

END OF TRANSACTIONAL DIPLOMACY FOR AZERBAIJAN?

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By Gohar Kantarchian, Toronto, Ontario 26 May 2021

On March 2, German Ambassador to Azerbaijan Wolfgang Manig met with Azerbaijan's Deputy Minister of Economy Sahib Alakbarov and other Azerbaijani officials to reaffirm the commitment to economic cooperation between the two countries, Azernews agency reported. During the meeting, the Azerbaijani official invited the German diplomat to consider German investments in the 'liberated territories' -- a reference to the territories that were conquered by Azerbaijan during the 44-day war launched against the Republic of Artsakh by Azerbaijan in cooperation with NATO-member Turkey and Islamic mercenaries. After all, Azerbaijan is Germany's number-one trading partner in the South Caucasus, host Alakbarov said. The German diplomat concurred.

Four weeks later, on March 30, the same German ambassador refused to be part of a scoping visit to the so-called liberated territories organized for representatives of the diplomatic corps of Western countries by Azerbaijan.

The German ambassador's rejection came as a shock in Azerbaijan sparking uproar. The Azerbaijani media, in particular, alleged that Germany had come under the influence of the "powerful Armenian Diaspora" and for that reason did not accept Azerbaijan's 'victory' over Armenia.

Despite the Azerbaijani allegation, the question was why the German ambassador, so supportive initially of the plan, had a change of heart. After all, the Bundestag was adamant on maintaining neutrality during the 44-day war waged against the Republic of Artsakh by Azerbaijan, Turkey and jihadists from Syria and Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Armenian media speculated that Germany might have grown suspicious that Azerbaijan had a role in the sudden death of German politician Karin Strenz while she was en route to Germany from a private trip to Cuba on March 21.

Strenz's death had magnified the impact of the influence-buying scandal in Europe and in Germany in particular, involving the Azerbaijani petro-dynasty as Strenz was one of the key figures known for bartering her conscience for Azerbaijani caviar.

Allegedly, Strenz, 53, representing Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union, received €4 million through a payment scheme dubbed 'Azerbaijani Laundromat', whereby money of unclear origin linked to the Aliyev clan in Azerbaijan was washed through four shell companies in the UK and ultimately paid to various beneficiaries, including European lawmakers in exchange for political favors.

Strenz is said to have also scooped a €22,000 in consultancy fees to Line M-Trade, founded by a former MP from the sister party Christian Social Union, Eduard Lintner, for the sole purpose of receiving financing from Azerbaijan for its services.

A masterful broker of transactional diplomacy in exchange for personal gain, Lintner has been using

his standing and reputation as a politician to promote a whitewashed image for the Azerbaijani petrol-dictatorship after retiring from the German Bundestag in 2009 and founding the Berlin-based lobby group Society for Promoting German- Azerbaijani Relations (GEFDAB). The company is said to have received €819,500 from offshore companies linked to the Aliyevs.

In 2010 Lintner recruited Strenz to work for his lucrative Azerbaijani side business funded by Azeri petrodollars. According to European civil society groups, during this period European politicians were invited to junkets in Azerbaijan and were presented with expensive gifts, including silk carpets, gold, money, and caviar in exchange for small and not-so-small favors for the ruling dynasty of Azerbaijan.

Strenz also travelled to Azerbaijan in 2010.

The Lintner-Strenz duo continued their cooperation for the benefit of the far-far away exotic fiefdom in 2013, when Lintner led a German election observation mission to Azerbaijan and Strenz registered as an observer from Germany. The elections met German standards, Lintner declared, although the official observers found the process problematic. Lintner's lip service to exotic Azerbaijan's kleptocrats was generously rewarded with a €61,000 tranche to GEFDAB two weeks later, according to the [Deutsche Welle](#).

Apparently, democracy and universal human rights so ardently preached by German politicians at home were of little concern to Strenz and Lintner in their dealings with Azerbaijan. Why would they care and how events in a faraway kleptocracy impact the comfort of their lives at home? Does not this explain why Strenz voted against the release of political prisoners in Azerbaijan at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in June 2015?

In 2018 Strenz was kicked out of the PACE, after the Azerbaijan [Laundromat scandal](#) broke. Yet during her Bundestag investigation in January 2019 she had the cynicism to compare her unethical behavior to that of breaching traffic rules and getting a ticket.

Strenz was under investigation by German authorities at the time of her sudden death. The investigation was launched after a criminal complaint by Transparency Germany in 2019 against Strenz and Lintner for bribery and corruption. No details of her death are known.

The Azerbaijani Laundromat scandal in Germany and the involvement of members of Angela Merkel's other top political cohorts from CDU remain a hot topic in Germany. Frau Merkel's elevated statements about what happens when territorial integrity and sovereignty of a state are not respected (as in case of the Karabakh conflict) impart nothing other than false wisdom and hypocrisy. After all, her cohorts did not shun away from lavish gifts from an impoverished people living under a dictatorship.

The German ambassador refused to visit the so-called liberated territories in Artsakh and check existing economic opportunities in ancestral Armenian lands not because he felt remorseful for what

happened in Artsakh and how the indigenous Armenians were ethnically cleansed from their ancestral lands. Perhaps it was Strenz's death that impacted the ambassador's decision due to suspicions of Azerbaijani involvement in it. Or maybe it was time to take a break and distance Germany from a shameful practice of getting alms from corrupt Azerbaijan in lieu of promoting Aliyev's image in Europe and securing mineral interests for Germany.

Comments



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No wonder the EU leaders and Germany's Merkel were quiet when their NATO favorite attack dog, Turkey, prompted Azerbaijan's occupation and destruction of Ngorno Gharapagh (Artsakh). Thereafter, Merkel, with great fanfare, retired with blood on her hands, leaving her successor to sort things out. Admittedly, Azeri petrodollar, has successfully made inroads in the global political circles, starting with England, ending with Israel. In the event that German investigations continue in the bribery cases, others may find their end too in the maze of lobbying and money laundry for Turkey and Azerbaijan. The saga will continue however, as always in favor of England's Sunni and Shia pets for a long time to come. Armenia, on the other hand, sadly, has yet to utilize seasoned politicians and diplomats to rewrite its recent history of failures.