

“Foreign Worker” Perspectives between German Trade Unions and Turkish Worker Organisations after the Recruitment Ban: Evidence from the Migrant Activism in Frankfurt

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Abstract

With the foreign worker recruitment ban in Federal Germany on 23 November 1973, the public featured one of the most controversial debates on how long the former guest workers would stay, and whether Federal Germany was a country of immigration. Between German trade unions and foreign workers these questions also remained contested during the 1970s. This paper looks into these contestations and explores conceptions of the former “guest workers” represented by the German trade unions and migrant organisations from the recruitment stop (1973) until the decade’s end. It discusses activities by Turkish worker organisations in Frankfurt, which were led by union functionaries and had charters promoting unionism, and compares them with the programmatic positions of the German Trade Union Confederation from the same timeframe. Although the period featured disagreements on the above questions, migrant activism at the local level suggests growing cooperation between trade unions and migrant groups as well as emerging agreements on the common migration issues, most importantly the foreign workers’ return option, their family migration and voting rights in German local elections.

Keywords: *Migrant Activism in Frankfurt; Migrant Organisations; Migration Policy of Trade Unions; Recruitment Ban; Family Migration*

With the recruitment ban in Federal Germany, the relationships between trade unions and guest worker associations entered their most turbulent period since the post-war guest worker agreements. While the years after 23 November 1973 featured increasing migrant participation and awareness by German trade unions, it was also marked undeniably by dichotomies between them and self-mobilised migrant groups. After the recruitment stop, at a time when the foreign workers found themselves in a sudden precarity, in which they doubted whether their residence and work permits as well as social and labour rights were secure, and in certain cases, such as the child money demonstrations, they came to ask if trade unions sided with them. Before this haze turned into increasing cooperation between migrants and trade unions in the 1980s, fundamental issues about migration, including residence and work permits, family migration, and the future of foreign workers in Federal Germany remained contested between the two sides. The present paper looks into these tensions and explores the conceptions of foreign workers between the official migration attitudes of the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) and the activism of the pro-unionist migrant organisations in the city of Frankfurt from the recruitment ban until the 1970s’s end. More specifically, it compares the content of the activism by the Turkish migrant organisations, which were led by trade union functionaries or at least had charters promoting unionism, and the programmatic positions of the DGB and its federal board published after the recruitment ban. It highlights three common subjects, foreign workers’ return option after 1973, their family

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migration, and suffrage in local elections, which in turn underpinned different foreign worker perspectives and demonstrated the dichotomous positions between the DGB's federal board and unionist migrant activists.

Few publications on the subject argue for increasing cooperation between trade unions and migrant organisations based on class solidarity after the recruitment ban, but they also point to disagreements and even unnamed conflicts in the 1970s. Earlier inquiries into the 1970s critically discussed the ambiguities and gaps in the migration policy of the DGB-affiliated trade unions (Trede, 2015: 265-327; Seidel, 2014: 35-68; Hunn, 2005: 227; 2002: 145-172; Karahasan and Öztürk, 1994: 285-287; Castles, 1990: 7-9; Dohse, 1985). In parallel, more recent historical scholarship explores dichotomies between trade unions and migrant activism, that was performed either without trade unions' support or against their programmatic decisions (Alexopoulou, 2020; Goeke, 2020, 2014:160-182). The wildcat strikes at factories undertook or joint by the guest workers until the recruitment ban embodied not only reactions to the work conditions, but also to the federal migration policy which did not suffice in tackling migrant's social inequality (Öztürk, 2022: 30-32; Birke, 2007: 330-335). In the early 1970s, migrant organisations, from charter-based associations to the less organised worker and student groups, directed their activism to the streets, as seen in the struggle for housing rights and house occupations in Frankfurt between 1970 and 1974 (Karakayali, 2018: 71-88; Bojadžijev, 2008: 205-213). The recruitment ban on 23 November 1973, the decision of the federal government to cease the employment of the new guest workers and systematically reduce the amount of the current foreign workers, led them to broaden their activities towards the rights to the equal treatment at public offices and employers as well as the rights to family reunification (Strokes, 2022: 388-389). A significant part of the protest activities organised without trade unions' support involved the child committees established, notably in Frankfurt, against the decision of the federal government to drastically reduce the child money paid to the foreign workers whose children live outside Federal Germany. They targeted the family conceptions structured by the labour market priorities and the government's failure and denial to respond to social rights and needs of the foreign workers and their families (Strokes, 2022: 3-4, 104).

Inquiries into local history, i.e. migrant activism in cities, districts and migrant neighbourhoods, bring closer insights into these protest activities as well as the extent of the cooperation and disagreements between trade unions and migrant organisations essentially for three reasons: it initially renders the actors (e.g. migrant associations and trade union offices in cities) more visible and also reveals the heterogeneity between federal and local positions of both trade unions or migrant organisations (Carstensen, Hess, Riedner and Schwenken, 2022: 276; Reichhold, 2021: 17). A third reason is to highlight the individuals, who were active both at trade unions and migrant organisations and contributed to the social and cultural change on both towards a common interest representation (Carstensen, 2021: 23-40).

Disagreements between trade unions and migrants were first and foremost structured by the differences in understanding migration. Thus the changes in its conceptions, and acknowledging that Federal Germany was an immigration country and foreign workers were no more short term but first of all based on labour, social and ultimately political rights, brought about a transition in the trade unions' migration policy (Jäger, 2022). Recent inquiries into local history suggest that the most visible signs of this transition in the 1970s and 1980s



were the proactive initiatives of the trade unions and their increasing cooperation with migrant organisations towards defending these rights against the common enemies, namely racism, xenophobia and the extreme right (Berger, Jäger and Teichmann, 2022: 35; Carstensen, Hess, Riedner and Schwenken, 2022: 274; Alexopoulou, 2020, 233; Öztürk and Trede, 2019: 465-484). In Frankfurt, the rising extreme right was a common threat as early as the mid-1970s, against which local trade union and DGB offices on the one hand, and the migrant groups on the other began to cooperate (Reichhold, Schneider and Carstensen, 2021: 7-8).

