



Repression of National Minorities in Uzbekistan (1937–1938)

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Abstract

The international and domestic situation in 1937 was highly unfavorable for the USSR. On the one hand, there were opportunities to wage war on two fronts—the western and eastern, and on the other hand, there was an extremely difficult situation for the national economy of the country, which led to tragic consequences, rapidly worsening the material condition of the people. Because of the famine of 1936, there were even cases of cannibalism. It is difficult not to agree with the assertion of contemporary historians that “the Soviet leadership feverishly looked for a way out of the dangerous situation, but did not find a reasonable solution. Once again violence as a mechanism of state control was chosen. As before, there were artificial culprits for the situation—spies, saboteurs, and other enemies of the people, whose number exceeded a million and a half. Stalin and his entourage diverted people’s attention from the real culprits of the crisis, that is, from themselves” [2, – p. 5]. The article examines the policy of the Communist Party and the Soviet government with respect to representatives of non-indigenous nationalities in the Uzbek SSR, including employees of various organizations, who were sent to work in the republic. It cannot be overlooked that the policy of repression covered almost all strata of the population, i.e. it was total. However, priorities were mainly given to kulak and national operations. With the help of archival documents, some data on the life and work of repressed ethnic minorities in Uzbekistan in 1937–1938 are put into scientific circulation for the first time.

Keywords: *Anti-Soviet, Sabotage; NKVD; Counterrevolution; Operation; Rehabilitation; Repression; Terror*

Introduction

Modern historiography of the Great Terror in the USSR shows the political, social, and national aspects of Soviet repression in 1937–1938. It was these criteria that were the basis for the identification and selection of victims of mass repression, which were mutually complementary. In Uzbekistan, the prevailing aspect was the social and national origin of the accused. The February–March Plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in 1937 became the ideological basis for mass repressions, including against nationals of the USSR and foreigners.

As we know, as a result of large-scale propaganda, in a very short time Soviet society found itself in search of an internal enemy, an anti-Soviet element and spy mania. According to the summary of 1 special department of the NKVD of the USSR “On the number of arrested and convicted by the NKVD

bodies of the USSR during the period from October 1, 1936 to July 1, 1938” 1 420 711 people were arrested, including about 357 000 people on national punitive actions, 1 124 000 people were convicted [1, – p. 156].

Between July 1937 and November 1938 the highest Party sanction was given to seven punitive orders, memorandums and directives aimed at launching ethnic repressions: the German (No. 00439 dated July 15, 1937), Polish (No. 00485 dated August 11, 1937), “Harbin” (No. 00593 dated September 20, 1937), Iranian (No. 202 dated January 29, 1937) and “Russian” (No. 00590 dated November 30, 1937) and “Harbin” (No. 00593 of September 20, 1937) orders, Latvian (No. 49990 of November 30, 1937), Iranian (No. 202 of January 29, 1938), Afghan (No. 226 of February 16, 1938) memoranda and directive on the Greek operation (No. 50215 of December 11, 1937) [3, – p. 8]. On the basis of these documents, large-scale ethnic cleansing operations were carried out in the regions among diasporas and national minorities.

The number of those convicted by the NKVD and USSR Prosecutor’s Commission on “national” operations, early August 1937–early September 1938 for Uzbekistan was as follows: Harbin–321; mixed–144; Polish–311; Afghan–0; Iranian–34; German–8; Romanian–0; Latvian–13; Finnish–0; Estonian–0; Greek–7. [3, – p. 9]. Convicted on these operations, only in the republics of Central Asia for the period of the Commission of the NKVD and the Prosecutor of the USSR (from August 1937 to early September 1938) is about 7 thousand people.

The number of persons convicted by Special Troikas on “national” operations, the beginning of September–the middle of November 1938 for Uzbekistan looked as follows: Harbin–1112; Polish–364; Afghan–527; Iranian–922; German–284; Romanian–34; Latvian–84; Finnish–8; Estonian–31; Greek–8; Bulgarian–9; English–45; Chinese–1047; other–6 [3, – p. 10].

