

КИЇВСЬКА ШКОЛА ЕКОНОМІКИ

МАГІСТЕРСЬКА ПРОГРАМА З ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ПАМ'ЯТІ ТА ПУБЛІЧНОЇ
ІСТОРІЇ

ДИПЛОМНА РОБОТА

“White Gold”: Ideology & Motivations of Cotton Cultivation in the Ukrainian SSR
(1940-1960)”

Студентка: Олена Зоря

Науковий керівник: Євгеній Монастирський

Для здобуття освітнього ступеня: Магістр
за спеціальністю: 032 Історія та археологія

Київ 2026

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Literature overview.....	13
3. Ukraine in the “New Regions” of Cotton Production.....	18
3.1 Factors of cotton production in Soviet Ukraine.....	18
3.2 Ideology of the “Cotton Autonomy Campaign”	21
3.3 Geography of Cotton Production.....	28
3.4 Structures of production.....	34
3.5 Labour.....	37
3.6 Chapter Conclusion.....	42
4. Postwar Aspirations for Ukrainian Cotton Cultivation.....	44
4.1 Clash of Ideologies on the Cotton Fields: Shifting meanings of cotton during and post-war.....	45
4.2 Hopes for Cotton Revisited: Union Decrees and Party Priorities.....	53
4.3 Motivations & Representations on the example of the Ministry of Cotton Cultivation (1950-1953).....	60
4.4 When White Gold Loses Its Lustre - 1953 and beyond.....	73
4.5 Chapter Conclusion.....	86
5. Conclusion.....	88
Reference List:.....	93

Annotation. This work investigates the ideological frameworks and practical motivations of the Soviet Union's large-scale industrialisation of cotton cultivation in the Ukrainian SSR. This research traces the history of cotton in Ukraine from early Imperial experiments in the colonial Ukrainian south, to the expansion of cotton cultivation to new geographies under the banner of the Soviet "cotton autonomy" campaign, to its eventual decline in the 1950s. By analyzing institutional archives, including records of the Ministry of Cotton Cultivation and regional cotton enterprises, this research uncovers the multi-vector hierarchies of cotton in the USSR and contextualises Ukraine's role in the "New Regions". This study demonstrates the main ideological themes of cotton through examination of mass media and party decrees, arguing for its central role in the environmental transformation and resourceification of the Ukrainian South.

Keywords: Cotton, cotton cultivation, Ukraine, Soviet Union, Ideology, Environmental History.

Number of words: 25877

1. Introduction

In Moscow, at the “Kievskaya” Metro Station, two Ukrainian women farmers stand amidst a blooming cotton field. Gently smiling, adorned in a Soviet-era depiction of Ukrainian national dress, they hold ripe cotton buds against the backdrop of an agricultural factory. The station opened in 1954, representing Ukraine’s history, achievements, and future prosperity alongside the Russian people.¹ While Ukraine, during the Soviet period, came to be known as one of the Union’s main agricultural producers, cotton likely does not spring to mind as a crop the country might be known for. Yet in one of the most prominent spaces for the presentation of Soviet ideals regarding the plans and aspirations for the Ukrainian SSR (Soviet Socialist Republic) and its role in the Soviet Union, there was cotton being grown by Ukrainian workers on its walls. In reality, the ideology of this era was fading away even as the paint was drying. Soon, this shift would be visible across the fields of Ukraine’s south.



¹ Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO. (n.d.). *Mezhdu sovetskoy klassikoy i frantsuzskim modernom* [Between Soviet classics and French Art Nouveau]

“Cotton Workers” one of 24 decorative panels at “Kievskaya Metro Station” in Moscow, Russian SSR. Unveiled in 1954, restored in the early 2010s.²

Cotton looms large in the history of the USSR. Threading many storylines across the vastness of its natural geography, cotton intersects with politics and economics, foreign and national policies, colonisation and class struggle, ecology and ideology in a way that has captured the attention of many researchers. On the territory of modern Ukraine, the plant and materials derived from its white bud have a rich history.

Across the USSR, the theme of cotton has been presented from many perspectives. For Christian Teichmann, cotton is a story of attempted decolonisation through proclaimed economic empowerment in Soviet Uzbekistan throughout the 1920s and 1930s.³ For Chris Ward, the thread connects two empires, the British and the Russian, wherein the early history of soviet industrial production in Russian cotton mills is unable to decouple from its imperial past.⁴ For Maya Peterson, the topic of cotton offers a look into American and Soviet relations within a “perpetuation of Russia’s colonial relationship with its Central Asian Borderland.”⁵ The majority of English-language contemporary scholarship on cotton in the USSR understandably focuses on Central Asia and Russia. There has been some Ukrainian-language research on cotton in Ukraine, focusing on aspects of collectivisation, infrastructural development and ties with Central Asia. The poetic metaphor of cotton being the “Child of the Soviet Sun” emerged in the 1930s. But what about the Ukrainian sun? What is the wider story of cotton in Ukraine, and where does it lie within the framework of cotton in the USSR?

² Kviten. (2012, March 14). *Khlopok v Ukraine* [Cotton in Ukraine]. LiveJournal. <https://kviten.livejournal.com/60122.html>

³ Teichmann, C. (2008). Canals, cotton, and the limits of de-colonization in Soviet Uzbekistan, 1924–1941. *Central Asian Survey*, 26(4), 499–519. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634930802018240>

⁴ Ward, C. (2018). Languages of Trade or a Language of Class? In L. H. Siegelbaum & R. G. Suny (Eds.), *Making Workers Soviet: Power, Class, and Identity* (pp. 194–218). Cornell University Press.

⁵ Peterson, M. (2016). US to USSR: American Experts, Irrigation, and Cotton in Soviet Central Asia, 1929–32. *Environmental History*, 21(3), 442–466. <https://doi.org/10.1093/envhis/emw006>



The film “Child of the Sun” is one example of mass media where cotton was presented as a “child of the sun” to be cared for, and the uniqueness of socialist cotton cultivation was promoted.⁶

This work intends to analyze the motivations and ideology of cotton cultivation in the Ukrainian SSR during the period between 1940 and 1960. Cotton was referred to as “white gold” across the USSR. Its positioning as a cash crop and symbol of modernisation throughout the entire period intersects with many ideological frameworks that come together under the banner of building communism. The overarching question my research aims to answer is: why and to what degree cotton production in Ukraine developed in these time frames, and why cotton largely faded from view? The answer to the question of why I will explore from the standpoint of Soviet political aims, ideology and broader processes in industries that relied on or interfaced with cotton. What did cotton mean to Ukraine, and was it different in what it meant among other Soviet republics? The representation and communication of the

⁶ This 1933 film was produced by Armenkino, the Armenian SSR’s state film studio. The film follows local cotton workers and presents how their lives have changed after the establishment of Soviet rule. Armenia was one of the other Soviet republics where cotton was industrialised in the 1930s. Barkhudaryan, P. (Director). (1933). *Ditya solntsa* [Arevi zavaky] [Film]. Armenkino. https://kinodaran.com/ru/title/ditya_solntsa.html

role of cotton cultivation from the Soviet government's perspective interests me as manifestations of practical needs and ideological framing.

To answer these questions, I focus not only on one precise time frame. I also explore the emergence of state-run cotton production in the Ukrainian SSR in the 1920s and its development through the 1920s-1930s. This period covers the 1st, 2nd and 3rd five-year plans: centralised planning cycles of the USSR that guided the development of the economy and industry across the entire Union. The Ukrainian SSR became a constituent of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1923, after 5 years of political struggles of different factions following the Russian Revolution of 1917.⁷ In 1929, the Main Cotton Authority of the USSR (Glavhlopkom) was founded to regulate cotton production across the Union. The industrialisation of cotton takes place during this period and so intersects with wider policies of collectivisation and centralised institutional development. The concept of the “New Regions” of cotton-growing also emerged at this stage. This geographic nomenclature encompassed Ukraine and other Soviet republics where non-irrigated cotton was to be industrialised. The “New Regions” stood apart from the “traditional” cotton-producing of Central Asia. I examine this concept, developed as part of the USSR's long-term vision for cotton industrialisation. This allows me to place Ukraine within a multi-vector framing of centre and periphery regarding cotton. I argue that Ukraine played a central role in the development of the “New Regions”. Examining the instrumentalisation of Ukraine's resources and labour through the prism of cotton allows a deeper understanding of how the Soviet system functioned.

To discern the main ideological frameworks presented by Soviet authorities at this time, I worked with party decrees and state periodicals like “Soviet Cotton” and “Cotton-Paper Industry”. Specialised journals such as these were aimed at the workforce of specific industries. They embodied and reproduced the messaging of the communist party, providing a rich resource for analysis of ideology. “Pluh” and “Chervonyi Shliakh” were long-format journals that provide examples of the adoption of cotton ideology in Ukraine. “The Battle for Cotton” aligned with militaristic framing of wider industrialisation, associated with the early five-year plans.⁸ Class struggles overlapped with achieving “cotton autonomy” of the Soviet state, highlighting the intersection of cotton with other ideological throughlines of this period.⁹ State publications such as “Chervonyi Steppe” (“Red Steppe”), “Chervonyi Shliakh” (“Red Way”), and other worker-focused local gazettes illustrate the expansion of cotton

⁷ Yefimenko, G. (2022). Koly bulo stvoreno SRSR ta chym buv zmusany postupytyia Stalin [When the USSR was created and what Stalin was forced to concede]. In V. A. Smolii (Ed.), *Za identychnist i nezalezhnist. Viina Rosii proty Ukrainy: Istorychni peredumovy, geopolitychni paraleli* [For identity and independence. Russia's war against Ukraine: Historical prerequisites, geopolitical parallels] (Bk. 2, pp. 1154–1157). Klio. <https://www.academia.edu/104152334/>

⁸ Aleshko, V. (1931). *U boiakh za bavovnyk* [In the battles for cotton]. *Chervonyi Shlyakh*, (7-8), 66.

⁹ Aleshko, V. (1931). *U boiakh za bavovnyk: Ispyt skladeno* [In the battles for cotton: The exam is passed]. *Pluh*, (5-6), 85.

production on the ground. Ukrainian-language gazettes like “Dilo” (“Business”), “Nove Selo” (“New Village”) and “Prawda” (“Truth”) from Lviv, which was part of Poland in the 1920s-1930s up until World War 2, illustrate the critical need for cotton across Europe, supporting the practical motivations in pursuing cotton production in new territories.

A part of the contemporary Ukrainian territories involved in cotton growing during the Soviet period was part of the Russian Empire before 1917. I briefly touch upon this period to explore the infrastructure and ideas that supported the early industrialisation of cotton cultivation in Ukraine. I argue that “Soviet Ukrainian cotton” has roots in imperial times, so I will also engage with contemporary research and historical documents that cover this continuance. There is some contemporary scholarship, like the works of Deborah Coen’s and Timm Schönfelder that engage with the steppe as “imaginaries” that embody ideological and political ideals of the ruling regime. Coen’s work focuses on the imperial era, when Ukraine was a colony under the Russian Empire. The development of “climatographies” at the time encompassed a view of nature that was conscious of human economic, agricultural and industrial intervention. Ideas of the resourceification of the steppe and its place as a stage of conquest developed during this period.¹⁰ This modernist approach to these territories only accelerated during the Soviet era. Schönfelder’s examination of the agromeliorative complex of Russian steppe peripheries presents the steppe as a “zone of innovation.” His work looks at how high-modernist Soviet ideology intervened in local ecologies, with the North Caucasus serving as the case study.¹¹ The transformation of the Ukrainian South and the Eurasian steppe, the biome where the majority of cotton cultivation in the Ukrainian SSR took place, is a prominent ideological theme through the imperial and Soviet eras. Cotton, as a non-indigenous plant, was both the instrument and a goal in the triumph of man over nature. While I do not position this work exclusively within the framework of environmental history, my research engages with the instrumentalisation of nature by the Soviet government. Industrialisation and conquest of nature eventually evolved into “The Great Transformation of Nature” under Joseph Stalin in the second half of the 1940s. Cotton remained a significant crop throughout these periods, as a symbol of scientific progress, socialist superiority, and as an economic imperative.

My additional sources on this work’s topic are predominantly Ukrainian periodicals, overviews of activities of agricultural institutes, and framing against contemporary historiography, looking at other areas of cotton production across the USSR. Individual perspectives support the examined processes through the inclusion

¹⁰ Coen, D. R. (2011). Imperial climatographies from Tyrol to Turkestan. *Osiris*, 26(1), 45–65. <https://doi.org/10.1086/661264>

¹¹ Schönfelder, T. (2022). Reinventing the steppe: The agromeliorative complex in the Russian periphery. *Slavic Review*, 81(1), 32–54. <https://doi.org/10.1017/slr.2022.77>

of materials from the Harvard Project of the Soviet Social System digital collection.¹² I will also take a brief detour into the era of Nazi occupation of Ukrainian territory through periodicals of 1942-1943 to see how the cotton industry was framed in the “Lebensraum”. This will enable an analysis of how contesting ideologies met on the cotton fields of Ukraine in a bid to control Ukrainian land, labour, capital and minds.

For the postwar period, I predominantly present findings from working with the archives of the “Ministry of Cotton Cultivation of the Ukrainian SSR”, held in the Central State Archive of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine (TSDAVO of Ukraine). This Ukrainian institution was the Ukrainian branch of the All-Union Ministry of Cotton Cultivation, based in Moscow, Russian SSR. When speaking of this structure, “Ministry of Cotton” or “Ministry” refers to the Ukrainian branch, as my main point of interest. When referring to the Russian central institution or ministries based in other Soviet republics, I will specify their affiliation.

The Ministry of Cotton came together at a time of large-scale reorganisation across the entire Soviet Union.¹³ While this body existed in Ukraine for only 3 years, the volume of documents left behind is expansive and rich, offering a view into both the practicalities and the ideology of agricultural cotton production. The records of the secretariat are rife with laments about low production, top-down instructions for measures to improve output, reshuffling of funds, equipment and structures in attempts to meet quotas. These insights provide a hefty anchor to balance the positive and utopian narratives developed and furthered by the state. Studying the archives of the short-lived Ukrainian Ministry of Cotton allows us to dive deeply into state positioning in the early 1950s and to take a peek at the other side of the coin captured in Soviet legalese.

For this period, I approach ideology from several points: analyzing government decrees, state messaging and infrastructures of propaganda. I use two main case studies. The first is the three-year agrotechnical courses implemented in the Ukrainian SSR. This initiative was meant to prepare the way for the next wave of expansion of cotton in Ukrainian territories. Through plans of the courses, backed up by the implementation perspectives from the Ministry, these materials offer an example of top-down directives to serve the construction of communism. I propose that the less-than-expected results of the courses also contributed to the end of large-scale cotton cultivation in Ukraine. As a second case study, I look broadly at agricultural

¹² Harvard Library. (n.d.). *Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System Online (HPSSS)* [Digital collection]. Harvard University. Retrieved June 14, 2026, from

<https://library.harvard.edu/collections/harvard-project-soviet-social-system>

¹³ Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR. (1950, July 5). *Pro zatverdzhennia Ukaziv Prezhydii Verkhovnoi Rady Ukrainiskoi RSR "Pro utvorennia soiuzno-respublikanskoho Ministerstva bavovnytstva Ukrainiskoi RSR" ta "Pro pereimenuvannia Ministerstva zbroinykh syl Ukrainiskoi RSR"* [On approval of the Decrees of the Presidium of the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR "On the establishment of the Union-Republican Ministry of Cotton Production of the Ukrainian SSR" and "On renaming the Ministry of Armed Forces of the Ukrainian SSR"] (Document No. T500001). Liga Zakon. <https://ips.ligazakon.net/document/T500001>

exhibitions at all-Union and local levels that presented cotton. These exhibitions were premier events that promoted scientific progress and agriculture. As such, they are the most prominent examples of ideology in material form. Through exhibition plans, mass media and documents detailing preparation, I identify the main themes surrounding cotton, presented from the state to the Soviet public.

The curtailing of the cotton initiative in “New Regions” has been harder to pinpoint to a specific date or event. I propose to look at the end of large-scale cotton production in Ukraine as a process of moving away from cotton in parallel with other shifts in Soviet ideology and economic policy. For this purpose, I review outcomes of agricultural exhibitions in the mid and late 1950s. I also engage with mass media produced by the Soviet state, like film and exhibition guides. The change in focus on other crops, Ukraine’s leading role in wheat, sugar beet, sunflower and corn illustrate a gradual loss of cotton’s prominence. It also explains why there is amnesia about cotton cultivation in Ukraine. The enduring image of Ukraine’s agricultural landscape was largely formed in the postwar years. Cotton’s swiftly declining role during this period meant that it was unable to retain a foothold in the long term.

Throughout my work, I discern ideology and motivation as different anchors of cotton industrialisation, although there are often intersections. I can only hypothesize about the true intentions of competing political regimes that positioned the role of cotton cultivation, but what was presented was not always the whole picture. To engage with the foundations of ideological framing of cotton, I also examine and specify practical motivations as they appear to me. The way things were presented within the USSR did not always align with the way they were viewed from the outside. I offer counterpoints by including American reports from the 1930s and 1950s that add a third viewpoint to the public presentation and internal characterisation of the Soviet cotton industry.

By studying a range of archival materials from Ukraine and existing scholarly work on cotton production in the Soviet Central Asian republics, I aim to contextualize the scale and scope of cotton growing in Soviet Ukraine. Can industrial cotton cultivation in the Ukrainian SSR be considered a completely new initiative or the next stage of a continuity of conquest, stretching from Imperial into Soviet times? Who and what were the main drivers behind the push for the cultivation of a crop not traditionally grown in new regions? Was the process and ideology for expansion in new lands the same as in other regions of the USSR?

This research has also been shaped by the contemporary context. In 2014, the Russian Federation annexed the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and began military action in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine. In 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. It cannot be avoided mentioning that cotton, known as “bavovna” in Ukrainian, has also experienced a recent resurgence in Ukrainian popular culture in connection with the ongoing war, undergoing memefication through an

interlanguage play on words. Adopted as slang and symbol by Ukrainians, “bavovna” has become an embodiment of military might and resistance to Russian aggression, depicted in mass culture and various products of art and design.¹⁴ Yet the cotton plant has also been present in this war all along, though with significantly less visibility. More than a century later, raw cotton remains a significant component of gunpowder, defense and chemical technologies. In 2018, the Russian Federation resumed cotton cultivation in Stavropol on the other side of the Ukrainian-Russian border, in the Eurasian steppe zone that also encompasses Ukraine’s cotton-growing regions.¹⁵ Occupied Crimea has also been considered for contemporary cotton production, with discussions of resuming cultivation in Northern Eurasian territories dating back to the 2000s, before Russia’s annexation.¹⁶ In 2024, Ukraine harvested its first raw cotton since the 1960s in the Odesa region.¹⁷ The government’s motivations, as presented, are expressly militaristic. Ukraine needs cotton for defense.

The reemergence of cotton as a crop under an independent Ukraine raises the relevance of this historical research. Cotton cultivation on the same territories was attempted under three previous political regimes. The measure of success of these endeavours can be viewed through several perspectives. Overall, during the Soviet period, it was limited, which I argue contributed to the abandonment of cotton growing in Ukraine. Analyzing the historical motivations and outcomes of cotton industrialisation may provide perspectives on the future of cotton in Ukraine and in the Eurasian region. Reasonings may vary, ideological frameworks can serve different regimes, and approaches can shape outcomes. Yet the basic steps of production don’t change critically. For the moment, I believe establishing basic facts about the context of cotton cultivation in the Ukrainian SSR is crucial. This can serve as the bedrock for further inquiry and support future work. Outlining the main frameworks and their presentation sheds light on questions of agency and independence in pursuing economic and societal goals within a multi-republic socialist system. This, in turn, can add a fresh perspective on Ukraine’s role within the Soviet Union, through the prism of cotton.

¹⁴ NV. (2022, 7 жовтня). *Всесвітній день бавовни. Історія українського мему та вітання зі святом із соцмереж*.
<https://nv.ua/ukr/lifestyle/vsesvitniy-den-bavovni-poyasnennya-mema-ta-pozdorovlennya-vid-ukrajinciv-50275345.html>

¹⁵ *Argumenty i Fakty Stavropol*. (2018, September 28). *Pervye urozhai khlopka sobiraiut na Stavropol'e spustia 50 let* [First cotton harvests are collected in Stavropol region after 50 years]. MySeldon.
<https://myseldon.com/ru/news/index/195792810>

¹⁶ Zvezda Tekstil. (2020, January 10). *V Rossii budut vyrashchivat' i proizvodit' sobstvennyj hlopok* [In Russia they will grow and produce their own cotton].
<https://zvezda-ivanovo.ru/news/v-rossii-budut-vyrashchivat-i-proizvodit-sobstvennyj-hlopok.html>

¹⁷ Ukrinform. (2024, October 24). *Experimental cotton harvesting campaign near completion in Ukraine*.
<https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-economy/3919234-experimental-cotton-harvesting-campaign-near-completion-in-ukraine.html>

Examining cotton cultivation in the Ukrainian SSR can add new perspectives to a number of scholarly discussions. Widening the geography of cotton beyond the traditional cotton-growing territories within the Soviet Union can reveal a deeper understanding of center-periphery dynamics and Ukraine's role within them. Cotton, as a labour-intensive crop, historically has deep associations with extractive practices. Focusing on this sector of agricultural industrialisation can add to shared understanding of this crop, specifically its social and political role within a socialist context. As little scholarship exists on this topic, and even less in English-language research, this work aims to contribute to a topic that offers fruitful areas of investigation but which has not yet been engaged with. I posit that cotton's role in ecological, political and social transformation of the Ukrainian South was significant. Yet its historical impact is little understood in 2026, and knowledge that cotton cultivation took place across the territory of Ukraine for half a century is not common.

The main argument of my work is that the cotton initiative in Ukraine was anchored by economic and political needs, but rooted in metropolitan resourceification. The ideology of cotton cultivation served to support these aims until it became apparent that the realities of growing the crop could not fulfill the needs or appease the dreams of the Metropole. This will be illustrated by the rise and eventual fall of the cotton industry in the Ukrainian SSR by the end of the 1960s. Sometimes, visions of riches are a well-crafted illusion.

2. Literature overview

From an overview of existing scholarship, I would argue that the topic of cotton cultivation in the context of the Ukrainian SSR has been rarely addressed directly. This is true for both Ukrainian-language and English-language research. The main themes of works that intersect with one or more dimensions of the wider cotton context operate within limited geographies and the history of the global and cotton trade, from colonial and social history perspectives. Within the context of the Soviet Union, Central Asia remains among the most researched geographies of cotton and related themes of Soviet modernisation, colonial relations and large-scale industrialisation and irrigation. Emerging scholarship in environmental history offers one of the most fruitful lines of examination. Placing the Ukrainian steppe, where cotton was grown, into the framework of peripheries in relation to the centre provides a clear understanding of why and how cotton cultivation developed.

Two major works address the role of cotton infrastructure within the wider Russian Imperial and Soviet contexts. The topic of cotton within the framework of state-run industrialisation and modernisation efforts was the focus of Maya K. Peterson's research. Peterson's examination of large-scale irrigation projects surrounding the Aral Sea between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan provides a view of colonial ambitions in relation to an imperial periphery across two political regimes: from Tsarist Russia to the USSR.¹⁸ Julia Obertreis's work similarly approaches cotton cultivation and the construction of irrigation infrastructure through a colonial lens. Obertreis also touches on two themes that are prominent across the Ukrainian cotton production context of the 1930s and 1950s: the "Cotton Autonomy" campaign and cotton's representation of cotton as "white gold."¹⁹ Grounded in environmental history, both Peterson and Obertreis draw a line between imperial and Soviet modernisation efforts in Central Asia related to cotton. In my opinion, this echoes closely to how cotton production developed in Ukraine.

While the argument of viewing cotton production through an extractivist lense is applied within a different territory and context from the Ukrainian SSR, it also raises several questions. Firstly, was cotton cultivation in the Ukrainian SSR and Crimea similarly part of an extractivist modernisation strategy, veiled in decolonisation narratives? Secondly, were the practical and ideological motivations for the development of cotton production in the Ukrainian SSR the same as those presented in what could be arguably considered the "centre" of cultivation?

¹⁸ Peterson, M. K. (2019). *Pipe dreams: Water and empire in Central Asia's Aral Sea basin*. Cambridge University Press.

¹⁹ Obertreis, J. (2017). *Imperial desert dreams: Cotton growing and irrigation in Central Asia, 1860–1991*. V&R Unipress.

From the Ukrainian perspective, Pavlo Satskyi's work provides the most comprehensive account of the construction of cotton infrastructure on the territory of Ukraine in the postwar period (1950s). Satskyi approaches large-scale industrial construction in Ukraine's South and Crimea from perspectives of economic and political history.²⁰ His research uncovers the leading but ultimately ineffective role of the Ministry of Cotton Cultivation and its Ukrainian republican branch in establishing irrigation systems, a likely significant factor contributing to the disbandment of the structure by 1954.²¹ Several of Satskyi's articles analysed the construction of irrigation systems in the Ukrainian south from the perspective of infrastructure and institutional competencies. He argued that the wider irrigation networks, constructed in Ukraine for cotton production, ultimately provided the infrastructural base for further development of agriculture.²² He saw the ideological framework of these initiatives as an administrative tool, employed to mobilise resources. The "cotton autonomy" campaign being utilised to lobby for large-scale infrastructure projects is one example.²³ Among them is the leading role of Stalin. The "cotton autonomy" campaign Unfortunately, Satskyi's death at the age of 43 in June of 2022, as a result of deferred cancer treatment due to Russia's full-scale invasion, cut short what was a unique contribution in historical research. His work adds to the understanding of the functioning of the institutional networks in Soviet Ukraine in relation to the "centre" when delivering on ideological and economic imperatives.

Krista Goff's research on the resettlements of Azeri workers in the aftermath of WW2 works in tandem with Oleksandr Khaetskyi's investigation of the forced labour of Uzbek peasants in Ukraine. Both works illustrate the biopolitics of the USSR in solving major issues of expert and manual labour in cotton production, presenting the same blunt strategy applied across different periods and different territories. Krista Goff's argument that forced Azeri migration to Azerbaijan from Armenia was prompted by economic imperatives of postwar cotton production, in addition to nationality policies, provides a wider context for the renewed push for cotton production in postwar years.²⁴ Khaetskyi's 2011 article, unfortunately, does not appear to be available in English. It provides insight into a little-researched topic, directly addressing cotton production in Ukraine between the 1930s and 1950s. The significant presence of a

²⁰ Satskyi, P. (2017). Concept of cotton in the southern USSR and in the Crimea in the early 1950 and prerequisites of forming a single regional economic complex. *Kraeznavstvo*, 1-2, 192–199.

²¹ Satskyi, P. (2017). Construction management South-Ukrainian and North-Crimean channels in 1950–1953. *Dnipropetrovsk University Bulletin: History & Archaeology Series*, 25(111). <https://doi.org/10.15421/261712>

²² Satskyi, V. P. (2017, March 3). *Prohrama rozvytku bavovnytstva v pivdennykh raionakh URSR u 1950—1954 rr. y ekonomichna intehratsiia Krymu iz Ukrainoiu* [Conference presentation]. Problems of Regionalism: Past, Present, Future, Kyiv, Ukraine.

²³ Satskyi, P. (2016). Ideolohichno-orhanizatsiine zabezpechennia budivnytstva Pivdenno-Ukrainskoho i Pivnichno-Krymskoho kanaliv (1950—1953 rr.). *Visnyk Mariupolskoho derzhavnoho universytetu. Serii: Istoriiia. Politolohiia*, 17, 83–90.

²⁴ Goff, K. (2022). Postwar rebuilding and resettlements in the Soviet Union: A case of Azeri migration. *Slavic Review*, 81(1), 97–121.

foreign “dekulakized” workforce, familiar with cotton production, underlines the severity of the needs of the “centre” and the methods used to satisfy them.²⁵ Goff and Khaetskyi’s respective research illustrate the outcomes of practical and ideological imperatives, pointing to the starting points of cotton initiatives in the 1930s and 1950s.

Tetiana Perga’s examination of recycling initiatives of the 1920s and 1930s acts as an example of emerging works that examine political economy and environmental history of the Ukrainian SSR through the framework of “multi-vector centre–periphery relations in the Soviet Union.”²⁶ While there is a significantly broader array of works examining what can be considered the “centre” of cotton production in the USSR (Soviet republics of Central Asia, such as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) in various contexts, I have been unable to identify any research that examines cotton production in the Ukrainian SSR in the context of centre-periphery. Perga’s argument is that centralised resource management, practice and policy around waste within the early Soviet period presented a clear colonial resourceification approach from the “centre” in relation to the “periphery.” Her work on “makulatura”, or paper waste, adds to the picture of resource - and needs-driven motivations for the development of cotton production in Ukraine.²⁷ Analysis of the Soviet command economy around a single strand of the vast cotton network is tied closely to the role of paper in propaganda. The new cotton economy was not only to improve the lives of Soviet citizens, but to serve to reproduce ideology in the form of both print and visual media. The latter theme, the role of cotton in the emerging age of cinema within the Ukrainian context, is underresearched and provides another potential arena for further inquiry.

Also, from the perspective of the periphery, Timm Schönfelder’s analysis of the development of agromeliarative complexes in Southern Russia traces territories making up the “New Regions” of cotton cultivation, excluding Ukraine.²⁸ Still, Schönfelder’s work, positioning the steppe as a “zone of innovation” offers a useful framework that aligns with archival materials in relation to the Ukrainian steppe, where cotton production took place. Placing Ukrainian territory alongside other “steppe imaginaries” unites the peripheral experience across geographic and climatic factors, through Tsarist and Soviet regimes. Both systems leaned into modernist ideas of the conquest of nature by man. From these imagined achievements, cotton also sprang to life in the inhospitable steppes, from aligning practical needs with idealistic socialism.

²⁵ Khaetskyi, O. (2011). [Vykorystannia prymusovoi pratsi uzbekskyyih selian u bavovnytstvi Ukrainy (30-ti-50-ti roky XX st)] [Use of forced labour of Uzbek peasants in cotton cultivation in the Ukraine (1930s-1950s)].

Muzeiinyi Visnyk, (12), 160–167. <https://www.academia.edu/42106125/>

²⁶ Perga, T. (2024). Ukrainian waste for the Soviet economy: Shaping the national narrative. *Environment and History*, 30, 541–560. <https://doi.org/10.3828/whp.eh.63830915903608>

²⁷ Perga, T. (2025). Conflicting interests: The early development of makulatura collection in Soviet Ukraine. *Worldwide Waste*, 8(3). <https://doi.org/10.3197/whpww.63857928646677>

²⁸ Schönfelder, T. (2022). Reinventing the steppe: The agromeliarative complex in the Russian periphery. *Slavic Review*, 81(1), 32–54. <https://doi.org/10.1017/slr.2022.77>

Deborah R. Coen's concept of "imperial climatographies" also serves to position the Ukrainian steppe within a colonial vision of ecological, man-made change.²⁹ While only generally engaging with southern Ukrainian territory as "New Russia" under the Romanov dynasty, Coen's positioning joins other works in explaining the far-reaching legacy of large-scale environmental change to satisfy imperial demands. This wider context represents the literal and figurative "fertility" that enabled cotton cultivation alongside other experiments in the Soviet periphery.

Lastly, to engage with the topic of ideological representation, three works covering two eras and other symbolic crops provide frameworks to place the representation of cotton alongside them. Victor Margolin's analysis of visual propaganda in the late 1930s gives insight into the utilisation of agriculture to promote soviet ideals. While focused on grain as the main agricultural symbol used in soothing the negative aspects of collectivisation and highlighting the figurehead of Stalin, this work provides a useful framework to consider the representation of cotton and agriculture widely, as a significant contribution of the Ukrainian SSR to the mission of building communism.

Trevor Clark's study of shifts in the representation of Ukrainian agriculture in 1949-1966 also provides a perspective on shifting priorities in the postwar period, highlighting how party leadership engaged with agricultural producers, cotton workers included.³⁰ A study of this period of Destalinisation in the ideological context around agriculture in Ukraine offers ways to consider the reasons for the gradual fading of cotton in public representation.

Kayla Nustad's research into Krushchev's Corn Campaign establishes agricultural and ideological strategies around the development and promotion of technical crops during the same time period (1953-1964).³¹ Nustad's argument that corn was utilised as a symbol of Soviet accomplishment and technological progress provides another explanation for why the visibility of cotton in this role faded away swiftly in the 1950s. This demonstration of economic outputs being dictated by party leadership politics provides insight into processes that ripple outward from decisions made in the centre. Analysing the imagined and the actual, Nustad's work illustrates a trajectory shared by cotton production in Ukraine: from high hopes to stagnation as a result of harsh realities.

