



World Library and Information Congress: 69th IFLA General Conference and Council

1-9 August 2003, Berlin

Code Number: 199-E
Meeting: 159. Library Service to Multicultural Populations - **Workshop**
Simultaneous Interpretation: -

Changes in Multi-Cultural Library Activities for Ethnical Minorities as Exemplified by Berlin

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1. Foreigners in Berlin

According to the annual statistics of the Berlin Commissioner for Foreigners, 437,777 foreigners were registered as living in Berlin in 1999, among them 130,449 Turks. Naturally these statistics do not include those who are in Berlin illegally or semi-legally, i.e. without police registration, and this number is estimated at being several ten thousand.

But there are other reasons why the statistics on foreigners are only partially applicable for ascertaining the need for special cultural offerings for those who do not have their cultural roots in Germany: whether someone is defined as a foreigner in the sense of these statistics depends exclusively on whether or not he/she possesses a German identity card. Upon naturalization such persons are declared by an administrative process to be Germans and are then no longer included in these statistics. Other groups, for example Russian and Romanian Germans, receive a German identity card at the time of their emigration, so at no time are they represented in these statistics.

On the other hand, when the term "foreigner" is used in other contexts, this applies to all people with alien origins independently of whether or not they possess an identity card and for whom the need for specially-prepared cultural offerings is assumed. Furthermore, people with cultural roots from within the geographical entity of Turkey are designated as being "Turks", independent of their ethnic affiliation.

2. The Turkish Population in Berlin

The beginnings of a Turkish presence in Berlin extends back to the first visit of an Ottoman envoy, Ahmet Resmi Efendi, to the court of the Prussian king Friedrich II in 1763. The first Turkish colony of significant size emerged at the beginning of the 20th century, when a larger

number of young Turks were brought to Berlin in order to study. Between the two world wars many Turkish students attended Berlin universities. During this time the first Turkish associations and social organizations were established in Berlin.

Starting from the beginning of the 60's larger inflows of Turks came to Berlin drawn by the so-called "recruitment". The beginnings during the 50's continued throughout the so-called "German Wirtschaftswunder". The demand for workers which resulted from it could not be satisfied with workers from East European countries and by the masses of GDR refugees, particularly following the erection of the Wall in 1961. The Federal Government signed recruitment contracts with Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Yugoslavia, Morocco, Tunesien and Turkey in order to satisfy the labor shortages in the German economy. It was tacitly assumed that a rotation principle would exist and it was presupposed that the "immigrant workers" recruited in this way would return to their homes after few years and be replaced by new workers who would likewise be recruited. This supposition proved to be inherently wrong, because on one hand the German industry was not willing to continually train new workers and on the other hand the willingness of the immigrant workers to return, above all the Turks, was minimal, despite initial intentions which were expressed quite differently.

Most of those recruited were fleeing the economic misery in their home country and intended to work hard in Germany for several years in order to then establish their "own businesses" in their own country with the money they had saved. Consequently, their requirements for living conditions in Germany were modest. They had already resigned themselves to having a life alternating between a place to sleep and their place of work for several years. Any participation in the social life in Germany, any cultural leisure activity, meant spending money which would be missing from the start capital for the new life in their home country. The relatively short period which they intended to spend in Germany made any effort for integration with the native population superfluous. Thus Turkish ghettos developed in the larger German cities, particularly in Munich, Frankfurt and Berlin. Even without a minimal knowledge of the German language they were able to get by in their consciously minimized environment, i.e. in their ghetto.

Conversely the Germans relied on the always-expressed willingness of the immigrant workers to return to their native country and regarded it as natural that after a few years the immigrant workers would return to their homes with the money they had saved. Likewise investments in cultural areas for immigrant workers seemed hardly meaningful, since there had neither been a corresponding indication for such a need nor did it seem feasible to make such investments for the "short" period involved until the reduction of the shortages in the work area were overcome, i.e. until the guest workers returned home.

Both sides erred: the guest workers who initially seemed willing to return home continued to postpone their departure. Some wanted to wait until the political and economical conditions in their home country improved (which at least in the case of Turkey always remained a dream), others had sent for their families or had established families in Germany and wanted to wait until their children had completed their schooling before they returned. The initial omissions in the linguistic and social areas could not be reversed by this so-called "first generation". Even worse, these deficits were often passed on to the so-called "second and third generation", which for the most part had been born in Germany.

