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THE AUKH REGION IN 1841

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Abstract

Despite extensive historiography, the events of the Caucasian War of 1817–1864 continue to attract the attention of modern researchers and even those politicians who think that a forceful solution to a problem is always faster and better than a compromise. The topic “Chechnya in the Caucasian War” has also been enough studied, but the study of documents almost always reveals the details that shed light on well-known events. One of these events is the struggle of the Separate Caucasian Corps with Imam for the strategically important historical Chechen region Aukh, which nowadays is a part of the Republic of Dagestan since 1921. After the general riot in Chechnya in 1840, the events began to turn in favor of Imam Shamil, which the Russian military leaders tried to resist. Realizing that this would cause big problems for the Caucasian army, since Imam would get additional economic and human resources, its commander E. Golovin gathered nine battalions of infantry, 19 guns, two squadrons of dragoons of the Nizhny Novgorod Dragoon Regiment and several hundred mounted police for the invasion of Aukh. The Samur units were ordered to occupy the Khubar hills so that Aukh could not receive help from Salatavia. As a result of this expedition in 1841, a part of the Aukh people took Russian citizenship and were resettled, but Imam Shamil was not going to put up with the loss of a strategically important area.

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1. Introduction

Early 1840s are one of the significant periods in the life of Imam Shamil and, in general, the Caucasian War, during which one of the most powerful regular armies in the world opposed the almost citizen militia, which most often used the methods and practice of guerrilla warfare, and the army resettled residents, destroyed settlements and supplies and deprived Imam of economic and human resources. The acceptance of citizenship and the fulfillment of the conditions of the Russian command, which most often depended on the proximity of parts of the Separate Caucasian Corps, could help the villages avoid destruction, but in this case, they were under attack from the Imam units.

2. Problem Statement

The paper is devoted to the study of the confrontation between the troops of Imam and the imperial army, the attempts to seize the initiative and keep it and provide themselves with resources, depriving them of the enemy.

3. Research Questions

The first research question is the strategy and tactics of the actions of the Caucasian army and units of Imam Shamil during the Caucasian war.

- i. The second research question is the situation of the peaceful population.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to analyze the military-political and socio-political situation in the historical region of Aukh, the struggle for it between Imam and the imperial army.

5. Research Methods

The principles of historicism, scientific objectivity and consistency and analysis of historical sources were used as research methods. The work is based on the problem-chronological principle.

6. Findings

The controversial events of the Caucasian War, including the period of the 1840s, have been studied in detail by Russian and foreign authors (Bliev & Degoev, 1994; Fadeev, 2003; Gapurov, 2003; Osmanov, 2006; Vachagaev, 2003). The problem of one of the ethnic communities of the Chechen people – the Aukh people and the historical region of Aukh is no less controversial issue (Adilsultanov, 1992; Akhmadov & Khizriev, 2005; Bashirov & Tesaev, 2021; Krinko et al., 2017; Nataev, 2016; Shakhbanova & Nagieva, 2017; Zhukov, 2012).

After gathering troops at the Vnezapnaya fortress (built on the orders of General A. Yermolov near the village of Endirey) and concentrating them near the devastated village of Khasav-Yurt (now a city in the Republic of Dagestan), several Aukh foremen arrived to General Golovin, who declared that the people

would like to submit to the Russians, but were afraid of the leaders of Imam Shamil (Yurov, 1886). On June 6, 1841, the troops began to move along the plain between the rivers Yaryk-Su and Yaman-Su and after a while they approached a dense forest. The infantry entered the forest, where a skirmish and an assault on the rubble prepared by the Chechens began, at this time the cavalry, having circled the forest, captured the village of Yaryk-Su-Aukh, going into the homefront of the highlanders. The highlanders scattered into neighboring forests and ravines, making it impossible to pursue them. On June 7, having ravaged Yaryk-Su-Aukh under the pretext that its inhabitants fought against them, the troops approached the large village of Kishen-Aukh, the main village of the society, surrounded by luxurious orchards.

