

GERMANS IN AZERBAIJAN: A RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS

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Azerbaijan, which is located between the West and East, became the home of representatives of many different nationalities at certain times throughout history. This ethnic diversity, which is still retained today, and the peaceful coexistence in our state of members of different nationalities, cultures, and confessions show the tolerance and respect the

Azeris have for these people. Germans are also some of the representatives of the European culture who have lived for a long time in Azerbaijan. Looking at their lives and vital activity in this country is of special interest and presents a graphic example of the interrelationship between western and eastern cultures within a single society.

Migration Processes

Germans began migrating to Azerbaijan in the first decades of the 19th century for a number of reasons.¹ The primary reason was the disastrous political and economic situation in Germany at this time as a consequence of the Napoleonic wars, which gave rise to mounting discontent among the masses and intensified the migration processes. The south of Germany, Württemberg, where dissident movements, including separatism, were becoming active, found itself in particularly dire straits. In search of salvation, some of its residents expressed the desire to move to the East, in particular to the Caucasus, since, in their opinion, it was located “not far from the cradle of the human race.”² They made this request of Russian Emperor Alexander I, who, on his way back from the Vienna Congress in 1816, was traveling through Stuttgart.³

We will note that by this time, the Central Caucasus, including North Azerbaijan, had already been conquered by the Russian Empire, after which czarism was faced with the question of reinforcing its supremacy among the local population. For this purpose and further development of the region’s resources, the Russian autocrat had to create a reliable sociopolitical, economic, and ethnocultural fulcrum in the region. When carrying out these tasks, the czarist authorities engaged in targeted resettlement of Armenians and Russians, which led to serious ethno-confessional and demographic changes in the very region where a group of German colonists were resettled at that time. We will remind you that on 22 July, 1763, Catherine II issued a manifesto which blazed the trail for mass

¹ See: E. Ismailov and Z. Kengerli, “O kategorii Kavkaz,” Reports of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, Vol. LVIII, No. 5-6, Elm, Baku, 2002, pp. 290-294.

² S. Smirnov, “Nemetskie sektanty za Kavkazom,” *Russkii vestnik*, Vol. 57, Moscow, 1865, pp. 230-233.

³ See: P. Basikhin, “Nemetskie kolonii na Kavkaze. Etnograficheskii ocherk,” *Kavkazskii vestnik*, No. 1, 1900, p. 14.

emigration of Germans to Russia.⁴ So migration of Germans to the new lands of the Russian Empire, before they were fully assimilated, became traditional as early as the second half of the 18th century.

According to some data, between 1816 and 1818, 1,400 families (6-7,000 people) left Württemberg for the Central Caucasus.⁵ But as a result of the immense losses along the way, by the fall of 1818 only about 500 of them arrived in Tiflis.⁶ Initially, six German colonies were founded in Georgia. But there was not enough convenient public land for all the emigrants near Tiflis, so the authorities decided to send them to the Elizavetpol uezd. General Ermolov's letter missive noted: "There is a lot of public land in the Elizavetpol uezd and it is beneficial in many respects to settle the colonists there."⁷ So in the spring of 1819, some families were sent to Azerbaijan, to the Elizavetpol area (now a suburb of Ganja), where two of their settlements were established. One of them (Helenendorf) was built on the territory of the destroyed Azerbaijani village of Khanlyklar (today Khanlar), seven versts from the town of Elizavetpol, and the second (Annenfeld) arose at the site of the ancient Azerbaijani town of Shamkir. Referring to several studies, we can maintain that 127 families settled in Helenendorf (approximately 600 people) and 67 families (300-400 people) in Annenfeld.⁸ By the beginning of the 20th century, there were as many as eight German settlements in Azerbaijan: Helenendorf, Annenfeld, Georgsfeld, Alexeevka, Grünfeld, Eigenfeld, Traubenfeld, and Elizavetinka. They were all built in the Khanlar, Shamkir, Kazakh, Taus, and Akstafa districts (mainly on the sites of old Azerbaijani settlements).

Economic and Cultural Life

The period between the founding of the first settlements in Azerbaijan (1819) and the mid-19th century can be called the stage of initial establishment, setting up, and adaptation of the colonists to the local living conditions. At that time, their economic activity was mainly of an in kind, consumer nature aimed at meeting their own needs. We will note that being peasants by origin and social class, they engaged in agriculture.

During the second half of the 19th century, the main area of their activity was winegrowing and winemaking, which successfully blended with the elements of capitalist relations that appeared in agriculture and with the emergence in Azerbaijan of certain industrial branches. By applying the skills brought from their historical homeland, making use of the local features of the developed winegrowing culture, exchanging experience with members of the indigenous population, and engaging in painstaking labor, the vineyards and wine of the German colonists acquired wide renown. The efforts exerted by the winemaking companies of the Vohrer Brothers and the Hummel Brothers made an immense contribution to the development of this sphere. By this time, these families owned many in-

⁴ See: *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii s 1649 goda* (Full Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire since 1649), Vol. XVI, 1830, pp. 313-316.

⁵ See: Schweinitz, *Helenendorf. Eine deutsche Kolonie im Kaukasus*, Berlin, 1908, p. 3; P. Basikhin, op. cit.

⁶ See: F. Zimmer, *Koloniia Helenendorf. Elisavetpolskoi gubernii i uezda*, SMOMK, Iss. 29, Tiflis, 1901, pp. 2-3.

