

## Vacca's Sensational Biographical Account of Essad Bey

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**E**ssad Essad Bey spent his childhood growing up in Baku as Lev Nussimbaum. When he died in 1942, Libyan-born Bello Vacca<sup>1</sup> (pseudonym Giamil Vacca-Mazzara) wrote a lengthy tribute in an Italian journal *Oriente Moderno*.<sup>2</sup> However, nearly every statement about Lev's early life can be refuted by historical documents from the Azerbaijan Republic State History Archives.

Basically, Vacca's relationship with Essad Bey seems to have been motivated by his attempt to prove that he was Lev Nussimbaum's "closest living relative"—a link he claimed could be traced to ancestors four generations back. It seems Vacca sought Essad Bey's inheritance, imagining that there would be lucrative royalties from the numerous books published under Essad Bey's name,<sup>3</sup> as the oil wells, which Essad Bey claimed his father owned, had long ago been confiscated by the Bolsheviks.

### 1 Essad Bey was born in Baku.



KYIV JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

**BUT...** The birth of Lev Nussimbaum (who many years later wrote under the penname of Essad Bey) was registered in the Jewish synagogue in Kyiv (Ukraine), and these records are now kept in the Kyiv National Archives.<sup>4</sup> No evidence of his birth was registered in Baku.<sup>5</sup>

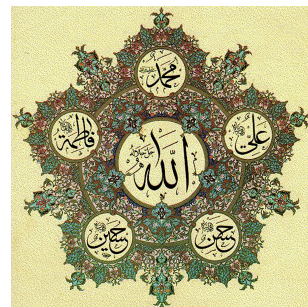
### 2 The name of Lev Nussimbaum's father was Ibrahim bey Arslan-oghlu.



**BUT...** the name of Lev's father is registered on both his own marriage certificate<sup>6</sup> as well as his son's birth certificate<sup>7</sup> as Abram Leybusovich Nussimbaum. It was Abram Nussimbaum who registered his son Lev in Men's Gymnasium No. 2 in Baku.<sup>8</sup> Vacca's suggestion that Lev's father's name was "Arslan-oghlu" is totally fictitious. Furthermore, for Azeri, it would be "Aslan-oghlu" without the "r." Both mean "son of a lion." Note that "Lev," "Leo" and "Essad" also all mean "lion."

### 3 Lev Nussimbaum was born a Shiite Muslim.

**BUT...** Lev's birth certificate gives the date of his birth and circumcision as the Jewish month of Keshvan. His birth was registered in the synagogue in Kyiv.<sup>8</sup> Lev's school records in Baku indicate that his religion was Judaism, and his nationality, Hebrew.<sup>9</sup>



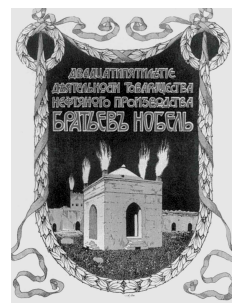
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### 4 Lev was not a Jew because Jews were prohibited from living in Baku.

**BUT...** Lev and his father lived at one of the most prestigious addresses in town, the Ashumov House at 11 Mikhayilovskaya Street (now Aziz Aliyev).<sup>10</sup>



BLAIR



### 5 Lev was not a Jew because Jews could not own land in Baku.

**BUT...** Lev's father owned the A.L. Nussimbaum & Binagadi Petroleum Pipeline Company, which he sold to the Nobel Brothers Petroleum Company in 1914 for 131,500 rubles.<sup>11</sup> Nussimbaum's office was in the Bunyadov House at Birjevaya Street 5 (now Uzeyir Hajibeyov Street). His office telephone number was 4-35.<sup>12</sup>



BLAIR

### 6 Lev was not a Jew because Jews were not allowed to attend the Imperial Gymnasium in Baku.

**BUT...** there is no school by the name of Imperial Gymnasium in Baku. Lev attended the most prestigious school for boys in Baku—Men's Gymnasium No. 2,<sup>13</sup> which was housed in the Realni School building at 6 Nikolayevskaya Street (now Economics University at 6 Istiglaliyyat).

Lev wasn't the only Jew to attend this school. For example when Lev was in Fourth Grade (1919-1920), his class included 9 Jews, 12 Russian Orthodox, 6 Armenian-Gregorian Orthodox, 2 Protestants, and 9 Muslims.<sup>14</sup>

### 7 Lev's mother was Aisha Slutzki.

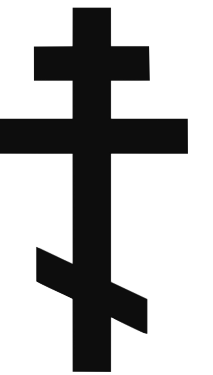
**BUT...** a century ago, such a combination of names would certainly have sounded very strange. "Aisha" is a Muslim name, usually Sunni, though Vacca claimed that Lev's mother converted to Shia Islam. "Sluzki" or "Slutzkin" is Jewish.

All official documents show the name of Lev's mother to be Berta Davidovna Slutzkin on both her marriage<sup>15</sup> and death certificate.<sup>16</sup> It's on her son Lev's birth certificate as well.<sup>17</sup>



### 8 Lev's mother was an Orthodox Russian who had converted to Islam.

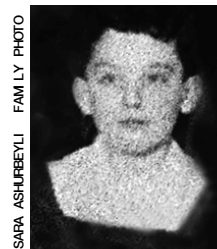
**BUT...** even her suicide on February 16, 1911, was registered in the Jewish synagogue in Baku.<sup>18</sup>



### 9 Lev was four years old when he was orphaned.

**BUT...** in truth, Lev would have been five years old plus a few months when his mother committed suicide.<sup>19</sup> His father was sent to a concentration camp shortly before Lev himself died in 1942.

SARA ASHURBEYLI FAMILY PHOTO



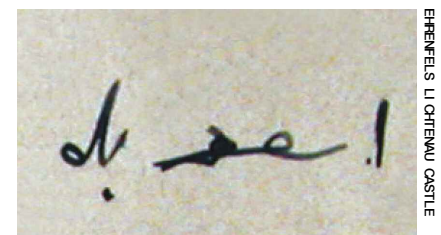
### 10 Lev was six years old when he started school.

**BUT...** documents show that he was nearly nine years old when his father first registered him for school on September 27, 1914, and that he officially started school on October 1, 1914.<sup>20</sup>

### 11 Lev studied Persian at school.

**BUT...** Persian was not even offered in the curriculum at Men's Gymnasium No. 2 in Baku.<sup>21</sup> Nor was Persian offered at Realni School,<sup>22</sup> which was in the same building as Lev's school.

Furthermore, if he were writing poems in Persian as Vacca claimed, how is it that he couldn't even spell his name correctly in the Arabic script.<sup>23</sup> Both Persian and Azeri were officially written in a modified Arabic script in the early 20th century.



EHRENFELS LI OHTEMU CASTLE