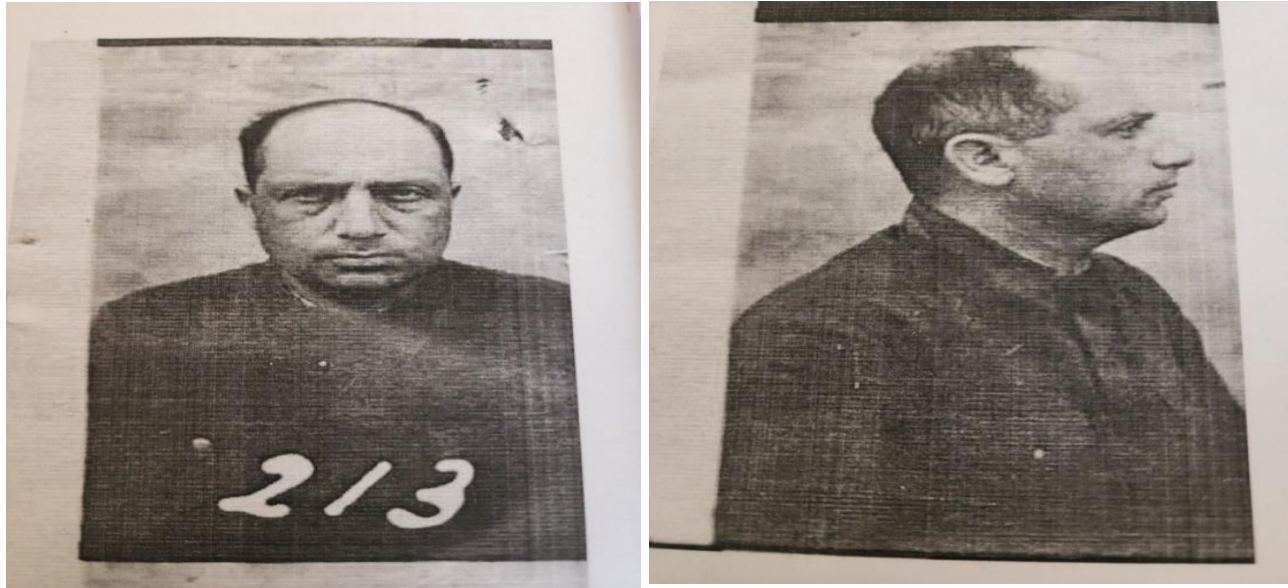
On January 31, 1938 the Resolution of the Central Committee of the All–Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), signed by Stalin, on the approval of additional limits for repressions under the order of the NKVD of the USSR No. 00447 of 30 July 1937, according to which the Uzbek SSR was determined an additional limit in the number of: for the first category (VMN)–2000 people; for the second category (imprisonment)–500 people [2, – p. 467–468].

The historiography of the problem shows that the political, social, and national composition of the repressed in Uzbekistan has not been consistently studied, analyzed, and little or no attention has been paid to it in terms of nationalities.

As is known, there are more than 130 nationalities living in Uzbekistan. During the period under study, along with the indigenous peoples of Central Asia (Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Tajiks, Turkmens, Kyrgyzs, Karakalpaks, etc.), many other minor nationalities of the USSR origin (Russians, Tatars, Jews, Azerbaijanis, etc.) and of foreign origin (Uighurs, Iranians, Afghans, Koreans, Poles, Latvians, Germans, etc.) lived.

This article discusses some aspects of the sad fates of the repressed members of the “national minorities” in the Uzbek SSR – L.A. Prupis, F.D. Bauzer and B.P. Straumal.

Lev Abramovich Prupis, assistant chief of the 2nd subdivision of the 3rd division of the Headquarters of the CAMD (Central Asian Military District), 2nd rank military engineer, was arrested on March 24, 1937 (warrant №329) in Tashkent, 56 Samarkandskaya street, apartment 9. He was searched and his personal belongings were confiscated [4, – p. 2].



The Archive of the State Security Service of the Republic of Uzbekistan. F-27675, p. 5.

