



Employment Of War Invalids In Uzbekistan During World War II: Historical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the policies and practical measures adopted by the Soviet state to integrate war invalids into the labor force within Uzbekistan during the Second World War. Drawing on archival documents, legislative acts, and statistical data, the study examines the scope of employment challenges faced by returning disabled veterans and the administrative responses developed at both central and regional levels. The article demonstrates that, despite formal commitments to protect the labor rights of invalids, significant bureaucratic and systemic obstacles hindered the full realization of these policies.

Keywords:

War invalids, World War II, Uzbek SSR, employment policy, social welfare, labor rehabilitation, Soviet state, disability groups, archival history, Central Asia.

INTRODUCTION

The Second World War left a profound humanitarian toll across the Soviet Union. Among those most severely affected were military personnel who returned home bearing permanent physical disabilities incurred in combat. These individuals — classified as war invalids — posed a significant challenge for state institutions tasked with their social reintegration. Guaranteeing their right to work, providing them with appropriate employment, and integrating them into productive social life became matters of urgent policy concern throughout the wartime period.

In Uzbekistan, as in other Soviet republics, the government assumed direct responsibility for the welfare and labor placement of war invalids. The republican authorities, together with enterprises, collective farms, and social welfare bodies, undertook a range of measures aimed at ensuring that returning disabled soldiers could participate meaningfully in the economic life of the republic. However, the gap between official policy commitments and their implementation on the ground was often considerable.

This article traces the legislative foundations, institutional mechanisms, and statistical outcomes of efforts to employ war invalids in Uzbekistan between 1942 and 1945, drawing primarily on archival sources, contemporary press accounts, and scholarly literature.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach adopted in this article is grounded in the principles of historicism, systematic analysis, and source criticism. The study employs a combination of historical-descriptive and comparative methods to examine the legislative framework governing the employment of war invalids and to assess the extent to which policy prescriptions were translated into practice across different regions of Uzbekistan.

The primary source base consists of declassified materials from the Uzbekistan Republic Archive (O'zR MA), particularly from funds R-96 and R-837, which contain administrative correspondence, statistical reports, and regional inspection records. These archival materials are supplemented by resolutions of the USSR Council of People's Commissars and the Uzbek SSR Council of People's Commissars,

as well as by relevant articles published in the contemporary Uzbek press.

Statistical data pertaining to the registration and employment of invalids across disability groups and administrative regions are analyzed using quantitative historical methods. The article also incorporates qualitative analysis of eyewitness accounts and memoir literature to illuminate the human dimensions of the processes under examination.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The legal foundation for the protection of war invalids' labor rights was enshrined in Article 117 of the Constitution of the Uzbek SSR, which affirmed the right of citizens to remunerated employment corresponding to their qualifications and physical capacity.¹ This constitutional guarantee was understood to preclude the denial of employment on the basis of disability alone. In practice, however, instances of refusal to hire war invalids or to process their applications were documented throughout the wartime period.

Responsibility for integrating invalids into the workforce fell directly upon state social welfare bodies. Regional and city social protection departments were charged with identifying invalids in need of employment and professional retraining. Those unable to continue in their previous occupations were directed to vocational upgrading courses, frequently organized within hospital settings.² In terms of the overall scale of the problem, archival data indicate that by January 1, 1945, a total of 62,795 individuals were registered as war invalids in Uzbekistan.³ The number had risen substantially from the preceding year, increasing by more than 16,900 persons over the course of 1944 alone. This growth was

attributable in significant part to the Soviet practice of direct conscription — often carried out without adequate military preparation — which contributed to disproportionate casualties from the earliest months of the conflict.

The historian H. Ziyoyev, himself a participant in the war, documented the conditions under which conscription was conducted in June 1942: young men aged 18–19 were mobilized and transported by rail, fifteen to twenty persons per wagon, receiving only a loaf of bread for every four soldiers per day. After seventeen days of travel, they arrived near Ilevskiy, where military training consisted of little more than drilling with wooden replicas of rifles. Soldiers thus entered frontline combat exhausted, hungry, and without meaningful military preparation.⁴

The legislative response to this challenge was substantial. Pursuant to the USSR Council of People's Commissars' resolution of May 6, 1942, the Uzbek SSR Council of People's Commissars adopted Resolution No. 899 on June 29, 1942.⁵ This resolution placed an obligation on directors of enterprises and institutions to provide employment to invalids within the shortest practicable timeframe. In cases where invalids lacked capacity to work in regular establishments, placement in specialized residential institutions was mandated.⁶ Subsequent legislative acts reinforced and expanded these provisions. The joint resolution of the Uzbek SSR Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, adopted in September 1943 under Resolution No. 1366, addressed the employment of war invalids specifically. Further refinements were

¹Constitution (Basic Law) of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. Tashkent: Uzbekistan Publishing House, 1945, p. 25.

