

Mehman SULEYMANOV
Doctor of History

THE “GOD” OF RUSSIAN ARTILLERY — GENERAL ALIAGA SHIKHLINSKI



Aliaga Shikhlinski at the Port Arthur fortress. 1905

One of the officers who made a great contribution to the swift formation of the army of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic and its transformation into a force capable of protecting the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is Aliaga Shikhlinski. This general with a rare talent, who has a rich service record, has a special place in Azerbaijan's military history.

Aliaga Shikhlinski was born in 1865 in Gazakh region, which is located in the west of present-day Azerbaijan. Shikhlinski's father decided to send him to Tiflis for

modern education. For this reason, young Aliaga came to Tiflis in 1875 and received his first education in Russian and then went to a military gymnasium. Although Aliaga did not know Russian, he was able to learn it in a short period of time thanks to his talent and graduated from his schools with high results. While studying in these schools, Aliaga Shikhlinski was able to demonstrate his great talent and diligence (1).

After completing his education at the military gymnasium, he headed for the Russian capital St. Petersburg and entered the Mikhaylovsk Artillery School there in 1883. The Mikhaylovsk Artillery School was one of the most advanced schools in Russia. It brought together young people with a great talent. Despite this, young Aliaga managed to get the highest results and distinguish himself among the students from the very first year of education. His talent and the fact that his teachers at the school were famous artillerymen of the time played a great role in his formation as an artilleryman. With his results, Shikhlinski was one of the three students who gained high results in the Artillery School and was given a special reward when he graduated from the Artillery School (2).

Shikhlinski graduated from the Artillery School in 1886 and started serving in the 39th artillery brigade stationed in the Caucasus. He served in this brigade for 14 years and became a skilful artilleryman during this period. When batteries of the division engaged in drills,

Lieutenant - Colonel Aliaga Shikhlinski during an expedition in Iran. 1900, Qazvin

Shikhlinski accomplished his tasks better and more accurately than others and destroyed all the targets during the drills. At the end of the 19th century, artillerymen did not have enough experience in destroying invisible targets. There were no devices to do this. Shikhlinski displayed special skills in destroying invisible targets and his experience and skill were met with great interest among other servicemen. For this reason, even Russian army generals said that Aliaga Shikhlinski was an officer who was able to implement the most responsible tasks even without education at a military academy (3).

Indeed, Aliaga Shikhlinski did not have military academy education. In tsarist Russia, it was very difficult for officers who did not have military academy education to be upgraded to general. Despite this, Shikhlinski was upgraded to lieutenant-general. This very fact testified to his skills as an officer. One of the prominent representatives of Russian artillery, major-general, doctor of military science and author of a great work entitled "The History of Russian Artillery", Yevgeny Barsukov, who noted his skills, wrote that Aliaga Shikhlinski took one of the highest places among Russian artillerymen (4).

During his service in the 39th artillery brigade, Shikhlinski was upgraded to the next rank three times and awarded two Russian medals (5).

In 1900, Aliaga Shikhlinski was sent to the Far East at his own request and started serving in the Zabaykalye artillery division stationed in the town of Nerchinsk. This division was one of the first artillery divisions organized in the Russian army and was different from the rest of the army by its military capability. As a member of this division, Shikhlinski participated in the military campaigns of the Russian army against China and in fighting between Russia and Japan in Port Artur in 1904-05.

Participation in Port Artur fighting represents a special page in Shikhlinski's life as an artilleryman, because during this war, Aliaga Shikhlinski graphically demonstrated his great artillery skills and the authenticity of his knowledge. A lot of works have been published in Russia about the course and results of Port Artur fighting, and most of these works specially note Aliaga Shikhlinski's artillery skills. Aliaga Shikhlinski demonstrated great skills again in destroying invisible targets and coordinating communications between the artillery battery, the observer and the target. For the first time in the history of artillery, Shikhlinski used the mixed fire method for



destroying a target. This method involved the coordinated use of grenades and shrapnel projectiles for destroying a target. Shikhlinski wrote that after he used this method, the term "complex (mixed) fire" (combined fire) began to be used in artillery regulations and it was recommended that troops use this method (6).

