "Out of 500 witnesses, 180 were barely questioned; out of an enormous amount of video recordings, where the most important investigative action had been recorded, they played only a portion, mere fragments."¹²⁷ Basically, Churbanov's trial marked the entry into politics of the two investigators, radicalizing public opinion, journalists, citizens – divided in gdlyanists and antigdlyanists, friends and enemies, heroes and villains, black and white etc. – and defining a narrative legacy for Gdlyan-Ivanov that would remain also in contemporary Russia. Gdlyan explains this as follows:

When the guilt of many corrupt individuals had been confirmed, to extend the case in its complexity became impossible [within the prokuratura]. We had no choice, and it was the last chance to reveal all. With the support of public opinion we could move forward and continue the investigation of this case. As evident, any normal investigator makes noise, shouting in the media and so on. We had no other choice, because in our case we were connecting all the

¹²⁴ Ibid., 102.

¹²⁵ Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, 116.

¹²⁶ Feofanov and Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era*, 124.

¹²⁷ FBIS, "JPRS-UPA-89-052 - Soviet Union. Political Affairs - 22 AUGUST 1989," 1989, 46.

elements, not only the office of the Prokuratura, but also the MVD, the KGB, the SC USSR and, worse, the leadership of the CPSU, headed by the Westerners' poster-child Gorbachev.¹²⁸

6.4 The people's lonely heroes (1989-1990)

Despite the criticism against Gdlyan and Ivanov for their methods of managing investigations, at the beginning of 1989, the group was still active and ready to launch a further attack against the upper echelons of the Soviet regime. On 11 January 1989, Gdlyan and Ivanov succeeded in impeaching the first member of the CC CPSU Central Committee Viktor Smirnov, the second secretary of the Moldovan communist party and the secretary of the CC CPSU responsible for the Central Asian nomenklatura.¹²⁹ This act signaled the final success of the two investigators whose careers ended with them marginalized by state institutions while their popularity grew considerably, inflaming a political battle that would thrill the Soviet citizens in the first half of 1989. On 19 January, Gdlyan and Ivanov gave a long press conference in which they denounced the obstacles in the way of their investigative activity and launched their open crusade against the party leadership. From that moment, the struggle against 'mafiya' inexorably turned to the political level.

6.4.1 The protracted election campaign

At the beginning of 1989, many more stories on the illegal investigative methods of Gdlyan and Ivanov emerged, discrediting the two investigators and exposing them to possible sanctions. In this regard, the prokuratura started to evaluate the case in February¹³⁰ while the party was much more

¹²⁸ "I understand that he is still praised and loved by you [Westerners], but he is the scoundrel who not only ruined the [Uzbek] case, but who also ruined the country. He is a short-sighted man, who went to Western leaders and betrayed all of our national interests." Personal interview with Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan, Moscow, 17 October 2014.

¹²⁹ Against Smirnov "there were nineteen proven episodes of bribe-taking." He was dismissed from the CC for health reasons three months before his arrest was authorized by the prokuratura. Such a high impeachment was probably not possible without the consent of the politburo. EG, "Nikolay Ivanov: Skazat' O Churbanove Chto-to Khorosheye Ya Ne Mogu"; Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, 226.

¹³⁰ The prosecutor E. Martinson revealed that "until 20 February 1989, there was not any prokuratura supervision for activity in criminal case N° 18/58115-83 but

concerned about other events related to the two loose cannons of the prokuratura. Nevertheless, in 1989 Gdlyan and Ivanov's popularity was so high that they ran for the elections of the CPDSU. This meant the Uzbek affair could return actively to the political level, as the two men would gain further warranties in terms of parliamentary immunity. In the first free elections of USSR,¹³¹ Gdlyan and Ivanov were the perfect populist candidates able to rouse voters and to catalyze the support of electors. Consensus on them gathered large constituencies made up of former Communists schooled in the myth of socialist legality and disappointed by recent Soviet history marked by degradation and hopeless transition.

Therefore, both investigators ran for the elections, inflaming a political battle based on their allegations about the 'Kremlin affair' and taking place in the two biggest cities of the USSR. Gdlyan was a candidate in the 25th electoral district of Moscow (Tushino-Zelenograd) while Ivanov was candidate in the 19th electoral district in Leningrad where he was presented as 'our [Leningrad's] Yeltsin.'¹³²

At meetings, rallies and stands organized for the campaign they inflamed the masses, informing citizens about the high-profile corruption scandals and casting a dark shadow over the Soviet leadership, which was accused of protecting (or at least tolerating) the mafia within the Soviet state. Hence, by accusing – directly or indirectly – the members of the CC CPSU, Gdlyan and Ivanov could offer what the people wanted. This was a fully politicized issue – like the Uzbek affair – that was now challenging the credibility of the CPSU. Nonetheless, their program was simple and easily understandable for voters. Indeed, on 21 February 1989 during the presentation of the 'letter to the voters of Tushino', Gdlyan recalled his commitments to fight "against mafia in the higher organs of the state" and denounced that "power had been usurped by criminal elements and is used in antisocial ways that deform the

complaints about the leadership of Gdlyan to prokuratura USSR, party and soviet organs, public organizations arrived from 1983." GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 6.

¹³¹ The election of the CPDSU served to politicize the Soviet people, who were finally free to express their personal perspectives, even promoting the formation of national "popular fronts." And for the first time non-communist and even dissidents, such as Andrei Sakharov – who co-led the democratic opposition, the Inter-Regional Deputies Group – were candidates. Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L'aigle Bicéphale*, 176; Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*.

¹³² Sobchak, *Khozhdenie vo Vlast' : Rasskaz O Rozhdenii Parlamenta*.

politics of the party and social aims of our social-political system.”¹³³ Gdlyan’s promises to fight against the self-styled *slugi naroda* (people’s servants) were a simple recipe to restore legal institutions within the country:

In this catastrophic situation, behind each of us there are two main tasks. The first is the consolidation of all healthy forces of society, to begin to stop the further collapse of the state and then to move dynamically along the way of the progressive development of the country. The second is to use the levers of democracy and glasnost to dispatch a staff of high quality deputies to the highest organs of power, willing and able to complete the renewal of society in the framework of perestroika.¹³⁴

Also in his electoral poster for the Tushino district, Gdlyan’s candidature president him as a brave figure who had fought for 20 years “against bribers, plunders of socialist properties, and crimes against persons. He is distinguished by high efficiency, principled behavior, belief in the rightness of his cause and the ability to fight for social justice.”¹³⁵ Interestingly, this new political proposal had many tones in common with the previous Andropovian narrative and was esteemed by the electors who appreciated his radical, moralist, populist – but clear, fair and simple – recipe. Thus, in the elections held on 26 March 1989, Gdlyan won in a landslide against the other four candidates, taking 86.8% of the votes. Less fortunate was Ivanov who had to move in to a run-off, to be held on 14 May. Nevertheless, despite Gdlyan’s triumph, the election campaign did not end and kept assuming harsh tones against the Soviet state and party organs for the whole of spring 1989, when the two investigators joined the rallies organized by the ‘democratic’ opposition groups and moved even closer to Yeltsin politically.

Their radical and highly public accusations against the CPSU were inexorably irritating the Soviet regime, which began to take countermeasures. On 3 March, the SC USSR demanded Gorbachev and the politburo take measures against Gdlyan who slandered the court after the Churbanov trial¹³⁶ while on 21 March, even Sukharev wrote to the Gensek about a memorandum that was received from Nikolai Ivanov containing criticism on the work of the SC and the prokuratura USSR and demanding to reopen the Churbanov case.¹³⁷ Obviously, this kind of accusation embarrassed the party

¹³³ GARF, f. 9654, op. 3, d. 121, l. 5.

¹³⁴ GARF, f. 9654, op. 3, d. 121, ll. 5-6.

¹³⁵ GARF, f. 9654, op. 3, d. 121, l. 14.

¹³⁶ RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 1, ll. 1-2; GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 16.

¹³⁷ RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 2, ll. 1-2.

no end, leaving it appearing increasingly weak. Part of the CC CPSU wanted to react by opening an internal case against Gdlyan and Ivanov and focusing attention on sensitive issues – such as their illegal investigative methods – which could discredit the investigators as dangerous charlatans.

Thus, on 24 March 1989, the politburo instructed the party commission of the CC CPSU headed by Boris Pugo – chairman of the CPC¹³⁸ – “to verify the legal violations in the investigation of cases of corruption in the UzSSR and to report the results to the Central Committee.”¹³⁹ The commission was held on 6 April and involved the Genprokuror Sukharev, the investigators Karakozov and Gdlyan, as well as the supreme judges R.G. Tikhomirnov and V.I. Zamyatin. On that occasion Gdlyan gave a harsh statement where he referred to the unconstitutionality of the party commission as an attempt to break the case and he defined the chairman of the SC USSR Terebilov as a ‘suspect’ involved in the case. Nevertheless, Gdlyan did not give evidence and stated that he would give it and other big names personally to Gorbachev,¹⁴⁰ thus rejecting the commission’s authority. Thus, on 7 April 1989, Pugo proposed to Sukharev to investigate the alleged bribes by Terebilov and stated:

Given that com. Gdlyan T.Kh. – with the aim of undermining the resolutions of the CC CPSU on the ongoing verification – may apply to the media with irresponsible statements, it would be appropriate to entrust the ideological department of the CC CPSU to take the necessary preventive action.¹⁴¹

This was something of a sinister formulation that sought to discredit Gdlyan and his team, defining a line that was confirmed during the politburo session of 10 April¹⁴² and that was also followed in the official press. Then, on 13 April the CC CPSU was informed by the members of the party

¹³⁸ On the aftermath of the Churbanov affair, the CC CPSU secretary Razumovsky affirmed that the facts published by the magazine "Ogonek" needed to be checked. Hence, he requested the CPC and the Prokuratura USSR to shed light on these facts. GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 15.

¹³⁹ The commission was headed by Pugo B.K. (CPC CPSU), Pavlov A.S. (State-legal department of the CC CPSU), Menteshashvili T.N. (Presidium of the SS USSR), Bobkov F.D. (KGB USSR), Pobezhimov AS (Prokuratura USSR), Gusev S.I. (SC USSR), Shilov I.F. (MVD USSR), Gubarev V.T. (MJ USSR). RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 20, l. 1

¹⁴⁰ RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 19, l. 2

¹⁴¹ RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 19, l. 3.

¹⁴² RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 19, l. 1.

commission¹⁴³ that, after evaluating many letters, the charges made against Gdlyan and Ivanov were founded and their methods of investigation illegal.

The commission thus confirmed cases of many illegalities such as pretrial detentions extended to 4-5 years, people arrested for months without any questioning, psychological pressure to extract confessions requested by investigators, seizure of personal money and valuables of suspects and their family, creating a situation “reportedly leads to self-incrimination.”¹⁴⁴ The report stated that according to the KGB USSR, these practices were not only applied to the suspects but also to the convicted, such as “Kamalov, Iliadi and Radzhabov to testify under the threat of execution and repression against [their] families.”¹⁴⁵ Finally, the commission acknowledged that “the actions of Gdlyan and Ivanov and some of their supporters actually lead to prejudice against the CPSU, the party leadership and the country through the shaping of public opinion. The Commission considers it appropriate to propose [the case] to the Genprokuror of the USSR.”¹⁴⁶ The day after, Gorbachev replied and revealed his concern for the facts, ordering the resolution of the situation within a couple of weeks.¹⁴⁷

Nevertheless, Gdlyan’s and Ivanov’s popularity kept rising and the party had to find a solution that could be accepted by the people as well. Thus, the CC CPSU commission was transferred at state level where a similar commission was set up in the Presidium of the SS USSR.¹⁴⁸ In parallel, also the plenum of the SC USSR issued a resolution that acknowledged “violations of the law committed by the investigative team of the Prokuratura USSR led by T. Kh. Gdlyan”.¹⁴⁹ This opened a further front on the – non-independent - judicial level against the two ‘people’s heroes’ with a fact that appeared to be highly discrediting: the posthumously rehabilitation of the Estonian scientist Johannes Hint¹⁵⁰ on 25 April 1989 emerged as a perfectly-timed attack on

¹⁴³ The memorandum was sent by the party commission members: B. Pugo, A.S. Pavlov, T. Menteshashvili, F. Bobkov, A. Pobezhimov, S. Gusev, V. Trushin and V.Gubarev. RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 3, ll. 3-6.

¹⁴⁴ RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 3, l. 4.

¹⁴⁵ RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 3, l. 5.

¹⁴⁶ RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 3, l. 6.

¹⁴⁷ RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 3, l. 1.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁴⁹ *Izvestiya*, 27 April 1989, p. 1.

¹⁵⁰ Johannes A. Hint was an Estonian scientist with an international reputation. PhD in technical sciences and winner of a Lenin Prize, he directed a special technological

Gdlyan's integrity and created a very powerful argument against his methods. In fact, the court recalled how Gdlyan charged Hint in 1981 as an example of official injustice and prosecution in the KGB style. In the SC USSR resolution emerged that:

Innocent people have been brought to trial without legal basis and have been convicted, which is a gross violation of socialist legality. This was possible because the investigatory group headed by T.Kh. Gdlyan, the investigator for especially important cases under the USSR Procurator General, ignored the legal status of SKTB "Dezintegrator" [...] From beginning to end the investigators conducted their inquiry into the case of Hint and others with an accusatory bias. [...] The Plenum of the USSR Supreme Court believes that the facts regarding the violation of socialist legality committed by investigators headed by T.Kh. Gdlyan in investigating this case and the absence of appropriate prosecutorial supervision over the investigation and court review deserve special significant response on the part of the Collegium of the USSR Procuracy. The elimination from investigatory practice of activities of this kind, and the discussion of the question of the further use of T.Kh. Gdlyan in such important aspects of investigatory work as an investigator for particularly important cases in the office of the USSR Procurator General are also called for.¹⁵¹

bureau named "Disintegrator." Hint and other employees of the bureau were arrested on 13 November 1981 and accused of theft, abuse of office, smuggling, and forgery of official documents. After numerous interrogations he and the others confessed, but all later retracted their confessions. On December 19, 1983 he was sentenced by the Estonian Supreme Court to 15 years in prison, and his property was confiscated. On March 28 1985 the USSR Supreme Court reduced the punishment, lowering the level of property confiscation assessed against Hint and his fellow-defendants but confirmed their criminal liability. Nevertheless, he died on 5 September 1985. Hint was effectively experimenting a proto-capitalistic cooperative but he did not steal a singular ruble from the state budget. However, as marked by Feofanov and Barry, "what was really feared was ideological heresy, which Hint represented, even though he never uttered a word against the communist ideology. But he did threaten it with his reasonable entrepreneurial acts, with real economic profit generated on the basis of common sense. This they could not forgive." On 25 April 1989, the USSR Supreme Court reviewed the 'Hint case' in plenary session and fully rehabilitated him posthumously. As well, his academic degrees, titles and awards were restored and the confiscated property returned. Feofanov and Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era*, 52, 77–78.

¹⁵¹ The special ruling N. 340-89 of the Plenum of the SC USSR of 25 April 1989 is reported in *Ibid.*, 81–84.

This sentence expressed by the SC USSR was a fatal hit to Gdlyan's professional honor and a political arm against the investigator who was openly attacked by the Estonian deputies and press. Sobchak recalled this episode and stated that Gdlyan became the scapegoat that took the sins of the whole totalitarian system, evidencing that Hint was effectively condemned by a court in three instances and not personally by Gdlyan.¹⁵² Then, also the two investigators personally contested a rehabilitation that appeared as a political event rather than a juridical one, opposing this episode as a Gorbachev's attempt to collude with the Estonian nationalists.¹⁵³

In the 1989 spring, the official newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*¹⁵⁴ also started to publish many more articles that were critical of the working methods of Gdlyan and Ivanov during the Uzbek affair investigations, accusing them of artificially enlarging the number of the people involved in corruption, violating law in getting information from those under investigation, illegally detaining or arresting innocents without reasons and over the statutory limits of nine months, fabricating evidence against suspects, using threats and actual violence to secure confessions, manipulating and rewording testimonies, illegally intervening in court proceedings, using the investigations to acquire popularity and personal power, and undermining the credibility of the CC CPSU and its members with groundless accusations.¹⁵⁵ Basically, the press – which had contributed in the edification of the myth of the 'people's heroes' – was now playing the role of judging Gdlyan and Ivanov as charlatans.

Nevertheless, they both rejected the accusations and denounced them as an interference of power in their investigations. This political strategy seemed to work. Apparently, the conflict with the institutions radicalized further and the people turned even more favorably to them, triggering a populist mechanism through which the 'people's heroes' were saying and offering to

¹⁵² Sobchak, *Khozhdzenie vo Vlast' : Rasskaz O Rozhdenii Parlamenta*.

¹⁵³ Chiesa, "La Mafia Uzbecka Alla Conquista Di Mosca. Due Giudici Sovietici La Sbarrano E Raccontano."

¹⁵⁴ Critical articles against Gdlyan and Ivanov appeared in the press. See, *Pravda*, 13 May 1989, p. 2; *Pravda*, 20 May 1989, p. 3; *Izvestiya*, 21 May 89, p. 4; *Pravda*, 21 May 1989, p. 3; *Pravda*, 22 September 1989, pp. 6-7; *Izvestiya*, 28 September 1989, p. 6; *Izvestiya*, 5 October 1989, p. 6; *Izvestiya*, 15 October 1989 p. 5; *Izvestiya*, 29 October 1989, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 192.

the people what they wanted to hear, presenting a thrilling story that was delegitimizing the power of an already weak CPSU.

6.4.2 The war of May

May 1989 was to a great extent the climax of the 'Gdlyan-Ivanov affair.' The failed negotiation with the prokuratura¹⁵⁶ and with the party created a 'perfect storm' in which Gdlyan and Ivanov seemed to benefit from their failures, appearing as the final martyrs of Gorbachev's system. At that time, Chernyaev defined the two investigators as "scum" that apparently charmed the hearth of some citizens. Thus, he revealed that Gdlyan, the new people's martyr, became a powerful political weapon to attack the Gensek. Chernyaev recalled how in early May a poster had appeared in Arbat bearing the slogan: "Yeltsin, Georgia, Gdlyan... who's next?"¹⁵⁷

On 3 May, Gdlyan joined a meeting of the Mossovet deputies with the politburo members where, according to Sakharov, he "began by crying out dramatically: 'I've been accused of state crimes. Look! Before you stands a state criminal!'" It's quite possible! Boris Pugo shouted back from the audience."¹⁵⁸ Thus, after denouncing the sabotaging of his case, he replied to the accusation against him¹⁵⁹ and demanded to speak with Gorbachev personally. The meeting took place and Gdlyan told the Gensek directly that in April, Khudayberdyev had retracted his confessions after a night visit from Sukharev, his deputy Vasiliev, and Dukhanin. "Gorbachev listened without interrupting. Then he said with a grim expression, 'This is an extremely serious matter. I'll see you, but if you can't prove your charges, I don't envy you.'"¹⁶⁰ Probably, Gorbachev was concerned enough to give some consideration to Gdlyan's allegations. In a moment when both party and Gorbachev felt that power was slipping away, the Gensek probably had sense

¹⁵⁶ The deputy Genprokuror Katusev reported that on 27 April 1989, Gdlyan came to the Prokuratura USSR and did not bring any evidence but that he had harsh words to say to the Genprokuror Sukharev and his deputy Vasil'ev. GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 4.

¹⁵⁷ Savranskaya, "The Diary of Anatoly S. Chernyaev. 1989. Donated by A.S. Chernyaev to The National Security Archive," 19.

¹⁵⁸ Andrei Sakharov, *Moscow and Beyond, 1986-1989* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 111.

¹⁵⁹ Gdlyan admitted: "They say that I kept children in jail. But those children were forty years old, and it was the only way to get back the millions of the people's money that they stole." *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 112.

that indulging the ‘people’s heroes’ or at least to treat them with ‘velvet gloves’¹⁶¹ in order to keep negotiations open.

Nevertheless, the day after, the Gensek received a long ‘report of information’ from the CC CPSU that summarized the content of the letters and complaint that arrived from Uzbekistan to denounce the violations of prosecution and justice made by Gdlyan and Ivanov.¹⁶² This denunciation of ‘terror’ was probably organized in accordance with the prokuratura – which had access to the prosecutorial materials of Gdlyan and Ivanov – and allowed a further step in the discrediting of the investigators to be taken. However, the two people’s heroes were more or less finished when they were removed from the investigations on the Uzbek affair “for unsatisfactory work of misconduct, an obvious accusatory and public misinformation” on 4 May.¹⁶³ The case was then transferred to Vladimir Semenovitch Galkin¹⁶⁴ in coordination with the investigative KGB group led by the colonel Dukhanin. This latter – according to Gdlyan’s version – had pushed the witnesses to

¹⁶¹ Excerpts from the Diary of Anatoly Chernyaev (2 May 1989): “Inside me depression and alarm are growing, the sense of crisis of the Gorbachevian Idea. He is prepared to go far. But what does it mean? His favorite catch-word is “unpredictability.” And most likely we will come to a collapse of the state and something like chaos. He feels that he is losing the levers of power irreversibly, and this realization prevents him from “going far.” For that reason, he holds to conventional methods but acts with “velvet gloves.” He has no concept of where we are going. His declarations about socialist values, ideals of October, as he begins to tick them off, sound as irony for the cognoscenti. Behind them - emptiness.” From Anatoly Chernyaev translated by Vladislav Zubok. NSA, Box 28, file 2909.

¹⁶² In 1978-1983 an average of 776 letters of this kind arrived annually from Uzbekistan. The number increased to 1212 in 1984, 1404 in 1985, 2414 in 1986, 2147 in 1987, 2180 in 1988, and 420 in the first quarter of 1989. Most of the authors of these letters were the convicted ‘victims’ of the two investigators, suspects under investigation (or their relatives). These letters denounced the long pre-trial-detention, violations of the principle of presumption of innocence and abuses of the investigators that were accused of threatening suspects and their family, doing pressure on courts, violence and even instigation to suicide. This ‘report for information’ just refers to cases related to the abuse of Gdlyan and Ivanov. RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 21, ll. 1-24.

¹⁶³ Aleksandr Anatol’evich Volkov, *Viktor Ilyukhin: Okhotnik Za Prezidentami* (Moskva: Algoritm, 2012).

¹⁶⁴ Speaking with Sakharov, Gdlyan commented “Galkin is my old friend. His fault—or misfortune—is that he doesn’t know how to stand up to the authorities. I never give in to pressure.” Sakharov, *Moscow and Beyond, 1986-1989*, 122.

retreat their accusations against CC CPSU members.¹⁶⁵ Certainly there is some truth in these assumptions, considering that, after the transfer of interrogations to the KGB in late October 1988, most of the defendants began to deny their confessions.

Final negotiations were organized on May 10 when Gdlyan met with Gorbachev in the presence of Chebrikov, Ryzhkov, Lukyanov and Sukharev.¹⁶⁶ Again, Gdlyan failed to bring overwhelming evidence of his allegations and blamed Gorbachev and the party for failing to be active enough. Nevertheless, he found an agreeable setting in the public square – where he could shout his anger at the regime for having removed him from the case for attempting to muzzle him – offering more conspiracy and imaginative narratives that demanded little evidence. Indeed, a great part of the public was supportive. In spring 1989, the press and the presidium of the SS USSR received many letters and appeals from Soviet citizens, labor collectives and organizations defending their heroes and revealing the general tenor of public opinion. A collective based in Almaty referred to the Gdlyan-Ivanov affair as a “broad and deliberate campaign to discredit comrades T.Kh. Gdlyan and N.V. Ivanov in the eyes of public opinion” in order to cover up criminality.¹⁶⁷ Another appeal from the group ‘friendship and dialogue’ pointed to the ‘convenient’ timing in the announcement about Hint’s case and the dismissal of the charges against many suspects arguing this was clearly about discrediting Gdlyan and Ivanov. The group demanded they be given the chance to appear in the media to defend their position.¹⁶⁸ Others, like the collective ‘Impuls’ demanded they be reinstated to lead the investigations into the Uzbek affair and conclude the cases.¹⁶⁹

Evidently, the Gdlyan-Ivanov affair attracted the sympathy of many citizens who generally rallied around the idea that ‘defending’ this cause was a matter of defending democracy and *glasnost*.¹⁷⁰ Local committees within factories also spontaneously organized to support Gdlyan and to endorse the

¹⁶⁵ This version is indirectly confirmed by the Gdlyan’s ‘victim’ Abdullaeva. Abdullaeva, *Preodolenie Ada*.

¹⁶⁶ Plekhanov, “Delo Gdlyana. Anatomiya Politicheskogo Skandala,” 39; Mauro, “Cosi Combato La Piovra Sovietica”; Chiesa, “La Mafia Uzbeka Alla Conquista Di Mosca. Due Giudici Sovietici La Sbarrano E Raccontano.”

¹⁶⁷ GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, l. 8.

¹⁶⁸ GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, l. 9.

¹⁶⁹ GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, l. 10.

¹⁷⁰ GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, l. 17.

campaign for their rehabilitation in the media, threatening strikes and riots.¹⁷¹ Interestingly, many appeals came not from supporters but from simple people who, without taking a partisan position, wanted an appropriate and uncensored resolution of the 'Gdlyan-Ivanov affair', demanding that an impartial body be formed to assess the case. A committee of Tushino voters organized a demonstration on 10 May and wrote to the presidium to denounce the campaign against Gdlyan (their elected representative within the CPDSU) as an attempt to violate democratic outcomes and after organizing a protest with about 8,000 participants demanded the creation of an impartial commission within the CPDSU.¹⁷²

It was clear that the Gdlyan-Ivanov campaign was incredibly appealing to the people and to some extent was also attracting skeptical citizens who were simply hungry for truth. In any case, this mobilization of the masses that produced some of the biggest rallies seen in late Soviet times was an exceptional democratic test for the Soviet regime. The extraordinary popularity of the two "heroic investigators" acted to a significant extent to 'inoculate' them such that they became effectively 'untouchable'¹⁷³ and free to say anything they wanted. Gdlyan and Ivanov's campaign of publicity in the war against the mafia also followed the course of Ivanov's election campaign. Politicization was heightened on 12 May 1989, when Ivanov appeared on Leningrad television and presented a sharp attack against the former and present establishment of the CC CPSU. In his words:

Many voters are asking why the mafia in Leningrad isn't being routed and who at the top in Moscow is being investigated for felony violations. There's no attempt to fight the mafia because it is state policy to curtail the battle against organized crime. But it could be fought everywhere. For the information of Leningraders, I can say that among those whose names have come up in our felony case is the former leader of Leningrad, Comrade Romanov. Other names that have come up are members of the Politburo, such as Comrade Solomentsev and Comrade Ligachev, and Terebilov, the former chairman of the Supreme Court. Today the situation concerning Ligachev is very worrisome. We are very concerned to see the consolidation of his position in light of the move to the right that we are observing in today's politics. That naturally raises serious concern. I'm not speaking about the innocence or guilt of these people. Today all I can say is that the case will be investigated in the

¹⁷¹ GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, l. 15.

¹⁷² GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, l. 11.

¹⁷³ Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 223.

future. I am speaking very deliberately. And I'm prepared to take full responsibility for my words. Thank you.¹⁷⁴

Ivanov's statement directly attacked the 'conservative' Ligachev even though he was well regarded for his moral integrity and for his anticorruption stance.¹⁷⁵ Thus, the inspirer of the famous XVI plenum of the CC CPUz in summer 1984 was alleged to be a bribe-taker and in collusion with the 'Uzbek Mafiya.' In his memoirs, Ligachev recalls that despite hearing such accusations he never wavered in his sense of moral integrity and claims to have never accepted bribes and gifts.¹⁷⁶ His memoirs also express his lack of surprise that such slanderous attacks would come from the 'gdlyanovists.' Nevertheless, his mood changed when he realized that such allegations undermined his credibility and were the butt of jokes among higher figures of the party who mocked him thus: "Yegor Kuzmich, so how much does Gdlyan say Usmankhodzhaev slipped to you? He says thirty thousand?... Well, you're a strange one, Yegor Kuzmich. You sold yourself too cheap, way too cheap."¹⁷⁷

The day after, the Presidium of the SS USSR strongly condemned such charges in a statement published in all the most important Soviet newspapers. Ivanov's statements were presented here as "an attempt to appeal to the public, to disorient people and hinder the work of a special commission, which the Presidium of the SS USSR instructed to review the numerous complaints of citizens on the serious abuses committed by Gdlyan T.Kh. and Ivanov N.V. during their investigative activities."¹⁷⁸ Nevertheless, an immediate political reply by the party was slow in coming. In this regard, Boldin reveals a conversation with the Gensek who stated: "I don't believe that Yegor took bribes. It's somehow not in his character. He might have done all sorts of things, but not that."¹⁷⁹ However, the Gensek assumed a strange

¹⁷⁴ The statement of Ivanov in Leningrad TV on 12 May 1989 has been fully transcribed and translated in Ligachev's memoirs. *Ibid.*, 226.

¹⁷⁵ Chernyaev recalls that "Ligachev was a figure coming from Andropov's personnel change and early fight against rampant corruption in the party." Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 11.

¹⁷⁶ "It was my firm rule, an ironclad, unwavering position" Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 205.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 220.

¹⁷⁸ Pravda, May 13, 1989, p. 2.

¹⁷⁹ Boldin, *Ten Years That Shook the World: The Gorbachev Era As Witnessed by His Chief of Staff*, 173.

attitude towards Ligachev's accusations and did not publicly condemn those allegations as slander. It is not clear whether Gorbachev believed the Gdlyan-Ivanov allegations or if he simply wanted to exploit the opportunity to marginalize an internal rival. Indeed, at that time Ligachev was a very critical element in the politburo and his relations with Gorbachev remained tense after his role had been progressively degraded in the deflated secretariat. Nevertheless, it is difficult to believe that Gorbachev would have endorsed an attack discrediting the very system he represented. Instead, it is more likely he was playing the role of Pontius Pilate, seeking to avoid antagonizing the people by condemning their heroes and preferring to take some more time to consider the situation.

However, on 13 May, the politburo CC CPSU demanded that the special commission headed by Sukharev produce the results of the investigations before the beginning of the first CPDSU and remove Gdlyan and Ivanov from any investigation related to the Uzbek affair.¹⁸⁰ This move simply turned into further grist for the mill for the two investigators who were by now adept at using these kind of attacks to sway the public against the regime. Needless to say, on 14 May, two days after the statements on TV, Ivanov was confirmed in a second ballot with 67% of votes in Leningrad, and on 16 May a committee to defend Gdlyan was formed in Zelenograd.¹⁸¹

Ligachev was furious and was convinced that he had to react as soon as possible. Thus, on 15 May he directly addressed an appeal to the Genprokuror Sukharev – who was also heading the commission of the presidium of the SS USSR – that stated:

On 12 May 1989 on Leningrad television, the investigator N.V. Ivanov said that "the new members of the Politburo came up" in a criminal case, and my name was mentioned. In this regard, I consider it necessary to report as follows. This statement is a provocation, a malicious fiction. It basically infers that I am a suspect in a crime. And he made this statement to advance his career as well as to disavow [his] responsibility for the charges that the letters from citizens bring against him about the abuses committed during the investigations of the criminal cases. I wanted to draw your attention to this. False reports are in

¹⁸⁰ RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 4, l. 1.

¹⁸¹ Plekhanov, "Delo Gdlyana. Anatomiya Politicheskogo Skandala," 40.

violation of the established order of investigation of criminal cases. Please consider the results to be published in the press.¹⁸²

Ligachev urged that a public reply be made and also wanted to publish his statements in TASS. However, as suggested by Vadim Medvedev – the head of the ideological commission of the CPSU – he preferred to discuss it with Gorbachev after his return from China. Ligachev was anxious and perceived that a delay in that task could be fatal, considering that not all the other higher members of the CC CPSU were so openly supportive of him. Nevertheless, on 18 May Ligachev called Gorbachev on his personal ‘hotline’ and the Gensek agreed to proceed.¹⁸³ Thus, on 19 May 1989, Ligachev’s “categorical protest” was published in *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* while in parallel also Solomentsev and Romanov wrote appeals to the politburo and secretaries of the CC CPSU.¹⁸⁴

Another counterattack arrived from the presidium of the SS USSR where the special commission "to examine the many statements and complaints regarding serious violations of legality by investigators of the USSR Procuracy T.Kh. Gdlyan and N.V. Ivanov in performing investigative activity" presented a conclusive report (19 May 1989) that was sent to the CC CPSU¹⁸⁵ and was even published in the press.¹⁸⁶ It stated:

¹⁸² RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 22, ll. 1-2. Ligachev even offered a lightly modified translation in his memoirs. Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 228.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 228–30, 233.

¹⁸⁴ RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 23, ll. 1-3.

¹⁸⁵ RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 24, l. 1-11.

¹⁸⁶ The commission created at the Presidium of the SS USSR was composed of 11 members, including MPs, prominent legal scholars, and representatives of law-enforcement organs. Among the eleven members of the commission were the Genprokuror USSR (Aleksandr Ya. Sukharev), the USSR Minister of Justice (Boris V. Kravtsov), the USSR Minister of Internal Affairs (Vadim V. Bakatin), the Chairman of the KGB (Vladimir A. Kryuchkov), S.I. Gusev (deputy chairman of SC USSR) and the legal scholars Yuri Kh. Khalmykov (the chairman of the Supreme Soviet Committee on legislation), the professor Dzhangir A. Kerimov, V.I. Semenko, Aleksander M. Yakovlev (the head of the Institute of State and Law of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR), Vladimir Kudryavtsev (the vice-president of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR) and Veniamin F. Yakovlev (the future President of the Supreme Arbitration Court of the USSR). The full text of the report was published in *Izvestiia*, 20 May 1989, p. 4, and translated in English by Feofanov and Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials*

In the materials, letters and complaints of citizens, including statements of investigatory and prosecutorial personnel, it is confirmed that in attempting to artificially broaden the circle of those accused of corruption, comrade Gdlyan and the investigators who were under his influence embarked on a path of gross violations of the norms of legality. They widely employed smear tactics in making unfounded accusations of bribery, forcing suspects and witnesses into giving so-called "inculpatory" evidence on the basis of groundless arrests, blackmail, and intimidation, without properly specifying the circumstances of their acts [...] Gdlyan, Ivanov and the investigators associated with them frequently insulted those being held, assaulted their dignity, threatened them with execution by shooting, and constantly sought to introduce the idea that to avoid the supreme punishment and receive a minimal term of imprisonment they needed only confess to the accusations made and testify against the "higherups," that is, certain leaders in the republic and the country. Regarding the latter point, they were presented with an already-prepared program of testimony, including sums of bribes and a list of officials to whom bribes were supposedly given.¹⁸⁷

Therefore, the commission considered the sensitive cases of Orlov, Usmanhodzhaev, Musakhanov, Kamalov and other cases that were dropped for lack of evidence, inviting the Genprokuror to proceed with further investigations and to bring to justice those responsible for violations of the law. Gdlyan and Ivanov protested because they were not invited to defend themselves in the commission. Sobchak also highlighted this episode as an example of neo-Stalinism, charging that the KGB was interfering with prokuratura investigations.¹⁸⁸ In parallel, another attack against Gdlyan's credibility occurred when the cases of other prominent figures involved in the Uzbek affair – such as Abdullaeva, Osetrov and finally Smirnov – were rapidly dismissed. Smirnov's case was transferred to another investigative group led by the KGB colonel Dukhanin who was supposed to check the validity of prosecution evidence (19 May). The 19 alleged bribes were accredited as 'gifts' and so the former second secretary of Moldova was finally liberated on 22 May. Vaksberg suggests that this episode was one of the dirtiest cases of

of the Post-Stalin Era, 135–37; Sobchak, *Khozhdenie vo Vlast' : Rasskaz O Rozhdenii Parlamenta*.

¹⁸⁷ The text is fully reported in the appendix.

¹⁸⁸ Sobchak, *Khozhdenie vo Vlast' : Rasskaz O Rozhdenii Parlamenta*.

political interference in justice undertaken by the KGB in the later years of Soviet history.¹⁸⁹

After this interference of the KGB in the investigations and the rapid dismissals of the case, Gdlyan and Ivanov had a strong case and were successful in publicizing the scandal, mobilizing the masses and their political allies. Interestingly, their crusade against the 'bribe-taker' Ligachev was also endorsed by another radical leader of the masses, and historical rival of Ligachev, Boris Yeltsin who on 18 May stated: "I personally believe them [Gdlyan and Ivanov] They've got some evidence, and without it they wouldn't have made such suggestions. It would have been suicide for them to put forward suggestions without evidence."¹⁹⁰ Similar 'tactical' narrative emerged on 20 May during a huge rally organized in Zelenograd to protect Gdlyan and Ivanov. Also on that occasion Yeltsin gave a long speech supporting the two investigators and demanding the establishment of a fair and impartial commission. In turn, Gdlyan joined the cause of his allies and participated at the big rally to protest against the latest repressions in Tbilisi held at Luzhniki on 21 May. On that occasion, Gdlyan – close to Yeltsin and Popov – met Sakharov seeking his support. However, when the scientist announced his skepticism about the case, "Gdlyan's face darkened and he walked away."¹⁹¹ Evidently, there were divergences within the 'opposition front' with a part of its intelligentsia seeking to distance itself from Gdlyan. Conversely, the consent of the working class for the two investigators consistently remained very high.¹⁹²

Thus, in May 1989, the party was too weak to firmly contest the accusations made by the masses, creating a situation that seriously concerned the Gensek and his advisors.¹⁹³ Further, Gorbachev did not seem

¹⁸⁹ Vaksberg recalls that on 12 May Aleksander Pavlov, the head of the administrative department of the CC CPSU (a very powerful figure) informed the SC USSR that Smirnov would be released within a few days. Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, 226.

¹⁹⁰ David Remnick, "Yeltsin Says He Believes Allegations against Conservative Rival," *The Washington Post*, May 19, 1989.

¹⁹¹ Sakharov, *Moscow and Beyond, 1986-1989*, 116.

¹⁹² Personal interview with Lev Dmitrievich Gudkov, Moscow, 24 November 2015.

¹⁹³ On 21 May, Chernyaev reported his concerns: "There was a decision to put Gdlyan and Ivanov in their place. TV is broadcasting the "universal indignation of the people." But at the same time a meeting is scheduled in Moscow, organized by a "strike committee" in defense of Gdlyan. They not only accused Ligachev, Solomentsev, and Romanov of corruption (in front of the entire Soviet Union), but also hinted at

to be able to elaborate a strategy and his enigmatic silence in front of such demonstrations spoke volumes. Indeed, on 22 May, during the politburo session Ligachev read out a statement about “slanderous accusations to his address, emanating from a group of Gdlyan-Ivanov supporters.”¹⁹⁴ Then, at the concomitant plenum – devoted to the organization of the first session of the CPDSU – Ligachev sent a petition to the CC CPSU where he condemned a tense atmosphere comparable to that of 1937. The petition was read by Gorbachev but there was “scarcely any reaction to it at all”, not even so much as a comment by the Gensek.¹⁹⁵ Once again, it was not clear if Gorbachev had no strategy to face the challenging crowd. Perhaps he was not overly worried and thought that he could easily control the situation by leveraging the influence of the party to marginalize the two mavericks.

Apparently, this second solution was effective and on the day of the plenum (22 May), Gdlyan and Ivanov were finally dismissed from any activity related to the prosecution of the Uzbek affairs.¹⁹⁶ This line seemed to follow the ‘restrained authoritarian’ approach that Gorbachev had endorsed after the plenum of 25 April 1989 when 74 full members and 24 candidate members of the CC CPSU were dismissed and replaced with ‘loyalists to perestroika.’¹⁹⁷ According to Sakharov, on that occasion the party even endorsed a change in the press narrative. This manifested in the discrediting campaign endorsed in the newspapers and magazines against the two investigators who had not been able to prove their accusations.¹⁹⁸ On 24 May 1989, a very famous article entitled *Mif* (The Myth)¹⁹⁹ appeared in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, discrediting Gdlyan and Ivanov for their ‘illegal investigative methods’ of extorting confessions, humiliations and strange suicides, criticizing also the mythmaking by the press in the previous months to support them. Again, gdlyanists seemed to be galvanized by the attacks

Gorbachev." Savranskaya, "The Diary of Anatoly S. Chernyaev. 1989. Donated by A.S. Chernyaev to The National Security Archive," 23.

¹⁹⁴ Gorbachev Fond, *V Politburo TsK KPSS...* (Moskva: Gorbachev Fond, 2008), 504.

¹⁹⁵ Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 231–32.

¹⁹⁶ RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 5, l. 2.

¹⁹⁷ Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 187; Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*.

¹⁹⁸ Sakharov, *Moscow and Beyond, 1986-1989*, 111.

¹⁹⁹ Olga Chaykovskaya, "Mif," *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, May 1989.

and, in response to Chaikovskaya's article, organized a two-hour strike in Zelenograd to defend the pair.

However, the next day, following a request from Ligachev,²⁰⁰ the head of the department for supervision over the implementation of laws on national security of the Prokuratura USSR, Viktor Ilyukhin²⁰¹ opened criminal case N° 18/67812-89 against Gdlyan and Ivanov for violations of the law during investigations in Uzbekistan.²⁰² Nevertheless, the two investigators were protected by parliamentary immunity since they had been elected people's deputies of the USSR and so the Genprokuror USSR requested to the newly formed Congress of People's Deputies of Soviet Union (CPDSU) to remove their immunity and to hand them over to justice.

²⁰⁰ RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 8, l. 1-5.

²⁰¹ Viktor Ivanovich Ilyukhin (1949-2011) was a Russian politician and Soviet prosecutor. In August 1989, he was appointed – on the recommendation of the Genprokuror USSR Sukharev – as head of the department for supervision over the implementation of laws on national security, a member of Prosecutor's Office and Senior Assistant to the Genprokuror USSR. In 1990 Ilyukhin opposed the Gdlyan-Ivanov investigation group, claiming they were using "illegal methods of investigation". He demanded a criminal investigation be opened against them. He wrote "Who are they, Gdlyan and Ivanov? [...] The heroes of their time, fighters for truth and justice, the persons devoted to their people and homeland, ready to sacrifice them for the sake of your well-being and life? Or perhaps merely disguised populist and loudmouths vain and mediocre figures, foam, which was formed on the crest of menacing and destructive waves of the so-called perestroika? Unfortunately, a lot of them came up: sons of a gun and charlatans, scoundrels and demagogues, explicit traitors [...] now donning the clothes and the mask of democracy. They fill the ether and television screens, pages of newspapers and magazines. They create parties and movements, striving for power, they criticize and condemn, teaching how to live and work. Impose their morality, their immorality and dirty ideology." Ilyukhin was also famous for opening a criminal case for high treason (art. 64 of the RSFSR Criminal Code) against Gorbachev on 4 November 1991 in connection with the signing of the decrees of the USSR State Council of 6 September 1991 on the recognition of independence of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Viktor Ivanovich Ilyukhin, *Vozhdi i Oborotni. Prervannoye Rassledovaniye* (Moskva: Paleya, 1994), 178.

²⁰² GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 54. Volkov, *Viktor Ilyukhin: Okhotnik Za Prezidentami*.

6.5 The CPDSU media circus

The opening of the first session of the CPDSU on 25 May 1989 elected Gorbachev as chairman of the SS USSR and head of state.²⁰³ However, the real extraordinary event was related to the media circus of parliamentary sessions that for the first time in USSR were broadcast on TV, thrilling the Soviet public.

6.5.1 Gdlyan-Ivanov in the CPDSU

As mentioned, both Gdlyan and Ivanov were elected to the CPDSU and joined the Inter-regional Deputies Group (MDG), an heterogeneous formation that brought together all the elements of the non-communist opposition. There was a lot of curiosity about these two neophytes of politics who polarized the assembly between gdlyanists and antigdlyanists. During the first session of the CPDSU, Gdlyan and Ivanov actively participated. They wrote to the first deputy chairman of the SS USSR, Anatoly Ivanovich Lukyanov, complaining of the criminal situation within the country and again declared that their investigations – even on the gold mining industry – had been hampered by the Genprokuror Rekunkov while a defamatory campaign was organized against them. Gdlyan and Ivanov demanded to be reinstated to the case.²⁰⁴

In parallel, several deputies sympathized with Gdlyan and Ivanov, speaking strongly against Ligachev and discrediting the party. Ligachev was furious because on the first day of the congress, he was not afforded the opportunity to reply to the accusations.²⁰⁵ Gorbachev also elected not to engage in the melee, probably because he did not want to further give importance to the discrediting 'Ligachev affair'. It's likely he felt the charges should drop by themselves under the weight of their inconsistencies. However, in this kind of provocative environment the risk was things would turn out the opposite and thus Ligachev even argued with Gorbachev over his unwillingness to speak up. In this regard, Chernyaev accused Gorbachev of having "underestimated the possible repercussions of Karabakh, Tbilisi and the Gdlyan affair. Once again, he [Gorbachev] had relied on old methods and

²⁰³ Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 588.

²⁰⁴ GARF, f. 9654, op. 1, d. 40A, ll. 2-5.

²⁰⁵ Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 232.

decided that nobody would dare to blame him.”²⁰⁶ Probably the Gensek did not want to get into an open war with gdlyanists and preferred to bear the brunt of Ligachev’s impatience instead. However, this situation was a good occasion to further marginalize one of his greater adversaries within the politburo. As well, Gorbachev probably had to mediate with some of his allies, such as Yakovlev, another politburo member who had “behaved with exaggerated indifference” and who demonstrably sympathized with Gdlyan and probably supported his cause.²⁰⁷

Thus, the ‘Gdlyan-Ivanov affair’ was also polarizing the first days of the CPDSU dividing the deputies and even a part of the CC CPSU. In this context, the new parliamentary body was called to settle the case by creating an impartial commission. Among the new figures entering the supreme legislative body of USSR, the famous physician and dissident Sakharov was an influential star. He seemed to be an impartial figure and was courted by many deputies to take a part in the ‘Gdlyan-Ivanov affair’ debates and to join the commission that was going to be formed.²⁰⁸ However, Sakharov rejected the invitation replying: “I can’t. It would take months for a newcomer to unravel the facts in the matter. And unless he does so, he risks compromising his own authority.”²⁰⁹ Also Gdlyan himself was courting Sakharov at the congress as a ‘fair’ protagonist and during one meeting he recounted his version of the facts: “The ones who are recanting were kept in Tashkent in deluxe conditions. They’re being held in much worse circumstances right now in Moscow. The prolonged detentions were necessary, but I didn’t make the final decision. Permission always came from Moscow.”²¹⁰ Then, a few hours

²⁰⁶ Savranskaya, “The Diary of Anatoly S. Chernyaev. 1989. Donated by A.S. Chernyaev to The National Security Archive,” 27.

²⁰⁷ Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev’s Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 234.

²⁰⁸ Before the congress, Sakharov was approached by Vladimir Kudryavtsev, director of the Institute of State and Law, a member of the commission of the presidium of the SS USSR investigating on the Gdlyan-Ivanov affair. The scientist, who had a manifest curiosity for the case, demanded if the investigators had beaten suspects and Kudryavtsev replied: “No, there was nothing like that. But he unlawfully extended the term of pretrial detention, and there were other serious infractions. Gdlyan hasn’t been able to support many of the charges he made. I want you to be aware of this. Our commission will probably be dissolved and another one composed of deputies appointed.” Kudryavtsev made no concrete proposal, but was evidently sounding me out.” Sakharov, *Moscow and Beyond, 1986-1989*, 114.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 122.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

after that conversation, Sakharov was involved in the provocations of some deputies who wanted to involve him in the quarrel, informing him about the alleged bribes received by Gorbachev.²¹¹ This event apparently shocked the scientist who was probably fascinated by Gdlyan and Yeltsin, and started to doubt the Gensek's honesty.²¹²

Finally, on 27 May a special commission of the CPDSU was established²¹³ while the issues related to its composition were discussed in the following days. In this regard, Sakharov intervened in the congress, stating:

The Gdlyan case has two aspects. It's an inquiry into the work of Gdlyan's team of investigators, but it's also an examination of the charges made against the highest levels of the bureaucracy and our society. There is a crisis of trust in the Party and the leadership [that sentence was omitted in the transcript, but I said it]. Both sides of the question must be studied objectively [...] The chairman of the commission should enjoy the confidence of the people, of the working class [this sentence was left out too], A man with Kudrin's²¹⁴ biography would make a fitting chairman, in my opinion.

²¹¹ In fact, after that meeting, Sakharov received an anonymous letter that was addressed to him and to Gdlyan, containing the name and the phone number of a person who allegedly could confirm the fact that Gorbachev had received 160,000 rubles in bribes while working in Stavropol and from the Armenian construction crews employed there. Sakharov perceived it as a provocation and passed it to Gdlyan "who accepted it with an impassive expression." *Ibid.*, 122–23.

²¹² In his memoirs, Gorbachev reconstructs the conversation between him and the scientist who came to his office and stated "I am worried by the danger that the nomenklatura will take revenge [...] They are putting pressure on you too. They threaten to publish certain information unless you do as they wish." Gorbachev immediately replied "What kind of information, what do you mean?" and Sakharov answered "That you have taken bribes." The conversation thus assumed a harsher tone: "Well, what do you think yourself, do you believe this?" and Sakharov looked at the Gensek with embarrassment "I, no, but they say..." Gorbachev comments on the episode stating "This was all the influence of Yeltsin and Gdlyan – it was from this corner that such information was being fed. Sakharov did not want to believe it, but he was secretly anxious that it might be true. This was why he decided to wait and risk asking me directly, face to face. It was clearly his own idea, not something that someone had 'authorized' him to do." Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (London: Doubleday, 1996), 386.

²¹³ RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 5, l. 2.

²¹⁴ Leonid Kudrin was much appreciated as a candidate by Sakharov and by the Sverdlovsk group. He was a "judge who resigned from his job and from the Party because he found the pressures exerted on the judiciary unacceptable. He was

Then, Sakharov mentions that the majority of the congress were insistent that the historian and famous dissident Roy Medvedev be chosen to head the commission²¹⁵ because he could be an impartial figure and be agreeable to public opinion. Apparently, also the CPSU majority was seriously concerned on any further criticism in trying to settle the Gdlyan-Ivanov affair, a case that was sensibly undermining the party credibility and endorsed a soft-line.²¹⁶ On this regard, at the end of the congress session of June 1, Sakharov had a discussion with Gorbachev and Lukyanov, stating that the whole Gdlyan-Ivanov affair was a real matter of credibility for the Soviet system and argued:

Sakharov: "The Gdlyan affair isn't only a question of violations of the law, although that is very important, but for the people it's a question of confidence in the system, of faith in the leadership. It's too bad that Kudrin wasn't appointed chairman of the commission: he's a worker, a former judge, a former Party member. The people would have trusted him." Lukyanov broke at this point: "Kudrin's whole election campaign revolved around the Gdlyan affair. He can't be impartial." (In fact, the Gdlyan affair was not the central issue in Kudrin's campaign.) Sakharov: "I'm very concerned that the only political result of the Congress will be your achievement of unlimited personal power—the '18th Brumaire' in contemporary dress. You got this power without elections; you weren't even on the slate of candidates for the Supreme Soviet, and you became its chairman without being a member." Gorbachev: "What's the matter, didn't you want me to be elected?" Sakharov: "You know that's not the case, that in my opinion no alternative to you exists. But I'm talking about principles, not personalities. And besides, you're vulnerable to pressure, to blackmail by people who control the channels of information. Even now they're saying that you took bribes in Stavropol, 160,000 rubles has been mentioned. A provocation? Then they'll find something else. Only election by the people can protect you from attack." Gorbachev: "I'm absolutely clean. And I'll never submit to blackmail—not from the right, not from the left!" Gorbachev spoke these last words firmly, without any visible sign of irritation. And on that note our meeting ended.²¹⁷

working as a truck driver and won his seat to the Congress after a fierce battle." Sakharov, *Moscow and Beyond, 1986-1989*, 124.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ On 30 May, Chebrikov sent to the CC CPSU the memorandum 693 to resolve the situation around the "Uzbek Affair" and to find "an objective approach to the public" about the investigations of Gdlyan and Ivanov. In this document, the politburo member warned the CC about the diffused campaign in the media against the two investigators and communicated the creation of the CPDSU special commission. RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 5, ll. 1-2.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 132-33.

6.5.2 The impartial judgement

On 1 June 1989, after a long debate within supporters and contesters of Gdlyan and Ivanov, the commission “to examine the materials related to the activities of the investigative group of the Prokuratura USSR headed by T.Kh. Gdlyan” was finally realized. The commission was headed by Roy Medvedev²¹⁸ and comprised another 16 members to examine the charges laid against the two investigators.²¹⁹ This new organ was created to be impartial, representing experts of the legal and non-legal society and members from all

²¹⁸ On that occasion, E. Yu. Yusupov, vice president of the An UzSSR stated that he was against Roy Medvedev’s candidature inasmuch he was accused of being close to those journalists who propagated the myth of Gdlyan and Ivanov. SNDSS, *Pervyy S’yezd Narodnykh Deputatov SSSR. 25 Maya — 9 Iyunya 1989 G. Stenograficheskiy Otchet. Tom II* (Moskva: Izdaniye Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 1989), 256.

²¹⁹ The commission was chaired by “Medvedev, Roy Aleksandrovich and included as members: Adylov, Vladimir Tuychiyevich — foreman of turners Tashkent Aviation Production Association named after V. P. Chkalova; Aleksandrin, Valeriy Grigor'yevich — Chairman of the Yoshkar-Olinski city people's court, Mari Autonomous Republic; Baranov, Aleksandr Ivanovich — Chairman of the Union of the production association “Izhora Works”, Leningrad, Kolpino; Bisher, Ilmar Ol'gertovich — Professor of the Latvian state university named after P. Stuchki; Bichkauskas, Egidiyus Vitautovich — investigator for particularly important cases of the Prosecutor's Office of the Lithuanian SSR; Golik, Yuriy Vladimirovich — Dean of the Law Faculty of the Kemerovo State University; Ignatovich, Nikolay Ivanovich — investigator for particularly important cases of the Prosecutor at the Byelorussian SSR; Lubenchenko, Konstantin Dmitriyevich — Associate Professor of the Law Faculty of the Moscow State University named after MV Lomonosov; Pokhla, Vello Paulovich — member of the editorial board of the main edition “Estonian TV movie” Radio and Television of the Estonian SSR, Tallinn; Semenov Vitaliy Aleksandrovich — Senior Researcher at the Institute Technical Mechanics of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Dnepropetrovsk; Sorokin Igor' Viktorovich — senior officer of the Criminal Investigation Department of the Kuibyshev MVD station; Strukov Nikolay Alekseyevich — senior investigator of the Kursk region; Suleymenov Olzhas Omarovich — writer, the first secretary of the Union of Writers of Kazakhstan, Alma-Ata; Fedorov Svyatoslav Nikolayevich — Director General of scientific and technical interbranch complex “Mikrokhirurgiya glaza”, chairman of the Soviet Charity and Health Foundation, Moscow; Shorokhov Viktor Nikolayevich — adjuster Tula Machine-Building Plant named after VM Ryabikov and Yarin Veniamin Aleksandrovich — operator Nizhny Tagil Metallurgical Plant named after VI Lenin, Sverdlovsk region.” Ibid., 250–68.

around USSR, even including three members recommended by Gdlyan and Ivanov.²²⁰

Its creation was an interesting event that involved the participation of numerous institutional actors and many from civil society.²²¹ Indeed, a large number of deputies sent appeals to the commission. These included requests for a review of the charges against Gdlyan and Ivanov as well as of those that they made against the senior CPSU officials. Members also demanded the results of the Gdlyan-Ivanov investigations in Uzbekistan.²²² As well, the CPDSU received many letters and appeals requesting the possibility for Gdlyan and Ivanov to defend their position.²²³ For example, a ‘workers’ initiative’ demanded the suspension of the Genprokuror Sukharev in his post at the CPDSU until the Gdlyan-Ivanov case was discussed. Permission was also sought for Ivanov – one of the most popular and influential deputies of the CPDSU – to speak to the press. The appeal was presented with 3,629 signatures and claimed to could easily have gathered thousands more.²²⁴

Other letters from local committees – drawn from across the whole USSR–arrived, accusing the Soviet power of focusing attention on the two ‘martyrs’ in order to mask high levels of corruption.²²⁵ Furthermore, collectives inside factories and institutes, spontaneous committees of citizens and voters, groups inside hospitals²²⁶ and investigators who worked on the case also expressed solidarity with Gdlyan and Ivanov who became symbols of justice.²²⁷ Other local groups requested that the CDPSU include in the

²²⁰ GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 2.

²²¹ Despite the commission demanded the silence of the media on the Gdlyan-Ivanov affair in June and July 1989, the spontaneous organization of rallies and demonstrations and even the activity of Gdlyan and Ivanov was followed by the press and broke this rule. GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, ll. 28-29.

²²² GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, ll. 1-4.

²²³ GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, l. 22.

²²⁴ GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, l. 23

²²⁵ GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, l. 34-35.

²²⁶ A letter supporting Gdlyan-Ivanov was sent from the hospital ‘19’ in Leningrad and signed by 135 medics and patients. GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, l. 36.

