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ABSTRACT

of the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CAUCASIAN LEGIONS
ON THE SIDE OF HITLER'S GERMANY DURING
WORLD WAR II**

Speciality: General History

Field of Science: History

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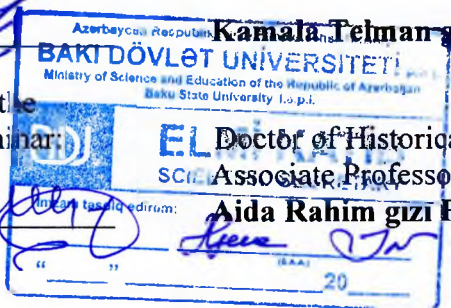
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GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORK

Relevance and degree of completion of the topic: World War II is one of the most catastrophic wars in human history, resulting in enormous human losses. Many aspects and issues of the war have been studied in both domestic and foreign historiography. However, like all historical periods, the history of World War II has left many “white spots.” Interest in these lesser-known aspects grew after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Among the understudied topics are the issues of collaborationism, prisoners of war, and the formation of national legions from Soviet POWs. Following the dissolution of the USSR, significant changes occurred in historiography and historical science. The topic of POWs had been previously restricted due to ideological reasons. With the emergence of sovereign states in the Caucasus, a new approach to their own history—particularly the World War II period—has developed. Since the 1990s, issues of collaborationism and POWs have been increasingly explored.

In the early years of World War II, many Soviet citizens were captured by German forces. The harsh conditions in concentration camps and the inhumane policies of the Nazis led to massive loss of life. The Caucasus, due to its complex political situation and strategic interest to European powers, became a battleground during the war. Baku's oil played a crucial role in the victory over fascism.

The relevance of this dissertation lies in the need for an objective study of the complex historical and political aspects of the war. Research in this period holds a significant place in world history and modern Caucasian studies. For the first time, the problem of forming national legions from the peoples of the Caucasus is examined in the context of regional history. This approach provides an “inside” perspective, avoiding evaluative judgments.

New historiographical works and archival materials offer the opportunity to study controversial issues from a fresh angle. It is essential to understand the factors that led individuals to cooperate with the Nazi regime and how these actions affected the historical memory of the Caucasus peoples. This research helps assess the justification for legion activity and study the postwar fate of legionnaires and their descendants.

Modern studies rely on previously unused sources, enabling an

objective exploration of lesser-known aspects of World War II. In May 2025, the 80th anniversary of the victory over fascism was commemorated. A key element of this commemoration was the recognition of war victims and a reassessment of the contributions made by all nations. It also underscores the fight against neo-Nazism and the defense of historical truth.

The study draws on archival sources revealing little-known facts. Some documents were found in the Archive of Political Documents of the Office of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. These include reports on desertion in the Red Army and the condition of rifle divisions. Other materials include reports, political surveys of Wehrmacht POWs, files from the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History, and documents from the collection “Soviet State Security Agencies During the Great Patriotic War”.

A wide range of scholarly works were used. During the Soviet era, studying these topics was prohibited, and POWs who collaborated with the Germans were labeled as “enemies of the people.” These subjects were not addressed in multi-volume historical works.

Contemporary historiography covers various aspects of legion participation. This research incorporates works from Azerbaijani, English, Georgian, Russian, and Turkish sources. Since gaining independence, Azerbaijani scholars have begun addressing the “white spots” in history, including the activities of the Azerbaijani Legion. The issue of collaborationism has been explored in numerous post-Soviet publications.

The topic of the legions gained scholarly attention in Azerbaijani historiography after the Soviet Union's collapse. Some researchers have explored collaboration with the Germans during the war. For example, the joint work by Baku State University professor Irada Huseynova and Azerbaijani Armed Forces Academy professor Nurulla Aliyev— “Azerbaijan and the Caucasus-Caspian Region During World War II (1939–1945)”¹—provides valuable insights into the role of Caucasian oil, the region’s geostrategic importance, and the formation of the Azerbaijani Legion.

¹ Гусейнова И. М. Азербайджан и Кавказско-Каспийский регион в период Второй мировой войны: 1939–1945 Баку: АФполигРАФ, 2019.- 230 с.

Historian Jamil Hasanli's book, "Soviet Policy on Expanding the Southern Borders: Stalin and the Azerbaijani Card in the Fight for Oil (1939–1945),"² centers on the influence of Azerbaijani oil on Stalin's policies. The study shows how Azerbaijan's oil resources became a strategic asset during wartime. This work is a vital contribution to both WWII history and Caucasian studies.

Hasanli's other work, "Azerbaijan in the Military, Political, and Diplomatic Context of World War II (1939–1945),"³ offers a comprehensive view of Azerbaijan's role during the war and includes objective analysis of legion formation and activity.

A notable Azerbaijani researcher of political emigration and Nazi collaboration during the war is diplomat Ramiz Abutalibov. His co-authored work with Georgian historian Giorgi Mamulia, "The Land of Fire in the Struggle for Freedom and Independence,"⁴ examines the political history of Azerbaijani emigration from 1920 to 1945. The final chapter covers the political aspects of German-Azerbaijani relations, the "Adloniada" conference, and the formation of the Azerbaijani National Committee and Communications Headquarters.

