

ARTICLE

# ‘An Invasion of Guest Worker Children’: Welfare Reform and the Stigmatisation of Family Migration in West Germany

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## Abstract

This article examines the effects of the 1974 child allowance reform on guest worker families in West Germany. As part of a wider reform, West Germany implemented a two-tiered system of child allowances whereby migrant parents received more money for children who lived in the European Economic Community (EEC) than for children who lived outside the EEC. Migrants protested the reform and with it the assumptions of the guest worker programme. However, these parents had to contend with a popular narrative whereby foreign parents who brought their children to West Germany after the reform were in fact irresponsible ‘welfare migrants’ who placed their desire for financial gain over their children’s need for a stable environment. The idea that this specific welfare reform had been the trigger for large-scale family migration not only discouraged further investigation of the causes of family migration but was also used to support new restrictions on that migration.

The Turkish Workers’ Choir of West Berlin released the ‘*Kindergeld* epic’ as a single in summer 1974. Sung to the tune of ‘Santa Claus Comes Tomorrow’,<sup>1</sup> the song responded to the recent announcement of a reform to the child allowance system in West Germany. One aspect of the larger reform meant that parents would now receive a smaller child allowance (*Kindergeld*) for children who lived outside of the European Economic Community (EEC). The song suggested one potential solution:

When the children in Turkey  
No longer receive *Kindergeld*  
What is left for us to do?  
Don’t wait, send the money  
Let us bring the children here!

Every day the aeroplane flies  
Flies with many children  
The children who live here  
What will become of them?<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> English speakers will recognise the tune as ‘Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star’. For more on the Turkish Workers’ Choir, see Edda Brandes, Dieter Hauerand and Marcella Hoffmann, ‘Der Türkische Arbeiterchor in West Berlin (1979)’, in Max Peter Baumann, ed., *Musik der Türken in Deutschland* (Kassel: Yvonne Landeck, 1985), 81–92.

<sup>2</sup> My translation of the Turkish lyrics recorded from the single. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. The German translation of the lyrics is also printed in Werkkreis Literatur der Arbeitswelt, ed., *Mein Vaterland ist international: Texte zur Solidarität* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1976), 136–8.

The song suggested that the state's plan to cut costs on children living abroad might backfire when aeroplanes full of those same children arrived in West Germany. The line 'what will become of them?' and the first line of the next verse, 'the back courtyard is dark/there are too many in one room' introduces a note of anxiety: was the West German state in fact prepared to assume the reproductive costs of guest worker families?

Max Frisch's famous aphorism about the Swiss guest worker programme – 'a small master race feels itself in danger: labour was called for, but people came'<sup>3</sup> – is often cited by scholars of guest worker programmes as a reminder that these programmes attempt to separate waged labour from the domestic requirements of the people who perform it, effectively to outsource the problems of reproduction.<sup>4</sup> Guest workers are invited to work in the receiving country when they are young and healthy, but to perform the time-consuming and expensive tasks of raising children and growing old elsewhere. The migrants themselves are also supposed to reap economic benefits by selling their labour in the receiving country, where it is expensive, and supporting their family in their country of origin, where the cost of reproduction is lower.

West Germany first began recruiting guest workers to fuel the economic miracle in 1955. This recruitment continued until the state imposed a ban on new labour migration in November 1973, at which time West Germany was home to approximately 3 million foreigners (3.6 per cent of the total population) primarily from six countries: Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey. Although the state initially presented the recruitment stop (*Anwerbestopp*) as a short-term response to the oil crisis, historians have shown that it resulted from longer conversations between West Germany and other European governments about the long-term social consequences of migration.<sup>5</sup> The recruitment stop for labourers ultimately became a permanent stop, but migration continued in the form of family migration.

In this article I examine how contemporaries – both policy makers and migrants – understood and narrated family migration after the recruitment stop. I argue that two separate policy decisions – the 1973 recruitment stop and a separate 1974 law reforming the child benefit system – had mutually reinforcing effects that changed public perception of migration into West Germany. After these two events family migration was persistently narrated as a form of selfish 'welfare migration' in which foreign families sought increased child allowances while pretending to migrate for more justifiable reasons. Flexible movement of productive labour in the form of guest workers had been useful while the economy was growing, but 'after the boom' the similarly flexible movement of child dependents was experienced as a threat.<sup>6</sup> Narratives that cast foreign children as 'invaders' of German national space reflected the fear that the state had unleashed a development it could no longer control and fused anxieties about the long-term social impacts of migration with anxieties about dependency on the welfare state.

The primary source base for the article is the papers of the responsible federal ministries. Throughout the period Chancellor Willy Brandt and then Chancellor Helmut Schmidt led a series of social-liberal governing coalitions between their party, the Social Democrats (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*; SPD), and the Free Democrats (*Freie Demokratische Partei*; FDP). The three most important ministries for the child benefit reform were the Labour Ministry, which was controlled

<sup>3</sup> Max Frisch, *Siamo Italiani/Die Italiener: Gespräche mit italienischen Arbeitern in der Schweiz*, ed. Alexander J. Seiler (Zürich: EVZ Verlag, 1965), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Cindy Hahamovitch, *No Man's Land: Jamaican Guestworkers in America and the Global History of Deportable Labor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 9, and 'Creating Perfect Immigrants: Guestworkers of the World in Historical Perspective', *Labor History*, 44, 1 (2003), 69–94. The historiography on guest workers in West Germany is extensive: Monika Mattes has been most explicit about this dichotomy of production and reproduction in the West German context in her book *'Gastarbeiterinnen' in der Bundesrepublik: Anwerbepolitik, Migration und Geschlecht in den 50er bis 70er Jahren* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Marcel Berlinghoff, *Das Ende der 'Gastarbeit'. Der Anwerbestopp in Westeuropa 1970–1974* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Anselm Doering-Manteuffel and Lutz Raphael, *Nach dem Boom: Perspektiven auf die Zeitgeschichte seit 1970* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008).

by the SPD, and the Interior and Foreign Ministries, both of which were controlled by the FDP. Although each ministry saw the problem of child migration slightly differently, this was largely due to their different areas of responsibility rather than a matter of contention between parties. The overwhelming impression is of a settled consensus about child migration as a form of 'welfare migration' shared not only by key players inside the governing coalition but also by the centre-right party then in opposition, the Christian Democratic Union (*Christlich Demokratische Union*; CDU).

The article also shows how migrants responded to the reform by forming multinational committees to demand equal child allowances irrespective of the child's location.<sup>7</sup> I examine the protests using flyers held at the Cologne-based Documentation Centre and Museum of Migration in Germany (DOMiD), the archives of social work agencies and unions and a number of publications created by migrants. Although guest workers and their allies developed compelling arguments against two-tiered child allowances, widespread protest was ineffective in changing this policy.

This is a history of unintended consequences. Although the architects of the child benefit reform did not intend to influence migration policy, the decision to create two-tiered child allowances for children who lived abroad offered contemporaries a deceptively simple explanation for post-1974 family migration. The idea that child migrants were in fact 'welfare migrants' produced an active disinterest in interrogating other causes of family migration, ultimately obscuring the longer history of family migration and erasing the multiple, highly individualised reasons that families decided to migrate. By insinuating that foreign families were held together by welfare rather than by emotional bonds, state officials suggested that 'family reunification' was being pursued for illegitimate reasons. Because of the child benefit reform, foreign parents who brought their children to West Germany after 1974 had to defend themselves against accusations of welfare seeking. The image of the 'child benefit migrant' became part of the case for increasingly restrictive migration policies throughout the late 1970s and 1980s.

### Child Allowances for Foreign Workers

West Germany introduced child allowances in 1954, when they were an employer funded benefit that began with the third child and that was linked tightly to the place of employment. Families with children also benefited from tax credits, although said credits were more advantageous for higher income families.<sup>8</sup> The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) first discussed the problem of child allowances for cross-border workers in 1955: should employers pay the benefits that corresponded to the place where the work was being performed or those that corresponded to where the child was being raised? France, Belgium and Luxembourg, all countries with comparatively higher allowances, voted for paying child benefit based on the child's place of residence. France had a particular interest in this 'residence principle' because it wanted to continue the policy of paying smaller child allowances to Algerian workers who worked in France and raised their children in Algeria.<sup>9</sup> West Germany joined

<sup>7</sup> Simon Goeke mentions these protests in passing when he argues for political activism as central to the history of migration in 'The Multinational Working Class? Political Activism and Labour Migration in West Germany During the 1960s and 1970s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 49, 1 (2014), 160–82, while sociologist Manuela Bojadžijev describes these protests as the harbinger of a new kind of migrant politics focused on the conditions of reproduction in *Die windige Internationale: Rassismus und Kämpfe der Migration* (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2008), 219–24.

<sup>8</sup> By the end of the 1950s over 70 per cent of all families with two or more children were in fact exempt from income tax altogether, and thus received no benefit from these tax credits. Christiane Kuller, *Familienpolitik im föderativen Sozialstaat: Die Formierung eines Politikfeldes in der Bundesrepublik 1949–1975* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2004), 160. For accounts of the establishment of child allowances in West Germany, see Kuller, *Familienpolitik*, 155–76; Dagmar Nelleßen-Strauch, *Der Kampf um das Kindergeld: Grundanschauungen, Konzeptionen und Gesetzgebung 1949–1964* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 2003); Merith Niehuss, 'French and German Family Policy 1945–60', *Contemporary European History*, 4, 3 (1995), 293–313 and Robert G. Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood: Women and the Family in the Politics of Postwar West Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 109–41.

