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SEBASTIAN CWIKLINSKI

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Tatars and the Tatar language in Germany

- Sebastian Cwiklinski, Free University of Berlin

HISTORY

Abstract: *This article discusses the history of the presence of Tatar language in Germany which came into being as the result of political developments following World War I. The Germans captured Tatar soldiers from the Russian army and interned the captives in camps designated especially for them, in order to subject them to Pan-Islamic propaganda. The propaganda developed by a central at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs might be regarded as the start of Tatar language publishing in Germany. From 1928 the prominent exile politician Ayaz Iskhaki published a monthly journal directed at a global community of Tatar exiles.*

After the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 Tatars became even more important for Germany. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers from the Soviet Red Army were taken captive and the state was eager to make use of their presence. A Volga-Ural legion within the German army was founded and the military efforts were accompanied by a propaganda central which published a newspaper, journals and literary almanacs in Tatar. In the years following World War II the Tatar language also became part of US American propaganda efforts directed at the Soviet Union. In 1953 a Tatar-Bashkir branch of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty was founded in Munich. Since the 1990s many Tatars have migrated individually to Germany, mainly from Russia, and they have gradually articulated a Tatar identity in which the language plays only a minor role. Only in the past few years a younger generation of Tatars, arriving in Germany for their studies, has started publicly expressing the importance of the Tatar language.

Keywords: *Tatar diaspora, Germany, World Wars, propaganda, identity-building*

Almanya'daki Tatarlar ve Tatar dili

Özet: Bu makale, Birinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası siyasi gelişmeler sonucunda ortaya çıkan Tatar dilinin Almanya'daki varlığının tarihini ele almaktadır. Almanlar, Tatar askerlerini Rus ordusundan esir almış ve pan-İslamist propagandaya maruz bırakmak için aldıkları esirleri özel olarak onlara ayrılmış kamplara hapsedmiştir. Dışişleri Bakanlığı'ndaki bir merkezin geliştirdiği propaganda, Almanya'da Tatarca yayıncılığın başlangıcı olarak kabul edilebilir. 1928'den itibaren, önde gelen sürgün politikacı Ayaz İshaki, küresel Tatar sürgün topluluğuna yönelik aylık bir dergi yayınladı.

Haziran 1941'de Almanların Sovyetler Birliği'ne saldırısından sonra Tatarlar Almanya için daha da önemli hale geldi. Sovyet Kızıl Ordusu'ndan yüzbinlerce asker esir alındı ve devlet bu esirlerin varlığından yararlanmak konusunda istekliydi. Alman ordusu içinde bir Volga-Ural lejyonu kuruldu ve askerî çabalara Tatarca bir gazete, dergi ve edebi almanaklar yayınlayan bir propaganda merkezi eşlik etti. II. Dünya Savaşı'nı takip eden yıllarda, Tatar dili, ABD'nin Sovyetler Birliği'ne yönelik propaganda çabalarının da bir parçası oldu ve 1953'te Münih'te Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty'nin Tatar-Başkurt şubesi kuruldu. 1990'lardan bu yana, çok sayıda Tatar, genellikle Rusya'dan Almanya'ya bireysel olarak göç etti ve yavaş yavaş, dilin sadece küçük bir rol oynadığı bir Tatar kimliğini somut hale getirdiler. Yalnızca son birkaç yılda Almanya'ya eğitim için gelen genç Tatar nesil, Tatar dilinin önemini alenen ifade etmeye başladı.

Anahtar kelimeler: Tatar diasporası, Almanya, dünya savaşları, propaganda, kimlik inşası

Татары и татарский язык в Германии

Аннотация: В статье рассматривается возникновение и последующая история татарского языка в Германии после Первой мировой войны. В то время татарские солдаты, воевавшие в составе российской армии, попадали в немецкий плен и помещались в построенные специально для них лагеря, где они подвергались панисламистской пропаганде. Именно пропагандистские тексты, написанные сотрудниками Министерства иностранных дел германской империи, можно считать началом татароязычной публицистики в Германии. С 1928 года Аяз Исхаки, видный политический деятель в изгнании, издавал ежемесячный журнал на татарском языке, распространявшийся среди татарских эмигрантов по всему миру.

