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Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, West German policymakers’ attitudes toward “family migrants” shifted from celebratory to antagonistic, resulting in increasingly restrictive migration policies. The central premise of Lauren Stokes’s terrific new monograph is to understand how and why this change happened, what effects it had on migrants’ lives, and how migrants sought to improve their own circumstances. While Stokes covers a wide range of guest workers from Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Turkey, it is the last category that occupied the most space in West German political discourse, and therefore takes center stage in this study. Politicians in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), she maintains, used family migration to reinforce their gendered and racialized assumptions of German identity. Furthermore, they made family migration their justification for transforming the welfare state into a neoliberal state. Stokes argues that the neoliberal state’s racialization of migrant families was an intentional strategy designed to force these families to conform to “German” values. Those who were unable to conform remained on the margins, perpetually seen as foreigners in (West) Germany.

Chapter 1 examines the creation of the aptly termed “market-conforming family.” Originally, in the 1950s and early 1960s, guest worker recruitment was deregulated. Visas were not required ahead of time, and family members could easily get residence permits to stay. By the mid-1960s, as guest workers began putting down roots, West Germans’ fears about guest workers and their families staying long term grew. The federal government began to clamp down on foreigners. After 1965, the Foreigners’ Office enforced having a visa prior to arrival. The government also only encouraged family migration under certain circumstances. Married women, for example, were encouraged to join their husbands so that they could work, and their presence would steer Turkish men away from marrying German women. Stokes describes the assumptions undergirding West German fears as problematic. Proponents of family reunification supported it because they be-
lieved that “southern” individuals (understood as citizens of Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Turkey) were incapable of surviving without their families. State officials, municipal authorities, social workers, experts, and tabloid editors all argued that family reunification would protect German women from lecherous foreign men and prevent intermarriage. Both arguments, Stokes suggests, point to West German policy based on othering non-German migrants. In the end, the West German state created a set of contradictory conditions for itself. West German officials wanted cheap, female labor, but they did not want to create the infrastructure to support migrant families. West Germans wanted foreign families to conform to their culture but also constructed an image of them as racialized others whose dependence on their families was pathological, unchanging, and, ultimately, incapable of conformity to “Germanness.”

Chapter 2 tackles the problem of housing for migrant families. To sponsor family members, foreign workers had to prove they had “adequate housing”—a tall order in a country that was still facing housing shortages and the memories of displacement during the Second World War. What constituted “adequate” varied from state to state, and what was available to foreigners tended to be more expensive and shabbier than what Germans typically inhabited. As migrants flocked to West Germany, they sought out the company of fellow foreigners. West German officials thus began to fear ghettoization of foreigners and thus enacted limits on how many foreigners could settle in one region, hoping to spread them across the FRG and avoid “overburdening” certain areas.

Chapter 3 covers the 1974 reform of child allowances for children living outside the European Economic Community. As the German state assumed responsibility for paying for child allowances, previously the charge of employers, officials changed their rhetoric about migrant families, which tended to be larger than West German families, arguing that these families might cost the state more money. Unlike earlier, when West German officials depicted migrant families as pathologically tied to their familial bonds, now they portrayed them as “welfare migrants,” only seeking family reunification for the sake of money. One solution, according to West German officials, was to create a two-tier system in which foreign workers received a smaller allowance for children living outside the European Economic Community. Stokes describes this decision and the ensuing controversy in West Germany over the so-called threat of migrant children, who, according to popular discourse, would eventually outnumber German children.

Chapter 4 examines the consequences of the work permit ban in West Germany. Officials in the Ministries of Labor and the Interior stood at odds with each other over regulating family migration. At its core, this debate was a murky mixture of contradictions. To some ministry officials, the family was an economic unit; to others, migrant families were inextricably bound by emotional bonds. To yet other ministry officials, migrant families were supposed to replicate the male breadwinner family model, when it was often men who were the unemployed trailing spouses. These misguided assumptions thus shaped policies on work permits and residence permits. They also culminated in the introduction of the waiting period in which foreigners could complete training necessary for work permit eligibility, which was allegedly the only way foreign men could prove that they were in West Germany for the “right” reasons. In the end, the waiting period law served as a precursor to a broader neoliberal turn in Germany in the early 2000s.