Regarding the early years after the recruitment stop, however, the occasions of cooperation with migrant organisations were, least to say, far from being fully acknowledged by the German trade unions. This was to be also partly explained with the trade unions' devotedness to the principles of the single trade union, that they should represent every worker, and political neutrality, which together necessitated a certain distance towards political mobilisations (Hunn, 2005, 393-394; Castles, 1990: 7; Vetter, 1979: 201-202). In the 1970s, combined with the political turmoil in Turkey, Greece, Spain and Portugal, a significant bulk of the protest activities organised by migrant groups had targeted military regimes and growing authoritarianism in the motherlands (Clarkson, 2013: 176-185). The fact that the foreign worker associations were highly politicized also underpinned the unions' general distance towards them throughout the 1970s. The ultimate fear on the side of the trade unions was that the politically organised migrants would arguably follow their national and ideological goals and in the end create opposition against trade unions or cause the unions to deviate from their labour agenda (Goeke, 2014: 175-176). Nevertheless, in cities joint activities were still common, as migrant groups were at times able to use trade unions' buildings and they were able to attend May Day activities under the names of both their trade unions and associations (Haunss, 2022: 413-434; Goeke, 2020: 271-272; Bojadzije, 2008: 177; Andersen, 2016: 166-167). In short, although the 1970s showed the first signs of convergence in the representation of migrant interests between trade unions and migrant organizations, it was also fraught with disagreements especially regarding the conceptions of migrant families and political participation. The question then remains on the sources of these conceptual differences, into which the DGB's programmatic attitudes in the 1970s already give insights.

The official trade union policy towards Turkish and other migrant minorities represented by the DGB underwent structural changes after the recruitment ban and, according to the literature, was marked by "ambiguities" in the attitudes towards foreign workers during the 1970s (Kühne, 2000: 39-64; Castles, 1990: 7-9). On the one hand, after 1973 the trade union policy under the DGB prioritised the systematic reduction of migrant labour and gave full support to the social democratic and liberal government. On the other hand, the DGB also systematically requested the federal government to change the Aliens Act in order for the long-term guest workers to receive permanent work and residence permits² and also called for improvements in the social conditions of foreign workers and their families (Kühne, 1988: 21-28). The DGB and its federal board published in 1971, 1973, 1974 and 1978 main resolutions that express trade unions' position towards migration on foreign workers' return,

² DGB's Federal Board, Proposal for Reform in the Aliens Act, „Forderungen des DGB zur Reform des Ausländergesetzes“ 06.02.1973, in: DGB-Bundesvorstand, Die Deutschen Gewerkschaften und die Ausländischen Arbeitnehmer, Düsseldorf: DGB, Bundesvorstand, Abt. Ausländ. Arbeitnehmer, 1988, pp.18-21.

family migration and political participation.³ From its 1971 Congress, it requested limitations at the recruitment of the new guest workers and, after 1973, the full implementation of the recruitment ban without exception.⁴ The DGB also backed the Employment Promotion Act in 1969 prioritising German workers over the foreigners (Herbert and Hunn, 2008: 769), as “any exception to this rule would arguably lead to an oversupply of workers in the labour market”.⁵ Although in the 11th Ordinary Congress (1978) this backing was criticised and the DGB adopted a new attitude against the priority of the German labour in company-based work permits and “any dismantling of the (foreign workers’) existing legal claims”⁶, during the decade the emphasis on the German labour market largely remained (Kühne, 2000: 46).

Within the DGB-affiliated trade unions it was believed that the recruitment ban would also lead to the improvements in the conditions of the former guest workers living in Federal Germany (Dohse, 1976, 255; Kühne, 2000: 45). Alongside their decisive attitude towards reducing the number of the foreign workers, trade unions also called for reform in the Aliens Act and the improvements in the social conditions of the migrants and measures against their marginalisation in German society.⁷ The 9th, 10th and 11th DGB Congresses thus often emphasized the need to improve the migrant accommodations and equal education chances for the migrant children.⁸

This policy based on the full implementation of the recruitment stop and the improvement in migrants’ conditions found its explanation at the resolution adopted by the DGB’s federal board on 2 February 1978, according to which Federal Republic of Germany was not a country of immigration and foreign workers would intend to leave Germany for their homelands.⁹ A year earlier, an executive board member had already raised this opinion at the DGB-Newsletter, which he sought to align with the DGB’s requests for the improvements in migrant lives: “In order to prevent foreign workers from being pushed to the margins of society while they are here - most of them intend to return home after a certain period of time - we have supported all efforts that make life in our country easier and create understanding for the special situation of these people.”¹⁰ With this assumption that the workers and their families were temporary in Germany, the contrast between reducing the amount of foreign workers and improving their social rights did not emerge in the first sense. According to the

³ “Die deutschen Gewerkschaften und die ausländischen Arbeitnehmer” (2. 11. 1971); “Forderungen des DGB zur Reform des Ausländergesetzes” (6. 2. 1973); “Forderungen zum Schulunterricht der Kinder ausländischer Arbeitnehmer” (7. 5.1973); “Empfehlungen zur beruflichen Aus- und Fortbildung ausländischer Arbeitnehmer” (9. 3. 1974). Positionspapier des DGB zur Ausländerbeschäftigung (7. 2. 1978), in: Martin H. G. (ed.) (2008). *Geschichte der Sozialpolitik in Deutschland seit 1945*: Bd. 6: Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1974-1982. Neue Herausforderungen, wachsende Unsicherheiten. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag, Annex (CD-ROM). Also see, Karl-Heinz Goebels, “Der Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund und die ausländischen Arbeitnehmer”, *Berichte* 7/82: 439-443.