⁷ *Akty sobrannye Kavkazskoi arheograficheskoi komissiei (AKAK)* (Acts Gathered by the Caucasian Archeographic Commission (ACAC), ed. by Adolf Berzhe, Vol. 6, Part 1, Tiflis, 1874, p. 331.

⁸ See: K. Stumpp, "Die Auswanderung aus Deutschland nach Rußland in den Jahren 1763 bis 1862," *Jahrbuch für ostdeutsche Volkskunde*, Band 22, Stuttgart, 1979, pp. 210-217; N.K. Nikiforov, "Ekonomicheskii byt nemetskikh kolonistov v Zakavkazskom krae," in: *Documents for Studying the Economic Existence of State Peasants of the Transcaucasus Territory*, Vol. 1, Tiflis, 1886, p. 104.

dustrial enterprises, trade outlets, land plots, and a large amount of capital. Even then they were the largest entrepreneurs among the German colonists not only in Azerbaijan, but also throughout the entire Central Caucasus.

At the end of the 19th-beginning of the 20th century, a large number of foreigners appeared, including Germans, in Azerbaijan, particularly in Baku. Among them were businessmen, industrialists, engineers, architects, doctors, scientists, teachers, and so on. In particular, we will note such well-known German industrialists as Siemens, who owned large copper-smelting production plants, and the owners of the Benkendorf Trade House Company, who also acquired oil plants. Incidentally, this flow of foreigners was generated by the oil boom in Azerbaijan which began at this time.

Of course, World War I, in which Russia and Germany found themselves in opposite camps, had a negative influence on the status of the Germans living in the Russian Empire. At the beginning of the war, the czarist government adopted several laws which restricted their rights to own real estate, teach in German, and so on. Only after the February Revolution did the Provisional Government annul these laws.

On 28 May, 1918, Azerbaijan was the first independent democratic republic to appear in the East, which existed until April 1920. The resolution on declaring Azerbaijan an independent state adopted on 28 May, 1918, announced: "The Azerbaijani Democratic Republic guarantees civil and political rights to all citizens within its borders, regardless of nationality, confession, social status, and gender. The Azerbaijani Democratic Republic grants broad maneuver for free development to all the nationalities residing on its territory."⁹

The sociopolitical, economic, and cultural reforms which took place in Azerbaijan in 1918-1920 also affected the Germans in the republic. For example, their deputy, Lorenz Yakovlevich Kuhn, was represented in its parliament.¹⁰ A vibrant event in the life of the German colonies at that time was the celebration of Helenendorf's anniversary, that is, the 100th anniversary of the Germans' emigration to Azerbaijan. This celebration, which was held on 9 June, 1919 with the permission of the governor of Ganja, took place in an atmosphere of great festivity.

In April 1920, as a result of the republic's occupation by the Red Army, Soviet power was established in North Azerbaijan. All of the changes which took place during the subsequent years had an enormous impact on the life of its population and, naturally, on the status of the Germans living here.

During the first years of the Soviet era, instability and an economic slump were observed in their settlements due to the so-called "war communism" policy. After ratification of the first Soviet decrees, including on land and on nationalization of private industrial enterprises, throughout Azerbaijan (and throughout the Soviet expanse as a whole), expropriation of land endowments began, which were redistributed in keeping with the egalitarian principle. What is more, a large number of beasts of burden and other property were confiscated from the German peasants, mainly for the needs of the Red Army contingents.¹¹ The colonists' winemaking enterprises, including the well-known large companies of Vohrer and Hummel, were nationalized, which led to their collapse.¹²

Between 1921 and 1922, due to the country's transfer to the new economic policy (NEP), certain improvements were designated in the socioeconomic conditions of the German settlements. For

⁹ *Azerbaidzhanskaia Demokraticheskaia Respublika (1918-1920). Vneshniaia politika*, Azerbaijan, Baku, 1998, p. 10.

¹⁰ State Archives of the Azerbaijani Republic (SAAR), rec. gr. 894, inv. 10, f. 53, sheet 5.

¹¹ State Historical Archives of the Azerbaijan Republic (SHAAR), rec. gr. 508, inv. 1, f. 459, sheets 24, 35, 51; f. 468, sheet 1.

¹² See: *Ekonomicheskii vestnik Azerbaidzhana*, No. 23 (30), 1922, p. 27.

example, in 1922, the Concordia Production Cooperative of Viniculturists and Winemaking of the Ganja Region was created, to which 90% of the German vineyards belonged. By 1926, this enterprise had as many as 9 still-houses and alcohol-rectification factories, 5 cognac houses, 11 wine and cognac cellars, as well as subsidiary enterprises and workshops distributed around all the colonies, which promoted the development of each of them.¹³ Concordia opened its representative offices and branches in many Soviet cities. What is more, we should take special note of the activity of Concordia's Berlin representative office, which was engaged not only in the export of the cooperative's products, but also purchased equipment for it, as well as medication for its employees.¹⁴ As a result of the expansion in the cooperative's sphere of activity, its revenue also grew. For example, it emerged at the end of the 1924/25 fiscal year with a positive balance of more than 8 million rubles,¹⁵ and throughout most of the 1920s, this enterprise was one of the best winemaking cooperatives in the republic.

