

## AVIM Türkmeneli İşbirliği ve Kültür Vakfı AVRASYA İNCELEMELERİ MERKEZİ CENTER FOR EURASIAN STUDIES



27 March 2014, İstanbul

# ABOUT AVİM

The Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM) was established in the beginning of 2009 by the Turkmeneli Cooperation and Cultural Foundation in Ankara. The aim of the Center is to conduct research on matters relating to Turkey in two major areas, the Caucasus and the Balkans, and in this context Eastern Europe, European Union, and the continent of Asia with particular focus on ECO member states, Russia and China. The Center also publishes its research within a written and digital environment, organizes conferences on these subjects, attends and contributes to education.

AVİM has also taken on the activities of the Institute for Armenian Research which was active in Ankara in years 1999-2009 within the framework of the Center for Eurasian Strategic Studies (ASAM). Maintaining the continuation of the research on the Armenian issues, AVİM publishes three journals by Terazi Yayıncılık. These journals are the following:

Ermeni Araştırmaları (first publication in 2001)

Review of Armenian Studies (first publication in 2002)

Uluslararası Suçlar ve Tarih (first publication in 2005)

The Center prepares a daily bulletin which includes news and commentaries relating to the Armenian Question, Balkans, Iraq, Asia and Europe (EU). This bulletin is forwarded to approximately 7.000 members by e-mail.

The Center also has a website consisting of a home page and four different folders (The Caucasus and the Armenian Issue, the Balkans, Asia, and Europe).

Ambassador (R) Ömer Engin Lütem serves as the Honorary President of the Center for Eurasian Studies.

Ambassador (R) Alev Kılıç is the Director of the Center for Eurasian Studies, since January 2013.

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# **CAUCASUS AND AZERBAIJAN**

(Unedited transcripts of oral, spontaneous presentations)

İstanbul, 27 March 2014, Bahçeşehir University

## CAUCASUS AND AZERBAIJAN

Bahçeşehir University International Leadership Application and Research Center (ULMER), in cooperation with Azerbaijan Strategic Research Center and Center for Eurasian Studies (AVIM in Ankara), organized a meeting on "Caucasus and Azerbaijan" 27th of March, 2014. In the meeting that was moderated by R. Ambassador Alev Kılıç, Mr. Thomas GOLTZ and R. Ambassador Candan AZER made keynote presentations. Goltz, who until recently taught at Montana State University, is an American journalist/author who made researches on the Caucasus. Goltz, who has also worked on the former Soviet Union geography and Turkey for a long time, published books titled **"Azerbaijan Diary", "Chechnya Diary"** and **"Georgia Diary"** and he participated in many field researches.

Retired Ambassador H.E. Candan Azer, who has over 40 years of experience in the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, served as Ambassador in Turkish embassies in Warsaw and Islamabad. He is also the author of the book titled *"South Caucasia from Father to Son"* which was published in 2011. Son of an Azerbaijani father, Ambassador Azer held high-level positions in the Turkish Foreign Ministry on the region and reflected his observations in his book in light of political developments with regard to relations between Turkey and Armenia.

Both speakers shared their experience, observations and their general deliberation with regard to the region with the audience.



### **ALEV KILIÇ**

### Director of Center for Eurasian Studies (AVIM)

Eurasian Studies Center located in Ankara, AVİM has the privilege and pleasure to organize a meeting at Bahçeşehir University today with two very distinguished, prominent speakers. The topic is very actual, very current, it has always been and probably always will be, "The Caucasus and Azerbaijan". We thank as AVİM, of course to the cooperation we received from Bahçeşehir University and ULMAR and also the Strategic Research Center of Azerbaijan. Today, we have two speakers as I've said very distinguished, very prominent and one is "Muallim" Thomas Goltz. He is a journalist and when I say only journalist, I am sure Ambassador Azer will object. Because he calls him not only an investigator journalist, but an intrusive one. These are his words. Mr. Thomas Goltz is indeed a journalist and until recently was a professor at Montana State University. He lives most of his time in Montana but we also have the pleasure to host him here in Turkey at least a month in a year.

