

TO THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF GERMAN SETTLEMENTS IN AZERBAIJAN

2017 marks the 200th anniversary of the resettlement of Germans and the creation of German settlements in the South Caucasus, particularly in the territory of Azerbaijan. Activities on the occasion of this anniversary are included in the UNESCO program. In connection with this date, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev signed an order on 30 August 2016 "On the 200th anniversary of the establishment of German settlements in the South Caucasus region".

The resettlement of Germans and their settlement on the territory of Azerbaijan began in the first decades of the 19th century. At the beginning of the 19th century, Germany, devastated by Napoleonic wars, was in a difficult economic situation, which contributed to the intensification of migration processes. Religious and sectarian movements became active in the southern lands

of Germany - Württemberg, one of which was separatism. Some of the followers of this movement wanted to move to the East, in particular, to the Caucasus, which, in their opinion, was "not too far from the cradle of the human race". (1) As a result, according to some sources, sectarians appealed to Russian Emperor Alexander I, who passed through Stuttgart while attending the Congress of Vienna, asking him to allow them to settle in the Caucasus. (2)

In the early 19th century, the territory of the South Caucasus, including Northern Azerbaijan, was conquered by the Russian Empire. From that period, Russian czarism conducted a policy of resettlement in the South Caucasus, which led to changes in the ethno-religious and demographic map of the Caucasus region. Thus, the resettlement of Germans was one of the directions



German colony of Helenendorf. Goygol, Azerbaijan

of the resettlement policy of Russian czarism conducted in the Caucasus region, as a result of which Emperor Alexander I permitted a group of German colonists-separatists to move to the Caucasus.

The resettlement of German colonists from Germany to the South Caucasus began in 1816 and lasted until 1818. In 1817, the first group of German settlers arrived in Tiflis, 35 versts from which the first German colony in the South Caucasus - Marienfeld - was founded near the village of Sarti-Chala. (3)

By the autumn of 1818, about 500 families of colonists reached Tiflis and settled on the territory of Georgia and Azerbaijan. In the spring of 1819, some of the German settlers were resettled by the tsarist authorities to the Yelizavetpol (Ganja) district in the territory of Azerbaijan, where two German settlements were created - Helenendorf, on the site of the destroyed ancient Azerbaijani village of Khanliglar (now the city of Goygol), and Annenfeld, on the site of the ancient Azerbaijani city of Shamkir. Subsequently, the number of German settlements in Azerbaijan increased and reached eight by the beginning of the 20th century - Helenendorf, Annenfeld, Georgsfeld, Alekseevka, Grunfeld, Eigenfeld, Traubenfeld and Yelizavetinka, which were located mainly in the places of old Azerbaijani villages in Goygol, Shamkir, Gazakh, Tovuz and Agstafa districts. In the

second half of the 19th - early 20th centuries, representatives of European nations, including Germans, among whom there were specialists from various industries - entrepreneurs, engineers, architects, scientists, teachers, etc. - migrated to Baku in connection with economic and industrial development and the presence of great prospects. According to the results of the 1939 population census, 23,133 Germans lived in Azerbaijan. (4)

The economic activities of the German colonies were directly connected with agriculture and agricultural production. The main economic specialization of the German colonies was viticulture, which was developed in Azerbaijan since ancient times, and winemaking. In the German colonies there were large wineries of the Fohrer brothers and the Hummel brothers, as well as medium-sized and small farms. Specifically, the company of the Fohrer brothers built a brewery, a brandy distillery and an alcohol distillation plant in Helenendorf. Along with viticulture and winemaking, agriculture, cattle breeding, dairy production, various kinds of crafts, especially manufacture of vans, etc., also developed in the German settlements.