⁴ DGB-Bundesvorstand zu Ausländische Arbeitnehmer und Arbeitsmarktsituation, Erklärung vom 05.03.1975, 38.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Proposal 14 to the Decisions taken at the 11th Ordinary Congress of the German Trade Union Confederation, 21-26 Mai 1978, Hamburg, DGB Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (1978). Protokoll 11. Ordentlicher Bundeskongreß Hamburg, Lübeck: Wullenwever-Druck, 489-490.

⁷ DGB-Bundesvorstand Ausländische Arbeitnehmer, “Die deutschen Gewerkschaften und die Ausländischen Arbeitnehmer”, published on 2.11.1971, in: DGB-Bundesvorstand, *Die Deutschen Gewerkschaften und die Ausländischen Arbeitnehmer*, 13; “Geplante Verschärfung Ausländerrechts”, Beschluß des 9. Ordentlichen Bundeskongresses, published on Juni 1972, in: DGB-Bundesvorstand, *Die Deutschen Gewerkschaften und die Ausländischen Arbeitnehmer*, 17; “Situation der ausländischen Arbeitnehmer”. Beschluß des 10. Ordentlichen Bundeskongresses, in: DGB-Bundesvorstand, *Die Deutschen Gewerkschaften und die Ausländischen Arbeitnehmer*, 40.

⁸ DGB-Bundesvorstand, *Die Deutschen Gewerkschaften und die Ausländischen Arbeitnehmer*, 17, 40.

⁹ Positionspapier des DGB, 1.

¹⁰ Karl Schwab, Mitglied des Geschäftsführenden Bundesvorstandes des DGB. “Ausländische Kollegen-Nachbarn am Arbeitsplatz”, DGB Report, 1/2, 1977, 13-18, here 14.



critics from the late 1970s, however, it was a “delusion” to consider foreign workers as short-term; as long as trade unions contributed to this delusion in their documents, it would not suffice for them to fight the marginalisation of migrants in Federal Germany.¹¹

The assumption about workers’ temporality in Federal Germany and the priority of the labour market underpinned the conceptions of family and political participation in the 1970s. First, on the family migration the DGB continued to send ambiguous messages: it requested “socially manageable family reunification” but also ruled that family migration should not “circumvent the recruitment stop” and overemphasised labour market necessities and adequate living space.¹² According to the decisions taken between federal and local governments and agreed by the DGB, the children of the former guest workers who arrived in Federal Germany from 01.12.1974 (this term was later moved to 1 January 1977) would not be granted residence, and family members that arrived until this date would have to wait years before receiving work permits.¹³ Despite these agreements, the Confederation also published resolutions against the federal government’s decision in 1976 that banned workers and their families from moving to large, immigrant-dense cities, as well as the plans to increase the duration of the foreign worker residence required for his family reunification (Trede, 2015: 282-284; Brunner, 1979: 17). In addition, despite some views that the DGB did not take any initiative against the child allowance regulation (Kaikis, 1977: 520), its management had raised a counter proposal in mid-1974, which in turn was not accepted by the federal government.¹⁴ After the decision came into force in 1975, the DGB officially declared it to be against the equality principle.¹⁵ Finally, in the 1970s the Confederation, in clearer terms than in family migration, dismissed the political empowerment of the migrants (Kontos, 1983: 181-182; Kühne, 2000: 39). The DGB’s federal board openly rejected the right to vote at local elections for the foreigners and considered that it was essentially a right of citizenship (Kühne, 1982: 389-390). Migrants’ suffrage would arguably make no sense, since “most of them had the wish, even after long-term residence in Federal Germany, to return to their home countries”.¹⁶ DGB acknowledged this right at the confederal level first at its 1986 Congress that migrants after their fifth year in Federal Germany should be granted passive and active voting rights at the local elections and the European elections.¹⁷

In summary, the DGB’s programmatic attitudes published in the 1970s towards the former guest workers’ return option, family migration, and their political participation largely advocated a perspective that foreign workers were in any case short-term and would leave Federal Germany sooner or later. They also acknowledged the priorities of the German labour market over foreign worker employment and family migration in most of the 1970s. Third, the DGB’s federal board and its department for foreign workers remained sceptical of the

¹¹ For the early critiques, “Kritik an DGB-Positionspapier: Für den DGB ist die Bundesrepublik kein Einwanderungsland”, *Stuttgarter Zeitung* 18.02.1978; “Auf dem Weg ins Ghetto?”, *der Sonntag*, 12.03.1978, DGB-Archive in AdsD 5/DGAZ000596; Dohse, Knuth (1982). “Ausländische Arbeiter und betriebliche Personalpolitik“, *Gewerkschaftliches Monatsheft*, 7/82: 427-438, here 438.

¹² Positionspapier des DGB, 2, 3-4.

¹³ Schwab, “Ausländische Kollegen-Nachbarn am Arbeitsplatz”, 16.

¹⁴ Schreiben von DGB-Abteilung Ausländische Arbeitnehmer und IGM Vorstand Frankfurt, Abt. Ausländische Arbeitnehmer an DGB-Landesbezirk, 28.10.1974, DGB-Archive in AdsD 5/DGAZ000624.

