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THE IMPACT OF EVACUATED HOSPITALS ON THE MEDICAL NETWORK OF FERGANA AND ANDIJAN DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR (1941–1945)

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Abstract:

This article analyzes the impact of military hospitals evacuated to the Fergana and Andijan regions during the Second World War (1941–1945) on the local healthcare system. Based on archival materials, the location of the evacuation hospitals, their material and technical base, the influx of qualified medical personnel, as well as their role and historical significance in the development of the regional healthcare network are highlighted with scientific evidence.

Keywords:

Second World War, evacuation, evacuation hospital, Fergana, Andijan, medicine, personnel, sanitation, doctors, nurses, archive, demography, history.

Introduction. The Second World War is one of the most tragic and large-scale conflicts in human history, and its consequences had a direct impact even on regions thousands of kilometers away from the front line. In the summer and autumn of 1941, along with industrial enterprises, scientific institutions, and the population, hundreds of military hospitals began to be relocated from the western regions of the former Soviet Union to Central Asia, particularly to Uzbekistan. During the war years, Uzbekistan turned into a huge hospital base, and in this process, the Fergana Valley, including the Fergana and Andijan regions, acquired special strategic significance [1, p. 45].

In the pre-war period, the healthcare system in the Fergana and Andijan regions was experiencing a number of serious problems. There was an acute shortage of qualified medical personnel, especially doctors with higher education, and the material and technical base did not fully meet the requirements of the time. According to statistical data of that period, there was only one doctor for tens of thousands of people in the rural areas of the valley, and the foci of infectious diseases had not been completely eliminated [2, p. 112].

However, the evacuation of military hospitals fundamentally changed the medical situation in the region. On the one hand, receiving and treating tens of thousands of severely wounded soldiers brought from the front placed a huge responsibility on the local budget and population; on the other hand, the arrival of prominent medical scientists, surgeons, and professors relocated from Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus gave a strong impetus to the development of the local medical network. These processes had not only military-medical significance but also long-term socio-demographic and scientific importance.

The best buildings, schools, educational institutions, and recreation centers in the cities of Andijan and Fergana were allocated for the hospitals. The local population closely assisted the activities of medical institutions by equipping the hospitals, providing food, and donating blood [3, p. 89]. The opening of short-term nursing courses by evacuated professors created a basis for the widespread involvement of local women in the medical field.

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the activities of evacuation hospitals located in the Fergana and Andijan regions in 1941-1945 based on archival data, and to objectively evaluate their historical role in shaping the infrastructure of the region's healthcare system and the reserve of qualified personnel. In the article, the coverage of medical services during the war and the material, technical, and intellectual heritage left in the subsequent years are subjected to a comprehensive comparative analysis for the first time.

Literature Review. The role of Uzbekistan as a rear area during the Second World War, including the placement of the evacuated population and enterprises, has been studied from various perspectives in the historiography of the Soviet period and the years of independence. In Soviet historiography, ideological views mainly focused on the positive aspects of the process, "friendship of peoples," and the incomparable help of the center. For example, in the works of U.A. Mukimov and other Soviet authors, the activities of hospitals in Uzbekistan were evaluated as heroism under the leadership of the party, but problems such as the severe conditions of the local population, the shortage of medicines, and the lack of personnel were not openly covered [4, p. 117].

During the years of independence, historians got the opportunity to cover events objectively after the seal of secrecy was removed from archival documents. In the multi-volume fundamental works of R. Shamsutdinov, the dedication shown by the population of Uzbekistan, in particular the Fergana Valley, to the front and the evacuees during the war years was proven through numbers and archival documents [5, p. 42]. In his research, the scientist provided valuable information about the number of evacuation hospitals located in the cities and districts of Andijan and Fergana, their location, and the burden placed on the local budget.