После нападения Германии на Советский Союз в июне 1941 года татары и татарский язык стали для немецкой политики чрезвычайно важными. Сотни тысяч солдат Красной Армии были взяты в плен, и знания некоторых из них были использованы для организации немецкой военно-разведывательной деятельности. Так в состав германской армии входил Волго-Уральский легион, в рамках которого военные действия сопровождалась пропагандистской работой, а также публикацией газет, журналов и литературных альманахов на татарском языке. После Второй мировой войны татарский язык входил в круг интересов американской пропаганды, направленной против Советского Союза и в 1953 году в Мюнхене было основано татаро-башкирское отделение «Радио Свободная Европа / Радио Свобода». Начиная с 1990-х годов, в ходе эмиграции некоторых татар в Германию возникла потребность артикулировать их татарскую идентичность в публичном поле, причем язык в этом процессе играл, скорее всего, второстепенную роль. Кроме того, в последние десятилетия молодые татары, приехавшие для обучения в Германию, старались организовывать публичные мероприятия, связанные с изучением истории и распространением татарского языка.

Ключевые слова: татарская диаспора, Германия, мировые войны, пропаганда, формирование идентичности

Introduction

The history of the Tatar community in Germany has been covered extensively by earlier research both in English (Cwiklinski 2008 and 2016) and in other languages (Gilyazov 1998; Cwiklinski 2000 and 2014). Therefore only a short overview is necessary here, focusing on the developments which are relevant for the presence of the Tatar language in Germany. The history can be divided into several phases. After a **first phase** (first decade of the twentieth century) with only a few merchants and some isolated cases of young Tatars studying at German universities, a lasting presence of Tatars came into place as the result of World War I (**second phase**, approximately 1914–1924) when Tatar prisoners of war (POWs) from the Russian army were interned in prisoner camps throughout Germany.

In the 1920s and 1930s Berlin temporarily became the centre for Tatar politicians like Ayaz Iskhaki and Musa Bigeev (also Bigi) who established organisations and published books and journals (**third phase**). When the Nazis took power in Germany in 1933, the nationalities in the Soviet Union found themselves the object of a growing interest. After the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 Germany captured hundreds of thousands of soldiers from the Soviet Red Army. It was eager to make use of their presence and a Volga-Ural legion was established within the German army. A propaganda central accompanied the military efforts by publishing journals and literary almanacs in Tatar language. Again, similarly to World War I, state-sponsored Tatar language publications were published as a part of German war propaganda (**fourth phase**, ca. 1935–1945).

In the years following World War II Germany became the centre for United States propaganda efforts directed at the Soviet Union. Tatars were involved in these activities, too (**fifth phase**, 1950s to 1980s). Nowadays we can observe a Tatar presence in Germany that is quite different compared to previous times: Tatars are arriving individually for various reasons. Only in this new environment they started articulating a distinct Tatar identity in which language plays a minor role. In the last few years, however, language-related activities have become increasingly important (**sixth phase**, 1990s to present).

For the purpose of the present article the first phase of Tatar presence in Germany can be left aside as it did not leave any language traces. The phases are sometimes interconnected, so the second and the third are grouped together, and also the fourth and the fifth are paired. It is impossible to give even an approximate number of the speakers of Tatar in Germany as similar statistics have never been compiled. Nobody knows how many Tatars and/or speakers of Tatar have stayed or now live in the country.

I. From prisoners of war to a tiny community of exiles: 1914 – early 1930s

Eager to take advantage of the presence of Muslims among the prisoners of war (POWs), captured from the Russian army at the beginning of World War I, the German authorities set up two prisoner camps designated especially for those of Islamic faith. In the camps the POWs were subjected to Pan-Islamic propaganda developed by the staff of the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient* ('News Service for the Orient', henceforth *Nachrichtenstelle*), a propaganda central founded in late 1914 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Its staff consisted of German civil servants and propagandists from the nationalities at which the activities of the *Nachrichtenstelle* were directed; the first Tatar language publications in Germany were published by the Tatar members of this institution. The leaflets, little brochures and the newspaper *El Dschihad* ('jihad', 1915–1918) consisted mainly of Tatar translations of texts written either by the German staff of the *Nachrichtenstelle* or by Arab propagandists. Only a tiny proportion of the articles were original contributions in Tatar (Cwiklinski 2000: 21–28).

