

At gunpoint: Forcing Foreign Students to the Wall through the residents' permit

The game of chess is all about strategy. It is a bloody war taking place on a board. Both players start with the same number of pieces and the main goal is to get the other side to surrender by checkmating their king. It is ruthless. A good player can slaughter the opponent's pieces and eventually capture (checkmate) their king. However, the masters of chess know how to end the game with little or almost no casualties. This is one of the things that Sun Tzu (The Art of War) says marks the best of generals. This same method is used in war, business, and politics alike. It is about forcing the opponent to surrender. And this method of forcing a surrender might be what the Foreign Office in Baihiloiti might be using against foreign students studying at the University of Baihiloiti.

In these series, I would be highlighting some tactics of the Foreign Office that constitute forcing a surrender from foreign students while making it look lawful and just. The Foreign Office makes it appear that it is done for the "good of the land", or like our America friends "in the name of God and country."

I have identified three components in their tactics. They are delayed response, intimidation, and subtle misinformation. The permutations that can be achieved using any or all of these components are many but the results are the same: make life miserable for innocent foreign students.

Today's article is about a classic move using the delayed response component. Let us begin the game!

Everyone in Germany is required to carry a residents' permit. There are different types like the national ID, the permanent ID, temporary ID, students' ID, etc. Nationals, students, refugees, visitors, everyone is expected to carry a form of identification on their person at every point in time. Foreign students who are eligible to study a fulltime course in Germany are also given a corresponding residents' permit. They are allowed to work for a total number of 120 full days or 240 half days. That is a very ambiguous law because no one tells them where the borderline line between the half day's and the full day's job is. Is it 4 hours or 3 hours thirty minutes? What happens if a student works for 4 hours and 5 minutes? Does that constitute a full day's job? Well, your guess is as good as mine, the foreign students don't know. All that they rely on is guesses and word of mouth from a person "who as stayed longer" in the system.

Back to my point of holding foreign students are residents' permit point. While you may be thinking that my choice of words is quite harsh, let me paint a scenario for you? Have you ever been held at gunpoint and be asked for money? Or have you ever watched a movie scene or even witnessed someone held at a gunpoint robbery? Okay, whatever your answer is, it is fine. Let us break it down. There are at least three

elements in such a situation: The attacker(s), the gun(s) and the victims(s). Whether the victim has money to give the attacker(s) is dependent on various things, but the other three elements are present. In this present scenario, the Foreign Office is the attacker, the foreign student is the victim and the weapon(s) is the law(s). While I do not say the laws concerning foreign students are bad, I only wish to point out how the Foreign Office in Baihiloiti has been using some laws like a gun to take money at gunpoint from hapless foreign students.

Delaying the issuance of the residents' permit.

Currently, to study in Germany, foreign students should put at least €10,236 in a blocked account or get a sponsor or a scholarship for the period of their study. This is the law and a good one at that to avoid overburdening the social support system in Germany. That is good but here is the catch for those who have to put €10,236 in a block account, some towns like Baihiloiti, you have to show an account balance of €10,236 every year to be granted a students' residents' permit. That is also the law and it is good to abide by the law. Let's go further.

In my experience and due to close contacts with international students, many of them pick up small jobs like working in bars, cleaning, teaching private classes, house moving etc. within and outside the town. They do that to augment whatever their scholarships, sponsors or bank savings provide. This is nothing new and it is a common practice in Germany. For those, who use the blocked account, after obtaining their first students' residents' permit, consequent ones can only be acquired by less than €10,236 in their accounts if they have a job contract. The officials of the Foreign Office do their calculations based on various criteria which also includes the difference between what the student earns and the balance from the €10,236.

Due to this practice, many students using blocked accounts try to get jobs because "getting €10,236 every year is not an easy task", as a friend once told me. So, one can say, a job contract provides a soft landing for foreign students so that they can go on with their lives. However, perhaps, the Foreign Office in Baihiloiti sees that in a different light (don't cite me), because it views it an escape route which must be stopped. "They must provide the €10,236" before they can renew their students' residents residents' permit." To prevent the "prisoners" from escaping through this "job contract crack", the law can be weaponized.

However, there is a huge barrier working to keep the Foreign Office in check. The law itself. It is made to protect the state and all residents irrespective of their ethnicity or background. The law in Germany is the law. It is without prejudice, simple. That means you don't want to be caught on the wrong side of the law.

So, how do “we” to circumvent and make the foreign students stand at the nozzle end of the law on blocked accounts? Well, there are at least two ways that I know. I will talk about one today: “Prevent them from getting a job in the first place or make them lose their job if they already got one”. The prevention is easy to achieve and effective in holding the full-time foreign student to ransom but let me give you a practical example of making a student lose a job.

Jane is a masters’ student in Mathematics. She came to Baihiloiti on a scholarship from her home country before things went south for the government and they had to cut scholarship funds. She would need to fund a Blocked account with €10,236 to renew her students’ residents’ permit this year. She decides to get herself a student’s job. She found one where she earns about €600 after (class 1) taxes. That means that she would need less than €10,236 in her account for the residents’ permit renewal. She applies 6 weeks ahead for the card as stipulated by the law. Her application is received and delayed until the current residents’ permit, she is holding expires. She asks the Foreign Office to give her a temporary residents’ permit to at least keep working. She is given none. The officials either guarantee her that the residents’ permit should be ready in four weeks or so. After six weeks the employer has no other option than to sack her because she has no residents’ permit to work. The Foreign office asks her to come back to clear some little issues. She is asked to show her proof of finance again. Without a job contract, she will need to fund her account with €10, 236 for a year because that is the law. She can’t provide it. Gbamm, checkmate! She is now in their hands and the tales of her woes has just begun.

Simple trick but produces classic results every time it is well applied.

You can fool some people sometimes, but you cannot fool all the people all the time. This injurious practice needs to be stopped.

Part 2: coming soon

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