

BATUMI DISTRICT IN THE HEAVIEST 1920-1921 YEARS

ბათუმის ოლქი უმძიმეს 1920-1921 წლებში

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Abstract

The Mensheviks had no less influence on the Batumi proletariat than the Bolsheviks, who outnumbered the Bolsheviks several times /5000, 500/. That is why the hope of coming to power for the Bolsheviks was not the Batumi proletariat, but the Russian Red Army, which at that time was engaged in the fight against the counter-revolution inside Russia and the war with Georgia. Therefore, without the help of the Red Army, the Bolsheviks and their supporters could not prevent the troops of the Democratic Republic of Georgia from entering Batumi on July 7, 1920. Batumi proletariat did not solve this issue alone. At that time, the national liberation struggle reached its zenith in Adjara, which was headed by the "Liberation Committee of Muslim Georgia" and the Batumi District Mejlis /Parliament/ under the leadership of Memed Abashidze, who met the units of the Georgian forces in Bartskhana, a suburb of Batumi, and addressed them with a welcoming speech.

The units of the Georgian army were met in Bartskhana together with the commander of the British occupying troops in Batumi district, the governor-general of Batumi district, 40-year-old Irishman Cooke-Collis, who a week earlier on July 1 officially announced the transfer of all Batumi district to the Democratic Republic of Georgia.

Keywords: Mensheviks; Mejlis; power; Russia-Turkey negotiations; coalition government; Military-Revolutionary Committee; National Guard of Georgia;

ოთარ გოგოლიშვილი

ბათუმის შოთა რუსთაველის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტის ისტორიის,
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აბსტრაქტი

მენშევიკებს არანაკლებ გავლენა ჰქონდათ ბათუმის პროლეტარიატზე, ვიდრე ბოლშევიკებს, რომლებიც აჭარბებდნენ ბოლშევიკებს რამდენჯერმე /5000, 500/. ამიტომ ბოლშევიკებისთვის ხელისუფლებაში მოსვლის იმედი იყო არა ბათუმის პროლეტარიატი, არამედ რუსეთის წითელი არმია, რომელიც იმ დროს რუსეთის შიგნით კონტრრევოლუციის წინააღმდეგ ბრძოლაში და საქართველოსთან ომში იყო

დაკავებული. ამიტომ წითელი არმიის დახმარების გარეშე ბოლშევიკები და მათი მომხრეები ვერ შეუძლიდნენ 1920 წლის 7 ივლისს საქართველოს დემოკრატიული რესპუბლიკის ჯარებს ბათუმში შესვლას. ბათუმის პროლეტარიატმა ეს საკითხი მარტო არ გადაჭრა. ამ დროს ეროვნულ-განმათავისუფლებელმა ბრძოლამ ზენიტს მიაღწია აჭარაში, რომელსაც სათავეში ჩაუდგა „მაჰმადიანური საქართველოს განმათავისუფლებელი კომიტეტი“ და ბათუმის საოლქო მეჯლისი /პარლამენტი/ მემედ აბაშიძის ხელმძღვანელობით, რომელიც ქართული ძალების დანაყოფებს ქ. ბათუმის გარეუბან ბარცხანაში შეხვდა და მისასალმებელი სიტყვით მიმართა.

ქართული არმიის ქვედანაყოფებს ბარცხანაში დახვდნენ ბათუმის ოლქში მყოფი ბრიტანეთის საოკუპაციო ჯარების მეთაური, ბათუმის ოლქის გენერალ-გუბერნატორი, 40 წლის ირლანდიელ კუკ-კოლისთან ერთად, რომელმაც ერთი კვირით ადრე, 1 ივლისს ოფიციალურად განაცხადა ბათუმის მთელი ოლქის საქართველოს დემოკრატიულ რესპუბლიკისათვის გადაცემა.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: მენშევიკები; მეჯლისი; რუსეთ-თურქეთის მოლაპარაკებები; კოალიციური მთავრობა; სამხედრო-რევოლუციური კომიტეტი; საქართველოს ეროვნული გვარდია;

Introduction

The government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia was strongly warned by Soviet Russia that it would not allow the transfer of Batumi and would not take responsibility for the expected mistakes. It was a meddling in the domestic affairs of the souvenir state. Moreover, it is seen that Soviet Russia needed Batumi to export Baku's oil abroad.