Another significant work is Khaladdin Ibrahimli's "History of Azerbaijani Emigration,"⁵ which offers a valuable account of the Azerbaijani Legion's formation and negotiations with German authorities. The author argues that blanket condemnation of the legionnaires is unjustified.

Mais Amrakhov's study "Armenian Fascism in the Service of Hitler's Fascism (1939–1945)"⁶ examines various forms of fascism and nationalist ideologies, including Armenian fascism, and their alignment

² Советская политика по расширению южных границ: Сталин и азербайджанская карта в борьбе за нефть (1939–1945) / Джамиль Гасанлы; [пер. с азерб. И. Н. Рзаева]. — Москва: Политическая энциклопедия, 2017. - 447 с. - (История сталинизма).

³ Həsənli C. İkinci Dünya Müharibəsi illərində Azərbaycan hərbi, siyasi və diplomatik münasibətlərdə (1939–1945), Bakı: "Yazıçı" nəşriyyatı - 2015, 540 səh.

⁴ Мамулия Г.; Абуталыбов Р. Страна огней. В борьбе за свободу и независимость. Политическая история азербайджанской эмиграции. 1920-1945 гг. Баку -"СВС", -2014.584 с.

⁵ İbrahimli X.C. Azərbaycan mühacirəti tarixi. Bakı; -ADPU – 2012. səh. 358

⁶ Əmrahov, M. Erməni faşizmi Hitler faşizminin xidmətində (1939-1945). Bakı: "Turxan" NPB, 2020-408 səh.

with the Nazis. The work provides a detailed analysis of the Armenian Legion's formation and ideological roots in "Tsakhronism."

Historian Nasiman Yagublu's "Azerbaijani Legionnaires"⁷ investigates the historical background and reasons for forming the Azerbaijani Legion, focusing on Sovietization, Stalinist repression, Nazi plans for the Caucasus, and legion formation. His research spans both wartime and postwar periods.

In "Abdurrahman Fatalibeyli Dudanginsky,"⁸ Yagublu honors the centenary of a notable legionnaire, providing a comprehensive biography, including the 1943 Azerbaijani Congress, postwar activities, and Radio Liberty involvement.

To understand the reasons for Caucasian POW collaboration, several other works were consulted. Notably, German historian Jörg Baberowski's "There Is an Enemy Everywhere: Stalinism in the Caucasus"⁹ examines the Great Terror, a factor influencing collaboration.

A key focus of this study is Germany's plans for the Caucasus, especially Nazi objectives to seize oil. Soviet Marshal A.A. Grechko's "The Battle for the Caucasus"¹⁰ relies heavily on documentary material and examines Germany's strategic goals in the region.

Another important source is B.N. Kovalev's "Collaborationism in Russia, 1941–1945: Types and Forms,"¹¹ which explores the origins and nature of wartime collaboration.

Military historian M.I. Semiryaga's work "Collaborationism: Nature, Typology, and Manifestations During World War II"¹² provides a foundational analysis of the phenomenon's roots, forms, and expressions.

⁷ Yagublu N. Azərbaycan legionərləri. Bakı: "Çıraq", 2005, 336 səh.

⁸ Yagublu, N. Əbdürrəhman Fətəlibəyli-Düdənginski Bakı: "Abşeron Nəşri", 2009 262 səh.

⁹ Баберовский Й. Враг есть везде. Сталинизм на Кавказе. Москва: Российская политическая энциклопедия (РОССПЭН), 2010, 855 с.

¹⁰ Гречко А. А. Битва за Кавказ. — Москва: Военное издательство, 1967, 424 с

¹¹ Ковалев Б. Н. Коллаборационизм в России в 1941–1945 гг.: типы и формы. — Великий Новгород: НовГУ имени Ярослава Мудрого, 2009, 370 с.

¹² Семиряга М.И. Коллаборационизм. Природа, типология и проявления в годы Второй мировой войны. Москва.: Российская политическая энциклопедия (РОССПЭН), -2000.- 863 с.

The problem of cooperation between Soviet prisoners of war and the Germans, as well as the formation of legions, has not been comprehensively studied in modern historiography within the context of the Caucasus region.

The first scholarly work that addressed the issue of the “Eastern Legions” was the study by S.I. Drobiazko and A.V. Karashchuk, “World War II 1939–1945: Eastern Legions and Cossack Units in the Wehrmacht.”¹³ This research provides statistical data on the formed legions, various interesting facts about their composition and military activities, and includes illustrations depicting uniforms and insignia of the different legions.

Another notable study is by O.V. Romanko, “Muslim Legions in World War II.”¹⁴ In his work, the author explores various religious, political, and ideological factors that influenced the formation and actions of Muslim legions that served the Third Reich.

