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Refugee crisis – casus of Cottbus

Introduction

In the past, numerous German states were known for its tradition of openness towards foreigners. In 1685, issuing the Edict of Potsdam Frederick Wilhelm allowed Huguenots to settle in Prussia. Along with the progressing industrialization, in the nineteenth century, “economic immigrants”, also from the Polish lands, came to the German lands. After the Second World War, along with the change of borders, the population structure in East and West Germany was also transformed, which resulted from the population with a migration background living in Germany. Among the population coming to Germany as part of employee contracts, the people from Turkey predominated. After reunification, Germany had to pursue an immigration policy in which it was necessary to respond to the challenges posed by hostility and fear of foreigners, as well as the international situation, such as migrations caused in the nineties by the conflict in the Balkans. In the Federal Republic of Germany, the culture of hospitality prevailed, despite the fact that there were symptoms of hostility towards immigrants in the united Germany and the knowledge that the practice of implementing immigration policy was complicated. After 1945, research was carried out in Germany on the theme of political extremism, aimed at combating radicalism and building democracy. The memory of Nazi crimes and Nazi politics resulted in a special sensitivity to extreme attitudes and expressing hostility toward strangers. As noted by Peter Nitschke after 1945, an “extremist” in Germany was considered everybody who “forms the antithesis to the constitution”¹. Dieter Segert, in turn, invoked two ways of understanding right-wing extremism: 1). political extremism which “consciously opposes a democratic constitutional state, not excluding the use of violence in politics”; 2). political extremism as a “pol-

¹ P. Nitschke, *Extremismus in der postmodernen Konstellation*, [in:] *Gewalt und Krieg. Extremismus und Terror. Beiträge zu immerwährenden Problemen menschlichen Zusammenlebens*, edit. J. Kuropka, Berlin 2011, p. 181.

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icy of right-wing extremists, often associated with right-wing ideology or worldview, especially with the ethnically or culturally defined concept of a nation whose interests are considered superior to individuals, and everything that is ethnically and culturally alien is perceived as a threat². The Polish political scientist, Roman Tokarczuk, called for the clarification of political extremism “as a collective description of various political views and activities that are linked by the negation of the democratic constitutional state and its fundamental values”³.

The influence of Angela Merkel's policy on the situation in Cottbus

Only after 2015, under the influence of the migration crisis in the Middle East caused by the war, the country was heated by a discussion about the pros and cons of the Open Door policy promoted by Chancellor Angela Merkel. The Chancellor convinced the public that they would manage to (“we can”) defend the German culture of hospitality together, call for the imperative of humanitarian aid and invoke the need to strengthen European solidarity. However, her policy, first accepted with enthusiasm, met with growing criticism over time. Opponents were of the opinion that Chancellor Merkel contributed to an increase in the scale of the immigration crisis in Europe, violated European solidarity (though she appealed for it) and provoked a debate about how this value should be understood. Among the politicians from the Member States of the European Union diversified opinions prevailed about what are the interests and humanitarian tasks of citizens. Critics argued that the intent to use the benefits of the welfare state by immigrants would weaken not only the economic potential of the European Union. After 2014, social movements, such as PEGIDA, began to form, which expressed concern that the acceptance of a large number of people, mostly Muslims, would contribute to the weakening of security through increased terrorist threats and the problem of preserving German identity. The issue of defending leading culture became a leaven to create a protesting party against immigrants, e.g. the Alternative for Germany. According to the survey conducted by Radio Berlin Brandenburg on March 1, AfD (39%) enjoys the strongest support in Cottbus. In 2018, AfD, PEGIDA, The Identitarian movement (*Identitären Bewegung*), the group “One Per Cent”, “Future Homeland” are among the actively protesting against migrants in the city⁴. Rock groups Frontalkraft and Collec-

² S. Segert, *Prawicowy ekstremizm w Europie Wschodniej i warunki jego przyszłych sukcesów – przegląd*, [in:] *Prawicowy radykalizm i ksenofobia w Polsce i w Niemczech. Nacjonalne i europejskie perspektywy*, edit. M. Minkenber, D. Sucker, A. Wenninger, Bonn 2006, p. 58.