²Resolution of the Council of People's Commissars (CPC) of the USSR, No. 640, dated May 6, 1942; Resolution of the Council of People's Commissars (CPC) of the Uzbek SSR, No. 899, dated June 26, 1942. See: *Memorandum on Benefits Granted to Disabled Veterans of the Great Patriotic War and Families of Fallen Soldiers*. Tashkent: "Uzbekistan", 1971. Pp. 4–6.

³National Archives of the Republic of Uzbekistan (NARU). Fund R-96, Inventory No. 2, Archival File 503, Sheet 17.

⁴Ziyoyev, H. *Uzbekistan During the First and Second World Wars*. Tashkent: "Muharrir", 2011. P. 48.

⁵Resolution of the Council of People's Commissars (CPC) of the USSR, No. 640, dated May 6, 1942; Resolution of the Council of People's Commissars (CPC) of the Uzbek SSR, No. 899, dated June 26, 1942. See: *Memorandum on Benefits Granted to Disabled Veterans of the Great Patriotic War and Families of Fallen Soldiers*. Tashkent: "Uzbekistan", 1971. Pp. 4–6.

⁶In 1942, residential care homes for war invalids were established. See: Makhkamova, Q. "Victory Celebration." *Uzbekistan Social Security*, No. 2, 1975, p. 5.

introduced by the resolution of April 10, 1944.⁷ As a result of these cumulative legislative efforts, a substantial portion of invalids was absorbed into various branches of the national economy.⁸

The resolution adopted on November 22, 1944 made additional provisions for the vocational training of invalids and their reintegration into socially beneficial labor.⁹ Severely wounded veterans unable to return to active front service were evacuated to their home regions, where many resumed their pre-war professional activities. A notable example was Qosim Hakimov, who returned to Tashkent following

severe injuries and continued his work as a printer.¹⁰

Similar efforts were recorded in Bukhara region, where collective farms, state farms, machine-tractor stations, and manufacturing enterprises created appropriate working and living conditions for invalids. In the Vobkent district, 27 war invalids were employed at the Stalin collective farm in Khalach village, with several appointed to supervisory roles.¹¹ To facilitate the employment of invalids discharged from hospital care, vocational training workshops were established within medical facilities, enabling patients to acquire new skills while still receiving treatment.¹²

Employment of War Invalids by Disability Group, Uzbek SSR (1944–1945) Table 1

Disability group	Jan 1, 1944 — Registered	Jan 1, 1944 — Employed	Jan 1, 1945 — Registered	Jan 1, 1945 — Employed
Group 1	987	141	1,037	131
Group 2	24,126	15,240	27,413	19,806
Group 3	20,716	19,035	34,345	32,120
Total	45,829	34,466	62,795	52,057

Source: National Archives of the Republic of Uzbekistan (NARU), Fund R-837, Inventory 32, File 4961, Folio 6; Fund R-96, Inventory 2, File 488, Folio 27..¹³

The data in Table 1 reveal that as of January 1, 1944, total unemployment among registered invalids stood at 11,413 persons: 846 from Group 1, 8,886 from Group 2, and 1,681 from Group 3. By January 1945, the total number of invalids had risen by nearly 17,000, reaching

62,795 registered persons.¹⁴ Of these, 52,057 were employed, leaving 10,738 without work — a figure that underscores the continuing gap between labor placement commitments and their realization.

Employed War Invalids by Administrative Region, Uzbek SSR (1944–1945). Table 2

No.	Region	01.01.1944	01.01.1945
1	Tashkent city	5,210	6,869
2	Tashkent region	3,722	6,051
3	Samarkand region	5,998	7,806
4	Fergana region	3,782	5,459

⁷Pirmuhamedov, A. "In Service of the Eternal." *Uzbekistan Social Security*, No. 3, 1970, pp. 22–23.

⁸National Archives of the Republic of Uzbekistan (NARU), Fund R-837, Inventory 32, File 4961, Folio 6.

⁹Hojiboyeva, A. "Let Us Show Greater Care for the Invalids of the Patriotic War." *Bukhara Truth*, July 13, 1945.

¹⁰Rahmat Adham. *For the Freedom of the Motherland (Essays on the Great Patriotic War)*. Tashkent: Publishing House of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, 1970. P. 36.

¹¹"Victory for the Invalids of the Patriotic War." *Red Uzbekistan*, August 10, 1944.

