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**ACTIVITY OF ORDZHONIKIDZE DEFENSE COMMITTEE
AIMED AT FORMATION OF PEOPLE'S MILITIA**

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Abstract

The article examines activities of the Ordzhonikidze (Vladikavkaz) Defense Committee aimed at formation of people's militia from among the population of North Ossetia. The archival material, first introduced into scientific circulation, made it possible to determine the role and place of the Defense Committee within the state and regional power structure. It was established in emergency conditions and therefore was an extra-constitutional body that had unlimited powers. The authors restore main directions of military-defense activities implemented by the Defense Committee. The analysis of new sources enabled to collect more information related to the creation of volunteer units made up of militias, partisans, soldiers of mopping-up and air defense detachments that fought for North Ossetia. The structure of these units, recruitment sources and the training of fighters were first analyzed. The emerged opportunities to explore new sources clarified the issues concerning the activities of North Ossetian power structures which were not fully covered in domestic historiography, or remained outside the scientific search, particularly the implementation of mobilization economy in the region, the use of forced labor at strategically important facilities, the growth of crime and crime prevention.

The scientific analysis of the sources allowed for the conclusion that the work carried out in the republic to assist the front could not have great results without the directing and organizing work of the local party-state bodies and, above all, the Ordzhonikidze (Vladikavkaz) Defense Committee.

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1. Introduction

The Great Patriotic War was country-wide warfare. Citizens of the USSR provided all possible aid and support to the government in this righteous patriotic war. Some fought at the front, others provided the army with everything they needed, while others made up the combat reserve of the active army. A considerable contribution to the victory over the enemy was made by volunteer militias that were created in different regions across the country. The people's militia, mopping-up and partisan detachments became a striking force in the enemy rear. The patriotic impulse of all citizens was caused by the threat to the existence of the USSR. As the researchers point out, the government focused on state-patriotic ideas, referring to the past of Russia.

2. Problem Statement

The paper analyzes the formation of people's militia that played a major role in the battle of North Ossetia.

3. Research Questions

The article attempts to reconstruct the formation of people's militia and its activity in wartime on the basis of new archival materials.

4. Purpose of the Study

The paper aims to comprehensively analyze the military-organizational activities of the Ordzhonikidze (Vladikavkaz) Defense Committee during the Great Patriotic War. Among a great variety of functions, the authors dwell upon the military-defense activity implemented by the defense committee, which included the military-mobilization work aimed at the formation of irregular voluntary units for the protection of the rear, particularly, the people's militia.

5. Research Methods

The aim defined research methods and specific approaches. The basis is comprised of some general scientific principles including impartiality, consistency, scientific character, integrated approach, etc. This allowed the author to significantly expand the research tools, disclose the military-defense activities of local authorities to a larger extent, show the general and the particular, and adequately reflect the activities of the Ordzhonikidze (Vladikavkaz) Defense Committee during the war years. Problem-chronological method made it possible to study the military-defense activities in the framework of the warfare.

The historical and typological approach was used to reconstruct certain military-defense directions that involve military mobilization, preparation of combat reserves, formation of units, etc. as well as identification of their implementation features based on some common things. For a comparative analysis of the processes, the statistical method was actively used.

6. Findings

The population of North Ossetia assisted the front in various ways. One of them was the establishment of people's militia.

On June 23, 1941, a 50,000-strong rally was held in Ordzhonikidze, which demonstrated the determination of the population to deliver a fitting rebuff to the enemy. As soon as the first days of the war, the main directions were defined in restructuring the rear for military needs. It was not only about the re-equipment of industrial enterprises, but also about the need to organize the masses for the armed struggle against the enemy.

The promulgated "Directive of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the Central Committee of the AUCP(b) to the party and Soviet organizations of the frontline areas", the speeches of I.V. Stalin performed before the Soviet people set the most important tasks of the moment. The creation of people's militia is thought to be initiated by the program speech of I.V. Stalin on July 3, 1941, in which, addressing Soviet citizens, the leader said: "Together with the Red Army, many thousands of workers, collective farmers, and intellectuals take up arms against the initial aggressor. ... The workers of Moscow and Leningrad are already embarking on the creation of many thousands of people's militia to support the Red Army ... In every city threatened by the invasion of the enemy, we must create similar people's militia, raise all the working people to the struggle ..." (Stalin, 1941). A massive patriotic movement to enlist in the militias began across the country. The people's militia amounted to over 4 million Soviet citizens, of whom about 2 million were later enlisted into the active army. According to some researchers, over 270 thousand people were involved in the militia in the North Caucasus, while the leaders of the countries laid great hopes on the political commitment of people (Panarina, 2008; Balikoev, 2000).