Mr. Goltz or Goltz Muallim, indeed knows Azerbaijan from inside out. He was "the" journalist who flew to Nagorno-Karabakh during the war time with the last helicopter to leave from the Azerbaijan and also to come back from Nagorno-Karabakh.

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So he knows not only Azerbaijan but also the Karabakh issue and the Caucasus, he is the author of three very prominent books. "The Azerbaijan Diaries" which I understand was also translated into Azerbaijani language now. Then "The Georgia Diaries" and "The Chechen Diaries". So just the titles of these books, I think, are indicative enough to tell the audience his experience in the Caucasus. So we shall be very pleased now to listen to him and we hope that he will share more than a tiny bit of his experiences in the area with us. Thank you very much Mr. Goltz.



# THOMAS GOLTZ

# Montana State University, Author of *"Azerbaijan Diary"*, *"Chechnya Diary"* and *"Georgia Diary"*

First of all deep thanks and gratitude for inviting me here to this venture. And this is my first time at this lovely, lovely University. And I had the pleasure of running into all sorts of old friends; there is Heath (Lowry) of course and I have forgotten that you were here Nigâr (Göksel) in the back and I also ran into an old friend of mine and sparring partner back then when I was a journalist here, in Turkey in the 1980's, who is also apparently no longer in the room right now, but it was a great pleasure to see him as well.

I thank here to the Ambassadors in my right and to my left Candan (Azer) and Alev (Kılıç) for creating this opportunity and I hope that I do not disappoint. I have a number of different things to say, but let's just start with the corrections. I used to be a journalist, I no longer am a journalist. I only write for my friends on the internet, blogging and such like. And I have to say though right now I yearn to be a journalist again because the times that we are in right now are particularly interesting. Everything

in the Caucasus right now and the Black Sea Region and indeed in Turkey of course and the world is focused on what is happening in Ukraine what is happening with Mr. Putin; what are his intentions? There is wild speculation across the board. There is great disagreement about the historical reasons why Russia retook Crimea etc. but I can tell you right now that throughout the Caucasus everybody is walking on pins and needles and waiting for the next move.

Couple of other things, thank you for your remarks about me. First a joke, yes I am the author of three books one is "The Azerbaijan Diaries" I had a completely different title for it but, friends and publisher insisted that it should follow in the footsteps of the books like "Berlin Diary" and "Guadalcanal Diary" there is a precedent for it so, finally I came and I've said "all right, call my book 'Azerbaijan Diary" because indeed it is a personal account. But I was never comfortable with the title. Then, my second book to come out was "*Chechen Diary*" and I had a completely different title for that as well but I was late to deliver it to the publisher and the publisher said "You don't get to argue about the title. You've already got one called "*Azerbaijan Diary*" thus your book on Chechnya is going to be "*Chechnya Diary*". Which I really disagreed with, but I had to accept that. Finally, came the "*Georgia Diary*" and the publisher was the same and it was sharp as the "*Azerbaijan Diary*" they basically said "Look we are publishing this book for you. Nobody else wants this book. It's going to be "*Georgia Diary*."

The other corrective thing that I would say is that in our discussions about Azerbaijan, the Caucasus and these various problematic entities; the non-state entities or non-recognized entities; Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Trans-Dniester and possibly now Crimea. We have to be very very careful about the terms we use. Nagorno is a Russian adjective, meaning mountainous. In Azerbaijan and in Armenia the disputed territory is referred to as "Upper-Karabakh". In Azerbaijani "Dağlık Karabağ" or "Mountainous Karabakh" or "Yukarı Karabağ" and in Armenian I forgot exactly what it is right now but it is the equivalent. Only in Russian it is "Nagorno" as well as in international discourse which I maintain confuses the entire issue. Because if you have a mountain, you also have a valley. And disaster that occurred in Azerbaijan on last twenty years is mainly of all the refugees and internally displaced people who came from valley Karabakh. So then I tend to insist that when I speak about the Karabakh issue, I refer to upper or mountainous Karabakh when I'm speaking in English. There are several Russian sentences here about the Karabakh meaning in Russian, because "Nagorno" is an adjective as mountain in Russian. How did I come to whatever expertise I have on this issue and other issues?

