



# Tracing the German Heritage of the South Caucasus



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## In the footsteps of the German settlers in the South Caucasus

Migration is an everyday and ubiquitous phenomenon for us today. In recent decades, many people from the countries of the South Caucasus have migrated to Europe and other places across the globe. At the beginning of the 19th century, the situation was reversed: Europeans arrived from the west to live and work in the South Caucasus. At this time, the borders of the Russian Empire were extended over the Caucasian foothills through conquests. Already in the 18th century, Catherine the Great (1729–1796) had initiated not only scientific exploration of these remote regions but also the settlement of foreigners in the newly conquered territories. The so-called Invitation Manifestos of 1762–64, outlining the rights and duties of the new settlers, laid the legal framework for future settlement. The recruitment and settlement of mainly German migrants had begun.

The first German villages were established on the Volga and later in the Black Sea region, in Crimea, in Bessarabia (around Odessa) and in the foothills of the Caucasus. The annexation of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti in 1801 under Paul I (1754–1801) was followed under Alexander I (1777–1825) with the establishment of the protectorate of the principalities of western Georgia and the annexation of additional principalities, such as Ganja and Baku in present-day Azerbaijan. Thus, the settlement policy of Catherine the Great was revived under Alexander I. His Manifesto of 1804 set higher requirements for the new settlers: they had to be good farmers, specialised in viticulture, silk production and cattle breeding, or craftsmen. Under these conditions, from 1817/18 onwards, South-German villages sprouted also in the South Caucasus, on the territories of today's Georgia and Azerbaijan.

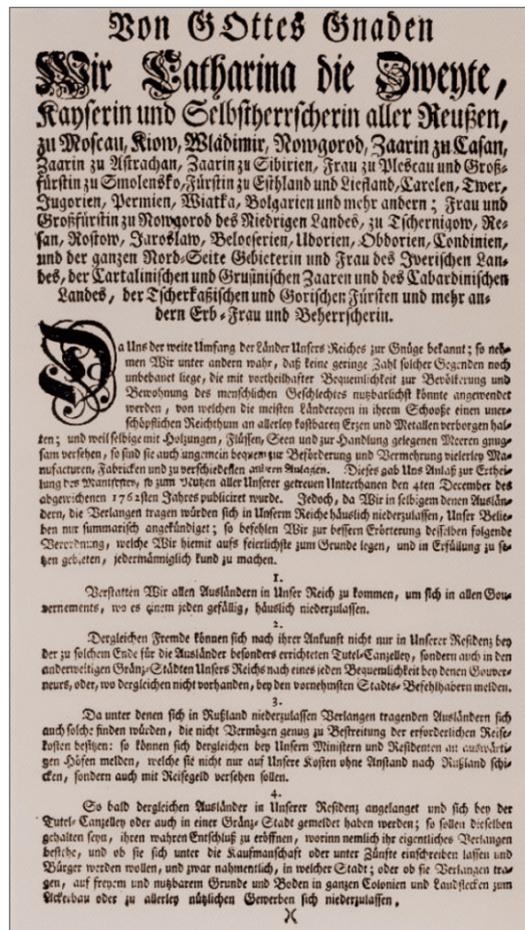
### Invitation Manifesto of 1762/63:

14 October 1762

Edict of Catherine II to the Senate:

*Since there are many desolate, unpopulated regions in Russia, and many foreigners have asked permission to settle in these desolate regions, with this Edict we grant our Senate once and for all permission, in accordance with the laws and agreement with the College of Foreign Affairs – for this is a political matter – to admit all who wish to settle in Russia, with the exception of the Jews. We hope thereby to promote the glory of God and of His Orthodox Greek Church, and the welfare of the empire.*

22 July 1763



## The first German settlers: Pietists from Württemberg

In 1803/4, migrants from Baden and Württemberg set out for the Black Sea. From the Russian perspective, in addition to the family relations with the Kingdom of Württemberg, the hope was for Christian settlers to bring transformative economic growth to the troubled region. Looking from Württemberg, the difficult political and economic conditions due the Napoleonic wars were the most frequent reason to emigrate. Devastation, quartering of troops, tax increases, unemployment, restrictions on marriage and conscription of young people for war service bred impoverishment. The massive eruption of the Tambora volcano, located in today's Indonesia, had dramatic effects on the climate in 1815, further aggravating crop failures and famines. In 1816 alone, 20,000 people left their homelands. While many emigrated to North America, the majority that chose southern Russia and the South Caucasus came from pious, protestant congregations (the so-called Pietists). At the time, the reforms of the Evangelical Lutheran worship of the Church of Württemberg led to religious protests among the more conservative fractions. As a result, they distanced themselves from the Lutheran Church and were persecuted by the state. For these communities, the invitation of the Russian Empire came at just the right time. It offered a fresh start, agricultural land of considerable size, exemption from military service and all taxes for ten years and – most importantly – full freedom of religion. These powerful incentives drew the southern German Pietists to emigrate to the South Caucasus.

