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## BETWEEN AUSLÄNDER AND ALMANCI: THE TRANSNATIONAL HISTORY OF TURKISH-GERMAN MIGRATION

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Although he had anticipated feeling happy in his homeland, Erdem was “shocked” to find himself the target of discrimination when he visited Turkey in 1991. A second-generation Turkish migrant born and raised in West Germany, the longhaired 21-year-old who played in a garage band called Apocalyptica stuck out from the local Turks. “You can’t imagine how crazy these people were,” he recalled. “They had an olfactory sense. They could smell that I was from Germany.” Twice, this prejudice turned to violence. Erdem was “lynched,” in his words, once at a discotheque and once while strolling along the sea-side. In the latter encounter, a group of men encircled him, took out pocketknives, and attempted to cut his hair. When Erdem reported the incident, the police officers told him to “F\*\*\* off, you *Almancı*! This is Turkey, not Germany!” The insults never stopped. Only when he returned to Germany could he breathe a sigh of relief.<sup>1</sup>

While certainly an extreme case, Erdem’s story captures the tensions between Turkish-German migrants and their home country. As Erdem vividly explained, the migrants’ time spent in Germany was marked on their bodies — in their fashion choices and hairstyles, in their behaviors, mannerisms, accents, and patterns of speech — making them the targets of scorn, derision, and ostracization. This sense of otherness is best captured in the police officers’ calling Erdem an *Almancı*. Translating literally to “German-er” — or, as I use it, “Germanized Turk” — this derogatory Turkish term evokes not only physical but also cultural estrangement: the perception that the migrants living in Germany (*Almanya*) have undergone a process of Germanization, rendering them no longer fully Turkish. Many migrants perceive *Almancı* as the flipside of the German word *Ausländer* (foreigner), which excludes them from the German national community even if they have lived there for decades and have obtained citizenship.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, whereas Germans have lambasted the migrants’ insufficient assimilation, the idea of the *Almancı* reveals that Turks in the homeland have often worried about precisely the opposite: *excessive* assimilation.

1 Erdem S., interview by author, Şarköy, 2016.

2 *Almanya’da Yabancı, Türkiye’de Almancı. Türkiye ve Almanya’dan İlginç Yorumlar* (Ulm, 1995).

In this article, as well as the dissertation and book manuscript on which it is based, I tell the story of how the idea of the *Almançı* — of this dually estranged “Germanized Turk,” identified simultaneously with two homelands and with no homeland at all — came to be. I begin in 1961, when West Germany first began recruiting Turkish laborers as part of the 1955-1973 guest worker program (*Gastarbeiterprogramm*) and end in 1990, a year marked by several developments: the reunification of divided Germany, the liberalization of German citizenship law, and renewed discussions about Turkey’s compatibility with a post-Cold War conception of Europe. Taking a transnational perspective that intertwines the levels of policy, public discourse, and personal experience, I complicate a narrative that has long been portrayed as a German story — as a one-directional migration from Turkey to West Germany whose consequences have played out primarily within German geographic boundaries. To the contrary, I argue that Turkish migration to Germany was *never* a one-directional process; it was a back-and-forth process of reciprocal exchange, whose consequences played out not only within the two countries but also throughout Cold War Europe. The basic premise is the following: We cannot understand how migration impacted Germany without understanding how it impacted Turkey; we cannot understand German immigration policy without understanding Turkish policy and the ways in which the two were constituted mutually; and we cannot understand the migrants’ experiences *integrating* in Germany without understanding their experiences *reintegrating* in Turkey.

The burgeoning scholarship on postwar German migration history has converged upon a relatively consistent periodization. As the standard narrative goes, Turkish guest workers never intended — and *were* never intended — to stay long-term. Envisioning them as temporary “guests,” as the term *Gastarbeiter* implies, the West German government planned for them to stay for only two years, after which, according to the recruitment agreement’s “rotation principle” (*Rotationsprinzip*), they would be replaced. The workers, too, understood their migration as temporary. After a few years working in factories and mines, they planned to return home with fancy cars, build their own two-story homes, establish their own small businesses, and secure a prosperous future for their families. Nevertheless, guest workers did not go home as planned and, after the 1973 moratorium on labor recruitment, increasingly brought their families and children, leading them to become West Germany’s largest ethnic

minority. The realization that migrants had not returned ignited the earliest debates about integration and multiculturalism, as well as the rise of anti-Turkish and anti-Muslim xenophobia in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Since German reunification, these tensions erupted in the citizenship debates of the 1990s, resurfaced in controversies about the “failure” of multiculturalism in the 2010s, and have been transposed onto German attitudes toward new Muslim migrants amid the current-day refugee crisis.

While this periodization holds true, the overwhelming focus on developments within West German borders has had the inadvertent effect of downplaying migrants’ return to their home country as a mere “illusion” or an “unrealized dream.” Crucial to my argument, however, is the sheer dynamism and agency of migrants’ lives. Far from oppressed industrial cogs relegated to their workplaces and factory dormitories, guest workers and their families were highly mobile border crossers. They did not stay put in West Germany, but rather returned — both temporarily or permanently — to Turkey. They took advantage of affordable sightseeing opportunities throughout Western Europe, and they traveled each year, typically by car across Cold War Europe, on vacations to their home country, where they temporarily reunited with the friends and family they had left behind. Hundreds of thousands, moreover, packed their bags, relinquished their West German residence permits, and remigrated to Turkey permanently, making their long-deferred “final return” (in Turkish, *kesin dönüş*). Remigration was not only a personal decision, but also state-driven, with the West German and Turkish governments grappling with how to promote (for the former) and curtail (for the latter) the migrants’ return. Migrants’ mobility beyond West German borders, and specifically their return to their homeland, was thus central to everyday life, domestic and international policy, and identity formation.

Organized chronologically, the article traces the gradual development of the idea of the *Almanci* by highlighting three key themes in the migrants’ gradual estrangement from their home country. In the first section, I explore guest workers’ vacations to their home country, showing how the cars and consumer goods they brought from West Germany made non-migrant Turks perceive them as a *nouveau-riche* class of superfluous spenders who selfishly neglected to support their economically struggling homeland. In the second section, I explore how these concerns, amid heightened West German xenophobia toward Turks, erupted in heated domestic and international debates

about the West German government's controversial 1983 Law for the Promotion of Voluntary Return (*Rückkehrförderungsgesetz*), which offered guest workers a "remigration premium" (*Rückkehrprämie*) of 10,500 Deutsche Mark (D-Mark) to go back to their home country. In the third section, I examine the consequences of the 1983 law, which brought about the largest remigration wave in modern European history, with 15% of the Turkish population (approximately 250,000 men, women, and children) returning to Turkey in 1984 alone. Here I focus particularly on the struggles of the second-generation "return children" (*Rückkehrkinder*), also derided as the "children of *Almançı*," when they accompanied their parents back to Turkey. Turning the concept of "integration" on its head, I ultimately argue that, amid the longstanding discourses of Germanization and cultural estrangement, many return migrants were faced with an uncomfortable reality: *reintegration* in their own homeland was often just as difficult as *integration* abroad.

### **I. Vacations in the homeland**

The moment at which guest workers initially departed their home country was one of great rupture. Each time guest workers boarded the trains at Istanbul's Sirkeci train station, crowds of men, women, and children huddled together behind wooden gates with tangled barbed wire, their emotions varying from joyous singing to woeful sobs. While guest workers from Istanbul were able to have their families see them off at their departure, others had already said their goodbyes in their faraway home villages, spread throughout the vast Anatolian countryside. For the guest workers themselves, the moment was bittersweet. While they were excited about their new adventures and the wealth they could amass, they had already begun to mourn the separation from their loved ones even before they departed. They knew that maintaining contact would not be easy. Electricity and telephone lines had yet to come to many villages, and letters traveling through the international post could take weeks or months to arrive, if at all.

As soon as they settled in to their factory dormitories in West Germany, guest workers developed strategies for quelling their homesickness. Early on, they created surrogate families — typically along gendered lines — which served as crucial support systems. Often, they commiserated together. "It was terrible being alone in this foreign country," recalled Nuriye M., whose husband had stayed behind in Turkey. "At the beginning, we sat together every evening,



Figure 1. Cartoon on the cover of a 1995 anthology of migrant writings, titled *Foreigner in Germany, Almani in Turkey*, depicting a dismayed guest worker reluctantly returning from Germany to Turkey. The image captures the idea of the “Almanci,” or “Germanized Turks,” who feel dually estranged from both countries they consider home. Reproduced by permission.

listened to Turkish music, and cried.”<sup>3</sup> Discussions, whether somber or lively, often centered on their lives at home. “We had no other topic,” insisted Necan, who worked at the Siemens factory in Berlin. “What else could we have talked about? Economics or politics? The entire topic was our homeland.”<sup>4</sup> Alongside the profound sadness, however, were moments of levity and excitement. They drank beer together, played cards, and watched television, and they often went out on the town to restaurants, bars, and shops. On the weekends, men in particular often congregated at local train stations—which one guest worker affectionately called the “gate to the homeland” (*Tor zur Heimat*) — to catch up on the latest political news from Turkey and to share stories about acquaintances in neighboring cities.<sup>5</sup>

While guest workers regularly wrote letters to their loved ones, eagerly awaiting each reply, they also developed another communication strategy: sending audio recordings of their voices by repurposing battery-operated cassette players, a new technology that they frequently purchased in West Germany to listen to Turkish music on tape. The process was complex. After recording their voice messages on a blank tape, the senders would locate a fellow guest worker who was planning to travel home by car and who would be willing to transport the cassette player, along with some extra blank tapes, directly to its recipient in the village. Once the intermediary delivered the cassette player, the family members would listen to the voice message and record a response on the blank tapes. They would then send the cassette player back to the original guest worker in Germany through either the same liaison or another guest worker. Although not always easy, finding this traveling intermediary was facilitated by the social networks guest workers had developed in their local communities. The weekend meetings at the train stations, for example, were spaces in which cassette players exchanged hands.<sup>6</sup>

By far the most important means of communication, however, was physically traveling to Turkey on their *Heimaturlaube*, or vacations in the home country. Because guest workers enjoyed the same right to vacation as German workers, they spent between four to six weeks in Turkey every year, usually during the summer but sometimes during Christmas break. By the rise of family migration of the 1970s, the spouses and children of guest workers took the vacations as well. *Heimaturlaube* were such an important component of guest workers’ experiences that they show up in even the most unexpected Turkish and West German archival sources: government agencies coordinated

3 Nuriye M., interviewed in Dieter Sauter, dir., “Die vergessene Generation. Von ‘Gastarbeitern’ der ersten Stunde,” in *In der Fremde zu Hause. Deutsche und Türken*, Bayerischer Rundfunk, 1990, Dokumentationszentrum und Museum über die Migration in Deutschland e. V., Köln (DOMiD-Archiv), VI 0090.