I maintain my life has been serious of flux and coincidences 'kısmet' 'nasip' etc. Briefly I started my life in North Dakota want be actor play right got to Chicago then New York then Berlin. I talked myself German. I decided to go visit a brother in Africa.



Hitchhike across Eastern Europe down through the Balkans and eventually this place called Turkey. I know the Turks from Berlin where I live; I was terrified of the Turks because the Germans told me how terrible the Turks can be.

I spent two days crossing Turkey, with relief into Syria. I spent about a year and a half there performing Shakespeare in the street I got back to the university, NYU, where I study Arabic properly and then I went to live in Syria for a while in Morocco, which is also obviously in the news today. It was whatever, the Islamic republic of Morocco or the equivalent and to give me a full scholarship to get a Ph.D., which I never got. To get that I had to study another Middle Eastern language to proficiency degree at NYU Persian was filled, Hebrew was filled but there was a just opened up brand new class in Turkish. There was one registered student and keep the class open, and they needed two registered students, so they said you are going to study Turkish, whether you liked it or not. I did so. As a result, I ended up in Istanbul 1982, I decided to stay. Then I moved in Ankara to begin carrier as a journalist covering Turkey during this fascinating period of time before most of you presumably weren't even born.

Basically, the transition from the last military take over Kenan Evren, the transition to Turgut Özal, the Özal's reform so that transformed Turkey over that period of time. And then after about a decade in Turkey, it was time for me to do something else. So,

I applied for a grant and received it to go to study the Turkic speaking republics of Soviet Central Asia.

The year was 1990; I was down in rocky Kurdistan as part of a relief thing. All the Kurds came out from Northern Iraq. I came to Istanbul to buy my ticket to go to Tashkent and the airport people in Istanbul said Moscow is not on your Visa; your Visa is from San Francisco directly to the Tashkent. There was no such flight. They refused to give me the tickets and told me I have to go back the USA and reapply for another visa. I said what am I to do? I picked up a phone and called an old friend who was the head of the Soviet News Agency task in Ankara at that time. His name is Yalçın Alizade and he came from the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan. I always thought he was KGB, he always thought I was CIA but we had some mutual relationship. So I called him up and I said "Yalçın, what do I do?" You have always talked about great fraternity between the Soviet Socialist Azerbaijani people and citizens of Republic of Turkey. He said, "Thomas there is a new flight direct from Baku to Istanbul and back. It's expensive but it's corrupt. If you can buy yourself a ticket and talk your way by walking a little way of Pan-Turkic enthusiasm at the border of Soviet Socialist Azerbaijan, my family will be waiting for you on the far side of frontier" and that is indeed what we did. It was July 1991. We figured out that we spent four days in Baku, and we got off Tashkent. We spend two intense weeks in the Summer July 1991. Got up to the Karabakh front,



identified the nationalism was reawakening in Azerbaijan, took the train when you still could go and find this guy but nobody wanted to talk about so-called first Turk in the politic bureau, namely Haydar Aliyev and also identified the fact that Azerbaijan looked like it had been such drive of energy resources like oil and gas. There were queues of cars, hundred cars long. But it was clear that something was happening in this aspect as well.

Finally, we've got to Tashkent and a week later came events of August 19<sup>th</sup> 1991 the abort against Mr. Gorbachev and the slow but sure collapse of the Soviet Union. I went back to Azerbaijan after two weeks, because all reports from Azerbaijan I knew to be corrupt or false on the BBC or every other news out there. I figured out that I would spent about two weeks there. Two years later I came up for a breathe. Thought I read a book about the place and then I discovered I walked in the middle of the movie and we were living in the middle of the movie, because the events in Azerbaijan in 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1994 were crucial and were very very chaotic. This is where I get my presentation concluded right now.

Years later, years with the association of Azerbaijan, a couple of, in 2011, I was invited to the wedding of the century the Ministry of Emergency Situations and former Minister of Customs and number two power in Azerbaijan, Kemalettin Hardarov, who flew me to Montana as well as those lot of other people, and after all dancing in the great palace on the way to the airport in front of the president, somebody approached me and then said; "The budget has been approved." And I said; "Budget for what?" and then he said; "Budget for the film that you're going to take the twenty years of Azerbaijan independence as seen through foreign eyes. And I said "It sounds really nice idea." This was in September and I said "When do you want this film?" and he said, "Well, in the independence day." And I said, "Oh, next May?" He said, "No, the second independence day." "Namely, October 18<sup>th</sup> in three weeks." I said, "You're crazy! This is impossible to do!" Two and a half years on. It has been an extraordinary learning experience.

