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History on Film: the Role of Cinema in Boosting Morale during World War II

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A B S T R A C T
The article examines the work of cinematography experts who portrayed the cultural legacy of the Uzbek nation, significant historical events, and the life stories of notable historical figures. Additionally, it analyzes the production of newsreels, wartime film collections, short film programs, and feature films made during the conflict.

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1. Introduction:

The Great Patriotic War, which began in 1941, left a profound impact on the history of all the nations involved in this massive conflict. Uzbekistan, then part of the former Soviet Union, played a crucial role in the military events, offering substantial support to the front lines and making an indispensable contribution to the victory over fascism. The republic's rear efforts focused on vital tasks such as supplying the army with food, raw materials, and military equipment, as well as evacuating industrial enterprises, scientific institutions, libraries, museums, educational establishments, and civilians from the western regions of the country to Uzbekistan.

During the war, Uzbekistan emerged as a vital hub for mobilizing labor resources, which enabled not only supporting the front lines but also fostering economic development during a challenging period. Citizens of the republic, regardless of age or gender, rallied to defend their homeland, fighting on various fronts and demonstrating bravery and heroism. This article will explore the key aspects of Uzbekistan's film industry's activities during the Great Patriotic War, highlighting its strategic importance and spiritual contribution.

The President of Uzbekistan announced that previously classified archival documents and materials, which were previously restricted from use, are now accessible to researchers. At the same time, cooperation with archival institutions, museums, foundations, as well as with historians, experts, and the public from the former Soviet republics and other foreign countries, has been intensified. As Shavkat Mirziyoyev stated: “Through research, we have today obtained new significant information about our people's involvement in the Second World War and the heroism of our ancestors, and these findings are being shared through the media, new books, and albums”. There are strong reasons to believe that a new phase has begun in the study of Uzbekistan’s history during the Second World War.

2. Methods:

The research methods used in this article were validity, systematicity, comparative analysis, analysis-

synthesis and statistics.

3. Core part:

The people of Uzbekistan, like those of other republics, did not remain indifferent to the terrible hardships and sorrows of the war. As a result, the Uzbek people fulfilled their patriotic duty with honor. They actively participated in the fight against fascism. Following the outbreak of the war, similar to the rest of the Soviet Union, party organizations in Uzbekistan organized rallies and meetings, and political work and mass events were widely developed. These efforts were primarily carried out through radio broadcasts, cinema, clubs, red corners, museums, libraries, and public education workers.

During the war, Uzbek cinema was entirely influenced and controlled by the party. The primary focus was on themes related to the war itself and the lives of workers on the home front. The portrayal of cultural heritage, historical events, and the everyday lives of Uzbek people was largely overlooked by filmmakers. Patriotic themes dominated both fiction and documentary films, making them the central subject of cinematic production during this period.

From the very beginning of the war, writers, poets, actors, artists, and musicians actively contributed to fostering high morale, political awareness, and fighting spirit among both home front workers and soldiers at the front. Literary and artistic figures played a crucial role in boosting the people's morale and nurturing essential qualities such as courage, perseverance, and love for the homeland. Each writer, playwright, artist, composer, director, and performer recognized their significant responsibility to the people, fully understanding the powerful inspiring role that literature and art held during the difficult and heroic years of the Great Patriotic War.

The military situation and the fierce resistance of the entire population against the Nazi invaders placed unique demands on the arts. Art institutions in Uzbekistan swiftly reorganized their activities to meet the needs of wartime. Artists from Uzbekistan, as well as those evacuated to the republic from the western regions of the country, worked together to accomplish the objectives set forth by the war effort.

Film workers faced a responsible and rewarding task. Films made at film studios during the war can be divided into four groups: film magazines, collections of war films, short film concerts and full-length feature films. In 1941, the Tashkent Film Studio published 43 film magazines. The film magazines “The Art of Ordered Uzbekistan”, “We Will Win”, “Front, We Are with You”, which reflected the work of workers in industry, construction, transport, agriculture, public irrigation construction, as well as the activities of workers in art, science and culture, were widely shown [1:17]. Since 1942, film collections began to be published, including “8-film collection”, “In the Ring of Hate”, “Dear Shores”. The “8-film collection” includes two stories, “Belgrade Night” and “Three Tankers.” The directors of these short stories are L. Lukov and N. Sadkovich [2:78]. The theme of patriotism has become the main theme in the art of cinema and theater.

During the war years, Uzbek filmmakers created a series of short films - film novellas, film stories, essays, satirical sketches, as well as several special films - concerts for front soldiers, such as “Front Friends”, “Longing for the Motherland”, “Concert to the Front” and others . Many short and feature films depicted heroic deeds on the war fronts.

Among the works of Uzbek cinema created during the Second World War, film concerts played an important role. They were assigned to the front and consisted mainly of dances and songs. To interest and entertain the fighters, they were enriched with interesting stories. In addition to the film concert staged by Uzbek directors, a second film was shot reflecting the nature and traditions of Uzbekistan especially for soldiers fighting at the front. Komil Yarmatov took part in the creation of the film, who came to the Tashkent film studio during the war years and took over the artistic direction, and the songs and dances were performed by artists of the Uzbek State Opera and Ballet Theater [5:2]. The documentary studio systematically sent five copies of each magazine to the front..

