



120 AZERBAIJANI SOLDIERS KILLED IN ITALY IN WWII

his year marks the 75th anniversary of the victory over fascism. Explaining the participation of the Azerbaijani people in the war is of great scientific, theoretical, political and practical significance. Referring to the history of World War II is especially relevant because the international situation has become even more complicated now.

Although Azerbaijan did not become a battlefield

during World War II, it was active in the war from the beginning to the end. All the material and spiritual resources of Azerbaijan and its human forces were involved in the war against fascism. In 1941-1945, about 640,000 people were drafted into the Soviet army in Azerbaijan and sent to the front line. They also participated in the war against fascism shoulder to shoulder with representatives of other peoples living in the former Soviet Union. (1)



Abschrift

H.P. Internierung

N 45554

Einvernahme

K-P- 21.8.1945.

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Ism'a jelow Hasan, geb. 10.3.1912 in Baku, Lehrer, Lt., z.Zt. im Lager Därstetten.

1. Lebenslauf: In Baku Volksschule und Lehrerseminar durchlaufen. 1936 Diplomabschluss, anschliessend 3 Jahre Lehrertätigkeit in Baku.

2. Militärische Laufbahn: Im Mürz 1940 wurde ich als Lt. einberufen und leistete in Dniepropetrowsk während 9 Monaten Dienst. Im Januar 1941 wurde ich nach der Krim versetzt. Am 28. Mai 1942 wurde ich dort von den Deutschen gefangen genommen. Anschliessen blieb ich als K.G. in einem Lager der Krim, um am 28. November 1942 per Schiff nach Rumänien verbracht zu werden. Von dort aus wurde ich kurz darauf in ein Lager in Wien transferiert. Im Januar 1943 kam ich nach Hammerstein bei Stuttgaund von da aus 2 Monate später nach Stettin. Von da aus wurden wir nach Bergen (Norwegen) transportiert, we wir im Befestigungs-Strassen- und Brückenbau eingesetzt wurden. Während unseres Aufenthaltes wurden wir 4 Mal durch das Aserbeidschaner-Komitee besücht, die uns dazu bewegen wollt en, nach Deutschland arbeiten zu kommen. Wir lehnten jedoch ab. Im September 1944 wurde ich zwangsweise nach Dänemark und zwei Morate später ins Sammellager der Baukasier in Wien eingeliefert. Im Februar 1945 wurde ich nach der Eschechoslovakei in die Nähe Pressburgs transportiert, wo ich in ein Arbeitsbat. eingereiht wurde. Von dort aus kamen wir kurz darauf nach Italien, desertierten dort zu den Partienen und überschritten dann schliesslich am 19.4.1945 bei Campocologne die Schweizergrenze.

Frage: Haben Sie je eine deutsche Uniform getragen?

Erst in Italien wurde ich in eine Wehrmachtsuniform gesteckt.

Frage: Haben Sie für die Deutschen gekämpft?

Nein

Frage: Warum wollen Sie nicht mehr nach Russland zurück?

Mein Vater wurde im Jahre 1934 nach Sibirien verbannt und ist dort gestorben. Er war Besitzer von 12 hq Lend. Einer meiner Onkel, ein Pfarrer, hatte sich nach der Türkei geflüchtet und der andere nach Persien, sodass die im Lande verbliebenen Angehörigen dafür büssen mussten. Von 1927 his 1929 war unsere ganze Familie im Gefängnis und meine Mutter starb dort. Ich selber wurde wieder freigelassen, während, wie schon erwähnt, emein Vater von dort aus nach Sibirien deportiert wurde. Auch aus religiösen Gründen möchte ich nicht mehr nach Russland zurückkehren.

Frage: Wie stellen Sie sich Ihre Zukunft vor?

Ich möchte lieber in der Schweiz sterben, als nach Russland zurückkehren.

i.f. Lt. Steiner: Der Protok.-Führer: Die Dolmetsch.: v.b.u. sig. Lt. Steiner sig. H.P. unl. sig. S. Kunz sig. unl.



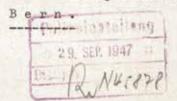


EIDGENÖSSISCHES POLITISCHES DEPARTEMENT DÉPARTEMENT POLITIQUE FÉDÉRAL

p.B.51.13.51.R.1. – GS Biffe dieses Zeichen in der Antwort wiederholen Prière de rappeler celle référence dans la réponse 90/ TE

Bern, den 26. September 1947.

An die Polizeiabteilung des Eidgenössischen Justizund Polizeidepartements,



Herr Abteilungschef.

