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How does the German media report about immigration? And what does this tell us about immigrants in Germany? To answer these two questions I would like to refer to an article of a recent edition of my own newspaper, Der Tagesspiegel. It dates Wednesday, September 26th 2007. This edition contains four different stories about aspects of immigration. They are as follows:

A headline in the local section says: “A majority of young migrants are homophobic”. In a recent survey, the first of this kind, it was shown that two thirds of young Turkish-Germans and 50 % of Russian-Germans have hostile attitudes towards homosexuals (and around one fourth of young German).

A big story in the cultural section celebrates the new film from Fatih Akin, a 34 years old prominent filmmaker, who grew up in Hamburg and whose parents immigrated from Turkey to Germany. Akin’s film was nominated for an Oscar. He is a star both in Germany and Turkey.

The next story is in the science section, reporting about a new private high school in Cologne, run by Turkish immigrants, in which it is obligatory to speak German, even during breaks, yet Turkish is taught as the first second language.

And, finally, I found a little note saying: The famous liberal writer GYnter Wallraff, who was denied to read in a mosque in Cologne from Salman Rushdie's book "Satanic Verses", wants to travel to Turkey to convince people that allowing him to read these texts would in itself be a contribution to successful immigration.

Now, what do these four stories show us? First of all: None of them could or would have been published ten years ago. The idea, to look specifically into differences between groups of immigrants as well as between ethnic Germans and immigrants, be it psychologically or culturally, would, back then, have been blamed as inherently racist. Whoever points at differences is thereby manifesting them and, consequently, contributes to disharmony. Now it seems that we have overcome this kind of reluctance. All people in Germany are different and the public is curious to find out in what aspects. So this poll, which could be as well regarded as typically for Berlin as the capital of German homosexuals and of Turks in Germany, shows that "Multikulti" is not just a nice dream but actually very hard work.

Something similar is illustrated in the huge success of Fatih Akin, the filmmaker. Aside of him, there are at least a dozen Turkish-German authors, artists and comedians, who have become very influential in Germany. We can easily speak now of a Turkish-

German culture in Germany on a very level. Many of the artists deal in a sometimes dramatic, sometimes funny way with all aspects of immigration, e.g. dual loyalties, identity problems, cut roots. This Turkish-German culture is gaining more and more ground in the popular German culture.

This again is underlined by the third story: More and more private schools are opening for Turkish immigrants with the explicit goal to contribute to German integration. A little footnote: Since education in Germany lies very much in the hands of the LŠnder, the states, Germany has a confusing variety of how to teach, for example, Islamic studies at public schools. In general it can be said that “Islamkunde” contributes a great deal to a successful integration. The pupils get the feeling that they can look eye to eye to their Christian counterparts.

Highly interesting, disturbing and amusing is the story about GŸnter Wallraff, who wants to read from the “Satanic Verses” in a mosque in Cologne. This story points to a fairly new phenomenon: various attempts to aggressively challenge immigrants and Moslems, testing their human-rights-credentials and secular values. This phenomenon needs to be explained and analyzed, because it can very well lead to a kind of intellectual Anti-Islamism or Islam-phobia. What does that mean?

Anti-Islamism is the notion that Islam itself is evil, dangerous and/or inherently aggressive and that, therefore, members of this faith do not deserve the same rights and freedoms as do followers of any other religion. Additionally, every Muslim as such needs to denounce terrorism, violence and should confess that he or she shares all Western values.

Historically it can be said that until “Nine-Eleven” migrants in Germany had very rarely been perceived in religious terms, but mainly in ethnic ones. This changed after the terrorist attacks in the US and the bombings in London and Madrid. Suddenly the rhetoric of “they and we”, Islam and the West, “clash of cultures”, overlapped the integration discourse. Three fourth of Germans now do not agree to the statement “The Muslim culture fits into the Western world”.

Out of these sentiments gave rise to a new coalition: Human-rights-activists and feminists closed ranks with the “neo-con” Muslim-Bashers. And even Pope Benedikt, probably involuntarily, had his share in this development with his famous Regensburg lecture. A striking and very good example of this are, furthermore, the various passionate debates about plans to erect mosques in Germany. The whole notion of religious liberty and religious rights is almost absent in these debates. Instead the pro-camp argues that it might be better to have Muslims worship out in the open than secretly. Again, the numbers tell their own story: In Cologne 36 % of residents are fine with the mosque

plan, 29 % wanted to see it scaled down (165 feet high) and 31 % are entirely against it.

To sum it up: Immigration to Germany was never pure fun. The Germans in general are not very sexy, they are laden with complexes due to their history - forms of symbolic patriotism are basically absent. Nevertheless, immigration and integration is a fact and covered in all its aspects and problems in the media. But “Nine-Eleven” led to a new sense of insecurity and the feeling shared by many Germans that they are challenged, if not threatened by Muslim culture. The we-don't-like-them-because-they-are-different-front is joined now by the we-don't-like-them-because-they-are-dangerous-inhuman-and-patriarchic-front.

A final remark: In a secular environment like the one in Germany, secularism is often connected to modernism. The message is: The more secular you are the better you fit into our society. Religiosity as such, not only the one being practised by Muslims, is regarded as backward, old-fashioned and – threatening. Some of the mosque-opponents are simply jealous: Our churches are becoming more and more empty and are being sold, the Muslims, however, need new mosques to meet the demand. Not only Christians and Muslims have still to go a long way in Germany, but believers and secularists as well.

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