L.A. Prupis is accused (indictment of investigation case No. 786 of May 21, 1938): having joined counter-revolutionary Trotskyism since 1923, until the day of his arrest he had been fighting the Party and the Soviet authorities; a participant in the anti-Soviet Trotskyist organization in Leningrad and the military Trotskyist conspiracy in CAMD; until recently he had conducted counter-revolutionary Trotskyist agitation, that is, in crimes under Art. 57-2, 64 and 67 of the Criminal Code of the Uzbek SSR; he is subject to trial by the Military Collegium (MC) of the Supreme Court (SC) of the USSR [4, – p. 1–103]. The closed session of the Field session of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR took place in Tashkent on October 10, 1938. Asked by the chairman of the court whether he pleaded guilty, Prupis replied that he did not plead guilty, he knew the incriminating testimony of Babushkin, Dikushkin, Feldman, Butman and Vasilyev and considered them false. Despite this, the Court sentenced L.A. Prupis to the Supreme Penalty (VMN)–execution, which was executed the same day [4, – p. 106–107].

Information about this victim of Stalinism can be found in his interrogation report of March 25, 1937 and his autobiography, written by himself in 1935, which is stored in the archive of the State Security Service (SSS) of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The interrogation report of March 25, 1937, contains the questionnaire of the accused. He was born on November 17, 1901 in Yanovich, Unishevskaya volost of the former Vitebsk province of the Belorussian SSR. He was a Jew by nationality, a peasant by social origin, his parents were farmers, his father Abram Iosifovich was engaged in agriculture till 1923, now retired, disabled. He himself before the revolution studied and helped his father, which he continued until 1919. He served in the Red Army from July 1919 to March 1937. He did not serve in the White and other counterrevolutionary armies. Member of the national organization of Jewish youth “Geholuts” in 1917 or 1918. In 1923 he voted for the Trotskyist resolution [4, – p. 8]. About this he recalls in his autobiography, “... I must say that the “Trotskyist spirit” was then strong in the academy. At voting the staff was divided into two, and although I did not consist in any factions, but brought up in a military school with slogans “Trotsky–the leader of the Red Army” I “stood up for the offended” Trotsky” [4, – p. 253]. According to indictments of May 21 and 26, 1938, “Prupis was a Trotskyist since 1923; in 1933 he was a member of the counterrevolutionary Trotskyist group in Leningrad, headed by the terrorist Serebryakov. After the murder of S.M. Kirov, during the purge of Leningrad from the Trotskyist element, Prupis, as a Party–line Trotskyist cadre, was

deported from Leningrad to Tashkent and appointed Assistant Chief of the 2nd Division of the Military Communications Department of the CAMD” [4, – p. 99, 102].

In 1923, in the municipality of Yanovichy he was prosecuted for murder, but the case was dropped under the order of amnesty. In 1925, he was awarded the badge of the People’s Commissariat (NK) of the Railways. Graduated from Leningrad Institute of Railway Engineers in 1930. Wife—Basia Grigorievna Prupis, born in Leningrad, children—daughters Era, 8 years old, and Nelli, 2,5 years old; brother—Moses Abramovich, 1903, born in Moscow, military engineer, 5th rank of the Military Academy of the Red Army; sister – Sima Abramovna Rosensom, born in 1905, housewife, lives in Leningrad [4, – p. 8].

In the above—mentioned autobiography Lev Abramovich writes the following: “Due to the poor financial situation in the family, my studies were taken care of by my mother’s sister, a hosiery worker and underground revolutionary (the owner of a safe house in Nizhny Novgorod). Having emigrated after her arrest to the United States, she continued to follow our education from there. In 1921, as a member of the Communist Party of the United States, she was expelled from America to the USSR, now working in Moscow.

In 1913, I entered a higher elementary school in Yanovichy, at the same time working in the farm, graduating in 1917.