Starting in 1917 the Tatar staff members Alim (also Alimcan) Idris (1887–1959) and Kemaleddin Bedri (1896–?) published some brochures and journals independently of the German authorities, even if the latter still carried out a post-publication censorship. The titles of these publications reflect the fact that they were written for the Tatar inmates of the prisoner camps: Idris published in 1917 *Äsirlek yuldaşı* ('Companion for the time of captivity') and *Saadet qanunnari yahud din boyriqlari* ('The laws of happiness or the commandments of the religion'; see Cwiklinski 2005), and together with Bedri the journals *Yaņa tormiř* ('New Life', 1918–1919) and *Tatar ile* ('Tatar lands', 1919–1920) (Cwiklinski 2000: 24–25; Cwiklinski 2014: 176).

Although the life of the POWs can hardly be compared to that of a diaspora community, there were elements of a community life. A considerable number of the camp inmates were illiterate or had received only basic education and both the Tatar staff at the *Nachrichtenstelle* and the German authorities tried to provide opportunities for education. The German authorities arranged several courses in the camp with Tatar language classes as an integral part. Unfortunately the exact details of these language classes are unknown, and even the denomination "Tatar language class" is an interpretation as the relevant documents mention only "class rooms" (*Schulstuben*) for Tatar language instruction. However the German authorities provided exact numbers of attendants, so we might assume that they were real language classes. The only thing we know for sure is that there was a continuous decline in the number of participants. At the beginning in September 1915 some 500 POWs attended but the number declined to 166 in March 1916 and finally to 18 in late 1918. Parallel to the language classes, the military authorities set up a library with books and brochures in Tatar and

Russian provided by the *Nachrichtenstelle*; in 1917 the library offered 1,265 books in Tatar (Höpp 1997: 54–55).

One staff member from the *Nachrichtenstelle* was involved in another effort related to Tatar: in 1918 Kemaleddin Bedri started teaching the language in close cooperation with the Orientalist Gotthold Weil (1882–1960) at the *Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen* ('Department for Oriental Languages', shortened SOS), an institution attached to Berlin University. Weil, a lecturer for Turkish, was unable to read Tatar texts without Bedri's help, so we could assume that actually the latter taught the Tatar language classes. Interest was limited: usually two to seven students attended and from 1922 to 1924 the classes even had to pause due to the lack of students, with the exception of one single semester. The classes were revived when Tatars from Manchuria arrived in Berlin for their studies and turned up for the course, although they spoke the language fluently. One of them, Reşit Rahmeti Arat, later became the Tatar language lecturer himself (Cwiklinski 2002b: 1007).

The end of World War I brought a noticeable reduction in the numbers of Tatars living in Germany. Most of the POWs were repatriated and only a tiny minority decided to stay in Germany (for two examples, see Cwiklinski 2000: 19–20 and 35–36). The presence of some dozens of Tatar students from Soviet Russia (later Soviet Union) and from various countries of exile at several universities in Germany did not contribute significantly to the visibility of the Tatar language, apart from the fact that their attendance did save the Tatar classes at Berlin University. Only in the late 1920s the language once again became more noticeable, this time due to the activities of exile politicians.

In the late 1920s the author and politician Ayaz Iskhaki (1878–1954), then resident both in Berlin and Warsaw, joined the *Prométhée*, a Polish state-sponsored network of exile politicians from various non-Russian nationalities from the Soviet Union. The Tatar branch of the *Prométhée* was founded in Warsaw in 1928. Its journal *Milli Yul* ('The National Way', later renamed *Yaŋa Milli Yul* 'The New National Way') was established later that year in Berlin, with Iskhaki and his daughter Saadet Çağatay (1907–1989) as editors. Çağatay in fact took over the bulk of the editorial work as her father was organising his political network of exiles throughout the world. As *Yaŋa Milli Yul* was a classical exile publication with authors contributing from Finland, Manchuria and many other regions, it only partly reflected the life of the Tatar community in Germany. More important was its role as a political and cultural medium for a vast community of exiles spread throughout the world (Cwiklinski 2000: 37–39). Iskhaki at this time mostly resided in Warsaw. He was also a writer and took the opportunity of publishing his own literary works both in the journal and separately as brochures and books. In the second half of the 1930s he published two dramas, his novel *Üygä taba* ('Going home') and a collection of Tatar songs (Cwiklinski 2000: 39).