While public communication from Soviet authorities mostly persisted around the topics of labor, plant cultivation and textile production, the use of cotton for military purposes, specifically gunpowder, remains largely unspoken in much of the

²⁹ Coen, D. R. (2011). Imperial climatographies from Tyrol to Turkestan. *Osiris*, 26(1), 45–65. <https://doi.org/10.1086/661264>

³⁰ Clark, T. L. (2014). *Changes in the portrayal of Ukrainian agriculture 1949-1966* [Undergraduate research award paper]. Eastern Kentucky University. <https://encompass.eku.edu/ugra/2014/2014/13>

³¹ Nustad, K. (2023). *Khrushchev's corn campaign: In dream and reality* [Master's thesis, University of Texas at Austin]. Texas ScholarWorks. <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/items/d6974a28-12ff-4d90-b14a-fd54427e08d5>

available historiography and historical publishing. Sven Beckert's magnum opus, "Empire of Cotton" makes only one mention of guncotton and gunpowder, and any mention of the military focuses on militarisation of control of land and labor, as well as military needs for textiles.³² Yet the critical component for nitrocellulose / pyroxilin remains a loud undercurrent, particularly in the battle of conflicting ideologies for the cotton fields of Ukraine. For the context of using derivatives of the cotton industry in the military sector of the Soviet Union, I turn to contemporary research by Russian war historian Aleksei Isaev. This work does not intend to look deeply into this topic, but acknowledges its influence on the direction of development of the cotton industry in Soviet and Nazi-occupied Ukraine.

Beckert's broad research also contextualises the role of cotton within global conflict between political regimes during WW2. The competition between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union for Ukraine's cotton resources shared motivations - to have controlled, continental-based resource bases to support the aims of their respective metropolises.

³² Beckert, S. (2014). *Empire of cotton: A global history*. (p, colored by Soviet ideology, becomes clear: the cotton industry in p 345–378) Vintage Books.

3. Ukraine in the “New Regions” of Cotton Production

In the late 1920s, the Soviet authorities launched plans to expand cotton production in new geographies. The search for suitable grounds for cotton cultivation would lead them to Ukraine, among other lands. Industrial cotton production in new territories was developed in the context of the “Cotton Autonomy” campaign. This initiative, supported by Soviet leaders such as Joseph Stalin and Vyacheslav Molotov, aimed to secure homegrown cotton, alleviating existing dependencies on imports susceptible to political turbulence. This chapter aims to examine the meanings behind the “New Regions” of cotton production that emerged as a result of the new political system within the “autonomy” campaign.

To explain this reasoning, I will examine cultivation strategies in the context of wider processes in agriculture and policy in 1930s Ukraine. I will also engage with historiography on cotton production, modernisation, and ideology in other regions of the USSR, specifically Central Asia, known as the “traditional” regions of cotton agriculture. Determining the main points of cotton production in the 1930s will allow me to analyze the recommitment and subsequent abandonment of cotton production in Soviet Ukraine of the 1950s-1960s in later chapters.

I engage with party decrees, general and specialist print media to crystallise the main ideological themes that developed during this period. I will demonstrate that the USSR formed the concept of the “New Regions” of cotton-growing, which encompassed the Ukrainian SSR, as a standalone phenomenon, unique to the “Northern Eurasian” geographies. Ukraine, although peripheral to cotton-growing in the Soviet Union, played a central role in the “New Regions.”

3.1 Factors of cotton production in Soviet Ukraine

The first documented experiments of cotton growing on the territory that encompasses modern Ukraine date back to the late 19th century. During the Russian Empire, biological institutes carried out experimental cotton cultivation in the Odesa and Kherson regions.³³ Through the 1920s and 1930s, industrial, state-run cotton production began to emerge from small-scale research labs and independent farms.³⁴

³³ Plant Breeding and Genetics Institute. (n.d.). *Istoriia instytutu* [History of the institute]. <http://sgi.in.ua/istoriya-institutu/>

³⁴ Institute of Climate-Smart Agriculture of the NAAS. (n.d.). *Istoriia Instytutu* [History of the Institute]. <https://icsanaas.com.ua/en/історія-інституту/>

This development was shaped by the new Soviet state and its emerging policies of agricultural production and collectivisation.

Cotton cultivation in the Ukrainian SSR took root in several contexts. The 1930s were characterised by the “Cotton Autonomy” campaign. This initiative was spearheaded by the most senior members of the Soviet government, among them Joseph Stalin and Vyacheslav Molotov.³⁵ Molotov was a spokesman for both collectivisation and the “battle for cotton” that aimed to alleviate external dependencies.³⁶ Driven by a deficit of cotton, covered in pre-revolutionary years by imports from the United Kingdom and the U.S.A., the Soviet leadership sought solutions to become independent from foreign supply chains. First steps were articulated and launched by Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin in the early 1920s.³⁷ Stalin and Molotov accelerated those plans, particularly in the light of rising tensions in Western Europe. The advancement of cotton in the USSR was often credited to the achievements of the “Lenin-Stalin party.”³⁸

While Soviet states in Central Asia, such as Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, further solidified as the main territories for cotton production in the USSR, other geographies were explored for their potential to contribute to cotton efforts. I argue that this expansion was also likely connected to political instability in the traditional cotton-growing regions, as the Soviet government worked to gain a foothold following the imperial era. According to Adeeb Khalid, political shifts caused significant issues in the cotton sector. In Turkestan, overall agricultural production dwindled in half between 1915 and 1920, with cotton production ceasing entirely. In 1918, all cotton production was nationalised, with the goal of supplying the Russian textile industry for internal consumption and external trade.³⁹ Throughout the 1920s, voices proclaiming the processes occurring in Uzbekistan in relation to cotton being “colonial” and the Uzbek SSR a “colony that exports cotton as a raw material” became louder.⁴⁰ Instability, sabotage and counterevolution threatened cotton production. Thus,

³⁵ Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks). (1967). *Postanovleniye TsK VKP(b) 18 iyulya 1929 g. o rabote Glavkhlopcoma* [Resolution of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) July 18, 1929, on the work of the Main Cotton Committee]. In *Resheniya partii i pravitel'stva po khozyaystvennym voprosam: V 5 t. Sbornik dokumentov za 50 let. T. 2. 1929-1940 gg.* (pp. 85–93). Politizdat. (Original work published 1929).

³⁶ Molotov, V. M. (1939, September). *Rech' tov. Molotova pri otkrytii Vsesoyuznoy sel'skokhozyaystvennoy vystavki 1-go avgusta 1939 goda* [Speech of Comrade Molotov at the opening of the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition on August 1, 1939]. *Sovetskiy khlopok* [Soviet cotton], 1939(9), 3–6. OGIZ Selkhozgiz.

³⁷ Tulepbaev, B. A. (1966, September). *Reshenie khlopkovoy problemy v SSSR* [The solution to the cotton problem in the USSR]. *Voprosy Istorii*, (9), 3–14. Biblio.uz (Libmonster ID: UZ-594).

<https://biblio.uz/m/articles/view/%D0%A0%D0%95%D0%A8%D0%95%D0%9D%D0%98%D0%95-%D0%A5%D0%9B%D0%9E%D0%9F%D0%9A%D0%9E%D0%92%D0%9E%D0%99-%D0%9F%D0%A0%D0%9E%D0%91%D0%9B%D0%95%D0%9C%D0%AB-%D0%92-%D0%A1%D0%A1%D0%A0>

³⁸ Karpych, V. (1939, November). *Velikaya pobeda partii Lenina — Stalina* [The great victory of the party of Lenin and Stalin]. *Sovetskiy khlopok* [Soviet cotton], 1939(11), 3–10. OGIZ Selkhozgiz.

³⁹ Khalid, A. (2015). *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, empire, and revolution in the early USSR*. Cornell University Press. (pp.82-93)

⁴⁰ Khalid, A. (2015). *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, empire, and revolution in the early USSR*. Cornell University Press. (pp.338-340)

diversifying supply chains and developing alternative sources for a vital raw material became part of the Soviet economic plan. Soviet Ukraine also became a platform for its implementation.

The rise in demand for cotton in the USSR in the 1930s was multifactorial, influenced by:

- The development of new industries that required cotton derivatives (i.e. the emerging film industry, chemical industry)
- Growing needs of the military sector
- Breakdown of existing supply changes due to global political shifts (including imports of American and British suppliers of cotton that previously held a significant percentage of cotton in Imperial Russia)
- The need for consumer goods to improve the quality of living for Soviet citizens

While less articulated in public historical documents, cotton was also a critical crop for the military industry. The material was utilised for soldier uniforms and cotton gauze (severe shortages of which are catalogued and mentioned in oral histories of soviet soldiers).⁴¹ The even more critical use of cotton derivatives was in gunpowder production (nitrocellulose / pyroxylin). Technology to utilise wood pulp for the production of explosive materials was applied in industrial production in the 1920s and 1930s in certain parts of the world, but cotton was the basis of Soviet gunpowder production, developed on French technology.⁴² Cotton remains, even today, a significant raw material for military purposes.⁴³

Nitrocellulose (cellulose-nitrate) is a dual-use compound, created by modifying cellulose through chemical processing with nitric acid. Dual-use in this instance signifies both military and industrial applications. Nitrocellulose was the basis of nitrocellulose film in the cinema industry until the 1950s. For example, the infrastructure that came to be the Svema film factory, the first industrial factory of film in the Soviet Union, was established in Shostka, Eastern Ukrainian SSR, in the 1930s through cooperation with film pioneers, the Lumiere company.⁴⁴ It was the same

⁴¹ Rogovoy, G. (2009, May 18). *Gerts Rogovoy. Full, unedited interview, 2009* (J. Chervinsky, Interviewer) [Video, Testimony]. Veteran Testimonies & Ephemera, Collected in Ukraine (ARK Identifier: ark:/86084/b4f18sk0j). Blavatnik Archive. <http://n2t.net/ark:/86084/b4f18sk0j>

⁴² Isaev, A. V. (2025, February 28). Production of gunpowder and ammunition as a "bottleneck" of the soviet military economy and its impact of armed struggle in 1941-1945. *Vestnik Volgogradskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta Serija 4 Istorija Regionovedenie Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenija*, 30(2), 21-30. <https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu4.2025.2.2>

⁴³ Johnson, N. G. (n.d.). *Nitrocellulose | Explosive, Fire-Retardant & Coating Uses*. Britannica. Retrieved March 9, 2026, from <https://www.britannica.com/science/nitrocellulose>

⁴⁴ Onufrienko, A., Menzelevskyi, S., Teliuk, O., & National Oleksandr Dovzhenko Centre. (2019). *VUFKU, Lost & Found*. National Oleksandr Dovzhenko Centre.

territory that housed the largest and oldest chemical plants producing gunpowder.⁴⁵ The origins of these factories date from the Russian Empire.⁴⁶

Thus, the need for cotton and its derivatives rose significantly at the start of the 20th century with the emergence of new industries and the expansion of existing ones. The Ukrainian SSR offered existing infrastructure and the potential to expand internal production of a strategic resource for the USSR. In the next subchapters, I will look more closely at the ideological messaging of the “Cotton Autonomy” campaign and what Ukraine offered the USSR in the context of cotton cultivation.

3.2 Ideology of the “Cotton Autonomy Campaign”

The idea of “cotton autonomy” was not new to territories that in the 1920s encompassed the Soviet Union. In fact, the entire idea of industrialisation as the main route for prosperity and development, with the agriculture sector included, had been characteristic of late imperial Russia. These ideas, circulating since the 1880s, particularly under the influence of Sergei Witte, Minister of Finance to Emperor Nicholas II, contributed to the development of the cotton industry in Central Asia.⁴⁷ For Julia Obertreis, the policy of the metropole was less influential than economic realities and capitalist competition in Central Asia. This she ascribed firstly to the inconsistencies of state policy. Secondly, she viewed the initial push for cotton in Central Asia as being led by local initiative and the introduction of capitalist trade and commerce.⁴⁸ She also traced the continuation of cotton autonomy projects of the late-19th-century and their adoption by the Bolsheviks. In these aspirations, neither the Russian Empire nor the Soviet Union were unique.⁴⁹

Shifting global economics and politics made the search for cotton a point of interest for many countries. Controlling and developing cotton resource bases was a significant part of this development. Sven Beckert argued that within these competing global efforts, the Soviet Union’s attempt to attain full self-sufficiency was particularly bold and stood out against earlier efforts to secure resources within established global

⁴⁵ Isaev, A. V. (2025, February 28). Production of gunpowder and ammunition as a “bottleneck” of the soviet military economy and its impact of armed struggle in 1941-1945. *Vestnik Volgogradskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta Serija 4 Istorija Regionovedenie Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenija*, 30(2), 21-30. <https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu4.2025.2.2>

⁴⁶ Shostkynskyi Kraievznavchyi Muzei & Kokshaikin, M. G. (n.d.). “Svema” - *Storinky istorii vid “Maloi kinoplivky” do Aktsionernoi kompanii “Svema”*. http://museum.shostka.org/publ/historical_works/svema_storinky_istoriji/4-1-0-87

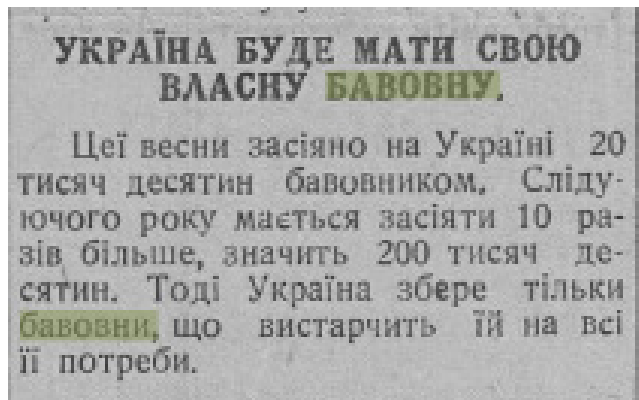
⁴⁷ Von Laue, T. H. (1954). A Secret Memorandum of Sergei Witte on the Industrialization of Imperial Russia. *The Journal of Modern History*, 26(1), 60–74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1874874>

⁴⁸ Obertreis, J. (2017). *Imperial desert dreams: Cotton growing and irrigation in Central Asia, 1860–1991*. V&R Unipress. (p. 48)

⁴⁹ Obertreis, J. (2017). *Imperial desert dreams: Cotton growing and irrigation in Central Asia, 1860–1991*. V&R Unipress. (p. 469)

markets.⁵⁰ To attain economic independence for the fledgling political body, the traditional cotton-growing efforts were apparently not enough.

The Soviet Union would need to significantly expand the scope and scale of cultivation efforts. The USSR found its solution in pushing for industrial cotton cultivation in new territories, building upon early imperial experiments in research stations.⁵¹ The South of the new Ukrainian SSR had both literal and figurative fertile soil for this endeavour. By this time, the steppe, which had become part of the geography of cotton cultivation, had been the object of ecological, agricultural and civilizational imaginaries for centuries.⁵²



*“Ukraine will have its own cotton.” This article from “Nove Selo” in 1930 states that Ukraine will have enough cotton to cover “all of its needs” in the coming year.*⁵³

The 1929 decree of the Central Committee of the CPSU was dedicated to the function of “Glavklopkom.”⁵⁴ This body was to oversee the cotton industry across its varying sectors and all-Union geography. As the responsible institution for implementing the strategic goal of “cotton autonomy”, Glavkhlopkom was set up directly under the Supreme Council of the National Economy. The decree regulated cotton cultivation across all territories of the USSR, establishing a clear hierarchy for managing resources. This took place within a command economy that spanned nation-states, directed by a metropole. The directives aimed to rebalance resources, both natural and human. Farmland dedicated to food production was to be repurposed

⁵⁰ Beckert, S. (2014). *Empire of cotton: A global history*. (pp 345–378) Vintage Books.

⁵¹ Sovet Truda i Oborony. (1930). O merakh k razvitiyu khlopkovodstva v novykh rayonakh [On measures for the development of cotton growing in new regions] (Postanovlenie No. 89). *Sobranie Zakonov i Rasporyazheniy SSSR*, (7), Art. 89.

⁵² Breyfogle, N. B. (2018). Toward an environmental history of Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union. In N. B. Breyfogle (Ed.), *Eurasian environments: Nature and ecology in imperial Russian and Soviet history* (pp. 1–28). University of Pittsburgh Press.

⁵³ Ukraina bude maty svoju vlasnu bavovnu [Ukraine will have its own cotton]. (1930, August 3). *Nove Selo*, 1(26), 2.

⁵⁴ Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks). (1929, July 18). *Postanovleniye TsK VKP(b) 18 iyulya 1929 g. o rabote Glavkhlopkoma* [Resolution of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) July 18, 1929, on the work of the Main Cotton Committee]. Portal of the Documents of Russian History.

for cotton cultivation. Infrastructural projects, such as the construction of the Chardzhou-Khiva railroad, were presented as a way to improve the cotton supply chain and connect peripheral growing regions to the wider Union. The forms of production were also aimed to be transformed, with cotton cultivation to take place in state and collective farms.

The decree stated that developing Soviet cotton production was to “not only liberate the textile industry of the USSR from imported cotton, but also to create the required reserve to further expand the textile industry.”⁵⁵ From the role of an importer, the Soviet Union aimed towards self-sufficiency. If cotton industrialization in Central Asia was framed as a decolonisation mission through economic empowerment, in regions that had not yet embarked on this course, it was presented as both a result and a vehicle for progress and prosperity. “Decisive measures” were to be taken to pave the way forward for cotton in new frontiers. Cotton was a means of liberation from the unfair conditions imposed by wealthy landowners of the previous era, but only through the collective farming system. The expansion of cotton cultivation in these territories throughout the 1930s was presented as one of the many great achievements of socialist agriculture development, spearheaded by Stalin.⁵⁶ The general title encompassing the areas where this would take place would come to be known as the “New Regions.”

At the XVIII Congress of the All-Union Communist Party in 1939, Vyacheslav Molotov, Stalin’s confidant who had stepped into the role of People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs a few months earlier, proclaimed that the goals of equipping the Soviet textile industry were even surpassed, to the point of excess. As Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars from 1930 to 1941, he played a crucial role in overseeing the transformation of the Soviet state and supporting collectivisation across the USSR. The fruits of a decade of his, Stalin’s, and the people’s labour were presented as monumental: production was struggling to keep up with the available raw materials. The Congress provided a venue to look back on the achievements of the last 5-year plans, but the general outlook for the future was tempered by the coming challenges.

The case for cotton’s indispensable role in Soviet defense was clearly articulated in Soviet print media. “Sovetskyi Khlopok” (“Soviet Cotton”) and “Khlopchatobumazhnaya Promyshlennost” (“Paper and Cotton Light Industry”) were two specialist publications, produced by dedicated state enterprises that intersected with cotton cultivation and its related production industries. The dual role of the crop lay not only in meeting the textile and consumer needs of the populace, but also in

⁵⁵ Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks). (1929, July 18). *Postanovleniye TsK VKP(b) 18 iyulya 1929 g. o rabote Glavkhlopkoma* [Resolution of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) July 18, 1929, on the work of the Main Cotton Committee]. Portal of the Documents of Russian History.

⁵⁶ Karpych, V. (1939, November). *Velikaya pobeda partii Lenina — Stalina* [The great victory of the party of Lenin and Stalin]. *Sovetskiy khlopok* [Soviet cotton], 1939(11), 3–10. OGIZ Selkhozgiz.

serving as a resource to counter aggression.⁵⁷ The rise in cotton imports from countries like Japan and Western Europe was not only noted, but bluntly presented as a sign of wartime preparation across Soviet media. Yet the framing in the USSR was firmly non-aggressive. “Cotton independence” also meant defense, but not offense.

In wider Soviet media, reports of continuing cotton imports from British and American suppliers emerged even by the middle of the decade.⁵⁸ Yet messages advocating for the high priority of removing foreign dependencies and reaching the potential of domestic cotton cultivation dominated.

Cotton’s potential across the entirety of the USSR, and especially in the “New Regions,” was presented as “literally boundless.”⁵⁹ Increasing yields and expanding cotton farmland did not even require intensive irrigation infrastructure projects. At least, that was the belief at the time, as in the 1950s, irrigation was to become a bigger part of Ukraine’s cotton industry. For the moment, Ukraine was expected to continue to rise in overall cotton output. Or it would, if only it were able to overcome its hurdles of sabotage, carelessness, and disinterest in cotton production.

The specialist publication “Soviet Cotton” offers a window into the industry’s development during this period. Among a number of industry-focused journals published by state enterprises, only a few carried the specified designation “Soviet” in their titles. “Flax and Hemp”, “Vernalization.” “Vegetable and Fruit Farming,” and others were dryly titled and focused on the industry.⁶⁰ Cotton joined the veterinary and poultry sciences, chemicalization, and the reconstruction of agriculture, with an emphasis on the decidedly socialist character these industries were taking on. The intention of marking these industries in their execution as quintessentially socialist becomes clearer when looking at other sources.

In preparation for the upcoming all-Ukrainian agricultural exhibition of 1937, the party outlined its achievements and continued hopes.⁶¹ The thematic “Cotton Pavilion”, brought to life by bureaucrats of the new social order, was an exercise in applied ideology. The cotton industry in the Soviet Union strived to represent a break with history. Several exhibits were to “...characterize, refresh and compare the

⁵⁷ Rogozhin, N. (1939, September). *Uluchshit' kachestvo i assortiment khlopkovogo volokna* [To improve the quality and assortment of cotton fiber]. *Sovetskiy khlopok* [Soviet cotton], 1939(9), 24–28. OGIZ Selkhozgiz.

⁵⁸ 5 million karbovantsiv worth of cotton for the USSR. (1925, October 22). *Bolshevik of the Poltava Region [Bil'shovyk Poltavshchyny]*, (242), p. 2.

⁵⁹ Rogozhin, N. (1939, September). *Uluchshit' kachestvo i assortiment khlopkovogo volokna* [To improve the quality and assortment of cotton fiber]. *Sovetskiy khlopok* [Soviet cotton], 1939(9), 24–28. OGIZ Selkhozgiz.

⁶⁰ Main Cotton Administration of the People’s Commissariat of Agriculture of the USSR [Glavnoye khlopkovoye upravleniye Narkomzema SSSR]. (1936, November). *Sovetskiy khlopok* [Soviet cotton], (11). OGIZ Selkhozgiz.

⁶¹ Ultimately, the agricultural exhibition was delayed until 1939. MosCulture. (n.d.). *Pavil'on "Zemledelie" (byvshiy Ukrainskoy SSR), 1954 g., arkh. Chechulin D.N.* [Pavilion "Agriculture" (former Ukrainian SSR), 1954, arch. Chechulin D.N.]. Retrieved October 24, 2023, from

<https://mosculture.ru/object/pavilon-zemledelie-byvshij-ukrainskoj-ssr-1954-g-arhitektor-chechulin-d-n/>

*colonial policies of Tsarism and the socialist national policies of soviet authorities in the cotton sector of the people's agriculture."*⁶²



*Stamp of the USSR: Cotton farming. Gathering cotton in Uzbekistan. Cotton (*Gossypium herbaceum* Carl Linnaeus (L.), 1753). Series: The All-Union Agricultural Exhibition (VSKhV) in Moscow, USSR, "New in the Agriculture"⁶³*

In a similar way, the USSR characterized its developing cotton industry as the antithesis of the exploitative, capitalist U.S.A. While the Soviet cotton industry was growing, American output was stagnating. According to agricultural propaganda, this was due to the superiority of Soviet scientific advances and socialistic agricultural system. As industry and agriculture improved, so did the quality of life in a vision of the cotton worker of this new era:

"In the USSR, colonial labour in cotton growing was eradicated at the root. In an unheard-of short period of time, the impoverished batrak [hired farm labourer]

⁶² "В павильоне «Хлопок» будет выставлен ряд экспонатов, характеризующих, освещающих и сравнивающих колониальную политику царизма и социалистическую национальную политику советской власти на хлопко-водческом участке народного хозяйства." S. Petropavlovsky "The "Cotton Pavilion" at the All-Republic Agricultural Exhibition of 1937" Main Cotton Administration of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture of the USSR [Glavnoye khlopkovoye upravleniye Narkomzema SSSR]. (1936, November). *Sovetskiy khlopok* [Soviet cotton], (11). OGIZ Selkhozgiz

⁶³ Ministry of Communications of the USSR. (1939). *Cotton farming* [Postage stamp]. CPA No. 681.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Soviet_Union_1939_CPA_681_stamp_\(Cotton_Farming\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Soviet_Union_1939_CPA_681_stamp_(Cotton_Farming).jpg)

*has risen to the level of prosperity of today's collective farmer. For the first time, a dehkanin [peasant from Central Asia] cotton farmer has felt cultural soil under his feet, and the joy of free labor in his chest. He builds for himself a cultured home, lights it with Ilyich lamps, and equips it with beds and tables. He visits the theater, cinema, listens to the radio, and reads books and newspapers in his native language. He is interested in his work, in raising his productivity. He aims to dive deeply into the treasure chest of agricultural technical knowledge, and with his experimentation, he has already enriched agricultural techniques..."*⁶⁴

If the cotton industry was presented as above in a specifically anti-colonial lens in the "traditional" cotton growing areas, fashioned as defiance against exploitative imperial knowledge, the "New Regions" had their own narrative. Framed as a "battle" for (resource independence) and against (external and internal enemies of the people, saboteurs, Trotsky followers who would restore capitalism, "rabid resistance of the kulaks"⁶⁵), cotton cultivation in areas where it had not yet been industrialised was presented as a frontier of progress.

The Ukrainian farmer had also undergone a transformation through the 1930s. At the start of the cotton campaign, attitudes ranged from the mild "sceptic" to the "anti-cotton", viewing cotton cultivation as a waste of labour. From being uninterested or outright hostile towards the very idea of cotton production, Ukrainian collective cotton workers were presented as among the most dedicated to this great cause.⁶⁶ This conversion into true believers of this historic mission occurred through observing the success and prosperity of those who had trusted in the CPSU's plans. Stories of extreme worker dedication were highlighted in specialized publications. A leading number of Stakhanovites of cotton production now came from the Ukrainian SSR. The eradication of enemies of the people within state bodies and on the fields increased yields. By the end of the decade, the Ukrainian cotton worker was presented as living an ideal life, prosperous and happy, made possible by the advances of socialist agriculture.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Petropavlovsky, S. (1939, September). Pavilyon "Khlopok" na Vsesoyuznoy selskokhozyaystvennoy vystavke 1937 goda [The "Cotton" Pavilion at the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition of 1937]. *Sovetskiy Khlopok*, (9).

⁶⁵ Reingardt, V. E. (1936, November). *Blyastyashchiye uspekhi khlopkovodstva v novykh rayonakh* [Brilliant successes of cotton growing in new regions]. *Sovetskiy khlopok* [Soviet cotton], 1936(11), 31–36. OGIZ Selkhozgiz.

⁶⁶ Petropavlovsky, S. (1939, September). Pavilyon "Khlopok" na Vsesoyuznoy selskokhozyaystvennoy vystavke 1937 goda [The "Cotton" Pavilion at the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition of 1937]. *Sovetskiy Khlopok*, (9).

⁶⁷ Excursion of leading cotton workers to the beat fields of the Ukrainian SSR. Main Cotton Administration of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture of the USSR [Glavnoye khlopkovoye upravleniye Narkomzema SSSR]. (1936, November). *Sovetskiy khlopok* [Soviet cotton], (11). OGIZ Selkhozgiz.

ТАВРІЯ—УКРАЇНСЬКИЙ ТУРКЕСТАН

Десять аніма й сині, а тут уже Дніпро вальмію від жриги, і сарій Таврійський берег дихає на повні груди, підставляючи сонцеві свої кучугури піску й нескінченні простори жовтобурих суглинкових піл.

Там, де Конка робить третю петлю, крізь густу завісу верболозового вліття майорить червоний прапор. Ранній лхтар блімає нараз за поворотом, щоб сказати нам, як ми вже близько від Цюрупинського. А коли понад верболозом шугне довгий гудок нашого криголаму, і всі інстинктивно беруться за речі, пристань постає несподівано, виростаючи на березі двома дерев'яними будинками і штахетамі очерету.

Це — Таврія, її західні береги. На схід і південь — край пісків і глиняку, де хліб росте не хоче. Зате виноград та сади познаходили собі не мало в'дяного ґрунту, і мільйони карбованців вкладали до своїх кишень глантайство.

Тепер йому надійшов край. І надійшов «рай старій баринницької економіки півдня. Інтенсифіковане господарство чорноморського надбережжя рішуче впроваджує нову культуру — бавовну.

Антон Козін везучи з пристані очерет укривати собі хату, про глантайство говорить просто:

— Годі їм розкошувати. Будемо самі будувати життя. От тільки шкода, що немає в нас теористів.

Я не розумію цього слова. Перекручене «теоретиків»? Коли так, то чому ж немає? Теоретиків у нас, здається, доволі.

— Немає в нас такого чоловіка, щоб теорично дав нам освіту на практиці відносно бавовни.

Тепер ясно. Теоретик і практик в його здоровому уявленні — це одне. «Теорист» — це, на його думку, якраз те, чого й справді бракує нашому радянському технічному виступові. Це якраз живе поєднання теоретика й практика, тип нового фахівця, яких у нас ще дуже мало.

— Блаудимо ми з нею, як ті саліці. Сіяли торік мов за паласт, полади — й говорити соромно. 571 га в районі загинуло. А якби теористи...

Ми вираховуємо, і результати несподівано прикрі та жорстокі своєю страшною правдою. Бо ж загинуло 1.100 центнерів бавовни, коли з гектара лічили по 2 центнери — найменший урожай. А коли по чотири, як уродило в «Соцпребудові»? А коли по п'ять, як у «Червоному полі»? По шість, як у «Серії й Молоді»?

А скільки не додав бавовни весь південь? А скільки втратив на цьому СРСР?

За кучугурами зрідка виривають степові села — маленькі островки серед навколишнього суцільного простору.

— Тут було колись морське дно. Тут буде море бавовни.

Степан Онопрієнко не може цьому повірити. Звідки то можна знати? Ніхто не знає, що було й що буде. Сьогодні ти є, а завтра... Ну, а коли доведеться ще покинути, то цю конячку він продасть, купить собі гіршу і тоді вступить в кол-

госп. А щоб не продавати? Ні. Він не такий нерозважливий.

В який колгосп? Імени Держинського? Йому все єдино. У який люди, в такий і він.

— Для мене всякий колгосп імени «Нема куди діватися».

Цей чоловік, мабуть, можливий тільки тут. В сірих його очах глантай запалив фанатичні вогники класової зневаги, і він «определённый малоцінний середняк», про бавовну говорить так:

— Що від неї заводиться малярія, так це хоч і самі провірте, якщо може ви доктор. Ніколи не хоріли люди так, як торік. І хоч ви що мені кажіть, а оце іменно та вата, що душить нашого брата. І більше я не скажу нічого, і можете на мене хоч у мільйон заявити. Крізь говорю й говорити буду.

Тарасівка ще адала позначає себе високою церквою і... жодної радіощогли. Тут межа українського Туркестану на схід від верхів Дніпрового гірля. В боротьбі за бавовну змагається п'ять колгоспів і глантайство а припінхвостами.

Нашітуючи про малярію, об'їджаючи плянтакі за 2—3 кам., щоб «не зарізатися», підбиваючи на те саме невідомих бідняків і середняцтво, глантай восени торік зібрав буйний урожай своїх намагань.

Дезорганізуюючи полілля бавовни, він домігся того, що не один десяток гектарів заріс бур'яном. Агітуючи проти збирання коробочок, густив за вітром не

This 1931 article from "Vsesvit", Ukraine's oldest literature, long-read publication is a unique find.⁶⁸ It positions the area of Tauria as "the Ukrainian Turkestan". Tauria is the toponym for the steppe territories in Southern Ukraine that encompass Kherson, Nova Kakhovka, and the Crimean Peninsula. The article describes efforts to transform the southern regions of Ukraine into a cotton-producing area, modelled after Central Asia's traditional cotton regions. Among the mentioned goals was achieving "cotton autonomy" for the USSR, after overcoming sabotage from resistant class enemies. Despite disappointing outcomes in the first years of production, an optimistic outlook is painted, with high yields expected as production expands across the region. The lack of "theoretics" and the need for expertise to grow the new crop are stressed, underlining the ideological narrative of the importance of labour. Its uniqueness is due to its comparative framing to Central Asia. This is not an ideological positioning that I came across again. Likely it's an early idea, developed and presented locally. Through the 1930s and 1950s, the Soviet Union moved away from direct comparisons to Central Asia in the "New Regions". The new cotton geographies were different, with their own specificity "without analogues". This is one example of how ideological frameworks were used to lobby for resources, as Pavlo Satskyi saw it happen in the context of infrastructural projects of the 1950s.

⁶⁸ Vasylenko, L. (1931, March 30). Tavriia – ukrainskyi Turkestan [Tauria is the Ukrainian Turkestan]. *Vsesvit*, 7(9), 11–12.