The experience of Moscow citizens, who became the first to create the militia, was taken as a basis. First of all, it goes about voluntary enlistment in self-defense formations. Citizens aged 18 to 55 who were not subject to mobilization, as well as workers of defense factories were drafted into the militia. The units of people's militia were formed according to the production-territorial principle: squads were first created among from employees at enterprises and educational institutions, then they were merged to the scale of a district, then a city, etc. (Yatsenko, 2003). Such structure was called the voluntary militia system (Pilishvili, 2009). Units of people's militia were under the authority of defense committees. Each platoon knew its combat mission and place of deployment. The operational activity, the supply of militia with armament and provisions was coordinated by specially appointed headquarters or working groups represented by district committees, district executive committees and the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs. The command of the units of people's militia was carried out as follows: supreme commanders were selected from the officers of the Red Army, the middle and junior – from the reserve officers (Bezugolny, Bugai & Krinko, 2012).

In North Ossetia, the people's militia began to form in July 1941. On July 11, the bureau of the North Ossetian regional committee of the AUCP(b) adopted a resolution on organizing the people's militia (CSA RNO-A, 2002). The leadership of OSOAVIAKhIM and district party committees defined the commanding staff to provide the military training to the militias. In each district of the republic, headquarters were established to form units of people's militia. The personnel included district heads, heads of police stations,

members of district military enlistment offices, and OSOAVIAKhIM. The creation and training of the militia took no more than 3-4 weeks, which could not but affect their combat readiness.

A wide propaganda campaign was launched among the population of the republic, which gained good results. Citizens who spoke at the meetings and rallies enthusiastically took the opportunity to help the Red Army in defeating the enemy. Thus, the metallurgist of the Electrozink plant M. Gagiyeu, joining the people's militia, called: "I am endeavoring to join the people's militia and appeal to all the veterans of the plant to follow my example and be ready to oppose the sworn enemy". The call was taken up, and on July 12, 1941, more than 500 workers and employees of the plant submitted applications for entry into the factory militia organization (Khubulova & Khablieva, 2013).

Several regiments and battalions of people's militia were created in the republic. However, the authors believe that in the autumn of 1941 the structure of people's militia was incomplete, which was largely due to the implementation of the republic mobilization programme, since in September-October about 150 thousand people left for the front, which affected the formation of the militia.

However, with the approach of the front line to the republic, it was decided to strengthen the units of people's militia. On September 13, 1942, the Ordzhonikidze Defense Committee adopted a resolution on the formation in the city the North Ossetian consolidated brigade of the people's militia that comprised two rifle regiments of working people of Ordzhonikidze: "To establish two regiments and group them together under brigade control. To appoint the brigade commander, Colonel G. Yanukovich, the military commissar S. Gazzaev, the head of the political department I. Efimenko". At the same time, the general mobilization of communists and Komsomol members who were capable of carrying weapons and "actively defending the city" was declared (CSA RNO-A, 2002).

The formation of specialized units was envisaged, specifically, tank destroyers, grenade throwers, machine gunners. Besides, a special cavalry squadron was created under the brigade. They were made up of ready reserve fighters drafted with their horses: "Arkhonekaya – 10, Ardonskaya – 10, Digora – 20, Chikola – 10, Iriston – 20, Darg-Kohsky district – 15, Elkhotovo – 10 and Alagir – 15, a total of 130 cavalymen" (CSA RNO-A, 2002). Special certificates were issued to fighters, commanders and political workers of the brigade. The issues related to transport, food-stuffs, money allowances and the provision of public services were solved by the Council of People's Commissars of the Republic (responsible – Deputy Chairman of Council D. Dragochenko).

On October 31, 1942, the North Ossetian national militia brigade was reorganized into a national militia regiment. Colonel G. Yanukovich was appointed the commander of the regiment, T. Musatov – the commissioner. The brigade, later the regiment of the people's militia, differed in that they were not a combat unit that could be fully used in battles on the approaches to Ordzhonikidze. At first, the brigade had to perform the functions of a reserve unit that prepared the combat reserves for the active army. Thus, only in July-August 1942, the brigade prepared and sent over 200 fighters to the front (CSA RNO-A, 2002).

As per social background, the personnel of people's militia brigade were composed of: workers — 44%, employees — 23%, collective farmers — 23%, the rest categories — 10%. Based on the data, the units formed in the cities of the republic consisted mainly of workers and students, and those created in the countryside consisted entirely of collective farmers and party and Soviet workers.