The Georgian historian G. Mamulia, in his work “The Georgian Legion of the Wehrmacht,”¹⁵ examines the historical prerequisites for the formation of the legion and the origins of German-Georgian cooperation. The study presents a detailed analysis of the legion’s composition, the battalions formed, and their military operations.

In the work of Armenian historian E. Abramyan, “Caucasians in the Abwehr,”¹⁶ the issue of Armenian collaboration with the Germans is explored. The study analyzes how Armenian émigré groups established cooperation with Nazi Germany.

A significant contribution to the study of the legions is S. Chuev’s work “The Cursed Soldiers.”¹⁷ In the chapter “Caucasian Eagles in the Service of the Reich,” the author examines the activities of battalions within the national legions.

¹³ Дробязко С. И., Карашчук А. В. Вторая мировая война 1939–1945. Восточные легионы и казачьи части в вермахте. Москва: АСТ- 48 с.

¹⁴ Романько О. В. Мусульманские легионы во Второй мировой войне. — Москва: АСТ; Транзиткнига, -2004. 312 с.

¹⁵ Мамулия Г. Грузинский легион вермахта. — Москва: Вече 2011. 416 с.

¹⁶ Абрамян Э. А. Кавказцы в Абвере. – Москва: Издатель Быстров, 2006. -352 с. - (На стороне Третьего рейха).

¹⁷ Чуев С. Проклятые солдаты. Предатели на стороне III рейха. Москва, 2004. 576 с.

The issue has also become a topic of foreign historiography.

German military historian Joachim Hoffmann, in his work “The Eastern Legions 1941–1943: Turco-Tatars, Caucasians, and Volga Finns in the German Army,”¹⁸ analyzes the formation process, deployment areas, and activities of these legions.

Austrian scholar Erich Feigl, in “On the Silk Road: The Land of Fire—The History of Azerbaijan,”¹⁹ presents a comprehensive study of Azerbaijan’s history and culture, with particular attention to its strategic importance and the formation of the Azerbaijani Legion.

American historian Alexander Dallin, in his work “German Rule in Russia, 1941–1945: A Study of Occupation Policies,”²⁰ examines Nazi Germany’s occupation policies and the use of defectors for military and political purposes.

British historian Chris Bishop, in “Foreign Volunteers in the Waffen-SS 1940–1945,”²¹ investigates the military-political strategies of Nazi leadership, including the use of Soviet volunteers in combat. The study explores not only the Eastern Legions but also all foreign legions formed on the side of Nazi Germany.

Turkish historian Mehmet Perinçek researched the issue of Nazi-Dashnak collaboration, offering a unique analysis of the ideological similarities between the Dashnaks and the fascists, and the anti-Turkish and anti-Azerbaijani orientation of their cooperation.²²

An important study highlighting the conditions of POWs in German camps and violations of the Geneva Convention is “Captivity: Soviet Prisoners of War in Germany, 1941–1945”²³ by Israeli-Soviet

¹⁸ Hoffman J. Die Ostlegionen 1941-1943: Turkotataren, Kaukasier u. Wolgafinnen im dt. Heer 1976. 197 p.

¹⁹ Fəyql E. “İpək yolu üzərində Odlar yurdu - Azərbaycan tarixi” B.2/ S’009 Milli Təhlükəsizlik Nazirliyinin, AMEA-nın Tarix İnstitutunun və AzərTAc-ın birgə layihəsi səh. 182.

²⁰ Dallin A. German Rule in Russia, 1941–1945: A Study of Occupation Policies. London: Macmillan and Company; New York: St. Martin's Press. 1957. 682 p.

²¹ Бишоп К. Иностранцы добровольцы в войсках СС. Москва: "Эксмо" 2006, 192 с.

²² Perinçek M. İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Nazi-Taşnak İşbirliği Tesam Akademi Dergisi - Turkish Journal of TESAM Academy Ocak - January 2015. 2 (1). 127–156

²³ Шнеер А. И. Плен: совет. военнопленные в Германии, 1941–1945. Москва: Мосты культуры; Иерусалим: Гешарим, 2005, 619 с.

historian A.I. Shneer. He analyzes the reasons Soviet POWs voluntarily surrendered, the inhumane conditions in Nazi camps, and the suffering they endured.

Historian Christian Streit, in “They Are Not Comrades: The Wehrmacht and Soviet Prisoners of War 1941–1945,”²⁴ provides a deep statistical and analytical study of the Soviet POW problem during WWII, including the number of prisoners held by the Germans.

The analysis of historiography shows that the activities of the Caucasian legions have been generally examined within the broader context of the “Eastern Legions,” without a separate, comprehensive study focused specifically on the Caucasus region. This indicates a gap in both military history and Caucasian studies.

Object and subject of the research: The object of the research is the Caucasian legions formed during World War II. The subject of the research is the activities of the Caucasian legions on the side of Nazi Germany during World War II.

The purpose and tasks of the research: The main goal of the research is to study the historical background and reasons for the formation of national legions during World War II, as well as to analyze and assess the activities of these legions composed of the peoples of the Caucasus.