¹⁵ “Kindergeldregelung für die in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland beschäftigten Arbeitnehmer aus Portugal, Spanien, Türkei, Griechenland und Jugoslawien” (Antrag 263), *Beschluß des 10. Ordentlichen Bundeskongresses*, Mai 1975, 41.

¹⁶ Positionspapier des DGB, 5.

¹⁷ Antrag 324 Ausländische Arbeitnehmer, *Beschluß des 13. Ordentlichen Bundeskongresses*, Mai 1986, in: DGB-Bundesvorstand, *Die Deutschen Gewerkschaften und die Ausländischen Arbeitnehmer*, 65.

migrant participation in local politics as well as cooperation with migrant organisations, in an attempt to remain politically neutral and focussed on labour priorities and distanced from political extremism.

The next section orients these debates into the Turkish migrant organisations in Frankfurt and highlights the activist groups led or attended by the Turkish union functionaries and whose charters promoted unionism. Yılmaz Karahasan, Secretary of the IG Metall (IGM) at the Department for Foreign Workers, founded and led throughout the 1970s the Working Group of Foreign Workers in the SPD Frankfurt. Second, the Turkish People's House was founded by Ülkü Gürkan Schneider in 1965, who was working in the IGM under Karahasan during the 1970s. The People's House was a common roof for the union functionaries, such as Naci Güresir from the DGB and Melih Bekler from the IG Bau-Steine-Erden. The charter of the People's House aimed at motivating its members and Turkish workers to join trade unions and mobilise for their causes.¹⁸ A very important part of the international migrant activism that Turkish People's House led occurred through a solidarity network entitled Proactive Committee of Foreign Citizens in Hesse (Initiativausschuss "Ausländische Mitbürger in Hessen", henceforth the Initiative Committee), which the Catholic and Protestant churches and welfare organisations from Frankfurt and its surrounding cities had founded in 1969.¹⁹ In early 1972, after the Initiative Committee attended a demonstration organised by the Turkish People's House with five thousand workers for the legalisation of tourist workers in Frankfurt and its neighbourhood, the association joined the Committee and actively participated in its decisions.²⁰ The working group led by Karahasan also often allied with the Initiative Committee during demonstrations and other protest activities.²¹ The DGB in Frankfurt was in contact with the Initiative Committee and its constituting migrant organisations as well as Karahasan's Working Group; in April 1973 they organised a joint demonstration entitled "Foreign Workers: Outsiders or Fellow Citizens?" on foreign workers' rights to residence, right to political activities about the issues in their motherland (but not migrant voting), rights to equality in education and housing for foreign workers as well as their rights to criticise the military regimes in their countries.²² Thus, the Initiative Committee, its Turkish constituent Turkish People's House, and the Working Group of Yılmaz Karahasan loomed large in the 1970s as important elements of the movement by trade unionists, clergy, and social advisers sensitive to the migrant rights. A "Coordination Commission", founded by the Turkish trade unionists, social advisers and journalists in 1974 similarly contributed to migrant activism against the federal government's restrictive migration policy. Finally, the Unity of Turkish Workers in Frankfurt, founded and led by Metin Gür, who was the only

¹⁸ Frankfurt Türk Halk Evi, Almanca Tüzük, TÜSTAV, ÜGS-77.

¹⁹ "Strenge Strafe für die Falschen", Rhein-Main Zeitung, 27.09.1972; Committee's presentation was written by its leader Deltel Lüdewald in 1986: "Der Initiativausschuss 'Ausländische Mitbürger in Hessen' – Aktivitäten und Argumente für ein gleichberechtigtes Zusammenleben von Ausländern und Deutschen", in: Hans-Wilfried Kuhlen (ed.), *Ausländische Arbeiterfamilien in Hessen*, Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 186-243; In 1973, the Initiative Committee had consisted of these organisations: Amt für Industrie und Sozialarbeit der Ev. Kirche in Hessen und Nassau, Arbeiterwohlfahrt, Bezirke Hessen Nord und Hessen Süd, Caritasverband für die Diözesen Fulda, Limburg, Mainz, Diakonisches Werk in Hessen und Nassau und in Kurhessen-Waldeck, Jugendsozialwerk e.V. Katholische ausländische Missionen, Koreanisch-deutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft, Türkisches Volkshaus, Erklärung des Initiativausschusses "Ausländische Mitbürger in Hessen" zum sogenannten Rotationsprinzip, 31.01.1973. Tustav/ ÜGS-051.

²⁰ Lüdewald, *Der Initiativausschuss*, 195-196.

²¹ "Ausländerdemonstration: Keine Menschen zweiter Klasse", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 22.12.1975, 19.

²² "Ausländische Arbeitnehmer: Aussenseiter oder Mitbürger?", Call to the Demonstration planned on 07.04.1973. TUSTAV, ÜGS-063. the demonstration was cancelled by the police on the ground of another event planned at the same meeting place. "Veranstaltung verboten", Newspaper Clipping, 7.4.1973, TÜSTAV, ÜGS-061.



leader without an administrative or active position in trade unions, often worked in cooperation with the Turkish People's House. Gür also had close contacts with the DGB Office and Türk-Danis in Frankfurt through his journalist status, and his association often held meetings in the halls of the DGB.²³ The charter of the Unity of Turkish Workers mirrored that of the Turkish People's House in promoting unionism and recruiting Turkish workers to German trade unions.²⁴ Although additional solidarity networks were later founded towards the end of the 1970s between other worker associations and welfare organisations,²⁵ the migrant groups investigated here are the most relevant for the overlaps between trade unions and Turkish migrant communities through common personnel, joint initiatives and joint participation in demonstrations (Reichhold et al., 2021: 71). Their activism about foreign workers' return options, their family migration, and migrant voting in local elections below suggest what images of foreign workers Turkish migrant organisations and trade unionists represented, which in turn contradicted federal trade union policies in certain examples during the 1970s.