As you will see, it is Azerbaijan, exclusively through foreign eyes with one exception, the man who is going to be speaking at the end of the part three, which I am going to show you. The film has now four parts, half an hour everything from the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic through the repressions during the Soviet occupation of Azerbaijan, the rise and demise of the President Haydar Aliyev. Finally, down to independence, interestingly enough, particularly diplomats in the audience, you will recall that Turkey jumped the gun on the recognition of restored Azerbaijani independence which was an exceedingly delicate move at the time made by Mesut Yılmaz, and literally his last act on Ataturk's death date of November 10<sup>th</sup> 1991. The United States only recognized Azerbaijan on Christmas day. On the day Gorbachev

formally resigned his presidency of the USSR and dissolved the USSR. This plays a big role in the film and we are not going to see that chunk of it right now. But your colleague or your former colleague Mehmet Ali Bayar addressed this subject and also Hikmet Çetin-I managed to put at the end of the film who explained the delicacy of that period of time. When he was the new foreign minister of Republic of Turkey and was in Brussels at the time when -I am forgetting his name but- Soviet delegate to the NATO partnership for peace thing was called from the room urgently, came back was shaking and said, "Excuse me, this morning I represented the USSR, from here on I represent the Russian f,Federation and I wish to have USSR stricken from the record. Right now I would like to show you the film. It is the low point of Azerbaijani independence.

Namely, the Spring of 1994, all this political chaos is going down, the Armenians were marching forward outside of Mountainous Karabakh all the way down to the Araks River. Azerbaijani refugees were swimming across the Araks River into Iran. It is chaos and confusion the very lowest point in Azerbaijan where it was clearly identified and it has been a failed state.

The far end of this part three is the laying of the first symbolic piece of pipe for the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan line the South of Baku with my conversation with İlham Aliyev, basically saying we are now looking forward to the future. What is that future going to be I am giving the events of Crimea and elsewhere, the rupture of the international order or territorial integrity used to be the primary thing the way the ruled world and going to back into self-determination for everybody, but it is a nice book, explaining the dynamics of Azerbaijan during this period of 1994. Failed state, through the Haydar Aliyev period, the successes of Azerbaijan and finally the thing that has made Azerbaijan thoroughly an international actor -the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipe-; we are going through the TANAP and TAP and Azerbaijan gas alternative to Russia, to Europe etc. Shall we play the film?

A part of the film, of which Goltz is a consultant and a producer was shown for about 35 minutes, which highlighted the important developments in Azerbaijan especially in the period of President Haydar Aliyev, in early 1990s, from the eyes of the foreigners who experienced the period first hand.



# ALEV KILIÇ

# Director of Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM)

Now, I think we are done with the introductory and film part of the Goltz's story. Now we will have Ambassador Candan Azer to tell his part of the story. I said his part because Ambassador Azer comes from Azerbaijani roots. His father was born in Azerbaijan, in Nakhichevan. He is in a position to tell personal family memories of Azerbaijan but also from a collection of official position and information, because the first years of independence of Azerbaijan and during those very difficult days of Azerbaijan, Ambassador Candan was heading the department as Deputy Director General responsible for Sothern Caucasus. So he has first-hand information and face to face meetings with all those who mattered then. That is why I think now we shall have a very comprehensive picture of both personal and as official recollections of those days. Please Ambassador.



