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Reasons for Immigrant Youth Criminality (November 16, 1978)

Liberal-minded commentators attributed immigrant youths' tendency toward criminal behavior to multiple factors, including ineffective or insufficient social integration, failure in school, and a lack of job opportunities.

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### **A Lack of Opportunities Makes Youths Aggressive Dire Causes Have Scandalous Repercussions**

Foreigners are knife-wielding machos, killers, drug dealers, and sex offenders. This is how they are still portrayed in some newspapers and magazines.

Scientific studies have long since proven, however, that foreign workers and their families have a lower propensity toward criminal behavior than the Germans in whose society they live. That applies unconditionally to both foreign children and adults. But there is one problem group among foreigners that provides considerable reason for concern: the fourteen- to eighteen-year-olds who increasingly evade the social controls of the parental home and turn to crime.

Here are the dire causes of this situation, for which not the foreigners, but rather the Germans, are responsible: more than 70 percent of these foreign adolescents have no high-school diploma, more than 50 percent of all sixteen- to eighteen-year-olds are out of work and have no prospect of ever finding a job. The descent into a life of crime is almost predestined.

“A generation of hopelessness is in the making.” This is how it was put at a conference on the subject in Bonn. Organized by the Workers' Welfare Association (AWO) and the German Juvenile Court Association (DVJJ), the conference pointed out ways in which young foreigners can avert the “social catastrophe.”

The criminologists' number-one demand is: integration! They point to the fact that the up-and-coming second generation of adolescent foreigners was largely born in the Federal Republic, that members of this generation no longer have a connection to the homeland of their parents, that they use German norms as their point of orientation, and that they are increasingly losing their identity as foreigners. “For these young foreigners, the Federal Republic is an immigration country.”

To take all this into proper account, experts are demanding that legal and social equality with Germans become a reality. But in practice, laws pertaining to foreigners actually achieve the exact opposite; from a humanitarian perspective, it is a scandal that German and foreign children are increasingly separated in social activities and at school. Young foreigners do not have access to apprenticeships; the children of those foreign workers who arrived after January 1, 1977, are not allowed to work – not even as unskilled laborers; and those who arrived after 1973 face possible deportation when they reach legal age, even when their parents continue to live in the Federal Republic.

Also threatened with possible deportation are all those young foreigners who, in their hopeless predicament, break the law. Their transgressions are largely crimes of aggression and sex offenses – crimes that are common, particularly for people in conflict situations. In comparison, delinquent Germans of the same age are more likely to be guilty of grand larceny, trafficking in stolen goods, and blackmail.

For this reason, experts are emphatically demanding an abstention from deportations for foreign children and adolescents who become delinquent, since in most cases this is tantamount to “social execution.”

The chances that the Federal Republic will treat young foreigners more humanely in the future are slim, however. The administrative directives of individual federal states make clear that there is no desire to implement an integration policy.

Every year, 110,000 children are born to foreign parents in our country. They are not allowed to call our country their homeland. Yet they also have no other homeland when they turn eighteen. What about their human rights?

“The foreigner problem is only partially the problem of foreigners. The other, major part is the problem of Germans,” stated German Federal President Walter Scheel.

Are we able to admit that?

Source: Theobald Gross, “Chancenlosigkeit macht Jugend aggressive” [“A Lack of Opportunities Makes Youths Aggressive”], *Welt der Arbeit*, November 16, 1978.

Translation: Allison Brown