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MILITARY COOPERATION ISSUES IN ARMY BUILDING OF THE AZERBAIJAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

One of the most pressing issues facing the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR), which proclaimed its independence on May 28, 1918, was ensuring the territorial integrity and independence of the country, given that an extremely complicated military and political situation emerged in this time period both in Azerbaijan and in the surrounding area. Therefore, there was a great need for organizing the national army in a short time to ward off the existing military threats. One of the most significant matters in this regard was establishing international cooperation in the defense and military fields.

Since it was impossible to set up a substantial defense force in a short time to counter the rapidly increasing military threat, the delegation that held talks with the Ottoman Empire in Batum on behalf of the ADR in the first days of June 1918 sought military assistance from this country (1). The request was met by the Ottoman government. On June 4, 1918, an agreement was signed in Batum between the Ottoman Empire and the ADR government in order to establish a legal basis for sending troops to Azerbaijan. Clause 4 of that treaty stipulated that the Ottoman state could provide military aid to Azerbaijan if a request was made for ensuring law and order within the country (2). Upon mutual consent, the 5th Caucasus infantry division of the Ottoman army was initially brought in. The Islamic Army of the Caucasus involving Azerbaijani national military forces was established on the basis of the Ottoman armed forces and Lieutenant-General Nuru Pasha was appointed its commander. Taking into account the peculiarities of the exist-

Colonel Abdulhamid Bay Gaitabashi took part in M. A. Rasulzade's negotiations with the Ottoman Sultan in June 1918



ing historical conditions, he was also tasked with overseeing the formation of the Republic's army, according to a decision of the Azerbaijani government (3). This made it

Major-General Ibrahim Agha Usubov headed an Azerbaijani military delegation in Italy in 1919

possible to capitalize more comprehensively on the potential of the incoming Ottoman forces in forming the republic's armed forces and upgrading its supplies.

Undoubtedly, the most significant historic outcome of the military cooperation between Azerbaijan and Ottoman Turkey was the liberation of Baku and other territories of Azerbaijan from the Bolshevik-Dashnak occupation with the involvement of joint military forces. Ottoman Turkey also rendered valuable assistance to Azerbaijan in the training of military officers, providing the logistics of military units and organizing military bodies. As part of these efforts, Colonel Atif Bay, an experienced Turkish officer, was tasked with running the newly opened National Military School in Ganja. The first-ever graduation at this institution was held on October 27, 1918 (4).

A considerable amount of weaponry and ammunition was delivered to Azerbaijan from Turkey to improve the logistics of the republic's military units. Furthermore, the parties planned to continue collaborating in this area (5). In a bid to expedite the organization of the republic's military bodies, this process was to be carried out on the basis of Turkish military units. Using the personnel and property of those military units for setting up military units of the Republic's army was envisaged as well (6). However, the military cooperation with Ottoman Turkey ground to a halt following the withdrawal of Ottoman forces from Azerbaijan in accordance with the terms of the Armistice of Mudros.

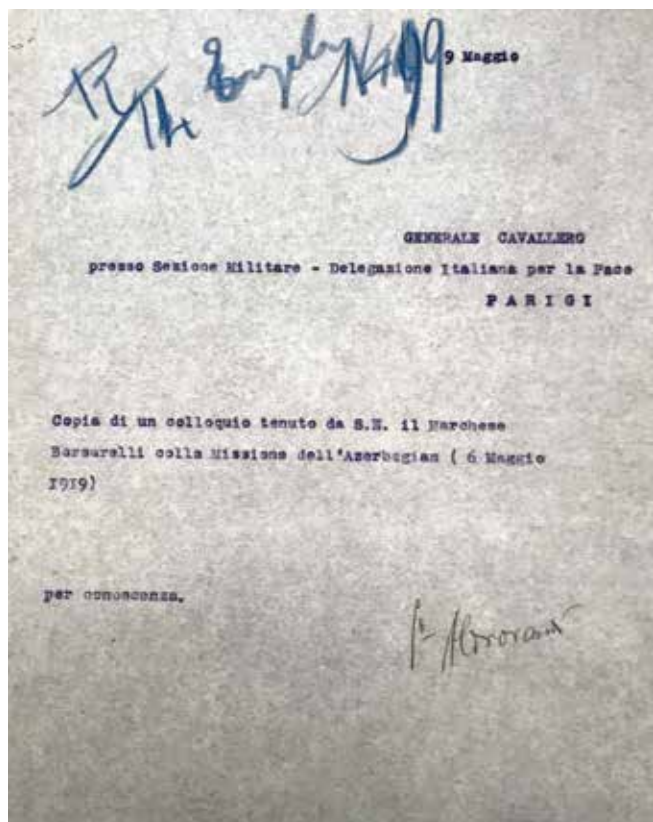
Azerbaijan's military cooperation with Georgia in organizing defense forces was also of particular importance for ADR's army building efforts. Forging friendly relations with Georgia, which declared state independence in the same time period and amid similar historical conditions was one of the important directions of ADR's policies. Azerbaijan and Georgia sought to establish close ties, which were in line with the interests of both countries. In an effort to regulate bilateral military ties, Azerbaijan established a military attaché's office in Tiflis in spring 1919 and Lieutenant-Colonel Mammad Bay Aliyev was appointed military attaché (7). In August that same year, Georgia followed suit and Colonel Navasalov was named its military attaché in Azerbaijan (8). As part of the effort to further expand the mutually beneficial military cooperation, Azerbaijan and Georgia inked a relevant deal on June 16, 1919. On behalf of the Azerbaijani government,