²²⁷ A telegram sent on 31 May 1989 stated that “corruption is common in the life of Uzbekistan,” in trading, in militsya, in the road police, in education, in health facilities. There, “everything has a price” and “organized crime leads the places of management.” The author, Galina Anatolievna Vieshkinia, defends Gdlyan and Ivanov because they managed the hard task of fighting against those major criminals. She said that a friend of her was an investigator in Uzbekistan and when he started to

commission members of Tushino-Zelenograd or Leningrad²²⁸ or international jurists²²⁹ in order to have a fair final judgement. As well, many letters from individual citizens were addressed to the CPDSU or even to the Gensek requesting justice for Gdlyan and Ivanov and linking this issue to the new course of democracy in USSR. One of these letters appealed directly to the Gensek and emblematically stated:

Dear Mikhail Sergeevich [...] if you are honest, let them [Gdlyan and Ivanov] work because they are now struggling alone against mafiya [... otherwise] all the beautiful words about the triumph of the ideal of justice and the honest idea of perestroika, which you so passionately speak about, become pure fiction and very inflammatory in the eyes of Soviet people and peoples of all the world.²³⁰

Indeed, these letters not only demanded the rehabilitation of both Gdlyan and Ivanov on their investigations but also challenged the credibility of perestroika, showing the contradictions between the pre-1989 narrative (discourse about 'heroes') and the current campaign against the two investigators.²³¹ Other appeals even protested the forming of the commission and asked that the material of the investigations be published in full to 'let the people judge it themselves.'²³² Nonetheless, many were simply convinced of the myth of the two investigators and demanded that the leadership give an account of why they were being discredited.²³³

However, after the establishment of the commission, the CPDSU received quite a volume of letters from the 'victims' of Gdlyan and Ivanov or from their families. Figures such as the former FS Bukhara obkom Ismail Dzhabbarov,²³⁴

follow some cases, somebody tried to beat and kill him. Then he was ostracized and couldn't find support for his investigations in Uzbekistan as well in Moscow, and became a taxi driver. GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, l. 72.

²²⁸ GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, ll. 63-64.

²²⁹ GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, l. 68.

²³⁰ GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, l. 45.

²³¹ GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, ll. 46-48.

²³² GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, l. 52-53.

²³³ GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, l. 56.

²³⁴ For example, on 19 May 1989, the presidium SS USSR received a letter from Maria Federovna Maksimova the wife of Dzhabbarov, Ismail Dzhabbarovich – the former FS Bukhara obkom in 1984-1988 – attacking the two investigators who elevated "themselves as glorified pioneers in the fight against corruption in Uzbekistan awaking the public's passions. [...However, they] lost all sense of proportion and responsibility to the soviet laws." Thus, she defended her husband as a honest person who was

the former FS Tashkent obkom Mirzamakhmud Musakhanov,²³⁵ the former FS Samarkand obkom Bektash Rakhimov,²³⁶ the former second secretary of the CPUz Timofey N. Osetrov,²³⁷ the former first deputy chairman of the Bukhara

unjustifiably put in jail and threatened by Gdlyan and Ivanov who had prosecuted the case in error. GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, ll. 73-75.

²³⁵ Yusup Talipov wrote on 2 June 1989 a letter to the president of the commission for Gdlyan and Ivanov and to the deputy chairman of SS UzSSR. He was a former FS Tashkent raikom (1975-1986), in Galabinski raikom and the main agronomist in the kolkhoz 'Leninism.' In April 1988, he accused the investigator Safronov – a member of Gdlyan's group – of having leaned on him to get evidence on bribes to the FS Tashkent obkom Musakhanov. Thus, the investigator pushed Talipov to have his collaboration. Finally, he also confessed a 6,000 ruble bribe to Musakhanov. However, that amount of money was directly suggested from the investigators who, in turn, let him free. Basically, Talipov was shocked at giving an extorted and slanderous confession against an innocent. GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, ll. 78-80. On 31 May, also the son of the former FS Tashkent obkom Musakhanov wrote to the Genprokuror Sukharev to defend his 77-year-old father who was spending his 21st month in prison and was very unwell. According to his reconstruction, he also was pressured to accuse his father who in turn was forced by Gdlyan and Ivanov to slander himself, several other people and his children in a game that pit family members against each other. So, he and his sister spent five months in prison and were threatened by investigators to gather confessions. He demanded justice for his father who had been due for release on 30 May but was still in jail. GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, ll. 84. On 22 May 1989, Musakhanov's daughter also sent a telegram to the CPDSU to demand the release of her father, brothers and sisters who had been 'illegally detained'. GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, l. 93.

²³⁶ On 18 May 1989, the SS USSR received a letter from a group of communists, deputies, heroes and veterans of socialist labor from Uzbekistan to defend the honour of the former FS Samarkand obkom Rakhimov, Bektash Rakhimovich, "an hero of war, an honorable man and a good communist," defining Gdlyan and Ivanov as "the enemies of perestroika." GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, l. 86.

²³⁷ On 28 May 1989, the wife of T.N. Osetrov, former second secretary of the CPUz, sent a letter to the SS USSR and Gorbachev denouncing the Gdlyan's group methods. According to her reconstruction, the investigator O.M. Litvak, a member of Gdlyan's group, came to their house and threatened them, saying that if they did not confess it could be worse for their children and grandchildren. She revealed that they had been victims of humiliations perpetrated by other interrogators within the group, such as I.M. Dovgan' and E.I. Chernyshev. These two were even badgered the friends, relatives and neighbors of Osetrov. Then, she reported that in the night of 14 December 1986, during an inspection she woke up and she asked where her husband was. The investigators replied "your husband is a criminal and he is in jail." According to her version, Gdlyan was too convinced of his work and had once told her "we never make

UVD Shamsi Rakhimov,²³⁸ the former deputy chairman of the Namangan UVD Shumkov,²³⁹ the former chairman of the Navoi UVD Tura Khaitov,²⁴⁰ and the former deputy chairman of the MVD UzSSR Kakhramanov wrote to the authorities.²⁴¹ All these letters were substantially accusing Gdlyan and Ivanov of imposing in the republic a system of terror where, to be liberated, a suspect had to give other and bigger names. All these letters were demanding for the restoration of their job post or even just of their good name and put a further shadow on the name of Gdlyan and Ivanov. To some extent, these letters seemed to recall the need to revive patrimonialism.

mistakes and we take people when all [their guilt] is proved.” However, “witness statements were distorted in a negative way, getting the opposite meaning of guilt” while they were overestimating the suspicious elements and ignoring the positive ones. GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, ll. 87-91.

²³⁸ On 20 May 1989, Shamsi Abdullaevich Rakhimov wrote a telegram to the presidium of SS USSR declaring herself a victim of Gdlyan. He was sentenced to 14 years in prison and he was still declaring his innocence and disavowing his involvement in mafia. Thus, he denounced the behaviour of Gdlyan that on 14 April 1987 sent a 41 page document to the CC CPSU about some alleged suspects and culprits. According to Rakhimov, thanks to this complaint, some people were sent to Siberia and publicly defamed in press. Thus, Rakhimov demanded the opportunity to speak and to consider the 250 complaints he had sent in the past six years. GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, l. 94.

²³⁹ A phototelegram sent to the SS USSR invited the control organs to evaluate the activity of the MVD, the KGB and the Prokuratura to prevent a new 1937, defending Shumkov, the former deputy head of UVD of Namangan as an innocent “victim of the arbitrariness of the group” and demanding his release. GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, l. 95.

²⁴⁰ On 25 May 1989, Tura Khaitov, the former head of Navoi UVD, protested that he was illegally under arrest. According to his reconstruction, investigators committed several gross violations of law and he demanded for his release, defining Gdlyan and Ivanov as “unworthy to be among the people’s representatives.” GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, ll. 97-98.

²⁴¹ Kakhramanov, the former deputy chairman of the MVD UzSSR and the only acquitted defendant of the Churbanov trial, sent a letter to the CPDSU and to Gorbachev revealing that he spent four years in prison in vain where he was pushed by investigator to say something against his superiors in a system that recalled ‘the methods of 1937’. After the trial, he was liberated. However, his life was destroyed, he lost his job and his wife got sick. He demanded the restoration of his good name and his job and accused Gdlyan and Ivanov of being “not worthy to take place of people’s deputies.” GARF, f. R-9654, op. 2, d. 20, ll. 81-83.

6.5.3 Enlarging the base of support

Evidently, the 'Gdlyan-Ivanov affair' was thrilling the public and was extending the scope of the debate on the democratic course of the USSR in a moment of dramatic crisis. Indeed, crisis was manifest in serious signs of interethnic intolerance, the explosion of violence in the Fergana valley in June 1989, the national demands of different ethnic groups, the economic crisis exasperated by excessive monetary issues, budget deficits, shortages of consumer goods and falling productivity, the protests in the cities and mining areas etc.²⁴² Furthermore, in that moment the political activity supporting Gdlyan-Ivanov increased with dozens of rallies and marches, frightening the party upper echelons. It was clear their cause had tremendous support, drawing thousands of protesters in big cities – and especially in Moscow.²⁴³ However, the situation seemed to be polarized on the Gdlyan-Ivanov front. In summer 1989, while the commission worked during the whole summer to define the case, the two investigators continued to publicly press their case and kept mobilizing a part of the public through rallies and demonstrations. For its part, the press kept a moderate attitude and avoided exposing further scandals related to the story.

Nevertheless, the prokuratura USSR – which was investigating a criminal case against Gdlyan and Ivanov – was still expressing to the party its concerns about the investigators' declaration²⁴⁴ and kept dismissing the allegations that they had previously endorsed, discrediting their methods. On 29 August, during the trial against Khudayberdyev, the former chairman of the SM UzSSR admitted that the confessions against Churbanov had been 'extorted' by

²⁴² Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 590.

²⁴³ On 12 September 1989, the first deputy chairman of the MVD USSR, V.P. Trushin, sent a memorandum to the CC CPSU outlining the extent of mob support for Gdlyan and Ivanov and stating that since May 1989 51 mass demonstrations with a participation of 350,000 people had been recorded. Most of these rallies were in May–June (41), concentrated in Moscow region (88%). However, there were demonstrations also in Vologda, Perm, Chelyabinsk, Sverdlovsk and Yaroslavl. 23 of these adopted resolutions and appeals to the citizens of the country and to the CPDSU. Also, petitions and crowdfunding had been organized. During the latest rallies in September, the Popular Front had been involved and the removal of Sukharev had been demanded. Nevertheless, there was no violation of public order. RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 7, ll. 1-2.

²⁴⁴ RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 6, l. 1.

Gdlyan.²⁴⁵ In parallel, the case against Ligachev was concluded on September 4 for lack of evidence.²⁴⁶ Thus, during the plenum CC CPSU of 20 September 1989, Sukharev rejected any accusation against Ligachev,²⁴⁷ stating that charges against him were without merit, and that Gdlyan and Ivanov had violated investigative ethics – such as the presumption of innocence – and were spreading "a dangerous lie that they themselves had fabricated."²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ On 7 September, Khudayberdiyev was sentenced to nine years' prison and confiscation of property. Initially, he admitted bribery naming 36 persons from whom he had received bribes (for a total of 150,000 rubles) and nine to whom he had given bribes (for 70,000 rubles). Then, in court he completely retracted all confessions and accused his interrogators of coercing his testimony by blackmail and threats, stating: "I made these statements under pressure from the interrogators, under threats of reprisals against my family, and on the basis of feeling that I was in a hopeless situation" Feofanov and Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era*, 127–28; Churbanov, *Moï Test' Leonid Brezhnev*, 198; Plekhanov, "Delo Gdlyana. Anatomiya Politicheskogo Skandala," 40.

²⁴⁶ On 4 July 1989 Ligachev was questioned as a witness by the deputy Genprokuror USSR V.I. Kravtsev and the major assistant Yu.N. Shadrin. He categorically denied taking bribes from Usmankhodzhaev and confirmed the latest version given by the former FS CPUz, denying any bribe during the XVI plenum CC CPUz in June 1984. Basically, the charges against Ligachev were substantially dismissed for lack of evidence. Then with a resolution of 4 September 1989, the deputy head of the investigative department of Prokuratura USSR Galkin (the investigator who took Gdlyan's post in the 'Uzbek affair') concluded that Usmankhodzhaev, in the first stage of the case, gave false testimony slandering Ligachev E.K. for bribery. Usmankhodzhaev explained that he made these allegations under pressure from Gdlyan. RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 8, l. 5; GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 12. On 14 September, Sukharev informed Gorbachev of the allegations against Ligachev and reconstructed the story of Usmankhodzhaev's confessions in October 1988 and their disavowal from November. It confirmed the psychological influence of Gdlyan in the questioning that forced Usmankhodzhaev to admit bribes to Solomentsev, Kapitonov, Mogilnichenko, Bessarabov, Smirnov, Ishkov, Terebilov and some others. In subsequent questioning – on May 22 and 14 June, 1989 – Usmankhodzhaev totally refused the idea of bribes to Ligachev. As well, other witness refused the allegations against Ligachev: V.P. Malyshev - who constantly accompanied Ligachev during a trip to Uzbekistan in 1984 - and his assistant A. Mikhailov defined Ligachev as a resolute opponent to any kind of bribes, gifts and other forms of 'suvenirschina'. Similar testimony was given Assistant Secretary of the CPSU Legostaev V.M. and the doctor Taranov A.M. RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 8, ll. 1-5.

²⁴⁷ NSA, box 28, file R. 6870, p. 1.

²⁴⁸ Pravda 22 September 1989, pp. 6-7. Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 193.

Consequently, the politburo asked the Moscow gorkom to consider party sanctions against Gdlyan and Ivanov.²⁴⁹

It is interesting to evaluate Ligachev's reaction to his formal acquittal. In his memoirs, he recalled the general indifference of the CC CPSU plenum audience had shown when the politburo (and indirectly against the whole system) had come under attack. This, he felt, was symptomatic of the fact that the party was deeply divided over Gdlyan and Ivanov. For this reason, during the plenum he acknowledged the symptoms of a systemic breakdown and called for a statement of party unity. He made it clear that the risks posed by radicalization and polarization of the political scenario and the threat represented by slanders that were deceiving people and discrediting the party were huge.²⁵⁰ Nonetheless, Ligachev's warning were branded 'conservative' while the Soviet 'Cassandra' was much more marginalized by a new group of party officials that would represent the latest stage of agony of the Soviet system.

In autumns 1989, the end of the 'Ligachev affair,' the further dismissal of criminal cases for lack of evidence and the refusal of Gdlyan and Ivanov to provide the expected evidence to the commission and to criminal trials further radicalized the positions of the public. A great part of citizens – especially the intelligentsia – had lost interest in the affair, concluding that the prosecutors' "stash of evidence" was not the hand they were purporting to hold, and they were essentially bluffing. Instead the prosecutors' ruse was just a populist²⁵¹ campaign designed to further their careers.²⁵² However, on the radical front the case assumed new interest, with more and more daring - if not fanciful - conspiracy theories that were formulated to defend or to discredit the two 'people's heroes' at any cost, becoming a matter of faith.

²⁴⁹ RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 9, l. 1. KPSS, *Materialy Plenuma Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS, 19-20 Sentyabrya 1989 G.* (Moskva: Politizdat, 1989).

²⁵⁰ Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 237; KPSS, *Materialy Plenuma Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS, 19-20 Sentyabrya 1989 G.*

²⁵¹ During the roundtable "Views Legal Status of 'Informal' Groups" held in September 1989, V. Zolotarev, member of the organization 'Civil Dignity' stated: "We have examples of such populist leaders in Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin, Gdlyan and Ivanov, who deliberately exploit the image of a "revolutionary" in the worst sense of the word..." *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 13 September 1989, p. 12, reported in FBIS, "JPRS-UPA-89-058 - Soviet Union. Political Affairs - 30 OCTOBER 1989," 1989, 37.

²⁵² *Pravda Vostoka*, 22076, 210, 13 September 1989, p. 3.

On 26 September 1989, the ordinary work of the commission resumed in a session watched by crowds of journalists and simple citizens.²⁵³ In the aftermath, the cautious Medvedev released an interview to *Izvestiya*²⁵⁴ where he revealed that “We still have a kind of unwritten rule that people above a certain position must not be drawn into an investigation.”²⁵⁵ This statements was effectively recognizing the interference of politics in judicial matters and seemed to make understandable the zeal of the two investigators. Consequently, within a couple of weeks, Medvedev was replaced and the commission was chaired by a triumvirate that, anyway, was including himself and the people’s deputy Veniamin Yarin and the senior investigator in Kursk oblast prokuratura Nikolai Strukov. This change in the commission’s leadership was justified because “Medvedev sometimes indulges in wishful thinking when speaking on the commission’s behalf, [and] has not always been able to organize the purely technical process of our work.”²⁵⁶

Again, this passage was interpreted by the supporters of Gdlyan-Ivanov as an attack to the supposed impartiality of the commission, while many committees in defense of the two investigators appeared all around the country.²⁵⁷ Once again, the more Gdlyan-Ivanov were attacked, the more popular consent they received. At that time, the high popularity of the two investigators was even confirmed in opinion surveys,²⁵⁸ causing concern within the higher echelons of the party. Indeed, Primakov, during the politburo session of 4 October reported his fear for these “lost figures” as Gdlyan and Afanasiev who had to be isolated.²⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the crowd defended its heroes and the popular defense committees seemed to proceed in a self-propelling way, forming a force that could stage spectacular events and to organize remarkable rallies. One example was the spectacular 40 km

²⁵³ FBIS, “JPRS-UPA-89-062 - Soviet Union. Political Affairs - 1 DECEMBER 1989,” 1989, 90.

²⁵⁴ *Izvestiya* 28 September 1989, p 6.

²⁵⁵ Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 194.

²⁵⁶ *Moskovskiye Novosti*, 15 October 1989, p. 15, cited in *Ibid*.

²⁵⁷ *Novyye Vremena*, 42, 1989, p. 4.

²⁵⁸ In autumn 1989, *Argumenty i Faktiy* organized a survey indicating the popularity of the best and the worst deputies. “Gdlyan was considered among “the very best” deputies by 187 respondents, and among “the worst” by a mere 15. For Ivanov, the corresponding numbers were 156 and 11.” *Argumenty i Faktiy*, 7-13 October 1989, p. 1 cited in *Ibid*.

²⁵⁹ Gorbachev Fond, *V Politburo TsK KPSS...*, 540.

human chain – in the Baltic style – organized on 7 October during the Day of the Soviet Constitution involving thousands of people that connected the Moscow center to Zelenograd. These events attracted the sympathy of many readers, and the number of letters of support to the newspapers began to increase.²⁶⁰ In response, the party tried to curb the “spillovers and clashes of opinion” in the press.²⁶¹ Furthermore, Gdlyan and Ivanov were extending their horizons. Indeed, from June 1989, the two investigators started to give interviews to foreign journalists investing in a provocative and self-martyrizing narrative²⁶² of pure Bolsheviks combatting against the Soviet mafiya. Gdlyan especially defined a special relation with the Italian journalists, making appealing comparisons between the different mafia systems:

The Sicilian Mafia is like a whore who does not hide her occupation, while the Soviet one is a prostitute who tries to save her respectability. Hence, all the world speaks about the first, that starts from the crime to involve politics, but little about the second, who uses politics as leverage and coverage for the crime.²⁶³

Gdlyan also followed a self-victimizing narrative describing to the Italian audience the paradoxical situation of a prosecutor fighting against mafiya who had been ostracized. Thus, the news of a brave prosecutor fighting against organized crimes attracted a lot of international interest and support. On 26 October 1989 he joined a convention in Rome organized by the magazines *l'Espresso* and *MicroMega* about the rule of law and the future of perestroika in the USSR. On that occasion, he denounced political

²⁶⁰ FBIS, “JPRS-UPA-89-062 - Soviet Union. Political Affairs - 1 DECEMBER 1989,” 22.

²⁶¹ In a memorandum, Chernyaev referred about the meeting of 20 October with Klimov, Adamovich and Gelman (Egor Yakovlev) discussing the candidature of Burlatsi instead Vorontsov to be chief redactor of Literaturnaya Gazeta. About the reaction of different Moscow people and their “spillovers and clashes of opinion” in connection with Yeltsin, Gdlyan etc. Chernyaev recalled how in Moscow “ideological environment is extremely tense.” GF, f. 2, d. 8096.

²⁶² Gdlyan commented to Chiesa “Ok, we are the villains, accuse us, it is your right. But the bags filled with money, the stolen gold, how are you going to return it to the comrades? Immediately exiting from jail or by mail?” Chiesa, “La Mafia Uzbeka Alla Conquista Di Mosca. Due Giudici Sovietici La Sbarrano E Raccontano.”

²⁶³ Mauro, “Così Combatto La Piovra Sovietica.”

interference in the Soviet judiciary, which was still reliant on the party.²⁶⁴ He recalled that experience as follows:

I realized that in Italy everything was taken seriously. Not as in the USSR. [...] Since our arrival from Moscow, I have seen people with machineguns in the airport. They told us that it was for the security controls etc. When I asked confirmation to the interpreter, she told me that it was normal for the Italians. In the USSR, everything was calm and for us it was strange to see that. Then we visited the parliament and again there were these strong boys with weapons [at the entrance]. For me and for all the [Soviet] delegation it was something odd. I jokily went to touch the hole at the top of the gun [of a guard] and they looked at me as Lenin looked at the bourgeoisie! The escort reprimanded me saying that it was not allowed. Evidently, I thought it all to be puppet theater. Those were very difficult years, because the whole country was stifled, and when the Italian Parliament passed a law against the mafia, it precisely instructed an antimafia pool. I looked at where and how this group was set, how it moved, what were their problems. They [Mafiosi] were chasing them. So, I met one of those Italian prosecutors and I asked him to make a deal. "We both walk on the "tightrope." You are persecuted and for me it will be not easier [to do my job in USSR]. Certainly, one of us will die first, but the other who will survive will drink for the repose of the other soul." It has passed more than six months after my arrival, and I heard on TV that he and his wife were blown up on the road.²⁶⁵ Mafia, of course, reached him. Well, I'm still alive. [For me] it was interesting that you [Italians] had that protection while I never had bodyguards. The only thing that Soviet Union gave me was a gun with three cartridges. What would happen if I had to use all these three rounds? Should I say to these bandits "comrade bandits, wait while they bring me other cartridges!?" [...] however, the level of danger and of personal unsafety, was of course higher in USSR than in Italy. And when, after 1988 we went into politics, the country's political leadership found itself in a trap. Stalin could solve this problem in five minutes. But they could not do so because the Kremlin has received collective statements, complaints, requests and the

²⁶⁴ Marcello Villari, "Nei Giornali Glasnost È Lotta Quotidiana. Convegno a Roma Sulla Perestrojka," *L'Unità*, October 27, 1989.

²⁶⁵ In our conversation, I asked if the subject he recalled in his story was Giovanni Falcone, a famous Italian judge and prosecuting magistrate killed by mafia – with his wife and escort of three police officers – in May 1992, on the A29 motorway near the town of Capaci. However, the timings do not coincide and there is probably a bit of fiction in his memoirs. Personal interview with Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan, Moscow, 17 October 2014.

message was "if you touch Gdlyan and Ivanov, we will destroy the Kremlin."
That was our security.²⁶⁶

6.5.4 Showdown

In autumn 1989, the commission was late in presenting the results, and this postponement was thrilling - not to say irritating - the millions of people who wanted to know the conclusions of the 'Gdlyan-Ivanov affair.' Thus, the pressure to clarify the situation inflamed the political debate also in autumn 1989 when many letters arrived to the CPDSU. Several appeals came from the others people's deputies addressed to Gorbachev asking for an evaluation of the materials related to the two investigators,²⁶⁷ or to suspend the work of the Genprokuror Sukharev.²⁶⁸ Other deputies were complaining about the delays in ending the matter, asking what happened and why the 'Gdlyan-Ivanov affair' was removed from the political agenda,²⁶⁹ as well as appeals to ascertain the competence of the Committee and of its chair Medvedev,²⁷⁰ or requesting to publish a first part of the materials.²⁷¹ In this phase, the work of the commission was followed by many people's deputies, media and press, groups of interest and committees defending Gdlyan-Ivanov and, not least, even by the two investigators who had the occasion to give their version of the facts.²⁷²

However, their credibility was further compromised by the fall of their 'Kremlin cases.' In fact, after Ligachev's acquittal, on 26 October 1989,

²⁶⁶ Personal interview with Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan, Moscow, 17 October 2014. Personally, I do not have intention to contest Gdlyan's impressions on the levels of mafia danger in USSR and in Italy. Nevertheless, I can add that until the late 70s Italy was facing a moment of high violence related to the black, red, anarchic and Palestinian terrorism and I would not be surprised to find so many weapons in that certain historic moment.

²⁶⁷ GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 96, l. 3.

²⁶⁸ GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 96, l. 5.

²⁶⁹ GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 96, l. 8.

²⁷⁰ GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 96, l. 9.

²⁷¹ GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 96, l. 13.

²⁷² As mentioned in a preliminary document of the commission: "in October-November 1989, many people's deputies (not members of the commission), journalists from press and mass media, members of public supporting Gdlyan and Ivanov from Moscow and Leningrad participated at the commission sessions. Ivanov presented in two meetings of the commission, Gdlyan in four." GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 2

Sukharev informed the CC CPSU that also the charges against the former Politburo member and chairman of the CPC M.S. Solomentsev had been dropped.²⁷³ Similarly, also Romanov²⁷⁴ on 11 November, Kapitonov²⁷⁵ on 12 November and Grishin on 22 November²⁷⁶ were acquitted for lack of evidence.

²⁷³ Solomentsev was accused of having received two bribes of 50,000 rubles, which was confirmed – and afterwards negated - by Usmankhodzhaev. Other witnesses of the meeting between Usmankhodzhaev and Solomentsev were listened, including the former first deputy chairman of the CPC I.S. Gustov, the assistants of the chairman of the CPC A.D. Smirnov and S.D. Mogilatov, and the security officer N.K. Lebedev. Thus, the allegations against Solomentsev were “proved to be false, obtained illegally by the investigators, as is evident from the case materials in connection with which the criminal case against Usmankhodzhaev] is dismissed in this part for lack of criminal evidence.” RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 10, ll. 1-2; NSA, box 28, file R6871, pp. 1-2.

²⁷⁴ The charges against Romanov were again based on Usmankhodzhaev confessions of giving a 25,000 rubles bribe. However, on November 1, the former FS CPUz changed his testimony and stated that the bribe amounted at 10,000 and it was aimed to get permission on the fabrication of micro air conditioners in Uzbekistan. Lately, Usmankhodzhaev rejected the accusations against Romanov stating that they had been extorted by Gdlyan and Ivanov. On these facts, the investigators had also listened the witnesses B.P. Gavrilov and T.I. Tsarev, who worked in 1983-1985 with Romanov. Even during the last questioning on 30 October 1989, Usmankhodzhaev confirmed that he never gave bribes to Romanov. RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 11, ll. 1-2; NSA, box 28, file R6872, pp. 1-2.

²⁷⁵ On 12 November 1989, Sukharev informed Gorbachev that also the charges made against the former CC CPSU secretary Ivan Vasilievich Kapitonov were inconsistent. The allegations were based on Usmankhodzhaev's confession in which he admitted giving Kapitonov a bribe of 50,000 rubles in November 1983 and a second of 50,000 in 1984 in Moscow during the preparation for the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Uzbek SSR. After the first admissions in October 1988, Usmankhodzhaev dropped these accusations and stated that such slanderous confession was “a result of the unlawful methods of investigation of T.Kh. Gdlyan and N.V. Ivanov.” Kapitonov was questioned and explained that he just had a formal relation with Usmankhodzhaev and he had no role in appointing Usmankhodzhaev, as was even confirmed by Osetrov. The testimony of Kapitonov's assistants N. Sobolev and I.O. Malinkin as well as his security officer V.K. Ilyin confirmed that during meetings between Kapitonov and Usmankhodzhaev, attaché cases were left out of the room. RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 12, ll. 1-2.

²⁷⁶ On 22 November 1989, Sukharev informed Gorbachev that the charges against the former politburo member and FS Moscow gorkom Viktor Vasilyevich Grishin were also dropped. As for the other 'big names', Grishin was accused by Usmankhodzhaev after his arrest in October 1988. Then, in November the former FS CPUz specified that the

Finally, on 10 December 1989, a “Preliminary report of the Commission of the Congress of national Deputies USSR to review materials on activities of the investigative group of Prokuratura USSR headed by T.Kh. Gdlyan” was ready.²⁷⁷ The document reconstructed the phases of the Gdlyan-Ivanov saga, their success and their ‘provocations.’ A first important point was that “the commission recognized nothing particularly unusual in its routine operations, noting that the Gdlyan-Ivanov group generally functioned in the typical way of the Prokuratura of the USSR.” It also recognized the group’s efforts in struggling against corruption and with “Mafioso groups in Uzbekistan and individual crime groups in Moscow.”²⁷⁸ However, it stated that “it is totally unacceptable that investigators [...] used methods of investigation adopted under Stalin and Vyshinsky.”²⁷⁹ Effectively, the commission acknowledged serious violations in the group’s work admitting that this was due to a lack of control and supervision by prokuratura.²⁸⁰ Indeed, “Gdlyan’s group was totally out of control and avoided all attempts at oversight to its work.”²⁸¹ The document revealed that even though initial complaints of violations arrived as early as late 1983, these were ignored and there was excessive tolerance towards this cavalier approach. The only review made by the Prokuratura was after the suicides connected to the investigations – Mirzobaev, Gaipov and

30,000 ruble bribe to Grishin was given in 1984 and was functional in obtaining a group of experts in Moscow for the construction of residential buildings in Tashkent. However, on 22 May 1989, Usmanhodzhaev disavowed his previous version and on 26 July 1989 Grishin was questioned and confirmed to have had no relations with Usmanhodzhaev with whom he met just on formal occasions. As witness was also interrogated Yu. Artemyev, manager of the protection unit of Grishin who confirmed that cases were left in the visitor’s storage room or at the reception. A.A. Vankov, worker at Glavmosstroy in Tashkent in 1984-1985 confirmed that Grishin had no influence on that process. Also Umarov, FS Tashkent gorkom confirmed no relations between the construction in Tashkent and the intervention of Grishin. Thus, the former politburo member was acquitted and excluded from further investigations on the Uzbek affair. RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 13, ll. 1-2.

²⁷⁷ GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, ll. 1-16.

²⁷⁸ GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 3.

²⁷⁹ GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 4.

²⁸⁰ In particular, the document mentions the responsibilities of the Genprokuror A. Rekunkov and his deputies A. Katusev and V. Soroka, the head of the investigation department of the prosecutor’s office G. Karakozov and the prosecutors N. Popov and G.K. Mazurkevich. GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 4.

²⁸¹ GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 4.

Khadzhimuratov.²⁸² After these episodes Gdlyan was seriously reprimanded.²⁸³ The report even included information about complaints against Gdlyan's methods that arrived from a former member of the group, B.I. Severtsev, who was removed from the case and sent back to work in Leningrad. Thus, the commission indicated that many complaints on the Gdlyan's methods of getting confessions referred on the investigator's "rudeness and insults, humiliation of national dignity," "food and water deprivation" and psychological violence such as "threats of execution" and "threats to prosecute relatives, wives and children, rough treatments, spitting in the face and so on."²⁸⁴ Not least there were complaints reporting the 'requests of money' by Gdlyan and Ivanov. Nevertheless, the commission acknowledged that all these complaints had to be checked.

Thus, the commission admitted also objective violations on defendants – such as T.Kh Kakhramanov,²⁸⁵ T. Khaitov and A.R. Gaipov – who had been detained in jail for more than three years without due process and even without a formal investigation against them.²⁸⁶ Furthermore, the commission accepted that just a fourth of the revealed evidence had been confirmed in courts. Strikingly, it was revealed that even family members of the suspects were often arrested and detained for long periods²⁸⁷ and that similar treatment was meted out even to the innocent, sick and old people, mothers

²⁸² Plekhanov resumes five suspect case of suicide: M. Mirzobaev was the brother of the head of the Bukhara consumers' guild, after questioning on 6 July 1984 in the local KGB facility – where Gdlyan's team was based - he jumped from the window. In his pocket a note "sorry, I lied you, suckers!" Then, on 15 August 1984 the suicide of the chairman of the MVD UzSSR K. Ergashev; the tragic end of the former FS Kashkadarya Gaipov in March 1985 and the suicide with three bullets in his head of the first deputy chairman of MVD UzSSR G. Davydov on 17 May 1985, and the suspect end of chief of Tashkent police department Khadzhimuratov on 23 December 1985. Plekhanov, "Delo Gdlyana. Anatomiya Politicheskogo Skandala," 35–36.

²⁸³ GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 5.

²⁸⁴ GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 7.

²⁸⁵ Kakhramanov reconstructed the story of his injustice in a famous book published in Uzbekistan. Tashtemir Kakhramanov, *Vozvrashchenie Iz Ada : Dokumental'nyĭ Roman* (Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo "Ėzuvchi," 2000).

²⁸⁶ GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 8.

²⁸⁷ The document makes the example of the case of A. Karimov in which were detained in prison 20 of his relatives for a period of 5-6 months. GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 8.

of minor children etc.²⁸⁸ Cases of abuse – midnight arrests and rough interrogation of witnesses, or arrests of deputies violating their immunity – were confirmed. The commission even revealed cases of mismanagement of the seized values that amounted to 37 million rubles,²⁸⁹ or the ‘unfair’ liberation of guilty bribers who collaborated with the group and cases of pressure made by the investigators on the local courts in Uzbekistan, and even on the SC UzSSR and the SC USSR.²⁹⁰ On these charges, the Prokuratura opened case N°18/67812-89 against them. The commission also reviewed the charges that Gdlyan’s and Ivanov made against higher managers of party and state and confirmed that the investigators did not provide the claimed evidence, agreeing with the conclusion given by the independent reviewer of the Prokuratura, E. Martinson.²⁹¹ Nevertheless, regarding the ‘Smirnov affair’ the commission admitted that the case needed further review, because it was dismissed too easily by the prokuratura, and the suspect was released on 22 May 1989 while there was still evidence of ‘gifts’ in the sum of 20,000 rubles that Smirnov did not deny.²⁹² However, the commission protested that it had no authority to evaluate some other cases that were more media-oriented than juridical – those of Aliyev, Medunov, Grishin, Kunaev, Shchelokov or Galina Brezhneva – and that were not directly related to Gdlyan-Ivanov’s investigation in any case. Thus,

these facts and circumstances, combined with economic and political difficulties, provides the opportunity for Gdlyan and Ivanov who, in recent months, had been turned away from [their] work and investigation team in Uzbekistan, began to engage in direct political activity in Russia against the leadership of CPSU and Soviet state, with the charge of deliberately inciting ethnic hatred and intentional creation of economic plight of the country and even in the conscious sabotage of rail transport. Almost all the limitations of our reality and difficulties of economic reconstruction, Gdlyan and Ivanov

²⁸⁸ The document made the example of P. Alimova who had nine children, B. Dalieva 11, A. Saidova 12 and P. Matganova with 10 children and was personally arrested by Ivanov and jailed for 9 months. GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 8.

²⁸⁹ The document also noted that this sum was collected over six years while the KGB, in less than one year between 1983-1984, collected 13 million. GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 9.

²⁹⁰ GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 10.

²⁹¹ GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 12.

²⁹² GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 13. Nevertheless, on 16 May 1990, Sukharev finally put an end to the Smirnov case, informing the SS USSR that there was no evidence of bribery. GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, ll.117-118.

started to present the result of purposeful deliberate action emanating from the Moscow-Kremlin mafia. This is not merely harmless demagoguery and causes considerable damage to the credibility of the perestroika reforms, to the CPDSU and to the SS USSR. From all the points of view, it would be wrong to leave this kind of activity of the People's deputies Gdlyan and Ivanov unanswered.²⁹³

Basically, the commission admitted that there were violations in the work of the Gdlyan-Ivanov group but the most significant negative impact had been to the credibility of the entire Soviet system in a sensitive moment of transformation.

Subsequently, the second session of the CPDSU started on 12 December and the commission's report – as well with other details on the Uzbek affair²⁹⁴ – was discussed in an already tense situation together with other sensitive issues such as the constitutional modifications,²⁹⁵ the Tbilisi events and the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Ligachev recalls the event for finally disparaging Gdlyan's allegations. In fact, on that occasion, Gdlyan took the stage. It was the best opportunity to expose the alleged 'Kremlin affair' from the highest podium of the USSR in front of millions of soviet citizens who, in front of their TVs, were waiting to hear his version. However, he did not give any evidence on the case and was interrupted by E.A. Panfilova who argued

Telman Khorenovich, as a lawyer, you must be completely responsible for the statements you make on television and at rallies. I personally saw on Leningrad TV your accusation of Ligachev, saying that you personally had

²⁹³ GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, ll. 14-15.

²⁹⁴ In his memoirs, Nishanov recalls that during the II CPDSU in December 1989, a deputy V.A. Yarin – the Co-Chair of the Commission to verify the work of the investigative group – voiced that in Uzbekistan, law enforcement officials investigated more than 800 criminal case of bribery. Convicted 5000 people - including six hundred executives and ten Hero of Socialist Labor – and seized cash amounting to one hundred million rubles. Despite his role in the investigations against his rivals, nowadays Nishanov disavow the work of Gdlyan and Ivanov stating that 'at first they put people in jail, and later they proved their guilt'. Rafik Nishanovich Nishanov, *Derev'ya Zeleneyut Do Metelei: Rafik Nishanov Rasskazyvaet Marine Zavade I Yurii Kulikovu* (Moskva: Molodaya Gvardiya, 2012), 232.

²⁹⁵ On 12 December 1989, during the second session of the CPDSU, Gorbachev refused to discuss the elimination of art. 4 and hounded against Sakharov. Unfortunately, the scientist died on 14 December. Jack F Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1995), 752.

materials that would prove his guilt. I ask you to bring them forward here, at the Congress. You knew that today we would listen to material on your case. You know that the entire country is waiting for it. If you have it—bring it out; if you don't—stop your demagoguery! Stop stirring up the entire country!²⁹⁶

Gdlyan listened but did not reply, disappointing the audience and the millions of other people awaiting his version. That was probably the end of the myth for many Gdlyan-Ivanov supporters who had listened to their alternative version and now looked at that story as pathetic conspiratorial demagoguery. As Sobchak recalls, from that moment “drama passed into farce” with the investigators claiming to have very secret documents and overwhelming evidence hidden in some safe place.²⁹⁷ Basically, while their investigations on the Uzbek affair was producing some effect,²⁹⁸ the ‘Kremlin affair’ was starting to look much like a fairytale.

6.6 The ‘democrats’ Gdlyan-Ivanov

In 1990, the war between the Soviet system and the front of Gdlyan-Ivanov became open. The case assumed a much more mediatic impact with the waited publication of the first Gdlyan’s book, *Pyramida-1*, that became a bestseller and source of inspiration for a documentary film produced by Lenfilm in 1990.²⁹⁹ At the same time, the two investigators joined the *DemRossiya* election bloc – a coalition created by the interregional group to run in the 26 March 1990 elections – and Gdlyan was elected to its Coordinating Council. Their radical political discourse, together with some elements of nationalism and anti-communism jelled very well with the

²⁹⁶ This passage has been reported and translated in Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev’s Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 244.

²⁹⁷ Sobchak, *Khozhdenie vo Vlast’ : Rasskaz O Rozhdenii Parlamenta*.

²⁹⁸ At the beginning of December, the prokuratura USSR closed the criminal case against N. Radzhabov for lack of evidence, while on 14 December the SC Kazakh SSR condemned for bribery the former FS Navoi obkom V. Esin to six years of imprisonment with confiscation of property; and on 27 December the SC USSR sentenced for bribery the former FS CPUz I.B. Usmankhodzhaev to twelve years imprisonment with confiscation of property. On 15 January 1990, the charges against Abdullaeva were totally acquitted by the SC USSR. On 14 February 1990, the SC USSR condemned the former chairman of the SM Karakalpak ASSR and secretary of the CC CPUz E. Aytmuratov to ten years imprisonment and confiscation of his property. Plekhanov, “Delo Gdlyana. AnATOMIYA Politicheskogo Skandala,” 40.

²⁹⁹ Gdlyan and Dodolyev, *Piramida-1*.

heterogenous coalition of 'democratic' candidates that were challenging the predominant CPSU and its leader. Thus, in a context where the democrats were fighting against a party in shambles, the possibilities of action were endless.

6.6.1 In the grip of the crowd

During a rally held in Tushino on 9 January 1990,³⁰⁰ Gdlyan personally accused Gorbachev of bribery and collusion with criminal elements, and made a common front with 'other dissidents of perestroika' such as the former KGB officer Oleg Kalugin. Apparently, there was no more common ground for negotiations. Similar accusations appeared during the huge mass demonstrations of 'reformers' that invaded Moscow on 4 February. Gdlyan also participated on that occasion, claiming that half a million people were for him³⁰¹ and calling for a resignation of the entire politburo based on its corruption and protection of mafia elements.³⁰² In these delicate days, the CC CPSU approved the elimination of art. 6 from the constitution, abolishing the primacy of the CPSU in the political system,³⁰³ and bringing to reality a political transition that would involve the opposition forces. After decades of ideological monolithism, enthusiasm for democratization was opening a Pandora's box from which emerged a plethora of shabby ideas. These included ultranationalism, anti-Semitism and even manifestations of crypto-fascism – among which Gdlyan's populism was not the most radical.

In this scenario, the still numerous gdlyanists could easily organize rallies while the Prokuratura turned resolutely to the task of discrediting its employees Gdlyan and Ivanov. Nevertheless, the criminal case against them was still in train and the Prokuratura admitted it lacked control over the investigative group. In this context, it for the first time issued apologies "to the Uzbek people for the arbitrariness and lawlessness [and promised] to develop measures to prevent similar phenomena" in future. Finally, a report "about the gross violations of law committed by the investigators for the especially important cases at the Prokuratura USSR, Gdlyan T.Kh. and Ivanov N.V." was prepared by Ilyukhin on 6 February 1990, becoming a base for the

³⁰⁰ Plekhanov, "Delo Gdlyana. Anatomiya Politicheskogo Skandala," 40.

³⁰¹ GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, l. 24.

³⁰² GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 87.

³⁰³ Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 753; Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*.

Gdlyan and Ivanov prosecution.³⁰⁴ The document stated that the criminal case against Gdlyan and Ivanov was opened on 25 May 1989 because of the many letters and appeals from citizens revealing abuses in investigative methods of the investigators who "systematically allowed gross violations of socialist legality and arbitrary abuse of honor and dignity of Soviet citizens."³⁰⁵

In Ilyukhin accusation, the Gdlyan's investigations were often "unprofessional, without critical analysis and long term vision and were badly organized,"³⁰⁶ producing unreasonable periods of pre-trial detention,³⁰⁷ and giving relatively limited results,³⁰⁸ considering that just one fourth – and sometimes less – of the alleged evidence had been validated by the courts. Thus, many cases were considered inconsistent after the removal of Gdlyan and Ivanov from the investigations.³⁰⁹ The document even charged the two investigators for "forcing citizens to testify thought threats, blackmail [...] and other abuses" and detaining – mostly illegally – more than 100 people for questioning.³¹⁰ Gdlyan and Ivanov were thus accused of extorting artificial confessions,³¹¹ extending the arrest to the members of the suspects' families,³¹² arresting mothers of minor children,³¹³ proceeding with illegal

³⁰⁴ The report was even sent from the deputy Genprokuror USSR Vasil'ev to the MJ USSR Yakovlev on 12 February 1990. GARF, f. 9492, op. 8, d. 2738, l. 10.

³⁰⁵ GARF, f. 9492, op. 8, d. 2738, l. 10.

³⁰⁶ GARF, f. 9492, op. 8, d. 2738, l. 10.

³⁰⁷ The report cites the cases of Kakhramanov and Khaitov, who were detained for three years, A. Gaipov, three years and seven months, and G. Mirzabaev, five years. GARF, f. 9492, op. 8, d. 2738, l. 10.

³⁰⁸ Ilyukhin comments that in six years more than 200 investigators worked to condemn 34 people while 4 were acquitted by the court (Kakhramanov, Khaitov, Gaipov and Abdullaeva). GARF, f. 9492, op. 8, d. 2738, l. 11.

³⁰⁹ The former the second secretary Osetrov spent four years and five months in jail as well as the former FSs of Fergana and Samarkand Kh Umarov, B. Rakhimov, N. Radzhabov (9 months) or the deputy chairman of the MVD UzSSR, A. Mukhammadiev, who was under arrest for two years and three months. Mukhammadiev and Osetrov were arrested personally by Gdlyan. GARF, f. 9492, op. 8, d. 2738, l. 11.

³¹⁰ For this purpose, Gdlyan personally arrested 8 people in such way, and Ivanov 17. GARF, f. 9492, op. 8, d. 2738, l. 11-12.

³¹¹ The document reports that due to the former FS Bukhara obkom Karimov's confessions, 21 people were arrested at the request of Gdlyan and six of them were personally handcuffed by Ivanov. GARF, f. 9492, op. 8, d. 2738, l. 12.

³¹² For example, Usmankhodzhaev was detained with 9 others (8 were relatives) for six months, including his wife, his son Gairat, two sisters Fazilatkhon and Kanalkhon. For all of them there was a lack of any evidence. As well, the FS Tashkent obkom

night arrests in the '1937 NKVD style' etc. in order to "force suspects to confess."³¹⁴ They were also accused of violating the parliamentary immunity or arresting people without an arrest warrant,³¹⁵ even exceeding unjustifiably the pre-trial detention over the three days limits. Ilyukhin also reported cases of people forced to push their relatives and friends to testify about bribes,³¹⁶ or the extreme indulgency towards 'smaller bribers' by Ivanov who in June 1985, voluntarily dismissed a criminal case against 56 'collaborative' workers of the Bukhara gorpromtorg who gave to their director Kudratov more than 2

Musakhanov was arrested with his son Mirzoiusuf and his daughters Sadzhida and Nafisa by order of Gdlyan. Also K. Nurumbetov was arrested in 1987 with eight other people directly by Gdlyan and the arrest of seven of them was considered illegal. In this way, eight relatives for each of Radzhabov, Kamalov, Dzhumaniyazov were detained, four of Primov and 15 of Khudajbergenov were illegally arrested as was confirmed by the SC USSR. GARF, f. 9492, op. 8, d. 2738, ll. 12-13.

³¹³ The report stated that even the investigators Adburakhimov, Dadazhanov, Tuktarov illegally arrested Pasho Alimova, mother of 9 children, Bibizada Dalieva (11 children), Anora Saidova 12 children, Pasha Matchanova (10 children) under the instruction of Ivanov. GARF, f. 9492, op. 8, d. 2738, l. 13.

³¹⁴ The document reports many cases of people arrested during the night and detained for no reasons in jail and isolated from their relatives. GARF, f. 9492, op. 8, d. 2738, l. 14.

³¹⁵ On 30 November 1987, Gdlyan arrested Shariboj Radzhapov an engineer of kolkhoz "Pravda", member of the CPSU, deputy of a village soviet, violating his immunity. Also, on January 1988, Ivanov arrested the deputy of Nukus city soviet Khudaibergenov Kh.M. but the arrest warrant came just on 9 February. When the suspect told that he was as deputy, Ivanov ironically invited him to enjoy the right of immunity. He was detained for 2 months but his guilt was not proved. GARF, f. 9492, op. 8, d. 2738, l. 15.

³¹⁶ For example, the document reports the case of Sh. Mukhimov, father of 6 children without guilt, spent in jail 5 months and 20 days. During the inquiries, Ivanov told him "you are a little man, we do not need you... however, you must instruct your children to give testimony against Kasymdzhanov, saying that near the UVD, or in the airport, or near the house or in different places was given any occulted parcel to Kasymdzhanov. Find somebody of your relatives or your friends who could confirm this fact." Similarly, the document reports cases of drivers who had to testify against their clients. Also Mirzoiusuf Musakhanov son of the former FS Tashkent obkom said that Gdlyan pushed him during the interrogation and shouted that if he would not confess and give the money back, the investigators would "totally terrorize the whole Musakhanov family". It was true and four of his relatives were arrested. GARF, f. 9492, op. 8, d. 2738, l. 16.

million rubles in bribes.³¹⁷ As well, the document accused the investigators of violating rules of recording the inventories of the seized valuables, confusing the bribes with personal belongings or writing approximate figures in protocols.³¹⁸ Then, Ilyukhin accused Gdlyan and Ivanov for substantially abandoning their work³¹⁹ and accused the former Genprokurator of not supervising the situation and even German P. Karakozov, the head of the investigative unit and very close to Gdlyan and Ivanov, for collaborating with them, writing documents to the Genprokurator and to the presidium of the SS USSR and allowing them to put in jail the people that they wanted to prosecute.³²⁰ Finally, Ilyukhin requested the possibility to prosecute Gdlyan and Ivanov – who had systematically abused authority in the detention of citizens and forced by threats of violence to give testimony and slander³²¹ – and to examine the material of the board of the Prokuratura of the USSR.

The report had an immediate effect and on 8 February 1990 the collegium of the General Prokuratura USSR acknowledged their criminal responsibility and demanded that the SS USSR strip the parliamentary immunity of both Gdlyan and Ivanov in order to proceed.³²² This petition to the prokuratura

³¹⁷ According to this reconstruction, some of these bribes amounted from 70,000 to 200,000 rubles. GARF, f. 9492, op. 8, d. 2738, l. 17.

³¹⁸ The document denounces the lack of professionalism of investigators who wrote labels like “a pack with 25-50 rubles”, “60 or more coins” etc. GARF, f. 9492, op. 8, d. 2738, l. 18.

³¹⁹ Ilyukhin stated: “over the last eight months they had practically ceased to perform their professional duties” becoming famous politicians and refusing to accept three new cases. They spent their time in different cities, attending meetings and musical shows and performing in mass media where they “spread accusations and insults against the political leadership of the party and state” GARF, f. 9492, op. 8, d. 2738, l. 20.

³²⁰ Karakozov was even accused of protecting Gdlyan and Ivanov, directly passing them, not to their superiors, letters of complaint and failing to take adequate measures during the period of investigations, when Gdlyan was brought to disciplinary responsibility three times and Ivanov twice. GARF, f. 9492, op. 8, d. 2738, l. 20.

³²¹ Ilyukhin implicates violations of the articles 149, 158, 159 and 160 of the code of criminal procedure of UzSSR and 130 of RSFSR. GARF, f. 9492, op. 8, d. 2738, l. 21.

³²² On 9 February 1990, Pavlov, the chief of the State and Legal Department of the CPSU, informed the CC that on 8 February the prokuratura board discussed the criminal case opened on 25 May 1989 on the gross violations of law of Gdlyan and Ivanov. The investigation of the case proceeded with more than 500 witnesses and a lot of material and the SC USSR dismissed many cases initiated by Gdlyan and Ivanov in January 1990, even in accordance with the commission of the CPDSU. The board

was not welcomed by a part of the commission members that even denounced this attempt as a violation of the people's will, undermining the CPDSU credibility and predetermining the work of the commission for acknowledging the guilt of Gdlyan and Ivanov.³²³ Then, on 14 February 50,000 people rallied in Zelenograd to support their heroes³²⁴ and on 21 February, 351 persons attended a general meeting of communists in the prokuratura to consider the issue "about violations of the law and the requirements of the CPSU statutes committed by communists T.Kh. Gdlyan and N.V. Ivanov." In a tense climate, the meeting decided they would both be expelled from the CPSU "for committing gross violations of the law and the requirements of the Charter of the Party."³²⁵ In response, a mass meeting in Zelenograd expressed support for the investigators and warned of strike action, while other manifestations of support for Gdlyan and Ivanov were organized in other parts of the country.³²⁶

Chernyaev warned Gorbachev about the risks as the anniversary of the February revolutions (on 25th) approached stating that "radical leaders including Gdlyan and Ivanov, will inflame and direct antiparty and anti-state actions." Thus, he concluded his warnings on the risks of disorder, pogroms and the involvement of criminality that would risk to degenerate in a

was attended by prokuratura members, deputies and journalists but not by Gdlyan and Ivanov, who boycotted the meeting. The board was led by Ilyukhin and reported the affirmations of former participants of the Gdlyan's groups or of people who worked in the case, involving from the Prokuratura USSR A.S. Sboev and E.I. Chernyshov, from the prokuratura Ukrainian SSR S.A. Sukhobrus and N.A. Klokol, the famous investigator of the Jizzakh-Ivanovo affair N.I. Kalinichenko, the prosecutors N.A. Nagorny and V.A. Ivanov and the attorney for prokuratura supervision R.M. Ovcharova. RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 14, ll. 1-4.

³²³ In fact, on 26 March 1990, I. Sorokin, a CPDSU deputy and member of the commission addressed to Gorbachev and to the media a letter referring his doubts on the activity of the commission that "became more and more biased and is now fully coincides with the position of the USSR prokuratura." According to Sorokin, the commission suffered from the influence of the KGB, prokuratura, presidium and the CC CPSU focusing the whole responsibility of the methods to Gdlyan and Ivanov and dropping the case on corruption in the higher echelons. RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 15, l. 1-3.

³²⁴ GARF, f. 10147, op. 1, d. 466, l. 3.

³²⁵ *Argumenty i Fakty*, 24 February - 2 March 1990, p. 8. Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 195.

³²⁶ Radyanska Ukrayina reports manifestations of solidarity also in Ukraine in February 1990. FBIS, "JPRS-UPA-90-039 - Soviet Union. Political Affairs - 7 JULY 1990," 1990, 85.

“Romanian variant.”³²⁷ In parallel, Gdlyan’s approach was not entirely welcome by a moderate part of the democrats that identified him as a radical and an extremist³²⁸ disavowing his disruptive methods of protests. Nevertheless, the rallies of 25 February – 220 demonstrations in 140 cities in Russia alone – recorded another huge crowd for the two popular ‘martyrs.’ This incredible – and alarming – result was even discussed during the politburo session of 2 March 1990. On that occasion, Gorbachev was furious at Gdlyan's claim that "mafia represents the country" and pointed Sukharev who was "too timid to deal with people such as Gdlyan" and referred to the other participants "sitting in their seats and watching the discrediting of senior officials." Thus, the Gensek called for an effective legalization of the response where, evidently, even slanders would be punished by law. Hence, the furious Gensek mazily exclaimed:

I don't want to expose Gdlyan as a political prostitute. I support the idea to legally prosecute [them] for their discrediting of the supreme power in the state. And check Gorbachev, Ligachev and others like them – if they got into the pocket of the state, let them respond. With such a Prosecutor, the Kremlin will be easily destroyed!³²⁹

Then, Biryukova mentioned that during the demonstrations slogans such as "CPSU – clique of thieves and murderers" appeared. But Sukharev replied that for those activities it was not possible to prosecute people.³³⁰ Basically, the politburo realized that no firm actions could be taken against this kind of demonstration because the backlash might be catastrophic.³³¹ The inability to take certain actions was an inexorable symptom of a dying USSR and a party in disarray. The following indication of impatience expressed by Chernyaev is remarkable. He wrote in his diary (3 March 1990) about Gdlyan and Ivanov:

³²⁷ GF, f. 2, d. 8200.

³²⁸ The journalist and human rights activist Len Karpinsky criticized Gdlyan's calls for people to take the streets, seeing the destructive potential in the extremism of the "power of the street" Igor V. Timofeev, "The Development of Russian Liberal Thought since 1985," in *The Demise of Marxism-Leninism in Russia*, ed. Archie Brown (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 75.

³²⁹ Gorbachev Fond, *V Politburo TsK KPSS...*, 601.

³³⁰ On this regard, also Pavlov, the head of the legal department of the CC, confirmed that was possible to prosecute for specific accusations against individuals but not in that form. Ibid.

³³¹ Then, Ryzhkov seemed to assume an ironic tone when he commented that in London the police were allowed to attack protesters who merely threatened public morals. Ibid., 602.

Criminals who imprisoned mothers with many children, extortionists who recreated 1937 in Uzbekistan! [...] Are you afraid to find out that Gorbachev is a thief?! Is that what you are afraid of? If he is a thief, let them prove it. If need be, Gorbachev will do what the law requires. But if it is slander — Gorbachev added — Gdlyan and Ivan[ov] belong on the prisoners' dock for contempt of supreme state leadership. It would be impossible to imagine anything like this taking place in any civilized country.³³²

6.6.2 The spring countermeasures

In mid-March 1990, as Gorbachev controversially assumed the presidency of the country, the USSR was in the midst of a rapid institutional transformation.³³³ Nevertheless, the Gdlyan-Ivanov issue remained a crucial theme for its capacity to mobilize the passions of the crowd regarding the higher echelons of the state and the party. Thus, during the politburo session of 22 March, the results of the Russian legislative elections were commented on. The anger of some politburo members against the rising opposition was palpable. 'Chekists' like Gdlyan-Ivanov remained popular in the country³³⁴ and in accusing Gorbachev of corruption and of covering the case up,³³⁵ they soon drew support from parts of the radicalized intelligentsia, infuriating the top leadership further.³³⁶ However, the atmosphere was about to shift.

³³² Svetlana Savranskaya, "The Diary of Anatoly S. Chernyaev - 1990" (Washington D.C., 2010), 17.

³³³ Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 753; Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*; Paolo Biscaretti di Ruffia, *1988-1990. Un Triennio Di Profonde Trasformazioni Costituzionali. In Occidente, nell'URSS, Negli Stati Socialisti dell'Est Europeo* (Milano: Giuffrè editore, 1991).

³³⁴ On that occasion, Frolov commented that despite the CPSU obtaining a solid result (86% of the seats) many of these were however taken by radical leaders such as Popov and Afanasiev. Then, Kryuchkov commented "Chekist candidates were almost all selected [...] There are deputies who are not only unworthy to be members of the Communist Party, but also to be citizens of our country: Gdlyan Ivanov, etc." Gorbachev Fond, *V Politburo Tsk KPSS...*, 609.

³³⁵ Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*, 230.

³³⁶ In the March rallies, Gdlyan was often joined by the economist Tatyana Koryagina who campaigned against party mafia in association with the apparatchiks. Joe Klein, "Shrinking the Russians," *New York*, March 1990.

