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The Educational Experiences of Students from the Republic of Azerbaijan in Weimar Germany (1920-1924)

Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti Öğrencilerinin Weimar Almanyası'ndaki Eğitim Süreçleri (1920–1924)

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the educational experiences in Germany of students who were sent abroad with the objective of developing qualified human resources during the establishment of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In particular, the research seeks to reveal the educational activities and cultural interactions of students sent from Azerbaijan to Germany for higher education, as well as their contributions to the Turkic world. The scope of the study encompasses Azerbaijani students who studied in Germany between 1920 and 1924 and their educational experiences. In addition, the study addresses the sending of German colonists from Azerbaijan to Germany for educational purposes. The primary sources of the research consist of official documents, diplomatic correspondence, reports, and questionnaires administered to students, preserved in the Political Archive of the German Federal Foreign Office. Historical analysis and document analysis were employed as research methods, and archival documents were examined and compared with scholarly works concerning the period. The findings indicate that the Republic of Azerbaijan sent more than 100 students to countries such as Germany, Russia, Türkiye, and France, and that some of these students, after completing their education, actively contributed to the modernization processes of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Türkiye. Following Hitler's rise to power in 1933, some of the Azerbaijani Turkic students chose to settle in Türkiye. It was also determined that Azerbaijani students in Berlin were closely engaged with the Turkic world's struggle abroad and strengthened cultural cooperation through the solidarity associations they established. Furthermore, the fact that German colonists living in Azerbaijan were also sent to Germany for education demonstrates that education played a decisive role not only in political relations but also in cultural relations between the two countries. In conclusion, the study demonstrates that education served as an instrument for strengthening cultural interaction in Azerbaijan–Germany relations and that Azerbaijani students made significant contributions to addressing the issues of the Turkic world. The educational experiences in Germany of students sent abroad as a manifestation of the modernization process of the Republic of Azerbaijan have not been addressed in previous studies. The archival sources utilized in this study provide an opportunity to reassess the educational experiences of students abroad.

Keywords: Azerbaijan Republic, Azerbaijani students, Germany, Weimar Republic, Türkiye.

Öz

Bu çalışma, Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluş sürecinde nitelikli insan kaynağını geliştirme hedefi doğrultusunda yurt dışına gönderilen öğrencilerin Almanya'daki eğitim süreçlerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, özellikle Azerbaycan'dan Almanya'ya yükseköğrenim için gönderilen öğrencilerin eğitim faaliyetleri, kültürel etkileşimleri ve Türk dünyasına olan katkılarını ortaya koymayı hedeflemektedir. Çalışmanın kapsamını 1920-1924 yıllarında Almanya'da eğitim gören Azerbaycanlı öğrenciler ile onların eğitim süreci oluşturmaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra, Azerbaycan'dan gelen Alman kolonistlerin eğitim için Almanya'ya gönderilmelerine de değinilmiştir. Araştırmanın temel kaynaklarını Almanya Dışişleri Bakanlığı Siyasi Arşivinde yer alan resmî belgeler, diplomatik yazışmalar, raporlar, öğrencilere uygulanan anketler teşkil etmektedir. Yöntem olarak tarihsel analiz ve belge incelenmesi kullanılmış, arşiv belgeleri ve döneme dair araştırma eserleri tetkik edilerek karşılaştırılmıştır. Bulgular, Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti'nin 100'ün üzerinde öğrenciyi Almanya, Rusya, Türkiye ve Fransa gibi ülkelere gönderdiğini, bu öğrencilerden bir kısmının eğitimlerini tamamladıktan sonra Azerbaycan ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin modernleşme sürecine aktif katkı sağladıklarını göstermektedir. 1933 yılında Hitler'in iktidara gelmesiyle Azerbaycan Türkü öğrencilerden bazıları Türkiye'ye yerleşmeyi tercih etmişlerdir. Ayrıca, Berlin'deki Azerbaycanlı öğrencilerin Türk dünyasının hariçteki mücadelesiyle yakından ilgilendiklerini ve kurdukları dayanışma dernekleri vasıtasıyla kültürel iş birliğini güçlendirdikleri tespit edilmiştir. Öte yandan, Azerbaycan'da yaşayan Alman kolonistlerin de eğitim için Almanya'ya gönderilmesi, iki ülke arasındaki siyasi ilişkilerin yanı sıra kültürel ilişkilerde eğitimin belirleyici bir rol oynadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Sonuç olarak çalışma, Azerbaycan-Almanya ilişkilerinde eğitimin kültürel etkileşimi güçlendiren bir araç olduğunu ve Azerbaycanlı öğrencilerin Türk dünyasının sorunlarına önemli katkılar sunduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti'nin modernleşme sürecinin tezahürü olarak yurt dışına gönderilen öğrencilerin Almanya'daki eğitim süreçleri daha önce ele alınan çalışmalarda değinilmemiştir. Bu çalışmada istifade edilen arşiv kaynakları hariçteki öğrencilerin eğitim sürecini yeniden değerlendirme fırsatı sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti, Azerbaycan Türkü Öğrenciler, Almanya, Weimar Cumhuriyeti, Türkiye.

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Introduction

Following the establishment of the Azerbaijan Republic in 1918, the formation of a qualified national intelligentsia became one of the central priorities of the new state. In 1920, the Azerbaijan Republic sent students to countries such as France, Germany, Italy, England, Russia, Ukraine, and Türkiye to enable them to pursue higher education in a foreign institution of higher education (See Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Azerbaijani Turk Students in Paris, 1920 (PA-AA R 63046)