the agreement was undersigned by Foreign Minister M. Jafarov, Minister of Defense S. Mehmandarov and Chief of General Staff M. Sulkevich. The three-year agreement, which was signed in Tiflis, centered on mutual assistance in the event of an outside intrusion (9).

The signing of the mutual defense treaty was hailed by Azerbaijani government officials and politicians. This deal was ratified at an extraordinary session of the parliament held on June 27, 1919. Lawmakers and Foreign Minister M. Jafarov highlighted in their speeches the importance of the agreement for the security of Azerbaijan and the entire region, regarding the date of its signing as a historic day for the two republics. According to M. Jafarov, in addition to the agreement's being a stride in preventing the Denikin aggression, which was considered a real threat to the South Caucasus, it was a historic deal in terms of the unity of the South Caucasus nations. Taking into consideration the practical significance of the agreement for the people of the two countries, a Georgian delegation attended discussions on the issue in parliament.

In addition to this agreement, the two countries signed a document on military and technical cooperation, which obliged Georgia to assist Azerbaijan both in the military-technical and ammunition supply fields and the training of military personnel. The mentioned



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From July 18, the commission started receiving a large number of kitchen cars and four-wheelers. Moreover, a lot of spare parts for cannons, worth 20,000 Rubles, were provided by private individuals. An advance payment totaling 80,000 Rubles was made to the Georgian side for the bulk of supplies. An agreement was also reached that a part of the payment for the military supplies to be purchased from Georgia would be made with oil (12).

As part of their successful military cooperation, Azerbaijan and Georgia jointly established the Military Council on January 20, 1920. This body was to ascertain potential enemies of the two countries and review the location of warfare, draw up appropriate defense plans, oversee the combat readiness of the armed forces of both countries, and prepare plans on the deployment of troops. It was to include two representatives on each side and one of them was to be elected co-chair of the council upon mutual agreement of the two governments. High-ranking officials of both republics could be invited to the Council's meetings. Enforcing the strategic and military-technical decisions passed by this body was obligatory for both parties. If necessary, working meetings could be held to mull implementation of the previously made decisions; the procedure of enforcing the decisions made during such meetings could be determined in due order. In case differences of opinion emerged in the course of such sessions, the issue causing the differences was to be reported to the heads of government and agreement was to be reached to that end with their participation (13). A. Shikhlinisky and M.Sulkevich were elected members of the Council from Azerbaijan, while Georgia was represented by N. Odoshelidze and Kutetaladze (14).

In accordance with the signed bilateral documents, Azerbaijani servicemen were sent to Georgia to undergo military training. Six officers were to take part in aviation training, while four officers and 10 soldiers were expected to study radiotelegraphy. At the same time, a large number of Georgian officers filled the ranks of ADR's army. For example, 14 of them were admitted to the Azerbaijani army according to the order issued by the minister of defense on July 15, 1919 alone (15). The process of drafting Georgian servicemen was continued afterwards.

The drafting of Georgian officers amid a shortage of local military personnel in Azerbaijan was of great importance for the formation of national troops. In com-

agreements began to be enforced upon signing. The weaponry, ammunition and supplies purchased from Georgia considerably improved the logistics of Azerbaijani troops, as well as the forces deployed along Azerbaijan's northern border to counter the Denikin threat. A special commission was established under the Azerbaijani ministry of defense to receive the military supplies delivered from Georgia. Major-General Tlekhas was put in charge of this body (10). The commission worked effectively in Tiflis in July 1919. It collected a significant amount of military and technical supplies representing great importance for Azerbaijani armed forces, as well as food, and dispatched it to Azerbaijan.