For his participation in Port Artur fighting, Shikhlinski was given six high rewards and the rank of lieutenant-colonel. Among the rewards was the Order of Saint George in the fourth degree, which was the highest military decoration of Russia (7). At the same time, the great experience he gained during this war allowed him to expand his theoretical views in the field of artillery. He enhanced these theoretical views even further while serving at the school of artillery officers near St. Petersburg. Shikhlinski first studied at this school and graduated with high results. Holding the posts of battery and division commanders at the school of artillery officers, he was engaged in training artillery officers. After graduating from the school, Shikhlinski served in the troops for some time again and was a division commander.



Parliamentary security detachment during a parade of the ADR troops. Ganja, 1919

But soon he was invited to the school of artillery officers again. At this school, he worked as a teacher and as a deputy chief of the school. After some time, he even worked as chief of the school of artillery officers.

Aliaga Shikhlinski also greatly contributed to studies and research in the field of artillery. Deeply analyzing the activities of gunners during the Port Artur fighting of 1904-05, he wrote a book entitled "The Use of Field Artillery in Fighting" (1910) (8). The importance of the book is that it brought some innovation to the tactics of Russian artillery. If we take into account that great powers had only just started using field artillery, the development of its tactics was of great importance. For example, a great power like France did not use field artillery even in 1912 (9). For this reason, Shikhlinski was in fact one of the first officers to study the tactics of this kind of artillery.

Ahead of World War I, Shikhlinski carried out a seri-

ous study on the tactics of firing at enemy targets over the head of one's own troops and summarized his scientific ideas in an article headlined "Firing over the head of your own troops". Preparing more accurate methods, Shikhlinski proved that the maximum efficiency of fire over the head of your own troops is possible and prepared its theoretical foundations and formulas (10).

Finally, ahead of World War I, Shikhlinski substantiated his famous "Shikhlinski triangle" from a theoretical and practical point of view. The purpose of the triangle was to ensure that the division commander accurately identifies the coordinates of a target while showing it to the battery commander and carries out more accurate management of fire (11).

In 1912, Aliaga Shikhlinski was promoted to major-general. He was upgraded to this rank well ahead of time, which was due to the assessment given to his artillery activities.

During World War I, Aliaga Shikhlinski was engaged mostly in practical activities. In 1914, he was appointed chief of the artillery defense of the Russian capital Petrograd. In order to implement a rather responsible task, Shikhlinski combined his scientific knowledge and practical activities and succeeded in making the artillery defense of the Russian capital more reliable. In order to teach new methods of artillery to gunners, Shikhlinski organized two schools and involved artillerymen in them.

After some time, Shikhlinski was sent to the front line. He first served at the headquarters of the Northwestern Front and then at the headquarters of the supreme commander-in-chief of the Russian troops. In



M. V. Frunze (center) inspects the Azerbaijan Rifle Division. Far left is Aliaga Shikhlinski. Baku, 1925



April 1916, Shikhlinski was appointed artillery chief of the Western Front. In all these posts, Shikhlinski was engaged in organizing artillery units in troops and managing their combat activities. Considering his organizing skills, he was even appointed commander of the 10th Army in 1917 (12).

A coup d'état happened in Russia in October 1917, and the Bolsheviks seized power. On 2 December 1917, an order was signed to discharge Shikhlinski from the Russian army (13). He was appointed commander of the Muslim corps established by the Transcaucasian Commissariat on 11 December 1917. This corps has a special place in the military history of Azerbaijan. Along with being the buildup to and base of an independent national army, the Muslim corps was also the first organized military unit of Azerbaijan. Analysis of Shikhlinski's service in the post of commander in this corps shows that he sincerely welcomed the establishment of a national military unit and spent all his experience and skills on the formation of this corps.

In late 1917 and early 1918, the headquarters of the corps were based in Tiflis and were then relocated to Ganja. As the commander of the Muslim corps, Aliaga Shikhlinski was supposed to implement extremely complicated and important tasks. He was supposed to organize service at a time when there was no national officer personnel, organize military conscription and mobilization, which did not exist, resolve the issue of calling up Azerbaijanis who had no experience in military service, undertake issues of supplying national army units and protect the newly-organized military units and the Azerbaijani people from Armenian-Dashnak threats.

The Muslim corps had two infantry divisions, one cavalry brigade, two artillery brigades and other auxiliary units (14). To organize better service in the corps,



Group of ADR artillerymen. 1919

Azerbaijani officers serving in the region were recruited. There were two generals among them – Major-General Khalil Talishinski and Major-General Ibrahim Usubov. A great number of non-Azerbaijani officers were recruited to serve in the corps. One of them, the chief of the corps headquarters, Col Menchukov, was upgraded to the rank of major-general based on a representation from Aliaga Shikhlinski.

