

# “How the Turkish Worker Should Behave and Defend His Character in a Foreign Country” (1963)

## Abstract

Each worker recruited from the Turkish Republic between 1961 and 1963 received a copy of this Turkish-language pamphlet published by the Turkish Labor Placement Office. The anti-Communist stance of the text can be compared with the hostile portrayal of FRG guest workers by GDR policymakers.

## Source

The federal republic of Germany is a nationalistic state. The Germans living there are nationalist and anticommunist, just like us. But even there, some harmful people will slip in among our workers and spread all sorts of propaganda to isolate them from their nationality and religion, luring them into the merciless, scarlet trap of communism, seeking to infect them with poisonous ideas. They will attempt to alienate our workers from the work by saying that they will find them better jobs. But more importantly, if encouraged, they will defame our homeland, our government, our state, our regime, and our glorious army and will attempt to lure you away from your straight path. To this end, they will take advantage of your drunken, tired, and weary moments to insinuate themselves among you. When you sense that someone like this is present, remove him from your social circle immediately. There are some among our colleagues whose will is weak. DO not leave them to their devices. Notify our consular officials.

Should you have friends who may be ensnared by the lies of communist radio programming, remind them of the realities of the situation.

So you are able to receive news from your homeland in a timely way and hear the *türkü* folk songs that you miss, our Ministry for Press, Publishing and Radio is currently making Turkish programming available via radio and shortwave frequencies.

Do not cause trouble or fight with our allies and friends among the Germans, with your own countrymen in Germany, or with other foreigners who have likewise come to make their livelihood. Each time such occurrences appear in the newspapers, the reputation and fame of Turkishness are denigrated. Because German women love the heroism of the Turk, they will behave cheerfully and politely toward you. Do not misunderstand this friendliness. You must regard the honor of these people with whom you are now living just as you regard your own honor. One thing that will elicit the most negative of reactions and is not kindly looked upon in Western countries is to aggravate a woman in any way or to attempt to establish intimacy with her in a way she does not want.

Family bonds in Germany are held sacred, just as they are in Turkey. Looking improperly at a respectable woman will not be forgiven. If you are married, do not do anything that would cause you to forget your loyal wife patiently awaiting you at home.

Every Turkish worker living in a foreign country must also not forget that our heroic ancestors, who went as far as Vienna and the banks of the Danube, never infringed upon the honor of others. When they took a bunch of grapes

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from a deserted vineyard, they left behind appropriate payment at the base of the vine, and if they took a fig from a tree, they tied a small purse of money to the branch. To this day, no Turk is considered as thieving, honorless, unjust, or mischievous. You will also not bring such labels upon yourself.

Germans are known throughout the world as a hardworking nation. They do not play around once work has begun and do not disobey the words of their superiors. German employers request workers from us because they have heard and know from experience that Turks are hardworking and discipline loving. Do not soil the Turks' reputation. Work like bees, be cautious, be quick to learn what you do not know. Do not deviate from the order of the workplace. Begin work on time; end on time. Do not seek medical leave unless it is especially necessary. Do not resist your supervisors or employers. Choose a trusted colleague from among you to be a spokesperson so that your rights will be represented and so that your wishes and complaints will be appropriately heard by your employer. Seek mediation from the ombudsmen at German workplaces and join the labor unions. If you have tried all of these venues and you continue to believe that you are in the right with regard to a complaint or request that has not been resolved or responded to, appeal to the nearest German Labor Placement Office or notify our labor attaché in Bonn in person or by letter. More labor attaché positions will be established soon. For now, you can explain your situation to the consulate in your region. Our consulates will try to do everything in their power to be of assistance to you. But they also will have some expectations of you.

Source of the original Turkish text: Turkish Labor Placement Office, "Türk İşçisi Yabancı Ülkede Nasıl Davranmalı, Nasıl Benliğini Korumalı," 1963.

Source of English translation: Deniz Göktürk, David Gramling, and Anton Kaes, eds., *Germany in Transit. Nation and Migration 1955-2005*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007, pp. 34-36.

Translation: David Gramling

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