Nearly the entire personnel of the brigade were confined to barracks: the regiments were billeted in battalions in schools No. 2, 5, 6, 13,18, the club of the car-repair plant and the pedagogical institute (CSA RNO-A, 2002).

In view of the aggravation of the situation on the city's fringes, it was decided to mobilize full wartime alert. Militias working at enterprises of the republic were confined to barracks in their free time, “without disrupting work at city defense enterprise. With this in view, units of the brigade should be manned on the industrial principle. The command of the units is obliged to send these units to enterprises on the basis of leave pass” (CSA RNO-A, 2002).

In September 1942, at a meeting of the Ordzhonikidze party activists, it was decided to urgently form new militia units. In order to raise the morale of the citizens, the Ordzhonikidze Defense Committee decided to “consider all communists and Komsomol members of Ordzhonikidze mobilized for the defense of the city, and also recall all workers capable of carrying weapons and actively defending the city together with the Red Army units” (CSA RNO-A, 2002). This call led to an unprecedented activity among the population of the capital of the republic and an influx into the militia. The city held a field exercise for militias to train shooting, throwing grenades, military knowledge of junior and middle command personnel.

The formation of people's militia revealed several challenges to be addressed. First of all, it was about the unstable composition of militia units, which were the Red Army reserve. Unlike Leningrad and Moscow people's militias that were supplied centrally from the People's Commissariat of Defense, arms and equipment for North Ossetian militia units were provided through local resources. Each district of the city and republic, engaged in forming a unit of people's militia, was obliged to equip it as well. Thus, local authorities were supposed to allocate funds for the deployment of the consolidated battalion of people's militia. These included the cost of wages, food supply, clothing bag issue, various minor expenses and political education costs (CSA RNO-A, 2002).

The largest items were clothing and salary. In addition, the militia needed uniforms, provant, etc., that should also be ensured by the local government bodies. The units of people's militia often lacked automobiles, motorcycles, and means of communication. For example, the 3rd battalion had only 1 motorcycle available instead of 6, and of the 13 vehicles required by the staff – only 5. The cavalry regiment also lacked troop-horses, there were many carts. The fodder was delivered intermittently. The units lacked telephones and telephone cables for communication with observation posts.

There was no discussion towards the centralized provision of militias with weapons and uniforms. Insufficient funding was covered by the local budget by a residual model. Most often, the militiamen were armed through the local defense workshops and the military classrooms of schools (CSA RNO-A, 2002).

Part of the armament was delivered from the arsenals of the 9th and 37th armies that were able to allocate 1,000 sets of summer ammunition, a number of rifles and machine guns. The next source was the produce of local enterprises focused on the production of military items. The volunteers brought some weapons with them. These were hunting rifles, sporting weapons, etc. The militia picked up some weapons on the battlefields. Most of them were German and Soviet-style assault rifles. A large percentage of the militia did not have weapons at all. There were few automatic and semi-automatic rifles, the situation with machine guns was somewhat better.

Another problem was the selection of management personnel. Given the haste accompanying the formation of militia units, it was difficult to rely on well-trained military personnel, mostly composed of reserve commanders who had no practical warfare skills. Considering that most of the militias either did not know the military affairs at all, nor served in the active army for a long time ago, this problem assumed a threatening character.

2 detachments alone would comprise over 60% personnel who did not have military skills. Most of them were from among the retired and students. In this regard, the Bureau of the regional party committee adopted a resolution “On compulsory military training for citizens of the North Ossetian ASSR”. In accordance with the resolution, from October 1, 1941, compulsory military training of men aged 16 to 50 was initiated in the republic. It was paramilitary on-the-job training that included 110 hours. The conscripts of 1923 and 1924 years of birth were attracted to studies, they had to learn how to deal with a rifle, machine gun, hand grenades, master the ability to dig trenches and conduct a single battle.

The schools organized military education for students in grades 8-10. However, as revealed by the inspection, at least 15% of the population of the republic did not attend military classes, hiding from military commissars. Strong emphasis was put on attendance that was strictly monitored. In July 1942 the attendance did not exceed 75% in the regiment. The workers of the Electrozinc plant who were occupied with the production of mines basically missed classes. Due to the victories of the Red Army, some units of the people’s militia became reluctant to attend classes. Thus, in Irafsky district, the training of militia was poorly organized: “There are cases of non-compliance with orders and altercations with commanders. Disciplinary practice is conducted formally, 5 people were fined for malicious non-attendance by the military registration and enlistment office, fines have not yet been recovered yet” (SACH RNO-A, 2002). There were even funny cases when some young people, nearly children, in order to skip classes, “hid under the bed in order to avoid classes” (SACH RNO-A, 2002).