Existing objective difficulties did not allow the Muslim corps to form as soon as possible. Despite that, the corps and its structures were organized under the leadership of Shikhlinski, infantry divisions and regiments



Parade of the ADR troops. Baku, March 1919



General Aliaga Shikhlinski in full dress. 1912

were founded, and a great number of Azerbaijani officers were recruited to the corps. Later, they formed the basis of Azerbaijan's national military units. Aliaga Shikhlinski founded military education institutions that trained national military personnel in Azerbaijan.

After the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was established on 28 May 1918, Azerbaijan's first national military units were organized and formed under his leadership. It is known that when the Azerbaijani people proclaimed their independence, some parts of its territory were under the control of non-national forces. Baku and its environs were controlled by the Baku Council, which supported Bolshevik rule and consisted mainly of Dashnaks. The southern region was controlled by the White Guard. Extremist Dashnak forces made territorial claims to the mountainous part of Karabakh and other parts of Azerbaijan and did not conceal their plans to carry out genocide in those areas. In such a situation, the Azerbaijani government asked the Turkish government for military aid. With the participation of Turkish military units that came to Azerbaijan and the Muslim corps (later renamed Azerbaijani corps), the Caucasus Islamic Army was cre-

ated. Shikhlinski remained commander of the Muslim corps and at the same time, became deputy commander of the Caucasus Islamic Army. Shikhlinski played a special role in the Caucasus Islamic Army clearing Azerbaijani territories from non-national forces. The commander of the Caucasus Islamic Army, Nuru Pasha, went to the front line only together with Aliaga Shikhlinski. Aliaga Shikhlinski was directly involved in the preparation of the plan to liberate Baku on 14-15 September 1918.

After the Turkish military forces left Azerbaijan at the end of 1918, Artillery Gen Samad Mehmandarov was appointed war minister and Lt-Gen Aliaga Shikhlinski deputy war minister (15). Shikhlinski honorably served in this post until the fall of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic on 28 April 1920.

The beginning of the formation of the army of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was a completely new stage. After a 100-year hiatus, the Azerbaijani people gained the opportunity to establish an army independently and created an army that was able to defend the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan during the 23 months of the existence of the republic. The creation of this army was a historic result of joint self-sacrificing service by Mehmandarov and Shikhlinski.