Following the recruitment stop in 1973, the flood of people from Turkey did slow down, and even until the present it has not been completely dammed. Although recruitment had stopped, many Turks came and still come to Berlin on the basis of family unification. Since the middle of the 70s, there have always been several thousand students from Turkey studying in Berlin. Many

of them remained and also remain in Berlin after their studies are completed. In addition a large number of political refugees and asylum-seekers come from Turkey; these looked for refuge in Berlin primarily immediately preceding and after the military putsch of 1980 and in the second half of the 90's because of the war in southeast Turkey.

In summary it can be said that the Turkish community in Berlin exhibits a markedly heterogeneous picture. Nevertheless, and in spite of all the problems such a generalization ignores, this community is composed of the following groups:

- a) "Turks of the first generation". These were socialized in Turkey. They were recruited as guest workers or came to Germany as marriage partners of the recruited guest workers and have in the meantime reached retirement age. They often have neither finished school nor had vocational training. Their German language abilities are often modest, but they are fluent in Turkish. Their emotional and cultural ties to Turkey are very pronounced.
- b) "Turks of the second generation". These were often born in Berlin and/or joined their parents during infancy. Those belonging to this group are also called the "lost generation". Their knowledge of German is often better than that of their parents, however it is seldom fluent. On the other hand, they speak Turkish much more poorly than their parents do. In the case of this group one speaks of "bilingual illiteracy". Investigations during the second half of the 90s showed that the active vocabulary in both languages was approximately 250 words in each language respectively. Members of this group attended the general schools in Berlin, usually, however, without graduating and/or without a successive professional training. The second generation is to a large degree torn between two worlds. The ties to Turkey are still very strong, but these people also do not feel really at home in Turkey either. In contrast to the first generation, this group has also produced an "elitist" group of university graduates and successful businessmen in spite of all the adverse circumstances.
- c) "Turks of the third generation". These are the grandchildren of the initial guest workers who were recruited. They were almost all born in Germany and have been socialized. Their knowledge of Turkish is often only fragmentary, although they speak Turkish predominantly at home. But their Turkish is both syntactically as well as in the vocabulary mottled with the German language. In comparison to the second generation, their school achievement is generally greater. Specifically, a substantial number have graduated from school. Nevertheless, their school achievements remain far behind that of Germans of the same age. They have gained their knowledge of Turkey and the Turkish society either from short visits there or from what they have heard. The ties to Turkey are more an emotional searching for their own roots than they are a genuine feeling of affiliation.
- d) "Turks, who came to Germany in other ways". These differ from the previously mentioned groups primarily because neither they nor their parents or grandparents were recruited as "guest workers". They came to Germany usually beginning in the middle of the 80s within the framework of family unification (e.g. by marriage), to study or as political refugees. They are similar to the first generation since their socialization occurred almost exclusively in Turkey. Contrary to the members of the first generation, however, this is not 40 years in the past, but is much more current. Many of them graduated at least from an general school in Turkey. Their memories of the homeland are still relatively fresh and consequently their interest in the political, social and cultural

developments in Turkey are quite high. The readiness, the effort and the ability to integrate themselves into the German society without, however, giving up their own cultural identity in the process, are strongly pronounced.

3. „Social library work" or “genuine task"?

The German Conference of Cities (Deutscher Städtetag) defines a city with more than 100,000 inhabitants as a large city. Therefore, since the end of the 70s, the people of Turkish origin living in Berlin represent a large city within the metropolis Berlin. This "Turkish large city" needs its own infrastructure precisely in those areas where recourse to the infrastructure of the metropolis is not possible.

Already beginning at the end of the 70's, the (at that time West Berlin) district library systems and the America Memorial Library as the Berlin Central Library took steps to develop holdings particularly oriented toward the Turks in order to attract this minority, which numerically could not be underestimated, as library users. This was even more understandable since the Turkish minority was indirectly contributing substantially to the maintenance of these library systems with their taxes and fees.

These initial efforts assumed that the majority of the Turkish subpopulation was excluded from using libraries with predominately German-language holdings because of their minimal knowledge of German. It was believed that the information needs of these people could be satisfied by offering them a Turkish-language selection from the respective German-language holdings.

The motivating idea was therefore to provide library services to a "disadvantaged" subpopulation. Thus providing literature for foreigners, and in particular for Turks, was grouped together with other "peripheral services" under the concept of “social library work”, such as library visitation services, special services for visually disabled persons, hospital and prison libraries.

The attempt to justify the necessity and the right to exist for this library work exclusively on the basis of linguistically-caused disadvantages of those concerned and, on the basis of the conclusions derived from this, to regard it as a subsection of "social library work", was fatal for two reasons. Firstly, a social but a not really genuine area of duty can very easily be terminated or reduced in times when money is tight. Secondly, this point of view intrinsically contains the assumption that in the course of time special services for foreigners will become superfluous, more specifically at the latest when language competencies will allow them to use the regular holdings. For this reason these services were considered to be "time limited". Often neither the financial budgeting nor the staffing were guaranteed for long time. The work was done periodically, a continuous development of the holdings could often not be maintained. When the initial above-average circulation of Turkish-language media began to decrease, many libraries simply closed them or let them fade out.