- To achieve this goal, the following tasks were set:
- To examine the historical background and causes for the formation of the Caucasian legions;
- To analyze the military and political goals pursued by the Germans in creating national legions and other military units;
- To investigate Nazi policy towards prisoners of war;
- To study the main stages of the formation of national legions;
- To analyze the specific activities of each legion.

Research methods: This dissertation employs historical-analytical and historical-comparative methods, which allow for a deep examination of the stages of formation of the Caucasian legions and for cross-referencing different sources. A critical approach and various

²⁴ Штрайт К. «Они нам не товарищи...» Вермахт и советские военнопленные в 1941–1945 гг. — Москва Русское историческое общество; Русская панорама, 2009. 480 с.

methods of analyzing scholarly works—published in Azerbaijani, English, Russian, Georgian, and Turkish—were used. In addition, primary sources were consulted, enabling relevant scientific conclusions. The methodology ensured objectivity in the research, adhering to the principle of historicism

Main points presented to the defense of the dissertation:

Some representatives of the peoples of the Caucasus found themselves in German captivity in the first months of World War II. While most of prisoners of war perished, some were forced to cooperate with the Germans.

- On the eve of the war, political émigré activity in Europe intensified.
- The policy of collectivization and repression became a severe trial for the peoples of the Caucasus region, resulting in widespread resentment toward the Bolsheviks.
- On the eve of and during the war, the Caucasus remained in the focus of European powers' interests and served as a strategic platform for Nazi Germany's eastward expansion.
- Germany's military failures led to the compelled use of Soviet prisoners of war from the Caucasus for military-political purposes.
- The main objective of forming legions was driven by the political motivations of both sides.
- Representatives of Azerbaijani, Georgian, and North Caucasian émigré communities sought to save prisoners of war from inhumane captivity and death.
- The Armenian émigré community, through its cooperation with the Germans and promotion of the creation of legions, introduced fascist and terrorist ideologies and sought a solution to the "Armenian Issue."

Scientific novelty of the research: This research topic has been subjected to comprehensive academic analysis for the first time within the context of contemporary Caucasus studies. Given the broad relevance of the subject, it is possible to formulate several key theses:

- for the first time, a scholarly investigation has been undertaken into the process of formation and activities of the legions during the Second World War in the context of the Caucasus region;
- for the first time, the activities of these military units are studied

- under the collective designation "Caucasian Legions";
- for the first time, an analysis has been conducted of the primary objectives and motivations behind the collaboration of Soviet prisoners of war from the Caucasus region;
 - a comprehensive examination of the formation and operational history of the Caucasian Legions during the war has been carried out for the first time;
 - for the first time, the issues of the legions' formation and activities are considered outside the ideological framework that dominated both Soviet and, to some extent, foreign historiography;
 - the historical and political preconditions that underpinned collaboration with Nazi Germany are analyzed for the first time;
 - the study explores the key political motives behind the activities of the Azerbaijani Legion, which was formed with the aim of rescuing Azerbaijanis from harsh German captivity, restoring national independence, and escaping communist oppression;
 - the research highlights the specific features of the formation and operations of the Georgian and North Caucasian legions;
 - for the first time, the political ambitions of Armenian émigré representatives, their motives for collaboration with the Germans, and their plans to annex the territory of Karabakh are subject to academic analysis;
 - an analytical study is conducted for the first time on the historical and political processes that gave rise to neo-fascist ideas in contemporary Armenia.

Theoretical and practical significance of the research: The practical significance of the work lies in the study of an important and timely topic concerning World War II and Caucasus studies. This is the first comprehensive research where the legions are examined specifically as "Caucasian" rather than "Eastern." The results can be used in teaching contemporary history of the Caucasus and World War II, in special academic courses, scholarly programs, and future studies on this subject.

Approbation and application of the research: The main findings of the research have been presented in 7 scholarly articles published in academic journals of foreign countries and the Republic,

recommended by the Supreme Attestation Commission under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as in 9 conference papers presented at scientific conferences held in the Republic and abroad.

The name of the organization where the dissertation work was carried out: The dissertation was carried out at the Department of History of the Peoples of the Caucasus, Baku State University. It was discussed at a department meeting held on April 11, 2025, with the participation of invited experts from the Institute of History and Ethnology of ANAS and was recommended for public defense.

The total volume of the dissertation. The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, seven sections, a conclusion, a bibliography, and appendices. The total number of pages is 179. The total number of characters in the dissertation (except for the list of used sources) is 252805 characters. Title page — 361, content — 699, introduction — 23574, first chapter — 47269, second chapter — 124950, third chapter — 46604, conclusion — 9308 characters.

MAIN CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION

The “**Introduction**” outlines the relevance of the topic, formulates the objectives and tasks of the research, presents key propositions, and substantiates the scientific novelty and practical significance of the obtained results.

Chapter One, titled “**The Outbreak of World War II: Historical Preconditions and Causes for the Formation of the Caucasian Legions,**” explores the historical and political foundations for the formation of Caucasian legions.