<sup>9</sup> Amelia H. Lyons, *The Civilizing Mission in the Metropole: Algerian Families and the French Welfare State during Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 94–8, 147–50.

the Netherlands and Italy – all countries with comparatively lower allowances – in voting for child benefit based on the place of employment.<sup>10</sup>

West Germany first put the ‘employment principle’ into practice in 1955 when it negotiated a labour contract with Italy that included child allowance payments for Italians in West Germany.<sup>11</sup> Given the competition over labour within Europe, German employers worried that it would be difficult to attract workers without a full programme of benefits, so that subsequent labour recruitment agreements with countries outside of the EEC also included family allowances. The Spanish and Greek governments both wanted to promote family stability, and their initial agreements stipulated that child allowances would only be paid for children living outside of West Germany for two years. In practice, these limits were dropped almost as soon as they were reached, as officials and employers agreed that persistent housing shortages meant that workers should not have to justify their failure to reunite in order to continue to receive child allowances.<sup>12</sup> This decision to drop the two-year limit was a tacit acceptance of the split between production and reproduction that characterised the guest worker regime: employers were happy to pay full child allowances as long as children were not demanding housing in West Germany.

Turkey had no child allowances, which made the April 1964 social security agreement with Turkey the first time that West Germany had extended a welfare benefit to nationals of a state that did not offer a reciprocal benefit.<sup>13</sup> This unprecedented decision was in part a response to migrant protest. Turkish workers began coming to West Germany in October 1961, and when they realised that their Spanish, Portuguese and Greek colleagues were receiving child benefits despite not being EEC citizens, they quickly made their displeasure known, arguing that recruiters had promised them equal treatment.<sup>14</sup> Workers in Essen even went on strike over the issue.<sup>15</sup> Turkish diplomats secured a verbal agreement that West Germany would begin paying child allowances to their children in June 1963, almost a year before the official agreement was ratified.<sup>16</sup> Although the Finance Ministry objected to the plan, they were overruled by the Labour Ministry and Foreign Ministry, both of which argued that it was important to uphold the principle of equal treatment that the workers had cited in their protests.<sup>17</sup>

During the same period, in which increasing numbers of non-citizens were receiving child allowances for their non-citizen children, the responsibility for those payments was also being shifted from

<sup>10</sup> Niehuss, ‘French and German Family Policy’, 310–1, and Emmanuel Comte, *The History of the European Migration Regime: Germany's Strategic Hegemony* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 63–6.

<sup>11</sup> Bundesministerium für Arbeit [BMA] to Bundeskanzleramt, ‘Betrifft: Zahlung von Kindergeld an italienische Arbeitnehmer in der Bundesrepublik’, 10 Dec. 1955, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes [PAAA] B 85/886.

<sup>12</sup> Bundesanstalt für Arbeit to BMA, ‘Betr.: Abkommen zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und dem spanischen Staat über Soziale Sicherheit; hier: Zweitkindergeld für spanische Arbeitnehmer’, 3 Jan. 1963; ‘Deutsch-spanisches Abkommen über Soziale Sicherheit; hier: Aufhebung des Artikels 40 Absatz 1 Nr. 3 des Abkommens und des Artikels 45 der Zusatzvereinbarung (zeitliche Beschränkung der Gewährung von Kindergeld an spanische Arbeitnehmer, deren Kinder in Spanien wohnen)’, 26 Mar. 1963 and ‘Abkommen vom 15. Mai 1964 zur Änderung des Abkommens vom 29. Oktober 1959 zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und dem Spanischen Staat über Soziale Sicherheit’, 8 Jul. 1964, Bundesarchiv Koblenz [BAK] B 149/22628.

<sup>13</sup> Ulrich Herbert and Karin Hunn, ‘Gastarbeiter und Gastarbeiterpolitik in der Bundesrepublik. Vom Beginn der offiziellen Anwerbestopp (1955–1973)’, in Axel Schildt, Detlef Siegfried and Karl Christian Lammers, eds., *Dynamische Zeiten: Die 60er Jahre in den beiden deutschen Gesellschaften* (Hamburg: Christians, 2000), 273–310, 284.

<sup>14</sup> Karin Hunn, ‘Nächstes Jahr kehren wir zurück...’ *Die Geschichte der türkischen ‘Gastarbeiter’ in der Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2005), 67–9 and Ahmet Akgündüz, *Labour Migration from Turkey to Western Europe, 1960–1974: A Multidisciplinary Analysis* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 119–20.

<sup>15</sup> Jennifer A. Miller, *Turkish Guest Workers in Germany: Hidden Lives and Contested Borders, 1960s–1980s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 138–9.

<sup>16</sup> Akgündüz, *Labour Migration*, 119–20.

<sup>17</sup> BMA to Auswärtiges Amt [AA], Bundesministerium der Finanzen, Bundesministerium des Innern [BMI], Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft and Bundesministerium für Familie und Jugend, ‘Betr.: Kindergeld für türkische Arbeitnehmer, deren Kinder in der Türkei wohnen’, 8. Nov. 1962 and ‘Betr.: Kindergeld für türkische Arbeitnehmer, deren Kinder in der Türkei wohnen’, 14 Dec. 1962, BAK B 119/3071.

employers to the state. In April 1961 child allowances were extended to the second child – 25 DM per month for the second child and 40 DM per month for subsequent children – and also became subject to dual financing, with the state and employers now sharing the cost of the measure. In April 1964 the payments were raised once again – still 25 DM per month for the second child, but now 50 DM for the third, 60 DM for the fourth and 70 DM for every subsequent child. The state took on full responsibility for these higher payments in 1964.<sup>18</sup> The Labour Ministry discussed whether it was still appropriate to pay child allowances to foreign workers,<sup>19</sup> but attempts to negotiate new agreements with the sending countries met a chilly reception.<sup>20</sup>

### The 1974 Family Allowance Reform and its Impact on Foreigners

In 1974 West Germany passed a significant reform to its family welfare system. Tax credits for families with children were eliminated in favour of all children receiving a higher direct cash payment. The state now took on the responsibility of providing a child allowance for every child, independent of their parents' employment status.<sup>21</sup> Parents would now receive 50 DM per month for the first child, 70 DM per month for the second and 120 DM per month for the third and beyond. This new approach to supporting families significantly increased the burden on state coffers: the state had paid 3 billion DM in child allowances in 1974 but was projected to pay 14.6 billion DM in 1975.<sup>22</sup>

How did foreigners fit into this new approach? Foreign workers comprised 11 per cent of the work force in 1973, but because they had larger families than West Germans on average, they were receiving 20 per cent of all child allowances.<sup>23</sup> As Christiane Kuller has shown, when employers had been partially responsible for funding child allowances, child benefits and the associated tax credits were understood as part of the labour contract whereby employers and the state worked to equalise the burden of raising children within classes. However, after 1974 the state promised to provide a 'family wage' to every family, funded by taxation and independent of the labour market.<sup>24</sup> By deemphasising the role of the labour relationship and employer contributions in favour of the state–citizen relationship and taxation, child allowances were now understood as part of a social contract rather than a labour contract. The state was less interested in paying money for foreign children who were not expected to grow up to become West German taxpayers.

The question of what to do with foreign children was first raised between the Family Ministry and the Labour Ministry in 1971.<sup>25</sup> The Labour Ministry disliked the idea of paying foreign children higher benefits, arguing that it would have undesirable effects by stimulating further reproduction in countries that were already trying to export surplus population.<sup>26</sup> One official extrapolated this argument into the future, writing that it 'would fuel a further population explosion in Turkey, with the

<sup>18</sup> Ursula Münch, 'Familien-, Jugend- und Altenpolitik', in Michael Ruck and Marcel Boldorf, eds., *Geschichte der Sozialpolitik in Deutschland seit 1945. Band 4* (Baden Baden: Nomos Verlag, 2007), 574.

<sup>19</sup> 'Niederschrift über die Besprechung . . . am 11. September 1964 im BMA', BAK B 149/46772.

<sup>20</sup> 'Betr.: Reform des Familienlastenausgleichs; hier: Kündigung der Abkommen über Soziale Sicherheit mit Spanien, Griechenland, Türkei, Portugal und Jugoslawien', 24 May 1974, PAAA B 85/1131.

<sup>21</sup> For a comprehensive account of the reform that does not focus on the consequences for foreign workers, see Kuller, *Familienpolitik*, 214–22.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>23</sup> 'Betr.: Reform des Familienlastenausgleichs; hier: Gewährung von Kinderentlastungen an ausländische Arbeitnehmer', 1 Oct. 1973, BAK B 149/46813.

<sup>24</sup> Kuller, *Familienpolitik*, 214–22.