As the most northern territories in the world dedicated to cotton cultivation, the advances of Soviet cotton in the “New Regions” were presented as the result of a unique approach that was markedly different from either American or Central Asian practices. This combination of technological ingenuity, advanced mechanisation and socialist agricultural labour was intended to allow the USSR to achieve its goals of cotton autonomy, economic prosperity, and resource self-sufficiency. For the realisation of these strategic aims, the Soviet administration worked to develop an extensive network within a vertical hierarchy that would unite the peripheries, share knowledge, and redistribute resources.

3.3 Geography of Cotton Production

The territory of Ukraine designated for cotton production during the years of the Soviet Union was designated as the “New Regions” (Noviye Regiony). In the postwar years, they would also sometimes be referred to as “non-irrigated” regions, to discern them from irrigation and infrastructure-heavy cotton endeavors in Soviet Central Asia.⁶⁹ These “New Regions” also included Crimea, which remained an autonomous republic and later oblast within the Russian SSR. In 1954, Crimea was joined with the Ukrainian SSR, becoming part of the Ukrainian network of cotton production.

⁶⁹ Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks). (1929, July 18). *Postanovleniye TsK VKP(b) 18 iyulya 1929 g. o rabote Glavkhlopcoma* [Resolution of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) July 18, 1929, on the work of the Main Cotton Committee]. Portal of the Documents of Russian History.

Республики и края	План контрактации	В том числе по колхозам, обслуживаемым МТС	В том числе египетского хлопка
Узбекская ССР	786,7	697,0	11,0
Туркменская ССР	117,1	105,2	8,1
Таджикская ССР	53,9	45,7	5,9
Киргизская АССР	44,3	30,4	—
Кара-Калпакская АССР	30,0	15,1	—
Итого по Средней Азии . . .	1032,0	893,4	25,0
Казахская АССР	55,2	49,7	—
Азербайджанская ССР	126,3	113,5	17,7
Армянская ССР	11,1	7,4	—
Грузинская ССР	3,9	2,1	—
Итого по ЗСФСР . . .	141,3	123,0	17,7
Всего по поливным районам .	1228,5	1066,1	42,7
Бывший Северо-Кавказский край .	27,9	22,7	—
Крымская АССР	5,4	5,2	—
Бывший Нижне-Волжский край .	1,5	1,3	—
Итого по новым районам РСФСР	34,8	29,2	—
УССР	28,0	27,6	—
Всего по СССР .	1291,3	1122,9	42,7

A table from a 1934 resolution of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) that specified plans for “irrigated” and “new regions.” This included contracting, mechanised tractor stations and specifications around the type of cotton to be harvested. Egyptian cotton was predominantly used on irrigated farmland. None was contracted for the Ukrainian SSR during this period. The resolution specifies that the plan's distribution was prepared by the Committee for Preparation of Agricultural Products under two bodies. The first was the Council of People's Commissars of the Soviet Union. The second was the People's Commissariat for Agriculture. Both structures were the highest executive and administrative organs of

*state authority in their respective sectors of the Soviet Union. This speaks to the top-down command economy that also affected cotton production.*⁷⁰

The English-language term “New Regions” was also used by external actors. The signifier appears in reports from the 1938 and 1970s from surveyors of the Soviet cotton industry.⁷¹ In the wider Soviet context, Ukraine was not always listed as a separate republic. In internal documents such as reports and executive plans, it was often grouped together with other republics.⁷²

Other “New Regions” territories included contemporary southern Russia and the North Caucasus. Historically, this included Stalingrad Oblast, Lower Volga Krai, North Caucasian Krai, and Azov-Black Sea Krai, which included Kuban and Taman regions. Dagestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic; Checheno-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, Karabardino-Balkar and North Ossetian autonomous regions.⁷³ Georgia (historically: Ordjonokidze krai) was also sometimes grouped with Armenia and Azerbaijan, but both Georgia and Armenia appeared in plans for the development of new regions with infrastructure projects.⁷⁴

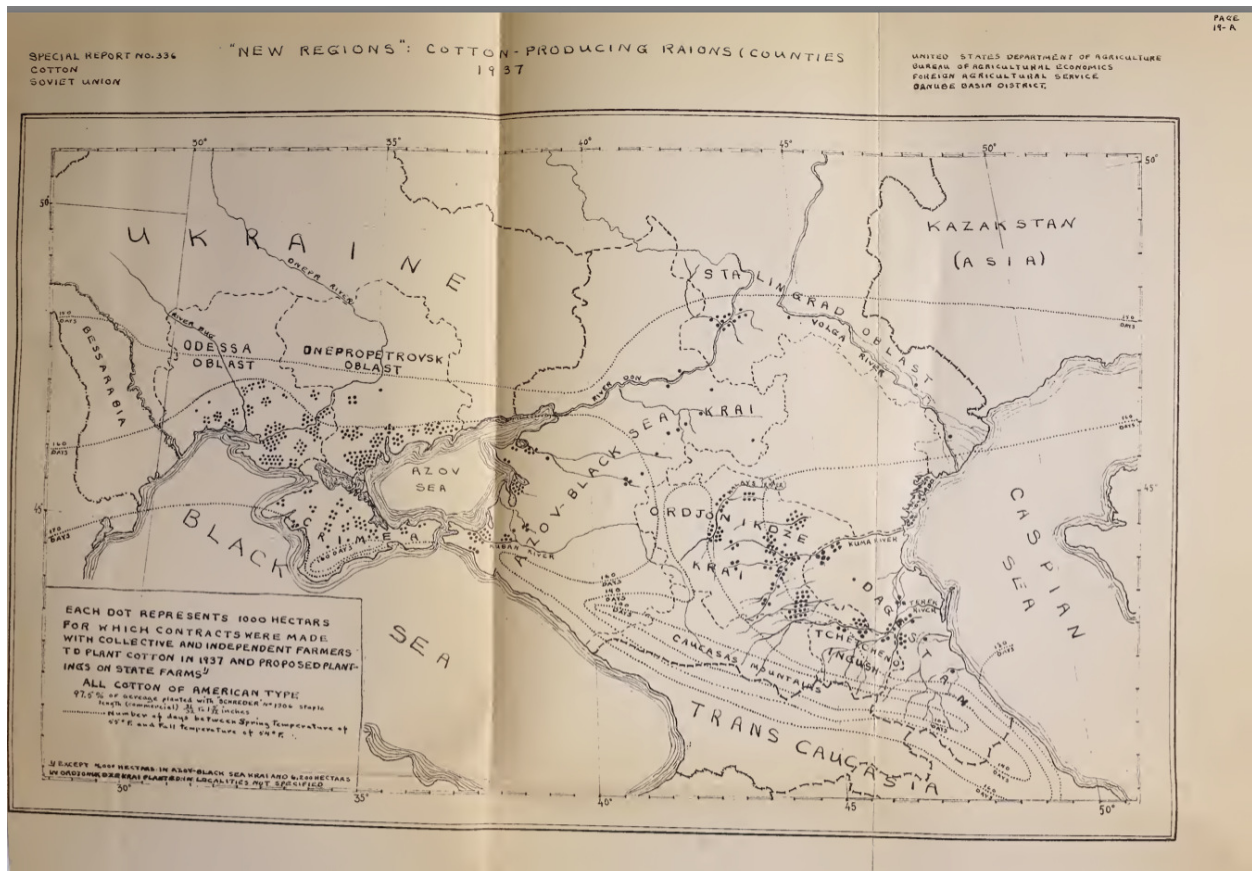
⁷⁰ Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks). (1929, July 18). *Postanovleniye TsK VKP(b) 18 iyulya 1929 g. o rabote Glavkhlopkoma* [Resolution of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) July 18, 1929, on the work of the Main Cotton Committee]. Portal of the Documents of Russian History.

⁷¹ Office of Research and Reports, Central Intelligence Agency. (1955, April 6). *Soviet Cotton Production in the Postwar Period*. CIA.gov. Retrieved June, 2025, from https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000496067.pdf

⁷² Sovet Truda i Oborony. (1930, January 25). *Postanovlenie: O merakh k razvitiyu khlopkovodstva v novykh rayonakh* [Resolution: On measures for the development of cotton cultivation in new regions] (SZ SSSR 1930, No. 7, Art. 89). Istoricheskie Materialy. <http://istmat.org/node/22904>

⁷³ Michael, L. G. (1938). *Cotton-growing in the Soviet Union* (Special Report No. 336). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Foreign Agricultural Service, Danube Basin District.

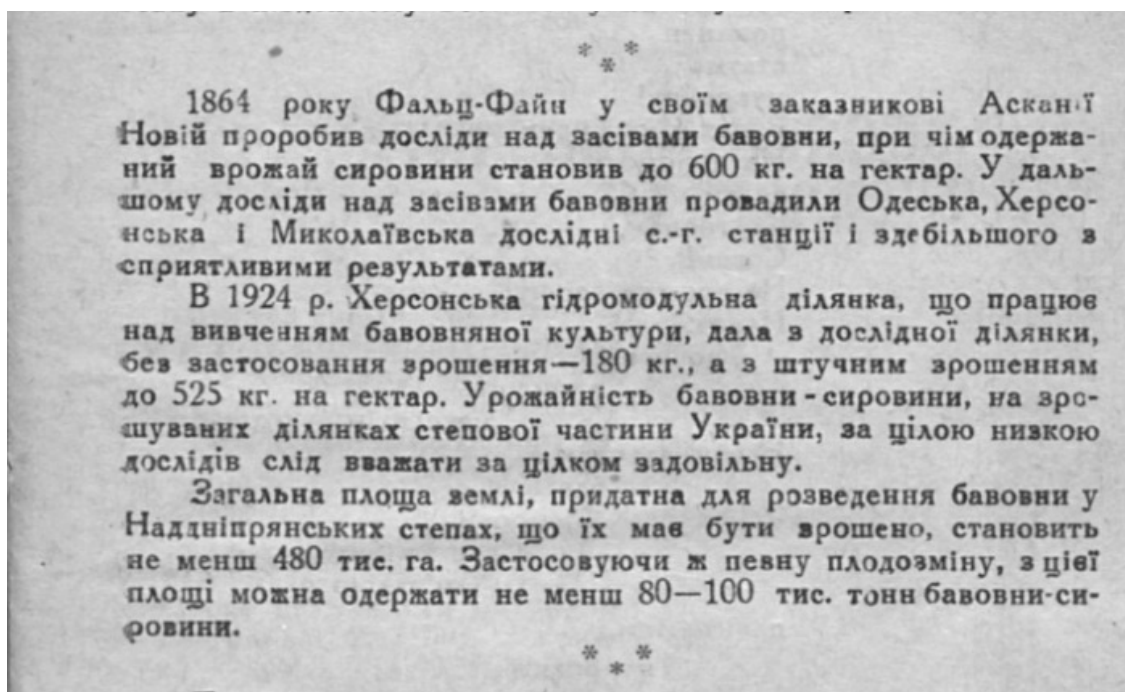
⁷⁴ Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks). (1929, July 18). *Postanovleniye TsK VKP(b) 18 iyulya 1929 g. o rabote Glavkhlopkoma* [Resolution of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) July 18, 1929, on the work of the Main Cotton Committee]. Portal of the Documents of Russian History.



Map: 1938 report from U.S. Agricultural Officer L.G. Michael in Belgrade, mapping "New Regions" and illustrating territory marked for cotton production according to 1937 plans. Each dot represents 1000 Hectares marked for cultivation. Among the "New Regions" the Ukrainian SSR and Crimea had the densest and largest territory designed for cotton.⁷⁵

In humble beginnings, cotton on the territory of Soviet Ukraine was grown mainly on experimental biological stations totaling 15 hectares. 400 hectares overall were dedicated to cotton cultivation in the "New Regions" as of 1927. By 1936, 189000 hectares of the Ukrainian South had been dedicated to this new cash crop in a "gigantic leap". RSFSR and Ukraine combined had 435000 hectares, with a further planned 520000 in 1937 (220000 for Ukraine).

⁷⁵ Michael, L. G. (1938). *Cotton-growing in the Soviet Union* (Special Report No. 336). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Foreign Agricultural Service, Danube Basin District.



The Soviet Union presented itself as a decolonial regime, in opposition to the Russian Empire. Simultaneously, it had no qualms about instrumentalising appropriated imperial structures, like the Askaniya-Nova reserve and research stations that conducted early experiments in cotton-growing.⁷⁶

In the 1930s, production in Ukraine was primarily located in Odesa and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts and Crimea, according to the historical territorial division. Within the agricultural plans for Ukraine in 1936, 180 thousand hectares of land were to be allocated to cotton production. This amount can be weighed against the plan to produce technical crops (2017,8 thousand hectares), which included beets (780,4 thousand hectares) and sunflowers (619 thousand hectares).⁷⁷

While percentage-wise cotton was to be grown on a much smaller territory than the other technical crops, it nevertheless remained a significant area devoted to a labor and resource-intensive crop. In contemporary boundaries, cotton growing occurred in the Odesa, Kherson, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhzhia oblasts and the Autonomous Republic of

⁷⁶ This article in *Vsesvit* about agriculture in the Lower Dnipro details the history of cotton production in the region and its potential. The region's infrastructure development in the 1930s was colloquially known as the "Dniprelstan" project. The development of large-scale infrastructure in connection with a hydroelectric station, new waterways and technical bases brought significant changes to these territories. This new agricultural frontier enabled the cultivation of new crops, such as cotton. The article notes early cotton experiments conducted by Falz-Fein in the natural reserve "Askaniya-Nova". Likely this refers to Friedrich Eduardovich Fein, a colonist of German background, who purchased the territory in 1856. Successful experiments conducted at agricultural stations in Odesa, Kherson and Mykolaiv are also mentioned. The steppe was being prepared for the next stage of its transformation from "inhospitable, infertile" to a land of plenty. Zandrok, Ye. (1930, April 15). *Nyzhnii Dnipro i silske hospodarstvo* [The Lower Dnipro and agriculture]. *Vsesvit*, 6(10–11), 7–9.

⁷⁷ Reingardt, V. E. (1936, November). *Blyastyashchiye uspekhi khlopkovodstva v novykh rayonakh* [Brilliant successes of cotton growing in new regions]. *Sovetskiy khlopok* [Soviet cotton], 1936(11), 31–36. OGIZ Selkhozgiz.

Crimea. Directives to secure insurance against hail, frost, and waterlogging for cotton harvests in the “New Regions” also specified territories in Crimea. Kerch, Feodosia and Sevastopol were the primary areas there.⁷⁸ The same regions were overall utilized in the postwar years, with an expansion of the utilized territory, until the downward trend in the New Regions from 1954.

These regions of Ukraine were chosen for several reasons. Historically, the main agricultural region, the southern lands, boasts fertile soil and a higher amount of daily sun. This geography offered a variety of climates better suited to cotton production than other regions. The temperate, continental climate of southern Ukraine offers mild winters with minimal snow and hot summers with abundant sunshine. The warmer temperate and subtropical climates of the Crimean peninsula were considered even more appropriate.

In the USSR, mostly American and Egyptian varieties were utilized. In Ukraine, American cotton varieties were used for large-scale, industrial cultivation.⁷⁹ This was due to the relatively short growth and harvest cycle of American varieties, which allowed production in a European Continental climate where winters could be short and mild.

For example, Askaniya-Nova biosphere reserve (created in 1888) was the site of cotton experiments in the late Russian empire.⁸⁰ The territory had a median temperature range of -3.5 to 23 degrees Celsius throughout the year. Optimal cotton growth requires 130-160 days of frost-free conditions between 21-23 degrees Celsius. The Kherson region offered 5 months of the year with marginally appropriate conditions. These moderately successful first experiments proved the potential for the development of industrial agricultural production in the region. Coupled with the introduction and cultivation of strains with shorter growth cycles, the use of mineral fertilizer, and improved water access through large-scale irrigation works, particularly in the 1940s, the Soviet government expected to improve output through advancements across all fronts. The “New Regions” were to contribute significantly to increasing cotton yields to meet the Union's growing consumer and defense needs, which only traditional cotton-growing regions were unable to match.⁸¹

Such a multi-strand strategic approach to increase yields was a common sight across the “New Regions.” The process was rooted in earlier experiments but required

⁷⁸ Sovet Truda i Oborony. (1930, March 21). *Ob obyazatelnom okladnom strakhovanii posevov khlopka v novykh rayonakh ot gradobitiya, vymerezaniya i vymochki v 1929-1930 g.* [On mandatory assessment insurance of cotton crops in new regions against hail, freezing, and waterlogging in 1929-1930] (Postanovlenie No. 216). *Sobranie Zakonov i Rasporyazheniy Raboche-Krestyanskogo Pravitelstva SSSR*, (19), Art. 216.

⁷⁹ Sovet Ministrov Ukrainy SSR. (1950, August 31). *Postanovlenie No. 2646* [Decree No. 2646] (Resolution addressed to the Ministerstvo khlopkovodstva USSR; Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 3). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

⁸⁰ Instytut Klimatychno Orientovanogo Silskoho Gospodarstva NAN. (n.d.). *Istoriya Instytutu*. <https://icsanaas.com.ua/en/історія-інституту>

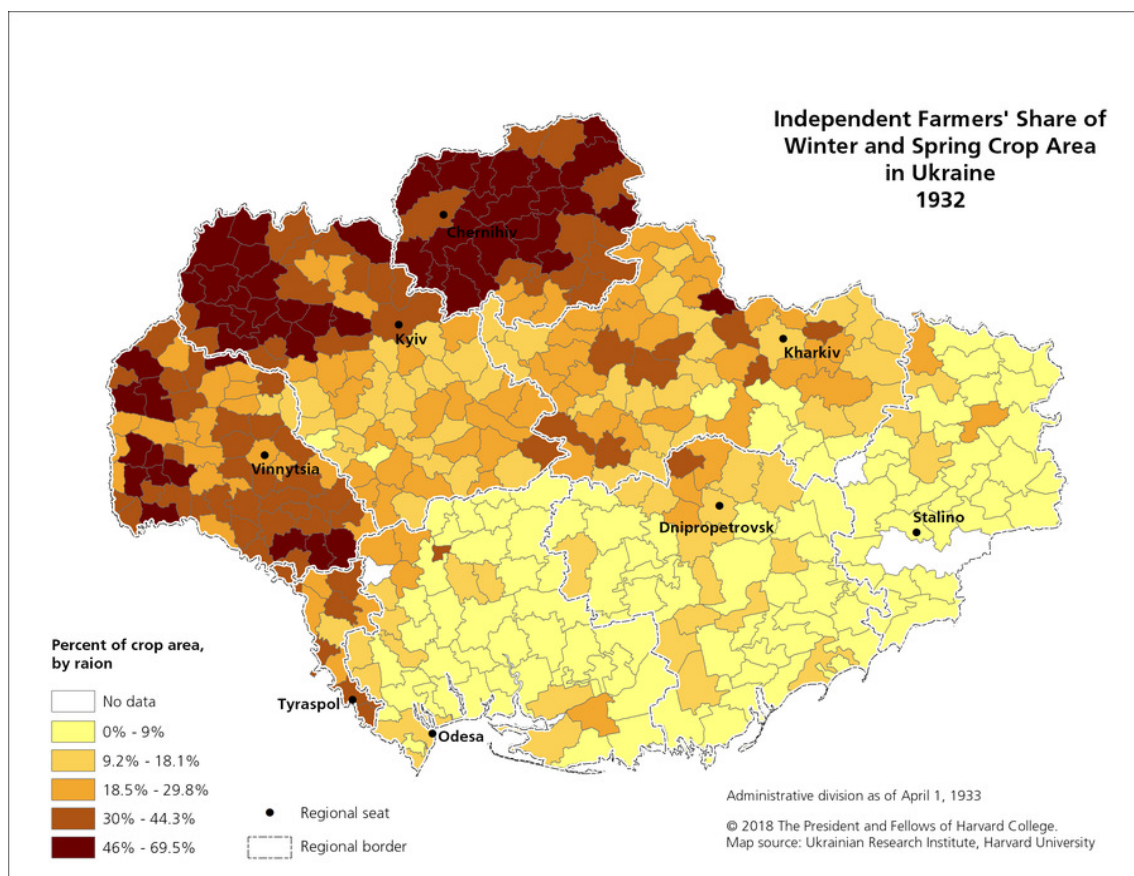
⁸¹ Reyngard, V. E. (1936, September). O planirovanii tretyey pyatiletki v rayonakh novogo khlopkovodstva [On planning the third five-year plan in regions of new cotton cultivation]. *Sovetskyi Khlopok*, (9). [Glavkhlopok].

both drawing on existing experience and adapting to local climate and soil conditions. The latter depended on developing production structures and cultivating a new workforce ready to meet these challenges.

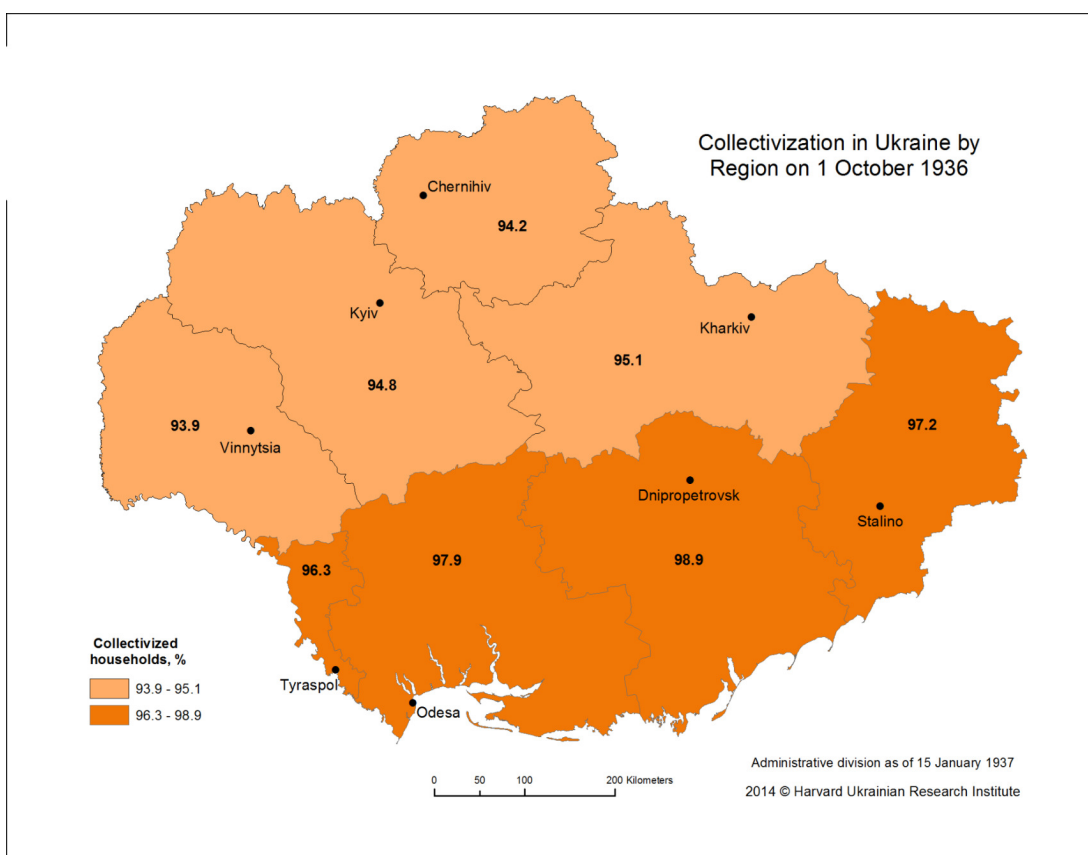
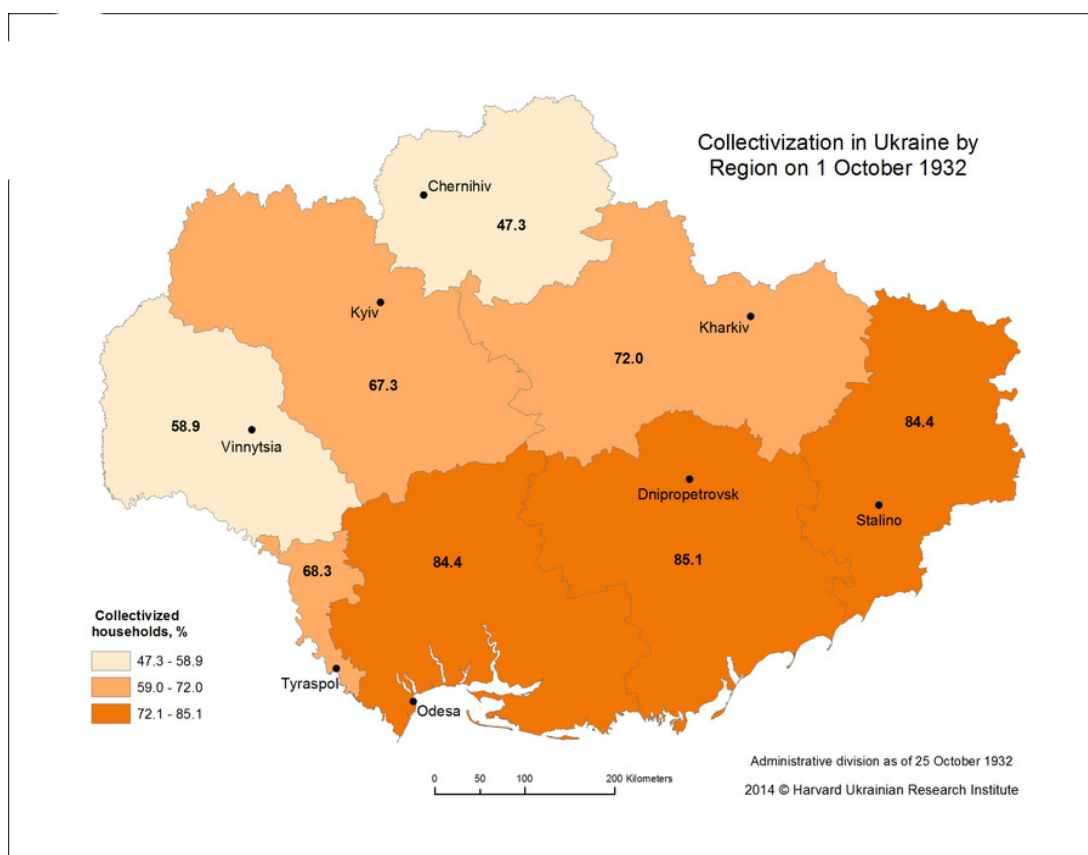
3.4 Structures of production

Industrial cotton production in Soviet Ukraine was significantly shaped by the introduction of collectivisation.⁸² This policy swiftly progressed from 1929, changing the agricultural landscape from independent farmers to collective farms. The pace of collectivisation was markedly quicker in the southern regions of the Ukrainian SSR.

The maps below (2014 © Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute) illustrate the high proportion of collectivized households in the southern regions of Ukraine, which encompassed the main cotton-growing areas.

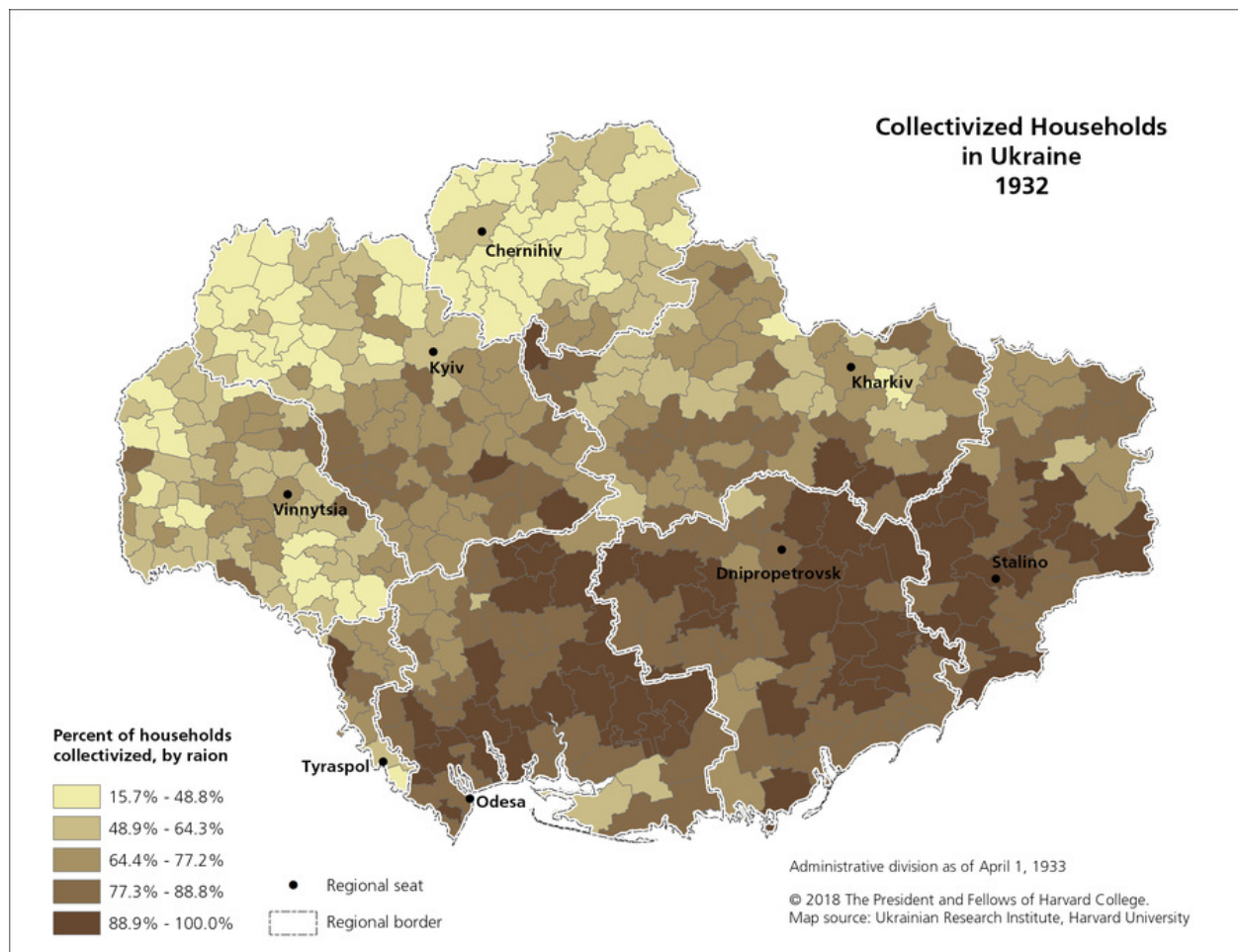


⁸² Collectivisation was a policy of the USSR of forcible transformation of independent peasant farming into collective, state-owned agricultural enterprises. Its decisive role in the transformation of agriculture was noted by Molotov at his address at the opening of the all-Union Agricultural Exhibition in 1939. Molotov, V. M. (1939, September). *Rech' tov. Molotova pri otkrytii Vsesoyuznoy sel'skokhozyaystvennoy vystavki 1-go avgusta 1939 goda* [Speech of Comrade Molotov at the opening of the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition on August 1, 1939]. *Sovetskiy khlopak* [Soviet cotton], 1939(9), 3–6. OGIz Selkhozgiz.



Cotton production took place in collectivised farms (kolhosps) from 1928. While kolhosps were in theory a voluntary collective that elected their head independently and had ownership over means and goods of production, in practice peasants who had been stripped of land and property had few options but to join such farms.⁸³

Radhosp's (Radiatskyi Hospodarstva / Soviet Enterprises) were closer to large-scale farming enterprises or factories, owned and run by the state. As cotton was a strategic crop that required specialised knowledge, cotton was also produced in Bavovnoradhosp's, a specialised form of state household, predominantly seen during the 1930s in Southern Ukraine.



⁸³ Conquest, R. (1984). The man-made famine in Ukraine. In *The man-made famine in Ukraine* (AEI Studies 404, pp. 3–8). American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.
<https://diasporiana.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/books/19629/file.pdf>

3.5 Labour

The question of labour in the cotton fields within the “New Regions” was crucial. “Engaging with the best people” was the “most important, most decisive factor” in achieving success across all agricultural aims. This included experts in cotton.⁸⁴ The expansion of a technical crop into regions where it was foreign led to a shortage of experienced workers in the required numbers. In Ukraine, despite earlier experiments, such significant growth laid bare the inadequacies in both knowledge and workforce. Sourcing the required number of workers was a constant challenge.

Through collectivisation policies, cotton and other collective farms were able to procure hands. Yet the 1930s were widely characterised by resistance of formerly independent farmers against collectivisation. Collective farms were constantly plagued by low productivity, sabotage and subsequent repressions of workers from authorities.⁸⁵

Published decrees regulated the number of workers required for collective farming. In 1933, the People's Commissariat for Agriculture (Narkomzem) dictated the presence of 40 to 70 workers for the execution of critical work related to the period of cultivation and gathering of cotton.⁸⁶ The cotton production cycle required workers at several points: sowing, cultivation, gathering, transportation, and storage. The last stages had the highest potential for failure. Even in the gentler South, weather patterns varied. If frost came early, the plants suffered.⁸⁷ If the cotton buds were not picked before colder weather began, the fibers lost their quality due to waterlogging and low temperatures. Freeing the raw cotton from buds that had not opened in time was painful labour.⁸⁸ Inadequate storage led to the spoilage of painstakingly grown cotton. Further processing for the textile and chemical industries relied on timely delivery.