First, the protest and information activities organised shortly before and after 23 November 1973 commonly revealed a return perspective based on the rights of foreign workers in work and social life. After the recruitment freeze migrant organisations rushed to caution and inform foreign workers against any decision to leave forced by the German authorities or companies: the Initiative Committee distributed a leaflet to thousands of the guest workers based in Hesse to warn them to leave Germany over Christmas only if they had a long valid residence and work permit, as otherwise they might not be able to return.²⁶ A newsletter published by Turkish workers in Frankfurt *İsci Gazetesi* (Worker Post)²⁷ warned its readers not to sign any documents in companies that they did not understand. If they were dismissed, they should ensure that the social selection and social plan (priority of employment by age and marital/parental status) were implemented in the terminations.²⁸ Karahasan's SPD Working Group welcomed the recruitment ban, since it would allow the government to improve the social situation of the foreign workers already living in Federal Germany.²⁹ From 1973 onwards notably the Initiative Committee and SPD Working Group continued its efforts to highlight rights of foreign workers in Federal Germany and object to the official decisions and suggestions, which commonly prioritised needs of the labour market and assumed that Federal Germany was not a country of immigration and the foreigners wanted to leave after

²³ In 1975, the association celebrated the anniversary of its foundation at the DGB Building in Frankfurt. "Frankfurt", Köln İsci Postası, 1975, (2): 4.

²⁴ Vereinigung der Arbeiter aus der Türkei, Entwurf einer Satzung für die Vereinigung der Arbeiter aus der Türkei, Frankfurt (Frankfurt Türkiyeli İsciler Birliği), TÜSTAV, ÜGS-078.

²⁵ The most important of them were the association „Rechtshilfekomitee für Ausländer“ and the „Pinie“, a cultural working group for foreigners' associations initiated by the city administration. Karpf, Ernst (2013): Eine Stadt und ihre Einwanderer: 700 Jahre Migrationsgeschichte in Frankfurt am Main. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 223-224.

²⁶ "Ausländer, fahrt nicht nach Hause!", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 08.12.1973, 35; Speech by Herbert Leuninger, "Feierstunde im Kaisersaal aus Anlass des 50-jährigen Bestehens des Türkischen Volkshauses e. V.", 17.11.2015, 4.

²⁷ *İsci Gazetesi* was first published in Frankfurt by a group of workers, who founded the Association of the Turkish Workers in Frankfurt in 1974. The association joined the Unity of Turkish Workers led by Gür in 1977. "Örnek bir davranış: Frankfurt'ta iki işçi kurulusu birleştirdi", İsci Birliği, 12.02.1977, (41): 8, TÜSTAV İstanbul. According to its Impressum, the newsletter was later assumed by the Federation of the Turkish Democratic Workers Association and moved to Essen from the 20th issue. İsci Gazetesi, 08.08.1974, (20): 4.

²⁸ İsci Gazetesi, Özel Sayı 2: İsten Çikarmalar Karsısında Ne Yapmalıyız?, 1973, 2.

²⁹ Stellungnahme des AAA 7.12.1973, Frankfurt, DGB Archive in AdsD, 5/DGAZ000730.

a while.³⁰ The Initiative Committee rejected the reports and resolutions of the working group created between the Federal and state ministers (Bund-Länder Commission) on foreigner employment policy, in particular the commission's proposals on a general ban on immigration for a few years, the restriction of the foreigners' residence permits to their work permits, and generally the official argument that Germany is not an immigration country.³¹ The Committee and SPD-Working Group instead saw the foreigners to be an equal and permanent group in German society, who were entitled to equal unemployment benefits, permanent residence and unrestricted social, legal and political integration.³²

The Federal Government came to reduce its social expenditures for migrants in the mid-1970s, including financial support for consultancy services for Turkish and Yugoslav workers. In 1976 the AWO began to close the counselling centres for Turkish and Yugoslav workers, the former being called "Türk-Danis" that employed Turkish social consultants. Trade unionists and Karahasan's working group protested against this decision, claiming that the closure of the Türk-Danis offices would not discourage Turkish migrants to leave Federal Germany but dramatically worsen their working and social conditions.³³ With the closure of various offices, trade unionists, social advisers and journalists from Turkey formed a Coordination Commission in Frankfurt in 1974 and acted together with the Initiative Committee in some protest activities (Hunn, 2005: 389). Yılmaz Karahasan from IGM, his brother Aydın Karahasan, Ismail Kahraman from IGM Stuttgart administration, Naci Gülesir from DGB regional administration and Turkish People's House, Melih Bekler from the Frankfurt office of the IG Bau-Steine-Erden and again from the Turkish People's House, Turk-Danis Secretary Fuat Bultan and finally Metin Gür were the leading members of the coordination group.³⁴ Despite these attempts the support for social counselling offices declined steadily, which resulted in the foundation of the additional groups by German and foreign social counsellors, such as *Rechtshilfekomitee für Ausländer* (Legal Aid Committee for Foreigners) which first emerged in 1977 under a Bonn association and years later became an association on its own.

