

## Materials Related to the Second World War in Narimanov's Personal Archive

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### Abstract.

Although the war waged by the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany was a part of the Second World War, it has entered Soviet historiography as the "Great Patriotic War". Azerbaijan also played a significant role in this war both in terms of strategy and human resources. More than 600,000 Azerbaijanis were involved for the war, and more than half of those who went to the front lost their lives. During the war, 128 Azerbaijanis, such as Hazi Aslanov, Mehdi Huseynzada, and Israfil Mammadov, were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

Azerbaijan supplied the front with weapons, clothing, food, medicine, and other strategic products. Women and teenagers also actively participated in production. It is enough to mention the key role of Baku oil in the victory over fascism to imagine obviously Azerbaijan's place in this war. The Azerbaijanis with no military obligation did their best for the Soviet Union's victory over fascism not only within the republic but also beyond its borders. All these processes are reflected in archival materials, including the personal archives of statesmen, cultural figures, and scientists in one way or another. One of such archives is the fund of the prominent statesman and writer Nariman Narimanov, preserved at the Institute of Manuscripts named after Mahammad Fuzuli of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences. These materials help us gain information about the participation of the writer's wife, Gulsum khanum Narimanova in the aid campaign for the front, his son Najaf Narimanov's participant in the battles, the course of the war, the reaction of the people to the news of victory, and more.

**Keywords:** Second World War, Great Patriotic War, archive, history, document

## Матеріали, пов'язані з Другою світовою війною, в особистому архіві Наріманова

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### Анотація.

Хоча війна, яку розв'язав Радянський Союз проти нацистської Німеччини, була частиною Другої світової війни, вона увійшла в радянську історіографію як «Велика Вітчизняна війна». Азербайджан також відіграв значну роль у цій війні як з точки зору стратегії, так і з точки зору людських ресурсів. У війні було задіяно понад 600 000 азербайджанців, а більше половини з тих, хто пішов на фронт, загинули. Під час війни 128 азербайджанців, таких як Хазі Асланов, Мехді Хусейнзада та Ісрафіл Мамедов, були удостоєні звання Героя Радянського Союзу.

Азербайджан постачав на фронт зброю, одяг, продовольство, медикаменти та інші стратегічні товари. Жінки та підлітки також брали активну участь у виробництві. Досить згадати про ключову роль бакинської нафти в перемозі над фашизмом, щоб наочно уявити собі місце Азербайджану в цій війні. Азербайджанці, не маючи військового обов'язку, робили все можливе для перемоги Радянського Союзу над фашизмом не тільки всередині республіки, а й за її межами. Всі ці процеси так чи інакше відображені в архівних матеріалах, в тому числі в особистих архівах державних діячів, діячів культури, вчених. Одним з таких архівів є фонд видатного державного діяча і письменника Нарімана Наріманова, що зберігається в Інституті рукописів імені Махаммада Фізулі Азербайджанської національної академії наук. Ці матеріали допомагають нам отримати інформацію про участь дружини письменника Гульсум Ханум Наріманова у поході допомоги фронту, учасника боїв його сина Наджафа Наріманова, перебіг війни, реакцію народу на звістку про перемогу тощо.

**Ключові слова:** Друга світова війна, Велика Вітчизняна війна, архів, історія, документ

### Introduction.

The Second World War was the largest and most devastating war in human history which continued between 1939-1945 years. This war was a global conflict which over 100 million people were involved, and in which most of the world's population was participated either directly or indirectly. Before the war, on March 23, 1939, Germany and the USSR confirmed their alliance through the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. And on September 1, 1939, the allies launched an attack on Poland, taking the first step toward an unprecedented global war. However, on June 22, 1941, Germany attacked its former ally, the USSR, violating the terms of the pact and initiating the brutal incident of World War II that is known in history as the Great Patriotic War which covered in 1941-1945 and which cost the lives of millions. All these events are reflected in one way or another in archival materials. A significant portion of these materials is kept in the personal archive of Nariman Narimanov, preserved at the Institute of Manuscripts named after Mammad Fuzuli of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences.

