



# GERMANY X. THE PERSIAN COMMUNITY IN GERMANY

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The history of the Persian community in Germany may be divided into three different phases:

*Before World War II.* This phase differs from the two subsequent ones by the relatively low number of Persians residing in Germany. The first Persians who visited Germany were presumably the envoys of Shah 'Abbās I (1588-1629, q.v.) at the court of the emperors Rudolf II (1576-1612) and Matthias (1612-19). It was on such a mission that Ḥosayn-'Alī Beg Bayāt, the Persian envoy, first set foot on German soil in Emden in the year 1600 (Kochwasser, p. 29; Falsafī, IV, pp. 284-85). He was followed by other emissaries in quick and sporadic succession. Persia's first diplomatic representation in Germany was established in Berlin in 1885, and as a result ambassadors and their staff spent more or less long periods in this country. Shortly before that, the first Persian students (the later Mortazāqolī Khan Ṣanī'-al-Dawla and Maḥdīqolī Moḵber-al-Salṭana) went to Germany (Hedāyat, pp. 13-16; Bāmdād, *Rejāl* II, p. 384) and were later followed by their sons and some sons of Persian diplomats in Germany (Taqīzāda, p. 186; Kochwasser, p. 92).

Only a small number of Persians resided in Germany before World War I.



They were for the most part students besides several merchants and a few political emigrants. According to the periodical *Īrānšahr* (1922, no. 7, p. 1), there were 120 Persian students living in Germany in 1922, while, a year before that, their number was reportedly only 25 (*Kāva*, no. 10, 3 October 1921, p. 10). The number of Persians in Germany, however, steadily grew, rising to about a thousand by the year 1939 (Schröder, Schukar, and Adineh, p. 2).

During World War I, on the initiative of the German Foreign Office, a group of Persian emigrants founded in Berlin the so-called Persian Committee (Komīṭa-ye mellīūn-e Īrān) under the leadership of Sayyed Ḥasan Taqīzāda. It was financed by the German government and its function was to support the latter's anti-Russian and anti-British campaign, which coincided with the nationalistic interests of the Persians themselves (Taqīzāda, pp. 479 ff.; Mahrad, p. 466 ff.; Sepehr, pp. 55-58). From January 1916, this committee published the bi-weekly periodical *Kāva*, which at the beginning was a political journal with strong pro-German orientation, but from 1918, published monthly, devoted itself to addressing only cultural, scientific, and literary issues (Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia* IV, pp. 483-88).

Somewhat later, the activities of Persia's Communist Party (see [COMMUNISM](#) i) became more conspicuous, with the periodicals *Setāra-ye sork* (1929), *Peykār* (1931), and *Nahzat* (1932) being published in Germany (Eskandarī, pp. 95-97, 99-100; Aḥmadī, 1993, pp. *alef-kāf*). A further organization of political opposition was formed around Taqī Arānī (q.v.), Aḥmad Asadī, and Mortazā 'Alawī in late 1924. It was called "Ferqa-ye jomhūrī-e enqelābī-e Īrān" (Revolutionary republican party of Persia), and two years later it published its platform under the title *Bayān-e ḥaqq* (Aḥmadī, 1992, pp. 398 ff., 431 ff.; 'Alawī, pp. 3-35; Mahrad, pp. 377 ff.; Šakerī, ed., pp. 8-43). Also worth mentioning is the student organization "Iran," which was founded in Berlin in 1924 and during its two years of activity published, among other things, the journal *Farangestān* (ed. M. Kāzemī; Abrahamian, pp. 123-24; Mahrad, pp. 365 ff.; Farzāna, ed., pp. 236-37, 248). Among further political and cultural activities of Persians at this time was the publication of the journals *Īrānšahr* (ed. Ḥ. Kāzemzāda Īrānšahr), *Īrān-e now* (ed: 'A.-R. Sayf Āzād) and *Jahān-e now* (ed: Š. K. Šāhroḵ) by Persians established in Berlin. Mention should also be made of Kāvīānī Press in Berlin, which had been established by Mīrzā 'Abd-al-Šakūr Tabrīzī and where Persian journals and a number of Persian texts were printed (Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia* IV, pp. 388-90; Šadr Hāšemī, *Jarā'ed o majallāt* I, pp. 337-41, II, pp. 186-87). *From 1945 to 1979*. The number of Persians in



Germany diminished considerably during World War II (only 190 in 1943), but it soon rose again after the war. There were 6,610 Persians in West Germany in 1951. Their number had risen to 17,000 in 1969, at times amounting to about 20,000 (Schröder, Schukar, and Adineh, p. 2). Students made up 45.6 percent of the entire colony in 1961, but their ratio dropped to a mere 22.8 percent in 1978, with the total of only 5,500 of them. The reason for this trend was, on the one hand, the rising number of students who, for political or merely professional reasons, stayed on in West Germany after graduation, and on the other hand, the growing number of businessmen who remained there with their families for a longer period (Schröder, Schukar, and Adineh, pp. 3-4).