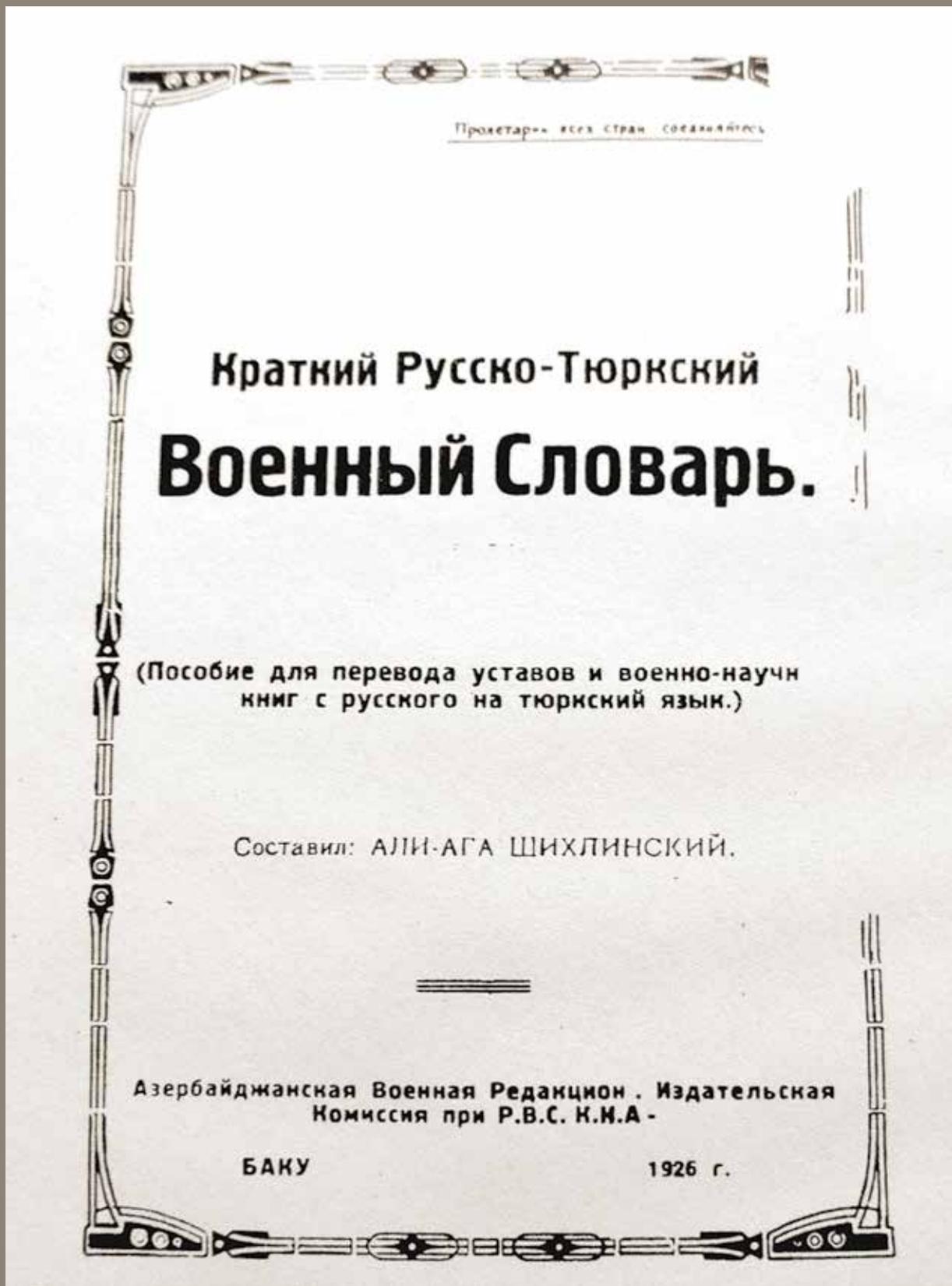
Употребление ПОЛЕВОЙ АРТИЛЛЕРИИ ВЪ БОЮ.

Конспект лекцій, читанныхъ въ Офицерской
Артиллерійской Школѣ
Полковникомъ ШАХЛИНСКИМЪ.



Гор. ЛУГА.
Друг. Тип. Н-го В. М. Курочкина.
1910.

*Cover of a book of lectures «Use of field artillery in battle»
taught at the Officer's Artillery School. 1910*



Cover of the «Concise Russian-Azerbaijani Military Dictionary»
by A. Shikhlinsky. Baku, 1926



*Epaulette of an ADR
army officer with
«Azerbaijan» embroidery*

After Shikhlinski was appointed deputy minister of the republic's army, he was given a number of important tasks. On orders from the war minister on 3 January 1919, Shikhlinski was supposed to head the commission that prepared the schedules and salaries of military units, departments and enterprises. This commission was also instructed to prepare draft uniforms for the personnel of the Azerbaijani army. On orders from the war minister on 18 January 1919, Shikhlinski was instructed to oversee artillery and fortification units, which were special types of troops, as well as military education and technical enterprises, artillery and fortification warehouses (16). Shikhlinski had extremely great experience in this issue. He skillfully managed these tasks. Shikhlinski played an exceptional role in the formation of units and services of the republic's army and in the efficient organization of the activities of military enterprises.

Along with that, Shikhlinski often visited military units and military education institutions. While visiting these military institutions, Shikhlinski praised positive practices and recommended promoting them and at the same time, put forward demands and recommendations to eliminate shortcomings. The results of his inspections at military units and military education in-

stitutions were repeatedly summarized on orders from the war minister and forwarded to military units.

Aliaga Shikhlinski put forward major demands to officers serving in the republic's army. He highly rated officers' role in the formation of the army and ensured that they were taken care of properly. In Shikhlinski's view, the Azerbaijani officer must be an example in service, understand his high duty and responsibility before his homeland and take a serious approach to its implementation. In this regard, his following thought is still of great importance: "Azerbaijanis must remember once and for all that their army is not an almshouse and that it does not exist for any Azerbaijani to be able to get a better deal for himself. It is the fatherland's support, which should include the best forces of the country" (17).

