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LABOR MOBILIZATION BEHIND THE FRONT AND THE MILITARIZATION OF SOCIAL LIFE IN SURKHANDARYA REGION DURING THE EARLY PERIOD OF WORLD WAR II (1941)

Choriyev Rakhmonberdi Yusufovich
Specialist of the Department of Youth Affairs,
Spirituality and Enlightenment, Termez State University
E-mail: ***rychoriyev90@gmail.com***

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Abstract:
This article examines the organization of labor mobilization behind the front in Surkhandarya Region during the early period of World War II, the adaptation of production processes to military requirements, and the labor activities of different social groups. Particular attention is paid to the replacement of men who had departed for the front by women, young people, and elderly citizens; measures to increase labor productivity in industrial enterprises and agriculture; short-term vocational training courses; the establishment of defense funds; and propaganda activities. The article also explores the adaptation of the regional administrative system to wartime regulations and the strengthening of totalitarian mechanisms of governance.

Keywords: Surkhandarya, World War II, home front, labor mobilization, women, industry, agriculture, defense fund, propaganda, military training, totalitarian governance

INTRODUCTION.

Following the outbreak of World War II, the economic and social life of all territories of the Soviet Union was reorganized to meet military requirements. Industrial enterprises, agriculture, transport, and other sectors were increasingly directed toward supplying the front with essential products, food, and material resources. These processes also brought significant changes to the national economy of the Uzbek SSR, particularly in Surkhandarya Region.

During the first months of the war, the mobilization of a considerable proportion of the region's able-bodied male population into military service resulted in labor shortages in industrial enterprises, collective farms, and other production institutions. Consequently, women, young people, and elderly citizens assumed many of the responsibilities previously performed by men. They worked at industrial machinery, operated tractors and combines, cultivated agricultural land, and prepared warm clothing and food supplies for servicemen.

METHODS.

The study employs the principles of historicism, systematic analysis, problem-chronological analysis, comparative-historical research, and statistical analysis. Archival documents, contemporary newspaper materials, and historical studies relating to the socio-economic life of Surkhandarya Region during the war were used as the principal sources.

In particular, documents preserved in Fund 45, Inventory 1, File 29 of the Surkhandarya Regional State Archive were examined. Materials published in the 1941 issues of *Ilg'or Surxon uchun* and *Pravda Vostoka*, the historical collection *Episodes from the History of Surkhandarya*, and the scholarly research of N. Saidmurodov were also consulted.

Information concerning women's participation in production, vocational training courses, labor performance indicators, voluntary workdays, defense funds, and military training was compared and analyzed. In addition, the relationship between wartime state policies and the daily labor activities of the population was examined in its historical context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.

One of the main characteristics of labor mobilization in Surkhandarya Region in 1941 was the transformation of the workforce structure. Following the departure of a significant number of men for military service, other social groups began performing their duties in industrial enterprises and collective farms. In particular, the extensive involvement of women in industrial and agricultural production became a significant development.

Women working at the Zolotprommat Artel in Termiz took the initiative to master occupations traditionally performed by men. They declared: "We women will master men's professions and, whenever necessary, take their places and perform their work" [1]. This initiative served as an example for other labor collectives in the region.

As a result, women gradually began filling vacant positions in industrial enterprises. After their husbands had departed for the front, female workers of the Zolotprommat Artel assumed responsibility for maintaining production activities. Through their efforts,

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the artel fulfilled its production plan for the third quarter of 1941 by 120 percent [1]. This achievement demonstrates the importance of women's labor in maintaining production stability under wartime conditions.

The mobilization of women into the workforce was also associated with initiatives implemented at the republican level. On July 5, 1941, a women's rally was held in the Oktyabr District of Tashkent, where an appeal addressed to all women of Uzbekistan was adopted. It called upon women to replace men at industrial machines, tractors, combines, and collective farm fields. The appeal emphasized that labor behind the front was also an important contribution to the defense of the homeland [2].

