

THE MARCH 1921 BATTLE FOR BATUMI AND THE PEOPLE'S GUARD

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ABSTRACT

The First Democratic Republic of Georgia, which tried to maintain its independence, found itself in a difficult situation at the beginning of 1921. In February and in March, Georgia was surrounded by Soviet Russia. The 11th Red Army attacked from the southeast, the 9th Army from the north, through the Mamisoni Pass, and the 13th Army from the Black Sea coast. Budyonny and Zhloba's cavalry units also joined the fight against Georgia. In addition there was the threat from the Ottoman Empire from the southwest.² While Turkey was formally presenting itself as a "friend" of Georgia, it was simultaneously trying to seize the city of Batumi and the Batumi region. When „... Georgia was tied up on three sides in the battle with the Russian whale, at that time the Ottoman government promised Georgia's alliance and at the same time silently advanced its army towards the Artaani region and seized Georgian territory...“³ This is confirmed by the information reflected in the "Selected Notes" of the then Chairman of the Mejlis of Muslim Georgia (the governing body of Batumi and the Batumi region), Memed Abashidze that a delegation of the Angora government appeared in Batumi and suggested him, as the Chairman of the Mejlis, that they review the issue of joining Georgia and, on behalf of the Mejlis, issue a resolution that the Batumi region would be transferred to the Angora government on the basis of autonomy.⁴

Unfortunately, the democratic government of Georgia realized the Kemalists' treachery too late. Before emigrating, Noe Zhordania said in a statement to the population that a new issue had arisen: should Batumi be given to Georgia, even if the Bolsheviks rule there, or should it remain with the Ottomans? There could be no two opinions on this question. Their decision was that in any case Batumi should remain with Georgia, not with the Ottomans.⁵

The two imperialist states (Turkey and Russia), which appeared on the world stage with the slogans of democracy and socialism, in fact, acted completely oppositely. This article concerns the period when the above-mentioned countries, with their insidious plan, divided the territory of the first democratic Georgia. The article will present the relations between democratic Georgia and Turkey and Russia, and the struggle for the liberation of Batumi, where the problematic issue of the role of the People's Guard will be presented.

Keywords: Democratic Georgia, Kemalist Turkey, Soviet Russia, People's Guard, regular army

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²Otar Turmanidze, The Forced Sovietization of Georgia and the Struggle Against the Separation of Adjara from the Motherland (February-March 1921), in the book: Essays on the History of South-Western Georgia, Adjara, Volume IV, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, Niko Berdzenishvili Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Batumi, 2012, p. 34.

³ Grigol Lortkipanidze, Thoughts on Georgia, Tbilisi University Publishing House, Tbilisi, 1995, p.

⁴ Memed Abashidze, Selected Writings, Tbilisi, 1967, p

⁵ Noe Zhordania to the "Cities, Nations, Communities of Georgia" regarding the Batumi issue, regarding the government's departure from the territory of Georgia (pencil note), 24.02.1921, SCSA, f.2113 an.

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the existence of the First Democratic Republic of Georgia, on the night of February 11-12, 1921, Soviet Russia began a war against Georgia by attacking Georgian armed forces stationed in Lore.⁶ The Georgian army was soon forced to retreat. The newly appointed Commander-in-Chief, General Kvinitadze, who had been appointed on February 16, decided to leave Tbilisi on February 24 in agreement with the government.

The government of Democratic Georgia made a number of mistakes in terms of political calculations as well as military ones. Prominent military figures do not shy away from talking about this. It is precisely these mistakes that the Georgian general (who fought bravely on almost all fronts during the period of the Democratic Republic of Georgia for the independence of the homeland as a worthy commander) Giorgi Mazniashvili drew attention to in his memoirs that the great mistake of the government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia was to dismiss from the army those soldiers who had served for two years at a critical moment for the country.⁷ The decision to suddenly evacuate Tbilisi and retreat without prior discussion with the leaders of the fronts, who in turn unexpectedly received the order to retreat, was also unjustified. The retreat, in fact, was more like an escape.

