

Heiner Geißler, “Germany – an Immigration Country?”

Abstract

Heiner Geißler (1930-2017) was Secretary General of the CDU from 1977 to 1989, Federal Minister for Youth, Family and Health from 1982 to 1985, and Chairman of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group in the Bundestag from 1991 to 1998. He belonged to the social-reformist wing of the CDU and was one of the first in the party to advocate for an easier naturalization process. In May 2007, Geißler joined the organization Attac and pleaded for a new, humane economic order in the sense of a global social market economy.

Source

[...] What consequences will the single European market bring? German businesses will be forced in significantly greater measure than before to establish production and distribution sites within the EU – also with German staff. Whoever wants to be economically successful in other EU countries must know the language and culture, the lifestyle and mentality of these countries. Not only managers and engineers but also skilled workers and employees will have to think and work European. Increasing numbers of educated and motivated young people will recognize professional opportunities in France, Italy, Spain, Great Britain, Greece, Portugal, Poland, and Hungary as a stimulus, chance, and challenge, and they will want to use these opportunities and excel in them. There are already 1.4 million foreigners from the EU states living with us.

[...]

In a Europe characterized by manifest freedom of movement, one can be born and grow up in Germany, study in Great Britain, work later in Germany or France, and spend one's “active old age” in Italy. In Germany, the neighbor will be Belgian; the work colleague Turkish; the daughter-in-law, Danish; and the fellow sports club member, Spanish or Hungarian. A Europeanization, and even an internationalization, of our lives is already taking place today. An abundance of European products – food and drink, literature, music and art (as we have had for centuries), science and research, fashion, design – will become a mass experience of everyday life. These are the characteristics of an already existing and growing multicultural society. [...]

The vast majority of foreigners in the Federal Republic were either born here or have lived here for over 10 years. And despite this fact we have the lowest naturalization quota of all comparable European countries. Only around 14,000 foreigners are naturalized annually, but in 1988 alone, for example, 73,000 children of foreign parents were born in our country. Barbara John, the commissioner of foreigner affairs of the Berlin Senate, pointed out in 1989 that someday we will have to speak of twenty-fifth-generation foreigners if the policy on naturalization remains the same.

I know that some in our country find it unbearable to live with people who come from another culture, have another native language and a philosophy of life different from the Germans'. For my part, it is intolerable that millions of fellow citizens have fewer rights in our country. Stuttgart's mayor Rommel compares our society with ancient Sparta, its Spartans and Helots, a three-class society composed of citizens with greater and lesser rights.

Constitutional patriotism as a concept for the future

The laws that regulate who is or may be German are questionable and contradictory enough. An ethnic German from Kazakhstan, who has only trace amounts of German blood in his veins and whose ancestors left Germany at the time of Catherine the Great, passes for a German here. I state emphatically: I have no objections to this. But the second-generation Iranian living in Germany, who works as a senior physician at a hospital in Rüsselsheim and speaks Hessian like Heinz Schenk has the greatest difficulties getting a German passport. [...] The economic prosperity of the Federal republic and its strong position in Europe and the world are not the result of German national character. It is rather the combined effects of a constitution guaranteeing unhindered development of personhood and the welfare-state concept of a social market economy that have produced a symbiosis superior to that in all other political systems.

[...]

Source of the original German text: Heiner Geißler, „Deutschland – ein Einwanderungsland?“, in *Transit Deutschland. Debatten zu Nation und Migration*, Hrsg. Deniz Göktürk, David Gramling, Anton Kaes und Andreas Langenohl, München: Konstanz University Press, 2011, pp. 442-443.

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