During this period, a group of outstanding figures in the country’s cinematography worked at the Tashkent studio - Y. Protazanov, L.D. Lukov, E. Gabrilovich, I.E. Kheifts, N.A. Zachry and others. Together with famous Uzbek directors Yu. Agzamov, N. Ganiev, K. Yarmatov, S. Muhammedov, they produced 10 feature sound films, which were included in the golden treasury of national cinema. Among

them, the sympathy of the people was won by “Man Number 217” by M. Romm, “Sukhbaatar” by A. Zarkhin, “Two Fighters” and “Alexander Parkhomenko” filmed in Tashkent by L. Lukov, “Nasriddin in Bukhara” and others [4:144].

Uzbek filmmakers revealed the misanthropic ideology of fascism, vividly and inspiredly showed high humanism and patriotism, courage and heroism of soldiers and home front workers, their unbending will and faith in victory over the enemy. The eighth (1941) and eleventh (1942) editions of the “Combat Film Collection” were created at the Tashkent film studio [6:141].

In addition, during the war years, jointly by Russian directors Yakov Protazanov (Honored Worker of Art of the Uzbek SSR, 1943), Mikhail Kranyansky, representative of Ukrainian cinema Daniil Delmutsky (Honored Worker of Art of the Uzbek SSR, 1944) and the great figure of Uzbek cinema Nabi Ganiev films “The Adventures of Nasriddin” (1946), “Tahir and Zukhra” (1945), “Alisher Navai” (1947) [3]. Despite the harsh everyday life of the war and post-war years, comedy films were shot in Uzbek cinema. Together with screenwriters V. Solovyov and V. Viktovich, director Y. Protazanov. They shot the film “Nasriddin in Bukhara”. This film, rich in Uzbek humor, won the love of the people and took its rightful place on the world screen. On June 22, 1942, filming of the film “Khoja Nasriddin Effendi” began, given that the historical buildings of Samarkand played a large role in filming, which resembled the historical view of Bukhara [9]. Therefore, filming was carried out in Samarkand.

In difficult times, when there was a fierce war with the enemy on the fronts and all the forces of the people in the rear were mobilized for victory at the fronts, filmmakers were looking for ways to quickly and effectively develop. Resolving organizational issues in the short term has become an important task. One of these tasks was a plan to produce short films. The evacuation of film studios from the central regions of a large country to local studios, located in small premises, but with technical conditions, created new conditions for the work of local studios, which led to the effective production of short films using new technologies.

At the beginning of the war, short films “We Will Win” (M. Ismailiy, E. Smirnova, K. Yarmatov), “Fighting Friends” (script by Z. Markina and A. Katsovich, director N. Ganiev) were shot at the Tashkent Film Studio. To be more precise, the writer M. Ismaili took part in writing the literary script for the film “We Will Win,” K. Yarmatov and Nabi Ganiev worked on the directing, the roles were played by A. Ismatov, N. Eshmuhammedov, L. Sarimsakova. Thus, the studio's first film dedicated to World War II was ready. The film did not use complex figurative and philosophical views, but used ideas that encourage courage and patriotism. After this film, Nabi Ganiev and N. Brunchugun shot the film novel “Battle Comrades”, the screenwriters of which were Z. Markina and A. Katsovich. It reflected the spirit of solidarity and brotherhood of Uzbeks and Ukrainians.

Work was underway to film concerts. Concert films were created - “Concert to the Front” (1941), “Friends at the Front” (1942), “Gift of the Motherland” (1943), “Concert of the Five Republics” (1944). Film concerts were filmed by directors and screenwriters: N. Ganiev, S. Muhammedov, Uygun, K. Yarmatov, Yu. Azamov, Z. Sobitov, they starred such actors as A. Khidoyatov, Sh. Mullazhonova, Sh. Burkhanov, A. Annakulieva , H. Nosirova, Tamara Khanum, K. Zokirov, L. Sarimsakova, K. Yakubov, Zh. Sultonov, M. Uzakov, M. Turgunbaeva [7:43].

During the war, many filmmakers from Moscow, Leningrad, Kyiv and Odessa moved to Tashkent. The Odessa film studio was also transferred to Tashkent. During the war, about 200 film workers were evacuated to Uzbekistan. Among the masters of cinematography who came to the Tashkent film studio were Y. Protazanov, M. Romm, G. Kozintsev, L. V. Trauberg, A. Zarkhi, L. Lukov, I. Geifits and others [8:7]. The Tashkent film studio has produced a number of films in collaboration with other film studios. For example, together with the Kyiv Film Studio, according to the script of G. Maryamov and S. Nagorny and under the direction of director L. Lukov, the film “Mother” was shot, with the Odessa Film Studio, according to the script by I. Shpanov and A. Mikhailovsky, under the direction of V. Brown, the film “The Last bullet”, based on the script by L. Solovyov and director A. Magaret, together with the Odessa Film Studio, the film “Sailors”.