With a regulation that entered into force on 1 October 1978, the Federal Government reformed the implementation of the Aliens Act, which now allowed foreign workers to apply for unlimited residence and work permits. The regulation in turn largely satisfied the DGB's

³⁰ Declaration of the German Foreign Citizens' Initiative dated 31.01.1973 in Frankfurt, TUSTAV UGS-051; 1. "Mai im Zeichen der Arbeitslosigkeit" Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 02.05.1975, 39; "Ausländerdemonstration: Keine Menschen zweiter Klasse", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 22.12.1975, 19; "Ausländer -immer noch 'nur Arbeitnehmer'", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 05.01.1977, 26; "Ausländische Jugendliche ohne Hoffnung", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 11.05.1978, 32; "Fördern statt abschieben", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 05.12.1980, 60; Resolution tabled by Karahasan's SPD Group: Resolution von der Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Arbeitnehmerfragen vom 11.12.1973, DGB Archive in AdsD, 5/DGAZ000730.

³¹ The Committee censured a report of the working group published in 1977 that recommended some means to motivate foreign workers to leave Federal Germany, calling it the policy of decimation. Frankfurter Rundschau, 05.01.1977; "Protest der gegen Beschränkung der Ausländer-Freizügigkeit", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 01.04.1975, 6.

³² "Ausländer - immer noch 'nur Arbeitnehmer'", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 05.01.1977, 26; Karahasan's group in the SPD adopted the same view in its founding document. Entwurf eines Programms Ausländische Arbeiter in der SPD, Frankfurt, DGB Archive in AdsD, 5/DGAZ000730.

³³ "Harte Kritik an Bonn von den Gastarbeitern", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 27.10.1975, 8.

³⁴ Federal Almany Türk Gazetecileri, Sendikacıları ve Sosyal Danışmanları Koordinasyon Komisyonu, F. Almanyadaki Türk İşçilerinin Programı, 1974, DOMID Archive Cologne, OS 0463; "Sendika ve Türk-Danis Sekreterleri Genel Af İstiyor", Kurtulus, 21.06.1974, (109): 4, TÜSTAV, Istanbul.



federal board (Kühne, 2000: 46).³⁵ Foreign workers under this regulation would be now able to receive unlimited permits after their five-year employment and the public authorities were not able to deport foreigners after their eighth year of work. Worker associations asserted a year later that in procedure these five and eight-year employment periods may not be interrupted and the regulation was thus ruling out most of the long-term foreign workers. According to a press release of the Initiative Committee, even a few days without legal employment could mean that the applicant was not eligible in the process and for a new entitlement had to work again straight for five years from the first work day after such a short break. Moreover, the Committee claimed that German authorities were still prioritising the labour market and the earlier Employment Promotion Act (1969), preferring the foreigners in certain fields, where Germans could not meet the employers' demand. To the critics, the regulation had not improved the long-term settlement perspective for the foreign workers but brought them greater uncertainty.³⁶

In summary, following the Recruitment Ban the Turkish worker groups led by trade unionists in Frankfurt began their activism against the pressure on foreign workers to leave Federal Germany, reportedly restrictive attitudes by the authorities in public offices and the reductions in the social counselling for foreign workers. The protest actions built on the view that foreign workers would not necessarily leave Federal Germany and were entitled to their labour and social rights. The rights-based migrant activism against the federal government's return policy also surrounded activism for family reunification, equal child allowances, as well as the rights to political participation in Federal Germany, which the next sections discuss.

Family migration occupied the agenda of the migrant organisations and Turkish trade unionists through protest events against the refusals of family reunification due to limited living space and the reductions in child allowances for migrant children in Turkey. While the Initiative Committee continued to criticize the inter-ministerial working group in press conferences and information flyers, Turkish migrant associations led by the Turkish People's House and Union of Turkish Workers organised a series of events at the DGB's Frankfurt office in 1977 and 1979. Public discussions were organised in March 1977 and April 1979 at the DGB building in Frankfurt, Wilhelm-Leuschner-Strasse 69-77, on the restrictions in family reunifications, the situation of Turkish families in Frankfurt, and the migrant children's education problems.³⁷ The Coordination Commission of trade unionists, journalists and social counsellors respectively addressed the rejections of applications by public offices and attributed them to housing problems of the former guest workers.³⁸ It was reportedly very difficult for foreign workers to convince the German authorities for the family reunification through their small living space. Immigrant activism in Frankfurt cogently presented the right to housing for foreigners and the right to family reunification as two interrelated issues, as did the child allowance committees.

³⁵ DGB Abt. Ausländische Arbeitnehmer, Brief an die ausländischen Arbeitnehmer und ihre Familienangehörigen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Verfestigung des aufenthaltsrechtlichen Status; hier: Änderung der Verwaltungsvorschrift zur Ausführung des Ausländergesetzes durch den Bundesrat am 2.8.1978, Düsseldorf, 5.7.1978, DGB Archive in AdsD 5/DGAZ000009; Kühne, *The Federal Republic of Germany*, 46.

³⁶ "Abhängig von Gnade und Gefühl der Behörden", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 15.05.1979, 28.

³⁷ "Diskussion um Türken", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 11.03.1977, 38; "Vom Leben Junger Ausländer in dieser Stadt", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 28.04.1979, 49.

³⁸ *Federal Almanya, Türk Gazetecileri, Sendikacilari ve Sosyal Danismanlari Koordinasyon Komisyonu, F. Almanya'daki Türk İşçilerinin Programi*, DOMID Archive, Cologne, OS 0463.