<sup>25</sup> The Labour Ministry was responsible for the international aspects of the child benefit reform. Karen Schönwälder looks at interministerial disputes about guest worker policy in *Einwanderung und ethnische Pluralität. Politische Entscheidungen und öffentliche Debatten in Großbritannien und der Bundesrepublik von den 1950er bis zu den 1970er Jahren* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2001).

<sup>26</sup> 'Betr.: Reform des Familienlastenausgleichs; hier: Besprechung zwischen Abteilung VI und Abteilung II am 7. September 1971 über die Gewährung von Kindergeld an ausländische Arbeitnehmer für ihre im Heimatland lebenden Kinder', 15 Sep. 1971, BAK B 149/46809 and 'Betr.: Reform des Familienlastenausgleichs; Regelung von Tatbeständen mit Auslandsbeziehungen', 22 Feb. 1972, BAK B 149/46811.

consequence that the pressure on the West German labour market would become even greater'.<sup>27</sup> The Labour Ministry consequently preferred a solution that did not involve paying higher benefits to foreign children.

The Family Ministry worried that it would be unfair to revoke tax credits for foreign children but not pay them the higher child allowances and made this argument by invoking the Basic Law of West Germany, specifically Article 6 – 'Marriage and the family shall enjoy the special protection of the state'. At this point in the debate, the Interior and Justice Ministries both explained that Article 6 only applied to foreigners in a negative sense: it protected them from 'state encroachment' but did not obligate the state to their positive support in the form of child allowances.<sup>28</sup> With the constitutional question clarified, the Family Ministry and the Economics Ministry both came to agree with the Labour Ministry that paying higher allowances for children who lived abroad would be a form of 'false development policy'.<sup>29</sup> The Labour Ministry believed that public opinion already opposed any child allowances being paid to foreign children and that paying more money to those children would only 'sharpen this criticism' and lead to 'domestic unrest'.<sup>30</sup>

The Labour Ministry worried that if they paid the new higher allowances, 'an even stronger population explosion would have to be feared, especially in Turkey', but if they failed to pay anything to children who lived abroad, 'one would have to expect an unstoppable flow of particularly Turkish children into the Federal Republic'.<sup>31</sup> In order to solve this problem, their preferred solution was for West Germany to follow the French model and to create a two-tiered system of child allowances, with parents receiving different amounts based on the location of their children. The Finance and Labour Ministries both believed that paying a partial child allowance for children who lived abroad would place a partial brake on child migration, but their position was not uncontested. The Federal Labour Office (*Bundesanstalt für Arbeit*), the independent federal agency in charge of foreign labour recruitment, warned that two-tiered allowances would create a permanent threat of fraud by inspiring foreign workers to bring their children for a short period to register them in West Germany before sending the children back home.<sup>32</sup> The Foreign Ministry opposed the two-tiered plan from the outset, believing that it would inevitably cause child migration, such that 'in the end no savings will be achieved' and in fact there would be 'additional costs on our already strained social infrastructure'.<sup>33</sup>

When the Labour Ministry finally presented the new plan to the public in the spring of 1974, it described two-tiered child allowances as a necessary corrective to an 'exceedingly generous' previous policy.<sup>34</sup> Family allowances were intended to 'minimise', but not to 'eliminate', the extra costs of raising a child. If the larger amounts were sent to 'countries with a lower standard of living . . . the child related economic burdens of foreign parents would be completely lifted from their shoulders'.<sup>35</sup> Had

<sup>27</sup> Abteilung II to Herr Minister, 'Betr.: Reform des Familienlastenausgleichs; hier: Leistungen für Kinder im Ausland', 1 Apr. 1974, BAK B 149/46815.

<sup>28</sup> Bundesministerium für Jugend, Familie, und Gesundheit [BMJFG] to BMI and Bundesministerium der Justiz [BMJ], 'Betr.: Reform des Familienlastenausgleichs... hier: Verfassungsrechtliche Fragen', 23 Sep. 1971 and BMI to BMJFG, BMA, and BMJ, 'Betr.: Reform des Familienlastenausgleichs... hier: Verfassungsrechtliche Fragen', 21. Oct 1971, BAK B 149/46809, and BMJ to BMJFG and BMA, 'Betr.: Reform des Familienlastenausgleichs', 20 Dec. 1971, BAK B 149/46810.

<sup>29</sup> 'Ergebnisniederschrift über die Ressortbesprechung am 20. April 1972 betr. Reform des Familienlastenausgleichs', 26 Apr. 1972, BAK B 149/46811.

<sup>30</sup> Abteilung VI to Abteilung II, 'Betr.: Reform des Familienlastenausgleichs; Regelung von Tatbeständen mit Auslandsbeziehungen', 22 Feb. 1972, BAK B 149/46811.

<sup>31</sup> Abteilung I 'Betrifft: Referentenentwurf eines Dritten Steuerreformgesetzes; hier: Einzelfragen zum Einkommensteuergesetz', 17 Oct. 1973, BAK B 149/46813.

<sup>32</sup> Bundesanstalt für Arbeit to BMA, 'Betreff: Reform des Kinderlastenausgleichs', 8 Feb. 1974, BAK B 149/46815.

<sup>33</sup> AA to BMA, 23 Apr. 1974, PAAA B 85/1131.

<sup>34</sup> Hartmut Leder, 'Für Ausländer weniger?', *Bundesarbeitsblatt*, 1 (1975), 38 and 'Argumentationskatalog. Kindergeld für ausländische Arbeitnehmer', 8 Jul. 1974, PAAA B 85/1131.

<sup>35</sup> Abteilung VI to Abteilung II, 'Betr.: Reform des Familienlastenausgleichs; Regelung von Tatbeständen mit Auslandsbeziehungen', 22 Feb. 1972, BAK B 149/46811.

equal child allowances been implemented, ‘one would have been able to speak of discrimination against those who raised their children in Germany’.<sup>36</sup> The other ministries followed the Labour Ministry’s lead. Family Minister Katharina Focke of the SPD contributed an article making a very similar argument to the newsletter of the German Confederation of Trade Unions,<sup>37</sup> while the Economics Ministry assured concerned social workers that the change was ‘only the partial dismantling of a privilege’.<sup>38</sup> Sociologist Margret Kuhn, who had previously worried that child allowances for foreigners were allowing West Germany to become ‘Mediterraneanised’, greeted the reform in the official magazine of the SPD, writing that paying equal child allowances would be ‘probably unconstitutional . . . the Germans would have every reason to protest’.<sup>39</sup> The article announcing the child allowance reform in the official *Federal Labour Gazette* (*Bundesarbeitsblatt*) also ended with a warning against child migration: although the economy would continue to depend on guest workers, the West German ‘capacity for integration’ would always make it impossible for those guest workers to bring their families ‘in the numbers in which they desire’.<sup>40</sup>

### Negotiating the Reform with Foreign States

Child allowances for foreign workers were regulated by Social Security Agreements that West Germany had previously negotiated with each of the sending countries, as described in the first section of this article. The Labour Ministry had been the most influential in devising the new policy of two-tiered child allowances, which it calculated should save the state close to one billion DM every year.<sup>41</sup> Although the Foreign Ministry was sceptical of the cost savings, it was responsible for renegotiating the bilateral agreements, which regulated not just child allowances, but also a variety of other welfare benefits, including health insurance, unemployment insurance and pension payments.

The Spanish government was the first to sign a new agreement in June 1974. According to the new agreement, children who lived in West Germany were to be paid 50 DM for the first child, 70 DM for the second child and 120 DM for the third child and beyond, while children who lived in Spain would be paid 10 DM for the first child, 25 DM for the second, 60 for the third and fourth and 70 for the fifth child and beyond. Officials settled on the cheapest possible solution for families where children lived in both locations, which explicitly disincentivised the maintenance of transnational families: children in West Germany and abroad were both counted starting as ‘the first child’ – four children, two in each place, would earn 50 and 70 DM for the two in West Germany and 10 and 25 DM for the two at home.<sup>42</sup> The payments for children abroad were almost identical to those before the reform, but because tax credits for children were also disappearing, workers with large families who lived abroad would in fact experience a reduction in their take-home pay.<sup>43</sup> Spain did receive the concession that foreigners could receive the higher child allowances for children living outside of West Germany once they had lived and worked in West Germany for at least fifteen years.<sup>44</sup>

During the negotiations with Yugoslavia, the Yugoslavian Ambassador argued that the change was intended to create a wave of child migration, while the Yugoslavian Confederation of Trade Unions feared that the new policy was meant to promote the assimilation of Yugoslavian workers in West Germany. The national press service even originally claimed incorrectly that the reform only applied

<sup>36</sup> Leder, ‘Für Ausländer weniger?’, 37.

<sup>37</sup> Katharina Focke, ‘Keine Diskriminierung ausländischer Arbeitnehmer’, *Welt der Arbeit*, 19 July 1974.

<sup>38</sup> Werner Steinjan to Helmut Class, 26 Nov. 1974, Archiv des Evangelisches Werkes für Diakonie [AEWD], PB 940.

<sup>39</sup> Margret Kuhn, ‘Kindergeld, Entwicklungshilfe und Bevölkerungsexplosion’, *Sozialer Fortschritt*, 22, 6 (1973), 132–3 and ‘Kindergeld für Gastarbeiter – ein ernstes Problem’, *Sozialer Fortschritt*, 24, 3 (1975), 59.

