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Agreement between the GDR and Vietnam on the Importation of Contract Labor (April 11, 1980)

Like West Germany, East Germany also needed more workers to support its economy. Thus the GDR government signed an agreement with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on the importation of contract labor. The GDR government put a careful spin on this agreement: it downplayed its own need for additional workers and emphasized that the agreement would benefit Vietnamese workers by giving them an opportunity to improve their occupational skills in GDR enterprises.

Agreement between the Government of the German Democratic Republic and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on the Temporary Employment and Training of Vietnamese Workers in the Enterprises of the GDR

Guided by the wish to deepen the brotherly cooperation between the two countries and [proceeding] on the basis of a mutual interest in the temporary employment and training of Vietnamese workers in the enterprises of the German Democratic Republic, the government of the German Democratic Republic and the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam have concluded this agreement and decided upon the following:

Article 1

(1) The government of the German Democratic Republic authorizes Vietnamese skilled laborers and cadres from vocational schools and colleges (hereinafter referred to as Vietnamese workers) sent by the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to take up employment in the enterprises and institutions (hereinafter referred to as enterprises) of the German Democratic Republic for a period of four years in each case.

This employment is associated with the acquisition and extension of practical occupational experience in the processes of production, as well as with occupational training and continuing education within the framework of adult on-the-job training.

(2) The number of Vietnamese workers who shall be employed in the enterprises of the German Democratic Republic, the areas of their employment, and the workers' designated activities shall be agreed upon in annual protocols.

(3) In agreeing to the activities in the annual protocols, the greatest possible consideration shall be given to allowing the Vietnamese workers to deepen their knowledge in different areas of the industrial work process and to round out their professional qualifications.

Article 2

(1) Employment in the enterprises of the German Democratic Republic shall be given [both] to those Vietnamese workers who remain in the German Democratic Republic after completing their training and those who travel directly from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

The age of the workers upon the assumption of their employment shall be between thirteen and thirty-five years for skilled workers and up to forty years of age for cadres from vocational schools and colleges. [. . .]

(3) The Vietnamese workers shall live in the German Democratic Republic without family members. In exceptional cases it is possible for both husband and wife to be employed on the basis of the agreement. [. . .]

Article 5

(1) For the duration of the agreed upon employment, the enterprises of the German Democratic Republic and the Vietnamese workers shall conclude employment contracts, in both German and Vietnamese, in which the reciprocal rights and duties are specified. [. . .]

(3) The enterprises of the German Democratic Republic or the Vietnamese workers can terminate the employment contract before the agreed upon expiration date only with prior approval of the authorized representatives of both signatories to the agreement.

(4) Each of the authorized representatives of the signatories to the agreement can demand the early termination of the employment contract and the return of a Vietnamese worker to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, if:

a) the worker violates the criminal code of the German Democratic Republic or repeatedly commits other infringements,

b) the worker seriously violates the Socialist work ethic,

c) the worker is unable to work due to sickness or an occupational injury, and if, according to medical opinion, it is unlikely that the worker will be able to return to work in the foreseeable future,

d) the enterprise of the German Democratic Republic does not comply with the conditions of the employment contract,

e) the larger national interests of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam necessitate it.

The early termination of the employment contract shall occur after the authorized representatives of the signatories to the agreement have given their approval.

In cases where conditions listed under letter d) of this section apply, the authorized representatives of both signatories to the agreement shall review the options for the further employment of the Vietnamese worker in a different enterprise of the German Democratic Republic.

Article 6

(1) The Vietnamese workers shall receive wages and bonuses in accordance with the labor regulations of the German Democratic Republic.

(2) In addition to wages, the Vietnamese workers shall receive a “separation compensation” of 4 marks per day for each day of their stay in the German Democratic Republic. The payment of “separation compensation” depends on their line of work. [. . .]

Article 7

(1) As a rule, enterprises of the German Democratic Republic shall employ Vietnamese workers in groups of at least fifty people.

(2) Suitable Vietnamese workers shall be employed in the enterprises as group leaders; these group leaders are to be named by the authorized representative of the Vietnamese signatory to the agreement and the authorized representative of the manager of the enterprise. Group leaders are subject to the same labor regulations as other Vietnamese workers. The group leaders are especially responsible for promoting close cooperation between the group of Vietnamese workers and the enterprise manager, for exerting an [positive] influence on the completion of work-related tasks and on the maintenance of work discipline, and for organizing political and cultural activities within the group of Vietnamese workers. [. . .]

Article 8

(1) As a rule, the Vietnamese workers shall be housed in group accommodations whose furnishings are comparable to those of dormitories for the workers of the German Democratic Republic. [. . .]

Source: "Abkommen zwischen der Regierung der DDR und der Regierung der Sozialistischen Republik Vietnam über die zeitweilige Beschäftigung und Qualifizierung vietnamesischer Werk­tätiger in Betrieben der DDR" ["Agreement between the Government of the German Democratic Republic and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on the Temporary Employment and Training of Vietnamese Workers in the Enterprises of the GDR"], in Federal Government Commissioner for the Concerns of Foreigners, ed., *Die ausländischen Vertragsarbeiter in der ehemaligen DDR* [*Foreign Contract Laborers in the Former GDR*]. Berlin, 1996, p. 83ff.

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