³ R. Tokarczyk, *Teoretyczna a praktyczna istota współczesnego ekstremizmu politycznego*, [in:] *Doktryny i ruchy współczesnego ekstremizmu politycznego*, edit. E. Olszewski, Lublin 2004, p. 27.

⁴ A. Fröhlich, *Durchsuchung in Cottbus, Identitäre Bewegung: Razzia bei Brandenburgs Regionalchef*, “Potsdamer Nueste Nachrichten”, August 24, 2017, <http://www.pnn.de/brandenburg-berlin/1211400/> [access on: 11.04.2018]; A. Fröhlich, *AfD, Pegida, Identitäre Bewegung. Ist Cottbus das neue Dresden?*, “Der Tagesspiegel”, February 6, 2018, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/afd-pegida-identitaere-bewegung-ist-cottbus-das-neue-dresden/20925890.html> [access on: 11.04.2018]; *AfD*, <http://www.afd-cottbus.de>.

tive Bianco Rosso promote neo-Nazi political views through music and protest against the presence of migrants⁵.

The protest movements against migrants competed with the “Cottbus Awakening” (*Cottbuser Aufbruch*) existing since 1999, which has been promoting tolerance and the rule of law, organizing marches against far-right parties for many years and also awarding the “Cottbus City Tolerance” since 2011. The body includes representatives of the city council (including the plenipotentiary for foreigners), representatives of democratic parties, representatives of the chamber of commerce and industry, Technical University, churches, representatives of youth from social workers, representatives of schools and parents, volunteers for youth work, representatives senior associations, journalists, theater representatives in Cottbus, representatives of German trade unions, representatives of the aggrieved, and interested residents⁶.

Table 1. Protesters against immigrants in Cottbus

Organization	Leader	Main activities
PEGIDA	Lutz Bachmann	Participation in demonstrations
Alternative for Germany	Marianne Spring-Räumschüssel	Party activity, meetings with voters, contact via the Internet
Identitarian movement (Identitären Bewegung)	Robert Timm	Actions against immigrants “Defend Europe”
“Future Homeland”	Hans-Christoph Berndt	Participation in demonstrations

Source: own elaboration.

The discussion on admission of immigrants was joined by representatives of political parties who in the election campaign in 2017 took up the topic of immigrants. As a result, the balance of forces changed, resulting in a high success of Alternative for Germany.

Arrival in Germany of over 1 million refugees in 2015 set institutions and German society to face challenges that need to be addressed at local, federal and international levels⁷. The division of immigrants in Germany took place according to the so-called “key from Königsstein”, i.e. the population adopted was dependent on population density in FRG⁸.

⁵ *Cottbus schaut hin*, <https://www.facebook.com/1334683443238188/photos/a.1627438013962728.1073741828.1334683443238188/1710733082299887/?type=3&theater> [access on: 9.04.2018].

⁶ *Cottbuser Aufbruch*, www.cottbuser-aufbruch.de [access on: 11.04.2018].

⁷ R. Balcerowiak, *Faktenchek Flüchtlingskrise. Was kommt auf Deutschland noch zu?*, Berlin 2015; J. Miecznikowska, *Niemcy*, [in:] *Uchodźcy w Europie. Uwarunkowania. Istota. Następstwa*, edit. K.A. Wojtaszczyk, J. Szymańska, Warszawa 2017, pp. 374-92; R. Alexander, *Angela Merkel i kryzys migracyjny. Dzień po dniu*, Warszawa 2017, p. 50; 122; D. Murray, *Przedziwna śmierć Europy. Imigracja-tożsamość-islam*, Poznań 2017, pp. 106-7; T.G. Grosse, *Solidarność – zapomniana wartość Unii. Kryzys uchodźczy (migracyjny) a podziały między państwami członkowskimi*, [in:] *Uchodźcy w Europie...*, pp. 218-219.