But as early as the second half of the 1920s, the situation began to deteriorate, which was primarily caused by the change in political and economic course carried out by the Soviet authorities. Prosperity, economic independence, ties abroad, insulation, and other features characteristic of the cooperatives' activity in the German settlements were not in keeping with the precepts of the U.S.S.R. leadership, which led to their initiatives being clamped down on and then to their elimination. For example, in 1925-1926, an investigation was run on the Concordia cooperative.¹⁶ As a result, on the basis of Central Executive Committee and the U.S.S.R. Council of People's Commissars resolutions of 18 September, 1929 on the reorganization of agricultural cooperatives, the corresponding authorities of the Azerbaijani S.S.R. adopted a decision on transforming the Concordia cooperative into the Regional Association of Settlement Companies of Winegrowing and Winemaking Cooperatives.¹⁷ In 1935, a trial was held to review the Concordia cooperative case. After deeming its economic activity not only detrimental, but also subversive, the court adopted a decision to eliminate the cooperative once and for all.¹⁸

In 1930-1932, during the collectivization that went on throughout the entire country, collective farms were created in the German settlements too: in Helenendorf, the Telman collective farm, in Annenfeld, the Clara Zetkin collective farm, in Georgsfeld it was called Borba (Struggle), in Traubenfeld—Sovetstern, in Marksovo (Elizavetinka), the International, in Grünfeld—Rote-Fane, and in Alexeevka, the Lenin collective farm. They all specialized in winegrowing, they were given the property confiscated from the German holdings of kulaks and even middle peasants. What is more, in the middle and second half of the 1930s, intensified measures were carried out against the kulaks. For example, a report of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs stated that in 1935, 381 Germans were repressed in Azerbaijan, most of whom were either dispossessed or arrested under the Concordia case.¹⁹ As a consequence of the dispossession and collectivization measures, conflicts became aggravated in the German settlements and the discontent of their residents grew. For example, on 18 March, 1930, a protest demonstration was organized in Helenendorf against the collective farms and the incorporation of the colonists into them.²⁰ But by the end of the 1930s, most of their households had to

¹³ SAAR, rec. gr. 2384, inv. 1, f. 2, sheet 214; rec. gr. 816, inv. 6, f. 56, sheets 7-8.

¹⁴ SAAR, rec. gr. 2384, inv. 1, f. 17, sheet 100-101; State Archives of Political Parties and Public Movements of the Azerbaijan Republic (SAPPPMAR), rec. gr. 1, inv. 85, f. 613, sheet 65.

¹⁵ SAPPPMAR, rec. gr. 1, inv. 235, f. 303, sheet 141.

¹⁶ See: M. Jafarli, *Nemtsy v Azerbaidzhane*, Baku, 1998, p. 21; SAPPPMAR, rec. gr. 1, inv. 235, f. 102, sheet 657.

¹⁷ SAAR, rec. gr. 2384, inv. 1, f. 10, sheets 85-86; rec. gr. 379, inv. 7, f. 87, sheet 9.

¹⁸ See: *Concordia*, Astroprint, Odessa, 2001, pp. 17-18.

¹⁹ See: M. Jafarli, *Politicheskii terror i sudby azerbaidzhanskikh nemtsev*, Baku, 1998, p. 71.

²⁰ See: E. Ohngemach, "Memoire eines Unbekannten," in: *Heimatliche Weiten*, M., 1989, S. 112.

be incorporated into collective farms. Of course, this had a negative effect on the socioeconomic conditions in the German settlements.

It is interesting to take a look at the cultural life of the first German emigrants, who paid a great deal of attention to teaching their children, at first at home, and then in schools. For example, the first school was built in 1842 in Helenendorf.²¹ Until the 1890s, these schools were ecclesiastical-parochial in nature and were under the care of the local pastors. In 1890, after the Russian government issued a decree on the re-subordination of Protestant and Lutheran schools to the Ministry of National Education, the school in Helenendorf was turned into a two-year academy, and in 1917, a mixed non-classical secondary school opened there in which Germans from all over the Central Caucasus studied.²² In 1924-1926, in all the German settlements of Azerbaijan, there were eight German primary schools with an average of 1,090 students in each and one secondary school in Helenendorf, in which there were 213 pupils. A total of 69 teachers worked in these learning establishments.²³ What is more, as corresponding documents noted, "due to the existing need for local staff in technology and agriculture," at the end of the 1920s, a Machine-Building Polytechnic was opened in Helenendorf. In the 1930s, there was a Viniculture and Winemaking Polytechnic in Helenendorf, in which the students were to assimilate a great deal of specialized knowledge. In March 1938, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and the U.S.S.R. Council of People's Commissars adopted a joint resolution on the mandatory study of the Russian language in non-Russian schools. Later, a similar decision was adopted by the Azerbaijan leadership, as a result of which reorganization of German schools and transfer of all classes to the Russian language began in the republic.²⁴

Soviet power paid much attention to ideological work among the Germans of Azerbaijan in order to involve them in the sociopolitical processes going on in the country, which was one of the areas of the Bolsheviks' national policy. In order to carry out the tasks in this sphere, as early as 1921, a German faction was created under the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in Baku. Its report for 1926 stated that at that moment 136 Germans in the republic were members and candidates for members of the Azerbaijan Communist Party (Bolsheviks).²⁵ In the 1920s-1930s, two German newspapers came out in Baku: *Bauer und Arbeiter* (Peasant and Worker), published in 1924 and distributed among the Germans living in Azerbaijan and Georgia,²⁶ and the *Lenins Weg* (Lenin's Way) newspaper, which was published in Helenendorf since 1932 and in Baku since 1936. It was considered the republic-level newspaper for the German population of the Azerbaijan S.S.R.²⁷ Both of these newspapers were to make a significant contribution to organizing ideological work among the German national minority.

