



CULTURAL DIFFERENCE AND DIFFICULT INTEGRATION

You've almost certainly never heard of Haydi Bey. Haydi is a male bear, living with his kind in Berne Zoo. What is so remarkable about him is the story of his integration. A group of politicians from Berne visiting the Bursa region in Turkey came across a semi-domesticated bear dancing for his Roma master. The creature resembled the bear in Berne's coat of arms and Berne Zoo was in desperate need of a male bear for their breeding programme. The politicians decided to try and acquire the bear. The formalities took a long time, even though both bureaucracies worked hard. Finally, the bear arrived in Berne. This was in the 1980s. Initially however Haydi Bey's sexual prowess left much to be desired. The zoologists concluded that he was suffering from acute alienation, he had after all been in constant human company. They recommended hiring a caretaker who spoke Turkish. Consequently, the Zoo hired a Turkish asylum seeker. Apparently his new buddy gave Haydi Bey a new outlook on things because very soon he started taking the business of procreation much more seriously. Today, many Helvetico-Turkish bears grace Berne Zoo – to the great joy of its visitors.

Thus we have a difficult integration situation turned into a success story, a “win-win” situation, as a post-modern storyteller might say, reached through smart solutions. This is precisely what the debate on Turkey's integration into Europe is all about. We keep on hearing today that Turkey has an alien social model and different historical values. Just like

Haydi Bey. This frequently touted claim seems to have become the argument of last resort for those who are opposed to Turkey's accession to the European Union. But this culture based argument is vague; it can be used in every sense and context. It postulates the existence of a well defined and rock-solid European identity shared by all Europeans, from which Turks are excluded. Yet everyone has his or her own definition of what is historical and what is cultural. Some Hungarians do not consider Romanians to be Europeans; for some Croats, it is the Serbs and the Bosnians who are the odd men out; for some Southern Europeans, such as Luigi Barzini, Scandinavians are not really Europeans.

European public opinion tends to view the Turkish population as hostile and impossible to integrate when in fact four of the seventy-million Turks already live and work in Western Europe, where successive generations are gradually integrating with local populations. On the economic front, sizeable numbers of former Turkish factory workers are now successful businessmen, who provide local communities with jobs (for example see Zentrum für Türkeistudien, Essen, www.uni-essen.de/zft). Integration within these host societies takes place best when clear national integration policies exist. Indeed, integration is extremely difficult when foreign workers are regarded as temporary guests although they have lived there for over forty years. Fortunately, clear-cut new policies aimed at integrating foreign minorities are now taking shape in many host countries and

the change in German nationality law has allowed approximately one million resident Turks to opt for German nationality. This naturalisation trend is occurring in other EU host countries as well. This is oddly reminiscent of Haydi Bey.

Today, the inclusion of the territory inhabited by Turks into the geographical definition of Europe would mean a Europe capable of including diverse values within a common political sphere and thus showing a universal and unprecedented vision of humanity and human society. This challenge is much too important to be left exclusively to politicians, who are known for their narrow electoral perspective and lack of vision. The world of arts and culture – the vanguard of a modern society – is the proper arena in which to demonstrate to the public at large the dynamism of the Turkish society.

At the macro level, European enlargement is a major step towards Europe establishing itself as a political global player, as foreseen by founding fathers such as Adenauer, Monnet, Spinelli, and Schuman. An eastward expansion process would serve this courageous vision of universal solidarity, an objective that urges us to rethink the very substance of Europe as it exists today. In this sense, there is a direct link between the debate about the European Union's expansion and the debate about its enhanced integration. Within the context of this new dynamic, the added value of the problematic Turkish candidacy, which serves as a catalyst for

so many negative connotations and subconscious fears, lies precisely in overcoming these fears and images through the integration of Europe's archetypal figure of the “other”, the “Tête de Turc”, the scapegoat, a figure that brings to western minds the Muslim, the Oriental, and the “barbarian”. This integration project undoubtedly creates a challenge, and it is one that might finally urge all parties to confront and come to terms with their “others”. Its success would mean the fulfilment of the universal political project that Europe is; a project, in French poet René Char's words, of “a shared presence”. Just like Haydi Bey and family.

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