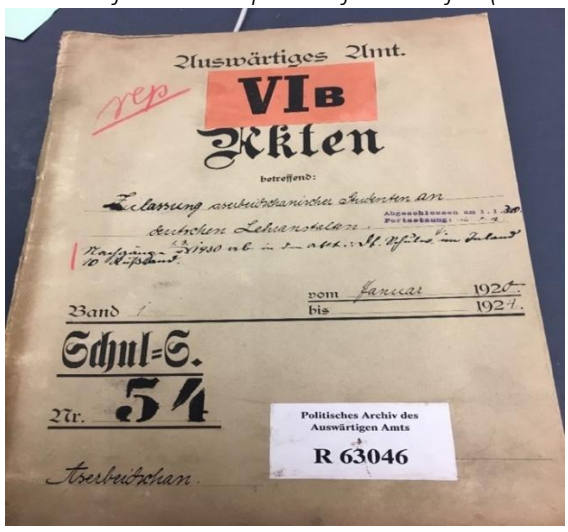


After the Bolsheviks took control of Azerbaijan in 1920, the students were initially allowed to continue their education abroad. This study aims to examine the identities of the students, educational processes, cultural interactions and subsequent professional contributions of Azerbaijani students who were dispatched to Germany (Weimar Republic) between 1920 and 1924. The research employs a methodology of historical analysis and document examination, relying heavily on sources preserved in the Berlin Foreign Policy Archive (Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts). The dossier R 63046, entitled März 1920-Juni 1923 Aserbaidschan, constitutes one of the significant sources concerning the students of the Azerbaijan Republic because it contains visa questionnaires, consular correspondence, petitions, photographs and student files (See Figure 2). Since the documents are fragmentary and do not cover all students sent abroad by the Azerbaijan Republic, the study does not claim to reconstruct the complete history of the student cohort. Rather, it uses the German diplomatic records to reassess selected cases and to complement existing Azerbaijani scholarship. While scholarship on Azerbaijani students abroad has been significantly advanced by domestic records—most notably in the comprehensive prosopographical research of Adalet Tahirzade—the German diplomatic perspective has remained largely overlooked. This study represents the first systematic integration of the Berlin Foreign Policy Archive (PA-AA) records, specifically the dossier R 63046, into the history of the 1920 student cohort. By introducing these previously unutilized primary materials, which include original visa questionnaires and consular reports, the research shifts the analytical focus from a purely national pedagogical mission to a complex case of cultural diplomacy. This approach allows for a reassessment of student numbers. While earlier lists emphasize the initial dispatch of thirteen students to Berlin, German records indicate that, due to later transfers from France and Italy, the number of Azerbaijani students in Germany rose to fifty-two. It should be emphasized that the archival documents are classified and preserved in folder form. The folders contain notebooks, official correspondence, questionnaires, consular reports and petitions. Within the folder are files relating to twelve students, including questionnaires that were administered to them. In the visa application forms filled out by the students, some files also contain passport-sized photographs of the applicants. The questionnaires and photographs referred to above are included in the appendix. Furthermore, the archival files of the Moscow and St. Petersburg Consulates were consulted, through which additional documents pertaining to the students of the

Azerbaijan Republic were identified and analysed. Key findings reveal that more than fifty Azerbaijani students pursued their studies in Germany, mainly in engineering, medicine, agriculture, chemistry, and mining. While many of these intellectuals returned to face Soviet repression or Stalinist purges, others settled in Türkiye and made lasting contributions to its scientific and agricultural development. Ultimately, the study concludes that education functioned as an important instrument for strengthening cultural interactions between Azerbaijan and Germany, providing the intellectual foundation for the modernization of Azerbaijan.

Figure 2.

Dossier of students from the Republic of Azerbaijan (PA-AA R 63046)



Despite these efforts, the available sources do not provide conclusive information about the later lives of all students. In line with Germany's political and economic objectives, its interest in the region naturally accelerated the activities of the Baku-based mission. In this context, the reports produced by Baku-based mission concerning cultural objectives are also examined. (PA-AA R 252212). The file concerning students of the Azerbaijan Republic contains information on twelve students, and their educational experiences in Germany have been examined. From among the students of the Azerbaijan Republic, the names and archival files of eight individuals have been retrieved. Seven of the files belong to students of the Azerbaijan Republic. The application forms and photographs of Mirza Hacızade Gökgöl (1897–1981), Aliekber Aliyev (1898–1977), Nusret Rızayev (1899–?), and Mirza Bahram Abdinov (1896–1969) are preserved among the archival records. In addition, the dossier also contains the file of Katharina Skobeleva, who was among the German-origin colonists (See Table 1).

The most comprehensive study on the education of Azerbaijani Republic students abroad has been carried out by Adalet Tahirzade. A detailed investigation has been conducted into the educational processes of 102 students. Although the study is meticulous and makes extensive use of archival materials, it does not draw upon German archival sources. Because Tahirzade's research does not encompass this aspect, it does not include an evaluation of the German-origin students dispatched from Azerbaijan. Since the political, socio-cultural, and scientific impacts of the students are dispersed over different time frames, it proves challenging to impose strict chronological limitations. Another issue to be considered is that the students pursued their studies in various cities throughout Europe. Some students abandoned their studies in France, Italy, and Türkiye and decided to continue their education in Germany. Table 1 summarizes the students' educational trajectories. The available evidence suggests that the students' application procedures in Germany were conducted via various cities and institutions (Abdullayev & Aliyeva, 2025). Thus, the fact that the students were dispersed across different German federal states complicates access to the relevant documents preserved in the state archives (Landesarchive) and to the personal records of the respective students. Accordingly, the analysis in this study has been confined to the information available. Despite the wealth of information in the Berlin Foreign Policy Archive, the fate and specific educational paths of certain individuals, such as Nusrat Rızayev, remain undetermined. The study is necessarily confined to the specific files available in the Berlin archive, such as folder R 63046, which contains detailed records for only a subset of the total student population. Ultimately, while the integration of German archives allows for a significant reassessment of these educational processes, the administrative fragmentation of records and the illegibility of certain documents mean that certain aspects of the students' lives remain beyond the current reach of the research.

Table 1.

