

Title of the lecture: *Arzach as a self-determined part of Armenia, Part 1*

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When the then general secretary of the CPSU, Mikhail Gorbachev, came to Leninakan after the earthquake in December 1988 to find out about the extent of the destruction, he was asked how Moscow would behave “towards the non-formal organizations”, including what was then Karabakh -Committee. He reacted to this with incomprehension. In another case, a man was buried under rubble for three days. When he was released, he asked what Karabakh was doing.

The two events impressively mark the complex in which the dispute over the Karabakh region is to be positioned. The Karabakh Committee symbolizes both the problem of its formation and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet empire. And even after 30 years, it is still a symbol of the Armenian nation's identity, which is particularly noticeable these days.

Since I am observing the war in the Caucasus from Germany, I necessarily expose myself to German press products, which is why I will first deal with some reports on the war from this perspective and from that of parties and other institutions. The second part should briefly outline the context in which the question of the right of self-determination for the Armenians in Artsakh stands.

While reading the newspaper in the early days of the war, I noticed the use of the word "rebel" in articles. It reminded me of an event in 1994 or 1995 when I was organizing seminars for political decision-makers in Yerevan as part of an association work. As an illustration for a seminar, there was a large cover photo of a GEO issue on the wall - a magazine that aims to explain the world to people using popular science - with the words “Through the wild Caucasus” in large letters. There were protests from the seminar participants, and the picture was taken down again. The way in which the expression “wild Caucasus”, which is reminiscent of travelogues of the 19th century, is used here forms the same ideological background for the use of the word “rebels” for the people of Artsakh (30 years ago as today as well).

Deutschlandfunk reported on September 27th. of "new difficult battles between rebels of Armenian origin and the Azerbaijani army in Nagorno-Karabakh". SPIEGEL Online writes about fighting "between pro-Armenian rebel groups and the Azerbaijani army". This is communicated by a "spokesman for the pro-Armenian regional government in Nagorno-Karabakh". The Tagesspiegel from Berlin publishes a picture with the subtitle "Pro-Armenian rebels gather in Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia has declared a state of war there".¹ The introduction by a journalist from the German news broadcaster Phoenix on October 7th, who speaks of Nagorno-Karabakh, which is largely inhabited by Armenians, "with the capital Yerevan", fits in with this. Finally: "Pro-Armenian rebels" face an "Azerbaijani army". The juxtaposition of "rebels" and "army" assumes a priori a level at which a military representation of the state of Azerbaijan confronts supposedly renegades, namely "rebels". Rebellion also means uprising and in the narrower sense means an open, violent resistance of several people against a state authority.

The ascription "of Armenian descent" is wrong, because in fact it is Armenians who live in Artsakh. The term used by the press is not only wrong, but demagogic about the ideology on which it is based. It refers to ancestors who were Armenians. In this sense, Donald Trump, for example, is of German descent - with all the consequences that this circumstance may have for us today. If, on the other hand, we take conscious diaspora Armenians like Charles Aznavour, then he sees himself as French and Armenian, he emphasizes an identity that is personally present to him as an Armenian abroad, which as such goes into his life experience. The Armenians in Artsakh are not of Armenian descent, but Armenians

The word "rebel" is directed against a legitimate or supposedly legitimate state authority on a common territory. Accordingly, the "Armenian rebels" of Karabakh are directed against the rulers in Baku, with "rebel" potentially also implicating Armenia. However, the Armenians living in Artsakh are not characterized being rebels against Baku - Artsakh declared itself independent in 1991 - according to the law and statutes of the time (Soviet Withdrawal Act 1990). In the reporting, the difference between the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh disappears and both are treated as rebellious. What is also not officially (at first) admitted is that the allies Turkey and Azerbaijan under the auspices of Stoltenberg's NATO are the only ones in the conflict who use REAL rebels!!

¹ The sources of the quotes can be found in the German version of the article.