⁸ *Verteilung von Flüchtlingen in Deutschland und Brandenburg*, “rbb24”, January 23, 2018, <https://www.rbb24.de/politik/beitrag/2018/01/cottbus-interview-demos-rechtsextreme-fluechtlinge.html> [access on: 8.04.2018].

Table 2. Support for political parties in Cottbus

Political party	AfD	CDU	Linke	SPD	FDP	Grüne	Inne
The result in % of the research carried out on February 21-28, 2018 among 1000 people entitled to vote	29	24	17	15	6	5	4
Election result in % in 2014	10.7	28.9	17.2	31.8	1.1	4.5	5.8

Source: *AfD mit fast 30 Prozent stärkste Partei in Cottbus*, "rbb24", March 1, 2018, <https://www.rbb24.de/politik/beitrag/2018/03/umfrage-cottbus-afd-sonntagsfrage-wahlen.html><https://www.rbb24.de/politik/beitrag/2018/03/umfrage-cottbus-afd-sonntagsfrage-wahlen.html> [access on: 9.04.2018].

The deployment of approximately 4,000 immigrants in Cottbus on the Spree in a straight line from Poznań 192 kilometers, and from Zielona Góra 83 kilometers, which is the metropolis of Lower Lusatia and at the same time the district town in Brandenburg, causes the need to analyze the *modus operandi* of legitimizing or delegitimizing the Chancellor Merkel's Open Door policy. The city is known for its Nazi supporters in the 1990s, and now many racist crimes are occurring in Cottbus. The situation of Cottbus as a potential environment for spreading political radicalism or extremism raised questions about the quality of German democracy after 2015, when immigration policy faced new challenges. To explain their position, political actors refer to the diverse narratives that Rolf Peter Sieferle classified as: the refugee narrative; a narrative recalling the demographic problem; a narrative referring to problems in the labor market and a lack of qualified employees; a narrative referring to the essence of multiculturalism⁹. In 2017, the scale of verbal skirmishes and fights increased in Cottbus, which resulted from conflicts between residents and immigrants, for example, on January 21, 2018, three juvenile Syrians threatened with a knife the Germans in a shopping centre. About 300 neo-Nazis live among approximately 100,000 residents. Some of them march through the old city on Tuesdays¹⁰. Fear of immigrants caused an increase in emotional criticism of the rulers, which reflected the discouragement and anxiety of citizens. It was, therefore, possible to predict that Cottbus residents would be in favour of uncompromising solutions to express rebellion against immigration policy decisions they considered un-

⁹ R.P. Sieferle, *Das Migrationsproblem. Über die Unvereinbarkeit von Sozialstaat und Masseneinwanderung*, Berlin 2017.

¹⁰ J. Blankennagel, *Kommentar Alle Augen auf Cottbus*, "Berliner Zeitung", <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/politik/meinung/kommentar-alle-augen-auf-cottbus-29709594> [access on: 9.04.2018]; A. Dworak, *Brunatna fala zbiera się w Cottbus, stolicy neonazistów w Brandenburgii*, "Gazeta Lubuska", February 10-11, 2018.

favourable¹¹. The discussion about Cottbus, according to Martina Münch, minister of culture in Brandenburg, caused a deterioration of the image of the town, which “is not hostile to foreigners”¹². President Frank-Walter Steinmeier arrived on February 15 with a visit to the city to get to know the emotions and moods of the city’s residents. His interlocutors were the mayor Holger Kelch, president of the Technical University of Cottbus Jörg Steinbach, representatives of the FC Energie Cottbus football club, the head of the Maik Bethke Chamber of Commerce and Industry, representatives of the world economy, the Human Rights Centre and the Cottbus Awakening association¹³.

Both protagonists and antagonists of the Open Door policy of are firmly defending their arguments. On February 3, 2018, opponents of admitting immigrants and supporters of openness politics went out on Cottbus streets to express their convictions in separate demonstrations. Proponents of admitting immigrants chose the slogans “life without hatred”, “stop the Nazis and racists – refugee welcome”; among them were immigrants and representatives of the organization “Cottbus Free of the Nazis” (*Cottbus Nazifrei*)¹⁴.