The first Germans, 31 Swabian families from Württemberg, arrived in Tbilisi on 21 September 1817. They were given plots of land near the village of Sartichala. The Germans named their settlement Marienfeld, in honour of Maria Fyodorovna (known before her Orthodox baptism as Sophie Dorothee von Württemberg), the sister of Frederick the Great and mother of Alexander I. Marienfeld was the first German settlement in the entire South Caucasus.



*Street in Bolnisi*

### Extracts from the Invitation Manifestos

The invitation manifestos were modified several times but usually included the following points:

- Personal freedom for everyone;
- Free settlement anywhere in the Russian Empire;
- Freedom of religion and the right to build churches;
- Local self-government with direct allegiance to the Crown and the right to leave Russia at any time;
- Exemption from military service, volunteers are to receive 30 roubles;
- Exemption from all taxes, services and quartering for 30 years (5–10 years if settling in towns); after expiration of time period, liability for all customary taxes and agricultural services;
- Granting of loans (interest-free return after 10 years) for house construction;
- Granting of travel allowances for the passage from the Russian border to the place of settlement,
- Endowment of settlers with land in perpetuity, not as personal property, but as common property of the settlement;
- The right of inheritance for the youngest son for the land allotted by the Crown;
- Permission to acquire property from private individuals to pursue economic activities.

## Eight settlements in Georgia and Azerbaijan

Between April and August 1817, additional 1,400 Swabian families willing to emigrate organised themselves into "harmonies", following the Acts of the Apostles 4:32. In specially built ships, called "Ulmer Schachteln" (Ulm boxes), they set out across the Danube to the Russian Empire. Quite a few died on this journey. From those who survived, many families decided to settle in other areas along the Danube or in southern Russia. Almost 500 Swabian families that made it to Odessa wanted to continue onward to their place of salvation, towards the Caucasus. They obtained permission from the Tsar and, in the autumn of 1818, they reached the South Caucasus in ten successive columns. From Tbilisi, however, they had to continue further east to Elizavetpol (called Ganja, until 1804). By 1819, there were eight main German settlements, the so-called mother settlements. Family members of the Tsar's household were chosen as patron saints. The following were established in what is now Georgia:

- 1817: **Marienfeld** (today Sartichala in the municipality of Gardabani);
- 1818: **Neu-Tiflis** (today the area around Agmashenebeli Avenue in Tbilisi and its adjacent streets);  
**Alexanderdorf** (today the streets Tskaltubo, Samtredia and Agladze in the Didube neighbourhood of Tbilisi);  
**Elisabethtal** (today the village of Asureti in Tetrtskaro municipality);
- 1819: **Petersdorf** (village of Sartichala in the municipality of Gardabani).
- These original settlements were established on the territory of present-day Azerbaijan:
- 1818: **Alt-Katharinenfeld** (near Shamkir), abandoned in 1819/20 in favour of Neu-Katharinenfeld (today's Bolnisi, Georgia);  
**Annenfeld** (today's Shamkir); and **Helenendorf** (today's Goygol).

## Organisation of the communities in the new homeland

Most settlers were farmers but they also included craftsmen skilled in various trades. Some of them settled in Tbilisi on the left bank of the Kura River



*Half-timbered house in Asureti*

(called Mtkvari in Georgian). Each farmer family was given 35 hectares of land, while craftsmen were allotted only one hectare. In addition to the financial support from the Crown, the settlers received agricultural equipment and livestock. Cossacks protected them from encroachment. The settlements had self-governments, consisting of a Schultheiss (village judge), two assessors and a secretary. They were subject to their own legal norms and were responsible for the efficiency of the administration and the productivity of the farms. Each had one civil servant assigned by the government, who was responsible for economic, social, cultural and village community affairs. The German villages developed various agricultural sectors, including viticulture, farming and horticulture, animal husbandry and beekeeping.

## Buildings and settlement structure

During the first decades, the settlers lived in small, single-storey houses, built with the help of Tsarist troops and the local population. Initially constructed as mud huts, these dwelling were followed by flatter residential and farm buildings, built with the help of local labour. The building materials and even the roof tiles were made by the settlers themselves. The interior work was done by German craftsmen.