⁸⁴ Tsentralny Komitet VKP(b). (1936, December 27). *Ob organizatsii Stakhanovskogo dvizheniya v selskom khozyaystve* [About the organisation of the Stakhanovite movement among agricultural workers] (Postanovlenie TsK VKP(b)). *Pravda*.

⁸⁵ Harvard University. (1950, October). *Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System: Schedule A, Vol. 5, Case 54* [Interview with a 57-year-old male Cossack]. Harvard University Library Digital Collections.

<https://hcl.harvard.edu/collections/hpsss/>

⁸⁶ Narodny Komissariat Zemledeliya URSR. (1933, January 26). *Pro organizatsiyu pratsi v kolgospakh, pro postiyu rilnychu vyrobnychu brygadu, vidryadnist, normy vyrobitku, roztsinky ta oblik* [On the organization of labor in collective farms, on the permanent agricultural production brigade, piecework, production rates, pricing and accounting] (Postanova No. 5). qvf

⁸⁷ Odessky Oblispolkom, Sektor VSKhV. (1952, December). *Sluzhebnaya zapiska / pismo Zam. nachalnika Upravleniya s-kh. propagandy Ministerstva Khlopkovodstva USSR Tov. Podvalkovu ot Zav. Sektorom VSKhV Tov. Afanasieva* [Memorandum / Letter to the Deputy Head of the Agricultural Propaganda Directorate of the Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR, Comrade Podvalkov, from the Head of the VSKhV Sector, Comrade Afanasiev] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 455). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

⁸⁸ Myalova, O. (2022). “*Beloe zoloto*” v Azovskom rayone [“White Gold” in the Azov Region]. Don so vsekh storon: Okno v prirodu.

<https://www.dspl.ru/blog/don-so-vsekh-storon/okno-v-prirodu/beloe-zoloto-v-azovskom-rayone/>

Delays in each cycle led to lower yields, but the unpredictability of conditions did not always allow the required workers to be present at the right times. The lack of infrastructure in the “New Regions” required attention, construction, appropriation, and redistribution of available resources.

Internal documents from the early 1950s show that all of the above posed challenges, particularly when conditions deviated from the expected. Numerous documents from the Ministry of Cotton of the Ukrainian SSR document labour shortages, low outputs, and dictate strategies to remedy disappointing results. (Source to specific funds here) Hiring workers who had the necessary knowledge and skills was another challenge.

Growing cotton requires specialist knowledge of its cultivation and management practices. At the start of the cotton independence campaign, the USSR found itself short of workers, both in quantity and quality. Preparation of employees received special attention. In the 1950s, the Ministry of Cotton ran a network of preparatory courses. Knowledge was built through the exchange of expertise, with two-way exchange between Ukraine and Uzbekistan chronicled throughout the 1930s.⁸⁹ This exchange would also continue into the 1950s. But there was a third mechanism the Soviet Union employed, demonstrating the state's power over bodies while utilising them for its own ends.

Governmental bodies responsible for cotton cultivation found the solution to gathering a workforce with experience at the start of large-scale industrial cotton production in Ukraine. They would import workers with lived experience. A significant contingent of “dekulakized” workers from other regions was put to work in the fields.⁹⁰ This included relocated Uzbek, Turkmen and Kazakh workers was present in the Soviet Ukrainian cotton industry.⁹¹ By the end of 1931, more than 15000 individuals had been resettled in the cotton-growing regions of Ukraine. By 1937, 14713 resettlers (8751 workers and their families) worked and lived full-time in special agricultural settlements.

These settlements were connected to 4 state-run collective cotton farms. Workers were permitted to live only in these accommodations, tied to the communes. Conditions were reported to be harsh. Episodes of further repression of displaced workers occurred towards the end of the 1930s, during the height of Soviet repression policies.

⁸⁹ Aleshko, V. (1931). *U boiakh za bavovnyk* [In the battles for cotton]. *Chervonyi Shlyakh*, (7-8), 66.

⁹⁰ “Dekulakisation” occurred across the entire Soviet Union, which meant mass arrests, confiscation of property, deportation, exile presented as “resettlement”, forced labour to punish “enemies of the people.” Davies, R. W., & Wheatcroft, S. G. (2004). The second phase of dekulakisation, 1931. In R. W. Davies, *The industrialisation of Soviet Russia: Vol. 5. The years of hunger: Soviet agriculture, 1931–1933* (pp. 52–79). Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000000-000>

⁹¹ Khaetyskyi, O. P. (2011). Forced labour of uzbek peasants in cotton-growing of Ukraine (1930 – 1950 years) (G. I. Shapovalov, Ed.). *Muzeinyi Visnyk*, 11(2), 160-167.

The Governmental Archival Service of Ukraine documents 42 individuals noted as “bavovniars” (cotton workers) who were sentenced to confiscation of property, execution by gunfire, imprisonment from 8 to 10 years, 8 to 10 years of penal colonies in 1937 and 1938. These workers were majority Uzbek, with some Kazakh, and were tied to 4 state-run collective cotton farms in the Mykolaiv oblast: Kakhovskyi Bavovnoradgosp, Skadovskyi Bavovnoradgosp #1, Bavovnoradgosp #2 of the Skadovsk Raion, and Bavovnoradgosp #2 of the Kakhovskyi Raion. Executions were carried out in Kherson. Punitive measures against collective farm workers were a common policy during Soviet rule, particularly at the height of collectivisation. Only in 1948 would the special settlements be wound down.

Periodicals from the 1930s also document the many connections between Central Asia and Ukraine, chronicling solidarity and learning trips. The presence of Uzbek workers on Ukrainian soviet Bavovnoradgosps (collective cotton farms) was so prevalent that even the Chervonyi Bavovniar (the Red Cotton Worker also known as Qzil Paxtaci) periodical was published between 1932 and 1939 in Skadovsk (then Mykolaiv region, contemporary Kherson oblast) in 3 languages: Ukrainian, Russian and Uzbek. Yet by the end of WW2, most Uzbek and Kazakh families and workers had returned home or left their collective farms.⁹²

The positioning of Soviet authorities around the value of people, while instrumentalising those it deemed necessary, redistributing entire populations, and penalising those it considered “wrongdoers,” points to the harsh biopolitics of production aimed at achieving the goals of communism. In this sense, the cotton project in Ukraine followed other Soviet republics, in which the Soviet Union continued to supply the needs of the metropole with cotton by resourcing its peripheries to the detriment of local populations. Peterson’s research on Central Asia illustrates this on the example of how prioritising cotton production systematically displaced food crops, leading to lower quality of life and “semistarvation” of locals.⁹³ The considerations of the local populace were not an obstacle to achieving the aims of the metropole.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, collective cotton farms were no different from other collectivised households of the era in terms of underperformance across a variety of areas (shortage of personnel, low morale, lack of equipment). The farms would continue to be plagued by under-delivery against expectations, particularly as the push for cotton became more brutal, and the war with Germany drew closer. Controlling and repressive collectivist policies continued throughout the entire early period of the development of the “New Regions.”

⁹² Khaetskyi, O. (2011). [Vykorystannia prymusovoi pratsi uzbetskyih selian u bavovnytstvi Ukrainy (30-ti-50-ti roky XX st)] [Use of forced labour of Uzbek peasants in cotton cultivation in the Ukraine (1930s-1950s)]. *Muzeiniyi Visnyk*, (12), 160–167. <https://www.academia.edu/42106125/>

⁹³ Peterson, M. (2016, May 19). US to USSR: American Experts, Irrigation, and Cotton in Soviet Central Asia, 1929–32. *Environmental History*, 21(3), 456–457. <https://doi.org/10.1093/envhis/emw006>

Whether cotton production took place in bayovnoradhosps or kolhosps, efforts to expand mechanisation were continuous throughout the period of cotton cultivation in Soviet Ukraine. In 1933, the People's Commissariat issued a decree about the organisation of specialist cotton mechanical-tractor departments in the network of tractor centers in Ukraine. To serve the cotton MTS (Mechanical Tractor Stations), regional grain tractor departments were to be set up in Odesa and Dnipropetrovsk the same year.

Mechanisation unfolded gradually across all cotton regions to address yields lost to slow, hand-picked harvests. This process of introducing new technologies also aligned with the way the Soviet Union saw itself and liked to be seen – as a progressive innovator, using engineering advances to improve workers' lives and well-being.



The push for mechanisation applied to cotton across the Soviet Union aligned with the regime's modernist ideology.⁹⁴

The crucial factor in expanding cotton production into new regions was the lack of mainstream experience with the crop. This was to be solved by bridging expertise from traditional cotton-growing territories and the "New Regions." Throughout the early 1930s and 1950s, numerous missions of professional exchange between

⁹⁴ *Traktorna kolona "Dzhon Dyr" na 60 mashyn, shcho pryznachena dlia vidpravky v Khyvu na zasiv* [Photograph]. (1931, March 30). *Vsesvit*, (9), 1.

Ukrainian experts to Uzbekistan and Uzbek experts to Ukraine took place. These visits were chronicled in Soviet periodicals and in enterprise documents. Uzbek experts were to teach cotton cultivation, while Ukrainians were to share their larger and more successful experience in collectivisation. Knowledge on growing this new crop was to be swiftly integrated at the local levels.

In 1936, a decree was published to organise agricultural technical studies for kolhosp and network contingents. Learning occurred in agricultural “clubs,” and orders were also issued to produce and provide specialist literature to workers in agriculture in general, as well as on specific subjects. Cotton received its own professional publication, “Radianska Bavovna,” which was a mix of botany and engineering case studies, sprinkled with a good dose of party-line propaganda.

Cotton agricultural cultivation and its wider infrastructure required a vast amount of specialist and non-specialist labour. Through these approaches, cotton cultivation in the Ukrainian SSR was made possible by the application of a diversified workforce for both manual and mechanised labour, under a managerial/governmental overstructure that directed available human resources as needed.

In strategic documents, cotton was positioned as “white gold” - a cash crop needed to build socialism, a resource that would allow for improving the circumstances of soviet workers. Yet the conditions of work, the exploitation of labour, and the appropriation of land and output became standard for Soviet production practices.

3.6 Chapter Conclusion

The “New Regions” emerged as a response to practical needs of Soviet leadership. The expansion of cotton-growing to new geographies was intended to offset the loss of traditional supply chains and political instability in Central Asia. A new resource base was developed to answer rising demand with the development of new industries and technologies. By the end of the 1930s, Glavhlopok (the Main Cotton Administration) had integrated the majority of the Glavhlopkom’s functions.⁹⁵ The development of the all-Union cotton industry had yielded a significant network of governmental institutions and enterprises on all levels of production and government. The centre of decision-making to launch new agricultural initiatives was not local. These new, centralised institutions all led to Moscow.

Within the “New Regions,” the Ukrainian SSR was set to be a major player in the developing cotton industry. This was indicated by several factors. Firstly, the significant territory that was designated for cotton cultivation. Secondly, the time and resources invested in building expertise through exchanges with more experienced cotton regions. The development of worker training programmes in various forms

⁹⁵ Slutskiy, A. A. (1936, September). *Fakty i tsifry — upryamaya veshch'* [Facts and figures are a stubborn thing]. *Sovetskiiy khlopok* [Soviet cotton], 1936(9), 42–48. OatGIZ Selkhozgiz.

spoke to the long-term ambitions of this plan. Short-term labour shortages were addressed by importing workers from cotton-growing regions, indicating a demand for quick results amid rising global tensions in the lead-up to WWII. Policies of collectivisation shaped cotton production similarly to other agricultural crops in Ukraine during this period. Cotton, as a strategic resource, was given high priority by the Soviet leadership. This was articulated through specialist publications and party documents. Collectivisation, labour, and mechanisation were all ideological concepts and practical instruments that were utilised to support the goal of “cotton autonomy”. The “battle for cotton” was a militarised framework that aligned with wider Soviet positioning of the early 5-year plans. It was positioned firstly as defensive, rather than offensive, even as the Soviet Union was preparing for war.

The Soviet Union internalised and accelerated modernist policies first expressed by the earlier Tsarist administration. The Ukrainian SSR took over Imperial Russian research stations and molded them into springboards for large-scale socialist cotton industrialisation. While early cotton experiments were successful, the launch of the cotton initiative in Ukraine faced many challenges. Large-scale farming under real life conditions was less successful. The expansion of cotton, as collectivisation generally, were both resisted by local populations. Harsh measures were taken to secure means of production and to achieve economic goals.

Thus Ukraine’s human and natural resources were subordinated into a command economy that was managed centrally. Socialist Moscow, as the centre of decision-making, took over as the metropole. While Soviet propaganda was gearing up for the twenty-year anniversary of the October Revolution, the cotton industry was also looking back and pinpointing achievements to present to the public. The achievements of cotton production from 1929 to 1936 in the “New Regions” were characterized as grand and historic. This was but the start of the dissonance between ideology and reality of cotton production in the Ukrainian SSR.

4. Postwar Aspirations for Ukrainian Cotton Cultivation

Working through the early years of the cotton industry in Ukraine, from the Russian Empire to early Soviet times into German occupation, I mapped a tremendous amount of effort into cultivating a crop that had mostly vanished from collective memory and identity, at least until a recent resurgence due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Across the historical agricultural landscape, Ukraine was known for its golden grain, its blooming sunflowers, and its sweet and fuchsia beetroot. Cotton was the crop of the mono-economies of the Central Asian Soviet Republics, but the white bud had entered the "New Regions" prior to WWII and reemerged with new significance within the post-war economy.

After the German occupation, which was marked by interest in the cotton crop and attempts to control and develop the industry, the Soviets returned to cotton production in Ukraine. By the second half of the 20th century, during the recovery from the destruction of WWII, the Uzbek, Turkmen, Tajik, and Azerbaijan SSRs were projected to have the highest cotton yields, according to the fourth five-year plan. Ukraine was expected to rank among the top 5 regions by area sown. The expected yield of only 5.0 centners per hectare, compared to over 20 centners per hectare projected for the top-producing nations.⁹⁶ Scarcity of labour, fuel, and seeds was critical in the postwar years, so the investment was significant. As was the founding of a dedicated "Ministry of Cotton Cultivation" in the USSR in 1950.

For what purpose had the Ministry, with its own chapter in Soviet Ukraine, come into existence (and disappeared)? These reasons and aspirations are what I examine in this chapter using materials intended for public consumption and internal strategic documents from government institutions. Utilizing periodicals from Soviet Ukraine and Russia, photographic and audiovisual records, and contemporary research, I analyze the ideological threads within cotton from the 1940s and 1950s in Soviet Ukraine in the context of postwar recovery, and the industry's genealogy from earlier processes in previous decades (1920s-1930s). In this chapter, I first explore the representation of cotton and its positioning within wider processes across agriculture, economics, and development in Soviet Ukraine. I will demonstrate the main ideological themes and priorities of the Soviet authorities regarding the expansion of cotton cultivation in the Soviet Union in the 1940s, which extended to the Ukrainian SSR. In many ways, cotton cultivation continued the industrial endeavour

⁹⁶ Office of Research and Reports, Central Intelligence Agency. (1955, April 6). *Soviet Cotton Production in the Postwar Period*. CIA.gov. Retrieved June, 2025, from https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000496067.pdf

launched in the 1930s. Yet postwar realities influenced the closure of the cotton chapter in “New Regions” and Ukraine.

4.1 Clash of Ideologies on the Cotton Fields: Shifting meanings of cotton during and post-war

The Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union commenced in June 1941. By November of the same year, the Ukrainian SSR and the Crimean peninsula had come entirely under the control of the Third Reich. Under the administration of the Reichskommissariat Ukraine (RKU), occupational forces pursued not only recomposition of the local population through genocide and resettlement. Control and extraction of Ukraine’s resources was the official Third Reich Policy.⁹⁷ Cotton, along with its derivatives and means of production, was among the critical resources now controlled by German and Allied Romanian forces. Considerations regarding the sharing of the spoils of war were weighed continuously, especially in light of Romanian interests, as their forces controlled the Transnistrian Governorate, which encompassed the Odesa region.⁹⁸ Yet needs and distribution were tightly controlled by the Germans. Removal and redistribution of raw materials, crops, and products now served the needs of another metropole. This time it was Berlin. Print media of the occupational period emphasized the Soviet loss of cotton resources.

⁹⁷ Priemel, K. C. (2015). Occupying Ukraine: Great Expectations, failed opportunities, and the spoils of war, 1941–1943. *Central European History*, 48(1), 31–52. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938915000059>

⁹⁸ Mykhailutsa, M. (2026). Civil, occupation administration in Transnistria, its structure and personnel collaboration (1941-1944) . V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University Bulletin History of Ukraine. *Ukrainian Studies: Historical and Philosophical Sciences*, 42, 71-86. <https://doi.org/10.26565/2227-6505-2026-42-06>

Совіти втрачають бавовняні терени

Після втрати України і Криму, більшовики втратили дві найважливіші території, на яких управляють бавовну. За старої царської Росії бавовну управляли головню на полях Туркестану, Узбекистану та Таджикистану, зате більшовики під час другої п'ятирічки поширили території управи бавовни також на Казахстан, північний Кавказ, Крим та Україну. Головна причина була передовсім, в тому, що попередні терени управи бавовни дуже далеко лежали, бо аж в середній Азії, а бавовняний промисл знаходився на Україні та середній Росії.

Поширення терену поступає передовсім, починаючи з 1930 р. і то так

скоро, що вже в 1939 р. на загальну кількість управної площі в СРСР 2,09 міль. га, 600000 га лежить в європейській часті СРСР. З того припадає на Україну около 228000 га, на Крим 50 — 55 тис. га, так що німецькі війська, займаючи Україну і Крим, заняли майже половину управної бавовняної площі в європейській часті СРСР. В 1939 р. збір бавовни дав на Україні майже 115000 тон бавовни, а на Кримі 45000 тон. В останніх роках Совіти старались також якісно піднести продуктивність бавовни. Тут заслугоють на увагу міста Генічеськ, Миколаїв та Херсон.

Ліпший сорт бавовни на Україні не був гірший, як азійський.

⁹⁹ "Soviets are losing cotton territories." This article is from Zhovkivski Visty, a gazette published during the German occupation in Western Ukraine. It highlighted that Soviet authorities began to develop cotton-growing in Kazakhstan, the Northern Caucasus, Crimea and Ukraine due to logistics considerations. Raw materials in Central Asia were located too far from the light industry, based in Ukraine and Russia. It also states that "the soviets" focused in recent years on improving cotton quality. The most noteworthy were Genichesk, Mykolaiv and Kherson. "The best cotton variety in Ukraine was no worse than in Asia." Sovity tratiaht bavovniani tereny [Soviets are losing cotton territories]. (1941, December 14). Zhovkivski Visti, (26), 2.



Occupational forces kept careful records of goods produced in Ukraine that would serve wartime needs. From the beginning of the occupation and by the end of 1942, among a wide variety of goods, 8500 tons of cotton, 20500 tons of cellulose, and 52000 tons of paper were produced.¹⁰¹ At the beginning of March 1943, 5100 tons of cotton were sent to Germany and to the frontlines.¹⁰² The reasons for this resourceification and representations of such actions to the local populace ran in different directions.

¹⁰⁰ A page out of the "Sumskyi Visnyk" ("Sumy Daily") gazette, published during the time of German occupation in the Sumy region. A brief article catalogues "cotton losses" of the Soviets as the German forces continued East. It notes rich seed storages and valuable textile products that were taken over. The article also underlines the critical role of Ukrainian and Crimean land for the production of cotton for the USSR. It underlines that a third of total cotton production occurred in the European cotton-growing territories, in the area between the Don River and the Caucasus. D. U.-Ts. (1942, August 30). Soviet'ski vtraty bavovny [Sounderscores the critical role of Ukrainian and Crimean land in the USSR's cotton productionviet cotton losuffered by the Soviets as the German forces continued Eastwardsses]. *Sumskyi Visnyk*, 1.

¹⁰¹ Reichskommissariat Ostland / Reichsministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete. (1943, February 16). *Aktennotiz für den Führer. Betrifft: Rohstoffproduktion in den besetzten Ostgebieten* [Memorandum for the Führer. Subject: Raw material production in the occupied Eastern territories] (Document No. 171) [Exhibition item]. National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War, Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁰² Auswärtiges Amt – Der Vertreter des Auswärtigen Amts beim Reichskommissar für die Ukraine. (1943, March 26). *Amtliche Ziffern über die deutsche Ernährungswirtschaft in der Ukraine* [Official figures on the German food economy in Ukraine] (Document No. 342263 / AA Vertr.AAb.RK 2) [Exhibition item]. National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War, Kyiv, Ukraine.

A page out of the history of the Nazi occupation of Ukraine reveals the hopes and needs for the local cotton industry, projected by the occupational government. Occupational media sources offer insight into this positioning. In May and June of 1943, the same article “Growing Cotton in Southern Ukraine and Crimea” was published in 3 periodicals: *Dzvin* (Kryvyi Rih); *Holos Volyni / Voice of Volyn’* (Volyn’ Oblast); *Khorolskyi Visti* (Khorol, Poltava region)¹⁰³ The publications were in circulation throughout occupied regions, and published in the Ukrainian language 2-3 times a week between 1941 and 1943. Loosely, they covered the same topics, sometimes with different materials, sometimes with reruns of texts, apparently distributed centrally. Among common topics: the successes of German military strategies and failures of the communists and Americans; demonisation and conflation of Jews, capitalism, and Bolshevism; calls to fight with partisans who are presented as acting against Ukrainian national interest; forced labour in Germany of Ukrainians as a positive force of exchange and building closer ties. The majority of texts published had no author mentioned, such as the article on cotton, but two of the reprints mentioned Rivne as the location where it was first published.

“Growing Cotton in Southern Ukraine and Crimea” addressed the overall conditions for cotton cultivation in Ukraine and argued that, while circumstances and climate were not ideal, wartime necessity trumped inefficiencies. Driving the need was the multi-purpose use of cotton, but first and foremost, its use in the military. The article also weaponized Soviet inefficiencies, claiming that statistics from the socialist government were dressed up as propaganda and that the proclaimed results of earlier years were even lower than presented publicly. The article concluded with recommendations for growing cotton, stressing that higher yields could be achieved through diligent, proper care. In 1943, with more than a year of the occupational regime, cotton cultivation faltered due to a variety of factors. Thus, the need for recommitment - to keep the Red Army at bay.

This article was published in regions and gazettes that were not part of the regions in which cotton was produced. Perhaps there was broader distribution, but a deeper examination of publications from the period is required to determine this. In any case, the nature of the article and its availability speak to the Nazi regime's need to continue producing cotton despite its earlier challenges and failures. The wider distribution of this publication positions cotton in a similar critical light, as it was in the Soviet Union during the “Cotton Autonomy” campaign. Military needs and the greater social good were among the key messaging. Careless or distracted work being the reason for low harvests likewise echoes the earlier Soviet positioning regarding the importance of cotton production. Different regime, but the song is the same.

¹⁰³ Growing cotton in Southern Ukraine and Crimea. (1943, May) *Dzvin*, 2.

In Khorolskyi Visti, another article from this period addressed the wider industry during occupation: “The Provision of Textile Products in Ukraine.” In it, the existing industry in Ukraine, developed through the 1930s and earlier under the Soviet regime, is presented as backward and underdeveloped at the craft level, not at the industrial level. A rationale was put forward for the way the cotton and textile industry was run during those years. While cotton, wool, linen, and hemp were grown and processed in Ukraine, the materials were then transferred to Germany, where it was to be produced into textile products. Subsequently, these goods would be returned to Ukraine and distributed among the populace in exchange for dutiful work. The Soviet authorities were blamed for not putting enough effort into developing the textile industry, making Ukraine unable to be self-sufficient in providing the local populace with enough products. The level of industry in Ukraine is so low that it makes no sense to develop the sector. Essentially, the approach to Ukraine is both extractivist and used as a market for German-produced goods.

This positioning revealed several points for consideration. One is that the German occupational forces likely had little understanding of Ukraine’s traditional textile practices. Hemp, linen, and wool were more commonly used household materials. The other is that this was simple propaganda. Cotton, in its leading role in the military industry, whether it be related to chemical uses such as gunpowder, uniforms, or medicine, was the likelier end source, at least in wartime. Germany had enacted restrictions on the use of cotton for civilian goods in the years leading up to their military aggression, which developed into WW2.¹⁰⁴ As they now had assumed control of not only Ukraine’s cotton fields, but also of its chemical and gunpowder plants, they needed to supply them to continue the fight against the Red Army. The occupation also deprived the Soviet Union of critical military industry, creating a “bottleneck” in their military response.¹⁰⁵ To address these deficits, the Soviet Union requested chemicals for explosives and fuel from the U.S. under the Second Protocol.¹⁰⁶ It was also reported that they sought sourcing cotton from Egypt.¹⁰⁷

Ukraine’s resources were mobilised to hold up Germany’s war economy.¹⁰⁸ In “Empire of Cotton”, Sven Beckert writes about the prominent role of cotton in Germany’s economy and its high dependence on imports. By 1913, one in eight

¹⁰⁴ *Zaborona vzhvyaty bavovny* [Ban on the use of cotton]. (1939, July 5). *Dilo*, (151)

¹⁰⁵ Isaev, A. V. (2025, February 28). Production of gunpowder and ammunition as a "bottleneck" of the soviet military economy and its impact of armed struggle in 1941-1945. *Vestnik Volgogradskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta Serija 4 Istorija Regionovedenie Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenija*, 30(2), 21-30. <https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu4.2025.2.2>

¹⁰⁶ Munitions Assignments Board. (1942). *Second protocol between the USSR the US and great britain tabs 5-12 (contains miscellaneous data also)* (Folder Lot 2). Combined Chiefs of Staff, Record Group 218. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

¹⁰⁷ Sovety potrebut yhipetskoi bavovny [Soviets need Egyptian cotton]. (1942, January 21). *Nove Ukrainske Slovo*, 1(15), Page 2.

¹⁰⁸ Priemel, K. C. (2015). Occupying Ukraine: Great Expectations, failed opportunities, and the spoils of war, 1941–1943. *Central European History*, 48(1), 31–52. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938915000059>

German workers was employed in the textile production industry (spinning and weaving), which amounted to their “most considerable of all domestic industries and constituted the nation’s most important export product.” In World War 1, Germany also suffered cotton shortages and, as a consequence, invested in the development of man-made fibers as an alternative. In the 1930s, 20% of their foreign imports went towards cotton and textiles, so diversifying and limiting external sourcing became a priority.¹⁰⁹ Occupational forces continued cotton processing measures in Mykolaiv - one example of how Germany mobilised both resources and labour.¹¹⁰ The long-term goal of German industrialists was to “grow cotton for German manufacturers on German-controlled soil under German supervision - in fact, to become more like their American and Russian competitors.”¹¹¹ In Ukraine, we see this ambition realised, the inspiration being earlier (Imperial) Russia and its contemporary arrangements, in which the Soviet Union’s peripheries continued to supply the metropole’s cotton needs.

The claims of purposeful underdevelopment of Ukraine’s textile industry from occupational periodicals line up with Professor Oleksandr Ohloblyn’s characterization of the textile industry in Ukraine, published more than a decade earlier in Soviet Kharkiv.¹¹² Ohloblyn’s view was that the industry in Ukraine was deliberately underdeveloped under Russian rule throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, the territory being designated as a market for Russian goods. The idea that much progress in a short time couldn’t have been achieved is plausible, particularly given Christian Ward’s work.¹¹³ His study of the textile industry in the Russian Empire through the 1920s and later years revealed that the industry remained heavily influenced by British industry. The same equipment remained in service for decades. Industry was not as quick to be reformed and through text. Industry was not as quick to change, even through the technological advances of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Labour systems, equipment, and ways of working rolled over into new ideological frameworks and simply carried on.

In Ohloblyn’s overview, the narrative of 1929 colored by Soviet ideology becomes clear: the cotton industry on the territory of Ukraine under the Russian empire was tightly controlled to the benefit of the “Russian industrial bourgeoisie.” It did not amount only to controlling the construction of textile factories and other cotton-processing plants, allowing the industry in Ukraine to work with “second-rate”

¹⁰⁹ Scherner, J., & Spoerer, M. (2023). Infant company protection in the German semi-synthetic fibre industry: Market power, technology, the Nazi government and the post-1945 world market. *Business History*, 65(3), 541–571. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2021.1900118>

¹¹⁰ Zakinchennia kampanii ochyshchuvannia bavovny [The end of the cotton processing campaign]. (1943, May 29). *Promin*, 2(40), 3.

¹¹¹ Beckert, S. (2014). *Empire of cotton: A global history*. (p, colored by Soviet ideology, becomes clear: the cotton industry in p 345–378) Vintage Books.

¹¹² Ohloblyn, O. (1929, March). Bavovniana promyslovist na Ukraini v XVIII-XIX st. [The cotton industry in Ukraine in the 18th–19th centuries]. *Chervonyi Shliakh*, (3), 116–135. Libraria.ua. <https://libraria.ua/>

¹¹³ Ward, C. (2018). Languages of Trade or a Language of Class? In L. H. Siegelbaum & R. G. Suny (Eds.), *Making Workers Soviet: Power, Class, and Identity* (pp. 194–218). Cornell University Press.

products such as cotton fluff (vata). In the Kherson and Odesa regions, there were 8 factories, all of which worked with cotton fluff. The largest industrial production in Kherson that actually worked with cotton thread belonged to the South-Russian Tovarystvo of cotton thread and weaving (based in Odesa). Transit through Ukrainian territory of cotton products (both legal and illegal) threatened the interests of Russian Imperial producers, who viewed Ukraine mostly as a consumer and attempted to curtail any imports flowing from across the Black Sea and from Turkey, as well as from the European side. While Ohloblyn's position here seems firmly Soviet, it is unsurprising that the German occupation government adopted specific points. A historian by trade, he had found himself on both sides of Soviet authorities throughout the 1930s. Going back and forth between imprisonment during Stalin's purges, he ended up teaching at Ukrainian universities.¹¹⁴ For a brief moment in time, he also served as Mayor of German-occupied Kyiv, departing to serve as Director of the Kyiv Archive Museum of the Transitional Period through 1942.¹¹⁵ The propaganda museum operated only for a brief time, covering Bolshevik crimes and drawing comparisons between the two regimes. For the benefit of the Third Reich, of course.¹¹⁶ Ohloblyn's background as a scholar of economic history likely informed not only the institution's work. It is probable that his work also influenced the wider German framing of their campaigns for resource control.

While Ohloblyn's 1930s imprisonment was connected to "bourgeois nationalist views", his 1929 work expressed perspectives that align with decolonisation and empowerment narratives pursued by the Soviet Union across Central Asia. Underdevelopment and bourgeois interests of imperialism were to become a thing of the past in the name of "Cotton Autonomy" and the empowerment of workers. While the main ideological framing of cotton production in the 1930s in Ukraine took shape as a positioning of innovation and opportunity, the undercurrent of comparative worker exploitation and brighter futures ran through the wider socialist project and entered the language of the Nazi occupational regime. Facets of "greater good" and blaming other regimes interested both competing powers that battled for control of Ukrainian territory and its cotton agriculture and industrial production in the early 1940s.

Ohloblyn fled Kyiv and Western Ukraine as the Red Army launched a bloody counteroffensive in 1943. He spent the remainder of his life in the U.S., continuing his scholarly work. His example shows how regimes that positioned themselves in

¹¹⁴ Plokhyy, S. (2012). *The Cossack myth: History and nationhood in the age of empires*. Cambridge University Press.

¹¹⁵ Berkhoff, K. C. (2004). *Harvest of despair: Life and death in Ukraine under Nazi rule*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

¹¹⁶ Byelaya, O. (Comp.). (2002). *Muzey-Arkhyv Perekhodovoyi doby: pofondovyy putivnyk* [Museum-Archive of the Transition Period: A collection guide] (I. Divnyy, Ed.). Derzhavnyy komitet arkhiviv Ukrayiny; Derzhavnyy arkhiv Kyivskoyi oblasti; Ukrayinskyy tsentr biohrafichnoyi nekropolistyky.

opposition utilised not only the same narratives. They also used the same people to achieve their aims. This was so off, and likely on the fields as well. As Germany lacked experience in cotton growing in its European territories, it required a workforce with some understanding of what needed to be done under local conditions. The fact that cotton production continued throughout the occupation years shows that, in all probability, those enterprises did not suffer extensive changes. At least until the front moved across Ukrainian territories in the other direction during the counteroffensive.

The entire territory of Ukraine was brought under Soviet control in October 1944. The Reichskommissariat Ukraine was formally disbanded in November 1944, and the Ukrainian SSR resumed and continued. The country and its people had suffered major losses in people and infrastructure after years of occupation.

