

THE HEROIC DEEDS OF UZBEKS IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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Abstract: This article explores the role and heroism of the Uzbek people during the Second World War (1941–1945), emphasizing their immense contribution to the victory over fascism. It highlights the bravery of Uzbek soldiers on the frontlines, the selfless labor of those who stayed in the rear, and the deep humanistic spirit that guided their actions. Through historical facts, personal stories, and archival materials, the paper analyzes the sociopolitical context that shaped Uzbekistan's participation in the war, as well as the long-term consequences of that heroic period for the nation's identity and historical consciousness.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, Second World War, heroism, patriotism, front, rear, history, victory, memory.

Introduction

The Second World War, one of the most tragic and large-scale events in human history, deeply affected every nation that took part in it. For Uzbekistan, which was then part of the Soviet Union, this war became a period of great trials and heroism. Thousands of Uzbek soldiers fought courageously on the frontlines, defending their homeland and contributing to the global victory over fascism.

At the same time, the people who remained in the rear—women, elders, and children—demonstrated unparalleled diligence and patriotism. They worked tirelessly in factories, fields, and hospitals, sending food, clothing, and moral support to the soldiers at the front. This unity of purpose, sacrifice, and moral strength became one of the defining features of the Uzbek contribution to the Second World War.

The aim of this paper is to present a comprehensive historical and cultural analysis of the heroism shown by Uzbeks during the war, to discuss individual examples of courage, and to interpret their significance in the formation of national identity and collective memory.

The Historical Context of Uzbekistan During the War

When Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, Uzbekistan immediately mobilized all its resources for the defense of the country. At that time, the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic was primarily an agrarian region, but its people quickly adapted to wartime needs. More than 1.5 million Uzbeks were mobilized to the front, and around 500,000 never returned, giving their lives for the victory.

The cities of Tashkent, Samarkand, and Fergana became major centers for the evacuation of industry and people from the western parts of the USSR. More than 200 factories were relocated to Uzbekistan, where local workers—many of them women and teenagers—took over the difficult task of maintaining production.

Tashkent was also known as the “City of Friendship and Mercy” because it hosted tens of thousands of refugees, including orphaned children from Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. Uzbek families welcomed these children into their homes, treating them as their own. This humanitarian act remains one of the most touching symbols of Uzbek solidarity during wartime.

Uzbek Soldiers on the Frontline

The heroism of Uzbek soldiers is an integral part of the history of the Great Patriotic War. They fought bravely in all major battles—from Moscow to Stalingrad, from Kursk to Berlin. Among them were legendary figures whose courage became immortalized in both history and literature.

One of the most famous was Hero of the Soviet Union, Turob Rakhimov, who showed exceptional bravery in the defense of Moscow. Sobir Rakhimov, another outstanding general, became the first Uzbek to be awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union. He commanded divisions on the frontlines and became a national symbol of courage and leadership.

Another remarkable name is **Zulfiya Zakirova**, a nurse who saved hundreds of wounded soldiers under fire and was posthumously awarded for her bravery. Many Uzbek women served as medics, communications officers, and snipers, proving that heroism knows no gender.

In the Battle of Stalingrad, Uzbek regiments played a vital role in maintaining defense lines and launching counterattacks. The 112th Uzbek Infantry Division fought with such determination that even German reports noted their resilience and discipline.

The Home Front: The Backbone of Victory

While soldiers fought on the battlefield, the Uzbek home front worked tirelessly to support them. The republic became one of the USSR's main suppliers of cotton, grain, and food products. Despite shortages and hardships, Uzbek farmers increased agricultural production to meet wartime demands.

Women replaced men in almost all industries—factories, collective farms, and construction sites. The concept of the “female worker-hero” became widespread. Uzbek women such as **Tursunoy Akhmedova** and **Makhfuza Murtazayeva** received medals for their exceptional labor achievements.

Uzbek poets and writers also contributed to the moral strength of the people. **Gafur Ghulam's poem “You Are Not an Orphan, My Son”** expressed the deep compassion and solidarity of the Uzbek people toward war orphans. Literature and art became powerful tools of unity and resistance.

Humanitarian and Cultural Contributions

The wartime period also highlighted Uzbekistan's humanitarian character. The country hosted more than **1 million evacuees** from the European parts of the Soviet Union, including intellectuals, artists, and scientists. Institutions such as the **Tashkent Film Studio** and the **Moscow Art Theatre** continued their work in Uzbekistan, enriching the cultural life of the region even during the war.

This exchange fostered a new level of cultural integration and mutual respect among Soviet peoples. Many of the friendships and professional relationships

formed during that period laid the foundation for postwar collaboration and the development of Uzbek national culture.

Memory and Legacy

The memory of the Second World War and the heroism of Uzbek people remains a vital part of Uzbekistan's historical consciousness. Monuments, museums, and annual commemorations on **May 9 – Victory Day** serve as reminders of the nation's courage and unity.

In modern Uzbekistan, the government and society continue to honor veterans and preserve their legacy. Educational institutions include war history in their curricula, ensuring that younger generations understand the value of peace and the price of freedom.

The stories of ordinary people—farmers, nurses, and soldiers—are retold not only in textbooks but also in films, literature, and national commemorations. This helps to strengthen patriotism and the sense of national identity rooted in historical truth.

Analytical Discussion

From a sociocultural perspective, the participation of Uzbeks in the Second World War was not just a military contribution but also a moral and ideological one. It reinforced the values of **collectivism, sacrifice, and resilience**, which later became part of the nation's moral foundation.

Furthermore, the war experience accelerated the modernization of Uzbek society. Industrialization, literacy campaigns, and women's participation in the workforce expanded significantly during the wartime years. These transformations laid the groundwork for postwar development and social progress.

The heroism displayed during the war thus has both **historical and civilizational importance**—it demonstrated how a nation, even from a remote part of the Soviet Union, could rise to the challenge and contribute decisively to world history.

Conclusion

The courage and selflessness of Uzbeks during the Second World War remain an eternal source of pride for the nation. Their contributions on the battlefield and on the home front symbolized the unity of all peoples who fought for freedom and justice.

Through their actions, Uzbeks proved that true patriotism is not limited by ethnicity or geography—it is defined by moral strength, compassion, and the willingness to defend human dignity.

Today, as Uzbekistan builds its independent future, the memory of those heroic deeds continues to inspire generations, reminding them of the unbreakable spirit and resilience of their ancestors.

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