A significant part of the activities by migrant associations and union functionaries consisted of the protests organized against the decision of the federal government in 1974 to reduce the monthly child allowances paid to foreign workers whose children lived outside Federal Germany. Child allowance committees were set up by a large group of worker associations in September 1974, including Yılmaz Karahasan's SPD working group, the Union of Turkish Workers in Frankfurt, the Turkish People's House, Spanish, Portuguese and Greek associations as well as the Initiative Committee.³⁹ Trade Unions did not participate in these committees, although they opposed the federal decision. In turn, trade unions came in for only limited criticism from the migrant activists in Frankfurt.⁴⁰ The content of the protests largely featured the equality of the social rights between Germans and foreign workers and the preoccupation with social integration.⁴¹ In a press release organized by the Initiative Committee and SPD Working Group, Yılmaz Karahasan explained that the cut in child allowance would make social integration more difficult. With this decision, many Turkish workers would start to bring their children to Federal Germany, and with further family reunification the existing housing and school problems would get worse.⁴² A leaflet of the children's committee criticized the injustice of the measures and commented on the view that the child benefit regulation could be overcome with family reunification: "When it is said that we should bring our children here, then we ask ourselves: where are the apartments, schools and kindergartens?"⁴³

The third subject of activism was the political rights of foreign workers concerning German elections, which increasingly featured at the May Day Demonstrations of the DGB in Frankfurt. May Day posters, speeches and other documents used by Turkish workers, which were as a rule controlled by the organising committee, explicitly informed about the agenda of migrant activism and the expectations from German and Turkish authorities (Reichhold et al., 2021: 80). The content of the material used by the Turkish section of the DGB corteges in the beginning largely involved the calls for political rights in Turkey. On the first May Day after the Recruitment Stop Turkish associations in Frankfurt organised the "May 1 Turkish Workers Solidarity Committee" and issued a joint statement in May 1974, which acknowledged: "Worker Friend from Turkey! You know very well that Germany is a temporary bread and butter for us. The main thing is to find a job in our own country, to live in our own country under humane conditions."⁴⁴ The statement continued largely with requests regarding social, political and work life in Turkey, referring to the retirement rights, and particularly called for a general amnesty for the political prisoners.⁴⁵ Struggle with ultra-nationalism from Turkey and Germany also occupied the agenda of the May Day committees

³⁹ "Çocuk Paramizin Kesilmesine Hayır", Kurtulus, 08.11.1974, (117): 117, 1; "Yürüyüş Haberleri", İsci Birliği, 21.10.1974, (14): 4; ATTF tanıtım kitapçığı, 1975: 6; İsci Birliği Özel Sayı, 3 - Çocuk Parası, 28.09.1974: 2; "Demonstration für gleiches Kindergeld", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 14.11.1979, 36. "Weniger Geld für die Kinder daheim", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 02.10.1974, 34.

⁴⁰ Among them, Metin Gür criticized the unions for being above politics on the issue of child money, for limiting themselves to activism in the field of work, and for "letting the workers down". Metin Gür, "Sendika Nedir", İsci Birliği, No.16, 02.12.1974, p.7; "Sendika Nedir", İsci Birliği, 23.12.1974, (17): 7.

⁴¹ "Weniger Geld für die Kinder daheim", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 02.10.1974, 34.

⁴² The Initiative Committee saw this decision as a violation of social equality and integration perspectives. "Angriff auf soziale Gleichstellung", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 28.06.1974, 46.

⁴³ Kindergeldkomitee in Frankfurt, Neues Kindergeldgesetz Diskriminiert Ausländische Arbeiter!! Flugblatt 1974-1975, Frankfurt am Main, DOMID Archive, Cologne, 376. Flugschrift, E 0301,002.

⁴⁴ "1 Mayıs Türkiyeli İsciler Dayanışma Komitesi Ortak Bildirisi", İsci Birliği 1 Mayıs Özel Sayısı, 01.05.1974, S.2.

⁴⁵ "1 Mayıs Türkiyeli İsciler Dayanışma Komitesi Ortak Bildirisi", İsci Birliği 1 Mayıs Özel Sayısı, 01.05.1974, S.2; 1 Mayıs's Kutladık, İsci Birliği, 28.05.1974, p.5; "Frankfurt'da 1 Mayıs- Af kampanyası", Kurtulus, No.106, 10.05.1974, p.4.



established by Turkish workers.⁴⁶ At the end of the parades, all workers were divided according to their nationalities at the DGB building in Wilhelm-Leuschner Street, where Turkish workers and associations gathered in the halls prepared for them and organised solidarity events.⁴⁷ On 1 May 1975 and 1976, after the DGB activities Turkish associations also organised their own meetings in Germaniaplatz, which brought together migrants and Turkish functionaries of German unions.⁴⁸

Requests for voting rights in the German local elections were on the agenda of the May Day demonstrations at the latest from 1975 onwards. Yılmaz Karahasan, using his IGM Secretary position, first raised migrant suffrage at his speech on 1 May 1975 in Frankfurt.⁴⁹ Federation of Turkish Socialists in Europe (ATTF), an umbrella organisation with which the Turkish People's House and Unity of Turkish Workers in Frankfurt were affiliated, brought migrant suffrage to the fore first at the May Day Demonstrations in 1976.⁵⁰ A year later its successor (Federation of Turkish Workers Associations in West Germany) adopted the activism for voting rights as one of the long-term requests, along with the restrictions in the family reunification and the retirement rights in Turkey.⁵¹ The May Day Organisations aside, migrant organisations also respectively campaigned for the participation in local elections in Federal Germany. In 1975, Karahasan and his SPD Working Group called for the right to vote and stand as a candidate in local and state elections for foreigners after their fifth year in Federal Germany.⁵² In 1977 Turkish People's House and the Workers' Union began a joint campaign, according to which Turkish migrants were not able to benefit equally from municipal services and their social rights should be reinforced with political participation. To this end, in March 1977 two associations organised a joint event, titled "Local Elections and our rights to Vote and Stand for Election", at the DGB's main Building in Wilhelm Leuschner Street.⁵³ In 1979 the Frankfurt office of the DGB began to express the voting rights for the foreigners and participated in the efforts of the city administration to include foreigners in the municipal governance through special commissions.⁵⁴ Manfred Kiesewetter, Chairman of the DGB's Frankfurt office, thus brought this request into the May Day Demonstrations in 1979, where he openly called for the suffrage at municipal elections for the long-term foreigners.⁵⁵ In 1979, Turkish People's House participated with Italian and Spanish associations in the initiative led by a Greek parents' association to introduce local voting rights for foreigners (Karpf, 2013: 368). As argued at a booklet about migrants' suffrage published by a migrant federation in the