Sometime later, the Ordzhonikidze (Vladikavkaz) Defense Committee heard a report from the headquarters of the people’s militia on the activities done and revealed a number of shortcomings. The inspection established that, for example, in the Alagir district, on July 15, 1942, instead of 1,572 people, there were only 1,209 people in the militia (SACH RNO-A, 2002). The shortage of uniforms and weapons was not the only hindrance hampering the normal functioning of the militia. The rapid transformation of North Ossetia from the front-line region into the area of operations demanded expeditious actions to build defensive lines involving a large number of labor soldiers. This bound a lot of constraints, detaining the militia from their straight duties thus swelling the ranks of Labour Army members.

However, the training programme had to be carried out despite the difficulties encountered. Much attention was paid to the study of rifles, machine guns, radio stations. At the same time, some units of people’s militia lacked training equipment, “there are no visual aids on machine guns, mortars, chemical and demining training. Guns, stuffed animals and other equipment for training bayonet combat have not been made yet” (CSA RNO-A, 2002).

First of all, the combat and political training of enlisted and junior commanding personnel of the North Ossetian consolidated militia brigade involved: political training of riflemen, mortar gunners, tank destroyers; classes in tactics and fire, physical, chemical training; study of statutes; sanitary classes.

The mandatory topics embrace march security precautions and on-the-ground reconnaissance security. Target practice was of particular importance. Training fighters of people's militia took many hours according to the programme, the exercises were held daily, so the results were not bad. The course lasted 236 hours, the schedule was prepared by the headquarters of the people's militia, classes were held either every day or every other day.

Political education stood alone. To ensure its provision the regiment had the commissar and political instructor from among the trustworthy workers of the Soviet-party apparatus. The commissars of the units carefully looked after the unit composition with Communists and Komsomol members. Party and Komsomol cells were set up within the divisions. "1. To organize and provide combat and political training pursuant to the basic directive obliging all units to be on full combat readiness; 2. To foster selfless commitment to the cause of Lenin-Stalin and the socialist homeland to obtain disciplined, courageous and dedicated fighters and commanders; 3. To instill in each fighter and commander solid practical skills in their sphere (CSA RNO-A, 2002).

Political education took place in the form of volatile rallies, open party meetings, and lectures. The main form, though, remained political discussions and political information about the situation at the front, about the tasks to be solved in the fight against the aggressor, etc. The militias were involved in daily conversations on the most pressing issues of the current situation. In each company there was a political instructor who was supposed to conduct classes, but often they did not do their job well, they were poorly prepared for classes, and some did not appear in the battalion installation at all. The topics discussed at the lectures involved Commission of atrocities in the Crimea, We block the way to the Caucasus to the enemy and many others. Political training took place for at least 20 minutes before the start of combat training. Moreover, a combat leaflet was issued in each subdivision. Competitions to master military knowledge were arranged.

A local division of OSOAVIAKhIM played a significant role in the training of militia. It is necessary to dwell on the exceptional role of OSOAVIAKhIM in the pre-war training of personnel for the army. In OSOAVIAKhIM societies arranged before the warfare, the pre-conscription youth received good knowledge of military affairs, had certain skills that could be useful in combat conditions. Thanks to the activities of OSOAVIAKhIM in the republic, the training programme for pilots, parachutists, and gunners was launched. Various sports programmes like Voroshilov Sharpshooter, Voroshilov horse rider, Ready for Antiaircraft and Antichemical Defense, Ready for Sanitary Defense, etc. also provided invaluable assistance with respect to military training. The training was on-the-job without interrupting production, so it did not cost the state a lot but provided good results.

In the wake of the aggravated international situation, the country's leadership set before the voluntary societies the task of strengthening the military-sports training of the pre-conscription youth through the GTO (Ready for Labour and Defence of the USSR) system. Within two years, the regional Society was to prepare 80 paratroopers, 102 radio operator gunners and over 6,000 Voroshilov shooters. In 1940, 153 people fulfilled all norms of the GTO in North Ossetia and became Voroshilov shooters. This activity was successfully accomplished in the Darg-Koch branch of OSOAVIAKhIM, which in a short time prepared 2 thousand people who were awarded GTO badges.

Mandatory military classes were introduced at enterprises and organizations. Each person undergoing preconscription military training had to get 120-hour training. Local OSOAVIAKhIM societies provided the training for shooters, signalers, parachutists. In Ordzhonikidze, for example, as early as October 1940, 5 detachments, 17 teams and 120 groups with a total of 11,320 people were created. Thus, the regional organization OSOAVIAKhIM played a significant role in training personnel not only for the Red Army, but also became the basis for the established people's militia.