Students from the Azerbaijan Republic and German Colonists Identified in PA-AA R 63046

No	Name Surname	Field of Study/Institution	Ethnic Origin/Affiliation	Place of Birth	City of Education
1	Murat Temirhanov	Faculty of Engineering	Azerbaijan Republic	-	Karlsruhe
2	Mustafa Vekilov	-	Azerbaijan Republic	-	-
3	Hasan Hüseyin Agayev	Deutsch-Persisches Komitee	Deutsch-Persisches Komitee (Iranian-Turk)	-	-
4	Mirza Bahram Abdinov	Engineering	Azerbaijan Republic	Derbend/Dagestan	Göttingen (discontinued) Bonn
5	Mirza Hacızade Gökgöl	Faculty of Agriculture	Azerbaijan Republic	Ganja	Berlin
6	Aliekber Aliyev	Faculty of Agriculture	Azerbaijan Republic	Shusha	Berlin
7	Nusret Rızayev	Faculty of Medicine	Azerbaijan Republic	Lenkoran	Berlin
8	Berthold Strasser	-	German-origin colonist	Helenendorf	-
9	Wilhelm Kühfuss	-	German-origin colonist	Georgsfeld	-
10	Georg Kühfuss	-	German-origin colonist	Helenendorf	-
11	Georg Reitenbach	-	German-origin colonist	Helenendorf	-
12	Katharina Ignatievna Skobeleva	Philology/Berlin University	German-origin colonist	Baku	Berlin

The Background and Process of Sending Students of the Azerbaijan Republic Abroad for Education

Turks under the dominion of the Russian Empire gradually enhanced and consolidated their political organization by means of the press and publishing. Following the events of 1905, the atmosphere of relative freedom in Azerbaijan fostered a growing sense of national and political awareness through newspapers and periodicals, culminating in the formation of political party organizations by 1912 (İsmayılov, 1993; Kazemzadeh, 2008, p. 52). Following the First World War, the Azerbaijani intelligentsia, distinguished by their advanced political awareness and organizational experience, sought to achieve national independence (Açıkkaya, 2010).

The aftermath of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution witnessed the emergence of new states and autonomous republics across the Caucasus and Western Turkestan. Under the leadership of Mehmet Emin Resulzade, reforms were planned in the political, social, commercial, and cultural spheres (Resulzade, 1996, p. 20).

The administrators and bureaucrats of the Azerbaijan Republic promoted the acquisition of a Western-type education. Within this framework, in 1920 students were dispatched to the capitals of Türkiye, Russia, and Western Europe for educational purposes, with the Ministry of Education allocating 7 million rubles to support their studies (Nazarli, 2008, pp. 179–180). To this end, the Ministry of Education of the newly founded republic established a commission that selected over one hundred students to be dispatched to Western Europe, Russia, and Türkiye for educational training (Agamaliyeva & Hudiyev, 1994, p. 68).

On this matter, Mehmet Emin Resulzade underscored the necessity of training students in diverse fields to supply the professional capital and highly trained bureaucrats required by Azerbaijan, and he committed to pursuing modernization and educational reforms based in Baku (PA-AA, R 63046). For this purpose, steps were taken to establish and institutionalize Baku University (Altstadt, 1992, p. 95). Aiming to ensure that the academic staff of the universities would be composed of Azerbaijani Turks, Mehmet Emin Resulzade, on 21 August 1919, emphasized the idea of dispatching students abroad (Tahirzadə & Tahirli, 2016, p. XIX).

In this context, he emphasized the necessity of ensuring that the decision would pertain to the disciplines most needed by the state. On 19 July 1919, following parliamentary deliberations in Baku, a decision was reached that specified the number of scholarships to be granted to the students and included consultations on the countries to which they would be dispatched. On September 1st, 1919, the National Council in Baku reached an agreement to establish a ministry that would deal with the issues concerning the students (Mladenova, 2021, p. 326). For this purpose, the students were chosen from among Azerbaijani Turks who lacked sufficient financial resources. To conduct the interviews of the selected students, Mehmet Emin Resulzade, Mehdi Bey Hacınski, Ahmed Bey Pepinov, and Abdullah Bey Efendizade served as members of the commission established for sending the students abroad, while Mehmed Kulu Hacınski acted as the advisor of the Baku Muslim Students' Committee (Tahirzadə & Tahirli, 2016, p. 106).

As a result of proposals put forward by the several parties represented in parliament, disciplines such as history, literature, physics, and mathematics were designated as areas of specialization for students. The expectation was that, upon their return to Azerbaijan, these students would fill a critical gap by contributing to the training of teachers in the newly established educational institutions. Within this framework, quotas were allocated for study abroad in various fields: 8 in medicine, 8 in mining, 7 in mechanics, 11 in chemistry, 3 in electrical engineering, 8 in architecture, 4 in aviation, 2 in agriculture, 3 in economics, 5 in history and philology, 5 in philosophy, 7 in law, and 6 in political science. In total, 280 students applied to the commission for the opportunity to pursue education abroad. In the selection process, priority was given to those who demonstrated academic success but lacked financial means, as well as to those who already possessed knowledge of the language of the country in which they would study. The commission overseeing the preparation and implementation of these arrangements was chaired by Teymur Aslanov (Tahirzadə & Tahirli, 2016, p. 64).

It is recorded that the Azerbaijan Republic decided to send 100 students abroad for education, of whom 31 were designated as alternates. However, replacements were drawn from among these alternates in cases where students either withdrew from participation or passed away. Moreover, some students who travelled at their own expense were nonetheless associated with the cohort of Azerbaijani Republic students. For this reason, the total number of students dispatched is generally considered to be 102. In his comprehensive study, Adalet Tahirzade provides the complete list of these students (Tahirzadə & Tahirli, 2016, pp. 103–105).

Commission chairman Aslanov promptly initiated the necessary correspondence for the students' applications to educational institutions. In this framework, a request was submitted to the Ministry of Finance, accompanied by a list of the students' needs. Beyond the financial support required for the journey, even provisions such as tea and sugar were included. By a decision dated 12 December 1919, it was approved that 2,600 francs would be allocated from the state budget to the students (Tahirzadə & Tahirli, 2016, p. 57).

Upon the completion of preparations, the students departed from Baku on 14 January 1920 for the countries where they were to pursue their studies. They were seen off by a parliamentary delegation consisting of İbrahim Elibov, Samed Agha Agamalioğlu, Ahmed Bey Pepinov, Abbas Kulu Kasımzade, and Aslan Bey Safikürdski. The students travelled by train as far as Baku, Ganja, Tbilisi, and Batumi. From Batumi they proceeded to Istanbul, from where, through the mediation of the local consulate, they were sent on to Rome. The majority of the students—seventy-eight—continued their journey to Lyon to study in Paris, while thirteen proceeded to Berlin. The remaining eleven pursued their education in Russia and Türkiye. However, German archival records indicate different figures regarding the actual course of their education: nine students are recorded in Türkiye, two in Italy, twenty-five in France, thirteen in Russia, and fifty-two in Germany (*Aserbaidschans Studenten Im Ausland*, 1923).