4 Necan, interviewed in Hannelore Schäfer, dir., “Ich bleibe hier. Eine Türkin in West Berlin,” Norddeutscher Rundfunk, 1983, DOMiD-Archiv, VI 0207.

5 Mahir Zeytinoğlu, “Atatürk, Ludwig, Goethe und ich — wir gehören zusammen!” Der bunte Hund des Münchner Bahnhofsviertels,” in *AufZeit. Für immer. Zuwanderer aus der Türkei erinnern sich*, eds. Jeannette Goddar and Dorte Huneke (Cologne, 2011), 132-133.

6 Fatma U., interview by author, Cologne, 2017. See the many cassette players held in the DOMiD-Archiv.

travel logistics, companies fired guest workers on the basis of a tardy return, newspapers reported on vacations with great frequency, novelists and filmmakers incorporated vacations as plot points, and guest workers and their children recounted their vacation stories in personal memoirs, poems, and oral histories.

Although buses, trains, and airplanes were common options, the vast majority of guest workers opted to travel by car, which permitted flexible departure times. The journey, however, was no easy feat. The only possible roadway from West Germany to Turkey was an international highway, the Europastraße 5, which stretched 3,000 kilometers across the Iron Curtain at the height of the Cold War. Driving through neutral Austria, socialist Yugoslavia, and communist Bulgaria to get to Istanbul took a minimum of two days and two nights, and even longer if the driver was heading to a remote village in eastern Anatolia. Not only long, but also dangerous, the road trip captivated the interest of the West German and Turkish media. In 1975, the West German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* sensationalized the treacherous road conditions in a ten-page feature article, headlined “The Road of Death” (“Die Todesstrecke”). Citing dubious statistics, the article reported that bumper-to-bumper traffic, exhausted drivers, and 2000-kilometer long unventilated tunnels made guest workers succumb to “near murder” and “certain suicide”: the 330-kilometer curvy stretch through the Austrian Alps caused over five thousand accidents each year, and one passenger allegedly died in Yugoslavia every two hours.<sup>7</sup>

To make matters worse, travelers had to deal with aggressive border guards and locals, whom one child of a guest worker called “sadistic.”<sup>8</sup> The situation was especially difficult on the Balkan portion of the road. Living under socialism and communism at the height of the Cold War, Yugoslav and Bulgarian border guards thirsted for material goods from “the West” and took advantage of guest workers, whose West German license plates exposed them as potential suppliers. Regularly, they forced travelers to unpack their entire cars, searching meticulously for contraband and items they could surreptitiously sneak into their pockets, causing undue stress and delay. Yet the manipulation was a two-way street. Guest workers were well aware of border guards’ soft spot for bribes and, accordingly, even packed extra “western” items, such as Marlboro cigarettes and Coca Cola bottles, solely for that purpose.<sup>9</sup> Locals, too, sought to exploit the travelers. Cavit S., for example, was once accosted by a group of Bulgarian

7 “E 5: Terror von Blech und Blut,” *Der Spiegel*, Aug. 25, 1975, 92-101.

8 “Karambolage,” DOMiD-Archiv, DV 0089.

9 Ibid.



children, who knocked on his car window demanding chocolate and cassette tapes. As he drove away, leaving them empty-handed, they shouted at him: “I hope your mother and father die!”<sup>10</sup>

The situation did not entirely improve when guest workers finally arrived in their home country, crossing the Bulgarian-Turkish border at Kapıkule. The lines were long, and Turkish border guards — like those in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria — were not immune to the lust for bribes.<sup>11</sup> In his 1979 novel about the Europastraße 5, the Turkish novelist Güney Dal painted a chaotic picture of the scene: “German marks, Turkish lira; papers that have to be filled out and signed ... exhaust fumes, dirt, loud yelling, police officers’ whistling, chaos, motor noises ... pushing and shoving.”<sup>12</sup> Overall, however, guest workers tended to recall the Kapıkule border fondly, as it marked the first time they set foot on Turkish ground in months or years. For one child of a guest worker, Kapıkule was a “gate of paradise,” where her family excitedly called out “Geldik!” (We’ve arrived!).<sup>13</sup> Despite the joyful homecoming, however, many continued to view the road trip as a whole with disgust. In a 2016 interview, looking back decades later, one former guest worker insisted that he would never take the journey again — “even if someone offered me 10,000 Euros!”<sup>14</sup>

Vacations to the home country were significant not only for the collective experience of traveling along the Europastraße 5, but also for their critical role in shaping the way the migrants were viewed by those in their home country. Indeed, the perception that guest workers had become Germanized *Almancı* had much to do with the cars and consumer goods that they brought on the E-5. These material goods, which helped guest workers manipulate bribe-thirsty Yugoslav, Bulgarian, and Turkish border guards, also imbued the guest workers with social cachet in their homeland. The relatively closed economy of 1960s and 1970s Turkey made foreign products hard to come by, and those in the homeland often marveled at the perceived quality of goods “Made in Germany” compared to the allegedly “inferior” products available in Turkey.<sup>15</sup> The excitement at German goods was even more palpable in Turkish villages, many of which would not receive electricity and running water until the 1980s, making products like telephones, cameras, refrigerators, and dishwashers especially curious commodities.<sup>16</sup>

By far the most significant consumer goods were the very same cars that guest workers drove across the Europastraße 5. During

10 Cavit Ş. interview by author, Şarköy, 2016.

11 DOMiD-Archiv: BT 0484,128b; BT 0484,108; BT 0341; E 1086,12.

12 Güney Dal, *E-5* (Istanbul, 1979), 248.

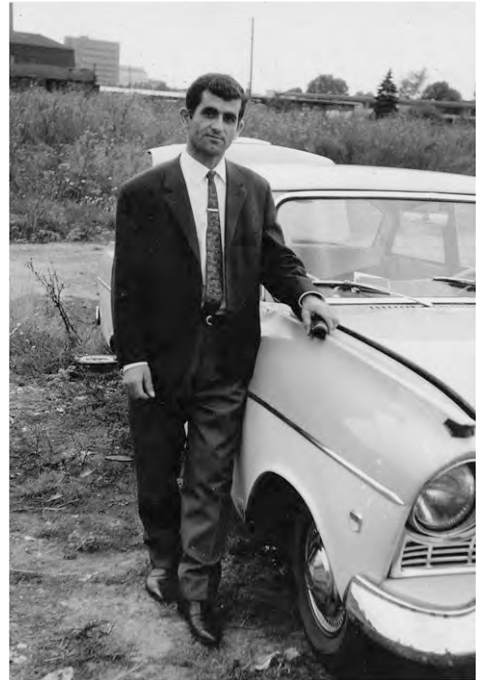
13 “Karambolage,” DOMiD-Archiv, DV 0089.

14 Cengiz İ., interview by author, Cologne, 2015.

15 Emine Zaman, interview by author, Ankara, 2014.

16 Walt Patterson, *Transforming Electricity: The Coming Generation of Change* (New York, 1999) 82.

the 1960s and 1970s, car ownership in Turkey was a privilege of the wealthy elite, and many villagers had never seen cars with their own eyes until a guest worker arrived on his vacation. When a guest worker rolled up in a German-made car, they became the target of awe, bewilderment, wonder, and envy. In the early 1960s, 20-year-old Necla even based her decision to marry her husband, Ünsal, on his light gray Mercedes-Benz. “That car had come to me like a fairy tale,” she remembered fondly decades later. “All I knew was that he was a wealthy man and that he was working in Germany. I just had to marry him.”<sup>17</sup> As the frenzy about cars circulated in the Turkish media, films, and novels, those in the home country began to associate guest workers nearly synonymously with West German brands like Mercedes, BMW, Volkswagen, Audi, and Opel.



**Figure 2. A guest worker poses proudly with his car in 1972. Purchased with hard-earned D-Mark and driven back to Turkey on vacations each year, cars represented not only the migrants' newfound wealth but also their perceived Germanization. DOMiD-Archiv Köln, E 1216.0033. Used by permission.**

Cars were also important because they allowed guest workers to bring other consumer goods to Turkey, as items to place in the houses that they were building in anticipation of their eventual remigration or, most commonly, as souvenirs to give to their friends, neighbors, and family at home. Indeed, worried about being perceived as stingy, guest workers felt pressured to undertake extensive shopping sprees before their vacations — which they often could not afford — in order to make sure that every friend, neighbor, and relative received a gift from Germany.<sup>18</sup> These items ranged from clothing, bed linens, toys, and electronics to larger items, such as furniture and household appliances. By the 1970s, the association of guest workers with loaded-up cars was so pervasive that West German firms sought to profit off it. The home improvement store OBI, for example, created a Turkish-language advertisement for a sale on rooftop luggage racks, depicting a woman in a headscarf yelling, “Run, run! Don’t miss the deals at OBI!”