**Method and methodologies.** In the article uses the comparative historical and chronology method.

**Novelty in the article.** The novelty of the article is that the events related to the Great Patriotic War was analysed for the first time based on materials from the personal archive of the Institute of Manuscripts named after Muhammad Fuzuli of ANAS.

**The aim of the article.** The purpose of writing the article is to uncover archival materials related to the Great Patriotic War and to convey to readers the participation of Azerbaijanis in the war based on these documents.

### Main text.

Nariman Narimanov (1870-1925), a prominent public-political figure and writer of Azerbaijan, was the first Chairman of the Soviet of People's Commissars of the Azerbaijan SSR and the first Chairman of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR from the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (TSFSR). His numerous autograph works, articles, letters, memoirs, photographs, and other materials are preserved in the Fund No. 18 in archive kept at the Institute of Manuscripts named after Mahammad Fuzuli of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences.

The description of Narimanov's archive kept by the Institute of Manuscripts was prepared by Mehri Mammadova, PhD in Philology, the late researcher and long-time head of the Department for the Study of Personal Archives (Mammadova, 2012). She categorized the materials in this personal archive into groups such as the writer's works, personal documents, memoir notes, letters, photographs, etc. However, in addition to this valuable documentary resource of great importance for Azerbaijani history, she also identified other materials in the archive that are no less significant. Among these materials, the letters written during the Great Patriotic War by Gulsum Narimanova, N. Narimanov's wife, and

Najaf Narimanov, their son, Gulsum khanum's speeches and notes in the Anti-Fascist Committee are especially noteworthy.

The result of observations over the aforementioned Archive No. 18 by researchers that "*N. Narimanov's personal archive includes 150 documents belonging to Gulsum khanum Narimanova. These comprise her biography, works, memoirs about her son Najaf Narimanov and their correspondence, documents related to guardianship and overall public activity*" (Imanova, 2021, p.103).

In the correspondence between Gulsum Narimanova and her son Najaf, the horrors of World War II, more precisely, the Great Patriotic War, the Soviet army's victory celebrations over the enemy are reflected. It should also be noted that G. Narimanova's letters, memoirs, and other documents were developed by Aytan Imanova, a staff member of the "Study of Personal Archives" department of the Institute of Manuscripts and were later published as a separate book titled "*Gulsum khanum Narimanova: Her unknown pages of life in archival documents*" (Imanova, 2022). We decided to reexamine other documents included in this above-mentioned book and in addition, Nariman Narimanov's personal archive, within the context of the events of the Great Patriotic War.

For example, from a letter written by Najaf Narimanov to Gulsum khanum dated December 12, 1942, it becomes evident that the Soviet army not only dealt a crushing blow to the enemy in the Caucasus and Stalingrad but also made a significant contribution to the defeat of fascist troops in Africa:

*"Dear mother!*

*I have some time now, so I am writing to you...*

*Probably you are reading the newspapers and have already known how they have been defeated in Africa, the Caucasus, and Stalingrad. All these brilliant victories must lead to the complete destruction of the Germans. I am sure this will happen very soon"* (Najaf Narimanov's letter to his mother).

It is known that in February 1941, "Afrika Korps" which belongs to the German was deployed to North Africa under the command of Erwin Rommel. For nearly two years, this corps had gained significant superiority over British forces in Africa and had become a major threat to the USSR as well. The Germans had already moved eastward. There was also a threat to Egypt, which had previously been under British control, and to the Suez Canal, which was of vital importance in the war.

However, despite E. Rommel's serious efforts, "Afrika Korps" belonged to the German was unable to break through the reinforced positions of the British near the city of El Alamein. In the battles of El Alamein, all German and Italian attacks were repelled. One of the contributing factors to this was the Soviet Army's gaining superiority over Nazi Germany on the Eastern Front.

Although historians do not give information about the direct Soviet military participation in the African

front, they confirm that the crushing blow by the USSR to the Germans at Stalingrad had a decisive impact on the success of its allies in Africa. Perhaps, when Najaf Narimanov wrote to his mother, *"they were defeated in Africa, the Caucasus, and Stalingrad,"* he was referring to the heavy defeats suffered by the common enemy and the failure of strategic plans.

