

Demographic Changes in the Population of the Uzbek Ssr: The Role of the Social Security System in Urban and Rural Life (1941-1945)

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Abstract: This article analyzes the involvement of the Uzbek people in the ranks of the army during the Second World War, as a result of which the population dropped sharply, as well as the shortcomings and problems of the social welfare policy of the Soviet authorities among the urban and rural population.

Introduction. The Second World War, which has taken its place in the annals of history as a tragedy of the 20th century, undeniably began through the fault of Germany, Italy, Japan, and the USSR. However, on June 22, 1941, Germany violated the non-aggression pact and invaded the Soviet Union. At this point, the USSR transformed from an aggressor state into a state defending itself. Although Germany planned to conquer the Soviet state swiftly, in reality, the war lasted 1418 days and ended with the defeat of the German state. All the republics within the USSR, including Uzbekistan, were "voluntarily" drawn into the vortex of war. Uzbeks, along with all the peoples of the USSR, displayed courage and selflessness on the battlefields. From the very first days of the war, Uzbekistan became one of the powerful arsenals of the Soviet army, supplying the front with numerous aircraft, aviation bombs, and other military products. Viktor Chernomirdin, highlighting Uzbekistan's contribution to the victory, stated that "one in ten shells fired against fascism was produced in Uzbekistan". [6; 51].

Alongside the heroic actions of soldiers on the battlefields, the Uzbek people also made a significant contribution to the victory through their dedicated labor on the home front. During the war years, all efforts were subordinated to the war effort, and the entire strength of the people was directed towards it. The mass mobilization of the able-bodied population to the front and defense industries had profound consequences.

Firstly, it significantly impacted the demographic situation in the republic. *Secondly*, the composition of the workforce changed with an increase in the number of young people and women in its ranks. *Thirdly*, agricultural production was disrupted, leading to increased food shortages. All of these factors manifested differently among the urban and rural populations.

Results and Discussion. World War II had a considerable impact on the demographics of the peoples of Turkestan, causing a population decline of 1,978,000 people [15; 17]. In particular, the population of the Uzbek SSR decreased from 6,050,000 in 1940 to 5,197,000 in 1945 [3; 82]. Calculations indicate that almost 28% of those conscripted to the front perished. The war also severely affected the natural population growth, with mortality rates exceeding birth rates. For instance, in 1941, the birth rate was 34.2% (per 1000 people) and the mortality rate was 10.4%, while by 1945 the birth rate had fallen to 17.7% [13; 14]. While in 1940 the Uzbek SSR ranked second after the Armenian SSR in terms of natural population growth among the Soviet republics, the sharp decline during the war years resulted in it falling behind Kazakhstan, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Armenia, and Turkmenistan by 1950.

Several factors contributed to the sharp decline in birth rates during the war years. Firstly, the significant increase in the number of women in the workforce, coupled with harsh working and living conditions, reduced their ability to bear children. Furthermore, the lack of maternity wards and

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inadequate medical care for women exacerbated the situation. For example, during the war years, out of 6,559 collective farms operating in the republic, only 82 (13%) had maternity hospitals, and only 20 of them had obstetrician-gynecologists [3; 84]. Secondly, increased working hours and malnutrition led to a deterioration in people's physical condition and an increase in illnesses. Difficulties in raising children led to an increase in abortions. According to sources, 7,247 illegal abortions were recorded in the cities of the republic in 1943, and 7,440 in 1944 [22; 9]. The actual figures are likely to be much higher, as cases of abortion with the help of folk healers in rural areas were not registered. Thirdly, the mass mobilization of men for war was a major factor in the low birth rate. As a result of these factors, the birth rate declined sharply.

During the Second World War, migration also significantly impacted the population. The evacuation and resettlement of people led to an increase in the urban population. For example, 1.5 million people, including over 250,000 children, were relocated from areas where active fighting was taking place. If in 1941 the population of Tashkent was 470,000, as a result of the influx of evacuees, the capital's population reached 1 million in a short period [6; 133]. The following table shows the population growth dynamics of the Uzbek SSR as a result of migration. [19; 29].