The demonstrators used the means in which they refer to the *argumentum ad populum*, or *argumentum ad verecundiam*, and evaluate the media that address the topic of accepting immigrants. The use of *argumentum ad populum* manifested itself mainly in the broadcasting of slogans exemplifying the fears articulated by opponents of accepting foreigners. Unfilled with detailed information about the slogans on posters of people demonstrating against immigrants may raise concerns about excessive negative emotions and lack of detailed knowledge about migration policy. In the *ad verecundiam* argumentation, the parties recalled statements of representatives of the world of science and the establishment from the world of politics. In spite of appealing to authorities in society, the nineteenth-century term “lying press” returned, and the one widespread during the First World War, when it became popular to say: “everyone lies, as it

¹¹ I. Janicka, *Fala radykalizmu politycznego w Niemczech*, “Przegląd Zachodni” 2013, No. 2; A. Fröhlich, *Syrer demonstrieren für ein Leben ohne Hass*, “Der Tagesspiegel”, January 29, 2018, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/brandenburg-syrer-demonstrieren-fuer-ein-leben-ohne-hass/20904156.html> [access on: 8.04.2018]; *Rechteverteilen in Cottbus Reizgas und NPD-Flyer*, “Der Tagesspiegel”, February 1, 2018, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/rechtsextremismus-in-brandenburg-rechte-verteilen-in-cottbus-reizgas-und-npd-flyer/20914650.html> [access on: 8.04.2018]; Z.D. Czachór, *Wzrost antyimigracyjnego radykalizmu i eurosceptycyzmu jako wyzwanie dla przyszłości Unii Europejskiej*, [in:] *Uchodźcy w Europie...*, pp. 231-2.

¹² *Gewaltserie: Landesministerin sieht Imageschaden für Cottbus*, “Merkur”, January 26, 2018, <https://www.merkur.de/politik/gewaltserie-landesministerin-sieht-imageschaden-fuer-cottbus-zr-9560060.html> [access on: 11.04.2018].

¹³ *Steinmeier spricht mit Bürgern aus Cottbus über Gewalt*, “Berliner Morgenpost”, February 20, 2018, <https://www.morgenpost.de/berlin/article213495191/Steinmeier-spricht-mit-Buergern-aus-Cottbus-ueber-Gewalt.html> [access on: 9.04.2018]; *Bundespräsident: Steinmeier empfängt Cottbus erwegen Flüchtlingsstreit*, “Zeit”, February 20, 2018, <http://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2018-02/bundespraesident-frank-walter-steinmeier-cottbus> [access on: 9.04.2018].

¹⁴ *Demo auf Cottbuser Altmarkt. Demo fürein “Lebenohne Hass”*, “Lausitzer Rundschau”, February 3, 2018, https://www.lr-online.de/lausitz/cottbus/demo-fuer-ein-leben-ohne-hass_aid-7169697 [access on: 8.04.2018].

has been printed”¹⁵. The public criticized the information policy on the migration crisis after 2014. The research conducted by the Allensbach Institute in the autumn of 2016 shows that 51% of respondents are not satisfied with the way the media report about the migration crisis¹⁶.

The crisis of trust in the media caused some journalists to say that it was harder for them to work, and Timothy Garton Ash postulated to strengthen: “A culture of debate. Maturity of society. Responsibility of the elite. Wherever it is possible. Then maybe good, which always requires a debate. The fewer restrictions, the better the debate fulfills its role. The problem is that great media are now crossing the geographical boundaries of societies and that different cultures co-exist in small territories”¹⁷.

Demonstrations and debates on the challenges associated with admitting immigrants show how difficult it is to solve current internal problems in an “open and cultural” manner (as Timothy Garton Ash advocates) and to avoid allegations that the media unbelievably inform about the level of security. Difficulties in absorbing immigrants caused a discussion about the fatigue both with political parties and the media, but they showed the potential of social initiatives and movements, for example the organization “The Future of the Fatherland”, whose leader was Hans-Christoph Berndt. His views combined with the statements of Dietmar Woidke, the Prime Minister of Brandenburg, or Jörg Steinbach, the President of the Brandenburg University of Technology, reflect the diversity of the assessment of migration policy in a micro-scale.