At one time, such geniuses of creating images entered the creative field as Malik Kayumov as an actor and cameraman, Nabi Ganiev as a director, Ergash Khamroev as a screenwriter and actor, Yuldash

Azamov as a performer and director, Rakhim Pirmukhammedov in various roles , Sulaimon Khuzhaev as a director and actor. They adopted the experience of Russian artists who lived in Uzbekistan and created the first works “Star of the East”. In the formation of truthful performing skills, Uzbek cinema adopted the advanced principles of realism of the acting school of K. Stanislavsky and creatively developed it in national conditions.

It should be noted that the work of the fathers of Uzbek cinema was continued by their students and followers. For example, Ergash Khamroev - who went to the front from the first days of the war, he was one of the first signs of Uzbek cinema, this man became known among his comrades as the intelligence officer “Moroz” [10]. After him, director Ali Khamroev and cameraman Davlat Khamroev, who continued their father’s profession, also contributed to the formation and development of Uzbek cinema.

Another of these directors was Malik Kayumov, who filmed on the battlefield, even returning to his homeland for a short time and directed the film “Native Land” (1944). Also in his filmography there are such films as “A Mighty Stream” (1940), “On High Ground” (1940), “Great Power” (1040), “Blossom the Earth” (1941) and others. Malik Kayumov, like many representatives of his profession, served as a front-line operator during the war years. He was wounded twice and returned home disabled [11]. However, Malik Kayumovich did not abandon the art of cinematography. Throughout his life, he made more than 400 documentaries, many of which received the highest ratings and awards in the field of cinematography. Malik Kayumov died in 2010 at the age of about 100 years. The cameraman was buried in his homeland in Uzbekistan.

With the release of such films as “The Oath”, “Azamat”, “Tahir and Zuhra”, “Navai”, “The Adventures of Nasriddin”, “Daughter of Fergana” and with the arrival of new actors in Uzbek cinema, as a result of the first major achievements of national directing, dramaturgy in the early forties in Uzbek cinema, the foundations of an acting school were laid and the creative personnel of local cinema reached maturity [12]. The rapid growth of Uzbek cinema, the complex and successful search for national directing is characterized by the fact that Uzbek cinema figures took live lessons from major masters who worked in Tashkent during the war. The formation and development of Uzbek film drama has always been associated with the name of local film actors. Successes and defeats in this area have always affected the fate of the performers.

During the most difficult years of the war, a number of resolutions were adopted to raise the ideological and artistic level of cinema and strengthen its material and technical base. In this regard, although some work was done, nevertheless, the lack of specialists and shortcomings in film equipment indicate that the work being carried out has not been fully thought through and that there are no specific conclusions about them. During the war years in Uzbekistan, in addition to achievements and successes in the field of cinema, there were also significant shortcomings. For example, work on some films was delayed, production costs were much higher than normal, a lot of low-quality footage was shot, and the training of national personnel was carried out inappropriately. During the war, cinema became a propaganda weapon for the Communist Party. In this regard, George Miller wrote: “Cinema was a means of mass propaganda and played a significant role in the history of the USSR, as well as in shaping the image of the Soviet Union at home and abroad.” [13]. The main factor in artistic and scientific development was the subsequent weakening of the ideological pressure of the dictatorial regime in the early days of the war.

In works of a humanistic orientation, both in Uzbekistan and throughout the country, less and less space has been given to glorification of leaders, idle talk, and officialdom. This alerted the ideological censors. At the top of the government, with the onset of a turning point in the course of the war, the mood began to increasingly manifest itself that on the ideological front there was an “underestimation and weakening” of ideological and political work among the masses [14]. As a result, a rigid ideological process began to be established again, based on dogmatic ideas about the role of culture, primarily artistic, which, with the victorious end of the war and the transition to peaceful life with an increasing tendency, began to put pressure on all aspects of the spiritual sphere of society.

Stalin personally closely followed the latest in journalistic and fiction literature and watched films. Since 1944, his faithful ally A.A. Zhdanov focused on processing the country’s artistic intelligentsia. Beria also began to show increased attention to literature and art [15]. Locally, leading ideological workers sought to

sensitively grasp the opinion of the “top people” and actively implement their instructions.

4. Conclusion:

The years of World War II are an essential chapter in the cultural history of our people. Despite the political and economic challenges of that period, the development of Uzbek culture continued uninterrupted. Rather, it served to uplift the people's spirits and foster confidence in victory over the enemy. Evaluating and highlighting the cultural and spiritual life during this time, grounded in the ideas of national unity of independent Uzbekistan, plays a crucial role in fostering a well-rounded, harmonious generation and in building a prosperous, happy society.

At this new stage of Uzbekistan’s development, special focus is placed on restoring the rich historical heritage of our people, fostering high moral values, highlighting national uniqueness and long-standing traditions, as well as enriching national cinema and theatrical arts. Significant emphasis is also placed on nurturing young talents and unlocking their potential. Currently, our government is undertaking important measures to better meet the cultural and aesthetic needs of the population, to develop cinema, theater, and other artistic expressions, and to provide comprehensive support to creative teams in producing works that depict both the illustrious pages of our history and contemporary life.

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