Table 1.

Year	Population change due to migration (+ increase, - decrease)
1940	+95 563
1941	+123 990
1942	+ 85 533
1943	+ 41 303
1944	-74 312
1945	-17456

If we analyze the table, we can observe a high population growth from 1940 to 1943 due to an influx of migrants. However, in 1944-1945, there was a population decline of almost 92,000 people. This can be primarily attributed to the re-evacuation (return migration) of people to the territories liberated from the fascist invaders.

The war had severe consequences for the rural population. The mobilization of able-bodied men to the front resulted in a labor shortage. This is evidenced by the fact that during the war, more than 60% of the army consisted of rural residents [11; 299]. In the collective farms of the republic, the number of able-bodied men decreased by 32% in the first year of the war and by almost 40% by 1945 [10; 125]. At the village level, the proportion of men decreased to 44.1% by January 1, 1944. According to the 1939 census data, the proportion of men was 51.7% of the total rural population. Several factors contributed to the decline in the rural population:

- Firstly, the mobilization of the rural population through military registration and enlistment offices.
- Secondly, the mass mobilization of the population for industry and construction.
- Thirdly, the mobilization of the population in the territories liberated from German occupation.
- Fourthly, the re-evacuation of the rural population.

Archival documents indicate that the total population of the Uzbek SSR as of January 1, 1945, was 5,196,973 people. Of these, the urban population accounted for 1,698,938, and the rural population for 3,498,035. Calculations show that the able-bodied population consisted of 1,390,550 people, and the non-able-bodied population of 1,458,937 people [23; 2-3]. Groups 1 and 2 of war and labor invalids, as well as children of military personnel, were also included in the non-working population group.

During the war years, the mobilization of skilled personnel and a significant portion of the able-bodied rural population to the front led to significant changes in the labor structure. Women filled the



positions vacated by men in various sectors of the economy. Across the Soviet Union, women constituted 80% of all able-bodied collective farmers in 1944. In some republics, the proportion of women was even higher. For instance, in the Uzbek SSR, as of January 1, 1944, the number of women reached 671,300, ranking second only to the RSFSR in the Union [12; 36-37]. With a significant portion of the male workforce at the front, the primary responsibility for providing for families fell on women. Consequently, many women were employed in industrial enterprises in various regions of the republic. For example, in the factories of Samarkand alone, women constituted 90% of the workforce [2; 20]. Due to the large-scale involvement of women in production during the war, the network of kindergartens and nurseries was further expanded.

The war years, with famine and the outbreak of various diseases, left both urban and rural populations in dire straits. Food shortages emerged. Under these circumstances, the rural population, while maintaining cotton production, had to provide food not only for the urban population but also for the army. As a result of the temporary occupation of some territories by the enemy, the Uzbek people, who used to consume up to 600,000 tons of imported bread annually, were now tasked with "self-sufficiency in food" [5; 28]. Despite the difficult situation, cotton cultivation remained the leading agricultural sector in the republic. The disruption of economic ties and the weakening of rural productive forces necessitated a shift towards austerity measures in almost all areas. Under these conditions, a system of rationed food distribution was introduced to provide for the population. A tiered supply norm was established for workers and those equated to them, employees, and children under 12 years of age. The majority of the rural population was deprived of centralized state food supply. Rationing only applied to rural intellectuals (teachers, medical workers, agronomists, livestock specialists, war invalids, and evacuees). The rest of the population obtained food products through their workdays and personal plots. The fact that in 1942, around 62 million people in the USSR received food on a rationed basis, with approximately 2/3 of them being urban residents, supports this point [9; 80].

Food shortages forced people to seek additional sources of supply and develop subsidiary farms. This was because state-allocated food funds were limited and did not fully meet the needs of the population. In these circumstances, in 1942, the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) adopted a resolution "On the Allocation of Land for Subsidiary Plots and Vegetable Gardens of Workers and Employees." According to the resolution, all land plots were leased for a period of 5-7 years and exempted from agricultural tax [1]. Thanks to these measures, the urban population gained access to an additional source of food.