Yanfa Milli Yul was fully dependent for political and financial support on the Polish state. The German attack on Poland in September 1939 brought the journal to an end; its last number was published in the same month. Ayaz Iskhaki and his daughter had to leave Warsaw and Berlin respectively, and they migrated to Turkey where they continued their political and scientific activities. The Tatar community in Germany significantly reduced its endeavours and until the second half of World War II the Tatar language remained almost invisible in Germany.

II. Tatars in Germany as the object of politics (1930s to 1980s)

The Nazi rise to power in 1933 did not change much in the fate of the Tatar community in Germany. Because Iskhaki's journal was aimed at a global community of exiles and not Germany-related in the first place, many of his activities went either unnoticed by Nazi officials or were even acknowledged by them. Within a few years however the paradigm of the *Auslandswissenschaften* ('research on foreign countries'), established in pre-Nazi times, brought the Tatars once again back into the agenda of German politics. The *Auslandswissenschaften* strived to establish an exact picture of the political and economic situations in countries which were or might be the object of German foreign policy. Within this paradigm, research focusing on the Soviet Union was a top priority and the Muslims in that country became particularly important. Gerhard von Mende (1904–1963), a young Baltic German historian who studied the national movements of the Turkic peoples in the Russian Empire, became interim professor for research on the nations of Russia at Berlin University in 1936. He took the opportunity of establishing close contacts with representatives of non-Russian nationalities from the Soviet Union. He also provided for the renewal of the Tatar language classes at Berlin University, which had been at a standstill since the last lecturer Reşit Rahmeti Arat left Berlin for Turkey in 1933. Ahmet Temir (1912–2003), a young Tatar Turkologist who was pursuing his doctoral studies at Berlin University taught the new classes (Cwiklinski 2000: 40–41).

After the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 Tatars became even more important for Germany. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers from the Soviet Red Army were taken captive and the state was intent on making use of their presence. Hardly one week after the attack, officials decided to form a Volga-Ural legion within the German army. After the establishment of the legion in 1942 a *Tatarische Leitstelle* ('Tatar coordination office') was created at the Ministry for the Occupied Eastern territories, the *Ostministerium*. For the purpose of demonstrating a would-be independence of the Tatar efforts from Nazi politics, the *Tatarische Leitstelle* was later formally transformed into the *Tatarischer Kampfbund* ('Tatar Fighting Association'), but practically both institutions were almost identical and remained under close control of the *Ostministerium*.

The propaganda directed at the soldiers in the Volga-Ural legion consisted among others of publishing activities and radio broadcasting in Tatar. From 1942 onwards the weekly newspaper *Idel-Ural* ('Volga-Ural') was edited as the organ of the Volga-Ural legion and in 1943 and 1944 a series of brochures and literary almanacs followed. These publications had a double character: on one hand they were part of the German propaganda efforts directed at Eastern Europe, and many texts were simply translated from German; accordingly they contained praise for Nazi Germany, racist contempt for the "Eastern subhumans" and anti-Semitism. On the other hand, the publications covered Tatar subjects and dealt with the national movements of Russia's Muslims at the turn of the twentieth century and the attempts at establishing an independent Volga-Ural state after 1917. They also contained Tatar folk songs and literature. Furthermore, Tatar soldiers took up the pen to express their allegiance to the Tatar cause, their contempt of the Soviet Union and their gratitude to Nazi Germany. Even the texts which appear to be composed independently of German interference were evidently under Nazi influence or written with Nazi censorship in mind (Cwiklinski 2002a: 77–104).

The defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 brought the strange experiment of a Tatar military formation within the German army to an end. For the Tatars who for various reasons happened to be resident in Germany this meant a total rupture. Fearing reprisals by the Soviet authorities, many of the Tatar soldiers from the Volga-Ural legion tried to avoid repatriation to the Soviet Union by fleeing to the US-administered federal state of Bavaria. Here they stayed in the first years in camps for displaced persons, meeting other Tatars, mostly male and female former forced labourers. From the fate of some individuals we know that part of them found their spouses in the camps. However, as the few Tatar couples who had met in the camps left Germany for Turkey and the USA they had no impact on the presence of the Tatar language in Germany. Other former soldiers married German women and did not transmit their language to the children.

There was still a certain but limited continuity of Tatar presence in Germany. In the late 1940s and the early 1950s three short-lived journals were edited, *Oçar yafraqlar* ('Flying leaves' in Neu-Ulm 1947–1948), *Azat Vatan* ('Free Fatherland' in Munich 1952) and *Milli Bayraq* ('National Banner' also in Munich 1953–1954), with some literary almanacs following in the 1950s. The fact that all these publications were published in Bavaria underlines the importance of the political developments: at the beginning of the Cold War (end of the 1940s), USA set up and financed a number of institutions in Munich, designated both for research on and directing propaganda at the Soviet Union.

One notable institution was *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, a radio station broadcasting in several languages of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The Tatar-Bashkir section of the radio station was established in 1953. Its staff consisted of former POWs who had actively developed the propaganda

for the Volga-Ural legion in the German army during World War II. The second and third directors of the radio station, Šihab Niğmäti (1913–1995, director from 1954 to 1979) and Garip Sultan (1923–2011, staff member since the late 1950s and director from 1979 to 1989), both had been POWs and then worked in the *Tatarische Leitstelle* during the war years. Niğmäti was also editor of the *Azat Vatan* journal.

The Tatar-Bashkir section of *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* remains active until today, but in 1995 the broadcasting station relocated to Prague. The changes among the Tatar staff reflects the fact that there was a lack of candidates fluent enough in Tatar. In the late 1960s and the early 1970s new staff had to be recruited from the Tatar diaspora in Turkey. Three of the Tatar staff members from Turkey were in fact born in Manchuria, where at the beginning of the twentieth century a large Tatar community had come into existence (Badretdin 2001). Even if the staff members of the Tatar-Bashkir section were resident in Munich, their presence in the Bavarian capital did not lead to a rise in the visibility of the Tatar language in Germany. This changed only with fresh developments in the 1990s.

III. Searching for a Tatar identity: Tatars in Germany since the 1990s

Starting in the 1990s, we can observe a rise in the numbers of Tatars living in Germany. The only common factor was that they migrated individually, either as spouses of Volga Germans or Jewish contingent refugees, as students or for other reasons, but almost never as members of ethnically homogenous Tatar families. Tatars did not just arrive from the Volga-Ural region in Russia but also from other parts of the former Soviet Union, including now independent states such as Latvia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. They had grown up in a Russian-language environment and many of them did not speak Tatar fluently, and they did not feel a need to engage in activities related to the Tatar language or culture.

The first impulse to change this situation came from the Institute for Turkology at the Free University of Berlin, where in 1991 the lecturer for Turkish, Margarete Ersen-Rasch, started teaching Tatar and Bashkir. Through the contacts she established with scientific circles in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, autonomous republics within the Russian Federation, she soon attracted the interest of Tatars who lived in Berlin. As a direct result three artists of Tatar and Tatar-Bashkir origin founded the *Tatarisch-baschkirischer Kulturverein* ('Tatar-Bashkir Cultural Association', henceforth *Kulturverein*) in 1999. The history of the association and of this new Tatar presence in Germany has been covered extensively by earlier research (see Cwiklinski 2000: 52–63; Cwiklinski 2016: 167–175), so we will concentrate here on the language-related aspects.