The first subchapter, is titled “**The Caucasus Region in the Plans of Nazi Germany during World War II.**” The 20th century was a difficult period for the peoples of the Caucasus. One of the most tragic events of this time was World War II, in which the peoples of the Caucasus took an active part. One of the least studied topics remains the formation and activities of the Caucasian legions on the side of Nazi Germany.

After a brief period of independence in the late 1910s, the

establishment of Soviet rule in the Caucasus marked the beginning of repression and hardship. The collectivization policy and the "Great Terror"²⁵ of 1937 dealt a serious blow to the peoples of the Caucasus and its intelligentsia. In response, a political émigré community formed abroad, opposed to Bolshevism and seeking independence, some of whom later collaborated with Nazi Germany.

With the outbreak of the war in 1941, the Caucasus became the focus of both warring sides. Strategically important oil-producing regions made the area a battleground. Many Caucasians were taken prisoner and faced inhumane conditions. At home, they were considered "enemies of the people." These individuals were caught between two hostile ideologies, neither of which aligned with their aspirations for independence.

The second subchapter, **“Main Goals and Stages of the Formation of the Caucasian Legions during World War II,”** examines the stages of formation of these units.

Prisoners of war captured by the Germans were faced with a choice between life and death. They can be conditionally divided into three groups:

- The first – those who perished in concentration camps due to hunger and disease.
- The second – those who, hoping for the independence of the Caucasus, agreed to cooperate with Germany.
- The third – those who initially cooperated but later joined the anti-fascist resistance.

After the war, many of them were repressed as “enemies of the people” and faced isolation in Soviet society.

Germany actively used various nationalities, including Caucasians, to form volunteer units. The political goal was to demonstrate international support, and the military goal was to replenish manpower and solve rear-area tasks. Legions were employed for construction, security, and combat operations.

The formation of the Caucasian legions occurred in three stages: first, volunteers were recruited from European countries (1940); then

²⁵ Баберовски Й. Враг есть везде: Сталинизм на Кавказе Москва: Российская политическая энциклопедия (РОССПЭН) 2010. 855 с.

from the Balkans (1941); and finally, from among Soviet POWs, including Caucasians. Structures such as “Hiwis,” auxiliary police units, and others were created to partially compensate for the army’s manpower shortage.²⁶

Despite Nazi racial doctrines, the Caucasus was viewed as a vital region. People joined the legions not only for ideological reasons but also for survival.

Among the Caucasian units were the Turkestan, North Caucasian, Armenian, Georgian, and Azerbaijani legions. However, most of them did not play a significant role at the front and became a tragic page in the history of the war.²⁷

Thus, the formation of the Caucasian legions was driven both by political calculations and human tragedy, ultimately failing to fulfill the hopes of either the German side or the legionnaires themselves.

Chapter Two, titled “**The Formation and Activities of the South Caucasian Legions,**” examines the process of forming legions from the peoples of the South Caucasus and their activities.

The first subchapter, is “**The Azerbaijani Legion during World War II.**” The Azerbaijani Legion was formed during World War II when Nazi Germany created legions from Soviet POWs and representatives of different ethnic groups. The goal was to use these people in the fight against the USSR and to attract Muslim and Turkic peoples to the side of the Third Reich.

The Azerbaijani Legion consisted mainly of prisoners from the Azerbaijani SSR, as well as Tuva and Turkmenistan. It was part of the so-called Eastern Legions, created from the peoples of the former USSR. Initially, Azerbaijanis served in the Turkestan regiment, which was later reorganized into a legion with separate national battalions.

In 1941, the Caucasian-Muslim Legion was created, which also included Azerbaijanis. The Germans aimed to mobilize Turkic-speaking and Muslim peoples of the Caucasus and Central Asia. Azerbaijani battalions, such as the 804th, took part in battles on the Eastern Front

²⁶ Романько О.В. Мусульманские легионы во Второй мировой войне. — Москва: АСТ- Транзиткнига, 2004. 312 с.

²⁷ Дробязко С. И., Карашук А. В. Вторая мировая война 1939–1945. Восточные легионы и казачьи части в вермахте. Москва: 2000, 48 с.

under the command of Colonel A. Fatalibeyli.²⁸

Meanwhile, active propaganda was conducted to attract Azerbaijanis. In 1941, the Azerbaijani National Committee was established, composed of independence supporters and collaborators with Germany. The committee hoped for the recognition of Azerbaijani independence, but Germany used it solely for propaganda purposes, and its activities ceased in 1943.

Some battalions were deployed to Poland and France, where they performed combat and guard duties. By the end of the war, the size of the Azerbaijani Legion had decreased significantly. Despite hopes for improved status, many legionnaires were repressed and accused of Nazi collaboration after the war.

Thus, the Azerbaijani Legion became part of the complex and contradictory history of World War II.

The second subchapter of **Chapter Two is titled “Georgian Formations of the Wehrmacht.”** The Georgian Legion was formed in 1941 in Berlin and Warsaw with the participation of the Georgian National Committee. The Germans created separate legions for the peoples of the Caucasus, applying a national approach.

