

# The Government Warns of a New Racial Arrogance (December 12, 1979)

## Abstract

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In response to a mounting wave of xenophobic sentiment, Heinz Kühn, the Federal Commissioner for Foreigners' Affairs, called the Federal Republic an "immigration country." In the following article, published in the left-leaning *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Kühn called for the integration of foreigners living in West Germany and warned against the negative effects of a new racism.

## Source

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### Kühn Warns Germans of a New Racial Arrogance

#### The Federal Republic Should See Itself as an Immigration Country without "Forced Germanization"

"For four million foreign workers and their families, the Federal Republic has become an immigration country." This view, "which many find shocking," was emphasized by Heinz Kühn, the current Federal Commissioner for Foreigners' Affairs in Bonn and the former minister president of North Rhine-Westphalia, at a conference this weekend in Stuttgart. The topic of the conference, which was organized by the National Commission for the International Year of the Child, was "foreign children in the Federal Republic." Kühn admitted that the Federal Republic is certainly not an immigration country in the conventional sense, like the United States or Canada. "But we have to open ourselves up to those who want to stay here, with all the attendant consequences," said Kühn to an audience of about 600 representatives of foreigners' associations, ministries, trade unions, churches, and welfare associations, as well as teachers, early childhood educators, and social workers.

For the first time since presenting his memorandum on the integration of foreigners to the federal government almost two months ago, Kühn publicly addressed the key demands of the memorandum and the criticism that has been voiced thus far. "With all his strength and passion," Kühn said, he stands by the memorandum, which above all demands local voting rights, "naturalization by postcard" for German-born children of foreign nationals, and their enrollment in regular German schools.

Kühn stated emphatically that he wrote the memorandum in "complete independence" from the government. Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who appointed Kühn to the post of Federal Commissioner for Foreigners' Affairs, recognized that the problem was of great significance. Schmidt, as Kühn told his Stuttgart audience, expected him to submit proposals "with unvarnished frankness." Up to this point, the federal cabinet—as reported—has consulted about the memorandum once, but an official statement on it is not expected until the coming spring.

So far, churches and charitable organizations have expressed their approval, Kühn explained. Some of the objections, however, were so outlandish that it seemed as though "anti-Semitic stereotypes from the 1930s were the model for anti-Turkish stereotypes of the 1970s." Kühn warned emphatically against a new German "racial arrogance" and a new two-tiered society in which "high-quality" jobs would be reserved for German workers and "low-quality, dirty ones" for foreigners.

Kühn spoke out decisively against any and all "national classes" in schools, which have been demanded above all by Greek parent associations and Greek government representatives—also in Stuttgart. "We

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don't want to bind anyone to us," Kühn said, "and we don't want forced Germanization either. But national classes are part of ghettoization." The preparatory classes for foreign children, which, in practice, often became "national schools" for the entire period of their compulsory schooling, should be limited to one year, he said. They should be under the exclusive jurisdiction of the German school administration. "I don't want any Islamic schools in which a Khomeini ideology might be taught," he said to enthusiastic applause. Kühn demanded that 600 million DM be made available annually for his integration program from preschool to vocational training.

Taking the Kühn memorandum and the new political approach to the problems of non-German families and their children as their point of departure, the fifteen working groups discussed a list of demands that was oriented towards direct assistance in daycare facilities and schools, in vocational training, and in work with youths and parents.

Only in one working group did massive and tumultuous disputes arise. Here the Greek parents' associations, whose members had come in groups mainly from Berlin, Munich, and Frankfurt, dominated the discussion and narrowly prevailed over other Greek and Turkish representatives in rejecting integration and the political goals of the Kühn memorandum. They adamantly insisted on Greek national classes, with their primary justification being the planned return of the children to Greece at some future, albeit unspecified, time. On Sunday, when the working group leaders presented the results of the discussion, those parent associations dominated the proceedings again, since many of the other participants from Saturday had already departed. Their vociferous protest against integration triggered a flood of press releases by other participating groups of foreigners and parent associations who spoke out in favor of equality and integration.

Source: Jutta Roitsch, "Kühn warnt Deutsche vor einem neuen rassistischen Hochmut," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, December 17, 1979. Republished with permission.

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