While WW2 had depleted industrial capacity across the warring nations, it also boosted Soviet industry following its end. Driven by a need for recovery and bolstered by a flurry of reparations given to the Soviet Union from Germany, local industry was padded by dismantled and repurposed German equipment and infrastructure, spurred on by the glory of a triumph over fascism.¹¹⁷ Soviet Ukraine, as a battle theatre on the Eastern Front, would require significant attention to restore Soviet order, rebuild, and reorient itself in a new frontier.

A world reshaped once again found itself on the other side of technological advancements, with a changed landscape of raw materials suppliers and consumption. Cotton was no longer the only crop required for the production of explosive piroxilin, thanks to advances in using wood pulp. Man-made fibres entered local and global markets. Soviet leadership found themselves in a world where they must not only feed and clothe their populace, but also take advantage of their newfound connections to the wider world. They would have to compete with a capitalist world that had, for a brief moment in time, allied itself with the Reds.

The “battle for cotton” - industrialization weaponized and institutionalized throughout the 1930s was in the process of being reframed once again. The Soviet Union was no longer overtly militaristic (albeit defensive). The Soviet people and their leader, Stalin, were now peace-bringers. And cotton was not to be fought for, but cultivated through scientific learning, technological advancements, ethical labour and “care.” In Ukraine, it would fit into broader, reinvigorated plans for the transformation of the South and the Steppe. Labour in cotton production, like all agricultural production, would serve as a “contribution to the cause of strengthening peace throughout the world.”¹¹⁸ In the next subchapters, I will expand on how these positionings were developed and presented.

¹¹⁷ Nettl, P. (1951). German Reparations in the Soviet Empire. *Foreign Affairs*, 29(2), 300–307. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20030835>

¹¹⁸ Letter to Ukrainian Cotton Workers to Stalin, 1951. TSDAVO, Fund 5021, Sprava 272.

4.2 Hopes for Cotton Revisited: Union Decrees and Party Priorities

If the 1930s were framed predominantly by the strategic goal of “cotton independence” and self-sufficiency from external supply chains, the late 1940s transitioned to a more self-oriented approach within the context of post-war rebuilding. The broader aims of Soviet authorities of this period were to raise the standard of living for Soviet citizens. Creating “material abundance” was necessary for the transition to communism. To make this new prosperity a reality, fast-paced modernisation and industrialization were to take place, imagined and led by Joseph Stalin. This included large-scale infrastructure and irrigation projects in the Ukrainian South, such as the construction of Kakhova Dam. These projects were envisioned to benefit cotton cultivation specifically, and agricultural production overall. The post-war period adopted and intensified ideas of scientific advancement. The transformation of nature was a symbol of humanity, and, concretely, of Soviet ingenuity. Cotton cultivation within this narrative was presented as both a symbol and an instrument to attain party goals during this period of Soviet “High Modernism”.¹¹⁹

Ukraine, as a strategic “resource base” for raw materials, including cotton, entered the Soviet imagination through a variety of propaganda materials: republican and regional agricultural exhibitions, specialist publications, commemorative stamps, film, gazettes, monumental architecture and more. They became illustrations of ideology in practice and of ways to communicate strategic plans. Ultimately, they were adopted, reciprocated and reproduced by republican, regional and local “second-tier” actors. This included administration authorities, heads of cotton trusts and cotton enterprises.

Stalin’s address in 1946 presented cotton as one of the backbone industries fueling the Soviet Union’s success in the Second World War, and a key industry for the post-war economy, along with metals, fuels and grains.¹²⁰ Cotton, a crucial material for the production of uniforms (and, unspoken, in gunpowder production and medical equipment) in the 1930s and early 1940s, would need to transition from small-scale production to large-scale industry to serve the needs of the Soviet people in this new chapter. The need for textiles, chemical production, and an export crop meant a return to the experiments of the 1930s on a new scale. For the Ukrainian SSR, which had suffered extended German occupation, loss of infrastructure and workforce, cotton was

¹¹⁹ Obertreis borrowed from J. Scott the concept of “high modernism”. She presented it as a state ideology that made nature “legible” through nature and society, directing the development of Central Asia through order, homogeneity and clarity. This perspective can also be applied to the cotton and wider initiatives in Soviet Ukraine. Obertreis, J. (2017). *Imperial desert dreams: Cotton growing and irrigation in Central Asia, 1860–1991*. V&R Unipress.

¹²⁰ Stalin, J. V. (n.d.). *O proyekte konstitutsii Soyuza SSR* [On the draft constitution of the USSR]. Marxists Internet Archive. https://www.marxists.org/russkij/stalin/t16/t16_01.htm (Original work published 1936)

part of this post-war recovery. Cotton production was part and parcel of “building back better” for the soviet era. 1946 was the same year that a dedicated Ministry of Technical Cultures (Industrial Crops) of Ukraine was founded. The structure was to oversee cotton development, as well as the further industrialisation of other crops such as sugar beets, flax, and tobacco. Their purview also included more exotic offerings for the region, such as soy, citrus, and tea.¹²¹

The Soviet Council of Ministers decreed in February 1949 that cotton cultivation territory should expand significantly to address the rising need for the raw material across a number of industries.¹²² The push for cotton production was so driven from the highest rungs of the Soviet authorities that the Minister of Agriculture announced that irrigated lands, used for grain, should be freed up for cotton cultivation. This coincided with the founding of a Ministry dedicated solely to cotton, at the Union and some republican levels. I will go into more detail on this structure later.

At the same time, cotton emerged as a symbol of Soviet scientific and agricultural achievement in the visual propaganda of this era. Cotton, as the new “cash crop” and industry, would enable economic recovery, benefiting local communities and Soviet society as a whole. The cotton sector was entering a new era, looking back only seldomly. The depictions were industrial-focused, tied to specific industries (textiles), and depicted factory production rather than simple fieldwork.

¹²¹ Presydia Verkhovnoi Rady URSR. (1946, March 27). *Ukaz: Pro utvorennia Ministerstva Tekhnichnykh kultur Ukrainskoi RSR* [Decree: On the formation of the Ministry of Industrial Crops of the Ukrainian SSR]. *Vidomosti Verkhovnoi Rady URSR*, 1947(5–6), 54.

https://uk.wikisource.org/wiki/Указ_Президії_ВР_УРСР_від_27.3.1946_«Про_утворення_Міністерства_Технічних_культур_Української_РСР»

¹²² Central Intelligence Agency. (1953, May 22). *Cotton growing in the Ukraine* (Information Report No. OO-W-27410). CIA Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room.

https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000496067.pdf



V. Zavialov, 1948 - Soviet stamp published as part of the “Fourth Five-Year Plan” series.¹²³ The spliced depiction of raw material being gathered against an industrial backdrop clearly communicates the link to mass-produced consumer goods.

The figure of Stalin looms large in this chapter on cotton cultivation in the USSR, particularly in Ukraine. In 1951, an all-republican conference of cotton workers was held in Kherson.¹²⁴ As a result of this meeting, a letter was drafted to Joseph Stalin. In many ways, this address followed the conventions seen in messages to the “great leader and teacher” from workers in specific industries. The adoption and performance of ideology by the common proletariat was no different for representatives of the developing cotton industry.

In this correspondence and numerous other materials, Stalin emerges as the ideologist of a bright future, wherein the Republic of Ukraine “blossoms, like a garden”, an “equal republic among equals.” As the “best friend of the collective farm peasantry” and “great architect of communism”, cotton cultivation was one among many of his “genius ideas” that would bring prosperity to the Soviet People. The tropes of the “friendship of nations” and “brotherly help of the great Russian people” emerge as catalysts for modernisation and industrialisation. Stalin’s planned economy is presented as “care” for the nation and its people, who will fulfil their patriotic duty as agricultural labourers. Gratitude is owed to him personally for all the support and

¹²³ The publication of this particular stamp coincided with the beginning of post-war industrial cotton cultivation, including “non-traditional” areas. Ministry of Communications of the USSR. (1948). *Fourth five-year plan: Agriculture—Baling cotton* (CPA No. 1275) [Postage stamp]. Moscow, USSR.

¹²⁴ Ministerstvo bavovnytstva URSR [Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR]. (1950–1953). [Letter to Stalin from the Cotton Workers of Ukraine, 31 August 1951] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Delo 272, Page 31-32). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

assistance that workers received, including specialists, mineral fertilizers, and machinery to aid in the mechanisation of processes and ease manual labour.

In these reciprocated visions, cotton would increase the material well-being of collective farm workers. Large-scale construction projects in the South of Ukraine, specifically the Kakhova Hydroelectric Station, the South-Ukrainian Channel, and the North-Crimean Channel, would all “radically transform the nature of Southern Ukraine”. These changes, along with the introduction of irrigation in cotton production, would increase yields of the “white gold” and other crops of the South, such as wheat.

The metaphor of “white gold” and the glory of cultivating this white bud in Soviet fashion could shine brightly in economic plans and celebrations of individual workers, raised to a pantheon of larger-than-life work heroes. Where personas were highlighted, no contribution was small: each a point of progress meant to roll over exponentially through knowledge exchange and mainstreaming, like a simple adaptation of the gathering of cotton, discovered by a young female worker. The Soviet Woman Cotton Worker was a figure of legend meant to inspire and aspire towards. More often than not, she hailed from the Central Asian republics, whose economies, educational and other calendars were structured around the cultivation of cotton (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan). But in Ukrainian periodicals, like *Literaturna Gazeta* in the 1950s, the female cotton worker was also chosen to convey the idea of a helpful, enthusiastic, productive and loyal socialist worker, who deeply understood her role in achieving the goals of communism.¹²⁵

Workers' addresses often highlighted achievements and offered pledges for the future. The cotton workers' letter was no different, promising to increase yields and the high quality of produce. To complete work on time and prepare the foundation for a bountiful harvest in 1952. The Ukrainian cotton worker was presented in the public sphere as being on board and going full speed ahead with the breakneck pace of modernisation in the “new” frontier of cotton.

The presentation of a great nation making steps to surpass even capitalist countries was exalting, particularly in propaganda-focused publications for foreign audiences, such as *Soviet Woman*. In this English-language journal, published between 1941 and 1991, the late 1940s and 1950s were a period when agriculture, technology, and cotton all grew and flourished rapidly. Even if there were failures in achieving plans, articles aimed to highlight plentiful bounties and achievements: expansion of arable land, increased mechanisation rates, construction of large-scale projects like the Kakhova Dam - all of which would reap great rewards for both the Motherland and individual workers. The advances in Soviet agriculture and the portraits of smiling, happy workers in interethnic solidarity were contrasted by the horrors of cotton

¹²⁵ Minko, V. (1950, October 5). Tam, de bude novyi Dniprelstan! *Literaturna Gazeta*, 1.

production seen in other countries of the world, like the U.S.A., with its exploitation of the black populace.¹²⁶ Argentina was another point of comparison of worker injustice in a later article in 1957.¹²⁷

In “Common Cause” by A. Bershadenko in the 1952 issue of *Soviet Woman*, the author details a 4-month-long agricultural study trip of Ukrainian agricultural workers to Uzbekistan.¹²⁸ The common ideological tropes are all on display: worker solidarity and the friendship of peoples in working towards a mutual goal of prosperity. The visit was connected to the fifth five-year plan, which set strategic goals to increase agricultural cotton production by 55-56 percent from 1951 to 1955. Specifically, for the southern European regions of the USSR, up to 11-13 centners per hectare were expected for irrigated lands and up to 5-7 centners for non-irrigated lands.¹²⁹

The presence of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant (HPP) within the singular vision of cotton production illustrates the symbiotic relationship between industrialisation and the new cotton industry in the South of Ukraine. The project, which included the Kakhovka Dam and reservoir, began construction following a joint resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Council of Ministers of the USSR adopted on September 20, 1950.¹³⁰ Pavlo Satskyi’s research demonstrates that the project served two purposes: to provide hydroelectric power to the region and to significantly expand irrigation and the agricultural potential of the territories.

Before, Ukraine had limited irrigated land, but that was about to change with the massive construction project underway in the Southern regions. As Bershadenko loftily stated in his article, “*Ukraine has every possibility of achieving this goal. This year alone, 65,000 hectares were brought under irrigation in the republic, and of this area, 12,000 hectares have been earmarked for cotton. Irrigated cotton growing will expand tremendously when the South-Ukrainian Canal is opened and Dnieper water will become available for the irrigation of over three million hectares of hitherto arid land.*”¹³¹ What is curious is that this piece ignores earlier cotton growing efforts in the southern regions of Ukraine of the 1930s, stating that for Ukrainian specialists, this is still a new endeavour.

There is significant evidence from that earlier period related to cotton growing. As in the 1930s, cotton and large-scale industrial projects that would harness the

¹²⁶ Galina, V. (1950). John Golden's dream has come true. *Soviet Woman*. East View Information Services. <https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/54469159>

¹²⁷ Cotton might well turn red... (1957). *Soviet Woman*. East View Information Services. <https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/54356225>

¹²⁸ Bershadenko, A. (1952). Common Cause. *Soviet Woman*. <https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/54149987>

¹²⁹ The fifth five year plan of the Soviet Union. (1953). *Current History*, 24(137), 43–55.

¹³⁰ Satskyi, P. (2016). Ideolohichno-orhanizatsiine zabezpechennia budivnytstva Pivdenno-Ukrainskoho i Pivnichno-Krymskoho kanaliv (1950—1953 rr.) [Ideological and organizational support for the construction of the South Ukrainian and North Crimean canals (1950–1953)]. *Visnyk Mariupolskoho derzhavnoho universytetu. Seriya: Istoriia. Politolohiia*, 17, 83–90.

¹³¹ Ibid 82

forces of nature marched hand in hand through the late 1940s and early 1950s. The second half of the 1920s saw the Dniprelstan project launch in anticipation of cheap energy and improved waterways for transportation, with periodicals stressing the importance of industrialisation but also cotton for the development and well-being of a Soviet Ukraine. In Chervonyi Shlyakh in 1927, Dniprelstan was presented not only as the answer for energy demands, but as a way to redistribute water resources for agriculture of the Ukrainian South.¹³² Specifically, it was expected to benefit cotton cultivation, building on experiments conducted between 1908 and 1915 at experimental stations in Crimea, Odesa, and Kherson that confirmed the crop's viability. In the 1950s, the earlier promise of conquering nature for the communist good resurfaced with an even wider transformation of the Dnipro into an image of a "New Dniprelstan," as illustrated by a 1950s article in *Literaturna Gazeta* by Vasyl Minko.¹³³ It is not only what the transformation of the Kakhovka region would bring for the soviet people and cotton - it is what cotton could provide to make dreams of rich harvests and good living a reality. Specifically, cotton would provide the capital to see the construction of the Kakhovka dam and its irrigation canals come to fruition. At least, that was the vision, in the words of cotton worker Olena Bykivna, quoted by Minko.

When it comes to irrigation, more than a third of planned newly-irrigated lands across Southern Ukraine and Crimea were to be designated for the cultivation of cotton. (respectively 1.2 million hectares and 300,000 hectares.)¹³⁴ This would add to the volumes of non-irrigated cotton already in production, with the aim of finally realizing what had solidified as a vision of Ukraine as the USSR's second cotton base. This sentiment became the cornerstone of cotton efforts in Ukraine in the years that followed.

Evidently, plans of the late 1940s were intended to be deeply transformative for the Ukrainian South and its agricultural potential, including cotton cultivation. The project of construction of the Kakhovka HPP and its related infrastructure was a key component of Stalin's "Great Plan for the Transformation of Nature."¹³⁵ This key 15-year programme was presented in October 1948.¹³⁶ Envisioned as a road-map to solve the USSR's resource problems, the plan set a course for large-scale infrastructural and ecological interventions to combat drought, desertification,

¹³² Lisovyi, P. (1927, February). *Ukrainska Niagara. Chervonyi Shliakh*, 2(47), 141-155.

¹³³ Minko, V. (1950, October 5). *Tam, de bude novyi Dniprelstan! Literaturna Gazeta*, 1.

¹³⁴ Satskyi, P. (2016). *Intehratsiia Krymu i Ukrainy v yedynyi ekonomichnyi rehion u protsesi mobilizatsii trudovykh resursiv dlia osvoiennia pivdnia URSR i pivnochi Krymskoi oblasti (1950—1953 rr.)* [Integration of Crimea and Ukraine into a single economic region in the process of mobilizing labor resources for the development of the south of the Ukrainian SSR and the north of the Crimean region (1950–1953)]. *Literatura ta kultura Polissia. Serii: Istorychni nauky*, 85(6), 167–180.

¹³⁵ Elie, M. (2022). Droughts and climate change in the USSR, 1960s–1980s. In T. Schönfelder (Ed.), *Desiccated steppes: Ecological restorations and Soviet environmentalism* (pp. 143–170). Central European University Press.

¹³⁶ Obertreis, J. (2017). *Imperial desert dreams: Cotton growing and irrigation in Central Asia, 1860–1991*. V&R Unipress.

sukhovei (dry hot winds).¹³⁷ The implementation of this programme would alter the environment across the USSR, in the Southern regions of Ukraine.

These transformational efforts are worth situating within a wider context. Julia Obertreis, researching cotton production in Central Asia, looks towards John Scott's concept of High Modernism. His idea of this phenomenon in an authoritarian context is expressed through "massive, state-imposed social engineering." Obertreis builds on his concept to include "transformation of nature and rural modernization" and applies it to the post-war period (1945-1969) in Central Asia. She positions it less as a radical break with the past and more as a continuation of earlier imperial ambitions for the region (and its potential as a resource base for the empire). I argue that the same can be stated for the Ukrainian SSR in its own cotton context. While presented as a new ambition for the region over the next few years, cotton cultivation had already proven to be an industrial effort pre-war, as well as during the Russian imperial era. At the beginning of the 1950s, the ambition was to solidify cotton as a mainstay crop after more than a decade of attempts to acclimatize and successfully mass-produce the crop on "Northern" territories. In this way, the cotton industrialisation in the Ukrainian SSR shares many characteristics with the "traditional" cotton-growing regions of Central Asia. The ambitions were constructed and delivered within a hierarchical structure, with decision-making on such profound changes to the landscape and industry being made in the metropole. Ukraine, as a periphery in the cotton industry, found itself subsumed to larger aspirations, serving as a resource and labour base under the guise of modernization.

Due to drastic changes caused by war and Soviet policy, cotton in the southern regions in the second half of the 1940s became the endeavour of a new crop of local Ukrainian workers. It is likely that many previous connections, established during study exchanges and visits throughout the 1930s, had become severed due to the war, particularly within the male workforce. Perhaps in a sense, cotton in the WW2 aftermath was a new endeavour, yet filled with senses and directed by aims crafted at least two decades earlier. Ideologically, the representation of cotton and labour in public communications did not significantly shift, but the tone did mark some changes. The engineering feat in the Kherson region was not simply a pragmatic step; it was presented as "care" by the Soviet state for its people. Constructing infrastructure for the nation's prosperity was just one side of this endeavour. More and more, a messianic line began to emerge through the irrigation efforts of the Ukrainian steppes. It was not simply to conquer nature - it was meant to save Europe from desertification through Soviet achievements. Cotton, as "white gold", was the rich technical crop that would make it all possible.

¹³⁷ Peterson, M. K. (2019). *Pipe dreams: Water and empire in Central Asia's Aral Sea basin*. Cambridge University Press.



*18 October 1947; Gathering of Cotton in the M.V. Frunze Kolhosp
Village of Tyligulo, Berezanskyi Rayon, Mykolaiv Oblast
Central National Audiovisual and Electronic Archive of Ukraine*

With cotton as a crop and industry embedded deeply in infrastructure and planning for the 4th and 5th Five-Year Plans, a new structure was created to take charge of these ambitious plans.¹³⁸ The Ministry for Cotton Cultivation was created in 1950 at the all-republican level, with its center in Moscow and offices in the republics, including the Ukrainian SSR. The Ukrainian chapter entered the 1950s internalizing the new party line and working to deliver these new priorities. I will go into more detail about this structure, its role and the realities on the ground in the next subchapter.

4.3 Motivations & Representations on the example of the Ministry of Cotton Cultivation (1950-1953)

The Ukrainian SSR's Ministry of Cotton functioned within a wider network of governmental bodies, engaging with production and scientific structures at the trans-republic and local levels. As the main institution dedicated to achieving the aims of Soviet authorities in agricultural cotton production, its functions encompassed oversight of local production and the implementation of strategic goals for the development of the cotton industry. The Ministry acted as an intermediary between state agricultural enterprises and governmental bodies, reporting to the Ukrainian communist party leadership as well as the main Republican branch of the Ministry of

¹³⁸ Satskyi, P. (2017). Concept of cotton in the southern USSR and in the Crimea in the early 1950 and prerequisites of forming a single regional economic complex. *Local Lore Studies*, 1-2, 192–199. http://kraieznastvo.history.org.ua/doc/kraieznastvo_2017_1-2_24

Cotton, based in Moscow, within the Russian SSR. Through this structure, the work of the Ukrainian branch was part of a centralised management strategy.

While the concept of the “New Regions” endured, the Ukrainian chapter's trajectory deviated from that of other territories in the classification, reflecting its distinct status. With the creation of the dedicated Ministry for Cotton Cultivation in 1950, the institution joined a wider infrastructure of bodies that held authority over the management of state enterprises, including the Ministries of Agriculture, regional agricultural departments, deputy councils, and others. Ukraine, along with the Uzbek, Tajik, Turkmen, Azerbaijan, Kirghiz and Kazakh SSRs, were to have republican-level Ministries of Cotton Cultivation. The Georgian, Armenian and Moldavian SSRs' cotton-producing enterprises were to be managed by the main authority for cotton cultivation under the Council of Ministers of the respective republics.¹³⁹ Ukraine's joining the grouping that included the “traditional” cotton-growing regions speaks to its more prominent role within the all-Union strategy. Several things may have contributed to its position.

First is the scale: the amount of land dedicated to non-irrigated cotton cultivation in the Ukrainian SSR had been growing prior to WW2. With the construction of the Kakhova Dam and its related irrigation infrastructure, the expansion of irrigated cotton within the Ukrainian steppe was imminent. Overall, the increase in cotton acreage in the Kherson, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhzhia, Izmail, Odesa, Dnipropetrovsk, and Stalinsko oblasts was noted as one of the highest priorities of Soviet agricultural organs.

I believe that the second reason lies in the geography and specificity of Ukraine as a territory for “Northern” cotton cultivation. The Ukrainian SSR, with its high level of research and development bodies, longevity, and experience, appeared to be well-positioned to take a leading role in the further development of cotton growing in the “New Regions”. This was also the position of Soviet authorities. The Ukrainian Ministry of Cotton also oversaw the Ukrainian (UkrNIKhi) chapter of the All-Union Scientific-Research Institute of Cotton Growing (SoyuzNIKhi). Ukrnikhi was to conduct scientific research on the development of new cotton varieties not only for Ukraine but also for the cotton-growing territories of the Moldavian SSR. Its significant role in implementing the Soviet Union's great plans for the “New Regions” was dwarfed only by its failures. Ukrnikhi was a frequent topic in correspondence that went through the Ministry, which was tinged by a negative tone. High hopes rudely interrupted by reality became a common theme throughout the functioning of Ukraine's Ministry of Cotton and its subordinate structures.

¹³⁹ Aksenenok, G. A., Grigoryev, V. K., & Pyatnitsky, P. P. (1950). *Kolkhozhnoe pravo* [Collective farm law]. Moscow, USSR: Gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo yuridicheskoy literatury. Retrieved from <https://istmat.org/node/23708>

The comprehensive reach of the Ministry meant that it was involved in all aspects of the cotton industry, but its primary concerns were cultivation and “first stage” processing: drying, sorting and preparing for transport. The Ukrainian SSR branch was to assume authority over cotton cultivation trusts, but also cotton processing factories and cotton preparation stations.¹⁴⁰ This “first stage” included sorting, cleaning cotton from seeds and impurities, pressing cotton bales for further transport and processing. Ministries across the Union were tasked with the development of infrastructure to facilitate the first stages of production, which included the construction and utilization of irrigation systems.¹⁴¹ To reach their aims, the Cotton Ministries were also to assume authority over *all* mechanized tractor stations in cotton-growing territories. This was in addition to all institutions connected to cotton production across the kolkhoz system: research institutes, water resource management structures, and educational institutions that trained cotton workers. While the shift of authority of some of these structures, in particular the mechanized tractor stations, may not have been such a dramatic decision for mono-economies structured around cotton, for Ukraine, this does not seem entirely sound. As a robust agricultural producer of a variety of crops, including high-volume wheat, hemp, and others, that also utilised mechanised farming, this shake-up would likely not have long-term longevity.

The Ministry’s financial planning and management of subordinate structures required it to take a long-term view while addressing pressing matters and daily needs. The availability of the bare necessities of production, such as warehouses, cotton-drying stations, and transportation facilities, was low, in line with the overall post-war deficit. Ensuring there were enough workers who had places to live and conditions for study was another concern. Lastly, but of high importance were research and development, and the preparation of cotton workers through education. Both streams provided ample space to implement and replicate ideology. Education included not only technical knowledge, but also indoctrination of soviet values and aims. Propaganda aimed at workers and the wider population focused on promoting scientific achievements, superior labour methods, and high-tech production. As was common for the time, the Ministry of Cotton Cultivation also held a department of “Agricultural Propaganda.” Despite this body’s short operational period, it is possible to assess its main focus area, themes, and methods.

¹⁴⁰Sovet Ministrov Ukrainskoy SSR, & Tsentralny Komitet KP(b) Ukrainy. (1950, May 30). *Postanovlenie No. 1637 Ministerstvu khlopkovodstva: Voprosy organizatsionnoy i upravlencheskoy raboty Ministerstva khlopkovodstva Ukrainskoy SSR* [Decree No. 1637 to the Ministry of Cotton Growing: Matters of the organization of the Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 1). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁴¹ Akseenok, G. A., Grigoryev, V. K., & Pyatnitsky, P. P. (1950). *Kolkhoznoe pravo* [Collective farm law]. Moscow, USSR: Gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo yuridicheskoy literatury. Retrieved from <https://istmat.org/node/2370> and high-volume wheat, hemp, and others, that also utilised

The Ministry continued reasserting Soviet cotton cultivation as a unique phenomenon, following the ideological throughline of the 1930s. By governmental decree in 1950, new naming conventions were introduced to stress the standalone character of Soviet cotton. The state was to move away from using the old titles of varieties research institutes and agricultural enterprises that it had used since the 1920s. All new designations were to be presented under “Varieties of Soviet cotton.” What used to be titled “Soviet raw cotton from American seeds” is now known as “Soviet raw cotton.” “Soviet raw cotton from Egyptian seeds” was to become “Soviet thin fiber raw cotton.”¹⁴² The deep American origins of the majority of Ukraine’s cotton seeds were to be obscured. The triumph of Soviet biological engineering was to take center stage.

This was also the result of 20 years of Soviet research and breeding, which further developed cotton varieties from the late 1920s onward. The desired outcome of this work was to move towards the use of new, locally suitable varieties. This goal was partially achieved, evidenced by changes in the fields. For the 1949 season, the best plots allocated for spring sowing were to be set aside for cotton. Along with directives to keep to strict timetables to increase harvest, to utilise mineral fertilisers and increase mechanisation, there was also to be extensive replacement of old varieties with new, quicker-ripening ones.¹⁴³

Ukrnikhi was at the heart of these efforts, along with the central Union institution, Soyuznikhi. Cotton varieties such as S-3210, S-3163, and S-460, with the classification “S,” were marked as affiliated with the central Soyuznikhi structure. “OD” marked varieties that came from the Odesa region, affiliated with the Ukrainian branch. Replacement of older varieties included both Ukrainian-developed seeds and those from other republics. The Karakalpak Autonomous SSR, at the time, was part of the Uzbek SSR and was expected to provide varieties of S-3210 through the establishment of a seed bank to specifically facilitate the expansion of acres dedicated to cotton growing within the Ukrainian SSR. These decisions were made at the highest levels, coming from the top down from the Council of Ministers of the USSR. These orders filtered through responsible ministries, directing Councils of other republics to provide the Ukrainian SSR with cotton seeds. In early 1950, seeds were to be provided by the Uzbek, Kazakh, Azerbaijan and Armenian SSRs.¹⁴⁴ The goal of creating a separate seed bank within the Ukrainian SSR and of moving towards a deeper

¹⁴² Sovet Ministrov Ukrainiskoy SSR. (1950, August 31). *Postanovlenie No. 2646 Ministerstvu khlopkovodstva: O naimenovanii sortov khlopchatnika sovetskoy seleksii* [Decree No. 2646 to the Ministry of Cotton Growing: On the naming of cotton varieties of Soviet selection] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 3). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁴³ Specifically, the old variety of #1306 was to be replaced by № 6II, Од-I, C-3210, C-3173. Ibid 95

¹⁴⁴ Sovet Ministrov Ukrainiskoy SSR. (1950, February 10). *Postanovlenie No. 302: O rayonirovanii sortov khlopchatnika v kolkhozakh i sovkhozakh Ukrainiskoy SSR na 1950 god* [Decree No. 302: On the regionalization of cotton varieties in collective and state farms of the Ukrainian SSR for 1950] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 1). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

specialization of cotton cultivation bodies was also set out as an aim back in 1949.¹⁴⁵ Before that became possible, Union leadership used all of the other possible options to swiftly and substantially expand cotton growing in the Ukrainian south.

The ultimate goal of the USSR was to develop regional varieties that would quickly ripen and yield large quantities of raw materials for further processing within the “Northern” territories. This would also enable the further expansion of cotton to non-irrigated territories and colder climates. Ukrnikhi were slow to deliver on this promise. Among the institution's greatest failures was its inability to produce cotton plant varieties with a short maturation period, large bolls, and frost resistance. Thus, the republic continued to rely on small-boll varieties, which were undesirable due to their smaller yield of materials for further processing.¹⁴⁶ Letters criticizing the work of Ukrnikhi made the rounds from the editorial office of “Soviet Cotton Cultivation” through the agricultural department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The trail led to the Ukrainian office of the Ministry of Cotton, responsible for implementing the party's strategic goals. The institute was generally the object of regular correspondence from and to the Ministry, which took a negative tone, expressing unhappiness with the speed and results of their work. In 1951, Ukrnikhi were ordered to increase the speed and volume of development of new varieties. Along with other research institutes, they were also tasked with developing advanced techniques and technologies for growing and harvesting.¹⁴⁷ Looking through available materials, it is possible to say that the institute was not successful in achieving all its aims during the time the Ministry of Cotton was in operation.