Chapter 5 interrogates a crucial reckoning with German national identity in the early 1980s, as Holocaust memory, German citizenship laws, and debates over migration collided. By the 1980s, the children of migrant workers were becoming foci of various controversies concerning German
national identity. Namely, German politicians argued that child migrants were doomed to fail if they settled in West Germany. Moreover, they asserted that foreign parents were causing more harm than good by raising their children in the FRG. Finally, this period saw West German politicians raising new concerns about the influence of Islam in Turkish culture, arguing that Turkish families were unable to escape their patriarchal, misogynistic family structures.

Chapter 6 explores what Stokes terms “the politics of vulnerability,” which in this context stemmed from state restrictions on marriage migration. By the 1980s, West German officials began to fear that second-generation migrants would marry abroad and try to bring their spouses to the FRG. Thus, the government proposed restricting or banning spousal migration. In the end, individual states decided to enforce an eight-year residence requirement on those who wanted to bring a foreign spouse to the FRG, while others added an additional three years’ requirement of legal marriage. These requirements were later challenged in the Federal Constitutional Court, leading to the removal of the three-year marriage requirement. The high court ruled that this stipulation ultimately undermined the Basic Law’s protection of marriage and the family. Meanwhile, the West German state resorted to extreme measures, such as deportation, but was challenged by foreign couples who became pregnant and called into question the FRG’s commitment to protecting families. These restrictions ultimately made migrants dependent on their spouses, which opened the door to domestic abuse, deportation, and uncertainty about their legal status in West Germany. The West German state employed equally paternalistic attitudes toward German women who married foreign men, barring them from gaining citizenship or residence permits for their husbands. These restrictions on marriage eventually prompted women to organize to fight for their rights.

The final chapter returns to the “problem” of foreign children in a series of 1990s-era reforms. Until 1999, children of foreigners born in Germany were not automatically granted citizenship nor were they required to hold residence permits. The 1990 Law on Foreigners created the possibility of the “return option” for migrant children who had been born in Germany but taken to their parents’ home country. When the FRG began requiring residence permits for minors, these minors began skirting the issue by declaring asylum, which the state noted with alarm. The controversial nature of requiring residence permits for children paved the way for discussions about granting citizenship to children of migrants and allowing dual citizenship, a major turning point in modern German history. At the same time, unwilling to cut ties with its racist, misogynistic, and anti-Islamic assumptions, the German state introduced integration courses and tests in the 2000s to ensure that recent and would-be citizens’ loyalties were in line with German values.

The history of migration and the history of the family in West Germany are well-tilled fields. For the last two decades, historians have uncovered time and again how central the politics of migration and the family have been to the West German state and to defining a post-fascist German national identity. Certainly, other historians have noted the gendered and racist assumptions undergirding federal policy.[1] Stokes intervenes here by demonstrating how closely, on every level, these assumptions guided every discussion about foreign workers and their families. There are thus few stones unturned in this brilliant book about the politics of family reunification in the FRG. Stokes masterfully weaves together analysis of local concerns, state- and federal-level policies, and bilateral contracts between countries in the European Economic Community, demonstrating how migrants and their families had to navigate these different levels of governance to simply stay in Germany. To this end, her narrative also serves the important function of giving agency to mi-
grant families, who protested, fought court cases, and found creative workarounds for uniting their families in the FRG.

If there is a weak spot in the book, it may be the treatment of the post-reunification FRG. While a full-scale comparison with East Germany would have been untenable, given the breadth and scope of the existing narrative, more acknowledgment of the context of the early 1990s would have nevertheless benefited the analysis. One of the most significant diplomatic events in recent German history is scarcely mentioned. The 1990 legal reform was passed against the backdrop of the Revolutions of 1989 and between the first free elections of the German Democratic Republic and German reunification in 1990. How did Chancellor Helmut Kohl and his government justify restricting migration of foreigners while allowing East Germans citizenship? How did Turkish Germans respond to seeing former East Germans receive the rights and privileges they were denied? This minor critique notwithstanding, Stokes has provided an elegantly written narrative that captures the intricacy and difficulty of decades of debate over family migration. This book deserves to join its peers as part of the canon of modern German history.

Note

[1]. There is an extensive historiography. Stokes situates her book among the following recent monographs regarding guest workers in Germany: Christopher Molnar, Memory, Politics, and Yugoslav Migrations to Postwar Germany (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018); Jennifer A. Miller, Turkish Guest Workers in Germany: Hidden Lives and Contested Borders, 1960s-1980s (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018); Sarah Thomsen Vierra, Turkish Germans in the Federal Republic of Germany: Immigration, Space, and Belonging, 1961-1990 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); and Rita Chin, The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Regard-

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