After the October Revolution ... I took part in the creation of the second grade school in Yanovichy and went there to study, while working on the farm. There, in fact, my conscious political life began. As chairman of the student committee, I went from the school to Smolensk to the regional congress of student socialists. The congress split into two parts: “For recognition of Soviet power and – against”. If I went there as an unformed Bolshevik ..., I came back from there as a Bolshevik. ... The difficult financial situation of my family forced me to think about service, and I went to Smolensk, where I took a job and at the same time graduated from the secondary school in 1919. ... In January 1920, I formed a member of the VKP (b) and was elected secretary of the Yanovichy Party Committee (cell), while also working as secretary of the District Council. ... In October 1921 I passed the tests and entered the preparatory course of the Military Engineering Academy. I studied at the academy for three years. ... At the Academy I was a member of the bureau of the collective of the All—Union Communist Party (of bolsheviks) of the Academy, a member of the Petrograd Soviet, a delegate of the Academy to the 2nd All—Russian Conference of Communist cells of higher military educational institutions, and I carried out a number of other Party and political activities. ... In 1927, he participated in the construction of the Chernigov—Ovruch railroad as a commander—unit commander of the bridge company. ... In 1928 the political apparatus and the command of the 2nd Division of the Brigade of Troops of the Military Communications transferred me to Leningrad to the School of Military Communications. ... At the school I was appointed a course commander, and in 1929 a teacher. In 1929, I went to Turksib (South Turkestan—Siberia), to lay railroad tracks. In 1930, I graduated from the Leningrad Institute of Railway Engineering (LIIPS). Public and party organizations of the institute nominated me for scientific work at LIIPS. The Headquarters of the District permitted me to work as a research associate at the Research Institute of Concretes at the Laboratory of the Leningrad Institute of Concrete, where I worked under the supervision of Professor N.M. Belyaev. At the institute I wrote a paper on the moduli of elasticity. ... As a result of my work on the Turksib, I proposed an improvement in the laying of the railway track [4, – p. 250–254].

On May 26, 1956, Lev Abramovich was pardoned. The Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR reversed the verdict of the MC SC of the USSR of October 10, 1938. We consider it expedient to cite the text of the summary of archive-investigative report №967471 on F.D. Brauser, prepared by captain Lysenko, senior investigator of the 6th sector of the Special Branch of the KGB for

the Turkestan Military District (Special Division of the State Security Committee for the Turkestan Military District) in Tashkent, dated October 11, 1955.

“Brauser Fritz Davydovich, born in 1889, native of Fraunburg, formerly Kurland province, Latvian, member of the Military Council of the CAMD, division commissar, arrested on December 2, 1937, by the city department of the NKVD of Yesentuki, the investigation was conducted in the 5th department of the 2nd Directorate of the NKVD of the USSR in Moscow.

According to the ruling of December 12, 1937, Brauser was charged with allegedly being a member of a “Latvian fascist–spy organization” and “anti–Soviet military conspiracy” that carried out subversive and espionage work in the Red Army in order to weaken its combat readiness and overthrow the Soviet regime.

There is only one interrogation report of F.D. Brouwer, dated February 6, 1938, printed on a typewriter on 102 sheets. Brouwer confessed that in 1925 he was a commissar at the Air Force Academy and was recruited by the head of the academy Lazarevich for espionage work for the German intelligence service. Brauser gave espionage information about the Red Army to Lazarevich and to the German officer Fibich, who was assigned to the academy.

While in the Central Asian Military District since 1930, Brauser passed spy information for German intelligence through the German spy Gurevich, with whom he was connected by the head of the Latvian nationalist organization in Tashkent –Bauman.

While in the CAMD, Brauser was recruited by Baumann into a Latvian nationalist organization that also included Udris Ernest, Kronberg, Rosit, Greenberg, Lep, Bige, Alconis, Aplok, Purin, Bebris, Appel, and Antoninskis. ... As Brauser testified, he was engaged in espionage activities in favor of Latvia. He gave the information he collected about the CAMD troops to Udris Ernest, who was the Chairman of the Supreme Court of the Uzbek SSR at the time.