The Russian leadership knew it would be hard to Sovietize Georgia by force. The civil war against intervention was not over yet. On the other hand, it would cause a noise in the international arena. Georgia was supported by the European states, the parties of the Second International, and their leaders with great authority: Karl Kautsky, Renodel, and others. That is why Lenin demanded to resolve relations with Georgia and its peaceful Sovietization and was against the use of force, and the introduction of troops into Georgia. On February 25, 1921, where Lenin received Orjonikidze's telegram - "The red flag of the Soviet government is flying over Tbilisi". When asked, "Should it be printed?" He answered, "Not yet."

Methodology

During the work on the topic, first of all, the method of analysis was used. We also use logical thinking.

Results

On March 18, 1921, the Batumi Military-Revolutionary Committee was established under the chairmanship of Sergo Kavtaradze, one of the outstanding leaders of the communists, who announced the victory of the Soviet government in Adjara on the morning of March 18, 1921. By the order of the Revcom, General Giorgi Mazniashvili was the leader of more than 8000 Georgian soldiers and officers in Adjara at that time. On March 18, 19, and 20, 1921, bloody battles took place in Batumi and its fronts, in which Georgians were victorious. On the evening of March 18, near Batumi, the 11th Cavalry Division of the Red Army of Russia, with 2500 soldiers, camped at the Stefanovka fort on the central highway, which crossed the Goderdze Pass in difficult weather conditions. The leadership of the division introduced to the Turkish side the clause of the Russian-Turkish Moscow Treaty, which states that the border of Turkey should pass through the

village of Sarfi to the Shavsheti mountains and that it blocked the only Turkish-Georgian road on Chorokhi and Adjaristskal, from which no additional soldiers can enter Adjara. Turks were forced to leave Ajara.

Discussion

On April 30, 1920, an underground organization of Georgian Bolsheviks was informing Moscow:

“Englishmen are leaving Batumi and handing over the city to Mensheviks, but a proletariat of Batumi will not allow seizing power by the Mensheviks. They have enough means, we are sure of this. However, if military units of the Red Army of Russia do not occupy Sokhumi and Poti, a soviet government in Batumi will not last long. Therefore, you must notify the Black sea Red Groups Command immediately.

The Mensheviks had no less influence on Batumi proletariat than the Bolsheviks, they were much more than the Bolsheviks /5000, 500/. That is why, the Bolsheviks did not consider the proletariat of Batumi as a source of coming to power, but the Red Army of Russia, which at that time had been fighting against counter-revolutionaries inside Russia and had no time for a war with Georgia. Due to this situation, the Bolsheviks and their adherents were unable to hinder the entry of units of the Army of the Democratic Republic of Georgia to Batumi on July 7, 1920. Only the proletariat of Batumi could not solve this issue. At that time National Liberation Movement reached its peak, which was being headed by “The Liberation Committee of Muslim Georgia” and The Mejlis (Parliament) of Batumi district with Memed Abashidze’s leadership, who welcomed the units of the army of Georgia in Bartskhana.

The units of the army of Georgia were greeted in Bartskhana by the head of the English occupying forces and General-Governor of Batumi district 40 years old Irish Cooke-Collis, as well, who had declared one week ago about the transfer of Batumi district to the jurisdiction of The Democratic Republic of Georgia.

The Bolsheviks resisted this decision, the entry of the army of The Democratic Republic of Georgia into Batumi, the unification of Muslim and Christian Georgia. They called on the workers to resist the army of The Democratic Republic of Georgia, but in vain, they did not receive any help from the Red Army.

