

Portuguese Hamburg people in Eimsbüttel

When the Portuguese-German recruitment agreement was concluded in March 1964, the country, ruled dictatorially by Antonio Salazar, was in the midst of a brutal colonial war – in Angola, Mozambique, and other Portuguese colonies.

On a chartered train to Germany

Young men had to serve four years in the military before they could seek work in other European countries, primarily in France. Portugal remained politically and culturally stagnant, with high illiteracy and oppressive poverty. Any opposition was mercilessly persecuted by the secret police (PIDE).

The recruitment agreement opened up new perspectives for many Portuguese men. After undergoing humiliating medical examinations by German personnel, the men were transported to Germany on special trains – many of them to Hamburg. The focus of employment for Portuguese "guest workers" was the large companies around the port and the Eimsbüttel companies Beiersdorf and Valvo (Phillips Group). They were often housed in barrack-like temporary accommodations and had to work at the bottom of the company hierarchy.

Recruitment ban and questionable proposals

Many Portuguese soon brought their families with them and looked for housing in Hamburg. When a recruitment ban was imposed in West Germany in 1973 and questionable proposals (such as paying out pension contributions without the employer's share) were made in 1984 to encourage "guest workers" to return to their home countries, most Portuguese families remained in Germany.



Women from all countries of origin and from Hamburg participated in the "Working Group on Women in Migrant Work."
Photo: private, n.y.

At home in Hamburg – still connected to Portugal

In the meantime, they had developed a vibrant political and cultural life in Hamburg. Women played an active role in this. In addition, a Portuguese-German scene had established itself in the city – largely inspired by the Portuguese Carnation Revolution of 1974. The "Asso" (Associação Portuguesa), founded in the 1960s, had its headquarters for many years on Heinrichstraße in Eimsbüttel. Hamburg's first bilingual Portuguese-German kindergarten was also affiliated with it.

Second- and third-generation Portuguese have attended German schools and, in many cases, universities. They are present not only in the "Portugiesenviertel" but also in Eimsbüttel with its pastelarias and restaurants. They feel at home here and yet are deeply connected to their homeland and have become, as they themselves say, "Portuguese Hamburg people."



Excursion of the Portuguese women's group to Krautsand.
Photo: private, o.y.



The "Portuguese Unemployed Group" actively participates in the demonstration of May 1st in 1984.
Photo: private