Giorgi Mazniashvili, who was the head of one of the fronts during the Tbilisi defense operation, openly expressed his dissatisfaction with this decision in his memoirs and considered the evacuation of the capital and the retreat in that form to be completely unjustified. In his memoirs, he said that one circumstance surprised him most of all: the evacuation of Tbilisi was such a big issue that it was impossible to explain the decision so hastily, so thoughtlessly.⁸ The general also noted that the commander-in-chief did not invite the front commanders to the meeting called to discuss the withdrawal from Tbilisi and the retreat. The army retreating from Tbilisi was unable to implement the commander-in-chief's plan to meet the enemy at fortified defensive positions near Sajavakho. The

⁶ Mikheil Bakhtadze, *From the History of the Military Operations of the Russo-Georgian War of 1921*, Publishing House "Artanuj", Tbilisi, 2013, p. 15.

⁷ Giorgi Mazniashvili, *Memories 1917-1925*, "State Publishing House", Tiflis, 1927, pp. 153-154.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

reason for this was the activation of the Turks in Batumi, which ended with the capture of the city by the Turkish army. At this time, the government of the First Democratic Republic of Georgia, after Kutaisi, was finally located in Batumi.

MAIN PART

The rapprochement between Soviet Russia and Kemalist Turkey proved fatal for the First Democratic Republic of Georgia. The union of the two imperialist countries was conditioned by the fact that the victorious "Entente" wanted to destroy the Bolshevik regime and divide the Ottoman territories. It was the union of these two resistance movements that became the reason for the rapprochement of the Turks and Russians for the first time in history.⁹

The goal of the new Ottoman government was to seize southwestern Georgia and the city of Batumi. The transfer of the Batumi region and the city of Batumi to Georgia by the British government was followed by protests from the Turks. On July 25, 1920, the Ottoman Grand National Assembly, headed by Mustafa Kemal, sent a letter of protest to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, E. Gegechkori, in which the Turkish side clearly expressed surprise and dissatisfaction with the capture of Batumi by the Georgian armed forces.

Turkish authors also spoke about the relationship between Kemalist Turkey and Soviet Russia in their works; the Soviet Russian government provided Turkey with financial and military assistance so that the Ottoman Empire would not fall under British control. In this way, the Kemalists managed to find a common language with Soviet Russia, from which they received 8.4 million gold rubles and even military assistance in 1920-1921.¹⁰ The same was confirmed by another author; in 1919-1921, Lenin's Russian government provided the

⁹ Afanasian Serge. *L'Arménie, l'Azerbaïdjan et la Géorgie de l'indépendance à l'instauration du Pouvoir Soviétique 1917-1923*, édition l'Armatan, Paris, 1981, p.89.

¹⁰ Bolat Mehmet Ali. *Milli mücadele dönemi'nde Türkiye'nin Kafkasya siyaseti (1919-1921)*, doktora tezi, İstanbul, 2017, s. 338.

Turks with financial and military assistance so that the Ottoman Empire would not fall under British control.¹¹

Canadian historian Andrew Anderson also spoke about the dubious deal between Bolshevik Russia and Kemalist Turkey and the illegal possession of the Batumi region by the Ottomans that how could the Ottomans "cede" to Georgia what they did not own, while Georgia did own it.¹²

Meanwhile, Western countries soon changed their policy towards the Bolsheviks and Kemalists. On March 9-13, 1921, the Turks signed an economic and political agreement in London first with France, and then with Italy, although nothing beneficial to Georgia was said in these documents.¹³ Unfortunately, the Georgian government of that time did not pay attention to Angora-Moscow and concentrated its main forces in the West, which were striving to establish diplomatic relations with the governments of Western states, while the latter was accountable to both Russia and Turkey, while simultaneously maintaining their interests in Georgia and, in particular, in Batumi.¹⁴

Turkey assured the Georgian government that, if necessary, it would not back down from an open confrontation with Russia. Noe Zhordania said about the new Ottoman government's deal with the Bolsheviks that as soon as the war began, they also conducted political work... The Ottoman ambassador, Kyazim Bey, appeared to him the very next day and declared categorically that their interest was the independence of Georgia, and to achieve this goal they would not hesitate to go to war against the Bolsheviks.¹⁵ Unfortunately, it was at this time that Russia ceded Artaxani and Artvin to the Ottomans in exchange for the Ottomans taking a neutral position in Georgian-Russian relations.

¹¹Mustafa San. Türkiye-Kafkasya ilişkilerinde Batum (1917-1921). Sakarya üniversitesi, sosyal bilimrel enstitüsü doktora tezi, Mart 2010, s. 571.

¹²Andrew Anderson, Georgia and International Agreements: Memories 1918-1921, Mtsignobari Publishing House, Tbilisi, 2000, p. 403.