## Faith and religious autonomy of the South Caucasian settlements

For about 25 percent of emigrants, devotion to a traditional, conservative interpretation of protestant Christianity was an important motive for leaving their old homeland. The freedom of belief and religion in the South Caucasian settlements remained a core feature of their spiritual and cultural life. After a perceived "decline of morality", in 1823 three missionaries from Basel, who were closely associated with Württemberg (Zaremba, Benz and Dietrich), took on the task of organising the religious affairs in the settlements. The first "Church Order for the Transcaucasian Settlements" was drawn up, based on the old Württemberg church order from 1743 and the principles of the separatists. Also, the decision of the Transcaucasian Synod to adopt Evangelical Lutheran Church Law in 1836 provided in the appendix for its own order to preserve its own tradition and special position. It was officially confirmed by the Tsar in 1841.

The city congregations of Tbilisi and Baku were placed under the Moscow consistory, while the settler congregations retained their special position. Their association was governed by a synod (pastors plus secular members) with a head pastor. Also, they were directly subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior and the Administration of Foreign Denominations. Thus, village and urban Lutheran congregations developed in parallel in the South Caucasus, which sometimes produced conflict.

Today's two-storey houses are half-timbered and laid on stone foundations, with balconies and verandas. Constructed from the 1870s onwards, their mix of southern German and Caucasian elements gave them a special character. According to Swabian building traditions, they had high facades and up to six metres deep cellars. The attic was used to store grain and the cellar for dairy products, preserves and wine.

Each enclosed courtyard complex also included a summer kitchen, stables, sheds and garden. Two farmsteads adjoined each other on their narrow side. A 2-metre wide footpath ran alongside the buildings, separated from the 25-metre wide street by a narrow watercourse paved with stones. Each house owner was obliged to plant trees along the watercourse. From the second half of the 19th century, the settlements had anywhere between one to four parallel main streets, which were connected by several side streets. A central square provided the location for the local administration, the church, a school as well as shops and other public buildings. Only a few years after their departure, the Pietists and sectarians – now endowed with special



*Evangelical Lutheran Church in Asureti*

rights – found their way back to their original Lutheran Church. A resolution to adopt Evangelical Lutheran Church Law in 1836 provided the settler congregations with a special status, preserving their pious, conservative tradition. With considerable state financial support, the settlers began the construction of first church in Neu-Tiflis in 1828. From the middle of the 19th century, impressive church buildings were erected in many settler communities, such as Katharinenfeld (consecrated in 1854), Helenendorf (consecrated in 1857) and in Elisabeththal (consecrated in 1871). The St. Peter and Paul Church in Neu-Tiflis, built in the 1890s, was financed by the German congregation itself. In Baku, the Evangelical Lutheran Church was consecrated in 1899 and in Annenfeld in 1909.

## Initial prosperity and progress

Farming, cattle breeding and above all winegrowing spurred economic development and, by the 1870s, had delivered a level of prosperity. Soon the lands provided by the government were no longer sufficient and the holdings were enlarged via land purchases by the settlers. Their economic situation continued to improve; thus, it became very attractive for relatives from the old homeland to follow them to the Caucasus. The population of the settlements grew sharply until the beginning of the 20th century, from just under 2,700 in 1819 to around 12,000 at the turn of the century. After the Great Reforms under Alexander II, the German settlements were more closely tied to the central administration from 1861 onwards. Special rights such as self-administration or exemption from military service were abolished in 1871/74 and 1884, respectively, and the German schools were gradually transformed into Russian elementary schools. The settlers still preserved their cultural identity.

Agrarian reform, expansion of transport routes and industrialisation enabled the settlers to invest in mechanisation, processing and marketing of their products. The largest dairy producer was Alexander von Kutzschenbach; his estate in Mamutlo supplied Tbilisi with milk, butter milk, butter, cheese and honey (see family portrait, p. 10).

The settlers were not only equipped with knowledge of viticulture and agriculture but also quite skilled in manufacturing all kinds of everyday goods: ladders, wagons, troughs and barrels, cots for fodder, baskets and presses the grape harvest, all kinds of handicrafts as well as clothes and shoes. Since according to the inheritance convention of the Caucasian Germans the right of inheritance went to the youngest son, craftsmanship was an important additional source of income. This was especially important for family members who were not entitled to inheritance and as supplementary income in winter.

## German craftsmanship and cultural life in Neu-Tiflis

The German craftsmen in Tbilisi played a special role. They were given lots for houses and gardens on the left bank of the Mtkvari River, near the village of Kukia. They called the settlement Neu-Tiflis. The German

tailors, watchmakers, shoemakers and bookmakers often employed young Georgian men as apprentices. They also brought the European baking and the German brewing tradition to Tbilisi.