Aliaga Shikhlinski played a special role in organizing the defense of the territorial integrity of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. When War Minister Mehmandarov did not turn up at work due to his state of health, Shikhlinski led the work to prevent the activities of Armenian-Dashnak military forces that made territorial claims to Azerbaijan around Karabakh and on the Azerbaijani-Armenian border. His appropriate orders and the quick implementation of these orders soon prevented the activities of Armenian-Dashnak forces. Crushing the aggression of Armenian military forces against Karabakh in March-April 1920 was one of the historic services of Mehmandarov and Shikhlinski. War Minister Mehmandarov issued the necessary organizational orders to Shikhlinski from the front line, and he organized the implementation of these orders at the War Ministry. This made it possible to eliminate the Armenian-Dashnak aggression. For all these services, Shikhlinski was upgraded to the rank of artillery general (colonel-general) by the government of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic.

The independence the Azerbaijani people gained in the early 20th century lasted only two years, and in April 1920, Azerbaijan was occupied by the troops of Soviet Russia. This put an end to the establishment of an independent army in Azerbaijan again.

After the Bolshevik occupation of Azerbaijan, Shikhlinski began to train Azerbaijani officers for the Soviet army and engaged in scientific activities. In 1922, he was appointed deputy chief of the military scientific society of the Baku garrison, and in 1924, chairman of the Azerbaijan military editing and publishing board. Along with handing over his knowledge and experience to officers in these posts, Shikhlinski also worked

on new textbooks and instructions. Shikhlinski carried out especially active work to create military textbooks and military terminology in the Azerbaijani language, because although in the early years of Soviet power it was allowed to create national divisions to serve the Soviet regime in Azerbaijan, there were very few officers who spoke Azerbaijani. Bolshevik terror against Azerbaijani officers educated during the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic significantly increased the need for Azerbaijani officers during the Soviet period. Shikhlinski was also involved in training such national officers. A great number of military textbooks in Azerbaijani were prepared by him or under his leadership. Shikhlinski prepared and published an Azerbaijani-Russian military dictionary for the first time in Azerbaijan.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Shikhlinski wrote and published a great number of scientific articles in the Azerbaijani press. Among those articles, his article headlined "Future Wars" is of special interest. This article, which was written in Azerbaijani, was published in three editions of Kommunist newspaper (18).

In general, Colonel-General Aliaga Shikhlinski made a valuable contribution to the world artillery science and is a serviceman who took a special place in the military history of Russia and Azerbaijan. His life is still studied with great interest. Aliaga Shikhlinski died in 1943 and was buried in Baku. ✪

Literature:

1. Şıxlinski Ə. Xatirələrım. Bakı, 1984, s. 16-17
2. Али Ага Шихлинский - Бог артиллерии. <http://www.vakmos.org/news/analytics/3210/>
3. Şıxlinski Ə. Xatirələrım. Bakı, 1984, s. 23-24
4. Предисловие. http://grwar.ru/library/Shikhlihsky/SM_00.html?PHPSESSID=f0504adba42e0262ee75c0e8655da360
5. Ибрагимов С. Генерал Али Ага Шихлинский. Баку, 1975, с.16
6. Şıxlinski Ə. Xatirələrım. Bakı, 1984, s. 64
7. История жизни и любви генерала Али Ага Шихлинского и его жены Нигярханум. <http://tsarselo.ru/yenciklopedija-carskogo-sela/voennye-v-carskom-sele/istorija-zhizni-i-lyubvi-generalali-aga-shihlinskogo-i-ego-zheny-nigjar-hanum.html#.WOCFadR97s0>

8. Шихлинский А. Употребление полевой артиллерии в бою. Луга, 1910, с. 18-40
9. Yene orada, s.107
10. Ибрагимов С. Генерал Али Ага Шихлинский. Баку, 1975, с.110
11. Şıxlinski Ə. Xatirələrım. Bakı, 1984, s. 93-94
12. Али-Ага Шыхлинский. http://1914ww.ru/biograf/bio_sh/shihlinski.php
13. Şıxlinski Ə. Xatirələrım. Bakı, 1984, s.185
14. MDA, f.2918, siy.1, iş 1, v.7
15. MDA, f.2894, siy.2, iş 4, v.2
16. MDA, f.2998, siy.1, iş 23, v. 42
17. MDA, f.897, siy.2, iş 23, v.53
18. Şıxlinski Ə. Gələcək müharibələr. "Kommunist" qəzeti, 9, 10, 11 aprel 1923-cü il



Tomb of Aliaga Shikhlinski. Baku