



## Review Article

Volume-03|Issue-07|2022

## Health Care of Karakalpakstan during the Second World War

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## Article History

Received: 25.06.2022

Accepted: 07.07.2022

Published: 20.07.2022

## Citation

Gulmurat, A. (2022). Health Care of Karakalpakstan during the Second World War. *Indiana Journal of Arts & Literature*, 3(7), 5-9.

**Abstract:** In this article, we made a historical analysis based on archival materials on the health of the Karakalpak people during the Second World War. We intend to publish the results in the form of this article.

**Keywords:** Fascism, Former Republics, Karakalpaks, Epidemics, Doctors.

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## INTRODUCTION

The war against fascism is an important event in the life of the Uzbeks, as well as all the peoples of the Soviet Union. The interest of all mankind in this terrible war, which claimed the lives of tens of millions of people, has not weakened over the years, but continues to grow, because it is a fateful, integral phenomenon in the history and historiography of the former republics of the USSR, already independent states. The people of Karakalpakstan, along with other peoples of the Soviet Union, made a certain contribution to the victory over fascism in World War II. Envoys from Karakalpakstan bravely and selflessly fought on the fronts of the war, and old men, women and teenagers worked tirelessly in the rear. The healthcare sector in rural areas was less developed, as it was formed a new, on a scientific basis. In 1937-1938, 114 doctors and 896 paramedical personnel worked in the republic<sup>1</sup>; in 1940 alone, 1,876,000 rubles were allocated to this area. However, these funds were not enough, which led to a sharp increase in mortality already in the first years of the war, especially among children. Epidemics of acute respiratory and other especially dangerous diseases began everywhere. There were no special sanitary and epidemiological services even in the cities; these duties were assigned to local doctors. Doctors of rural medical stations (points) could not cope, many of them did not even have doctors, but only paramedics and nurses. They huddled in adapted premises - "adobe buildings with earthen floors, with walls crumbling from the salt marsh, small windows. The collapse of the roofs and walls of these buildings is dangerous to the living, and consumes so much money every year that a new one could be built. Medical workers live in the same closets."<sup>2</sup>

The increase in mortality and the rapid spread of epidemic diseases in 1941 forced the People's Commissariat of Health to organize sanitary and epidemiological detachments, which were supposed to carry out preventive work in villages and collective farms. For example, in January 1942, a sanitary and epidemiological survey of the rural population of the Kungrad region was carried out. It turned out that from November 15, 1941 to January 29, 1942, 19 children died on the 11th village council of the Pravda collective farm. Most of the children died from catarrhal bronchopneumonia, measles, scurvy, meningitis, etc. The doctors who examined indicated that the main causes of death of children were the lack of warm clothes ("barefoot, without hats and rarely in a coat, mothers carry small children behind their backs undressed, only tied with a scarf, sometimes with fever or children who have had a cold"), poor sanitary and hygienic condition of dwellings ("dampness, darkness, lack of ventilation, drafts, etc., as well as a complete lack of personal hygiene of collective farmers in caring for children"), long, one-sided vitamin-free nutrition ("boiled rice, millet porridge, salted cabbage, which weakens the body's resistance in general and especially children and leads to scurvy").<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Central State Archive of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, f.273, op.1, d.10, l.5.

<sup>2</sup> Central State Archive of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, f.273, op.1, d.122, l.69

<sup>3</sup> Central State Archive of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, f.273, op.1, d.122, l.138

In subsequent years, diseases such as relapsing fever, dysentery, trachoma were widespread in rural areas of Karakalpakstan, there were cases of typhus and typhoid fever, measles. Even by the end of the war, the epidemiological situation in the republic remained difficult: diseases such as leprosy, venereal and skin diseases, trachoma, and tuberculosis were widespread. Labor veteran U. Tleubergenov recalled that “due to the decline in the standard of living of the population during the war years, such diseases as “suzek”, “isitpa” spread among the population, since there were not enough medical institutions, medicines, there were a lot of deaths. More than 20 people died in two auls “Kazayakly”.<sup>4</sup> Labor veteran I.Shagilov also recalls the case when his sister fell ill and a mullah was summoned. He writes that in those years the population was reluctant to turn to doctors, more mullahs and healers (tawip): “If he recovers, it’s good, no, they will cry, grieve and bury. Although at that time there were hospitals in Muynak and good doctors who arrived from Russia worked in them. But at that moment it didn’t occur to anyone to go to the doctors.”<sup>5</sup>

The population, especially the rural population, in most cases turned to local healers (taubs, porkhans) and chiropractors. Usually, in each village there were flitters and taubs who treated the sick with the use of various herbs, incantations and prayers. Porkhans were treated with various conspiracies and prayers, expelling the spirit of "evil spirits", taubs still bled, treated with medicinal herbs. However, they were powerless against infectious and epidemic diseases. On the eve of the war, about 500 medical workers were sent to Karakalpakstan, but despite this, in 1940 there were only 2.4 doctors per 10,000 people [32], although, compared with 1925, this figure increased by almost 6 times.