<sup>40</sup> Leder, ‘Für Ausländer weniger?’, 38.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Betr.: Reform des Familienlastenausgleichs; hier: Einleitung von Verhandlungen über die Änderung der kindergeldrechtlichen Bestimmungen der Abkommen über Soziale Sicherheit’, May 1974, PAAA B 85/1131.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Betr.: Deutsch-türkische Verhandlung über Kindergeld’, 28 Jul. 1974, BAK B 149/47272.

<sup>43</sup> Katholischer Arbeitskreis für Fragen Ausländischer Arbeitnehmer to AA and BMA, ‘Betr.: Familienlastenausgleich bei ausländischen Arbeitnehmern’, 20 Jun. 1974, BAK B 149/46818.

<sup>44</sup> Leder, ‘Für Ausländer weniger?’, 33.

to Yugoslavia – because Germans only wanted to force the assimilation of their children.<sup>45</sup> Yugoslavian workers also picked up on these arguments in a 1979 petition protesting that West Germany was attempting to reverse its own declining birth rate through the ‘Germanisation’ of Yugoslavian children.<sup>46</sup> The argument that child allowances were a weapon of assimilation may have found particularly fertile ground in Yugoslavia because of memories of the campaign for the forced Germanisation of Yugoslavian children during the Second World War.<sup>47</sup>

Greece and Turkey did not interpret the reform through the ‘Germanisation’ lens in the same way as Yugoslavia, but both used the Turkish military invasion of Cyprus in July 1974 as a reason to cancel the initial meetings set for the negotiations. The Schmidt cabinet subsequently voted to cancel the social security agreements despite the Foreign Ministry’s warning that Greece and Turkey would interpret this unilateral cancellation as an act of aggression. Unilateral cancellation effectively forced the two countries to accept the terms that had been given to Spain in order to prevent the broader agreement from going out of effect, a decision that would have disrupted not only child benefits but also a range of other social welfare provisions.<sup>48</sup>

The bilateral negotiations between Turkey and West Germany were particularly tense because Turkish guest workers were the most likely to have children living in Turkey – indeed, Bonn estimated that Turkish children were responsible for two-thirds of all child allowances paid to children living abroad. In these negotiations, West Germany stuck to the official framing of the policy, arguing that the true victims of the current policy were West German workers, who could not offshore their reproductive costs by sending their children to grow up in cheaper countries. Diplomats also presented the current regulation as a source of ‘discrimination’ for Turkish children living in Turkey ‘depending on whether their father works in the Federal Republic or in the homeland [*Heimat*]’.<sup>49</sup>

Turkish diplomats countered by adopting the language of ‘strained infrastructure’ that had been used to justify the end of labour recruitment less than a year prior, informing West Germany that if the proposed two-tiered allowances were implemented, ‘the Turkish government must give advance warning of adverse consequences for German infrastructure, since the planned reform would lead to Turks working in Germany bringing their children to the Federal Republic’. In response, the West German diplomats replied that they did not plan to take any responsibility for those children:

Turkey cannot be indifferent to the fate of Turkish children brought to Germany *only in the expectation of a higher net income*. The Federal Republic is not an immigration country and will therefore not raise these children to be Germans. A good portion of these children will therefore return to Turkey at some point. Furthermore, the German side must if necessary defend itself with the measures that stand at our disposal against the strain on infrastructure that is no longer sustainable.<sup>50</sup>

In these negotiations, both sides implicitly accepted the idea that West Germany was ‘not an immigration country’ and therefore not a good place for Turkish children. West German diplomats insinuated that those Turkish parents who brought their children to West Germany could only be acting out of a selfish desire for ‘a higher net income’ and a disregard for the future of their children. The moralising tone taken by officials in this negotiation underlined the fact that the conceit of the guest

<sup>45</sup> German Embassy in Belgrade to AA telegram ‘Betr.: Reform des Familienlastenausgleichs’, 17 Jul. 1974, PAAA B 85/1381.

<sup>46</sup> ‘Entschließung aus der Personalversammlung für jugoslawische Arbeiter beim Bahnhof Hamburg Süd vom 04.12.1979’, BAK B 149/96205.

<sup>47</sup> Christopher A. Molnar, ‘Imagining Yugoslavs: Migration and the Cold War in Postwar West Germany’, *Central European History*, 47, 1 (2014), 138–69.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Betr.: Reform des Familienlastenausgleichs; hier: Kündigung des deutsch-türkischen und des deutsch-griechischen Sozialversicherungsabkommens’ and ‘Sprechzettel für die Kabinettsitzung am 31. Juli 1974’, 24 Jul. 1974, PAAA B 85/1381.

<sup>49</sup> German Embassy in Ankara to AA, ‘Betr.: Reform des Familienlastenausgleichs; hier: Verhandlungen zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Republik Türkei’, 11 Oct. 1974, PAAA B 85/1383.

<sup>50</sup> Emphasis mine. German Embassy in Ankara to AA, ‘Betr.: Reform des Familienlastenausgleichs; hier: Verhandlungen zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Republik Türkei’, 11 Oct. 1974, PAAA B 85/1383.



worker had never been solely about the harmonious overlap of the economic interests of West German employers and foreign employees. Rather, the guest worker was also a form of migration intended to keep the national community closed to foreigners except as a source of waged labour. West Germany had utterly failed to anticipate the possible long-term consequences of giving work permits to millions of foreigners, but during these negotiations, Bonn persistently argued that it was foreign parents who were acting without regard for their children's futures.

### Migrant Responses to the Child Allowance Reform

After the reform was announced, migrants organised 'child allowance committees' in at least nineteen different cities across West Germany in order to protest the proposed two-tiered child allowances, holding at least one joint meeting in Essen to coordinate their messages.<sup>51</sup> These committees were often supported by pre-existing organisations including the Nuremberg Foreigners' Council, the Spanish Parents' Association and socialist and communist organisations (including Lotta Continua of Italy, the European Federation of Turkish Socialists and Workers' Commissions affiliated with the Spanish Communist Party). The largest single demonstration was organised by the 'National Committee of Spaniards against Child Allowances', which funded buses to bring a multinational group of 3,500 guest workers to Frankfurt from cities across the country. The protest march was announced as a demonstration of the 'international working class', with flyers announcing that the date of 17 November had been chosen in order to coincide with the first democratic elections in Greece since the establishment of the military junta in 1967.<sup>52</sup>

Protests replicated similar arguments in multiple locations. Part of the state's argument in favour of two-tiered child allowances rested on the fact that child allowances were no longer funded by employers, but by taxes, and 'tax revenue must be used according to necessity'.<sup>53</sup> Migrant activists protested that they also paid taxes, and that it was unfair that while tax credits had been eliminated for all children, only children in West Germany were being compensated with higher child allowances. As one Spanish flyer declared, 'when we pay taxes we are Germans, but when we receive income we are foreigners'.<sup>54</sup> Protest slogans also included 'we resist because we pay the same taxes and do not get the same rights' and 'are our taxes worth less than German taxes?'.<sup>55</sup> The editor of the newsletter of the Spanish Parents' Association worried that this might be the first step towards cutting other welfare benefits, writing 'we demand the same child allowances for children living at home today in order to prevent our pensions being cut once we return home tomorrow, using the argument that life is cheaper there than it would be here'.<sup>56</sup>

The 'child allowance committees' also frequently criticised the expectation of family separation inherent in the idea of the guest worker. While labour migration enabled migrants to provide for their children in a way that was impossible at home, the West German state's failure to provide social infrastructure, particularly to provide family housing, also forced them to live apart from their families.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Jose Sanchez, 'Kindergeld ¡Discriminacion!', *Carta a los Padres*, Dec. 1974, and 'Alemania. Frankfurt: Una Leccion de Provecho', *Lucha Obrera*, 24 (1975), 7.

<sup>52</sup> 'Alle zur Nationalen Kindergelddemo!' DOMiD FL0050 and 'El 17 De Noviembre en Frankfurt/El Sindicato Nos Dejo en La Estacada!', 30 Oct. 1974, Staatsarchiv Hamburg 136-3, Nr. 8. The multinational character of the Spanish organised demonstration is also particularly stressed by '3 Bin yabancı işçi Çocuk Parası için Frankfurt'ta yürüyüş yaptı', *Tercüman*, 19 Nov. 1974.

<sup>53</sup> Leder, 'Für Ausländer weniger?', 36.

<sup>54</sup> DGB Landesbezirk Niedersachsen to DGB Abt. AA, 'Betrifft: Internationales Komitee', 19 Jul. 1974, Archiv des Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbundes im Archiv der Sozialen Demokratie [DGB Archive] 5/DGAZ 624.

<sup>55</sup> '3 Bin yabancı işçi Çocuk Parası için Frankfurt'ta yürüyüş yaptı', *Tercüman* 19 Nov. 1974, and 'Gastarbeiter protestieren gegen die geplante Kindergeldregelung', *General-Anzeiger*, 1 Jul. 1974.

<sup>56</sup> Manuel Rojas, 'Heute das Kindergeld, morgen vielleicht die Rente', *Carta a los Padres*, Feb. 1979.