This initiative received support among women in Surkhandarya Region. In particular, Oqabibi Imomova, Mariyam Xudoyqulova, and Beka Hazratqulova, members of the Sotsializm Collective Farm under the Pattakesar Village Council in Termiz District, addressed women living in the rural areas of the region. They called upon them to take the places of their husbands, brothers, and relatives who had departed for the front and to work actively in collective farm production [3].

These appeals placed responsibility on women not only to perform their regular production duties but also to fulfill the labor plans of family members who had gone to the front. Thus, wartime conditions significantly changed the distribution of labor within families and the composition of the workforce in collective farms.

By October 15, 1941, approximately 800 women in the region had responded to the appeal that "the places of men who have departed for the front must be filled" [4]. The growing demand for labor in industry and agriculture made vocational training for women an urgent necessity. For this purpose, short-term training courses were organized at industrial enterprises and machine and tractor stations.

For example, during the first months of the war, 83 women completed tractor-driving courses organized at the Sherobod Machine and Tractor Station, while another 62 women learned to operate tractors at the first Machine and Tractor Station in Jarqo'rg'on District [5]. Among the women who actively participated in these processes were Ravshankhon Tilavova, Chuchuk Meliboyeva, Mahar Samatova, and O'g'iloy Chorshanbiyeva.

Overall, during the war years, 260 women in the region were promoted to managerial positions, while 600 women acquired professions as tractor drivers and chauffeurs [6]. These figures demonstrate that women were involved not only in manual labor but also in production management and technical occupations.

Young people also played an active role in labor mobilization behind the front. During the first months of the war, 17 schoolchildren in Termiz expressed their willingness to work at the Progress Artel. Three other students decided to work in the fields of the Ittifoq Collective Farm. On July 31, 1941, 408 schoolchildren in Sho'rchi District collected and delivered 6,750 kilograms of scrap metal to the state [7].

These initiatives demonstrate that young people were actively involved in production and economic activities behind the front. Their participation in industrial and agricultural work reflects the changing relationship between education, labor, and public service under wartime conditions.

Elderly citizens also played an important role in labor mobilization. The shortage of workers in production and agriculture led to their renewed involvement in collective farm activities. For example, at the Qizil O'zbekiston Collective Farm under the Manguzar Village Council in Termiz District, 76-year-old Yunus ota Shukurov completed two labor-day units, while 80-year-old Husan ota Allamurodov completed up to one and a half labor-day units. At the Y. Okhunboboyev Collective Farm under the Xo'jaulkan Village Council in Sherobod District, 70-year-old Bozorbobo Musulmonov, 60-year-old Ernazar ota Bobonazarov, and 65-year-old Qizlarmomo ona Turdiyeva also worked beyond the established labor norms [7].

These examples indicate that wartime labor mobilization was not limited to the working-age population. Elderly citizens also contributed to agricultural production according to their physical capabilities.

Alongside labor mobilization, industrial enterprises and the agricultural system of the region were reorganized to meet wartime requirements. Working hours in industrial enterprises were extended, and some facilities began operating in two or three shifts. Production, food preparation, transport, and other sectors were increasingly directed toward meeting the needs of the front.

At the same time, the worsening military situation affected the daily lives of workers. Production targets became more demanding, while difficulties in obtaining food and clothing increased. The population was often compelled to continue working under extremely difficult material conditions. Therefore, labor mobilization behind the front should be assessed not only through production indicators but also in relation to the daily living conditions and social circumstances of the population.

The establishment of defense funds also became one of the important wartime tasks. On July 24, 1941, the leadership of Surkhandarya Region discussed the issue

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of "Wartime Conditions" and adopted a resolution aimed at reorganizing the activities of local industrial institutions and organizations in accordance with military requirements. On this basis, regional, city, and district departments were established to coordinate defense funds, the collection of warm clothing and food for servicemen, contributions toward military equipment construction, and military loan campaigns [8].