The Second World War left a serious imprint on the demographic situation of the rural population of the republic, especially in 1941-1943. According to statistics, in 1941 the natural increase in the population was 5622 people, and in 1942 - already 6000, however, in the seven months of 1943 this figure was 1720 people. At the same time, these indicators were not accurate, since the registration of births, as well as deaths, was not always registered. “Even in the cities, far from all the dead are registered, and few people care about registration in rural areas,” one of the documents of the People's Commissariat of Health of the republic said - cemeteries are located in cities and villages in an open field, they do not have watchmen, everyone can dig graves and bury without any control and demand.<sup>6</sup> In most cases, the rural population did not turn to medical workers, preferring local taubs and doctors. For example, in 1941, 13937 births were recorded in the republic, in 1942 - 11385, for 7 months of 1943 - 4438, while in 1941 only 4177 women in labor turned to medical workers for help, in 1942 - 2672, and in 1943 - total 537.<sup>7</sup> The reason was considered religious prejudice and distrust of the medicine of the local population, as well as the lack of local personnel, since almost 80% of the medical staff were representatives of European nationality.

**Table 1.** The number of medical personnel in the Karakalpak ASSR in 1941-1943

Year	Established Positions		Actually Employed	
	Doctors	Nursing Staff	Doctors	Nursing Staff
1941	279	1082	105	553
1942	328	1123	163	589
1943	351	1140	134	560

To improve the situation in rural areas in the first years of the war, the People's Commissariat of Health of the Republic sent young doctors and nurses to the regions and collective farms, organized advanced training courses for nurses. For example, in 1941, after graduating from the Samarkand Medical Institute, Fanya Efimovna Vaysberg came to Karakalpakstan on a referral, who was sent to the Kegeyli region, where she worked throughout the war. She organized the work to combat the epidemic in the district center and villages, then worked as the head of the section in the district. Zoya Kasymovna Kantarbayeva, a medical assistant-midwife, worked in the same area for many years, who actively fought against infant mortality in 1941-1945. Maria Borisovna Shlepina graduated from the Turtkul medical assistant-obstetric school only in 1943 and until the end of the war she worked in the villages and collective farms of the Kegeyli district. She actively participated in the elimination of the outbreaks of the epidemic, working around the clock in the difficult conditions of a temporary hospital in the village, at the same time she carried out door-to-door rounds in the collective farms. It is also necessary to note the selfless work during the war years of the nurse Praskovya Timofeevna Zelepukhina, the doctor, head of the hospital of the 5th village council Lidia Ignatyevna Tikhonchuk, the paramedic-epidemiologist Lee Chan Ik and others. (head of the district hospital), Tamara Alexandrovna Stepanova (pediatrician), paramedics Zina Wai, Lee Dan Sen, Kainarbaev and others.

<sup>4</sup> Moyanov J.Erdi eli ardaqlasin. – Nukus, 2020. Pp.20

<sup>5</sup> Shagilov O. O’tken ku’nlardi esleymen, Nukus, 2012, pp 67

<sup>6</sup> Central State Archive of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, f.273, op.1, d.122, l.58.

<sup>7</sup> Central State Archive of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, f.273, op.1, d.122, l.70.

Most of the paramedical staff were graduates of the Turtkul medical and obstetric school: in 1941-1943 alone, 185 medical assistants were graduated here (of which 12 were midwives), most of whom were from local nationalities. Through the Red Cross and Red Crescent, 220 reserve nurses were trained, through the People's Commissariat of Health - 12 disinfectors, 1218 heads of seasonal collective farm nurseries, 20 nursery patronage nurses, 174 bonifiers, 32 surgical nurses, 23 doctors in military field surgery, etc.<sup>8</sup>

Household rounds of doctors and paramedics were carried out constantly, usually on foot. As archival sources testify, in rural areas, as well as most in cities, "the activity of health workers is associated with constant walking, the lack of shoes makes it impossible for them to perform their duties" . The People's Commissariat of Health of the republic even begged the government to provide medical personnel with shoes, outerwear, fabrics (manufactory).<sup>9</sup>

Buildings of medical institutions also required attention and large investments. for example, in the Takhtakupyr district there was a single hospital, 7 medical centers, all of them were located in adapted premises. The quality of medical care did not meet the needs. The population often turned to doctors, as the sanitary and medical situation in the region worsened. In 1942 alone, 34995 people were examined, in 1943 - 21982. The most common disease was typhus. In total, there were 30 baths in the district, 18 disinfection chambers, however, the functionality left much to be desired, even the bath in the center of Takhtakupyr worked only twice a week. The situation was similar in almost all regions.<sup>10</sup>

