

(98/C 196/65)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3984/97**by Laura González Álvarez (GUE/NGL), Alonso Puerta (GUE/NGL)
and María Sornosa Martínez (GUE/NGL) to the Commission***(14 January 1998)*

Subject: The labour situation in the coal-mines in the municipality of Acalândia (Brazil)

The Centre for the Protection of Life and Human Rights in Acalândia is an NGO working for the recognition of citizenship and against slave labour and overexploitation in the coal-mines.

This NGO has been denouncing the exploitation and near-enslavement of workers in the Acalândia coal-mines, where there are continual accidents owing to poor working conditions and work is being done by a group of children under 15 years old. According to information supplied by the NGO some of these coal-mines belong to the Viena and Pindaré steelworks.

Can the Commission say whether it knows of these reports? Can it say whether it is monitoring the agreements between the EU and Brazil and Mercosur to ensure that the Brazilian Government enforces internationally recognized labour standards and conditions and the ban on child labour?

Answer given by Mr Marín on behalf of the Commission*(3 February 1998)*

The Commission is, naturally, aware of the abusive working practices and conditions which may prevail, in particular in mines, and sometimes involve children.

A large number of associations, a variety of organisations, non-governmental organisations or private individuals draw the attention of the Commission to similar cases, which generally affect extremely deprived and defenceless communities.

Exploitation (or worse) of workers arises from unsatisfactory economic and social conditions which result in situations of this type. Changing those conditions is a long-term task.

It is reasonable to believe, however, that action taken by the Commission in its total relations with partner countries — and specifically cooperation with Brazil — is precisely designed to remedy this kind of situation upstream.

Consequently, whenever action is liable to be effective, the Commission endeavours according to the facts in its possession to lobby the authorities through whichever channels it finds most appropriate.

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WRITTEN QUESTION E-3992/97**by Alexandros Alavanos (GUE/NGL) to the Council***(15 January 1998)*

Subject: Racist violence in Germany

According to data from the Federal Anti-Crime Agency, assaults by neo-Nazis have risen by 14% since last year, bringing the total to 5 173, the victims being Portuguese, Italians, Turks, Greeks and other workers.

One victim of such violence was the Greek immigrant, Anastassios Dalakouras, who was seriously injured following an assault by right-wing extremists on 8 November 1997 in a village in Brandenburg.