Among the Ministry's other priority activities during the period between 1949 and 1953 was the implementation of 3-year agricultural courses. The aim of this educational initiative was to increase overall expertise in agriculture and to develop experts in cotton cultivation specifically. The courses were intended to build workers' technical expertise and serve as an instrument of indoctrination. Alongside lectures on agricultural techniques, textbook knowledge, the ideology of collective work, Soviet

¹⁴⁵ Sovet Ministrov Ukrainskoy SSR, & Tsentralny Komitet KP(b) Ukrainy. (1949, April 26). *Postanovlenie No. 973 Ministerstvu USSR: O meropriyatiyakh po razvitiyu khlopkovodstva v kolkhozakh i sovkhozakh Ukrainskoy SSR* [Decree No. 973 to the Ministry of the Ukrainian SSR: On measures for the development of cotton growing in collective and state farms of the Ukrainian SSR] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 7, p. 592). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁴⁶ Ministr Khlopkovodstva SSSR. (1951, January 9). *Prikaz No. 39: O merakh po obespecheniyu vysokikh urozhayev khlopka v kolkhozakh i sovkhozakh nepolivnykh rayonov* [Order No. 39: On measures to ensure high yields of cotton in collective and state farms of non-irrigated regions] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 271). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁴⁷ Ministr Khlopkovodstva SSSR. (1951, January 9). *Prikaz No. 39: O merakh po obespecheniyu vysokikh urozhayev khlopka v kolkhozakh i sovkhozakh nepolivnykh rayonov* [Order No. 39: On measures to ensure high yields of cotton in collective and state farms of non-irrigated regions] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 271). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

values, and cotton, these topics were taught.¹⁴⁸ The main advantage of the chosen training model for the state was that workers would study evenings, while continuing with their regular duties.¹⁴⁹ Over the three years, students were to go from mastering the basics of techniques and expertise (year one) to advanced knowledge within their specific area of focus. The second and third years were to prepare “Masters of Agriculture” of the second and first class, respectively.¹⁵⁰

The Silkhozpropaganda department led the support for their implementation, but there was frequent pushback at the local level. Heads of local cotton state enterprises constantly complained of difficulties fulfilling the high expectations. The barriers varied from the absence of materials and facilities to a lack of funding and the quality and quantity of labourers. One correspondent said that he was unable to deliver the number of students he was required to as he was supplied with workers who were illiterate and thus unteachable. The labour pool in several Kolkhozes of the post-war shake-up now included workers of Bulgarian and Hungarian descent. Other correspondents unveiled the true crux of the matter: these workers simply did not know Russian. As they could not engage in the material, a solution was sought to publish the textbooks in their “national languages.” Given the chronic shortage of teaching materials, it is unlikely that this problem was to be solved. Ukraine was not the only republic having difficulties with executing the directive to implement the 3-year courses. The Kirgiz and Kazakh SSRs, similarly, were unable to fulfil the plan for the first year, as in Ukraine, thus putting the implementation of the second and third years in jeopardy. Classes across republics were sporadic, student attendance unsatisfactory, resources lacking, and exams were failed or avoided entirely.¹⁵¹ Correspondence between cotton enterprises and the Ministry also demonstrated confusion about who was to provide the budget and resourcing to implement the

¹⁴⁸ Upravlenie Selskokhozyaystvennoy Propagandy Ministerstva Khlopkovodstva Ukrainской SSR. (n.d.). *Metodicheskie ukazaniya* [Methodological guidelines] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 276). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁴⁹ *O khode agrozootekhnikeskogo obucheniya rabochikh na trekhletnikh kursakh bez otryva ot proizvodstva v sovkhozakh Ministerstva khlopkovodstva USSR* [On the progress of agro-zootechnical training of workers in three-year courses without interruption from production in state farms of the Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR]. (n.d.). (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 276). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁵⁰ Tsentralny Komitet KP Ukrainy, & Sovet Ministrov Ukrainской SSR. (1950, July 19). *Postanovlenie No. 2213: Po vypolneniyu postanovleniya Soveta Ministrov Soyuzа SSR i TsK VKP(b) "O postanovke dela propagandy i vnedreniya dostizheniy nauki i peredovogo opyta v selskom khozyaystve"* [Decree No. 2213: On the execution of the decree of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Central Committee of the CPSU(b) "On the organization of propaganda and the implementation of scientific achievements and advanced experience in agriculture"] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 2). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁵¹ Ministerstvo Khlopkovodstva SSSR. (1951, September 12). *Prikaz po Ministerstvu Khlopkovodstva SSSR: O podgotovke k novomu uchebnomu godu na trekhletnikh agrotekhnicheskikh kursakh v kolkhozakh i sovkhozakh* [Order of the Ministry of Cotton Growing of the USSR: On preparations for the new academic year for three-year agrotechnical courses in collective and state farms] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 271). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

training. Textbooks cost money to order, classes needed chairs and desks, and instructors required pay.¹⁵²

Despite the progressive representation of the cotton industry, with its high tempo of mechanisation and efforts to support the emergence of a new cohort of experts trained in the most advanced agricultural techniques, the reality fell short. The presentation of a united people's effort hid desperate attempts to secure any labour, including underage labour, on the cotton fields. The Soviet labour code of 1922 had prohibited child labour and limited hours for workers under 18. This was a point of great pride for the Soviet Union, to contrast with exploitative Russian imperial and capitalist practices.¹⁵³ Yet urgency in the agricultural fields was known to bend the rules. The short windows for cotton harvest meant an “all-hands on deck” policy. In 1950, more than forty thousand additional workers were mobilised for cotton harvesting across 6 oblasts, with the highest demands in Kherson, Zaporizhzhia and Mykolaiv regions (between 10,000 and 15,000 individuals per high-demand oblast).¹⁵⁴ In the Kherson region in 1951, the inclusion of youth and schoolchildren in the cotton harvest (along with elderly animal farmers and Kolkhoz worker arrivals from the Vinnytsia region) was a point of pride, highlighted at the level of an agricultural exhibition. Participation in key harvests as a patriotic duty was a contribution by Soviet citizens, large and small. Clearly, these underage and unspecialised workers were not the highly specialised, mechanised forces the Soviet Union envisioned.¹⁵⁵

The department also regularly engaged with national publications and state publishing structures to facilitate the implementation of its promotional strategy among the agricultural workforce and the wider public. The Ministry worked to ensure that messaging was not only consistent but reliably adopted and reproduced through its subordinated structures. Ukrnikhi came up in this thread once again as a slow institution with a lackluster performance that fell short of expectations, given its “exceptional position” and level of “responsibility for the future of Ukrainian cotton.”

¹⁵² TsK KP(b)U Sektor Sel'khozpropagandy [Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine, Agricultural Propaganda Sector]. (ca. 1952). *Spravka o rabote kursov po podgotovke masterov sel'skogo khozyaystva s 3-kh letnim srokom obucheniya bez otryva ot proizvodstva v kolkhozakh khlopokoseyushchikh oblastey Ukrainskoy SSR* [Information on the work of courses for training agricultural masters with a 3-year term of study without interruption from production in the collective farms of cotton-growing regions of the Ukrainian SSR] (Fond 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 272). Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁵³ Arutinyan, A. A., & Markus, B. L. (Eds.). (1940). *Razvitie sovetskoy ekonomiki* [Development of the Soviet economy]. Moscow, USSR: Sotsekgiz.

¹⁵⁴ Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR. (1950, September 26). *O pokazatelyakh i usloviyakh otbora ukрупnennykh kolkhozov na Vsesoyuznyuyu sel'skokhozyaystvennyuyu vystavku 1951 goda* [On the indicators and conditions for the selection of enlarged collective farms for the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition of 1951] (Resolution [Decree] No. 2941; Sprava 4). Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁵⁵ Upravlenie sel'skokhozyaystvennoy propagandy [Agricultural Propaganda Administration]. (1951–1952). *Otchety o rabote oblastnykh sel'skokhozyaystvennykh vystavok Ukrainskoy SSR za 1952* [Reports on the work of regional agricultural exhibitions of the Ukrainian SSR for 1952] (Fund 5021, Opys 1, Sprava 274). Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

The Ministry recommended the purchase and implementation of Ukrnikhi's own printing equipment and dedicated staff of three to enable the structure to produce propaganda materials independently of the state printer "Selhozgiz." External printing often came up short and was the object of annoyance from the Ministry. "Ukrselhozdat", the dedicated printer and publisher for agricultural materials, was a particular offender. Representatives of the Ministry brought the significant delays in production to the attention of the agricultural department of the Central Committee of the CPSU.¹⁵⁶ Redirecting blame for the disappointing outcomes of the 3-year agricultural courses was a popular exercise. Finger-pointing worked in all directions, including toward the lack of books, posters, and instructional print materials.

The Ministry corresponded with republican, regional, and local publications, advising on thematic materials related to cotton growing, resulting in more than 60 publications over 3 months in 1951, showcasing the experience of leading labourers. Special correspondents were directed to exemplary farms, where materials were collected for print in posters and postcards. The female cotton worker was featured in a series of posters, with a print run of 100,000 copies per poster. In addition to these propaganda and morale posters, "how-tos" were also printed and distributed, like the poster "How to adapt agricultural structures to the simplest cotton drier", distributed in the Kherson region.¹⁵⁷ Despite this close relationship with thematic press, the Ministry was not immune from public criticism. Even the gazette "Soviet Cotton Growing" (Sovetskoe Khlopkovodstvo) published a piece criticizing the implementation of the three-year courses and the work of the local department of agricultural propaganda within the Izmail oblast cotton.¹⁵⁸

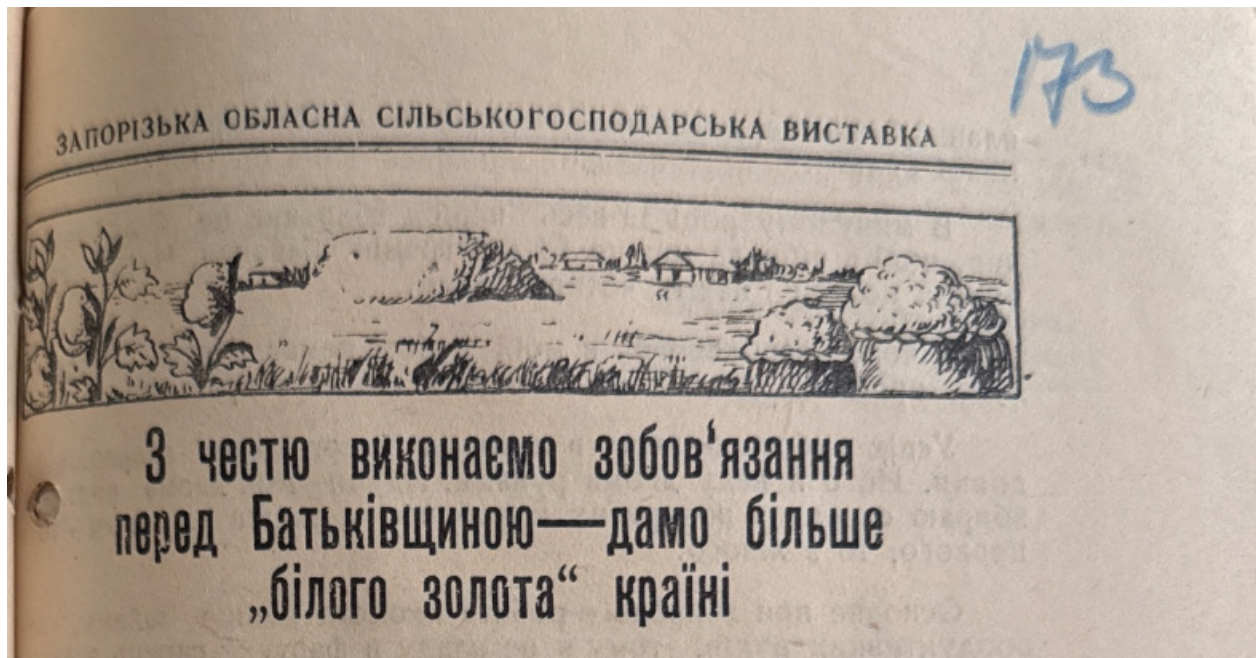
The area of work of the Agricultural Propaganda department that best illustrated the ideology of cotton growing was overseeing the preparation and implementation of agricultural exhibitions at the Union, Republican, and local levels. The department collated data, compiling reports from regional and local cotton producers. They sent those onward to state and all-republic bodies, and they frequently corresponded with

¹⁵⁶ Tkachenko, A. (ca. 1951–1953). [Formal letter from Deputy Minister of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR A. Tkachenko to Comrade P. L. Barabash of the Agricultural Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine] (Fund 5021, Inventory 1, Sprava 272). Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁵⁷ Ministerstvo khlopkovodstva USSR [Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR]. (1951). *Spravka - Postanovleniya Soveta Ministrov SSSR "O postanovke dela propagandy i vnedreniya peredovogo opyta v sel'skom khozyaystve" organami sel'khoz-propagandoy sistemy Ministerstva khlopkovodstva USSR za 1951 god* [Information - Resolutions of the Council of Ministers of the USSR "On the organization of propaganda and the introduction of advanced experience in agriculture" by the agricultural propaganda bodies of the system of the Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR for 1951] (Sprava 272). Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

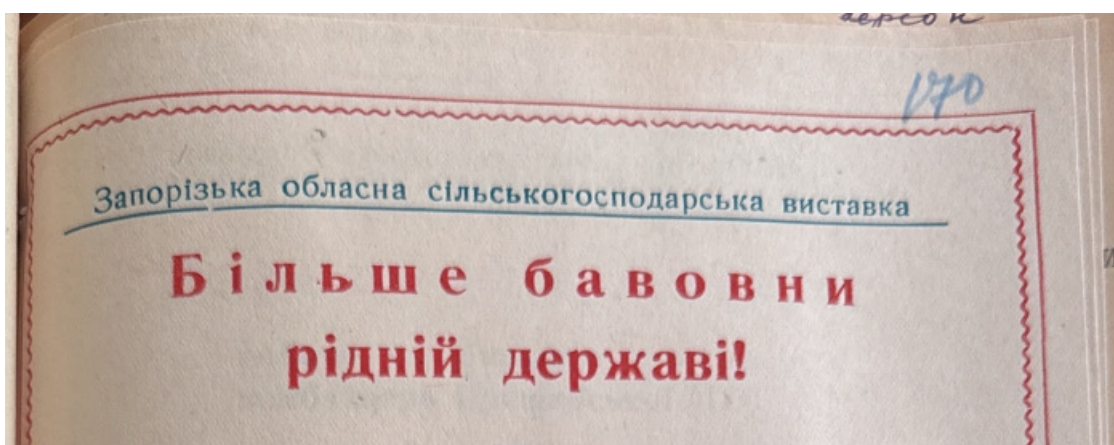
¹⁵⁸ Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR. (1952, December 31). *Nachal'niku oblastnogo upravleniya khlopkovodstva tov... [To the head of the regional cotton growing administration, comrade...]* [Formal correspondence regarding a critical article in the gazette "Sovetskoe Khlopkovodstvo"] (Fund 5021, Inventory 1, Sprava 456). Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR and USSR, as well as the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine. The Ministry gathered results from agricultural work at cotton enterprises and also highlights from regional exhibitions implemented by local authorities. Agricultural propaganda departments across the various structures drafted thematic plans for agricultural exhibitions, which were the main platforms for promoting achievements of socialist innovation and labour among Soviet workers and the general public. Due to the format, framing remained consistently positive and upbeat, as the exhibitions were designed as celebrations and sources of motivation for the Soviet people.



An article in Ukrainian from the Zaporizhzhia regional agricultural exhibition titled: “With honour we will fulfil our duty to our Fatherland: to give more 'white gold' to the country.”¹⁵⁹ The narrative unfolds from the perspective of a female worker who speaks of the difficult work of growing and harvesting cotton while overcoming unfavourable climatic conditions. She also speaks of the handsome payment she received from this work, and hints at the prosperity the collective of their farm enjoys as a result of cultivating this valuable crop. This demonstrates the way second-tier actors adapted and reproduced party lines at the local level.

¹⁵⁹ Volobuyeva, M. P. (1952). *Z chestiu vykonatymo zobov'iazannia pered Batkivshchynoiu — damo bilshe „biloho zolota“ kraini* [With honor we will fulfill our obligation to the Fatherland — we will give more "white gold" to the country] (Fund 5021, Opys 1, Sprava 455). Zaporizhzhia Regional Agricultural Exhibition Materials, Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.



Another print material in Ukrainian from the Zaporizhzhia regional agricultural exhibition titled: “More Cotton For The Homeland!”¹⁶⁰ This is another piece from the perspective of a cotton worker (this time E.K. Ivasenko - Hero of Socialist Labour of Pre-Azov raion). The claims are tall, beginning with boasting that the USSR “produces more cotton than [countries] famous for their cotton production: India, Pakistan and Egypt altogether.” Isaenko writes about the leading role of cotton in “strengthening the economic power of our Fatherland, creating a material base for the construction of communism.” He also writes that their cotton enterprise (Kolhosp named after Chapaiev) began growing cotton in 1930 and that, with this crop, their enterprise has become a “millionaire.” Stalin is also present, as the wise elder who said that “cotton is as important in the economy of our country as metal, oil and bread.”

Understanding of plans and expectations for cotton cultivation can be gleaned from materials from the preparation and implementation of agricultural exhibitions. Particularly illuminating in terms of ideological framing in the early 1950s were materials for the upcoming All-Union Agricultural Exhibition (VSKhV)¹⁶¹. The VSKhV was a key event and exhibition space, established in 1935. Designed to showcase agricultural and technical socialist achievements, it opened to the public in 1939 with grandiosity after 4 years of capital construction of a permanent exhibition complex in Moscow. The 1954 event was to take place as the first post-war “season”, as the annual exhibition plan was interrupted by World War II in 1941. Initially planned for 1950, the

¹⁶⁰ Ivasenko, Ye. K. (1952, September 27). *Bilshе bavovny ridnii derzhavi!* [More cotton for the native state / homeland!] (Fund 5021, Opys 1, Sprava 455). Zaporizhzhia Regional Agricultural Exhibition Materials, “Komunar” Press, Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁶¹ Ministerstvo khlopkovodstva Ukrainskoy SSR [Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR]. (1953). *Vtoraya Ukrainskaya SSR — vitovaya baza Sovetskogo Soyuza* [The second Ukrainian SSR — the [vital] base of the Soviet Union] (Fonds 4915, Opis 1, Delo 587). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vladы ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

grand exhibition's return was a high-level event, with years of planning to ensure that both reconstruction and exhibits were ready.

The Cotton Ministry, working extensively not only with its namesake plant but also with other technical crops, was preparing to showcase Ukraine's greatest agricultural achievements. Aspirations to make the “Ukrainian SSR - the second cotton base of the USSR” took material form. Plans for a refreshed Ukrainian pavilion were made with this message in mind, as the Ministry worked through 1952 and 1953 in preparation. Meanwhile, the Ministry supported and catalogued regional agricultural exhibitions held throughout the Ukrainian SSR in 1951 and 1952. In parallel, they also worked to prepare the dedicated “Hall of Cotton,” which was to be presented at the permanent republic exhibition in Kyiv, within the Pavilion of Technical Cultures.¹⁶² I see two main themes that emerged across these agricultural exhibitions: peace and innovation.

The peace narrative regarding cotton found expression in visual representations for mass audiences. If, in the 1930s and during German occupation, cotton was clearly linked to the military industry in public messaging, this throughline vanished entirely in the 1950s in the USSR. The Soviet Union, as the victor who brought peace to Europe, leaned into this positioning.

The peace message was embraced by second-tier actors on all levels. Sailors, leaving their impressions after attending a regional agricultural exhibition in the Izmail region, vowed to “protect the peaceful labour” of cotton workers of the kolkhoz.¹⁶³ In another pavilion from the Telman raion, designers of the pavilion put together a decorative panel where the Soviet star was executed in cotton buds, while plums spelled out “Peace will defeat war.”¹⁶⁴ In the late 1950s, industry and specifically foreign trade would be presented as “the sound and stable foundation on which the peaceful coexistence of states... can successfully develop.”¹⁶⁵ That became the ambition of the new Soviet leader, Khrushchev, as expressed in these words towards external partners. At the start of the decade, labour and peace were the main poles. In the letter

¹⁶² Mizerna, V., & Drobovych, A. (2026). Rozdil I. Zadum, budivnytstvo ta funktsionuvannia Kyivskoi vystavky [Chapter I. Design, construction and functioning of the Kyiv exhibition]. In O. Dovhopolova, A. Drobovych, V. Mizerna, K. Semeniuk, D. Prutkin, O. Bykov, & L. Herman, (NE)VYSTAVKA. *Chy ye mistse kolyshnii VDNH v kulturnii spadshchyni Ukrainy?* [(UN)EXHIBITION. Is there a place for the former VDNH in the cultural heritage of Ukraine?] (pp. 8–45). Kyiv School of Economics.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/16eoafwUrc-arSV0Q5bczPXSrv5GuAyKI/edit>

¹⁶³ Popov, I. (1951, November). *Otchet o vtoroy sel'skokhozyaystvennoy vystavke gor. Izmail 1951 goda* [Report on the Second Agricultural Exhibition of the city of Izmail, 1951] (Fund 5021, Opys 1, Sprava 274, p. 80). Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR Records, Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁶⁴ Matvienko, A. (1951, December 27). *Otchët o provedenii Oblastnoy sel'skokhozyaystvennoy vystavki* [Report on the holding of the Regional Agricultural Exhibition] (Fund 5021, Inventory 1, Sprava 274, p. 69). Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR Records, Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁶⁵ Alkhimov, V. S. (1959). Soviet Foreign Trade Channels. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 324, 30–38.

of Ukrainian cotton workers to Stalin, it was “socialist competition”, “timely handover of cotton raw materials to the state,” and “tireless labour, together with the multimillion Soviet people” which were to be their “contribution to solidifying peace in the whole world.” Labour as “peace watch” through high yields of devoted workers was exalted in gazettes reviewing agricultural exhibitions. “Cotton - The Most Important Technical Crop of the South” was the headline of an article where Maria Petrivna Volubueva “did not regret spending her efforts for her dear Homeland” in gathering 5.5 thousand kilograms of cotton over the course of the year.¹⁶⁶

“Every harvested kilogram of cotton is a blow to the warmongers, who wish to disrupt our Peaceful labour. With each person working in their place, raising the production of our labour on a daily basis, we guarantee a strong and lasting peace.”

¹⁶⁷

Improving production outputs, raising yields, minimizing losses during harvest through technology and mechanisation - this was all to be achieved through the development of science. The Soviet people's ability to attain “what had never been achieved before” in cotton production was a prominent point. Specifically, this spoke about cotton being pushed to the 48th parallel North, “a circle of latitude in the Northern hemisphere.” For this achievement, “Soviet cotton growers have no analogues in cotton production of capitalistic countries.” This was only possible with “advanced agrobiological science, dedication and persistent work of the Soviet people.”¹⁶⁸

“Advanced methods of growing cotton”, including mechanisation and irrigation, were propagandized to agricultural workers and the wider public at exhibitions through posters, exemplary cotton plants, photographs and diagrams.¹⁶⁹ The

¹⁶⁶ Chervone Zaporizhzhya. (1951). *Oblasna silskohospodarska vystavka. Bavovna—nayvazhlyvisha tekhnichna kultura Pivdnia* [Regional agricultural exhibition. Cotton—the most important technical crop of the South] (Fund 5021, Opys 1, Sprava 274). Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR Records, Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁶⁷ Letter from I. Popov, Deputy Head of the Regional Authority for Cotton Growing to Comrade Podvalkov the Ministry of Cotton Cultivation of the Ukrainian SSR (report about the regional agricultural exhibition of 1951 of the Izmail regional authority) TSDAVO Sprava 274

¹⁶⁸ Marchenko, N., & Podvalkov, M. (1952, January). *K itogam selskokhozyaystvennykh vystavok po Ukrainiskoy SSR. PEREDOVYI OPYT po khlopkovodstvu* [To the results of agricultural exhibitions in the Ukrainian SSR. ADVANCED EXPERIENCE in cotton growing] (Report compiled by Senior Engineer N. Marchenko and sent by Deputy Head of the Agricultural Propaganda Department M. Podvalkov to the Main Department of Agricultural Propaganda of the USSR Ministry of Cotton Growing; Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 455). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁶⁹ Marchenko, N., & Podvalkov, M. (1952, January). *K itogam selskokhozyaystvennykh vystavok po Ukrainiskoy SSR. PEREDOVYI OPYT po khlopkovodstvu* [To the results of agricultural exhibitions in the Ukrainian SSR. ADVANCED EXPERIENCE in cotton growing] (Report compiled by Senior Engineer N. Marchenko and sent by Deputy Head of the Agricultural Propaganda Department M. Podvalkov to the Main Department of Agricultural Propaganda of the USSR Ministry of Cotton Growing; Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 455). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

constantly failing Ukrnikhi was hoped to eventually turn into an institute that would “correspond with the contemporary demands of advanced Soviet science.”¹⁷⁰ The new push for “Soviet cotton” took place within a wider framework of developing a standalone national science under the banner of the USSR. This can be traced to the 1948 meeting of the Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences, directed personally by Joseph Stalin. “Michurinist” agricultural techniques, named after the plant breeder Ivan Michurin by Trofim Lysenko, took center stage during this period. It is also known as a dark epoch, during which genetics was disavowed. Lysenkoist views were that traits are inherited and plants can be trained to exhibit desired behaviours. Under Stalin's patronage, these ideas distorted biological research across the USSR.¹⁷¹ It is entirely possible that Ukrnikhi's failures to develop cotton plants that performed at a high level in Northern territories were, in part, driven by ideological conventions dictated from the highest party levels that had a flawed scientific basis.

As for innovation beyond the field, it is likely that the Soviet Union continued to pursue new developments in gunpowder production. This is evidenced by 11 cases in the Ministry of Cotton archives that remain classified to this day. In 1949, plans for the procurement of cotton raw materials of the 1949 harvest also retained classified points.¹⁷² Cotton, while presented as a consumer material first, was still treated as a strategic resource internally. Information related to the construction of the Southern Ukrainian and North Crimean Channels within the Ministry archives was also marked as “secret.” The wider infrastructure of cotton and its irrigation channels in the rapidly developing steppe was part of complex electricity and transport systems and thus treated securely.

In the wider context of the USSR's industrial development in the 1940s and 1950s, in the aftermath of World War II, the Soviet Union set its aim of achieving communism through technological and scientific progress. Within that goal, increasing the quality and availability of consumer goods to raise workers' living standards was identified as a top priority for the party leadership. Cotton was now, first and foremost, a consumer good, improving the standard of living of Soviet citizens. The reality often fell short of these aims, and the cotton and its related industries were illustrative of the challenges of the times.

Alongside this, across propaganda materials for external and internal consumption, there was constant tonal whiplash. Things were going badly and

¹⁷⁰ *Zakonchit zatyanuvshuyusya organizatsiyu UkrNIKHI* [Finish the protracted organization of the Ukrainian Scientific Research Institute of Cotton Growing]. (1951, September 29). (Fonds 5021, Opis 1). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁷¹ Borinskaya, S. A., Ermolaev, A. I., & Kolchinsky, E. I. (2019). Lysenkoism against genetics: The meeting of the Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences of August 1948, its background, causes, and aftermath. *Genetics*, 212(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1534/genetics.118.301413>

¹⁷² Sovet Ministrov Ukrainskoy SSR. (1949, March 8). *Postanovlenie No. 510: O plane kontraktatsii i zagotovok khlopka-syrtsa urozhaya 1949 goda* [Decree No. 510: On the plan for contracting and procurement of raw cotton of the 1949 harvest] (Decree addressed to the Ministry of Agriculture; Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 7). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

victoriously at the same time. Real struggles in the production of raw materials and the great expansion lay behind failures of supply chains far down the line, and victories, no matter how small, were paraded as grand achievements. Peace, prosperity, innovation, modernist progress, mechanisation and triumph over nature: the Ministry of Cotton Cultivation in the Ukrainian SSR was created to elevate the local cotton industry to new heights. Yet the years of its existence also set the stage for the eventual fall of cotton in Ukraine after a turbo-charged attempt to engineer its rise.

4.4 When White Gold Loses Its Lustre - 1953 and beyond

The beginning of the 1950s was marked by great optimism for cotton cultivation in Ukraine. The Ukrainian chapter of the republican Ministry of Cotton amassed significant resources to achieve its aim of expanding cotton production. Construction of large-scale irrigation systems across the Ukrainian South and Crimea commenced in 1950¹⁷³. The promise of this undertaking brought visions of new and better agriculture in the region, particularly for cotton and wheat¹⁷⁴. Being part of Stalin's "Great Plan for the Transformation of Nature", the engineering efforts to build new and advanced hydroelectric and irrigation systems in Ukraine were on a grand scale.¹⁷⁵ While those plans forged ahead, for cotton, the 1950s became a decade of forgetting, first in projected ideology and by the end of the 1960s, in reality.

As the premier event for showcasing agricultural achievements, the 1954 All-Republican Agricultural Expo provides insight into the shifting role of cotton in the USSR and the Ukrainian SSR's place in it. With general preparations beginning with a governmental decree in 1949, the Ministry of Cotton immediately began planning upon its founding. In addition to contributing to the positioning of the cotton industry at the exhibition, the Ministry was also to coordinate the selection of participants and collection of exhibits.¹⁷⁶

Overall delays in holding the event were influenced by many factors. Missed deadlines for capital construction and restoration at the venue, late approvals from

¹⁷³ Satskyi, P. (2017). Concept of cotton in the southern USSR and in the Crimea in the early 1950 and prerequisites of forming a single regional economic complex. *Local Lore Studies*, 1-2, 192–199. http://kraieznavstvo.history.org.ua/doc/kraieznavstvo_2017_1-2_24

¹⁷⁴ Satskyi, P. V. (2017). Osnovni chynnyky intehratsii ekonomiky Krymu iz URSR u khodi vyboru trasy budivnytstva Pivdenno-Ukrainskoho i Pivnichno-Krymskoho kanaliv [Main factors of the integration of the economy of Crimea with the Ukrainian SSR during the choice of the construction route for the South Ukrainian and North Crimean canals]. *Naukovi Pratsi: Seriya Istoriia*, 292(280), 87–91.

¹⁷⁵ Elie, M. (2022). Droughts and climate change in the USSR, 1960s–1980s. In T. Schönfelder (Ed.), *Desiccated steppes: Ecological restorations and Soviet environmentalism* (pp. 143–170). Central European University Press.

¹⁷⁶ Alekseevskiy, Ye. (1951, January 26). *Prikaz Ministra khlopkovodstva USSR No. 329: O meropriyatiyakh po podgotovke k Vsesoyuznoy sel'skokhozyaystvennoy vystavke 1951 goda* [Order of the Minister of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR No. 329: On measures to prepare for the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition of 1951] (Fund 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 271). Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

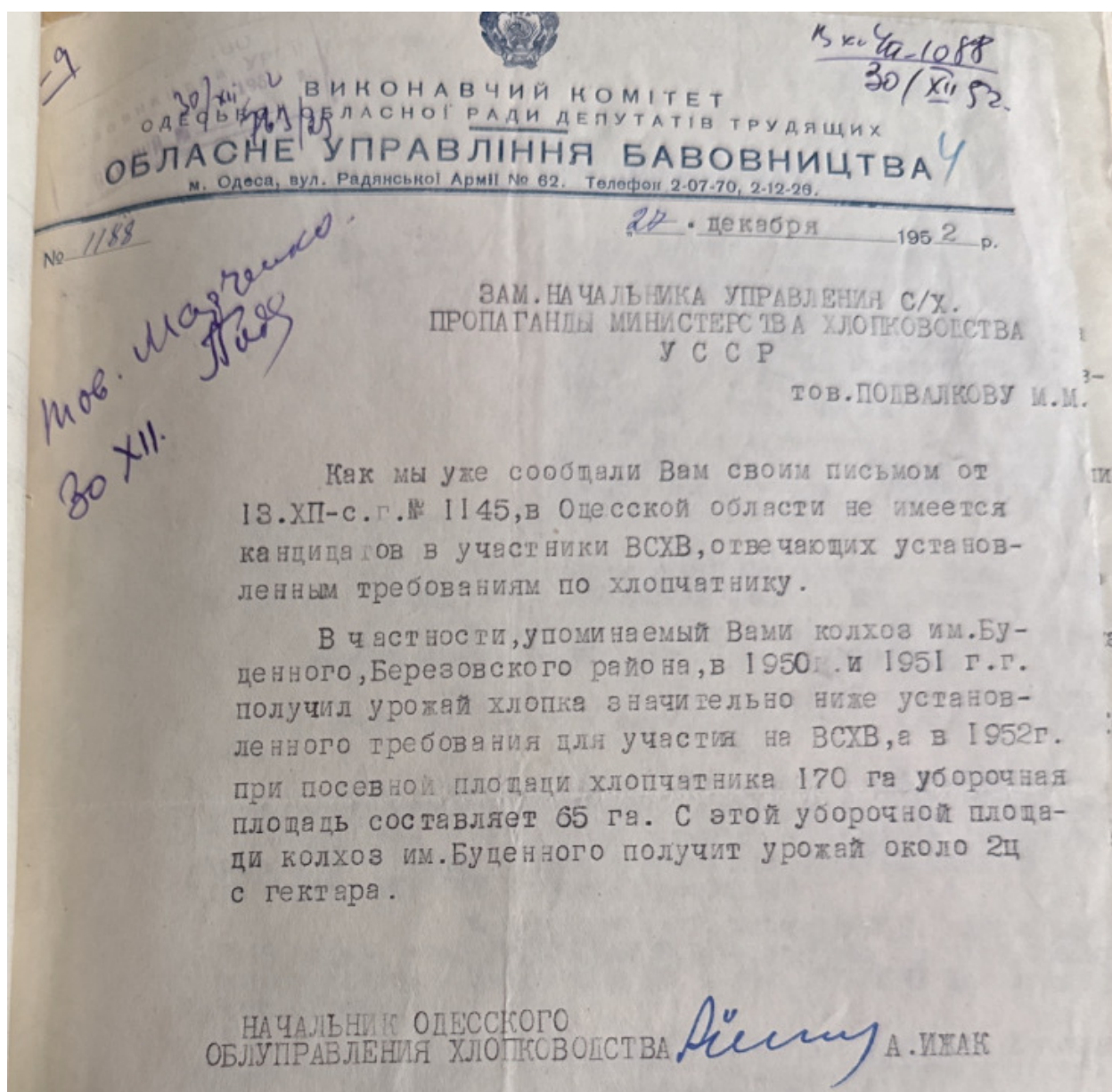
Ministries and responsible structures for the space and exhibition design, untimely selection of participants, and slow gathering of materials.¹⁷⁷ The political landscape changed significantly between 1949 and 1954, but realities on the cotton fields also made course corrections.