“Rebel” is conceptualized from a domination perspective to identify groups that are subject to an elimination process. So it leaves out essential aspects of the inner view of those who are called "rebels", especially as regards the internal relationship to state power. That means that the group / ethnic group as such is not considered, but negatively derived from the authority, in this case the Aliiev family in Baku (in unity with EU / NATO). The use of "rebel" implies the construction of an asymmetry between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, which in turn is assigned by a symmetry: Both sides are asked to stop the fighting, which, however, ignores the question of the real arsonist and both sides equally suspected. However, there are no reasons for Artakh to attack its Azerbaijani neighbor, but the other way round however. This brings us to the perception of what is going on in Karabakh in German parties.

The characterization that Karabakh is "occupied" by Armenia is particularly virulent, but wrong. Only that which was not previously possessed can be occupied. The story of Karabakh occupied by Armenia implies that ALL Armenians who live there live there illegally. That means that every Armenian in Karabakh is one too many. That is the Azerbaijani interpretation of the alleged illegality of international law in all practice, along with Turkey.

It is then not without a certain irony that the term "occupation policy" in particular is in the vocabulary of the LINKE. For Heiko Langner, employee of the LINKE in the Reichstag building, Armenia must give up the - quote - “occupation policy and return the seven occupied territories around Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan, which were populated by the Azerbaijani before the war. In return for this, the Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh would have to get comprehensive security guarantees from Azerbaijan, compliance with which could be monitored by the OSCE.”

The Republic of Artsakh does not pursue an occupation policy, as its inhabitants were there before the existence of Azerbaijan by the mercy of Stalin. Regarding the security guarantees, it must be replied that Armenian autonomy under the Azeris / Aliievs is tantamount to a fairy tale which has finally become evident with the Turkish-Azerbaijani warfare since September 27th. Significant for this is the fate of the Djughha cemetery in Nakhichwan as a formative example of culturally lived autonomy as part of the Armenian identity. It was razed to the ground in 1998. When Shah Abbas of Persia at the beginning of the 17th century attacked Djughha and deported the Armenians living there, he probably left ruins behind, but these and the said cemetery with its cross stones, monuments dating back to the 4th century, were

preserved and remind us that Armenians lived here. But there is no sign of this in Azerbaijan's politics. .

“Rebel” and “occupying power” denote a water-down-effect of the actual circumstances through falsifying characterizations and thereby converge with the historical picture that is told to us by Azerbaijan. A conscious journalism cannot behave neutrally by definition; it is obliged to other laws than to practice political sham diplomacy or political correctness, which would like to pretend a balance, a parity of mutual horror. In the mirror of such neutrality, however, one can actually see a lack of attitude and historical oblivion denounced: What about the significance of the resolution of the Bundestag in 2016, which equates to the recognition of the 1915 genocide? Anyone who has admitted this cannot behave neutrally in the current situation. This also includes the press. Neutrality towards the war of aggression by Turkey and Azerbaijan is synonymous with taking sides with them. The parity rhetoric or equidistance prevailing in German mass media serves as pseudo-neutrality for the Turkish-Azerbaijani war plans and is their vicarious agent under the Corona star.

“Rebel” and “occupying power” denote a watering down of the actual circumstances through falsifying characterizations and thereby converge with the historical picture that is told to us by Azerbaijan. The head of the office of the Böll Foundation, which is related to the GREEN Party, speaks of the fact that both Armenia and Azerbaijan are raising “claims” to Karabakh. Russia would have a special role in this. However, Stefan Meister, the director, adds that Turkey has now joined the group and has brought "new rules of the game" with it.

Meister seems to accept this sacrosanctly without pointing out that Turkey and Azerbaijan do not heed the old "rules of the game". It is a war of aggression that is contrary to international law. It is also pathetic that the spokesman for the foundation, initially criticized Armenia's alleged behavior in violation of international law and did not mention the actual violators of the law (Azerbaijan, Turkey with the EU and NATO) in the current war. “This is an Armenian-Azerbaijani war that we have here. These external forces, Turkey and Russia, have a certain influence on this conflict, but they do not decide when this war will end, it is these two actors, Armenia and Azerbaijan. ”(This is exactly the argument that de Waal pursues)