Many well-known personalities settled in Neu-Tiflis. Among them were world-class artists, such as the Russian writer Lev Tolstoy and the singer Fyodor Shalyapin, whose careers began there. Lev Tolstoy moved there in 1851, rented a flat from a German settler and began writing his first work, "Childhood". Fyodor Shalyapin moved into the neighbourhood in the 1890s. He sang every evening in the park, until he finally made his debut at the Tbilisi Opera and became an internationally renowned singer.

## Economic independence and foundation of satellite settlements

The Russo-Turkish war, railway construction and oil exploitation created massive demand for their products by the end of the 19th century. Orchards and vineyards supplied the army with dried fruit, and some 70 distilleries and wineries also had a stable customer in the military. The 13 mills supplied not only settlements with flour but also provided bread for the military. Soap production, cheese dairies, carpenter's workshops, wagon makers, blacksmiths, barrel makers, and other



*Grape Harvest at Grünfeld circa 1905 (PSA)*



*Four-wheeled wagon circa 1905 (PSA)*

### Newly established German settlements of the early 20th century

In the early 20th century, numerous satellite settlements were founded, and not only by resettling existing main settlements: Alexanderfeld (Hasansu. Akstafa) in 1902; Eigenfeld (Irmasy) in 1905, Grünfeld (Vurgun near Akstafa) in 1906, Traubenfeld (Tovuz) in 1912 and Elisabeththal (Chatai near Akstafa) in the Elizavetpol governorate in 1914. In the Tbilisi governorate, the following were founded: 1908 Grape Mountain (Tamarisi in Tetrtskaro municipality), 1911 Waldheim (Iphnari in Dmanisi municipality). During the 1920s, the following settlements were established in Georgia: Wiesendorf (Akhali Marabda, Tetrtskaro municipality), Steinfeld (Kotishi, Tetrtskaro municipality) and Marnauli (Marneuli). In 1922 Grünthal (Sartichala, Gardabani municipality) and Hoffnungsthal (Akhasheni, Gardabani municipality) were founded, followed between 1933 and 1935 by Traubenthal (Ambartapha, Gardabani municipality) and Rosenthal (Vardisubani, Mtskheta municipality).

In Azerbaijan, in addition to the former main and satellite settlement, traces of German communities are visible in the capital Baku and in the German industrial settlements Kedabeg (Kalkent) of the former family business of the Siemens brothers. Also worth mentioning are the estates located near the settlements: for example, the model estate of the Vohrer family business from Helenendorf in Karaeri (Samuch district), the small settlement of the Swiss-German Siegenthaler family in Todan (Goranboy) and the resort town of Hajikent, on the way to the mountain lake and Goygol national park.

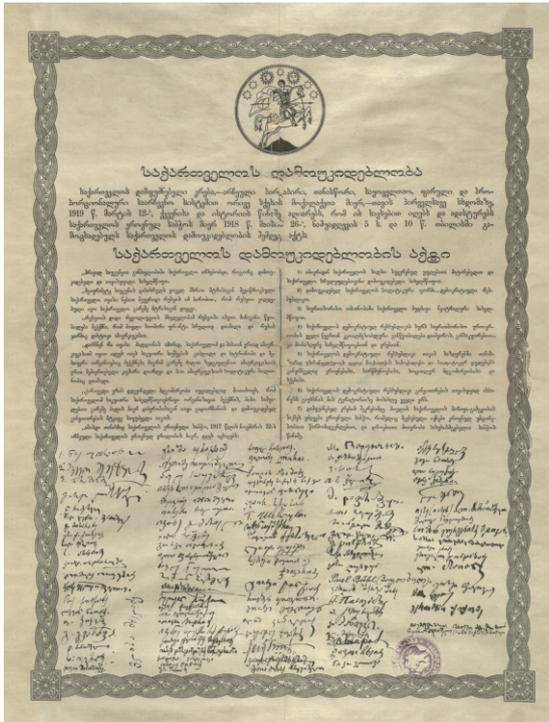
trades also contributed to the booming villages. Of a total of 170 master craftsmen, 64 lived in Helenendorf alone. The wagon makers enjoyed a particularly good reputation, as far as Persia. Helenendorf and its neighbouring villages not only provided carriages for the army but also produced and sold four-wheeled wagons, atypical at that time for the Caucasus.