<sup>57</sup> Housing shortages have been discussed extensively in the literature on guest workers, including Miller, *Turkish Guest Workers*, chapter three, and Barbara Sonnenberger, *Nationale Migrationspolitik und regionale Erfahrung. Die Anfänge der Arbeitsmigration in Südhessen 1955–1967* (Darmstadt: Hessisches Wirtschaftsarchiv, 2003), chapter four.

To quote a speaker at the rally in Frankfurt, ‘we want to bring our children, but there is no housing. There is no space in the schools’.<sup>58</sup> A flyer for the demonstration in Bonn asked ‘where are the houses, the places in kindergartens and schools? How much more will the German state have to spend on these facilities than on child allowances? What will the Germans do later with two million inadequately educated children. . . the lawmaker is taking back rights that already existed! But does that create schools?’<sup>59</sup> Gerhard Braun, a Bundestag representative for the CDU, attended a similar protest in his home district of Remscheid and was alarmed when ‘over 100 guest workers declared that they would bring their families from Spain to Germany’. He wrote to the Labour Ministry to ask whether they were aware of this threat, explaining that it would ‘create not insignificant difficulties for the municipalities, because kindergartens and schools cannot be created overnight’.<sup>60</sup>

Child allowance activism also included demands for better conditions for foreign families in West Germany. In 1973 the municipality of Nuremberg had created a Foreigners’ Council, the first advisory board in West Germany whose members were directly chosen by immigrants. One of its first actions was to organise a letter writing campaign based on the question: ‘is the state able to guarantee that all of the children of foreign workers who are currently living abroad can be brought through family reunification, and is it ready to prepare the additional social institutions that will be necessary?’ The Spanish Parents’ Association used a similar argument in its organised letter writing campaign, which was explicitly linked to the problem of education.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, migrant activists argued that the state did not understand the true cost of a transnational family. The Labour Ministry’s argument that it was cheaper to raise children outside of West Germany was only ever supported by a table of comparative GDP per capita.<sup>62</sup> The Labour Ministry’s declaration that foreign parents had an ‘advantage’ in raising their children abroad ignored the emotional pain of separation and underestimated financial costs such as the maintenance of two households and frequent travel between the two locations. Parents from most of the sending countries also had to pay for their children’s education in the home country, and the vast majority also sent remittances to the people who cared for their children at home.<sup>63</sup> This last fact raised particular ire among migrant activists, who argued that ‘nobody, not even a relative, looks after the children of the “rich ones from Germany” for free’.<sup>64</sup> One Turkish man lamented, ‘they don’t believe us or they don’t want to believe us. Instead they repeat like PARROTS that our family relationships are so close that an uncle can support his nephews without a problem’.<sup>65</sup>

Activism around the issue of child allowances also became a way to criticise the unions for failing to represent their foreign members.<sup>66</sup> A Turkish-language flyer linked the unions’ failure to fight for equal child allowances with the failure of unions to organise workers at the automotive company Ford before the ‘wild strikes’ in 1976,<sup>67</sup> while a Spanish communist newspaper argued that the entire

<sup>58</sup> ‘3 Bin yabancı işçi Çocuk Parası için Frankfurt’ta yürüyüş yaptı’, *Tercüman*, 19 Nov. 1974.

<sup>59</sup> ‘Kurze Information’ by ‘Organisationskomitee Ausländerkindergeld Bonn-Bad Godesberg’, 24 Jun. 1974, BAK B 149/46817.

<sup>60</sup> Abg. Gerhard Braun to Par. Staatssekretär BMJFG, 24 Jul. 1974, BAK B 149/46819.

<sup>61</sup> Ausländerbeirat Nürnberg to Wolfgang Mischnick, ‘Betreff: Neue Kindergeldregelung im Rahmen der Steuerreform’, 22 July 1974, Archiv des Deutschen Liberalismus [ADL] Mischnick A38-168; ‘Feliz Navidad – solo con nuestros hijos?’, *Carta a los Padres*, Dec. 1974; ‘Tambien a las Duras, Señor Schmidt!’, *Carta a los Padres*, May 1975.

<sup>62</sup> Leder, ‘Für Ausländer weniger?’, 37.

<sup>63</sup> These arguments are found in a telegram from German Embassy in Lisbon to AA, 25 Jul. 1974, PAAA B 85/1381, ‘Esta Medida Del Kindergeld es un Puro Abuso y nada mas’, DOMiD FL0115, and ‘Contra la Discriminatoria Ley del Subsidio Familiar. Igualdad de Derechos Entre Extranjeros Y Alemanes’, by ‘Comité PRO-KINDERGELD Stuttgart/Sindelfingen’, Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg [LA B-W], Bestand J 152 B III b Nr. 62.

<sup>64</sup> ‘Probleme mit Kindergeld’, *Südost Express*, June 1980, 5.

<sup>65</sup> TISPJG letter, 2 Mar. 1986, Kreuzberg Museum, SO 36 Archival Collection, Inv. Nr. 131, Lfd. Nr. 137.

<sup>66</sup> ‘El 17 De Noviembre en Frankfurt/El Sindicato Nos Dejo en La Estacada!’, 30 Oct. 1974, in Staatsarchiv Hamburg 136-3, Nr. 8.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Patronların Yeni Bir Oyunu’, DOMiD FL0094. For more on ‘wild strikes’ see Peter Birke, *Wilde Streiks im Wirtschaftswunder. Arbeitskämpfe, Gewerkschaften und soziale Bewegungen in der Bundesrepublik und Dänemark*

episode was ‘a lesson for the comrades who believe and say that we can rely on the aid of the unions’.<sup>68</sup> In Hamburg, members of the metalworkers’ union signed a resolution to protest their union’s passive stance.<sup>69</sup> Union officials quickly realised that neglecting the issue could ‘expand the sphere of action for subversive political groups’.<sup>70</sup>

The German Confederation of Trade Unions responded by passing a resolution condemning the reform at its 1975 national congress. Union representatives criticised the state’s failure to invest in working class neighbourhoods. One speaker warned that working class children would shortly find their classrooms overwhelmed by foreign children for whom schools had made only minimal provisions.<sup>71</sup> (This point was sometimes repeated by educators protesting the reform, such as the school principal in Hamburg who thought that child migrants would create a ‘new proletariat’ and represent a ‘threat to our free democratic state order’.<sup>72</sup>) The metalworkers’ union newsletter declared that the anticipated migration would not represent such a threat ‘if only the responsible parties . . . had listened to the demands of the unions, for example if they had not introduced the difference in the child allowances, or if only they had taken care of creating the necessary infrastructure – housing, schools, kindergartens, etc. – before calling foreigners to serve capitalist interests for greater profits’.<sup>73</sup>

Although the experience of multinational organising certainly catalysed new forms of migrant political engagement, migrant activists and their allies failed to change the policy of two-tiered child allowances. Bonn even renegeed on its prior commitments in 1979, when it cancelled the agreement to pay equal child allowances for those children whose parents had worked in the Federal Republic for fifteen years. This decision led to the revival of many previous child allowance committees.<sup>74</sup> Bonn also reiterated its commitment to two-tiered child allowances both when Greece joined the EEC in 1981 and when Portugal and Spain joined in 1986. In each case, West Germany negotiated a ‘transitional period’ of three years where foreign workers from these countries would continue to receive lower child allowances for children who lived outside of West Germany.<sup>75</sup>

### Depictions of Child Migration as a Threat

The introduction of two-tiered child allowances encouraged policy makers and the general public to see two-tiered child allowances as the sole cause of child migration. In April 1982 a public opinion survey discovered that 76 percent of West Germans ‘see the high German child allowances as the

(Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2007) and Jennifer Miller, ‘Her Fight is Your Fight: “Guest Worker” Labor Activism in the Early 1970s West Germany’, *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 84 (2013), 225–47.

<sup>68</sup> ‘Alemania. Frankfurt: Una Leccion de Provecho’, *Lucha Obrera*, 24 (1975), 7.

<sup>69</sup> ‘Esta Medida Del Kindergeld es un Puro Abuso y nada mas’, DOMiD FL0115.

<sup>70</sup> Quote IG Chemie-Papier-Keramik to BMA, ‘Betr.: Kindergeld für ausländische Arbeitnehmer’, 25 July 1974, BAK B 149/46819, similar observations in Abt. AA to Bundesvorstand DGB, ‘Betrifft: Ausländische Arbeitnehmer; hier: Kindergeld’, 8 Jun. 1974, DGB Archive 5/DGAZ624 and ‘Ergebnisprotokoll über die Sitzung zum Fragenkomplex ‘Kindergeld für Ausländische Arbeitnehmer’ am 29.10.1974 im Büro des Kollegen F. Koob’, 6 Nov. 1974, IG Metall-Archiv 5/IGMA260013. For more discussion of union reactions to child allowances, see also Oliver Trede, *Zwischen Misstrauen, Regulation und Integration. Gewerkschaften und Arbeitsmigration in der Bundesrepublik und in Großbritannien in den 1960er und 70er Jahren* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2015), 278–81.

<sup>71</sup> Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, *Protokoll 10. Ordentlicher Bundeskongress Hamburg, 25. bis 30. Mai 1975* (Düsseldorf: Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, 1975), 376–8.