In the Ukrainian SSR, the Ministry struggled to meet the quotas set by the exhibition's display parameters, developed by the exhibition's committee. Strict directives instructed that the highest-quality examples of the cotton plant at various stages of its development be set aside for the Moscow exhibition, and that they be banned from presentation at regional agricultural exhibitions. Yet gathering materials that could uphold these high standards was a challenge. Sometimes, there was a mismatch between plans and what the cotton enterprises were actually doing. The Kherson regional authority for cotton cultivation noted in correspondence that they were unable to provide samples of specific cotton varieties because those varieties were not in use in the fields.¹⁷⁸ As the exhibition was further delayed, a disastrous harvest season in 1952 with extensive rains and spring frosts caused many farms to fail to reach their targets. Correspondence between the Ministry and regional cotton enterprises revealed that in several regions, including Odesa, Stalino (Donetsk), and Zaporizhzhia, there were no candidates who met the requirements. A special petition was launched so that cotton producers who had qualified in 1950 and 1951 could participate on the basis of their previous achievements.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Ministerstvo Khlopkovodstva SSSR. (1952, September 24). *Prikaz po Ministerstvu Khlopkovodstva SSSR No. 1810: O meropriyatiyakh po zaversheniyu stroitelstva i usileniyu rabot po oformleniyu pavilyonov "Khlopok" i "Vodnoe khozyaystvo" Vsesoyuznoy selskokhozyaystvennoy vystavki* [Order of the Ministry of Cotton Growing of the USSR No. 1810: On measures to complete the construction and intensify the decoration works for the "Cotton" and "Water Management" pavilions of the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 455). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁷⁸ Khersonskoe Oblastnoe Upravlenie Khlopkovodstva. (1952, July). *Doklad na No. 23/332 ot 23. VII. 1952 goda: Zam. nachalnika Upravleniya s/kh propagandy Ministerstva Khlopkovodstva Ukrainskoy SSR Tov. Podvalkovu M.* [Report responding to No. 23/332 from July 23, 1952: To the Deputy Head of the Agricultural Propaganda Department of the Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR, Comrade M. Podvalkov] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 455). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁷⁹ Organizatsionnoe Upravlenie Vsesoyuznoy Selskokhozyaystvennoy Vystavki. (1952, October). *Pismo Zamestitelyu nachalnika Upravleniya selskokhozyaystvennoy propagandy Ministerstva Khlopkovodstva Ukrainskoy SSR tov. Podvalkovu: Razyasnenie na pismo No. 23/432 ot 18/X-1952 g.* [Letter to the Deputy Head of the Agricultural Propaganda Directorate of the Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR, Comrade Podvalkov: Clarification responding to letter No. 23/432 of October 18, 1952] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 455). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.



Correspondence between cotton enterprises and the Agricultural Propaganda department of the Ministry of Cotton revealed the chasm between reality and what was envisioned by party leadership.¹⁸⁰

Monitoring visits to cotton farms and kolkhozes revealed much of the same. Such audits were led not only by the Ministry but also by representatives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine. Reports from such site reviews showed

¹⁸⁰ A letter from the Head of Odesa Regional Authority for Cotton Cultivation (A. Izhak) to the Deputy Head of the Agricultural Propaganda Department of the Ukrainian SSR, Comrade Podvalkov, notifying him that there were no candidates for participation in the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition that fulfilled the requirements. His message also notes that a specific collective farm that was inquired after not only missed targets, but that in 1952 from 170 sown hectares, only 65 hectares were harvestable - a significantly low result. Odeske oblasne upravlinnya bavovnytstva. (1952, December 27). Lyst No. 1188 do zastupnyka nachal'nika upravlinnya silskohospodarskoyi propahandy tov. Podvalkova M. [Letter No. 1188 to the Deputy Head of the Agricultural Propaganda Department, Comrade M. Podvalkov]. (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 455). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlyady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

uneven results. While some enterprises were exemplary, others were in shambles with critical vacancies, no food for workers, a lack of chemicals and materials, and no plans in place. The success of the enterprises often depended on the wilfulness and expertise on the ground, more so than on top-down party directives.¹⁸¹

Imagined or implemented, many of the extensive plans made by the Ministry of Cotton did not come to fruition or did not enter the public consciousness. Guides and other materials produced for the Moscow event make the absence of cotton within the space designated to Ukraine conspicuous, given these extensive preparations.

Within a 1954 guidebook, grain and sugar beets have top-line billing as the most significant contribution of Ukraine.¹⁸² Ukraine is presented through the now-familiar trope as the main “breadbasket of the country.” Hemp is noted as the main cash crop, as “valuable and highly profitable” produce within the technical crop category, but not cotton, as it had been positioned prominently in years prior.¹⁸³

The new king of the hill of crops of the coming years (corn) was even granted an honorable mention. As cotton lost favour, a new darling of technical agricultural crops emerged. Whereas cotton was Stalin’s project, a new era under fresh party leadership had begun.¹⁸⁴ Nikita Khrushchev, serving as First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1964, had his own ideas about where to guide the Soviet people. His campaign for expanding corn became infamous, as the initiative ultimately faced many of the same challenges as cotton. While many soviet anecdotes were still in the making, a separate stand in the exhibition noted in the guidebook hailed masters of high corn yields and Heroes of Socialist Labour from the Ukrainian SSR, where the crop had been grown years before Nikita Khrushchev took on corn as his personal crusade.

¹⁸¹ Podvalkov, M. (1952, March 2). *Dokladnaia zapiska tov. Demchenko I.F.* [Memorandum to Comrade I.F. Demchenko]. (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 272). Agricultural Propaganda Department of the Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR to the Agricultural Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine (Selkhozotdel TsK KP(b)U). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁸² Tsitsin, N. V. (Ed.). (1954). *Vsesoyuznaya selskokhozyaystvennaya vystavka: Putevoditel* [All-Union Agricultural Exhibition: Guidebook]. P. 96 Gosudarstvennoye izdatelstvo selskokhozyaystvennoy literatury

¹⁸³ Tsitsin, N. V. (Ed.). (1954). *Vsesoyuznaya selskokhozyaystvennaya vystavka: Putevoditel* [All-Union Agricultural Exhibition: Guidebook]. P. 96 Gosudarstvennoye izdatelstvo selskokhozyaystvennoy literatury

¹⁸⁴ Nustad, K. (2023). *Khrushchev’s corn campaign: In dream and reality* [Master’s thesis, University of Texas at Austin]. Texas ScholarWorks. <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/items/d6974a28-12ff-4d90-b14a-fd54427e08d5>



Mark Yevstafiyevich Ozerny and Yelena Semyonovna Khobta, mentioned in the guidebook, were showcased as “Heroes of Labour”.¹⁸⁵ This was a typical approach in the promotion of “socialist competitions” to raise worker output and encourage the further “building of communism.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Serdyukov, I. (n.d.). *Ozernyy Mark Evstafievich* [Mark Evstafievich Ozerny]. Geroi Strany. Retrieved June 14, 2026, from https://warheroes.ru/hero/hero.asp?Hero_id=16795

¹⁸⁶ Kuzovatov, S. (n.d.). *Hero ID 19881 profile entry* [Yelena Semyonova Khobta]. Geroi Strany. Retrieved June 14, 2026, from https://warheroes.ru/hero/hero.asp?Hero_id=19881



Hero of Socialist Labour Yelena Khohta is one of the foremost collective farmers whose selfless labour has been rewarded with record harvests

Photo by K. Mishko

Just a few years earlier, Yelena was featured in an article in “Soviet Woman” where cotton and other crops were the main focus: “The 1948 crop is not the earth’s bounty, not a gift from heaven. The rich harvest on the grain fields, sugar-beet and cotton plantations and truck gardens is striking proof of the ever-growing might of the collective farm system, evidence of the victory of Socialism in agriculture.”¹⁸⁷

In the Ministry of Cotton exhibition plans, corn was to have a place within the “Hall of Grain Crops”, categorised as a fodder crop. There are no indications that there was to be any special focus on the crop. Corn was to be featured only in the context of new accomplishments in achieving sustainable and high-level yields. In the guidebook, this particular accent indicates the shifting party lines, where new heroes rose when others fell.

¹⁸⁷ Yelena was not a stranger to being a poster girl for socialism. She was also featured in Pravda and in an article in Soviet Woman. Her achievements in output were underlined by her bravery in the face of Nazi occupation. The article also highlighted the gains made in the transforming South, which the Nazis hoped to turn into a “desert zone” for years to come. Mechanisation, Lysenko, and advanced Soviet science also appear among the many ideological tropes. Ryabov. *i* (1950). Harvest. *Soviet Woman*. <https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/54469139>

The prominent role of vegetable cultivation in Ukraine's agricultural landscape was also noted, as well as animal husbandry. Yet nowhere in the guidebook for the Ukrainian pavilion is cotton mentioned. The singular mention of cotton in the Ukrainian SSR in this source is found in a short chapter dedicated to a separate "Cotton" Pavilion. Within it, the significant development of cotton cultivation in the USSR is lauded. With yields supposedly growing 3 times since 1913, the guidebook positioned the USSR as nothing less than the "number one country in yields of raw cotton and quality of fiber." Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are prominently featured for their significant contributions to cotton cultivation, underscoring the continued focus on "traditional" cotton-growing territories. Among the "New Regions," Armenia also earned a nod for achievements in combating disease and in using fertilizers to achieve high yields. The Ukrainian south finally appears within this chapter as an example of cultivating cotton in non-irrigated areas, through the achievements of "...the 'Pamiyat Illicha' (Memory of Ilyich, i.e. Lenin) collective farm in the Kherson region, which has mastered proper cotton crop rotation and achieved high cotton yields."¹⁸⁸

Other materials from the exhibition also attest to the loss of cotton's prominence within the Ukrainian context. A 1954 documentary film features the Ukrainian pavilion but makes no mention of cotton in its narration or in visual evidence of the exhibits. The hour-long film created by the Central Documentary Film Studios in Moscow explored each of the sixteen pavilions, covering each Soviet republic. The minutes focusing on the Ukrainian SSR act as a visual document of implemented exhibition plans and as a witness to 1954 propaganda lines. The materials echo many of the guidebook's earlier focuses. Full-size stalks of golden wheat illustrated as planned "The advancement of the grain economy [as] an essential condition for creating an abundance of products and increasing the welfare of the people and the power of the USSR."¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Tsitsin, N. V. (Ed.). (1954). *Vsesoyuznaya selskokhozyaystvennaya vystavka: Putevoditel* [All-Union Agricultural Exhibition: Guidebook]. Gosudarstvennoye izdatelstvo selskokhozyaystvennoy literatury

¹⁸⁹ Ministerstvo khlopkovodstva Ukrainskoy SSR [Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR]. (1953). *Vtoraya Ukrainskaya SSR — vitovaya baza Sovetskogo Soyuza* [The second Ukrainian SSR — the [vital] base of the Soviet Union] (Fonds 4915, Opis 1, Delo 587). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vladny ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.



Stills from the “USSR Agricultural Exhibition” (1954) presenting the Ukrainian pavilion.

The main focal points are golden wheat bushels, fruits, and vegetables.

The results of expanding vegetable production and increasing yields through technological advances, in combination with new irrigation channels, were also presented in abundance. For example, among the exhibits was a stupendous chandelier, adorned in a jewel-like manner with the most impressive fruits of Ukrainian socialist labour: green-striped watermelons from the south, polished to a shine, crisp yellow and green peppers arranged in contrasting rows, juicy-red heirloom tomatoes, pale courgettes with skin perfectly unblemished. Mimicked market stalls attractively presented this attainable luxury, made possible thanks to "the fraternal assistance of the other peoples of the Soviet Union, the assistance of the Union Government, the Central Committee of the VKP(b), and the everyday care of Comrade Stalin himself," - as was noted in plans made in 1953 that Stalin would not live to see.



Stills from the “USSR Agricultural Exhibition” (1954) presenting the Ukrainian pavilion.

The final paragraphs of the chapter dedicated to the Ukrainian pavilion in the exhibition guidebook stressed that “This year the Russian Federation handed over to Ukraine the pearl of the nation - Crimea.” The guidebook promised that visitors would also be able to view the agricultural achievements of the southern region. Crimean bounties of vegetables, tomatoes, beets, radishes and courgettes were showcased for their high yields. Yet cotton remained unarticulated in such clear terms, despite being utilised in propaganda materials only a few years earlier.



“Cotton Growers of Crimea!” G.O.Zelma, Likely Krymsizdat, 1952. “Let us complete our pledge, made in the letter to Comrade Stalin!”

While I have not yet been able to locate materials that can definitively speak to the presence or absence of cotton within the Ukrainian pavilion, the accents placed by state-produced materials make the case clear that cotton, as a trend, was out.

In Kyiv, at the construction site of the permanent agricultural exhibition, changes were also afoot.¹⁹⁰ During the early 1950s, the building dedicated to technical cultures was to hold a dedicated hall for cotton along with “significant space... for demonstrating the experience of cultivating [cotton] under irrigation, as well as the prospects for developing this crop in the southern regions of the Ukrainian SSR in

¹⁹⁰ Ministerstvo Khlopkovodstva Ukrainiskoy SSR. (1952, November). *Informatsiya o khode stroitelstva obyektov Ministerstva Khlopkovodstva na postoyanno-deystvuyushchey selskokhozyaystvennoy vystavke v g. Kieve i skheme tematiki pavilyona tekhnicheskikh kultur: Zamestitelyu nachalnika Glavnogo upravleniya selskokhozyaystvennoy propagandy Ministerstva Khlopkovodstva Soyuz SSR Tov. Krinitskomu B.A. Na Vash 36-2-1585 ot 11 noyabrya 1952 goda* [Information briefing on the progress of construction of the Ministry of Cotton Growing facilities at the permanent agricultural exhibition in Kyiv and the thematic layout of the industrial crops pavilion: To the Deputy Head of the Main Directorate of Agricultural Propaganda of the Ministry of Cotton Growing of the USSR, Comrade B.A. Krinitsky. Responding to your No. 36-2-1585 of November 11, 1952] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 455). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

connection with the commissioning of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant and the South Ukrainian Canal.”¹⁹¹ Here, cotton was intertwined with the idea of the steppe as an innovation zone, with extensive plans made for the construction of a demonstrative exhibit to show how irrigation worked. An artesian well was to be dug to serve this installation, and the installation was to be shown several times a day to demonstrate the impact the expansion of irrigated agriculture would have.¹⁹² The thematic plan for the pavilion of technical cultures as of November 1952 had already been revised three times. The main goals of the pavilion were to demonstrate the “contribution of our republic to the supplying of raw materials for the industry of the country.” The other objectives were to demonstrate the advanced experience of collective farms, highlight achievements in mechanisation and improved yields, present scientific progress, and show the economic rise of enterprises. Within “theme 1” (“SOVIET UKRAINE MAKES A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE CREATION OF A STRONG RAW MATERIAL BASE FOR THE SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOOD AND LIGHT INDUSTRIES IN OUR COUNTRY”), cotton was noted in second place after sugar beet, with the slogan of “Ukraine - the second cotton base of the Soviet Union.” The second subtheme was also related to cotton: “Leading cotton growers of Ukraine in a short period of time have mastered the cotton crop and make a large contribution to the development of cotton in the republic.”¹⁹³ While the main construction of the pavilion of technical cultures ended in 1952, the agricultural exhibition would not open until 1958. By then, the USSR was a very different place, with 5 years of leadership post-Stalin. Cotton was conspicuously absent from the pavilion's facade, which was covered with decorative agricultural motifs. Among the USSR's most important technical crops, wheat was the central figure, supported by sugar beets, sunflowers, and corn. Khrushchev's darling had supplanted Stalin's.

¹⁹¹ Ministerstvo khlopkovodstva Ukrainskoy SSR [Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR]. (1953). *Vtoraya Ukrainskaya SSR — vitovaya baza Sovetskogo Soyuz* [The second Ukrainian SSR — the [vital] base of the Soviet Union] (Fonds 4915, Opis 1, Delo 587). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁹² Tsentralny Komitet KP Ukrainy, & Sovet Ministrov Ukrainskoy SSR. (1950, July 19). *Postanovlenie No. 2213: O meropriyatiyakh po podgotovke k stroitelstvu respublikanskoy postoyanno deystvuyushchey selskokhozyaystvennoy vystavki v gorode Kieve* [Decree No. 2213: On measures to prepare for the construction of the republican permanent agricultural exhibition in the city of Kyiv] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 273). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁹³ Ministerstvo khlopkovodstva Ukrainskoy SSR [Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR]. (1953). *Vtoraya Ukrainskaya SSR — vitovaya baza Sovetskogo Soyuz* [The second Ukrainian SSR — the [vital] base of the Soviet Union] (Fonds 4915, Opis 1, Delo 587). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.



Decorational motifs adorning the pavilion of Technical Cultures at the Kyiv Exhibition Space, taken by the author in June 2026.

In the coming decade, cotton also appeared less and less in documentary/propaganda films produced by the Soviet Union, in relation to Ukraine. Focus shifted in communications and the representation of Ukrainian agriculture, with audiences within the Soviet Union and the wider world.¹⁹⁴

After World War II, the Soviet Union found itself speaking to the world at large, carefully phrasing what it was saying about itself to external audiences. In “A Look at Soviet Agriculture”, - a 1959 film documenting a U.S. Department of Agriculture delegation to the USSR, Ukrainian agriculture is presented as “the most diversified and productive” in the Soviet Union, focused on its wheat cultivation.¹⁹⁵ At the same time, the film notes significant deficiencies and outdated technologies in agricultural production. Cotton appears only in relation to irrigated territories in the Central Asian

¹⁹⁴ Trevor L., "Changes in the Portrayal of Ukrainian Agriculture 1949-1966." (2014). ECU Libraries Research Award for Undergraduates. 13. <https://encompass.eku.edu/ugra/2014/2014/13>

¹⁹⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2025, May 28). *A look at Soviet agriculture (1959)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4vJoMa-oho> (Original work published 1959)

Soviet republics, which continued not only as business as usual but also with efforts to expand irrigation and arable areas.

Meanwhile, in the “New Regions”, the cotton experiment was quietly coming to a close. With Stalin’s death and changes in party leadership, old ideas no longer had the same pull. The development of new technologies and the rising prominence of other crops have diminished cotton’s former leading role. Cotton’s economic viability in the Ukrainian SSR had reached both its limit in reality and in hopeful potential.

The Ministry of Cotton was disbanded in 1953, its functions folded into the Agricultural Ministries. The Ministry had displayed its inefficiencies and lack of capacity to implement the large-scale irrigation projects on which the Ukrainian SSR was staking its high hopes. Given the high profitability of cotton, the Ministry’s budget contributions to the republic budget were lower than expected, as evidenced by the reduction in projected costs in state plans from 1952 to 1953. The newly-developed infrastructure, constructed also with the purpose of cotton cultivation in mind, found other uses, serving to usher in a fresh chapter of promises of postwar food and consumer goods abundance.¹⁹⁶ Subordinate structures of the Ministry had demonstrated failures across every line of implementation of the cotton cultivation strategy, including research, education, cultivation and processing. While food shortages would continue to be a constant feature of Soviet life, in the early 1950s the Soviet outlook remained as optimistic as ever, even as the present could not cover up its failures. The proclaimed success in producing cotton in the “most Northern territories” for cultivation was continually plagued by real problems. Reality was not the imagined, and even Soviet propaganda was no longer playing the game.

The emergence and development of new industries for the use of cotton, and hungry internal and external markets demanded more, but by the end of the 1950s, the party’s push for cotton growing in non-irrigated territories, including Ukraine, died down, in favor of turning attention to more efficient crops. The specialised institutes that had appeared in the 1930s and continued working through the 1940s and early 1950s were reoriented towards general agricultural purposes. Generally, this is seen as a response to even further expansion of cotton production in Central Asia’s traditional growing regions.¹⁹⁷ The Soviet sun shines more brightly there.

In 1959, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine made a resolution that abolished the distribution of funds from the Union budget to the

¹⁹⁶ Satskyi, P. (2017). Concept of cotton in the southern USSR and in the Crimea in the early 1950 and prerequisites of forming a single regional economic complex. *Local Lore Studies*, 1-2, 192–199.

http://kraieznavstvo.history.org.ua/doc/kraieznavstvo_2017_1-2_24

¹⁹⁷ Institute of Climate-Smart Agriculture of the NAAS. (n.d.). *Istoriia Instytutu* [History of the Institute].

<https://icsanaas.com.ua/en/історія-інституту/>

Ukrainian one for “execution and overfulfillment of plans” of raw cotton.¹⁹⁸ Across the Ukrainian-Russian border, in the steppe of Southern Russia near Stavropol, cotton production ceased entirely by 1964.¹⁹⁹ Throughout the 1960s-1980s, droughts plagued the Soviet Union, including territories that had grown non-irrigated cotton, exacerbating conditions for cultivation.²⁰⁰ Changes in the climate likely contributed to the winding down of cotton production and the prioritization of other crops, like grain. In the 1970s, the Soviet Union and Egypt improved relations, returning to an old external import source for cotton from the 1920s.²⁰¹ The Soviet cotton monoeconomies doubled down and achieved greater improvements in cotton yields than the “New Regions” ever did.

Cotton growing efforts would continue in Soviet Ukraine. The infrastructure brought into motion with the idea of serving cotton production continued to develop.²⁰² In parallel, the ideological fervour around the crop died down. Aside from practical considerations, the reasoning points to Stalin's death in March 1953. Stalinisation as we knew it was over, and the visions of the future were about to shift. The 1954 Republican agricultural exhibition in Moscow went ahead without much notice of cotton and its hoped-for leading role in Ukraine's agriculture and economy. The Ministry's department of agricultural propaganda, which had carefully constructed its vision of cotton as the second most important crop in Ukraine for the Republican Agricultural Expo, was gone. And so, over the next two decades, the hopes for cotton in Ukraine would slowly dissipate and become forgotten.

4.5 Chapter Conclusion

During World War II, another regime vied for Ukraine's land and resources. Occupying German and Romanian forces of the Third Reich, like the administrations before them, assumed control of land, infrastructure, and the workforce linked to cotton production. The raw material was critical in wartime efforts, and a significant

¹⁹⁸ Tsk Kompartii Ukrainy, & Rada Ministriv URSR. (1959, June 1). *Postanova N 838: Pro skasuvannia hroshovykh vidrakhuvan z soiuznoho biudzhetu v biudzheth Ukrainskoi RSR za vykonannia i perevykonannia planiv vydobutku nafty ta zahotivli bavovny-syrtsiu i shersti* [Decree No. 838: On the abolition of monetary deductions from the union budget to the budget of the Ukrainian SSR for the execution and overfulfillment of plans for oil extraction and raw cotton and wool procurement]. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

¹⁹⁹ Dyatlovskaya, Ye. (2019, February 15). *Stavropole ishchet investora dlya khlopkovogo zavoda stoimostyu 12 mlrd rubley* [Stavropol region seeks investor for a 12 billion ruble cotton plant]. Agroiinvestor. <https://www.agroiinvestor.ru/regions/news/31248-stavropole-ishchet-investora-dlya-khlopkovogo-zavoda/>.

²⁰⁰ Elie, M. (2022). Droughts and climate change in the USSR, 1960s–1980s. In T. Schönfelder (Ed.), *Desiccated steppes: Ecological restorations and Soviet environmentalism* (pp. 143–170). Central European University Press.

²⁰¹ Bavovna z Yehyptu [Cotton from Egypt]. (1925, May 15). *Zirka*, (35), 2.

²⁰² Satskyi, P. (2017). Concept of cotton in the southern USSR and in the Crimea in the early 1950 and prerequisites of forming a single regional economic complex. *Local Lore Studies*, 1-2, 192–199. http://kraieznavstvo.history.org.ua/doc/kraieznavstvo_2brought017_1-2_24

part of long-term economic plans for both Germany and the Soviet Union. The loss of cotton production and the related chemical industry significantly impacted the USSR's fighting capacity. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union reestablished control of Ukraine and its cotton-growing territories by the end of 1942.

The aftermath of the war saw a return to cotton production in the Ukrainian SSR. The renewed push brought more ambitious plans than before. Government structures were reorganised across many levels to serve the new and improved party line. These post-war institutions set up to support the expansion of cotton production in Ukrainian territories failed to meet expectations. They emerged and faded away in quick succession. From a Ministry of Industrial Crops to a Ministry of Cotton to a general Ministry of Agriculture, they waxed and waned in tandem with cotton's significance for the Soviet economy. The command economy, dictating plans from the "centre" was unable to account for the realities of implementation in the "periphery." Failures and low performance across each chain of cotton production contributed to the eventual loss of cotton's role in the Ukrainian SSR.

Led by Michurinist science, research institutes like Sovnikhi and Ukrnikhi were unable to achieve the breakthroughs that would enable higher-quality, higher-yielding cotton to flourish on Ukrainian land. The three-year zootechnical courses that would prepare the next generation of agricultural and cotton workers failed spectacularly to produce the desired number and quality of graduates. The negative effects rippled outward. Dissatisfaction with the Ministry's work and its subordinate structures was evident internally and externally. Complaints about the quality of textiles and consumer goods were aired across Soviet print media.

The All-Union Agricultural Exhibition in Moscow in 1954, the pinnacle of Soviet agricultural achievement, had little to show for cotton in Ukraine. Most Ukrainian enterprises were unable to meet the standards dictated by Moscow. Weather conditions decimated harvests in 1952 and 1953. The regional varieties developed after 30 years of Soviet bioengineering were still unable to withstand frost, waterlogging, and drought. Cotton first lost its prominence in the Ukrainian pavilion in Moscow, earning only a small mention in the dedicated Cotton pavilion. All significant mentions of it vanished by 1958, when Kyiv's permanent agricultural exhibition was launched. Cotton was dethroned in practice and in ideology by corn as the leading technical crop, championed by new party leadership under Khrushchev.

Stalin's input continued to have an oversized impact across ideology and implementation of agricultural production. The post-war years under his leadership saw a shift in the positioning of cotton from a vital crop in defense to a crop that served the new "peace-building" narrative of the USSR, victorious over fascism. Stalin's death in 1953 and subsequent change of party leadership course-corrected the trajectory of cotton development in the "New Regions." Yet his legacy continued to bear fruit, but not of cotton.

Ideologically, the 1950s continued many of the themes of the 1930s. The concept of cotton as “white gold” persisted. It was presented as a crop that would bring prosperity and compound workers' fortunes across Ukraine. The image of cotton as a child to be cared for was left in the 1930s. The only care the Soviet Union had was for humans, its citizens, as expressed in the “genius plans” of Joseph Stalin. Nature was to be molded, changed and used as man saw fit within plans for its “Great Transformation.” The Ukrainian steppe underwent drastic changes with the construction of large-scale infrastructure projects such as the Kakhova Hydroelectric Station, the South-Ukrainian Channel, and the North-Crimean Channel. These interventions were also intended to prepare the ground for the expansion of irrigated cotton in Ukraine, molding it into the “second base of cotton in the USSR.” For and with cotton, the Ukrainian steppe was changed irrevocably by high-modernist ideology. It became a zone of innovation for irrigation, mechanisation and “uniquely Soviet” science. In the end, the developed infrastructure served the agricultural production of other crops such as grain, sugar beets, and corn. Cotton fell out of favour and left the Ukrainian fields. Ukraine remained a resource base for the Soviet Union, but other raw materials now served its aspirations.

5. Conclusion

This work put a critical lens on existing narratives around cotton cultivation in the Soviet Union by centering Ukraine. Through an examination of the development of large-scale cotton industrialisation in the Ukrainian South, this study uncovered cotton's prominent role within the region's transformation. Viewed through the high modernist perspective of the steppe as a “zone of innovation”, the Ukrainian SSR offered fertile ground for implementing utopian visions of Soviet leadership. Contextualising Ukraine's role within the “New Regions” of cotton-growing, I demonstrated that a multi-vector framing of periphery and centre can be fruitful in examining hierarchies within the socialist system. Ukraine's role was unique, yet little known. This research contributed to a growing body of work centering environmental, economic and political perspectives of Ukraine. By employing the prism of cotton, the resourceification and instrumentalisation of the Ukrainian south within the Soviet political regime comes into clearer view.

Within the larger context of cotton cultivation in the Soviet Union, Ukraine was undoubtedly the periphery. It was the periphery in relation to the cotton mono-economies of the Soviet Union. Ukraine was also peripheral when it came to the centre of decision-making on the Union/Empire's cotton strategy. The role of the metropole was assumed by Moscow (in the Soviet period) and St. Petersburg (in the Imperial period). During the brief episode of German occupation, Berlin fought to stay

in its place. All three regimes turned to a resourcification of Ukrainian territory and workforce. All three saw cotton as a crop with potential that could be instrumentalized to serve their needs. Those ranged from the economic to the political, which were often intertwined. Cotton, as a strategic raw material, was required for waging war, feeding the swiftly developing chemical industry, and clothing the people.

It is difficult to speak of the Ukrainian agency in cotton cultivation on its territory under socialism or imperialism. Throughout the Soviet period, there was significant documented resistance among local actors in Ukraine towards cotton cultivation. This skepticism was to be turned into ideology, developed and distributed through mass media. When there weren't enough hands to work the fields, they were found through punitive biopolitics (forced resettlement and labour) or societal pressure (mandatory farm work). Would a different Ukraine, one not under an authoritarian system, be willing and able to pursue the cotton experiment to the extent it did during the Soviet Union? I argue that it would likely not. Demonstrably, all-Union authorities were able to direct resources towards achieving their aims across republican borders. This included the workforce, as well as biological materials (seeds) and expertise. The metropole tapped into resources placed across a wide geography and distributed them according to its own vision. An independent Ukraine would likely not have been able to mobilize comparable resources from outside its territories. Another Ukraine may not even have pursued cotton on its own, at least in this period.

Infrastructure for cotton growing was developed and inherited. Many research institutions working on cotton trace their history to imperial times. The institutions responsible for cotton production at different periods underwent restructuring and reorganisation. The hierarchical structure and top-down directives documented in the 1950s within the Ministry of Cotton did not allow for initiative from the bottom up. The limited upward mobility of knowledge and feedback was confined to scope and form (developed techniques, scientific advances, or worker "know-how"). Yet reality found ways to push back and inevitably crack what had been more than half a century of cotton dreams projected onto Ukrainian territories. Unfulfilled plans and failed harvests were forms of pushback in their own right. But anecdotes of defiance pushed through the ideological haze. If left to their own devices, would Ukrainian farmers have grown cotton, and on such a scale? Against the high, dependable harvests of wheat, the promises of cotton prosperity may not have been as attractive. Industrial cotton cultivation would not have been possible without collectivisation. The further the cotton experiment went, the more apparent it became, even at the top levels of the state apparatus, that invested costs were not turning a profit. The promised expansion of cotton cultivation with irrigation and the extensive transformation of the Ukrainian south brought into existence infrastructure that found other uses.

Through this trajectory of up and down, the Soviet Union weaved a story about cotton, firstly telling it to itself. Pushed by global shifts and emerging dangers, the

USSR needed cotton, and needed it fast. The concept of resource autonomy also found a home in the cotton fields. While Lenin briefly appears in relation to cotton, Stalin can be positioned as the main ideological figure and champion of the cotton cultivation initiative in the Ukrainian SSR and, more widely, in the “New Regions.” With his passing, the ideological framework seems to shift almost overnight, but not before enshrining some of these visions of cotton in stone, as in the Moscow metro. Cotton was a story of the past, but in 1954, it was also intended to be a shared dream of the future.

The positioning of cotton production in new territories differed from that of other “traditional” cotton-growing republics. It was innovation, not decolonisation, that became the new narrative in this space. Wider socialist framings still applied, such as the struggle against nationalist-bourgeois elements. Cotton was both an income source and a symbol of the might and modernism of competing regimes. In a chicken-or-egg framing, cotton was the instrument for building socialism, but socialism also built cotton in its Soviet incarnation. The standalone character of “Soviet cotton” among other initiatives on the global stage at this time is debatable, but in terms of goals and methods, the latter were idiosyncratic. Cotton’s industrial rise across the Soviet Union is indivisible from collectivisation. In Ukraine, these broader shifts changed the landscape, both literally and figuratively.

The accents around cotton cultivation also changed through time. Positioned as a fierce battle for cotton in the 1930s, postwar realities softened approaches. Cotton and its labour, for all of its strategic importance in warfare, became an instrument of peace. The Ukrainian steppe became the stage for the next push of cotton within new geographies. Paired narratively with the large-scale engineering projects that took place around the Dnipro River and the Kakhovka region, cotton embodied the ideals of high modernism and “The Great Transformation of Nature.” The steppe as an innovation zone, brought forth achievements presented as “without analogue” and with more imagination than sense. “Northern Cotton” was an idea that could not flourish under Michurinist science, nor in the frost and rain-prone Ukrainian fields.

The same industrial advancement that pushed cotton cultivation forward also made it less of a need and more of a want. Over time, the Soviet Union also shifted its position on autonomy and isolation. Ideas of trade as peace, economic interdependence as a safeguard, moved the needle. A new type of competition emerged, and so did new trade partners that provided cotton from more dependable climates.

When the metropole had decided that it was no longer pursuing cotton cultivation as a strategy in the “New Territories”, did the Ukrainian SSR have enough of a say to continue on its own, even if it had wanted to? That is something I can only hypothesise about, but I believe that even the fading of cotton’s prominence in Ukrainian visions of the future in the mid 1950s is indicative of the centralised

decision-making that was characteristic of the Soviet command economy. If the Ukrainian SSR did not develop these frameworks independently and lacked the resources to implement large-scale cotton industrialisation, then the conclusion is that this cotton initiative should be viewed through the lens of colonialist extraction. Regardless of how committedly the development of cotton production and the industrialisation of Ukraine's natural environments was presented as care.