Spiritual life was of great importance in the lives of the emigrants and their descendents. Religion and the church were a uniting link, a symbol of their national culture and uniqueness, which were zealously preserved far from their historical homeland. In 1854, the first stone of St. John's church

²¹ SHAAR, rec. gr. 508, inv. 1, f. 436, sheet 26; N.A. Ibragimov, *Nemetskie stranitsy istorii Azerbaidzhana*, Azerbaijan Publishers, Baku, 1995, pp. 165-166.

²² SHAAR, rec. gr. 830, inv. 1, f. 7, sheet 8; SAAR, rec. gr. 2602, inv. 1, f. 18, sheets 36, 47.

²³ See: *Narodnoe obrazovanie v Azerbaidzhane 1920-1927*, Publication of the ASSR People's Commissariat of Education, Baku, 1928, p. 143; *Izvestia AzTsSU* (Bulletin of the Azerbaijan Central Statistics Board), No. 1 (8), 1924, pp. 28-29; SAPPMMAR, rec. gr. 1, inv. 235, f. 303, sheet 141.

²⁴ See: T.A. Musaeva, *Revoliutsiia i narodnoe obrazovanie v Azerbaidzhane*, Elm, Baku, 1979, p. 147; I.I. Kasumova, *Kulturnoe stroitelstvo v Azerbaidzhane v 1920-1930-e gody (na primere natsionalnykh menshinstv i malochislennykh narodov)*: Dissertation... Ph.D. (Hist.), Baku, 1996, p. 103.

²⁵ SAPPMMAR, rec. gr. 1, inv. 235, f. 303, sheets 140-141.

²⁶ SAPPMMAR, rec. gr. 12, inv. 2, f. 108, sheets 155, 158; rec. gr. 1, inv. 235, f. 160, sheet 148.

²⁷ SAPPMMAR, rec. gr. 1, inv. 74, f. 807, sheets 8-9; f. 425, sheet 18.

was laid in Helenendorf, and on 10 March, 1857, it was solemnly consecrated.²⁸ In 1897, a German Lutheran church was built in Baku (architect A.W. Eichler), and in 1909, a church was opened in Annenfeld (architect F.A. Lemkul). During the Soviet period, there was an ambiguous attitude toward religion. As early as the beginning of the 1920s, an Evangelist-Lutheran community officially functioned which united the Germans of the Central Caucasus, including Azerbaijan.²⁹ But at the beginning of the 1930s, a wave of arrests of German pastors swept many regions of the U.S.S.R., who were accused of anti-Soviet activity, of liaisons with Germany, and of receiving corresponding assistance from this country. According to the archives of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, at the beginning of 1936, there were 7 Lutheran pastors in our republic who were arrested in 1936-1938 for espionage.³⁰ In this connection and for several other reasons, the Lutheran churches were also closed. Incidentally, by 1937, not only the German churches, but also most of the mosques and cult buildings of other confessions at one time built in Azerbaijan ceased their activity once and for all and were turned into something different, for example, St. John's church in Helenendorf became a sports hall.³¹

One of the interesting events in the cultural life of the German settlements during the Soviet period was the creation in 1928 of a regional studies museum in Helenendorf (the town of Khanlar). It was organized by local resident Yakov Ivanovich Hummel, who made a significant contribution with his scientific studies (including archeological digs) to Azerbaijan's archeological and ethnographical sciences.³²

Deportation

The last and rather tragic page in the history of the Germans of our republic, which put an end to their existence, development, and vital activity in Azerbaijan, was deportation. At the beginning of the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945), it was organized in all the Soviet republics, whereby this process affected not only Soviet Germans, but also the members of several other nationalities of the Soviet Union, whom the country's leadership considered the "fifth column." Here it is worth noting that according to the results of the last prewar census of 1939, 23,133 Germans lived in Azerbaijan (0.7% of the total size of its population).³³

Deportation was carried out as follows. On 8 October, 1941, the State Defense Committee adopted a resolution (No. 744 ss) On the Resettlement of Germans from the Georgian, Azerbaijan, and Armenian S.S.R., which envisaged: "To resettle the German population from the Georgian S.S.R.—23,580 people, from the Azerbaijan S.S.R.—22,741 people, and from the Armenian S.S.R.—212 people." All the measures for their forced resettlement in the Kazakh S.S.R. entrusted to the bodies of the U.S.S.R. People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs were to be carried out in a short time, between 15 and 30 October, 1941.³⁴ According to the available data, Azerbaijan's Germans were placed

²⁸ SHAAR, rec. gr. 508, inv. 1, f. 436, sheet 26.

²⁹ SAAR, rec. gr. 27, inv. 1, f. 377, sheets 5-6.

³⁰ See: M. Jafarli, *Politicheskii terror i sudby azerbaidzhanskikh nemtsev*, p. 45.