Voluntary workdays, commonly known as *subbotniks*, also played an important role in replenishing defense funds. The first republican voluntary workday was held on June 28, 1941. Workers from Surkhandarya Region participated alongside representatives of other regions of the republic and donated the money earned during these activities to the defense fund.

The militarization of social life was also clearly reflected in political administration and propaganda activities. The Soviet state intensified political propaganda to mobilize the population in support of wartime objectives. On August 8, 1941, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan adopted a resolution entitled "On Improving Political Agitation and Propaganda in the Republic under Wartime Conditions." In accordance with this resolution, propaganda centers and groups of propagandists were established in Surkhandarya Region.

Propagandists conducted meetings and awareness-raising activities at industrial enterprises, clubs, and teahouses. Their work focused on the struggle against fascism, assistance to the front, and the fulfillment of production plans. During June–July 1941, 570 anti-fascist rallies were held throughout the region, with a total attendance of 85,000 people [9].

The slogans "Death to Fascism," "We Will Not Surrender Even an Inch of Our Land to the Enemy," and "Everything for the Front, Everything for Victory" were widely promoted at these meetings. Such activities sought to align public attitudes toward the war and labor activities with the military and political objectives of the state.

Military training also received particular attention. In accordance with the resolution of the USSR Defense Committee of July 23, 1941, concerning the general military training of civilians, activities were organized to provide the population of the region with military knowledge and practical skills. During the first months of the war, 21,494 people in Surkhandarya Region participated in military training exercises, including marching, grenade throwing, and other activities. In July–August 1941, military marches covering distances of 10–25 kilometers were organized, involving 1,800 participants [10].

In addition, shooting training was conducted through the primary organizations of the Osoaviakhim Society under the program known as *Voroshilov Sharpshooters*. As a result of these training activities, 295 female sharpshooters were prepared [10]. These figures confirm that women participated not only in labor activities behind the front but also in military training.

Alongside labor mobilization, mechanisms of totalitarian governance were strengthened under wartime conditions. Control over production plans and labor discipline became increasingly strict. State administrative bodies imposed more demanding requirements on enterprises and organizations. Administrative and criminal penalties were applied in cases of violations of labor discipline or failure to fulfill assigned tasks.

Documents preserved in Fund 45, Inventory 1, File 29 of the Surkhandarya Regional State Archive reflect the administrative regulations and decisions adopted under wartime conditions [11]. At the same time, the expansion of the totalitarian governance system created additional pressure and difficulties in the everyday lives of the population. Economic and social hardships caused by the war were accompanied by intensified political surveillance and punitive measures.

Thus, home-front activities in Surkhandarya Region in 1941 encompassed two closely interconnected processes. On the one hand, the population was mobilized to maintain production and meet defense requirements. On the other hand, state administration and social life were subordinated to wartime regulations. These processes brought about changes in the region's economic and social life, including new labor relations, workforce composition, and administrative practices.

CONCLUSION.

In 1941, labor mobilization behind the front in Surkhandarya Region encompassed all major sectors of the local economy. Following the departure of men for military service, women, young people, and elderly citizens actively participated in overcoming labor shortages in industrial enterprises and agriculture.

The production initiatives of women at the Zolotprommat Artel, tractor-driving courses organized at the Sherobod and Jarqo'rg'on Machine and Tractor Stations, the involvement of schoolchildren in industrial and agricultural activities, and the labor contributions of elderly citizens demonstrate the broad social scope of home-front mobilization.

The establishment of defense funds, voluntary workdays, and the collection of clothing and food for servicemen strengthened the population's material support for the front. Propaganda centers and military

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training courses also became important instruments in adapting the population to wartime conditions.

At the same time, the introduction of military regulations, stricter labor discipline, and expanded state control had a substantial impact on the daily lives of the population. Consequently, the socio-economic development of Surkhandarya Region in 1941 became closely linked to the needs of the front, labor mobilization, and the requirements of military administration.

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