The legion consisted of four battalions commanded by both Georgians and Germans. Training took place in Warsaw and its surroundings, with legionnaires wearing German uniforms and using Soviet weapons. Active recruitment began in 1942, including promises of liberation for the Caucasus.

Combat operations revealed poor training and a heterogeneous composition. In 1942–1943, only the 795th and 796th battalions under the command of Shalva Maglakelidze distinguished themselves. Other battalions demonstrated low effectiveness.²⁹

The legion did not achieve its main goal—restoring Georgian independence. Many legionnaires were killed, captured, or reassigned to other units. After repatriation, some ended up in filtration camps.

²⁸ Yaqublu N. Əbdürrəhmən Fətəlibəyli-Düdənginski Bakı, Abşeron Nəşr. 2009, 262 s.

²⁹ Мамулия Г. Грузинский легион в борьбе за свободу и независимость Грузии в годы Второй мировой войны. Второе дополненное и переработанное издание. Тбилиси: 2007. стр. 324

The legion was diverse not only ethnically but ideologically: some sought to fight Soviet power, while others were simply trying to survive captivity. Germany did not guarantee Georgian independence, and only the 795th battalion, led by Maglakelidze—a staunch advocate for independence—proved to be combat-effective³⁰.

Interrogations of defectors confirm the presence of internal contradictions. Many joined the legion involuntarily through émigré connections, trying to escape the conditions of the concentration camps.

The third subchapter, titled **“The Armenian Legion and Its Activities”**, analyzes the features of the formation and operational functions of the Armenian Legion. The leadership of the Third Reich decided to form military units from among Soviet prisoners of war, including Armenians. At that time, the Armenian émigré community was already cooperating with the Nazis, and the German Eastern Ministry decided to establish the Armenian National Committee. The Dashnaktsutyun Party actively began collaborating with the Third Reich.³¹

Among the Armenian émigrés based in Berlin were notable figures such as Alexander Khatsov, who had held high-ranking positions before the Sovietization of Armenia, and Drastamat Kanayan, also known as General Dro. He played a key role in creating the Armenian Legion and was one of the leaders of the Dashnaktsutyun Party. After emigrating to Romania and establishing contact with German authorities, he organized the recruitment of Armenian POWs into the legion. Kanayan was also known for his harsh attitude toward Azerbaijanis, which left a lasting stain on his historical reputation.

Nazi Germany used Armenians not only to oppose the Soviet Union but also to pursue its own geopolitical goals in the region. Historian Abramyan notes that the “Armenian question” became a tool in the implementation of the Third Reich’s expansionist policy. Germany promised the Armenians the territories of Karabakh,

³⁰ Справка VII отдела Политуправления Закавказского фронта «О грузинском легионе “Георгиен легион” и других национальных формированиях германской армии». [Ранее 15 февраля 1943 г.] РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 125. Д. 165. Л. 14 -35. Копия. Машинопись.

³¹ Абрамян. Э. А. Кавказцы в Абвере. - Москва «Издатель Быстров», 2006. - 352 с.

Nakhchivan, and Akhalkalaki in exchange for their assistance in the anti-Soviet struggle, as well as in the campaign against Turkey. The recruitment of Armenian POWs into German forces became a key component in the creation of the Armenian Legion, whose numbers steadily grew. Initially, the legion consisted of about 1,000 men, and by 1942, they were actively deployed to the front.

One of the most significant participants in the formation of the Armenian Legion was Garegin Harutyunyan, better known by his pseudonym Nzhdeh. In his fight for Armenian independence, he actively cooperated with the German authorities and helped organize anti-Soviet activities. Nzhdeh was one of the main individuals who helped German forces recruit Armenian POWs, promising the creation of an independent Armenia in the event of a German victory.

The collaboration between the Armenian émigrés and the Third Reich also included the creation of intelligence and sabotage groups, among which was the Armenian reconnaissance team “Dromedar.” In 1942, this unit was attached to Abwehrgruppe-101, where it worked to recruit POWs for the formation of Armenian battalions and legions. “Dromedar” also carried out active intelligence operations in German-occupied territories and worked with the Armenian diaspora, forming anti-Soviet groups and emphasizing the idea of an independent Armenian state.³²

Special mention should be made of the cooperation with German intelligence services. As the situation developed, Armenians began to take an increasingly active part in the creation of national Armenian battalions, which was part of a larger plan to establish a “Greater Independent Armenia.” These legions were later deployed to the front to support German troops against the Soviet army.

A pivotal event in the history of this collaboration was the arrest of Nzhdeh in 1944 by Soviet military intelligence. His activities with German intelligence, his recruitment of volunteers for the Armenian

³² Из ориентировки Второго управления НКГБ СССР об антисоветской деятельности армянской националистической эмиграции и о созданной германской разведкой зондеркоманде «Дромедар». 5 июня 1943 г. (1). Органы государственной безопасности СССР в Великой Отечественной войне: Сб. док. Т. 4. Кн. 1. Секреты операции «Цитадель». 1 января -30 июня 1943 г. — Москва: Русь, 2008. (267) с. 570.

legions, and his attempts to organize sabotage groups against the USSR led to his imprisonment. In his interrogations, Nzhdeh attempted to curry favor with the Soviet authorities and conceal his true intentions, despite his active cooperation with the Nazi regime.³³

Chapter three of the dissertation, “The Activities of the North Caucasian Legion of the Wehrmacht,” analyzes the formation and operations of the North Caucasian Legion.