Some of the students who had initially begun their education in France subsequently transferred to Germany to continue their studies. As a result, more than half of the students were ultimately obliged to complete their education in Germany. In Berlin, twelve students continued their studies, while in Baden the number was between thirteen and fifteen, and in Freiburg seven. At this point, it is necessary to clarify why the students preferred to pursue their education in Germany. The primary reason was that Germany offered more affordable educational and living conditions for students (Bauknecht, 2001, p. 41; Tahirzadə & Tahirli, 2016, p. 119).

The students' educational experience unfolded during a politically turbulent period in Azerbaijan. Despite the upheavals following the Red Army's occupation of Baku, the students continued their studies abroad. Those who were sent to Berlin established contact with the resident Turkish community there and supported one another. After the dissolution of the Azerbaijan Republic, beginning in 1922 Azerbaijani students abroad were compelled to cope with severe economic difficulties. In response, the Azerbaijani Turks in Berlin consolidated their organizational efforts and founded the Association of Azerbaijani Students in Germany (Cafarli, 2003, p. 47).

However, as the newly enrolled students were concerned about the continuation of their scholarships, Eshref Aliyev, a student of the Faculty of Mining at the University of Freiburg, was sent to Baku (Tahirzadə & Tahirli, 2016, p. 194). Following the negotiations, the newly established Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic assured the students that their scholarships would be maintained, provided they accepted Soviet citizenship. Yet, because the promised stipends were disbursed irregularly, most students were forced to engage in supplementary employment while pursuing their studies.

Following the Soviet occupation of Baku, the payment of student stipends was subject to delays and interruptions. To remedy these difficulties and to secure the continuation of scholarships, Nariman Narimanov appealed to the Soviet authorities; however, his attempts yielded no tangible results. At the same time, the Azerbaijani Students' Association engaged in several initiatives aimed at obtaining financial support from Türkiye (Schnelle, 2020, pp. 2–4).

Bahram Akhundov assumed the leadership of the Commissariat of Education. Financial constraints prevented many

students from continuing their studies in Paris, with only twenty-eight managing to remain in France. Forty-nine students continued their education in Germany, and three in Italy. Adalet Tahirzade, however, cites the number of those who pursued their studies in Germany as fifty-four (Tahirzadə & Tahirli, 2016, pp. 184–185). In the documents obtained during this research, reports concerning the educational progress of eight students can be identified.

The Educational Experiences of Azerbaijani Republic Students in Germany

As one of the principal centres of higher learning in Europe, Berlin attracted considerable attention. Following a meeting with the German Foreign Ministry (Auswärtigen Amt) on 2 January 1920, forty students submitted visa applications to study in Germany (*Die Deutsche Botschaft in Paris*, 1920). The students who applied for education visas were required to complete an extensive questionnaire, in which they provided personal information as well as responses to specific questions. According to a report issued by the German Foreign Ministry in 1924, seventy-eight students from the Azerbaijan Republic were continuing their studies abroad. The report notes that fifty students were studying in Germany, nine in France, three in Italy, and three in Istanbul. Most of the students pursued their studies in fields such as agricultural engineering, chemistry, mechanics, medicine, and mining.

In this application, Murat Temirhanov and Mustafa Vekilov (M. Temirkhanoff and M. Vesiroff) expressed their requests to pursue studies at the university in Berlin. As both were simultaneously serving as representatives of the Azerbaijan Republic in the peace negotiations, they were authorized to reside in Berlin with permission to undertake their studies and to obtain residence permits (*Die Deutsche Botschaft in Paris*, 1920).

Among the students who arrived from Azerbaijan to pursue their studies in Berlin was Agayev Hasan Hüseyinoğlu. Agayev, a Turk from Iran, stated that he would receive support from the German Iranian Education Commission. Hüseyinoğlu's 1922 application was processed via the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic. It is also important to highlight that Azerbaijanis residing in Iran organized themselves and pursued a course of collective action.

Another student, Mirza Bahram Abdinov (Mirsa Bach'ram Ewsatoğlu Abtinoff), submitted his application on 17 October 1922, which was subsequently examined by the Baku Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. Abdinov, born on 1 August 1896 in Derbent, Dagestan, indicated in his questionnaire that he was a Muslim. He stated that he attended the Faculty of Agriculture at Hohenheim University in 1920–1921, before continuing his studies at the University of Göttingen from 1921 onwards. Asked to elaborate on his motives for studying in Germany, Abdinov explained that fifty students dispatched by the Azerbaijan Republic were already residing there, and that during his trip to Azerbaijan in August 1922 he personally collected the scholarship funds that had been promised to the students. Abdinov emphasized the students' dependence on the forthcoming stipends, noting that scholarship payments had not been received since September. He also indicated his intention to continue his studies through the sixth semester and subsequently take the final examination (*Fragebogen für Studenten.*, n.d.). He was granted a passport valid until 24 January 1923 and affirmed that he would proceed with his education under the scholarship of the Azerbaijan Republic. During his visa interview, he was required to fill out two questionnaires, the information from which was duly documented (Tahirzadə & Tahirli, 2016, p. 314). He ultimately completed his studies in Bonn (*Fragebogen für Studenten.*, n.d.).

Among the notable students whose applications are preserved in the German archives was Mirza Hacızade Gökgöl (1897–1981). Though a citizen of Azerbaijan, Mirza Hacızade (Mirza Hadschi-Sade) submitted a passport application on 3 January 1924 via the Istanbul Police Directorate to the representative of the Kingdom of Sweden, travelling on a Turkish passport. In his petition, he expressed his wish to pursue higher education in economics in Berlin and requested that his passport be validated to allow him to commence studies within the designated timeframe. During the visa procedure, Hacızade—like the other students—was also required to fill out the standard questionnaire. Gökgöl, born on 12 September 1897, recorded in the questionnaire that his profession was that of a student. He added that, although of Azerbaijani origin, he was at that time a citizen of Türkiye. He also reported that he had been forced to discontinue his studies in Naples, Italy, on account of financial hardship (*Zulassung aserbaidschanischer Studenten an Deutschen Lehranstellen*, n.d.).