As the Latvian spy Brauser called: Pudovikov, Razumovsky, Appel, Tishinsky, Gorin, and Bige. According to Brauser’s testimony, Bige was passing spy information to Moscow to Rudzutak¹.

The interrogation report of February 6, 1938 states that Indrikson came to Tashkent on May 1, 1936, to inspect the troops. The latter told Brauser that the members of the Latvian organization in Moscow were: he (Indrikson), Abol, Berzin, Oshlei, Jukoms, Bokis, Alksnis and Krums.

At the same time Brauser testified that in 1934 he (Brauser) was recruited into an anti–Soviet military conspiracy by Velikanov, a former commissar of the CAMD troops. As a member of the conspiracy he conducted sabotage and recruited new participants in the conspiracy. Among the participants of the “anti–Soviet military conspiracy” that existed in CAMD Brauser named 62 people, including 28 recruited into the “conspiracy” personally by him. Brauser does not name Prupis and Butman among the participants of the “conspiracy”. There is no material to support or refute Brauser’s testimony (on file). The preliminary investigation ended on July 27, 1938. On July 29, 1938 the case against Brauser was heard in a closed court session of the Field session of the Supreme Soviet of the

¹ Rudzutak Yan Ernestovich (1887–1938), member of the RSDLP since 1905, Participated in party work in Moscow, Riga and Central Asia, in 1920–1922, general secretary of the All–Union Central Executive Committee, chairman of the Turkbureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and the Turkcommission of the All–Union Central Executive Committee and SNK RSFSR, from 1922 chairman of Sredazburo Central Committee, in 1923–1924 secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks), in 1924–1930, Commissar of Railways of the USSR in 1926–1937, Deputy Chairman of the SNK and CTO of the USSR, a member of the All–Union Central Executive Committee and CEC of the USSR. In May 1937 he was arrested; in July 1938 he was sentenced to the death penalty by the Supreme Court of the USSR; rehabilitated.

USSR in Moscow. At the trial Brauser confirmed the testimony he had given during the preliminary investigation and asked to be given the opportunity to redeem himself. The court found Fritz Davidovich Brauser guilty of crimes under the articles 58–1 “b”, 58–8 and 58–11 of the Criminal Code of the Uzbek SSR and sentenced him to the VMN–execution.

The archive investigation file on Brauser F.D. is stored in the accounting and archival department of the KGB under the USSR Council of Ministers (Committee for State Security under the Council of Ministers; now FSB of the Russian Federation – Sh.R.) at No. 967471” [5, – p. 172–174].

The document was prepared during the “thaw” policy of rehabilitating those unjustly convicted during the political repressions in the USSR. The author has not yet had the opportunity to familiarize himself with the materials of case file 967471 on F.D. Browser, which is in the archives of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation. One thing is clear that the case was falsified, the charges were not substantiated.

Straumal Boris Petrovich, born in 1900, born in Slonim, formerly Grodno province, Latvian by nationality, a servant, higher education, a member of the VKP (b) from 1918 to 1936, excluded, not previously convicted, before his arrest he was director of the Research Institute for Cotton (NIKHI union)–was arrested November 1, 1938 and detained in the Tashkent prison. He was accused of crimes under Articles 66 part 1 and 63 of the Uzbek SSR Criminal Code.

The case arose on the basis of data received by the agent in the 4th Division of the UGB (Department of State Security) of the NKVD of the Uzbek SSR about Straumal’s sabotage activities in the field of agriculture.

The investigation of agent case No. 9530 established that in 1929 Straumal established anti–Soviet ties with the counter–revolutionary Trotskyists Anishev (convicted in the case of enemy of the people Zinoviev) and Tsinda (forced to leave from Tashkent) and shared the Trotskyist theory of monoculture of cotton propagated by them. As director of the MTS (1929–1930), he was active in the Trotskyist attitude to collectivization and the counter–revolutionary Trotskyist theory of the monoculture of cotton. In 1931, he spoke in the press in defense of this theory.

In 1934, resisted the development of new swidden lands and the introduction of crop rotation for the second five–year period, gave a large place to the alfalfa–free schemes of crop rotations.