From the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, the Soviets achieved their first victory over Germany in the Battle of Stalingrad, which concluded in February of 1943. the Battle of Stalingrad, which takes place between July 17, 1942, and February 2, 1943, and which is remembered for causing the deaths and injuries of over 1.7 million people, is considered one of the largest and bloodiest battles during World War II. Let's consider the following facts to understand the scale of the battle: *"In the summer and autumn of 1942, during battles of Stalingrad which played a decisive role in the Great Patriotic War, 2 million soldiers from both sides participated. The fighting involved 2 thousand tanks, 1 thousand aircraft, 26 thousand artillery pieces, and mortars"* (Gaffarov, 2008, p. 36).

The attacks by the German on Stalingrad began in August 1942. And in November, despite suffering heavy losses, the fascists have been forced to retreat around the Volga River. Between November 19-23, 1942, through Operation Uranus, the Soviet Army encircled and defeated the German forces. Finally, on February 2, 1943, the Battle of Stalingrad ended with a Soviet victory.

*"The Soviet Army dealt a heavy and crushing blow to Nazi Germany on the Stalingrad front. The fascists lost 1.5 million soldiers and officers, over 3,000 tanks, artillery, and mortars, and 4,4 thousand combat and transport aircraft. Representatives of all Soviet peoples, as well as Azerbaijani soldiers and officers, contributed to the victory at Stalingrad. By the end of 1942, over 1,600 Azerbaijanis had been awarded the Medal "For the Defence of Stalingrad", established by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR"* (Gaffarov, 2008, p. 38). Najaf Narimanov was among the Azerbaijanis awarded this medal.

We can also obtain information about other decisive battles from the letters addressed by Gulsum khanum to her son Najaf; writings also provide:

*"My dear Najaf!*

*Today is August 9, and I have received your letter dated 29.7.1943. I was so happy. A few days ago, I received your letters dated July 19 and 25...*

*My dear, I congratulate you on the victory of the Red Army! A strong blow was dealt to the Germans. Glory to the liberators of Oryol and Belgorod! The Germans tried to frighten the Soviet soldiers with their new "Tiger" tanks and self-propelled guns. But it didn't work; their plans were completely ruined. I am sure that their executioners will soon be destroyed"* (Personal Archive Fund, n.d.a).

It is known that on July 5, 1943, the Germans begun

an attack operation on Oryol, Belgorod, and Kursk. The Soviet Army was able to repel the enemy's attack and, on July 12 of the same year, had launched a counteroffensive and delivered devastating blows to the German divisions.

In another letter of Gulsum khanum there are relevant notes on this subject:

*"... My dear, Najaf!*

*First, I congratulate you on the glorious victory of the Red Army and send you my fiery and heartfelt greetings! I wish you success in your frontline life and in your service.*

*My son, you cannot even imagine how joyful days Moscow is experiencing right now. Almost every day, the capital hosts a fireworks display to honor the heroic battles of the Red Army. The streets are filled with cheerful people. The skies of Moscow are lit with colourful lights, and our hearts beat with joy and pride.*

*Thank you for the postcard you sent on 04.09.1943"* (Personal Archive Fund, n.d.b).

If we pay attention to the dates mentioned in the letters, it becomes clear that they refer to the Battle of Kursk, which took place between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in July-August 1943 and in which the Red Army emerged victorious. We should note that while the first major victory over the fascists was achieved at Stalingrad, the Battle of Kursk was considered the true turning point during the war. Gulsum khanum's notes clearly show how important and joyous this victory in this battle was for the country.

The aspect that interests us is the direct alignment of the notes in the letters with historical events. The following excerpt from the "History of Azerbaijan" textbook, when compared with extracts from Gulsum khanum's letters, once again demonstrates that writing based on archival historical documents allows for more accurate conclusions to be drawn:

*"On July 5, 1943, the Nazis began an attack near Oryol, Belgorod, and Kursk with 50 units, including 16 tanks and motorized divisions. The Red Army repelled the enemy's attack and launched a counteroffensive on July 12. The Kursk Salient, one of the largest battles of the Second World War, created a turning point during the war. The Red Army, having seized the initiative, didn't lose it until the complete defeat of the fascists"* (Gaffarov, 2008, p. 44).