On July 11, two special trains full of weapons and ammunition were dispatched from Tiflis to Azerbaijan. The consignment included 12 hilltop cannons, 10 boxes of explosives for the cannons, 1,500 rifles, as well as a lot of spare parts for these weapons. Another batch of weaponry, sent in on July 19, included eight light cannons, 16 explosives for the cannons, 1,500 more rifles, more spare parts for cannons and rifles, medicine and medical supplies worth 12,885 Rubles, as well as topographical items. On July 21, another consignment, which was mainly comprised of engineering and fortification supplies, was dispatched from Tiflis to Ganja (11).

pliance with the bilateral agreement, Georgian officers could serve in the Azerbaijani army but they were not obliged to take part in the battles waged in Azerbaijan's territory. The agreement stipulated that Georgian officers were entitled to retaining their privileges, including the ranks, service records and related perks. Taking into account their work experience, a number of Georgian officers were appointed to high-ranking positions in the military. For example, Lt.-Col. Svanadze was appointed commandant of the city of Ganja. Col. Chkheidze became commander of the 4th Guba Infantry Regiment and was later appointed principal of the Military School. Five ethnic Georgian generals served in the ADR army: Maj.-Gen. Amashukeli, Maj.-Gen. Sisianov, Maj.-Gen. Purseladze, Maj.-Gen. Kargaleteli and Maj.-Gen. Chkheidze. Kargaleteli and Chkheidze were the last ADR generals to have been granted this senior military rank by a decision of the Azerbaijani government.

Each of the mentioned Georgian generals played a great role in the formation of the ADR army. Defense Minister Samad Bay Mehmandarov said while assessing the military service of Maj.-Gen. Amashukeli, "«According to the application filed by Maj.-Gen. Amashukeli, the acting cavalry division commander and chief of the division headquarters, he is stepping down on his own free will and will be dismissed from the troops. Gen. Amashukeli, who was appointed HQ chief of the cavalry division seven months ago, at a time very intensive army-building work was underway, in fact, served as the division commander for more than five months. Gen. Amashukeli, who is proficient and fond of military service, was distinguished by his vigor and resoluteness in meeting the requirements of service in military units and greatly contributed to doing this job. Bidding farewell to Gen. Amashukeli with a sense of disappointment, I sincerely thank him for his excellent and efficient service in the military» (16).

Georgian military specialists were also invited to Azerbaijan on numerous occasions to provide counsel on specific issues. For example, Georgian generals Kutalashvili and Takayshvili arrived in Baku in late August 1919 at the request of Lt.-Gen. M. Sulkevich (17). These experienced generals were to render assistance in setting up the defense system of Baku. A plan on defending the city and the surrounding areas was drawn up with the oversight of Gen. Takayshvili. The plan consisted of two parts. The first part envisaged the defense of the Absheron Peninsula, while the second one was aimed at organizing work on engineering and fortification

related to Baku's defense. The area where the fortification work for the Absheron Peninsula was to be carried out stretched from Badamdar to Masazir Lake. A host of seven defensive props was to be set up along this route. The other defense line was expected to cross the Bilajari-Boyuk Shor-Razin Mountain and the Ahmadli Heights. Placing a group of six defensive props along this route was envisaged (18).

In November 1919, Gen. Takayshvili returned to Baku. Takayshvili reviewed the implementation of the plan on the defense of Baku and the Absheron Peninsula. The Georgian general prepared and submitted his recommendations to the leadership of Azerbaijan's Ministry of Defense to speed up and improve the defense work.

A group of Georgian officers was contributing to the engineering and fortification activities aimed at reinforcing the country's northern borders. Staff-Captain Tsereteli was in charge of the project. Tsereteli prepared a very detailed report on progress in those activities and submitted it to the Ministry of Defense.

In an effort to facilitate the solution of the domestic problems of Georgian officers, Azerbaijani Minister of Defense S. Mehmandarov issued an order on February 28, 1920 to increase the amount of compensation for mission trips. The Defense Ministry leadership sought to ensure that these officers worked more efficiently in Azerbaijan without any difficulty. It is worth mentioning that a great deal of work was done in a short time span with the aid of these officers and a very powerful defense system was created in Azerbaijan to counter the Denikin menace.

One of the priorities in international activities of the Azerbaijani government and the Ministry of Defense in particular was establishing military cooperation with developed European countries, which was aimed at boosting the country's defense capabilities and military supplies. Successful forging of such international cooperation would allow the republic to acquire the much-needed supplies of high quality. One of the steps taken in that direction was an attempt to establish military cooperation with Italy. An ad hoc commission headed by the commander of the 2nd Infantry Division, Gen. Ibrahim Agha Usubov, was set up for this purpose. According to the instructions issued by the Defense Ministry leadership, Gen. Usubov was to be delegated to Italy where he would negotiate acquiring artillery, fortification, medicine, clothing and other items required for the ADR army with the Italian ministry of defense. The parties agreed that 25,000 sets of military uniforms would be purchased and delivered from Italy to Azerbaijan (19).