The decreased circulation was partly because the holdings had become outdated, partly because the actual information needs of these users were not taken into consideration while developing holdings, partially because of the changed use of media, but above all because of the dynamic development of the Turkish population groups, with newcomers moving to Germany and the maturing of the generations who had been born in Germany. The decreased circulation was taken as an indication that the Turks were now completely using the German-language holdings. The

language-conditioned "disadvantage" of those concerned and thus the basis for this kind of "social library work" no longer existed.

4 Review of the beginnings of Turkish-language holdings in the Berlin Central and Regional Library

The America Memorial Library (AGB), which later fused with the (formerly East) Berlin City Library to become the Berlin Central and Regional Library, began to develop Turkish-language holdings at the end of the 70's. There was a political commitment on the part of the library as well as an earmarked initial financing from the German Lottery. In the AGB (as in many large city libraries in the German Federal Republic), it was assumed that there was a largely static and to a large extent homogeneous need for information: a population group consisting of manually hard-working laborers with unfinished schooling and with even less knowledge of German, which was exclusively interested in saving as much money as possible for the new start in their native country. The only literature of interest for such people would be fiction in their own language. Hence the lottery money was used exclusively to purchase very simple fiction which had been translated into Turkish. The circulation numbers of these books and the wishes for more sophisticated literature and in particular for non-fiction by Turks who had in the meantime become users of the library encouraged the AGB to increase its Turkish-language holdings. Because of the lack of native-language staff with the appropriate knowledge of country, people and literature, particularly avid Turkish readers were asked to be volunteers and to assist in developing the holdings. The development of the holdings thus became a lottery in which each of the volunteers tried to influence the holdings with their own political and social views.

In the meantime the library systems in those districts where the Turkish population was concentrated saw the necessity to also offer Turkish-language holdings. A pioneering role was played by the district library in Kreuzberg: an exclusively Turkish-language library with its own building and a native-speaking employee was established, the "Namik Kemal Library". Even if in later years this concept was felt to restrain integration and the holdings were enriched with German-language media, the "Namik Kemal Library" has retained its model character up to the present.

Although the district libraries were interested in developing Turkish-language holdings, they could not or were not always able to make appropriate staff available for holdings development. They suggested the creation of a "Turkish Central Lectorate" in the Berlin Central Library AGB which would supervise and advise all the district libraries. In 1982 the "Turkish Central Lectorate" was installed in the AGB with one full-time librarian and a half-time technical assistant. For the library position a Turkish sociologist living in Berlin was chosen. Not only did she support the district libraries in all questions relating to selection, purchase, development and presentation, she also created a well-rounded, comprehensive and universally oriented collection from the previously haphazardly acquired books in the AGB collection.

Already in this phase the "language-conditioned disadvantage" was abandoned as the sole criteria for holdings development in the AGB. Above all the concept that the target group was a homogeneous subpopulation with a uniform background and with uniform needs was discarded.

5. Collection development today

In the middle of the 90's there were approximately 10,000 media in the Turkish-language holdings of the AGB. Since then a continual holdings renewal and not numerical expansion are the focus of attention. Holdings development, in keeping with the dynamic development of the

Turkish population in Berlin, has accordingly developed additional criteria. The universality criteria was replaced in favor of purposeful concentration. What follows are the current criteria and emphasis.

a. Deficiencies in German

Even today there are very many Turks in Berlin who for purely linguistic reasons are unable to use the German-language holdings of the AGB. Such persons are either members of the first generation or they have only lived in Berlin a relatively short period of time. Providing library services to these people – as was stated previously – is no longer the sole criteria. Nevertheless, Turkish-language media are still purchased whose contents can also be found in the German-language collection.

Example:

Books from the area "life assistance", particularly about medicine and individual diseases for laymen; modern and classical world literature as well as fiction.

b. Fostering native languages for a potential reintegration

Although in the meantime many Turks have adjusted themselves to a permanent life in Germany, the majority do not want to completely exclude a return to Turkey should special occurrences take place (an economic crisis in Germany, a lack of professional prospects, support of frail relatives in the home country and above all the fear of increasing hatred of foreigners). In order to be able to keep this option open, many Turks are interested in retaining their own knowledge of Turkish and in keeping that of their children current. With the increasing possibilities of receiving Turkish television stations, the role of the library in this respect is pushed increasingly into the background. Nevertheless there are many Turks who precisely for this reason read Turkish-language books, although they could just as well read the German editions.