The policy of openness is promoted by Social Democrat, Woidke. Although he does not deny that the deployment of the Syrians in Cottbus caused new problems in the everyday life of the city’s inhabitants, he is in favour of building a positive image of Cottbus. Because the police noted attacks by right-wing extremists and violence among young Syrians, the politician warned against the “spiral of fear, hatred and violence in Cottbus”¹⁸ and would like Cottbus to be seen as a place open to a world worth living. He advocated defining the difficulties that arose when new residents arrived in the city. Above all, he stressed that Cottbus needs more police, social workers, as well as improving the situation in schools and kindergartens¹⁹. Woidke supported demonstrations in which residents will express a positive attitude towards immigrants.

¹⁵ N. Schneider, “Zwei mal drei macht vier”. *Über das Innenleben und die Breitenwirkung einer Hetzvokabel*, [in:] *Lügenpresse. Anatomie eines politischen Kampfbegriffs*, edit. V. Lilienthal, I. Neverla, Köln 2017, p. 120.

¹⁶ M. Haller, *Transparenz schafft Vertrauen. Folgerungen aus der Fehlenentwicklung des Journalismus*, [in:] *Lügenpresse...*, p. 231.

¹⁷ *Niebezpieczna mowa. Historyk Timothy Garton Ash o zagrożeniach wolności słowa, jej granicach i sposobach obrony (Rozmowa Jacka Żakowskiego)*, “Polityka”, May 16-22, 2012.

¹⁸ *Übergriffe in Cottbus: “Das kann keinen politisch Verantwortlichen ruhig lassen”*, “Süddeutsche Zeitung”, February 2, 2018.

¹⁹ *Es darf kein Wegsehen geben*, “Der Tagesspiegel”, February 2, 2018.

Table 3. Slogans of demonstrators in Cottbus

Opponents of accepting immigrants	Supporters of admitting immigrants
Tight borders	The Enlightenment began in 1720
We can do it. People?	Life without violence
Multi-culti. The Destination station	Detroxit your brain
Mass immigration is also the death of the nation	The right to asylum is a human right
The love of the nation is not a crime	Against fear, racist assault
Cottbus will remain German	Heart instead of hatred
Islamization is like a cancer ulcer and is the greatest danger of humanity	Thank you, Cottbus, for my heart
	Against the peace with Germany & their Nazis
	Liberté-Égalité-Fckafd
	“I do not mind a kebab but...” anxious citizen
	Search for a room and follow him
	Colorful Lübbenau

Source: “Zukunft Heimat” demonstriert in Cottbus, “Märkische Allgemeine” <http://www.maz-online.de/Lokales/Bildergalerien-Region/2018/2/Zukunft-Heimat-demonstriert-in-Cottbus#p1> [access on: 8.06.2018]; M. Helbig, *Gewaltfrei und ohne Hass in Cottbus leben*, “Lausitzer Rundschau”, https://www.lr-online.de/lausitz/cottbus/gewaltfrei-und-ohne-hass-in-cottbus-leben_bid-7169817 [access on: 8.06.2018]; *Rechte verteilen in Cottbus Reizgas und NPD-Flyer*, “Der Tagesspiegel”, February 1, 2018, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/rechtsextremismus-in-brandenburg-rechte-verteilen-in-cottbus-reizgas-und-npd-flyer/20914650.html> [access on: 8.06.2018]; J. Blankenagel, *Kommentar Alle Augen auf Cottbus*, “Berliner Zeitung”, <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/politik/meinung/kommentar-alle-augen-auf-cottbus-29709594> [access on: 9.06.2018].

Table 4. Activity of organizations on Facebook

Support for the admitting of migrants	Lack of support for admitting immigrants
Cottbus schaut hin	Bürgerinitiative Heimat & Zukunft
Cottbus nazi frei	Förderverein Cottbuser Aufbruch e.V.

Source: own elaboration.