³¹ See: T.F. Gumbatova, "Dukhovnaia zhizn nemtsev v Baku," in: *Rossiiskie nemtsy. Problemy istorii, yazyka i sovremenogo polozheniia*, Documents from the International Scientific Conference, Gotika, Moscow, 1996, p. 345; *Heimatbuch der Deutschen aus Rußland*, Stuttgart, 1961, S. 115.

³² See: Ya.I. Hummel, *Kraevedcheskii muzei Khanlarskogo raiona*, Baku, 1939, pp. 3-19.

³³ See: *Vsesoiuznaia perepis naseleniia 1939 g. Main Results* (All-Union Population Census for 1939), ed. by Yu.A. Poliakov, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1992, p. 71.

³⁴ See: "To mobilize Germans into working colonies... (J. Stalin)," Collected Documents, ed. by N.F. Bugai, Gotika, Moscow, 1998, p. 37-38.

**Size of the German Part of
the Population of
the Central Caucasus**

Location		1818-1819*	1897**	1926***	1939****	1989*****
In the Russian Empire	Azerbaijan	194 families (approx. 1,000 people)	6,834	—	—	—
	Georgia	292 families (approx. 1,500 people)	405	—	—	—
In the Soviet era	Azerbaijan	—	—	13,149	23,133	748
	Georgia	—	—	12,074	20,527	1,546
	Armenia	—	—	104	—	265

* See: N.K. Nikiforov, op. cit., p. 104. The source indicates the number of German families who moved to Georgia and Azerbaijan based on which the approximate number of people was estimated.

** See: *Pervaia vseobshchaia perepis naseleniia Rossiiskoi imperii 1897 g.* (First National Population Census of the Russian Empire of 1897), Vol. LXIII, Elizavetpol Gubernia, 1904, p. 3; Vol. LXI, Baku Gubernia, 1905, p. 52; Vol. LXXI, Erivan Gubernia, 1905, p. 53; Vol. LXIX, Tiflis Gubernia, 1905, pp. 76-77; Vol. LXVI, Kutaisi Gubernia, 1905, pp. 2-3. In the data of the *Pervaia vseobshchaia perepis naseleniia Rossiiskoi imperii 1897 g.*, the country's national composition was defined according to native language, based on which the number of Germans was indicated as the number of people who declared German as their native language.

*** See: *Naselenie Zakavkazia. Vsesoiuznaia perepis naseleniia 1926 g.* (Population of the Transcaucasus. All-Union Population Census of 1926), Publication of the Transcaucasus Central Statistics Board, Tiflis, 1928, p. 8.

**** See: *Vsesoiuznaia perepis naseleniia 1939 g.*, pp. 71-72.

***** See: "Rasselenie narodov SSSR po soiuzyim respublikam po perepisi 1989 g.," *Soiuz* newspaper, No. 32, August 1990.

(in groups) in special settlements created in the Akmolinsk, Karaganda, Kustanai, Pavlodar, and North Kazakhstan regions of the Kazakh S.S.R.,³⁵ where they were mobilized into a working army, were

³⁵ See: *Iz istorii nemtsev Kazakhstana (1921-1975)*, Collected Documents, Gotika, Almaty-Moscow, 1997, pp. 105-106; P.B. Rempel, "Deportatsiia nemtsev iz evropeiskoi chasti SSSR i trudarmii po 'sovershenno sekretnym' do-

registered with the bodies of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, and were deprived of many rights, primarily to free movement.

Only many years after the end of the war, on the basis of decrees of the Presidium of the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet of 13 December, 1955, 29 August, 1964, and 3 November, 1972 were they given the opportunity to leave these special settlements. But they were ultimately rehabilitated on the basis of the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet Declaration On Recognizing Repressive Acts Against Peoples Subjected to Forced Resettlement as Illegal and Criminal, and On Guarantee of Their Rights signed on 14 November, 1989.³⁶ At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, most Soviet Germans emigrated to the FGR. Only a few of their families returned to the places of their former residence, in particular to Azerbaijan (see table), mainly to Baku. In this way, deportation put an end to the history of the German population which lived for almost two centuries in Azerbaijan.

The Situation Today

As we have already noted, the representatives of many nationalities, including Germans, live in Azerbaijan today. They all enjoy the equal rights and freedoms guaranteed by the republic's Constitution and preserve and develop their own culture, language, customs, and traditions.³⁷ In our country, several societies and organizations have been created which hold functions to acquaint people with the German culture, spiritual life, and history of these people, including evenings devoted to the memory of well-known German figures of literature, art, and science.³⁸ Among such organizations we can note the Azerbaijan National Cultural German Society, Vozrozhdenie (Revival), the German-Azerbaijani Cultural Society, Kapellhaus, the German-Azerbaijani Society, and the Evangelist-Lutheran Society in Baku. So the members of this nationality now living in the republic have the opportunity to celebrate national holidays, go to church, and remember the history of their ancestors, the life and destinies of whom were linked with Azerbaijan for almost two centuries.

kumentam NKVD SSSR 1941-1944 gg.," *Rossiiskie nemtsy. Problemy istorii, yazyka i sovremennogo polozeniia*, p. 73.

³⁶ See: *Istoria rossiiskikh nemtsev v dokumentakh (1763-1992)*, Collected Documents, ed. by V.A. Auman and V.G. Chebotareva, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1993, pp. 177-179, 266-267.

³⁷ See: G. Orudzhev, "Azerbaijan's National Minorities Today," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 4 (22), 2003, pp. 139-141.