Military units of Imam were grouped around the village. It was possible to notice the pickets set up by them and green and red badges (flags, banners – evidence that certain naibs were located here. According to spies, a dense forest began behind the mountain near the village, surrounded by deep ravines, from which there was no way out except through the heights where the mountaineers pickets were. General Golovin instructed Colonel Bezobrazov's cavalry to seize the dominant hills from where there was a danger of falling under the flank fire of the Imam detachments. The cavalry quickly knocked down the Imam posts and captured the edge of the forest, locking the Chechens who did not have time to get out from the forest, in impenetrable slums.

In a stubborn and prolonged battle that lasted about an hour, the highlanders, trying to occupy the crest of the mountain, threw themselves at daggers and checkers and two squadrons of dragoons threw them back with rifle fire and bayonets. The Georgian unit, led by their commander, captain Kundukhov, also took an active part in the battle – the same one who, more than 20 years later, became one of the initiators of the resettlement of the highlanders of the North Caucasus to the Ottoman Empire. They were replaced by 2 infantry companies at the positions of the dragoons and the squadrons were assigned to the reserve, since Golovin valued the dragoons and, sending them to dangerous places, made sure that they did not suffer unnecessary losses (Potto, 1894).

The inhabitants of Kishen-Aukh sent their representatives with a request to stop the troops so that the village, divided into supporters of reconciliation and opponents, could make a decision. General Golovin stopped and gave the command to stop, but after 2 hours had passed and no one else came to the troops from the village, the commander, considering that night was coming soon, ordered the cavalymen to bypass the village and break into it from the homefront, which the Chechens watched not very carefully. Having fulfilled the order, the dragoons came under crossfire from three sides, but soon infantry and guns approached, the fire of which contributed to the occupation of the village from which all the inhabitants managed to escape into the surrounding forest.

General Golovin, sparing the beautiful aul with huge gardens, sent his representatives to the Chechens to convey that if the villagers returned, the gardens and property would be spared, but the inhabitants did not return and fire and an ax destroyed the rich aul, in the place of which only sad firebrands and two mosques were spared by Golovin. The mosques were preserved at the request of the local Qadi Dukay, an active supporter of peace with the Russians.

The infantry destroyed the buildings in the village for several days, and the cavalry destroyed the grain in the fields and burned the huge stocks of hay prepared for the winter. The surroundings of Kishen-Aukh were devastated, but it was not possible to stay here longer, since the floods of the rivers interrupted

all the paths between the villages and Shamil entered Aukh with significant forces and the question of the voluntary subjugation of the Aukh people disappeared. 27 Aktash-Aukh leaders came to Golovin with an expression of complete obedience and expressed their desire to return to their homes, at the same time asking for protection from Ullubey-mullah, who threatened to destroy the village for subjugation to the Russians. The villagers began to return to their homes, Dukai again became a qadi and at the request of local elders, a temporary fortification was built in two days – a bastion for an infantry battalion and a division of guns. This measure prompted about 100 families to move to Aktash-Aukh from Kishen-Aukh. Imam Shamil was not going to give up Aukh so easily and he and his divisions under the command of the naibs of Akhverdy-Magom, Shoip-mullah, Dzhevatkhan, Abuker-kadia and Ullubey-mullah occupied the villages of Gassanbekent and Zandak, waiting for the moment when it would be possible to return under their power of the Aukh people (Yurov, 1886).

On June 18, one of the divisions of Imam attacked the Aktash-Aukh people who did not have time to move and recaptured the cattle. Having learned about this, the fellow villagers, led by Dukay-Kadiy, rushed to the rescue and a shootout started. 2 battalions and Georgian police with 2 guns were sent to help, which forced the highlanders to retreat. The next day, it was ordered to stop the relocation of the remaining families and this resulted in a big fight. The highlanders under the command of Akhverdy-Magom attacked fearlessly, but their onslaught was also bravely repelled by carabinieri, rangers and artillery. Colonel Andronnikov sent for reinforcements, which resulted in the outcome of the battle in favor of the Russians, who camped at the battle site for the night and returned to the camp near Aktash-Aukh in the morning. The detachment lost 2 officers and 13 common soldiers, 53 were wounded (Potto, 1894).