Mayor Holger Kelch emphasized, however, that the presence of over 4,000 immigrants is a heavy burden in the city's functioning. He believes that the limit of admitted people has been exhausted, and the city needs not only more policemen, but also social workers²⁰.

²⁰ *Flüchtlings-Demos in Cottbus*. “Wir wollen die nicht. Schreiben Sie das”, “Süddeutsche Zeitung”, February 3, 2018; M. Stürzenhofecker, *Cottbus: So weit ist es also gekommen*, “Zeit”, January 24, 2018, <http://www.zeit.de/2018/01/cottbus-fluechtlings-demos>

While advocating an increase in the number of employees involved in strengthening security, he paid attention not only to the need to increase the objective sense of security, but also articulated the need to care for subjective feelings of security, individuals and communities. He advocated overcoming fears and negative emotions because the sense of security affects the quality of society's life²¹.

One of the demonstrations of support for the policy of openness took place on February 15 and was organized under the slogan: "Together against fear". On March 10, a demonstration of support for women was held, under the slogan "Together against racism and injustice". The transmission of information about demonstrations takes place via Facebook. On April 7, 274 people liked the site, and 289 indicated that they subscribed to it²².

The City Council of Cottbus presented on January 31, 2018 "The Concept for Integration" in response to the residents' concerns. The purpose of the document was to contribute to the creation of conditions so that the local population and immigrants could live together and support the process of integration of the incoming community. The document distinguishes goals and 5 theses. The authors of the concept postulated the creation and stabilization of the necessary advisory structures. They underlined the role of education as a guarantor of access to society. They pleaded for integration at work, which is to enable people to communicate with the society and earn a living. The city council also supported the creation of a social environment and taking into account the needs of people that arrived in housing and health policy. In addition, attention was paid to the need for participation in social life, for example through sport, culture and the implementation of other interests in free time. In addition, "The Concept" emphasized that some arrived need special protection.

"The Concept for Integration" results from a wave of protests against immigrants. On February 3, a demonstration took place in Cottbus, during which protesters chanted: "Merkel must go", "We are the people", "Lying press"²³. The leader of opponents of Chancellor Merkel is East-Berliner, Berndt, who is the leader of the "Future Homeland" movement. The group informs about its views by demonstrating on the streets and squares of the city and on its own Internet domain and social networks – Facebook and Twitter²⁴. The political scientist, Werner Patzelt, who researched the situation of the protesters in

www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2018-01/cottbus-fluechtlinge-rechtsextreme-gewalt-zuzug-stopp [access on: 8.04.2018].

²¹ D. Hummelsheim-Doss, *Objektive und subjektive Sicherheit in Deutschland. Einwissenschaftliche Annäherung das Sicherheitsgefühl*, "Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte" 2017, No. 32-33.

²² *Gemeinsam ohne Angst*, <https://de-de.facebook.com/Gemeinsam.ohne.Angst.Cottbus/> [access on: 9 IV 2018].

²³ J. Nasr, *Arab refugees march in German city hit by far-right protests*, "Reuters", February 3, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-migrants-protests/arab-refugees-march-in-german-city-hit-by-far-right-protests-idUSKBN1FN0C8> [access on: 9.04.2018].

²⁴ C. Fuchs, *Rassismus-Vorwürfe: Charité-Leitung distanziert sich von Mitarbeiter*, "Berliner Zeitung", July 8, 2016; <https://zukunft-heimat.org/> [access on: 10.04.2018].

Cottbus and Dresden, stressed that the opponents articulated “collective anger” based on the local residents’ problems faced with the challenges of migration policy. Patzelt warned against the growing spiral of anger²⁵. Protesters Berndt epitomizes the stereotypical “Enraged citizen” (or “misguided citizen”)²⁶.

Political foundations also spoke about the situation in the city. On February 26, 2018, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation invited about 120 participants to the debate, during which the concepts of “frustration of voters” and “populism” prevailed in the diagnosis of the situation²⁷. Frank Richter (former Head of the Centre for Political Education in Dresden) and AFD journalist, Christoph Giesa, said that the voters were frustrated²⁸.