Guest workers' displays of wealth, however, also had negative consequences, driving a rift between the migrants and their homeland and serving as a catalyst for the development of the term *Almanci*. At the root of these tensions were fundamental disputes about how guest workers should be spending their D-Mark, whether for themselves or

17 Necla and Ünsal Ö., interviews by author, Şarköy, 2014 and 2016.

18 Karin König, Hanne Straube, and Kamil Taylan, *Merhaba ... Guten Tag. Ein Bericht über eine türkische Familie* (Bornheim, 1981), 49–51.

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Figure 3. Turkish-language ethno-marketing flyer from the West German home improvement store OBI, advertising auto parts and rooftop luggage racks to vacationing guest workers. The woman, wearing a headscarf, shouts: "Run, run, don't miss the deals at OBI!" DOMiD-Archiv, Köln, E 0634.0000. Used by permission.

for the good of the Turkish homeland. The Turkish government's goal in sending workers abroad had always been economic. State planners hoped not only to stave off domestic unemployment by "exporting surplus labor,"<sup>19</sup> but also that the workers would develop a new set of technical know-how that they would use to promote their country's productive industries upon their return.<sup>20</sup> Even more crucial, however, were the guest workers' remittances payments, one-time cash transfers of D-Mark to Turkey, which the government hoped to direct away from guest workers' personal coffers and toward investment in productive sectors. In reality, however, those goals did not always materialize. "Most of the workers come back without money," complained the local governor of Cappadocia, a rural province in Central Anatolia, in a 1971 letter to the West German Foreign Office: rather than bringing tools and equipment to promote "income-generating activity," vacationing guest workers "just spend it on frivolous things, such as cars, television sets, etc., or even items that do not correspond to their current standard of living."<sup>21</sup>

The governor's concerns were not unfounded. A 1975 sociological study found that only 1.5% of returning guest workers in the Central Anatolian district of Boğazlıyan had brought back tools and equipment. By contrast, a remarkable 65% percent of had brought clothing, 62% cassette players, 28% furniture, 10% televisions, 10% cars or other vehicles, and 5% household appliances.<sup>22</sup> In one of the study's most egregious cases, which the researchers called "gaudy" and superfluous, a returning guest worker had spent his D-Mark on building a five-bedroom house, by far the biggest in his impoverished home village, and had filled it with "modern urban business furniture," five or six clocks, a grand showcase displaying German-made cups and mugs, and, curiously, a single Christmas ornament hanging from the ceiling. Although electricity had yet to come to the village, he had also brought a number of larger appliances, such as a laundry machine, a tanning bed (intended to alleviate the symptoms of rheumatism), and a refrigerator. As he waited for electricity to arrive in the village, he apparently placed the refrigerator in his bedroom and used it as a storage cabinet for clothing.<sup>23</sup>

This is not to say, however, that guest workers did not take pride in contributing to their homeland. Beginning in the 1960s, they banded together to create Turkish Workers Collectives (*Türkische Arbeitnehmersgesellschaften; İşçi Şirketleri; TANGs*), grassroots joint-stock companies that invested in the creation of factories in their primarily

19 T. C. Başbakanlık Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, *Kalkınma Planı (Birinci Beş Yıl), 1963-1967* (Ankara, 1963), 455. Available at <http://www.kalkinma.gov.tr/Lists/Kalkinma%20Planlar/Attachments/9/plan1.pdf>.

20 Brian Joseph-Keysor Miller, "Reshaping the Turkish Nation-State: The Turkish-German Guest Working Program and Planned Development, 1961-1985" (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 2015).

21 Staatssekretär von Braun, "Türkische Arbeiter in Deutschland," Apr. 5, 1971, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PAAA), B 85/1046.

22 Nermin Abadan-Unat, et al. *Göç ve Gelişme: Uluslararası İşgücü Göcümün Boğazlıyan İlçesi Üzerindeki Etkilerine İlişkin Bir Araştırma* (Ankara, 1976), 387.

23 *Ibid.*, 388.

agrarian home regions.<sup>24</sup> For the Turkish government, TANGs were a welcome boon. By 1980, the number of vested workers had skyrocketed to 236,171; TANGs were responsible for approximately 10% of investments in Turkey and were estimated to have created 10,000 new jobs, with an additional 20,000 jobs indirectly.<sup>25</sup> Not only did TANGs help direct remittances toward productive sectors, but they also attracted money from the West German government, which financed TANGs as part of its broader strategy of giving “development aid” (*Entwicklungshilfe*) to struggling “Third World” economies during the Cold War.<sup>26</sup> Despite guest workers’ efforts to invest in their homeland, however, the population at home continued to perceive them as selfish; while they saw all the cars and consumer goods, the investment money was less tangible.

24 Faruk Şen, *Türkische Arbeitnehmersgesellschaften. Gründung, Struktur und wirtschaftliche Funktion der türkischen Arbeitnehmersgesellschaften in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland für die sozioökonomische Lage der Türkei* (Frankfurt am Main, 1980).

25 “Türkische Arbeitnehmer investierten 1,5 Milliarden Mark,” *Informationsdienst Entwicklungspolitik*, Vol. 5, no. 80 (May 20, 1980), Bundesarchiv (BArch), B 213/13896.

26 Isoplan — Institut für Entwicklungsforschung und Sozialplanung GmbH, *Türkische Arbeitnehmersgesellschaften. Zwischenbericht zur Entwicklung und Beratung wirtschaftlicher Selbsthilfeinitiativen in der Türkei und der Förderung der beruflichen Wiedereingliederung von in der Bundesrepublik beschäftigten Arbeitnehmern in die türkische Wirtschaft*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Saarbrücken and Istanbul, 1980).

27 Ibid.

28 Örsan Öymen, “Yurt dışına ayrıcalık,” *Milliyet*, Feb. 24, 1979, 9.

29 Örsan Öymen, “İşçi Dövizleri. Okurlardan Kazan’a,” *Milliyet*, Mar. 20, 1979, 9.

30 Ibid.

Concerns about how guest workers spent their D-Mark heightened in the late 1970s, when the Turkish economy collapsed in the midst of the so-called “Third World debt crisis.” Although Turkey desperately needed guest workers’ remittances, they had decreased substantially in the previous several years, from \$1.4 billion U.S. Dollars in 1974 to just \$980 million from 1976 through 1978.<sup>27</sup> In one of many news reports on the issue, a *Milliyet* columnist lambasted guest workers for their selfish refusal to contribute to the national economy in its time of need.<sup>28</sup> The column provoked the ire of guest workers living abroad, who defended their spending habits.<sup>29</sup> The Turkish government had spent their remittances “irresponsibly,” one insisted, while another blamed the untrustworthiness of Turkish banks, which “think of nothing other than grabbing the marks from the hands of the workers.” Most revealingly, one guest worker defended his “right” to do whatever he wanted with his D-Mark, regardless of Turkish priorities. “The workers here are slowly beginning to live like Germans,” he contended. “They do not want to live in old houses. Everyone wants to live in a civilized manner, not to work like a machine. Like people. As a result, our spending has increased. Isn’t that our right?”<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, the assertion that he and his fellow guest workers had begun “to live like Germans” was precisely the heart of the tensions, as the idea of the *Almancı* had already crystallized. The guest workers’ initial departure from their home villages led only to more separation anxieties, which — despite their best efforts — could not be quelled from afar, through letters and postcards alone. Ironically, guest workers’ vacations, although intended to be the best mechanism for bridging the separation anxieties, actually ended up deepening

the rift between migrants and their loved ones at home. The long and treacherous road trip on the Europastraße 5 not only imbued the otherwise pleasant thought of vacationing to the homeland with exorbitant time, effort, danger, and expense, but also forged a collective migrant experience of unsavory encounters in the Balkans to which Turks in the homeland could not relate. Once in their home country, vacationing guest workers became the targets of awe and envy, but not always with the most beneficial outcomes. The cars and consumer goods they transported on the Europastraße 5 changed the way they were viewed in the eyes of their countrymen at home: as *nouveau-riche* superfluous spenders who had adopted the allegedly German habit of conspicuous consumption and, in the process, had stabbed their homeland's economic needs in the back.

## II. Kicked out of two countries

Vacations were not the only way that guest workers maintained physical contact to their homeland. Many remigrated permanently, packing their bags, relinquishing their West German residence permits, and reintegrating into life in their homeland. By the 1973 recruitment moratorium, an estimated 500,000 of the 867,000 Turkish guest workers had returned to their home country as expected.<sup>31</sup> Paradoxically, however, the recruitment moratorium had the unintended consequence of reducing guest workers' willingness to remigrate and precipitating a vast increase in West Germany's Turkish population. Fearing heightened restrictions on visas, Turkish workers in particular took advantage of West Germany's lax policy of family reunification and arranged for the legal immigration of their spouses and children. Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, as families established stable lives in West Germany and the struggling Turkish economy portended dismal job prospects in their home country, the remigration rate plummeted. Between 1975 and 1981, the number of Turkish remigrants nearly halved from 1975 to 1981, from around 148,000 to 70,000 people.<sup>32</sup> As a 1982 West German government report concluded, the number of Turks who expressed a "latent" desire to return far exceeded the number of those who "actually" returned (*tatsächlich Zurückkehrende*).<sup>33</sup>

As Turkish guest worker families increasingly became the targets of xenophobia — or "anti-foreigner sentiment" (*Ausländerfeindlichkeit*), as it was more euphemistically labeled — West German policymakers realized they needed to take action. In an October 1982 meeting, just

31 Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, "Die Anwerbung türkischer Arbeitnehmer und ihre Folgen," 5 Aug. 2014, <http://www.bpb.de/internationales/europa/tuerkei/184981/gastarbeit> (accessed Jan. 9, 2020).

32 "Ausländische Arbeitnehmer. Rückkehr wird gefördert," *Bundesarbeitsblatt* 10 (1982), 8.

