

The Gülen Movement and Turkish Integration in Germany

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This essay treats the role of the Gülen-inspired centers and schools in promoting a positive model for the integration of the Turkish community in Germany while allowing its members to maintain their cultural and religious roots. A great deal has been written in the past decade on the challenges of integrating the large Turkish community into German society. More recently, this has become part of a wider discussion about growing religious fundamentalism and violence among Europe's Muslim population. While this discussion has correctly highlighted the social, economic, and political barriers to integration presented by the host societies, very little has been published in English about the efforts among Europe's Muslim populations to promote their own visions and models for integration. Certainly, foremost among these models is the Gülen movement, which has embraced a modern, multicultural notion of political identity and community that is also deeply rooted in Muslim practice and traditions. To what extent have Gülen-inspired centers in Germany been successful in promoting this model of mutual co-existence between ethnic Germans and Turks?

The debate over Turkish-Muslim integration in Germany has revolved around three main educational policy issues. The first involves the role of religious instruction in the schools and how instruction in Islam can best be delivered to Muslim students. Religious instruction is part of the core curriculum in German schools and, while there is increasing recognition of the need to offer Islamic religious instruction, such instruction has also been highly contested. The second educational policy debate involves the establishment of private Muslim or Turkish schools. Turkish students have typically performed less well academically and have been far less likely to attend a German college-preparatory high school; the establishment of private schools is intended in part to address this problem. Germans have a strong tradition of public school education, however, and the state and federal governments have resisted the establishment of private Muslim schools. The third educational policy issue involves the wearing of headscarves in the schools. While, in contrast to France, German schools permit female students to wear headscarves in the classroom, instructors in almost all areas of Germany are prohibited from doing so. This has become the subject of various court cases and continues, as does the role of women overall in Islam, to be a flashpoint for tensions between the ethnic German and Turkish-Muslim communities in Germany.

These policy issues raise the larger question of Turkish-Muslim integration and what it entails. As one scholar of European Islam put it "Until now there is hardly any 'German' or 'European' way of Muslim life generally accepted by Muslims and non-Muslims on a theoretical and social level which would keep the values and ways of Muslim belief as well as it would fit into the framework of society as a whole" (Rohe 2004:102). On the one hand, many German policy makers such as former Cabinet Minister and Parliamentary President Rita Süßmuth insist that their approach to integration distinguishes them from their counterparts in countries like France who emphasize the necessity of assimilation (Dowling 2006). On the other hand, many ethnic Germans and residents of Turkish descent alike charge that the German approach is one of assimilation (Stowasser 2004:61). To them, the vision promoted by such leaders as Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) leader Edward Stoiber is one that requires the minority Turkish population to do all the adjusting (Interview 1).

The numerous Gülen-inspired centers established during the past decade in Germany have attempted to find a "middle way" between the cultural devastation implied by assimilation and the "ghettoization" of a minority group living apart from the majority culture. For the teachers and staff of these learning centers, cultural centers, and schools, any solution to the challenge of integration must involve the give and take of cultural understanding and

mutual enrichment. These residents must become educated according to German standards and fully capable of operating at the highest levels of German professional society, but the key to integration is to provide the best possible education, which is also "mindful" of Turkish culture. In the words of the Director of the Atlantic Learning Center, "The best method of integration? That's simple. Education!" (Interview 7).

This paper is based on research conducted in Germany in July and August 2006. During this period I visited several learning centers in Munich, Berlin, and Ingolstadt, a high school in Berlin, and an intercultural center in Munich. I interviewed the directors of these learning centers and the school, as well as other staff and participants in their activities. My goal was to place the activities of these groups and centers in the larger context of the debate about integration of the Turkish Muslim minority in Germany. What vision of integration are they attempting to promote and how?

Description of Gülen Movement Activities in Germany

Gülen movement participants in Germany have founded a variety of educational institutions that operate throughout the country. There are three major types of institutions: learning centers, which offer after-school tutoring to students from elementary school through high school; intercultural centers, which sponsor a variety of programs and events to promote cultural and religious exchanges between residents of Turkish background and the majority German population; and more recently, private high schools, which offer a full college-preparatory curriculum to students primarily of Turkish background. The movement is not directly affiliated with, nor does it currently sponsor, any mosques in Germany.

Learning centers currently operate in most of the major cities and towns in Germany. While there is no Germany-wide source of statistics on these centers, the Director of the Learning Center in Ingolstadt guessed that there may be over a hundred centers in Bavaria (Interview 7). These centers typically serve about a hundred and fifty students at a variety of levels from grades 1–13, offering courses in German, English, math, and science. In addition, the learning centers offer a variety of adult courses. Parents of children receiving after-school help at the centers attend meetings at least once a month in which they discuss with teachers ways in which they can offer a supportive learning environment in the home. Several learning centers have also recently begun to offer "Integration Courses." These federally-mandated courses, now required of all immigrant adults, offer 600 hours of German language instruction and 30 hours of instruction in German culture and history over a six-month period. Turkish language instruction for Germans is also offered at the centers.