In total, there were 89 doctors in the republic in 1944, and another 24 doctors arrived during the year. In the existing 28 rural medical districts, only paramedics remained. There were not enough doctors, only 1/5 of the staff were filled, and the staff of nursing staff was 1/3. In 1945, the total number of doctors was 106, but with the end of the war, the outflow of specialists intensified, as benefits and privileges for medical staff for working in remote areas were removed.<sup>11</sup>

Another reason was their training. So, in one of the memorandums it is indicated that "among the doctors we have almost no national personnel and this issue is waiting for its urgent resolution." "With a few exceptions, European medical workers, both doctors and paramedical staff, have a "suitcase mood", and only the firm refusals of the People's Commissariat of Health delay Ukrainians from leaving for liberated Ukraine and, in general, everyone who wants to leave Karakalpakstan. Analyzing this desire to leave, one has to conclude that our cadres, especially doctors, are educated incorrectly even in universities and they are afraid of the deep periphery. On the student bench, they study social hygiene from books that talk about sewerage and plumbing systems in Paris, Moscow, Leningrad, but no one gives them lectures on how to deal with unsanitary conditions in an abandoned collective farm, where they don't know what a bath is, where is the restroom serves the entire area surrounding the dwelling. Poor housing and general living conditions in the rural areas of Karakalpakstan add bitterness to their first impressions and it takes a long time until a person gets used to it. For 2.5 years (1941-1943. - Approx. A.G.) we were convinced that 70% of the arriving young doctors are hothouse flowers, almost unadapted to work in our conditions.<sup>12</sup>

In the summer of 1944, a malaria epidemic spread, 20,279 patients were recorded.<sup>13</sup> The government of the republic adopted a special resolution providing for a number of measures to combat this disease. However, it was difficult to stop the spread of this disease, there was not enough staff or medicines. In most cases, the population was engaged in self-treatment, in the traditional folk way, since on the one hand, there were not enough medicines, on the other hand, in the countryside there was still distrust of official medicine. This is how academician M. Nurmukhamedov describes his illness during the war years: "Somehow I got sick with malaria. There was a war, the medical service experienced difficulties. The disease, I remember, tormented me: usually in the afternoon I instantly had a fever, I was terribly cold, despite the summer heat, I felt disgusting. Then these symptoms subsided, I got better, but I waited for a new attack of fever, which appeared the next day and again in the afternoon. One day, a desperate grandmother brought two live carp, which she bought at the market. He ordered me to undress and squat, which I did. My grandmother cut both fish in front of me, deftly took out their insides ... Grabbing one carp, my grandmother began to beat the inside of the fish on my armpits, saying: "Not my hand, but the hand of my feast of Patima" ("Meniñ qolum emes, piyrim Biypatpaniñ qoli"). Having finished the treatment session, my grandmother ordered me to get dressed without wiping myself ...".<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Central State Archive of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, f.273, op.1, d.122, l.73.

<sup>9</sup> Central State Archive of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, f.273, op.1, d.135, l.17.

<sup>10</sup> Central State Archive of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, f.R-606, op.1, d.18, l.45.

<sup>11</sup> Central State Archive of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, f.273, op2, d.12, l.25.

<sup>12</sup> Central State Archive of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, f.273, op.1, d.122, l.74.

<sup>13</sup> Central State Archive of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, f.273, op.1, file 1078, l.1.

<sup>14</sup> Academician Marat Nurmukhamedov. *Bounce*. - Tashkent, 2020. P.134.

At the end of 1944 and 1945, the government of the republic began to pay great attention to this area, primarily the protection of motherhood and childhood. So, on December 15, 1944, the Council of People's Commissars of the KKASSR and the regional party committee in pursuance of the decision of the Council of People's Commissars of the Uzbek SSR and the CP (b) Uz on increasing state assistance to pregnant women, mothers of many children and single mothers, strengthening the protection of motherhood and childhood, on establishing the honorary title "Mother Heroine" and the establishment of the Order of "Maternal Glory" and the "Medal of Motherhood" dated September 14, 1944, decided to open a nursery for 80 places in rural areas, organize training and advanced training courses for nursery nurse teachers in the regions, vacate and repair all kindergarten premises and nurseries, etc. However, after the end of the war in the healthcare sector, there is a period of stagnation, an outflow of qualified workers, dilapidated premises of existing medical institutions, including pharmacies (there were only 14 of them in the republic, mainly in cities and regional centers).<sup>15</sup>

## CONCLUSION

During the war years, the state sought to take control of all spheres of life of the population, including the small amount of free time that the working people had left. Great changes in wartime occurred in the field of cultural services for the population of the republic.

The main task of the cultural institutions of the KKASSR was the work aimed at mobilizing forces to defend the Motherland, as well as to solve the main tasks of the national economy that were on the agenda. Cultural workers explained to the population of the republic the nature, goals and course of the war, and also revealed the essence of nazizm ideology.

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