33 BMA to Mitglieder der Arbeitsgruppe "Rückkehrförderung," "Betr.: Rückkehrförderung ausländischer Arbeitnehmer und ihrer Familienangehörigen," May 18, 1982, 3, BArch, B 106/117694.

several weeks after taking office, Chancellor Helmut Kohl secretly confided in British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher about his desire to “reduce the number of Turks in Germany by 50%.”<sup>34</sup> While extreme, Kohl’s ambitions were generally in line with his party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), which had been fighting with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) about curtailing immigration and promoting remigration for the past several years. Far from an easy task, Kohl and other West German policymakers grappled with a political and ethical dilemma: How, after perpetrating the Holocaust forty years prior, could they rid themselves of an unwanted minority population without enduring domestic and international scorn for contradicting their post-fascist values of liberalism, democracy, and human rights?

The solution, they determined, was to pay Turks to leave. On November 28, 1983, the West German government passed the controversial Law for the Promotion of Voluntary Return (*Rückkehrförderungsgesetz*), which offered money directly to unemployed former guest workers in the form of a so-called “return premium” (*Rückkehrprämie*), often more magnanimously termed “return assistance” (*Rückkehrhilfe*): a one-time cash transfer of 10,500 D-Mark, plus an additional 1,500 D-Mark per child. To receive the money, the worker’s entire family, including spouse and children, would need to exit West German borders by a strict deadline of September 30, 1984 — just ten months later. Once a guest worker had taken the money, he or she could return to the country only as a tourist. Even children who had been born in West Germany or had spent the majority of their lives there would require tourist visas to re-enter the country, which were increasingly hard to acquire given the harsh immigration restrictions at the time. Upon their departure, a border official at either a roadway crossing or an airport would stamp all the family members’ residence permits “invalid,” marking their official severance from a country that they had, in some cases for nearly two decades, called home.

Anticipating criticism, proponents of the *Rückkehrförderungsgesetz* portrayed it in a way that sought to reconcile the morally controversial policy with their post-Holocaust commitment to upholding the rights of minority populations. Although policymakers’ primary interest lay in reducing the Turkish population, they knew that they would endure both domestic and international scorn — certainly from the Turkish government — if the law singled out only Turkish citizens. In an October 1982 internal memorandum shortly after

34 Claus Hecking, “Secret Thatcher Notes: Kohl Wanted Half of Turks Out of Germany,” *Spiegel Online*, Aug. 1, 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/secret-minutes-chancellor-kohl-wanted-half-of-turks-out-of-germany-a-914376.html> (accessed Sept. 26, 2016).

Kohl's election, tellingly entitled "Turkey Policy," one bureaucrat acknowledged that targeting Turkish citizens exclusively would generate a public relations disaster. "It is strictly advisable not to present the foreigner policy and its basic components (immigration restriction, remigration promotion, and integration) as exclusively oriented toward the Turkish workers," he wrote, "although we are internally conceptualizing this policy with regard to this group and its country of origin."<sup>35</sup> To combat the appearance of discriminating against Turks, the law thus offered the remigration premium to former guest workers from all non-European Economic Community countries. To further save face, officials repeatedly made it clear in the press that the law did not constitute a forced deportation. During parliamentary debates in 1983, for example, Federal Labor Minister Norbert Blüm assured critics that the key word in the law's title was "voluntary" (*freiwillig*).<sup>36</sup>

Despite attempts to frame the law as magnanimous, it drew intense scorn from West German leftists, trade unions, and migrant advocacy organizations. Siegfried Bleicher, a board member of the German Trade Union Confederation (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, DGB), called it a "false," "illusionary," and socially irresponsible "political miscarriage."<sup>37</sup> One journalist referred to it as an "elegant kicking out,"<sup>38</sup> while the metal-workers union IG Metall condemned it as a "continuation of the federal government's kicking out policy."<sup>39</sup> In the words of *Die Tageszeitung*, under the guise of generosity, the West German government was offering unemployed foreigners little more than "pocket money for an uncertain future."<sup>40</sup>

Many critics contended that the West German government actually stood to make money off the deal and was not paying the guest worker families sufficiently in comparison to the returns expected to flood into federal coffers. The notion of the government benefitting monetarily was captured in a 1983 *Der Spiegel* article entitled "Take Your Premium and Get Out," which featured a photograph of a Turkish family loading their belongings into their van with the caption "Splendid deal for the Germans."<sup>41</sup> In the words of one guest worker, the law was "singularly and solely about saving the German state the social services to which these foreigners are legally entitled."<sup>42</sup> Such critiques were on point. Policymakers were well aware of the long-term savings that would result from the reduction of the Turkish population. As one bureaucrat put it optimistically, the remigration

35 Kroneck, "Betr.: Türkeipolitik; hier: Aspekt Rückkehrforderung," Oct. 19, 1982, PAAA, B 85/1604.

36 Bundesrat. 526. Sitzung, 2 Sept. 1983, p. 290, BArch, B 106/117965.

37 "Rückkehrprämie ist politische Fehlgeburt," *Gewerkschaftspost*, 1983.

38 Bernd Heintze, "Eleganter Rausschmiß," *Westfalen Post*, Sept. 3, 1982.

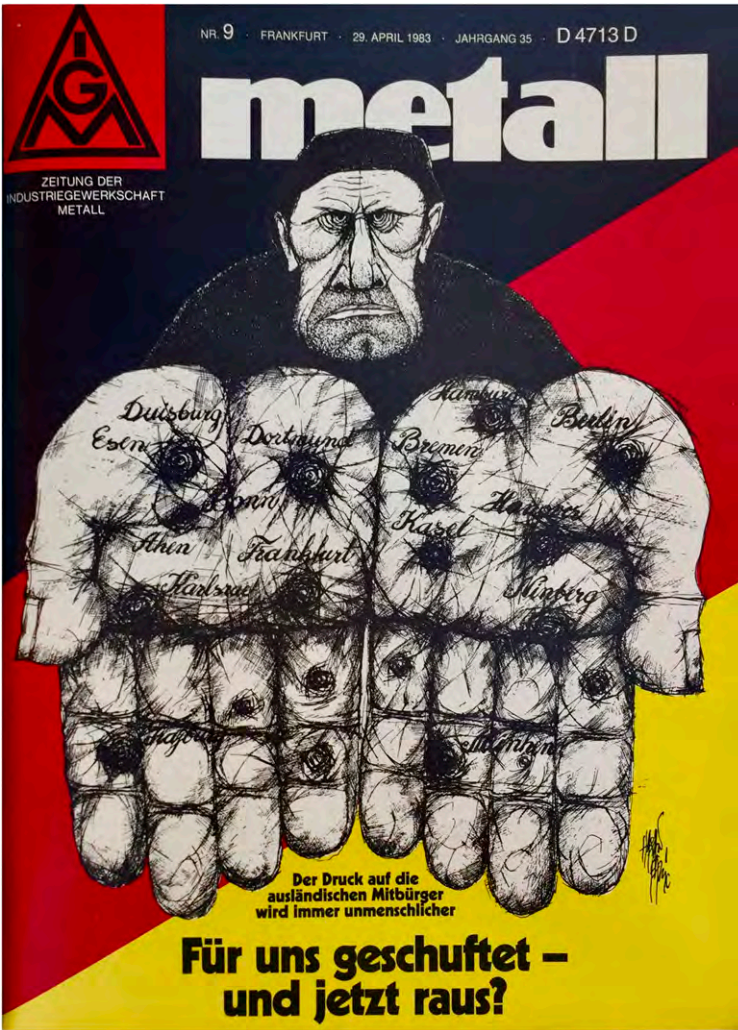
39 Deutsche Presseagentur, "IG Metall nennt Rückkehrhilfe ein Blendwerk," *Volksblatt*, Dec. 1, 1983.

40 Klaus Weizel, "Taschengeld für ungewisse Zukunft," *Die Tageszeitung*, Feb. 24, 1984.

41 "Nimm deine Prämie und hau ab," *Der Spiegel*, Aug. 22, 1983, 26-31.

42 Hakki Keskin, "Rückkehrförderungsmaßnahmen bieten den Ausländern nichts an," *Arkadaş*, Nov. 1982, 6-8.





premiums would be “cost-neutral in the mid-term (3-4 years) and then — because of the decline in entitlements — even yield saving effects.”<sup>43</sup>

Criticism of West Germany’s rising anti-Turkish sentiment reverberated transnationally to the homeland. Keen to sensationalize, Turkish newspapers added another layer, drawing parallels between the treatment of Turks to that of Jews before the Holocaust. *Günaydın* printed a photograph of “Turks out!” (*Türken raus!*) graffiti next to the iconic image of a Nazi Stormtrooper holding the sign, “Germans, protect yourselves! Do not buy from Jews!”<sup>44</sup>

Figure 4. Cover of the April 1983 edition of *Metall*, the magazine of the West German metalworkers trade union, opposing the *Rückkehrförderungsgesetz*. The text reads: “Slaved for us — and now get out? The pressure on our foreign co-citizens is becoming increasingly inhumane.” IG Metall Archiv.

The accompanying article threatened: “Those who want to relive the spirit of Nazism should know that we live in another time. We won’t remain passive.”<sup>45</sup> The most egregious comparisons, however,

43 Kroneck, “Betr.: Türkeipolitik; hier: Aspekt Rückkehrförderung,” Oct 19., 1982, PAAA, B 85/1604.

44 *Günaydın*, Dec. 9, 1981, qtd. in West German

Embassy in Ankara to West German Foreign Office, “Betr.: Beschluss der Bundesregierung zur Ausländerpolitik; hier: Türkische Reaktion,” Dec. 10, 1981, in PAAA, B 85/1610.