The commission led by Gen. Usubov left for Italy in October 1919. In late October, the commission members arrived in Rome and immediately launched negotiations with the Italian ministry of defense. Once the commission representatives learned that the latter was unable to provide the goods meeting Azerbaijan's needs, they started negotiating with privately owned Italian companies. Talks were held with local companies in November 1919 in the cities of Genoa, Milan, Turin, Verona and Trento. As a result, an agreement was reached with Kiono, Gello and Co. A total of 20,000 sets of military uniforms stored in the company's warehouses were made available. The company's executives pledged to allocate an additional 5,000 sets of uniforms shortly, as well as deliver 500 sets of clothing for generals and officers to the Azerbaijani side. On November 23, 1919, an agreement on the purchase and sale of these items was signed between the Azerbaijani delegation and the company. In accordance with the deal, the military clothing was to be dispatched from Turin, Italy to Baku on December 20, 1919 (20). However, timely dispatch of the purchased military supplies from Italy was not possible due to the complication of the socio-political situation in this country. As a result, the consignment sent from Italy reached its destination shortly before the fall of the Republic and was taken over by the Bolshevik army, which had intervened in Azerbaijan (21).

Information is also available regarding attempts to forge ties with the command of the Entente forces in order to upgrade the ADR's military logistics. According to that data, the head of the delegation sent to Italy, Maj-Gen. I. Usubov, contacted the Entente command while in Europe. The military brass of the Entente countries did not decline to collaborate with the ADR Ministry of

Italian documents about I. Usubov's delegation

Defense. However, it turned out that most of the military clothing stocks in the Entente warehouses had been distributed among Romanian, Czech and Polish armed forces. Since just a small number of military uniforms remained in those warehouses, which would have been insufficient to meet Azerbaijan's needs, Usubov's delegation continued its trip onward to Italy (22).

Following the Defense Ministry delegation's departure for Italy, Minister S. Mehmandarov discussed purchase of weapons, ammunition and military uniforms from England at a meeting with Col. Stokes, the political representative of the British High Commissioner in Baku. Referring to the Usubov-led delegation's visit to Italy, Mehmandarov noted during the meeting that all agreements that could be reached with Italy might be revised if England agreed to cooperate with Azerbaijan militarily (23).

ADR Foreign Minister Fatali Khan Khoyski, who met with Col. Stokes on January 7, 1920, requested providing arms and military uniforms to Azerbaijan. Stokes welcomed Azerbaijan's request and further raised the issue of rendering such assistance with the British authorities (24). The British military and political leadership deemed it possible to assist the Azerbaijani military in order to prevent a Bolshevik incursion into the South Caucasus. Consequently, the British military command ordered the commander of the country's naval forces in the Mediterranean to supply the missing spare parts for shells in the Caspian Sea bay (25). Following the appeal of the Azerbaijani delegation, which was attending the Paris Peace Conference, the Entente's supreme military council mulled the issue of providing military aid to the South Caucasus republics, including Azerbaijan, in January 1920. A relevant memorandum submitted to the supreme military council stressed the need for providing food and military assistance to these republics. At the same time, a suggestion was made that the weaponry and ammunition slated for the Denikin army be delivered to the South Caucasus republics (26).

In February 1920, British military representatives visited the South Caucasus, including Azerbaijan, to determine the current needs for military assistance. Having collected the required information, they returned to their home country via Istanbul. Following the talks, a number of private British companies announced their intent to cooperate with Azerbaijan. Members of the Azerbaijani delegation, which attended the Paris Peace

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Conference, said that the head of the Azerbaijani military delegation, Gen. Usubov, who was in Italy at the time, should be delegated to England to sign relevant agreements with those companies and further determine which military supplies were required. Nevertheless, aggravation of the military situation in Karabakh from February 1920, Azerbaijan's ending up in a state of war, as well as the military-political developments ongoing in the region hampered the signing of such documents on military cooperation (27).

Following respective negotiations, French officers, Maj. Nonancour and Navy Lt. Deforge, visited Baku March 9-12, 1920 and explored the possibility of providing military assistance to Azerbaijan. The French representatives looked into ways of invigorating the Azerbaijani naval forces. They said in the reports sent to their superiors that revitalization of the Azerbaijani Navy required sending in military instructors along with providing military supplies (28). However, the entry of Bolshevik troops to Azerbaijan in late April 1920 ruled out the previously planned military cooperation with European countries. 🌱



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