<sup>72</sup> Schule Chemnitzstrasse Volksschule to Behörde für Schule, 4 Oct. 1974, Staatsarchiv Hamburg 361-9, Nr. 4364.

<sup>73</sup> ‘Por no hacernos caso’, *El Noticiero*, May 1975, 2.

<sup>74</sup> ‘Gemeinsame Stellungnahme der spanischen Sozialberater und der spanischen Seelsorger in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland zur Neuregelung des Bundeskindergeldgesetzes’, 30 Mar. 1979 and Initiativausschuss ‘Ausländische Mitbürger in Hannover’ to Deutsche Städtetag, ‘Stellungnahme zu aktuellen Problemen der Lage ausländischer Arbeitnehmer und ihrer Familien in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland’, 1 Mar. 1979, Landesarchiv Berlin, Deutsche Städtetag, DST 4/44-49 Nr. 7120.

<sup>75</sup> Comte, *European Migration Regime*, 113–4, 117. The Foreign Ministry argued that it was important to uphold this principle in order to undermine the possibility that Turkey could make claims to equal child allowances. See ‘Betr.: Beitrittsverhandlungen EG-Griechenland; hier: Kindergeld’, 30 Oct. 1978, PAAA B 85/1479.

primary cause for the influx of foreign children'.<sup>76</sup> This idea had been present from the beginning of the reform, as multiple media outlets depicted the change as 'an irresponsible stimulus for further family reunion'.<sup>77</sup> Some reporters used explicitly military language to describe the possibility of mass child migration. The centre-left *Süddeutsche Zeitung* used the headline 'An Invasion of Guest Worker Children?' and worried about 'the announced Turkish invasion',<sup>78</sup> while the centre-right *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* claimed to have 'nothing against the dear small Turkish children, but our representatives surely did not want an invasion of child allowance Turks'.<sup>79</sup>

Reporting about child migration was often suffused with anxiety about the high fertility of foreign families. To give one example, *Der Spiegel* reported that the chief foreigner expert in the Labour Ministry 'even has the appalling vision, that the model Turk (*Mustertürke*) "goes home every Christmas, in order to produce another child"'. The story went on to explain that 'Ankara threatens to send the children to Germany, where the men in Bonn would have to produce kindergartens, living space and schools for them'.<sup>80</sup> In 1976 a widely reprinted German Press Agency article that described foreign children as 'ticking time bombs' explained that there were two reasons for the growing number of foreign children: first, guest workers did not use the pill, and, second, the child allowance reform had incentivised them to 'let their offspring come from the home country'.<sup>81</sup> The threat did not stop at migration: foreign women's comparatively high fertility after arriving in West Germany was also frequently interpreted as due to child allowances.<sup>82</sup>

The foreign press also narrated the reform as a driver of child migration, and thus placed the blame for emigration squarely on the 'pull' of welfare rather than the possibility of 'push' conditions in the sending country.<sup>83</sup> The topic was virtually inescapable in the Turkish press. *Tercüman*, the centre-right Turkish-language newspaper with an edition published in West Germany, featured articles about *Kindergeld* on twenty-two of thirty days in October 1974 alone. In an article titled 'The Flow of Children from Turkey Begins!' a father of seven was quoted as saying 'I am bringing my children, who I miss very much, to Germany because the German state will pay a lot of money'. Two weeks later, 'The Flow of Children from Turkey Continues!' featured pictures of unaccompanied children on aeroplanes.<sup>84</sup> *Milliyet*, a Turkish-language newspaper which supported the SPD, also published twelve articles about the topic in October 1974, with one editorial that implored Germans to think about how they would justify this reform to one of the Turkish soldiers who had helped to defend the Germans from the Russians during the First World War.<sup>85</sup>

The people who read these stories might have wondered where to place the blame. Was West Germany at fault for creating an incentive for child migration, or were the foreign parents at fault for taking them up on that incentive? The Labour Ministry actively promoted an interpretation that placed the blame on parents, as it continually defended itself against public criticism by insisting that foreign parents who brought their children were acting irrationally. Parents who brought their children were parents 'to whom it has not been made clear, that the higher child benefits for children

<sup>76</sup> 'Wichtigste Ergebnisse der infas-Ausländer-Studie', 27 Apr. 1982, ADL, IF-Kommission Ausländerpolitik #4238.

<sup>77</sup> Hunn, 'Nächstes Jahr', 375.

<sup>78</sup> Christian Schneider, 'Eine Invasion von Gastarbeiterkindern? Eine Einsparung, die teuer werden kann', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 8 Nov. 1974, trans. Allison Brown, available at [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage\\_id=1517](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=1517) (last visited 12 Dec. 2018).

<sup>79</sup> 'Der Kindergeld-Türke in der Schule', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17 Dec. 1974.

<sup>80</sup> 'Billige Kinder', *Der Spiegel*, 7 Oct. 1974.

<sup>81</sup> Ruth Lindenberg, 'Bei Ausländerkindern "tickt eine Zeitbombe"', *Kölnische Rundschau*, 15. Apr. 1976.

<sup>82</sup> Untitled report about foreign women in Wilhelmsburg, 25 Apr. 1977, Staatsarchiv Hamburg, 131-21, Nr. 3209 and 'Betr.: Schwangerschaftsabbrüche bei Türkinnen', 27 Jan. 1982, Landesarchiv NRW, NW 670, Nr. 95.

<sup>83</sup> For summaries of the Yugoslavian and Portuguese press, see telegram from German Embassy in Belgrade to AA, 'Betr.: Reform des Familienlastenausgleichs', 17 Jul. 1974, and telegram from German Embassy in Lisbon to AA, 25 Jul. 1974, PAAA B 85/1381.

<sup>84</sup> 'Türkiye'den Çocuk Akını Başlıyor!', *Tercüman*, 4 Nov. 1974, and 'Türkiye'den Almanya'ya çocuk akını devam ediyor', *Tercüman*, 27 Nov. 1974.

<sup>85</sup> Burhan Felek, 'Almanya'daki işçilerin çocukları', *Milliyet*, 12 Oct. 1974.

in Germany will be consumed by the higher cost of living'.<sup>86</sup> In response to the previously mentioned critical article in *Der Spiegel*, the Labour Ministry circulated a memorandum explaining that 'a possible threat "to send the children to Germany" is of no avail. The Ministry of Finance has calculated that bringing the family to Germany will normally not be worth it'.<sup>87</sup>

The Labour Ministry also went on the offensive in Turkey when it prepared a packet of information for the Turkish press intended to discourage family reunion in December 1974.<sup>88</sup> The German Embassy in Ankara reported on the packet's impact on media coverage in Turkey, where fifty Turkish publications published over 120 articles and editorials about child allowances during the month of December 1974. The report singled out a *Milliyet* article by young adult novelist Gülden Dayioğlu for particular praise because it represented 'a more objective discussion of the situation'.<sup>89</sup> Her article instructed parents to leave their children in Turkey in no uncertain terms: 'if children are brought to Germany because of child allowances the situation will become worse'. Children 'torn out of school for a few pennies, shouldered like a bundle' would 'fall into a pitiable situation' because they were people rather than "'goods" to be transported haphazardly from place to place'.<sup>90</sup>

Dayioğlu continued to use child allowances as a motif in her later work. One of her young adult novels is about Atil, a young boy who leaves his grandmother's care to join his parents in West Germany, where he gradually loses his ability to speak Turkish. Throughout the novel, child allowances are repeatedly used to underline the fact that the parents made a selfish decision in bringing their son to West Germany. At one point, Atil's father shouts at him: 'I didn't bring you here for your own private amusement, but because of the tax rebate and child allowances!'<sup>91</sup> By the end of the novel, the entire family returns to Turkey, realising that the pursuit of financial gain in West Germany has come at an unacceptably high cost.

In 1986 Dayioğlu published a collection of interviews with Turkish migrants to West Germany which took up similar themes about the 'lost generation' of Turkish children.<sup>92</sup> A full decade after the reform, a Turkish teacher working in West Germany tells the interviewer:

when I think about child allowances, I still feel sick. People took their children helter skelter to Germany in order to earn Deutschmarks. They didn't think about school or think about whether they could settle in here. In this way hundreds of thousands of children were thrown to the dogs! If one thinks about it rationally, the great German state also failed! In order to cut child allowance payments, it didn't just burden itself with hundreds of thousands of children, but also with their problems.<sup>93</sup>

The teacher was hardly alone in 'feeling sick' when thinking about the impact of child allowances on the sending countries. We have seen that Yugoslavian officials argued that two-tiered child

<sup>86</sup> Abteilung II MR Dr. Leder to Parl. Staatssekretär, 'Betr.: Kindergeld für ausländische Arbeitnehmer; hier: 64/65 Sitzung des A + S-Ausschusses des Deutschen Bundestages am 22. Januar 1975 – Abkommen mit Spanien, Griechenland, Türkei, Portugal und Jugoslawien', 20 Jan. 1975, BAK B 149/96398.