Mirza Hacızade, on the other hand, stated that he had previously resided in Germany for educational purposes from June 1920 to August 1923. From this, it may be inferred that after being sent to Berlin by the Azerbaijan Republic, he subsequently returned to Türkiye. It is also evident that, owing to the Soviet occupation of Baku during this period, he was unable to return to his homeland. In the questionnaire, he indicated that he would enter Berlin via the Polish border and declared his intention to remain in Germany until the completion of his studies. After completing his education, Gökgöl was invited to Türkiye, where he contributed through his work in Turkish agriculture and the seed industry (Karagöz, 2020, pp. 2–3; Zencirci et al., 2018, pp. 693–711).

Another student, Azerbaijani national Nusrat Rızayev (1899–?) (Nusrat Ryzajew – Nusret Bey Riza), was accepted based on

his declaration that he was a political refugee from the Soviet Union. Born on 25 December 1899 in Lankaran, Rızayev applied on 3 January 1924 through the Embassy of the Kingdom of Sweden for a German visa to continue his studies at Berlin's Friedrich Wilhelm University. He further stated that he had resided in Berlin between 6 April 1920 and 27 August 1923. In support of his visa application, Rızayev also submitted his university student card. To alleviate his financial difficulties, he had been assigned responsibilities by the Association of Azerbaijani Students in Berlin (Tahirzadə & Tahirli, 2016, p. 932).

Alekber Aliyev likewise applied for a German visa on 3 January 1924 through the Embassy of the Kingdom of Sweden, via the Istanbul Police Directorate, using a Turkish passport. In his questionnaire, Aliyev declared his intention to study at the Faculty of Agriculture in Berlin. Although formerly a citizen of Azerbaijan, he was by then recorded as a Turkish national. Born on 25 August 1898 in Shusha, Aliyev requested a visa valid until the completion of his studies. The documents also note that he had previously applied for a visa with a Soviet passport and that he had studied in Berlin between 20 March 1920 and 29 August 1923. Finally, Aliyev enclosed his student card from the Faculty of Agriculture in Berlin, which was valid until August 1923 (*Deutsche Vertretung in Russland*, n.d.).

One of the groups that came from Azerbaijan to pursue education in Germany consisted of the German minority residing in the colonies of Helenendorf (Göygöl) and Georgsfeld. In 1923, German authorities issued a petition in support of facilitating the higher education of students from these colonies in German universities and technical institutes. The petition noted delays in the visa applications processed in Moscow and requested that two named individuals be granted educational visas without further delay (*Deutsche Botschaft in Frankreich*, 1920). The first of these students, Berthold Strasser, a graduate of the Baku Gymnasium, applied to the Technical University. The second, Wilhelm Kühfuss, a graduate of the Elisabethpol Gymnasium, was in the process of selecting a university and stated that he had not received adequate medical training in Helenendorf. A third student, Georg Kühfuss, graduated from the Helenendorf Gymnasium, while the fourth, Georg Reitenbach, was a graduate of the Elisabethpol Gymnasium. The petition emphasized that the processing of their visas should be expedited (*Die Deutsche Botschaft in Paris*, 1920). This episode illustrates the diligence with which the German government sought to ensure the education of its ethnic compatriots residing in the German colonies of Azerbaijan.

According to the files sent from the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic to Germany, another student, Katharina Ignatiewna Skobelewa, applied on 20 September 1924 to study as a philology student at Berlin University (see Figure 3). An Azerbaijani citizen, Katharina filed her visa request on 19 November 1924 for educational purposes. Residing at No. 6 Lieutenant Schmidt Street in Baku, she stated her intention to pursue philological studies in Berlin. This case also demonstrates Germany's support for its ethnic compatriots in the colonies to engage in research on the German dialect spoken in the region. Indeed, Katharina's presence in Berlin was tied to her studies on the German language. Within this framework, Germany's interest in Azerbaijan and the Caucasus is significant, as it reflects its concern for the education and cultural heritage of its compatriots. This case illustrates broader efforts to exert influence in the region through education.

Figure 3.

Visa Application of Katharina Ignatiewna, a Caucasian German (PA-AA R 63046)



Completion of Studies and Later Careers of Azerbaijani Turkic Students

Most of the students returned to Azerbaijan after completing their education. However, these intellectuals, who had pursued their studies in Europe, were confronted with the pressures of Soviet rule (Bala, 1991, p. 159). Moreover, some of the students who did not return to Azerbaijan continued to reside in Germany (Bauknecht, 2001, pp. 41–42). Among the most notable of these intellectuals was Hilal Munsizade, a student of the Faculty of Mining in Freiburg. Beginning in 1928, Munsizade became active in Azerbaijani foreign press activities, and in 1930 he served as editor for the newspapers Istiklal and Kurtuluş, which had just begun publication. In addition to these roles, he also prepared a brochure in Azerbaijan (Munschi, 1930, pp. 28–29).

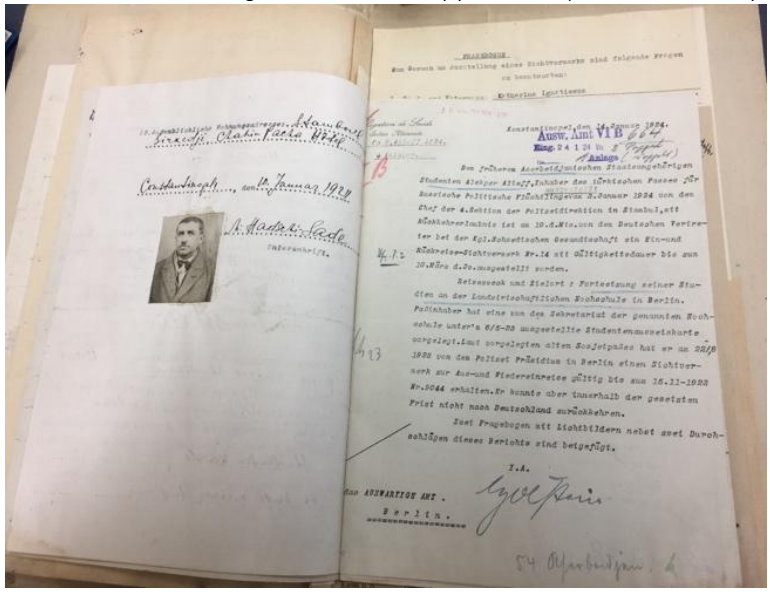
Rashid Bey Topçubaşı, the son of Ali Mardan Topchubashov, was one of the students who refused financial assistance from the Soviets and died in Paris at the age of twenty-six. Another figure who remained in Paris was Abbas Bey Atamalıbeyov, who completed his studies at the Paris Institute of Political Studies and worked closely with Mehmet Emin Resulzade. After 1934, he succeeded Ali Mardan Topchubashov in leading the émigré activities. Later, moving from France to Germany, he played a significant role during the Second World War in efforts to secure the release of Turkestani prisoners of war and became actively involved with Abdurrahman Fatalibeyli and the Azerbaijani Legion.