The staff at learning centers is drawn largely from university students of Turkish background. While the teachers are paid for their services, a significant component of their participation in the centers constitutes volunteer labor, since they do not receive the same pay that they would in a comparable tutoring position elsewhere. This is because the non-profit learning centers are entirely self-supporting through fees for courses and services. Unemployed parents may receive funding for their children to attend the center; however the centers generally do not, at the moment, receive direct financial support from the state and local governments.

Intercultural centers have been established in some of the bigger cities in Germany. They are specifically intended to sponsor activities that promote cultural and religious understanding and dialogue between the Turkish and German communities. While the stated goal is mutual interaction, the main point seems to be to expose Germans more to Turkish culture and society. Events and activities consist of lectures, trips to Turkey, Turkish language courses, participation in Round Tables and panel discussions, dinners for Germans hosted in Turkish homes and other activities for youths and adults. The centers are self-supporting through membership fees. The Intercultural Dialogue Center in Munich, established in 2001,

has an active membership of 100. The intercultural centers (and other Gülen-inspired institutions in Germany) do not maintain close relations with other Turkish or Islamic groups. Mindful of their "inability to control the behavior and activities of these groups," and the extremist inclinations of some of them, the intercultural centers prefer to concentrate their dialogue and outreach activities on the Germany community (Interview 1).

The establishment of private schools has been a goal of Gülen-inspired activities worldwide, but until recently it was not possible to do so in Germany. The establishment of three private, college-preparatory high schools in Berlin, Dortmund, and Stuttgart in the past two years, and the anticipated establishment of three more high schools in the next two years represents a new phase of Gülen movement educational activities in Germany. These schools offer the same curriculum as public college-preparatory high schools with the difference that they offer Turkish as the third language choice, after German and English. (Depending on the high school, in Germany the third language is typically Latin or French.)

Learning centers, intercultural centers and high schools are typically governed by an association, which is regulated according to German law. The members of the association, typically parents of children involved or members of the Intercultural Center, choose a board of directors, generally consisting of seven members. Members of the board of directors, which have a two-year term, are represented by a president who must approve all major decisions concerning hiring of teachers and educational curriculum and policy. The board generally meets once or twice a month.

The relationship between the Gülen movement and the institutions described above is loose and one more of inspiration than organization. As in Turkey, the movement is extremely decentralized. For example, there appears to be no central record-keeping office for the Gülen-related institutions in Germany; each city or town is responsible for organizing and maintaining its own schools and centers. Moreover, many of the participants in the centers and schools appear to have no idea that they are inspired in any way by the ideas of Gülen. According to the head of the Wedding Educational Center, 80 percent of the parents are unaware that the centers are connected in any way with the Gülen movement since the staff does not typically talk about it with them. Indeed, he emphasized that most teachers are there because they believe in what the centers are doing, not because they are necessarily inspired by Gülen (Interview 3). The Director of the Learning Center in Ingolstadt estimated that more than fifty percent of the members of the Association but only two or three of the teachers have anything to do with the movement (Interview 7). In any case, every director and representative with whom I spoke was clearly influenced by the ideas and practice of the movement.

Religious Instruction in Schools

One of the most important issues concerning the integration of the Turkish-Muslim population involves the question of religious instruction. German Basic Law of 1949 provides for religious instruction in public schools and also for its regulation at the state level. The law stipulates that "religious instruction shall form part of the regular curriculum...in state schools" (Article 7, German Basic Law, cited in Fetzer and Soper, 2005:111). The curriculum, teachers, and materials for these classes are determined by the religious communities involved, primarily the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities. Parents usually choose whether to have their children attend classes in one of these two variants of the Christian faith (or where enough parents request it, the Jewish faith) or in a more general ethics class; in some areas parents may withdraw their children from religious or ethical instruction altogether.

In the past decade, there have been increasing calls from Muslim parents to allow their children to enroll in Islamic education classes. German authorities have become

increasingly receptive to the idea as a way of fostering integration and avoiding less desirable alternatives. As one expert on this subject put it:

It should not be forgotten that there is a certain concern among Muslims and non-Muslims about the existing alternative of private Qur'anic schools, which are partly run by persons or groups of an obvious extremist or anti-western observance. For this a system of reliable co-operation between the Muslim communities and the state, which puts Islam into the middle of "normal" school education, appears to be the only desirable alternative for the future. [Rohe 2004:97]

While Islamic instruction has been offered in some areas of Germany, several obstacles have impeded its introduction in most of the country. First, no Muslim group has yet achieved public corporation status, a special legal status extended to the Christian and Jewish communities under German Basic Law. The status affords the religious community certain rights and protections such as the right to have the government collect money from members of religious communities in order to provide financial support to those communities (Fetzer and Soper 2005:107). The lack of legal status for the Muslim community has meant that school authorities do not feel obligated to provide religious instruction to their Muslim students. Second, school authorities point out that they do not have a clear partner to work with in devising a curriculum and appointing teachers. The Muslim community in Germany, while overwhelmingly of Turkish background (2.2 million out of the more than 3 million Muslims), is divided into many groups with various approaches to religious instruction and practice. It has been difficult to devise a unified curriculum and for the educational authorities to know with whom to negotiate. The response has been, in many cases, to offer a form of instruction that is based less on the "Sunday school model" of religious instruction that prevails for the Christian faiths, and more on a comparative religion model in which the student is taught aspects of the Islamic faith from a more "neutral" or academic point of view (Fetzer and Soper 2005:112). Thus, while the provision of religious instruction in the schools offers Muslim residents possible future opportunities to pursue their goals, at the moment these opportunities have generally not been extended to them (Fetzer and Soper 2005).