<sup>87</sup> Abteilung II 'Betr.: Kindergeld für im Ausland lebende Kinder von Arbeitnehmern, die in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland beschäftigt sind; hier: Artikel "Billige Kinder" in "DER SPIEGEL" Nr. 41/1974', 8 Oct. 1974, BAK B 149/46819.

<sup>88</sup> Abteilung II to Herr Minister, 'Betr.: Kindergeld für ausländische Arbeitnehmer', 27 Dec. 1974, BAK B 149/46820.

<sup>89</sup> I was unable to locate the press packet itself. German Embassy in Ankara to AA, 'Betr.: Reform des Familienlastenausgleichs, hier: Änderung des deutsch-türkischen Sozialversicherungsabkommens', 15 Jan. 1975, PAAA B 85/1383.

<sup>90</sup> Gülden Dayioğlu, 'Çocuk Parası için Çocuklar Almanya'ya götürülürse durum daha kötü olacak', *Milliyet*, 12 Dec. 1974.

<sup>91</sup> Gülden Dayioğlu, *Atil hat Heimweh [Yurdumu özledim]*, trans. Feridun Altuna (Berlin: ikoo Verlag, 1985), 194.

<sup>92</sup> For more on Turkish state fears of losing children to the nation, see Brian Joseph-Keysor Miller, 'Reshaping the Turkish Nation-State: The Turkish-German Guest Working Program and Planned Development', Ph.D. thesis, University of Iowa, 2015, chapter four.

<sup>93</sup> Gülden Dayioğlu, *Rückkehr zwischen zwei Grenzen: Gespräche und Erzählungen*, trans. Feridun Altuna (Berlin: ikoo Verlag 1986), 128.

allowances were a form of ‘Germanisation’ policy, while Turkish officials also worried about their nation’s demographic future. Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit used a 1979 meeting with the head of the SPD in the Bundestag to complain that the policy was the primary reason that 450,000 Turkish children lived in West Germany.<sup>94</sup> The idea of two-tiered child allowances sometimes had a face saving function, enabling Turkish officials to blame West German policy for a wide variety of problems. In 1982 a reporter from *Tercüman* asked Economic Minister Turgut Özal about his failure to increase employment opportunities in Turkey in order to enable workers to return from West Germany. Özal dodged the question with the statement that child allowances were the primary cause of child migration and therefore of ‘foreigners’ problems in general’.<sup>95</sup>

In fact, migrant protests had consistently pointed out that the decision to bring children was contingent on several factors. Families moved children on highly personal timelines: when they were able to secure a larger apartment, when relatives at home grew older or passed away, when children completed primary school in the home country or simply when parents could no longer bear to be without them. Two-tiered child allowances were one factor among many, but the media narrative whereby they were the most important factor failed to do justice to the complexities of the decision. Despite migrant attempts to provide context, officials who wanted to argue in favour of more restrictions on family reunion would seize on the narrative of two-tiered child allowances as the sole driver of child migration because it helped them to depict foreigners as bad parents, seduced by Deutschmarks into neglecting the psychological wellbeing of their children.

### Counting and Controlling Foreign Children

To what extent did the common narrative of two-tiered child allowances as the cause of child migration reflect reality? Were observers correct when they interpreted it the primary stimulus for child migration? Because the child allowance reform was announced only shortly after the November 1973 decision to stop labour recruitment, it is impossible to fully disentangle these two factors in the decisions of individual families. Demographer Amparo González-Ferrer’s analysis of self reported data about family migration suggests that the reform was in fact more important than the recruitment stop for accelerating the decision to bring children,<sup>96</sup> while historians Ulrich Herbert and Karin Hunn speculate that the decision to bring children was more often motivated by fear that restrictions on family reunion were just around the corner.<sup>97</sup>

The question is also difficult to answer because the reform created the information that was necessary to measure its own effects. There are no reliable records about where foreign children lived from before the introduction of two-tiered child allowances because children under sixteen were not required to have residence permits and visas before 1990. In an example of the interaction between welfare provision and policing, two-tiered child allowances created a new need to accurately track the location of foreigners’ children in order to limit the possibility of welfare fraud. Data from child allowance claims quickly became the most accurate way to count and to locate foreign children – and a frequent topic of discussion at diplomatic meetings between Turkey and West Germany.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>94</sup> ‘Betr.: Gespräch Professor Dr. Horst Ehmke, MdB, mit Ministerpräsident Ecevit, Bezug: Drahterlass Nr. 0005 vom 5. January 1979-012-303.13’, 10 Jan. 1979, BAK B 149/47275, also present in ‘Betr.: Besuch von Frau Minister a.D. Funcke, Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für die Integration der ausländischen Arbeitnehmer und ihrer Familienangehörigen, vom 6-10 September 1981 in der Türkei’, 15 Sep. 1981, BAK B 149/83935.

<sup>95</sup> *Tercüman* clipping with title missing, 30 Mar. 1983, Landesarchiv Berlin [LAB], B Rep 002/17830.

<sup>96</sup> Amparo González-Ferrer, ‘The Process of Family Reunification Among Original Guest-Workers in Germany’, *Zeitschrift für Familienforschung*, 19, 1 (2007), 10–33.

<sup>97</sup> Ulrich Herbert and Karin Hunn, ‘Beschäftigung, soziale Sicherung und soziale Integration von Ausländern’, in M. Geyer, ed., *Geschichte der Sozialpolitik in Deutschland seit 1945, Band 6* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag, 2008), 755.

<sup>98</sup> German Embassy in Ankara to AA, ‘Betr.: Kindergeldzahlungen an türkische Arbeitnehmer; hier: Zusammenarbeit mit der türkischen Sozialversicherungsanstalt beim Nachweise der Kinder’, 13 Dec. 1976, BAK B 149/47279.

Officials themselves were unsure of how to interpret new data about child allowance claims. Some believed that the reform had resulted in many children who had already been living in Germany being registered with the police for the first time. According to this narrative, foreign parents who lived with their children had previously failed to register them because they feared having their residence permit revoked for having too many people in the apartment,<sup>99</sup> but the prospect of higher child allowances convinced them that the risk was worth it.<sup>100</sup>

A competing narrative argued that parents were in fact falsely registering children in West Germany so that they could claim higher child allowance payments while their children lived abroad. Heinz Richter, the head of the Foreigner Section in the German Confederation of Unions, told a radio journalist in October 1974: ‘about fourteen days ago at the airport in Munich, I saw with my own eyes that approximately two-thirds of the family members traveling to Germany on that day were clearly in the Federal Republic for the first time. That is apparently already a consequence of these alleged child allowance disadvantages’.<sup>101</sup> Richter speculated that families were organising airplanes full of children to visit for two weeks in order to register for child allowances before returning to Turkey, and he argued that fathers found guilty of such trickery should be deported.<sup>102</sup>

One year later, in October 1975, several parliamentary representatives sent the Labour Ministry a clipping from the right-wing tabloid *Bild* titled ‘1,068 Children of Guest Workers are Missing from School – Where are They?’<sup>103</sup> According to the article, 1,068 foreign children were registered as residents in the town of Monchengladbach but were not going to school. Local school officials believed that deceitful foreign parents were to blame: either they were keeping their children at home, or they had falsely registered their children as residents in West Germany for the purpose of claiming child allowances. The Labour Ministry launched its own investigation and discovered that there were only seventy-eight false claims. The apparent discrepancy came from the fact that the British Armed Forces were headquartered in the region – creating a large population of British soldiers who had registered their children as residents, but who did not send their children to German schools. British occupiers, not ‘Turkish invaders’, were at fault, but the correction did not make it back to the headlines.<sup>104</sup>

What did West Germany actually do in response to the perceived threat of child migration? Chancellor Helmut Schmidt first asked his cabinet to investigate ‘the possibility of counter measures’ to mass family migration in June of 1974,<sup>105</sup> but his own cabinet was divided on the question of whether these counter measures were necessary. The Interior Ministry, at the time controlled by the liberal FDP, was responsible for granting residence permits and thus for implementing migration policy. It believed that new restrictions were potentially unconstitutional and would moreover only further stimulate family reunion by pressuring migrants to bring their families while they still could. The SPD controlled Labour Ministry believed that new restrictions were necessary in order to stop foreigners from trying to enter the labour market.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Family members’ residence permits were tied to spatial requirements which varied between federal states. To give one example, Bavaria required foreigners applying for a residence permit to be able to prove that their home had twelve square meters of housing for every person over the age of six and nine square meters of housing for every person below the age of six. Lauren Stokes, ‘“Fear of the Family”’: Migration and Integration in West Germany, 1955–2000’, Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 2016, chapter two.

<sup>100</sup> ‘Sitzung des Koordinierungskreises “Ausländische Arbeitnehmer” beim Bundesminister für Arbeit und Sozialordnung am 23.4.1975’, AEW, PB 941.

<sup>101</sup> ‘Interview im Mittagmagazin am 19.10.1974’, DGB Archive, 5/DGAZ 624.

<sup>102</sup> Heinz Richter to Karl Schwab, ‘Betrifft: Kindergeld für ausländische Arbeitnehmer’, 23 Dec. 1974, DGB Archive, 5/DGAZ 624.

<sup>103</sup> ‘1068 Gastarbeiterkinder fehlen in der Schule – wo sind sie?’, *BILD*, 15 Oct. 1975.

