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point for neo-Nazi youth gangs.
50,000 inhabitants. In Dresden it is no
the only such facility for the project's
in the wave of racist
violence which has swept the entire
united Germany this autumn, time
and again the ugliest scenes have
erupted in Saxony. Next to Gorbizt's
uniform-type GDR supermarket lies
the standard single-storey youth club,
the only such facility for the project's
50,000 inhabitants. In Dresden it is no
secret that the Espe Club is the rallying
point for neo-Nazi youth gangs.
The youth centre had been the Mon­
day meeting place of the Gorbizt
Brotherhood, a loose coalition of neo-
fascist groups, until the alliance
splintered this autumn. The Dresden
Criminal Police estimate that a hard
core of about 100-150 semi-organised,
violent ultra-right youth live in Gorbizt.
Roughly three times that are ac­
tive in Dresden as a whole, with
several thousand sympathisers of
varying degrees of commitment.

“Yeah, we're all rightwing here,” says
Jorg, 18, in a rough working class
Saxon accent. Tall and muscular, with
short-cropped brown hair and flash­ing
dark eyes, Jorg says he's a member
of the Ku Klux Klan. Although he's
never met a Klan member, he has their
literature in translation. “The Klan
takes the strongest stand against the
niggers and the slant-eyes, those who
are taking away our jobs and flats;” he
hesitates for a moment: “and, of

course, against the leftists too.”
The crowd in Espe agrees that
democracy has left them empty-
handed. Jorg and his friend Ute, who
will join the Aryan-supremacist
Viking Youth as soon as she turns 18
next year, look back to the Third Reich
as the high point of German national
glory. “The Viking Youth simply
wants to restore traditional German
values and Germany's real historical
borders,” she says, accurately repeat­
ing the group's program. “National
Socialism was good, but Hitler tried to
push too far. Mostly, we just want Ger­
many to be German again.”

For the ultra-right, the issue of foreign
immigration into Germany is Theme
Number 1. Unemployment has hit the
Neubau ghettos like Gorbizt hard. In
the East, the dozen or so fractured
neo-fascist parties from former West
Germany see fertile soil. Through
propaganda and visits, the ultra-right
has focused its energies on the eastern
youth's disillusionment, pinpointing
the influx of foreigners into Germany
as the source of their plight. Parties
such as the German Alternative (GA),
the German People's Union (GPU),
the Nationalist List, the Free German
Workers' Party (FGWP) and the
Republican Party first made contact
with the Gorbizt scene several years
ago. In former West Germany, the
xenophobic, ultra-nationalist parties
occasionally score regional electoral
successes, taking up to 9% of the vote.
Yet, two years after the fall of the wall,
the Western parties have been unable
to build solid political organisations
in the new federal states. Their
demagoguery, however, has obvious­
ly penetrated at least a segment of the
population.
The growing aggression against for­
gingers in Saxony reached a climax in
October during a three-day pogrom in
Hoyerswerda, north of Dresden,
where several hundred radicals be­sieged the dormitories of foreign
refugees and workers. The Espe crew
proudly boasts the evacuation of
foreign nationals from now "foreigner-
free" Hoyerswerda as a milestone
victory.

But the spectacle of neo-fascist mobs
bombarding the refugees' Hoyerswerda
homes with Molotov cocktails sent deep shock waves
through the majority of the German
population. Since Hoyerswerda,
debate has raged over the asylum law,
over the sources of rightwing identi­
fication and over plans of action.
Meanwhile, the violence continues
unabated.

Black and Asian people in Dresden
say that the ever more brutal aggres­sion has created a permanent state
of fear in their communities. Stefan Tran­
berg, from the city's Office for Foreign
Nationals, says that Third World
people stay off the streets at night.
"Even many average people here har­
bour a lot of hostility towards foreign­
ers," says the lawyer. "The abrupt
changes in their lives have taken a
heavy psychological toll, and foreign
nationals are convenient scapegoats."

In a city of 500,000, the 10,000 foreign­
ers (among them only 28 asylum ap­
plicants) constitute a drastically lower
total percentage than in major West
German cities. Over the next five
years, the number of foreign nationals
in Dresden will more than quadruple
as the East takes on its share of the
Federal Republic's immigrants and
refugees.

