

PAPER

ACTIVITIES OF LIBRARIES IN UZBEKISTAN DURING WORLD WAR II (1941–1945)

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Abstract

This article explores the activities of libraries in Uzbekistan during World War II, focusing on changes in their material and technical base, the reduction of book collections, and the mobilization of library staff to the front. It also analyzes how libraries promoted patriotic and ideological literature and contributed to strengthening the spiritual unity and will of society through mass and educational events.

Key words: public libraries, red teahouses, reading rooms, front lines, collections, hospitals, military units.

INTRODUCTION

World War II (1941–1945) directly influenced the life of Uzbekistan, as it did in many other countries. The war affected not only the economy and social life but also brought significant changes to the cultural and educational sphere. Libraries, too, experienced the hardships of the war. Books and librarianship became an important factor in raising the spiritual culture of the people and strengthening patriotism.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

From October 1941, the movement to acquire military knowledge intensified throughout the Soviet Union. Libraries of Uzbekistan contributed significantly to spreading such knowledge. During the first year of the war, the library network of the Uzbek SSR was reduced considerably, especially in rural areas. Wartime difficulties forced the reduction of library funding. By the end of 1942, there were only 190 libraries left in the republic with a total book collection of 259,000 copies, compared to 408 public libraries in early 1941.

The number of specialized libraries and their staff was also reduced. By 1945, only about 200 employees worked in all scientific and specialized libraries, which was almost four times fewer than in 1940. However, the importance of political and educational activities carried out among the population did not decrease but, on the contrary, grew. Each library, reading room, and red

teahouse had to carry out wide-ranging political, cultural, and educational work, explaining to workers and collective farmers the party and government decisions, the situation at the front, international events, the tasks of the rear, and other urgent issues for the country.

Libraries of Uzbekistan provided workers in the rear with the necessary information by distributing books and newspapers. They also supported military units, thereby gaining experience in political, educational, and propaganda activities.

The Soviet authorities emphasized mass forms of propaganda, including book and newspaper exhibitions, lectures, discussions, and QA evenings. Libraries were instructed to organize book propaganda in factories, research institutions, higher educational institutions, and hospitals, ensuring that books reached all readers. Public libraries, following these directives, strengthened their political and educational work and helped readers improve their political and cultural awareness. In 1941, libraries of Uzbekistan distributed 89,500 political books, while in 1942 this number reached 105,500.

Much attention was also paid to publishing works dedicated to fostering patriotism. The Uzbek State Publishing House issued many works by prominent Soviet writers, including Hamid Olimjon, G'afur G'ulom, Oybek, Uyg'un, and others. During this period, one of the finest works of Uzbek prose, Oybek's novel *Navoiy*, was published.

RESULTS

World War II brought changes to the composition of library readers. The proportion of scientific and engineering-technical staff among readers increased. In 1940, such readers made up 17.3% in the State Library of the Uzbek SSR and 64% in the main library of the Academy of Sciences of the Uzbek SSR. This shift influenced the demand for literature by subject: during the war, the need for books on military technology and medicine increased significantly.

Libraries paid special attention to the propaganda of socio-political literature in their work with readers, both individually and in groups.

Librarians also took responsibility for hospitals and other medical institutions, supplying them with necessary literature, organizing exhibitions, literary meetings, public readings, and discussions. Special mobile collections were created to serve hospitals and military units. In 1941, such collections were formed in the Alisher Navoiy State Public Library, and by early 1942, in the main libraries of the Central Asian State University. These mobile libraries were sent to evacuation hospitals in Chirchiq and Yangiyo'l, the Academy of Motorization and Mechanization, the Military Medical Academy, and other institutions.

New libraries also appeared during the war in military units and hospitals. Regional, city, and district libraries actively supported their work. Many libraries formed groups of volunteers, mostly students, who helped librarians in organizing cultural activities. With their assistance, books, musical instruments, records, and other cultural materials were distributed among the population.

DISCUSSION

The decline in library work indicators during the early years of the war turned out to be temporary. Thanks to the dedication of librarians, the number of library readers in the Uzbek SSR grew rapidly. In 1941, 467,000 people used public libraries in the republic, while in 1942 this number reached 580,000.

By 1943, the situation of libraries had significantly improved. The network of public libraries began to recover, and by 1944 there were 203 libraries in the country, including 10 regional, 51 city, 120 district, and 22 children's libraries. The total book collection of republican libraries exceeded 2.7 million copies.

Due to wartime relocation, scientific institutions and industrial enterprises from other cities of the Soviet Union were moved to Uzbekistan. This led to the creation of new specialized libraries, including technical libraries. During the war, 12 technical libraries were established, and by the end of the war, the total number of scientific and specialized libraries in the republic reached 243.

In 1944, government and party organizations took measures to further improve library activities. On March 31, 1944, the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan adopted a resolution "On measures to improve the work of political-educational institutions and public libraries." The resolution called for the restoration of all libraries closed during the war, the return of library buildings occupied by other institutions, and the creation of reading rooms and red teahouses in rural areas and neighborhoods. It also planned to open courses for training 200 librarians. Scientific libraries, while replenishing their collections, sought to fill gaps by using all available sources and establishing direct connections with publishers and bookstores.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, libraries in Uzbekistan experienced great difficulties during World War II: their material base weakened, staff numbers decreased, and book collections were reduced. Nevertheless, they played a crucial role in uniting the people, providing spiritual support, and raising morale. Today, this historical experience serves as an important lesson in the development of librarianship, patriotism, education, and spirituality.

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