<sup>104</sup> Bundesanstalt to BMA, ‘Betreff: Durchführung des Bundeskindergeldgesetzes (BKGG); hier: Mißbräuchliche Inanspruchnahme von Kindergeld’, 7 Apr. 1976, BAK B 149/47278.

<sup>105</sup> ‘Vermerk für Herrn Dg 51, Betr.: Reform des Familienlastenausgleichs; hier: Kündigung von Abkommen über Soziale Sicherheit’, 26 Jun. 1974, BAK B 149/46817.

<sup>106</sup> Referat VIII6 to Staatssekretär Dr. Fröhlich, ‘Betr.: Zahlenmäßige Entwicklung der ausländischen Wohnbevölkerung’, 22 Nov. 1976, BAK B 106/81038.

The Interior Ministry would move closer to the restrictive position of the Labour Ministry by the end of the 1970s. This shift was partially justified through a reinterpretation of Article 6 of the Basic Law. The first paragraph of Article 6 stated that ‘marriage and the family shall enjoy the special protection of the state’. In the early 1970s Interior Ministry officials had argued that restrictions on family migration would violate this paragraph of Article 6, but by the end of the decade, legal scholars and experts within the Interior Ministry were shifting their attention to the second and third paragraphs of Article 6, according to which the state had to watch over parents in order to protect child welfare. The state could separate parents and children ‘if the parents or guardians fail in their duties or the children are otherwise in danger of serious neglect’. By focusing on this part of Article 6, officials who wanted to restrict child migration could argue that the state’s responsibility to guarantee child welfare could take precedence over the state’s responsibility to protect marriage and family – and children could be prevented from migrating to join their parents when it was for their own good.

To make this argument plausible, the Interior Ministry had recourse to the familiar idea that child migrants were the ‘delayed victims of the German “economic miracle”’ (the latter phrase used to describe these children by the Senator of the Interior in Hamburg, an SPD member).<sup>107</sup> This argument about looking out for child welfare by preventing ill-advised migration was accompanied by the familiar concern for protecting West Germany’s welfare system from opportunists and scroungers. The position paper supporting the new interpretation of Article 6 within the Interior Ministry explained that older foreign children ‘chose to move to their parents overwhelmingly not for familial, but for economic reasons’, by which they meant both access to child allowances and access to the labour market.<sup>108</sup>

Despite this new interpretation of the Basic Law, the state’s ability to place new restrictions on child migration remained limited for the same reason that it was impossible to measure the true dimensions of child migration: foreign children under the age of sixteen were not required to have residence permits. When Bonn announced its first set of ‘emergency measures’ against family migration on 2 December 1981, the most significant new restriction was a ban on the migration of sixteen and seventeen year olds.<sup>109</sup> This new restriction gave West Germany the distinction of being the only Western European state to ban the migration of children below the age of majority, a dubious distinction that it would hold until 2004.<sup>110</sup>

The federal government simultaneously announced that it was considering further restriction in the form of a ban on the migration of children over the age of six. This step, however, would require a revision to the Law on Foreigners (*Ausländergesetz*) in order to require children to have residence permits. Although the ensuing debate over the possible age limit of six is beyond the scope of this article, it was undoubtedly shaped by the common belief that parents brought their children to West Germany for overwhelmingly financial rather than emotional reasons. To quote an editorial in support of an age limit of six in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, ‘there are always more foreigners, who only want to benefit from social welfare (starting with child allowances): this is indefensible’.<sup>111</sup>

The cabinet discussed several possible ways to limit child migration in the interim, before the intended revision of the Law on Foreigners. One such proposal raised the possibility of not paying any child allowances to children who arrived in West Germany after the age of six. This proposal linked child allowances to the ‘goal of timely relocation for integration . . . the denial of child allowances would balance the higher expenditures in the areas of school, education and vocational training

<sup>107</sup> ‘Beitrag der Behörde für Inneres zum Ausländerkonzept (nach der Grobdisposition für das hamburgische Ausländerkonzept)’, 2 Sep. 1975, Staatsarchiv Hamburg 136-4, Nr. 8.

<sup>108</sup> ‘Zur Vereinbarkeit von Beschränkungen des Ausländerfamiliennachzugs mit Art. 6 GG’, 20 Nov. 1981, BAK B 106/117675.

<sup>109</sup> The federal government claimed that its hand was being forced by a restrictive administrative decree in West Berlin and a similar proposal on the table in Baden-Württemberg – the latter of which cited child allowance migration as one of the primary reasons that restrictions were necessary. Landespolizeipräsidium to Regierungspräsidenten in B-W, ‘Betr.: Ausländerrecht; hier: Familiennachzug, Encl: Familiennachzugsrichtlinien’, 2 Oct. 1981, BAK B 149/59886.

<sup>110</sup> Stokes, ‘Fear of the Family’, chapter five.

<sup>111</sup> ‘Bis zu Sechs Jahren’, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 14 Dec. 1982.



that would have to be made on children and teenagers who relocated later'.<sup>112</sup> Although this particular proposal did not move past its first cabinet meeting, the fact that it was discussed at all reveals the enduring power of the fantasy that child allowances could be used to direct migration flows.

The proposal also underlines the fact that the discussions over limiting family migration were consistently linked to anxieties about the capacity of the welfare state. The child migration panic had revealed the underlying logic of the guest worker programme: workers needed to be flexible for the needs of the 'economic miracle', but their families needed to be stationary and predictable. Waged labour needed to be mobile because the movement of productive labour was understood as a spur to economic growth, but the reproductive labour of producing new workers – particularly in the areas of childcare and education – was not understood as part of that economic growth, but exclusively as an unexpected and undesirable drain on the welfare state.

## Conclusion

The continuation of family migration in West Germany after the end of labour recruitment was consistently narrated through the figure of the 'child allowance migrant', and thus as a transition from 'labour migration' to 'welfare migration'. Almost everyone who weighed in on the 1974 reform to child benefit connected it to the spectre of increased family reunion, although the figure of the 'child allowance migrant' had different purposes depending on who invoked it: the Turkish Workers' Choir sang about aeroplanes full of children in order to convince the state to change its mind, while the bureaucrats at the Labour Ministry used the same image to criticise those parents who failed to leave their children at home.

The architects of the 1974 child allowance reform had not intended to change either migration patterns or migration policy – in fact, they had explicitly chosen the solution that they hoped would disrupt migration patterns the least. Despite their intentions, the reform inadvertently offered a simple narrative with which to explain family migration. Foreign parents who brought their children to West Germany after 1974 had to defend their motives, while officials seeking to legitimise new restrictions could refer to the existence of 'child benefit migrants' in order to imply that parents brought their children to West Germany out of a short-sighted desire for financial gain rather than genuine emotional attachment. Was 'family migration' legitimate if the 'family' was seen as a welfare seeking machine?

The 'child allowance migrant' is neither the first nor the last 'welfare migrant' to have been invoked in the name of more restrictive migration policies. This broader genealogy of the 'welfare migrant' would include the figure of the 'economic refugee' and the 'asylum tourist', who has been used to argue for more restrictions in German asylum policy since the beginning of the Federal Republic, but with particular intensity since the 1980s. (In fact, fears that child allowances might create an incentive for 'false asylum seekers' led to the elimination of child allowances for asylum seekers in 1980.)<sup>113</sup> Similarly, the restrictions on spousal migration that have been adopted widely across Europe since the early 2000s are often intended to prevent the abuse of the national welfare system by foreign families.<sup>114</sup>


Of course, West Germany also began the recruitment of guest workers for material reasons, treating them not as potential citizens or even community members, but as cheap labour power to fuel the economic miracle. During the panic over 'child allowance migration', the West German bureaucracy worried that migrants might adopt its own logic, which is to say, that they might approach their relationship to West Germany straightforwardly as a money making proposition. The 'child allowance

<sup>112</sup> Referat VII1, 'Betr.: Ausländerpolitik (Kabinettsitzung am 2. Dezember 1981) hier: Gewährung von Kindergeld für Kinder ausländischer Arbeitnehmer', 30 Nov. 1981, BAK B 106/117679.

<sup>113</sup> Lauren Stokes, 'The Permanent Refugee Crisis in the Federal Republic of Germany, 1949–', *Central European History*, 52, 1 (2019), 19–44. 'Bericht der Bund-Länder-Arbeitsgruppe "Asylrecht"', 28 May 1980, PAAA B 85/1461.

<sup>114</sup> Laura Block, *Policy Frames on Spousal Migration in Germany: Regulating Membership, Regulating the Family* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2016) and Anne Staver, 'From Right to Earned Privilege? The Development of Stricter Family Immigration Rules in Denmark, Norway and the United Kingdom', Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 2014.

migrant' expressed the fear that migrants could profit from exactly those aspects of humanity and personhood that the guest worker category had deliberately excluded – reintroducing the category of family ties in order to lay claim to child benefits morally intended only for German children. In the figure of the 'welfare migrant', the state's own instrumental rationality and morally neutralised profit seeking is projected onto migrants themselves as their essential identity. The 'welfare migrant' – under whatever name – will be a central protagonist of the German, European and Western political imaginary for many years to come.

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