Berndt during the demonstration on March 1, 2018 in Cottbus accused the German political class of ignorance. He stressed that his goal is to protect identity and culture. He is of the opinion that ideologies are harmful, especially multi-culti politics²⁹. The demonstrators spoke out against immigrants blaming them for increasing the threat of terrorism and attacking women. They proclaimed the words: “Close the borders”, “Cottbus stands together”, “Islam can stay where the pepper grows”³⁰.

In turn, Markus Klein, chairman of Demos, the Brandenburg Institute for Counseling Communities, believes that “Future Homeland”, like PEGIDA and AfD, contribute to the strengthening of far-right mood in Cottbus³¹.

To support the Chancellor Merkel’s policy of openness, the website “Cottbus. My city” has been launched on Facebook. Its supporters call for help to immigrants, for example through socialization. Teacher from Cottbus, Ralph Bogacz, founded the music band Stay Together, that by singing songs, urges openness and humanitarian atti-

²⁵ Werner Patzelt – TU Dresden – *Zur Wut der Bürger in Cottbus 2018*, February 22, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XLom7qdpQ8> [access on: 8.04.2018].

²⁶ M. Wehner, *Flüchtlingsdebatte in Cottbus. Die Musterstadt will Grenzen ziehen*, “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung”, January 27, 2018.

²⁷ S.G. Raabe, “Hört endlich zu”. Eine “Cottbuser Runde Spezial” diskutierte über den Umgang mit Wählerfrust und Populismus, “Konrad Adenauer Stiftung”, March 1, 2018, <http://www.kas.de/wf/de/33.51687/> [access on: 9.04.2018].

²⁸ S. Wendler, *Offene Worte. Diskussion über Wählerfrust in Cottbus*, “Lausitzer Rundschau”, February 27, 2018, https://www.lr-online.de/lausitz/diskussion-in-cottbus-ueber-waehlerfrust-und-populismus_aid-7638081 [access on: 9.04.2018].

²⁹ *Interview mit Hans-Christoph Berndt*, “rbb24”, February 8, 2018; <https://www.rbb-online.de/kontraste/archiv/kontraste-vom-08-02-2018/interview-mit-hans-christoph-berndt.html> [access on: 8.04.2018]; *Hans-Christoph Berndt, Rede in Cottbus 17 III 2018*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0POc-MXC_M [access on: 9.04.2018].

³⁰ *Demozug Cottbus*, March 17, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zaREWyi_6bc [access on: 9.04.2018].

³¹ *Die Stimmung in Cottbus ist gerade enorm aufgeheizt* [interview with Markus Stein], “rbb24”, January 23, 2018, <https://www.rbb24.de/politik/beitrag/2018/01/cottbus-interview-demos-rechtsextreme-fluechtlinge.html> [access on: 9.04.2018].

tudes towards immigrants³². In opposition to the “Future of the Fatherland” organization there is an environment of didactics and researchers from the Social Work Institute at the Technical University of Cottbus. In their debates, they made the diagnosis that there is a problem of “everyday violence and racism” in Cottbus. They wrote an open letter in which they said:

We take with care the racist violence of individuals who organize themselves in the extreme right. The connection of right-wing populist and right-wing extremist groups and the organization “Future Homeland” spreads the mood of hatred and violence. This mood, which affects all people, does not match the human image of the world³³.

Researchers have pointed out that violence is increasing against those who want to help refugees. To improve the situation, they postulate organizing public debates, during which the participants will speak critically. The BTU researchers are of the opinion: “Everyone responsible in politics, administration, education, media, economy and science clearly defines racism and extremism as a problem” and “argue for democracy”³⁴. They also postulate structural changes in Brandenburg, among others in infrastructure that will help to overcome problems in the city. Researchers also noted that every year around 100 graduates in social work receive a BTU diploma.

Professor Heike Radwan, who researches methods and theory of social work, is of the opinion that rulers should protest against racism and implement projects that would strengthen the situation of migrants. Such activities would be conducive to building a democratic culture of conflict³⁵.