¹³Otar Janelidze, The expulsion of the Turkish army from Batumi, where the fate of Batumi was decided, in the book: The battle for Batumi, March 18-20, 1921. 2011, pp. 124, 132.

¹⁴Zurab Avalishvili, Georgian Independence in Politics of 1918-1921, Tbilisi, 1924, p. 228.

¹⁵Noe Zhordania, My Past, Publishing House "Sarangi", Tbilisi, 1990, p. 123.

Georgian émigré historian Alexander Manvelishvili, referring to the trade agreement signed between England and Russia on March 16, 1921, wrote that a person would have to be blind not to notice the scattered clouds in the Georgian sky.¹⁶ The fate of the first democratic republic of Georgia was actually decided. It was in this format that Kemalist Turkey acted, in order to seize quickly and as much territory as possible, before Soviet Russia completely reddened Georgia. In fact, a line would be drawn between the territory seized by Turkey and the rest of Georgia. After which the ally would try to legalize the seized territories of Georgia on the basis of an agreement with Russia.

On June 9, 1920, Mustafa Kemal announced mobilization in Eastern Anatolia and appointed Kızım-Karabekir as the commander-in-chief of the Caucasus Front. While the new democratic Georgia was waging a fierce struggle to preserve its freedom and existence, at this very time, the Great National Assembly decided to attack Georgia.¹⁷ A Turkish author also speaks of these events, stating that the government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, realizing the imminent danger from the so-called "friendly" Ottoman Empire, strengthened its military forces on the Georgian-Ottoman borders. All the efforts of the Georgian government were directed towards preventing the occupation of the Batumi region by the Turks.¹⁸

In February-March 1921, the Georgian Democratic Republic opposed the military aggression of Soviet Russia with units of the regular army and the People's Guard. The invading army "fought with great dedication and courage for the name and profit of its people and the Russian homeland."¹⁹ In the Kojori-Tabakhmela area, the enemy was met with particular resistance by the cadets of the Tbilisi Military Academy, who temporarily stopped the enemy's advance. On February 19, about 1,600 Russian Red Army soldiers were

¹⁶ Alexander Manvelishvili, *Russia and the Independence of Georgia*, San Francisco, 1984, pp. 277-278.

¹⁷ Victor Nozadze, *The Struggle for the Restoration of Georgia over Meskheta*, Publishing House "Union of Georgian Theater Workers", Tbilisi, 1989, pp. 84, 94-95.

¹⁸ Mustafa San. *Türkiye-Kafkasya ilişkilerinde Batum (1917-1921)*, Sakarya üniversitesi, sosyal bilimler enstitüsü, doktora tezi, Mart, 2010, s. 528.

¹⁹ Grigol Lortkipanidze, *Thoughts on Georgia*, Tbilisi, 1995, p. 215.

captured near Soganlughi, but Tbilisi could not be defended. On the night of February 24, the Georgian combat units were ordered to retreat and leave the capital.

The abandonment of the capital had a depressing effect on the Georgian cavalry. The morale and psychological mood of the retreating army noticeably deteriorated. Discipline decreased, desertion appeared here and there. In the words of the famous Georgian political figure, émigré Revaz Gabashvili, after Tbilisi, our army fought only “small” battles with the enemy near Avchala and Mukhatgverdi, then near Gori, a battle took place near the village of Osiauri and “a little more at the Kutaisi station.”²⁰

Soon Turkey will reveal its insidious plans. This is also evident from the fact cited in the work of the Turkish author; Kızım Karabekir informed the General Staff in a telegram sent on March 9 that he had issued an order to seize Batumi on March 9, based on Directive No. 1/8 of March 8. He also informed the Red Army command about the decision. However, he also indicated that, based on the results of the London Conference, the agreement reached with the Georgian government was not long in coming.²¹ Which sheds light on the so-called "friendship" of Turkey towards Georgia.

On March 12, 1921, at 12:00, the 3rd Battalion of the Ottoman 7th Regiment, led by Captain Talat Bey, and the Chorokhi detachment, created for the purpose of capturing Batumi, under the command of Major Ali Riza Bey,²² entered Batumi. On March 12, approximately 1,200 Turkish troops were in Batumi.²³ After the true goals of the Turks were revealed and it became clear to the government of Noe Zhordania that the war with the Red Army was lost, the government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia was forced to agree to negotiations with the Georgian Revolutionary Committee.²⁴

²⁰ Revaz Gabashvili, What I Remember, in the book - Return, vol. 3, Tbilisi, 1992, p. 536.

