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The price of information – Expulsion

Abstract:

The text describes the personal experience from February 2008 of a Russian student living in the Czech Republic who was expelled from Germany due to having received incorrect information. The author did not wish to make her name public.

I now know that I cannot travel within the Schengen area having only a long-term national visa. The price I paid for this information was very high – expulsion from Germany.

I have been studying in the Czech Republic since I came from Russia in September 2007 at the beginning of the winter semester. I have a Czech national visa and I wanted to travel to Hamburg, Germany to see my friends. I needed to find out how I can travel in the Schengen area. First I looked at the homepage of Ministerstvo vnitra (Czech Home Office), but I couldn't really make much sense of it and there was just information for foreigners who had not yet arrived to the Czech Republic. So I sent an inquiry to the Russian consulate and they assured me that I could even go to England with my student visa if I wished to. To make sure I called the Alien police in Brno and they told me that although I was not really free to travel within the European Union, I could travel within the Schengen area for up to five days. However, they did not tell me that this was valid for the sole purpose of transit to the country that I was given the national visa. Nobody advised me that the best thing would be to inquire at the German consulate.

Every institution told me something different, but it seemed that I was allowed to travel to Germany so I decided to set off. One of the advantages of the Schengen area is that borders are now open and there is no such thing as a border guard. However, you can be stopped anywhere and have your documents checked. The Schengen area created a new kind of problem for foreigners whose documents are not all correct. Before Schengen, a travelling foreigner would be stopped at the border and if his or her documents were not in order he would not be allowed to enter the country. I got to Germany without problems, but there they found out that my visa was not the correct visa and that I was in Germany illegally.

Around two o'clock in the morning two policemen took me out of the bus, and then I was put in a police cell. Just before that, I made a phone call to my German friends and they called the police office to declare that I was not a "gastarbeiter". Fortunately, the policemen were polite and kind to me. I survived the inspection and the interrogation, and I understood that I was not the first one who had received misinformation. During the interrogation I was asked questions

such as: “How can you explain your behaviour? How could you dare to come to Germany when you don’t have the correct documents?” It was enough for them when I told them what I was told by those offices, and then the policemen explained twice – to me and to my German friends – that with my visa I was allowed to stay in the Czech Republic only. After that they didn’t want anything else, but we had to wait until they got an answer from the Czech Republic that I was allowed back. So I was taken to the police cell again. After four hours they woke me up and I was driven – with three accompanying policemen – to the nearest Czech border town where I was handed over to Czech policemen.

It was interesting to watch the behaviour of the Czech policeman. In contrast to polite German policemen – where I committed a crime - he started to call me condescendingly by my first name. After a while, he wanted to make sure and he asked me: “You don’t understand Czech, do you?” I answered by nodding my head and saying “Yes, I do.” He was surprised: “You do?!” and he started to explain much more politely how I could get to the nearest bus stop and when the next bus was coming.

One of the most important consequences of my ordeal and illegal border crossing is the renvoy that also means expulsion from Germany for life. Fortunately, for similar cases such as this when the illegal border crossing was the result of wrong information and not intention, there is a chance to reduce the life ban to a temporary ban. The German police explained that I could write a plea of pardon, pay 30 EUR and to send it together with the copy of the protocol to the Police authority in Germany. But nobody knows whether this will be successful.