Polish reminiscences

Polish institutions from the Lubuskie Voivodship were asked whether the subject of immigrants from Cottbus is the subject of talks and cooperation with the relevant institutions from Brandenburg, e.g. between the council of the voivodship and the Brandenburg parliament, educational institutions. The obtained data shows that state institutions from Brandenburg did not ask for support in connection with the admission of immigrants and there is no cooperation with offices and centres in Brandenburg in connection with the migration crisis, for example consisting in creating a catalog of good practices, helpful in solving problems arising from the migration crisis.

³² *Stay Together – Cottbuser Musiker singen für Toleranz und Menschlichkeit*, “Niederlausitz aktuell”, November 17, 2015, <http://www.niederlausitz-aktuell.de/cottbus/item/56225-stay-together-cottbuser-musiker-singen-fuer-toleranz-und-menschlichkeit.html> [access on: 9.04.2018].

³³ Für ein sicheres und solidarisches Cottbus 2 II 2018. Offener Brief von Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftlern der BTU Cottbus-Senftberg, <https://www.b-tu.de/news/artikel/13549-fuer-ein-sicheres-und-solidarisches-cottbus> [access on: 9.04.2018].

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵ *Cottbus kann von anderen Städten lernen* [interview with Heike Radwan], “Medien Integration”, February 9, 2018, <https://mediendienst-integration.de/artikel/interview-heike-radwan-cottbus-kann-von-anderen-staedten-lernen.html> [access on: 9.02.2018].

Table 5. Poll in Lubuskie Voivodship

Does the institution cooperate with the relevant offices and centres in Brandenburg in order to create a catalog of good practices, helpful in solving problems arising from the migration crisis?	Yes / no / no answer
Rector of the University of Zielona Góra	No answer
Marshal Office	No
the Council of the Lubuskie Voivodship	No
Lubuskie Board of Education	No
Euroregion Spree Nysa Bóbr	No answer
Spokesman of Roman Catholic Diocese of Zielona Góra-Gorzów	No answer
Spokesman of the Police Lubuskie Region	No answer
Provincial Labour Office	No answer

Source: own elaboration.

Conclusions

The problems in Cottbus exemplify the obstacles to democracy and civic society resulting from the anxiety of the inhabitants. The representative of the PEGIDA group compared the situation in Cottbus with earlier protests in Dresden. They confirm the view of Oliviero Angeli that immigration causes stressful reactions in society³⁶. The contact with foreigners is a test of German democracy, in which citizens expect security to be guaranteed. Citizens of Germany, fearing that by accepting immigrants, they will lose the sense of stability and the image of an open society that has developed over the years, while at the same time facing questions about the limits of the absorption of immigrants. Integration of arriving people is a long-term process and results from the imperative of defending liberal values. However, there is no guarantee that it will bring the expected results in confrontation with threats stemming from current international conflicts and changes that have made the migration processes more dynamic in recent years.

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³⁶ R. Breyton, *Das ist auch die einheimische Bevölkerung in der Pflicht*, "Welt", January 26, 2018, <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article172864760/Cottbus-Interview-mit-Migrationsforscher-Oliviero-Angeli.html> [access on: 10.04.2018].

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Abstract: The fact that about 4000 immigrants are placed in Cottbus, situated 192 km from Poznań and 83 km from Zielona Góra, makes us feel it is necessary to analyze *modus operandi* of the entities legitimizing or delegitimizing the Open Door policy of the Chancellor Angela Merkel. To explain their position, political actors refer to the diverse narratives that Rolf Peter Sieferle classified as: the refugee narrative; a narrative recalling the demographic problem; a narrative referring to problems in the labor market and a lack of qualified employees; a narrative referring to the essence of multiculturalism. Difficulties in absorbing immigrants caused a discussion about fatigue both in political parties and in the media, but they showed the potential of social initiatives and movements, for example the organization “Future of the Fatherland”, led by Hans-Christoph Berndt. His views combined with the statements of Dietmar Woidke, the Prime Minister of Brandenburg, or Jörg Steinbach, the President of the Brandenburg University of Technology, reflect the diversity of the assessment of migration policy in a micro-scale.

Keywords: refugee crisis, extremism

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