One of the significant aspects to be mentioned here concerns the role of the students within the Azerbaijani émigré press. To this end, it is evident that their activities in Berlin largely focused on publishing and association work (Mahmudov, 2014, p. 208). At the same time, they established connections with students from other Turkic republics and engaged in joint initiatives. In this regard, Cemil Ağazade's restaurant became a frequent meeting place for Turkic students (Schnelle, 2020, pp. 12–14). During their stay in Berlin, the students organized themselves through the establishment of the Azerbaijani Students' Association. They also made repeated appeals—primarily to Türkiye—seeking support to continue their educational pursuits (Tahirzadə & Tahirli, 2016, p. 153).

After completing their education, several students assumed significant positions and contributed to broader Turkic intellectual networks. Among them was Mirza Hacızade Gökgöl, whose file is preserved in the German archives (see Figure 4). After completing his studies, he returned to Türkiye. In 1926, his mentor Erwin Baur (1875–1933) began working at the Halkalı School of Agriculture in Istanbul. Following the institution's relocation to Yeşilköy in 1931, Gökgöl not only served as its director but also as a specialist in seed research and plant breeding. In 1934, with the enactment of the Surname Law, he adopted the surname 'Gökgöl,' recalling his native region in Azerbaijan (Karagöz, 2020, p. 2). Gökgöl remained in office until 1961, during which time he authored a considerable number of works on Turkish agriculture, agronomy, and seed improvement (Karagöz, 2020, p. 10; Tahirzadə & Tahirli, 2016, pp. 610–614).

Figure 4.

Mirza Hacızade Gökgöl's 1924 Visa Application (PA-AA R 63046)



Mirza Bahram Abdinov completed his studies at the Faculty of Agriculture in Bonn in 1924. Returning to Azerbaijan in 1925, he was assigned by the Azerbaijani People's Commissariat of Land to positions in Uzbekistan and Nakhchivan. Until 1934 he continued in these posts, after which Abdinov was appointed to the Tropical Plants Department of the Land Commissariat in

Baku, a position he held until 1939. Until his retirement in 1957, he served in various capacities within Azerbaijan (Tahirzadə & Tahirli, 2016, pp. 322–323).

Aliekber Aliyev (1898–1977) returned to Azerbaijan in 1924 and held various positions at the Agricultural Institute. In addition to serving as director of the Azerbaijan Agricultural Institute, he also contributed to the publication of a newspaper aimed at raising public awareness. Furthermore, he worked as a specialist in Western languages at Azerbaijan State University until 1967 (Tahirzade, Tahirli, 2016, p. 543). Among the archival files is also that of Nusrat Rızayev (1899–?), one of the students of the Azerbaijan Republic. However, no information could be obtained regarding his course of study or his subsequent fate (Tahirzadə & Tahirli, 2016, p. 932).

While the educational process of the German-origin colonists dispatched from the region, alongside the Azerbaijani Turks, can be traced, no further information has been found regarding their later lives.

Conclusion

To meet the need for a trained intelligentsia to advance the country's development and progress, Azerbaijani intellectuals and government officials sent promising students abroad. Under the leadership of Mehmet Emin Resulzade, the Azerbaijan Republic took a significant step in this regard by dispatching 102 students. Following the Soviet occupation of Azerbaijan, students from the region continued to be sent to Europe, particularly to Germany. During this period, the number of students who completed their education in Germany exceeded fifty, although the records preserved in German archives remain limited. Alongside Azerbaijani Turkic students, members of the German population residing in the Azerbaijani colonies were also sent abroad for higher education. The dispatch of these German-origin students also illustrates the cultural dimension of Azerbaijan- Germany relations. This educational exchange strengthened the ties between Germany and Azerbaijan, underlining the significance of the German communities within the colonies.

Sending 102 students abroad represented a strategic effort to consolidate national independence through intellectual sovereignty. The insufficiency of educational institutions and the fact that Azerbaijani Turks had been deprived of higher education under the Russian Empire were decisive factors in this decision. Despite limited financial resources, this measure was implemented urgently in recognition of the shortage of a national cadre capable of assuming the administration of the Azerbaijan Republic—the first state in the Turkic world to declare independence.

The personnel files of students such as Murat Temirhanov, Mustafa Vekilov, Agayev Hasan Huseyinoğlu, Mirza Bahram Abdinov, Mirza Hacızade Gökgöl, Alekber Aliyev, and Nusrat Rızayev, who were sent abroad by the Azerbaijan Republic, are preserved in the German archives. These files constitute an important source for understanding the educational policies of the period, the selection of students, and the processes they underwent. Many students returned to Azerbaijan after completing their studies; some later became victims of the Stalinist purges of 1937. This tragic outcome illustrates the vulnerability of Azerbaijani intellectuals under Soviet rule.

Another point emphasized in this study is that some students, such as Mirza (Hacızade) Gökgöl, found opportunities to made lasting contributions after settling in Türkiye. This demonstrates that the students were able to make use of their education and contribute on an international scale. In the specific case of Mirza Gökgöl, the educational initiatives undertaken by the Azerbaijan Republic had tangible outcomes in Türkiye. It may thus be argued that, despite residing in different parts of the Turkic world, the contributions of Azerbaijani students left enduring marks. In conclusion, although the educational experience of the students sent abroad by the Azerbaijan Republic was overshadowed by Stalinist repression, it nonetheless represented a significant step for both Azerbaijan and Türkiye. The education and contributions of these students continued to shape the intellectual and cultural development of Azerbaijan.