All three founders are professional artists and it was mainly this quality which brought them together. Only one of them, Ildar Kharissov, a (mainly Russian-language) poet, composer and musician is a fluent speaker of Tatar. After the successful *Tatarische Kulturtag* ('Tatar cultural days' festival) in 2003, the first public event attracting a large audience and making the *Kulturverein* known, the association decided to make its work permanent and rented rooms in Berlin for cultural activities. The people who gathered there were mainly but not exclusively from various countries of the former Soviet Union, most of them of Tatar and/or Bashkir origin. For everyday communication within the *Kulturverein* Russian was used, which made the question whether a participant was fluent in Tatar or Bashkir irrelevant. An external observer could not discern who or if anybody at all spoke Tatar. When Germans or Turks turned up at meetings communication switched from Russian to German which most of the attendants knew well.

As some felt the wish and need to learn Tatar, a small-size language course was established in 2004–2005. The classes were conducted by Ilmira Miftakhova, a young specialist in Tatar philology who had arrived in Berlin a short time before to pursue her studies at the Free University of Berlin. Ilmira later taught the language also at the Institute for Turkology at the university. The classes were held only once a week and for a very short time, so their effect was limited. A closer look at the circumstances reveals however that the students most likely did not judge the importance of the classes in terms of gaining fluency. Parallel to the Tatar lessons many of the same participants, mostly middle-aged and elderly women, started learning also the basics of Arabic and the Arabic script, obviously regarding all this as an attempt to get closer to Tatar culture. Although it soon became evident that taking three classes at once was too much, we might assume that the Tatar language classes meant meeting and doing something together for their "own" identity. The classes were only short-lived: in 2005 the *Kulturverein* de facto split and almost entirely ceased its activities (for details see Cwiklinski 2016: 170–171).

Two journals grew out of the *Kulturverein*: *Bertugan* ('Relative', 2002–2006) and the online journal *AlTaBash* (2004–2010), the name of the latter being an acronym of Germany (*Almaniyä* in Tatar), Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. The journals became later in fact the organs of two competing fractions of the Tatar community in Germany, but they were in many aspects very similar. Both published articles in Russian, German and in Tatar, although Russian dominated. The few original Tatar language articles in the journals were written mainly by Tatars resident in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. Alia Taissina, the editor of *Bertugan*, established her own small-scale publishing house which bears the same name as the now defunct journal. One of the focuses of *Bertugan* is on Tatar and Bashkir literature, yet this did not contribute to a rise in the visibility of these languages. The texts are

published in German translation, justified by Alia Taissina by the fact that *Bertugan* is a publisher operating in Germany (Bertugan 2020).

The end of the *Kulturverein* meant a blow to Tatar activities in Germany, but this did not signify that the presence of the Tatar language came to an end. In the years following the split of the association a new kind of actor appeared on the scene and dominated Tatar issues until the mid-2010s: people who (semi-)professionally devote energy and time to Tatars and/or Tatarstan subjects. The Tatar language plays only a minor role in their activities (Cwiklinski 2016: 174–175). A typical example for this is the *Institute for Caucasic, Tatarica and Turkestan Studies* (ICATAT, which is also the official shorthand of the institute), a private research institute in Magdeburg run by the German Turkologist Mieste Hotopp-Riecke. This institute devotes only part of its research to Tatar matters (including Crimean and Volga Tatars) but its activities related to Volga Tatars have become more professional over the years. Relying entirely on federal, regional and local funds in Germany and other countries, the institute has also established official contacts with the Republic of Tatarstan. Any activity of the ICATAT linked to Tatar has to be viewed in connection with these contacts (ICATAT 2021).¹

Another example of a small elite of activists is the Berlin-based journalist Venera Vagizova-Gerasimov. She was the editor of *AlTaBash* and the founder of a Russian-language website which documents most activities of the Tatars in Germany (Tatarlar 2021). She is also the organiser of the *Sabantuy* ('Plough feast'), an annual summer festival held in several towns of Germany with games for children and adults. Both Hotopp-Riecke and Vagizova-Gerasimov cooperate closely with official structures in Tatarstan and remain active until today. The former uses mainly German and the latter Russian, so their activities did not contribute to a lasting presence of the Tatar language in Germany.