As a result of the clashes between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks died many innocent people. „We could not prevent bloodshed in Adjara”, said Noe Zhordania, a chairman of the government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia. The authority of Georgia was spread throughout the whole Batumi district, including Adjara, Artvin, Artanuj, and Shavshet. In Batumi on July 7, 1920, at 18:00, at the headquarters of the occupying powers was hoisted the flag of The Democratic Republic of Georgia instead of the flag of England. On July 8 occupying forces left Adjara, where martial law was declared, which was not necessary. The government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia in the Batumi district was to hand over power by declaring autonomy repeatedly promised to the Mejlis. With this, the Bolsheviks and other enemies of The Democratic Republic of Georgia were enabled to bring the issue of Batumi to the international arena and criticize the policy of the government of The Democratic Republic of Georgia towards Batumi district and Muslim Georgia. People's Commissariat for nations of the soviet republic was disseminating the following information: „Nowhere was a petty-bourgeois essence of moral of the Mensheviks as clearly revealed as in Batumi”. In their turn, propagandists and leaders of The Democratic Republic, the Mensheviks, and other parties were asserting per their print media that Georgia was a perfect, democratic country, which rejected experiments of Bolsheviks, that is why the socialist revolution would start in Georgi. Leaders of the Menshevik party were noting that a clash between bourgeoisie and proletariat was inevitable. That is why they were warning the

proletariat of Batumi that enemies of the bourgeoisie were their enemies as well. They were persuading workers that a revolution would not be national, but would simultaneously happen in every civilized country – in England, the USA, France, and Germany. Noe Zhordania was asserting that neither Georgia nor Russia must start a revolution. Noe Zhordania and his adherents were fiercely struggling against the Bolsheviks, till spreading the authority of The Democratic Republic of Georgia over Adjara, there were 400 communists and several thousands of their adherents in Adjara, in three months, from July 8 to October 15, 1920, remained 200 communists only. Every topography was printing only anti-Bolshevik literature (SAARG-AA, fund 1, list 1, work 112, pp. 56-58).

The Mensheviks and other national parties that come to power were no longer recognizing the ideas of territorial, regional, and previously recognized cultural-national autonomy. On the one hand, they were talking about some national union, on the other hand, asserting that the rights of ethnic minorities were properly secured with democratic principles. Early, before declaring the independence of Georgia, on February 15, 1918, at the meeting of the Transcaucasian Seim, Noe Zhordania noted in his speech – “Even a small nation is imbued with ideas of great-power nations”.

After declaring the independence of Georgia, he as a chairman of the government addressed to residents of Batumi district with a special letter at the beginning of the occupation of Batumi by Englishmen, on December 25, 1918 - “The government of The Democratic Republic of Georgia is publicly and resolutely stating that will grant autonomy to Muslim Georgia. Representatives of Adjara will promulgate laws themselves with what they will settle their life according to their liking and conscience, ensure their faith with firm laws, resolve local affairs, and establish happiness in their native region. Brothers!, Muslims!, your brothers are coming to you not for sorrow, but with a flag of freedom and fraternity”. However, after the spreading of the jurisdiction of Georgia on Batumi district abovementioned pieces of promise remained as a promise, which was harming the policy of The Democratic Republic of Georgia. Vice-chairman of the Constituent Assembly of Georgia was writing: “The first thing you hear here, in Adjara is an autonomy. Everybody, elder and younger, peasant or nobleman, learned or unlearned is speaking about autonomy. A conversation will start and finish with this. Autonomy. Where are your autonomy and your promise?” (SAARG-AA, fund 1, list 1, work 112, pp. 77-78).