For counter–revolutionary, sabotage purposes, he delayed the development of issues on agrotechnics of alfalfa, created conditions for the development of the bourgeois “law” of decreasing soil fertility in the department of chemicalization at the station, pushing this law in the practical activities of collective farms and in the scientific works of the Institute.

Delayed work on creation of new high–yield, good quality and disease–resistant varieties of cotton. He was in close relations with members of the anti–Soviet Trotskyist organization Zelkina (wife of Akmal Ikramov, leader of the Communist Party of the USSR) arrested.

Pleaded guilty to propaganda of counter–revolutionary Trotskyist theories. In addition, in his connections with counter–revolutionary, Trotskyist, and sabotage activities, he is accused by direct testimony of the witnesses Chumakov and Rusakov. In view of the fact that an agent was interrogated as a witness in the case, whose speech at a public trial may cause his deciphering, the investigative case is sent for consideration by the Special Board under the NKVD of the USSR. In the document of the NKVD of the Uzbek SSR dated July 3, 1940, under the stamp “Top Secret”, about the termination of the investigative case No. 9530 and in connection with this, Straumal Boris Petrovich was released from custody” [5, – p. 259–260]. There are no documents on the Court in the case file because the case was considered at a secret meeting of the NKVD of the Uzbek SSR.

It is known that the NKVD's Order No. 00762 of November 26, 1938, indicated the cessation of all mass operations launched in 1937–1938. As a result, a significant drop in the scale of arrests was traced and the mass implementation of repressions was suspended. This once again confirms the fact that the political repressions came from and were directed by the top of the Communist Party and the Soviet power, headed by Stalin. The search for the perpetrators of these destructive acts against their own people began. They “considered” as such the security agencies, especially the NKVD, on whom they dumped all the responsibility and blame for the deeds, moreover, according to the same script and using the same methods they began to “expose” and “condemn” the leaders and employees of the NKVD. They were accused not only of investigative and judicial irregularities, but were also charged with “anti-Sovietism”, “espionage” and other crimes for which they had sentenced millions of innocent people “only yesterday”. The law enforcement agencies “stopped the falsification” and began to adhere to legality and objectivity in their investigations and trials. Perhaps, it was this factor that saved tens of thousands of people, like L.P. Katz and B.P. Straumal, from becoming the next victims of the repressive machine of the Soviet power.

At the same time, of course, it is very hard and painful to imagine the anguish and suffering of the thousands and thousands of people wrongfully accused, who had to endure the NKVD prisons while waiting for the court decisions.

Conclusion

The historiography of the issue shows that the political, social and national composition of the repressed in Uzbekistan has not been consistently studied and analyzed, and little attention has been paid to it in the context of ethnicity.

Uzbekistan is home to more than 130 nationalities. During the period under study, along with the indigenous peoples of Central Asia (Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Tajiks, Turkmens, Kyrgyz, Karakalpaks, etc.) many other nationalities of the USSR (Russians, Tatars, Jews, Azerbaijanis, etc.) and of foreign origin (Uighurs, Iranians, Afghans, Koreans, Poles, Latvians, Germans, etc.) lived here.

The study of the most tragic period in the history of the Soviet regime, when mass repressions were carried out, especially during the Great Terror, is unthinkable without the archive documents. The official documents of the party and Soviet organs of the USSR, including those of the Uzbek SSR, are of tremendous value in the analysis of the essence and monstrous consequences of political repression in the USSR, especially in 1937–1938. Among them, the documents from the archives of the NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) of the USSR, both central, republican and peripheral, provide a huge amount of information about the organization and conduct of repression against their own people, the activities of punitive bodies, the sad fate of over 1.5 million arrested people, of whom about 700 thousand were shot.

The article for the first time introduces into scientific circulation materials from the archives of the State Security Service (GSB) of the Republic of Uzbekistan, documents that make it possible to reveal some sides of the sad fates of the repressed representatives of “national minorities” in the Uzbek SSR.

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