In fact, on 2 April, the prokuratura counterattacked and finally asked the SS USSR for authorization to fire Gdlyan and Ivanov from their prosecutorial posts. With the memorandum № 1-5-33-90 of 2 April 1990, the prokuratura communicated to the SS USSR details of the criminal case opened against Gdlyan and Ivanov and their group.³³⁷ The document gave details of the abuses on the suspects who had been beaten and illegally detained, reiterating the cases – previously cited by Ilyukhin – involving a total of 70 victims. Furthermore, they were accused of slandering the state, the party and the Gensek without giving any evidence, violating articles 149 (abuse of power or position), 150 (abuse of power or official authority), 158 (knowingly unlawful arrest or detention) and 159 (coercion to testify) of the UzSSR criminal code and part 3 of article 130 of the RSFSR criminal code (slander, coupled with the accusation of a state or other serious crime). With this harsh document, Sukharev demanded their removal from the prokuratura.³³⁸

At the party level, on 9 April the politburo discussed Ivanov's latest serious statement on Leningrad TV (29 March 1990) and the seizure of a TV studio together with Gdlyan and other members of the Leningrad city council (6 April) when the two mavericks attacked the Soviet president, his wife and the Communist party. Thus, the politburo endorsed a series of measures to limit the influence of these radicals in the media.³³⁹ Then, even Gorbachev –

³³⁷ In 1984-1988, Gdlyan and Ivanov led the investigators Borov, Abdurahimov Ibragimov, Kartashyan and some others to commit systematic abuse of power and official position, by means of threats, blackmail and humiliation of personal dignity of citizens forced to give false and self-incriminating statements. They illegally prosecuted, detained and handed down the decision to arrest innocent people, which led to grave consequences. GARF f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 1

³³⁸ GARF f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, ll. 11-12.

³³⁹ Specifically, the politburo instructed the head of the USSR State Committee for Television and Radio (M.F. Nenashev) to propose to the SM USSR the establishment of the main tele-radio channels of Moscow and Leningrad under the Gostelradio USSR; to instruct the Leningrad obkom (B.V. Gidasov) to bring to party responsibility the people involved in these statements and seizure of the TV studio; to instruct the Prokuratura to proceed against the people involved in these illegal actions; to provide as soon as possible to the presidium SS USSR and to Lukyanov the conclusions of the commission, to develop and adopt legislation on liability for insulting the President in the press and other officials of the country, requests the Commission on Parliamentary Ethics (chaired by com. Denisov) to consider the responsibility of the People's Deputies N. Ivanov and T. Gdlyan for their insults, to take measures against the Leningrad council member taking part in the seizure of the TV studio, and to

probably believing that the case was going to end soon – started to publicly consider the issue when, on 12 April 1990, he

gave candid answers to the thousands of questions flying at him during a meeting with the Komsomol before their Congress, including about the Gdlyan-Ivanov slander: “I, the President, am not going to go and try to prove that I am not a thief and I do not take bribes!” They applauded when he declared that Gdlyan and Ivanov will be dealt with in the open at the Supreme Soviet (who knows whose side they were applauding).³⁴⁰

Chernyaev’s final remarks are indicative of the tense political climate, in which Gdlyan and Ivanov were challenging Gorbachev’s credibility. As well, the two investigators, probably warned of the impending decision of the commission and fearing a negative judgment, decided to do something about it. On 15 April, they wrote an open letter to the CPDSU deputies. In this document, the two investigators noted that the commission was only focusing on the “investigators affair” and did not deal with the corruption in the state and party, alleging that only a 5% of the material had been reviewed while thousands of volumes, videotapes and documents remained unexplored. Thus, Gdlyan and Ivanov emerged as scapegoats in a case that involved more than 500 investigators by the prokuratura, the MVD and the KGB. Thus, they highlighted that the commission’s members demonstrated biases in the press³⁴¹ and that they had not been informed of the commission’s findings. Therefore, they demanded to postpone the conclusion of the commission, to include a pool of 40-50 experts of law and to remove the ban on them in the central press and mass media.³⁴² In the meantime

instruct Nenashev to take measures against the executives Lenteleradiokomiteta (com. Senin, Kurkov and others) for the organization of TV programs conducive to the creation of a society in the political atmosphere of permissiveness, overtones and denigration of anyone who disagrees with their ideological position. NSA, box 29, file R10028, p. 1; NSA, box 29, file R6877, pp. 1-2. RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 16, ll. 1-3. In what seemed to be a 'Leningrad affair', the Lenobkom answered to the CC CPSU that measures to punish the responsible for these acts were going to be implemented. RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 17, l. 1-2.

³⁴⁰ Savranskaya, “The Diary of Anatoly S. Chernyaev - 1990,” 21.

³⁴¹ Gdlyan and Ivanov thus denounced some of members of the commission (like V.A. Yarin, N.A. Strunov, V.G. Aleksandrin and V.G. Adylos) for bias. They also criticized those who had condemned them in articles appearing in the Uzbek newspaper *Selskaya Pravda* and *Izvestiya*, as well as Medvedev who even performed on central television on 7 April 1990 and showing clear bias towards the case.

³⁴² GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 68-77.

other appeals to defend Gdlyan and Ivanov appeared in the Soviet press,³⁴³ further politicizing an issue that seemed to explode. Also among the commission members, the climate remained very tense because they knew to make a political choice in judging the two popular 'Robin Hoods' that were protected by the people.³⁴⁴

Nonetheless, the commission was able to release a final report on 16 April 1990³⁴⁵ and reconstructed the case integrating, in many parts, the conclusions of its preliminary report of December 1989 and the information mentioned in Ilyukhin's report. The tone of the report was conciliatory and conveyed submissions from both parties, declaring that due to its media-oriented impact, Gdlyan and Ivanov had become the scapegoat of the prokuratura where many investigators acted unprofessionally.³⁴⁶ Their arrests were authorized from either the prokuratura USSR or UzSSR and the prolongation of pre-trial detention periods had been sanctioned by the Presidium of the SS USSR.³⁴⁷ The report stated that the violations for which they were charged were generally common in the prokuratura and they were not the only case in this regard. Therefore, defects of that kind were attributable to lack of supervision by the prokuratura.³⁴⁸ However, the commission acknowledged the specificity of the group, considering that "in the last 20 years in our country this was the only such large group of investigators with such great powers to ever have been created." It was recognized that no one had reviewed complaints as they began to arrive from the public from 1983,³⁴⁹ or from other team members,³⁵⁰ admitting that

³⁴³ FBIS, "JPRS-UPA-90-034. Political Affairs. 21 JUNE 1990," 1990, 35.

³⁴⁴ For example, before the judgement, the member of the commission Suleimanov warned Lukyanov and the other deputies about the dangerous game that was opened on the two "Robin Hoods." GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 65-67.

³⁴⁵ The report was signed by the members Roy Aleksandrovich Medvedev; Nikolai Alekseevich Strukov; Veniamin Aleksandrovich Yarin; Ilmar Olgertovich Bisher; Valery Grigorevich Alexandrin; Vladimir Tychievich Adylov; Yuri Vladimirovich Golik; Olzhaz Omarovich Suleimanov; Konstantin Dmitrievich Lubenchenko. GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 64.

³⁴⁶ GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, ll. 31-32.

³⁴⁷ However, the commission admitted that several cases were not checked. GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 33.

³⁴⁸ GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 34.

³⁴⁹ GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, ll. 35-36.

before February 1989, there was essentially no oversight over the Uzbek affair investigations.³⁵¹ As well, the commission acknowledged that only incomplete, superficial or contradictory investigations were opened on the almost ten suicides connected with the methods of Gdlyan,³⁵² and condemned the practice of 'bargaining' with defendants, acquitting collaborators,³⁵³ arresting whole families³⁵⁴ and mismanagement of investigative materials³⁵⁵ and seized money and other valuables.³⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the commission admitted that it was unable to investigate the charges made by Gdlyan and Ivanov against the leaders of party and state because they did not give the promised materials and kept claiming to store these secret documents in some safe places.³⁵⁷

Basically, this report laid out the evidence for serious defects in the prosecutorial activity of Gdlyan and Ivanov, but acknowledged that their methods were not so far from the Soviet tradition of prosecutorial practices, presenting them as but one cog in a greater repressive machine. Therefore, the commission demanded that "the methods of the prokuratura be strengthened and upgraded, increasing its authority and independence" as well as the buttressing of legal standards to build a democracy with effectively democratic standards.³⁵⁸ Evidently, the 'Gdlyan-Ivanov' case served to put both the methods of prokuratura and, to some extent, Soviet totalitarianism itself on trial.

Thus, on 18 April 1990 the SS USSR reviewed the commission's report and approved resolution N°1438-1 "regarding the conclusion of the commission to review materials of the activities of the investigative group of prokuratura

³⁵⁰ Also, the complaints from the investigators R.M. Ovcharova and B.I. Severtsev that accused Gdlyan of abuse of power and official authority, violent and abusive actions of personal dignity.

³⁵¹ GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 37.

³⁵² The charge was for violating the art. 87 of the UzSSR criminal code (incitement to suicide). GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, ll. 38-40.

³⁵³ "N.V. Ivanov stopped criminal cases on 70 persons who, according to their testimony, have given bribes for 2,358,481 rubles." GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 46.

³⁵⁴ GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 49.

³⁵⁵ The commission evidenced disappearance of investigative materials that Gdlyan admitted to storing in 'pits.' GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 50.

³⁵⁶ GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 52.

³⁵⁷ GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 55.

³⁵⁸ GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l. 43.

USSR led by Gdlyan T.Kh." This conclusive resolution affirmed that Gdlyan and Ivanov did not provide the evidence that they claimed to have provided and continued to discredit the SS USSR, its deputies and its officials, destabilizing the situation in the country. The resolution warned that if they were to continue their slanderous conduct, the SS USSR would consider rescinding their immunity. Nevertheless, the SS USSR rejected the option of opening a criminal case against them. At the same time, considering they had made their positions within the prosecutorial office untenable, it determined that they would be expelled from the prokuratura and obliged them to collaborate with further investigations. The SS USSR also requested the dismissal from the prokuratura of those officials who had failed to ensure proper control over the activities of the investigation team led by Gdlyan and Ivanov.³⁵⁹

The receipt of the commission report and the SS USSR resolution in the assembly provoked something of a ruckus.³⁶⁰ This seemed to turn in a positive direction for Gdlyan and Ivanov who, despite having been wrapped severely over the knuckles, were acquitted. Nevertheless, their censure meant their hands were tied and they would need to limit their ambitions somewhat and proceed with caution going forward. Some strategy was needed to allow the two to continue their anti-system crusade. Thus, shielded from any criminal charge, Gdlyan and Ivanov were nevertheless unemployed, having been formally fired from Prokuratura on 19 April.³⁶¹ Moreover, it was clear that were they to continue their radical narrative, they would risk losing the immunity granted by their status within the CPDSU. The way to cut through this Gordian knot, Gdlyan and Ivanov decided, was to become full-time professional politicians and to find a political office to run for that would cement their parliamentary immunity and advance their success. The elections in Russia – as in many other republics - had already passed, so the two looked elsewhere to put their strategy into effect.

³⁵⁹ GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, ll. 17-18.

³⁶⁰ In his diary, Chernyaev reported on April 21: "There is a ruckus in the Supreme Soviet over Gdlyan, with demands to replace Sukharev. It has been declared that the organs, i.e. Kryuchkov, the Prosecutor's Office, and others, have no right to use the excuse that they are serving socialism. The Supreme Soviet will decide whom they are to serve; otherwise, they can take a hike." Savranskaya, "The Diary of Anatoly S. Chernyaev - 1990," 31.

³⁶¹ Volkov, *Viktor Ilyukhin: Okhotnik Za Prezidentami*.

6.6.3 The Armenian front

In the immediate aftermath of the SS USSR resolution, the two former investigators essentially engaged a tactical retreat. Many supporters who were “confident in the rightness of their idols, calmed down” and had looked at their allegations as a “tactical bluff”³⁶² saw this cagey move as a capitulation. In any event, on 19 April Gdlyan and Ivanov flew to Armenia where they led a campaign for the parliamentary elections of 20 May and where their political discourse was forged on a specific ‘nationalist’ narrative. Hence, Gdlyan, an ethnic Armenian, was acclaimed as a national hero in Yerevan and, in front a cheering crowd, endorsed the candidacy of his Russian colleague Ivanov who aspired to be an exponent of the Russian/Ukrainian community of Kirovakan – an industrial city close to the earthquake disaster epicenter that is now known as Vanadzor. In this context, the former investigators inflamed the crowd, linking their story to the dramatic national issues of Armenia, referring to the drama of the reconstruction after the earthquake of 1988, the crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh, the pogroms against Armenians in Azerbaijan and the debate on the Armenian genocide of 1915. In a strategically brilliant reformulation of their political discourse, all these issues were craftily linked to the Gdlyan-Ivanov war against party mafiya.

In Yerevan, on 20 April Gdlyan openly attacked Gorbachev of doing nothing to protect people during the pogroms against Armenians in Baku and Sumgait, with the claim: “the mafiya seeks to destabilize through bloodshed.” Then he recalled that “Armenian democracy has been infected with the illness of Moscow, Leningrad and other republics” and invited the crowd to boycott the official press. Lest he be accused of being a reckless ‘spreader of terror’, he pointed to recommendations he had sent to Gorbachev in 1986, advising him ‘stop the terror’ against ordinary people and to focus his efforts against the mafiya. In a crafty move, Gdlyan harshly accused figures as Brezhnev, Suslov, Chernenko, Gromyko and Rashidov of criminal and anti-state activity. Given all of them were dead he could extract the political benefit of slandering all of them with little risk to himself. At this point, Gdlyan’s clever move was still ‘in bounds’ according to the rules of the SS USSR political game. However, not satisfied with merely slandering the mentioned “godfathers of stagnation,” Gdlyan took on fallen figures who were very much

³⁶² Sobchak, *Khozhdenie vo Vlast’ : Rasskaz O Rozhdenii Parlamenta*.

still alive, such as Grishin, Aliyev, Romanov, Kunaev, Solomentsev, Kapitonov and Medunov, and insisted that Gorbachev, Ligachev and others in the ruling environment be kept under the spotlight. Interestingly, he seemed to give to the crowd an indirect suspicion about these figures, without making any specific charge and without punishable slanders. However, probably encouraged by the Yerevan crowd, the tones became again harsh when he shouted the request to dismiss Gorbachev and his deputy Lukyanov for their “role of higher patrons of mafiya selected by antidemocratic means.” Evidently Gdlyan was again breaking the rules but he felt confident that the crowd was on his side to resume his slanderous approach.³⁶³ At the same event, Ivanov also intervened inciting the crowd to organize mass demonstrations against the “common enemy – boyards’ дума, which is how the Politburo CC CPSU should now be called” and insisted in following the example of Eastern Europeans.³⁶⁴

The day after, in Kirovakan, Gdlyan mocked Gorbachev, saying he ‘does not rule anything’ and recalled his investigations, remarking the risks connected to the criminal ‘clans.’ Then, he called the ‘talented Armenian people’ to become the new intellectual vanguard of a new democratic society, offering more and veiled allusions to the Armenian nationalism.³⁶⁵ Ivanov also pushed on local desires for the independence and the de-sovietization of Armenia, “hoping that the XXVIII will be the last congress.” Then, he referred to the Karabakh issue and to the Armenian nationalist revival in the region, stating that “in 1988 the democracy process and ‘liberation movement’ began.”³⁶⁶ On 22 April, during a meeting in Abovyan, the tones seemed to be more relaxed. Gdlyan hailed the public with “Greetings, citizen terrorists” explaining that this was the formulation given by the Soviet regime to anyone who supported democracy. Again, he recalled the Uzbek/Kremlin affair stories and railed against the rehabilitations of those

³⁶³ In his speech in Erevan, Gdlyan also followed a nationalist-democratic narrative proposing to elect the president and the deputy president in democratic way, giving all the powers to the state, excluding the party, the KGB and the MVD from governance. In his speech, Gdlyan also showed solidarity with Yeltsin, demanding a share of 50% of the seats to be reserved to of the democratic platform within the CPSU membership and for the cause of a Russian communist party. GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, ll. 19-27.

³⁶⁴ GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, ll. 28-32.

³⁶⁵ In his words, Armenia could become a “technological vanguard [...] much like Japan, which also has no natural resources.” GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, ll. 33-36.

³⁶⁶ GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, ll. 37-43.

people that until some months before had been considered as ‘mafiosi.’ Thus, he explained that his case was dismissed because the KGB had falsified documents to save Gorbachev from his implication in the Uzbek cotton affair and defined Sukharev as a "professional dystrophic" who was participating in this provocation. Despite the apparent calm, Gdlyan argued about the necessity to endorse a violent “Romanian solution” that would involve not only the army but also the KGB, the MVD, the prokuratura and the best part of the state.³⁶⁷ This was a message that was far from conciliatory or peaceful. On that occasion, also Ivanov inflamed the nationalist sensitivity of the crowd, alleging to have evidence of Gorbachev and his wife’s bribery, accusing Aliyev – who in the meantime reinvented himself as a moderate nationalist in Nakhchivan – of being part of the mafiya and linking the Uzbek affair to the events in the enemy neighbor Azerbaijan where “falsifications were 1.5 times higher than in Uzbekistan.” Thus, the former investigator commented on the dismissal of the Azerbaijani cotton affair (1986-1988) as an intervention of the ‘Aliyev clan.’ Then Ivanov alleged that impeaching Ligachev would prove to be impossible and that he was an instigator of the Fergana events.³⁶⁸ This was by all accounts a dangerous game these two were playing, adding Mafia and state massacres to allegations of corruption. The political discourse of Gdlyan and Ivanov was clearly taking a hyper-radical turn, with the latter apparently doing most of the dirty work.

The harsh Armenian election campaign ended on 23 April in Yerevan with a four-hour press conference at the city chess house. On that occasion, Gdlyan and Ivanov confirmed to the public their version of the story, the difficulties in doing investigations, the episodes of suicides connected with mafiya, the treasures and the delays in investigations, recalling the strange temporal conjectures of the ‘Hint affair’ as a strategy of Terebilov and other ‘mafiya allies’ to discredit them and to create an argument to thrill the Baltic nationalists. Then, they answered the public’s question, relating the Uzbek affair to the Armenian nationalist sensitive issues: indeed, Gdlyan and Ivanov discussed an alleged ‘Aliyev’s criminal triangle’ and the possible mafia revenges against Armenians in Uzbekistan as the next potential victims. In these rocambolesque reconstructions that involved any sort of emotional arguments, Gdlyan and Ivanov confirmed their populist attitude of simply giving people what they wanted to hear.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, ll. 44-57.

³⁶⁸ GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, ll. 58-70.

³⁶⁹ GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, ll. 72-103.

The Gdlyan's Armenian campaign was a triumph in term of popular support – confirmed by their election on 20 May – and was partially supported by the local communists who believed in the 'national hero' who came from Moscow. Ivanov also seemed to endorse the narrative of Armenian nationalists even after their return to Russia. In fact, during a meeting organized on 29 April at the Azimut association in Leningrad, Ivanov explained the reasons of his approach to the Armenian cause, stating that he was sensitized by the effects of the 1988 earthquake and affirming that Armenia was more democratic than Russia and did not apply censorship in publishing. Then, he also defended the 'armenity' of Karabakh, blaming the Soviet system for the crisis, and supporting the independence of Lithuania as well as the opposition front organized by the 'ally' Yeltsin against "Gorbachev, Ligachev, Lukyanov and others who are relegated to the past."³⁷⁰

In fact, the Gdlyan-Ivanov front fully reemerged during the anti-Gorbachev rallies organized during May Day in 1990³⁷¹ when Gdlyan incited the mob to not surrender against the 'institutional masquerade' that was no longer representative and indicating the crowd as the evidence of dissent against the "73 years of slavery."³⁷² Undeterred and fearless, the former investigators persisted in accusing the party of protecting the Soviet mafiya and joined a group of radical democrats shouting offensive slogans against Gorbachev and the entire government "to leave the podium of the mausoleum until the end of the demonstration."³⁷³

After their acquittal, the 'Gdlyan-Ivanov affair' was basically over. However, in these years of protests and media circus, the two mavericks of the crowd were affirmed as experienced politicians with an unnatural ability of attracting support and inflame the crowd. Basically, after their return from Armenia they joined the protests with a new vigorous approach, keeping their radical agenda and shouting in the streets for the next months while the country was ready to collapse.

³⁷⁰ GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, ll. 104-141.

³⁷¹ Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 753.

³⁷² GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, ll. 142-144.

³⁷³ Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 195; Sobchak, *Khozhdenie vo Vlast': Rasskaz O Rozhdenii Parlamenta*.

6.6.4 Aftermath

In mid-1990, Gdlyan-Ivanov and their supporters kept spreading stories of the Kremlin affair in the non-official press distributed at the rallies³⁷⁴ and maintained an unpunished and radical attitude, demanding the dismissal of the communist regime.³⁷⁵ At that point, despite the many warning signals from the state organs³⁷⁶ and the slanders that the two former investigators were spreading, the party seemed to be much too weak to open a second Gdlyan-Ivanov affair. It was, after all, facing much more serious threats, ones that challenged the very stability and the integrity of the country.

Nevertheless, Gdlyan and Ivanov kept antagonizing the Soviet institutions and frustrating its leaders who seemed to be inept and unable to formulate a response. On 6 May 1990, Sukharev informed Lukyanov about the slanders made by Gdlyan-Ivanov and their colleagues Koryagina and Surkov in rallies and public speeches where they alleged Gorbachev's involvement in the 'Northern Caucasian' mafia. Sukharev defined these provocations as "a misuse of glasnost and parliamentary immunity [to] destabilize the country."³⁷⁷ As well, Chernyaev noted:

M.S. once again got worked up about Lithuania. He came down on mass media, which has "gotten out of hand" (this reeks of Gdlyan) and shows no respect to the country's President. He was describing a meeting between Raisa Maksimovna and Pamela Harriman, who was struck by the Soviet people's ingratitude to Gorbachev, and their failure to understand the importance of

³⁷⁴ The unofficial magazine "Golos Izbiratelya" – Informative bulletin of Moscow union of electors – published an abstract of the famous letter sent to Gorbachev, Ryzhkov and Yeltsin on 11 November 1986 "Golos Izbiratelya" n. 6 (13), 7 May 1990, in GARF, f. 10147, op. 1, d. 466. The next issue of "Golos Izbiratelya" – n. 7 (14), 1-10 May 1990 – was entitled "Whoever is with Gdlyan and Ivanov is with the truth and the law." This issue contained the appeal of Gdlyan and Ivanov sent to the deputies on 15 April 1990, the appeals to Gorbachev and the open letters from the local soviets, the requests of the defense committees in Zelenograd, the interrogations of Usmankhodzhaev, and a cartoon with the Mafiya octopus and the petitions sent from DemRossiya and made letters from citizens demanding for truth. GARF, f. 10147, op. 1, d. 466, ll. 1-4.

³⁷⁵ GARF, f. 10147, op. 1, d. 474, pp. 1-4.

³⁷⁶ On 25 April, a group of people's deputies also wrote a note to Lukyanov containing the evidence of Gdlyan's speech in Armenia, which was sent to Moscow and to the foreign press. Indeed, the article appeared in the Japanese journal *Sapio*. GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, ll. 93-110.

³⁷⁷ GARF, f. 9654, op. 6, d. 18, l.87-90.

his work. He concluded his tirade by saying that it is time for everyone to choose right now, including the people sitting here.³⁷⁸

The party felt the pinch while a strong response would have been counterproductive if not impossible to realize. Nevertheless, the issue of Gdlyan and Ivanov had sensitized, in many ways, internal debate within the Soviet society and the state regarding the restoration of a culture of legality,³⁷⁹ while it contributed to the affirmation of the opposition and the rise of Yeltsin as a real leader of the masses able to challenge Gorbachev.³⁸⁰ Thus, it seems that after the resolution of the SS USSR, the resolved Gdlyan-Ivanov affair was still presenting rowdy spillovers on politics. Gorbachev understood that 'the dog that barks doesn't bite,' and avoided any reaction to their offensive provocations. Moreover, from mid-1990, the party had bigger problems to deal with, and the former investigators remained a marginal argument relegated to a weaker minority that was still believing in the populist program of Gdlyan and that was ready to endorse his 'Romanian solution', albeit only on paper.

After so much noise during the XIX CPSU conference and a full presence in the media and in the political agenda of USSR, the issues related to the Uzbek Affair, Gdlyan-Ivanov and the moral fight against corruption etc. became insignificant problems compared with the serious political, social and economic challenges that USSR was facing. These issues were neither mentioned³⁸¹ during the XXVIII Congress of the CPSU (2-13 July 1990) where the party demonstrated its terminal state and the factions failed to reach an agreement on the Union treaty or to define the CPSU program, revealing a deep internal crisis exacerbated by the resignation of Yeltsin. Interestingly, after the failed Congress, the sweeping recomposition of the party and the

³⁷⁸ Savranskaya, "The Diary of Anatoly S. Chernyaev - 1990," 31.

³⁷⁹ The deputy Genprokuror USSR V. Andreyev declared that the Gdlyan-Ivanov affair was a typical case that had to sensitize the debate within prokuratura to restore legality in the prosecution organs. *Pravda*, 23 May 1990, p. 2.

³⁸⁰ Yeltsin was assuming much more power on becoming the chairman of SS RSFSR (29 May), and declaring the superiority of Russian over Soviet law (8 June). On 12 July, during the XXVIII congress, Yeltsin resigned from the party. Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 754.

³⁸¹ During the congress, the bribery allegations made by Gdlyan-Ivanov against Ligachev were not mentioned and that silence was interpreted by the former politburo figure as a rehabilitation. Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 252.

criticized approval of the so-called “500 days program”, the ‘old guard’ of the party started to recall the mafiya issues against those figures that emerged to lead the gradual transition towards a market system.³⁸² In parallel, some radical nationalists also used allegations that were similar the program that Gdlyan had presented in Armenia, distrusting the party and for some extent letting a sense of fatigue by empire. This feeling, in our case, was perceived in Moscow and in Tashkent and, as we will see in the next chapter, led to manifestations of xenophobia and interethnic intolerance.³⁸³

Gdlyan and Ivanov – as well as other popular leaders like Kalugin and Koryagina – had even an impact in attracting the attention of the masses to the newly formed Democratic Russia Movement in October 1990, when Gdlyan endorsed its political line. Interestingly, after proclaiming himself as a Bolshevik old guard, Gdlyan assumed a new narrative that pushed for a transition from communism. On 7 November, during the celebrations commemorating the October revolution, Gdlyan, Kalugin, and Ivanov firmly denied that this was a national holiday and resolutely opposed any celebration.³⁸⁴ Thus, the famous phrase “the worse, the better” allegedly said by Chernyshevsky - the founder of the populist Russian movement ‘Narodism’ - fit perfectly with the perestroika populists who based their success on this mechanism. Nonetheless, this strategy failed at the end of 1990, when the party ceased to attack Gdlyan and Ivanov and their popularity has dropped considerably. Apparently, Gorbachev had silenced the barking dog by simply ignoring it.

In this last year of uncertainty and major changes, Gdlyan, Ivanov and all the extended family of radical democrats kept attacking a party that seemed to be in agony. Then in January 1991 Gdlyan became a credible leader and member of the coordinating council of Democratic Russia.³⁸⁵ However, his

³⁸² Graziosi, *L’Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 625.

³⁸³ In 1990 Solzhenitsyn wanted Russia to be free of its imperial encumbrances in Central Asia, the Transcaucasus and the Baltic against an empire that was destroying the Russians. Aleksandr Isayevich Solzhenitsyn, *Rebuilding Russia* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1991); Marlène Laruelle, “Russia’s Central Asia Policy and the Role of Russian Nationalism” (Washington D.C.: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2008).

³⁸⁴ FBIS, “JPRS-CAR-91-004 - China - 25 January 1991,” 1991, 5.

³⁸⁵ Peter Rutland, “The Paradoxical Role of Russian Nationalism in a Future Soviet State,” 1991, 8.

influence was minimal compared to Yeltsin who became the ultimate challenger of Gorbachev. Consequently, Gdlyan definitively joined the circle of Yeltsin's supporters and played a prominent role in organizing rallies and public demonstrations. Then, during the great pro-Yeltsin rallies of 10 March 1991, he proclaimed the People's Party of Russia (PPR), a formation with a liberal-democratic program that would be integrated into the democratic coalition supporting the rise of Yeltsin. The PPR

was quite a late attempt by some of the most radical anti-Gorbachev 'democrats' to unite the whole of the 'democratic' movement. Its formation was announced in March 1991 at a rally in support of Boris Yel'tsin by the former special investigator Tel'man Gdlyan and was joined by the RSFSR People's Deputies Aleksey Surkov, Bella Denisenko, Oleg Kalugin, and Vladimir Rebrikov. Its real leader was Gdlyan and its main base was his support groups, which were formed in several cities during his sharp confrontation with CPSU Politburo members over alleged corruption. The strongest organization of this kind, the Committee in Defence of Gdlyan and Ivanov, was formed in Gdlyan's USSR Congress of People's Deputies constituency in the town of Zelenograd, which administratively is a part of Moscow. The party failed to unite all 'democrats' and, like its leader, who failed to prove most of his allegations, gradually lost popularity.³⁸⁶

In this moment of political crisis for the USSR, there was a new final attempt to limit the influence of the former investigators. On 12 July 1991, the Genprokuror USSR Trubin mentioned to Gorbachev that there was sufficient evidence for an accusation to Gdlyan and Ivanov for abuse of power.³⁸⁷ Nevertheless, these charges had no effect. Soon enough, the situation in the country rapidly collapsed during the attempted coup of August 1991 and the subsequent witch hunt. Gdlyan recalls that moment:

On 19 August 1991, the GKChP arrested me because I was an enemy for them, for me it was impossible to negotiate, I have principles, and if I am convinced that it is necessary to do it this way, no one can convince me to change my path. Hence, the chairman of the KGB gave the order to put Gdlyan in prison. [...] They wanted to send me to my 'clients' in Uzbekistan. Then, fortunately, they were defeated and on 22 August I was liberated.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁶ Alexander Lukin, *The Political Culture of the Russian "Democrats"* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 93.

³⁸⁷ PV, 22644, 178, 12 September 1991, p. 1. Feofanov and Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era*, 103.

³⁸⁸ Personal interview with Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan, Moscow, 17 October 2014.

Gdlyan has a personal interpretation of the coup as a mafiya's attempt to take power³⁸⁹ and he often recalled the story of his arrest to prove it. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of this event, Gdlyan was 'rehabilitated' while the Soviet Union was more or less finished. In fact, on 31 August the Genprokuror Trubin disavowed the charges against Gdlyan on the basis of "rehabilitating circumstances" and "absence of [incriminating] elements."³⁹⁰ This news was not welcomed universally, and 83 deputies of the CPDSU made a formal protest, qualifying the amnesty towards such a popular figure³⁹¹ as an opportunistic move.³⁹² On that occasion, also the historical rival of Gdlyan, Viktor Ilyukhin claimed that the decision was:

Illegal and unfounded. I value his [Gdlyan's] action as a treacherous and dishonorable move against the interests of legality and truth [...] dictated by personal and opportunistic considerations [...]. The Genprokuror's decision to rehabilitate Gdlyan and Ivanov was made without knowledge of all the materials of the case and without a personal evaluation of the facts.³⁹³

Nonetheless, in these last days of Soviet Union, Gdlyan's 'rehabilitation' was completed on 4 December 1991, by the decision of the newly established State Council of USSR that declared illegal Gdlyan and Ivanov's dismissal from the prokuratura and obliged the Genprokuror to reinstate them. However, this measure would never be effective and the whole querelle became senseless, in a context of confusion and vacuum of power, declarations of independence and the USSR that was formally dissolved.

³⁸⁹ Timofeev reports that in the aftermath of the putsch there was a series of mysterious suicides, such as Nikolay Kruchina, the Administrator of Affairs of the CC CPSU, and some weeks later his predecessor Georgy Pavlov, who according to Gdlyan was a key member of the Soviet Mafiya. His suicide was, according to Telman Khorenovich, the best way to protect the criminal system where "the best witness is a dead witness". Gdlyan also stated that when he came to arrest Kudrat Ergashev, Yakh'yayev's successor as Uzbek MVD (1979-1983), he was warned by his protectors in the party and killed himself, implementing that "obligatory ritual." Timofeev, *Russia's Secret Rulers*, 87.

³⁹⁰ Izvestiya 3 September 1991, p 8; PV, 22644, 178, 12 September 1991, p. 1.

³⁹¹ According to a survey in September 1991, Gdlyan was the 19th most popular political figure in Moscow, while Yeltsin was first and Gorbachev 17th. The survey found his populist political agenda was highly appreciated by the masses, but much less so by the intelligentsia. Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 28 September 1991, p. 2, FBIS, "JPRS-UFA-91-045 - Soviet Union. Political Affairs 29 OCTOBER 1991," 1991, 1.

³⁹² PV, 22644, 178, 12 September 1991, p. 1.

³⁹³ PV, 22644, 178, 12 September 1991, p. 1.

Also in post-Soviet Russia, Gdlyan and Ivanov continued their political activity. However, their popularity remained marginal and conflicted with the Gaidar and Chernomyrdin entourage. After so many battles together in 1988-1991, they felt betrayed by Yeltsin³⁹⁴ when he dropped them. Thus, in the early 90's Gdlyan tried to lead an opposition force³⁹⁵ but he found only marginal successes fell into oblivion.³⁹⁶ Thus, by the 2000s Gdlyan and Ivanov substantially disappeared from the public scene and the crowd rapidly forgot them.³⁹⁷ Gdlyan entered an angry condition of retirement marked by disenchantment and regret, while Ivanov became a lawyer and disavowed his uncomfortable past. Nowadays, their approach towards the past is totally different.³⁹⁸ A 72-year-old Telman Khorenovich gave me his own idealistic

³⁹⁴ The President of Russian federation Yeltsin promoted the historical Gdlyan and Ivanov rivals Dukhanin and Galkin. As mentioned, the KGB colonel Alexander Dukhanin was inserted in the investigations of the 'Uzbek affair' in October 1988 and had a role in acquitting most of the cases in May 1989. He was appointed by Yeltsin as deputy head of the investigation department of the Russian Ministry of Security. His deputy was Vladimir Galkin, the investigator who replaced Gdlyan in the investigations. Ivanov now regret having supported Yeltsin in 1990-1991, a leader who "destroyed the country." In his words: "We wanted to strengthen the system. But the system did not want us to reinforce it." EG, "Nikolay Ivanov: Skazat' O Churbanove Chto-to Khorosheye Ya Ne Mogu."

³⁹⁵ A memorandum of the Center operative information of the administration of president of Russia, 24 may 1993, stated that "Democrats chose the first concrete candidate Telman Gdlyan (national party of Russia) as deputy prime minister for the fight against corruption." GARF, f. 10115, op. 1, d. 844, l. 2.

³⁹⁶ In December 1991, Gdlyan launched the 'All-Russian Fund of progress, human rights and charity' and in 1992 the political initiative 'New Russia', proposing to run for the elections of the state дума in 1993 in a heterogenous coalition – headed by Bocharov, Gdlyan and Ivanov – with nine other groups. However, the coalition did not get enough signatures. In 1995, Gdlyan's party joined the centrist bloc People's Conscience Party and Gdlyan was elected deputy of the state дума and became a member of the international affairs committee and member of the permanent delegation of the federal assembly of the Russian Federation for relations with the European Parliament.

³⁹⁷ "In Russia, Gdlyan and Ivanov were forgotten and there is no mechanism to maintained the collective memory of them." Personal interview with Lev Dmitrievich Gudkov, Moscow, 24 November 2015.

³⁹⁸ In October 2014, I was able to reach them both. On the phone, Ivanov was annoyed by my curiosity and said he was very busy with work, postponing our interview indefinitely. I am still waiting for his reply. Gdlyan ran both hot and cold. He was very

interpretation of the facts. After so many years, he still appeared convinced of his moralizing mission to cleanse Soviet society of the yoke of a parasitic party mafiya.

Our tragedy was that we supported the preservation of the country, the strengthening of the state, prompting the law and order in the country. This is what we fought for. [...] Our work sought to bring normality and progress to the country, but then, under Gorbachev and Yeltsin, we fell into the chasm. I have often wondered why Gorbachev was so anxious and wanted to destroy the case. The answer was very simple: corruption in the Stavropol krai – where Gorbachev was at the head of the kraikom - was in the same dimensions of what we have seen in Central Asia and in Uzbekistan. And here we can draw a conclusion. Without the participation of Rashidov [such a high level of corruption] would have been impossible. Well, some bribes, you know, are part of the natural dynamic in any country, in any society [...] but corruption on a large scale can only occur when the main leaders are involved.³⁹⁹

Fascinatingly, Gdlyan still defends his instincts for the ‘Kremlin affair’ and the honesty of the job he did. Besides his allegations regarding the ‘Stavropol affair,’ he is still very irritated in recalling Gorbachev’s “political shortsightedness” for implementing a non-gradual transition and probably for not believing in his campaign. Hence, Gdlyan has no words to describe Gorbachev’s attitude in the last years of USSR. Finally, he simply labelled him as a ‘jerk.’ Nevertheless, his frustration with Gorbachev is evidently much less painful than his disappointment with Yeltsin and the betrayed hopes of the ‘90s:

In the new country, there were yet the same potential social dangers of the Soviet Union in the '80s. [...] After Gorbachev, Yeltsin wrecked the country, capturing the people's property and delivering it to all his stakeholders thus creating all these oligarchs from thin air. Everything could absolutely have been saved by purifying the country, not only from corruption but also by the many other deficiencies that were identified during the investigation. [...] Yeltsin, together with the cannibals and oligarchs in the end turned a beautiful country into a desert. [...] This new generation of corrupters in the new Russia plays in figures a hundred times, if not thousands, higher than in the Soviet

reluctant at first to speak with me and he angrily said that he had nothing to add to what he had already published in his books. He felt abandoned by the world. However, his interest was piqued by my curiosity and after three phone calls, he gave me a chance. As was his want, he spent the first 30 minutes of our interview peppering me with questions about myself.

³⁹⁹ Personal interview with Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan, Moscow, 17 October 2014.

Union. And they kept attacking us on television, in the media, to say that [our case] was unfair, that we broke the law and all manner of other nonsense.⁴⁰⁰

Gdlyan appears as nostalgic for Soviet times and apparently still believes in the justice and indeed righteousness of his cause, declaring his sadness in knowing that too often his story was remembered as a ruinous episode in late Soviet history. Nevertheless, he again demonstrated his naïve idealistic Andropovian moralism stating:

I think that when an effective consciousness of the country's leadership arises, as Italy in the early 90's that rallied around the idea of 'Clean Hands', there will be a time when we will see a new investigation team of the younger generation who will go left and right to open the way for progress and to clean the country from corruption, which erodes not only public morals but also individual ones. [...] When the new investigative team will clean the society from all these useless parasites, they will remember the investigation team of Gdlyan-Ivanov and under that flag, the mafia in Russia will be defeated, or at least weakened.⁴⁰¹

The Gdlyan-Ivanov saga was a colorful soap bubble. It was suddenly inflated, thrilled the Soviets in the late 80s, polarized the public opinion and finally burst and disappeared. Today it is still very difficult to give a judgement on this affair and for three years I have personally tried to answer the main question in my mind: who are they?

6.7 Conclusions

So many conflicting labels appeared on the Gdlyan-Ivanov story: Heroes or bandits? Inquisitors or paladins of justice? Professional investigators or charlatans? Mythomaniacs or idealists? Populists or avant-gardists? Careerists or idealists? Crusaders for freedom or fame-thirsty opportunists? etc. To some extent, all of these radical interpretations find some kind of argumentation verifiable in the facts and in the emotion of the Soviet public opinion. Nevertheless, hasty judgments on the case itself are not useful to our task. Rather, we can try to use the "heroes of perestroika" as a test to interpret the first glasnost emphasis⁴⁰² and the final years of Soviet political history.

⁴⁰⁰ Personal interview with Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan, Moscow, 17 October 2014.

⁴⁰¹ Personal interview with Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan, Moscow, 17 October 2014.

⁴⁰² Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 494.

The first issue we should consider is the impact that Gdlyan-Ivanov's questionable methods had on the public emotions. From 1989, many stories appeared in the media discussing the unfairness of the so called 'gdlyanovshchina'⁴⁰³ and the 'spread of terror' in Uzbekistan where Gdlyan and Ivanov were alleged to have repressed thousands of innocents.⁴⁰⁴ In this regard, two facts are clear: compared to the whole Uzbek affair – that effectively involved thousands of people – the number of 'victims' of the Gdlyan-Ivanov team was fairly small and they were just one group in a huge case. It is also true that the way they extorted confessions was clearly questionable and far from ideal in terms of human rights. However, the investigative methods of Gdlyan-Ivanov were part of a greater problem associated with the nature of prosecution in USSR where, as we have seen, the 'queen of evidence' has marked a long history of injustice. Thus, Vaksberg emblematically comments Gdlyan and Ivanov as the "products of that System of 'socialist legality' (to be more exact, illegality), under which people were none too fussy about exact observation of the procedures they disparagingly referred to as 'legal formalism.'"⁴⁰⁵ These two "illegitimate sons of the Andropovian moralizing wave"⁴⁰⁶ are probably just a clear example of the brutal features that were still used in late '80s and they can be interpreted as a single cog within a greater repressive machine that was exposing culprits in advance and demonstrating guilt at any cost. However, Gdlyan and Ivanov were described as 'grand inquisitors' and became the scapegoat of the Soviet totalitarianism.

In parallel, the mythmaking of Gdlyan-Ivanov can be understood in terms of the deep ideological crisis of the system. The liberalization of the information offered to the people a debate on the worst malfeasance in the country, presenting the failures of a system and blaming leaders that were presented as mafiya godfathers. In this context, Gdlyan and Ivanov endorsed a media circus and became the new idols of the crowd. Their media impact

⁴⁰³ This term was invented by the Gdlyan's main rival Viktor Ilyukhin to intend the plethora of abuses that investigators used to extract evidence. Ilyukhin, *Vozhdi i Oborotni. Prervannoye Rassledovaniye*.

⁴⁰⁴ Razzakov recalls that the Tashkent hotel "Schelkovichnaya" became the "main headquarters of the repression, the very mention of which would produce shudders for all inhabitants of the republic, from the ordinary to the very high." Razzakov, *Korruptsiya v Politbyuro: Delo "Krasnogo Uzbeka."*

⁴⁰⁵ Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, 116.

⁴⁰⁶ Personal interview with Rudolf Germanovich Pikhoya, Moscow, 10 December 2015.

was based on showcasing the seized treasures in press conferences, presenting higher officials in handcuffs and publishing 'pulp stories' with a high degree of intriguing fiction, denigration, conspiracy and villains to fight in a 'common battle' that united people in an apparently just cause. This kind of public exposure inexorably followed the kinds of political aims that professional investigators are not supposed to follow. Nevertheless, their great success was inevitably connected with the demands of the people. In the context of glasnost, Gdlyan and Ivanov excited a disillusioned population that, after having lived a whole life under the pretensions of socialist fairness, felt cheated and sympathized with the two investigators for their supposed honesty, courage, integrity, resilience, devotion to duty etc. In the absence of ideological reference points, a part of the Soviet people uncritically believed and defended a myth that, in many respects, became a matter of faith. In the decadent climate of a country adrift, Gdlyan and Ivanov substantially became a symbol and a message of hope for a generation of Soviets that were shouting "By defending Gdlyan and Ivanov, we defend liberty and democracy!"⁴⁰⁷

The 'Gdlyan-Ivanov affair' is also a useful case to read the fragmentation of a party that did not appear anymore as the monolith of the Stalinist times and that was exposed to the internal struggles of its factions. We have seen how Gorbachev probably had a marginal role in the whole story and, especially at the beginning, seemed to welcome Gdlyan's mission, finding in it an element that was functional to legitimize his narrative and, probably, to discredit and marginalize his rivals. Nevertheless, it is possible that some cases had been acquitted in order to discredit Gdlyan's professionalism and the Gensek's approach⁴⁰⁸ inexorably changed in 1990 when he and his family became a target of the Gdlyan-Ivanov allegations. Furthermore, this story could be read as an attempt to discredit the 'conservative' faction represented by Ligachev. In fact, together with the 'Kremlin affair' publicity, in mid-1988 the press started to criticize the 'conservative' line endorsed by Ligachev, inflaming the tones of radical leaders, such as Yeltsin, Afanasiev, Popov and obviously Gdlyan. In many respects, the Gdlyan-Ivanov affair

⁴⁰⁷ John Thor Dahlburg, "2 Crusaders for Justice or 2 Grand Inquisitors? : Soviet Union: The Exploits-and Woes-of the Two Embattled Investigators Have Polarized the Nation.," *Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 1990.

⁴⁰⁸ In October 2015, I tried to approach Gorbachev again in order to have his comments on this story. The answer was negative and, apparently, he seemed to be still irritated to recall these episodes of the latest Soviet years.

recalls the history of divergences between Yeltsin and Ligachev, two leaders that in different ways had been marginalized from 1988. The former was one of the greatest supporters of Gdlyan-Ivanov within the politburo in 1986 and also during the XIX conference after which the front of radicals converged in alleging corruption in the politburo and pointed at Ligachev and figures connected to him. In fact figures such as Usmanhodzhaev,⁴⁰⁹ Osetrov, Smirnov, Mogilnichenko, Ishkov, Bessarabov, Istomin, Ponomarev, Solomentsev⁴¹⁰ etc. were all connected to Ligachev – or worked under his guide at the party-organizational department – and were to some extent connected to the facts in Uzbekistan. In 1988-1991, Yeltsin exploited Gdlyan's popularity and probably involved other members within the politburo⁴¹¹ for his political ambitions. In such way he could keep attacking his historical rival Ligachev. Nevertheless, we have not enough evidence to argue a possible alliance between Gdlyan and Yeltsin aimed at diverting the charges against the 'conservatives.' However, Yeltsin and Gdlyan had a common target identified in the weakest faction of the politburo, and their radical self-martyrization narrative proceeded in parallel and was indirectly related to the low esteem of the Gensek. In this regard, Sakharov comments

Yeltsin's popularity is to some extent dependent on Gorbachev's "unpopularity," since Yeltsin is regarded as the opposition to, and victim of, the existing regime. This is the main explanation of his phenomenal success.⁴¹²

Hence, the Gdlyan-Ivanov affair can be read as a populist issue exploited by Yeltsin and his allies in a struggle against the ruling establishment. In this task, the former investigators also turned to be professional politicians and had a mere politically opportunistic approach on the corruption issues. In fact, their narrative was very craftily formulated in creating 'indirect

⁴⁰⁹ On 27 June 1988, Usmanhodzhaev wrote an anxiously-worded letter to Ligachev requesting for help against non-specified people who wanted to destroy him. Ligachev rejects criticism about patronage and stated that in 1983, the Usmanhodzhaev appointment as FS CPUz was supported by Chernenko and Gorbachev and confirmed by the politburo. Nevertheless, his role in directing the organizational department in the CC CPSU endorsing the 'moralization' and the *kranii desant* is hardly deniable. Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 242.

⁴¹⁰ According to Gdlyan, these were Ligachev's affiliates. GARF, f. 9656, op. 4, d. 90, ll. 88.

⁴¹¹ According to Ligachev, Yakovlev was the only politburo member who had a normal relation with the 'traitor' Yeltsin also after the 28th congress. *Ibid.*, 235.

⁴¹² Sakharov, *Moscow and Beyond, 1986-1989*, 115.

impressions,⁴¹³ inflaming the crowd, garnering support, and avoiding any legal implications. The clearest example was the 'Ligachev affair',⁴¹⁴ which was legally inconsistent but politically powerful. In this regard, the former 'number two' of the USSR underlines the quality and selection of words in Gdlyan-Ivanov speeches, recalling typical propaganda language.⁴¹⁵ Also Pikhoya commented the Gdlyan-Ivanov provocative narrative as a form of

⁴¹³ They slandered their 'suspects' in a very crafty and political way that had no legal implications and could be too difficult to sue: they say that people were implicated, but they never used direct accusations stating that some people were mafia members or bribetakers. Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 246.

⁴¹⁴ There was no evidence of the Ligachev bribes. In this regard, Ryzhkov comments: "[In the USSR] there were also some bribes and corruption. They accused Ligachev who took bribes, money from Uzbeks, brought him a suitcase full of money and so on. I remember the time I was visiting some oblast, perhaps in Novgorod and of course the people gathered in the streets and everywhere they asked me the same question: did Ligachev take bribes? Because Ligachev was a famous person, a member of the Politburo, the whole country knew him and there were lots of pictures around on all sides. I clearly told everyone that it was a lie. I would not say that my relations with Ligachev were without clouds. We had friction on some issues, but I am convinced that he is an honest man, an honorable man, and would never take money or anything else. I told everyone that it was a lie, specially planted in order to cast a shadow on the leadership of our country's party. I am absolutely convinced that he had nothing to do with this case, with all his defects he was an honest man." Personal interview with Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov, Moscow, 22 December 2014. Nevertheless, it is possible to think that he had covered, shielded or sheltered from exposure some corrupt members of the nomenklatura and even used his position to interfere in the prokuratura work or that he also put his clients in the higher posts of the nomenklatura. On this regard, Vaksberg recalls: "Ligachev had hardly taken up his key position in the Kremlin leadership and command of party appointment than he transferred his chums to Moscow with him. They amazed his colleagues in the capital by their complete incompetence. From Tomsk he brought to the capital Vladimir Karnaukhov and put him in charge of a trade organization; he appointed the former director of the Tomsk psychiatric hospital Anatoly Potapov – a totally illiterate petty bureaucrat – Minister of Health of the Russian Federation. It is clear that they would not have given Ligachev any bribes – he simply needed faithful servants around him. Thank God the reign of one of these 'Vikings' was not a long one. Potapov did not get into the new Russian government. But Karnaukhov managed to keep his grip and even got promotion: he became the deputy president of the executive committee of the Moscow city soviet." Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, 225.

⁴¹⁵ Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 227.

political leverage that “offered imaginative/science fiction versions of the facts and that have nothing to do with justice.”⁴¹⁶ In this regard, another witness of those times, Nikolai Ryzhkov, offers his conclusions:

During glasnost' [...] information on thefts of very large amounts of money, jewelry etc. increasingly appeared and became available to people. Then, when democrats began to struggle with the official power they, of course, used this issue as a tremendous hit on the central government. They showed that everything was depraved and so on. So, at the end of the 80s, not only Uzbekistan, but everything has been made available to the public. [...] Gdlyan and Ivanov were the people who were used in the fight against the Communist Party and against the leadership of the country. Thus, they grew and claimed some more facts to hit [Soviet power] harder. [...] Gdlyan and Ivanov were used, and they wanted to be used. [...Nevertheless], the law enforcement bodies needed glasnost as well and it was important to provide a [free] information. But is not possible to say everything. [...] They had to do their duty as investigators, but they started throwing [mud] and to tell the facts. They became famous figures in the country and they loved it. [...] They were a catalyst of the internal contradictions of the country.⁴¹⁷

Thus, Gdlyan and Ivanov became just a political megaphone, a folklore arm and a populistic tool in the hands of the ‘democrats.’ Nevertheless, they just represented a smaller piece in the Yeltsin’s most ambitious plans and when the latter came to power, both Gdlyan and Ivanov were cannibalized and repudiated by the same forces they had supported.

A conclusive point is whether the ‘Gdlyan-Ivanov affair’ gave a fatal hit to the credibility and legitimacy of Soviet institutions and contributed to Soviet collapse. For sure, corruption is a crucial indicator to determine the health of a society. In this regard, Gdlyan comments:

an Uzbek affair alone was enough to determine the fall of the state [...] the Soviet leadership had underestimated the devastating consequences of the corruption that had been revealed. We had repeatedly warned that this could lead to very sad and devastating consequences for the state and the Communist Party. [...] Corruption was a catalyzer of Soviet collapse [...because], at the end, it led to consequences that touched the deepest interests of the State, causing permanent damage. The Union collapsed and one of the reasons was that corruption has covered it from top to bottom.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁶ Personal interview with Rudolf Germanovich Pikhoya, Moscow, 10 December 2015.

⁴¹⁷ Personal interview with Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov, Moscow, 22 December 2014.

⁴¹⁸ Personal interview with Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan, Moscow, 17 October 2014.

Nevertheless, the Gdlyan-Ivanov affair in itself was not a factor that directly determined the crisis of the Soviet Union. The regime would have inevitably collapsed because its systemic inefficiencies and the revivals of the various nationalities. However, we can read this story as an emblematic symptom of a more general crisis of the Soviet Union, discrediting its system of governance represented by a party in agony, triggering the people and showing that something was going wrong with the potentiality of transforming the anger feelings in a real factor of revolution. In every republic, national elites realized that they could use these symptoms to realize their political goals, presenting them as the real reasons of crisis. To some extent national elites – such as Yeltsin and Karimov – had a similar strategy, presenting symptoms as effective factors and turning them into tools of destruction – or even distraction – in order to justify the split from USSR.

7 LEGITIMATION THROUGH SELF-VICTIMIZATION

To restore the good name of the great person that I have served - Sharaf Rashidov - who contributed to our lovely Uzbekistan, exalting it to the highest levels in the world¹ - Karimov

We have concluded the fifth chapter, splitting the story between a Moscow and a Tashkent based perspective. In the sixth chapter, we have analyzed the results of the ‘muscovite’ Uzbek cotton affair and its pivotal ‘Gdlyan-Ivanov saga.’ In this final chapter,² we want to evaluate the effects of the Uzbek cotton affair on the affirmation of Islom Karimov’s leadership; on the transition of the UzSSR towards independence; and the legacies of the ‘Uzbek cotton affair’ in the post-Soviet context.

7.1 A critical period of transformations

In the spring 1989, Uzbekistan was about to face one of the most turbulent moments in its history. At this stage, the cotton affairs season could already be considered to be over, and many judicial cases were acquitted and reconsidered – in parallel with the delegitimizing of Gdlyan and Ivanov investigations and their methods. Nonetheless, the republic was entering a period of dangerous socio-economic crisis,³ exacerbated by the rising nationalism and the reappearance of alternative ideologies and traditional values. As mentioned in the first introductory chapter, the Iranian revolution and the war in Afghanistan inexorably implied a series of unintentional spillovers in the neighbor Soviet republics. From the 1970s, radical Islam was

¹ Personal inscription of Karimov in the book of signs at the Monumental Museum Sh. Rashidov in Jizzakh.

² This chapter is largely based on an article that has been accepted for publication in *Cahiers du Monde Russe* for 2017.

³ In May 1989, in the new economic framework of perestroika, Ligachev recalled that despite the scarcity of food, Uzbeks were bartering fruits for cements with Siberian enterprises. Yegor Kuzmich Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev’s Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 204.

widely diffused in some parts of Uzbek society where, despite the fact that there was only a small number of formal religious institutions, there were several “underground religious circles” - in particular in the Ferghana Valley - protected by local communities. A relevant one was the circle of Hakimjon qori Vosiev Margilan, close to the disciple of the Salafi tradition⁴ that would further emerge in these years of liberalization of religion - since 1989 the pattern in promoting atheism changed and Islam was basically accepted⁵ - with new opportunities for association⁶ and self-financing.⁷

Ahmed Rashid remarks that “ethnic nationalism, anti-Russian feeling and Islam [reemerged in Uzbekistan] as a cultural identifying factor against Russification”⁸ that, to extends large extent, was imposed with new vigor during the cotton affairs. New political formations became the evidence of the changing times where the CPUz was inexorably losing its influence on the Uzbek society. Among these new formations, the political movement *Birlik*⁹ - a

⁴ Martha Brill Olcott, “Roots of Radical Islam in Central Asia,” *Carnegie Papers - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, no. 77 (2007): 10.

⁵ Sarah Kendzior, “Redefining Religion: Uzbek Atheist Propaganda in Gorbachev-Era Uzbekistan,” *Nationalities Papers* 34, no. 5 (2006).

⁶ Finally, on 31 July 1989 the prokuratura USSR approved the law project on rights of association of citizens of the UzSSR. GARF, f. 9654, op. 1, d. 121.

⁷ “Both Andijan and Namangan developed a strong, politicized Islamic presence. In Andijan, politicized Islam centered on Abduhvali qori and the Wahhabis, but in Namangan both Wahhabi and radical (but doctrinally more traditional) Hanafi and Sufi clerics were also highly politicized and played the more critical role.” Olcott, “Roots of Radical Islam in Central Asia,” 18.

⁸ Ahmed Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia, Islam or Nationalism?* (London: Zed Books, 1995), 56.

⁹ *Birlik* (unity) started as a small group of nationalist intellectuals from the Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences and Tashkent State University. It was founded on November 11, 1988 by members of the intelligentsia - most prominently scientists Abdurahim Polatov and Shuhrat Ismatullaev, the former MP Pulat Akhun and poet Muhammad Solih, and claimed to have 15,000 members. Their first point was to make Uzbek the state language, even raising social, economic, health and ecological issues, criticizing the cotton monoculture and the exploitation policies from Moscow. *Birlik* was claiming democratization, human rights, freedom of speech and a wide autonomy for Uzbek SSR but it did not support the full independence of Uzbekistan. Even if *Birlik* was very popular in the late 80s, it was very fragmented and strongly opposed by the authorities of Tashkent, which accused the movement of fomenting ethnic unrest. Fragmentation and tensions among *Birlik* leader led to an official split on February 20, 1990 when Solih’s group founded the new party Erk. Muhammad Solih became the leader of Erk

zealous group of Uzbek nationalists that in September 1989 founded the homonymic party and that was later banned – emerged from civil society. It, formed a first democratic opposition and organized several mass demonstrations for establishing Uzbek as the only state language in the UzSSR. As in the rest of USSR, language became the primary issue in the nationalists' agenda.