### CANDAN AZER

#### Ret. Ambassador, author of "South Caucasus from Father to Son"

Thank you very much for these words and for this introduction. I also thank very much for all the three institutions that have brought us together and gave me a new opportunity to meet my old friends. Thomas and I were friends from 1992 in Baku. Now, my friend and colleague Ambassador Kilic said that I am fifty percent Azerbaijani, my father was born in Nakhchivan and after the October Revolution he had to leave the Caucasus. The reason for that was because from 1916 to 1924, he was working as an agent of the Ottoman secret service, Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa. And, in 1924 he was stationed at our mission in Batumi. Our other agents from Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa discovered that my father's name was appearing on the black list of CHEKA. What is CHEKA? CHEKA is forerunner of KGB. And they warned my father "Abdullah Bey, you rather go". So he escaped. From 1924 to 1934, that's ten years, he didn't have any contact with his family. He was the only member of the family who ran away. The rest of the family stayed behind. In 1934 he met my mother and they decided to marry. So he wanted to share the news with his family. He never told me how he did it, but he did it. He sent a message to Baku since in the meantime rest of the family have already moved from Nakhchivan to Baku. He said that he was going to marry with a girl in Istanbul etc. The response came: "We want you to be happy. If you want our happiness, don't you ever again communicate with us". This was it.

You all know the times when we talked about the Iron Curtain. That was the conceptual curtain in Europe between the Soviet Union and the Western Countries that came into being after the Second World War. When we look to this iron curtain concept from Turkey's perspective, I do believe that the iron curtain fell down between Turkey and the Soviet Union in 1924, the year my father left Azerbaijan. Because in 1924 our relations with the Soviet Union started cooling off. As our relations continuously cooled with Soviet Union, that iron curtain got thicker and ticker. There were times when we had hopes for warmer relations with Moscow, but they really did not go beyond what I can describe as "good neighborly relations.

When the of the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 we had a chance to enter into bilateral relations with all three South Caucasian countries along with all republics that once made the Soviet Union. We recognized all these newly independent countries simultaneously in December 1991, but Azerbaijan had a priority. We recognized Azerbaijan a month ahead of the other countries. Soon after recognition we entered into talks to establish diplomatic relations with Georgia and Azerbaijan. We did not have any difficulty. They were ready. With Azerbaijan, let me say a few words about our relations. Our relations with Azerbaijan became so intense, so intimate although we did not want, we also played a role in domestic politics of Azerbaijan.

This happened during the months of turmoil in Azerbaijan which led to the downfall of Ebulfez Elçibey and coming to power of Haydar Aliyev. In addition to the chaotic domestic situation, Azerbaijan was in war with Armenia and was losing territory, not only Upper-Karabakh but other regions too.

At that time Haydar Aliyev was the President of the Autonomous Republic of Nakhchivan which is part of Azerbaijan. As you know Nakhchivan is cut-off from the rest of the country, a very "nice" design by Joseph Stalin. Although, Ebulfez Elcibey was inviting Aliev to go to Baku, he was reluctant. Maybe Thomas can help me there. So our President Demirel called, our Foreign Minister Hikmet Cetin called and Hikmet Çetin asked me to his office and said, "Candan, your roots are in Nakhchivan, you know him." "Yes, I met him before " I responded. Minister Çetin demanded "You"d better call him and encourage him to go to Baku" I reflected "our President and Foreign Ministry called him Aliev didn't move. Why should he take the risk and go to Baku, when I beg him to do so?" At this point I remembered what my relatives have told me at one of our meetings about being Nakhchivani. They said that people from Nakhchivan respect and mutually support each other very much. So took my chance and called Aliev and said "Your Excellency, this is an emergency situation, I think you should not be in Nakhchivan. You are very much needed in the capital. He said "Ben de öyle fikirleşirem - I also think like that." This was the first clue that he would go. Then Demirel called again and finally convinced Aliev to Baku. For a time Aliev acted as Speaker of the

Pariament and later became President. After his Presidency the situation in Azerbaijan stabilized and our relations continued to develop steadily.

Although the front stabilized after the loss of Kalbadjar. Every hope or peaceful solution was no more in the offing. But the country stabilized and we found a ground to develop our relations in every aspect.

We already saw the movie concerning the pipeline, it took us quite a while to bring about that pipeline. The idea of a pipeline initially came when Elçibey was in power and Elçibey's preference was that the pipeline should not run through Georgia or Iran, but through Armenia. He said that this will create interdependence with Armenia and bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia as well as between Turkey and Armenia will improve in time. This was maybe a good idea but not a realistic one. So as you have already seen, the pipeline came into reality and brought a new dimension to our relations with Azerbaijan.