45 *Günaydın*, Mar. 15, 1982, qtd. in West German Embassy in Ankara to West German Foreign Office, “Betr.: Deutschlandbild in türkischer Presse,” Mar. 15, 1982, PAAA, B 85/1611.

were between West German chancellors and Adolf Hitler, from which neither Kohl, nor his Social Democratic predecessor Helmut Schmidt, were spared. Headlined “From Hitler to Schmidt,” a 1981 article on the front page of *Milliyet* asserted that the debates in Bonn “do not surprise us,” given the Nazis’ “desire that all non-German races be crushed.”<sup>46</sup> The following year, the tabloid *Bulvar* printed a cartoon depicting Kohl with swastikas on his glasses.<sup>47</sup>

News of guest worker families’ mistreatment alarmed the Turkish population at home. Several expressed their discontent by sending hate mail to the West German Ambassador to Turkey, Dirk Oncken, who had recently dismissed reports of xenophobia as “isolated cases” and downplayed West German culpability by asking rhetorically, “But in which countries do [such sentiments] not exist?”<sup>48</sup> The writers of the hate mail were not convinced. “We have begun to hate you,” one man wrote to Oncken.<sup>49</sup> It was “a shame,” another lamented, “that our longstanding friendship has come to an end, and that you have lost a real friend ... The Germans today are only foreign and even enemies for us.”<sup>50</sup> Another claimed that he had collected enough experiences from his friends and family members abroad to “write a novel.”<sup>51</sup> Drawing upon a *Sonderweg* argument, he insisted that xenophobia was embedded within “German culture” itself: “Because of his psychological master race (*Herrenrasse*) complex, every German between seven and seventy years old is a xenophobe (*Ausländerfeind*),” and not to be trusted.<sup>52</sup>

The Turkish government, too, vehemently opposed the law. In a 1982 speech, General Kenan Evren, who had assumed control of the Turkish government after the 1980 military coup, invoked the language of human rights to condemn West Germany, portraying himself and his regime as the true custodian of Turks living abroad: “We are following with horror and dismay how the very same countries that previously called for cheap laborers in order to drive their own economic progress are now attempting to expel the country’s same workers in defiance of their human rights. Our government opposes this injustice with full force.”<sup>53</sup> The following year, Turkish Minister President Bülent Ulusu held a press conference in which he called the remigration law “unjust and to the disadvantage of our workers” and urged the West German government not to “resort to measures not supported by the Turkish government.”<sup>54</sup>

Considering this evidence, one might assume that the Turkish government’s main reason for opposing the *Rückkehrförderungsgesetz*

46 “Hitler’den Schmidt’e,” *Milliyet*, Apr. 12, 1981, 1.

47 *Bulvar*, Oct. 14, 1982, West German Embassy in Ankara to West German Foreign Office, “Betr: Ausländerpolitik; hier: MP Ulusu in PK 16.10 und türkische Presse,” Oct. 18, 1982, PAAA, B 85/1614.

48 Interview with Dirk Oncken, *Anadolu Ajansı*, Mar. 26, 1982, in PAAA, B 85/1611; *Tercüman*, Jul. 14, 1982, PAAA, B 85/1611.

49 Anonymous to Dirk Oncken, Aug. 2, 1982, PAAA, B 85/1612.

50 İlhan Düzgüt to Dirk Oncken, Jul. 30, 1982, PAAA, B 85/1612.

51 Ahmet Kanun to Dirk Oncken, Jul. 28, 1982, PAAA, B 85/1612.

52 Ibid.

53 Bernd Geiss, “Zusammenfassung. Türkische Standpunkte zur deutschen Ausländerpolitik,” Feb. 1982, PAAA, B 85/1611.

54 West German Embassy in Ankara to West German Foreign Office, “Betr: Rückkehrförderung: Äußerungen MP Ulusu, 08.07.1983,” Jul. 8, 1983, PAAA, B 85/1605.

was a humanitarian concern for the migrants' well-being. This was largely true. Despite long-term criticism of the *Almanca* abroad, they remained Turkish citizens and countrymen, and it was understandable that the home country would rush to their defense. The Turkish government, however, also had a more important, and more sinister, motive for opposing the 1983 *Rückkehrförderungsgesetz*: for primarily economic reasons, they had absolutely no interest in the migrants' return and, in fact, actively sought to prevent their remigration. While often overlooked in discussions of Turkish-German migration history, this was no secret. A 1983 *Der Spiegel* article, for example, articulated the argument clearly: "At first glance, the position of the Turkish government appears to stem from a humane concern for the fate of their countrymen in the FRG. However, tangible economic interests play a role, if not even the main role ... A mass remigration from the FRG would plague the country."<sup>55</sup>

While Turkish policymakers did not necessarily view returning guest worker families as harshly as a "plague," they did view them as an economic liability. As early as 1974, Turkish Ambassador Vahit Halefoğlu had expressed "fears of a mass remigration" because the unemployment rate was expected to double by 1987, compounded by a simultaneous population growth from 37.5 to 55 million.<sup>56</sup> By the 1980s, these fears had become more realistic. In a January 1983 meeting, Turkish state planners told West German Foreign Office officials that "there is very little need for non-self-employed qualified remigrants in the Turkish labor market." Returning guest workers, they continued, "expect too high of a salary" and "return to such provinces where no need for their labor exists." Overall, "There is a general fear here that the dam against remigration could break if one makes exceptions."<sup>57</sup>

Reflecting the ongoing tensions about how guest workers spent their D-Mark, a mass remigration also threatened to cut off the remittance payments that the Turkish government so desperately needed. This fear was made patently clear during a tense January 1983 meeting in the northwestern Turkish city of Bolu, where West German and Turkish officials met to discuss how guest workers' savings could be used to finance the development of the Turkish economy.<sup>58</sup> The Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet* reported a "duel of words," culminating in Turkish Finance Minister Adnan Başer Kafaoğlu snapping, "Turkey needs the workers' remittances for many years to come, and she will not pull back her workers."<sup>59</sup> Guest workers were well aware of these

55 "Deutsche abgestempelt," *Der Spiegel*, Jul. 29, 1983, 20.

56 "Furcht vor einer Massentrückwanderung," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Mar. 16, 1974.

57 West German Embassy in Ankara to West German Foreign Office, "Betr.: Zusammenarbeit mit Türkei; hier: Einzelförderung an Rückkehr interessierter türkischer Arbeitnehmer," Jun. 28, 1983, PAAA, B 85/1605.

58 West German Embassy in Ankara to West German Foreign Office, "Betr.: Seminar über das Thema 'Die Finanzierung unseres wirtschaftlichen Wachstums' vom 20. bis 23.01.1983 in der Türkei," Jan. 25, 1983, PAAA, B 58(ZA)/182486.

59 West German Embassy in Ankara to West German Foreign Office, "Betr.: Veranstaltung türkischer Arbeitergesellschaften vom 21.-23.01.1983 in Bolu," Jan. 26, 1983, PAAA, B 58(ZA)/182486.

concerns. A 1983 study revealed that a startling 90% believed that the Turkish government viewed them only as sources of remittances (*Devisenquellen*).<sup>60</sup> “If you ask me,” opined one guest worker in a 1983 interview with *Milliyet*, “the first priority of politicians is to abandon our workers in Germany like a burdensome, barren herd. They view us as remittance machines.”<sup>61</sup>

Ultimately, the Turkish government’s vehement opposition to guest worker families’ remigration reflects the development of a new set of relations between the Turkish state and the migrants that I call “financial citizenship”: a conception of national belonging in which the Turkish state valued those living abroad not for their physical *presence* on Turkish soil, but rather for the economic advantages reaped precisely from their *absence*. As much as the Turkish government sought to portray itself as the champion its workers abroad, it was far more interested in their money than their return. Viewed in transnational perspective, the multifaceted debates over the 1983 *Rückkehrförderungsgesetz* left the migrants dually estranged, as both *Ausländer* and *Almançı*. As *Der Spiegel* put it succinctly in 1983: “The bitter truth is: the 1.6 million Turks in the Federal Republic of Germany are also unwanted in their homeland.”<sup>62</sup>

### III. Return and reintegration

Although Kohl’s party touted the remigration law as a “full success,” his goal of reducing the Turkish population by half remained far from fulfilled.<sup>63</sup> By late February 1984, only 4,200 out of 300,000 eligible guest workers had applied.<sup>64</sup> Desperate to boost these low numbers, the federal government sweetened the deal in March, adding the opportunity to cash in on employee social security contributions as soon as they provided proof of remigration.<sup>65</sup> Another factor was the ability to receive additional money from their employers, who jumped on the opportunity to get rid of Turkish workers by offering hefty severance packages in addition to the government premium.<sup>66</sup> These added perks proved effective, and the overall result was a mass exodus. By the September 30, 1984 deadline, within just ten months, 15% of the Turkish immigrant population — 250,000 men, women, and children — packed their bags, left their jobs and schools, and moved back to Turkey, with their residence permits stamped invalid at the West German border. While some flew on airplanes, the vast majority crammed all their belongings into their cars and

60 “Fast die Hälfte der Türken möchte nicht mehr zurück,” *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, Sept. 18, 1984.

61 “Bunalım ikinci ve üçüncü kuşakta,” *Milliyet*, Jan. 22 1983, 9.

62 “Deutsche abgestempelt,” *Der Spiegel*, Jul. 29, 1983, 20.

63 For many examples of the CDU praising the “full success” of the remigration premium, see the party’s 1986 publication: *CDU-Dokumentation* 32/1986, 29, at [http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas\\_26763-544-1-30.pdf?110826092553](http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_26763-544-1-30.pdf?110826092553) (accessed Jan. 15, 2020): “The SPD had been talking about *Rückkehrförderung* for years — we acted. The Law for the Promotion of Voluntary Return was a full success.”

64 “Kaum Wirkung der Rückkehrhilfen,” *Einigkeit*, Apr. 1984.

65 Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, “Türkische Arbeitnehmer: Rückkehr und Rente,” *Sozialpolitische Umschau*, May 11, 1984.