Anlässlich einer Besprechung vom 23. September 1947 machte uns Minister Kulaschenkow darauf aufmerksam, dass einer der Hauptagitatoren für die Nichtrückkehr russischer Internierter in die Heimat ein gewisser Saltanow sei. Bei diesem handle es sich um einen SS-Mann, der sich freiwillig zur Strafexpedition des deutschen Heeres gemeldet habe.

In unsern Akten kommt der Name Saltanow nicht vor. Wir wären Ihnen deshalb dankbar, wenn Sie uns mitteilen wollten, was Ihnen über den Genannten gegebenenfalls bekannt sein sollte. Wir würden dann dem Russischen Gesandten die gebotenen Aufschlüsse geben.

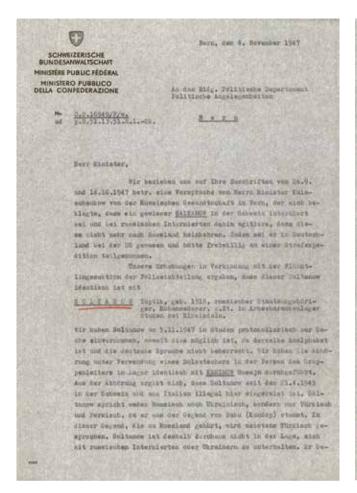
Ein Durchschlag dieses Schreibens geht mit gleicher Bitte an die Schweizerische Bundesanwaltschaft.

Genehmigen Sie, Herr Abteilungschef, die Versicherung unserer vorzüglichsten Hochachtung.

EDG. POLITISCHES DEPARTEMENT
Politische Angolegen neitze

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struitet ouch energiach, je einnal einen russiachen Internierten vor der Ausruise abgehalten zu haben. Beber seinen Aufentbalt in Sautechland befragt, gab er an, or sul in Jabre 1540 sum Abtivilemet in Smanismi sufgrouten sorder, In Eletour sai er als Infantariut magakildet earden, Spiter varde er duron elses Granteplitter on residen Swin veriets; und an 25. Oktober 1941 in Sanlanah vom den Sautonben gefangen genommen. Er put duck mach Doutschland verschleppt worden. Ir meete in Kupwinner in einer Schehfahrik und eidter in einer Rieensicanerei. arbelten, Wachher sal er med Conterretot genousen, kinns aber die Rasen der Ortocherten uicht mehr angeben, du er nicht lesen Atoms, Ven Oveterralsh and or much von Bringsunde noch Burgano (Italian) varundinat sorden, or or für die Deutschen Arnelten an Inflactuable ten mortileen counts, hat friennechtuer out er mit Stife was tallectudes Participes that the Schreitergrang verbrackt sorder. In Deutschland sel or laser the leungafrundarbeiter and sie bei der AD titte gewonen, Der Gruppenenef des Legere, Keriste, Sortitigts mir Morigens, does Soltanow tataschlich micht Speatage varataba une Aralphabet sai, Dies gale auch sus den Löhnlisten der Folizeinbteilung berenr, muf welchen Berince Jesetlen für Soltenew guittiert habe, da dieser des Seuralbene ummenig sei. In narious ochildust une Merinow Soltanew als runt an und earthous Arbeiter, der bie jotet en keinen Beanstahfun en Anlane gegeben bitte. De er might Russisch sproche, winnehe er woch mich't mich honeland comminutation, assisted and der Türkel, Das Protokoll Seltanow frigt als Belligs. Ane disser Silvernahne ergist side, dass belinner gonifallog might in Himss der Ansaugen von Berrn Himleter Kulascreence agitalorisch tätig sein hann. Andere resaisone Internierte att glosen mier einem Shulighen Manon mind der Polissisbteilung micht beimont, hoch erhlärte mir Lerison, der diese Flüchtlinge mission alls personated beaut, deem bein homes eit eines Whalichet Perso unter dec in far Schools Interniertes soi. Secelulos Die, Berr Einister, die Versicherung un ever ausgeneighneten Booksahtung. Builage eremunt. Lorde p.K. and ng. Polincialtailong, mit Himmrontoeprotokal

Even after being taken captive, Azerbaijani fighters continued their struggle within the framework of the resistance movement against fascism in European countries and glorified the name of their nation far beyond Azerbaijan: a group of Azerbaijani prisoners of war were brought to northern Italy in October 1943. At the end of that year, 45 of the Azerbaijani captives held in Udine in Trieste province escaped and joined local guerrillas. The commander of a large guerrilla group, which was formed in February 1944, was Javad Hakimli, and its commissar was Mehdi Huseynzadeh. (2)