Instead of making the right decision, representatives of the party and government were exacerbating the already tense situation in Adjara. They were spreading different provocative statements. It is mentioned in one of them: “It is very dangerous to take any political step in this region. Who provokes people by mentioning an autonomy will be enemy of people, hypocrite, and double-dealer Judas”.

Such statements were against to interests and aspirations of civilians of Batumi district, erasing the National-Liberation movement of Muslim Georgia, the process of national awareness of Adjarians, which was headed by The Liberation Committee of Muslim Georgia by Memed Abashidze’s leadership.

A thoughtless steps in the internal and foreign policy, ineffective and wrong activities towards Russia, repression against the Bolsheviks, what were incompatible with that article of Treaty of Moscow signed on May 7, 1920, which implied that the government of The Democratic Republic of Georgia must enable Bolsheviks to work legally, this was directed against the Democratic Republic of Georgia and was being used by enemies of Georgia. The Bolsheviks were sending letters from Tbilisi, Bako, Batumi and etc. to Moscow in which they were exaggerating mistakes and requiring the invasion of the Red Army into Georgia, the overthrow of the legitimate government, and Sovietization of Georgia. On October 25, 1920, Mamia Orakhelashvili, one of the leaders of the Bolshevik organization of Batumi, informed Moscow that the communists had dearly cost „Legalization“. At the Second Congress of the Communist International in July 1920,

the head of the delegation of Georgia stated that prisons in Georgia had been full of communists. At the congress was also said that ethnic minorities and representatives of other confessions had been persecuted, they were not in the Constituent Assembly, and clashes with ethnic minorities had become a usual event. In August 1920, vice-chairman of The Constituent Assembly of Georgia was noting: “You will not find even ten members of your organization throughout Adjara”. On January 9, 1921, Mamia Orakhelashvili was informing the central committee of the Communist Party of Russia: „Arrestments in Batumi got especially incisive”. Information about workers’ economic problems, their evictions from Batumi, and the increase of unemployment was being spread. In the letters sent to Moscow was written that most of the workers were supporters of the Communists and the proletariat of Batumi had been ready to take power. On October 26, 1920, Stalin sent a letter to Lenin from the North Caucasus: “Georgia is going to hand over Batumi to the Entente and may pave the way for Wrangel to retreat, also for an attack to Baku”. After three days Lenin sent a responsive letter, agreed with Stalin, and repeated the same in his turn: “I am sure that Georgia will hand over Batumi to the Entente, probably in secret, and the Entente will go toward Baku”. Lenin also did not rule out the conquest of Batumi by Turkey. On October 9, 1920, on the gathering of the communists of Moscow Lenin said that Turkey had launched an attack on Armenia with the aim of capturing Batumi (SAARG-AA, fund 1, list 1, work 114, pp. 11-15).

The government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia was strictly warned by soviet Russia that it would not allow losing of Batumi and would not take any responsibility for possible mistakes. This was an intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign country. Moreover, it is clear that Russia needed Batumi for the export of oil of Baku.

Authorities of Russia knew that a violent Sovietization of Georgia would be difficult, the war against civil intervention was not over yet. Besides, this would cause an incisive international response. Georgia was being supported by European countries, parties of the Second International, their leaders with great authority: Karl Kautsky, Pierre Renaudel, and others. That is why Lenin was demanding adjustment of relations with Georgia, peaceful Sovietization, and opposing the entry of troops into Georgia. On February 25, 1921, Lenin received a telegram from Orjonikidze: “The Red Flag of Soviet Power Flies over Tiflis”. On the question – “Should it be printed?” he answered – “Not yet”.