From the middle of the 19th century, the rapid growth of the German communities and their economic strength led to the establishment of satellite settlements. In 1857, residents of Elisabeththal founded Alexandershilf. From the mother settlement Helenendorf, Georgsfeld was established in 1866; Alexandershilf founded Blumenthal in 1891. The new settlements of Gnadenberg, Neu-Dorf and Lindau were set up between 1879 and 1884 on the east coast of the Black Sea, predominantly by Baltic Germans. This process continued until the 1920s. On the territory of today's Georgia, 21 German settlements have been confirmed so far. In Azerbaijan, in addition to traces of settlements in the capital Baku, further twelve sites have been identified.

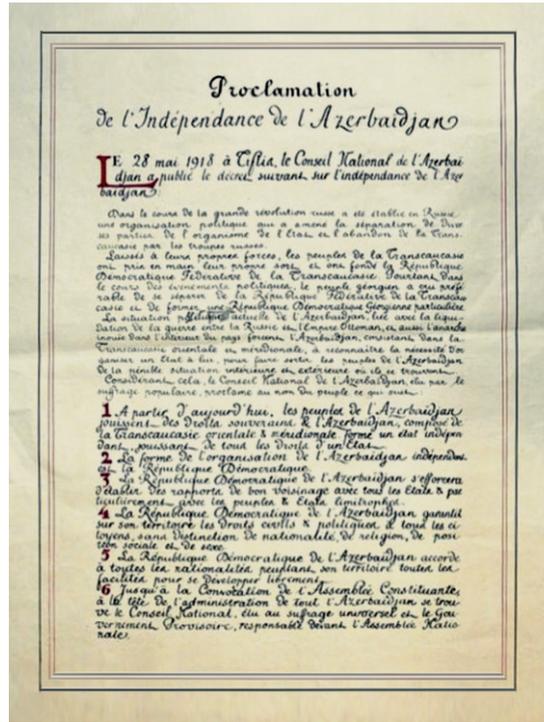
### World wars, revolutions and annexation by the Soviet Union bring difficult times and great suffering

Already during the World War I, the Germans living in the Russian Empire faced severe difficulties and setbacks, even though they were Crown subjects. For example, the German-language newspaper *Kaukasische Post*, founded in 1906, was banned and settlements names were Russified. With the advance of the German Empire on the Eastern Front, the Russian government planned to expropriate settler lands. However, against the backdrop of the February Revolution in 1917 and the end of the Tsarist Empire, this plan was never put into action.

Between 1918 and 1921, Azerbaijan and Georgia briefly enjoyed their first independence. Germany made a major contribution, by de facto recognising the new state of Georgia, founded on 26 May 1918. Within the framework of a military-diplomatic mission under General Friedrich Kreß von Kressenstein (1870–1948), it sent troops to Georgia, to assert its territorial claims against Armenia and the Ottoman Empire. However, the German Empire also pursued its economic interests: local raw materials such as manganese ore were



Declarations of independence of the countries of Georgia and Azerbaijan (26 and 28 May 1918, respectively)



needed for steel production, and the railway connection from Baku to the Black Sea was to bring oil imports.

On 28 May 1918, Azerbaijan proclaimed its independence. Most German settlers were sympathetic to the new Azerbaijani Democratic Republic. The new constitution guaranteed the German minority at least one seat in Parliament and protection of property rights. Also, the Constituent Assembly of Georgia included two German settler representatives.

However, Azerbaijan (in 1920) and Georgia (in 1921) were soon captured by the Soviet Red Army. This meant the end of the life that German settlers had enjoyed under the previous regimes. Property was confiscated, civil rights revoked and self-administration restricted. During the New Economic Policy of the 1920s, the German settlers once again experienced a brief phase of economic prosperity. By the close of the decade, however, Moscow's collectivisation and repression policies put a stop to this respite of well-being. Stalin's Great Terror hit the two Soviet republics

hard and inflicted great suffering on the German population. Countless Germans were sentenced in show trials, imprisoned and sent to forced-labour camps (gulags), the "labour army" or executed.

### The tragic loss of the new Caucasian homeland

The Germans experienced even greater suffering after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. The October 1941 Decree "On the Resettlement of the Germans from the Georgian, Azerbaijani and Armenian SSR" forced 23,580 Germans from Georgia, 22,741 from Azerbaijan and 212 from Armenia to surrender their all their possessions except for "transportable luggage" and had them deported to Kazakhstan via Tbilisi and Baku, under military escort. Thus, they followed the fate of the Volga Germans, who had already been deported in August. Only German women who had married into non-German families could

remain. Non-German women who had married a German were given the choice to leave their husband or be deported with him. Children and young people with a German father and non-German mother were allowed to stay with their mother until they turned 16 years old and were deported thereafter. This act of violence brought malnutrition, disease and death; it separated hundreds of thousands of Soviet German families, orphaned tens of thousands of children, and brought on complete civil disenfranchisement. Countless Germans died on the journey there or in the forced-labour camps.