7.1.1 A tense inter-ethnic coexistence

The first signs of inter-ethnic intolerance were evidently manifested against Russians and generally against the Slavs. In Moscow, despite the cotton affair to some extent contributing towards a sort of 'fatigue by empire' in Russian nationalists¹⁰, there were fortunately no significant clashes between Russians and Uzbeks in the republic. In fact, the evidence of a strong inflow of migrants from Central Asia – as would happen a decade later with thousands of seasonal

and criticized his former group, Birlik, for getting carried away with public demonstrations which could lead to violence. Erk proposed itself as a systemic party that could drive the transition of Uzbekistan. Its agenda was calling for independence, a democratic multi-party system, a liberal market economy, privatizations of state enterprises and an improvement of human rights situation in Uzbekistan. Erk was a tolerated intellectual branch that run out of Birlik that renounced demonstrations and wanted to get results by parliamentary means. Erk was running, as everybody else, the wave of ecologism and the environmental causes of Uzbekistan demanding the end of cotton monoculture and a new inflow of water to the Aral sea, and calling for the UzSSR autonomy within USSR. Independence seemed to be a goal to be reached in the mid-term. Just before his election at the presidency of Uzbekistan, Karimov revealed to Matlock that he did not want to register Birlik because "it did not deserve registration because it had been taken over by irresponsible elements who organized demonstrations that could result in rioting." Daria Fane, "Ethnicity and Regionalism in Uzbekistan. Maintaining Stability through Authoritarian Control," in *Ethnic Conflict in Post-Soviet World. Case Studies and Analysis*, ed. L Drobizheva et al. (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 283; William Fierman, "Political Development in Uzbekistan. Democratization?," in *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, ed. K Dawisha and B Parrot (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 372; Idil Tunçer-Kılavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan* (London & New York: Routledge, 2014); Jack F Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1995), 394–95.

¹⁰ Andrea Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), 495.

workers (*otkhodniks*) crowding the main Russian cities¹¹ - was not perceived yet, and Russian ultranationalists kept their focus on other victims of their racial hatred (as the Caucasian and Jews) in the late 80s. The national press started to report episodes and publish letters by the people referring to the rising environment for potential inter-ethnic violence,¹² while the tension remained high and the situation seemed to explode at any moment. In Uzbekistan, since the aforementioned Pakhtakor events in 1969, there were no other significant episodes of violence towards the communities of Russian settlers that had been established in the WW2 period.¹³ However, the tensions between the two self-excluding communities of Uzbeks and Russians remained high, and were further exacerbated due to the differences of social framework.

Despite the fact that Russians were clearly overrepresented in the higher apparatus of the Party, they were underrepresented in the governmental institutions¹⁴ - with the exception of the 'strategic' sectors that were directly managed by Moscow officials - and basically out of the rural areas. As mentioned, Russians were integrated in the sovietized urban framework¹⁵ and

¹¹ Juri Plusnin et al., *Wandering Workers: Mores, Behavior, Way of Life, and Political Status of Domestic Russian Labor Migrants* (Stuttgart: ibidem, 2015).

¹² Ogonek received many letters of Soviet citizens scared for the violent interethnic environment and the spread of racism and antisemitism. Christopher Cerf et al., *Small Fires: Letters from the Soviet People to Ogonyok Magazine, 1987-1990* (New York: Summit Books, 1990), 211, 215.

¹³ Since the colonial period, "Russians arrived in Uzbekistan in five large migration flows. The first is tied in with the colonization of Turkestan in the 1870s. By 1912 there were 210,306 Russians living in Uzbekistan. This migration had both political and economic causes: at the beginning of the century the importance of Turkestan as the principal cotton-growing region supplying raw material for the textile industry of Russia began to grow (in 1915 the percentage of Central Asia in the total import of cotton to Russia reached 77.7 percent). This necessitated the creation of local production facilities for the primary processing of raw materials. Since the indigenous population lacked the necessary skills, industrial workers from Russia were brought in. Four other migration flows of Russians occurred in the Soviet period, all connected with the creation in Uzbekistan of industries, transportation facilities, and the expansion of building and assembly operations." Sergei Nikolaev, "Russians in Uzbekistan," in *The New Russian Diaspora: Russian Minorities in the Former Soviet Republics*, ed. Vladimir Shlapentokh, Munir Sendich, and Emil Payin (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), 108.

¹⁴ In the SS UzSSR they were represented by 4% of the deputies. *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁵ In a city with 2 million inhabitants as Tashkent was in 1989, more than a third of people were Russians. Marco Buttino, *Samarqanda. Storie in Una Città Dal 1945 a Oggi* (Rome: Viella, 2015), 24.

basically excluded from the traditional and Uzbek rural areas. Hence, a balance between the coexistent societies would be responsive to new socio-political events and demographic trends.

In fact, the demographic gaps between Russians and Uzbeks, and between cities and rural areas, would be further exacerbated in the period 1979-1989, during which period the population of UzSSR rose by 29%, reaching 19.906 million inhabitants. In this period, the share of Uzbeks rose from 68.7% to 71.4% of the republic population, while the share of Russians dropped from 10.8% of 1979 to 8.3% of 1989 because of the lower natality rates and the first massive emigrations from the peripheral UzSSR to the central regions of the country.

In an effective context of non-forced segregation, Russians had specific features¹⁶ and were basically not integrated into Uzbek society for cultural and especially for linguistic reasons. Not only Russians but also other minority communities were substantially marginalized in the Uzbek framework because of the poor knowledge of the national language, surviving in the very Sovietized (and Russified) part of the republic society. Hence, the share of Non-natives claiming fluency in Uzbek language was 12.4% in 1970 and 13.5% in 1979 including Russians; and without Russians respectively 17.8 and 20.2.¹⁷ In parallel, also the number of Russian speakers dropped from 50 to 25% in less than 10 years, especially in the rural areas¹⁸ and Russian remained as a *lingua franca* between natives and the other minorities.¹⁹

¹⁶ "The immigrant and local Russian society showed different attitudes in work preferences, in family and reproductive strategies, in the housing choices, and in the consumption. The Russians in their formally dominant role were linked to Soviet official rules more than others. This it was due to their employment status and their relatively weak social roots, which made them lack strong external or transversal solidarity towards the state." Ibid., 35.

¹⁷ Robert J. Kaiser, "Nations and Homelands in Soviet Central Asia," in *Geographic Perspectives on Soviet Central Asia*, ed. Robert Lewis (London & New York: Routledge, 1992), 292.

¹⁸ Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 603–4.

¹⁹ To evaluate the diffusion of languages, we can examine the print run of newspapers published in Tashkent: despite the share of newspapers in Uzbek were inexorably the majoritarian - *Lenin Uchkuni* had a print run of 1,008,380 copies; *Sovet Uzbekistoni* - 880,462; *Uzbekiston Adabiyeti Va Sanati* - 579,245; *Yesh Leninchi* - 509,233; *Ukituvchilar Gazetasi* - 227,437; *Toshkent Okshomi* - 139,035; *Kishlok Khakikati* - 121,587; *Uzbekiston Fizkulturachisi* - 65,830 and *Tashkent Khakikati* - 55,964 – the publications in Russian

Ethnic composition of the UzSSR in 1989²⁰

	Population (thousands)		Variation (%)	Percent of total	
	1979	1989		1979	1989
Uzbeks	10,569	14,142	133.8	68.7	71.4
Russians	1,666	1,653	99.3	10.8	8.3
Tajiks	595	934	157	3.9	4.7
Kazakhs	620	808	130.3	4.0	4.1
Karakalpaks	298	412	138.3	1.9	2.1
Tatars	531	468	88.1	3.5	2.4
Crimean Tatars	118	189	160.6	0.8	1.0
Kirgiz	142	175	123	0.9	0.9
Koreans	163	183	112.3	1.1	0.9
Ukrainians	114	153	134.6	0.7	0.8
Turkmen	92	122	131.7	0.6	0.6
Turks	49	106	--	0.3	0.5
Jews	74	65	88.6	0.5	0.3
Armenians	42	51	119.3	0.3	0.3
Uyghurs	29	36	122.9	0.2	0.2
Germans	40	40	100.7	0.3	0.2
Azerbaijanis	60	44	74.3	0.4	0.2
Bashkir	26	35	134.6	0.2	0.2
Other	161	194	120.5	1.1	1.0
Total Population	15,389	19,810	128.7	100	100

were over-representing the mere share of Russian speakers - *Pravda Vostoka* - 270,463; *Vechernyy Tashkent* - 168,920; *Tashkentskaya Pravda* - 48,609; *Komsomolets Uzbekistana* - 37,789; *Frunzevets* - 27,783; *Fizkulturnik Uzbekistana* - 20,836; *Selskaya Pravda* - 16,099 – while other minority (but relevant) language groups were under-represented: in Tajik *Khakikati Uzbekistoni* had a print run of only 29,861 copies; and in the Crimean Tatar language *Lenin Bayrogy* - 22,763. FBIS, "JPRS-UPA-90-015 - Soviet Union. Political Affairs - 22 MARCH 1990," 1990, 63–64.

²⁰ Nancy Lubin, "Implications of Ethnic and Demographic Trends," in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 49–50.

Demographic trend per region of the UzSSR (1979-1989)²¹	Population Censed (12 January 1989) in thousands			% variation (1979-1989)	1989 in %		1979 in %	
	Total	Urban	Rural		Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Uzbek SSR	19,906	8,106	11,800	129	41	59	41	59
Kara-Kalpak ASSR	1,214	584	630	135	48	52	42	58
Andizhan Oblast	1,728	559	1,169	128	32	68	29	71
Bukhara Oblast	1,141	397	744	129	35	65	33	67
Kashka-Darya Oblast	1,594	415	1,179	142	26	74	25	75
Namagan Oblast	1,475	550	925	134	37	63	34	66
Samarkand Oblast	2,778	926	1,852	129	33	67	42	58
Surkhan-Darya Oblast	1,255	245	1,010	140	19	81	19	81
Syr-Darya Oblast	1,316	407	909	137	31	69	29	71
Tashkent (city)	2,079	2,079	-	116	100	-	100	-
Tashkent Oblast	2,157	958	1,199	120	44	56	43	57
Fergana Oblast	2,153	703	1,450	127	33	67	33	67
Khorezm Oblast	1,016	283	733	136	28	72	20	80

²¹ FBIS, "JPRS-UPA-89-031 - Soviet Union. Political Affairs - 19 MAY 1989," 1989, n.d., 18-20.

As mentioned, a key feature of Uzbek identity can be found in its 'rurality.' Conversely, the Russian population of Uzbekistan remained mainly urban²² and outside of rural society.²³ This Slavic 'urban dimension' gave them a specific role within the industrial and administrative context, and consequently a different social status. According to Nikolaev,

the Russians' predominantly urban environment gave them the advantages of better education and social services (health services, culture, housing, etc.) and also higher wages than average, since in Uzbekistan wages in cities and towns (especially in industry) were always higher than in the countryside. With occupational characteristics typical of the urban environment, Russians concentrated mostly around the middle stratum of the social structure: engineers, technicians, and managerial personnel in industrial enterprises; workers in industrial, power engineering, transportation, and construction establishments; skilled workers in the same establishments; workers of average skill levels without a specialized education; employees in educational, cultural, and other such facilities, and so forth. This means that the professional culture of Russians in Uzbekistan, by incorporating industrial labor skills absent among the Uzbeks, has promoted Russians to second place in the ethnic hierarchy after Uzbeks.²⁴

Nevertheless, since the mid-70s the communities of Slav settlers started to come back from Uzbekistan in search for better opportunities in the center of the Soviet state and also because of a general and diffused feeling of remoteness and isolation within a society that appeared in its exclusivity. Then, during the 'cotton affairs' – a season that to many extents seemed to have interrupted the korenization process – further tensions were exacerbated between Uzbeks – that in the rest of USSR were mocked of being part of 'mafiya'²⁵ – and Russian settlers and the situation risked to degenerate into

²² The share (in %) of urban and rural dwellers comprising the total Russian population of Uzbekistan was respectively 89.1 and 10.9 in 1970; 93.4 and 6.6 in 1979; and 94.8 and 5.2 in 1989. Nikolaev, "Russians in Uzbekistan," 112.

²³ Roy comments: "Russian cadres and representatives of security bodies were to be found only in the district capitals; kolkhoz and village soviets were entirely in the hands of local apparatchiks, functioning on a logic of group solidarity and not state control." Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia. The Creation of Nations* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 106.

²⁴ Nikolaev, "Russians in Uzbekistan," 112.

²⁵ Many Central Asian writers as Muhammed Salih, Otkir Hashimov and Timur Pulatov referred to the cotton affairs describing the discriminations perceived by the Uzbeks. The first two described corruption as a natural response of the population to survive

racial hatred among the two communities.²⁶ Donald Carlisle commented that a “reactive national identity” was “stimulated and crystallized” as a result of the cotton scandals,²⁷ while also the Russian communities often took further distance from Uzbeks, manifesting their prejudices towards Uzbeks²⁸ - the third largest ethnic group in USSR after Russians and Ukrainians.²⁹ As well, a larger parts of the Uzbek intellectual community joined the nationalist cause in denouncing the ‘cotton affairs’ as a national humiliation, accusing or perceiving Russians to be ‘slave-owners’ and ‘colonizers’³⁰ usurping resources,

and to rebel against the negation of the korenization. The latter described the situation of some Uzbek children in the pioneer camps where they had been named “children of thieves and bribe-takers.” As well, the Russian writer Fyodor Razzakov recalls how Uzbeks were mocked in public events and in football matches for the cotton affairs. See also Boris Z. Rumer, “Central Asia’s Cotton Economy and Its Costs,” in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 81; Fedor Razzakov, *Delo, Vzorvavshee SSSR* (Moskva: Algoritm, 2012). Some years ago, I was discussing this story with a Russian friend of mine, and he commented: “at that time, Churbanov was mocked as being part of the ‘Uzbek mafiya’ and some people even referred to him as ‘Yuri Churkanov’ [laughs].” Although indicative, this racist joke was not funny.

²⁶ Due to the Gdlyan-Ivanov affair, Uzbekistan had been already exposed as a blackhole of the country. It is emblematic that just after establishing the commission to evaluate Gdlyan and Ivanov, on 1 June 1989, the deputy Evgeniy Evtushenko spoke in the CPDSU about the signs of intolerance recently emerged as well as the racist nicknames diffused to insult the other ethnic groups and the risks for destabilization. He referred the diffused use of words as *khokhlyandya* (for Ukrainians), *katsap* (for Russians), *zhid* (for Jews), *armyashka* (for Armenians), *chuchmek* (for Caucasians), *chukhonets* (for Baltics) and *katsoshka* and then he proposing to insert in the constitution against a new article racist discrimination. GARF, f. 9654, op. 1, d. 40A, l. 6.

²⁷ Donald S. Carlisle, “Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev,” in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation*, ed. William Fierman (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 117.

²⁸ In 1985, Wixman interviewed several Russian mothers who encouraged their children to not frequent the “dirty and wild” Uzbeks. These settlers were so presenting the natives as a population of liars who remained “violent, not honest, mistreat their wives, and do not learn Russian well” characterizing this fact as a sign of their backwardness and inferiority. Ronald Wixman, “Ethnic Attitudes and Relations in Modern Uzbek Cities,” in *Soviet Central Asia. The Failed Transformation*, ed. William Fierman (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 161–63.

²⁹ Edward A. Allworth, *The Modern Uzbeks: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present : A Cultural History* (Stanford: Hoover Press, 1990), VII.

³⁰ In a speech at CPDSU, the deputy Adil Yaqubov, head of the Uzbekistan Writer's Union, compared the Soviet regime with the 19th century slave-owners in the USA,

opportunities and better living standards: basically, 30% of Uzbeks perceived a monopoly of Russians within the party and state agencies.³¹ Thus, in late 80s, Uzbeks perceived Russians as the second hostile group in the republic (after the Armenians). Nikolaev commented:

It should be pointed out that especially hostile toward Russians are residents of those regions where interethnic competition for jobs is greatest. This is borne out by the following data (percent of the Uzbeks who have negative attitudes toward Russians): Tashkent—14.3 percent; Samarkand—13.7 percent; Nukus—2.6 percent; Andijan—12.8 percent; Fergana—7.6 percent; Karshi—33.3 percent; and Urgench—10.2 percent. This circumstance has led to the departure of Russians not only from the countryside but from towns and cities as well.³²

Nikolaev keeps arguing:

The organizers of the survey “Russians in the USSR: Realities and Stereotypes” (1991) made an attempt to find out, among other things, how 1,008 respondents felt about the threat of interethnic conflicts in Uzbekistan. Of this number 88.9 percent of the Russian respondents experienced interethnic tension at their place of residence. 55.6 percent at their place of work or study, and 27.8 percent with close friends. Among the causes of interethnic tension cited were infringement upon the rights of the non-Uzbek nationalities, the Uzbeks' dislike of the culture of other peoples, the aggressiveness of members of certain nationalities (50 percent), and the outcome of the struggle for power.³³

The perception of danger, discrimination and difficulties in social integration led to the mass emigration of Slavs in the 90s - in the period 1991-2008, 900.000 ethnic Russian returnees left Uzbekistan³⁴ - bringing the

suggesting that there, at least, the “slave-owners were savvy enough to make sure that their slaves were well fed and strong.” Even the Uzbek poet Muhammad Salih claimed than in pre-revolutionary Russia a peasant could receive for a kilogram of cotton enough payment to purchase a cow, but now he receives just for 15 boxes of matches. This figure was exaggerated and even contested by the Uzbekistan Environmental Protection Society that said that in prerevolutionary Russia it was possible to buy a kg of meat. Rumer, “Central Asia’s Cotton Economy and Its Costs,” 83–86.

³¹ Nikolaev, “Russians in Uzbekistan,” 116.

³² *Ibid.*, 114.

³³ *Ibid.*, 113.

³⁴ Lyudmila Maksakova, “Uzbekistan v Sisteme Mezhdunarodnykh Migratsiy,” in *Postsovetskiye Transformatsii: Otrazheniye v Migratsiyakh*, ed. Zh.A.; Vitkovskaya

Russians to currently represent less than 2% of the Uzbekistani population (about 600,000 individuals). Nevertheless, despite the classical tensions between the (self)perceived 'colonizers' and 'colonized,' the victims of interethnic violence in Uzbekistan would not be Russians but another Turkic, Muslim and non-native group that was living in the most agricultural intensive and most densely populated area of the entire Central Asia: the Ferghana valley.

7.1.2 The Ferghana pogroms

The new climate of intolerance, the rise of nationalisms and the crisis of the CPSU that had to face the first clear signs of separatism created a warning scenario. In this turbulent context, the first mass inter-ethnic clashes appeared also in Uzbekistan: the most serious episodes happened in the Ferghana Valley in June 1989, when a market discussion for the price of strawberries among Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks³⁵ degenerated into pogroms, ethnic tensions and a civil conflict that killed and injured hundreds of people: the massacres began on 3 June in the cities of Margilan, Ferghana and Kuvasai (where almost 3,000 Meskhetian Turks lived) and the republican government took measures to stem violence: a commission headed by the chairman of the SM UzSSR G. Kh. Kadyrov was established and the presidium of the SS UzSSR issued a decree that imposed curfew in the oblast beginning at 22,00 hours on 4 June. The situation remained tense but seemed to have stabilized. Nevertheless, on 7 June, the pogroms again resumed and subsequently spread to the neighbor city of Kokand and to Rishtanskiy, Uzbekistanskiy, and Kirovskiy rayons, involving also Namangan on 11 June and the Osh oblast in Kirghizstan defining a situation of pogroms that involved actively and passively the communities of Uzbeks of the Ferghana Valley that even reached Tashkent and lasted for almost three weeks.³⁶

Zayonchkovskaya G.S. (Moskva: Tsentr migratsionnykh issledovaniy, Institut narodnokhozyaystvennogo prognozirovaniya RAN, Adamant", 2009), 328.

³⁵ "The violence led to a massive investigation involving more than two hundred law enforcement officials resulting in 265 arrests and 120 cases brought to trial." Lawrence P Markowitz, *State Erosion. Unlootable Resources and Unruly Elites in Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 59.

³⁶ The attacks continued even against those Meskhetians who were evacuated to Tashkent in the districts of Buka and Parkent. Nevertheless, the drama of Meskhetians did not finish then. They were displaced in Russia and other regions but they had difficulties to return to Georgia where their settlements had been occupied by

Mass demonstrations were stopped by the security forces in order to avoid the exacerbation of violence against non-native minorities, schools, transports, government infrastructures and even local communities. The subsequent deployment of 12,000 MVD USSR troops³⁷ to quell the riots and normalize the situation in Ferghana Valley ended in increasing the number of civilian losses while the Soviet government organized the escort, the evacuation and the displacement of Meskhetian refugees in the central regions of Russia.³⁸

On 13 June, Nishanov was in Moscow and arrived in Ferghana together with the head of the Soviet government Ryzhkov³⁹ and the CC CPSU secretary

Georgians since 1943. Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 240.

³⁷ Prot. 15/1989, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 1587, d. 1509, l. 67.

³⁸ In two months only, from the 117,600 Meskhetian Turks registered in the republic (1989 census), 52,875 people had been displaced out of Uzbekistan and settled in the Krasnodar and Stavropol kraia, in the Moscow, Orel-Kursk, Voronezh, Belgorod, Smolensk oblast and even in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Kirghizstan. Prot. 90/1989, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 158, d. 1525, l. 20. Sakharov recalled his disappointment for this solution that sounded as a "second exile" and argues his conviction that such pogroms had been well organized by somebody who wanted that massacre to blame some other groups. Probably, the famous Soviet scientist was right. Andrei Sakharov, *Moscow and Beyond, 1986-1989* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 137–40.

³⁹ Ryzhkov recalls that episode: " Me and Nishanov - who was in Moscow - went to Ferghana to somehow stop the violence that was there. When I arrived there, I had a very heavy and painful impression. The tragedy of Meskhetian Turks [in Central Asia] started in 1943, when they were deported from their historical homeland. It seems that the reasons for this policy are attributable to Mr. Beria who said that they were, evidently, a 'fifth column.' Thus, [Meskhetian] people have been deported. I honestly do not know what they were saying against the Soviet regime. For the other peoples, I do not want to say, but I know that many of those who have suffered [of the repressions] deserved it for some extent. They opposed the Soviet regime, they killed our prisoners, our wounded, and so on. In this case, I cannot say anything, I just do not know. Everything happened in an unclear way. They appeared in Uzbekistan, Uzbeks have accepted these [Meskhetian] Turks very well and, as they say, have 'shared the last bread.' They have helped to build houses, find a job and so on. Therefore, [Meskhetian] Turks said that Uzbeks were their brothers, very nice and good [people]. Then, the years have passed. Turks lived not bad, had good houses, they became professionals and specialized in vegetable cultivation. Well, someone did not like this, and the young people who appeared under the effects of narcotics did the massacre. Over a hundred people [were killed by a crowd that] stabbed and burned people, and so on. when I was there, I met with representatives of Meskhetian Turks. The meeting lasted for some 3-4 hours, I tried to convince them that they need to go to the central

Chebrikov in order to speak with the representatives of the local communities, calm the people's tempers down and avoid any further degeneration of mass violence.⁴⁰ At that time, it was interesting to see how the communist political class did not understand the scope of the events, considering the ethnic tension in the same way of violence due to hooligans, criminals and troublemakers.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the official count of the victims appeared to be a war report.

In the aftermath of the crisis, Nishanov gave a speech at the meeting of the republic party-economic aktiv (15 June 1989) where he referred that during the tragic events in the Ferghana Valley, 93 people died (of them 64 were Meskhetian Turks and 17 Uzbeks), more than 1000 people were injured or maimed, including 173 military personnel of the USSR MVD and 57 policemen, one of whom died. More than 700 homes and other buildings and 168 transportation vehicles were burned. 30 criminal proceedings had been instituted, about 200 people arrested of whom 20 were suspects in particularly serious crimes. A total of 600 people who took part to one degree or another in the commission of serious crimes had been identified.⁴² The FS CPUz gave a vague explanation of the event referring to

scuffles that arose between groups of persons belonging to the indigenous and the Meskhetine Turk nationalities were intentionally distorted and skillfully utilized by corrupt and criminal elements in order to accomplish their own dirty political aims. An artificial inflammation of inter-ethnic differences, specially organized massive disorders and excesses by shameless young thugs, accompanied by pogroms, arson, murders, by violence and acts of vandalism,

regions of Russia, where we will give them housing and the possibility to sue [the violent facts]. At a first moment, they did not want [to accept this proposal], but then I convinced them by saying that they cannot stay here and that we [the Soviet government] were not able to put a soldier around each person to guard. Nobody could give the guarantee that things like that would not happen anymore [if they remained in Ferghana]. Hence, they finally decided to go away, we brought military transport aircraft, waiting at the airport [to embark the refugees]. Thus, they were taken away. [...] We cannot say that Turks or Uzbeks were guilty. I know that when they came in Uzbekistan, Uzbeks accepted and helped them. How can we blame all the people of Uzbekistan [for these facts]? These things happened at the end of the Soviet Union." Personal interview with Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov, Moscow, 22 December 2014.

⁴⁰ PV, 22006, 140, 15 June 1989, p. 1.

⁴¹ RGASPI, fond 17, op. 158, d. 1509, l. 65.

⁴² FBIS, "JPRS-UPA-89-053 - Soviet Union. Political Affairs - 29 AUGUST 1989," 1989, 21-24.

have taken hold of large regions and cities in Fergana Oblast. At the end of the day on 3 June a large group of young people in an aggressive mood, having ignored the explanations and warnings of party, soviet and law enforcement organs, instigated pogroms and burnings in the village of Tashlak, and later at the "Komsomolskiy" construction and water-transport workers settlement in the city of Margilan, in places where dense Meskhetine Turk populations are found. The excesses were accompanied by particularly cruel murders, outrages, violence, and acts of vandalism. In subsequent days the geographical area of the disorders spread to the city of Fergana and the agricultural regions lying nearby.⁴³

Hence, Nishanov admitted miscalculations and lack of prevention measures, keeping the usual attitude of self-criticism and pointing to lack of control of party and institution, as well a lack of education, economic stagnation and crisis, the cotton monoculture, unemployment and ecologic disasters in the Ferghana region:

Taking advantage of the situation that has developed in recent times, a part of them are trying to negate the work done since the 16th Plenum of the Uzbek CP Central Committee to restore healthy conditions and to portray this work in the eyes of public opinion as being a limitation of the dignity and honor of the Uzbek people. But we, the Communists, must look truth in the eye. We cannot show even the slightest tolerance of these people, who have disgraced themselves through distortion, misappropriation, bribe-taking, and misuse of official position. We will firmly implement this principled party line toward self-purification and self-improvement.⁴⁴

Thus, Nishanov pointed at Birlik for fomenting people's frustration and indicated the facts as a planned event of violence organized by extremists:

At the same time, it would be incorrect to regard what has happened only as a criminal manifestation. Such facts, for example, as the appearance of green banners within the columns of those committing excesses, the distribution of fliers containing religious symbolism and signed by a previously unknown organization called the "Holy Uzbeks [Svyashchennyye uzbeki], the defilement of Soviet laws, attempts at physical violence against party and soviet workers, the pronouncement of appeals to continue the traditions of the basmach leaders, etc. require deep consideration and evaluation. In a word, there are serious grounds to suppose that this is a previously and carefully planned and

⁴³ Ibid., 21–22.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 23–24.

prepared provocative action, possibly even specially timed to coincide with the congress of USSR people's deputies.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, the ethnic clashes in the Ferghana Valley inexorably undermined Nishanov's legitimacy. The Uzbek leader did not seem to be warned of the real situation of the republic and appeared as a Moscow official careless of the national instances. The fact that he was in Moscow and did not come back immediately to take charge of the situation weighed much to his political credibility. Tunçer-Kılavuz comments:

His attitude during the events (his explanation made light of the clashes) and his handling of the situation were widely criticized. He was accused of being unable to understand or handle the events and of underestimating them. Nishanov was also disliked for his role as Moscow's representative in implementing the purges [reaching] their climax in Uzbekistan.⁴⁶

Thus, the Uzbek 'Caesar' who in the previous months had imposed his enlightened dictatorship characterized by purges of the internal apparatus would surely have suffered internal conspiracy of the CPUz that opposed a figure considered as a man of Moscow who "carried out the orders of the center with respect to the purges of thousands of Uzbek elites,"⁴⁷ hoping that his "removal coincided with the end of the purges in Uzbekistan."⁴⁸ At that moment, Gorbachev – who kept warning the Soviet population about the risks of ethnic clashes in the country⁴⁹ – perceived the Ferghana events "as evidence of the isolation of the party from society and its inability to both eliminate corruption and stop the rise of new opponents like the Birlik movement."⁵⁰ Thus, the Gensek tried to save his trusted ally Nishanov, calling him back to Moscow where he became the chairman of the Soviet of Nationalities at full

⁴⁵ Ibid., 24.

⁴⁶ Tunçer-Kılavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*, 82.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 60. See Fierman, "Political Development in Uzbekistan. Democratization?," 360–408.

⁴⁹ Parallel to Fergana, in June 1989 there were clashes between Kazakhs and Chechens (and other Northern-Caucasus groups) in the oil-city Novy Uzen (now known as Zhanaozen) in the Caspian sea. Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 240, 751.

⁵⁰ Graeme Gill and Roderic Pitty, *Power in the Party. The Organization of Power and Central-Republican Relations in the CPSU* (Houndmills & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 79.

time.⁵¹ Basically, the Uzbek leader was finally exiting from the Uzbek political scenario.⁵²

In the summer of 1989, Gorbachev had to accept to further open the system to the national claims in order to deal with the separatist instances of

⁵¹ Ryzhkov commented: "Nishanov is a good and tactful person, otherwise it would not be normal to be appointed at the head of one of the chambers." Personal interview with Nikolai Ivanovich Ryzhkov, Moscow, 22 December 2014. In his memoirs, Gorbachev reported: "On 6 June the delegates elected the Chairman (Speaker) of the Council of Nationalities. The candidacy of Rafik N. Nishanov, former first secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, who had been proposed by the Central Committee, was generally greeted favorably. However, he had to begin by giving an account of the conflict with the Meskhetian Turks in Fergana, which as it happened had taken place on the eve of the session. I liked Rafik Nishanovich. His unchanging composure, humor and a certain philosophical distance from the petty vagaries of life - in other words everything that was usually associated with the 'wisdom of the East' - appealed to me. His ability to get along well with people and to settle conflicts worked well for him in the position of Chairman of the Council of Nationalities. I would even say that Nishanov was a natural speaker, had it not been for one quality that he lacked. This was decisiveness, the ability to cut the Gordian knot at the proper time. The diplomat in him got the upper hand over the politician and sometimes sessions of our 'nationalities chamber' lasted for days, even discussions on procedural matters, while simultaneously ethnic conflicts flared up in several parts of the Union. The body of deputies could have (and should have!) actively assisted in calming them down. To be fair, some committees and individual deputies went to the 'hot spots' on their own initiative. However, the Council of Nationalities and its Chairman did not do justice to its position as the organ of supreme power responsible for this sphere. Of course, I direct this criticism first of all towards myself as Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet. Nishanov had to 'dance' perhaps a little more than Primakov did before the delegates approved his nomination. He was cross-examined in order to discover his views on equal rights for all nationalities, the possibility of using indigenous languages, and ways of regulating conflicts between nationalities. However, most of the questions were asked not so much to get answers as to present the questioner's own positions on the subject. Some deputies, who were ready for harsh polemics, were obviously not satisfied by the composed and balanced opinions of Rafik Nishanovich or his conciliatory tone. In the end, Nishanov was elected chairman of the chamber by a convincing majority." Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (London: Doubleday, 1996), 393–94.

⁵² In 2016, Nishanov recalled the Ferghana events in a very revisionist interview, indicating that the problem of cotton affairs was that Moscow had endorsed some punitive groups to act in the republic and to create the disaffection of the people. Rafik Nishanovich Nishanov, "Nishanov: Obnovlenny SSSR Provalilsya Iz-Za GKChP," *Vesti Ekonomika*, August 2016.

the Baltic republics and their communist parties.⁵³ As well he had to mediate with the nationalist instances and find for a compromise. Despite the fact that there is no apparent connection between the cotton affairs and the explosion of violence in Ferghana, the first episode constituted a “shifting balance of power” in the region⁵⁴ and a solution could be found by appointing a figure who appeared (once again) as a mediator between Moscow and the Uzbek power networks.

7.1.3 The rise of Islom Karimov

In June 1989, the Meskhetian pogroms were the straw that broke the camel’s back and signified the political end of the poorly tolerated Rafik Nishanov. The designated successor for the FS CPUz was expected to be Ibragimov.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the XIV plenum CC CPUz of 23 June 1989 headed by the first deputy director of the OrgOtdel CC CPSU E.Z. Razumov led to unexpected results. After thanking Nishanov for his “politically mature and worthy work,” the plenum proposed the candidacy of Islom Abdug’aniyevich Karimov, the FS Kashkadarya obkom since 1986 who was considered an “outsider” to the higher party *nomenklatura* and not a typical professional politician nor a career party *apparatchik*: in fact, he never had a role in the buro or in the secretariat, nor he was the chairman of SS UzSSR.⁵⁶ Karimov (1938-2016) was an economic technocrat from Samarkand and educated at Central Asian polytechnic institute and member of CPSU since 1964.⁵⁷ Karimov worked in the Ministry of Finance between 1966 and 1983 at which point he became

⁵³ On 9 August 1989, Chernyaev informed Gorbachev about the need to rename the CCs in national committees in order to reflect the international tradition of USSR. He also advised the Gensek about the need for the CPSU to reflect the multiethnicity of the country, listening and legitimizing "the claims of the autonomous republics where party leaders have equated to the obkom committees." GF, f. 2, d. 8023.

⁵⁴ Neil J Melvin, *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism on the Silk Road* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 2000), 183.

⁵⁵ Mirzaulim Ibragimovich Ibragimov was the chairman of Presidium of the SS UzSSR since 6 March 1989, replacing Pulat Kirgizbayevich Khabibullayev (who substituted Nishanov when he became FS CPUz in 1988).

⁵⁶ This position seemed to be a sort of institutional prerequisite to become FS CC CPUz since the appointment of Amin Niyazov in 1953.

⁵⁷ Karimov worked in the Uzbek Gosplan since 1966 until 1983 when he became Minister of Finance and Deputy Chairman of Soviet Ministrov Uzbek SSR. He kept that position until 1986, when he was appointed as Chairman of the Uzbek Gosplan. *PV*, 22014, 148, 24 June 1989, p. 1.

Minister of Finance of Uzbek SSR, remaining in this post until 1986 when he became the Chairman of Uzbekistan Gosplan. On 26 December 1986, he held his first important party post, becoming the FS Kashkadarya obkom.⁵⁸

On that plenum, Razumov seemed to be warned about the unclear past of the CPUz candidate and his relatives,⁵⁹ disavowing the subsequent famous stories about him being an orphan.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, despite his lower profile

⁵⁸ About Karimov's experience as the First Secretary of Kashkadarya Obkom cf. Poyon Ravshanov, *Qashqadaryo: Istiqlol Arafasida 1986 - 1989 Yillar* (Toshkent: Ma'naviyat, 2003).

⁵⁹ The plenum recalled the story of Karimov's father who had been charged for theft of socialist property in 1950 and his brother Khurshed - deputy director of the grocery complex Uzkooptbakaleya in Jizzakh - who was condemned in 1986 for ten years for the same reasons. Prot. 14/1989, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 158, d. 1508, ll. 4-6. On this regard, Malikov commented: "Ligachev opposed the candidacy because Karimov's two brothers had criminal records." Mukhammed-Babur Malikov, "Uzbekistan: A View from the Opposition," *Problems of Post-Communism* 42, no. 2 (1995).

⁶⁰ An US diplomatic report of December 2004 confirms certain rumors about Karimov's first marriage with a Russian woman called Natal'ya Petrovna Kuchma - and their son Pyotr - and the how the story of the 'orphan' leader was appositely crafted in order to avoid any scandals related to his name. The report collects the witness of Muslima, Karimov's brother wife, reporting that Karimov was not an orphan but he "had six brothers and one sister, and grew up in a "normal family" in Samarkand. Karimov began to distance himself from his family in late 1985 and early 1986, when his brother, Hurshid, a distributor of retail food products (mostly tea), became embroiled in a minor corruption scandal. At the time, [...] Karimov was Deputy Chairman of Gosplan, and was expecting a promotion. Karimov called his brother Arslan (Muslima's husband) and demanded that they disown Hurshid, arguing that their careers were in danger. Arslan, the Chair of the Jizzak City Court, refused. (Now Hurshid is a rich man, Muslima said with some resentment; he lives in a fancy house in Tashkent and is protected by Ismoil Jurabekov.) From that point on, there was almost no contact, Muslima stated. Karimov was soon named First Secretary of Kashkadarya and spent almost all of his time shuttling between Tashkent and Karshi. It was then, Muslima and Jamshid said, that Karimov began to claim that he had been orphaned. [...] The final break came in 1989, the year Karimov was named First Secretary of the Uzbek SSR. Arslan died that year in what Muslima described as a "suspicious" collision with a bus. A street in Jizzak was named after him, but Karimov ordered it changed back to the original name. Karimov's eldest brother died that year, as well. According to Muslima, Karimov made a brief appearance at the funeral, where he offered 350 Rubles to the family (not a small sum in those days). Since then, there has been no direct contact. Muslima occasionally calls the Presidential Apparat if she needs something specific, such as medical treatment. The one time she tried to get through to the President's residence, she said, his daughter Gulnora picked

and his unclear past, the appointment of Karimov was enthusiastically greeted by the party top echelon who hoped to finally have a representative of national instances: without directly referring to the newly-dismissed Nishanov, on that occasion the FS Surkhandarya obkom M. Mamarasulov demanded “one thing, I ask that Islom Abdugʻaniyevich would not be a puppet like Usmankhodzhaev.”⁶¹ Then, Karimov thanked and reminded that “a person at the post of FS must know the republic, its people and the people's life.”⁶²

The appointment of Karimov was not an easy task: in a moment of major autonomy and lack of predominant power inside the CPUz (as even the CPSU), Uzbek elite groups were searching for a strong new leader that could be able to protect their interests. The CC CPUz agreed on Karimov with the *placet* of Ismoil Jurabekov and Shukrulla Mirsaidov, two prominent members of the Uzbek political elite at that time, and Qudrat Ahmetov, then chairman of Gosplan that had good connections in Moscow with the prime minister of USSR, Valentin Pavlov. The selection of a candidate had to be a compromise that could balance the powers among national elite, the former ruling ones, and the Party needs: Karimov was the least common multiple among all these figures. Thus, this ‘consensus’⁶³ on an outsider figure had a logic: since all of these competing groups had equal powers to promote their leadership of Uzbek SSR, none could enjoy the full consensus of the other ones. As Tunçer-Kılavuz points, at that time “in Uzbekistan there was more than one powerful elite group, so no elite group had a clear perception of their own power being higher than that of others.”⁶⁴

up the phone and hung up immediately. See: WikiLeaks, *President Karimov not an orphan, and other family secrets, 04TASHKENT3519_a*, classified by Amb. Jon R. Purnell for reasons 1.4 (B, D). The document is online at: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/04TASHKENT3519_a.html.

⁶¹ Prot. 14/1989, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 158, d. 1508, l. 7.

⁶² Prot. 14/1989, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 158, d. 1508, l. 2.

⁶³ “Only through support from Nishanov, and such figures as Solijan Mamarasulov, Shukurullo Mirsaidov, Erkin Yusupov, Ahmadjan Mukhtarov, and Mufti Mukhamedsadyk Mukhamadiusuf (a deputy of the last USSR Supreme Soviet), was Karimov's candidacy approved.” Ibid.

⁶⁴ Tunçer-Kılavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*, 48. However, Karimov was deeply supported by the (former ruling) Samarkand-Jizzak clan. In fact, according to Collins, “Karimov was both a local, networked into the Rashidov clan, [formally] a communist *apparatchik*, [and] a technocrat whom Moscow would be unlikely to oppose [... His] candidacy was the work of adroit political maneuvering by certain Uzbek clan elites – especially by Jurabekov,

The new FS CPUz was considered to be someone who could protect the interests of Uzbeks, even if he did not initially support nationalist movements or independence of the Uzbek SSR. At a popular level, he was presenting himself as a people's leader, someone that could unite instead of disunite, and that could enforce peace and stability in a context that was threatening to overspill into instability. The first message of peace and normalization was referred to the situation in the Fergana Valley, with the continuation of MVD investigation and the lifting, since June 27, of the curfew in the region.⁶⁵ During the plenum of 29 July 1989, the chairman of the presidium SS UzSSR and head of the CC CPUz commission on the Ferghana events Ibragimov gave the results of the events,⁶⁶ stating that the origin of the problems there was the underrepresentation of Meskhetian Turks within the party apparatus in an oblast where the situation remained critical with more than 70,000 unemployed and 64% of the agriculture absorbed by cotton monoculture.⁶⁷ Thus, the new establishment accused the former ruling leadership declaring that party organs and governmental agencies did not take all those appropriate measures to solve the problems of cadres and population at socio-economic, ideological, ethnic and organizational level.⁶⁸

Hence, the commitment to normalize the situation in Ferghana and to find the culprits would be an occasion to consolidate his power, marginalize

who wanted to restore the Rashidov network's place in power and who saw Karimov as tied by birth to a powerful Samarkand group, but not to the clan of former first secretary Rashidov" Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 123. Thus, "Karimov was in the unfortunate position of having to balance the interests of numerous large regions (the most important of which were the Ferghana Valley [including three oblast's], Samarkand and Jizzak, Kashkadarya, and Khorezm) and more regionally based clan elites, some of whom were traditional rivals of his own power base in Samarkand" Ibid., 128.

⁶⁵ PV, 22023, 157, 6 July 1989, p. 4.

⁶⁶ During the pogroms in the Ferghana Valley 103 people died - of whom 52 Meskhetian Turks and 36 Uzbeks; 1011 wounded - of whom 137 MVD troops and 110 policemen of whom one died.; 757 houses, 27 public buildings and 275 had been burned. Prot. 15/1989, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 1587, d. 1509, l. 65.

⁶⁷ Prot. 15/1989, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 1587, d. 1509, l. 71.

⁶⁸ PV, 22044, 178, 2 August 1989, p. 1.

opponents, approve purges and promote loyal figures.⁶⁹ Then, on August 2 Vyacheslav Mukhtarovich Kamalov became the chairman of MVD UzSSR and on August 3 Shukrulla Rakhmatovich Mirsaidov was appointed as deputy chairman of SM UzSSR and chairman of the republican Gosplan.⁷⁰ At a political level, there was further condemnation for these facts against the previous political order. The people deputy E. Yusubov declared publicly that “the roots of the tragedy of Fergana” were at socio-economic and political-ideological levels in an oblast where, in the last 30 years, the timing of the industry's growth has lagged behind the republican average. He was also denouncing the serious “pedagogical problem” related to a lack of education and respect of the language, history, culture, and traditions that led to provocations and interethnic clashes even against Russians.⁷¹ In this first phase of Karimov's mandate, the Uzbek leadership was still quite cautious in taking distances from USSR and in condemning those practices of *krasnij desant* - that were characterizing the previous Usmankhodzhaev and Nishanov mandates – starting to balance the equilibrium between Uzbek and Slav elites, maintaining some Russian figures⁷² while enforcing again a “nativization” policy.⁷³ To some extent, this narrative seemed to align with the nationalists.

Nevertheless, Karimov was also considered to be a loyal communist, faithfully implementing in Gorbachev's reformism. At the XVI plenum of the CC CPUz (19 August 1989), he denounced the problems of Uzbekistan, as the negative economic trends – low production, shortage of consumer goods and rising inflation, the evident social and interethnic tensions and the difficult

⁶⁹ The CPUz buro meeting of 20 July 1989 demanded hard sanctions against the local party leaders, the MVD and KGB officers responsible for the events in Ferghana. Prot. 88/1989, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 158, d. 1523, l. 18.

⁷⁰ PV, 22045, 179, 4 August 1989, p. 3.

⁷¹ PV, 22047, 181, 6 August 1989, p. 2.

⁷² In these weeks, other Russians were appointed at primary positions in the Uzbek SSR: on August 15, Dmitri Dmitrevich Berkov became the first deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR and Boris Fedorovich Satin was appointed as the chairman of the PCC UzSSR. PV, 22054, 188, 16 August 1989, p. 1 and PV, 22057, 191, 20 August 1989, p. 1.

⁷³ Since the first months, the Uzbek leadership renewed korenization appointing on September 9 the natives Lerik Akhmetov as Minister of Road Haulage and Rustam Rasulevich Yunusov as Minister for Highways; and on September 17 S.A. Khodzhaeva as Minister of social security, I.N. Iskandarov as the Minister for the building materials industry and Kh.Kh. Gulyamovas the Chairman of the State Committee for Work and Social Issues. PV, 22074, 208, 10 September 1989, p. 1 and PV, 22081, 215, 19 September 1989, p. 1.

demographic situation, considering the upsurge of 4.5 million people (30% of the total Uzbek population) in the past 10 years. This demographic growth rate was three times higher than in any other Soviet Republic, and Uzbek SSR was not able to absorb such a number of newly-arriving citizens and to provide adequate services. Even the security and social protection standards were criticized by the CPUz for being scarce, considering that just 5% of the rural population had access to running water, 50% to drinkable water and just 17% to gas, and there were no improvements in the availability of housing, schools, health, culture etc. On that occasion, Karimov was still acting as a loyal Soviet statesman, admitting that the biggest political problem was related to the difficulties of implementing perestroika in Uzbekistan. In his vision, the party needed to apply the “reconstruction” to itself.⁷⁴ To some extent, we could say that in these first months Karimov was still playing the card of “self-criticism” while balancing a tenuous nationalist rhetoric.

Again, during the CC CPSU plenum of 19-20 September 1989, the Uzbek leader referred to the Fergana events, declaring that the dangers of the tense socio-political situation had been underestimated. Thus, he was emphasizing in a veiled way the responsibilities of his predecessors and other anti-perestroika agents. He was, substantially, declaring to Moscow that Uzbekistan would break with the past, exploiting the “perestroika spirit” to realize a major autonomy of the UzSSR.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, this autonomy had to be realized within a reformed Soviet framework and any separatist attitude seemed to be undesirable. However, during the plenum CC CPUz of 30 September 1989, Karimov complained for the difficulties in getting essential goods such as sugar, soap and flour,⁷⁶ remarking the problems of a republic that had some of the lowest levels of consumptions rates in the whole USSR,⁷⁷ and that was entering in a deep crisis due to the interruption of the supply chain from the center after 1989.⁷⁸ Effectively, the hyperinflation and the crisis of real income – dropped

⁷⁴ *PV*, 22059, 193, 23 August 1989, p. 1.

⁷⁵ *PV*, 22086-22087, 220-221, 23 September 1989, p. 1.

⁷⁶ Prot. 17/1989, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 158, d. 1511, l. 53.

⁷⁷ The annual meat consumption in USSR was 64.1 kg and in Uzbekistan only 29; as well as dairy products that were 190 for Uzbekistan and 341 for USSR. Rumer, “Central Asia’s Cotton Economy and Its Costs,” 86–87.

⁷⁸ A memorandum sent on 12 February 1990 by 17 peoples’ deputies from Uzbekistan to Ryzhkov denouncing the dramatic situation of a republic that was not able to produce the essential goods to feed its population. They argued that in order to fulfill a demand of 3.320.000 tons of flour, Uzbekistan had to import from other republics 3.220.000 (97%) of that. Similarly, there was a demand for 500.000 tons of rice and an importation

for 25% in Central Asia only – defined the first significant crisis of primary goods deficits.⁷⁹

A great result that seemed to pacify the nationalist opposition – and that to a large extent was moved under the pressure of Birlik - was the approval, on 20 October 1989, of a law that declared Uzbek as the official language of the republic.⁸⁰ Karimov's nationalist attitude was much more strongly enforced due to the condemnation of the 'cotton affairs' in a moment of high popularity of the facts. Indeed, as we have seen in the previous chapter the Gdlyan-Ivanov saga was thrilling the Soviet readers, mobilizing masses and polarizing public opinion between supporters and opponents while the cases were rapidly dismissed. Also in Uzbekistan, the 'Uzbek cotton affair' stories were resumed and exploded by the new leadership, which adopted a very critical attitude and to some extent followed the nationalist narrative against the 'colonial center.' During the plenum CC CPUz of 14 November 1989, Karimov even commented the 'cotton affairs' as an unreasonable event that caused tension in inter-ethnic relations and also the dissatisfaction of workers.⁸¹ Thus, the first semester of Karimov's mandate was concluded with his efforts to consolidate his power and legitimacy, replacing those "Moscow appointees" – mainly Russians who were chosen by his predecessors during the *krasnyi desant* – with Uzbek ones satisfying the clan divisions and getting their acceptability. This major autonomy of CPUz and flexibility of CPSU could be read, ex post, as a sign of CC CPUS weakness.

In 1990, Karimov made further steps towards the national autonomy of Uzbekistan at political, ideological and cultural levels, while in parallel he kept marginalizing the opposition and launched the plan for a progressive transition that excluded political adversaries from the political game. "Whilst Karimov

of 80.000 (15%); and grain forage 1.174.000 - 950.000 (81%). Nevertheless, for 1990 the republic was going to receive 600.000 ton of flour only (19,1 of the demand) and needed an importation between 75 and 100% of forage for livestock. They denouncing the fact that the distribution chain that once assured supplies from the center had stopped after 1989. The situation was generating a chaotic scenario were neither the factories of the republic received raw materials from the center and were not able to fulfill the plans while the black market was flourishing and becoming an important supply point for the domestic consumption. GARF, f. 9654, op. 4, d. 52, ll. 1-4.

⁷⁹ Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 635.

⁸⁰ William Fierman, *Language Planning and National Development the Uzbek Experience* (Berlin-New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991).

⁸¹ Prot. 18/1989, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 158, d. 1512, l. 10

supported the elimination of Article 6 in early January 1990, he opposed factionalism and warned after the republican elections that oppositional activity would not be tolerated.⁸² Due to the major freedoms of perestroika, the republic was also publicly rediscovering the traditional cultural and religious values: emblematically, in February 1990, there was the first translation of the Holy Koran in Uzbek language,⁸³ in March the celebration of Nowruz was permitted for the first time in decades⁸⁴ and in May *Islam Nuri* (ray of Islam) became the first recognized Muslim periodical in the whole of the USSR.⁸⁵ In parallel, 1990 was the year of Karimov's consolidation of power, bargaining, negotiating and making concessions to elites, enforcing a "transformist"⁸⁶ agenda, coopting many of the opposition figures and increasing his legitimacy in the eyes of the general public.

Indeed, at the beginning of his mandate, the new leader was too weak to immediately fight against his divided antagonists. Thus, he proceeded with a power balance of elites, distributing powers and benefits without giving the perception that some of them could be more powerful than others to challenge the power status quo led by himself. Carlisle commented that local politicians were so powerful and effective in assisting the Karimov nomination that they even "thought of him as their puppet", thinking that he would remain dependent on those people who brought him to power.⁸⁷ In fact, during these months, Karimov tried to build good relations with all oppositions and rival clans, granting them freedom to promote their ideas and recognizing them a positive role in the system and, gradually, proceeding with a Central Asian version of Rakosi's "salami tactic" to progressively divide opposition, eliminate his rivals and consolidate his power. Malikov commented:

⁸² Gill and Pitty, *Power in the Party. The Organization of Power and Central-Republican Relations in the CPSU*, 79.

⁸³ *PV*, 22203, 37, 13 February 1990, p. 4.

⁸⁴ Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire : The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 394.

⁸⁵ *PV*, 22284, 118, 24 May 1990, p. 4.

⁸⁶ *Trasformismo* (Transformism) is an Italian concept - typical of the post-Unitarian Italy - referred to the method of making wide and flexible coalitions of government dividing, coopting and isolating the opponents to remain in power. Quoting the character Tancredi of the novel *The Leopard* (by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa): "If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change."

⁸⁷ Donald S. Carlisle, "Islam Karimov and Uzbekistan. Back to the Future?," in *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership*, ed. T J Tucker and R C Colton (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 196.

Karimov eventually eliminated these early supporters. Nishanov was effectively exiled; he was not allowed to return to Uzbekistan, and his apartment in Tashkent was taken away. Mirsaidov was convicted and was physically beaten in the Street. The Mufti was forced to emigrate, and a criminal case was instituted against him. Mamarasulov, Yusupov, and Mukhtarov were prosecuted and removed from the political arena.⁸⁸

On 15 March 1990, after abolishing art. 6 of the Soviet constitution (the primacy of party in the state), the CPDSU elected Gorbachev as President of the USSR and approved Nazarbayev's proposal to establish national presidents - elected on a popular basis – in each republic. This move effectively legitimized the sovereignty of those local presidents more than the Soviet one.⁸⁹ Hence, on 24 March 1990, Karimov was the first leader to be appointed by the republican SS as President of the UzSSR, defeating the leading representative of the former elite, Shukurullo Mirsaidov who became the vice-president and lately entered in disagreement with the Uzbek leader.⁹⁰

In this phase, Karimov kept an ambiguous approach towards the USSR – on the one hand, laying out a discourse of 'brotherhood' among the USSR peoples and, on the other, advancing a self-victimizing nationalist narrative for Uzbekistan – seeking for a 'double legitimation' of local networks and Moscow that, at least formally, was still the center of the country. Also the vice president Mirsaidov kept criticizing Moscow's manipulations on the Uzbek economy and demanded to recognize all the most valuable resources as property of the republic.⁹¹ Thus, Karimov and his affiliates maintained something of a schizophrenic position that both formally respected the Soviet

⁸⁸ Malikov, "Uzbekistan: A View from the Opposition."

⁸⁹ Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 635.

⁹⁰ "Karimov and Mirsaidov were engaged in a power struggle. [...In 1991, the latter] traveled to Moscow in September soon after the declaration of independence, in an attempt to gather supporters in opposition to Karimov. Karimov's decision to marginalize and eventually oust his former supporter may have also been the result of a power struggle between competing clans in Uzbekistan [...]. Mirsaidov and his allies represented the Tashkent region, while Karimov represented the Samarkand region. Notably, Rashidov and Ismail Dzhurabekov (whose position in the early government will be discussed below) also represented Samarkand." Pamela Blackmon, *In the Shadow of Russia: Reform in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011), 31; Melvin, *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism on the Silk Road*, 184.

⁹¹ Ben Fowkes, *The Disintegration of the Soviet Union. A Study in the Rise and Triumph of Nationalism* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 1997), 168.

role and laid a large amount of blame at its feet. In his first speech as President, Karimov recalled the need of unity within the country, launching a proposal for a federal project based on severing republics with a clear separation of powers between the republics and the central USSR. The final aim – and most delicate task - of this project was to strengthen the economic independence of the republic and the transition to self-government and self-financing of SSRs.⁹²

While the USSR was adopting a new legislation defining the terms of the separation of the republics,⁹³ the SS Uzbek SSR elaborated the general concepts of the socio-economic and cultural development and ‘independence’ of Uzbekistan, setting prior issues such as housing, food and primary goods supply, ecological problems,⁹⁴ national cultural heritage,⁹⁵ and the implementation of democracy and stability while most of these debates were hiding a veiled criticism against the Soviet central power. Gorbachev’s appeals to preserve internationalism within Soviet Union and to deter the younger generations from indulging in the dangerous nationalistic temptations were in vain.⁹⁶ During his speeches, the Soviet leader warned about the risks of ethnic

⁹² *PV*, 22237, 71, 25 March 1990, p. 1.

⁹³ The new law laid down the rules for the republic’s separation from the USSR which could be made with the decision of the people through a free and voluntary referendum. The decision to open the referendum had to be held by the SS of the republic that could act independently or with instance proposal by a tenth of Soviet citizens residing in the republic and with voting rights. The referendum had to be held by secret ballot not earlier than six days prior to or after nine months after the decision. *PV*, 22247, 81, 7 April 1990, p. 1.

⁹⁴ Already in 1984, the Uzbek government was informed about the mobilizations and petitions of intellectual civil society worried about the ecological situation in Uzbekistan. TsGARUz, f. 2742, op. 1, d. 258. Then, in 1990 also the people’s deputies from Uzbekistan started to send many letters and petitions to the Soviet government denouncing ecological problems and their effect on the workers’ health. GARF, f. 9654, op. 4, d. 52, ll. 8-69.

⁹⁵ *PV*, 22250, 84, 11 April 1990, p. 1.

⁹⁶ During the Gorbachev’s speech at the XXI Komsomol congress on April 10 1990, the Soviet leader reiterated the need to distinguish national from nationalist: the first is “legal and legitimate aspiration of every nation to preserve its originality, language, traditions, lifestyle and historical memory. Without this element, the individual loses the national sense. Even without evaluating the events that are happening in our international relations, I can say that our party and organs of the government and I, as President, have one those important tasks to meet the needs of all people on the radical transformation of the Soviet federation”. According to Gorbachev, nationalism that is “the aspiration of the superiority of the nation, satisfying the interests of the nation not

clashes and separatism in USSR, enforcing the idea of a Union where the health of peoples influences each other ones.⁹⁷ Similar rhetoric discussing the sense of ‘brotherhood among the people’ was still implemented even by Uzbek leadership who was able to balance a constructive attitude towards the Soviet center and criticism. One of the issues used for this aim was the “Gdlyan-Ivanov affair” that was continuing to sensitize the Uzbek public opinion, presenting the two prosecutors as two enemies of the Uzbek people.

7.2 Self-victimization and ideological myth-making

There is an extensive literature on national identity and the process of national ‘myth making’ in post-Soviet Uzbekistan.⁹⁸ These studies have

to mention the interests of others, thus corresponding to a humiliation of the others [...]. Nationalism is scary when it is based in the new generations [...]. The principle of internationalism is the necessary condition for the conservation of the state”. *PV*, 22251, 85, 12 April, p. 2.