Army of the Democratic Republic of Georgia was fiercely resisting the Red Army of Russia. Selected 4000 soldiers were standing in the vicinity of Batumi. At the beginning of March, an army of many thousands and guards was added. In spite of that on March 23, 1921, Georgia recognized districts of Artvin and Ardahan which was occupied by the militaries of Turkey as a territory of Turkey, in return for neutrality, however, Turkey has not missed a difficult situation of Georgia, falsely promised to help to Georgia, and invaded Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki, and Adjara on March 11, 1921. Command of Eastern Turkish Army informed Command of the 11th Army of Russia that Georgia had handed over Batumi, Akhaltsikhe, and Akhalkalaki to Turkey. Negotiations about borders between Russia and Turkey which began on February 26, 1921, were being delayed. The delegation of Turkey was lying when insistently stating that Batumi district, Akhaltsikhe, and Akhalkalaki belonged to it. On 28 February Stalin sends a letter to Lenin talking about protecting Adjara from Militaries of Turkey moving towards Batumi. On March 9, 1921, commander-in-chief of Army of the Eastern Turkey Kiazim Karabekir officially states that he sends troops to retake territories that were controlled by Turkey before the Russo-Turkish war in 1877-1878. It was obvious that they were going to remove Adjara from the homeland. That is why the Soviet leadership advised Georgian Bolsheviks to find an acceptable compromise with Zhordania and other Mensheviks. But, Georgian Bolsheviks did not share this advice. Nor Noe Zhordania expressed a desire to create a bloc with Bolsheviks – “Two governments can not exist in one state” (CACHG, fund 234, list 12, work 1865, pp. 33-36).

On 6 March, Lenin's abovementioned letter was printed belatedly in the Bolsheviks newspaper "Pravda Gruzya", the Bolsheviks printed only part of the letter, which regards finding of an acceptable compromise with Zhordania and other Georgian Mensheviks.

On March 9, 1921, Lenin sent a letter to the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of Soviet Russia Georgy Chicherin, who had been heading the soviet delegation during Russo-Turkish negotiations, in the letter was noted: "We are concerned that Turks are delaying the negotiations in order to gain a time while their militaries are moving towards Batumi. We must not allow this". Lenin asked Chicherin to come to him and Stalin would "sincerely negotiate" with the delegation of Turkey. Finally, on 16 March 1921 in Moscow was signed treaty between Soviet Russia and Turkey, which stipulated that Turkey refuses Adjara, including Batumi, and recognized the borders from Sarpi passed through the Shavsheti Range. In the second article was noted that Turkey agreed to cede the city of Batumi and the territory of the Batumi district, located north of the border described in the first Article of the Treaty. The same article states that The population of the mentioned territories would be able to practice wide regional administrative autonomy.

Although a large part of Georgian territories remained part of Turkey Under the treaty of Moscow, the treaty was considerable in the light that Turkey was claiming whole Muslim Georgia. Under the Treaty of 7 July, 1920 jurisdiction of the Democratic Republic of Georgia was spread on the Batumi District, which in addition to Adjara included Artvin, Artanuj, and Shavshet, a pretention of Turkey on these territories was baseless. It was repeating this from time to time. In the December of the same year, the ambassador of Turkey in Georgia Kiazim Bey announced to the government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia that the Batumi District belonged to Turkey under the Turkish-Georgian Treaty of June 4, 1918.

In January of 1921, the government of Turkey made an official statement on the urgent return of Adjara to Turkey. It was the issue of Batumi that bothered Lenin when he thought of compromising with Zhordania and other Georgian Mensheviks for the bloc. Early rumored, in the light of the course of the transition to capitalism by M. Gorbachov in the 80s of the XX century was stated an opinion as though Lenin aimed the compromise and collaboration with the government of The Democratic Republic of Georgia chaired by Noe Zhordania. Some of the scientists and political figures note that it was missed chance. As if Lenin wanted to maintain The Democratic Republic of Georgia, which was obstructed by Stalin and Orjonikidze. Lenin still 10 days before entering Tbilisi, on February 15, 1921, sent a letter to Politburo, where was noted: "We expect energetic and fast activities from the Revolutionary Council, which will not end with capturing Tbilisi if this is necessary from a military point of view for protecting the neutral zone (Lore District) from the new attacks.