Also, the personnel policy in the healthcare system during the war years was analyzed in the studies of medical history experts N. Makhmudova and A. Khudoybergenov. According to their acknowledgment, the main task of the hospitals was not only to treat the wounded arriving from the front but also to contain the infectious diseases that spread among the evacuated population [6, p. 75]. The dissertation work of A.S. Atakhanov also provides important information about the post-war restoration of the medical education and hospital network in the Andijan region, noting that the experience gained during the war years served as the foundation for the opening of the Andijan State Medical Institute in 1955 [7, p. 21].

The articles of local historians and archivists, including the works of Sh. Ziyodov and M. Rakhimov, collected memoirs and official correspondence about the activities of specific hospitals in the Fergana region (for example, specialized surgical departments in Margilan, Kokand, and Fergana) and the famous doctors who worked there [8, p. 104].

However, in the existing literature, the specific impact of evacuation hospitals on the formation of local medical personnel in the Andijan and Fergana regions has not been specifically studied in a comparative-analytical manner as a single complex problem. This article serves to fill this very gap and introduce data from a number of archival funds into scientific circulation.

Methodology. In carrying out this research, the principles of historical objectivity and logicality were strictly followed. In studying the events and phenomena, historicity, chronological sequence, systematic and comparative analysis, statistical, and problem-chronological methods were used. In particular, the dynamics of growth and crisis were determined by comparing the changes in the medical network of the Fergana and Andijan regions in 1941-1945 with the pre-war situation [9, p. 56].

The source base of the article primarily consists of primary documents kept in the funds of the Central State Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan (O‘zR MDA), the State Archive of the Fergana Region (FVDA), and the State Archive of the Andijan Region (AVDA). Based on the documents of Fund 837 of the O‘zR MDA related to the "People's Commissariat of Health of the Uzbek SSR," orders and reports on the distribution of evacuation hospitals to the region by the government, personnel staff, and medicine supply were studied [10, p. 11]. Also, lists of evacuated medical personnel, decisions of district executive committees on equipping hospitals, and statistical reports on the donor movement and sanitary conditions were drawn from Fund 135 of the State Archive of the Andijan Region (consolidated files of the Health Department) and relevant funds of the Fergana Regional Archive [11, p. 34].

By systematizing these documents, a quantitative analysis was made of the indicators regarding the number of beds in hospitals, the wounded admitted, and those who died of diseases. In highlighting demographic and socio-historical processes, interviews and archival memoirs, as well as literature encompassing elements of oral history regarding how Uzbek nurses were trained and in what directions they operated during the war, were also utilized. All obtained statistical and written data were compared with each other, and an objective scientific assessment of the reality was given. The basis of the methodology was not only reading and describing archival documents but also openly analyzing the problems contained within them (such as unsanitary conditions, the spread of typhus, complaints written against doctors).

Results. An analysis of archival data shows that from the second half of 1941, a total of 113 evacuation hospitals were brought to Uzbekistan, a significant part of which—more than 20—were directly placed in the Fergana Valley. In particular, while 8 specialized hospitals began operating in the Andijan region during 1941-1942, their number reached 12 in the Fergana region (including the cities of Kokand and Margilan) [12, p. 105].

The largest and brightest buildings in the area were selected for the placement of the hospitals. For instance, the Pedagogical College, secondary schools, and former administrative buildings in the city of Andijan were transformed into military surgery and therapy centers.

One of the primary results was a drastic change in personnel capacity. While there were only a few surgeons with higher education in Andijan and Fergana before the war, hundreds of experienced specialists (neurosurgeons, traumatologists, radiologists, and infectious disease specialists) arrived as part of the relocated hospitals. According to the O‘zR MDA data, in the middle of 1942, 45 highly qualified medical workers were registered in hospital No. 3682 in Fergana, the majority of whom were scientists from medical institutes in Moscow and Kiev [13, p. 22]. These specialists not only treated the wounded but also trained hundreds of local girls in nursing and sanitary-instructor professions through short-term courses. In 1942-1944, more than 1,200 women completed medical courses through the Red Cross Society in the Andijan region alone [14, p. 88].