Mention must also be made of the comparatively smaller group of the members and leaders of the banned Tūda/Tudeh Party who, especially from 1959, stayed in the German Democratic Republic (Ṭabarī, pp. 212 ff.). This group was mainly engaged in a propaganda war against the Pahlavi regime, publishing the journal *Donyā* (q.v.), the newspaper *Nāma-ye mardom*, and a few other periodicals (Abrahamian, pp. 316, 454). In West Germany, however, student organizations formed the forefront of political activities. There was, above all, the Confederation of Iranian Student, National Union (q.v.), whose majority in Europe consisted of the Federation of Iranian Students in West Germany including West Berlin. Founded in Heidelberg in April 1960, the Confederation soon established its headquarters in all university cities of West Germany. Most of the Confederation's annual congresses were held in West Germany, and the majority of its committee members lived there. From here, they organized protest marches, hunger strikes, and embassy occupations and issued numerous publications and declarations against the shah's regime. During the 1960s and 1970s, they took an active part in the German student movement and exercised a considerable influence on it.

The Confederation was usually backed by political organizations with a leftist tendency, such as the Socialist Society, the National Front, the Tudeh Party, the Revolutionary Organization of the Tudeh Party, the Cadre, the Ṭūfān group, and a few smaller organizations, all of whom had their representatives in the Federal Republic (Šawkat, *passim*; Matin, *passim*). These also published books, periodicals, brochures, and declarations. There were also unions of Islamic students, but they acted only within their own circles and were not therefore much noticed by outsiders.

*After the 1979 Revolution.* Many members of the political groups opposed to the Pahlavi regime returned home from Germany in the first months after the



revolution, but the total number of Persians in this country rose by 1,500 in the same year (Schröder, Schukar, and Adineh, p. 12). There were 32,246 Persians living in Germany in 1982, and by 1995 their number had risen to 106,997 (Statistische Bundesamt, pp. 18 ff.). Considering the number of Persians who had been naturalized in the meantime (2,913 in 1991) as well as their children, the total number of Persians in Germany must have increased by several thousands. The main reason for this great increase was the massive flight from Persia following the revolution, mainly because of the imposition of strict religious laws by the new regime. The continuation of the war with Iraq after 1982 was also a significant factor that stepped up this flight, which now particularly concerned young men liable for compulsory military service. Further reason for this rise can be attributed to the arrival of the family members of those Persians who had already settled in Germany as well as the increase in the number of Persians born in this country.

The massive flight of Persians to Germany considerably changed the structure of the Persian colony as regards age, sex and profession. Before the revolution, men formed the large majority of the Persians living in Germany, but this ratio had changed significantly in the 1990s. For instance, the ratio of 4.33 men to every woman in 1961 had dropped to 1.56 men to a woman in 1995 (Statistische Bundesmat, pp. 23 ff.; Schröder, Schukar, and Adineh, p. 21). Before the revolution, Persians within the age group of 1 to 15 years made an insignificant percentage of their community as a whole, but in 1995 their proportion rose to 19.3 percent with 20,600 individuals. In the same year, the group aged between 30 to 45 years, with 43,800 individuals, formed the largest part (40.9 percent) of the Persian population in Germany; it was followed by the age group between 15 and 30 years, which amounted to 20.4 percent of the total number (Statistische Bundesamt, pp. 38 ff.). Physicians formed the most important group of Persians with compulsory social security in the year 1975, but their proportion together with pharmacists only amounted to 4.1 percent in the year 1992. The number of students in 1975 amounted to about 3,457 or about 18 percent of total number of Persians, but this proportion decreased to only 11 percent in the year 1991. In the same year, the largest proportion of working Persians subscribing to social security consisted of merchants, who made up 8.9 percent of the community, followed by professional engaged in health services with 7.2 percent, excluding doctors and pharmacists. Engineers, office workers, and assistants formed the next major professional group with 6.4 and 6.1 percent. Twenty-two percent of the employees were women. In 1995, most Persians lived in Hamburg, Berlin, Frankfurt, Cologne,



Munich, Hanover, Dortmund, Düsseldorf, Aachen, and Essen, dispersed among several districts.

The experience of the revolution and the imposition of religious precepts in the country also brought about a change in the social activities of the Persian colony. While Persians before the revolution were mainly concerned with political tendencies and followed the above-mentioned organizations, they now increasingly concentrated on cultural activities and matters regarding women or the defense of human rights. The influence of the still numerous political organizations has thus considerably declined. There are many cultural associations, one or several of which exist in each major town with a Persian community. Theatrical and musical groups also belong to the overall picture, as well as several television stations in the larger cities. The number of books and journals published by the Persian community in Germany is relatively large. According to Moʿin-al-Dīn Meḥrābī (1993, 1994), 438 books and 71 magazines were published between 1979 and 1993.

Despite their large number and the fact that many of them have lived in Germany for a long time, the Persians here have failed to form a community in the strict sense of the word. They lack an organization encompassing their entire colony that could create an emotional bond between them. Political organizations and cultural unions have not so far been able to unite more than a fairly small number of their fellow expatriates.

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