Across the Elbe, the Right's favourite
target is the turn-of-the-century work­ing
class Neustadt district, today the
rundown quarters of Dresden's alter­
aive scene. The colourful murals
and anarchist graffiti on the crum­
bling houses attests to a very different
subculture. In the barely-heated,
candlelit cafes, the Neustadt's artists
and leftist politicos complain that the
police have not raised a finger against
regular assaults in the area. The
culprits who pushed a 28-year-old
Mozambican out of a street car to his
death in April, and the arsonist who
burned down the Bronx Cafe on New
Although special Western-trained anti-terrorist units have been ordered into Saxony since Hoyerswerda, the Interior Ministry admits that it is unable to guarantee the public's safety. Western personnel are busy training an uncertain and ill-prepared police force. The purge of officers compromised under the communist regime has left a force at only 60% capacity. Yet even this skeletal force has shown itself to be quite proficient in cracking down on the anarchist squats in the Neustadt.

In Dresden, officials deny a pro-rightwing bias, as well as the charge that neo-Nazi activity is stronger in Saxony than elsewhere in Germany. The Interior Ministry continued to deal with the rightwing extremists in the manner of the old GDR—as a criminal rather than a political phenomenon. "Most of the criminal offenders are frustrated youth with minimal political ideology," argues the Stuttgart expert Heinrich Rosegger, the director of Saxony's new Special Commission on Rightward Radicalism. "The real number of politically motivated, organised persons in the scene is quite small."

Bernd Wagner, director of the Domestic Security Office in Berlin responsible for ex-East Germany, says that extensive conspiratorial networks exist within the German right. This summer, the various groups came together in Dresden to ground the Saxon National List in an effort to unify the Right. Although little has been heard of the party since its inception, Wagner argues that underground groups are highly organised.

Hopes of uniting the unruly rightwing scene were dealt a heavy blow with the murder of Dresden's popular neo-Nazi leader Rainer Sonntag. A gunman sprang out and fired a single bullet into Sonntag's head. Sonntag's gunman sprang out and fired a single bullet into Sonntag's head. Sonntag's funeral attracted 2,000 neo-Nazis who marched through Dresden streets with their arms extended in the Nazi salute shouting "Sieg Heil".

Splintered and at odds with one another, the East's neo-fascists fall into several, often overlapping categories. The skinheads, for example—easily distinguished by their shaved heads, green bomber jackets and high-top army boots—constitute the most lumpen form. Normally under 23 years of age, the self-professed neo-Nazis operate more like street gangs in groups of five to 15 persons, usually with an authoritarian, charismatic leader at the fore.

Another militant strain, often associated with the FGWP or GA, claims to act as a citizens' police. Armed with a newly-available array of weaponry from baseball bats to gas pistols, the thugs take it upon themselves to cleanse German society of foreign crime, drugs trade and the sex industry. The police report that still heavier weaponry is being sold off from the back doors of the Soviet barracks as the Red Army troops make their exit.

The bigger question in Saxony is whether there exists a potential for rightwing ideology to take hold among a broader cross-section of the population. The more disturbing images from Hoyerswerda were those of the town's citizens cheering as the foreign nationals fled in guarded buses, helicopters whirring overhead. Throughout former East Germany, the Right's propaganda touched a sensitive nerve. According to New Forum's Andreas Meinel, a deputy in the Saxon parliament, the ultra-Right alone has colonised the social issues that have affected people most, such as unemployment, housing and kindergartens. "In this atmosphere, a lot of people are receptive to the charge that Germans have to look out for themselves first," says Meinel. "The real danger is that these extremist groups succeed in making contact with the average citizen.

The outburst of racist violence has rallied a diverse coalition of anti-fascist political forces across Germany. In Saxony, the Evangelical church, left political parties and extra-parliamentary groups have initiated community work projects for rightwing youth. Non-ideological, anti-racist demonstrations have united 100,000 people in Berlin and 7,000 in Dresden.

In Bonn, however, all of the major political parties have stooped to capitalise on the surge of resentment toward foreigners. The ruling Christian Democratic Union has unscrupulously turned the discussion over Germany's liberal asylum law into a dominant election issue. The tenor of debate has simply legitimised the myth that, indeed, it is the Eastern European and Third World refugees who are to blame for Germany's economic woes.

The real benefactor of the government's demagoguery could well prove to be the extremist political parties. The neo-fascist GPU captured 6.7% of the vote in autumn local elections in the north-western city of Bremen, with organisational structures no more visible than those in Saxony. Should the Right get its act together for the regional 1994 elections, the united Germany's political landscape could begin to look very different.

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