Since approximately 2015 a rise in the public visibility of the Tatar language in Germany can be observed. This is mainly due to a younger generation of Tatars engaging in two recently founded associations, the *Berlin Tatar Youth* (2015; see Berlin Tatar Youth 2021) and the Frankfurt-based *International Association of Tatar Women 'Hanim'* (2017, henceforth *Hanim*; see Hanim 2021). The members of both associations are students or young academicians with an excellent command of several languages, not only Tatar and Russian but English and German as well. A common feature of

1 The ostentatious character and the very limited scope of the activities of ICATAT related to Tatar can for instance be observed in its obituary to the Polish-Russian-Jewish scholar Swietłana Czerwonnaja (1936–2020). The obituary was published in November 2020 in nine languages on their website and included Crimean and Kazan Tatar, see <https://icatat.files.wordpress.com/2020/11/swietlana-nekrolog.pdf>. From the languages used in the obituary (among others Arabic which usually is never present in research related to Tatars), we can conclude that the main goal of presenting the obituary in these languages was rather demonstrating openness to multilinguality than making communication possible.

the two associations is that they organize activities in which Tatar is not just visible but also plays an important role. In most cases these activities involve people and/or institutions in Tatarstan. Both associations communicate on the internet in Tatar, German and English but not in Russian. This shows a remarkable difference in comparison with the websites of the older associations: Venera Vagizova-Gerasimov's *Tatarlar Deutschland* is exclusively in Russian (Tatarlar 2021) and the *Argamak Youth Association* provides content in Russian, Tatar and German but uses Russian as the main language (Argamak 2021).

The annual worldwide competition in Tatar dictation, *Tatarča diktant Yaz* ('Write'), might serve as a good example for the activities of *Hanim* and the *Berlin Tatar Youth*. Both associations took part in it at least once. In the competition participants write down a Tatar text read by actors (Diktant 2021). The competition is organized since 2015 by a number of state and civic institutions in Tatarstan, and the participation of the two Germany-based associations was covered not only by their respective websites and that of Vagizova-Gerasimov's *Tatarlar Deutschland*², but by Tatar- and Russian-language media in Tatarstan as well.³

A look at another recent event organised by the *Berlin Tatar Youth* might give an insight into the state of the Tatar language in Germany at present. In February 2020 the Berlin-based association arranged an evening to commemorate the Tatar poet Musa Ğälil (1906–1944) with a recitation competition of his poems, either in the original Tatar or translations into several other languages. Ğälil had become an icon and symbol in Tatarstan already in Soviet times. He fell into German captivity during World War II and organised the resistance within the Volga-Ural legion in the German army; he was later executed in the Berlin prison of Plötzensee.

The participants in this event reveal the changing nature of Tatar language-related events in Germany compared with previous periods: Timur Kharrasov, chairman of the *Berlin Tatar Youth* and moderator of the evening, moved in 2014 to Berlin after completing his university studies in environmental engineering in the Netherlands (Berlin Tatar Youth 2021). Nazlygul Mingazova and Saydash Miftakhov, the winners of the first and third awards respectively, both recited Ğälil's poems in the original Tatar version. They moved to Germany and the Netherlands respectively to pursue English-language Master studies in economics. All three are actively involved in networking activities uniting Tatarstan,

2 <https://tatarhanim.de/en/activities/tatar-dictation-2020-frankfurt/>, https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=141030290608192&id=114153229962565&__tn__=%2As%2As-R, <https://tatarlar-deutschland.de/wordpress/2019/10/20/v-berline-napisali-tatarcha-diktant/>

3 For some examples see https://tatar-inform.tatar/news/tatar_world/08-10-2019/berlin-tatarlary-b-ten-d-nya-bel-n-berg-tatarcha-diktant-yazachak-5612755, <http://shahrikazan.ru/news/yazmalar/tatarcha-diktant-yazu-chen-italiyadn-germaniyag-makhsus-ochyp-kildem>

Russia and Europe. It remains to be seen whether these new structures, created and established by representatives of a young, highly mobile and polyglot elite with international contacts will persist.