²¹ Serpil Sürmeli, Türk-Gürcü İlişkileri (1918-1921), Ankara, 2001, s. 65.

²² Roin Kavrelishvili, The Batumi Issue (March 1921) in Turkish Historiography, in the book: “The Battle for Batumi”, Tbilisi, 2011, p. 46.

²³ Bolat Mehmet Ali. Milli mücadele dönemi'nde Türkiye'nin Kafkasya siyaseti (1919-1921), doktora tezi, İstanbul, 2017, ss.574-575.

²⁴ Otar Gogolishvili, The Batumi Issue in the Kutaisi Negotiations of March 17-18, 1921, in the book: The Battle for Batumi, March 18-20, 1921, Tbilisi, 2011, p. 111.

On March 17-18, 1921, negotiations were held in Kutaisi between the government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia and representatives of the Revolutionary Committee. They signed the following agreement: “1. To cease hostilities; 2. The democratic government liquidates the front against the Soviet troops; 3. The democratic government also leaves that part of the territory that it has occupied so far and allows the troops under the command of the Revolutionary Committee to enter the Batumi region to protect it from Turkish invasions; 4. From Sajavakho to Batumi, the administration of the Republic of Georgia still remains, and the army of the Revolutionary Committee is entering here as a force friendly to the democratic government.”²⁵

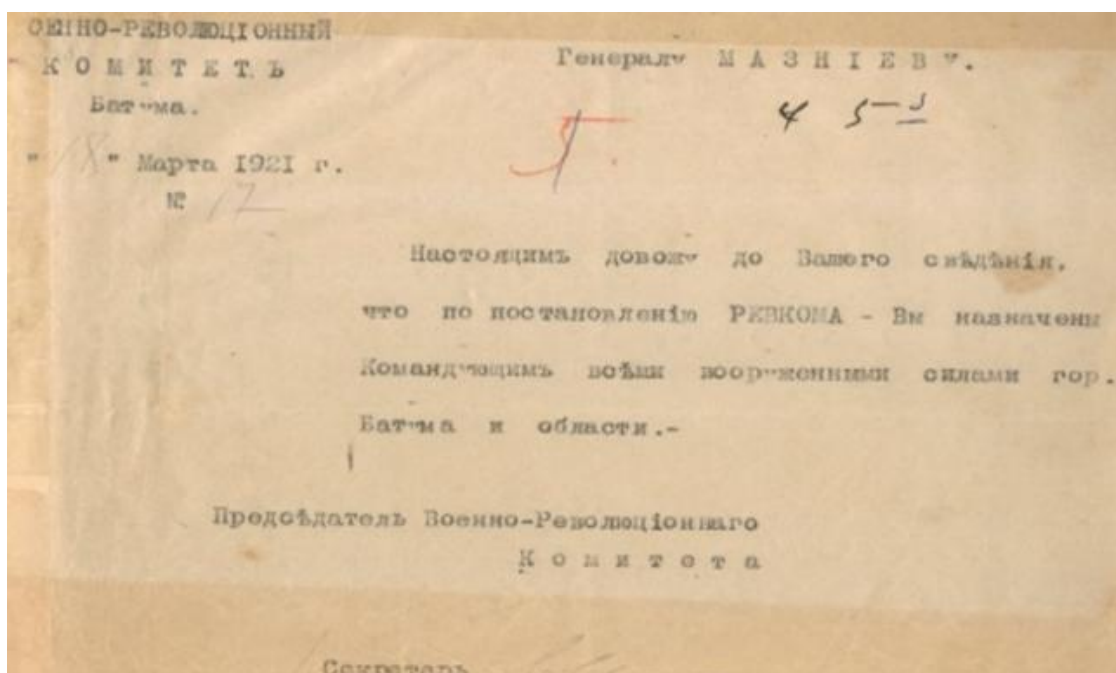
Soon, the democratic government of Georgia departed abroad through the port of Batumi, having overtaken the Red Army division under the command of D. Zhloba, which was also tasked with overthrowing the Menshevik government of Georgia.²⁶ V. Lenin expressed regret about this fact in his work, while at the same time noting the annexation of Batumi to Soviet Georgia that they acquired territory not for the Russians, but for Soviet Georgia - Batumi and its environs, and also that they lost the Mensheviks who had left for Constantinople, not a small number.²⁷

As it is known, Giorgi Mazniashvili, who had been in Batumi since March 17, 1921, after some hesitation, agreed with the Bolsheviks to lead the liberation of Batumi from the Turks. The chairman of the Revolutionary Committee, S. Kavtaradze, confirmed and informed G. Mazniashvili of the appointment of the general leader of the military units in Batumi.