For the Germans in Georgia and Azerbaijan, this land was their homeland for over a century. The majority had never seen Germany with their own eyes and knew of this old homeland only from stories. Now they had to leave behind their villages, their gardens and vineyards and the graves of their ancestors. Numerous poems and Heimatbüchern (local historic records) testify to the pain and the endless suffering caused by their deportation. This poem, by the Caucasian German Allmendinger from Katharinenfeld, is a poignant illustration:

*...Far to the south there in the wild Caucasus,  
Where from mossy rocks the clear river rushes,  
Where the proud castles stand on light hills,  
Where in old stones much is to be seen.  
Yes, there was my dear, cherished homeland,  
Where the cradle of our ancient fathers stood,  
In the middle of the mountains stood my parents' house.  
There was my homeland, there was my home...*

Only a few Germans were allowed to return to their Caucasian homeland after the end of the war. The initial hopes of a return after the destruction of the Third Reich were to prove illusory. In 1948, they were deprived of the right to return. The system of special settlements under commandant supervision remained in force. Only through negotiations with the German government did the USSR decide in 1955 to abolish the special settlements for all deported and repatriated Soviet Germans. Still, return to the pre-war place of residence was still forbidden. In August 1964 the Soviet Germans were rehabilitated via a decree of the Supreme Soviet – which was not made public at the time. The prohibition of right to return remained in force and was revoked by a decree of the Supreme Soviet at the end of 1972.

In 1998, those Germans who had been victims of



*A restored house in Asureti*

Stalin's state terror and had remained in Georgia were officially rehabilitated by the Georgian government.

### **Reawakening the history and architecture of the German settlers**

The history and architecture of the Caucasus Germans are hardly known to the general public. In 2014, the Association for the Preservation of German Cultural Heritage in the South Caucasus was established in Tbilisi. It focuses, among other things, on compiling an inventory of the German cultural heritage in Georgia, on behalf of the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia.

Since 2015, this effort has set a firm ground for restoration work to begin. For example, the Council of Europe has erected information boards and street signs in the former German settlements, providing a glimpse into the history of the Germans in these places.

With the support of the German Foreign Office, the roof of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Alexandershilf (Trialeti) was renovated. Starting in 2016, the Georgian government restored the main street of Elisabeththal. The road was completely renewed; existing fences were replaced; the Evangelical Lutheran Church, three German houses and the historic German cemetery were restored. Also, this project has been successfully completed. Since 2017, work has been underway to open a regional museum in Bolnisi, with a separate room of its permanent exhibition dedicated to the German settler history.

German heritage is also being preserved in Azerbaijan. The Evangelical Lutheran Church on 28th May Street in Baku now serves as a concert hall and is used for church services. Right next to the church stands the Kapellhaus. After many years of neglect (including fire damage in the 1990s), this historic building was reconstructed, thanks to a donation from the Wintershall company. Today, it houses the Goethe Centre, where concerts, exhibitions, evenings and the German Christmas bazaar take place.

In 1994, a working group for the research and preservation of German cultural heritage was created in Baku, followed by the 2005 founding of the cultural and scientific association EuroKaukAsia e.V. The association focuses in particular on researching and preserving the German heritage in the South Caucasus. With financial assistance from the Federal Government of Germany, the church in Helenendorf was rebuilt in 2008, with support from GIZ and EuroKaukAsia e.V. Today it serves as a cultural centre for the local community. A master plan for tourism valorisation of the German heritage was elaborated in 2016, commissioned by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Azerbaijan. Numerous houses and streets have been renovated in recent years, including the church and several residential houses in Shamkir. The house of the last German inhabitant, Viktor Klein, who died in 2007, is to be transformed into a museum in Helenendorf, following a concept developed by EuroKaukAsia e.V. and supported by GIZ. A wine museum, located on the grounds of the former "Konkordija" cooperative, is already under construction in Helenendorf. At the same time, a museum concept is being developed for the entire Ganjabasas region, aiming to also include the German historic settlements in Georgia.

