

**Kanak-Attak**

## **No a la Integración, right to a legal status, globalisation and anti-racism**

**Looking back:** One year ago, Kanak Attak, a coalition against racism, presented its work to a larger audience for the first time at the Volksbühne Berlin. With the *OpelPitbullAutoput* revue, panel discussions, films and conversations in the hallways, we turned our attention to the history of migrant resistance, a topic whose traces have been lost in libraries and personal archives. It was time to finally change that. Engaging with migrants' struggles and their strategies for self-assertion, dating all the way back to the 50s, also helped us formulate positions on the everyday life and socio-political situation of *Kanaken*\* in today's Almanyia. The goal was not to blindly agree to continuing these strategies. Instead, we wanted to use a perspective gained from struggles of the past to recognize the racism of today, which tries to either keep Kanaken on the margins of society or celebrate them as exotic social climbers. The guideposts that show some the way into this country, and keep others out, spell out the following: INTEGRATION. These signs have governed operations in this country for decades, and integration has been challenging and patronising migrants for thirty years - now it's even become competitive. We're writing over those signs and making new use of them: No Integración!

**When it became clear**, primarily out of economic considerations, that Germany had become a country of immigration, the leaders in Almanyia did not want to take responsibility for the political consequences. Instead calculations were set up to model how many immigrants Almanyia could handle per year. After the Ford strike in Cologne in 1973\*\*, they began to go through the figures particularly quickly: What will continuing to employ guest workers cost? Isolation from the outside world and integration as a tactical denial of political rights have been two sides of the same strategy ever since. In the 1980s, the mysterious distinction emerged between the unwilling to integrate and the able to integrate. When a law on dual citizenship should have been passed in the 1990s, the CDU/CSU parties played the integration joker card once again and Koch & Co. mobbed with pens on the street.\*\*\* The governing parties quickly dropped the proposed law in the name of constitutional patriotism. In so doing, integration is defined as something that Kanaken must take care of themselves, as a genuflection before the defining culture. As an integrated person you are only ever integrated, and never equal.

**Looking to the future:** Integration, as we understand it, is the state's response to the numerous demands raised in the historical struggles against systematic impoverishment: the abolition of the Aliens Act and of native primacy, equal rights for all. Integration is sanction's highly flexible tool. No German course? Expulsion. On benefits? Expulsion. Child support? Expulsion. Theft? Expulsion. This is about our everyday lives: Equality in matters of health, education, work, training and housing has always been the mission of this struggle. Ever since (foreign-worker) recruitment ended, the official slogan has been: Integration can only succeed if further immigration is limited.

**However,** because the implementation of zero-immigration has never been successful, at least one million undocumented migrants live and work in the country today. An unintended but very useful development for many employers and private households, providing what the old guest worker system could no longer achieve: the cheapest labour possible in a racially segmented labour market with a structure based on gender. With increased duration of stay and family reunification, first-generation migrant workers increasingly lost their characteristics as extremely available, flexible and therefore cheap labour. Furthermore, the official portrayal of the guest workers in the 60s, who were sitting on packed suitcases in their dorms, never matched up to the reality. Because the new arrivals quickly became an integral part of the labour market. It's fitting that the new guest workers of post-Fordism have no papers at all. That means there's no misunderstandings regarding length of stay: as short as possible and as long as necessary. With no access to social or political rights, the cost of these migrant workers is lower than ever.

**The transgression** of nation-state borders is often examined under the "globalisation" label today. The neo-liberal strategy of maximising profits on the one hand, and national-social defence reflexes on the other, appear to contradict each other completely. But in reality, their positions are mutually dependent. Government action is currently aimed at the continuation of neo-liberal deregulation, and neo-liberalism itself cannot manage without state regulation. On the other hand, large parts of the critical globalisation movement - from Seattle to Genoa and Porto Alegre - believe that the negative effects of globalisation can be counteracted by defending national-social standards. But there is one factor that rarely comes out in anti-globalisation battles: the spectre of transnational migration. Workers in the post-colonial societies of Asia and Africa and Latin America ensure the existence of migratory movements that break down barriers in national labour markets. They make up a mass that votes with its feet. This autonomy of migration is in a permanent tug-of-war with the government discourse about economic utility. And at the same time, it subverts it in the areas where no one takes heed of it. Without an offensive against racism, no other world is possible. Embracing the perspective of this migration could become the pivotal point in a critique of globalization that's not caught up in the dualism of nation state versus neo-liberalism.

**In the wake** of the immigration debate over the high-tech, in-demand migrants of the future, the scandal that is illegality must finally be put on the agenda. Although there is hardly anyone who wants to discuss this since the attacks of 11 September last year: the *sans papiers* around the world have a political right to legalise their stays. A campaign for legalisation promises to improve the concrete living conditions of undocumented immigrants through a right of residence. But even in the process of organising itself, a level of empowerment can be achieved that goes beyond the rights to be won! Implementing such a campaign requires a broad social alliance that encompasses both church and humanitarian initiatives, as well as refugee organisations and anti-racism groups, and extends all the way to the left-liberal camp. Together with the unions in particular, a debate on how to fight for and defend social rights without having to resort to national protectionism should finally begin. As long as there are territories where social advancements can be fenced off, there will be both legal and illegal migration.

**Since immigration to Almanyia began**, racial discrimination has been fought with various means, so we're not starting from scratch. A different narrative practice, which assigns sovereignty over their interpretation to those who are otherwise only described, is not just a funky opportunity for overachievers in the feature pages and opinion makers in policy departments. Normal!!! A mix of yesterday, today and tomorrow is our tangible way forward.

**And this time we're asking the questions!**

**Off we go! - Kanak Attak**

\*Translator's Note: According to the first dictionary definition, the word *Kanake* in German denotes the indigenous population of islands in the south Pacific - derived from *kanaka*, a Hawaiian word for "person". The second definition states, however, that the word is usually used as a derogatory term for people who belong to "other" ethnic groups. As the term is also closely linked to history of "guest" workers from southern Europe and Turkey in Germany, it has been left untranslated in this text. It's also worth noting that when "kanaka" is used in English, it's usually a derogatory term as well, mostly referring to people of Polynesian descent.

\*\*Editor's Note: The wild-strikes of migrant workers were held in spite of the wills of their labour union -something completely unseen in post-war Germany.

\*\*\*Editor's Note: The slogan of the conservative campaign led by figures like Roland Koch was: "Yes to Integration - No to Double Citizenship!"

Translated by Summer Banks