⁹⁷ During his speech when Gorbachev met the workers of the Sverdlovsk oblast, the Soviet leader affirmed that “the process of national revival went very fast” leading to losses in international and interethnic relations creating difficulties: first of all nationalism and separatism. He affirmed: “the Russians have made a great contribution in the construction and real national state” and “we found ourselves in front of the exasperation of acute conflicts and ethnic relations [...]. The Russian people and other peoples of the country have the consciousness of this huge world called USSR. Whether the health of Russian people will be good, also the health of other people will be good and vice versa”. *PV*, 22265, 99, 29 April 1990, p. 2.

⁹⁸ See Laura Adams, *The Spectacular State: Culture and National Identity in Uzbekistan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Allworth, *The Modern Uzbeks: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present : A Cultural History*; Bakhtiar Babadzhanov, “Islam v Uzbekistan: Ot Repressii K Bor’be Identichnostei,” in *Rossiiia-Sredniaia Azia Politika I Islam v XX - Nachale XXI v.*, ed. A Kokoshin (Moskva, 2011); Donald S. Carlisle, “Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks,” *Problems of Communism*, 1991; James Critchlow, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic’s Road to Independence* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991); Peter Finke, *Variations on Uzbek Identity: Strategic Choices, Cognitive Schemas and Political Constraints in Identification Processes* (New York-Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014); Adeeb Khalid, *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Maria Louw, *Everyday Islam in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (London & New York: Routledge, 2007); Vitaly V. Naumki, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle* (Bolder: Bowman and Littlefield, 2005); Johan Rasanayagam, *Islam in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan; The Morality of Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Grigol Ubiria, *Soviet Nation-*

deepened our understanding of the anthropological, sociological and political aspects of Uzbekistan's often painful transition from Soviet state to independent nation. Nevertheless, these literatures have not adequately addressed the role of 'negative' commemoration of the Soviet period within this process of crafting a new Uzbek national consciousness and significant historiographic lacunae therefore remain. The new field of 'identity and memory' research⁹⁹ is essential to understand the role of historiography in the construction of a 'colonial trauma' narrative in the post-Soviet Central Asian republics, including Uzbekistan, and in particular its function in grounding and legitimizing the new ideology of national independence (*Mustaqillik*).

The Russian scholar Sergey Abashin has observed how this new ideology was not built merely on the recovery of Uzbek tradition but was cast as a radical break with a pathological Soviet past, that blends "memory of the suffering caused by the colonial policies of the tsarist era with memory of Stalinist repressions and other hardships of the Soviet epoch to form one general sense of trauma."¹⁰⁰ These intuitions prompted me to undertake a comprehensive investigation of post-Soviet historical memory in Uzbekistan and its role in the construction of a 'colonial trauma' narrative through a particular case study: the 'Uzbek cotton affair,' a formative event in late-Soviet Uzbek history that drew extensive media coverage in the *perestroika* period and defined the official political narrative after the collapse of the Soviet Union. I was struck by how quickly this episode – as well as the Gdlyan-Ivanov affair - was forgotten in Russia, only to re-emerge as a definitive event in Uzbekistan, remembered as one of the most tragic events in Soviet history. Indeed, as we shall see, the Uzbek cotton affair has come to occupy a pivotal position in the official narrative of Uzbekistan's political, cultural, ideological and identity break with Russia/USSR, and in the ideological structuring and legitimation of the *Mustaqillik* concept.

Therefore, we want to move beyond the limits of the current literature to lay out in detail how the Uzbek cotton affair was narrated within the political

Building in Central Asia: The Making of the Kazakh and Uzbek Nations (London & New York: Routledge, 2015); Buttino, *Samarcanda. Storie in Una Città Dal 1945 a Oggi*.

⁹⁹ A recent contribution comes from Timur Dadabaev, *Identity and Memory in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Uzbekistan's Soviet Past* (London & New York: Routledge, 2015).

¹⁰⁰ Sergey Abashin, "Nations and Post-Colonialism in Central Asia: Twenty Years Later," in *Development in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Migration, Democratisation and Inequality in the Post-Soviet Era*, ed. Sophie Hohmann et al. (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 87.

arena to undergird the *Mustaqillik* ideology, most notably through the exploitation of national ‘emotional levers’ that legitimized the steps taken by Uzbek political elites in the post-Soviet transition. These key moves that led to the definition and propagation of the *Mustaqillik* dialectic will therefore be outlined, showing how the Uzbek cotton affair was skillfully deployed to censure the Soviet regime and lay out a narrative of ‘victimhood’ that both re-interpreted historical facts and rehabilitated the local ‘victims’ and symbols of the affair. The political exploitation of memory in Uzbekistan – through history, museology and political discourse – offers the perfect case study of how a post-Soviet nation could assert its independent identity much as a newly post-colonial state might, drawing on simultaneously censorious and affirmative ideological narrative to strengthen – domestically and internationally – its political legitimacy.

7.2.1 Mustaqillik and the Uzbek national myth making dialectic

During the 1990s, the Soviet collapse was represented in discourse as a ‘triumph’ of the nation state, national ideology and national identity. Out of this political earthquake emerged 15 newly-independent states in search of legitimation at both the domestic and international levels. Former Soviet Central Asian states thus began to forge (political) legitimizing national mythologies, rewriting the historical narrative – through a politically-directed historiography and new textbooks and museums – and reshaping collective memory to make a clear break with what was now being cast as an ‘awkward’ past.

Unlike the struggles for national liberation and independence seen in decolonizing states elsewhere, the separation of the Central Asian republics from Russia was more or less unforeseen, an unavoidable consequence of a startling political collapse. Therefore, unlike the anti-colonial movements of Africa and Asia, no ‘post separation’ vision had yet been articulated in Central Asia and essentially needed to be developed from scratch, and in very short order. Thus, a new narrative and set of national identity markers were required that could both ‘rationalize’ this rather inauspicious break with the past and legitimize the newly-constituted national leadership. In Uzbekistan, as well, historiography¹⁰¹ became part of the same process of post-separation

¹⁰¹ In Uzbekistan, there was apparently no transition at a historiographical-methodological level and many patterns of previous Soviet historiography are recovered. At a narrative level, Uzbek history does not recall a cultural ethnic

legitimation designed to strengthening the state at the domestic level. The politicization of both memory and the definition of 'post-colonial' and 'post-soviet' thus became important elements of the Uzbek national narrative and political debate. At the scholarly level, the use of these definitions remains highly contentious,¹⁰² with a significant proportion of historians and social scientists stressing the idea of the Soviet Union as a continuation of the colonial system introduced during the Russian Empire,¹⁰³ while other authors argue that the USSR was an atypical empire that fundamentally restructured traditional notions of motherland-province, oppressor-oppressed and

dimension, but rather the history of the peoples in that territorial area. Hence, it is not uncommon to read of *istoriya narodov Uzbekistana* rather than *istoriya uzbekov*. Thus, we could say that we deal more with state historiography rather than national historiography.

¹⁰² Marco Buttino summarized the debate on the imperial/colonial nature of the USSR, citing Ronald Grigory Suny, "The Empire Strikes Out: Imperial Russia, 'National' Identity, and Theories of Empire," in *A State of Nations. Empire and Nation Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigory Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Terry Martin, "An Affirmative Action Empire: The Soviet Union as the Highest Form of Imperialism," in *A State of Nations. Empire and Nation Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigory Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). The fundamental volume on the 'national' involvement in Soviet policy is Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001). Abeed Khalid argues that use of the colonial category for the USSR is misleading, Adeeb Khalid, "Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective," *Slavic Review* 65, no. 2 (2006): 231–51. Similarly, see Laura Adams, "Can We Apply a Post-Colonial Theory to Central Asia?," *Central Eurasia Studies Review* 7, no. 1 (2008): 2–8; Deniz Kandiyoti, "Post-Colonialism Compared: Potentials and Limitations in the Middle East and Central Asia," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34, no. 2 (2002): 279–97; Anatoliy Remnev, "Kolonial'nost, Postkolonial'nost I Istoricheskaiia Politika' v Sovremennom Kazakhstane," *Ab Imperio* 1 (2011): 169–205. The need to converge post-colonial and post-soviet studies in order to overcome the limits of the Cold-war approaches is argued by Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery, "Thinking between the Posts: Postcolonialism, Postsocialism, and Ethnography after the Cold War," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 1 (December 16, 2008); Morgan Y. Liu, "Central Asia in the Post-Cold War World," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40 (2011). Abashin analyzes the debate along the political use of the past. Abashin, "Nations and Post-Colonialism in Central Asia: Twenty Years Later"; Buttino, *Samarqanda. Storie in Una Città Dal 1945 a Oggi*, 12.

¹⁰³ See Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

colonizer-colonized.¹⁰⁴ The leadership that took charge in Uzbekistan during *perestroika* faced its own challenge in addressing the nature of what post-Soviet order might emerge in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet political, economic and cultural systems.

During the initial period of crisis as the Soviet system began to breakdown after 1988, the approach of Karimov was a kind of 'cautious ambiguity' towards the collapsing order and the possibility of Uzbek independence, which the leadership was neither prepared for nor particularly keen to pursue. Over the ensuing two years, however, it became increasingly clear that a partition was inevitable and that a new path would need to be charted. The Uzbek leader therefore advanced a new nationalist narrative that set the ground for the ideological transition from communism to *Mustaqillik* and in 1991 Uzbekistan became an independent republic born of a mutually-agreed separation from the USSR. Nevertheless, many practical aspects of the old order – in politics, in the economy, and in the society more generally – were retained, and had to be incorporated within a nationalist agenda that would emphasize the pure 'Uzbekness' of the new state and accelerate a policy of 'Uzbekization' to place local-born cadres into every level of the political and administrative structure.¹⁰⁵

As with other ex-Soviet republics, a national 'myth making' process was required to legitimize the new political order in the now independent Uzbekistan. The borders of the state had been laid down as early as the 1920s,

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Adeb Khalid, "The Soviet Union as an Imperial Formation: A View from Central Asia," in *Imperial Formations*, ed. A. Stoler, C. McGranahan, and P. Perdue (Santa Fe: School of Advanced Research Press, 2007).

¹⁰⁵ Uzbek nationalism is effective and, to some extent, as moderate as it is radical. Buttino argues that Uzbek nationalism is effective in so far as it builds the nation on national myths, 'uzbekizes' the great heroes of the past, enhances the leader/father of the homeland and basically keeps a hostile attitude to neighboring countries. Nevertheless, it is a moderate nationalism as it does not indicate enemies - and neither the Russians - and it is aimed at preventing any popular violence. It is also a radical nationalism because it becomes the ideological reference by which, in the absence of other resources, has expropriated the non-Uzbeks - such as Russians and other minority groups - ousting them from managerial posts and basically pushing them to leave. This kind of moderate/radical nationalism is also in the other former Soviet republics where the costs of the socio-economic crisis had been often paid by the non-titular nations, creating consensus around the dominant (national) group. See: Marco Buttino, *In a Collapsing Empire: Underdevelopment, Ethnic Conflicts and Nationalisms in the Soviet Union* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1993).

designating an area to the Uzbek titular nation. In fact, in Uzbekistan “[references] to nationality became an official means of gaining access to power, privileges, and bonuses, while sometimes [being deployed as] a stigma, a tool for repression and discrimination”.¹⁰⁶ Although sovietization had been effective at the political (and even cultural) level, Uzbeks were permitted to maintain part of their ‘traditional dimension’ (like the institution of *makhalla*¹⁰⁷) and other aspects of ‘Uzbekness’ were deployed affirming privileges as the titular nation within the Soviet republican system. This is because an Uzbek national state had never existed before 1920s and despite their high grade of sovietization, they had been allowed to keep many traditional aspects of the pre-Bolshevik society.

The creation of a (post-soviet) Uzbek national identity thus became a fascinating creature that at once charted a new discourse and built on existing myths of the Uzbek historical legacy. Continuity with the modernizing and multi-ethnic discursive aspects inherited from Soviet experience were manifest.¹⁰⁸ In fact, every feature of the new national narrative lacked an orthodox interpretation but could be deployed in any given context as needed, depending on the particularities of the moment and the deep contradictions of a highly-fragmented society. Although a return to Islamic values seemed a natural dimension of this process in a country with a Muslim majority, Karimov took an ambiguous position regarding religion. In replacing the Soviet narrative, he initially embraced aspects of Islam as a pillar of *Mustaqillik* and the new Uzbek society. However, this trend would be reversed in short order, when it was determined that ‘Islamism’ would pose more of a threat to the

¹⁰⁶ Abashin, “Nations and Post-Colonialism in Central Asia: Twenty Years Later,” 82.

¹⁰⁷ The *makhalla* is the name given to the typical Uzbek neighborhood, and the traditional institution that governs relations amongst its inhabitants. The *makhalla* is important because it has started to “represent what is construed as national, independent and sovereign in the new Uzbek life.” Ayşe Saktanber and Asli Özataş-Baykal, “Women and the Formation of Uzbek National Identity,” in *Gender and Identity Construction: Women of Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Turkey*, ed. Feride Acar and Ayşe Gneş-Ayata (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 233.

¹⁰⁸ The Soviet rethoric of “brotherhood among nations” in a republic with “more than 100 national and ethnic groups” was revived in post-Soviet Uzbekistan where “multi-ethnic harmony” became a key pillar of official political discourse. *Mustaqillik* thus emerged as an ambiguously inclusive ‘civic ideology’ that legitimized the national claim of the Uzbeks while not (formally) excluding non-Uzbeks from civic and political participation. Islam Abduganiyevich Karimov, *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century: Tradition and Survival* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997), 41–51.

new order than a solution to the question of legitimation. This reconsideration emerged as soon as Islam was adopted as mobilizing discourse for the political opposition in Uzbekistan – and for a minor section of *Birlik*. During subsequent periods of communal strife – such as in the Ferghana valley tensions, the civil war in Tajikistan (1992–1997), the war against terrorism and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) (especially after the 1999 Tashkent bombings, the IMU invasions of 2000-2001, and the Tashkent attacks of March and July 2004) – the anti-Islamism of the Uzbek national leadership was reinforced. Thus, the initial ‘liberal’ posture towards Islam was gradually repudiated, closing off the freedoms (especially in terms of religious habits and practices) that *perestroika* had made possible and legitimizing a police regime against what was cast as a (potential) terrorist/fundamentalist threat. Islam, then, remained an attenuated ideological base of *Mustaqillik*, making a somewhat awkward contribution to a narrative that balances Muslim tradition, modernization, and secularization in an uneasy tension.

Having been, at the end of the Soviet period, subject to a kind of ‘trusteeship’ from Moscow (epitomized by the *krasnyi desant* during the ‘cotton affair’), Karimov’s regime propagated this new ideology with the aim of simultaneously justifying Uzbek independence, grounding its pure ‘Uzbek’ nature and legitimizing the reconstituted Uzbek ruling elite, principally with a domestic audience in mind. The newly constituted Uzbek government was much more worried about the (fragmented) internal dynamics of Uzbek society than about projecting its influence abroad. Indeed, Uzbek nationalism hardly even touched the Uzbek diaspora,¹⁰⁹ Uzbek minorities abroad and the transnational communities of Uzbek immigrants; it was far too concerned with addressing the tensions arising in domestic cleavages. As Abashin has argued,

the increasing tendency of the nation to fragment further along various fault-lines comes into view: rich regions and poor, the city (suburbs) and the village, Islamists, women, migrants, minorities etc. This does not mean that the nation has failed as a community or identity. It does, however, indicate that the process of national construction continues to-date and is in constant flux: reacting to

¹⁰⁹ Out of the Republic of Uzbekistan, there are consistent communities of Uzbeks in Tajikistan (16% of population), Kyrgyzstan (20-25%), Turkmenistan (10%), Kazakhstan (5-8%) and Afghanistan (10%). Aleksandr Shaydatovich Kadyrbaev, “Natsional’naya Istoriya Kak Instrument Politicheskoy Legitimatsii v Tadzhikestane I Uzbekistane,” in *Istoriya - Pole Srazheniy*, ed. Apollon Davidson (Moskva: Sobraniye, 2015), 205.

new conditions, changing trajectory, and continually finding itself in competition with other identities.¹¹⁰

In this framework, the *Mustaqillik* ideology underpinned an official narrative that evolved according to a Baconian dialectic between a *pars construens* – essentially, a celebration of the myth of a ‘glorious past’ and the unique wonders of Uzbekness to cultivate a strong sense of belonging/affiliation¹¹¹ – and a *pars destruens* that cast the Soviet ‘infamous past’¹¹² as the source of all the problems and pathologies of the present. The overall effect of this dialectic was a sense of emancipation and legitimation of the post-soviet Uzbek independence.

7.2.2 The condemnation of the ‘Uzbek cotton affair’

A crucial dimension of the *pars destruens* was a posture and discourse of self-victimization that the Uzbek leadership carefully crafted to condemn the Soviet experience *ex post*.¹¹³ In this telling, Uzbekistan was the victim of a series

¹¹⁰ Abashin, “Nations and Post-Colonialism in Central Asia: Twenty Years Later,” 86.

¹¹¹ Such elements include national culture, traditions, religion, institutions, architecture, science, language, literature and its symbols, such as the poetry of Alisher Navoi, the science of Ulugh Beg and all those representatives of the ‘Central Asian renaissance’ etc.

¹¹² Nevertheless, despite many perplexities on the Soviet modernization, the memory of the Soviet past and its official narrative are not exclusively negative but, according to Dadabaev, there is a principle of ‘selectivity’ in recalling the recent past. Indeed, there are some ‘positive’ aspects related to the sacrifice of the Uzbek people in the common struggle against the German invaders. On this regard, a World War II memorial was constructed in Tashkent in 1999. Hence, despite rejecting the trauma of Stalinism and ‘cotton affairs,’ also the great patriotic war, the race to space and ‘great power’ status associated with the cold war are very sensitive topics that still thrill the elder generation of Uzbeks. Dadabaev, *Identity and Memory in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Uzbekistan’s Soviet Past*.

¹¹³ As Kudaibergenova demonstrates, there are similar narratives in the Kazakh presidential, national-patriotic and opposition political discourses. In Uzbekistan as well opposition groups (and *Birlik* above all) shared significant aspects of post-colonial discourse with Karimov. However, while the ‘official’ narrative remains ambiguous in terms of defining the responsibilities, the opposition charges both the former rulers and the current leadership (that was formed within the Soviet power structure) with collaboration; namely, of being puppets of Moscow. See Diana T. Kudaibergenova, “The Use and Abuse of Postcolonial Discourses in Post-Independent Kazakhstan,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 68, no. 5 (2016): 922.

of Soviet policies imposed on the country, particularly ethnic division (cast as the progenitor of interethnic clashes in Fergana valley in 1989 and during the '90s), economic planning (which triggered the food and consumer goods shortages in the republic after 1989), the division of labor (establishing cotton monoculture and Uzbekistan's total economic dependence upon it), water and agricultural policies (producing ecological disasters, such as salinization and pollution of the soil, as well as the drying up of the Aral sea), the imprudent overtures towards Islam during *perestroika*, and 'repression of the Uzbek people' during Stalinism and in the 1980s. The 'cotton affair' itself was cast as part and parcel of this last accusation. Indeed, it was described as 'the final stage of 1937' or even as an 'Uzbek genocide' conducted by the two *perestroika* 'inquisitors' Telman Gdlyan and Nikolai Ivanov. In order to understand the vital role played by the 'Uzbek cotton affair'¹¹⁴ (1983-1989) in the evolution of *Mustaqillik* we must first explore how it was told initially (it was covered extensively in the Uzbek press up until mid-1989) to see how later (mostly in post-1991) interpretations were so distorted and recast.

The 'Uzbek cotton affair' was one of the most famous corruption scandals to emerge in the final decade of the Soviet era. Pikhoya defined it as "one of the greatest examples of Andropov's 'demonstrative terror', aimed at tightening control over both republican and local politics."¹¹⁵ This 'demonstrative' policy was endorsed as well by Chernenko and then by Gorbachev who, especially in the aftermath of the XXVII CPSU Congress in 1986, ordered stronger measures against moral and material corruption in the USSR. After Brezhnev's tolerance, Moscow realized that every year the Soviet state was paying for 270–340 thousand tons of nonexistent Uzbek cotton¹¹⁶ (as well as widespread fraud in other sectors). Indeed, between 1976 and 1983 the cotton scam had defrauded the state of almost four billion rubles.¹¹⁷ The consequent season of massive investigations, purges and political trials, which

¹¹⁴ A range of terminology is used to describe the events, including 'cotton scandal', 'cotton scam' or simply the 'Uzbek affair'.

¹¹⁵ Personal interview with Rudolf Germanovich Pikhoya, Moscow, 10 December 2015.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 493.

¹¹⁷ William A. Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 187; Leslie Holmes, *The End of Communist Power. Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 101.

officially involved more than 20,000 people in the republic,¹¹⁸ progressed in three different phases. As mentioned, the first ‘hidden’ phase (1983–1984) was characterized by preliminary inquiries amidst a general ‘institutional silence’ and conducted by the USSR central *prokuratura* and KGB officials in the Uzbek SSR. Initially, the case was not thought to have systemic implications and the previous power structures were preserved in the party and the SSR administration. During the second phase (‘systemic-repressive’) between 1984 and 1986, the leadership in Moscow demanded that the CPUz elite take the battle against ‘negative phenomena’ to the party and to the state apparatus. What followed was spiraling dynamic that took the form of a kind of paranoid witch-hunt, which was often exploited in internal political struggles. In fact, in that period a denunciation campaign began in which dozens of letters were written – often anonymously – to the CC.¹¹⁹ In seeking to implement the recommendations of the CPSU, the XVI plenum of the CPUz (June 1984)¹²⁰ endorsed a harsh campaign against corruption in every agricultural and industrial sector. The result was repression on a mass scale and purges of the CPUz and Uzbek SSR bureaucracies, eradicating the previous power structures at all levels of the hierarchy. In fact, as early as January 1985, 40 of the 65 *oblast* Party secretaries, 10 of the 13 *obkom* first secretaries, and 260 city and *rayon* secretaries were removed from their posts.¹²¹

The final stage of the ‘cotton scandal’ was characterized by a highly visible and public – with, in the context of *perestroika*, an intense media campaign that attracted an eager mass audience – crusade against corruption and falsification, led by Gdlyan and Ivanov.¹²² Throughout, the narrative of this campaign was

¹¹⁸ However, Donald Carlisle argues that the ‘Uzbek cotton affair’ would had to involve, directly or indirectly, more than 58,000 people. Carlisle, “Islam Karimov and Uzbekistan. Back to the Future?”

¹¹⁹ See RGANI (Rossiskiy Gosudarstveniy Arkhiv Noveyshey Istorii), f. 5, Apparat TsK KPSS, op. 90, o delakh TsK KPSS 1984 g., d. 49, Perechenie sekretariat KPSS Ligacheva. Praski ot delai po pismo Olumbekova T.T., Sedarenko B.D., o pervim secretarie TsK Kompartii Kirgizii Usualiev.

¹²⁰ RGASPI (Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv social’no-politicheskoi istorii), f. 17, Tsentral’nyi komitet KPSS, op. 153 Otdel organizatsionno-partiynoy raboty. Sektor informatsii (1984), d. 2450 Protokol 16.

¹²¹ Carlisle, “Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev,” 141.

¹²² Cf. GARF (Gosudarstvennyy arkhiv Rossiyskoy Federatsii), f. R 9654 S'yezd Narodnykh deputatov SSSR, Verkhovnyi Sovet SSSR i ikh organy, op. 4 Dokumenty o deputatskoy deyatel'nosti narodnykh deputatov SSSR. 1989-1991 gody, d. 90 Otdel'nyye dokumenty o narodnykh deputatakh SSSR T. Gdlyane i N. Ivanove (teksty

cast around the struggle against the '*mafija*' in the USSR. Indeed, during this period in which the Uzbek administrative and political order was essentially under the direct 'trusteeship' of Moscow (1986–1989), investigations targeted the entire political system, provoking an understandable sense of frustration and humiliation within the Uzbek elite - typically represented by the *nomenklatura*. This humiliation reached its apogee during the so called *krasnyi desant* campaign, when hundreds of predominantly Russian cadres were sent to Uzbekistan to replace Uzbeks natives in command and control posts. At this moment, the local sense of disaffection with the empire was at its height, as Uzbek elites felt their very self-determination was on the line and that Moscow had completely violated the unofficial (patrimonial) 'social contract' between the center and periphery within the Soviet system. It was at this moment that a new Uzbek narrative of the country's Soviet experience – and a new official national ideology – emerged.

The interethnic clashes and subsequent pogrom of Meskhetian Turks that took place in June 1989 proved to be the 'straw that broke the camel's back'. These developments signaled the end of Nishanov's leadership and he was immediately dispatched to Moscow to take up the position of Chairman of Soviet of Nationalities. Karimov, his designated successor as CPUz First Secretary, was an 'outsider' within the upper echelons of the *nomenklatura*. He immediately cast himself in the role of 'peacemaker' – and to a large extent a 'restorer' of the pre-cotton affair order - launching a new political identity for Uzbekistan, the central ideological theme of which was *Mustaqillik* (independence). *Mustaqillik* essentially combined a 'soft' (and non-orthodox) nationalist folklore with a set of *pars destruens* claims, undergirded by the rhetoric of Uzbek 'victimhood' at the hands of the Soviet colonizers. Since that time, the Uzbek leader has propagated a sort of transgenerational 'post-colonial trauma narrative'¹²³ in a country that had hitherto never considered

vystupleniy, predvaritel'nyy otchet Komissii S'yezda); GARF, f. R 9654, op. 2 Dokumenty Sekretariatov i komissiy S'yezda narodnykh deputatov SSSR. 1989-1992 gody, d. 20 Materialy k voprosu o deyatel'nosti sledstvennoy gruppy Prokuratury Soyuz SSR, vozglavlyayemoy T.KH. Gdlyanom. RGANI, f. 89 Kolleksiya kopiy dokumentov, rasekrechennykh pri vypolnenii tematicheskikh zaprosov v protsesse nauchno-issledovatel'skoy raboty. 1920–1991 gg, op. 24 Gdlyan-Ivanov delo.

¹²³ There is a broad academic debate on this concept. Here, trauma can simply be adopted to indicate "a frightening event outside of ordinary experience" that is "forging relationships of empathy and solidarity" among individuals of a community. Therefore, in relation to a colonial experience, there is "an attempt to construct an ethical response to forms of human suffering and their cultural and artistic representation." Sonya

itself as a colony within the Soviet system but rather as an example of highly successful integration of an 'archaic' Asian society within the schema of Soviet modernization.¹²⁴ In this first phase of Karimov's mandate, the Uzbek leader was still quite cautious in establishing distance from the USSR and in condemning the practices of *krasnyi desant* that had characterized the previous Usmankhodzhaev and Nishanov mandates. Instead, he began to gradually assert his autonomy and to consolidate his personal power and legitimacy, rebalancing the equilibrium between Uzbek and Slav elites and replacing 'Moscow's men' – mainly ethnic Russians appointed during the *krasnyi desant* – with Uzbeks in order to salve divisions within the local power network.¹²⁵ This assertion of autonomy by the CPUz leader can be read, *ex post*, as a sign of Moscow's increasing weakness.

Andermahr, "Decolonizing Trauma Studies: Trauma and Postcolonialism," *Humanities* 4 (2015): 500–505. See also Michelle Balaev, *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Fella Benabed, "An Indigenous Holistic Approach to Colonial Trauma and Its Healing," *Literary Paritantra (Systems)* 1, no. 1–2 (2009): 83–91; Milena Bubenechik, *The Trauma of Colonial Condition: In Nervous Conditions and Kiss of the Fur Queen* (Hamburg: Anchor Academic Publishing, 2014); Ogaga Ifowodo, *History, Trauma, and Healing in Postcolonial Narratives. Reconstructing Identities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); David Lloyd, "Colonial Trauma/Postcolonial Recovery?," *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 2, no. 2 (2000): 212–28; Terry Mitchell, "Colonial Trauma: Complex, Continuous, Collective, Cumulative and Compounding," ed. Indigenous Research, 2011; Abigail Ward, "Understanding Postcolonial Traumas.," *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology* 33, no. 3 (2013): 170–84.

¹²⁴ Sharaf Rashidovich Rashidov, *Soviet Uzbekistan* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1982), 1–35.

¹²⁵ There is a debate and criticism on the use of the term 'clan' and its merely regional implication. I prefer Tuncer-Kilavuz's flexible concept of 'local power networks' that refers to groups affiliated to interests rather than regional identity. Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*; Demian Vaisman, "Regionalism and Clan Loyalty in the Political Life of Uzbekistan," in *Muslim Eurasia Conflicting Legacies*, ed. Yaaev Roi (London: Frank Cass, 1995); David Gullette, "Theories on Central Asian Factionalism: The Debate in Political Science and Its Wider Implications," *Central Asian Survey* 26, no. 3 (September 14, 2007); Fane, "Ethnicity and Regionalism in Uzbekistan. Maintaining Stability through Authoritarian Control"; Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia, Perceptions and Pact* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Tunçer-Kilavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*.

In 1989, with the emergence of nationalist resentment against the central power and greater criticism in the press because of glasnost, Uzbek public opinion started to consider even more critically the events of the so called 'cotton affairs', and in Moscow the case even became something of a media event coinciding with the 'Gdlyan-Ivanov affair'. In Uzbekistan, *PV* – which had previously followed these scandals by condemning the weakness of party discipline and the 'negative phenomena' – started publishing testimonies and interviews against the two prosecutors, who had been acclaimed as 'heroes of glasnost' in previous years. It published an interview of the Deputy General Prosecutor of USSR, V.I. Kravtsev, who for the first time was declaring the story of Usmankhodzhaev, his dismissal and his implication in the 'cotton affair' for an alleged bribe to Yegor Ligachev. At the end of the story, he denounced Gdlyan and Ivanov as 'inquisitors' who had been extorting confessions, including through torture.¹²⁶

From 1989, the 'cotton scandal' stories became media cases that the Uzbek press, media and official journals – such as *Positsiya*, *Dialog*, *Narod i demokratiya* – started to follow very closely, confronting the versions expressed in the Soviet central press with the alternative versions they provided. These reportages were also instrumental in revealing how, among the *prokuratura* and public opinion, there were many doubts and a general disagreement about the validity of these criminal cases. Although in the Republic there were still groups that were helping the 'judicial reform' process endorsed by the CPSU, the Uzbek press started to acknowledge that, from the central level, misinformation and imprecise facts had spread about the 'cotton affairs' and the trial of Yuri Churbanov and others. During these months, the Uzbek media closely followed and condemned the related case of Aleksandr Minkin, one of the first reporters to sensitize Soviet public opinion about the dramatic situation in Uzbekistan in terms of corruption, child labor and environmental issues related to the use of defoliants in the cotton fields. Meanwhile, across the whole of the USSR, Minkin's name became symbol of 'glasnost'. In the Uzbek press he was harshly accused of distorting the truth and defaming the positive improvements in the republic, fomenting political tensions and creating a false impression of the processes in the economy, ecology and cultural life of Uzbekistan.¹²⁷ However, history has proved that Minkin's denunciations were unfortunately well-founded.

¹²⁶ *PV*, 22076, 210, 13 September 1989, p. 3.

¹²⁷ *PV*, 22084-22085, 218-219, 22 September 1989, p. 8.

7.2.3 Self-victimization and the ‘last repression’ narrative

After mid-1989, the limits of the Soviet system and challenging issues such as the ‘Gdlyan-Ivanov affair’ were highlighted, to sensitize Uzbek public opinion and present the two prosecutors as ‘enemies of the Uzbek people’. Even the SS USSR acknowledged the ‘risks of destabilization’ due to this case¹²⁸ while the SS UzSSR established a special commission to investigate the moral and substantive damage inflicted during the ‘cotton affairs’ revealing that:

every person needs *glasnost* as much as they need the air to breathe. Now people want to know everything that is going on - considering that previously they did not have the opportunity to objectively obtain the whole truth on all aspects of life - and the deputies have created a commission for *glasnost* [...]. In recent times, the expectations of the workers of the republic have not being met by the officials of the law enforcement [...] and now the commission is examining the work of *prokuratura* of the Oblast of Andijan and the results of the audit will be made known to the public. [...] The commission plans to examine the *glasnost* in the broadcastings of the ‘State Committee of Uzbekistan on TV and Radio’ as well as the opinion of the public on critical articles and cartoons [...] and the fate of the people had been unjustly blackened by the press of the republic regarding the ‘cotton affair’ will be controlled.¹²⁹

It became increasingly clear that in Moscow, as in Tashkent, the ‘Gdlyan-Ivanov affair’ was assuming a political dimension, narrated as it was from the Uzbek point of view. One of the most loyal of Karimov’s original allies, the Uzbek Minister of the MVD, Kamalov, gave his version on the ‘*mafiya*’ accusations. Kamalov argued that the definition of ‘*mafiya*’ – in the sense of being related to organized crime – was used as a “play on words”. The term – which had become widespread at that time due to a popular Italian TV series entitled *La Piovra* – was simply an exaggeration, not to be taken seriously as a description of actual reality in Uzbekistan. Indeed, Kamalov affirmed: we can easily say that there is fortunately no ‘*mafiya*’ here [...] this term implies a huge criminal unit monopolizing action in many spheres” of public life. Conversely, in Uzbekistan the term ‘*mafiya*’ referred to the “activities of corrupt officials who carried out theft, handed out bribes on a large scale and had powerful patrons behind them [...Therefore] there is no link to define these phenomena as organized crime.”¹³⁰ This stance, advanced by the main person in charge of republican internal affairs, was targeted thus to wholly disavow the political

¹²⁸ PV, 22258, 20 April 1990, 92, p. 3.

¹²⁹ PV, 22302, 15 June 1990, 136, p. 2.

¹³⁰ PV, 22321, 155, 8 July 1990, p. 3.

campaign that Gdlyan and Ivanov were advancing from Moscow. Therefore, the case had repercussions for the entire political life of the republic. During the plenum of the CC CPUz of 23 March 1990, the member of the CC CPUz, Kh. Yakubzhanova said that the XXII Congress must be the "congress of the cleaning, justice and independence." In her words,

those 2-3 people who made speeches in the Supreme Soviet will never spare Gdlyan and Ivanov; this is a terrible force, this is the mafia, mafia against our people, they are chains for our communists. [...] The fight against Gdlyan and Ivanov is a sacred duty of the party organization CPUz and of the SS UzSSR. We will win Gdlyan and Ivanov, absolving the Uzbek people, or we will be defeated and disgraced.¹³¹

In summer of 1990, there was an ambiguous attitude within Uzbek politics towards the USSR that emerged also during the first stage of the XXII Congress CC CPUz (4–6 June 1990),¹³² Karimov recalled the difficulties in implementing perestroika in a republic that was on the point of exploding, and the contradictory effects of the fight against the negative phenomena.¹³³ In his words:

the difficulties in Uzbekistan ended up being a kind of guilt. An example of this is the so-called "Uzbek cotton affair" [literally *Uzbekskoe Khlopkovoe Delo*]. The republic and its workers did not have time to straighten the back from the yoke of cotton, distortions and violations of the party and state rules and the law, and then a wave of lawlessness and humiliation came in connection with the cotton itself. The unfounded insult to [our] people which was exacerbated in the media, moral terror against some honest workers, mass repressions that have been expanded not only against the organizers of forgeries but also to thousands of workers, becoming an heavy additional burden on shoulders of [our] people.¹³⁴

On this point, Karimov was even recalling his predecessor Rashidov, who lived and worked, and was the head of the republic for nearly a quarter century in the period that now we define as 'stagnation.' If there is the supreme justice

¹³¹ Prot. 19/1990, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 159, d. 1799, l. 56.

¹³² In June 1990, the XX Congress CPUz chose a new buro and secretariat that swept away the membership that had been approved in 1986. Nobody 'survived', meanwhile of the 1986 CC total membership of 261, only 62 were retained by the 1990 Congress evidencing a turnover rate in the CC CPUz of 76%. Carlisle, "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev," 118.

¹³³ Prot. n/1990, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 159, d. 1796, l. 31.

¹³⁴ Prot. n/1990, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 159, d. 1796, l. 32.

- and in our opinion it is in the opinion of the people - we cannot deny the great and important changes that are connected with the name of this person. Yes, in this period the report-mania and falsehood, fraud and magnificence, protectionism and intrigue flourished. However, was Rashidov himself the only father of these phenomena and what we judge now was inherent only to him [?] But in the other republics and regions of the country there were no facts like these ones? We must not forget the responsibility of people like Brezhnev and his clique. We judge all negative phenomena connected with the name of Rashidov. For us, this is unacceptable. We must cleanse us from the routine of the past and without this [passage] we cannot go on. In parallel, we cannot conclude that everything that happened in that period was around a lifeless personality. Above all, it is not acceptable to speculate on the name of one with which many of his accusers today have [previously] worked together when they had non-minor posts. The most important thing has been obscured; and it is the [Uzbek] people that was, is and will be a great worker.¹³⁵

At the congress, some party delegates expressed the need to rehabilitate the moral integrity of the Uzbek people and of the republic against the slanders moved by Gdlyan and Ivanov campaign;¹³⁶ while others started to accuse the CC CPSU and its officials, blaming for the lack of unity or blaming the inefficient planning system.¹³⁷ This excess of criticism towards Moscow suggests a simple consideration: evidently, party unity was over and the republican elite were searching for a new agreement with a center that had dramatically interrupted the supply chain.

As evident, the cotton affair was narrated differently than it had been before. The story was considered as a distortion of reality, a season of terror and mass repression, a humiliation and was thus evidence of the exploitative regime that the soviets imposed in Uzbekistan. On that occasion, the party condemned the actions of Gdlyan and Ivanov and asked for protection for people from that injustice.¹³⁸ In parallel, on 20 July 1990 the SC UzSSR adopted the decision n° 4, introducing criminal liability for those defendants who, for the cases related to the cotton scams, had been given no other choice but to obey the orders of their superiors.¹³⁹ With an evident manifestation of petty

¹³⁵ Prot. n/1990, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 159, d. 1796, l. 38.

¹³⁶ Prot. n/1990, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 159, d. 1796, l. 92.

¹³⁷ Prot. n/1990, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 159, d. 1796, ll. 103-104.

¹³⁸ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 159 Otdel organizatsionno-partiynoy raboty. Sektor informatsii (1990), d. 1796 Protokol XXII s"yezda KPUz 4-6 yunya 1990.

¹³⁹ This decision was contested by the Supreme Court of USSR (n 1-16/62-90 of October 26 1990), but it was again reconfirmed by the resolution of the Plenum of the Supreme

annoyance, during the second stage of the XXII congress of CPUz (7–8 December 1990), the Uzbek president declared that the republic had honored its commitments with the USSR – even exceeding the economic cotton plan by more than 225 thousand tons – while the CPUz cadres were dissatisfied with the decisions of the CPSU on the resolution of the intra-national relations issues. On that occasion, Karimov reaffirmed the need to redefine the Union agreement – and the interaction among party, soviets and the social organizations – and a roadmap for the transition to a market economy, even considering the responsibilities for the ecological disaster in the Aral basin, in Karakalpakstan and in the pre-Aral *rayons*. In this phase, highlighting ecological problems became a crucial point, constituting a further topic for the subsequent narrative of self-victimization in relation to environmental disasters brought about by Soviet policies of agricultural exploitation and cotton monoculture.

On the one hand, the rhetoric of ‘brotherhood’ and unity under the same communist party framework still survived. At the same time, a national leader pushed for Uzbek economic and political autonomy. In fact, during that second stage of the XXII CPUz congress, Karimov highlighted the self-determination of the party, declaring that: “now we are an independent party and we ourselves have a responsibility to our people”.¹⁴⁰ On that occasion, S. Mamarasulov, FS Tashkent obkom, delivered a harsh speech blaming perestroika and Gorbachev, with the complicity of the old Uzbek leadership. In this emblematic intervention, he noted that:

the just assessment of the past is important for the party authority. I am talking about the so-called ‘cotton affairs’ that were called illegally for all of us ‘Uzbek affairs’ by irresponsible political speculators with the tacit approval of the central authorities. But how did this happen? I think the main mistake was made at the XXVII CPSU congress in the speech of M.S. Gorbachev, when the party organization of the republic was accused of corruption and massive decadence. After this, Usmanhodzhaev and his group wanted to save their heads and left Uzbekistan to the mercy of events to CC CPSU, sending a letter with a request to send ‘*severnij desant*’ [northern reinforcements]. And we know well what they were doing with the help of Gdlyan and Ivanov. Thus, we have to say that this was a small genocide, a 1937 in the period of *perestroika*. And now that the

court of Uzbek SSR (n° 5-9-90 of 28 December 1990). Materials exposed at the Museum in Memory of the Victims of Repression in Tashkent, 29 May 2015.

¹⁴⁰ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 159, d. 1798 Protokol XXII s"yezda KPUz 7-8 dekabrya 1990, l. 34.

truth is revealed the center pretends that nothing special happened, just one of many errors that occurred.”¹⁴¹

This unforgiving speech sounded like a symptom of ‘fatigue by empire’ by local elites, revealing the seriousness with which the ‘moralization campaigns’ of the ‘cotton scandal’ had been perceived in Uzbekistan and the need to rehabilitate the honor and the symbols of a people – guilty or innocent – who had felt humiliated during these massive investigative campaigns.

7.2.4 The rehabilitation of Sharaf Rashidov

After 1990, Karimov consolidated his power¹⁴² by bargaining, negotiating and making concessions to the elite, advancing an agenda of ‘transformism’,¹⁴³ coopting many opposition figures, and increasing his legitimacy in the eyes of the public. His remaining in power depended on how well he could satisfy elite expectations. In this perspective, some episodes became emblematic, such as the restoration of the Jizzak *oblast*,¹⁴⁴ approved by decree on 16 February 1990. This event was highly symbolic because Karimov was essentially restoring a power base for the Jizzak power network and cancelling one of those measures that had been made during the *krasnyi desant* to condemn the former FS CPUz, Sharaf Rashidovich Rashidov (1959-1983), his memory, and his (imposing) power network.

The rehabilitation of Rashidov, a leader who had marked a quarter century of Uzbek political history, was not only intended to legitimize the ruling power elite – itself formed during Rashidov’s period in power – but to restore the idea of an ‘era of splendor’ regarding a period that had been vilified during the ‘cotton scandal.’ In fact, Rashidov was officially recognized as the chief person responsible for the criminal situation in Uzbekistan at the XXI Congress CC CPUz (30 January 1986), when the “derashidovization” campaign condemned – post-

¹⁴¹ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 159, d. 1798, l. 42.

¹⁴² Carlisle, “Islam Karimov and Uzbekistan. Back to the Future?,” 196.

¹⁴³ *Trasformismo* (Transformism) is an Italian concept – typical of post-unitarian Italy – that refers to the method of making wide and flexible coalitions in government by dividing, coopting and isolating opponents to remain in power. Quoting the character Tancredi in the novel *The Leopard* (by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa): “If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change.”

¹⁴⁴ Jizzak oblast was the native region of Sharaf Rashidov and became a key area of cotton production in the 1960s and 1970s. On 6 September, 1988, during the ‘de-Rashidovization’ campaign led by the First secretary of the CPUz, Rafiq Nishanov, the Jizzak oblast was abolished and merged into the Syrdarya.

mortem – the defunct leader as guilty of a vicious work style in cadre management, intrigue, formalism, indifference, abuse of power, corruption, theft, and scamming.¹⁴⁵ Gleason notes that, “by the mid-1980s Rashidov was being publicly ridiculed and denounced for having fostered ‘*Sharafrashidovshchina*’. Rashidov [wa]s accused of having built for himself a political machine quite unlike anything anticipated by the conventional interpretation of the latitude of local officials in the USSR”.¹⁴⁶ As mentioned in the fifth chapter, in June 1986 the CC CPUz and SM UzSSR even decreed a sort of *damnatio memoriae* cancelling any commemoration of his name, restoring original place names and removing the financial and housing support to his family.¹⁴⁷ While the Uzbek affair became a media issue throughout the USSR, Rashidov’s name was in fact associated with that of a ‘Mafia godfather’. Nevertheless, after 1990, a campaign for the rehabilitation of Sharaf Rashidov became a crucial part of Uzbek public debate, becoming something of a *cause célèbre*, even in the official Uzbek press.¹⁴⁸ In an interview published in the Soviet newspaper *Izvestiya* in 1991, President Karimov responded to Rashidov’s rehabilitation, explaining how his name was a symbol of recent events in Uzbekistan and how he had become a scapegoat for the period of stagnation:

The attitude towards Rashidov was defined during the XXII Congress of the CPUz and at the III session of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic. I agree with the assessment that has been made in these places. The meaning of these evaluations is that the personality of Rashidov cannot be decontextualized from the period in which he lived and worked. I have to say that the hardest crisis that hit us was not economic, but moral. The consequences of the destruction of the ancient moral traditions for the sake of ideological reasons will be much more difficult to overcome than economic problems. Not long ago, a communist who had an important position could not go to the cemetery to honor his deceased loved ones. Participation in the process of burial has been associated with mortal sin, and the person was expelled from the party and removed from his position. To reconcile with his conscience and to not lose what has been achieved over many years, people even preferred to ‘go to hospital’ or leave on ‘urgent’ business trips when a relative died. Moreover, after this, we say to

¹⁴⁵ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155 Otdel organizatsionno-partiynoy raboty. Sektor informatsii (1986), d. 2296, Protokol XXI s"yezda KPUz.

¹⁴⁶ Gregory Gleason, “Fealty and Loyalty: Informal Authority Structures in Soviet Asia,” *Soviet Studies* 43, no. 4 (1991): 617.

¹⁴⁷ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2316, ll. 9-10.

¹⁴⁸ At that time, the article “*Nostalgia for the “lord” was emblematic. Who needs Rashidov’s rehab?*” in *PV*, 22474, 8, 11 January 1991, p. 3.

people there is nothing left of the spiritual dimension and the double morality regarding religion took on its ugliest form. A million and a half of the inhabitants of the republic who had the opportunity to watch Afghan TV have seen that the Soviet army was building and restoring mosques there. Meanwhile, here the mosques were destroyed. This attitude lasted until 1988 [...] when those 24,000 criminal cases connected with the cotton [affair] started such that villains and even their victims appeared behind bars. This has undermined the people's faith in justice. Meanwhile, our managers regularly reported to Moscow about those thousands of people arrested or expelled from the party for the facts related to cotton. Not all of them were convicted in vain, but this is not a justification for the thousands of innocents who have been persecuted unjustly. Only lately, we have compensated 1.5 million rubles to those who had been unjustly sentenced, and now released and rehabilitated. [About the years of stagnation] why in the ranks of Brezhnev people, they recall just Rashidov, while his other companions live serenely out from the public or have returned to political activity? In this imbalance, we can see the injustice.¹⁴⁹

Then, since 1990, the legal and honorary rehabilitation of victims thus became one of the main points of Karimov's political agenda which advanced an agenda of forgiveness towards those former 'culprits' who has seemingly overnight become 'victims' of the repressive Soviet system. According to the Uzbek leader, corruption and falsifications in Uzbekistan were just one example of a wider problem related to the stagnation period. However, the republic became the scapegoat for the whole Soviet system. During the same interview, the reporter asked him why his opponents were linking his moderation towards Rashidov with the fact that he also had concentrated in his hands so much power since becoming President of the UzSSR, head of the cabinet (the former SM) and FS CPUz. Thus, Karimov answered that his actual status was the "requirement for the time of the transition to face the explosive situation which was formed in the country and in the republic."¹⁵⁰ In this way, the self-victimization rhetoric, the need to rehabilitate the victims of repression and the continuous call to an 'emergency' situation would become elements that President Karimov continued to apply in order to legitimize his power even in the following decades, laying the blame on the Soviet past to justify the present. Substantially, according to the Uzbek president, the 'negative phenomena' related to the 'cotton scandal' were the natural outcome of Soviet policies of cotton monoculture, imposed on Uzbekistan with the most severe means:

¹⁴⁹ Izvestiya's interview with Karimov reported in *PV*, 22487, 21, 30 January 1991, p. 2.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

and those who did not agree were removed or replaced. [Moscow] chose those who were obedient, declaring that they would reach the [five-year] plan in [just] two years. It remained only to seed cotton on the sills or on the roofs. We have provided the independence of cotton [to the USSR] but, in return, we have received economic dependence. Everything was just created for the final purpose of cotton. Now we need to import more than half of our consumer goods.¹⁵¹

Subsequently, the narrative emerged that Rashidov, although the main culprit or an accomplice, had effectively had no choice and had done everything possible to protect his people from the exploitation of Moscow. On 18 October 1991, during a commemoration of Alisher Navoi – considered one of the fathers of Uzbek literature – the controversial rehabilitation of the literary work of Sharaf Rashidov¹⁵² was finally revived.¹⁵³ Meanwhile, his controversial name was still signifying absolutism, nepotism, patrimonialism, stagnation and corruption in the rest of Soviet Union. Conversely, in Uzbekistan, Rashidov, his literary works, his family and even his power network were rehabilitated by politics, literature¹⁵⁴ and historiography.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, Rashidov was recast as a ‘patriot’, a ‘national hero’ – who behaved in such a way to maximize the Uzbeks’ interests sharing power and wealth amongst the

¹⁵¹ PV, 22514, 48, 8 March 1991, p. 1.

¹⁵² PV, 22671, 205, 19 October 1991, p. 1.

¹⁵³ Allworth comments: “many people perceived Rashidov's extraliterary motives [but] they could not express great respect for his writing. His endless panegyrics to Russia, then, succeeded temporarily as Sovietwide political devices but failed as indigenous art for the emerging Uzbek nationality. In that crucial regard, the leader's main aesthetic method, his literary animus, could not contribute to a distinctive new Uzbek profile in Central Asia.” Allworth, *The Modern Uzbeks: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present : A Cultural History*, 315–16.

¹⁵⁴ An example is Rizaev, who explains his wish to write a book about Rashidov which would run counter to the ‘rashidovshina’ narrative. According to him, “the center needed to find a scapegoat in order to expose the appalling corruption and the incoherence of its promises [...] Despite the ‘Uzbek affairs’ the people of Uzbekistan kept a respectful attitude towards Rashidov.” In Rizaev’s opinion, falsifications were not a direct responsibility of Rashidov but of the Soviet system. Saidakbar Rizaevich Rizaev, *Sharaf Rashidov. Shtrikhi K Portretu* (Toshkent: Yozuvchi, 1992), 5.

¹⁵⁵ According to Buttino, in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, “the history was bent for this purpose, gave merits and honors returned to the party leaders. In reality, these leaders were not so forward-looking, but they sailed in a corrupt world and then ran the power left by the Soviet collapse which they had not wanted nor expected.” Buttino, *Samarqanda. Storie in Una Città Dal 1945 a Oggi*, 36.

Uzbek people – and a symbol of revenge and resistance against Soviet ‘colonial rule’. This, then was a curious paradox, considering the work of the longest-serving Soviet leader who had himself been a key contributor to the Sovietization of Uzbekistan. Similarly, both Usmankhodzhaev and Nishanov were represented as ‘Moscow’s puppets’, responsible for the ‘repression against the Uzbek people.’ However, Rashidov and his successors responded to central policies in order to legitimate their power, endorsing and declaring what Moscow wanted to hear. The campaign for ‘six million tons’ and the ‘fight against the negative phenomena’ had both a confirmatory-legitimizing intent in order to demonstrate loyalty to the Soviet cause. In this power structure, the latest Soviet leaders of Uzbekistan were probably not so different in their role.

Despite the opposition of Birlik – that opposed this rehabilitation course and, for many extents, used the same argumentation of the ‘Uzbek affairs’ against Karimov¹⁵⁶ - since 1991, monuments and streets in Tashkent¹⁵⁷ and in other cities of Uzbekistan¹⁵⁸ have been dedicated to Rashidov’s memory. In Jizzak – his native city – the Uzbek government endorsed several initiatives in his name. For 75th anniversary Rashidov’s birth (6 November 1992) a jubilee commission organized celebrations all around the city and several places were renamed in his honor, a monumental complex with his bust was inaugurated, a *madrasa*, and the ‘*Monumental Museum Sh. Rashidov*’ dedicated to ‘the

¹⁵⁶ In its program, Birlik was using the same argument of the ‘Uzbek affairs’ against Karimov, evidencing a corrupt trend from Rashidov within the party and the state apparatus that lasted until the present day: “the bustle in changing republican leadership (Rashidov - Usmankhodzhaev - Nishanov - Larimov) and of the official management of the SS UzSSR and SM UzSSR led to the renaissance of rashidovshina, corruption and fortification of [a corrupt] administrative and the command system.” Hoover Institution Archives, Inventory of the Soviet and post-Soviet independent publications collection, box 465, Birlik - Gazeta narodnogo dvizheniia Uzbekistana, Spetsvypusk titled "Za nashu i vashu svobodu," pp. 5-6.

¹⁵⁷ After the removal of the Lenin statue from Tashkent center (7 June 1992), Lenin street was renamed after Sharaf Rashidov, and near his former grave, a memorial complex was built after destroying a church and removing a pelmeny place, a puppet theater and an ice cream café. Then, the memorial complex was enlarged in a labyrinth shape and in the center a monumental bust was put. See Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom. Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, 191.

¹⁵⁸ At the beginning of 1992, a movie about Rashidov entitled “Triumf i drama Sharafa Rashidova” was shot and diffused; and in May 1992 the Uzbek parliament announced that Ilyichevsky raion in Syrdarya oblast was renamed after Sharaf Rashidov. However, in 2004, it was renamed again as Sardoba. Ibid.

important statist and public figure, poet and writer, twice hero of labor' were founded in Jizzakh. The museum was officially established by a decree of President Karimov to celebrate a symbol of modernization and Uzbek independence. He left a message that is still exposed in the main hall:

This [celebration] is for the 75th anniversary of Sharaf Rashidov but, first of all, needless to say, for his 30 years serving Uzbekistan and our people. This is to restore his name to our generation. Slanders such as the "Uzbek affair," the "cotton affair" made a blemish to our people, defamed our country, accusing [us] to be "thieves" and "bribers." He suffered all of this and restored the justice to its current level and for the future life; he saved history. Secondly, he condemned the people who sold the[ir] relatives, the people and the country. Thirdly, as having reached independence, we do not let our country to be in the hands of strangers, we are responsible for our people's lives - [This is] the truth that we should bear in mind. Finally, we should persuade our young generation that there is still justice in the world.¹⁵⁹

This narrative correlates both Rashidov's rehabilitation and *Mustaqillik*, to imply a relationship of interdependence. As it is stated in the museum, "with the independence of our motherland, even the good name of the unforgettable Sh. Rashidov is returned," celebrating "one of the best sons of the fatherland" who said once "if Uzbekistan ever become independent, I will put gold in front of every house." The museum – that appears as a 'meta-museum' where the visitors go to admire the concept rather than its collection - was located in a former school library (built during Rashidov's period in office) to contain a collection of his personal belongings of donated by his daughter, Sayora Rashidova. Accordingly, Jizzakh became the center for the memory of Sharaf Rashidov and it is now planning to celebrate the 100th anniversary of his birth, in 2017, with an ambitious plan of urban embellishment and modernization in order to make the city "as beautiful as he dreamed"¹⁶⁰ and a series of public events.

Thus, Rashidov (and his works) became the main symbol to be rehabilitated against the humiliation of the 'Uzbek affair'. According to the chairman of the

¹⁵⁹ Message left by Islom Karimov and reported in the hall of Monumental Museum Sh. Rashidov in Jizzakh.

¹⁶⁰ The official statement expressed in the brochure of the "Monumental Museum Sh. Rashidov" in Jizzak, donated by museum's curator. Interview in Jizzak, 13 June 2015.

Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan (FATi),¹⁶¹ Ravshan Abdullaev, there could be even an attempt to rehabilitate this Brezhnevian symbol as a sort of “*jadid*”, a “partisan with the pen” who peacefully struggled against the colonial power.¹⁶² This provocation can appear paradoxical when related to a Soviet leader, but it is based on the fact that Sharaf Rashidov represented a model of progress and development in a Muslim society, “defending the interests of Uzbek people.” However, contrary to the *jadids*, he was also the endorser of a deep sovietization process that erased national culture and tradition.¹⁶³ Wooden and Stefes have commented the rehabilitation as a direct political maneuver: “Karimov’s decision to embrace past policies and to rehabilitate Rashidov, as well as other officials involved in the cotton affair, would also result in the return of members of the former First Party Secretary’s Soviet-era elite.”¹⁶⁴ This political analysis is sharp, considering that the Rashidovian elite was mostly restored and ruled for more than three decades after Rashidov’s death. Nevertheless, it was functional to legitimize Karimov’s regime. On this matter, Buttino commented:

The existence of an Uzbek resistance to Soviet colonialism led by Rashidov and Karimov is a central part of the official Uzbek rewriting of history after 1991 and entered into textbooks [...The 'cotton affair'] was interpreted as a colonial act such as the arrival of cadres from the centre to replace local leaders accused of corruption in the cotton scandal. For many Uzbek leaders newcomers were seen as people who commanded without knowing the country and were held responsible for an atmosphere of utter arbitrariness and chaos. According to this interpretation, when he was appointed first secretary of the Uzbek party, Islam Karimov has wisely brought the country to the previous order, liberating from prison hundreds of people unjustly convicted and putting every process down.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ The institute is the official institution responsible for defining the historiography. In Soviet times, the institute was a party organ under the Institute of Marxism Leninism of the CC CPSU.

¹⁶² Interview with Prof. Ravshan M. Abdullaev, Tashkent, 19 June 2015.

¹⁶³ Interview with Prof. Ravshan M. Abdullaev, Tashkent, 23 May 2015.

¹⁶⁴ Amanda E. Wooden and Christoph H. Stefes, *The Politics of Transition in Central Asia and the Caucasus, Enduring Legacies and Emerging Challenges* (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), 150.

¹⁶⁵ Buttino, *Samarcanda. Storie in Una Città Dal 1945 a Oggi*, 36.

