
Rightwing Radicals To Lose Their Jobs

Commercial Enterprises Initiate Offensive Against Neonazis -- Trade Unions and Politicians Agree.

AvG/ad Berlin - The suggestion of the German Industrialist Coalition (BDI) to fire Neonazis employed in their factories, has met a mixed reception. The labor unions and the Greens support the idea, but the FDP (German Federalist Party) judged the suggestion of BDI spokesperson Ludolf von Wartenberg with skepticism. In the view of the Social Democrats, a policy of suppression would accomplish little. At the center of the controversy is the question of whether persons with rightwing extremist views should be integrated, or whether our fellow workers should be protected from such views.

Von Wartenburg had demanded in the German Financial Times that "rightwing radical employees who make themselves conspicuous should be fired". Such actions should be fought out in the courts, if necessary. And since, according to the national criminal police agency, the majority of rightwing radical delinquents in 1981 have jobs to lose -- only 12.7 percent were unemployed -- the threat of losing a job can strongly influence the political scene.

"Those who bring racism and violence to work must reckon with consequences," said Claus Eilrich, spokesperson for the IG Metalworkers Union, to a reporter from the Berliner Morgenpost. Referring to the example set by Eko Steel in Eisenhüttenstadt, Eilrich continued: "If good words and persuasion do not help, then we should show the door to those who do not agree." In 1998 the company had terminated the employment of two young men at the conclusion of their training, on account of their racist views.

"The suggestion of the BDI is not covered by our protection against unlawful dismissal", said legal expert Carl-Ludwig Thiele, Member of Parliament of the German Liberal Party, to the Morgenpost. "Employers risk to be put in their places by the industrial courts." After all, to dismiss somebody without a criminal record just because of his conviction is forbidden by the German Basic Law. "Instead, we should do everything to remove those persons from xenophobia by integrating them into society."

Ulrich Weber, the labor lawyer from Cologne, has an optimistic view of the legalistic issue: "Where activists of the rightwing scenerie are concerned, the companies have a good chance before the court," he told the Financial Times of Germany. Weber mentions two grounds for firing rightwing radicals: If they disturb the company's established routine, such as in daily dealings with foreign colleagues. The termination grounds of the 70s (against communists in public employment) could be resurrected also, in a somewhat different form.

Annelie Buntentbach, the Green Party's expert on rightwing extremism in parliament, warmly welcomed the recommendation of the BDI. She told the newspaper that the demand has already been raised by several corporation lawyers. "To be sure, we have to be careful that we target the right people with such measures." According to the Green lady politician, the targeted group includes all employees who "emanate racial violence or who spread National Socialist propaganda."

The sister organization to the BDI, German Industrial and Trade Congress, had previously warned that German prestige was endangered by increasing rightwing extremist acts of violence. Other commercial organizations as well have expressed fears that German exports would suffer.