66 Bergbau AG Lippe, “Rückkehrhilfegesetz — Beispiele über zu erwartende Leistungen,” Feb. 10, 1984, Archiv der sozialen Demokratie (AdsD), Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB)-Archiv, 5/DGAZ000902.



**Figure 5. A guest worker family packs their car, preparing to permanently leave West Germany in accordance with the 1983 Rückkehrförderungsgesetz. Overall, the controversial law prompted the mass remigration of 15% of the Turkish immigrant population—250,000 men, women, and children—within just ten months. DOMiD-Archiv Köln, E 1053.0547. Used by permission.**

drove — as they had done so many times before on their vacations — on the Europastraße 5 across Cold War Europe; for many, it would be the very last time.

Both somber and chaotic, the scene of departure was regularly portrayed in the West German media. Reports focused on Duisburg’s district of Hüttenheim, derogatorily called “Türkenheim” because every eleventh resident was Turkish.<sup>67</sup> The leftwing magazine *Stern*, for example, published a ten-page article titled “The Expellees” (*Die Heimatvertriebenen*), in a reference to the mass migration of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe after the Second World War. Aiming to attract sympathy, the article featured melancholy photographs of goodbyes, captioned “Hugs, kisses, tears. Compassion for the old and young who are leaving Germany forever — and for those who are staying in the Turk-Ghetto (*Türken-Ghetto*). Will they also have to go soon?”<sup>68</sup> *Die Zeit*, on the other hand, described a mad dash to leave with as many West German consumer goods as possible: “Almost daily the Duisburg department stores are delivering goods that will be taken to the homeland: washing machines, television sets, video recorders, and entire living room furniture sets.”<sup>69</sup>

Although the guest workers had hoped to return with great wealth, for many remigrants, the stereotype of the wealthy *Almanca* failed to materialize. Reports on remigrants’ financial difficulties abounded following the 1983 remigration law. One article, tellingly titled “The

67 “Ausländer. Dramatische Szenen,” *Der Spiegel*, Feb. 27, 1984.

68 Gerhard Krömschröder and Mihaly Moldavy, “Die Heimatvertriebenen. Exodus der Türken,” *Stern*, Mar. 1, 1984, 20-29, DOMiD-Archiv, P-15540.

69 Hannelore Schulte, “Der Abzug der Türken. Wie Duisburg viertausend Menschen verliert,” *Die Zeit*, Feb. 10, 1984, 13.

Almancis,” relayed the situation of 42-year-old Muzaffer Kılıç, who had returned to Istanbul with his wife and daughter after spending eleven years working at a manufacturing company in Bremen. When he arrived in 1984 with the remigration premium, he opened a small shop selling natural gas for cooking and heating, which, on the surface, appeared profitable. Nonetheless, given Turkey’s high inflation rate, his Turkish lira were “worthless” — mere *pfennigs* in comparison to the D-Mark that he had been making in Germany. Within months, Kılıç was broke. “It would have been better if I had not given up my well-paid job in Germany,” he said. “Here I am a foreigner and on top of that still a poor man. I had not expected that.”<sup>70</sup>

Some returning guest workers, moreover, failed to receive the *Rückkerprämie* to which they were entitled. A collection of 105 handwritten letters from returning guest workers to the local Labor Office in Braunschweig reveals widespread confusion and desperation. “I regret coming back,” one man admitted. Although he had rushed to the West German Consulate in Izmir to submit the required border crossing form affirming his departure, four months later he had received neither the 10,500 D-Mark remigration premium nor his social security contributions and was struggling to make ends meet.<sup>71</sup> Another man checked all of his bank accounts but found no money in his name: “I went to Fakat Bank and even telephoned the bank in Ankara and the Merkez Bank in Istanbul. I called them one by one ... Which bank was it sent to?”<sup>72</sup> For another, the situation was more dire: “There are five of us here (my children and I), and we have run out of money.”<sup>73</sup> While the letters to the Braunschweig Labor Office provide only a localized set of cases, the problem was more systemic. West German newspapers regularly reported about shady credit sharks who preyed on desperate remigrants, charging interest rates of up to 50%.<sup>74</sup>

By far the biggest difficulties reintegrating, however, were encountered by the second-generation children of guest workers, whom the West German government, press, and sociologists lumped together as archetypical “return children” (*Rückkehrkinder*). Since the rise in family migration of the 1970s, concerns about guest workers’ children — who were stereotyped as poorly parented and “illiterate in two languages” (*Analphabeten in zwei Sprachen*) — had stood at the center of integration debates and were a major factor motivating West Germany’s decision to send Turks home. Nevertheless, West German anxieties about the second generation’s insufficient integration belie that many children *had*, in fact, integrated enough

70 Uwe Gerig, “Die Almancis,” *Frankfurter Neue Presse*, Jun. 28, 1986.

71 H. S. to Ergün Yelkenkaya, Nov. 1, 1984, DOMiD-Archiv, E 0987,36.

72 S. K. to Ergün Yelkenkaya, Dec. 2, 1984, DOMiD-Archiv, E 0987,36.

73 R. B. to Ergün Yelkenkaya, Oct. 1984, DOMiD-Archiv, E 0987,36.

74 Hans-Dieter Budde, “Die Kredithaie lauern schon im Kellerbüro,” *Neue Ruhr Zeitung*, Jan. 25, 1984.

as to consider themselves caught between two cultures and even to self-identify as German. As one boy wrote in a 1980 poem, “I stand between two cultures / the Turkish and the German / I swing back and forth / and thus live in two worlds.”<sup>75</sup> Another explained how the external definition of his identity led to his internal confusion. “Some say: ‘You are a German.’ Others say: ‘You are a German Turk.’ ... My Turkish friends call me a German! ... But what am I really?”<sup>76</sup>

Not only did children at least partially self-identify as German, but — even more so than their first-generation parents — they were also perceived as Germanized by those in the home country, frequently being called “*Almancı* children” (*Almancı çocukları*) as early as the 1970s. In 1975, Turkish journalist Nevzat Üstün observed that although guest worker children appeared to live in better conditions than Anatolian children “from a distance,” their situation was actually more pitiable. “The only thing I know is that these children cannot learn their mother tongue, that they do not integrate into the society in which they are living, and that they are alienated and corrupted (*yabancılaştıkları ve yozlaştıklarıdır*) in every direction.”<sup>77</sup> Invoking a similar language of estrangement, a 1976 *Cumhuriyet* article reporting general “News from Germany” warned the Turkish public of the “crisis” to come. “In Germany, Belgium, Holland, France, and Switzerland, we have abandoned hundreds of thousands of our young people,” who are “adrift and alone” (*başıboş, kimsesiz*).<sup>78</sup> As the mass remigration loomed in the early 1980s, both the quantity and the foreboding tone of such reports intensified. In 1982, one article derided guest worker children as “a social time bomb,” and another described them as “cocky, rowdy, and un-Turkish.”<sup>79</sup>

The Turkish government, too, was deeply concerned about the mass return of Germanized children. In the summer of 1984, when the majority of guest worker families who had remigrated following the *Rückkehrförderungsgesetz* were scheduled to arrive in Turkey, the Turkish Education Ministry scrambled to implement “adaptation courses” (*uyum kursları*), intensive six-week summer programs that aimed to prepare remigrant children for Turkish public schools. The specialized textbook began with the lyrics of the Turkish independence march and featured nationalistic poetry, the speeches of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and centuries of Ottoman history. Cultural norms, too, were a focus. As Murad, who had taken an adaptation course, recalled, “They were teaching us not only the history of Turkey and rules in Turkey but also how you have to appear in Turkey,

75 Förderzentrum Jugend schreibt, *Täglich eine Reise von der Türkei nach Deutschland. Texte der zweiten türkischen Generation in der Bundesrepublik* (Fischerhude, 1980), 18-19, 37, 53.

76 Ibid.

77 Nevzat Üstün, *Almanya Beyleri ile Portekiz'in Bahçeleri* (Istanbul, 1975), 31-32.

78 Oktay Akbal, “Almanya'dan Haberler,” *Cumhuriyet*, May 17, 1976, 2.

79 Hasan Pulur, *Hürriyet*, Mar. 29, 1982, qtd. in West German Embassy in Ankara to West German Foreign Office, “Betr.: Deutschlandbild in der türkischen Presse; hier: Leitartikel von Hans Pulur in ‘Hürriyet’ 29.03.1982,” 30 Mar. 1982, PAAA, B 85/1611; Hans-Ulrich Dillmann, “Dort Türkin — Hier Deutsche,” *Die Tageszeitung*, Apr. 30, 1985, 14-15.

how you have to behave in Turkey, and that that is different than how you have to act in Germany,” he explained. Most vividly, he recalled being taught to “stand up and kiss the hand of elders” when entering their presence.<sup>80</sup>

While the adaptation courses themselves were short-lived and poorly attended, they received widespread media coverage, setting remigrant students up for difficult transitions into the 1984/1985 school year and beyond.<sup>81</sup> Turkish newspapers fixated on the notion of “adaptation,” a parallel to German concerns about “integration.” In August 1984, a front-page, above-the-fold *Cumhuriyet* article featured the headline “They Grew Up in Another Society, Made their ‘Final’ Return, and Now... They Will Adapt to Us.”<sup>82</sup> The same newspaper published a similar article the following week, announcing “Germany did not adapt to their parents. Or their parents did not adapt to the Germans ... Now they are to be adapted to us ... For now, ‘They’re not adapting at all.’”<sup>83</sup> The latter article quoted young children about what had confused them about life in Turkey: why people honked their car horns so frequently, why the toys were so “bad” and broke so easily, why civil servants treated people so unkindly, why the television was so awful, why the Bay of Izmir was so polluted, why no one did their job properly, and why everyone gave commands without saying “please.” After each student’s quotation, the newspaper printed the word “I am confused” (*şaşırdım*). The message was clear: the Germanized children were simply unfamiliar with life in Turkey and would be difficult to “reintegrate.”