¹²"Employment of Invalids of the Patriotic War." *Red Uzbekistan*, September 1, 1944.

¹³National Archives of the Republic of Uzbekistan (NARU), Fund R-837, Inventory 32, File 4961, Folio 6; Fund R-96, Inventory 2, File 488, Folio 27.

¹⁴National Archives of the Republic of Uzbekistan (NARU), Fund R-837, Inventory 32, File 4961, Folio 10.

5	Namangan	1,914	2,914
6	Bukhara	3,219	4,848
7	Andijan	3,796	6,920
8	Khorezm	1,480	2,685
9	Kashkadarya	2,222	3,574
10	Surkhandarya	1,444	1,778
11	Karakalpak ASSR	1,679	3,153
Total		34,466	52,057

National Archives of the Republic of Uzbekistan (NARU). Fund R-837, Inventory No. 32, Archival File 4961, Sheets 6–7..¹⁵

A regional breakdown of employment figures (Table 2) indicates that Samarkand region consistently recorded the highest rate of invalid employment relative to its registered population, while Surkhandarya lagged behind.

Tashkent city and Andijan region both registered notable increases in the proportion of employed invalids between 1944 and 1945, by 23.3% and 31.2% respectively.

Distribution of Employed War Invalids by Economic Sector, Uzbek SSR (1944–1945). Table 3

No.	Economic sector	July 1, 1944	January 1, 1945
1	Industry	9,002	8,116
2	Cooperatives	2,917	2,913
3	Home-based workers	889	666
4	Agricultural sector	22,701	24,836
5	Other institutions	11,545	13,424
6	Education	1,501	2,102
7	Total	48,555	57,057

Source: O'zR MA, R-96-fond, 2-ro'Yxat, 503 yig'ma jild, 27-varaq; R-837-fond, 2-ro'Yxat, 4961 yig'ma jild, 7-varaq.¹⁶

Table 3 demonstrates that the agricultural sector absorbed by far the largest share of employed invalids throughout the study period. This reflects both the difficulty of acquiring new technical skills required for industrial employment and the pre-war agricultural background of many invalids who naturally returned to familiar rural occupations.

Despite the overall trend of increasing employment, inspection reports revealed

persistent shortcomings in policy implementation. Verification visits to institutions in Tashkent, Samarkand, Andijan, and Bukhara uncovered cases where enterprise personnel departments refused to hire disabled persons on pretextual grounds, in direct contravention of applicable legislation.¹⁷

As of March 1, 1945, 10,738 invalids remained without employment: 2,225 from Group 3 and 7,607 from Group 2.¹⁸ Inspections consistently

¹⁵National Archives of the Republic of Uzbekistan (NARU), Fund R-837, Inventory 32, File 4961, Folios 6–7; Fund R-96, Inventory 2, File 4961, Folio 7.

¹⁶National Archives of the Republic of Uzbekistan (NARU), Fund R-96, Inventory 2, File 503, Folio 27; Fund R-837, Inventory 2, File 4961, Folio 7.

¹⁷National Archives of the Republic of Uzbekistan (NARU), Fund R-837, Inventory 32, File 4937, Folio 9.

¹⁸National Archives of the Republic of Uzbekistan (NARU), Fund R-96, Inventory 2, File 503, Folio 17. As of March 1, 1945: 2,225 third-group and 7,607 second-group invalids remained unemployed.

revealed that many enterprises had failed to create suitable working conditions, that managers were not actively engaged with the issue, and that disabled persons were being excluded from hiring processes.

CONCLUSION

The wartime experience of employing war invalids in Uzbekistan illustrates the structural tensions inherent in Soviet social policy during the Great Patriotic War. The state articulated a robust normative framework for protecting the labor rights of disabled veterans, enshrined in constitutional guarantees and a succession of executive resolutions at both the all-union and republican levels. Enterprises, collective farms, and social welfare institutions were formally required to accommodate invalids and facilitate their vocational retraining where necessary.

In practice, however, the distance between legislative intent and administrative reality was considerable. Thousands of war invalids remained unemployed at the conclusion of the study period, and inspection records documented widespread noncompliance, bureaucratic indifference, and the absence of suitable workplace conditions across multiple regions. The agricultural sector demonstrated a greater capacity to absorb disabled workers, largely reflecting the prior occupational experience of invalids from rural backgrounds. This study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the Soviet wartime welfare state in Central Asia, highlighting both the genuine commitments made to disabled veterans and the significant institutional failures that limited their fulfillment. Further archival research at the regional level would be valuable in illuminating the local dynamics of policy implementation and the lived experiences of war invalids during and after the Second World War.

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