## History in action – Notable German entrepreneurial families of the South Caucasus

### The Siemens family

Two brothers from the famous family of Werner von Siemens, Walter and Otto, co-founded the Telegraph Construction Siemens & Halske Company in 1847 and lived and worked as company representatives in Georgia for many years, residing in Tbilisi at Sadovaja Street number 30 (today Lado Asatiani Street). They served successive terms as consuls of the North German Confederation. Their names are associated in particular with the construction of local and international telegraph lines from the 1850s to 1870s. They also led successful mining operations in the Caucasus.

On behalf of the government of England, the Siemens company carried out one of the most important international projects of the age: the construction of the 11,000 km Indo–European telegraph line between London and Calcutta. Put into operation in January 1870, it passed through Sukhumi, Zugdidi, Kutaisi, Tbilisi and Yerevan in the Caucasus and was extended throughout the entire region in the following years.



*The Werner Siemens family*





*Baron Kutzschenbach visiting the Karabulach cheese factory (PSA)*

Construction – and above all maintenance – contracts ensured large profits for the Siemens & Halske Company, which the brothers invested in additional Caucasian ventures. For example, the mining rights of the copper mine in Kedabeg (Azerbaijan) were acquired in 1864, followed in 1865–1868 by the purchase of the cobalt and iron ore mines of Dashkesan (40 km southeast of Kedabeg). The copper smelter in Kalakent was built in 1879, along with a railway connection to Kedabeg.

A number of inventions were applied in the region. In 1866 Werner von Siemens discovered the dynamo-electric principle and thus initiated the development of high-voltage current technology. The brothers were involved in oil production around Dedoplistskaro and used the asphalt for road construction. The methods of electrolysis for copper extraction were refined, and the company was granted permission in 1889 to build the first pipeline with seamless Mannesmann pipes from Daljar to Kedabeg (45 km). From the 1890s onwards, the company was heavily involved in the electrification of the Baku oil fields. Their experience with pumping systems and seamless piping was applied to the construction of the longest oil pipeline in the world at that time, connecting Baku on the Caspian Sea with Batumi on the Black Sea.

The brothers Walter and Otto Siemens were buried in

the Vera cemetery in Tbilisi, where today one can visit a vibrant public park, just across the street from the Philharmonic Hall.

### **The Kutzschenbach family**

Baron Alexander von Kutzschenbach (1835–1909) visited Georgia on the advice of his school friend Werner von Siemens. In the 1860s, he set up factories there for the production of Swiss cheese. Initially near Tbilisi and later in Mamutlo (Mtisdziri, Dmanisi municipality), with a workforce of five Swiss-German master craftsmen and 15 Georgian employees. In addition to Swiss cheese, it also produced butter, other dairy products, honey and candles. Initially as employees of Kutzschenbach and later as partners, the Ammeter family from the Oberland built a large-scale cheese production, and the Siegenthaler family from the Emmenthal set up a large-scale beekeeping operation. The latter was transferred at the beginning of the 20th century as a family business to Todan near Helenendorf.

The Swiss cheese was widely known and beloved. The beekeeping brought consistently above-average yields and was soon taken over by the local neighbours. According to newspaper reports, the industry experts at an 1882 exhibition in Moscow could hardly believe that such excellent products could come from "such a wild country". They accused Kutzschenbach of fraud and excluded him from the exhibition.

Kutzschenbach also made a great contribution to the development of the glass industry in Georgia. In 1879, he broke ground on a glass factory, that started production in 1882. The glass was of such high quality that the German brewer and hotelier from Tbilisi, Friedrich Wetzel, sold his beer at exhibitions in Russia exclusively in Kutzschenbach bottles. Also Hummel and Vohrer used the bottles for their beers, lemonades and spirits. The factory used special gas-powered generators, made by the Siemens brothers. It employed 70 persons, including twenty German and Austrian experts.

All of them were given flats in an adjoining settlement, where their children – hailing from many different ethnicities – were taught together. Kutzschenbach

himself referred to the settlement and factory as "Alexanderhütte" (Alexander's hut). On a Georgian map from 1927, this place is called "Alexander's glass factory". Today all traces of this place have been erased.

In 1906, Kutzschenbach's son Kurt was one of the co-founders of the German-Caucasian newspaper *Kaukasische Post*, under the German editor Arthur Leist. A great friend of Georgia, Leist not only wrote books about Georgia and the Caucasus, but also learned the Georgian language to such a high level that he was able to translate many Georgian works into German. In recognition of their contribution to the improvement of agriculture and industry in Georgia, at the behest of the Russian emperor on 29 May 1891, Alexander and Kurt Kutzschenbach were granted noble status, and their names were entered in the register of nobility of the Tbilisi Governate.