³⁸ See: T.F. Gumbatova, "Vozrozhdenie nemetskoj kul'tury i religii v Azerbaidzhane," *Nemetskoe naselenie v post-stalinskom SSSR, v stranakh SNG i Baltii (1956-2003)*, Documents of the International Scientific Conference, Moscow, 2003, pp. 333-347; Ch. Abdullaev, B. Gulieva, *Nemtsy v Azerbaidzhane*, Baku, 1992, pp. 26-28.

THE GREEKS OF GEORGIA: MIGRATION AND SOCIOECONOMIC PROBLEMS

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Greeks first came to western Georgia in the 8th-7th centuries B.C., yet the ancestors of most of the Greeks now living in the country came in the 19th and 20th centuries. Today, the once large diaspora (which comprised a significant part of Georgia's population) has shrunk to several thousand people.

The first wave of Greeks from Asia Minor (the Anatolian Greeks) was generated by Czar Irakly II's economic projects implemented in the 1770s and the policies of the regional countries. Under the Kuchuk-Kaynardji Peace Treaty of 1774 between Russia and Turkey, the Russian Empire acquired a protectorate over the Greeks; this was followed by Greek migration to Russia. It was at the same time that Irakly II invited Greek artisans from the Erzurum and Kars regions to work at the newly-opened silver and copper plants in Akhtal and Alaverdi. (About 800 Greeks with families moved to Georgia from the industrial centers of Asia Minor.)

In fact, Russia deliberately created a Christian area in Georgia (where Armenians lived side-by-side with Georgians) which bordered on the Islamic world; this was further promoted by the resettlement of Greek refugees who came in great numbers, especially in the 19th century. Under the Adrianople Peace Treaty which put an end to the Russo-Turkish war

of 1828-1829 Russia was expected to remove its troops from the Erzurum vilayet, a move which would have left the local Greeks who had been on the Russian side during the war unprotected. At General Paskevich's request, Nicholas I allowed the Greeks to settle in Georgia. They came mainly to the Borchala uezd, which had been completely ruined by Turkish and Daghestani inroads. By 1830, about 18 Greek settlements had appeared in the Tsalka District. Simultaneously, Greeks from the northwestern vilayets of Turkey started moving to the Dmanisi District; they replaced the local Georgian geographic names with the names of the villages they left behind in Turkey. This part of the country still abounds in Turkish geographical names, even though over time some of the villages restored their old Georgian names. In the 1830s, Greeks moved to Samtskhe: 200 Greek families settled in the villages of Tsikhisdjvari (Borzhomi District) and Mikeltsminda (Akhaltsikhe District) depopulated by the Muslim incursions. The favorable living conditions made it much easier to strike root there than in the Tsalka District.

Greeks appeared in Abkhazia and Ajaria after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878; the Russian government believed it expedient to move Greeks, politically reliable Orthodox Christians,

to the lands depopulated by mutiny in Abkhazia. Greeks started pouring into these lands in great numbers in 1881; they settled in Batumi and the Dagva village. By the early 20th century, their numbers increased considerably. It should be said that the local Greeks were fairly well-educated and cultured people.¹ Mass Greek migration ended in the 1930s.

It is worth noting that even earlier, in the 1920s, the Greeks started emigrating from Georgia:

¹ See: I. Garakanidze, "History of Greek Resettlement to Georgia (18th-19th Centuries)," in: *The Greeks of Georgia*, 2000, pp. 28-70 (in Georgian).

Sovietization, the dire economic situation,² and the processes unfolding in Turkey³ forced the Greeks to seek a better life in their historical homeland. The next emigration wave arose in the 1940s when the Soviet authorities moved the Pontic Greeks living along the Black Sea coast in Georgia, Abkhazia, and Ajaria to Central Asia and Kazakhstan, areas with bad climates and adverse geographic conditions. Few of them came back after rehabilitation.

² See: "Ot'ezd grekov," *Batumi* (newspaper published by the Greeks of Ajaria), No. 1-2, January-February 2001.

³ See: "Den pamiati genotsida Pontiysskogo ellinizma," *Eliniki diaspora* (publication of the Union of the Greek Communities of Georgia), Nos. 5-6 (V-VI), 2003.

The Settlement Pattern

Until the 1990s, the Greek population of Georgia grew steadily first due to migration (in the 19th century) and later thanks to natural population growth: in 1926, there were 54,000 Greeks, or 2.0% of the total population, living in Georgia; in 1937, 85,000 (2.4 %); in 1959, 73,000 (1.8%); in 1970, 89,000 (1.9%); and in 1979, 95,000 (1.9%).

Greek settlements are mainly found in the southern and southwestern regions of Georgia—in the Tsalka, Tetrtskaroy, Dmanisi, Marneuli, Akhaltsikhe, and Borzhomi districts—and in the Autonomous Republic of Ajaria.⁴

In 1989, there were about 100,000 Greeks (or 1.9% of the total population) living in Georgia; they were in the majority in the Tsalka District (27,000, or 61.0%) where they lived side-by-side with Armenians (28.5% of the district's total population) and Azeris (5.1%). Driven away by natural calamities in the mountains of Svanetia and in Ajaria, Georgians returned to the region in the late 1980s after several centuries of absence. They were resettled there for political reasons as well: Tbilisi wanted to tip the demographic balance in this mainly non-Georgian district by moving Georgian ecological migrants there. By helping the newcomers to adapt to the alien conditions, public organizations supported the official structures. Since that time, the number of Georgians has been growing slowly but steadily.