7.3 Uzbekistan towards Independence

Despite Karimov playing the nationalist tones in front of the republican elite, he had a softer and more collaborative attitude in Moscow. In fact, during the XXVIII congress of CPSU (2-13 July 1990), the Uzbek president remarked the importance of a political union in the USSR while he how during the cotton affairs the republic became a test site for repression and mass lawlessness, degrading to people's national dignity. On that occasion, the Uzbek president reiterated the importance of unity in the party - that at that time was seriously challenged by internal struggles – proposing the democratization of the organization and of the entire system of intra-party relations. The means to autonomy within a Union was, again the formula that Karimov proposed in Moscow, clenching on the inadmissibility of a new return to hard bureaucratic centralism, and a hierarchical structure “that castrates the Leninist ideas.”¹⁶⁶ Substantially, Karimov was advancing an autonomist agenda that would nonetheless be limited for as long as it existed within the Soviet constitutional framework.

The declaration of sovereignty of the Republic of Uzbekistan (20 June 1990) – which affirmed Tashkent prerogative power over the Uzbek population and territory¹⁶⁷ – started the constitutional negotiations, which would define the involvement of the republic within the Soviet economic system. The negotiations would even bring forth the ideas of breaking the dependence yoke and strengthening the local cotton production industry. In this phase, besides confirming the commitments to supply the USSR with Uzbek ‘white gold’ until the end of the Soviet system,¹⁶⁸ since 1989 the Tashkent government also followed an autonomist path, including a number of different measures: it launched a plan to build new factories and to restore, modernize and to improve the economic efficiency of the existing complexes; to endorse programs and proposal to make the cotton sector autonomous from the Soviet

¹⁶⁶ *PV*, 22330, 164, 19 July 1990, p. 1.

¹⁶⁷ *PV*, 22307, 141, 22 June 1990, p. 1.

¹⁶⁸ On 13 April 1991, the first deputy prime minister Dzhurabekov wrote to the SM USSR confirming an exportation from Uzbekistan to the rest of USSR of about 1.334 million tons of fibers. *TsGARUz*, f. 837, op. 41, d. 7990, l. 30.

planning system;¹⁶⁹ and to exchange the share of agricultural productions and redefining the interexchange agreement of the planned system.¹⁷⁰

Cotton factories in 1989 in UzSSR¹⁷¹

<i>Region</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Renovated</i>
Karakalpak ASSR	9	6
Andijan	13	13
Bukhara	9	8
Jizzak	8	2
Kashkadarya	12	7
Navoi	/	/
Namangan	9	9
Samarkand	10	7
Surkhandarya	10	9
Syrdarya	10	7
Tashkent	11	7
Fergana	8	8
Khorezm	10	10
Total	119	93

Nevertheless, the negotiations to define the role of Uzbekistan within the Soviet system proceeded also at a constitutional level. In the meeting of the Federation Council on 12 June 1990, Karimov recalled the need for a new agreement to build a confederation among “free republics,”¹⁷² while the debate on the redefinition of the Soviet institutional framework continued in the whole country. Meanwhile, the ‘conservative’ faction of the CC CPSU

¹⁶⁹ On 14 August 1990, the first deputy chairman SM UzSSR Dzhurabekov wrote to SM USSR to organize new selection of cotton types in Uzbekistan and not in Moscow in order to reach at least on cotton issues the same autonomy as Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 7824, ll. 59-60.

¹⁷⁰ On 28 December 1990, the Uzbek government was proposing to the SM USSR to exchange for 1991 about 50 thousand tons of cotton fibers for fodder for livestock. TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 7990, l. 96.

¹⁷¹ These data are referred to the total of cotton factories in UzSSR and the number of complexes that had been repaired and renovated in capitals by 28 August 1989. TsGARUz, f. 837, op. 41, d. 7616, l. 46.

¹⁷² Gorbachev Fond, *V Politburo TsK KPSS...* (Moskva: Gorbachev Fond, 2008), 628.

opposed any possibility of secession.¹⁷³ In this phase, Karimov had an active role and on 19 September he proposed to Gorbachev a project to reform the country on the base of a “real Union’s agreement”¹⁷⁴ – that would replace the 1922 one - among sovereign republics that are “voluntarily inside and outside of the USSR.”¹⁷⁵ Karimov’s project, that sounded like a sort of confederation, acknowledged the respect of all nations and recognizes sovereignty and culture, traditions, languages in every republic (art. 1); the full independence of the republics with the exception of those rights that they delegate to the Union (art. 3); the full property of the resources (art.4).¹⁷⁶ In this regard (art. 5), Karimov’s project referred to Uzbek gold - defining that prices of resources would be fixed by world prices and payed in freely convertible currency¹⁷⁷ - and cotton that Uzbekistan will give to the center for no more of 40% of its production in exchange of meat, milk, sugar and other products. In the current situation of economic crisis, Karimov affirmed that the republic needed 5-10 years to recover, and requested an annual budget of 55-60 billion rubles from the center. In parallel, he requested that a part of Soviet budget would be dedicated to recover the ecological disaster in the Pre-Aral regions and to build infrastructures that could ensure the water demand.¹⁷⁸

Alongside, the project proposed for the republic to reach the free access on the global market and an equitable status in international relations and foreign trade (art. 6) and the peaceful and common agreement to define the borders between republics (art. 7). This “voluntary transfer of sovereignty” – and also the definition of borders, economic and political regime - would be confirmed by referendums¹⁷⁹ and set a convergence goal that required republics’

¹⁷³ Graziosi, *L’Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell’Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 635; Rudolf Germanovich Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L’aigle Bicéphale* (Longueuil: Éditions Kéruss, 2007).

¹⁷⁴ In light of the transformation of the political, social and economic system, to make a real Union’s treaty to reaffirm socialist order on the base of democracy, personal freedoms and social aims, welfare of people, mutual enrichment of national cultures, taking advantage of all-Union market, regional division of labor and the integration of national economy on the basis of the need to maintain the current balance of forces in peace, together with environmental and other global threats to mankind, expressing the interests and need of their people. GARF, f. 9654, op. 7, d. 1097, l. 3.

¹⁷⁵ GARF, f. 9654, op. 7, d. 1097, l. 3.

¹⁷⁶ GARF, f. 9654, op. 7, d. 1097, l. 4.

¹⁷⁷ GARF, f. 9654, op. 7, d. 1097, l. 5.

¹⁷⁸ GARF, f. 9654, op. 7, d. 1097, l. 6.

¹⁷⁹ GARF, f. 9654, op. 7, d. 1097, l. 7.

standards gap to do not exceed 25%.¹⁸⁰ Thus, the union's prerogatives would be in specific issues such as the most important scientific research, defense, energy systems, railways, water infrastructure and atomic energy, cosmonautic, communications, information and informatics, and emergency management. The citizens of the USSR would be equal and free to live in any part of the union (art. 8).¹⁸¹

The project also specified that law had to follow common standards in each republic on the matters of citizenship, production, soil, forests, water, mountains, crimes, forced labor, finance, labor legislation, social protection and pensions, public association of citizens, environmental protection, administrative offenses, judiciary proceeding, education and health (art. 9); it also confirms that republics are free but not in establishing Union law and not against other republics (art. 10).¹⁸² Both Union and republics protect human rights mutually (art. 11); the republics pays the budget to the Union and then it is redistributed (art. 12); the SS USSR would be the central organ of the Union, while the President of USSR would be the head of state elected by citizens (art. 13);¹⁸³ a Soviet of sovereign states would monitor the application of the treaty (art. 14) and the government of the state would be conferred to the presidium (art. 15). The USSR courts would address violations of the Union law and the SC USSR (and even military tribunals) would accept refers from republican courts (art. 16);¹⁸⁴ every republic would join this treaty as a subject of international law and could take duties internationally, but not against the interests of the Union or of other republics (art. 17).

The project also specified that every citizen of a republic is a citizen of the USSR with the same fundamental rights (art. 18)¹⁸⁵ and the republican law cannot dispute the unions' law (art. 19) while also the administrative issues (art. 20)¹⁸⁶ and conflict of laws (art. 21) would be defined by the USSR constitution. The self determination of any republic can be defined by a referendum for independence that can pass with 2/3 of votes and proposed by 10% of citizens who have the right to vote (art. 22)¹⁸⁷ and the resolution of this

¹⁸⁰ GARF, f. 9654, op. 7, d. 1097, l. 8.

¹⁸¹ GARF, f. 9654, op. 7, d. 1097, l. 9.

¹⁸² GARF, f. 9654, op. 7, d. 1097, l. 10.

¹⁸³ GARF, f. 9654, op. 7, d. 1097, l. 11.

¹⁸⁴ GARF, f. 9654, op. 7, d. 1097, l. 12.

¹⁸⁵ GARF, f. 9654, op. 7, d. 1097, l. 13.

¹⁸⁶ GARF, f. 9654, op. 7, d. 1097, l. 14.

¹⁸⁷ GARF, f. 9654, op. 7, d. 1097, l. 15.

referendum is taken by the SS USSR that give 5 years to resolve the problem after which the republic can separate. In these 5 transitional years, both soviet and republican laws are operative (art. 23) and at the end of the transitional period the republican will would be respected (art. 24) but the eventual secessionist republic would pay for its debts (art 25).¹⁸⁸ Basically, Karimov was pushing to reform the Union's agreement in the framework of international law and claiming for Uzbekistan major possibilities to manage its resources and even reaffirming the possibility of secession. Nevertheless, any possibility of the separation of Uzbekistan from the USSR seemed to be undesirable and these kinds of proposals were a typical bargaining strategy which entailed attracting as much resources as possible to the republic. Also in USSR, every miller draws water to his own mill.

In the first months of 1991 - while Moscow was effectively facing separatism in Lithuania¹⁸⁹ - in Uzbekistan Karimov stressed the responsibility of the Soviet government for the 'cotton scandal', as well as for the monoculture and the related ecological disaster - or 'ecocide' - in the Aral Basin, even as he was restoring the figure of Rashidov. However, Karimov continued to profess his loyalty towards the Soviet cause, excluding the possibility of secession. In fact, Karimov still seemed to be a proponent of maintaining the Union. He argued that the party needed a firm line attempts of systemic openings could be seen as signs of weakness and uncertainty, giving to the opposition an easy opportunity to take advantage and make demagogy.¹⁹⁰

Hence, during the IV plenum of the CC CPUz (12 March 1991), Karimov affirmed the importance of reforming the system and disavowed any separation hypothesis, explaining that this kind of maneuver might be a hazard because the country that was not ready for sudden independence. On that occasion, the Uzbek president invited the electorate to vote – in a referendum

¹⁸⁸ GARF, f. 9654, op. 7, d. 1097, l. 16.

¹⁸⁹ On 29 January 1991, in the aftermath of the Lithuanian crisis, despite the opposition of republics Gorbachev with a decree legalize the displacement of joint police-military troops to avoid civil war. Nevertheless, on 9 February a referendum with more of 90% of consensus confirmed the people's will for the Lithuanian independence. Andreï S. Gratchev, *L'histoire Vraie De La Fin De L'urss - Le Naufrage De Gorbatchev* (Paris: Editions Du Rocher, 1992), 346–47.

¹⁹⁰ Pikhoya, *URSS, Histoire Du Pouvoir. Tome 2, Le Retour de L'aigle Bicéphale*, 314–15, 318.

on 17 March – to remain within in the USSR.¹⁹¹ He affirmed that the destruction of the Soviet Union “means the threat of legal chaos, the first manifestations of which we already feel as a result of separatist aspirations, violations of economic and productive relations [...] only a renewed union of sovereign and independent republics will be the warranty and the condition for the free development of each republic.”¹⁹² In the end, during the ‘Soviet Union referendum’ of March 1991, 9,215,571 Uzbek voters (93.9%) voted in favor of remaining in the renewed Union,¹⁹³ one of the highest rates in the whole Soviet Union. It seemed then that, despite perestroika being presented by Tashkent as a camouflaged repressive maneuver, Uzbek citizens still wanted to stay within the USSR.

Despite the will to remain in the Soviet system, Karimov kept seeking for better opportunities for the republic. During a Federation Council meeting of 9 April 1991, the Uzbek president argued with Orlov and affirmed:

And what do we do if from the Union budget we do not receive 7 billion rubles? Not only the federal, but also the republican budget is on the verge of collapse. The division into positive and negative republics [is unacceptable]. 40% of Uzbekistan's budget is created by the union. The Republic itself can provide, and lives with his hand outstretched. Just for gold, it loses 2 billion rubles. One of the measures could be a solution for barter plan production.¹⁹⁴

When Gorbachev was on a state visit in Japan, on 18 April the representatives of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (“the five core republics”) met in Kiev to propose the terms of the new union treaty that had to be formed by sovereign states, sounding like a sort of confederation pact, and excluding this dignity to ASSR (that was a Gorbachev's proposal in order to destabilize the Yeltsin position). The next step was taken on 23 April, when an agreement between the Soviet central government and the nine republics (the so-called “9+1” agreement) was finally signed in Novo-Ogaryovo on April 23.¹⁹⁵ Thus, on June, Karimov together with Mahkamov was one of the

¹⁹¹ The popular referendum on the future of the Soviet Union was held on 17 March 1991 in the nine republics (Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan) which participated in the drafting of the treaty.

¹⁹² *PV*, 22516, 50, 13 March 1991, p. 2.

¹⁹³ *PV*, 22522, 56, 21 March 1991, p. 3.

¹⁹⁴ Gorbachev Fond, *V Politburo TsK KPSS...*, 684.

¹⁹⁵ The New Union Treaty would have converted the Soviet Union into a federation of independent republics with a common president, foreign policy, and military. Russian

first leaders to agree on the version of the Union's treaty.¹⁹⁶ Finally, on 12 July 1991, the SS USSR approved in principle the union treaty draft and during the plenum CPSU of 29 the date of 20 August for signing the agreement was scheduled.¹⁹⁷ On 2 August, Gorbachev announced that the treaty was open for validation while Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan announced their willingness for signing on 20 August.¹⁹⁸ Russian democrats were asking Yeltsin not to sign until Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Russia were all ready to join. Thus, excluding Uzbekistan from the priority¹⁹⁹ and marking an idea of Union that would keep united those territories that were historically tied to Moscow. Nevertheless, on 10 August, Yeltsin wrote an open letter where he confirmed the participation of Uzbekistan – together with Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Belarus for a new Union's treaty.²⁰⁰ The project to relaunch a Union agreement seemed to take form and Uzbekistan was a part of it.

7.3.1 Rewriting memory to advance *Mustaqillik*

At the same time as the Uzbek president refusing any separation attempt and was negotiating the role of the republic in the new union, the political narrative at domestic level remained nationalist – and to a large extent chauvinist and anti-colonialist – criticizing Moscow and its policy. Indeed, the Uzbek press kept pursuing accusations against the '*perestroika* democracy', reminding the public of how the 'cotton affair' could be considered as but the latest dose of humiliation, violence and repression, akin to that Uzbekistan had experienced during the '30s and '50s.²⁰¹ Karimov, again, took part in the media quarrel, and during his speech at the V session of the Uzbek SSR Supreme Soviet, he replied to those he called 'slandorous inventions' of Soviet newspapers, and joked in the following way about himself: "President Karimov, thus violating the law, frees people from prison who have been convicted for

would become a *lingua franca*, while the common budget would remain at central level. Basically, it was a plan to establish a sort of confederation of republics. Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 637, 642; Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 511–12.

¹⁹⁶ GF. F. 5, d. 18049.

¹⁹⁷ Graziosi, *L'Urss Dal Trionfo Al Degrado. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1945-1991*, 642.

¹⁹⁸ Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 757.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 573–74.

²⁰⁰ GF, f. 5, d. 21428.

²⁰¹ *Soviet Uzbekiston*, April 17 1991, p. 2.

the 'cotton affairs'."²⁰² He was, substantially, taking the responsibility of this rehabilitation course and negating the policies that Moscow had imposed in the republic during the previous years. This narrative would effectively become operative once that – after the failed conservative putsch led by the GKChP - the latest attempts to save Soviet Union failed.

At that time, Karimov's attitude towards the putsch – which was openly supported by the other Central Asians leaders – was ambiguous, assuming a very careful position.²⁰³ Without condemning the coup, he filtered out a certain neutrality towards its leaders.²⁰⁴ On August 20, Karimov appealed to the people, declaring: "no matter what forces may have opposed us and called our activity a dictatorship, we have always been advocates of strong discipline and order, and no one can deny this."²⁰⁵ Nevertheless, he "made his own personal contribution by arresting his rival, the chairman of the Uzbek Popular Front, Abdurrakhim Pulatov, on 19 August"²⁰⁶ then, when the coup failed, Karimov did not have other choice than an inevitable and undesirable independence.

²⁰² *PV*, 22580, 114, 15 June 1991, p. 2.

²⁰³ According to Matlock, Karimov was endorsing the coup. *Ibid.*, 587, 611.

²⁰⁴ During the August 1991 coup in Moscow, the Uzbek President Islam Karimov took an ambiguous and cautious stance towards the coup leaders until it was clear that the coup would fail. In fact, since 17 August, Karimov was on an official visit to India: according to Malikov, this is a strange political agenda, considering that some days before he met Pavlov in Tashkent and on 20 August he was supposed to be in Moscow to sign the new Union's agreement. Anyway, he immediately returned to Tashkent. Uzbek authorities took emergency measures in Uzbekistan, issuing a "vaguely worded statement declaring certain emergency measures, but were careful to write in a way which could be interpreted as an expression either of neutrality or support for the coup" without mentioning the removal of Gorbachev and just calling for order and discipline. Until Karimov took charge, the Vice President Shukrullo Mirsaidov and his allies made statements supporting the coup. An intense debate between the two figures followed. After returning, Karimov made ambiguous statements that could be read in support of both coup leaders and Gorbachev. "He cautiously explained that he would only be able to give his opinion of the changes after becoming thoroughly acquainted with detained plans for implementing the promises made by government circles" Tunçer-Kılavuz, *Power, Networks and Violent Conflict in Central Asia: A Comparison of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*, 91; Malikov, "Uzbekistan: A View from the Opposition."

²⁰⁵ American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, "The Current Digest of Soviet Press," 1991, 14. translating an article of *Izvestiya*, September 13, 1991.

²⁰⁶ Fowkes, *The Disintegration of the Soviet Union. A Study in the Rise and Triumph of Nationalism*, 191.

On 23 August, Karimov resigned from the Communist Party and on 26 August, he nationalized the MVD and the KGB. In his speech at the CC CPUz plenum of 28 August 1991, the Uzbek president condemned the “criminal attempt of coup of 19–21 August” and protested against Gorbachev’s decision to resign as General Secretary of CPSU. However, he took note of the events specifying that the

dissolution of the party and of the fate of its property should be decided by the plenum or by the party congress [...] but today after the declaration of Gorbachev the harsh realities of life raise questions about our party. [...Nevertheless] these questions can be answered only by the congress of communists of the Republic.²⁰⁷

At the end, the failed *putsch* had finally and irreversibly undermined the credibility and solidity of Soviet power. Finally, on 30 August the property of the CPUz was nationalized and the party cut its ties with the CPSU.²⁰⁸ On 31 August 1991, the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek SSR officially sanctioned the renamed Republic of Uzbekistan as a sovereign and independent state, effective 1 September 1991. Although Karimov was cautious in his initial speeches – balancing national interests with support for the Soviet cause – he assumed a hard tone following the proclamation of independence of a republic that was, formally at least, still part of Soviet Union. In his speech at the VI extraordinary session of the Uzbek Supreme Soviet, the President declared:

Everything that was done to us, our people, Uzbekistan, differed little from the policy of the [colonial] pre-revolutionary period, and the republic was not much more than a source of raw materials. It was in the mind of all the organs of the union, who knew only that this region had to provide cotton, raw materials, while the rest of our needs remained our problem to resolve. They promised much, but none of it was honored. For the state independence in terms of cotton, the republic had to make many sacrifices, putting the people of Uzbekistan in total dependence on the import of meat, milk and most essential goods for the subsistence of life. We must say that this policy led Uzbekistan to the brink of collapse, with the lowest *per capita* income and a budget that had the character of a grant. And we were supposed to be ‘grateful’ for any meagre ration we received from the center. By this moment, we had finally realized who

²⁰⁷ *PV*, 22633, 167, 29 August 1991, p. 1.

²⁰⁸ At this point, the CPUz was formally renamed as the People’s Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDPU) and effectively transformed on 1 November 1991.

our friends and who our enemies were, who wanted well-being and peace [for us] and who was hiding a stone behind his back.²⁰⁹

This reformulation, which assumes properly anticolonial rhetorical tones, indicated the following fact: that the USSR was, effectively, over. On the same occasion, the Supreme Soviet promulgated a decree of ‘amnesty on the occasion of Independence Day of the Republic of Uzbekistan’ that pardoned many prisoners condemned during the ‘cotton affairs’²¹⁰ and effectively becoming a key political issue in Karimov’s agenda. In the program of the renamed People’s Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, the first item was entitled “lessons of history and the path forward” saying that “the story of many family stories have become the allegations related to persecution on so-called ‘cotton affairs’, but this past way showed the futility of the administrative system and totalitarian control with its anti-people policy.”²¹¹ In this political program, there were several references to the other mentioned traumas of cotton monoculture and its disastrous ecological consequences.²¹² Emblematically, Karimov used often the ‘cotton affairs’ issue to reformulate the ideology of *Mustaqillik* and independence appeared as a rebirth of the nation in the likeness of the *Homa*, the legendary phoenix-like bird that, in 1992, was officially established as the symbol of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The use of a trauma like the ‘Uzbek Affair’ – a fresh experience that involved a large part of the elite emotionally against the central power in Moscow – is still implemented in Uzbek politics to garner popular legitimation. The USSR ‘legalization season’ became a symbol of ‘restyled’ purge and unfair Soviet persecution against Uzbeks who “felt they had been blamed unfairly for the results of Moscow’s inflexible and unrealistic cotton procurement policies. [...]they resented their portrayal in the Soviet press as being temperamentally corrupt, a criticism that offended their sense of national honor.”²¹³ In fact, since

²⁰⁹ *PV*, 22636, 170, 1 September 1991, p. 2.

²¹⁰ Specifically, this amnesty pardoned men over 60 years old and women over 65; handicapped of I & II type, women with minor children or pregnant, veterans of World War II and other wars, women with condemns until five years (minor crimes), exiled people. This amnesty was not directly directed to those criminalized for cotton affairs but, indirectly, has benefited a large part of these who had filled the prisons in last years. *PV*, 22636, 170, 1 September 1991, p. 2.

²¹¹ *PV*, 22661, 195, 5 October 1991, p. 1.

²¹² *PV*, 22661, 195, 5 October 1991, p. 2.

²¹³ Tom Everett, *Central Asia, Aspects of Transition* (London & New York: Routledge, 2003), 148.

1989 in Uzbekistan it has become common to interpret the cotton scandal (and the related scandals of child labor in cotton fields) as a normal consequence of colonialism or an error of planning policies. This interpretation is also presented by international scholars, such as Ahmed Rashid, who seems to understand, even to justify, the informal/shadow economy as the only way to survive under the inefficient USSR:

the black economy [...] amounted to one third of the total economy in Central Asia [...] and] corruption was [...] a safety valve to keep the system running and allow clan networks to operate to alleviate local problems, food shortages and unemployment.²¹⁴

Indeed, Karimov was able to promote himself as the father of the newly independent Uzbekistan who alone broke ties with this perverse 'colonial system.' At the same time he was still trying to keep – in the form of agreement – the same economic ties with Russia that he was narratively refusing.²¹⁵ Nevertheless, no other projects to reform the Union seemed to be credible and Karimov just followed the destructive course of the events.²¹⁶ The USSR was

²¹⁴ Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia, Islam or Nationalism?*, 66, 92.

²¹⁵ On 18 October 1991, the Soviet President Gorbachev and the leaders of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Russia signed an agreement on the economic community. On 4 November, the republican leaders convened to abolish the soviet ministries except for defense, foreign affairs, railways, electric power and nuclear power while there was no agreement on the debt of the Soviet state that Uzbekistan did not want to cover. On 5 November 1991, Chernyaev noted in his diary: "The agenda included the question of implementation of the Economic Agreement, on which nothing has been done... The memorandum on external debt, to which M.S. referred to Madrid and in Lache, turned out to be signed only halfway... Mutalibov and Karimov declared that they don't have to pay, it is the Center that has to pay them... And try as he might, Yavlinsky failed to convince them not to follow the Bolsheviks of 1917, who stated that the Tsar made the debts so he should pay them. They did not heed..." On 14 November, there was another prior agreement on the form of confederation and on 25 November 1991, during a meeting of the State Council, Karimov confirmed that besides the commitments of the Novo-Ogorevo: "Prior to consideration of the Supreme Council of Uzbekistan, I can not be initialed." Svetlana Savranskaya, "The Diary of Anatoly S. Chernyaev. 1991. Donated by A.S. Chernyaev to The National Security Archive" (Washington, D.C., 2011), 157; Gorbachev Fond, *V Politburo Tsk KPSS...*, 749, 779; Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire : The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 758.

²¹⁶ On 10 December 1991, Chernyaev noted in his diary: "At noon, M.S. spoke with Yeltsin. Kravchuk and Shushkevich did not come. Before that, he spoke with Nazarbayev. Then the three of them met. I don't know what happened there. After that,

over and his political career would inexorably remain on the national front. Hence, during the campaign for the presidential election in autumn 1991, he gave a speech addressed 'to all citizens of Uzbekistan' in which he stated that [in the last months]:

the popular festivals and traditions had been revived and thousands of people unjustly repressed were rehabilitated [...] The situation in Uzbekistan has been exasperating also because we have been the victim of colonial expansion of Tsarist Russia and the short-sighted policy of leaders of later ages, who have condemned us to distorted development and a one-sided economy. Our region has been transformed as the appendix of raw materials for the other industrial regions.²¹⁷

In this way, the Uzbek president reversed the previous narrative – which spoke of a republic that was fully contributing to the Soviet cause – through 'exploitation' rhetoric, casting the cotton monoculture issues, such as the 'cotton scandal', as a consequence of a colonial system. This 'justification' narrative was not only theoretical but also had political implications in terms of popular legitimation. In fact, at the fourth point of the political program presented by Karimov at the Supreme Soviet in November 1991, there was even the plan for a general 'amnesty of those people that had been condemned during the so called 'cotton affairs'.²¹⁸ This point was in line with the revisionist approach towards the cotton affairs after the spring of 1989 when, as we have seen, the evidence made on confessions was reconsidered by the defendants and finally dropped.

On 12 September 1989, the SM UzSSR established a higher commission to reconsider to rework over the cotton affairs (*paxta ishi*), analyzing more than 40,000 documents and collaborating with the SC UzSSR for the rehabilitation

he met in turn with Nabiev (Tajik), Niyazov's representative (Turkmen). Presidents Akayev and Karimov also did not come. Ter-Oganesyan publicly supported the Belovezhskaya Pushcha threesome, which sentenced the Soviet Union to death." On 12 December 1991, the Central Asian leaders met in Ashgabat requesting membership in CIS as founding members and finally on 21 December the 11 republics signed the declaration in Almaty, establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Savranskaya, "The Diary of Anatoly S. Chernyaev. 1991. Donated by A.S. Chernyaev to The National Security Archive," 182; Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 759.

²¹⁷ PV, 22701, 235, 3 December 1991, p 1.

²¹⁸ PV, 22690, 224, 19 November 1991, p. 1.

of almost 3,500 prisoners.²¹⁹ Then, in 1990, more than 800 sentences connected with the cotton affairs were reexamined by Uzbek courts and in February 1991, the SC UzSSR examined and acquitted another 241 cases, rehabilitating 1,600 wrongly convicted and dispensing more than 1.5 million rubles in compensations.²²⁰ Finally, on 25 July 1991, the MJs of UzSSR and RSFSR signed an agreement of judicial cooperation - the first of this kind and before the Soviet collapse – that effectively became the legal basis for transferring those cases that were still under the jurisdiction of the SC USSR in Moscow. Hence, in the fall of 1991, Karimov ordered to transfer the latest grand trials and culprits - as Odilov,²²¹ Usmankhodzhaev and Khudayberdiyev - to Uzbekistan.²²² The final amnesty was implemented four days before the presidential elections on 25 December 1991, the day on which the USSR itself and the darkest page of its recent history in the memory of Uzbeks were buried.

By 1991 Karimov was reinstating many corrupt officials sacked in the mid-1980s, as well as repressing the Birlik movement more severely than informal groups were being repressed elsewhere in the USSR. This showed that despite a sustained campaign of severe criticism which developed in Uzbekistan during the 1980s and reached exceptional intensity during early 1988, the tradition of protecting failed officials remained strongly entrenched.²²³

²¹⁹ Asat Niyazovich Abdullaev, "Uzbekistonda Paxta Yakkahokimligi va Uning Oqibatlari (1917-1991 Y.y.)" (Tarix fanlari doktori ilmiy darajasini olish uchun taqdim etilgan dissertatsiya. Toshkent., 2010), 233.

²²⁰ Komsomolskaya Pravda, 2 April 1991, p. 1.

²²¹ In 1991, after the independence of Uzbekistan, the Uzbek Writers' Congress, chaired by Adil Yakubov and Muhammad Salih unanimously declared Adylov as a "national hero" and in February 1992 he was finally rehabilitated by a special decision of the Uzbek government. Nevertheless, on 26 June 1993 he was arrested again, and four months later sentenced by the Kokand city court to 4 years in prison for stealing five tons of fertilizer. A year later, when he had already served this term, the court added 10 more years for "economic crimes" committed during the Soviet era. Then, in 1996 Odilov was again charged and condemned for possession of drugs for disobeying. He was the last defendant of the cotton affair to do not enjoy the full amnesty and remained a marginalized figure by Karimov who probably was scared of him. As a result, also in the independent Uzbekistan, he spent 16 years in jail. On 5 June 2008, at the age of 83 years, Ahmadzhan Odilov was finally released.

²²² George Ginsburgs, *The Soviet Union and International Cooperation in Legal Matters - Part III: Criminal Law* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1994), 298–99.

²²³ Gill and Pitty, *Power in the Party. The Organization of Power and Central-Republican Relations in the CPSU*, 80.

On 29 December, the first post-Soviet Uzbek presidential elections confirmed Karimov with 87.1% of votes against the only admitted candidate Muhammad Salih, who ran for *Erk*. Since that moment, Karimov continued to enforce the ideology of *mustaqillik*, victimization and proud for the renaissance of the Uzbek nation. However, Uzbekistan and Uzbek people remain still divided to judge the Soviet experience and one of the most sensitive topics of their contemporary history.

Since independence, Karimov has continued to exploit those arguments to enforce the ideology of *Mustaqillik*, self-victimization and pride in the renaissance of the Uzbek nation to legitimate the new course of independent Uzbekistan represented by him. Therefore, self-victimization, criticism against the USSR – and its ‘colonial policies’ – and the rejection of the Soviet past gave a first base to the independence claims after 1989, considering in part the birth of the new nation as a people liberated from the Soviet system. Karimov’s policies of desovietization replaced the old communist ideology with the values of *Mustaqillik*, a name that became the key word used to designate emblematic places, such as the former Lenin square and the main roads of Tashkent, to destroy and replace and the symbols of Soviet memory. In order to advance this identity/legitimizing ideology and its *pars destruens*, even official Uzbek historiography started to invest in the self-victimization themes of ‘repressions’, repeatedly referring to the ‘cotton affairs’ (*‘pakhta ishi’*) of the ‘80s as the last stage of a long-running ‘Soviet terror’. *Mustaqillik* also became the main leitmotiv in the contemporary Uzbek academy and the key reference on which scholars interpret national scientific development. As Babadzhanov affirms:

Mustaqillik became the fundamental value to be followed also in academic production. The structure to base scientific research remained the same as in Soviet times, even if the ideology has changed. In the introduction of every essay, the word *Mustaqillik* is one of the first to be mentioned. Before it was communism. In the second paragraph, there is a necessary cross-reference/quotation of Karimov, whereas before we used Brezhnev, Andropov etc. In the third paragraph, there must appear references to the national ideological values of *Mustaqillik*, which replaced, of course, references to Marxism-Leninism.²²⁴

²²⁴ Personal interview with Prof. Bakhtiar Babadzhanov, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Tashkent, 26 June 2015.

Indeed, since mid-1989 the official historiographical narrative²²⁵ was also officially replaced by a new interpretation of the facts. The Institute of Party History at the CC CPUz was expressly ordered to change the tones of “demagogy, apology and dogmatism” of the previous years in order to “revise entrenched in the literature unilaterally, often biased in favor of the official assessment of the concept of many facts of the events of the past, many prominent figures of the Communist party etc.”, carrying out a historiographical narrative of ‘repressions’ (especially related to the Stalinist period). In reference to past historical works, the attempt to “distort the history of the country and the party, presenting it as a continuous chain of tragic mistakes, excesses, repressions and blames to the party”²²⁶ was condemned. Nowadays, the Uzbek historian Khurshida Yunusova carefully reconstructs the facts and provides an ‘Uzbek version’ according to which the cotton scandal was just a symptom of a wider disease of the Soviet Union. However, according to Yunusova, Uzbekistan became a scapegoat that was deflecting the attention from the real corruption in Moscow and in other regions of the empire.²²⁷ Even figures such as Telman Gdlyan and Nikolai Ivanov

²²⁵ Still at the beginning of 1989, in the annual report related to the scientific production in 1988, the Institute of Party History of the CC CPUz was still endorsing the critical narrative of the ‘cotton affairs’ season, reporting the economic decline of Uzbekistan in social and spiritual spheres and the non-fulfillment of the eleventh FYP and problems of the party organization "in terms of democracy, in principle of selections and appointments of cadres, in membership of party and in collegiality of managers." The institute marked the importance of publishing certain documents: "part of these documents after XVI (June 1984) plenum CC CPUz made it possible to trace the struggle waged in the republic on improvement of moral-psychological situation, the strengthening of ties with the masses of the party organization overcome the stagnation in the economy." Over the usual debates, the institute marked in importance of extending the usual Soviet historiography about 1917 revolution to issues related to the history of religion in the Central Asia, agriculture, electrification and cotton developments, the realization of democracy and social class struggle and to the implementation of perestroika and the "realization of XVI plenum and XXI congress of CC CPUz." RGASPI, f. 71, op. 39, d. 198, ll. 25, 29, 42-81.

²²⁶ Annual report (1989) of the Institute of Party History at CC CPUz - Tashkent Filial of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism at CC CPSU, Tashkent, 1990, RGASPI, f. 71 Institut marksizma-leninizma pri TSK KPSS (IML) (1931-1991), op. 39 Otdel filialov i koordinatsii nauchno-issledovatel'skoy raboty, d. 198 Godovoy otchet filiala IML Tashkent (1990), l. 91.

²²⁷ Khurshida Yunusova, *Òzbekistonda Sovet Davlatining Milliy Siyosati va Uning Oqibatlari (XX Asrning 80 Yillari Misolida)* (Toshkent: Zar qalam, 2005).

- presented in Uzbek historiography as muscovite *'torquemadas'*²²⁸ - are sometimes interpreted simply as Moscow's puppets.²²⁹ Moreover, Abdullaev offers a version that denotes the "suffering of the Uzbek people", affirming that – in the history of Soviet repressions and their "media manipulations"²³⁰ – Uzbekistan became an "experimental test site" (*poligon*) for these new forms of judiciary purges during the 5–6 years of the "cotton affair terror". Indeed,

the repressions in the '80s were against the national system and even against the Uzbek people themselves. However, society was neither cohesive nor immunized against those attacks. At the end of the story, these years consolidated society, forging anti-Russian, anti-imperial and independent passions. This period coincided with disaffection and disillusion towards the USSR, corresponding to the end of the communist ideology in Uzbekistan, because the Uzbek people were perceived as living in a colony whose requests were barely heard – and certainly not heeded – by the center [...]. In this story, President Karimov was an independent figure who refused to obey Gorbachev's orders, a patriot able to find a solution and to struggle against a stronger and larger enemy that wanted to reaffirm its imperial power over Uzbekistan. For Uzbek people, this story coincides with the last stage of a long-lasting colonial period.²³¹

This interpretation provides a clear perspective on the – nationalist and *'Mustaqillik* biased' – Uzbek contemporary historiography. Also the FATI's deputy chairman, Prof. Shukhrat Mukhamedov affirmed that:

Due to the cotton affair experience, Uzbekistan could find reasons and myths over its independence, understanding the USSR as a colonial, exploitative, and external power. During the long Soviet experience, Uzbekistan was clouded by an ideology that had concealed the need for independence from Russia and, despite some positive interpretations of the Brezhnev period, there was never effective autonomy. In fact, Rashidov could also be seen as subservient to

²²⁸ However, the worst allegations against the Gdlyan-Ivanov group came from Viktor Ivanovich Ilyukhin, one of the prosecutors who fought against it, accusing it of "gross illegal methods of investigation". Cf. Viktor Ivanovich Ilyukhin, *Oborotni: Kak Bylo Nadumano "Uzbekskoe" Delo* (Tashkent: Uzbekiston, 1993).

²²⁹ Khurshida Yunusova, "The Fergana Valley during Perestroika 1985-1991," in *Fergana Valley: The Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S Frederick Starr (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2011), 182–83.

²³⁰ Since 1989, the idea that media - acting as a "fourth power" – was manipulating/exploiting 'cotton affair' stories to unjustifiably blame Uzbek people has spread. *Dialog*, vol. 1, January 1991, p. 31.

²³¹ Personal interview with Ravshan M. Abdullaev. Tashkent, 12 June 2015.

Moscow! Thus, the myths about him are not for an inane independentist action but since he was a patriot that protected, in his way, the Uzbek people.²³²

Thus, it is evident how even contemporary historiography gives an interpretation of the facts that contributes to consolidate the doctrine of *Mustaqillik* and its *pars destruens*, to legitimate the transition from USSR. In this purpose, there is also a museological case that has contributed to create the 'Soviet memory trauma' and to enforce the concept of *Mustaqillik*. The '*Museum in Memory of the Victims of Repression*', created in Tashkent by the initiative of President Karimov in 2002, has as its core mission the 'moral rehabilitation' of the victim's honor. To some extent, it was conceived with the same political purposes of Napoleon when he opened the Louvre to promote a French national narrative. In Tashkent, the museum narrates a period of repressions that started in the pre-revolutionary Russian colonial period and assumed its worst shapes in Soviet times when "the repressions assumed a total dimension and were enforced at any level of society and individuals."²³³ Most of the exhibition is dedicated to the repression of the *kulaks* and *jadids* in the '30s, the great purges and GULAG system, the ethnic deportations during World War II, the cotton monoculture, and Aral Sea ecological disaster. Finally, there is a section dedicated to the 'cotton affair' that quotes a harsh commentary prepared by President Karimov, for visitors to read:

Uzbek society never forgets the tragedies known as the 'cotton affair', 'Uzbek affair' and which were shameful slanders for us, the Uzbek people. Over that time, human rights and the rule of law were destroyed, thousands of blameless people were in jail and local people were slaughtered in great numbers. Islom Karimov.

In the same 'cotton affair' room, a severe banner states: "The deceptions of the colonial regime were uncovered because of the will-power and resistance of President Islom Karimov. Our blameless people are thus justified and their rights restored." The final hall is dedicated to the heroes and symbols of Uzbek independence and identity, including President Karimov, Amir Timur, Mirzo Ulugbek, Babur and, for this reason, it can be considered as an effective evidence of our suppositions. Hence, the museum is representing the three pillars – repressions, imposition of cotton monoculture and ecological disasters

²³² Personal interview with Shukhrat B. Mukhamedov. Tashkent, 19 June 2015.

²³³ Personal interview with Murat Zikrollaev, Deputy Director of the Museum in Memory of the Victims of Repression, Tashkent, 8 June 2015.

- of the self-victimization narrative endorsed by Karimov. In the banners of the 'Museum in Memory of the Victims of Repression' we can read:

The Soviet government in its first period of its role in Uzbekistan had a policy of domination addressed to the cotton. In the 80s the harsh impact of this policy was not seen only in the fields of agriculture and the economy but it was also seen in the fields of social life and ecology. The productivity of earth decreased dramatically because of that period, increasing the state plan of cotton production. During this plan, using chemical elements for improving productivity destroyed the current rules of agro-technique and crop rotation. Decreasing artificially the income from the cotton products by the center, bringing products such as wheat and food from outside, becoming worse social life and material life of rural people was the consequence of the cotton policy [...] the opening of new lands for cotton, using the water of Amu Darya, Syr Darya, Chichik and Zaravshan rivers unlimitedly brought the disaster of Aral Sea which was the biggest ecological tragedy in the 20th century. Consequently, the amount of water in the sea decreased by more than 60%. The sand and salt stones were flown to the air because of drying Aral Sea and this situation began to influence badly the nature in the region [...] in the 80s the center began a new repression to Uzbek people called the 'cotton affair.' Because of this policy, Uzbek people had to accept many calumnies and thousands innocent people were jailed. I.B. Usmankhodzhaev and R.A. Nishanov, who were secretaries in those times, did not fight against this policy and the group of Gdlyan and Ivanov opened 25.000 criminal cases not always discussing them in the court. Consequently 4500 people were jailed and 3600 got different types of punishments. For officials in the CC CPUZ, 8 secretaries in the obkom and 20 heads of ministries of internal affairs and 62 heads in different organizations were jailed. Different deputies who worked in the cities, raions and oblasts were jailed illegally and even 4 deputies of the Supreme soviet of USSR were jailed [when they were] in the building of the First Secretary in Uzbekistan. The terrible thing is that old men and women, pregnant women and women who had young children were imprisoned and using their wives and children to demonstrate their guilt and to make pressures.²³⁴

The myth of resistance against colonial power (as the 'cotton affair' is presented) is a fundamental element of self-victimization aimed at consolidating and to commemorating the *Mustaqillik* ideology, and the two aspects – *pars construens/pars destruens* – are necessarily interrelated. The example of this museum is indicated in order to further articulate what this paper argues. Indeed, there is an official institution that represents the

²³⁴ The translations of the banners displayed at the 'Museum in Memory of the Victims of Repression' are in the final appendix.

contemporary history of Uzbekistan in a serious manner, mixing the critics against Soviet totalitarianism with anticolonial issues such as the two main obstacles of independence during the former regime. The lack of distinction between these two separate aspects strengthens inexorably the echo of criticism and creates a confusion of overlapped concepts. This misperception finds its endemic reason even in the strategic role that Uzbekistan covered within the Soviet system and it contributes to perfectly define the paradoxes over *Mustaqillik* in its *pars construens/destruens*, evidencing a self-victimization towards those policies that had been implemented during Soviet period and that often persist in contemporary Uzbekistan.

Thus, the policy of nationalities and their violent consequences, the imposition of cotton monoculture – narrated as a way to control Uzbekistan creating a bond of economic dependence²³⁵ – the related ecological disaster (as the Aral Sea Basin drying up) and the last ‘repressions’ during the ‘Uzbek affair’ become typical *leitmotivs* in the implementation of *Mustaqillik*, leveraging on wounded proud of Uzbek people, coming “closer of all to classical forms of decolonization narratives.”²³⁶

7.3.2 A post-colonial ideology for a post-Soviet state?

Mustaqillik and its historiographic self-victimizing *pars destruens* served to positively legitimate Karimov’s regime and undergird its stability, endorsing independence from USSR through a post-colonial-like narrative.²³⁷ However, these analytical categories can lead to misleading conclusions, considering the level of involvement of the UzSSR within the Soviet machine and the fact that most Uzbeks - especially the elite groups – still refrain from considering themselves ‘post-colonized.’ This lack of consensus over historical memory is due to the high levels of fragmentation within Uzbek society – divided among social classes, ethnic groups, power network (‘clans’), religion and regional cleavages – and to the general involvement of the Uzbek elite itself in the former nomenklatura. Indeed, the Soviet ‘colonial system’ was implemented

²³⁵ Abdullaev, “Uzbekistonda Paxta Yakkahokimligi va Uning Oqibatlari (1917-1991 Y.y.),” 219.

²³⁶ Abashin, “Nations and Post-Colonialism in Central Asia: Twenty Years Later,” 89.

²³⁷ The official historiography presents the independence as a long struggle for self-determination against a system that deprived Uzbekistan of its political, economic and cultural independence. Dadabaev, *Identity and Memory in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Uzbekistan’s Soviet Past*; Dilorom Agzamovna Alimova, *Istoriya Kak Istoriya, Istoriya Kak Nauka* (Tashkent: Uzbekistan, 2008).

by the same local intelligentsia that, some years later, led the country towards independence. This underscores the absence of the typical social tensions between colonizers and indigenes in a country where Russian communities were fewer in number than in other parts of the 'empire.' This aspect demonstrates why – compared with the Baltic or Caucasus republics – cultural desovietization and nationalization processes in Uzbekistan was to many extents peaceful.

Furthermore, the shift to *Mustaqillik* was even responding to the need to compensate for an identity trauma from 'loss of status'. During Soviet times, Uzbeks perceived their identity-status as inextricably linked to the more general nuclear superpower status of the USSR. In this sense, there is also a sort of nostalgia for the Soviet era. Even if it is pointless to compare the history of such different contexts as Soviet Central Asia and decolonized countries, this paper has sought to bridge the literature gap on *pars destruens* by arguing how the rhetorical use of a post-colonial narrative is still effective in legitimizing the current regime at domestic and international levels, as for the recent ambitions of Uzbekistan in the third world block. In this field, a decolonization narrative somehow 'works'.

Moreover, *Mustaqillik* was appropriate to propose Uzbekistan as a 'post-Soviet' entity. This common label is generally used for the 15 republics of the FSU and, sometimes, even for those non-USSR countries that were part of the communist bloc that have become 'new democracies'. Concerning Uzbekistan, it is necessary to disaggregate this concept, analyzing the presence and the effectiveness of a transition 'from Soviet' that can justify the 'post' label. In fact, at a political level, opposition was endorsed in an 'ornamental' form, and the role of the security service remains strong in ruling and controlling the state. Also, the ruling elite of Republic of Uzbekistan came directly from the Soviet cadres.

From this perspective, the political claim that wants to find a 'colonial' pattern of power would necessarily discuss the legitimacy of these institutions, of social and human capital and even the status of the current elite groups. Also the social services pillars – such as pensions, welfare state, free education and healthcare – and the institutions of Republic of Uzbekistan were forged on Soviet patterns as also the academy of sciences, the KGB (renamed SNB), the unions, the youth organizations, the government institutions and powers etc.; as even the economic system that remained mainly monopolistic and based on

extensive exploitation of natural resources. Modernization and secularism²³⁸ were kept as pillars of the Uzbek state; the role of Russian language, symbols and culture remained as the main cultural platform among elite groups and it seems that the positive opinions about USSR are still higher in Central Asia than in other FSU Republics²³⁹ revealing how 1991 was more a formal – rather than substantial – date. Once we exclude the evidence of political, economic, institutional and even cultural evolutions in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse, we can easily conclude that the ‘post-Soviet transition’ was effective at least at an ideological level. Therefore, the ideological shift – from *kommunizm* to *Mustaqillik* – is the unique strong element that could justify the idea of ‘post’, and the self-victimization narrative had a strong role in the abovementioned process of ‘transformism.’

Most likely, although the government in Tashkent has significantly endorsed this ‘post-Soviet’ version, the Uzbek leadership was not successful in endorsing a publicly shared ‘post-colonial trauma’; meanwhile, the repression narrative remains a sensitive topic only for those generations of Uzbeks who lived the ‘Gdlyan-Ivanov terror’ period. This issue is realistically too recent to be reconsidered and, probably, also the new President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev will not undertake relevant moves to shift the Karimovian narrative in the short term.

7.4 A case study for interpreting neo-patrimonialism

As has emerged in the previous chapters, the ‘Uzbek cotton affair’ is an emblematic case study that we have used to reconstruct and to interpret the crisis of the Soviet power system in the periphery of the empire and the political history of late USSR from a non-Muscovite perspective. In the previous chapters, we have seen the limits of the common interpretation of these facts – usually narrated as a sort of ‘*mafiya*’ novel - trying to discredit myths, misunderstandings, prejudices and historical falsehoods that I encountered during these three years of research. In the first chapter, we introduced a theoretical framework through which this story can be read: the Uzbek cotton

²³⁸ Sébastien Peyrouse, “La Gestion Du Fait Religieux En Asie Centrale: Poursuite Du Cadre Conceptuel Soviétique et Renouveau Factice,” *Cahiers d’Asie Centrale* 13–14 (2004): 77–120.

²³⁹ Research project ‘*Vospriatie molodezh'iu novykh nezavisimykh gosudarsy istorii sovetского i postsovetского periodov*’, reported in Abashin, “Nations and Post-Colonialism in Central Asia: Twenty Years Later,” 97.

affair as a crisis of patrimonialism in the Soviet system. Therefore, patrimonialism is a form of governance in which all power and benefits flow directly from the leader or the leading institution: in the Soviet case, this institutional figure was represented by the party in each level and territorial dimension.

Hence, the party-led patrimonial system was aimed at including the political subjects in a pyramidal scheme that had kolkhozes/villages at the base and the Gensek at its vertex. To a large extent, patrimonialism was the effective system of the Soviet Union, relegating communism to an ornamental feature. Indeed, despite Marxism-Leninism being presented as a pillar of the Soviet power structure, its role has probably been over-estimated in many social sciences studies, and even in the historiography, which has often been too focused on the impact of an apparent ideological crisis on the collapse of the Soviet Union due to the defeat of the Cold War or to the rise of nationalism. Nevertheless, patrimonialism represents the effective case we have to analyze in order to determine the collapse of the party-led system within the country.

As we have seen, communist ideology was too often no more than a rhetorical veil that was covering the effective patrimonial system of command and control: especially after the Stalin era and the end of the terror system that had previously characterized the first stage of the Bolshevik system (1917-1953),²⁴⁰ patrimonialism became the backbone of the Soviet system.

After the Stalinist era, local elite - involved in the Party and in the state administration - gained space in the formal power structures and also in the informal and non-transparent areas of negotiation. Apparently, the system remained centralized and hierarchical, but effectively it was defined by a network of informal relationships that became more and more relevant. Then, the patrimonial system persisted and even intensified during the era of stagnation characterized by stability of cadres.

In this very moment, the Soviet patrimonial system enforced some of its key features: the local FS effectively had unlimited and direct power on the party and governmental apparatus; the system was based on prohibitions and concessions, and any authorization required a payment that could be in various forms; even the political offices and honors could be bought and were a resource in terms of material and status benefits; the administrative style was

²⁴⁰ Andrea Graziosi, *L'Urss Di Lenin E Stalin. Storia dell'Unione Sovietica, 1914-1945* (Bologna: Il mulino, 2007).

the base of the subordination between the leaders and the lower cadres. Also at a psychological level, the subordination and the respect for the leaders is expressed by gifts – that as we have seen have a separate logic to bribes – that were aimed at creating a “moral credit”²⁴¹ and at remarking the kinship between the two subjects: in this regard, the Churbanov case was emblematic when he confessed to receiving so many gifts for no other reason than being Brezhnev’s son in law. Indeed, the patrimonial system of governance is based on moral traditions for cooperative obedience that arose in the Soviet era. In the USSR, the wealth was accumulated - in money, jewelry, gold coins etc. - and not consumed in a non-market and closed system; rather, it was used to make other gifts to the superiors. Officially, these attitudes were stigmatized, being referred as *clanovist* (clanistic), *mestnichestvo* (localism), *zastoya* (stagnation), *vzyatochnichestvo* (bribery) and *kumovstvo* (nepotism) etc. as a negation of socialism. Nevertheless, these dynamics were the (informal) rule of Soviet politics and society.²⁴²

Though this seemed to be a failure of the communist dream, in fact it was the very soul of the system that was co-opting through the nomenklatura and which determined the patronage relationships in a non-competitive system for struggle for scarce (or also inaccessible) goods, services and resources. Nevertheless, it is useful to use the term “neo-patrimonial” inasmuch this ‘corruption’ – in its broader meaning - was not an exceptional situation of systemic malfunctioning but it was its normal *modus operandi*. Indeed, ‘corruption’ was a constitutive aspect of USSR and the way in which the Soviet system actually operated. This huge machine claimed to be centralized to the maximum but – due to a lack of information and control instruments to be so – it had no alternative to recognizing a number of figures (while officially denying their existence) and to use a continuous informal negotiation between them. This is the key to understanding the relations between the center and periphery in USSR. The post-Soviet narrative provides both a ‘positive’ mandevillian interpretation of corruption as an endemic feature that greased the wheels in order to make the machine work; and a ‘negative’ connotation of a system that, to some extents, forced to steal and falsify as a matter of survival. On this regard, Dadabaev comments:

Unrealistic plans and pressure from Moscow [...] forced the Uzbek leadership to misreport and misappropriate the funds. In addition, the fact that a large part

²⁴¹ Buttino, *Samarcanda. Storie in Una Città Dal 1945 a Oggi*, 32.

²⁴² Konstantin Simis, *USSR - The Corrupt Society. The Secret World of Soviet Capitalism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

of the funds obtained from the cotton affair were used for the construction of public facilities like the Metro and other buildings served as justification for many ordinary citizens that this was not the fault or structural problem of the government in general but some exceptional case of misunderstanding that needed to be handled administratively.²⁴³

Hence, the history of the ‘Uzbek cotton affair’ becomes a test to evaluate the course of Soviet history and the changing power patterns: in the pre-revolutionary period, Central Asia was considered to be a sort of ‘internal’ or ‘light’ colony in which Russians maintained a relatively low profile; then, Bolshevism imposed the Sovietization of the political, economic, social and cultural framework recurring to the mass terror under Stalin. Then, Khrushchev denounced Stalinism and renounced terror, setting the bases of patrimonialism by creating a balance of central and local powers. Finally, under Brezhnev, the “social contract” enforced the system, leaving large autonomy to the local leaders who acted as viceroys and followed the patrimonial dynamics at a local level. Hence, Uzbek elites could not just drop the Soviet system off, since it was granting them consistent privileges. Nevertheless, the inefficiency of patrimonialism - out of any logic of evaluation of professionalism and effectiveness of the work results²⁴⁴ - during the era of stagnation led the system close to the economic collapse, leading the next generation of leaders (Andropov, Chernenko and Gorbachev) to try to reform, to review the redistribution chain of much more scarce resources from the center to the periphery and to dismantle that social contract that the country was no longer able to maintain with the local proxies of Soviet power.

Furthermore, ‘corruption,’ the ‘fight against the negative phenomena,’ the replacement of cadres and the witch-hunt within the party and state apparatus did not emerge during the cotton affairs only and were not a new phenomenon in Soviet history: these phenomena – and the related moralistic narrative - were typical instruments regulating political struggles among elite and legitimizing the party policy and also its coercive measures. However, the Uzbek cotton affair became so relevant because of its systemic dimension in a moment of transparency, when it assumed a huge media echo (due to the Gdlyan-Ivanov affair), becoming a manifestation of the Moscow intolerance

²⁴³ Dadabaev, *Identity and Memory in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Uzbekistan’s Soviet Past*, 34.

²⁴⁴ Aleksey Georgievich Barabashev, “Krizis Gosudarstvennogo Upravleniya I Yego Vliyaniye Na Osnovnyye Administrativnyye Paradigmy Gosudarstva I Byurokratii,” *Voprosy Gosudarstvennogo I Munitsipal’nogo Upravleniya* 3 (2016).

towards patrimonialism and an attempt to de-patrimonialize the system. Despite the post-Soviet 'repression' labels not being commonly used, this set of radical and massive (thousands of cadres) but 'soft' (no summary executions) purges within the party and state characterized a period of uncertainty during the perestroika. At that moment, local elites started to be very resentful of the purges, maturing the idea of the intrusion of the center into their own affairs that was cracking down the compromise between Moscow and the Uzbek periphery; and so to develop a sense of impatience towards the Soviet establishment – and its local proxies as the ambitious Nishanov who was considered to be so - in order to protect themselves and their positions of privileges.

Thus, perestroika in Central Asia arrived as a witch hunt against the local leaders instead of a reform of the working style based on managerial and efficiency criteria. According to Pikhoya, the crisis of patrimonialism, the purges and the anticorruption campaigns propagandized with great fanfare were phenomena connected with the struggle among elites competing for scarce resources. According to his reconstruction, since 1986 the volume of subsidies from the central budget to the regions sharply dropped. In this phase of budget '*defitsit*' the redistributions at the base of the patrimonial system also dropped, causing the disruption of interactions between the local elites and central authorities, the economic crisis and the collapse of the productive system while determining a perfect storm and the growing discontent of the local elite that would be emphasized against the Soviet power.²⁴⁵ During the 'cotton affairs' (1983-1989), the Uzbek elite groups exploited the situation and struggled among one another by following the moralistic course of events and complaining against the rival groups – during the 'donos wars' mentioned in chapter 4 – in order to discredit the adversaries and accredit them as effective perestroika supporters. In fact, participating actively in the 'moralizing campaign' offered certain advantages and was, at the same time, a way to be affiliated with the ruling establishment of the CPSU.

After this period of internal struggles, the Uzbek elite began to show signs of impatience with the Moscow-led planned system, demanding greater autonomy²⁴⁶ within the Soviet planned system. Hence, they pressed the new leader Karimov to restore the social contract and demanded more benefits

²⁴⁵ Personal interview with Rudolf Germanovich Pikhoya, Moscow, 10 December 2015.

²⁴⁶ Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire : The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, 393.

from the center – the reason for the negotiations in 1990-1991 – while remaining in a system that had enforced relevant welfares for them. The Uzbek cotton affair season appears as a contradiction in Gorbachev's 'liberal' reformism attempts – that effectively never reached the UzSSR.²⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the very essence of the perestroika change was in this massive and radical reshuffle of cadres. However, during glasnost the story of the Uzbek cotton affair was inexorably turned against Gorbachev's regime that was seen as a corrupt one by the Gdlyan-Ivanov supporters and as a repressive, inquisitorial and even terroristic one by Uzbek nationalists. At that point of the story, the already weak party did not seem to elaborate a strong, effective and legitimate response to fight against patrimonialism and lost its battle.