180 families from the villages of Aktash and Yurt-Aukh dali delivered honorary residents to amanats and sent their cattle to pastures in Salatau. E. Golovin, supporting their hatred to Shamil, explained to them that he would help if they themselves would unite, obey the prudent elders (who called for loyalty to the Russians), fortify their villages by digging a moat and surrounding it with a palisade and put up guards to monitor the divisions of Imam. The local residents agreed to fulfill this condition and obey Mullah Dukai and his assistant Perkey, the recent murid of Shamil. The obedience of a part of the Aukh people was reinforced by 3 infantry battalions, a team of sappers, Georgian police, hundreds of Cossacks and 6 guns.

The fortification at the strategically important Aktash-Aukh with significant forces hampered the plans of Imam Shamil, who blamed Akhverdy-Magoma for the failure and unleashed anger on Aukh, ordering the execution of 4 people for sympathy for the Russians and took amanats (in fact, hostages, this practice was widespread among both sides) from the villages of Yaryksu-Aukh, Kishen-Aukh, Zandak and Gassanbekent.

Since Imam was not going to put up with the loss of Aukh, and it was problematic to keep units there, E. Golovin decided to relocate the obedient Aukh people to the Kumyk plane and entrusted this to Lieutenant General Feze, under whose command 233 Aukh families were resettled by September 21 in the villages of Endirey, Bata- Yurt and Bayram-Aul. The temporary fortification was demolished and its military post was transferred to the Vnepnaya fortress.

On September 22, General Grabbe went with troops to Yurt-Aukh, destroying the village of Dylm along the way. The Yurt-Aukh people, supported by Akhverdy-Magoma and Dzhevat Khan, stubbornly

defended every hut, every hedge of the gardens, but the Cossacks managed to occupy the entire village and the highlanders began to retreat to the forest, steadfastly holding a position on the top of the mountain, but were forced to retreat when they approached new divisions. Yurt-Aukh was destroyed to the ground along with its huge gardens.

After the occupation of Yurt-Aukh, the troops of Imam began to gather here. Imam himself occupied Aktash-Aukh. Shoip-mulla and Dzhanbek arrived to him with their detachments. The third battalion of the Kurinsky regiment, under the cover of artillery with a bayonet attack, occupied Aktash-Aukh, where three battalions and all the cavalry were quickly assembled to attack the enemy position. A fierce battle began. Bayonet attacks were interspersed with checkered counterattacks of the mountaineers, who suffered losses from artillery fire and were forced to retreat, and the next day a detachment of Russian troops moved to the river Yaryksu. However, the struggle for Aukh and Aukh people was not over.

7. Conclusion

The struggle in 1841 for the historical Aukh region, inhabited by Chechens, was a part of the Caucasian War. This period in historiography was called “the brilliant era of Shamil.” Imam Shamil, forced to flee Dagestan after the famous defense and capture of the village of Akhulgo by the Russians, found shelter in Chechnya. He was proclaimed its imam in 1840 and began an active struggle to spread and strengthen his power in the North Caucasus. The Caucasian Corps, the main conductor of St. Petersburg's policy here, under the command of General Golovin tried to prevent the strengthening of the power of Imam Shamil and for this purpose pursued an active offensive policy in 1841.

A part of the strategy of these political actors was the hostilities which took place in Aukh in 1841. The civilians suffered the greatest damage. Their villages were burned and destroyed. They were often forced to move under pressure from the forces of the imamate or the imperial army. The situation was aggravated by the fact that in every society there were both supporters of the imamate and supporters of the adoption of Russian citizenship. Nevertheless, a significant part of the Aukh people fought in the ranks of the Imam troops, putting forward famous warriors and naibs Ulubiy – mullah, Goitemir Aukhovskiy and others.

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