In the first subchapter, titled “Formation and Activities of the North Caucasian Legion,” it is noted that Operation Barbarossa led to contradictions between Nazi racial theories and the realities of the Eastern Front. In 1941, German commanders began using local populations, including former Soviet prisoners of war, to replenish their units. Soon, the so-called “Eastern Troops” (Osttruppen) were formed, including battalions of Kazakhs, Tatars, Chechens, and others. Starting in 1941, national legions were formed from POWs and volunteers from the Caucasus and Central Asia, including the Caucasus-Mohammedan Legion, which later became the Azerbaijani Legion.

Local Chechens and Ingush actively avoided service in the Red Army, and by the fall of 1942, many had begun cooperating with the Germans, creating organizations such as the “Caucasian Eagles.” Within the ranks of the Wehrmacht, the North Caucasian Legion was formed, as well as a Chechen-Ingush Infantry Regiment. Despite the Soviet Union’s efforts to suppress collaboration, some legionnaires later joined partisan movements.³⁴

The North Caucasian legions, including the 835th, 836th, and other battalions, were used for security, defense, and combat missions in Western Europe and along the Atlantic Wall. As the number of POWs grew, the German command expanded these units. These legions were often relocated—to Poland, Greece, and Italy.

Researching the activities of the North Caucasian Legion presents challenges due to a lack of archival materials and contradictory interpretations in both Soviet and post-Soviet historiography. While

³³ Гарегин Нжде и Гитлер. Старые и новые документы. Сб. / Сост. М. А. Колеров. Москва: «Модест Колеров», 2023. 130 с.

³⁴ Чуев С. Проклятые солдаты. Предатели на стороне III рейха. Москва, 2004. 576 с.

the activities of these legionnaires were officially condemned as acts of treason, modern historiography emphasizes that their decisions were often shaped by the political context and coercion. Ultimately, the fate of these legionnaires became intertwined with the fate of the peoples of the Caucasus, many of whom were subjected to mass deportations in 1943–1944 under accusations of collaborationism.

In the second subchapter of Chapter Three, entitled **“The Formation and Activities of the Special-Purpose Battalion “Bergmann”**”, the formation process and operational activities of the battalion are analyzed. During World War II, the Abwehr—Germany’s military intelligence service—played an important role. It was engaged in intelligence gathering and sabotage, particularly against the USSR after the German invasion in 1941. The Abwehr sought to establish connections with anti-Soviet forces, émigrés, and nationalist groups. In 1941, special units were created for propaganda purposes and to incite anti-Soviet uprisings in the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as for working with Soviet prisoners of war.

One such unit was the Bergmann Battalion, established in October 1941. It was composed of Georgians, Caucasians, Azerbaijanis, and Germans. Its tasks included reconnaissance, sabotage, and propaganda. In 1942, the battalion was deployed to the Caucasus to fight against partisans and Soviet troops.

Following a series of reorganizations, Bergmann was transformed into a regiment and participated in battles in the Caucasus, Crimea, the Balkans, and Eastern Europe. Some legionnaires took part in suppressing the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. In 1945, the regiment was stationed in Croatia and continued fighting until Germany’s surrender. After the war, most of its soldiers were either captured or handed over to Soviet counterintelligence.³⁵

Like other ethnic groups, the peoples of the Caucasus endured great hardships during the war. The activities of the Caucasian legions on the side of Nazi Germany constitute an important and complex subject, reflecting both the military and cultural-historical dimensions of

³⁵ Романько О. В. Соединение специального назначения «Бергманн». К истории германских спецслужб на территории Украины и Крыма в 1941–1944 годах // Military Крым. – 2007. – №7. – С. 43–45.

the era. The reasons behind the formation of the legions are linked to national, ethnic, and political tensions in the Caucasus, which were exploited by the Germans to create these units.

Issues related to the war—especially the so-called "blank spots" in history—must be studied reliably and objectively. The investigation of such a controversial topic remains highly relevant in modern Caucasus studies. The prospects for further research into the activities of the Caucasian legions on the side of Nazi Germany depend on the openness of archives, the discovery and publication of sources, and ongoing fieldwork.