According to the national population census of 2002, the number of Greeks in Georgia dropped to 15,000, or 0.3% of the total population. About 3,800 of them live in Tbilisi; 2,200, in Ajaria; and 7,500 in Kvemo Kartli, including 4,600 Greeks in the Tsalka District. Today, Armenians are in the majority there.⁵

⁴ See: M. Pkhakadze, "The Current Settlement Patterns of the Greeks in Georgia," in: *The Greeks of Georgia*, pp. 71-83.

⁵ See: *The State Department of Georgia for Statistics. Results of the First National Population Census of 2002*, Vol. 1, 2003, pp. 110-116 (in Georgian). It should be said here that the local Greeks are convinced there are fewer of them still living in Georgia: because of mistakes, some of those who had emigrated were entered on the lists as still living in Georgia.

Greeks were involved in the migration processes which began in the 1990s to a much greater extent than other ethnic groups, mainly because Greece helped all Greeks from former Soviet republics to resettle in their historical homeland. Nearly all of the 14,700 Greeks who lived in Abkhazia in 1989 left the country for Greece after the war of 1992-1993.⁶

The nationalism raging in the country during Zviad Gamsakhurdia's presidency spurred on emigration: nationalists of all hues and their organizations persecuted ethnic minorities without impunity; they were especially active in the places where ethnic minorities lived in compact groups. There were no cases of deliberate persecution of the Greeks, yet nationalist hysterics caused apprehension and urged people to emigrate. With the removal of Gamsakhurdia, the wave of nationalism subsided, while Greeks continued to emigrate for socioeconomic reasons.

The absolute majority emigrated to Greece; fewer people went to Cyprus, other European states, and Russia. The larger part of the émigrés expected to get residence permits to be able to stay in the country, mainly because back home the strained socioeconomic conditions were killing hopes of getting adequate employment. This has already deprived the Tsalka District of young people, while those of the Greeks who preferred to stay behind (mainly the elderly) live on the money their relatives send them from other countries. In fact, members of the older generation have also decided to emigrate with the help of the same relatives. Crime is another reason behind this: Greeks are attacked, their houses and farm buildings are burned down, and there were several murders.⁷

The Georgian authorities so far have done nothing to stem the outflow. They have limited themselves to statements,⁸ while two presidential acts (of 1996 and 2002) on the sociopolitical development of the Tsalka District remained on paper. The outflow is going on.

One Ethnos— Two Languages

In the past, all the Greeks who settled in Georgia belonged to one of the two language groups—the Greek-speaking Ellinophones (they called themselves “Romeos” or, rarely, “Grekos” and “Elinos”), who on the whole preferred Abkhazia and Ajaria (and, to a lesser extent, south Georgian villages), and Turkic-speaking Greeks who called themselves the “Urums.” They preferred the Tsalka and Dmanisi districts.⁹ The Greek-speakers use the Pontic dialect. In Greek “ponto” means a sea coast or a coastal country. In antiquity this word referred to the territory along the southern and southeastern Black Sea coasts where, in the 6th century B.C., the Greeks founded their first colonies and where, some 300 years later, the Pontic Kingdom was located. Later, Ponto (the Pontic area) and the Pontic

⁶ See: R. Gachechiladze, *Population Migration in Georgia and Its Socioeconomic Results*, Tbilisi, 1997, p. 37 (in Georgian). To move the Greeks away from Abkhazia, the Greek government carried out a special operation in the course of which Greeks were evacuated by sea: *Athens News Agency Bulletin*, 19 August, 1993. About the Greeks living in Abkhazia see the website of Post Factum Radio: [<http://www.postfactumk.org/index.php?tim=2-5-2003&ID=103>].

⁷ See: P. Kotanov, “Kogda zhe nastupit spokoystvie?” *Eliniki diaspora*, No. 1-2 (I- II), 2005.

⁸ See: “Migratsia grekov iz Tsalkskogo rayona dolzhna byt priostanovlena,” *Mnagonatsional'naiia Gruzia*, No. 4, August 2002.

⁹ Two different languages used by the same ethnic community have created an identity problem for the local Greeks as one ethnic group. This is not obvious, yet there is alienation between the Greeks of the Black Sea coast and Eastern Georgia.

population remained closely connected with the territory and its people. In the course of history, the Pontic population lived under different rulers in different historic conditions, yet they kept their collective name—the Pontic people. Today, they live in Ukraine, Russia (mainly in the Northern Caucasus), in Armenia, and Georgia.

The local Greek speakers use the term “Romeyka” to describe their Pontic dialect, which is fairly common in Georgia, and apply the word “Romey” to themselves. They also call their language the Pontika. Another term, Elinika, is also applied, although much more rarely, to describe the same language together with the Pontika; people in Greece mainly use it to describe the Greek language. For several reasons, the Pontic dialect in Georgia has moved farther from the contemporary spoken and written Greek than all other Greek dialects. The language of the Greek-speaking community in Georgia was influenced by neighboring tongues—Russian, Georgian, Turkish, and Armenian.¹⁰

The Turkic-speaking population of the Tsalka District mainly uses the eastern Anatolian dialects of the Turkish language¹¹ and call the local Greeks “Urums.” The term that appeared after the collapse of the Eastern Roman Empire, when the Turks conquered Byzantium stems, from the Latin root “Roma” which means “Rome” or rather the “Roman” (a subject of the Eastern Roman Empire living in one of its provinces, irrespective of his/her ethnic affiliation, captured by the Turks).