The Ukrainian SSR was unequivocally positioned as a resource base for the entire "Homeland" - the Soviet Union. This ideological throughline was internalized and reproduced by second-tier actors all across national-level state governance structures and cotton enterprises. In the name of progress, prestige and cold, hard cash, the USSR launched an initiative to transform the South of Ukraine and allocate more than a million hectares to growing a non-indigenous, labour-intensive plant. After some reluctance and much blaming for a lack of commitment and attention, the "limitless potential" of cotton cultivation in Ukraine reached its ceiling in the mid 1950s.

Cotton cultivation in the Ukrainian SSR, despite two promising attempts over three decades, largely faded from view and memory. If the archives of the Ministry of Cotton Cultivation were not preserved, it would be difficult to tell that cotton had played any role at all in Ukraine's agricultural history of the 1950s. The few imprints that remain in view today, like the decorative panel at "Kievskaya Metro", speak to a moment in time when ideology sought to create a reality that did not entirely fit. Yet cotton in the "New Regions" and now-independent Ukraine has another attempt.



Ukrainian female cotton farmers working in a field in Odesa (Ukrinform, 2024)

The Ukrainian women working in the cotton fields today do not exist in a picturesque, imagined reality. There are no processing factories looming in the background, ready to receive pristinely pressed bricks of cotton. Yet. Contemporary motivations align more with the 1930s framework than with the 1950s. Global instability and military conflicts in 2026 threaten supply chains. Despite technological advancements, raw cotton remains a critical source of nitrocellulose for warfare. Once again, the Ukrainian and Russian South reemerge as potential territories for cotton cultivation. Nearly 100 years after the beginning of state-run industrial production in the region, cotton returns to the steppe.

Ultimately, this research provides a complementary narrative to existing scholarship on cotton in the Soviet Union. Cotton cultivation was not localised solely to Central Asia. Nor was it a footnote in Ukraine's history. Cotton was a large-scale socialist experiment in the Ukrainian south, pushed ahead by modernist ideals from one century to the next, from one political regime to the other. Embraced as a symbol today, cotton's history remains little-known. This work makes a step to uncover and tell the story of cotton, as it was in the Ukrainian steppe. From a tender child of the sun, to becoming the glimmering beacon at the high noon of midcentury, to being largely forgotten. But perhaps now, revisited.

Reference List:

Aksenenok, G. A., Grigoryev, V. K., & Pyatnitsky, P. P. (1950). *Kolkhoznoe pravo* [Collective farm law]. Gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo yuridicheskoy literatury.

<https://istmat.org/node/2370>

Aleshko, V. (1931a). U boiakh za bavovnyk [In the battles for cotton]. *Chervonyi Shlyakh*, (7-8), 66.

Aleshko, V. (1931b). U boiakh za bavovnyk: Ispyt skladeno [In the battles for cotton: The exam is passed]. *Pluh*, (5-6), 85.

Alekseevskiy, Ye. (1951, January 26). *Prikaz Ministra khlopkovodstva USSR No. 329: O meropriyatiyakh po podgotovke k Vsesoyuznoy sel'skokhozyaystvennoy vystavke 1951 goda* [Order of the Minister of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR No. 329: On measures to prepare for the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition of 1951] (Fund 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 271). Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Alkhimov, V. S. (1959). Soviet Foreign Trade Channels. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 324, 30–38.

Arutinyan, A. A., & Markus, B. L. (Eds.). (1940). *Razvitie sovetskoy ekonomiki* [Development of the Soviet economy]. Sotsekgiz.

Auswärtiges Amt – Der Vertreter des Auswärtigen Amts beim Reichskommissar für die Ukraine. (1943, March 26). *Amtliche Ziffern über die deutsche Ernährungswirtschaft in der Ukraine* [Official figures on the German food economy in Ukraine] (Document No. 342263 / AA Vertr.AAb.RK 2) [Exhibition item]. National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War, Kyiv, Ukraine.

Bavovna z Yehyptu [Cotton from Egypt]. (1925, May 15). *Zirka*, (35), 2.

Barkhudaryan, P. (Director). (1933). *Ditya solntsa [Arevi zavaky]* [Film]. Armenkino.
https://kinodaran.com/ru/title/ditya_solntsa.html

Beckert, S. (2014). *Empire of cotton: A global history*. Vintage Books.

Berkhoff, K. C. (2004). *Harvest of despair: Life and death in Ukraine under Nazi rule*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Bershadenko, A. (1952). Common Cause. *Soviet Woman*. [suspicious link removed]

Borinskaya, S. A., Ermolaev, A. I., & Kolchinsky, E. I. (2019). Lysenkoism against genetics: The meeting of the Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences of August 1948, its background, causes, and aftermath. *Genetics*, 212(1), 1–12.

<https://doi.org/10.1534/genetics.118.301413>

Breyfogle, N. B. (2018). Toward an environmental history of Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union. In N. B. Breyfogle (Ed.), *Eurasian environments: Nature and ecology in imperial Russian and Soviet history* (pp. 1–28). University of Pittsburgh Press.

Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks). (1929, July 18). *Postanovleniye TsK VKP(b) 18 iyulya 1929 g. o rabote Glavkhlopkoma* [Resolution of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) July 18, 1929, on the work of the Main Cotton Committee]. Portal of the Documents of Russian History.

Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks). (1967). *Postanovleniye TsK VKP(b) 18 iyulya 1929 g. o rabote Glavkhlopkoma* [Resolution of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) July 18, 1929, on the work of the Main Cotton Committee]. In *Resheniya partii i pravitel'stva po khozyaystvennym voprosam: V 5 t. Sbornik dokumentov za 50 let. T. 2. 1929-1940 gg.* (pp. 85–93). Politizdat. (Original work published 1929).

Central Intelligence Agency. (1953, May 22). *Cotton growing in the Ukraine* (Information Report No. OO-W-27410). CIA Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room. https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000496067.pdf

Chervone Zaporizhzhya. (1951). Oblasna silskohospodarska vystavka. Bavovna—nayvazhlyvisha tekhnichna kultura Pivdnia [Regional agricultural exhibition. Cotton—the most important technical crop of the South] (Fund 5021, Opys 1, Sprava 274). Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR Records, Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Clark, T. L. (2014). *Changes in the portrayal of Ukrainian agriculture 1949-1966* [Undergraduate research award paper]. Eastern Kentucky University.
<https://encompass.eku.edu/ugra/2014/2014/13>

Coen, D. R. (2011). Imperial climatographies from Tyrol to Turkestan. *Osiris*, 26(1), 45–65. <https://doi.org/10.1086/661264>

Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO. (n.d.). *Mezhdru sovetskoy klassikoy i frantsuzskim modernom* [Between Soviet classics and French Art Nouveau].

Conquest, R. (1984). The man-made famine in Ukraine. In *The man-made famine in Ukraine* (AEI Studies 404, pp. 3–8). American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. <https://diasporiana.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/books/19629/file.pdf>

Cotton might well turn red... (1957). *Soviet Woman*. East View Information Services. [suspicious link removed]

Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR. (1950, September 26). *O pokazatelyakh i usloviyakh otbora ukрупnennykh kolkhozov na Vsesoyuznuyu sel'skokhozyaystvennuyu vystavku 1951 goda* [On the indicators and conditions for the selection of enlarged collective farms for the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition of 1951] (Resolution [Decree] No. 2941, Sprava 4). Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Davies, R. W., & Wheatcroft, S. G. (2004). The second phase of dekulakisation, 1931. In R. W. Davies, *The industrialisation of Soviet Russia: Vol. 5. The years of hunger:*

Soviet agriculture, 1931–1933 (pp. 52–79). Palgrave Macmillan.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/00000000-000>

D. U.-Ts. (1942, August 30). Soviet'ski vtraty bavovny [Soviet cotton losses]. *Sumskyi Visnyk*, 1.

Dyatlovskaya, Ye. (2019, February 15). *Stavropole ishchet investora dlya khlopkovogo zavoda stoimostyu 12 mlrd rubley* [Stavropol region seeks investor for a 12 billion ruble cotton plant]. Agroinvestor.

<https://www.agroinvestor.ru/regions/news/31248-stavropole-ishchet-investora-dlya-khlopkovogo-zavoda/>

Elie, M. (2022). Droughts and climate change in the USSR, 1960s–1980s. In T. Schönfelder (Ed.), *Desiccated steppes: Ecological restorations and Soviet environmentalism* (pp. 143–170). Central European University Press.

Galina, V. (1950). John Golden's dream has come true. *Soviet Woman*. East View Information Services. [suspicious link removed]

Goff, K. (2022). Postwar rebuilding and resettlements in the Soviet Union: A case of Azeri migration. *Slavic Review*, 81(1), 97–121.

Growing cotton in Southern Ukraine and Crimea. (1943, May). *Dzvin*, 2.

Harvard Library. (n.d.). *Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System Online (HPSSS)* [Digital collection]. Harvard University.

<https://library.harvard.edu/collections/harvard-project-soviet-social-system>

Harvard University. (1950, October). *Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System: Schedule A, Vol. 5, Case 54* [Interview with a 57-year-old male Cossack]. Harvard University Library Digital Collections. <https://hcl.harvard.edu/collections/hpsss/>

Institute of Climate-Smart Agriculture of the NAAS. (n.d.). *Istoriia Instytutu* [History of the Institute]. <https://icsanaas.com.ua/en/історія-інституту/>

Isaev, A. V. (2025, February 28). Production of gunpowder and ammunition as a "bottleneck" of the soviet military economy and its impact of armed struggle in 1941-1945. *Vestnik Volgogradskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta Serija 4 Istorija Regionovedenie Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenija*, 30(2), 21–30.

<https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu4.2025.2.2>

Ivasenko, Ye. K. (1952, September 27). Bilshe bavovny ridnii derzhavi! [More cotton for the native state / homeland!] (Fund 5021, Opys 1, Sprava 455). Zaporizhzhia Regional Agricultural Exhibition Materials, "Komunar" Press, Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Johnson, N. G. (n.d.). *Nitrocellulose | Explosive, Fire-Retardant & Coating Uses*. Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/science/nitrocellulose>

Karpych, V. (1939, November). Velikaya pobeda partii Lenina — Stalina [The great victory of the party of Lenin and Stalin]. *Sovetskiy khlopok* [Soviet cotton], 1939(11), 3–10. OGIZ Selkhozgiz.

Khaetyskyi, O. P. (2011). Forced labour of uzbek peasants in cotton-growing of Ukraine (1930 – 1950 years) (G. I. Shapovalov, Ed.). *Muzeinyi Visnyk*, 11(2), 160–167.

Khaetskyi, O. (2011). *Vykorystannia prymusovoi pratsi uzbetskyih selian u bavovnytstvi Ukrainy (30-ti-50-ti roky XX st)* [Use of forced labour of Uzbek peasants in cotton cultivation in the Ukraine (1930s-1950s)]. *Muzeiinyi Visnyk*, (12), 160–167. <https://www.academia.edu/42106125/>

Khalid, A. (2015). *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, empire, and revolution in the early USSR*. Cornell University Press.

5 million karbovantsiv worth of cotton for the USSR. (1925, October 22). *Bolshevik of the Poltava Region* [Bil'shovyk Poltavshchyny], (242), p. 2.

Main Cotton Administration of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture of the USSR. (1936, November). *Sovetskiy khlopok* [Soviet cotton], (11). OGIZ Selkhozgiz.

Marchenko, N., & Podvalkov, M. (1952, January). *K itogam selskokhozyaystvennykh vystavok po Ukrainskoy SSR. PEREDOVOY OPYT po khlopkovodstvu* [To the results of agricultural exhibitions in the Ukrainian SSR. ADVANCED EXPERIENCE in cotton growing] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 455). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Matvienko, A. (1951, December 27). *Otchët o provedenii Oblastnoy sel'skokhozyaystvennoy vystavki* [Report on the holding of the Regional Agricultural Exhibition] (Fund 5021, Inventory 1, Sprava 274, p. 69). Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR Records, Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Michael, L. G. (1938). *Cotton-growing in the Soviet Union* (Special Report No. 336). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Foreign Agricultural Service, Danube Basin District.

Minko, V. (1950, October 5). Tam, de bude novyi Dniprelstan! *Literaturna Gazeta*, 1. Ministerstvo bavovnytstva URSR [Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR]. (1950–1953). *[Letter to Stalin from the Cotton Workers of Ukraine, 31 August 1951]* (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Delo 272, Page 31-32). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Ministerstvo khlopkovodstva Ukrainskoy SSR [Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR]. (1953). *Vtoraya Ukrainskaya SSR — vitovaya baza Sovetskogo Soyuzu* [The second Ukrainian SSR — the [vital] base of the Soviet Union] (Fonds 4915, Opis 1, Delo 587). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Ministry of Communications of the USSR. (1939). *Cotton farming* [Postage stamp]. CPA No. 681.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Soviet_Union_1939_CPA_681_stamp_\(Cotton_Farming\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Soviet_Union_1939_CPA_681_stamp_(Cotton_Farming).jpg)

Ministry of Communications of the USSR. (1948). *Fourth five-year plan: Agriculture—Baling cotton* (CPA No. 1275) [Postage stamp]. Moscow, USSR.

Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR. (1952, December 31). *Nachal'niku oblastnogo upravleniya khlopkovodstva tov...* [To the head of the regional cotton growing administration, comrade...] [Formal correspondence regarding a critical article in the gazette "Sovetskoe Khlopkovodstvo"] (Fund 5021, Inventory 1, Sprava 456). Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Ministerstvo Khlopkovodstva SSSR. (1951, September 12). *Prikaz po Ministerstvu Khlopkovodstva SSSR: O podgotovke k novomu uchebnomu godu na trekhletnikh agrotekhnicheskikh kursakh v kolkhozakh i sovkhovakh* [Order of the Ministry of Cotton Growing of the USSR: On preparations for the new academic year for three-year agrotechnical courses in collective and state farms] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 271). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Ministerstvo Khlopkovodstva SSSR. (1952, September 24). *Prikaz po Ministerstvu Khlopkovodstva SSSR No. 1810: O meropriyatiyakh po zaversheniyu stroitelstva i usileniyu rabot po oformleniyu pavilyonov "Khlopok" i "Vodnoe khozyaystvo" Vsesoyuznoy selskokhozyaystvennoy vystavki* (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 455). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Ministr Khlopkovodstva SSSR. (1951, January 9). *Prikaz No. 39: O merakh po obespecheniyu vysokikh urozhayev khlopka v kolkhozakh i sovkhovakh nepolivnykh rayonov* [Order No. 39: On measures to ensure high yields of cotton in collective and state farms of non-irrigated regions] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 271). Tsentralnyi

derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchikh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Mizerna, V., & Drobovych, A. (2026). Rozdil I. Zadum, budivnytstvo ta funktsionuvannia Kyivskoi vystavky [Chapter I. Design, construction and functioning of the Kyiv exhibition]. In O. Dovhopolova, A. Drobovych, V. Mizerna, K. Semeniuk, D. Prutkin, O. Bykov, & L. Herman, *(NE)VYSTAVKA. Chy ye mistse kolyshnii VDNH v kulturnii spadshchyni Ukrainy?* [(UN)EXHIBITION. Is there a place for the former VDNH in the cultural heritage of Ukraine?] (pp. 8–45). Kyiv School of Economics.
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/16eoafwUrc-arSVoO5bczPXSrv5GuAyKI/edit>

Molotov, V. M. (1939, September). Rech' tov. Molotova pri otkrytii Vsesoyuznoy sel'skokhozyaystvennoy vystavki 1-go avgusta 1939 goda [Speech of Comrade Molotov at the opening of the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition on August 1, 1939]. *Sovetskiy khlopok* [Soviet cotton], 1939(9), 3–6. OGIZ Selkhozgiz.

MosCulture. (n.d.). *Pavil'on "Zemledelie" (byvshiy Ukrainskoy SSR), 1954 g., arkh. Chechulin D.N.* [Pavilion "Agriculture" (former Ukrainian SSR), 1954, arch. Chechulin D.N.].
<https://mosculture.ru/object/pavilon-zemledelie-byvshij-ukrainskoj-ssr-1954-g-arhitektor-chechulin-d-n/>

Munitions Assignments Board. (1942). *Second protocol between the USSR the US and great britain tabs 5-12 (contains miscellaneous data also)* (Folder Lot 2). Combined Chiefs of Staff, Record Group 218. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

Myalova, O. (2022). "Beloe zoloto" v Azovskom rayone ["White Gold" in the Azov Region]. *Don so vsekh storon: Okno v prirodu*.
<https://www.dspl.ru/blog/don-so-vsekh-storon/okno-v-prirodu/beloe-zoloto-v-azovskom-rayone/>

Narodny Komissariat Zemledeliya URSR. (1933, January 26). *Pro organizatsiyu pratsi v kolgospakh, pro postiynu rilnychu vyrobnychu brygadu, vidryadnist, normy vyrobitku, roztsinky ta oblik* [On the organization of labor in collective farms, on the permanent agricultural production brigade, piecework, production rates, pricing and accounting] (Postanova No. 5).

Nettl, P. (1951). German Reparations in the Soviet Empire. *Foreign Affairs*, 29(2), 300–307. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20030835>

Nustad, K. (2023). *Khrushchev's corn campaign: In dream and reality* [Master's thesis, University of Texas at Austin]. Texas ScholarWorks.
<https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/items/d6974a28-12ff-4d90-b14a-fd54427e08d5>

NV. (2022, October 7). Всесвітній день бавовни. Історія українського мему та вітання зі святом із соцмереж.
<https://nv.ua/ukr/lifestyle/vsesvitniy-den-bavovni-poyasnennya-mema-ta-pozdorovle-nnya-vid-ukrajinciv-50275345.html>

Obertreis, J. (2017). *Imperial desert dreams: Cotton growing and irrigation in Central Asia, 1860–1991*. V&R Unipress.

O khode agrozootekhnicheskogo obucheniya rabochikh na trekhletnikh kursakh bez otryva ot proizvodstva v sovkhosakh Ministerstva khlopkovodstva USSR [On the progress of agro-zootechnical training of workers in three-year courses without interruption from production in state farms of the Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR]. (n.d.). (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 276). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Odessky Oblispolkom, Sektor VSKhV. (1952, December). *Sluzhebnaia zapiska / pismo Zam. nachalnika Upravleniya s-kh. propagandy Ministerstva Khlopkovodstva USSR Tov. Podvalkovu ot Zav. Sektorom VSKhV Tov. Afanasieva* [Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 455]. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Odeske oblasne upravlinnya bavovnytstva. (1952, December 27). *Lyst No. 1188 do zastupnyka nachalnyka upravlinnya silskohospodarskoyi propahandy tov.* Podvalkova M. (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 455). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Office of Research and Reports, Central Intelligence Agency. (1955, April 6). *Soviet Cotton Production in the Postwar Period*. CIA.gov.

https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000496067.pdf

Ohloblyn, O. (1929, March). *Bavovniana promyslovist na Ukraini v XVIII-XIX st.* [The cotton industry in Ukraine in the 18th–19th centuries]. *Chervonyi Shliakh*, (3), 116–135. Libraria.ua. <https://libraria.ua/>

Onufrienko, A., Menzelevskyi, S., Teliuk, O., & National Oleksandr Dovzhenko Centre. (2019). *VUFKU, Lost & Found*. National Oleksandr Dovzhenko Centre.

Organizatsionnoe Upravlenie Vsesoyuznoy Selskokhozyaystvennoy Vystavki. (1952, October). *Pismo Zamestitelyu nachalnika Upravleniya selskokhozyaystvennoy propagandy Ministerstva Khlopkovodstva Ukrainskoy SSR tov.* Podvalkovu: *Razyasnenie na pismo No. 23/432 ot 18/X-1952 g.* (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 455). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Perlyna Stepy [Pearl of the Steppe]. (1931). [Film]. Ukrainfilm.

https://avd.archives.gov.ua/files/kino-doc.php?od_obl=12102

Perga, T. (2024). Ukrainian waste for the Soviet economy: Shaping the national narrative. *Environment and History*, 30, 541–560.

<https://doi.org/10.3828/whp.eh.63830915903608>

Perga, T. (2025). Conflicting interests: The early development of makulatura collection in Soviet Ukraine. *Worldwide Waste*, 8(3).

<https://doi.org/10.3197/whpww.63857928646677>

Peterson, M. (2016, May 19). US to USSR: American Experts, Irrigation, and Cotton in Soviet Central Asia, 1929–32. *Environmental History*, 21(3), 442–466.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/envhis/emw006>

Peterson, M. K. (2019). *Pipe dreams: Water and empire in Central Asia's Aral Sea basin*. Cambridge University Press.

Plant Breeding and Genetics Institute. (n.d.). *Istoriia instytutu* [History of the institute]. <http://sgi.in.ua/istoriya-institutu/>

Plokhy, S. (2012). *The Cossack myth: History and nationhood in the age of empires*. Cambridge University Press.

Popov, I. (1951, November). *Otchet o vtoroy sel'skokhozyaystvennoy vystavke gor. Izmail 1951 goda* (Fund 5021, Opys 1, Sprava 274, p. 80). Ministry of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR Records, Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Presydia Verkhovnoi Rady URSR. (1946, March 27). *Ukaz: Pro utvorennia Ministerstva Tekhnichnykh kultur Ukrainskoi RSR* [Decree: On the formation of the Ministry of Industrial Crops of the Ukrainian SSR]. *Vidomosti Verkhovnoi Rady URSR*, 1947(5–6), 54.

https://uk.wikisource.org/wiki/Указ_Президії_ВР_УРСР_від_27.3.1946_«Про_утворення_Міністерства_Технічних_культур_Української_РСР»

Priemel, K. C. (2015). Occupying Ukraine: Great Expectations, failed opportunities, and the spoils of war, 1941–1943. *Central European History*, 48(1), 31–52.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938915000059>

Reichskommissariat Ostland / Reichsministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete. (1943, February 16). *Aktennotiz für den Führer. Betrifft: Rohstoffproduktion in den besetzten Ostgebieten* [Memorandum for the Führer. Subject: Raw material production in the occupied Eastern territories] (Document No. 171) [Exhibition item]. National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War, Kyiv, Ukraine.

- Rogozhin, N. (1939, September). Uluchshit' kachestvo i assortiment khlopkovogo volokna [To improve the quality and assortment of cotton fiber]. *Sovetskiy khlopok* [Soviet cotton], 1939(9), 24–28. OGIZ Selkhozgiz.
- Satskyi, P. (2016). Ideolohichno-orhanizatsiine zabezpechennia budivnytstva Pivdenno-Ukrainskoho i Pivnichno-Krymskoho kanaliv (1950–1953 rr.). *Visnyk Mariupolskoho derzhavnoho universytetu. Serii: Istorii. Politolohiia*, 17, 83–90.
- Satskyi, P. (2017a). Concept of cotton in the southern USSR and in the Crimea in the early 1950 and prerequisites of forming a single regional economic complex. *Kraeznavstvo*, 1-2, 192–199.
- Satskyi, P. (2017b). Construction management South-Ukrainian and North-Crimean channels in 1950–1953. *Dnipropetrovsk University Bulletin: History & Archaeology Series*, 25(111). <https://doi.org/10.15421/261712>
- Satskyi, P. (2016). Intehratsiia Krymu i Ukrainy v yedynyi ekonomichnyi rehion u protsesi mobilizatsii trudovykh resursiv za 1950–1953 rr. *Literatura ta kultura Polissia. Serii: Istorychni nauky*, 85(6), 167–180.
- Satskyi, P. V. (2017). Osnovni chynnyky intehratsii ekonomiky Krymu iz URSR u khodi vyboru trasy budivnytstva Pivdenno-Ukrainskoho i Pivnichno-Krymskoho kanaliv. *Naukovi Pratsi: Serii Istorii*, 292(280), 87–91.
- Satskyi, V. P. (2017, March 3). *Prohrama rozvytku bavovnytstva v pivdennykh raionakh URSR u 1950–1954 rr. y ekonomichna intehratsiia Krymu iz Ukrainoiu* [Conference presentation]. Problems of Regionalism: Past, Present, Future, Kyiv, Ukraine.
- Scherner, J., & Spoerer, M. (2023). Infant company protection in the German semi-synthetic fibre industry: Market power, technology, the Nazi government and the post-1945 world market. *Business History*, 65(3), 541–571. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2021.1900118>

Schönfelder, T. (2022). Reinventing the steppe: The agromeliorative complex in the Russian periphery. *Slavic Review*, 81(1), 32–54. <https://doi.org/10.1017/slr.2022.77>

Serdyukov, I. (n.d.). *Ozernyy Mark Evstafievich* [Mark Evstafievich Ozerny]. Geroi Strany. Retrieved June 14, 2026, from https://warheroes.ru/hero/hero.asp?Hero_id=16795

Slutskiy, A. A. (1936, September). Fakty i tsifry — upryamaya veshch' [Facts and figures are a stubborn thing]. *Sovetskiy khlopok* [Soviet cotton], 1936(9), 42–48. OGIZ Selkhozgiz.

Sovet Ministrov Ukrainiskoy SSR. (1949, March 8). *Postanovlenie No. 510: O plane kontraktatsii i zagotovok khlopka-syrtsa urozhaya 1949 goda* (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 7). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Sovet Ministrov Ukrainiskoy SSR. (1950a, February 10). *Postanovlenie No. 302: O rayonirovanii sortov khlopchatnika v kolkhozakh i sovkhozakh Ukrainiskoy SSR na 1950 god* (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 1). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Sovet Ministrov Ukrainiskoy SSR. (1950b, August 31). *Postanovlenie No. 2646 Ministerstvu khlopkovodstva: O naimenovanii sortov khlopchatnika sovetskoy selektsii* (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 3). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Sovet Ministrov Ukrainiskoy SSR, & Tsentralny Komitet KP(b) Ukrainy. (1949, April 26). *Postanovlenie No. 973 Ministerstvu USSR: O meropriyatiyakh po razvitiyu khlopkovodstva v kolkhozakh i sovkhozakh Ukrainiskoy SSR* (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 7, p. 592). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Sovet Ministrov Ukrainiskoy SSR, & Tsentralny Komitet KP(b) Ukrainy. (1950, May 30). *Postanovlenie No. 1637 Ministerstvu khlopkovodstva: Voprosy*

organizatsiia cotton-growingii Ministerstva khlopkovodstva Ukrainiskoy SSR (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 1). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchych orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Sovet Truda i Oborony. (1930a). *O merakh k razvitiyu khlopkovodstva v novykh rayonakh* [On measures for the development of cotton growing in new regions] (Postanovlenie No. 89). *Sobranie Zakonov i Rasporyazheniy SSSR*, (7), Art. 89.

Sovet Truda i Oborony. (1930b, March 21). *Ob obyazatelnom okladnom strakhovanii posevov khlopka v novykh rayonakh ot gradobitiya, vymerzaniya i vymochki v 1929-1930 g.* [On mandatory assessment insurance of cotton crops in new regions against hail, freezing, and waterlogging in 1929-1930] (Postanovlenie No. 216). *Sobranie Zakonov i Rasporyazheniy Raboche-Krestyanskogo Pravitelstva SSSR*, (19), Art. 216.

Sovity tratiat bavovniani tereny [Soviets are losing cotton territories]. (1941, December 14). *Zhovkivski Visti*, (26), 2.

Sovety potrebuiut yhipetskoi bavovny [Soviets need Egyptian cotton]. (1942, January 21). *Nove Ukrainske Slovo*, 1(15), p. 2.

Teichmann, C. (2008). Canals, cotton, and the limits of de-colonization in Soviet Uzbekistan, 1924–1941. *Central Asian Survey*, 26(4), 499–519.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02634930802018240>

The fifth five year plan of the Soviet Union. (1953). *Current History*, 24(137), 43–55.

Tkachenko, A. (ca. 1951–1953). [Formal letter from Deputy Minister of Cotton Growing of the Ukrainian SSR A. Tkachenko to Comrade P. L. Barabash of the Agricultural Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine] (Fund 5021, Inventory 1, Sprava 272). Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Traktorna kolona "Dzhon Dyr" na 60 mashyn, shcho pryznachena dlia vidpravky v Khyvu na zasiv [Photograph]. (1931, March 30). *Vsesvit*, (9), 1.

TsK KP(b)U Sektor Sel'khozpropagandy. (ca. 1952). *Spravka o rabote kursov po podgotovke masterov sel'skogo khozyaystva s 3-kh letnim srokom obucheniya bez otryva ot proizvodstva v kolkhozakh khlopokoseyushchikh oblastey Ukrainskoy SSR* (Fond 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 272). Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Tsentralny Komitet KP Ukrainy, & Sovet Ministrov Ukrainskoy SSR. (1950a, July 19). *Postanovlenie No. 2213: Po vypolneniiu postanovleniya Soveta Ministrov Soyuzha SSR i TsK VKP(b) "O postanovke dela propagandy i vnedreniya dostizheniy nauki i peredovogo opyta v selskom khozyaystve"* (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 2). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Tsentralny Komitet KP Ukrainy, & Sovet Ministrov Ukrainskoy SSR. (1950b, July 19). *Postanovlenie No. 2213: O meropriyatiyakh po podgotovke k stroitelstvu respublikanskoy postoyanno deystvuyushchey selskokhozyaystvennoy vystavki v gorode Kieve* (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 273). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Tsentralny Komitet VKP(b). (1936, December 27). *Ob organizatsii Stakhanovskogo dvizheniya v selskom khozyaystve* [About the organisation of the Stakhanovite movement among agricultural workers]. *Pravda*.

Tsitsin, N. V. (Ed.). (1954). *Vsesoyuznaya selskokhozyaystvennaya vystavka: Putevoditel* [All-Union Agricultural Exhibition: Guidebook]. Gosudarstvennoye izdatelstvo selskokhozyaystvennoy literatury.

Tulepbaev, B. A. (1966, September). *Reshenie khlopkovoy problemy v SSSR* [The solution to the cotton problem in the USSR]. *Voprosy Istorii*, (9), 3–14. Biblio.uz (Libmonster ID: UZ-594).

<https://biblio.uz/m/articles/view/%D0%A0%D0%95%D0%A8%D0%95%D0%9D%D0%98%D0%95-%D0%A5%D0%9B%D0%9E%D0%9F%D0%9A%D0%9E%D0%92%D0%9E%D0%99-%D0%9F%D0%A0%D0%9E%D0%91%D0%9B%D0%95%D0%9C%D0%AB-%D0%92-%D0%A1%D0%A1%D0%A0>

Ukrinform. (2024, October 24). *Experimental cotton harvesting campaign near completion in Ukraine*.

<https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-economy/3919234-experimental-cotton-harvesting-campaign-near-completion-in-ukraine.html>

Ukraina bude maty svoju vlasnu bavovnu [Ukraine will have its own cotton]. (1930, August 3). *Nove Selo*, 1(26), 2.

Upravlenie sel'skokhozyaystvennoy propagandy. (1951–1952). *Otchety o rabote oblastnykh sel'skokhozyaystvennykh vystavok Ukrainskoy SSR za 1952* (Fund 5021, Opys 1, Sprava 274). Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Upravlenie Selskokhozyaystvennoy Propagandy Ministerstva Khlopkovodstva Ukrainskoy SSR. (n.d.). *Metodicheskie ukazaniya* [Methodological guidelines] (Fonds 5021, Opis 1, Sprava 276). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2025, May 28). *A look at Soviet agriculture (1959)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4vJoMa-oho>

Vasylenko, L. (1931, March 30). *Tavriia – ukrainskyi Turkestan* [Tavria is the Ukrainian Turkestan]. *Vsesvit*, 7(9), 11–12.

Volobuyeva, M. P. (1952). *Z chestiu vykonatymo zobov'iazannia pered Batkivshchynoiu – damo bilshe „biloho zolota“ kraini* [With honor we will fulfill our obligation to the Fatherland – we will give more "white gold" to the country] (Fund 5021, Opys 1, Sprava 455). Zaporizhzhia Regional Agricultural Exhibition Materials,

Central State Archive of Higher Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Von Laue, T. H. (1954). A Secret Memorandum of Sergei Witte on the Industrialization of Imperial Russia. *The Journal of Modern History* 術, 26(1), 60–74.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1874874>

Ward, C. (2018). Languages of Trade or a Language of Class? In L. H. Siegelbaum & R. G. Suny (Eds.), *Making Workers Soviet: Power, Class, and Identity* (pp. 194-218). Cornell University Press.

Zakinchennia kampanii ochyshchuvannia bavovny [The end of the cotton processing campaign]. (1943, May 29). *Promin*, 2(40), 3.

Zakonchit zatyanuvshuyusya organizatsiyu UkrNIKHI [Finish the protracted organization of the Ukrainian Scientific Research Institute of Cotton Growing]. (1951, September 29). (Fonds 5021, Opis 1). Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), Kyiv, Ukraine.

Zandrok, Ye. (1930, April 15). Nyzhnie Dnipro i silske hospodarstvo [The Lower Dnipro and agriculture]. *Vsesvit*, 6(10–11), 7–9.