*The families of the Vohrer brothers circa 1914 (Vohrer family archive/PSA)*

### **The Vohrer and Hummel family businesses**

At the outbreak of the World War I, all the German villages of Transcaucasia produced about 28 million litres of wine, over eight percent of Russia's total wine production. With an annual turnover of 12.3 million litres of wine, the Vohrer and Hummel businesses in Helenendorf accounted for almost half of the entire German settlement production and thus about four percent of the total Russian wine trade.

Vohrer's enterprise was one of the largest winegrowing and wine-trading companies in Russia. In 1846, Christoph Vohrer laid the foundation stone with a vineyard of about one hectare. He made sure to select grape varieties that were well suited to the climatic conditions of the region. As early as 1856, silk merchants travelling from France became acquainted with Vohrer's wine. Amid continuous financial challenges, he continued to work as cobbler, postman and cart driver; however, from 1860 onwards he was able to focus exclusively on the wine business. In 1862 he founded a joint-stock company, followed in 1868 by the first brewery in the Elizavetpol region, which was always to remain a side business. In 1870, a parent company was founded with four of his sons, "Christopher Vohrer and Sons". The quality of their products gained international acclaim, and the Vohrer estate Karaeri was particularly impressive. In

1886, the Vohrer family acquired this land and developed one of the leading agricultural research and demonstration farms in the Russian Empire. In addition to all aspects of the winery business, the company also engaged in farming, livestock husbandry and horse breeding. For land cultivation, it employed irrigation and new methods of variety selection and propagation as well as pest control.

The second entrepreneur family, the Hummels, was one of the leading families in the community. Through skilful marriages, they brought several farms with the associated lands into their possession. In 1878, four brothers planted the first large vineyards, followed in 1883 by a wine cellar, delivering wine as far away as Baku and Tbilisi. A barrel manufacturing business supplied not only the brothers' own cellars but also provided important additional income, which was invested in land acquisition. In 1895, the Hummel brothers already had a few additional vineyards in the main settlement and several vineyards with a large cellar in Elizavetpol.

The real economic breakthrough came in 1895, with the construction of a brandy factory in Helenendorf. The establishment of purchase points on the Baku–Tbilisi





*The families of the Hummel brothers before 1914 (Hummel family private archive/PSA)*

railway line facilitated strong growth. Similar to the Vohrer family, the Hummels bought grapes not only from German settlers but increasingly also from Azerbaijani and Armenian growers. The brandies and wines of the Hummel Brothers also received international awards in 1899/1900. The decision to merge all branches of the company (cultivation, processing and sales) in 1900 into the "Hummel Brothers Trading Company" was a good move. The concentration of capital enabled the acquisition and cultivation of additional lands, also in Annenfeld, including foreign grape varieties. New insights into the choice of varieties and pest control as well as

investment in modern winepress technology increased yields and improved wine quality. Winepress residues were sold as dye or raw materials for printing ink.

Like the Vohrer company, the Hummel family business made a large part of its sales directly through its own network in 39 governorates of the Russian Empire. Under Sovietisation, the expropriated family businesses formed the basis for the extremely successful cooperative "Konkordija", which was broken up in 1935. In October 1941, the deportation of the Caucasus Germans to Central Asia brought German economic and cultural life to a standstill.

## Selection of German Settlements in the South Caucasus

### Georgia

Original name	Current name*
Marienfeld	Sartichala, Gardabani municipality
Neu-Tiflis	Agmashenebeli avenue and its adjoining streets, Tbilisi
Alexandersdorf	Tskaltubo, Samtredia und Agladze streets in the Didube neighbourhood, Tbilisi
Elisabethtal**	Asureti, Tetrtskaro municipality
Petersdorf	Sartichala, Gardabani municipality
Katharinenfeld**	Bolnisi
Alexandershilf	Tsalka District, Trialeti
Traubenberg	Tamarisi, Marneuli municipality

### Azerbaijan

Original name	Current name*
Alt-Katharinenfeld	Next to Shamkir, abandoned in favour of the 1819/20-established Katharinenfeld (Bolnisi, Georgia)
Annenfeld**	Shamkir city, the administrative centre of Shamkir district
Helenendorf**	Goygol city, the administrative centre of Goygol district
Georgsfeld	Chinarli settlement in Shamkir district
Eigenfeld	İrmashli village in Shamkir district
Alexanderfeld	Hasansu village in Agstafa district
Traubenfeld	Tovuz city, the administrative centre of Tovuz district
Grünfeld	Vurghun village in Agstafa district
Elisabethtal	Khatai village in Aggstafa district

\* Place names in German may differ slightly from the usual designation.

\*\* Separate leaflets with further information are available for these settlements.



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