

Some Brazilians in Germany Have Only One Dream: To Go Back Home

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The weekly German newsmagazine Der Spiegel has just published a long article about the rising influx of Brazilians to Germany. The piece written by Daniela Gerson informs that the new wave of Brazilian immigration to that country marks a reversal of a 200-year-old trend.

About 260,000 Germans chose Brazil as their home from the early 1800s to the Second World War. Most of them emigrated to the Brazilian South: the states of Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul. By 1929, there were around 1 million people speaking German in Brazil.

The move in the opposite direction started in the early 1990s, The main factors: a faltering Brazilian economy, rampant corruption and cheaper air fares.

The signs that the Brazilian are coming have been popping everywhere. Small shops carry Brazilian products like farinha de mandioca (manioc flour) and guaraná soft drink. Samba is becoming more and more popular and the martial-art-cum-dance capoeira is getting lots of fans.

The Brazilian consulate in Berlin estimates that there are 40,000 Brazilian in Germany. The German census is even more conservative putting that number at 27,076 in 2004. Brazil's Itamaraty (Foreign Relations Department) seems closer to the real numbers when it informs that the number of Brazilians in Germany has already reached 60,000, what would make it one of the largest Brazilian communities in Europe.

According to Der Spiegel, Germany's Brazilian community is one of the fastest growing immigrant groups in the country. Their members represent "a financially and socially diverse group - ranging from academics to line cooks, au pairs to engineers."

Most of the unskilled Brazilians, however, have to subject themselves to hard and badly paying jobs like working as maid, on construction or tending to Germany's growing number of senior citizens. There is very little else available.

Illegal workers, according to Bianca Donatangelo, editor of the publication Brazine wouldn't be more than a minority: 1,000 or less. Official numbers show also that there is a big imbalance of immigrants: three quarters of them are women. Some of them come to marry a German guy, others as student, but quite a few are also prostitutes.

Germany has also a large Brazilian homosexual community, which is drawn by a liberal attitude toward gays in the country. Some artists consider working in Germany more prestigious than in Brazil.

Brazilians start to challenge stereotypes in Germany since Germans seem to know Brazil by three key words: soccer, samba and caipirinha (margarita made with sugar cane liquor). By the way, caipirinha has apparently become Germany's hard drink of choice.

But as Der Spiegel notes many immigrants are not happy. The magazine quotes Luciene Barros, 29, saying: "'Our life here in Germany is only work. We don't have time to enjoy. We saved in Brazil to live here like this."

Her husband has a degree in Economy, but cannot find a job in his specialty. She cleans two houses a day and her husband spends the week working construction in the south of the country. Both are saving, she says, so that in two years they can fulfill their dream: go back to Brazil.