Beginning in 1942, a new crop (sugar beet) was cultivated in the republic, with Tashkent, Samarkand, and Fergana regions becoming major centers for its production. Specialists were brought in from other regions to teach and promote sugar beet cultivation techniques. As a result, the area under sugar beet cultivation expanded in the republic, and during the war years, Uzbekistan provided a quarter of all sugar production in the Soviet Union [8; 12]. The rural population of Uzbekistan also mastered the cultivation of sunflowers, an important food crop. The cultivation of corn and sesame was also increased. In particular, in 1942, the area under sesame cultivation in the republic accounted for 50% of the total sesame cultivation area in the USSR [21; 447]. However, these products were not primarily directed towards meeting the needs of the local population. Under these circumstances, rural residents were forced to consume various wild herbs.

The rural population even resorted to using cottonseed for baking bread. War veteran and historian Hamid Ziyoyev recalled in his memoirs: "The bread was mixed with husks, dark in color, sticky, and very difficult to chew and swallow. Fortunately, corn was grown in the villages. Households baked bread from corn flour with the addition of pumpkin and beetroot. This national product was better than the bread provided by the government. Those harvesting wheat would rub the ears and eat the grains to satiate their hunger while working. Due to hunger, many were selling their houses, but finding buyers was difficult. I witnessed people dying from hunger after consuming husks, and the deceased being buried in their clothes without shrouds". [17]



The war significantly changed not only the methods of obtaining food (bread was rationed) but also its consumption patterns. For instance, the practice of dividing bread into small pieces and consuming it as an independent dish persisted. Changes were also made to funeral rites, with halva being prepared from corn flour. Furthermore, in 1943, the Muslim Religious Administration issued a fatwa permitting Muslim soldiers and women in dire circumstances to temporarily consume pork [18; 234]. This was due to the rising death rate among the population caused by famine. Even in such a situation, the Uzbek people refrained from consuming products prohibited by Islam. Hunger and poverty reached such an extent that there were instances of 1 kg of flour being diluted in a large cauldron and distributed among 50-60 workers, and due to the unmet demand for footwear, people mostly went barefoot or made "simple makeshift shoes" [21; 452]. Food shortages and malnutrition led to the outbreak of various diseases.

On April 19, 1941, the Council of People's Commissars of the Uzbek SSR adopted Resolution No. 387 "On the Amounts of Pensions and Allowances Granted to War Invalids and Their Family Members, as well as to the Elderly, Accidentally and Congenitally Disabled." According to the resolution, disability pensions were assigned in the following amounts [24; 128-129].

Table 2.

Pension Recipient Group		Monthly Pension (Rubles)	
		Non-agricultural workers	Agricultural workers
Military personnel	1 st group invalids	97,50	60
	2 nd group invalids	67,50	37,50
Imperialist war invalids	1 st group invalids	37,50	22,50
	2 nd group invalids	22,50	13,50
Old age, accidental, and congenital invalids	1 st group invalids	25	15
	2 nd group invalids	15	9

Table The amount of pension and assistance payments to the families of military personnel was determined based on the number of able-bodied and non-able-bodied family members. Assistance to family members of military personnel living in rural areas and engaged in agriculture was set at 50% of the amount established for urban residents.

Rural invalids received significantly less assistance compared to urban invalids. Groups I and II invalids received material assistance from the state. The state did not guarantee social security for rural war invalids of the III group [16; 225]. Material assistance to war invalids in rural areas was provided by collective farms and collective farmers' mutual aid public funds. Assistance from collective farms came not only in the form of money but also in the form of agricultural products. Despite limited resources, collective farm members assisted war invalids in stocking fuel, repairing their homes, and addressing other issues.

Conclusion. The Second World War profoundly transformed the demographic situation in Uzbekistan, impacting population growth rates and its composition. The mobilization of able-bodied men to the front forced the mass involvement of women and school-aged adolescents in industrial enterprises and fieldwork, often under extended working hours. Moreover, violence and pressure on farmers intensified. The rural population was burdened not only with providing for their own needs but also with supplying food to the army and delivering agricultural products to the liberated cities and villages.

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