Dresden, the Baroque capital of south-eastern Saxony, has won itself the title of the capital of rightwing radicalism in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). 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 Monday 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 fascist groups, until the alliance

But the spectacle of neo-fascist mobs bombarding the refugees' Hoyerwerda homes with Molotov cocktails sent deep shock waves through the majority of the German population. Since Hoyerwerda, debate has raged over the asylum law, over the sources of rightwing identification 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 Tranberg, from the city's Office for Foreign Nationals, says that Third World people stay off the streets at night. "Even many average people here harbour a lot of hostility towards foreigners," 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 foreigners (among them only 28 asylum applicants) 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 alternative scene. The colourful murals and anarchist graffiti on the crumbling 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 Year's Eve 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.

AGGRO SAXONS

On Dresden's westernmost outskirts, the concrete highrise project of Gorbizt is the largest of the city's sprawling industrial ghettos. From the looming apartment blocks, the blue-purple flicker of TV sets illuminates the dark, empty streets below. On the side of an aluminium sausage stand, the spray-painted graffiti is nearly identical to that which covers the walls in Dresden's other projects: "Reds Against the Wall!", "Foreigners Out!" and "Third Reich Again!".

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 repeating the group's program. "National Socialism was good, but Hitler tried to push too far. Mostly, we just want Germany 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 (GDP), 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 obviously penetrated at least a segment of the population.

The growing aggression against foreigners in Saxony reached a climax in October during a three-day pogrom in Hoyerswerda, north of Dresden,
Although special Western-trained anti-terrorist units have been ordered into Saxony since Hoyerswerda, theInterior 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—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 Rightwing 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 extreme 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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