

The Muslim society in Europe

3-12-04
Daily News

FROM TIME TO TIME THE APOLOGISTS of a multi-cultural society in Europe use the buzzword 'Fortress Europe.' This is meant to accuse Europe of adopting a dismissive attitude towards foreigners for social and economic reasons. After the murder of Theo van Gogh the phrase could appear in a different light. Could it be that it is not Europe that closes its doors on the foreigners but the Muslims who gradually shut themselves out?

Consider the case of Germany which has the highest Muslim immigration rate in Europe. Since the end of World War II, the German population has increased from 63 million to 82.51 million. Almost 3.2 million Muslims live in Germany. The nearly 1.9 million Turks are the largest ethnic group in the foreign population, making up 26.6 percent of all foreigners in the country.

Recent surveys indicate three things: First, the German share of the population has declined. A major reason for this is that the proportion of German women wanting to give birth is less than foreign women. Germany therefore needs young immigrants. Else, the society risks having a lopsided demography with too many elderly people. Second, Germany is not the only European country having a low birth rate. The entire West- and Middle-Europe suffers from the problem. In the long run, therefore, people from countries with high birth rates could replace the indigenous populations of Europe. Muslims in Europe, who have the highest demographic increase for cultural and economical reasons, could spearhead the change. Some Muslim leaders claim that there is no doubt that Europe will be 'Islamised' — it is merely a matter of time. From their perspective, Germany — on account of its constantly increasing Muslim population — is the gateway to Europe's 'Islamisation'. Third, the integration of Muslims into the European societies has not been successful. According to a survey, 83 percent of all Germans associate terror with Islam and 82 percent think of Islam as a "fanatic and radical religion" while only 6 percent sympathise with it (*Passauer Neue Presse*, November 18, 2004).

To find out why Germans have this attitude towards Islam, let's look at Berlin, which — after Ankara and Istanbul — has the third largest population of Turks in the

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world. Not only about 200,000 Turks live in Berlin — which comes to the population of a large city in Europe — some districts are actually dominated by Turkish shops and mosques and Muslim culture rules the daily life. Here a number of Muslims live without knowing a single word of German or having any contact with the Germans. This becomes more of a problem when Muslim families send their daughters to their homelands for a Muslim education and bring them back in the nubile age for marriages which are often forced on the girls. This reimport of the Muslim lifestyle excludes the young from the German society for ages.

The phenomenon is not unique to Germany. In congested suburban areas of France and even in the multi-cultural society of Great Britain, the Muslims live in the same self-imposed ghettos. Worse still, in some districts of European cities and in several mosques 'preachers of hate' appeal for the subversion of Europe by an Islamic culture.

Finally, the 9/11 has revealed that Muslim fundamentalists have established their terrorist cells in Europe for an overthrow of the so-called 'Western societies'. Contrariwise, one must appreciate that in Cologne almost 20,000 Muslims recently participated in a demonstration against ter-

rorism in the name of Islam and highlighted their will to integrate.

The conflicts are bound to increase if the European and Muslim population groups do not open up to each other. In their Constitutions the European states recognise all kinds of religions and cultures. According to Article Four and Article Two of the German Basic Law, everyone in Germany has the right to follow his religion, culture and faith. Similar freedoms can be enjoyed in other European states, too.

Furthermore, Germany supports the integration of foreigners. At the same time it is going to control further immigration. It has, therefore, like some other European states long before, passed an Immigration Act which will become effective on January 1, 2005. Henceforth, Germany offers "integration courses" to foreigners to become acquainted with its legal order, culture, and history and cope with the national language. In certain cases, foreigners are even obliged to join these courses. Political activities can be forbidden in case of immigrants who endanger the constitutional order of the state, affect the "peaceful coexistence of Germans and foreigners" or "use force for religious purposes". Moreover, an eviction order is the rule when some "facts justify the assumption that (the foreigner) is a member of a terrorist organisation ... or has supported one", when he "endangers the security of the Federal Republic of Germany" or "appeals in public for assault or threatens with assault".

Surely, only on the basis of a truthful integration can the foreigners stay in Europe and enjoy the right to follow their religion and traditions as guaranteed in the European Constitutions — unlike oftentimes in their home states. If the Muslims in Europe do not take this chance, it is obvious what they choose instead. They close Europe's doors on themselves because every Muslim who rejects the states' integration policy provokes the European states to harden their immigration laws. It is these Muslim thus who contribute bricks to the walls of the 'Fortress Europe' gradually built up only by those who resist the open societies of Europe.

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