However, the document-based information resources in personal archives do not merely consist of historical facts; these materials also reflect the heartbeat of humanity, joy and pride, as well as anxiety and suffering.

For example, we learn from archival materials that after Najaf, holding the rank of Senior Lieutenant during the Great Patriotic War, was sent to the front, Gulsum khanum wrote a letter to Stalin, asking for her only son to be returned home. Despite the Supreme Commander's positive response to her request, Najaf voluntarily continued his path on the battlefield. Archival documents show that until his deployment to the front, Najaf served as a commander in military unit "N" located in Lviv city,



during his service, he was wounded twice and received treatment at a hospital in Saratov. A nurse of the hospital informed Gulsum khanum of this in a letter (Personal Archive Fund, n.d.d).

One of Najaf's comrades-in arms preserved in his memory the story of Najaf's going to the front line and his mysterious death there: *"Eventually, we were loaded into a wagon and taken to the city of Zaporizhzhia in Ukraine. We were part of the 77th Azerbaijani Division. When we arrived there, we heard that the son of Nariman Narimanov was also participating in battles in the city of Volnovakha. Narimanov's wife had written to Stalin, saying, 'I have one keepsake from Narimanov, please return my son to me'. Stalin contacted the military unit and ordered that Najaf Narimanov be discharged from service. However, Najaf replied that he would finish the fight first because he had already gone into battle. But he was killed in that very battle. We were eyewitnesses to these events"* (Najaf Narimanov, n.d.).

Najaf Narimanov was killed on September 10, 1943, in the city of Rostov. For his bravery during the Great Patriotic War, he was awarded twice: with the Medal *"for the Defence of Stalingrad"* and the Medal *"for Courage"*. His memory was immortalized after the war. On May 1, 1949, a monument was erected in his honor in the city of Volnovakha, Donbas region. In Nariman Narimanov's personal archive a letter sent to Gulsum khanum from the Soviet authorities of this city, and a photo of Najaf Narimanov's monument have been protected (Personal Archive Fund, n.d.e).

Among the materials preserved in Narimanov's personal archive there is also an excerpt from the decree related to the fact that Najaf Narimanov was posthumously awarded the Order of *"the Patriotic War, 1st Class"* (Personal Archive Fund, n.d.g.). In addition, a document expressing gratitude to Gulsum Narimanova from Colonel-General Artyomov, Commander of the Moscow Military District troops, for her active role in organizing the political and cultural welfare of Red Army soldiers recovering in military hospitals during the Great Patriotic War is also among the materials (Personal Archive Fund, n.d.k.).

It should also be noted that Gulsum Narimanova was a member of *"the Soviet Women's Anti-Fascist Committee"* during the Great Patriotic War. Her appeal, addressed to the women of England as a committee member, is also preserved at the Institute of Manuscripts:

***"Dear sisters, women of England!"***

*I want to speak to you about one of the millions of Soviet women — a person who, alongside her husband, father, and brothers, fought against the fascists. That someone is me! ...*

*I am a retiree. Due to recent events, my health has deteriorated. However, over time, I am recovering. I hope to begin working again soon. I swear that I will do everything in my power to help the Red Army by crushing the enemy. I am proud that my only son is on the front*

*lines, and that I am among the voluntary guardians of our Motherland..."* (Personal Archive Fund, n.d.c).

In a letter sent to Najaf, Gulsum khanum also wrote about her life during the period she was evacuated from Moscow to Tashkent and her involvement with a commission responsible for caring for orphaned children:

*"How eagerly the children waited for Sundays and their visitors! They used to rush into the arms of unfamiliar women with such joy that it was impossible to witness this scene without emotion. At that moment, my hatred toward the Hitlerites, who had left these poor children orphaned, would burn even more fiercely..."*

*On the rear, all women — mothers, sisters, and daughters—are tirelessly working in factories, collective farms, and plants to assist our Red Army soldiers. Groups of women and girls from our multiethnic country are voluntarily heading to the front lines as doctors, nurses, and medics and go to defend the Motherland. Not a single woman from our freedom-loving country can remain on the sidelines in the fight against the Hitlerite executioners."* (Personal Archive Fund, n.d.c).