As we see Lenin has not told Zhordania about finding an acceptable compromise for the bloc until the occupation of Tbilisi by the Soviet Army on February 25, 1921, but after the establishment of the Soviet government in Tbilisi, when authority was seized by the Bolsheviks, no one thought, and certainly not Lenin about returning the power. On the contrary, Lenin emphasized in his letter "acceptable compromise" and not a concession of power. As was noted, he sent the order of Politburo to the Revolutionary Military Council about the conquest of the whole of Georgia. As for Lenin's opinion that Zhordania and other Mensheviks like him were not hostile to the establishment of the Soviet System in Georgia under certain conditions before the specially arranged "Uprising" in Lore, probably Lenin meant Zhordania's and some other Mensheviks' loyal attitude towards the Soviet government if the Bolsheviks had captured authority and would have not established a dictatorship, which was caused by prevention possible massacre and intervention of Russia in Georgia. Everybody knew that the Bolsheviks would not refuse to take the power. The Mensheviks, including Zhordania, were far from the government, they would not even agree on the coalition government.

The meeting of the Constituent Assembly of Georgia convened in Batumi on February 10, 1921, and on March 27, 1921, adopted a resolution about the organization of self-defense and arming all forces for rejection of the Bolsheviks and 11th Russian Army from the territory of Georgia. In the middle of March 1921, the forts of Batumi were in the hands of the Turks: Kakhaberi, Stephanovka, Bartskhana, Khemidie, Anaria, Sameba, and others. On the night of March 17-18, 1921, troops of Turkey captured the post and telegraph of Batumi, police office, and other strategic points. On March 17, the ambassador of Turkey to the Democratic Republic of Georgia Kiazim Bey issued the order of annexation of Adjara and declared himself as a general-governor of the Batumi District (CACHG, fund 234, list 12, work 1865, pp. 89-95).

On 12 March, the revolutionary committee of Georgia accepted the request of peace negotiations offered by the government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia being in Batumi. Negotiations started on 14 March in Kutaisi and military operations were suspended, but negotiations were formal. The government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, the Constituent Assembly were preparing for departure from Georgia, 16 laden ships were waiting for them. The government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia could only procrastinate negotiations to peacefully leave Georgia. It was demanding troops of the Red Army of Russia not to enter Adjara until March 25. On the night of March 16-17, when they were guaranteed to get on a ship and go abroad, Noe Zhordania took out of the prison leaders of the Bolsheviks Sergo Kavtaradze and Malakia Toroshelidze, met them and told them that after the departure of the government the authority would be in hands of the Bolsheviks and send empty carriages from Batumi to Sajavakho for taking troops of the Red Army of Russia to Adjara for liberation this Region from Turkey. After this conversation, Sergo Kavtaradze and Malakia Toroshelidze were returned to the prison, but on March 17-18, as soon as the government left Georgia all the prisoners were liberated, majority, more than 1000 prisoners were political prisoners, including 450 communists. At night, on March 18, 1921, was established the Revolutionary Committee of Batumi with the chairmanship of a prominent communist Sergo Kavtaradze, who declared victory of Soviet Georgia. By the order of the Revolutionary Committee, Giorgi Mazniasvili led the army of Georgia. Bloody battles took place on the Batumi front on March 16, 17, and 18, Georgians were successful. On March 18, the cavalry division of the 11th Russian Red Army with 2500 soldiers, which had crossed the pass of Goderdzi in severe meteorological conditions camped in the fort of Stephanovka located on the central magistral near the Batumi. The leadership of the division introduced a specific article of the Treaty of Moscow to the Turkish side, which indicates that the northeast border of Turkey is defined by a line, which begins in the village of Sarp located on the Black Sea, passes through the Shavsheti Range, they closed ways on Rv. Chorokhi and Adjaristskali, that is why other Turkish soldiers would not be able to enter Adjara. Turks had to leave Adjara.

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