In April 1945, a large group of Azerbaijanis who fought in the Third Reich's legions escape from the legion and move towards the Italian mountains and Swiss territory. The aim here is to join the anti-fascist movement and the Garibaldi guerrilla group well-known in Italy. The Azerbaijanis come to the village of Monte di Nese 20 km from the city of Bergamo. The villagers do not know who they are and are therefore afraid. Later, when they find out that they are tired and hungry guerrillas, they put the Azerbaijanis up in their homes and hide them. The Azerbaijanis just wanted to use this vil-

lage as a passage point. On the morning of April 13, the bell of the local church rings. In a hurry to attend a service, the local people are stunned by the sounds of gunfire. More than 2,500 Republican fascists, as well as SS units enter the village. The center has received secret information about the Azerbaijanis hiding in Monte di Nese. The Azerbaijanis are urged to surrender, but our compatriots refuse. And so begins the bloody battle between the 120 Azerbaijanis and the 2,500 Nazi troops. Most of the Azerbaijanis are killed during the battle, which lasts about 6 hours, and others died afterwards. In all, the number of Azerbaijanis around Bergamo was about 900 (3). Mozala, the commander of one of the guerrilla groups, said in his memoirs that about 300 Azerbaijanis were captured and their fates were still unknown. However, a number of documents available in the Swiss Federal Archives confirm that these Azerbaijanis, whose fate is still unknown, were able to find shelter in Switzerland.

Switzerland's place in World War II. The most important reason why the Azerbaijani soldiers took refuge in Switzerland was the neutral position of Switzerland



during World War II. In spite of the anti-German position of the Swiss press during World War II, the country was able to maintain its political neutrality. However, the leaders of the country said that "the independence of the country was more important than its neutrality and, if necessary, they could sacrifice their neutrality for independence." After the rise of the National Socialist German Workers' Party in Germany, about 2,000 people, mostly Jews and opposition members, fled Germany from Switzerland in the fall of 1933. At the end of 1938. the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany (Anschluss) saw a significant increase in the number of asylum seekers in Switzerland, and the number of those who took refuge in this country reached 10,000. The increase in the number of asylum seekers in the country also resulted in increased competition on the labor market, which dissatisfied the local population.

In June 1940, French and Polish soldiers crossed the border in the Canton of Jura and entered Switzerland as a result of German attacks. These soldiers were sent to work in construction sites and farms. During World War II, more than 100,000 soldiers took refuge in Switzerland.

In general, more than 180,000 civilians sought asylum in Switzerland. In 1942, with the beginning of the deportation of Western European Jews to camps, the Swiss authorities decided to close the border in August 1942. Exceptions were made only for those subjected to racial discrimination, while political immigrants were not included in this category. The decision was subjected to heavy criticism, and after long discussions, ill people, pregnant women, the elderly and children were granted the right to asylum (4).

Historians also highlight the dark side of the Swiss position during World War II. In 1938, as a result of talks with Germany, the Swiss Federal Council decided to put the J stamp on the passports of German Jews. Thus, the Swiss authorities were able to distinguish the Jews from other Germans. According to studies, an estimated 20,000 Jews were turned away from the border and more than 10,000 Jews were denied visas. Jews living in Switzerland strongly protested at the fact that during the Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2013, Swiss President Ueli Maurer described Switzerland as "an island of salvation and a land of liberty and law even at the darkest times of the world". They expressed regret that in his speech the Swiss president did not mention the J stamp applied by the country during World War II. As a result of these protests, Ueli Maurer apologized to the Jewish community in Switzerland (5).

The most critical areas of the policy pursued by Switzerland were arms supplies to Germany, the purchase of seized gold and, most importantly, the immigration policy.

New facts from the Swiss archives. The new facts from the Swiss archives show that the Azerbaijani soldiers who fled to Switzerland during World War II settled in the village of Wöschnau in the Canton of Solothurn. However, it should be noted that the Azerbaijanis who fled to Switzerland were persecuted by the Soviet embassy in this country. In most cases, the Soviet embassy in Switzerland made unsubstantiated allegations about Azerbaijanis seeking asylum in Switzerland and demanded that the Swiss authorities investigate these claims and take legal action.

A letter from the Swiss Political Office to the Swiss Federal Police on September 26, 1947 cites a conversation with the Soviet ambassador to Switzerland, Kulashenkov. Kulashenkov says that a person named Saltanov campaigned among soldiers in the camps in Switzerland not to return to Russia. It is alleged that Saltanov fought in SS units and voluntarily joined the German punitive squad. (6) The letter also states that the documents they have do not contain the name "Saltanov" and that the information obtained will be handed over to the Soviet embassy. The case is also sent to the Swiss Federal Prosecutor's Office for investigation. The Swiss Federal Prosecutor's Office sends a response to the Swiss Political Office on 6 November 1947. This letter proves that Kulashenkov's statements do not reflect the truth.