“Gorbachev's attempts to break “*zemliachestvo*” in Central Asia probably came decades too late”²⁴⁸ or maybe the Gensek was wrong to implement such a repressive policy in a more democratic environment and without bringing innovation in a delicate moment when the party was not united anymore and was under the continuous attacks of the opposition. In his memoirs, Gorbachev – who was warned about the developments of the Uzbeks affairs - admitted:

I myself assume some of the blame for having failed to launch an anti-corruption struggle early enough and on a proper scale. However, it is a fact that all attempts undertaken to that end were blocked by the opposition, which was already becoming enmeshed in the corrupt structures of our nascent business world, and which once in power provided a reliable cover for them.²⁴⁹

Then, the Soviet state collapsed and the local elites could bargain directly with Tashkent and within the new framework of the independent Republic of Uzbekistan. By his side Karimov was able to restore a system that had secured stability and that led him to stay in power for another quarter of century, satisfying all the relevant political forces in the redistributive game and preventing them to vie with the Tashkent government and creating counter-powers. In another Central Asian context, the patrimonial system crumbled and when resources became scarce the elite groups started to struggle among

²⁴⁷ On this regard, Ahmed Rashid comments: “no real modern, capitalist business elite has emerged in Central Asia.” Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia, Islam or Nationalism?*, 70.

²⁴⁸ Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, 103.

²⁴⁹ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 752.

one another. The Kyrgyz ‘Tulip Revolution’ in 2005 is a clear example of it.²⁵⁰ In Uzbekistan, Karimov was able to avoid such scenario during his long reign.

In fact, Karimov was able to consolidate his power, coopting the elites - instead of foment competition – and restoring a patrimonial system in the newly independent republic. We could draw a parallel with his predecessor Rashidov and his ‘transformistic’ attitude that enabled him to stay in power for more than three decades. The new Republic of Uzbekistan changed its name and reshaped its symbols, but had preserved those kinds of dynamics and informal institutions that were typical of Soviet times. After the Soviet collapse, “the abandonment of anticorruption measures in 1989 was followed by a dramatic expansion of local elites’ access to state rents across all regions. Under the guise of economic reform, a series of concessions to local elites in the easily 1990s opened new rent-seeking opportunities, facilitating the co-optation of local elites.”²⁵¹ In Karimov’s times, “linking local strongmen to patrons within the center remain intact over time, surviving Moscow’s crackdown in the late 1980s and facilitating state security cohesion and the spread of coercive rent seeking across the country by the mid-1990s.”²⁵²

Karimov had to rebuild a patrimonial system on a national basis that could face the emerging religious political alternative. As mentioned, he symbolically rehabilitated Rashidov, pardoned the ‘victims of repression’ and effectively reintroduced the pre-purges establishment. Karimov’s transformism and the restoration of so many feature of Soviet past – presented in a national face - defines what Jones Luong named “the continuity of change.”²⁵³ Nevertheless, the system is not immobile but is in a constant state of evolution and transformed itself in conjunction with the political opportunities pursued by the presidents who acted as a sort of supervisor over the patrimonial regime in what Malikov defined a “return to Feudalism.”²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ Scott Radnitz, *Weapons of the Wealthy: Predatory Regimes and Elite-Led Protests in Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

²⁵¹ Markowitz, *State Erosion. Unlootable Resources and Unruly Elites in Central Asia*, 59.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁵³ Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia, Perceptions and Pact*, 13.

²⁵⁴ Malikov, “Uzbekistan: A View from the Opposition.”

Hence, Karimov restored a management that had its origins in the pre-purges period²⁵⁵ enforcing an authoritarian regime²⁵⁶ - where the levels of individual freedoms were strongly compressed - that continued the USSR experience, coopting the loyal elites and replacing the threatening ones.²⁵⁷ However, the Karimov recipe was accepted because it appeared as the only solution that could guarantee peace and stability, avoiding clashes between the different ethnic groups and clans in a country that presents many internal potential crises and that is still trying to find its own identity in the globalized context. Even at an economic level, the system is still far from the efficiency of the free market regime and the economy remains hardly publicist, leaving just small margins to private initiative²⁵⁸ and persevering the substantial Soviet centralized/planned experience in a country that is trying to diversify its production but where cotton is still an important culture that is absorbing a

²⁵⁵ Pulat Nugmanov – the former deputy prime minister of installation and special construction work - was reconfirmed from Soviet times in the same posts. Also Bakhiyar Khamidov - the former deputy chairman of Uzbek president cabinet of ministers - became Minister of economy and chairman of State Committee on Prognostication and Statistics; Inom Iskandarov, the Minister of construction materials' industry held the same post from Soviet times as well as Kudratilla Mahamadalyev who was Minister of construction. Abdulaziz Kamilov, who finished to cover the posts of Minister of foreign affairs, was also a part of the presidential establishment. Ilkhamov adds that “A number of local officials associated with Sharaf Rashidov and his patronage networks were also granted key positions in the government. This was the case for Shukrullo Mirsaidov and Timur Alimov, two key members of the Tashkent ‘network’, who respectively became Prime Minister and Presidential Adviser; Ismail Jurabekov, who represented the Samarkand-Jizzak region, was also appointed Deputy-Prime Minister, a position that involved control over water management and agriculture.” Alisher Ilkhamov, “Neopatrimonialism, Factionalism and Patronage in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan,” in *Neopatrimonialism in Africa and Beyond*, ed. Daniel C Bach and Mamoudou Gazibo (London & New York: Routledge, 2012), 191–92; Blackmon, *In the Shadow of Russia: Reform in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan*, 33.

²⁵⁶ Cf. Melvin, *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism on the Silk Road*.

²⁵⁷ Conversely to the Soviet tradition of stable and longstanding cadres, Karimov used to often change the governors of the regions (hokims) in order to avoid that kind of political opposition that in Soviet Union was not.

²⁵⁸ “Under Soviet communism all farmland in Uzbekistan was under the control of 2,048 state-owned farms. These were broken up and the land distributed after 1991. But that didn’t mean farmers could act independently” Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (New York: Crown Business, 2012), 432.

great part of Uzbek resources²⁵⁹, while the problems we have seen seem to be similar also in today's Uzbekistan.²⁶⁰

The pattern of neo-patrimonialism to read the Uzbek – and maybe the whole of Soviet – history is a new and challenging field that further research should deal with. The many studies using this new category in the analysis of post-colonial countries could help to define the theoretical framework of reference and to set the analysis of the political system of Uzbekistan and Soviet. Neo-patrimonialism is a very tenacious model that is able still to revive in the future in many societies and seems to be one of the main obstacles to the affirmation of effective democracy as in Uzbekistan as in the rest of the world. It is important not to underestimate a system that can potentially undermine the most important achievements of the 20th century - such as freedom, competition and democracy – by creating a political alternative that is potentially dangerous. Karimov's strategy appeared dangerous and weak in many ways, and was criticized by many of those who hoped in an effective change. On this issue, Gdlyan – who probably represents one of the main protagonists of this story and apparently still keeps his idealistic attitude towards patrimonialism and corruption - commented:

Karimov is a contradictory personality [...] instead of continuing the fight against corruption, he has recovered the old ways of protecting the clans' interests. And in essence, willing or unwilling, he sowed the large-scale corruption while the republic - after our mission - was once again in the grip of corruption. Secondly,

²⁵⁹ Still in 2014, the Uzbek cotton sector consumed considerable resources: “1.4 million hectares of land, or 36-37 percent of all agricultural land, is used to grow cotton. Of the 53.1 billion cubic meters of water consumed annually, 92 percent goes to agricultural needs, the lion's share of which is consumed by the cotton sector. Agricultural production and processing of agricultural products employs 30-35 percent of the working population, more than half in the cotton sector. This does not include people forced to harvest cotton each year. The cotton sector consumes a significant portion of the mineral fertilizers, such as ammonium nitrate, ammonium sulphate and urea, produced by the chemical industry and 290,000 tons of diesel fuel, or more than 30 percent of domestic consumption, as well as other resources.” Bakhodyr Muradov and Alisher Ilkhamov, “Uzbekistan's Cotton Sector: Financial Flows and Distribution of Resources,” 2014, 11.

²⁶⁰ In the Uzbekistan it has been estimated that every year up to 2 million children work in the cotton fields. Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A New History of Global Capitalism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 438; Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights and Cotton Campaign, “A Systemic Problem: State-Sponsored Forced Labour in Uzbekistan's Cotton Sector Continues in 2012,” 2013.

a Karimov mistake was in enforcing his power under the new conditions and playing with Islam. He gave full rights to Islamic groups and encouraged [the recovery of] all old traditions that were so invigorated. And then, a few years later, when he realized that Islamists were against him, then he understood how far he went in his ventures. Hence, he stopped everything. Now, we do not see anymore those national costumes of the women - that were previously appreciated - pursuing a more secular approach. But it's too late, all these Islamist cells had been strengthened and have created the powerful Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which is now established in Afghanistan. [...Evidently,] the games of the country's leaders led to very different results. Gorbachev played and went bad, [...] and Karimov, who played with the corrupt and Islamists, has to face these factors that can ruin not only him, but also the republic. [...] These two factors have worked at some point to determine a new corrupt elite in Uzbekistan. While these two factors - corruption and games with Islam - were supposed to strengthen his power, on the contrary they had weakened his authority year by year.²⁶¹

Dangerous or not, this strategy seemed to be winning in the mid-long run and let Karimov to stay in power until his death in September 2016. It will be interesting to see if the new president, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, will welcome the challenge of modernity or will preserve a (Soviet) model of political, economic and social system that isolated the country in relation to the global challenges. We can only hope the best, and we hope that happens.

To conclude this long story, Uzbekistan and the Uzbek people remain divided in judging the Soviet experience in general, and the 'cotton affairs' – one of the most sensitive topics of their contemporary history – in particular. These contradictions – in analyzing an issue that remains sensitive in both Russia and Uzbekistan – are indicative of the complexity of an as yet unresolved issue. An overall evaluation of the Soviet experience in Central Asia that can be shared by both Russians - who have perhaps most suffered and invested in the Soviet utopia - and Uzbeks - who still struggle to assert their own cultural identity devoid from past Soviet experience - remains elusive. Thus, the purpose of further research is to analyze the period of perestroika from the perspective of additional cases on the periphery, defining other social, economic, political and cultural elements that characterized the 'traumatic' transition to independent national statehood.

²⁶¹ Personal interview with Telman Khorenovich Gdlyan, Moscow, 17 October 2014.

APPENDIX

Extract from the CC CPUz buro discussing the 'Karimov affair', 31 January 1984

The CC CPUz received many letters complaining of serious violations in the cadres and about the fact that he promoted people who did machinations, bribes and thefts while the party was dissatisfied by the work of the organs and internal affairs. The former oblast prokuror O. Tursunov, the director of the oblast court U. Mingbayev, the former UVD executive A. Dustov, and the head of regional OBKhSS Muzaffarov worked together with Karimov and were friends. Now, 13 UVD managers had been arrested and from them had been seized large sums of money, valuables, gold, cars and other things for a value of more than 6 million rubles. A criminal trial has been instructed by the investigations of the prokuratura USSR [...] and in the oblast there is often a replacement of the cadres. Last year in the obkom, raikoms and gorkom apparatuses a third of workers, and in a kolkhoz a fifth of the directors was changed.¹ Since 1982, the leaders of industry and sovkhoses, the cotton factories 'Kagan' and 'Karakulsk' (1980) and in the sovkhoses 'Shurkul' and 'Mekhnatabad' and sovkhos 'Frunze', had also often been changed: in each of these, two directors have been changed but the production indexes did not improve. In the last 3 years in the oblast they fired nine officials who failed to obtain good work and 6 employees of the nomenklatura who are compromised. For three years the rhythms of the increase in production was 5.3% compared to 7% that was expected by the plan, and for the last period of the plan, the industry productivity has fallen by 14% while [managers] make corrections of the production plan to the downside. From year to year, the plan on cotton fiber was not carried out. It was a waste that did not allow the surmounting of the plan. By 1983, throughout the oblast, the 1.5% of the plan was being achieved, realizing wastes for 27,000 tons of raw cotton.² [...As well,] In 1983, the oblast did not realize the plan in the production of grapes, melons and watermelons while for potatoes only 45% of the plan is expected [to be produced].³ Considering the republic[an standards], in the [Bukhara] oblast the sales volume per capita is in tenth and the eleventh in terms of services. [...] On the safety of socialist ownership, the situation is particularly unfavorable in the state and cooperative trade and in the agriculture system. Material damages due to the deficiencies, theft and obsolescence of assets, only for nine months of last year are 56,000 rubles in the state trade, 210,000 in consumer cooperatives and 180,000 in kolkhozes and sovkhoses. [...] There were falsifications on the preparation of food

¹ Prot. 83/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2455, l. 164.

² Prot. 83/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2455, l. 165.

³ Prot. 83/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2455, l. 166.

estimated for 45-63% of the total volume of a specimen of the 40 kolkhozes and sovkhozes that had been controlled.⁴ Construction of different types were built with many structural flaws. In 1981, in sovkhoz where there were herds of astrakhan were detected failures and losses for 377 thousand rubles, 2,300 head of cattle to 66 thousand rubles and furs for 121 thousand rubles. In 1982 the collective farms had wasted more than 760 tons of oil products. Moreover, there were increasing reports of the Oblast by workers at CC CPSU unjust activity, abuse of managers, allocating state funds and facts of falsification and fraud. Half of the facts stated in the letters are confirmed by the checks. Only last year the CC CPSU from this oblast received complaints in 1.5 times more than in 1982. It should be noted that the anonymous letters last year were 9.1% and are now 16.2% [of the total letters]. For the last 3 years in the CC CPUz and the oblast workers more than a thousand letters and statements have come. In these it was said that A.K. Karimov has built a two-floors house with a pool and did a great celebration for his daughter's wedding with expensive gifts and gave to her a home. He also helped his son to buy a car.⁵ These alerts were also known before. In fact, after the earthquake, for the Karimov family was assigned a two-floors house with six rooms and an area of 104 square meters, that had a cost of 28,300 rubles, where before 13 people lived. To his son was given the Zhiguli car. These aforementioned defects in the economic and social development of the oblast are failures that have been in the work of organs of the MVD and are connected with the fact that the obkom party, his buro and personally its FS Karimov made no attention to the improvement of the work style and methods of the party organizations, and they were wrong in the selection and education of cadres, and did little monitoring on the execution of such decisions. It would be an expedient to discuss this complaint in buro CC CPUz.⁶

Extract from the CC CPUz buro discussing the systemic dimension of the cotton scam, 23 April 1984

According to CC CPUz resolutions of 9 September 1983 "on the amplification of the fight against counterfeiting, distortion in the accounting and fraud" and the resolution CC CPSU of 27 September 1983 on the "note of TsSU USSR on the fight against fraud and counterfeiting in the first half of 1983", the obkoms, TsSU UzSSR, the PCC, prokuratura and some ministries and institutions reported to the CC CPUz on the done work. The CC CPUz departments analyzed the information provided and think it is important to refer the following information to the CC CPUz. The amplification steps of the struggle against these negative phenomena were considered by the buros of the obkoms, gorkoms and raikoms and by the collegiums of ministries, institutions, and local ispolkoms. Much

⁴ Prot. 83/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2455, l. 167.

⁵ Prot. 83/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2455, l. 168.

⁶ Prot. 83/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2455, l. 169.

attention has been made – in the plenum of the party committees and in the meetings of its primary organizations during the discussion on the commitments arose from the decisions of the CC CPSU plenum in December 1983 – with regard to strengthening the state and planning discipline and proper accounting. The party's and soviets' organs have increased the demand for guilty officials in the falsifications and other violations of accounting. The culprits are brought to the party responsibility and much more often for their discipline. For falsifications and distortions of the state accounts, 16 leading communists were brought to the party responsibility. The Tashkent obkom has severely reprimanded the deputy director of the Tashkent executive committee for trade (I. Bader) for falsifications.⁷ Also the chairman of the Tashkent ispolkom G.M. Sarkisov, the director of the Almalyk gorispolkom (B.A. Agarkov), and the Samarkand obkom made a stern rebuke to the director of the oblast consumers' unit (A. Mardankulov) [...]. In 1983 for falsifications and fraud throughout the republic, 77 people were brought to criminal responsibility. The prokuratura officially noticed to the officials on the inadmissibility of violations in the accounting and in 1983 were made 263 notifications. Last year it gave a greater attention to the proper accounting of cotton preparation and the individual attempts of exaggeration cotton [figures] in the kolkhozes and sovkhoses of the Jizzakh and Namangan oblasts where had been suppressed by obkoms and was given the main assessment on the unjust activities of the managers. For falsifications and fraud, were relieved from their posts and severely reprimanded the FS Shakhrisab raikom, the directors of the cotton cleaning factories in the Nishan and Shakhrisab raions⁸, of the Bukhara bread factory, of the tea factory of Samarkand, of the furniture factory in Andijan and many others. In the struggle against the above-mentioned violations participated also the workers of industries and institutions. [...] As a result of the fight against falsifications and fraud in the republic in the second half of 1983, compared to the same period of 1982, the cases of distortion of accounting decreased by 3 points in the total amount of the controlled organizations, and falsifications by 1.1 point.⁹ As is clear from the analysis that has been done by the organs of the party, soviets, organs of law enforcement and control, the work still does not meet the requirements of the CC CPSU. Decisions on this issue and did not lead to a radical improvement in the case; the fiddling facts and fraud are widespread and affect state organization and discipline. The economy in the second half of 1983 revealed distorted statements for 24.7 percent of the number of enterprises inspected. Higher than in the whole country, the deliberate falsifications spread in Syrdarya and Namangan oblasts. The heads of some ministries and departments, many production teams still have not taken effective measures to implement the instructions of the party hovering strictest order in public statements. During the controls on the reliability of registered materials and uninstalled equipment

⁷ Prot. 91/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2464, l. 21.

⁸ Later was discovered that in 1984, the cotton processing factory of Shakhrisab inflated its productive data and emitted fake invoices in order to cover 22,000 tons of new existed raw cotton. PV, 20785, 112, 16 May 1985, p. 2.

⁹ Prot. 91/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2464, l. 22.

reported that by 1 January 1984, 429 enterprises and organizations for their underestimation and shelter from the registered materials and technical resources. In the Glavsredazirsovkhosztroya [principal Central Asian irrigational construction in sovkhoses], and in the ministries of water resources, construction, rural building, communications, energy, agriculture, Goskomvodstroya [State Committee for water engineering], Goskomselkhoztehniki [State Committee of agricultural technique] of the UzSSR were determined violations in the majority of enterprises inspected and in the organizations of the ministries of building assembling, of food industry and roads in the half of inspected organs. Some heads of enterprises and organizations, when faced with difficulties, instead of mobilizing teams on the implementation of the plan, took the road of deception, fraud and additions. Such violations were identified in the consumers of Akhunbabaev area. The Tashkent administration "Stroyrembyt" attributed to the amount of 11,000 rubles illegally obtained and a half thousand rubles in premiums. The building has become a practice to commission facilities with large sub quality under letters of guarantee. The principal Tashkent construction enterprise over the past year presented for delivery in such a way as GUKS of the Tashkent gorispolkom reported on input from 113 residential buildings with a total area of 368,000 square meters. Just due to the additions reported on the implementation of the plan for the commissioning of housing management of capital construction of the SM Karakalpakstan, and the oblispolkoms of Samarkand and Syrdarya.¹⁰ In the organization of Dzhizakselstroy [Jizzakh agriculture construction] in 1982-1983, without performing housing construction plans, were received due to the additions about 60,000 rubles in premiums. In the Syrdarya factory for school-sports equipment of the ministry of local industry were attributed [non-existent] sales for 147,000 rubles. Some kolkhozes and sovkhoses farms bought from the cattle population without fattening delivered at the expense of implementation of the plan. For these purposes in Andijan last year were spent 9.3 million rubles to pay the collective farmers, and in the Kashka-Darya region - 7 million. Employees of the Gosbank institutions insufficiently controlled the expenditure of money for other purposes. They continue to occur machinations in the delivery of butter for milk, especially in the farms of Khorezm, Navoi and Namangan oblasts. In 1983 were also recorded additions in the hectares of the areas. During the instrumental measurement of crops on farms of Karakalpak ASSR on the main crops of grain and forage crops were calculated 37,000 [extra] hectares, in Tashkent oblast 9,600, in Jizzakh 18,300, in Kashkadarya 11,600 and in Surkhandarya 8,300 hectares. The spread of fiddling and fraud cases was facilitated by the fact that the ministries and departments do not take the necessary measures to strengthen the institutional control, which is usually did not reveal the gross violations in this case, little used accounting, audit and legal services for the detection and prevention of additions, often do not give such a principled assessment of the facts, and sometimes simply condoned the frauds. Some Party committees show a liberal attitude to the issues of additions and frauds, and do not make full use of the law to control the activities of the administration,

¹⁰ Prot. 91/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2464, l. 23.

there are instances where perpetrators are not punished at all managers. In Kashkadarya, Navoi, Namangan regions in the second half of last year, the leaders responsible for distortions had been rarely punished [for their responsibilities]. State control organs do not fully utilize the right to suppress distortion of the facts reported to them, especially in the agriculture, construction, and consumer services.¹¹ Especially disturbing are cases when the state engaged controllers who by deceit were controlling themselves. Last year, the following facts have been revealed even in statistical agencies. An analysis of the information received indicates that the Party committees do not make a high demand for employees of ministries and departments of the executive committees of the Soviets of People's Deputies of the guidance in strict order of accounting and reporting in the subordinate enterprises and organizations. Poor control the activities of the prokuratura office and other law enforcement agencies for the timely consideration of the materials of the additions, and other distortions of statements, the definition of the volume of the damage and its compensation, in dealing with the prosecution of frauds, and individuals forced into falsifications. Presented in the Communist Party of Uzbekistan information regional Party committees, ministries and agencies in some cases are unself-character often embellish the situation, they can not see the program further concrete actions to eradicate this shameful phenomenon as the pipiski. It would be appropriate to forward this note to the obkoms, ministries and agencies, obliging them to work more actively to implement the resolutions of the CC CPSU and the CC CPUz in the fight against fraud and pipiski.¹²

Extract from the CC CPUz buro discussing the 'Kashkadarya affair', 29 February 1984

in December 1983, a department of the OrgOtdel CPUz sent in the obkom of Kashkadarya, a memorandum on the serious violations of labor in the Chirakchinsk raikom and offered to consider the facts of the violations of the CPSU rules about the cadres' selection within the party and its principles, the education of cadres and other negative phenomena. It was indicated that in order to create an image of qualitative improvement of the Chirakchinsk raikom composition [refilling with new people] forgery and the staging of the results was allowed. During 1982-1983, were discovered six cases where members accepted as candidates for the CPSU - workers such as engineers and technical employees - were recorded in the documents and in the raikom buro decisions as mere 'workers'. Thus, in January 1982, a hydrotechnical manager of the "Moskva" canal, B. Yakshyev, was accepted by the organization of the party as an employee and, on the buro of raikom of 15 February 1982, as a party worker. L. Turaev – secretary of the Komsomol at the kolkhoz 'Lenin' – was recorded in the documents as a blacksmith. Also S. Kenzhaeva – a kindergarten teacher of the kolkhoz 'Akhunbabayev'

¹¹ Prot. 91/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2464, l. 24.

¹² Prot. 91/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2464, l. 25.

– was registered as a mechanizator. In addition, the secretaries of the raikom T.R. Tillaev and N. Eshonkulov violated the instructions of the CPSU on the register of members and candidate members of the CPSU because they have not filled in the questionnaire the points where it was required their social position. Then, shortcomings of work in the cadres had also been revealed: in the last two years in the rayon, three directors of sovkhozes were replaced – on a total of eight – and fired with the same formulation "for reasons of health."¹³ The people who have been convicted occupied the important posts in the past, such as A. Makhmadustov - head of a district unit of inter-kolkhoz, Ya. Pardaev – director of a sovkhoz specialized in citrus production, Kh. Zhipiev – director of the legal department of the rayon's agroindustrial unit, and U. Akhmedov – the leader of the barracks of the rayon firemen. T. Khushmuratov - the director of the kolkhoz 'Akhunbabayev' – had defects in the work and violated the financial discipline. In 1982 he embezzled the salaries funds to 463,200 rubles and did not realize the plan on cotton, grain, vegetables, meat, milk and silk cocoons. He had been fired from his post and, with the consent of the obkom, he was assigned to work as an instructor of the organizational department of the raikom. The brother of the FS raikom, U. Razzakov, when he was the director of the sovkhoz 'Akhunbabayev' violated financial discipline. From January 1981 until June 1983, during the purchase of the livestock, sovkhoz has overpaid it for 260,000 rubles, and emitted false receipts on payment of the premiums of workers for more than 50,000 rubles. During the inspection, [extra] costs and shortcomings for a total of 206,000 rubles were estimated. Some managers accumulated money and started the construction of illegal dwellings, and these were the raikom secretary M. Alibayev, the chairman of the gorispolkom M. Babakulov,¹⁴ the chairman of the raion's PPC E. Norbayev and the general inspector of the raion on the preparation and quality of agricultural production M. Suvorov and others. for more than eight months, the post of Secretary of the party committee of the sovkhoz 'Akhunbabayev' had been vacant during the selection of the candidate, but the raikom chose it under the pressures of a part of the people. The popular pressure sounded like a threat because if they chose their candidate A. Khudaibergenov, he would no longer report violations.¹⁵

Report from the KGB department of Namangan to the FS Namangan obkom Radzhabov entitled 'The history of a Kapo' about the Odilov case, 24 August 1984

The resolutions of the XVI plenum CC CPUz have caused the support and the large participation of the Namangan people [...] of which a great part was not satisfied for the measures that party has adopted to uproot the negative phenomena in the social and economic life, and they try to exacerbate the situation and to create nervousness and doubts over the obkom organizational work. The situation was exasperated in the oblast

¹³ Prot. 88/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2461, l. 25.

¹⁴ Prot. 88/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2461, l. 26.

¹⁵ Prot. 88/1984, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 153, d. 2461, l. 27.

after the Papski raikom plenum of 7 august 1984 where was criticized the activity of the former general director of the Agroindustrial complex Akhmandzhan Odilov. Believing in his impeccability and impunity and trusting in his false authority and ties that in the past saved him more than once, Odilov almost started to ignore the decisions of the party organs not so much in words but in facts, and started to contradict the decisions of the CC plenum. In this company where there was lawlessness and large-scale theft, corruption and forgery there was no access for the representatives of the supervisory organizations. Odilov himself went so far as to threaten physical violence in telephone conversations¹⁶ against the members of the oblast and rayon party managers. At the same time there were reports that Odilov and his affiliates had firearms and were saying to each other that were intended to protect the interests of their patron. It is all further exacerbate the situation and called for drastic measures to locate the negative phenomena and the possible agitations in the territory. [In order to enforce] the party organizational work in the Papski rayon, it was created an operative group. In the first days of work of this group, the forces were concentrated in the localization of negative processes and the prevention of possible terrorist actions. These measures made it possible to enlarge the information flow on the negative processes in the plans, intentions and [potential] measures of the Odilov's affiliates and also on the facts of his criminal activities. The inhabitants of the rayon and workers in the agro-industrial complex had explicative materials on the facts that have been mentioned above, and seized four guns held illegally and 1,420 bullets that were purchased by order of Odilov. Reports of violations of socialist law, crimes and evidence of sadism by Odilov and his affiliates are still arriving. The workers of this agro-industrial complex E. Kamparov and Yu. Zhureev declared that the beekeeper Kh. Abdurahmanov wrote a declaration that in the years 1983-1984 by the direct Odilov order, were collected 'taxes' for meat, eggs and [cooking] oil from the sovkhoses' workers. During payment of wages, he restrained 30 rubles [from each worker] and from the beginning of 1984 salaries were not even paid and those who complained about this fact or other reasons were beaten. In order to control the situation in the agro-industrial complex, were not allowed criticisms about his criminal activity. Odilov resorted to terrorism and torture of workers and the humiliation of their human dignity as well as retaliation against unwelcome [people], using physical force, nagging and forced labor, the manufacture of incriminating materials, provocation and blackmail. In this way, yet in 1972 a group of kolkhoz workers in a statement to the Prosecutor General of the USSR said that after receiving beatings by Odilov, some people were crippled, and many people were forced to move in the kolkhoz and probably even the kolkhoznik Mamadzhon Khalimov¹⁷ and the police lieutenant Buisin had been killed under Odilov's order. In the materials of the criminal case on the murder of the shepherd Akhmedov in 1981 are reported many facts about Odilov and his affiliates crimes that humiliate the constitutional rights of citizens. In these materials, it is possible to notice that Odilov, organizing the criminal group of his

¹⁶ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 84.

¹⁷ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 85.

neighbors, even went to the point of inflicting physical harm and to beat more than 30 unwelcome workers. In this agroindustrial complex, Odilov has even organized the system of shadowing and dossier reporting about the unwelcome people. Dossiers like these represented violations of constitutional rights of Soviet citizens and [this practice] was maintained for many years. For example, the dossier about Amindzhanov is formed by five volumes and other materials, containing copies of the protocols of interrogations that were made by the police authorities, the recording of the answers during the hearings of the court and the official demands of Soviet organs that were made and were given on special request of the competent bodies. In the materials there are the data on the work of the Amindzhanov case and on the investigator Tursulov. Therefore, there is the criminal abuse of power by some [judiciary] workers that gave these confidential materials to a private citizen as Odilov. His and their guilt is exacerbated by the fact that documents accumulated in the dossiers were used for criminal purposes, blackmail, incitement to commit illegal acts, fabrication of fake criminal cases, provocations etc, therefore trampling on the Soviet constitution. On the realization of these dossiers, [we had been] told by S. Samsakov, a worker of the cadres department of the agroindustry complex, that for some months worked with M. Mirazimov who was in charge of producing these dossiers. About a week before Odilov's arrest, the most of these dossiers that are datable before the 1980, had been destroyed. Nowadays, some of these dossiers had been seized. Odilov had even practiced the 'primitive detachment', allocating unwelcome workers to the most difficult and often unpaid jobs: and so a veterinarian called Sobir Uminov for two years he was forced to work in the construction of a stone wall perceiving all this time 241 rubles.¹⁸ His only crime was that for two years had not gone on vacation for the holidays and when on the third year he has requested them, [he has been punished]. Similar facts are also reported in the declarations of Abdukhalil Zhumanov, Saib Samsakov, M. Raisakhiev. According to the data, in this agroindustrial complex more than 80 people had been harassed. Odilov and his sons, brothers, nephews tortured the workers with whips. Odilov more than once whipped the guard of the agroindustrial complex Mamadali Shumanov – and his brother – fabricating a case against him and getting his conviction. In November 1983, [Odilov] ordered to undress the worker Yuldashali Kuldashiev and despite the cold he washed him down with the tube water. The workers [...] E. Kamparov and Yu. Zhuraev declared that, on the base of Odilov's order, have marked with a hot iron the face of Makhmud Khaidarov, the former director of the sovkhos 'Kirgizston', and even a stigma on the right thigh of the guard of the sovkhos 'Uzakov'. As the general agronom Makhmudzhon Raisakhiev wrote in his declaration, in August 1983 Nuridin, the son of Mukhtar Khamidov who lives in the village of Grumsarai, has been sodomized by Odilov with a bottle of vodka, presumably for 'educational purposes'. The inhuman crimes of Odilov trample the honor and the dignity of workers, torture and murder by his order have caused anger and disturbance of citizens of the raion and the oblast. So on these operational results, the workers of his sovkhos regarded these as 'fascist actions' and

¹⁸ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 86.

he has been compared to Hitler. The operational results that we have received testify that Odilov tried to personally enrich himself and to affirm his unlimited private power in the raion, surrounding himself with people dependent on him – unprincipled, amoral and often with criminal records – with the help of which he did theft, machinations and falsifications on a large scale. Odilov has created a group which severely faced all those who criticized him or who were considered 'guilty'. Disposing of significant amounts of cash and other valuables, by the extensive use of all types of offer or simply bribing, [he] has created a wide network of 'reliable ties' who at critical moments had to guarantee with their official position his impunity. Of the many facts of this kind about the activity of Odilov¹⁹ testify following data. In the declaration of the group of kolkhoz workers to the General prosecutor USSR in 1972 it has been specified that yet at that time Odilov was illegally spending tens of thousands of rubles of kolkhoz money for his personal needs and he withheld a part of kolkhozniki [salaries]. According to investigative data of the years 1981-1982 on this agroindustry about the murder of the shepherd N. Akhmedov, it has been affirmed in the criminal case that in the agro-industrial complex there was the disguised theft of livestock, cotton, wool, squandering of kolkhozes and sovkhoses land and other crimes. Therefore, in the years 1979-1981 in the agroindustrial complex 969 cattle heads had been stolen, more than a thousand goats and sheep that were produced in the kolkhozes and sovkhoses of the neighbor raions. In the sovkhoses 'Naiman' and 'Ilich' the value of the stolen livestock amounted for more than 200,000 rubles. With money of sovkhos were bought 'defitsitnii' [scarce, rare] goods before there was an increase of prices in these goods²⁰ and in the warehouse of the agroindustrial complex had been seized these goods for a value of more than a million rubles and in the bottom of the warehouse were found 19 new cars of different brands and 20 motorcycles and the accountant Ezonali Kenzhaev has voluntarily given the money that was kept in his brother's house according to the orders of Odilov for a value of 118,648 rubles. Even the former accountant of the sovkhos has declared that in the period 1979-1981, Odilov gave him 124,700 rubles to storage them. Then it was discovered that the factory that was producing shawls made an illegal production for 150,000 rubles [...] and were discovered great deficiencies in cattle and goods in the sovkhoses. From the arrested people for this case, were witnessing Yu. Turaev, M. Shuraev, M. Mukhtarkhanov, Z. Turaev, A. Dzhunaev. From the received witness evidences' and seized, is indicated that Odilov was ordering to make expensive presents - for a value of about one million rubles and 12 cars of different brands - due to the funds that he illegally collected. These funds were sent to the top managers in Namangan, Tashkent and Moscow. Other money – that had been illegally collected –

¹⁹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 87.

²⁰ In this way, he was determining a sort of rural investment-speculation. This means that he had connections in upper planning echelons that told him when a price was going to increase. To fight this situation, in Western world there were created antitrust agencies. In Soviet Union such institutes did not make any sense because the system was supposed to work out of the market and without possibility of machinations.

was spent for services of people that were attracted by Odilov to make them write anonymous [slandering-defamatory] letters and to make provocations against the former secretaries of the Namangan obkom. During the investigations have been discovered cases of illegal entrusting of sovkhoses' land to privates.²¹ However, at that time, Odilov, being the deputy of the SS USSR and member of the CC CPUz and abusing of his power, could create the conditions to prevent investigations [against him. Now] the hostages' goods were returned and the criminal trial was concluded. Odilov with impunity violated Soviet law. On 24 November 198[missing, presumably 1983], a group of more than 100 people under Odilov's order has surrounded the building of the ROVD [provincial department of internal affairs] of Chust raion where were the documents of accountability that had been seized, in order to demand the return of documents and threatening violent actions. There, there were the Odilov's data where had been discovered the serious violations in his industries in 1982, however this did not stop Odilov's criminal activity. Thus, S. Ziyatov – the former director of sovkhos 'Naubakhor' – and M. Madrakhimov – a manager of a department of the same sovkhos – under Odilov's order gave the land to privates in exchange for payments that were then given to the latter. About operative data, in the highland of Magar, there are presumably ten herds with 300-350 sheep and in the other parts of agroindustry there are horse herds and a great number of goats that behold to Odilov. In some [detected] messages, there are data about Odilov's dachas in mountain places and on the river Syrdarya. These are guarded by hunters and probably there, there is the most part of his material goods. The above mentioned activities enriched him and his affiliates and determined the fall of the agroindustry unit's productivity and its profitability, determining a big and serious economic damage to the state and to the material condition of the inhabitants of Papski raion, causing discontent. With impunity, for many years these Odilov's activities in a certain measure have undermined the faith of a part of the population towards the state organs. This point is also mentioned in the statement of Raisakhiev who wrote "Odilov's crime disturbed all the people. His impunity has caused distrust in the party, the court, the prokuratura and administrative bodies. I'm glad that he has been imprisoned." And the fact that testify that these words reflect the feelings of many residents of the raion is that, in some places, the news about Odilov's arrest has been celebrated and many workers of the agro-industrial complex²² express joy stating that this was a triumph of the Soviet power and of the justice, and have helped the representatives of the administrative organs to discover the crimes of the former director and to normalize the situation in the agro-industry. The prokuratura and the UVD are informed about the facts of Odilov's and his affiliates' criminal activities. In these organs more than 15 declaratory materials had been spent and the people linked to Odilov kept spreading rumors about that his arrest is a temporary measure, trying to scare the people on the return of the old order and adopt measures to attract a part of the inhabitants to join the initiatives to putting pressure on the judiciary organs to release the arrested.

²¹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 88.

²² RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 89

Odilov's wife and brothers Muksin and Davud are particularly active. The wife of the arrested has collected signs in order to promote a petition [letter] for justice. Many people renounced to sign it but some had signed for fear and on 20 August 1884 this letter had been presumably sent to the CC CPUz. Odilov's son Akbar who supposedly has firearms threatened to avenge his father and is hiding. Under these circumstances, the operating group forces direct a further identification of the antisocial behavior of the group and the suppression of possible terrorist actions and other hostile actions, the seizure of the weapons, the help in the investigation, the disclosure of witnesses and the discovery for information of Odilov's and his affiliates' criminal activities. [Signed, Kh. M. Mamatov, chairman of the Namangan UKGB]²³

The 'Pupil of a dead' – the donos against Rano Kh. Abdullaeva

On 27 September 1984, a group of “ideological activists of Tashkent” addressed to Chernenko, Gorbachev, Romanov, and Solomentsev an anonymous letter where the amoralities of the secretary for ideology and of her son were denounced. The latter was accused of being an arrogant person with an amoral lifestyle based on alcoholism, his four cars, and luxury house restorations costing more than 30,000 rubles. According to the letter, the secretary promoted her friends in the ministry of education of the UzSSR and chose the cadres on the basis of zemlyachestvo and friendship. The letter also states that she herself was arrogant and did not have the modesty of real communists.²⁴ The case was followed by the party, which asked Tashkent to shed light on the facts. In response, a memorandum of the CC CPUz to the CC CPSU sent on 5 October 1984, reported that Abdullaeva in 1980 received two apartments for her family of four people with a total area of 135 m² and from 1983 her family lived in a private house of more than 100 m² while her son did not have cars registered on his name. After the allegations, the party clarified the situation with her.²⁵ The slanderous level of this letter was evident, considering the high level of bigoted moralism in many of these anonymous letters. However, given the frequency, the tone, and the contents of these letters, they seemed to be very carefully orchestrated campaigns of discrediting of individuals. On this case, on 16 October another letter arrived from the “group of labor veterans”, handwritten in very poor Russian, against Abdullaeva asking “how can she be an ideological manager when she [isn't] able to establish order within her family” with an alcoholic and drug-addicted son who had car accidents and made parties with loud music where there were naked boys and girls. Then, this second letter denounced again that she put her friend as ministry of education UzSSR and organized a very expensive wedding for her two sons, inviting more than 350 people in expensive

²³ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 105, l. 90.

²⁴ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, l. 115.

²⁵ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, ll.116-117.

restaurants.²⁶ And other anonymous letters arrived in the serious period with very low allegations against the ideological secretary that mimicked the tones of quarrels between neighbors.²⁷ Another anonymous letter from a “group of party workers” arrived in the CC CPSU on 28 January 1985, stating that she is arrogant with employees, a miserable mother because her son is a criminal, and an unfaithful wife because she put her lover at the head of AN UzSSR.²⁸ Then, another anonymous – supposedly from somebody in the academy – letter addressed to Chernenko arrived on 22 February 1985 describing Abdullaeva as Rashidov’s “pupil” and his “right hand”. “She follows Rashidov’s tradition of zemlyachestvo, protectionism, and arrogance”, and then denouncing the fact that she became doctor of science without attending university and joining the training of candidates of science.²⁹ Again, on 15 April 1985 a very angry, sexist and racist letter³⁰ from “the representative of the republic’s intelligentsia” to the Gensek Gorbachev added that “women in the top post in the party had been chosen not for their managerial qualities but on the amoral base of their lovers” and gave the example of Rano Abdullaeva who had been nicknamed “the idiot” by the people. The letter stated that a scholar who criticized her work was expelled from the academy and her son always used to change cars and had a great house. Then were reported the same story that she was half Bukharan and half Khorezmian and she was promoting people of those regions and her fiend as the top of education ministry.³¹ Finally, in a note to the CC CPSU (14 May 1985), Mogilnichenko declared that these allegations written in so many anonymous letters were fake and slanderous against Abdullaeva. Then, he observed how before June of the previous year - the month of the XVI plenum – nobody had ever sent a letter to criticize her. In that event she was responsible for sending to Uzbekistan party workers from the center. So, Mogilnichenko – as we doing too – was guessing who was behind those slanderous letters against a person that was retained as a firm figure who was not making compromises and discounts.³² However, besides the respectful trust that Moscow reserved for Abdullaeva, it was just a matter of months and she had to face the worst fate in the Uzbek affairs, when she was implicated for her relation with Rashidov and her role in the scam. As happened for Nasriddinova, also Abdullaeva was alleged with sex scandals, and other issues that were indicative of the level of bigotry and sexism in Uzbek politics. Abdullaeva then became a symbol of Rashidovism, who had to be hit and was at the center of a campaign

²⁶ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, ll.119-121.

²⁷ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, ll.123-126.

²⁸ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, ll.130-131.

²⁹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, ll.127-128.

³⁰ This letter was full of racism and anger from somebody who had problems with the ethnic minorities in the republic, stating that “in order to be relevant and to be eared in the party you have to be a Crimean Tatar, a Korean or an Uighur but not a Russian or an Uzbek.” RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, ll.133-135.

³¹ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, ll.133-135.

³² RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, ll.141-142

orchestrated with the sole but clear purpose of discrediting somebody very important, moved by those who had been anti-Rashidovian and marginalized from 1959. This hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that from the end of 1984 the first complaints against the defunct FS CPUz started to arrive. An exemplary anonymous letter to the CC CPSU and CC CPUz, and arrived on 25 September 1984, stating that in the June 1984 plenum, among the names of the culprits lack the name of the main responsible of this scam at republican scale: it was Sharaf Rashidovich Rashidov who had never been mentioned as the main responsible party. During his reign, “corruption, theft, speculation, bribes, protectionism, falsifications, scam and distortion of reality that limited any manifestation of criticism... and these are not all the vices with which was infected the republic [...] where a great part of people believed that it could be possible to live even without working [...] So why has Rashidov been buried with all honors in the center of the capital? [...] Rashidov was probably eating meat every day while the people had to take a kilogram per month with the ration book.”³³The letter was thus prompting a polemic against a figure who, for better or for worse, was dead, asking to delete “those honors that he got with fraud and falsification”. So they asked the party to rebury Rashidov somewhere else and to forget a figure that was associated with the “Brezhnevism and its worst ugliness” – as well as the scandals in the Ministry of fishing, Elizevski store etc. – and “to judge if not openly at least closely Rashidov’s activity in order to restore the faith in the party.”³⁴

The FS CPUz, I.B. Usmankhodzhaev memorandum n. 1-726 SS addressed to the CC CPSU, 30 April 1986

As a result of the dedicated restitutive work of the party-organizational aktiv of the CC CPUz in collaboration with the CC CPSU, as well the ordinary process of criminal investigation, we can report the following. The unseemly role of the former FS CPUz Sh. Rashidov is clear. He is responsible for serious violations and abuses in his work with the cadres, for his retreat from Leninist norms of party life, [and for] widespread corruption, bribery, pripiski, and political expansion of the executives. Additionally, he is responsible for major flaws in the ideological and political life. Rashidov in 1959 became the FS CPUz [and stayed in that post] for a long time in power. Especially in the ‘70s, he planted a ceremonial atmosphere of self-praise, hymns in his addresses about the real and imaginary achievements of the republic, ignoring [the norms of] collegiality, criticism, and self-criticism. The selection of [cadres] was predominantly on the basis of kinship, zemlyachestvo, personal dedication, and often guided by selfish interests. As a result, many of the key positions in the Party, government, and economic bodies of the republic were filled with his close relatives. There were Rashidov’s relatives in the apparatus of the CC CPUz in various posts (eight); in the Jizzakh obkom five members of

³³ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, ll.144-145.

³⁴ RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, ll.144-147.

the buro,³⁵ and three secretaries. All this [malfeasance] was known by the party activists, who encouraged its imitation. With the direct assistance of Rashidov, his grandfather Nasyrov was twice awarded with the title Hero of Socialist Labor – without sufficient reason – and his brother N. Rashidov, his daughter S. Rashidova, and his son in law A. Muminov became doctors of sciences. Rashidov himself is not an example of modesty. In nine oblasts, luxuriously furnished villas with large excesses were built, in which he rarely stayed to rest. For these unplanned estates he spent 10 million rubles. Believing in his infallibility, Rashidov put himself [above the law, resorting to illicit and] unsuitable means to achieve his ambitious goals. It was established that he was trying to create the appearance of well-being in the economy such that he encouraged and often orchestrated falsifications in the cotton sector of the republic. In the cotton blanks, annually there were additions totaling some 400 thousand tons of raw [cotton]. In the accounts of the state plan for milk, butter bought from the state trade and consumer cooperation was also computed. Livestock was purchased on the [black] market [...] and sold to the state, as if it were produced by the public sector. All this had allowed him to become Hero of Socialist Labor twice, a winner of the Lenin Prize, and to create around his person a phony authority. He lost the sense of proportion and modesty [...even in his] literary works. [Unjustifiably] his works have been repeatedly republished in Uzbek, Russian, and other languages in high print runs.³⁶ The people who created the appearance of prosperity were held in high esteem and received undeserved rewards. [And these...] unseemly things were going on for the sake of Rashidov himself. For a long time, he was shielded from criticism, led away from the punishment, allowed anti-Party and anti-state actions of the former first secretary of the obkoms of Kashkadarya (Gaipov) and Bukhara (Karimov), the MVD (Yakh'yaev), the general director of the Papski agroindustrial association (Odilov), a pander and personal confidant, now arrested, [and] the former chief of cadres of the Central Committee T. Umarov. As a result of the criminal investigations, it emerged that Rashidov received expensive gifts and hundreds of thousands of rubles in bribes from employees of the leading party, soviet, and economic organs. With the connivance of Rashidov, the state was robbed [...] and bribery took on vast and dangerous proportions in the country. The caused great material damage to the state, estimated at billions of rubles. After enforcing the [proper] measures, the perpetrators were [finally] been brought to the party and state to be held responsible, and thousands of people convicted under criminal law. In the context of lack of control and permissiveness, deep moral decline and degeneration of the leading cadres resulted. The Republican Party organization – with the help of the CC CPSU – endorsed measures to cleanse the Party and state organs from those officials who embarked in the direction of additions, fraud, and bribery. During 1984-1985, for these reasons 172 employees within the nomenklatura of the CC CPSU and 1813 - or 45.7 per cent - within the [lists] of the CC CPUz had been removed

³⁵ NSA, Box 26, file R 10051, p. 1.

³⁶ NSA, Box 26, file R 10051, p. 2.

from their posts.³⁷ Of 65 obkom secretaries, 52 were replaced, including 11 FSs. 408 new raikom and gorkom secretaries – 70% of the total – were appointed, of which 149 were in fact FSs. Additionally, 46 chairmen and deputy chairmen of oblispolkoms were changed. 29 officials from the Central Committee, 232 deputies of the Supreme and local Soviets, and from the ranks of the CPSU 6653 individuals were ousted for all the negative phenomena. About Rashidov's unseemly role, during the current difficult situation in the republic, the party organs received many letters from authors who believe that his name should not have been assigned to streets, enterprises, and institutions. The basic assessments on the personality of Rashidov were given at the XXI Congress CPUz. The congress strongly condemned the vicious style and methods of leadership of Sh. Rashidov, which directly contributed to the emergence and spread of serious shortcomings and negative phenomena. Under the suggestion of [the congress'] delegates, the CC CPUz was instructed to suggest a revision of the decision to perpetuate his memory. Based on the above facts, and taking into account the decisions of the XXI CPUz Congress, the CC CPUz requests cancellation of the decision of the CC CPSU and SM USSR n. 1227 of 23 December 1983 "to commemorate the memory of Sh Rashidov", according to which Usbekistanskaya street in Tashkent was renamed Prospekt 'Sharaf Rashidov' and a memorial plaque on the building n. 68 in G. Lopatin street in Tashkent was installed. [Additionally, the order we seek cancelled had] the name of Sh. Rashidov assigned at the Samarkand State University, to the Tashkent textile complex, to the regional library of Jizzakh,³⁸ to the sovkhos "Madaniat" in the Karauzyak raion of the Karakalpakstan ASSR. Finally, it was scheduled to build a memorial monument of Sh. Rashidov and to assign his name to one of the ships under construction. At the same time, it might be necessary to consider the question of depriving Sh. R. Rashidov of his two Hero of Socialist Labor awards and his Lenin Prize award, as well as the cancellation of the pension and welfare status of his widow and his children. According to the decision of local authorities, Rashidov's [body] was buried in the center of Tashkent, near a branch of the Central Lenin Museum. The CC CPUz is requesting that he be reburied in the municipal cemetery. [Signed Usmankhodzhaev]³⁹

CPSU memorandum to the Central Committee P-206, 5 May 1986

To the CC CPSU. "About the note of the comrades Chebrikov V.M. and Rekunkov A.M." As requested we report that the note of the comrades Chebrikov V.M. and Rekunkov A.M has been considered. The note correctly reported that in the Uzbek SSR serious shortcomings of the party leadership took place, as did the perversion of the Leninist principle of selection, placement, and training of cadres, the weakening of state discipline and socialist legality, which had an extremely negative impact on the situation

³⁷ NSA, Box 26, file R 10051, p. 3.

³⁸ NSA, Box 26, file R 10051, p. 4.

³⁹ NSA, Box 26, file R 10051, p. 5.

in the economy. This has led to widespread corruption and bribery, and to the moral and political degradation of the leading cadres. Among them were some members of the buro and secretaries of obkoms, some senior officials of the CC CPUz, ministers, chairmen of oblispolkoms and their deputies, heads of a number of city and regional leadership, economic cadres, many senior officials of the law enforcement organs. The desire to create the appearance of prosperity led to widespread state fraud. As has now been found, for example, in the main commodity of the republican economy – cotton – up to 400,000 tons of raw cotton were falsely added annually. At the expense of the state plan for the sale of milk, collective and state farms resold butter purchased in the system of state trade and consumer cooperation as if it were milk. Cattle – which the state did not feed – was also purchased on the market was resold to the state as if it was grown in the public sector. As a result, for the period from 1978 to 1983, the country suffered material damage amounting to more than three billion rubles.⁴⁰ The party organizations of the republic are working to improve the situation, to clean the party, government, and state organs from compromised persons and to strengthen all areas from top to bottom with honest and principled workers. They were particularly active after the June 1984 XVI plenum of the CC CPUz. The departments of the CC CPSU accorded to the CC of the republican party an all-round assistance. In Uzbekistan, in the last two years, from the 65 obkom had been replaced 52 officials, including 11 of the 13 FSs. [As well] had been appointed 406 - or 70% - of the gorkom and raikom secretaries, of which 149 - or 76.8% - FSs. 46 (56.8%) chairmen of oblispolkoms and their deputies were changed, as well as 160 of the 234 chairmen of city and raion executive committees. Those who have pursued the way of abuse, economic fouling, violations of the CPSU Charter and Soviet laws are liable to strict party and also criminal liability. From the CC [CPUz] had been ousted 29 people, and from obkoms, gorkoms and raikoms 269. Dismissed from the deputies of the Supreme and local soviets 232, excluded from the CPSU 6653, prosecuted for criminal malfeasance 21,369 people. Significant personnel changes were made in the apparatus of the Communist Party, in the republican ministries and in the departments. For this purpose, the CC CPSU sent 55 experienced workers of the CC [CPSU] apparatus and of the party committees from the RSFSR, Ukraine and Belarus to Uzbekistan to support the leading party and soviet work. Much attention is paid to strengthening reliable people of the law enforcement agencies. Replaced also were almost the entire leadership of the prokuratura, the MVD, the SC and the MJ, as well as their⁴¹ organs in the field and most of the judges. For the managerial and operational work in these bodies had been sent 190 people from other regions of the country until the end of this year, intending to send another [group of] 220 specialists. To assist in the investigation of the largest embezzlement and abuse of the UzSSR were detached a hundred of experienced prosecutors and police investigators, some of them from the central offices. In order to review the incoming cases in a timely and qualitative manner, the staff and members of people's courts and

⁴⁰ NSA, Box 26, file R 10052, p. 1.

⁴¹ NSA, Box 26, file R 10052, p. 2.

oblasts' courts had been [numerically] increased. This was also done to decide whether to change the jurisdiction of some criminal categories. The prokuratura USSR, the MVD USSR, the SC USSR and the MJ USSR are on-site to constantly assist law enforcement agencies of the republic and to take measures to improve the style and methods of their activity. The work of cleaning the party, soviet, and economic agencies of Uzbekistan continues. It is implemented under the control department of the CC CPSU. So as to improve state control over the observance of the rule of law in economic relations and to increase the efficiency of the prosecutor's supervision, the solution has been provided in the plan of action to implement the Resolution of the XXVII Congress of the CPSU and the line of the Political report to the CC Congress (P3/42 of 24 March 1986). The prokuratura USSR, the MJ USSR, the SC USSR, the legal department of the presidium of the SS USSR with the participation of the department of the administration of the CC CPSU are currently preparing such proposals. In accordance with the plan, in the current year we are also preparing and⁴² submitting to the CC CPSU proposals aimed at improving the state arbitration to strengthen the prescribed discipline.⁴³

The Decree of the CC CPUz and SM UzSSR, n. 282-21 (4 June 1986) implemented the decree n. 617 of the CC CPSU and SM USSR of 22 May 1986 "on the cancellation of the decree of the commemoration of Sh. R. Rashidov":

- 1 to delete the decree n. 9 of 5 January 1984 on the commemoration of Rashidov;
- 2 to approve an action plan to implement the decree of the CC CPSU and SM USSR of 22 May 1986 "on the cancellation of the decree of the commemoration of Sh. R. Rashidov";
- 3 to restore the names that were in effect until January 5, 1984 of the textile factories in Tashkent, the library of the Jizzak oblast, the sovkhos of Karauzyak raion that were named after Rashidov. The Tashkent gorispolkom would rename Prospekt Sharaf Rashidov in Prospekt Uzbekistankii;
- 4 to compel the obkoms of Karakalpakya, Jizzak, Samarkand, Tashkent to review the resolutions previously adopted on this matter and to take the necessary measures arising from this decree;
- 5 to compel the SM of the Karakalpak ASSR, the oblispolkoms of Jizzak and Samarkand and the Tashkent gorispolkom to conform road signs and other place names⁴⁴ as well as office supplies in the economic organizations and institutions to remove Rashidov's name completely from them.
- 6 in accordance with the decree of the SM USSR of 26 May 1986, No. 618-182, [to rescind the financial support to the family of Sh. R. Rashidov] the decree of the CC CPUz

⁴² NSA, Box 26, file R 10052, p. 3.

⁴³ NSA, Box 26, file R 10052, p. 4.

⁴⁴ Prot. 9/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2316, l. 9.

of 5 January 1984, n. 82/20 and the decree of the SM UzSSR of 19 January 1984 n. 16-3.

7 to instruct the SM UzSSR to decide on pension support for Sh. Rashidov's widow and bring it in line with the housing conditions of her family.⁴⁵

Memorandum "Information for the party activities on Sh. R. Rashidov", CC CPUz buro, 4 June 1986:

During the improvement of the situation in the republic and in the course of criminal investigations of officials, it was revealed that the FS of the CC CPUz, Sh. R. Rashidov is personally responsible for deviations from the Leninist norms of party life, distortions in working with cadres, spreading corruption in the republic, forgery, fraud and serious flaws in the ideological and political life of the republic. Having been for a long time in the post of FS of the CC CPUz, he planted in the country an atmosphere of splendor and self-congratulation, he ignored collegiality, criticism and self-criticism, and encouraged fraud against the state and "mestnichestvo" [localism]. According to his conscience, the cadres were placed in general on the basis of kinship, zemlyachestvo, personal loyalty and often out of greed. So many of the key positions in the organs of the party, of the Soviets and of agriculture in the republic were occupied by relatives and people close to him. Unfairly the pandering persons and persons charged by him who have committed serious violations had been honored and thus avoided criminal liability. In order to create an appearance of well-being in the economy and by Rashidov's promotion, during the 1978-1983 period in the republic 4.548 million tons of non-existent cotton was falsified, for which kolkhozes and sovkhoses received 2.866 billion rubles of which with, the pretext of salaries, had been paid 1.178 billion rubles.⁴⁶ A significant portion of these funds was used to bribe various officials. Now only because of criminal charges more than 22,000 people are accused. The organization of the Republic Party had taken measures to clean up the party organs, the Soviets and the state from the people who have taken the road of fraud, falsification of data, corruption and for this reason 172 workers who were part of the CC CPSU nomenklatura were removed, 1813 who were in the nomenklatura of the CC CPUz of which there were 52 of the 65 obkom secretaries, and 408 – or 70% – of the gorkom and raikom secretaries. Believing in his infallibility, Rashidov was put beyond the control and with the unworthy means he created around him a phony authority, trying to give undeserved honors and awards. According to statements and witnesses of the workers and the former managers under investigation, Rashidov systematically obtained expensive gifts and bribes. Rashidov's party activities have undermined the faith of the people of the republic in the power of Soviet law and social justice,

⁴⁵ Prot. 9/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2316, l. 10.