In the first months of the war this work allowed for the creation and staffing of a sanitary battalion comprising 613 people within the militia brigade. They were mostly women who had to take the medical care course. Besides theoretical knowledge the sanitary battalion also took internship at the hospitals. The members of the battalion were responsible for providing first aid and carrying the wounded off the battlefield. 147 women serving in the battalion were members of OSOAVIAKhIM. They shared their knowledge with the female militias. Young Komsomol members of the Alagir district appealed for joining the Komsomol-youth fire protection platoon. The call was immediately picked up by 40 activists who within 15 days took a 25-hour combat training without interrupting production. The local Red Cross Society was actively engaged in the activities implemented by the battalion. As early as 1941, about 3,000 participants of the battalion and nurses took courses through the Republican Red Cross and Crescent programme. In the Sadonsky district, the profession of a nurse was so popular that it was decided to initiate an additional intake of applicants. At the request of the commander of the Northern Group of Forces, courses for female snipers were launched, the first intake was arranged on October 8 and 100 girls were enrolled.

Awarding the militias was of great importance. In compliance with the SDC decision, the monetary allowance could not be lower than the average salary or scholarships provided by enterprises and organizations to families. Those fighters who, by the time they joined the militia, were unemployed, were paid an allowance in the amount received by army conscripts. Besides the allowance, all the militias received additional payments: the enlisted – 20 rubles, the junior commanders – 50 rubles, the senior staff – 75 rubles per month. All volunteers received pan-army types of allowances in accordance with their positions.

The leadership of the people's militia performed its work in conformity with the Decree of the State Defense Committee "On the procedure of monetary support for individuals who joined the mopping-up battalions of people's militia, mobilized for defense works and drafted to the local air defense", in which salary tariffs were specified: "1) the people's militia is provided by the People's Commissariat of Defense with monetary and material allowances according to the standards existing in the Red Army; 2) to terminate the payment from April 1, 1942 to the militias at the place of previous work" (RA GPW, 1941). The recruitment for the brigade was regulated by the special list of staff that was developed by the Ordzhonikidze (Vladikavkaz) Defense Committee (Khubulova & Khablieva, 2013).

The militias participated not only in maintaining order, guard duty in a settlement, but also were on the front line during the battles for Ordzhonikidze. The 12th rifle division of the internal troops of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs and the North Ossetian brigade of people's militia held the direct defense of the city of Ordzhonikidze. The platoon commanders of people's militia brigade A. S. Gasparov, H. I. Budaev, N. A. Digurov, I. I. Kotik became one of the examples of courage (SACH RNO-A, 2002).

On November 17, 1942, after the defeat of the fascist German forces under Ordzhonikidze, the regiment of the people's militia was transformed into the First Separate Ordzhonikidze battalion of the people's militia with a total number of 619 people. It performed special tasks of the Ordzhonikidze (Vladikavkaz) Defense Committee including the protection of military facilities and order maintenance. Major F. Cherenkov was appointed commander of the separate battalion of the people's militia.

In early January 1943, following the defeat of the Germans under Ordzhonikidze, the confinement of the battalion to barracks was no longer necessary (Tugusheva, 2008). Therefore, the Defense Committee decided to disband the Ordzhonikidze battalion of people's militia, the command personnel were transferred to the city military commissariat to be sent to the active army, and the enlisted to the enterprises and institutions for their previous places of work. Arms, ammunition, uniforms and many others were handed over to the local OSOAVIAKhIM.

7. Conclusion

Thus, the war confirmed that the course pursued by the state for the advance implementation of measures to protect the population, ensure the sustainability of enterprises in extreme situations, and create and train the forces and means for successful actions was correct. It convincingly showed that the protection of the population and entities of the economy and territories was the most important function of the state, the matter of concern of the entire population.

In summary, during the battle for North Ossetia, the people's militia became one of the key irregular formations that greatly assisted the Red Army in defeating the enemy. It is also important to note that the people's militia became the basis for training the reserve of the Red Army fighters. The main activities of the people's militia brigade of North Ossetia were the training of military specialists (shooters, radio operators, machine-gunners), the protection of settlements during the bombings, the provision of assistance to the wounded. During the battle for the city of Ordzhonikidze, the participation of militias in battles on the outskirts of the city, as well as assistance to military units and fighter battalions in maintaining order in Ordzhonikidze became a new sphere of their occupation.

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