Thus, during the questioning on 5 November 1947 of Tapdig Soltanov, born in 1918, it was revealed that he did not know the alphabet and could not speak German. For this reason, the head of the group, Huseyn Karimov, helped with translation issues. As a result of the questioning, it was found that on 21 April 1945, Tapdig Soltanov crossed the border from Italy into Switzerland. Soltanov speaks neither Russian nor Ukrainian, he only speaks Turkish and Persian. During the survey, he said that he was from the village of Gandob in Azerbaijan. For this reason, the document indicates that Soltanov was unable to speak to Russian and Ukrainian soldiers.

It is noted that Soltanov was wounded in the right leg during the war and was captured by Germans on 25 October 1941, near Smolensk. Soltanov was later taken to Germany. He first works in a shoe factory in Göppingen and then at a steel mill. He notes that he was then sent to Austria but could not name the place because

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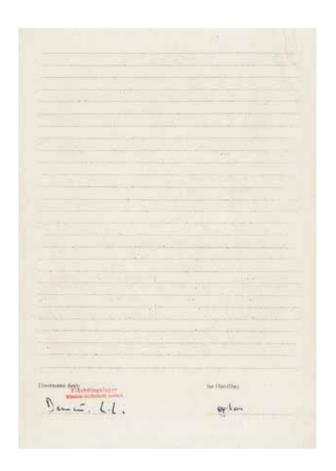


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he could not read. The Germans then send him to Bergamo, Italy to work on air defense. Here, Italian guerrillas help him to reach the border with Switzerland. He says he lived as a captive during his stay in Germany and never fought in SS units. The group's leader, Karimov, also confirms that Tapdig Soltanov did not speak Russian and, therefore, did not communicate with Russian and Ukrainian soldiers. Karimov characterizes Soltanov as a guiet and serious worker. He asks to be sent to Turkey and not to Russia because he cannot speak Russian. Karimov confirms that he knows almost all the Soviet soldiers in Switzerland, and that there are no other Azerbaijanis with the same name as Tapdig Soltanov. (7) Tapdig Soltanov's testimony also reveals that he was born into a peasant family in 1918 and did not know the exact date of his birth. He was employed in the oil fields in Baku before being drafted into the army in 1940. He notes that with the help of Italian guerrillas, he and a group of Ukrainians were able to escape to the Canton of Graubünden canton in 1945. During the guestioning, Soltanov says that he has no connection with the Soviet embassy. (8)

Another document from the Swiss Federal Archives shows that some of the Azerbaijanis who escaped from Bergamo fled to Switzerland. A document about Aslan Tagiyev, who was born in Shusha in 1907, shows that he was captured by Germans on the Kerch Peninsula on 8 May 1942. As is known, there was heavy fighting for the Kerch Peninsula in the spring of 1942. This area was ceded to the fascists and taken back twice. In total, about half a million Soviet soldiers were encircled and then taken prisoner in poorly-prepared offensives on Kerch. Among those taken prisoner in Kerch was the famous writer Suleyman Veliyev. (9) A document in the Swiss Federal Archives states that Aslan Tagiyev was taken to Czechoslovakia's capital Prague in January 1945 and held in a camp there. It is noted that he escaped on 11 April 1945, joined the guerrillas and fought the Germans. It is reported that the guerrillas helped him to reach the Swiss border. He says he never fought in German military units. (10)

One of the soldiers who took refuge in Switzerland was Hasan Ismayilov. He was born in Baku in 1912. After graduating from the teachers' seminary in 1936, he worked as a teacher for three years. In March 1940, he was drafted into the army and sent to Dnepropetrovsk. In January 1941, he began serving in Crimea. On 28 May 1942, he was captured by the Germans in Crimea and sent to Romania on 28 November 1942. In February

1945, he was sent to Czechoslovakia and shortly after that to Italy. He escaped from Italy on 19 April 1945 with the help of guerrillas and crossed the Swiss border from the village of Campocologno. In a statement to the Swiss authorities, Hasan Ismayilov says his father was sent to Siberia and died there. One of his uncles took refuge in Turkey and another in Iran. His family was under arrest in 1927-1929, and his mother died in prison. He said he preferred "to die in Switzerland rather than return to Russia". (11)

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