While the Karabakh conflict was described as an "internal problem of the USSR" 20 years ago, which was given an international character after the declaration of independence by

Karabakh, here too the conflict is only limited to its internal dimension and these preceding aspects were neglected: International conflicts (Russia, the USSR and Turkey) created an internal problem that was not only revealed again after 70 years. Therefore Meister's attempt to separate an alleged internal problem from an external one would be superfluous. Ironically, the Social Democrats declared the rules of the game as early as 1998, which Meister described as novel! In their paper called "Future Region Caspian Sea", published at the time, the SPD contrasts the energy resources that are attractive in this region with the systemic conditions that can be found there. Among other things, large corporations such as British Petroleum help with the exploitation of mineral resources, they are actually active in the removal of resources. Siemens and Rothschild are named to highlight their activities in the area during the first wave of industrialization at the beginning of the 20th century.

Political stability is called for: "It cannot be European policy to turn a blind eye to human rights violations and manifestations of denial of democratization in some regimes in the region just because advantageous deals in oil, gas and other raw materials beckon" That appears hypocritical, since while BP is transporting oil and gas in Azerbaijan, German weapon parts are used, building Turkish and Azerbaijani warfare technology. Behind the supposedly neutral stance of the federal government, there are solid energy and geopolitical interests, for which one is also willing to assist in a mass murder.

The SPD in 1998 recognized another problem: A north-south flank can arise against an east-west flank, i.e. the USA, Turkey-Azerbaijan via Georgia versus Russia-Armenia-Iran, a situation that the former Defense Minister Rühle from the CDU in those years mentioned as an "intervention case". Perhaps they meant the corridor that is currently about to be bombed. Hayk Demoyan, former director of the Yerevan Genocide Museum Institute, quotes NATO Secretary Jens Stoltenberg on his forum page, whom he told Erdogan: "Turkey is a valuable member of NATO, but I also expect Turkey will use their significant influence in the region to reduce tensions." NATO as part of the military-industrial complex is jointly responsible for the efficient recovery of raw materials. With his sentence, Stoltenberg creates an equivalent scope for himself and the Turk Despot in which both sides can act adequately according to their own specifications.

The shown contradictions, which are connected with the use of "rebel", continue in the argument about the respective allocation of the right of self-determination and international

law: The Armenian in Arzach is denied the right of self-determination, and he finds himself as a rebel against international law.

The right of self-determination of the Armenians in Arzach is sacrificed to the ahistorical dogma of territorial integrity and the question is justified why this opposition was constructed, to which another one is added, the one between cultural autonomy and territorial autonomy. This was preferred by Stalin because it unites the nation in one territory and thus strengthens the class struggle. In cultural autonomy, the people of a culture form a nation independent of their place of residence. Therefore, only the form of territorial autonomy is worthy of support for socialists.

In the case of Armenian culture, culture does not dissolve into territory, so the reduction of cultural autonomy to territorial autonomy is not allowed. This can be shown by Stalin's false assumption when he says that cultural autonomy promotes dispersion. Armenian culture shows that its autonomy does not promote dispersion, but is conversely its historical expression. "Armenian history" in Khorenatsi's words means "history of Armenia" and "history of the Armenians". The dynamics of the resulting tensions is what makes the Armenians' dispersion. On the contrary, among the Azerbaijanis it is the case that there can be no cultural autonomy, because the history they create can only refer to territory and swallow the history it contains.

The history of Azerbaijan is a history of and about Stalin. To put it in a nutshell: Stalin was the only history-making moment for what could call itself after him Azerbaijan (in the USSR) - and this is what had to be hidden. My teacher and colleague Levon Abrahamjan, in his model of identity, has assigned the predicate "omnivoros" to Azerbaijani culture: everything that does not fit is made to fit, if necessary destroyed, which in the practical case of Karabakh is at present such that Armenian culture is to be destroyed. This is omnivoros, garnished with creations of new branches of origin that did not exist before: "Thus, according to Azerbaijanis ethnohistory the Albanian-speaking proto-Azerbaijanis who had lived on the territory of present-day Azerbaijan, adopted a Turkic language from a small group of nomads in medieval times (...), while those who had lived on the territory of present-day Mountainous Gharabagh are thought to have adopted the Armenian language."