The primary original contribution of this study is its integration of records from the Berlin Foreign Archive (Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts - PA-AA), specifically the dossier R 63046, which covers the period from March 1920 to June 1924. While previous comprehensive works, most notably by Adalet Tahirzade, have meticulously documented the lives of Azerbaijani students abroad, they did not utilize these specific German archival records. Unlike existing literature, this study evaluates the educational experiences of German-origin colonist students who were dispatched from Azerbaijan for higher education. This highlights how education served as a tool for Germany to maintain cultural influence over its ethnic compatriots in the Caucasus. By comparing archival data with existing narratives, the research offers a more precise look at the geographic distribution of students. While general lists mention around 100 students sent abroad, German records identify a higher concentration of 52 students specifically within Germany.

Since students were dispersed across various federal states, future studies should move beyond central diplomatic archives and examine local state archives (Landesarchive) and university records in cities such as Karlsruhe, Freiburg, Göttingen, and Bonn to recover more detailed personal files. There are significant gaps in biographies of certain individuals. Dedicated

research could aim to trace these missing trajectories. Future research is needed to determine the collaboration between Azerbaijani students and those from Turkistan and other Turkic regions in Berlin. This includes researching the Association of Azerbaijani Students in Germany and their joint initiatives in the emigration press. A comparative study could be conducted by analyzing the educational processes of Azerbaijani students in France, Italy and Russia using the national archives of those respective countries to provide a more holistic view of the student cohort.