In 1922, the Production Cooperative of Winemakers of the Ganja Region, Konkordia, was established, which united winemaking farms of German colonists. By 1926, the cooperative operated distilleries, alcohol distillation



Laboratory of the Konkordia winery

and brandy factories, wine cellars, as well as ancillary enterprises and workshops that were located in each of the German settlements. (5) In the late 1920s and early 1930s, in connection with the collectivization of agriculture by the Soviet leadership, collective farms were created in German settlements like in all villages of Azerbaijan (in Helenendorf - the Thalmann collective farm, in Annenfeld - the Clara Zetkin collective farm, in Traubenfeld - Sowjetstern and others). All these collective farms specialized mainly in viticulture and winemaking.

Cultural life – education and spiritual culture - was of great importance in the life of the German community. The first school was built in Helenendorf in 1842. (6) In 1924-1926, in all German settlements and in Baku, i.e., in all of Azerbaijan, there were eight German schools of the first stage with the average number of 1,090 stu-

dents and one German school of the second stage in Helenendorf with 213 students, with a total of 69 teachers. (7) German, Azerbaijani and Russian teachers - V. I. Hummel, O. I. Vuhner, M. Ibrahimli, E. Tselinskiy, G. I. Olkhovskiy and others - worked at the schools. In the late 1920s, a machine-building technical school was opened in Helenendorf, and in the 1930s, a technical school for viticulture and winemaking operated in Helenendorf.

The German community founded the Lutheran church in Azerbaijan. In 1854, the first stone of the church was laid in Helenendorf (Goygol), which was opened in 1857, and in 1909 the foundation of a church was laid in Annenfeld (Shamkir). In 1885, the Baku City Duma decided to allocate a site to the Lutheran Society for the construction of a Lutheran parish, where the Lutheran church in Baku, solemnly opened in 1899, was built. The Lutheran churches were erected by architects of German origin A. Eichler and F. Lehmkuhl.

During the existence of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1918-1920), a deputy from the German population, Lorenz J. Kuhn, was represented in the ADR Parliament. (8) A bright event in the life of the German colonies at that time was the solemn celebration of the jubilee of the Helenendorf colony, i.e. the 100th anniversary of the resettlement of Germans to Azerbaijan, held on 9 June 1919. The colony of Helenendorf received a con-



German colonists harvesting grapes in Helenendorf

Korkordia company shop in Moscow

gratulatory telegram from the Deputy Chairman of the ADR Parliament, Hasan bay Agayev: *“By organizing the celebrations of the centenary of the Helenendorf colony, the Presidium of the Parliament of the Azerbaijan Republic welcomes the centenary of the Helenendorf colony and wishes this small cultural cell further prosperity and well-being”.* (9)

In the 1920s-1930s, newspapers in German - “Bauer und Arbeiter” (“Peasant and Worker”) and “Lenins Weg” (“Lenin’s Way”) were published in Azerbaijan. (10)

One of the interesting events in the cultural life of the German settlements was the opening of a local history museum in Helenendorf in 1928. It was organized by a native of this colony, archaeologist and teacher Jacob Hummel, who conducted archaeological excavations in Ganja District. (11) In 1940, an exhibition dedicated to the great Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi, whose 800th anniversary was celebrated in the Soviet Union, was opened in the local history museum of Helenendorf. (12)

During the entire period of their residence in the territory of Azerbaijan, German settlers preserved their traditional national and ethnographic features, which were expressed both in the material and spiritual culture of the German population. Architecturally, the German colonies used the Gothic style, which was especially





Jacob Hummel - scientist-archeologist from Helenendorf

pronounced in the construction of German churches, for example, the Church of St. John in Helenendorf. The houses of the colonists represented the "alleman type" and fronted the street from the façade, while parallel village streets had sidewalks. In the German colonies, there were electric lighting and plumbing, pharmacies and medical stations. In general, the German colonies in the South Caucasus, being rural settlements, were built in the German architectural style reminiscent of German villages in Germany and combined residential houses, business buildings and public and cultural buildings in a single complex.

German colonists retained their customs and traditions passed down from generation to generation. The main holidays celebrated by the German community were Christmas and Easter. Also, one of the festivities was the harvest festival. The colonists preserved their national folklore. There was a club in Yelenendorf where theatrical and sports circles, a choir, a brass band and a library were organized.