Underlying the concepts of “adaptation” or “reintegration” was the notion that remigrant children could be re-educated into becoming “real Turks.” Equating having been raised abroad with a disease that only a proper Turkish education could cure, one school principal announced at a school assembly: “You are from a foreign land. I will make you healthy again.”<sup>84</sup> Remigrant children had been well prepared for these ideas, as their parents had often cited their drifting away from Turkishness as a reason for their return. “In Germany, we were always warned: Be careful, when you’re in Turkey, they will make real Turks out of you,” one returning teenager explained, while another noted, “We came here to escape Germanization and to become real Turks.”<sup>85</sup> These motivations are corroborated in studies of the time. In a 1985 survey of eighteen returning families in Istanbul, Ankara, and Antalya, 62% of parents cited “problems of the children” as a main motivation for their return.<sup>86</sup> A study published three years

80 Murad B., interview by author, Cologne, 2017.

81 “Anpassungskurse wenig gefragt,” *Bizim Almanca - Unser Deutsch*, Nov. 1986, 2.

82 “Bize uyacaklar,” *Cumhuriyet*, Aug. 14, 1984, 1.

83 “Gurbetçi Çocuklar Zor ‘Uyacaklar’ Çünkü... Şaşırdılar,” *Cumhuriyet*, Aug. 21, 1984, 1.

84 Sibylle Thelen, “Zurück in den alten Zwängen. Türkische Jugendliche, die lange bei uns lebten, haben Probleme in ihrer Heimat,” *Die Zeit*, Sept. 25, 1987.

85 Dilek Zaptıcioğlu, “Wir kamen hierher, um Türken zu werden,” *Bizim Almanca - Unser Deutsch*, Apr. 1987, 13-16.

86 Hasan Topraklar, *Zur Situation türkischer Rückkehrfamilien. Ursachen, Folgen, Probleme* (Berlin, 1986), 20.



later attributed many families' decisions to return to the "fear that children could too strongly Germanize."<sup>87</sup>

Another key theme in students' recollections, as well as in both Turkish and West German media coverage of their experiences in Turkish public schools, was a "liberal" versus "authoritarian" binary. To understand this binary, one must recall that Turkey was still undergoing a fraught transition from military dictatorship to democracy following the 1980 coup. Emphasizing the perceived authoritarianism within Turkish schools fit squarely into existing Europe-wide criticisms of Turkey's slow return to democracy. West German observers harped on the idea that those returning to Turkey, especially migrant youths, were feared by both civil servants and the military as "potential agitators" (*potentielle Unruhestifter*), who might influence other Turkish students by asking critical questions of the government.<sup>88</sup> As one Turkish school principal explained, he held concerns that remigrant children would "shake up schools' sacred framework of drilling and subordination" because West Germany's "freer" education system had socialized them to express "criticism and dissent."<sup>89</sup>

Teachers whom the West German government had sent to Turkey to work in special schools for returning students likewise invoked the liberal/authoritarian binary. Before his departure for Turkey, one explained his preconceived notions of Turkish schools:

In Turkey, the teacher is an absolute authority and is always right. Teacher-centered teaching is almost exclusively practiced. The children have to stand up when they are called upon to respond. This is certainly an entirely different atmosphere than in German classrooms. I do not want to change my teaching style, but I also do not want to cause conflicts. I want to do everything to avoid provoking the Turkish side.<sup>90</sup>

Another explained, "Even I became authoritarian at this school... It would have been impossible to accomplish anything without disciplinary measures ... This school system would never function if all were authoritarian and only one was liberal."<sup>91</sup>

Remigrant students used similar language to describe the differences between the two school systems. A teenage boy interviewed

87 Klara Osiander and Johannes Zerger, *Rückkehr in die Fremde. Die Problematik der Remigration junger Türken/-innen und deren Familien in ihr Heimatland. Oder: 'Keine Ahnung und zurück'* (Augsburg, 1988), 61.

88 Uwe Gerig, "Die Almancis," *Frankfurter Neue Presse*, 28 Jun. 1986.

89 Reiner Scholz, "Rückkehrkinder fehl am Plätze," *Die Tageszeitung*, 3 Apr. 1985.

90 Qtd. in "Gut vorbereitet auf die türkische Schule?" *Nürnberger Anzeiger*, Oct. 8, 1987, 9.

91 Qtd. in Dilek Zaptıoğlu, "Bir getto'dan diğetine..." *Bizim Almanca — Unser Deutsch*, Apr. 1987, 6-12.

for a Turkish newspaper praised the more “democratic” environment that he had experienced in West Germany, where he was allowed to “contradict” the teachers. “Discussion is the foundation of democracy,” he insisted. “One cannot educate through orders. One must persuade.”<sup>92</sup> Another boy called his experience at Turkish schools “a type of slavery” and complained that the Turkish education system was “not modern.” “If I want to have a modern education,” he quipped, “I have to go to Germany.” An 18-year-old at the private Ortadoğu Lisesi described his school days as psychological torment that was “brainwash[ing]” him into obedience: “All nerves are under pressure ... [T]o be able to survive here, one must not speak, not see anything, and of course not hear anything.”<sup>93</sup>

Turkish teachers’ verbal and even physical abuse drew the most media attention and consternation. Halit, a 10-year-old boy whose family came from Fethiye on the Aegean coast, complained: “The teachers don’t know how to treat people...If you don’t pay attention to something, if you just fool around during the lesson, you’ll just get slapped a couple times.” In Germany, on the other hand, “the teachers would just glare at us and then we were all silent as fish.”<sup>94</sup> Ayşe, a girl in the tenth class at Maltepe Lisesi, revealed that she was “still very afraid of the teachers,” who had often hit her.<sup>95</sup> In another article, a Turkish teacher exposed the abuse of her own colleagues.<sup>96</sup> A fellow teacher had publicly shamed a remigrant student as a “beast” for chewing gum during class. When the student responded by calling him a pig (*Schwein*) in German, which required translation by another remigrant, the teacher hit him and kicked him out of the classroom. Despite the teacher’s role in escalating the incident, the disciplinary committee allegedly blamed only the student.

Outside school, the children faced similar difficulties that, for West German observers, further reinforced stereotypes about Turkish culture as authoritarian and patriarchal. A 1985 *Die Tageszeitung* article reported that Turkish newspapers’ frequent criticism of the girls’ alleged sexual promiscuity had impacted their daily interactions with men in their home country.<sup>97</sup> Men of all ages, the article stated, “hit on the remigrant girls in order to go to bed with them.”<sup>98</sup> Migrant girls’ styles of dress also raised eyebrows within the local communities. In one of Turkish novelist Gülten Dayıoğlu’s stories about remigrants, a girl from Germany becomes the target of local gossip. “Why are her pants so short and tight around her bottom? People would even be

92 Haldun Taner, qtd. in Horst Widmann, “Zum schulischen Aspekt der Reintegration” in *Probleme der Reintegration Migrantenkinder*, ed. Horst Widmann and Unal Abadi (Gießen, 1987), 28, n. 5.

93 Anonymous, “Ausländer in Deutschland, Ausländer in der Heimat,” *Bizim Almanca - Unser Deutsch*, Apr. 1987, 33.

94 Qtd. in Trottnow and Engler, “Aber die Türkei ist doch meine Heimat...,” DOMiD-Archiv, CC 0041.

95 Dilek Zaptıcioğlu, “Wir kamen hierher, um Türken zu werden,” *Bizim Almanca - Unser Deutsch*, Apr. 1987, 13-16.

96 Pakize Türkoğlu, “Unsere Probleme...,” *Bizim Almanca - Unser Deutsch*, Apr. 1987, 34-37.

97 Hans-Ulrich Dillmann, “Dort Türkin — Hier Deutsche.”

98 Ibid.

embarrassed to wear that as underwear!" the neighbors complain. The gossip takes an emotional toll on her. "I am like a prisoner in the village," the girl explains. "When I go outside, everyone looks at me. There is nowhere to go, no friends. I am going crazy trapped at home."<sup>99</sup>

By the late 1980s, the widespread media coverage of the archetypically alienated, depressed, and abused *Rückkehrkinder* had made a powerful impact. Sympathetic to the children's plight, West German policymakers gradually began to reconsider their decision to send Turkish children home and, in 1990, implemented a radical policy change: permitting them to come back. In the late 1980s, a hotly debated "return option" (*Wiederkehroption*), supported by the SPD and the Green Party, gained traction at the state level in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) and Berlin. NRW Interior Minister Helmut Schnoor (SPD) attributed his decision to allow children over age fifteen to return to West Germany to "progressive" concerns grounded in "a Christian conception of humanity."<sup>100</sup> Remigrant children, he insisted, had "tragic fates" and they should be allowed to return if "Germany had become their actual homeland" (*eigentliches Heimatland*).<sup>101</sup> The *Kölnische Rundschau* concurred: "The Federal Republic has a human responsibility toward these young people."<sup>102</sup>

Public opinion also began to shift in autumn 1988 with the realization that several politicians within the federal government's CDU/FDP coalition had changed their stance. The most significant was Liselotte Funcke (FDP), the Federal Commissioner for the Integration of Foreign Workers and their Families. Despite having earned the nicknames "Mother Liselotte" and "Angel of the Turks" for the "tolerance and understanding" with which she treated guest worker families, Funcke had long towed the coalition line on the issue of a return option.<sup>103</sup> In October 1988, however, she altered her stance, asserting that the state-level reforms should apply to the entire country, so that the opportunity to return would no longer depend on the state in which the child had grown up.<sup>104</sup> To mitigate critics' concerns, Funcke insisted that a federal return option would not lead to a "flood" (*Überschwemmung*) of foreign children into West German borders. As evidence, she cited a study concluding that, of the seventeen thousand eligible Turkish children, only four thousand would want to make use of such an offer.<sup>105</sup>

99 Gülten Dayıoğlu, *Geriye Dönenler. "Adın Almancıya Çıkılmışsa"* (Altın Kitaplar, 1986), 48.

100 "Rückkehr in die 'Heimat': Auch dort sind sie oft Fremde," *Neue Ruhr-Zeitung*, Sept. 20, 1988.