Conclusions

The public presence and visibility of the Tatar language in Germany has a history of more than a century. For most of the time it was a highly politicised issue. During the two world wars, the German state wanted to use the Tatars who had fallen into German captivity from the Russian and the Soviet armies for propaganda purposes. Even if the circumstances cannot be compared directly there are striking similarities: during both wars, the authorities established propaganda centrals at ministries which addressed especially the Tatar POWs and soldiers with newspapers, journals, literary almanacs, and in the case of World War II also with Tatar radio broadcasts.

To a certain extent we can draw parallels between the Tatar language exile publications published after the world wars: in both cases Tatars who happened to live in Germany after the war published journals directed at a global community of Tatar exiles spread throughout the world; with Ayaz Iskhaki we even find a prominent person connecting the two epochs. The few literary almanacs published in the 1950s in Tatar do not change this image of a highly politicised presence of the Tatar language in Germany, but rather complete it. Until World War II even the seemingly unpolitical issue of teaching Tatar at German universities was linked to political developments, with the language being taught either as a result of World War I or more indirectly as part of the scientific preparations paving the way for an aggressive German policy directed at the Soviet Union in the run-up to World War II.

After World War II, Tatar has been taught in various departments for Turkish Studies at universities throughout Germany. Although it was not a political issue anymore, we still can observe traces of the previous strongly politicised times. For example the involvement of Mainz University in the teaching and research on Tatar in post-war years might partly be explained by the fact that Ahmet Temir, the young Tatar Turkologist who came to Germany in 1936 and remained until 1943, in the 1950s spent one year at that university and taught among others Tatar. Tamurbek Dawletschin (1904–1983), the author of the academic Tatar-German dictionary, edited 1989 posthumously by his wife and the Turkologist Semih Tezcan, was a former soldier of the Red Army who fell into German captivity during World War II (Dawletschin, Dawletschin & Tezcan 1989).

In general Tatar language classes at German universities have remained an academic endeavour within Turkish studies, with theoretical knowledge rather than fluency being the main goal. This changed only in the 1990s in the Institute for Turkology at the Free University of Berlin, when lecturer Margarete Ersen-Rasch started teaching the language with a communicative approach which was applied by her successors in the 2000s as well. The Tatar textbook based on her teaching efforts (Ersen-Rasch 2009) remains until now one of the few examples of a communicative approach in teaching Tatar not only in Germany but also globally.

In several aspects the state of the Tatar language in Germany since the 1990s shows significant differences to earlier times. Speaking Tatar no longer is a political issue. After the end of the Soviet Union many Tatars migrated individually to Germany. They founded their own associations and organised public festivals directed at both German and Tatar audiences. These activities cannot however be regarded as a yardstick for the presence of Tatar in Germany. As the example of prominent activists of the Tatar/Tatar-Bashkir associations shows, being engaged for the Tatar cause does not necessarily bring along a good command of the Tatar language and vice versa, speaking the language fluently does not necessarily entail an involvement in Tatar associations. There are Tatar women, married to German men, who simply do not feel the need to engage publicly for a Tatar cause. In recent years a younger generation of Tatars, who move to Germany for their university studies or as spouses of Germans, have made the Tatar language more visible to an interested general public, relying hereby on financial, institutional and moral support from Tatarstan. As this flexible and highly mobile polyglot elite could easily move back to Tatarstan or continue to other countries, it remains to be seen to what extent the recent rise in the visibility of the Tatar language is permanent.

If we take an overall look at the life of the Tatar community in Germany in the course of more than a century, and compare it to the Tatar diaspora in other countries, one difference with a huge impact on the future of the Tatar language immediately becomes evident: the almost complete absence of Tatar families consisting of couples and children who speak Tatar as their first language. Earlier mainly male Tatars came to Germany as a result of the wars. If they chose to stay in Germany, this was often because they had met German women and founded mixed Tatar-German families in which they did not transmit their language to the next generation. The few Tatar couples who met in the camps for displaced persons after World War II left Germany for other countries. Even nowadays if Tatars living in Germany have partners, these are much more likely to be Germans, Russians, Russian-speaking Jews or Turks rather than Tatars. It is not very likely that Tatars living in these mixed relationships will ever transmit their language to the next generation, so we might say that the future of the Tatar language in Germany remains open.

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Här zammaniñ üz köye.
Every period has its own melody.
Tatar mäkale / proverb