²⁵ Levan Toidze, *Intervention, Occupation, Forced Sovietization, and Actual Annexation*, Tbilisi, 1991, pp. 137-138.

²⁶ Jemal Karalidze, *The Mission of the Zhloba Division*, in the book: *The Battle for Batumi, March 18-20, 1921*, Tbilisi, 2011, p. 169.

²⁷ Vladimir Lenin, *Works Volume 45*, Tbilisi, 1972, p.



Picture. 1,²⁸

As noted, initially, G. Mazniashvili even refused S. Kavtaradze's offer, but realizing the difficult current situation, he made the absolutely right decision and agreed to the Bolshevik government of the city, to head the operation to expel the Ottomans from Batumi. G. Mazniashvili appealed to the leadership of the Batumi Revolutionary Committee, if the new Georgian government would not consider their service to the Fatherland during the Menshevik rule as evil and would give them a guarantee that not a single soldier, from the general to the ordinary soldier, would be punished for his previous service, he was ready to continue his military service and from that day he would begin military action against the Ottomans.²⁹

Initially, the Aspidza battalion, which was stationed in the city's barracks and strategic forts, was tasked with protecting Batumi. ³⁰The Kemalists also used Georgians against their native country, which unfortunately characterized all eras of Georgian history. Akaki Vasadze confirms this in his memoirs, when he talks about the participation of Georgians

²⁸ ATSSA, Fund I-67, Anastas. 1, Sak. 53, F. 5-A.

²⁹ Giorgi Mazniashvili, Memories 1917-1925, "State Publishing House", Tiflis, 1927, p. 200.

³⁰ Akaki Vasadze, Memories, Thoughts, Tb., 1977, p. 99

living in Javakheti in the Turkish army. Akaki Vasadze, who was in Batumi and was enlisted in the Aspindza battalion as a machine gunner, even offered a Javanese soldier a cigarette and had a short conversation in his native language.³¹

By that time, several military fortresses had been set up in Batumi and its surroundings. Among them: Anari, Stefanovka, Bartskhani, Kakhaberi, Hamidiye, Didi and Patara Sameba, etc. The most important strategic fortress in the battle for Batumi was the Kakhaberi Fort. With the capture of this fort, the Ottomans became the de facto owners of Batumi. That is why G. Mazniashvili turned all his attention here. He also sent a relief unit to Kakhaberi, because his reserves were scarce. The commander-in-chief, in agreement with the commander of the Red Cavalry, D. Zhloba, temporarily stationed Russian horsemen at the Anari and Stefanovka forts, and ordered the Georgian garrisons stationed there to reinforce the Kakhaberi Fort by leaving the city.³² These units had to overcome a number of obstacles on various streets of Batumi and engage in brief battles with Turkish soldiers. Nevertheless, the Georgian army successfully completed the task and joined the garrison of the Kakhabri Fort.

The battles between the Georgian army and the Turkish soldiers, whose number by that time was already about 3,500 people,³³ took place in several other places. The Turks were unable to capture the baggage station, which had become the front line, because here the Georgian troops bravely faced the enemy. The soldiers' attempt to seize the building where the Revolutionary Committee was located also ended in vain. The newly formed Georgian cavalry unit turned the Ottomans back.³⁴

G. Mazniashvili divided the fortified area of Batumi into two combat zones. He subordinated the Kakhabri and Bartskhani forts to General Varden Tsulikidze, and the second part of the city with the Stepanovka and Anaria forts to General Data Artmeladze. On March 18, the Turkish army stopped and disarmed the first echelon of Soviet troops

³¹ Ibid. Akaki Vasadze, *Memories, Thoughts*, Tb., 1977, p. 103.

³² Ibid. Otari Janelidze, *March 18-20, 1921*. 2011, pp. 147.

³³ Ibid. Levan Toidze, 1991, pp. 137-138.