⁴⁶ Prot. 9/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2316, l. 11.

resulting in significant material damage to the state, holding back economic development and bringing a significant part of managing cadres to moral decline and degeneration. The party organs received many letters on the unseemly role of Rashidov and on the current difficult situation in the country and the authors of these letters feel that streets, institutions, and companies should not bear his name. The principled assessment of Rashidov's personality had been discussed at the XXI Congress of the CPUz.⁴⁷ The congress has widely considered the style and methods of Rashidov's vicious leadership, which contributed to emergence and dissemination of such shortcomings and phenomena and the CC CPUz delegates submitted a proposal to repeal the decree of the CC CPSU for the commemoration of Rashidov [referred to the CC CPSU and SM USSR decree of 23 December 1983 on the commemoration of Rashidov]. The presidium of the SS USSR on 2 June 1986 has also revoked the part dedicated to the construction of a bronze bust of Rashidov in its decree of 4 November 1977. The SM USSR has revoked the decree of 25 November 1983 "for the material support of Rashidov's family" [signed by A. Petrov, director of the protocol sector of the general department of CC CPUz].⁴⁸

Memorandum of the Buro CC CPUz to SM UzSSR, 24 July 1986:

The major episodes of falsification intensified mainly in the years 1980-1982. This policy did not have a local-private nature, but came from the top leadership of the republic [...] Estimates suggest that in the period 1978-1983 the material damage to the state amounted to more than 4 billion rubles and during this period data [additions] of 4.5488 million tons of cotton never harvested were falsified, thus leading to a sum of 2.8667 billion rubles being paid in vain. Of this, 1.178 billion had been paid in false wages. [For these facts], about 22,000 people had been condemned. [...] During the investigations, it emerged that one of the organizers of the scam was N.A. Khudayberdiyev, chairman of the SM UzSSR.⁴⁹ [...] according to the testimony of Usmanov, the former head of MCC UzSSR, Khudayberdiyev and Rashidov promoted this campaign of falsification of the cotton harvest volume. They forced the leaders of the party, soviets, and agricultural organs to implement the plans at all costs. Khudayberdiyev admitted his responsibility for the events and that these forgeries have caused great material damage to the state. [...] to cover the defects of the financial and agricultural assets, he disposed of the state budget [corrupted with public money]. In the period 1978-1984, he spent just for these things 305 million rubles of state funds.⁵⁰ Like Rashidov, he was from Jizzakh and gave more funding to the development of his native oblast. For Jizzakh alone six

⁴⁷ Prot. 9/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2316, l. 12.

⁴⁸ Prot. 9/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2316, l. 13.

⁴⁹ Prot. 15/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2322, l. 3.

⁵⁰ Prot. 15/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2322, l. 4.

decrees of the government were made in the period 1978-1983. [...] Abusing his power, he had illegally invested with public budget funds to maintain and renovate the dacha of Rashidov at a cost of 366,000 rubles. He also exceeded in spending on outside missions. His visit in Mongolia alone cost the republic 306,000 rubles of which some 6,981 rubles were spent on souvenirs and liquor. These anti-state activities have caused damage to the interests of the republic and restrained its economic development, undermining people's faith in the power of Soviet law and social justice, and causing a great material damage to the cadres. [Signed A. Petrov, director of the protocol sector of the general department of the CC CPUz].⁵¹

Nishanov's speech in Tashkent for the commemoration of the 117th anniversary of Lenin's birth (22 April 1987):

[Sharafrashidovshchina became] synonymous with intrigue and blasphemy, hypocrisy and ambiguity, disgrace and corruption, nonsense rhetoric and self-celebration. From the tribunes, solemn appeals of honesty, decency and responsibility were pronounced, but in reality corruption and fraud were the key results. From the tribunes the obligation to respect the choice of the Leninist principles for cadres was professed, but at the same time the leaders of the people were surrounded by their trustees, careerists, and people with connections and the sale of offices for profit was rife. From the tribunes the call for criticism was also professed but those who tried to speak out against the methods of leadership and against lawlessness were severely persecuted with sophisticated techniques. From the tribunes there were statements about modesty, but at the same time there was the unbridled self-promotion of honors, and the construction of luxury hotel residences with special access for the new Uzbek khan with the party card, gold stars and awards were encouraged. From the tribunes, the call for truth was professed, but in fact in the most shameless manner falsification of reports that inflated reality by up to six million of cotton 'mountains' occurred [...] The lovers of this false documentation praised the Rashidovian technique of forgery and were like heroes, creating a false impression that they, with their golden hands, personally gathered the white gold themselves. The nature and scale of the negative phenomena which wreaked havoc in the republic are well known. Many officials – including those in high ranks - were involved in criminal and the party punishments. We remember how V.I. Lenin spoke with anger about officials who have taken the road of corruption, against fraudsters and other villains, noting that all the forces must be engaged in a relentless struggle against these people and must use an iron fist, moving against them more severe judgments, and treating them in a way that everyone will remember for years [...Only then ,] the fight against them will be completed. We must always do as Lenin taught us; that is, not to accept any

⁵¹ Prot. 15/1986, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 155, d. 2322, l. 5.

deviation from the letter of our laws. We are aware that only through the integration of the CC CPSU, under its leadership and with its daily help, was it possible to extend the fight to eradicate these negative phenomena in the republic and to make order and to achieve a decisive improvement. In this direction, much has been done. But we should continue this hard work thoroughly and pursue relentlessly the eradication process without negative compromises, and the complete elimination of the causes of [possible] revival of these intolerable events. We must enable an exchange of cadres between the republics to strengthen international attitude of the cadres and the enrichment of the experience of the party and the state work. This is the Leninist tradition and now it has been reborn.⁵²

Letters to the CC CPSU against Radzhabov (1984):

After the XVI plenum (1984) many letters started to arrive in the Moscow and Tashkent CCs, denouncing the malfeasance of the newly appointed Radzhabov. For example, a letter sent from a 'participant at the XVI plenum CPUz' to Ligachev, to the Genprokuror, and to the director of the CPC CPSU Solomentsev denounced how still in August 1984 there were intrigues, falsifications, scams, violation of state and party discipline in Namangan after the arrival of Radzhabov. According to the letter, Radzhabov supported an atmosphere of toadyism. He also advanced the career of jeopardized people, such as his deputies Temkin – with whom he worked in Bukhara – and Nugmanov – who had an illicit trade of cars and was sponsored by Radzhabov in becoming the minister for the assembly works. Nugmanov had a reputation for drunk driving, and had on one occasion been in a serious accident. He even sold his car Gaz-24 to his toady and bribegiver Shadskikh, the director of a car storage, for 5,000 rubles. When Radzhabov was minister for agricultural building, he inflated the value of (unrealized) works by more than 50 million rubles, receiving from the state 15 million rubles. Then, he undertook machinations within the ministry where he also managed a trade of job places. He also supported the appointment of jeopardized figures, such as Averbakh – who became deputy minister – and who could thereby be removed only thanks to the intervention of the USSR minister G.A. Karavaev. As well, Temkin was removed by Karavaev but, thanks to Radzhabov, he went to direct a department in the SM UzSSR after which he was even allowed to become the second secretary of the Namangan obkom and first deputy chairman of the oblast's oblsolkom. He was corrupt and speculated in cars and apartments and, every week, went to his friend Radzhabov with the official car to look after his apartment and his sons. In two ministries, Radzhabov did huge damage to the state for hundreds million rubles, and bought his apartment and cars with public funds. "During his speeches in the plenums, he was always praising Rashidov when he was still alive." He even helped the director of Stroidetal' V. Baratov to restore

⁵² PV, 21362, 94, 24 April 1987, p. 2.

Radzhabov's apartment and gave him a monthly bribe of 5000 rubles. When he was arrested, Radzhabov helped to liberate him. RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, l. 82-85. Another letter - from "a raion activist" sent to Ligachev, to the Genprokuror Rekunkov, and to Solomentsev arrived at the CC CPSU on 10 August 1984 - denounced his dangerous connections, in which Samarakhan Karimov, manager of the Kassansaiski raion in the Namangan oblast was denounced on account of corruption and falsification. He had obtained more than 10 million rubles with which he created his criminal network and built up his own authority. He lied to the party for not admitting the conviction his father had been given (10 years' imprisonment) and showed the house of his brother - instead of his own - to Osetrov and to Radzhabov. He was most responsible for tolerating report-padding to the tune of several million rubles and the failure to declare goods for about 10 million rubles found during police controls. But Radzhabov ordered the case to be covered up in a raion where kolkhozes and sovkhozes had accumulated more than 100 million rubles in debts. His friend Nazyrov, built a house for him for a cost of 70,000 rubles and spent 30,000 just for furniture. He spoke with Radzhabov in Tajik in order to show his nationality. Hence, it seems that letter's author wanted to highlight a sort of 'Tajik group' based on mestnichestvo. RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, ll. 87-89. Another letter sent from a 'group of communists of the general housing industry at the ministry of housing of the UzSSR' declared in a letter sent to Chernenko on 27 September 1984 that Radzhabov bought the post of FS Namangan obkom for 200,000 rubles. As well, Pravda was sending to the CC CPSU dozens of anonymous letters in September 1984 denouncing Radzhabov. RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, ll. 97-111. In the aftermath of these *donos*, the CC CPUz informed Moscow about the situation in the oblast, defending Radzhabov as an honest worker. On 26 October 1984, the CC CPUz informed the CC CPSU about the controls on these complaints, reporting that Temkin did not have any car registered in his name and that he had lived in an apartment that was assigned to his family from 1974. Additionally, the illegal trade of cars by G.K. Shadskikh - who was expelled from the party by a decision of the Tashkent gorkom buro was confirmed. However, the purchase of Nugmanov's car was not reported, and the latter had no responsibility for the accident. However, Buratov was discovered violating the party discipline, reprimanded and fined with a month's salary. RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, ll. 93-94. In response, also Mogilnichenko confirmed more than once his innocence. In a memorandum to the CC CPSU dated 5 November 1984, K. Mogilnichenko, deputy director of the party organizational work department of the CC CPSU, confirmed that the work of Radzhabov as FS Namangan since January 1984 was well done and he was a serious and principled manager. RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, l. 113. Then, in a memorandum of K. Mogilnichenko, on 15 January 1985 about the mentioned letters about Radzhabov the comment of Usmankhodzhaev is reported. The latter defined these letters as "slandorous" and figures such as Karimov had showed their commitment to improve the situation in the party, fulfilling the plan for more than three years on all the agriculture and industrial production. He also commented that

Karimov had, in fact, declared the story of his father, who was, anyway, released. RGANI, f. 5, op. 90, d. 49, l. 95.

Extract of Nishanov's speech at the IX plenum (30 January 1988)

Aitmuratov supervised the issues of the development of the agro-industrial complex and he tolerated falsifications and frauds. [However,] the CC CPUz buro did not strictly vindicated [these facts] and he was sent to another place of leadership in the republican gosagprom. Finally, he was removed and sentenced. [Also] K. Akhmedov, the former chairman of Gosplan UzSSR, overlooked and tolerated [negative phenomena... Similarly,] the former obkom FSs of Kashkadarya (Gaipov), Surkhandarya (Karimov), Khorezm (Khudaibergenov) and Tashkent (Musakhanov) originally were dismissed with high pensions. And the former first secretary of Bukhara, Karimov, was a convicted criminal and [yet] was appointed as vice-minister of land improvements and irrigation under Khudaibergenov from the end of 1984. Furthermore, by the initiative of the buro CC [CPUz], he was [even] awarded the prize of Hero of Socialist Labor but the CC CPSU has not approved this proposal. [...]

At the XVI plenum the activities of the Karakalpak obkom were also criticized. However, at the recommendation of the CC buro, the former FS Kamalov was sent across the border to work on a management post. Then, a great damage to the education of the cadres was done by the former candidate to the buro CC, and former director of the *OrgOtdel* Orlov who was an affiliate and a faithful companion of Rashidov.⁵³ And with his criminal activity he endorsed the demoralization of the executives' workers. But he was sent into retirement with a high pension at the recommendation of the buro CC [CPUz]. However, now he has been condemned. The political promiscuity and the indecision of the buro CC [CPUz] was more evident towards the former secretary of the CC R. Kh. Abdullaeva. It took three and a half years to understand the real face this masked "activist" who, under the guise of perestroika, pursued a voluntarist [arbitrary] and vicious ideological line [...] Then, the phenomena of forgery, fraud and abuse of power were revealed in the Tashkent oblast where the FS obkom was Musakhanov, who has now been condemned. Together with him, the current members of the buro CC CPUz V.A. Antonov and T.A. Alimov worked in the oblast's leadership. They also carry moral responsibility for the fraud. However, we did not hear about judgments of their unprincipled positions within the so-called "Tashkent falsifications' technology" [*tashkenskaya tekhnologia propisok*]. How was this lack of principles possible even in the CC CPUz buro? Why was no hard position towards the perpetrators and those responsible for the negative phenomena not assumed? This liberalism and connivance was transmitted to other committees of the republican party. Among the eliminated [figures] for the negative phenomena, 45 former officials of the CC nomenklatura

⁵³ Prot 9/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2008, l. 11.

and 110 of the obkom nomenklatura still continue to have management positions. In the oblasts of Jizzakh, Surkhandarya, and Tashkent, a quarter of these leaders have been dismissed for abuses and other phenomena. None of the obkom, gorkom, and raikom committees had the courage to [Impeach] some leaders guilty of corruption and other phenomena [...]. And, as before, there are the phenomena of shuffling of cadres from one place to another⁵⁴ and there are cases of abuse of power by the raikom FSs. The subjectivity in the choice of the cadres has been noted, for example, by the FS Karakalpak obkom K. Salykov. [Finally,] the deputy chairman of the SM UzSSR, G. Sakhriddinov, the deputy chairman of Gosplan UzSSR, A. Makhmudov, and the minister, A. Azimbekov, were dismissed from their posts a few days ago. And buro CC CPUz member and chairman of the SM UzSSR G. Kh. Kadyrov has tried to mitigate their guilt. Everything has been done in vain because his position forces him to be principled and courageous [...]. It is necessary to fight without compromise regarding the negative phenomena and their consequences.⁵⁵

*Memorandum to the Gensek Mikhail Gorbachev from the investigators for particularly important cases of the General Prokuratura USSR T.Kh. Gdlyan and N.V. Ivanov, 11 April 1986.*⁵⁶

Dear Mikhail Sergeevich! We consider our duty to address you on the issue of extreme importance. Its positive decision refers to your exclusive competence, because it is primarily concerned with the FS CPUz Usmankhodzhaev IB and other senior party leaders and law enforcement agencies. The issue proceeds as follows. The Prokuratura USSR, with the active participation of the KGB investigated a criminal case of bribery of a number of officials of the Uzbek SSR. During the investigation, officers of the CC CPUz, of the regional, city and district committees, as well as of the MVD UzSSR and others were brought to justice and arrested. It was found that over the last ten years in the country are widely used and have become widespread bribery, embezzlement, and other self-registry abuses. For example, a mass-scale bribery has been evidenced by such facts. FS of the Gzhduvan raikom (in the Bukhara region) S. Rakhimov overlaid "tax" from collective farm chairmen, state farm directors, heads of trade and economic organizations of the district, getting from them bribes worth more than 600,000 rubles. The FS of the Bukhara obkom, A.K. Karimov, also regularly received bribes in the form of a "tax" from all the FSs of the [local] raikoms and from the majority of the heads of regional and district institutions and organizations. During the search on Karimova, valuables worth over 6,000,000 had been seized, including 130 kg of gold items. The manager of the CC CPUz, T. Umarov, consistently received large bribes from many secretaries of provincial, city and district committees and from economic managers. A

⁵⁴ Prot 9/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2008, l. 12.

⁵⁵ Prot 9/1988, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 157, d. 2008, l. 13.

⁵⁶ RGANI, f. 89, op. 24, d. 18, ll. 18-23.

similar situation has been observed in the system of the MVD and other departments. [To evaluate] on how deeply graft is entrenched in the region, [the value of] gold, money and manufactured goods [is worth] in the amount of about 20,000,000 rubles. Fully sharing your concern about the situation in Uzbekistan, which has sounded from the podium of the Party Congress, we would like to inform you about a very serious problem, a positive decision which, in our view, will greatly contribute to the overall improvement of the situation in the republic. The investigation established that a characteristic feature of the prevalence of acquisitive crime in Uzbekistan was the fact that the[se events] were made with the direct participation of the leadership of the republic headed by Rashidov Sh.R., Usmanhodzhaev I. B., Osetrov T.N., Salimov A.U. and others. Without any exaggeration to say that they were the organizers and inspirers [of the crimes]. This was done, of course, with the aim of rampant greed, promotion through bribery and creation of the appearance of welfare in the country. Usmanhodzhaev I.B. received bribes in the period 1974-1984 - when he was chairman of the Namangan oblispolkom, FS Andijan obkom, Chairman of the Presidium of the SS UzSSR and the FS CPUz - as it was established in their confessions and in the evidence given by Karimov A.K. and Baltaev P.P. - secretaries of the Bukhara obkom, T. Umarov - director manager of the CC CPUz, Asatov U. - chairman of the Navoi oblispolkom, Iliadi Ya.A. - FS FS Karshi gorkom, Rakhimov S. - FS Gizhduvan raikom, Yakh'yayev Kh.Kh. - Chairman of the MVD UzSSR, Makhmadzhanov Ya. - head of the Namangan UVD, Khvan M.G. - chairman of the kolkhoz 'Politotdel' in the Tashkent region and hero of socialist labour, Sharipov A. - prosecutor of the Andijan oblast, Gaziev Kh. - people's judge, and many others. They pointed out the specific circumstances of Usmanhodzhaev I.B. obtaining bribes totaling more than 500,000 rubles. In addition, Usmanhodzhaev I.B. was one of the deceptors of the state in the procurement of raw cotton. Thus, the head of the MCC [UzSSR] B. Usmanov said that after the death of Sh. Rashidov, in December 1983 Usmanhodzhaev I.B. personally gave to him and to the chairman of the SM UzSSR Khudayberdiyev N.D. an indication for adding to the state reports 240,000 tons of raw cotton [for a value] in the amount of more than 183,000,0[00] rubles. This fact has been confirmed by Khudaiberdiyev N.D. and other officials. This has been also evidenced by the conclusion of the planning and economic expertise that only in 1983 in the Uzbek SSR determined 991,700 tons of [non-existing] raw cotton, for which [the state] had illegally paid to cotton farmers more than 757,000,000 rubles, of which 286,000,000 had been stolen. As can be seen from the materials of the criminal case, also the second secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan Osetrov T.N. received bribes for a long time [In fact,] lasted since 1968, when he worked at the CC CPSU. The bribes given to Osetrov had been reported by the party and economic managers: Umarov T., Karimov A.K., Baltaev R.R., Rakhimov S., Sharipov A., Khvan M.G. Also Salimov A.U., chairman of the Presidium of the SS UzSSR, the FS of the Tashkent and Khorezm obkoms - Musakhanov M. and Khudaibergenov M., as well as other leaders were involved in bribery. Characteristically, Usmanhodzhaev I.B., Osetrov T.N., Salimov A.U. engaged in bribery in 1983-1985, after the death of Rashidov Sh.R., when respectively their leading position changed in terms of quality. For example, the last revealed bribes received by Osetrov T.N. refers to the fall of 1985. Bribery was

also revealed for the second secretary of the Communist Party of Moldavia Vladimir Smirnov, formerly head of the sector of the CPSU Central Committee, and for the former executive employees of the CC CPSU Brovin G.D. and others. In a speech at the Party Congress, the Secretary of the CC CPSU com. E.K. Ligachev noted that the MVD is out of criticism. The case file indicates that this circumstance contributed to the widespread bribery among the responsible employees of the MVD of the USSR. Thus, in the course of the investigation, it was proved the evidence that Churbanov Yu.M., as chief of political department of the MVD USSR and then the first deputy Minister of MVD USSR, received bribes from Yahyaev Kh.Kh. - Minister of the MVD UzSSR, Kahramanov T.Kh. and Begelman P.B. - deputy ministers of MVD UzSSR, Norbutaeva Kh. - head of the Kashkadarya UVD, Dzhamalov D.D. - head of the Tashkent oblast UVD, Norov M.S. - head of the Bukhara oblast UVD, Mahamadzhanov Ya. - head of the Namangan UVD, Urunov A.S. - head of the OBKhSS of the Tashkent city UVD, Karimov A.K. - FS of the Bukhara obkom, T. Umarov - director manager of the CPUz and others. Thus, only by the testimony of these persons who have held up the arrest of senior positions in the party and MVD apparatus of the Uzbek SSR, Churbanov received as bribes more than 670,000 rubles. He and other senior officials of the central apparatus of the MVD USSR, instead of providing practical assistance in trips to Uzbekistan, contributed to the spread of corruption and decay on a great part of officials of the republican MVD. Although, this is not a complete list of those entirely involved in bribery, it is a clear indication that the rebirth of [this phenomenon] in the higher ranks workers of the party and state apparatus has a threatening nature and can significantly weaken our position. Currently, the criminal charges brought against officials of district, city and regional units, however, the main culprits of the incident, which bear full responsibility for the tragedy of Uzbekistan, is left behind. A giant danger is that these state criminals were able to concentrate in their hands all powers of the region where live up to 17 million people. Trampled one of the fundamental principles of Soviet legislation, according to which everyone is equal before the law. In this context, [we] should also consider the principle of equity, which in this case did not fully prevailed yet. The situation is aggravated by the fact that workers are well aware that the current leaders of the Republic are involvement in crime, and therefore there is a vacuum of trust - or rather, the absence of any trust in the authorities for them. Perhaps even now it is difficult to evaluate all the negative consequences that entails to fight this injustice. Any indecision and hesitation whatever reasons they were not motivated, and especially leaving criminals in their current situation, the main part of the country's population will be regarded as another patronage of anti-social elements from senior management, as the case was in the past. The results that we have on the case are entitled to inform you with factual information about the true state and reveals: in the course of the investigation, because of this case alone, you will be able to make an objective judgment on the merits of the raised issues. It seems that until now you have not given complete information on the extent, that in recent years occurred in Uzbekistan, and the role of the senior officials who, as dangerous criminals, remained in their posts of responsibility. We are completely aware that appealing to you personally, [rather than] calling the most extreme irritation of those who by virtue of their office had long before the XXVII

Congress of the CPSU been in the party, basically put before the leadership of the party these issues for their timely decision. Informing of the foregoing, we would ask you to find a way and take us for an objective report on the case. The investigators for particularly important cases of the General Prokuratura USSR T.Kh. Gdlyan and N.V. Ivanov.

Memorandum from the investigators Telman Kh. Gdlyan and Nikolai V. Ivanov to the Gensek M.S. Gorbachev and to the chairman of the SM USSR N.I. Ryzhkov, 5 November 1986.

In March 1986, we had already written you about the corruption of Uzbek managers and of the central organs in Moscow. After that, we had been informed that you had ordered to make controls about these facts and to refer about these facts. We had been called in the CC CPSU by Com. V.A. Abolentsov, deputy director of the administrative organs department that thanked us for promoting these principal issues and he had contested that they will resolve positively all the problems in short times. However, after some months, we had been sure that these issues were not resolved and but everything is done to hinder the investigations and thus to clear from penal responsibility those state criminals. In these circumstances, and not having any support, we had been forced to personally call for help in July 1986 to you, Mikhail Sergeevich, because without your approval, such important issues that touch state-party interests cannot be resolved. In this moment, we had concluded that you were not informed about the largest information about this case, and this forced us to write you again. The need of this plea is linked to: 1- the reception of many other witnesses about the guilts of these persons; 2- the obstacles to persecute them for criminal responsibility; 3- the absence of the necessary support by CC CPSU, because without this [element] it is impossible to persecute this very difficult and actual case until the end. In the previous report, among the people that had been accused: first Secretary of CPUz, I.B. Usmankhodzhaev; second secretary of CPUz, T.N. Osetrov; Chairman of presidium of supreme soviet UzSSR, A.U. Salimov; first secretaries of⁵⁷ Tashkent and Khorezm obkom party M.M. Musakhanov and M.Kh. Khudaibergenov; second secretary of CC of the CP Moldavia V.I. Smirnov, that before was working as manager of the organizational-party department of CC CPSU, first deputy minister of MVD USSR Yu. M. Churbanov and many other managers. During the investigations, it was confirmed the implication in the corruption of deputy director of the organizational-party department of CC CPSU K.N. Mogilnichenko, the manager for the agriculture sector in CC CPSU B.M. Istomin, the deputy director of the organizational-party department of CC CPSU I.E. Ponomarev, the instructor of the same department M.L. Ishkova, the secretaries of CC CPUz R. Kh. Abdullaeva, E. Ajtmuratov; the Chairman of Soviet Ministrov UzSSR N. D. Khudayberdiyev, first secretaries of the obkom N.T. Turapov (Kashkadarya), I.D.

⁵⁷ RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 1.

Dzhabbarov (Bukhara), V.P. Esin (Navoi), N. radzhabov (Namangan) and K.K. Kamalov (Karakalpak); the minister of MVD UzSSR N.I. Ibragimov and his deputy M.N. Sultanov, deputy director of HQ of MVD USSR V.N. Kriventsov, the manager of cadres of MVD USSR I.F. Mel'nik and others. Nowadays the issue is not about the ascertainment of guilts of Usmankhodzhaev, Osetrov, Churbanov, Smirnov and other, but it consists in those people by which it depends the solution to prosecute these cases, because they don't want to resolve this problem. The judicial evaluation of their criminal activity is univocal and their guilt has been totally defined. For example, it was confirmed that Yu. M. Churbanov took bribes from 13 people for a total of 700.000 rubles, and Usmankhodzhaev from 14 people for a sum of more than a million and 200 thousand rubles. New evidences appear about these responsible workers taking bribes because their criminal activity had been pursued for several years. The, if in March 1986 we informed you that Osetrov took bribes from 7 people, nowadays the number of people taking bribes had been doubled and obviously, the sum [of bribes] increased. An analog situation, was for other people that took bribes and that used their responsible position for mercenary aims and to own wealth. The more characteristic personality in this framework is⁵⁸ I.B. Usmankhodzhaev. Being a criminal creature of the group of A. Odilov - now under arrest for bribes and multimillion theft - he was contributing of the cadres' cleavage in the Republic, falsification and corruption, using his higher state-party position in the interest of his accomplices. It is relevant to remember that, when in 1983 he became first secretary of CC CPUz, Usmankhodzhaev was pursuing the [informal] party-line to fraud the state with falsification, corruption and other negative facts. Just in November-December 1983, under his order, it was falsified the public account for 240.000 ton of raw cotton for a sum of more 183 million rubles. During the investigations, the first secretaries of Khorezm and Bukhara obkom M.Kh. Khudajbergenov and A.K. Karimov, the secretary of the Bukhara obkom R.R. Baltaev, the manager of the CC CPUz aktiv T.U. Umarov, the deputy chairman of the presidium of SS UzSSR G.M. Orlov, the manager of the Navoi oblispolkom U. Asatov, the raikom secretaries A.Ya. Iliadi and S. Rakhimov, the minister of MVD UzSSR Kh.Kh. Yakh'yaev, the managers of the Navoi and Namangan UVD T. Khaitov and Ya. Makhmadzhanov, the director of the kolkhoz "Politotdel" and Hero of socialist labor M.G. Kvan and many others - admitted that they gave him bribes in high sums. The cynicism, the falsehood and the level of moral decadence of this trouble manager are surprising. For example, without feeling disgusted for anything, in December 1983 he took a bribe for 500.000 rubles from the FS Khorezm obkom M.Kh. Khudaibergenov to promote his candidature to the award of hero of socialist labor, and the last of his bribes was received for 20.000 in the hall 'Georgevski' [in the Kremlin] during the session of the Supreme Soviet of USSR in November 1985. Evidently, in the period when perestroika [became] active in the life of our society, corrections of errors, this person - was not just a travel companion but he was an obstacle in the execution of the new line of the party: following his mercenary aims, he has desecrated those symbols and places holy for soviet people. After these

⁵⁸ RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 2.

concrete facts about the criminal activity of I.B. Usmankhodzhaev, a question appears: can a person like this to direct the republic?⁵⁹ According to us, the answer must be frank: his continued presence at such high place is in flagrant contradictions with the indication of the XXVII congress of CPSU. Then, [we can] put the question: who can protect these degenerated, dangerous state criminal and also the internal enemies of our socialist society? However, even they, having a responsible position, consciously they degenerate employees by involving them in their criminal activities aimed for personal wealth, and then they had caused irreparable damage in the sectors of economy, politics, ideology and moral abutment of society. Their potential dangers, and especially those who are working now, are much more dangerous than our open and external enemies. Unfortunately, we have to see that the criminals have protectors. Firstly, they are those workers of the apparatus of CC CPSU, that were related to Uzbekistan and were taking bribes from criminals. For example, the first secretaries of the of Bukhara and Khorezm obkoms, A.K. Karimov and M.Kh Khudaibergenov and even a manager of internal affairs of CC CPUz T.U. Umarov had affirmed that they gave bribes to K.N. Mogilnichenko. Bribes from Uzbekistan had been received even by the CC CPSU workers B.M Istomin, M.L. Ishkiv, I.E. Ponomarev, V.I. Smirnov. Just for this reason, they are not interested to give objective information about the real situation in the republic to the heads of CC CPSU. Having fear for their personal safety, they provided disinformation and exonerate their accomplices. Just these facts explain the position of K.N. Mogilnichenko that, in December 1985, was informed with materials of investigation about corruption of Usmankhodzhaev and his entourage. However, he did nothing to protect the party from these criminals. Second, the criminals had protectors who [in turn] became accomplices in their criminal activity because they didn't do anything and assumed their personal responsibility in the resolution of the criminal prosecution issues. Paradoxically, these people were the Genprokuror USSR, A.M. Rekunkov, and his deputy, O.V. Soroka. For objectivity, we must say that the principal disorganizer role in the investigations⁶⁰ in Uzbekistan was imputable to O.V. Soroka. He - we don't know why - was during the last 3 years misinforming the Genprokuror of USSR, leading the decisional process to damage the realization of state interests. Being a cautious and emotional person, A.M. Rekunkov had been negatively influenced by his deputy and he didn't want personally to deal with these actuals affairs even if we tried several times to give him objective information. The real situation in Uzbekistan and in Moscow is much more complicated and dramatic as it appears to A.M. Rekunkov, O.V. Soroka and some others. They don't want to see in the eyes of truth and consciously they recede from the solution of many crucial problems that represent the important interests of party and state. Evidently, the heavy of the past prevails on them and they don't believe in the reality of positive changes in the country. They will to "remain in trenches", acting according to the principle of "nevertheless, nothing happens" and to do not take personal responsibility are definitive factors in their behavior. In the

⁵⁹ RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 3.

⁶⁰ RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 4.

meanwhile, the interests in the country, especially at nowadays level of our development claim urgent solutions of all the issues of matured problems, all the inherited problems, even including such detestable fact which we express in this report. The investigations of criminal cases in Uzbekistan with all the evidences confirms these conclusions. Somebody has to take the responsibility to resolve [this] difficult situation. Three years ago in Uzbekistan, had been found the people that uncompromisingly and in party-style toke the responsibility to uproot corruption in the republic, not fearing the risks of persecution and public dishonor. Thanks to the hard position that had the manager of KGB UzSSR, L.N. Melkumov, his first deputy V.N. Logunov and others workers of public security and despite the opposition of Sh.R. Rashidov and his criminal entourage, it was possible to open and to investigate over this criminal case. It is not a secret that all these people had been dismissed from their positions for disobedience and they had been harrassed. Maybe, this example negatively influenced the behaviors of A.M. Rekunkov and O.V. Soroka during the investigations of the case, but even if is it so, this cause cannot be a justification for them.⁶¹ Furthermore, considering that 1986 is not 1983, when in the face of the new leadership they could always find comprehension and support. The persecutions, that were in the first stage of the investigations of this case, were even against our investigative group. The criminal groups feared to be discovered and were provoking us, artificially heating the spirits around the investigations, and there was even an attempt to rid of us, creating an impossible climate to normally work in the republic. The situation was aggravated by the fact that in the face of our superiors we could not find the necessary support, and we received the indications from Soroka to do not enlarge the case and to limit the investigations with those 8 culprits that had been arrested by KGB organs in April-June 1983. But already at the end of that year, the investigations revealed the evidences that the responsible workers of the party and the management of MVD UzSSR were involved in bribing, and this information was communicated to com. O.V. Soroka. However, this study approach of objective truth caused him extreme irritation and hanger, ordering again to not expose the criminal organizers and to stop the collection of evidence against them. We have refused to get his illegal request. After that, blackmails to be removed from the head of investigations until the possibility of being fired from organs of prokuratura arrived. Com. O.V. Soroka has an analog position until now. Meeting this fierce resistance by his side, we had continued the comprehensive and deep investigations anyway and we showed to our chiefs the facts, when we had met many evidences about the bribery for any organizer of crimes in a sum of since 500.000 until 800.000 rubles. In these circumstances O.V. Soroka was impotent to refuse arrests and detentions even if, every time, he showed his displeasure together with threats. However, after giving the sanctions, he was always against the realization of arrests [and this situation] led to the suicide of the minister of MVD UzSSR K. Ergashev, of his first deputy G.I. Davydov and the First Secretary of Kashkadarya obkom, R.G. Gaipov. For

⁶¹ RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 5.

example, in August 1984, when there were sanctions for the arrest of⁶² Ergashev, in the whole week we had no possibility to arrest him, because every day O.V. Soroka was indicating to do not realize this sanction, providing several reasons, even if we had advised about the possibility of suicide and knowing the situation and having the operative information. Hitherto, he is hindering the professional and operative realization of the most important investigation activities as arrests, searches ecc., that unavoidably could cause that dangerous criminal can commit suicide and escape from investigations or even committing terroristic actions. What it has been done on this particular case - that does not have any analogy with the judiciary investigative practice - was against the will of our leadership. This is applied especially for the inculcation and for the prosecution of the 'criminal procession' and the withdraw of accumulated values for a cumulative sum of 26 million rubles. The most intolerable situation was around a case at the end of 1985, when we gave the information to A.M. Rekunkov and O.V. Soroka about the criminal activity of I.B. Usmankhodzhaev and others, that became assimilated by party leadership in order to make argued decisions at the XXVII congress CPSU. But even in this case, they did not show the political intransigency and they did not inform you about the unchallengeable evidence about the criminal guilt of these workers. In answer to our position by gen prokuror of USSR, it came the punishment [for us]. He had in his safe all the materials of investigations proving the guilts of I.B. Usmankhodzhaev and his companions. [However,] on January 2 1986 in front of all members of investigative management he put in doubts the work of the investigative group, proceeding with a cascade of threats to us. Like this, he gave a lesson to his subordinates that everybody of them will have the same destiny if they will be disobedient. Our attempts to explain that he was misinformed on many main aspects, were not considered by him, refusing to implement our objective argumentation on which we were insisting. Our written appeal to him did not give any effect, and it was put an argument of the need of criminal responsibility⁶³ of the organizers of the managers of criminal groups in Uzbekistan and in Moscow. Even this time, he did not want to accept and rather listen his subordinates. We have to note, that for 3 years during the investigations on this difficult case, the com. A.M. Rekunkov met us just once and even accidentally. Since that moment, all the work on covering criminals has been paralyzed due to the light hand of com. A.M. Rekunkov. In this stage, com. O.V. Soroka, to put it mildly, took the peculiar position, trying to coax us, to end our activity on unveiling the organizers of criminal groups. Under the guise of false benevolence, he tried to convince that we have understood in an unfair way the political situation of the moment and everything that is done by us constitutes as a suicide, and the solution to end the investigations is to go out of this dangerous zone, before that the dramatic events start for the whole prokuratura. After having realized our incorruptibility, Com. Soroka went on further sabotage of the investigations, as emerged in a banning the travels of a leader of the investigative group in Uzbekistan, and substantially putting

⁶² RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 6.

⁶³ RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 7.

him under home arrest, to complicate even more this case. Even he, without any reason, has refused twice in giving sanctions to arrest the minister of MVD of UzSSR Ibragimov N.I. and his deputy Sultanov M.N., that have been the corruptors of Usmankhodzhaev I.B. and his affiliates. Furthermore, he has declared that in an open and categorical way that Usmankhodzhaev I.B., Osetrov T.N., Churbanov Yu.M. and Smirnov V.I. will be never tried for the penal responsibility, and this position, according to his words, will be defended anyway. The negative role of our executives appeared also during other investigations of crimes in Uzbekistan. For example, the investigation on the so-called 'cotton affair' has been done in such a way that to the penal responsibility had been prosecuted more than twenty thousands "secondary" people, meanwhile the main organizers of these massive crimes in the departments of oblast of the republic are still apart, saving millionaire wealth that had been acquired with the help of their subordinates, that for their guilt are now on the dock. Analogically, it was conducted the investigation on the case of the former director of the Papski agroindustrial company in the Namangan oblast, A. Odilov, famous millionaire, corruptor,⁶⁴ and plundered that has corrupted many executives in Uzbekistan and in Moscow. Nevertheless, all these patrons-corruptors remained apart from their deserved punishments. And even after the XXI congress of CC CPUz, when from the tribunes was recalled the rebuke to the Prokuratura of USSR for lack of criminal responsibility of Odilov's corrupters nothing drastic was achieved to activate the investigation in this direction. In this way, the usual line of reluctance is always traced, for deepening the investigation on all these cases and for bringing to the criminal responsibility all the criminal organizers. It is regrettable that our colleagues of the investigations have reached a compromise with their conscience and have proven malleable and have softened these cases avoiding direct confrontation with their leadership and ensuring a peaceful life. These 3 years of investigation have convinced us that the "intransigency" of our executives is just towards the secondary and tertiary offenders and is totally absent when we consider the main criminals. We do not agree with their decision to bring to criminal responsibility several hundred people on our case that had been forced with hard pushing to give bribes to their executives. Basically, they had been their victims and they did not have any other choice to survive and stay afloat in those unbearable circumstances, when beginning from Rashidov and ending up with executives of the rayon department, [they] had extorted bribes from their subordinates. We are convinced that the arrests of so many people without considering the level of their guilt and the real situation in which they were making guilts, is erroneous and politically harmful. This huge mass in [these] places knows better than every prokuror the names of the main criminals, and even know that due to them they had been conducted into these crimes. For this, prosecuting a part while another is left freedom, will determine the explosion of the discontent that is already now effective, with hundreds of people that surround the raikom, obkom and CC CPUz demanding for justice in the choose of their destiny. Without denying their guilts, they put the issue on

⁶⁴ RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 8.

the responsibility of those who turned them into criminals. And nobody still now cannot give them a proper answer on these issues.⁶⁵ The danger of this phenomenon consists in, considering these injustices and these people with their numerous clan, in turning these figures in anti-Soviet people, as they are convinced that injustice is done in the name of the Soviet government. For example, on the basis that each of these prosecuted twenty thousand people on the case of cotton has 100 relatives (this figure is underestimated), then it will happen 'that more' than two million of the population will automatically be opposed to the acts of state justice. But this is a brilliant proof of the destructive work by the administrative bodies in the fight against organized crime, when the roots that originated this phenomenon consciously (rather than criminally) remain untouchable, and yet all punitive efforts are towards collateral side and discovering that the evil again born, speaking in philosophical categories, and the good is transformed into its opposite, causing the damage to our public interests. Who need this "task"? Only our enemies external and internal. The experience has the examples of the different behaviors during the resolution of similar situation. In particular, during the mass unrests where even thousands of people participate, nobody has never put the argumentation to bring to [criminal] responsibility of all offenders. Naturally, [someone] identify the organizers and the more active participant of this crime that are responsible for their actions and all the other who had been involved in these unrests are exonerated. This rule is fully applicable to Uzbekistan. The tragedy of this republic with a population of 18 million people, it has no counterpart in the country according to the degree of social decomposition of society. And full responsibility for the incident would be held by the republic's leaders their henchmen in the place, and hit their "scapegoats". We categorically are against the unjustified mass repressions in this region, considering their full political and legal insolvency and extremely negative consequences for the improvement of the social situation in the country. Thus, the activity of our executives, voluntarily and involuntarily, objectively coincide with the position of the criminal group of Usmankhodzhaev I.B.. In what is it expressed? Firstly, everything possible is done to leave the main criminals⁶⁶ in their high job along with stolen wealth, and not to punish them for the serious crimes that have been made by them to the state. Secondly, everything is directed to attract the major possible number to criminal cases from the social group that was forced by their management to install these criminal cases, thus becoming among the people that are called criminals. And, finally, thirdly the executives of Prokuratura of USSR and the group of Usmankhodzhaev I.B. are in the role of "active fighters" in the struggle against organized crime in Uzbekistan, that satisfies both, regardless of the fact that all the main problems discovered during the investigation in the republic will remain unresolved. The activity of these figures is distinguished only by targets and motives of their behavior. If the workers of prokuratura demonstrate hesitation - that proceeds together with their lack of principles - they do not want to assume risks and personal responsibilities, in order

⁶⁵ RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 9.

⁶⁶ RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 10.

to do not provoke anger and irritation of the defenders of this criminal group, and Usmankhodzhaev I.B. with his companions try to show himself as an honest and principled leader in order to cheat the party leadership, save the post and stay out of anti-party and anti-state responsibilities. This explains the fact that the largest criminal cases under investigation in Uzbekistan, deliberately have not been merged into one [singular case], in order to professionally correct the tactic and strategy of all the investigations, because otherwise the great extent of the great extent of the criminal activity would be clear [involving] those that today are unreasonably protected. Everything was done with the knowledge and the planning of com. Soroka O.V., who was and will remain one of the main obstacles to the success of investigations of these criminal cases on Uzbekistan, assuming the main decision on key issues. In our opinion, it is not possible to keep the situation in this way. We are very worried about the conditions of [those] cases in Uzbekistan that had been discovered during the investigations. [These cases] require an immediate solution and a correct evaluation, whatever is the negative effect of these drastic measures⁶⁷ to uproot corruption that has overwhelmed the republic from top to bottom. Naturally, partial measures will not give the expected results as it was already in the 60s and 70s in Uzbekistan. Without a cardinal solution, the social illness in form of corruption with all the consequences was repeated in the 80s. The recidivist [phenomenon] is again inevitable, and whether now there will be not taken the general measure that could stop and create objective conditions to uproot this antisocialist phenomenon in future. We are far to think that the Genprokuror USSR and his deputy, having all the complete information, do not understand the intensity of this problem. In their concrete actions, [we] do not feel [their] concrete concern that should be characteristic of such high state figures. You cannot really look indifferently at what is happening in the country at this qualitatively new stage of our development through the lens of their own peace and prosperity. Does that not explain that in three years com. Rekunkov never went to Uzbekistan and did not try personally on the spot to deal with crime in this hot part of the country. For our part, we have done everything possible to uncover the whole conglomerate of crime, show the mechanism of criminal connections, regardless of the official position of persons were involved in this [scheme]. In more than three years, we sought to investigate thoroughly and objectively and put those concerns to management, to enable them to take the right decisions for the community. We are honestly and conscientiously fulfill their duties and we have nothing to reproach. Despite three years of terror and defamation, we do not have deserted or retreated for someone to benefit consciously chosen position. But we have also seen in the fact that the responsible officials, whose competence includes resolution of questions raised by us in every way and do not want to essentially lead to the collapse of the case. In this context, it should be considered the position of Comrade. Rekunkov AP and Soroka OV which, through artificial dismemberment of a single case want to suspend the active course of the

⁶⁷ RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 11.

further investigation of the exposure of the remaining principal perpetrators as⁶⁸ this has already occurred in the so-called cotton affair. Do not be a professional, but enough to have a general idea of the investigation to reach a conclusion about the true intentions of our management of the collapse of the case. Today, the question is as follows: the end of the preliminary investigation or in-depth study for those who are on the right is the inspirer and organizer of these terrible crimes to the state. In other words, the question of whether or not to pull the abscess of the social organism? With all the negative consequences that are inevitable in moral and political terms, the giant benefits of surgery is that these bold steps will inevitably lead to a dramatic cleansing of the party and the state apparatus from the corrupting recurrence both in the present and in the future. In our view, we have no other alternative. Any other solution would inevitably lead to more negative social impacts, provided that we take into account that in the new stage of our development, we can not allow the differences of words from the case, otherwise commit mistakes of the past, for which now have to pay a high price. Trying to escape from a direct confrontation with those who are still standing at the helm, and those who are now excluded from work, but thanks to his connections and support more able to deliver a lot of trouble, our leadership chose the path of least resistance and its practical steps to objectively help the most odious criminals escape just punishment. This, in particular, explained by the illegal actions of the Prosecutor General of the USSR, which gave an indication to inform Usmankhodzhaev IB the testimony incriminating him of bribery. Another sample of similar action by the com. Rekunkov A.M. It refers to Churbanov! Contrary to logic and the foundations of elementary tactics of the investigation, on its direct request, but without our participation, he was summoned for questioning, where he was informed about existing in against him. Bare and weakened so consequently, he ordered the recall Churbanov Y.M. and to invite him to compensate the amount of illicit enrichment, although the interrogation categorically denied his involvement to bribes.⁶⁹ Now they have been given a new team to conduct between bribers and Churbanov Y.M. confrontations asked about what the need for this investigation, he said, "Let's think again." Com. Rekunkov A.M. expressed the view that such in the same way a consequence of the former received a second secretary CC CPUz Osetrov T.N., whose guilty of bribery is proved. Of course, it begs the question, who benefits and why is it done? It seems to us that it is not necessary to have exceptional mental ability, honestly and truthfully admit that all this is done in favor of the criminals, and ultimately these illegal actions are intended to bring them to suicide, that is, to commit murder without trial, but our hands. With all of our intolerance of bribe-takers, we naturally cannot participate in this vandalism, because in addition to the iniquities of these actions are immoral. To one of those familiar with the materials of the investigation, there is no doubt that evidence has been collected in the case against them. Therefore, the question is whether to give consent to attract them to justice, and not to engage in a tragicomedy that does no credit to the

⁶⁸ RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 12.

⁶⁹ RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 13.

Prosecutor's Office of the USSR. In this situation lies another tragic outcome. Who will take the responsibility to ensure that these state criminals, knowing with a light hand of our leadership of the risks they face and being in agony before severe punishment, do not commit any terrorist act against the person or body. Do not dramatize the situation, but in the exodus from common sense, we would like to pre-empt the possible consequences of, to put it mildly reckless action that can lead to very undesirable results. In defense of this banal situation, we present a single argument. People of such a high rank official, accused of taking bribes in the amount of about one million rubles, and nothing more than wait for the mercy of the law severely punished for bribery. This ruthless, but at the same time simple worldly logic available to any reasonable person, in a moment of discriminatory culture,⁷⁰ can be decisive and will push them in unpredictable actions. This is the real situation prevailing today around us investigated the case. Due to the exclusivity and importance of the situation, we decided to appeal to the Deputy for help, because only your personal intervention is able uniquely to the end, in the party to resolve all issues. Whatever the consequences for making a contact "audacity" on the part of our leadership and other individuals, we considered it their duty honestly and openly explain the essence of the events, because this position is based on our internal party conviction. The investigator for particularly important cases of the General Prosecutor of the USSR T.Kh. Gdlyan. The investigator for particularly important cases of the General Prosecutor of the USSR Ivanov N.V. Moscow, November 5th, 1986.⁷¹

Inquiry of Gdlyan and Ivanov, after the arrest of Churbanov (1987)

The USSR Prosecutor's Office investigated the criminal case against the responsible officials of the Uzbek SSR and the central departments in Moscow. It showed impressive dimensions of corruption in Uzbekistan, which has affected the majority of the officials of the republic's leadership to the district level. Even an ordinary member of the party during the investigation were removed value exceeding one million rubles, and at first the secretary of the party accepting bribes in the millions. Withdrawal of the case values in the amount of 26 million rubles, only a small part of what officials took possession middle managers. Upcoming withdrawal values confirm this conclusion. Ideological inspirers and organizers of bribery in the region were the first secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, kandi-dat a member of the Soviet Politburo Sh Rashidov, and then his successor Usmanhodzhaev and, used., The second secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan Osetroff TN Secretaries CC Abdullayev AD and Aitmuratov E., Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the AU UeSSR Salimov, chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR Khudaiberdiyev JD, first secretaries of provincial Party of Uzbekistan Dkabbarov ID, Musakhanov MM, Esin VP

⁷⁰ RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 14.

⁷¹ RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 15.

Turapov NT and others. Perennial preotupnaya activities of these persons is largely due not only to mutual responsibility in the region, but also the support that these criminals at the expense of large bribes were patrons in the face of the CPSU Central Committee and other central authorities in Moscow. Only a small part of the organizers revealed bribery currently privlenena prosecuted and arrested. This is the second secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan Osetroff TN, per-vye secretaries of Bukhara, Khorezm and Karakalpakstan regional Party Karimov AK, Khudaibergenov MH, K. Kamalov, Deputy Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek SSR Orlov GM, mi-nistr Internal Affairs Yahyayev HH and other leaders of the party and the law enforcement agencies. January 14, 1987 in Moscow was arrested by one of the patrons of the Uzbek government korrupirovannogo Churbanov Yuri Mikhailovich, born in 1936 As established by the investigation, he, being a deputy and first deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR, in the 1975-1984 biennium. repeatedly received bribes from subordinates and dependents.⁷² As explained Churbanov only by senior officials of the party and the law enforcement agencies of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, he received bribes worth more than 800,000 rubles., Including 50,000 rubles. the first secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan Usmanhodzhaeva IB Incidentally, the amount of bribes received by Usmanhodzhaevym IB, now amounts to more than 1,250,000 rubles. and leaving it to such a high position can not but cause concern, 50,000 rubles. Predseda-telya by the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR Hundaybertsieva ND, 25,000 rubles. the second secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan Osetrova TN, 30,000 rubles. Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek SSR Salimov AU. From the testimony of Churbanov follows that he received bribes for the appointment or promotion of it, for the assignment of the rank of general and other services in all other regions of the country: Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, the Russian Federation, as well as in Moscow. Among those who gave him bribes Churbanov have 29 ministers of internal affairs of the Union and autonomous republics of their deputies, 59 chiefs of regional police department, 8 employees of the central apparatus of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs, 20 first secretaries of provincial Party and other senior officials. Most of the bribes he received when traveling on business trips. For example, when you visit the Sakhalin region, as follows from the explanatory Churbanova, he was the first secretary of the regional party committee Leonova PA 60.000-70.000 rubles. for assisting in his transfer to work in the central regions of the RSFSR. This transfer took place in 1978, Leonov was elected the first secretary Kalinin regional party. Total Churbanov indications he had received bribes amounting to about two million rubles. Some facts of bribery worth over 700,000 rubles. I was confirmed in the case file. The rest of the Churbanov facts to be checked. The investigation was ongoing. An investigator for particularly important cases of the General Prosecutor of the USSR T.X.Gdlyan An

⁷² RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 16

investigator for particularly important cases under the Prosecutor General of the USSR N.V.Ivanov. January 26, 1987 Moscow⁷³

Conclusion of the Presidium of the SS USSR Commission (19 May 1989)

[...] In April 1983 the Uzbek KGB initiated a criminal action against Akhat Muzafarov, the head of the OBKhSS [Department for the Struggle Against the Theft of Socialist Property] office of the Bukhara oblast executive committee, who was under arrest for being caught in the act of taking a bribe. The case was transferred in September 1983 to the USSR Procuracy for further investigation, where an investigatory group headed by Telman Kh. Gdlyan had been formed. At one time 200 or more people worked in this group. And in the five years that it investigated cases in Uzbekistan, some 70 persons were charged with criminal offenses. Nineteen cases went to court, and 40 persons were convicted of crimes [...] In the materials, letters and complaints of citizens, including statements of investigatory and procuracy workers, it is confirmed that in attempting to artificially broaden the circle of those accused of corruption, comrade Gdlyan and the investigators who were under his influence embarked on a path of gross violations of the norms of legality. They widely employed smear tactics in making unfounded accusations of bribery, forcing suspects and witnesses into giving so-called "inculpatory" evidence on the basis of groundless arrests, blackmail, and intimidation, without properly specifying the circumstances of their acts. . . Gdlyan, Ivanov and the investigators associated with them frequently insulted those being held, assaulted their dignity, threatened them with execution by shooting, and constantly sought to introduce the idea that to avoid the supreme punishment and receive a minimal term of imprisonment they needed only confess to the accusations made and testify against the "higherups," that is, certain leaders in the republic and the country. Regarding the latter point, they were presented with an already-prepared program of testimony, including sums of bribes and a list of officials to whom bribes were supposedly given [...] [M]any of those arrested later retracted their coerced false testimony, but this information was not included in the records of the investigatory proceedings. Moreover, investigators adopted urgent measures to restore the influence they had lost over some of the accused. Thus, for instance, on June 14, 1987 Orlov, who had been interrogated, issued two statements addressed to the former USSR Procurator General Rekunkov in which he said he had given false testimony against Usmankhodzhaev, Osetrov, and Ishkov. The next day he was called by Ivanov and interrogated intensely for six hours. According to Orlov, they promised to release him on his own recognizance if he would stick to his previous testimony. They also suggested that he tear up the statements that he had sent the day before, which had not gone to where he sent them but were in the hands of the investigators [...] [T]o exert psychological pressure on those being interrogated, a common practice was to take their relatives into custody. In the

⁷³ RGASPI, f. 653, op. 1, d. 113, l. 17.

case of Karimov, the former secretary of the Bukhara oblast Communist Party organization, 16 of his relatives were arrested and held for periods ranging from 5 to 8 months. Similar acts were committed with regard to the kin of Usmankhodzhaev, Musakhanov, Kalamov and others. In many of these instances the criminal cases were later dropped for lack of evidence. Some of those questioned stated that they had been subjected to physical and psychological violence. More than 20 citizens gave statements asserting that investigators from the Gdlyan group frequently made illegal arrests. Myianov, a resident of the city Karsha, was held in custody for 2 years and 4 months, R. Karimov for about 3 years, and N.R. Akhadova, who was pregnant, for 20 days. In these and many other instances the cases were later dropped for lack of evidence [...] [T]here is evidence of gross departures from the law by some of the investigators from the Gdlyan group in conducting searches of the homes of accused persons and their relatives, which were carried out for the purpose of finding valuables and other property. In the corresponding procedural documents the seized valuables and objects were not always accounted for, their identifying characteristics not indicated, and money not always counted. The inspection of valuables was frequently carried out several days after it was seized. . . [O]n Gdlyan's order personal savings of relatives of suspects were seized. . . [I]nvestigators Gdlyan and Ivanov, in spite of constitutional norms concerning the independence of the court and its subordination only to the law, improperly involved themselves in court proceedings in cases they had investigated. In particular, they tried to influence the presiding judge and the prosecutor, as well as witnesses, in the Muzafarov case, which was heard by the Uzbek Supreme Court. For these violations they both were punished by the USSR Procurator General in February 1986. In spite of this, Gdlyan and Ivanov later tried to influence the USSR Supreme Court in 1988 in the case against Churbanov and others. And after the sentence had been handed down they issued abusive denunciations of the members of the USSR Supreme Court that were not supported by the evidence, employing the mass media for this purpose [...] ⁷⁴

Letter of I.B. Usmankhodzhaev to Ye.K. Ligachev 23 January 1990⁷⁵

To Ye. K. Ligachev, member of the Politburo, secretary of the CPSU Central Committee: Esteemed Yegor Kuzmich! This is being sent to you by Inomzhon Buzumkovich Usmankhodzhaev, former first secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party Central Committee, who has now been sentenced to twelve years of imprisonment. First of all, I ask your forgiveness a thousand times for everything that has happened. You must know—and I say this sincerely—that I never even considered accusing you of anything, of humiliating you, or implicating you in a crime. The investigators Gdlyan and Ivanov

⁷⁴ Feofanov and Barry, *Politics and Justice in Russia Major Trials of the Post-Stalin Era*, 135–37.

⁷⁵ Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs Of Yegor Ligachev*, 248–49.

needed that, and they got it. I was a victim of the political intriguers Gdlyan and Ivanov, who tried to fabricate accusations that a number of Party and soviet figures committed crimes. As a result of their illegal actions—blackmail, the threat to execute me and arrest members of my family and relatives, I hoped to save the honor of my family and relatives and feared for their lives. I was not responsible for my actions, but I was compelled to implicate people not guilty of anything at all, including myself. Later, when I came to my senses, in literally a few days, I retracted my false testimony about giving you and others bribes. But despite that, the above-mentioned investigators continue to make a hue and cry and sling mud at decent people who are guilty of nothing. Once again I proclaim, fully aware of my words, that it is all a lie! It is high time for these investigators, who have completely lost their souls, these opportunists, to be called on the carpet and the force of the law to be used against them. Esteemed Yegor Kuzmich! I've been imprisoned for over a year now and have suffered a great deal. I had never been in this situation before. My conscience continues to torment me and I suffer sleepless nights and great anxiety. While I was under pressure from the investigators and started down the path of deception, I implicated innocent people, including you, Yegor Kuzmich. I will curse that day my whole life. So with all my heart I ask you again and again to forgive me. I also deeply apologize to K. N. Mogilnichenko, V. I. Bessarabov, I. Ye. Ponomarev, and all the officials in the division with whom I worked on such friendly terms and with such mutual respect. Apologizing once more, Respectfully yours, Usmankhodzhaev.

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- 2015 Visiting scholar at Aarhus University, Institute of History of Academy of Sciences of Republic of Uzbekistan, trainee at NRU-HSE
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