⁴⁶ The Call of the "Turkish workers 1 may solidarity committee" (Türkiyeli İşçiler 1 Mayıs Komitesi), *İsci Birliği*, 28.04.1974, (7): 5; "1 Mayıs'ta 11 000'den fazla imza toplandı", *İsci Birliği*, 22.05.1976, (35): 8; F, Almanya ve B. Berlin'de 1 Mayıs, *Kurtuluş*, No.184, 21.05.1978, p.4; 1 Mayıs ilk dileğimiz. ! Mayıs'da kalbimiz Türkiye'deydi, *Kurtuluş*, No.223, 21.05.1980, p.2.

⁴⁷ "Frankfurtta 1 Mayıs", *Kurtuluş*, 20.04.1974, (105): 4; *İsci Birliği*, 28.04.1974, (7): 5; "Maikundgebung wieder auf dem Römerberg", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26.04.1979, 32.

⁴⁸ "1 Mayıs'ı Kutladık", *İsci Birliği*, 24.05.1974, (8): 5; "İsci Birliği, 1 Mayıs'ı Germaniaplatz'da Kutladı", *İsci Birliği*, 22.05.1976, (35): 8. At the meeting on 1 May 1976 DGB Secretary Naci Güresir, IG Metall Secretary Yılmaz Karahasan and IG Bau-Steine-Erden Melih Bekler were three of the invitees. *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ "1. Mai im Zeichen der Arbeitslosigkeit" *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 02.05.1975, 39.

⁵⁰ "Haydi 1 Mayıs'al", *Kurtuluş*, 1 Mayıs Özel Sayısı, 01.05.1976, 1.

⁵¹ "Fidef'in 1 Mayıs Belgileri", *Kurtuluş*, 21.04.1977, (170): 4; "FIDEF'in 1 Mayıs Çağrısı", *Federal Almanya İsci Dernekleri Federasyonu, FIDEF 1 Mayıs Özel Sayısı*, 01.05.1978, p.3, TÜSTAV, Istanbul.

⁵² "1. Mai im Zeichen der Arbeitslosigkeit" *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 02.05.1975, 39.

⁵³ Invitator to the open session on voting rights: "Belediye Seçimleri ve Seçme-Şecilme Haklarımız Konulu Açık Oturum, 12 March 1977, DGB Building 6 Frankfurt / MN. Wilhelm-Leuschner-Str. 69-77", in: *İsci Birliği, Seçme ve Şecilme Hakkı Özel Sayısı*, 06.05.1977, 2.

⁵⁴ "Der dornenreiche Weg vom Gastarbeiter zum Bürger", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 07.04.1979, 53; "Wenn Politiker im Wahlkampf türkisch radebrechen müssen", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 29.02.1980, 49.

⁵⁵ "Der Kampf gegen die Arbeitslosigkeit hat weiter Vorrang", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 02.05.1979, 31.

1980s, the requests for participation in German politics became institutionalised in time, especially with the perception that “foreign workers and their families were permanently established in Federal Germany”.⁵⁶

To conclude, migrant activism by the worker groups led and attended by Turkish union functionaries in Frankfurt and programmatic positions by the DGB at its federal level from the recruitment stop until the end of the 1970s suggested dichotomous images of the former guest workers. Foreign workers represented by the DGB’s federal board in most of the 1970s above all were short-term employees in Federal Germany, whose work permits should be dependent on the preferences of the German labour market. Understanding foreign workers as temporal and prioritising the labour market over them thus framed the DGB’s programmatic attitudes towards other social and political issues, i.e. family migration and migrant voting in local elections. On the other hand, worker organisations and union functionaries from Turkey rather adopted rights-based approaches to the former guest workers without assuming if their stay in Federal Germany was long or short-term. Despite the scepticism in DGB’s programmatic statements towards migrant mobilisations outside trade unions, Turkish worker groups often came together and entered into interaction with the DGB’s Frankfurt Office on foreign workers’ problems, family migration, and even migrants’ participation in local elections. The increasing cooperation between the DGB’s Frankfurt office and Turkish workers on these issues, notably through 1 Mai demonstrations and even the meetings organised by migrant activists at the Confederation’s building in the 1970s, preceded the changes that were later broadly acknowledged by the DGB and its trade unions at the federal level, most importantly the view that Federal Germany was a country of immigration, part of which the former guest workers and their families permanently constituted. In this respect, it is also necessary to mention the migrant activists taking functionary roles at trade unions, who constituted bridges between trade unions and migrant organisations. In particular, the migrant network in Frankfurt formed by union leaders such as Yilmaz Karahasan, union employees such as Ülkü Gürkan Schneider and pro-union journalists such as Metin Gür, cooperated with the Initiative Committee and the DGB’s Frankfurt office and created activism based on the labour, social and political rights of foreign workers and their families.

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