Example:

Technical literature for individual occupations; classical authors of world literature; standard works in sociology and the humanities; special subject dictionaries

c. Fostering native languages as a prerequisite for learning the German language

As mentioned above, Turkish is almost exclusively spoken in Turkish households and attempts to be bilingual is rare. To that extent Turkish is still the native language for most Turks, and German remains a foreign language which is learned later. Linguists themselves agree that learning a foreign language presupposes sound knowledge of the native language. The oft-deplored "bilingual illiteracy" results from neglect of the native language. The collection development attempts to foster this by offering the appropriate literature.

Example:

Bilingual literature; literature for children and young people; youth magazines; special books for children and young people

d. Turkey related contents

Even if they have lived abroad for decades, the Turks living in Berlin are intensely interested in the events, developments and occurrences in Turkey. This interest often extends to all topics and is of a general nature. Sometimes it is only selectively present and concerns individual topic such

as sports or the music scene. The wide-spread consumption of German editions of Turkish daily newspapers, whose content is largely identical with those in Turkey, underscores this interest. The German book market, however, offers - if at all - relatively few titles with current Turkey-related contents. The need for information pertaining to Turkey cannot be satisfied by using German-language holdings. In these cases it is not linguistic reasons which make the use of German-language holdings impossible, the necessary contents are just not available in German. This situation plays a central role in the development of the holdings: particular emphasis is placed on acquiring books with Turkey-related topics which are not available in German publications.

Example:

Books concerning the history, geography, economics, politics and culture of Turkey; modern Turkish literature

e. Problems preserving values

The members of the first generation left Turkey when they were young and they brought their values and Weltanschauung with them to Germany. These often originated, however, from Turkey in the 60's. In the meantime this Turkish society has itself developed, a very dynamic and comprehensive restructuring process has taken place in Turkey, even if this has not always been reflected positively. Many members of the first generation have, however, just as it can also be observed in other minorities in the diaspora, defensively conserved the values which they brought with them and passed them on to their children and grandchildren.

The frequently criticized degree of integration of the Turkish population in Germany has several causes. A very important cause is because comparisons are always made between their own values and those of the native population. When the deviation is great, one clings to his own values. If, however, one's conceptions remain stagnant to the conditions the way they were 40 years earlier, the discrepancies become ever greater and the ability to integrate becomes much less. However if these people would have taken part in the social development of the last 40 years in their native country, their own value conceptions would no longer be so distant from those in the German society.

Nearly in each life situation one can observe the negative consequences of value preservation. Not only in interfamily relations, but also in political and civic relations antiquated and non-viable values are retained and passed on. The social development within Turkey is also reflected in the publication market. By presenting publications which concern themselves with the social development tendencies, a contribution can be made for overcoming of the value preservation. Such publications form one of the most important emphasis with the collection development.

Example:

Classical authors of feminist literature; books about Turkish non-governmental organizations, among them those dealing with environmental protection initiatives; books dealing with human and civil rights; fashionable books of the 68 generation, which only now are beginning to be published in Turkish.

f. Serving as a bridge between both culture areas

In developing the Turkish-language collection, the language principle is strictly adhered to. The holdings in this department are exclusively in the Turkish language. Translations of works of Turkish authors are available in the literature department of the ZLB. Conversely, however, one

tries to present translations of works of German authors as completely as possible within the Turkish holdings. Non-fiction books about the culture exchange between the two countries are also included. The aim is that a reciprocal acquaintance with the different culture areas and the other literatures is possible independent of a knowledge of the respective language.

Example:

Goethe and Max Frisch in Turkish, but also Simmel and Kinsler; books about German immigrants in Turkey; CDs with music from different music styles and epochs, as well as different ethnic groups.

g. Supporting the multi-cultural art and culture scene

A very active multi-cultural art and cultural scene developed and continues to develop in Berlin. Above all artists with non-German origins produce contemporary art in which they integrate quotations from their own cultures. German artists also experiment with traditional Turkish elements. In order to support such efforts appropriate literature is made available.

Example:

Books about traditional architecture; museum and exhibition catalogs; dramas and film scripts; historical costume books; books about traditional art forms such as calligraphy and paper marbling.

In summary it can be said that most Turks in Berlin do not use Turkish language media because they do not know German, but because the content they are looking for is not available in German. Therefore, library activity which is aimed at them should no longer primarily seek to serve a disadvantaged subpopulation deficient in language abilities, but to allow those concerned to retain their cultural identity which they have always desired. Only when they are no longer afraid that they will have to give up their cultural identity will they be open for integration.