Archival documents show that although the loss of her only son was a devastating blow to Gulsum khanum, she did not cease her activities on the rear. Gulsum khanum was trying to aid the front lines, to help wounded soldiers, and to soothe the wounds of grieving mothers like herself. Ayten Imanova writes in her article titled *"New Research on Gulsum khanum Narimanova (Based on Personal Archival Documents)"*: *"Gulsum khanum Narimanova was not only the life partner of Nariman Narimanov but also his ideological comrade, working side by side with him. This woman was mainly engaged in charitable work and the orphanages and children's care centres established by her in Baku operated until the late 1950s."* (Imanova, 2021, p.103).

From Gulsum khanum's post-war correspondence with residents she befriended while in evacuation in Tashkent, we learn that: *"Gulsum khanum worked tirelessly in Uzbekistan — in the Commission for the Evacuation of Children, in departments for the public welfare of the elderly and the sick, and in the Central Household Commission, and there, she continued her charitable and anti-fascist activities consistently."* (Imanova, 2021, p.107). After returning to Moscow in 1943, Gulsum khanum served in a military hospital, caring for wounded soldiers who reminded her of her son, organizing cultural events to boost the morale of the injured. Even after the war, she continued her work in this field Supporting children who had been wounded and psychologically traumatized during the war, sending them gifts during holidays.

In one of the letters sent in 1946 by children undergoing treatment at the Moscow Prosthetic Rehabilitation Institute, addressed to Gulsum khanum Narimanova, a member of the Red Cross Committee's sponsorship commission, the following was written: *"We know that your husband was a Bolshevik and that your*

*only son died on the front lines of the Patriotic War. The care shown to us by such a person is especially valuable... Your love and sincerity give us courage and faith in the future*" (Personal Archive Fund, n.d.h).

The state authorities also recognized her efforts and awarded Gulsum khanum with the honorary badge "Excellence in Public Health of the USSR".

As we can see, the personal archive of Nariman Narimanov, preserved at the Institute of Manuscripts named after Muhammad Fuzuli of the ANAS, sheds light on the remarkable moments of lives of three individuals (the prominent public and political figure Nariman Narimanov, the well-known philanthropist Gulsum Narimanova, and their only son, the heroic soldier Najaf Narimanov). Among these archival materials, the document-information resource related to Najaf Narimanov and Gulsum Narimanova are not only about their personal lives but also helps to obtain important historical information about the years of the Great Patriotic War.

### Conclusions.

Although Azerbaijan was considered part of the rear during World War II, Azerbaijanis made invaluable contributions to the Great Patriotic War both on the front lines and in the rear. The selflessness of the people, the heroism of courageous soldiers, and rich resource potential had a decisive impact on the course of the

war. To this day, the people of Azerbaijan remember the heroes of the Great Patriotic War and the veterans of the rear with deep respect and honor.

Some of the historical materials that shed light on the heroic lives of our compatriots who, even beyond the borders of Azerbaijan, acted with the motto "*Everything for the front, everything for victory*" during the Great Patriotic War are preserved in personal archives. One of such collections is Fund No. 18, kept at the Institute of Manuscripts named after Muhammad Fuzuli of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan. Officially registered as the personal archive of Nariman Narimanov, this fund also contains the personal archives of his wife, Gulsum Narimanova, and their son, Najaf Narimanov. Among the materials of this fund there are the correspondence between mother and son from 1941 to 1943, letters sent to Gulsum khanum during and after the war, documents and photographs related to both individuals, and these provide important information about the beginning, course, and outcome of the Great Patriotic War, the bitter realities of the war, and the efforts to overcome them. In this regard, the personal archive of Nariman Narimanov is not only significant for studying Azerbaijani history up to 1925 but also serves as a valuable source of information on World War II and its crucial component, the Great Patriotic War.

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