³⁴ Ibid. Otari Janelidze, *March 18-20, 1921*. 2011, pp. 148.

advancing towards Batumi. The Georgian cavalry seized this opportunity to storm the port of Bartskhani, destroying the entire Turkish garrison and capturing 218 soldiers.³⁵

The main battle took place on March 19, 1921. In the morning, the Turkish soldiers went on the offensive. The defense of the Kakhabri Fort was of particular importance. If the Georgian army were defeated here, there would be a real threat of losing Batumi. The command of the Georgian army properly assessed the importance of the Kakhabri Fort and strengthened its defense. The Ottomans launched an intensified attack on the Kakhabri front, where the battery of the 2nd artillery division was located under the command of Major Petre Karumidze. The artillerymen especially distinguished themselves in this battle.³⁶The Georgian army successfully repelled the enemy attacks and inflicted great damage on the Turkish occupants. This combat unit also included Petre's half-brothers, officers Lado and Davit Karumidze. ³⁷The Georgian artillerymen performed brilliantly, the Turks could not organize against them, but the losses were also significant. The officers were already responsible for firing from cannons. It became necessary to find soldiers with some experience in firing from cannons. By order of G. Mazniashvili, about 20 such volunteers were gathered from among the residents of Batumi, who were immediately sent to rescue P. Karumidze.

The enemy, defeated at Kakhaberi, retreated to the Stepanovka fortress, but the 4,000th regiment that had been ambushed there opened fire, after which the Ottoman unit was completely broken and scattered. ³⁸The Turks suffered heavy losses. They lost many soldiers and two prominent staff officers. The gorges of Kakhaberi were full of the corpses of killed soldiers G. Mazniashvili recalled.³⁹

The Ottoman soldiers, confused by the bravery of the Georgian artillerymen and the rest of the army, spread rumors that the Georgians were rescued by the French and English, that the foreign cruisers were shelling the forts, and that was why the Ottomans suffered

³⁵ Ibid. Giorgi Mazniashvili, 1927, p.

³⁶ Ibid. Otar Turmanidze, 2012, p. 34.

³⁷ Geronti Kikodze, Notes of a Contemporary, Tbilisi, 2003, p. 60.

³⁸ Newspaper. "Socialist-Federalist", 1921, May 13.

³⁹ Giorgi Mazniashvili, Memories, Batumi, 1990, p.207.

greatly.⁴⁰ The same information was confirmed by the words of the commander of the Russian army, Zolotov, who came out of the Mamison Pass and a destroyer warship sailing under the French flag appeared on the Black Sea, which approached them within machine-gun range and opened fire on their units.⁴¹

Of course, both pieces of information were outright lies and did not correspond to the truth. Moreover, Zolotov was clearly lying in his memoirs when he named Gobelia, not S. Kavtaradze, as the chairman of the Revolutionary Committee that as soon as the clashes ended, a delegation from Batumi, led by Comrade Gobelia, arrived to negotiate with them. Before that, they declared themselves the new government of the city, that was, the Military Revolutionary Council.⁴² The French squadron, by order of Admiral Dumenil, did indeed provide artillery support to the Democratic Republic of Georgia in repelling the Red Army units that invaded Abkhazia, bombarding their positions near Gagra, in the village of Pilenkovo (Gantiadi), in the Gudauta and New Athos regions,⁴³ but foreign ships did not participate in the battle for Batumi.

The entire burden of liberating Batumi and its region fell on the patriot general and officers, soldiers, volunteers and the local population. According to the chairman of the Batumi Revolutionary Committee, Sergo Kavtaradze, the units of the People's Guard, who were in the city with their commanders (Al. Dgebuadze, V. Jibladze), did not participate in the battle. They only demanded money for the demobilization of the Guard, which was not granted.⁴⁴ However, this information must be objective, because in his own memoirs he notes that General Mazniashvili was planning to flee to Turkey with his family before he was offered to gather and command an army to fight against the Turks.⁴⁵ This fact is not and could not be presented in other sources, because General G. Mazniashvili arrived in

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.206.

⁴¹ Davit Alaverdashvili, Ivane Zolotov's Memories of Crossing the Mamisoni Pass, Taking Kutaisi and Batumi, and Establishing Soviet Power in Adjara, in the book: The Occupation of Georgia, Bolshevik Interpretations (1921), Tbilisi, 2017, p.15.

⁴² Ibid., p. 16.

⁴³ Temur Chachanidze, French Squadron Operations Off the Coast of Georgia, Journal "Arsenal", 2006, No. 6, June, pp. 41-42.

