

Kitap Eleřtirisi

Vicky DAVIS, *Central Asia in World War Two: The Impact and Legacy of Fighting for the Soviet Union*, Bloomsbury, London, 2024, ISBN: 9781350372283

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The Second World War can be described as a great disaster that deeply affected science, art, philosophy and politics in Europe. In the post-war period, major ruptures occurred due to the suffering experienced during the war. However, another consequence of the Second World War for Europe and the rest of the world was the emergence of the Soviet Union as a super power. When it is not easy to evaluate the Soviets as the successor of the Tsarist regime, it is possible to say that the unique policies followed by this state deeply affected the Eastern European and Central Asian regions. Within this context, Vicky Davis' *Central Asia in World War Two: The Impact and Legacy of Fighting for the Soviet Union* reveals the reflections of Soviet policies in Central Asia during the Second World War. The book is organized into four well-structured parts, which together provide significant insights into the support of the Central Asians for Soviets and Red Army during the Second World War.

The first part of the book consists of three chapters. The first chapter, *Fighting for the Soviet Union "War in the Wind"* (pp.1-40) gives details about the merits of the population of Central Asia in the Soviet Union as well as the role of national minorities in strategic battles through the depiction of the expansion of Soviet culture and ideals.

Chapter two as well as chapter three of the first part brings testimonies and experiences of soldiers who passed through the jaws of war from secret archives that can be considered as great contributions to the academic world. The author draws attention to Stalin's strengthening of military-industrial complex in the eve of the outbreak of the war against Nazi Germany. On the other hand the Soviet media did not inform Central Asians about the events of war especially in smaller cities. However during the Second World War a huge number of Central Asian recruits served in the Red Army to defend their fatherland. Jumabek Rakhmanov is just one of the examples of fighters who left his hometown in aggravating circumstances in the Issyk-Kul province in Kyrgyzstan. The quantity of Central Asian fighters in the row of the Red Army was amounted to 34 million recruits that consisted of 1.2 million Kazakhs and 1.4 million Uzbeks, Tajiks, etc.

However the recruits from the Central Asian countries had to contend with bad treatment during their duties in the Red Army. Despite the poor knowledge of the Russian language in the written and spoken sense, as well as the lack of military training, a huge number of recruits, especially from Kyrgyzstan, faced inhumane conditions, such as food poisoning and hard military training. After the capitulation of Berlin in May 1945, many soldiers, especially from the Asian part of the Soviet Union, remained in uniform and were ordered to the Far Eastern region of the country to mobilize them for the war against Japan.

The second part of the book, entitled *"The impact of war on the home front"* (pp.81-179) emphasizes the willpower of the Soviet Army for victory and not accepting anything but triumph on all fields with all possible sacrifices. There was also a positive

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reversal in the Soviet leader's behavior towards Muslims of the Soviet Union during the war. Consequently, Soviet leaders tried through propanda to bring the national minorities, as well as the Slavs together to mobilize against the common enemy, Nazi Germany.

In the third part entitled "Comings and goings: The movement of displaced population" (pp.221-273) the author stresses the measures taken by the Soviet leadership following the permanent bombings of Petrograd in 1941. For instance, Soviet leaders had to preserve the manpower of the Red Army and tried to relocate academic institutes as well as entire factories to Central Asia and the Far Eastern region of the Soviet Union. Moreover, civilians such as Jewish people were deported to the other regions of the country. Consequently, the demographic structure of Central Asia was deeply affected by this decision. This situation led to highlight anti-semitism, however many Jews survived thanks to the hospitality of the local people.

In the fourth part entitled "The Legacy of the Second World War in Central Asia" (pp. 319-321) the author concentrates on the sacrifices and efforts of the Central Asian recruits in the row of battalions led by General İvan Panfilov, Nikolai Anan, and Grigorii Konki. For instance, İvan Panfilov became a symbol of the fighting against Nazis with his 28 Central Asian followers. In the post-war period Aleksandr Bek and Baurzhan Momysuly conducted interviews with the soldiers who fought in the row of Panfilov's battalion. Thus, it became evident that these soldiers sacrificed a lot for their Soviet fatherland.

Davis points out that the myth of Panfilov and his 28 soldiers in Kazakh and Kyrgyz schools was shown to be unfounded in the post-Soviet era. In this vein, all the monuments erected as a result of propaganda were replaced with new ones under the traditional spirit in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Essentially, in *Central Asia in World War Two: The Impact and Legacy of Fighting for the Soviet Union*, Vicky Davis uses primary sources comprised from interviews, official documents, and various first-hand materials in the Issk-Kul archives. Lastly, as Davis conducted interviews with local people, it renders this work valuable and significant to the readers. Consequently this leads readers to look beyond the victories, and rather focus on the sacrifices undergone by the population of Central Asian countries in favor of the Soviet fatherland during the Second World War against Nazi Germany.