

"The situation for refugees is the same as it was under the CDU"

Verena Nees
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The Red-Green government of Sachsen-Anhalt will treat foreign refugees more humanely, so claimed the PDS in 1994. However the party's own speaker for immigration policies, Matthias Gardner, describes the result so far as fairly 'sobering.'

The interior minister for Sachsen-Anhalt Manfred Püchel (SPD) has twice revoked temporary measures suspending the deportation of Kurdish and Algerian refugees, and even Bosnian families, whose homeland has been devastated by war, have been shown no pity. Refugees are kept in inhuman conditions, including the former military barracks 'Cracau' on the edge of Magdeburg, where over 700 refugees, including many families with small children, are herded together.

On the infamous 'Father's Day' (the Christian holiday of Ascension Day) in May 1994, right-wing thugs hunted down foreigners in Magdeburg city centre in broad daylight, with police protection. Subsequent Father's Days have seen no repetition of such incidents--a huge police presence has ensured calm.

However, on every other day of the year foreign refugees are harassed and left-wing youth beaten up, while right-wing attackers are treated leniently by the police. Last year 17-year-old punk Frank Boettcher was murdered by neo-Nazis.

Even on this question the PDS has in no way pushed the government to the left. But the PDS continues without question its policy of 'toleration' of the SPD. Matthias Gardner: 'I'm certainly not tolerating the deportation policies of Interior Minister Puschel, a minister who is better 'tolerated' by the CDU, but rather the general framework that makes this government and its budget possible.'

At 'Kontakt International,' an advisory office for foreign refugees in Magdeburg, we met Jussef Barzan from Iraqi Kurdistan, who has received asylum in

Germany for the past five years and works as an advisor for all Kurdish and Iraqi refugees in Sachsen-Anhalt. On 'Fathers Day' in 1994 he was among the victims. Seeking to flee from the gang of right-wing thugs, he was beaten up by the police and thrown into prison. The policeman who treated him with particular brutality was later acquitted at a court hearing. Our reporter asked him if the situation for foreign refugees had improved under the Red-Green coalition.

Jussef Barzan: Not in my opinion. The situation is the same as it was under the CDU. The present President of the Police in Magdeburg, Herr Wendt--he is a member of the SPD--asked me at a meeting three days before last Father's Day if any incidents had taken place. I said no, but then asked him why only three police cars patrol Neustädter Feld, an area on the outskirts of Magdeburg. In this area of typical East German concrete blocks there are incidents against foreigners every two or three days. However, when a foreigner steals a pen in the local store the police turn up straight away in four cars and arrest the man. Why? Wendt wrote everything down without giving an answer.

Once I rang the police for assistance at 1.30 in the morning after someone threw a stone through an Iraqi child's bedroom window. The child was lucky. It was lying directly by the window, but was not hit. The police station was a mere 10-minute walk to the scene of the crime, but the police came only a half-hour later, after my second call. Naturally, they could not catch the culprit.

A further incident concerned an Iraqi woman. Right-wing radicals attacked her in the lift and attempted to strangle her with her own veil. When the police came they checked the woman's papers and let the right-wingers go.

VN: Are there now fewer deportations of refugees in

Sachsen-Anhalt than previously?

Jusuf Barzan: In 1995 the suspension of deportations for Kurdish refugees was revoked and since then many Kurds have been deported.

Some time ago we tried to prevent the deportation of the Kurdish family Karatas. The family of five, the oldest child was seven years old, were staying in Germany illegally after their application for asylum had been rejected both here and in Holland. It was difficult because two of the children were sick and urgently needed a doctor. We had to get a sick note from the immigration office. They refused however to issue one, and demanded to see the passport of the father. There was no choice--Herr Karatas had to register himself. At that point they arrested him. The family were not even allowed to visit him. In the end they were all deported.

We brought in lawyers and scoured all the government departments. I went to the state parliament, my co-workers to the interior minister--all of them said we had to respect the laws of the national minister for security Herr Kanther. The PDS did not help us.

Also in German

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