⁴⁴ Sergo Kavtaradze, 1921, February, Journal "Mnatobi", 1957, No. 11, p. 149.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 147.

Batumi from Sajavakho, from fortified positions, and how could his family approach him?! Accordingly, the information about the non-participation of the Guard units in the battle cannot be objective either. I think that this information is due more to the downgrading of the role of the Guard than to the transmission of objective information. For the Bolsheviks, the People's Guard was the most dangerous force and a sworn enemy. This is confirmed by Pavel Sytin, a resident of Soviet Russian military intelligence, who, in his secret reports while developing plans for the occupation of Georgia, considers the People's Guard to be the main opponent and the most effective combat formation.⁴⁶

It was the People's Guard that suppressed a number of Bolshevik speeches in the country. Therefore, the information about the Guard conveyed by S. Kavtaradze must have been deliberately concealed. At a time when G. Mazniashvili was gathering troops by name and at that time not using the Guard units in the city is unthinkable; especially when the Guard units were relatively better supplied in every way and the generals themselves confirm this in their memoirs. If we add to all this the existence of those units that were supporting the democratic government abroad, in fact, there was a sufficient force in Batumi in the form of the People's Guard.

Several facts support the participation of the People's Guard in the liberation of Batumi; before boarding a ship for a tour abroad, Noe Zhordania instructed the Commander-in-Chief of the Military Forces, General Giorgi Kvinitadze, to issue an order to demobilize the Georgian army. However, in G. Kvinitadze's words, "this strange order" was "unrealistic and unfulfillable." The order was not transmitted to the general in Sajavakho, because the telegraph station was already in the hands of the Turks at that time, and it was found impossible to send the document by rail. It is noteworthy that the commander-in-chief did not issue an order to demobilize the Batumi garrison either, because it "did not correspond to the situation due to the aggression shown by the Turks." Moreover, Giorgi Kvinitadze

⁴⁶ David Khvadagiani, Foreword, in the book: *The Heavy Cross (Records of a People's Guard)*, Publishing House "Ziari", Tbilisi, 2022, p. 13.

also instructed the army units stationed at the forts to firmly defend their positions in the event of hostile action by the Turks.⁴⁷

CONCLUSION

After three days of brave fighting under the command of G. Mazniashvili, the Georgian army defeated the Kemalists on March 20, 1921. Not a single Soviet soldier took part in the battle, and this is confirmed by the representatives of the Bolshevik government themselves; in the words of the Chairman of the Georgian Revolutionary Committee Filipe Makharadze, that the Georgian army. decided to return Batumi to Soviet Georgia and did it with its own blood.⁴⁸ G. Lortkipanidze⁴⁹ also confirmed the same that the remnants of the Georgian army, having fought the enemy, turned him back and with their own blood and bones, they tied the steel flag of Georgia to the former Aziziye and now Patriots Square.⁵⁰ In the battle for Batumi, 84 Georgian soldiers died. The Ottomans lost about 150 officers and soldiers. Although Batumi remained part of Soviet Georgia,⁵¹ if it had not been for the development of events, in which the Georgian fighters under the leadership of General Mazniashvili played a major role, Batumi and Adjara in general would most likely have remained in Turkish hands forever.

It is regrettable that no scholarly work has yet provided a concrete fact about the participation of the People's Guard units in the battle for the liberation of Batumi in March 1921. This issue is the subject of future research; it is necessary to answer the questions: How many People's Guard units and personnel were in Batumi in March 1921? In what composition did the mentioned units participate in the liberation of Batumi? If not, then why? Despite my detailed study of the materials preserved in the Central Archives of Adjara, no source could be identified regarding the participation of the People's Guard in

⁴⁷ Giorgi Kvinitadze, *My Memories*, Vol. II, Tbilisi, 2014, pp. 89-90.

⁴⁸ Geronti Kikodze, *Tamedrov's Notes*, Tbilisi, 2003, p. 60.

⁴⁹ Deputy Chairman of the Government and Minister of Defense of the Democratic Republic of Georgia.

⁵⁰ Grigol Lortkipanidze, *Thoughts on Georgia*, Tbilisi, 1995, p. 210.

⁵¹ Lela Salaridze, *Batumi during the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921)*, გამომცემლობა „ფავორიტი“, თბილისი, 2023, გვ. 394.

the Battle of Batumi. However, I believe that the People's Guard units would definitely have been involved in the battle for the liberation of Batumi.

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