101 Reinhard Voss, "Junge Ausländer dürfen bleiben," Jul. 22, 1988 (name of newspaper not provided in archive; for copy of article, see: AdsD, DGB-Archiv, 5/DGAZ001214).

102 Peter Weigert, "Alleingang in Düsseldorf," *Kölnische Rundschau*, Jul. 22, 1988.

103 Altan Öymen, "Deutschlandbild in der türkischen Presse," *Bizim Almanca — Unser Deutsch*, May 1986, 7-10.

104 "Funcke fordert Rückkehrrecht," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Oct. 20, 1988.

105 Ulrich Reitz, "Funcke für Wiederkehr-Option," *Die Welt*, Oct. 20, 1988.

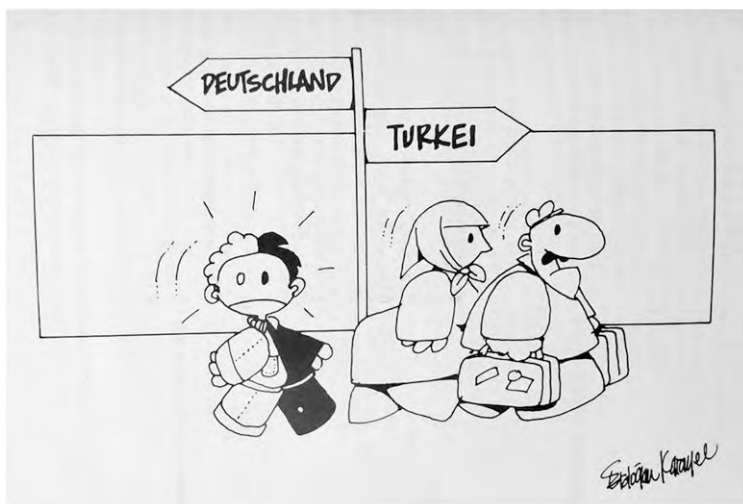
After nine months of extensive attention to the issue at the state and federal levels, Kohl's conservative government softened its stance. In late December 1988, the Federal Interior Ministry publicized its plans to implement the return option for remigrant youths who had spent the majority of their lives in West Germany. The new policy was codified in the July 1990 revision of the Foreigner Law (*Ausländergesetz*). In a section entitled "Right to Return" (*Recht auf Wiederkehr*), the revised law allowed young "foreigners" to receive residence permits if they had legally lived in West Germany for eight years prior to their departure and had attended a West German school for at least six of those years; if they could secure their livelihoods either through their own employment or through a third party who would assume responsibility for their livelihood for five years; and if they had applied for the residence permit between their sixteenth and twenty-second birthdays, or within five years of their departure.<sup>106</sup>

The 1990 revision to the Foreigner Law went much further, however. The inescapable realization that foreign children who grew up on West German soil were, in fact, members of the national community prompted a reevaluation of the country's citizenship law altogether. In a section entitled "Facilitated Naturalization" (*Erleichterte Einbürgerung*), the law enacted two milestone changes. First, it permitted "young foreigners" between the ages of sixteen and twenty-three to naturalize under similar conditions as in the "right to return" provision: if they had continually lived in West Germany for the past eight years; and if they had attended school there for six years, four of which at a public school. Second, it granted *all* foreigners the right to naturalize, as long as they had lived in West Germany regularly for the past fifteen years, could prove that they could provide for themselves and their families without requiring social welfare, and applied for citizenship before December 31, 1995. In both cases, the applicant could not have been sentenced for a crime and had to relinquish their previous citizenship. Though the "right to return" and the "facilitated citizenship" clauses pertained to all foreigners, the primary targets were guest worker families.<sup>107</sup>

The long-fought battle for the "right to return" reflected years of West German political, scholarly, and media attention to the plight of allegedly Germanized children who had endured great hard-

106 *Gesetz über die Einreise und den Aufenthalt von Ausländern im Bundesgebiet (Ausländergesetz — AuslG)*, 9 Jul. 1990. Full text available at <http://www.gesetzesweb.de/AuslG.html> (accessed Oct. 10, 2017).

107 Deutscher Bundestag, 11. Wahlperiode, "Gesetzentwurf der Bundesregierung. Entwurf für ein Gesetz zur Neuregelung des Ausländerrechts," Drucksache 11/6321, Jan. 27, 1990, <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btd/11/063/1106321.pdf> (accessed 2 May 2018), 85.



**Figure 6.** Cartoon portraying a distressed “return child” (*Rückkehrkind*) forced to remigrate to Turkey with his parents, published in 1989. The division of the child’s body into black and white represents the second generation’s split identity as both Turkish and German—or, in the view of many children, as neither Turkish nor German. Cartoon by Erdogan Karayel, *Bizim Almanca — Unser Deutsch*, 5/1989.

attitudes toward children caught between two cultures. Within the boundaries of West Germany, migrant children seemed to be anything but German. In their home country, however, their ostracization as *Almançı* underscored precisely the opposite: they *had* integrated, even excessively so, and were no longer “real Turks.”

### Conclusion

Implemented within just three months of the reunification of Germany, and carrying through to the new Federal Republic, the July 1990 revision to West Germany’s Foreigner Law marked a sea change in conceptions of German national belonging. Within just ten years, a total of 410,000 migrants of Turkish descent — approximately 20% of the population — applied for German citizenship, and they did so at much higher rates than other immigrant groups, constituting 44% of all naturalized immigrants in the year 2000.<sup>108</sup> The 1990 reform also paved the way for the more radical overhaul of the German Nationality Act in 2000, whereby individuals born in Germany could acquire German citizenship regardless of heritage. In bringing about this vast transformation, the experiences and discourses of return migration following the 1983 *Rückkehrförderungsgesetz* had played a crucial role: guest worker families’ status as *Almançı* made Germans rethink whether, after decades of living in Germany, they could still really be considered *Ausländer* after all.

In charting this process of gradual estrangement, I hope to offer several contributions to German, Turkish, and European history.

ships after returning to a homeland that was not their own. The struggles of the second generation thus lay precisely in their at least partially successful assimilation into German society—in their “Germanization,” as concerned Turkish parents and observers put it. Therein lies the paradox of West German atti-

108 Max Friedrich Steinhardt, “Does Citizenship Matter? The Economic Impact of Naturalizations in Germany,” *Labour Economics* 19, no. 6 (Dec. 2012): 813-823.

First, my work illuminates the understudied dynamics of Turkish guest worker families' relationship to their home country. In the 1960s, guest workers were viewed as Turkish citizens who were temporarily moving abroad to develop skills and participate in their country's economic uplift. By the late 1970s, declining remittance payments — coupled with the realization that guest workers were spending their money on superfluous consumer goods rather than tools and equipment — made many believe that guest workers were not fulfilling their duties to the homeland and motivated the Turkish government to oppose their remigration. The final act of transgression — most evident following the mass remigration in the 1980s — was the decision to raise a “lost generation” of “*Almanci* children” in Germany, who dressed and acted like Western Europeans and could barely speak the Turkish language. Whether conceived in financial or cultural terms, being a Turk abroad meant being loyal to the Turkish nation, and the migrants had slowly drifted away.

Second, my article revises our understanding of German identity. Because guest worker families existed in a liminal, transnational, and transcultural space, various stakeholders were able to develop multiple, fluid understandings of who they were, where and to whom they belonged, who was responsible for them, and what kinds of threats they posed. From this fluidity emerged an opportunity for Germany identity to be defined not only by “native” Germans and not only by the migrants themselves, but also by Turks in the home country, who lived two thousand miles away, had never even set foot in Germany, and in many cases were poor villagers. The Turkish conception of German identity, moreover, was highly radical. The term *Almanci* itself, which defined Germanness as a matter of cultural adaptation, contradicted the very foundation of German identity, which from the nineteenth century onward had been defined rigidly and homogenously, by German blood and German ethnicity—so much so that, only several decades prior, it had become the driving ideology behind Nazi genocide.

Third, my research questions West Germany's political identity. By examining the controversies surrounding the 1983 *Rückkehrförderungsgesetz*, I show that West German policymakers' best efforts to avoid domestic and international criticism for attempting to kick out the Turks failed miserably. Just as they determined the boundaries of German identity from afar, it was the Turkish government, population, and press who were the most vocal in exposing the hypocrisy

of West Germany's postwar project of liberalism, democracy, and human rights: despite de-Nazification, discrimination and racism persisted well after 1945. Although often hyperbolic, Turkish accusations of direct parallels to Nazi Germany hit West Germany where it hurt. Paradoxically, these accusations were coming not only from Turkish citizens but also from the Turkish government, which had not yet transitioned to democracy following a military coup and which itself was under intense European scrutiny for violating human rights at home.

Finally, my work calls for us to challenge the categories we use when writing German history. The idea that a migrant might become German through cultural adaptation forces us to consider whom we count as German in a migratory postwar period. If we reformulate our impression of migrants as German actors—or at least historical subjects with a valid claim to having their stories told in the context of modern German history—then we must also broaden the lens of our investigations to include geographic spaces that they deem integral to their experiences and processes of identity formation. The story I have told follows the migrants along a journey that takes us from Turkey, to West Germany, across Cold War Europe, and back. Considering immigrants as German actors encourages us to adopt a more expansive philosophy of German history as a whole—one that is deeply rooted in the nation-state and domestic developments but acknowledges its limitations and strives to move beyond it, to consider Germany more broadly, in its regional, international, and transnational contexts.

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