A history of Azerbaijan is constructed as an Azeri or topocentric teleology, which casts a historical grid from the present about territorial, social, and political developments of the region and its inhabitants and measures Armenian culture against it. Methodically, the histomat's career is based on a Leninist-Stalinist model, but at the same time, one falls behind him. While in the Histomat the societies were analyzed with regard to their historical development towards communism, in the Azeri version the historical part is partly completely ignored in its developmental stage towards Azerbaijan: "Karabakh-Arzach was an integral part of those state formations that were located on the territory of historical Azerbaijan, i.e. it is a historical province of Azerbaijan from the oldest times until today", says the Azerbaijani scientist Mamedova.

For her Azerbaijan already exists in the 10th century:

"After the fall of the independent Albanian state, Arzach or Karabakh, as part of the geographical and political Azerbaijan, belonged to the Azerbaijani states of the Sadshids in the 10th century, the Salairids in the 11th-12th century and the Scheddadids in the 12th-13th century".

Azerbaijan, so theoretically ammunitionized, claims not only the whole former territory of Soviet Azerbaijan for itself, but also that of the Republic of Armenia itself and makes every effort to give it a historical foundation, which then also concerns Nagorno-Karabakh. In this respect, it is consistent that the rulers in Baku do not want to hear anything about self-determination for the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh or even independence.

The question is therefore: Could Karabakh claim state independence in Soviet times? Of the seven criteria that Luchterhandt gives us, those that relate to the connection between self-determination and secession are of interest. Independence could be demanded because

- "- the people of B-K can claim the highest intensity level of the SB - Secession of Azerbaijan - for themselves, (...)
- its limitation to the status of a national minority is not in proportion to its legitimate interest in development and protection, on the other hand
- the level of oppression has reached an intolerable level, making it unreasonable to remain in the State Union of Azerbaijan, and

- it has expressed its will for self-determination and independence in an unmistakable and convincing manner"²

The changes of territorial borders or the affiliation to the USSR were regulated by two laws: Article 72 of the Soviet Constitution established the right of each Union republic to freely withdraw from the USSR. Article 78 states that the "territory of a Union Republic may not be changed without its consent". In addition, the borders between the republics will be changed by mutual agreement, but only after confirmation "by the USSR", which is equivalent to the leading power in Moscow. Soljan points out a paradox of a legal nature:

First and foremost, it concerns Article 72, which determines the right of a Union Republic to withdraw from the USSR, as laid down in the USSR constitution and based on the principle of self-determination. Experts reduce its scope of application to the Constitution of the USSR, "forgetting, however, the laws of the USSR that regulate the legal mechanisms of implementing constitutional norms. In particular, it is far too little known that the Soviet Law of April 3, 1990 'On the Order of Resolution of Issues Relating to the Withdrawal of Union Republics from the USSR' provided for the right to self-determination not only for Union republics, but also, under certain conditions, for autonomies and compactly living ethnic groups".

An objective factor is the historical ethnic, political, and cultural classification of the territory, or rather the settlement area of Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as its status within Azerbaijan within the framework of the USSR. Subjectively, there are frequently recurring acts of will that express with sufficient clarity the desire of the Armenian population for self-determination.

What stands out in Luchterhandl's statement on the application of international law in the Karabakh question is that he does not strictly oppose the right of self-determination in Lenin's version to the Charter of the United Nations, but rather places it in a line of development with it. This is of particular interest to an emic perspective of Armenia, since not only the Stalinist nationality policy has come over it, but also the aforementioned UN resolution, which must accordingly be considered together. The UN resolution represents a breakthrough in terms of

recognizing the legal validity of the right to self-determination. The resolution was integrated into the human rights pacts of the UN on December 16, 1966.

And precisely in this sense it applies to Armenians in the Republic of Armenia as well as in the Republic of Arzach.