Now, how are our relations with Azerbaijan? They can best be described in Haydar Aliyev's words: "one nation, two states". But, a certain damage has accrued our relations with Azerbaijan because the current governments' initiatives to establish diplomatic relations with Armenia. When I was in charge, I was instructed together with my colleague Ambassador Karaosmanoğlu to negotiate the establishment of diplomatic relations with Armenia. We did it without any third party, without any encouragement from any foreign power. We did it, not in a foreign country, but in Ankara. The talks developed very smoothly. I would say that the text of the protocol to establish diplomatic relations with Armenia was the reference to the Treaty of Kars, which determined the border between Turkey, Georgia, Armenia and Nakhchivan, that is Azerbaijan.

The Armenian side was reluctant to make a reference to the validity of the Kars Treaty. This was the only obstacle. We suggested to refer to the validity of bilateral documents between Turkey and Armenia without naming the Treaty of Kars. Since the Treaty of Kars was the only valid document between Turkey and Armenia we wouldn't have much difficulty in convincing our public opinion. The Armenian side welcomed the suggested and saw it as a way out but, couldn't accept it without instructions from Erivan. So they left. When we reported the point we reached, they also welcomed it.

But certain circles didn't like the progress in Turkish-Armenian relations: The Armenians attacked Kalbadjar. This was the fifth or sixth region outside upper Upper Karabakh that was occupied by Armenians. After that aggression and occupation we could not continue to negotiate to establish diplomatic relations. As we cut-off the negotiations, we also closed the border with Armenia.

In years that followed there were some loosening of sanctions. Armenian planes were allowe to have charter flights to Istanbul. But the border is still closed. Today it is public knowledge that there are about seventy thousand Armenians who are employed in Turkey and they feeding their families back home.

Now let me turn to more recent times. The current government has entered into negotiations with Armenia after some the mediation efforts by Switzerland. Switzerland is a country by the way that considers it criminal to "deny Armenian genocide". (Thanks to Perinçek's efforts now, maybe that law will change. But, this was a situation when the government accepted the mediation of Switzerland and negotiated in Switzerland.) Why accept Switzerland's mediation efforts and why negotiate with the Armenians in Switzerland? And then the texts came out to my deep regret I so no reference to the validity of the Treaty of Kars or to valid other bilateral documents. And about the commission that will look into the history etc. It is vague, to say the least! As this document was in the process of ratification also with us, the Armenian Constitutional Court degreed that the protocols can in no way can question the "reality of genocide" and that no commission can investigate the validity of "genocide which is a historical fact".

So this where we stand vis-à-vis our relations with Armenia. And after the decision



of the Armenian Constitutional Court I do not see any possibility to overcome that obstacle, unless the current government accepts the Armenian allegations.

I have to underline that these protocols had a very negative impact on our relations with Azerbaijan, since they did do not include any clue to the withdrawal of Armenian occupation forces from Azerbaihjani territory. These protocols have damaged the confidence of Azerbaijani people that they have entrusted in the Turkish Government. What appears at the surface should not deceive any one.

With Georgia, initially we had a difficult time, because of the domestic situation. During the years that led to the collapse of of the Soviet Union, Georgia was in chaos. There was no stability. Then, thanks to Shevardnadze (you already know him, because Thomas Goltz introduced him to us) who came to power and the country stabilized. This gave us the opportunity to enter into very friendly and close relations. Reciprocal visits at various levels followed one another. Important documents were signed and they soon became instrumental.

What is the future for the region? As I see it, the region can have a good cooperative future. But much depends on Armenia. Armenia, instead of satisfying the whims of the Diaspora in France, in USA and in other Western countries, should seek to improve its relations with its neighbors. The easy way to achieve this is it to give up its expansionist policies vis-à-vis Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Armenia's only neighbor that is immune to territorial claims is Iran! Another important step Armenia should take is to lessen its dependence on the Russian Federation.

If that can be realized, then the three countries Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan should be able form a Benelux-type cooperative forum, which would create interdependency among themselves and in time also with Turkey. For the time being it does not go beyond a dream. But it is for the creative minds to turn dreams into reality!

Thank you for your patience.





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