A special manifestation of the ethnic self-consciousness of the German community was the preservation

and use of the native language. German colonists, who came from South Germany - Württemberg, were Swabians by origin and retained their characteristic ethnographic features and the Swabian dialect. In the names of German settlements, German toponyms used endings such as "feld" – meaning field in German (Annenfeld) and dorf - village (Helenendorf). The streets, for example, in Helenendorf were called Gartenstrasse (Garden Street), Helenenstrasse (Helen Street), etc. (13)

Between Azerbaijanis and German settlers there were processes of intercultural dialogue, which were expressed mainly in mutual enrichment with experience, knowledge and techniques in various spheres of life, primarily in the economic sphere. Taking an ethnographic trip to the city of Goygol (where the German colony of Helenendorf was located), you can see some technical structures (for example, kahriz), borrowed by the German settlers from the Azerbaijani population. The Germans colonists adopted some methods of cultivation and irrigation from Azerbaijanis, in particular, irrigation systems for pumping groundwater - kahrizes, which have existed and have been traditional in Azerbaijan since ancient times, local methods of wine-growing - local varieties of grapes, vehicles - local carts (araba) and etc. Azerbaijanis adopted from colonists their traditional features used in wine production - European grape varieties, fertilizers, medicinal products, technical innovations, European vans, etc. (14) German settlers studied the Azerbaijani language. One of the most important factors of their life and economic and cultural development was hospitality and tolerance in Azerbaijan, as a result of which the Germans, like representatives of other peoples living in the republic, had freedom of religion, received education, worked, preserved their national and cultural values and lived peacefully in the multicultural space of our country.

With the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War, the Soviet-led process of deportation affected Soviet Germans, whom the USSR leadership considered to be the "fifth column". On 8 October 1941, the USSR State Committee for Defense adopted a decree, which ordered the resettlement of the German population from the Azerbaijani SSR – 22,741 people and from the Georgian SSR – 23,580 people. The NKVD of the USSR was entrusted to implement all measures for their forced resettlement to the Kazakh SSR from 15 to 30 October 1941. (15) Germans from Azerbaijan were accommodated in special

Lesson of chemistry in the German school in Helenendorf



settlements established in remote areas of the Kazakh SSR where they were mobilized to a labor army, were registered with the NKVD and were deprived of many rights, above all, the right to free movement. (16)

Only on the basis of decrees of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR dated 13 December 1955, 29 August 1964 and 3 November 1972, were the Germans given the opportunity to leave these special settlements. However, they were finally rehabilitated on

the basis of the Declaration of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR "On the Recognition of Repressive Acts against Forcibly Resettled Peoples as Illegal and Criminal and Ensuring Their Rights" signed on 14 November 1989. (17) In the late 1980s and early 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, most of the Soviet Germans migrated to Germany. The deportation put an end to the history of the German population who lived in Azerbaijan for about two centuries.



Germans from all over the Caucasus attend German music festivals in Helenendorf



Photo of the German family in Helenendorf



In modern Azerbaijan, monuments of the German heritage, Lutheran churches in Baku, in the cities of Goygol and Shamkir, the houses and structures of the German colonists who lived here are preserved. In 2010, after renovation and restoration work, the building of the former Lutheran church in Baku was opened - the hall of chamber and organ music of the Muslim Magomayev Azerbaijan State Philharmonic Society, which was attended by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva. In 2013, the head of state got acquainted with the restored building of the German Lutheran church in Shamkir. The German-Azerbaijan Cultural Society Kapelhaus operates in Baku, where cultural events, concerts and exhibitions are held. The city retains architectural buildings built by German architects. This is another example of and testament to tolerance, the policy of multiculturalism, the careful attitude to the historical past and culture of various ethnic communities and representatives of various faiths residing in Azerbaijan. 🌟

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Street with German houses in Shamkir. Modern photo

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The street in Goygol. Modern photo