The Urums of Georgia use a Turkish dialect divided into local dialects very close to the Turkish dialect. It developed under the strong influence of three languages: the Azerbaijani, Georgian, and Russian. Most of the Tsalka population are Christians—Georgians and Greeks who are Orthodox Christians and Armenians who are Gregorians, as well as Azeris who are Sunni Muslims.¹²

The Problem of the State Language

Under Soviet power most Greek children attended Russian schools since knowledge of Russian was needed to enter colleges and universities and be employable across the country. With the Soviet Union out of the picture, the Georgian tongue became the main language of the country’s sociopolitical life, while the Greeks living in compact groups, as well as the Azeri and Armenian majority of Kvemo Kartli and Javakheti do not know Georgian at all.

In the Tsalka District there are several factors behind this. The district is populated mainly by Greeks, Armenians, and Azeris who use Russian or Turkic for communication; in Soviet times and today, the Georgian taught in local schools was inadequate, to say the least. There were practical reasons to learn Russian too—the knowledge of Russian alone was more than enough. The Greeks living in Tbilisi have a more or less adequate command of Georgian, yet Russian is still their main spoken language.

¹⁰ See: A. Mikaberidze, M. Shakhpazidi, “On the Dialect of the Greeks of Georgia,” in: *The Greeks of Georgia*, pp. 129-177.

¹¹ See: N. Djanashia, “General Description of the Tsalka Urums’ Turkic Dialect,” in: *The Greeks of Georgia*, pp. 178-192.

¹² See: L. Pashaeva, *Sem'ia i semeyny byt grekov Tsalkskogo rayona*, Tbilisi, 1992, pp. 18-19.

This has inevitably created problems in independent Georgia: the Greeks became virtually unemployable; they found themselves in an information vacuum and were excluded from the country's sociopolitical life. The only Greek deputy who served two terms in the Georgian parliament (of the 1995 and 1999 convocations) was practically excluded from law-making because of the language barrier. Those Greeks who can potentially find good jobs cannot do this because of the language exams required in certain spheres of activity. For them emigration is the only option. In the present socioeconomic and political context, the younger generation sees no prospects for themselves and, therefore, sees no reason to study Georgian. The state, on the other hand, cannot organize the teaching of Georgian in the areas where national minorities live in compact groups. After the Rose Revolution, the state started stepping up its activity in this sphere, yet the modest results achieved so far give no hope of a breakthrough.

Socioeconomic Conditions

Even though only 94 km away from Tbilisi, the Tsalka District (with its adverse climate and bad roads, which means that it takes people 4 to 5 hours to reach the capital) is in a more deplorable socioeconomic situation than many other areas. In winter, things become even worse.¹³ Nearly all the local enterprises are idling, many of them have been plundered, and the power supply is erratic. The local Greeks, mostly jobless, are living on money transfers from relatives who emigrated to Greece; agriculture is no longer as profitable as it used to be.

The Greek government and public organizations are doing much to help the local Greeks within the international humanitarian programs.¹⁴ The programs themselves are not limited to the Greek population alone: the three clinics opened under the aegis of the World Congress of Greeks Abroad in Tbilisi, Tsalka, and Tsikhisdjvari extend medical assistance to all ethnic groups living in Georgia.¹⁵ The Greeks do hope that thanks to the international efforts and joint initiatives of the Georgian and Greek governments, the emigration wave will gradually subside.¹⁶ So far this has not happened—young people are still resolved to leave the country.

Compensation Problem

The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline could have potentially created jobs for the local Tsalka Greeks, yet they were never employed. Moreover, there were problems with getting compensation for the land taken up for laying the pipeline. From the very beginning, BP, which funded the project, bought

¹³ Only a small stretch of road was repaired under the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan project on BP money. It is expected that in the near future the highway that used to connect Armenian-populated Javakheti with Tbilisi will be restored. The road will cross the Tsalka District and will improve its communication with the capital. This project is realized by the Georgian government on American money under the Millennium Challenge program.

¹⁴ See: V. Nekresidi, "Spasibo za pomoshch," *Eliniki diapora*, No. 6-7, 1998; V. Kekchidi, "Blagotvoritel'nost," *Eliniki diaspora*, No. 4 (IV), 2003.

¹⁵ See: A. Umudumova, "Vsemirny sovet grekov zarubezh'ia prodolzhit svoi prorammy v Gruzii," *Eliniki diaspora*, No. 5-6 (V-VI), 2003; A. Papanidi, "Ambulatorii primaiut patsientov," *Eliniki diaspora*, No. 1-2 (I-II), 2004.

¹⁶ See: K. Diamantopulo, "Grecheskaia programma podderzhki ekonomicheskogo i sotsial'nogo razvitiia Gruzii beret start," *Eliniki diaspora*, No. 4 (IV), 2003; idem, "Iannis Makriotis privez iz Gretsii programmu ekonomicheskoy i sotsial'noy podderzhki naselenia Gruzii," *Eliniki diaspora*, No. 5-6 (V-VI), 2003.