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# AZERBAIJAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF GERMANY

Germany and Azerbaijan are connected by intense and sound relations. Hundred years ago, the German government already estimated and supported the formation and development of the first Azerbaijani democracy. On the occasion of the centenary of the foundation of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic we want to give an account of some aspects thereto.

By 1890, the German Reich maintained a consular representation in the Azerbaijani capital Baku. Before the First World War, Baku was the most prosperous city of the Caucasian governments held by the Russian empire. When the war broke out, the German mission there had to be shut down. The government of the Reich found another way to provide information about the state of affairs in the Tsar's empire. By order of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Freiherr Max von Oppenheim established the „Information office for the Orient“, which included a Russian department.

When the Great War begun in August 1914, the German government tried to foment ethnic conflicts in the Tsar's empire in order to weaken the combatant Russia. An insurgency in Caucasia was also planned. For that purpose, the Georgian ruler George Matschabeli made arrangements with Muslim politicians. He was supposed to advance their interests as well and therefore met with representatives of the German Ministry of foreign affairs in spring 1915. Two years later, the Tsar's regime broke down due to internal conflicts. The parliament of Petrograd established a provisional government. The governor in Caucasia committed his authority to Georgian politicians in situ. Russia, however, persisted to be a warring power. The German government maintained its policy of insurgency and organized the transport of Rus-



*National march written by Uzeyir Hajibayli  
very soon began to be used  
as the national anthem of the ADR*

sian revolutionists from their exile in Switzerland back to their home country. At night-time between the 6th and the 7th of November 1917 the communists, who called themselves Bolsheviks, rose to power in Petrograd by coup d'état. Lenin, who previously had lived in exile, became leader of the government called Council of the People's Commissioners. Stalin, of Georgian origin, took the leadership of the commissioner's office of the affairs of the nationalities. The peace-offering initiated

by Lenin to the combatant nations resulted in a peace treaty with the German Reich, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey. This treaty didn't comprise an adjustment of plot boundaries with Georgia, though. Any attempt to found new states in this region were therefore substantially impeded.

On paper, the leading Bolsheviks acknowledged the national right of self-determination, in practice, they acted against it. A declaration signed by Lenin and Stalin on November 15, 1917 secured the "Right of the Russian peoples to self-determination until disengagement and formation of an independent state." In the "call to the working Muslims of Russia and the Orient" of December 3, 1917, signed by Lenin and Stalin as well, it is declared, they could "establish their national life freely and without restraint." Their rights would be protected. The Caucasian politicians however did not adopt the recommendations of the Council of the People's Commissioners, but formed the Transcaucasian Commission-ership, a government consisting of three Georgians, two Armenians, two Azerbaijanis und two Russians, ruled by the Georgian parliamentarian Yevgeni Gegetschkori, on November 28, 1917 in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia. Based on an analysis of the Russian department of the information office for the Orient, there was nowhere any mention of conflicts between Muslims and Georgians in Transcaucasia. "The Georgians and the Muslims agree to found a federal Transcaucasia, the Armenians are against it." The relationship of Transcaucasians to Bolshevism was negative. For the Council of the People's Commissioners, Stepan Schaumian was supposed to organize the Communist takeover in Caucasia. Starting point for this was Baku, where the Bolshevik power was established already since the end of 1917. In spring 1918, there occurred violent attacks of the Russian bands of soldiers and the Armenians to Muslims in the area.

Against all proclamations, the Council of the People's Commissioners refused to recognize the independence of the non-Russian peoples and also prevented any democratic development in Russia itself. Lenin had the legislative assembly dissolved on January 19, 1918, the day after its constitution in Petrograd. In Tbilisi, Transcaucasian representatives subsequently formed the Transcaucasian state parliament on February 10. This parliament proclaimed the independency of the Transcaucasian Democratic Federal Republic on April 22, 1918. The president of the parliament Nikolia Tshcheidse acted as the head of the state. The head of government and minister of foreign affairs Akaki Tshenkeli



*Kress von Kressenstein*

telegraphically informed the German ministry of foreign affairs on the formation of the state. The German minister of foreign affairs tried to accomplish a speedy recognition of the Caucasian Republic by the German Reich, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria, but also by Russia and Ukraine and wished to establish friendly relationships with the new state in order to bring it economically and politically under German influence. Turkey, by contrast, planned to recapture some formerly Turkish areas in Transcaucasia.

On April 29, 2018, the Chancellor of German Reich Georg von Hertling authorized the Royal Bavarian General Major Otto von Lossow to conduct peace negotiations with the government of Transcaucasia. The talks failed due to the territorial demands of Turkey. Due to this, the Caucasian Federation disintegrated. On May 26, the state parliament and the government dissolved. Following a notification of Tshenkeli to the



*Friedrich von der Goltz*

German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this decision was made because of the "Turkish advance into the territory of Caucasia, which shook the foundations of the Transcaucasian Federal Republic". In Tbilisi, the Democratic Republic of Georgia was founded on the same day. On the following day, the Muslim members of parliament constituted the National Council of Azerbaijan. On the next day, he proclaimed the establishment of an independent and autonomous state as a democratic republic. Friendly relationships with all states were to be built. On this day, the Republic of Armenia was founded in Tbilisi. The National Council installed the first Azerbaijani government led by Fətəli Xan Xoyski in Elisabethpol on June 15, 1918.