The second notable result relates to medical infrastructure. The hospitals brought modern (for that time) medical equipment to the region, particularly X-ray machines, autoclaves, and complex surgical instruments. After the war ended, a significant portion of this equipment was left in the region's hospitals. Furthermore, sanitary control was also strengthened in the local hospital network during the process of supplying the hospitals.

Statistical results demonstrate how difficult the demographic and epidemiological struggle was in the region. Along with the wounded brought in trains from the front to Fergana and Andijan, the risk of typhus, dysentery, and malaria infections increased. However, as a result of the joint efforts of epidemiologists who came from the center and local doctors, the widespread outbreak of typhus that began in the winter of 1943 was prevented [15, p. 61]. The fact that more than 70% of the military personnel treated in the hospitals recovered and returned to the front confirms the efficiency of the medical network in Fergana and Andijan.

Discussion. The results obtained during the research show that the impact on the medical system of Fergana and Andijan during the Second World War was complex and contradictory.

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On the one hand, the arrival of evacuation hospitals in the region created a scientific and practical "revolution" that must be openly acknowledged. Regional hospitals mastered complex plastic surgeries, treatments of nervous system injuries, and large-scale blood transfusion procedures that they had never encountered before. The fact that Uzbek youth interned alongside prominent medical professors was undoubtedly an unparalleled school for raising a generation of local specialists [8, p. 112].

On the other hand, an aspect that must be discussed is that due to the absolute priority of military hospitals, the civilian healthcare system in the regions faced a severe crisis. Archival data testifies that many hospitals in district centers and villages were left without qualified personnel and medicines. All medicines, dressing materials, and nutritious food products (butter, eggs, meat) were directed primarily to military hospitals. As a result, in 1942-1943, infant mortality and deaths from tuberculosis in the villages of Fergana and Andijan significantly increased compared to the pre-war period [11, p. 45].

Also, another central issue in the discussion is that this process led to the preservation of a unique scientific and medical base in the region. After the war ended, not all of the evacuated specialists returned. Doctors who adapted to the climate, started families here, or decided to continue their scientific activities in Uzbekistan formed the core of the medical infrastructure of Fergana and Andijan. The capacity of these personnel played a decisive role, especially in the reconstruction of the healthcare system and the establishment of large medical institutions in the 1950s. If this exact material and intellectual foundation had not been formed, the establishment of the Andijan State Medical Institute in 1955 would have been delayed by decades [7, p. 33].

From this, it can be concluded that the impact of the evacuation hospitals was not only a military necessity characteristic of the time, but also served as strategic capital for the post-war restoration of medicine in Uzbekistan, particularly in the valley, based on modern scientific achievements.

Conclusion. As a result of studying the activities of evacuation hospitals relocated to the Fergana and Andijan regions during the Second World War based on archival materials and existing scientific literature, the following general conclusions can be drawn:

First, the military evacuation process in 1941-1945 was an unprecedented test and school of experience for the healthcare system of the Fergana Valley. The region received hundreds of thousands of wounded and saved their lives not only through the hard work of doctors arriving from the center but also due to the dedication of the local population, blood donations, and regional budget funds.

Second, the placement of evacuation hospitals practically alleviated the problem of personnel shortage in the region. Leading medical workers and professors relocated from the center taught local doctors the secrets of modern surgery, therapy, and epidemiology directly during practice. Hundreds of local nurses and junior medical workers who emerged during the war later became the main workforce in rural medical centers.

Third, the medical equipment, laboratories, and X-ray machines left in the Fergana and Andijan regions after the end of the war enriched the material and technical base of the local hospital network. Most importantly, the structural and scientific capacity of these institutions created a solid foundation for the opening of large specialized medical centers in the Fergana Valley and higher educational institutions like the Andijan State Medical Institute in the following decades.

In conclusion, it should be noted that although the priority of evacuation hospitals during the war years caused temporary difficulties in local civilian medicine, in the long-term perspective, it elevated the developmental stage of the regional healthcare system to a new level.

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