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Yapılandırılmış Özet

Bu çalışma, 1918–1920 yılları arasında bağımsız bir devlet olarak varlık gösteren Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti'nin Batı Avrupa'ya, özellikle de Almanya'ya gönderdiği öğrencilerin eğitim süreçlerini Berlin Dış Politika Arşivi (Auswärtigen Amt, PA-AA) belgeleri ışığında ele almaktadır. Araştırma, özellikle R 63046 "März 1920–Juni 1923 Aserbeidschan" başlıklı dosyaya dayanmaktadır. Söz konusu dosya, Azerbaycanlı öğrencilerin kimlik bilgileri, eğitim alanları, konsolosluk yazışmaları, dilekçeleri, vize anketleri ve vesikalık fotoğraflarını içermesi bakımından oldukça özgün bir kaynak niteliğindedir. Ayrıca, Azerbaycan topraklarında yaşayan Alman kolonilerine mensup öğrencilerin –özellikle Helenendorf (Göygöl) ve Georgsfeld kökenli– eğitim faaliyetleri de incelemeye dâhil edilmiştir. Araştırmanın temel amacı, Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti tarafından Avrupa'ya gönderilen öğrencilerin kimliklerini, gönderilme amaçlarını, eğitim süreçlerini ve Sovyet işgali sonrasında yaşadıkları dönüşümleri belgelemektir. Berlin Dış Politika Arşivi'nde yer alan dosyada on iki öğrenciye ait belgeler bulunmaktadır; bunlardan sekizinin kimliği açık biçimde tespit edilmiştir. Bu isimler arasında Mirza Hacızade Gökgöl, Aliekber Aliyev, Nusret Rızayev, Mirza Bahram Abdinov, Murat Temirhanov, Mustafa Vekilov, Hasan Hüseyin Agayev ve Alman kökenli öğrenci Katharina Skobeleva yer almaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra Alman kolonistlerden Berthold Strasser, Wilhelm ve Georg Kühfuss kardeşler ile Georg Reitenbach da aynı dosya kapsamında değerlendirilmiştir. Rus Çarlığı döneminde siyasi ve kültürel baskı altında yaşayan Azerbaycan Türkleri, 1905 Devrimi sonrasında gelişen basın-yayın faaliyetleri sayesinde ulusal bilincini önemli ölçüde güçlendirmiştir. Bu süreç, 28 Mayıs 1918'de Mehmet Emin Resulzade önderliğinde kurulan Azerbaycan Demokratik Cumhuriyeti'nin modernleşme ve eğitim reformlarını gündeme almasına zemin hazırlamıştır. Yeni devletin karşılaştığı en önemli sorunlardan biri, nitelikli insan gücü eksikliğiydi. Bu bağlamda hükümet, 1919 yılında bir Eğitim Komisyonu oluşturarak gençleri yurt dışına göndermeye karar vermiştir. Komisyon, maddi imkânları kısıtlı ancak başarı düzeyi yüksek, yabancı dil bilen öğrencileri seçerek farklı uzmanlık alanlarına yönlendirmiştir. Toplam 100 öğrenci (31'i yedek) Avrupa'ya gönderilmek üzere belirlenmiş ve bu program için 7 milyon ruble bütçe ayrılmıştır. Öğrencilerin büyük bir kısmı mühendislik, tıp, ziraat, hukuk, tarih, felsefe ve fen bilimleri alanlarında eğitim almak üzere görevlendirilmiştir. Hazırlık sürecinin tamamlanmasının ardından öğrenciler, 14 Ocak 1920 tarihinde Bakü'den hareket etmiş; Batum, İstanbul ve Roma üzerinden Avrupa'nın çeşitli merkezlerine ulaşmıştır. Bunlardan 78'i Fransa'ya (çoğunlukla Lyon'a), 13'ü Berlin'e, geri kalanı ise Rusya ve Türkiye'ye yönlendirilmiştir. Ancak Alman arşivlerinde bu sayıların farklı biçimde kaydedildiği görülmektedir: Almanya'da 52, Fransa'da 25, Türkiye'de 9, İtalya'da 2 ve Rusya'da 13 öğrenci eğitim görmüştür. Zamanla mali koşulların elverişsizliği nedeniyle birçok öğrenci Fransa ve İtalya'daki eğitimini yarıda bırakmış, daha uygun imkânlar sunan Almanya'ya geçmiştir. Böylelikle Berlin, Karlsruhe, Freiburg ve Göttingen şehirleri Azerbaycanlı öğrencilerin yoğun olarak bulunduğu merkezler hâline gelmiştir. Berlin, dönemin Avrupa'sında bilimsel ve teknik eğitim bakımından en önemli merkezlerden biri olarak öne çıkmıştır. 1920 yılı itibarıyla Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti adına 40 öğrenci Almanya'ya vize başvurusunda bulunmuş ve bu süreçte her biri ayrıntılı anketler doldurmuştur. 1924 tarihli Alman Dışişleri raporuna göre, yurt dışında eğitimine devam eden 78 Azerbaycanlı öğrenciden 52'si Almanya'dadır. Mirza Bahram Abdinov, Derbend doğumlu olup 1920–1921 yıllarında Hohenheim Üniversitesi Tarım Fakültesi'nde, ardından Göttingen ve Bonn'da eğitim görmüştür. Burs ödemelerindeki aksaklıklar nedeniyle öğrenimine kendi imkânlarıyla devam etmiştir. Mirza Hacızade Gökgöl, Gence doğumlu olup Napoli'de başladığı eğitimini mali nedenlerle yarıda bırakmış, Berlin Ziraat Fakültesi'nde sürdürmüştür. Aliekber Aliyev, Şuşa doğumlu olup Berlin Ziraat Fakültesi'nde Türk pasaportu ile eğitimine devam etmiştir. Nusret Rızayev, Lenkeran doğumlu bir tıp öğrencisi olarak Berlin Friedrich Wilhelm Üniversitesi'nde öğrenim görmüş ve siyasi mülteci statüsünde kabul edilmiştir. Hasan Hüseyin Agayev, İran Türklerinden biri olup Deutsch-Persischen Komitee tarafından desteklenmiştir. Katharina Ignatievna Skobeleva, 1901 Bakü doğumlu olup 1924 yılında Berlin Üniversitesi Filoloji Fakültesi'nde Almanca üzerine çalışmıştır. Ayrıca Helenendorf ve Georgsfeld kolonilerinden gelen Alman asıllı öğrenciler (Strasser, Kühfuss kardeşler, Reitenbach) Almanya tarafından özel olarak desteklenmiş, bu durum Berlin'in kültürel nüfuz politikasını yansıtmıştır. Sovyetler Birliği'nin Bakü'yü işgali sonrasında Azerbaycan hükümeti tarafından sağlanan burslar kesintiye uğramış, öğrenciler ciddi ekonomik zorluklarla karşı karşıya kalmıştır. Bu dönemde Berlin'deki Azerbaycanlı öğrenciler dayanışma amacıyla Azerbaycanlı Talebeler Birliği Derneği'ni kurmuşlardır. Sovyet yönetimi, bursların yalnızca öğrencilerin Sovyet vatandaşlığını kabul etmeleri hâlinde sürdürüleceğini bildirmiş, bu durum ise öğrenciler arasında fikir ayrılıklarına yol açmıştır. Eğitimlerini tamamlayan öğrencilerin sonraki yaşamları farklı yönlerde şekillenmiştir. Bir kısmı ülkesine dönerek devlet kurumlarında görev almış, bir kısmı ise Avrupa'da kalarak muhaceret faaliyetlerine katılmıştır. Mirza Hacızade Gökgöl, öğrenimini tamamladıktan sonra Türkiye'ye dönmüş; Halkalı Ziraat Okulu ve Yeşilköy Ziraat Enstitüsü'nde tohum ıslahı ve ziraat alanlarında 1961 yılına kadar görev yapmıştır. Türkiye tarım biliminin gelişimine yaptığı katkılarla tanınmıştır. Mirza Bahram Abdinov, 1925'te Azerbaycan'a dönmüş, Halk Toprak Komiserliği bünyesinde Özbekistan ve Nahçıvan'da görev almış, ardından Bakü'de Tropik Bitkiler Amirliği'nde çalışmıştır. Aliekber Aliyev, 1924 yılında yurda dönerek Azerbaycan Ziraat Enstitüsü'nde yönetici ve eğitimci olarak görev yapmış, ayrıca Batı dilleri uzmanı olarak 1967'ye kadar akademik faaliyetlerini sürdürmüştür. Avrupa'da kalmayı tercih eden bazı öğrenciler ise Azerbaycan muhaceret hareketinde aktif roller üstlenmiştir. Hilal Münşizade, Freiburg Maden Fakültesi mezunu olarak Berlin merkezli muhaceret basınında görev almış, İstiklal ve Kurtuluş gazetelerinde editörlük yapmıştır. Abbas Bey Atamalıbeyov, Fransa'da sürdürdüğü çalışmalarında Ali Merdan Topçubaşı ile iş birliği yaparak Azerbaycan Lejyonu ve Türkistanlı esirlerin serbest bırakılması konusunda faaliyet göstermiştir. Raşid Bey Topçubaşı ise Sovyet yardımlarını reddetmiş ve 26 yaşında Paris'te vefat etmiştir. Berlin Dış Politika Arşivi'nde yer alan belgeler, Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti'nin kısa ömürlü bağımsızlık döneminde yürüttüğü modernleşme ve eğitim politikalarının somut kanıtlarını sunmaktadır. Bu belgeler, Azerbaycanlı öğrencilerin yalnızca bireysel eğitim hikâyelerini değil, aynı zamanda bir ulusun modernleşme ideali uğruna verdiği mücadeleyi de yansıtmaktadır. Almanya, ekonomik koşulların uygunluğu ve bilimsel altyapısının gelişmişliği nedeniyle Azerbaycanlı öğrenciler için cazip bir merkez hâline gelmiştir. Sovyet işgalinin ardından bursların kesilmesi, öğrenciler arasında yeni dayanışma biçimlerinin doğmasına yol açmış; Berlin, Azerbaycan muhaceretinin kültürel ve entelektüel merkezi hâline gelmiştir. Almanya'da eğitim gören Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti öğrencileri gerek Azerbaycan'ın gerekse Türkiye'nin bilimsel ve kültürel yaşamına önemli katkılarda bulunmuş, aynı zamanda Türk dünyası aydınlanmasının öncü kuşağını oluşturmuştur. Arşiv belgelerine dayanan bu çalışma, Azerbaycan modernleşme tarihinin Avrupa boyutuna ışık tutarak, erken Cumhuriyet döneminde eğitimin bir ulus inşa aracı olarak üstlendiği rolü ortaya koymaktadır.