The German Reich was represented in Tbilisi again from May 21, 1918, by Graf Friedrich-Werner von der Schulenburg, who had already been consul before the Great War. The military leadership recommended the sending of Freiherr Friedrich Kreß von Kressenstein in order to ascertain the situation in Caucasia. The Bavar-

ian officer received letters of recommendation signed by the Chancellor to the three governments. On board of the steamship "General", the German delegation reached on June 23 the port of Poti, together with the missions of Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria. On the next day, the journey was continued by train to Tbilisi, where the heads of the three delegations handed over their letters of recommendation.

The document intended for the government of Azerbaijan was presented by Kreß on June 17 in Elisabethpol. Following his notification to Hertling, a strict touch with the Reich was very desirable for Azerbaijan politicians due to the lack of trust in the reliability of the Turkish friendship and the expectation of a better representation of their interests by the German Reich. On June 30, Kreß presented his letter of recommendation to the government of Armenia in Erivan.

The German military leadership considered the oil of Baku to be most important for Germany and even planned to send its own troops there, if necessary. The city and the area were occupied by British troops on August 4, 1918, and, after their withdrawal in September, by Turkish armed forces. Together with the Turks, the government of Azerbaijan also moved into the capital of the country. The Turkish expansion in Caucasia led to a severe dispute with the German ally, which was finally resolved by negotiation. On September 23 1918 the Turkish head of the government Mehemed Talaat Pascha and the state secretary Paul von Hintze in the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed a secret protocol, which included the recognition of the states of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan by the Turkish empire. "Germany recognizes Georgia only, but will appoint consuls for Armenia and Azerbaijan before. The Turkish government withdraws their troops from Armenia and Azerbaijan."

Friedrich Kreß strove for the reopening resp. installation of new consular missions in Caucasia. Consuls for Baku and Erivan to be appointed immediately were supposed to move to their residences promptly. The consul general Heinrich Brode was commissioned with the establishment of the consulate in Erivan. Freiherr Friedrich von der Goltz, the former German military attaché in Sofia, travelled to Baku. Kreß instructed Khan Chojski by letter from September 24, 1918 about his order "to stay at the residence of the government of Azerbaijan for the time being. Baron von der Goltz will mediate the communication between Your Excellency and me and is also obliged to advice and support Your Excellency, if

you wish." The German representative arrived by train in Baku on October 2<sup>nd</sup> and later wrote: "On the following day, I paid my inaugural visits to the leading men of the state." They received him in the hotel Metropole. Khan Chojski responded to the speech of the Freiherr von der Goltz, that he "was fortunate that it was now possible to him and to his government to keep in touch with the great German Reich, on whose support he hoped. (...) After this solemn ceremony I was escorted to a rich buffet. There, the president raised a glass of champagne for the good of the German Emperor. I responded with a toast to the Republic of Azerbaijan and its president. Then we took a seat on the richly laden tables, on which all sorts of delicacies ... were served. This form of greeting at an inaugural audience of the representative of a foreign state certainly contravened the etiquette. However, it had the advantage, that there immediately arouse a favorable atmosphere with a beneficial influence of the relationship. (...) In Khan Chojski I discovered a perfect gentleman. We quickly gained trust to each other and would have been able to achieve a fruitful cooperation to promote mutual interests, if my activities hadn't found a sudden end just four weeks later."

The most important problem to discuss with the government of Azerbaijan was the purchase of petrol and fuel oil for Germany. The Turkish military forces though demanded the oil products as a loot. The German representative finally agreed with the Turkish occupiers to exchange preyed Russian military equipment for Naphta.

The security situation in Baku was challenging. The occupation of the city was followed by heavy riots. Following his notification of October 19, 1918, the German representative took the excesses against Armenians for a reaction to Armenian assaults against the Azerbaijani people of Baku and the surrounding villages in March 1918. Upon request of the government of Azerbaijan, a German professional consul was supposed to be sent to Baku. Due to the ceasefire, the aspirant Fritz Grobba chosen for this position had to interrupt his journey at the Romanian port Braila.

The Turkish Empire and the German Reich had to sign the armistice with the Entente on October 30 resp. November 11, 1918 and were obliged to withdraw their troops from Caucasia. Thereby the mission of the Freiherr von der Goltz in Baku was finished. He left the city on November 2, 1918. Freiherr Friedrich Kreß von Kressenstein and Graf Werner von der Schulenburg were interned and returned home from Turkey

in June, 1919. The safeguarding of German interests in Tiflis and Baku had been taken over by the Persian consular representations in situ.

The Azerbaijani Democratic Republic, which existed for almost two years, was a sovereign state and the first democracy of the Muslim world. The most important foreign-policy problem of the states of Transcaucasia in these days was the international recognition. A delegation sent to the peace conference in Paris accomplished the recognition of the Republic Azerbaijan by the Western allies. Subsequently, many countries engaged in official relations with her. Moscow, though, never accepted the self-determination of the states of Transcaucasia. The first victim was Azerbaijan because of the oil. On the morning of April 28, 1920, a revolutionary committee led by Nariman Narimanov rose to power in Baku and requested Lenin for military help, which arrived promptly. Later on, the same day, Azerbaijan was proclaimed to be a Socialist Soviet republic. In November 1920, the communists took over in Armenia also and in April 1921 in Georgia. The three Caucasian states were incorporated into the Soviet Union and remained there up to its end in 1991. After that, they regained their independence. With an exchange of notes between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the German Embassy Moscow in February/March 1992, diplomatic relations were established. Since then, Germany has become an important political, economic and cultural partner of Azerbaijan. 🌟

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