The “Conclusion” presents the main theses derived from the research:

- The dissertation attempts to free the analysis from the ideological views of the past.
- The historical reasons for the formation of the legions are rooted in the difficult conditions of the Caucasian peoples in the pre-war period: repression, collectivization, and dissatisfaction with Soviet policies gave rise to anti-Soviet sentiment, which was exploited by Nazi Germany.
- The composition and motivation of the legionnaires were diverse. Some sought the liberation of their nations; others simply aimed to survive captivity. Only a small portion adhered to fascist ideology—most notably among them, Armenians.
- The role of the Caucasian émigré communities, particularly the Armenians, is analyzed within the context of anti-Soviet propaganda and collaboration with the Nazis. The dissertation exposes attempt to glorify fascist collaborators in modern Armenia.
- The outcomes of the legions’ activities show that the majority of participants were victims of historical circumstances. After the war, they faced repression and exclusion from public life, deepening the tragedy of their situation.
- The historical and humanitarian lesson of World War II lies in the necessity to prevent conflicts, preserve peace, and uphold human rights—especially important in the context of current ethno-political tensions in the Caucasus.
- The scientific significance of the dissertation lies in its attempt to

objectively analyze the “blank spots” of history and its appeal for historical integrity. The research provides a foundation for further studies on the legions’ activities, contingent upon expanded archival access.

- Future prospects lie in the continued reassessment of controversial World War II topics through the lens of human fate, which is essential from both a historical and philosophical-humanitarian perspective.

The main content of the dissertation is reflected in the following scientific articles and theses of the author:

1. “Изучение проблемы деятельности кавказских легионов на стороне Третьего Рейха в современной историографии // – Bakı: “Geostrategiya” jurnalı., –2022. –s.80-84.
2. Основные этапы деятельности Азербайджанского легиона в годы Второй мировой войны // – Bakı: Bakı Universitetinin Xəbərləri jurnalının Humanitar elmlər seriyası, –2023. №1, –s. 171–180.
3. Интересы великих держав на Кавказе в период Второй мировой войны// –Gəncə: AMEA Gəncə bölməsi, Xəbərlər məcmuəsi jurnalı İctimai və humanitar elmlər seriyası, –2023. №5(9), –s. 97–101.
4. Азербайджанский легионер Абдурахман Фаталибейли и его деятельность в годы Второй мировой войны//–Bakı: Tarix və onun problemləri, –2024. №1–s.122-126.
5. “К вопросу о формировании Грузинского легиона в годы Второй мировой войны//Qafqazşünaslıq elmi-nəzəri jurnal, – Bakı: AMEA Qafqazşünaslıq İnstitutu, –2024. –s. 88-97
6. Peoples of the Caucasus During the Second World War: from Captivity of War to Legions// –Ukraine: Scientific and theoretical almanac “Qrani”., –2024. №3 –p. 88-93. ERİH PLUS. (Ukrayna)
7. “Historical Background and Reasons for the Formation of the Caucasian Legions During the Second World War//–Ukraine: Scientific and theoretical almanac “Qrani”, – 2024. №4 –p. 42-46. ERİH PLUS. (Ukrayna)
8. Исторические предпосылки создания кавказских легионов в период Второй мировой войны// –Bakı: Qafqazşünasların III beynəlxalq forumu. –2022, №2, –с. 252-254.

9. Formation of the Eastern Legions During World War II // Azərbaycan elm mərkəzi. "Qədim diyar". I Respublika Elmi Konfransı, –Bakı, –2022. –с. 151–153.
10. İkinci Dünya müharibəsi dövründə Azərbaycan legionunun formalaşması məsləsinə dair" // –Bakı: "NASCO-2022" Doktorantların və gənc tədqiqatçıların XXV respublika elmi konfransının materialları, –2023. s. 90–93.
11. Кавказские легионы между двумя идеологиями// –Bakı: "Gənc tədqiqatçıların VIII beynəlxalq elmi konfransı, –2023. s. 1621–1624.
12. Геополитическая битва европейских держав за Кавказ в период Второй мировой войны// –Moskva: Московский Государственный Университет. Материалы Международного молодежного научного форума «ЛОМОНОСОВ 2023»–2023. с.1-3 (Rusiya)
13. Activities and outcomes of the Adloniad conference during the Second World War// - "NASCO-2023" Doktorantların və gənc tədqiqatçıların XXVI respublika elmi konfransının materialları, - 2024. -p.-293-296
14. Research of the problem of collaboration during the Second War in Azerbaijan historiography // « Azərbaycan elm mərkəzi. "Qədim diyar". V Beynəlxalq Humanitar və İctimai Elmlər Konfransı» -Bakı.2024. –s.44-46.
15. Деятельность Азербайджанской политической эмиграции в годы Второй мировой войны в рамках национального съезда азербайджанцев 1943 года // «Gənc tədqiqatçıların VIII beynəlxalq elmi konfransı". ВМУ, –Bakı: 2024, –с. 1682 1686
16. К вопросу о формировании кавказских легионов в годы Второй мировой войны // –Moskva: Московский Государственный Университет. Материалы Международного молодежного научного форума «ЛОМОНОСОВ 2024»–2024. с.1-3 (Rusiya)
17. Деятельность южнокавказских легионов в оценке азербайджанских и зарубежных историков «Сənubi Qafqaz tədqiqatları: Mövcud vəziyyət, problemlər və perspektivlər» respublika elmi konfransı, – Bakı: АМЕА Qafqazşünaslıq İnstitutu, –2024, –s. 58-60

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