Participants in the Gülen movement and leaders and staff of the learning centers have generally played a low-key role in the often emotionally charged policy debate concerning religious instruction in schools. As the Director of the Intercultural Center in Munich put it, he offers his opinion only when asked by the relevant officials (Interview 1). While some groups advocate the teaching of Islam in the Turkish language, he insists that Islam must be taught in German by instructors trained within the system of state schools. Previously, some religious instruction has been offered through Turkish mother-tongue classes in co-operation with the Turkish government, which has provided the curriculum as well as the teachers. Islamic instruction in Turkish—which in the view of more than one observer "sometimes seems to be more nationalist than religious"—is part of the classes (Rohe 2004:95). More recently, states have been experimenting with classes in religious instruction in which the content of the class is determined through Round Table discussions with local Muslim groups. Several universities, such as the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, have also established programs for training teachers of Islamic religious instruction (Rohe 2004:96–97).

These kinds of programs appear to be supported by Gülen movement participants, who see Islamic religious instruction by German-trained, German-speaking teachers as meeting with the best success in the schools. This does not mean, however, that they do not see a role for themselves in providing ethical training in their centers and schools. While they eschew any formal religious instruction in classes, Gülen-inspired learning centers are centered upon providing ethical training to students in which the Qur'an can offer a clear

reference point and guide. In some centers, such motivational or ethical education classes are required; in others they are optional.¹ The Director of the Bodensee Learning Center in Munich made a clear distinction between the education and learning missions of his center. While education focuses on improving the students' performance in a particular subject, learning is concerned with ethical and cultural questions. He is quick to point out that the Learning Center does not offer courses on the Qur'an or on prayer; that is the job of the mosque. Education at his center does, however, focus on the right way to live, on proper relations with others, and on moral and ethical actions. In this sense, he argued, it is impossible to leave out reference to the Qur'an. As he put it, "when we refer to German law, we are not lawyers nor are we engaged in teaching the law. Nevertheless, the law is essential for understanding proper public behavior. The same is true with the Qur'an. Of course we refer to it when it is relevant" (Interview 2). This emphasis on ethical training involves not only an Islamic reference point, it also focuses on conveying "traditional Turkish values," above all, a respect for one's parents and other authority figures and an emphasis on the importance of family.

An essential component of this ethical training necessarily involves relations with the larger German society and, by implication, a particular vision of integration. That vision is based on highlighting the student's Turkish cultural roots while at the same time emphasizing the need to "live comfortably in the culture in which one finds oneself" (Interview 7). According to the Director of the Bodensee Learning Center, the main emphasis of the learning component of the school should be on teaching these children their Turkish culture and heritage. According to him, students rarely need to be taught more about German culture since they live in the midst of it, but often they know far less about their own culture. Thus, they should be taught more about Turkish culture and values, and then they can synthesize the two. Traditional Turkish values can also help them to solve the problems they encounter in everyday life in Germany (Interview 2).

The Director of the Learning Center in Wedding, Berlin approached this question in a slightly different manner. Students at this center attend weekly "motivational groups" that deal with relational and life issues. A strong theme of these groups is the need to get along with others, especially the Germans with whom they come into contact every day, and to avoid physical aggression in interactions with them. He told a story of a boy in the 7th grade who listened to this message in motivational class week after week and finally, one day, he had had more than he could stand. "But how?" he asked. "We want to be friends with the Germans but they don't want to be friends with us. They tease us, and insult us and bully us. What are we supposed to do about that?" Such situations are not uncommon, this director said, and they try to help students find a way to respond to them that does not involve using their fists (Interview 3).

In addition to helping students respond to the tensions arising in school between the Turkish and German students, learning centers also attempt to reach the parents and to exert a positive influence on the tensions relating to integration that arise within the family. Parents are required to attend parent sessions at the centers at least once monthly, where they are provided with guidance about how best to help their children academically. But these sessions and the frequent visits to the home by the center's teaching staff address the deeper questions of parent-child relations. Many of these parents come from rural, conservative backgrounds and are ill-equipped to deal with the realities of German, secular, urban life. Teachers from the learning centers attempt to navigate between the cultural clash that often arises between students and their parents over such issues as religious observance, German social norms, and interaction between the sexes.

¹ For example, at the Atlantic Learning Center in Ingolstadt, students typically enroll in eight hours of instruction per week, with an additional optional two hours in a "motivation course." The Director estimated that over fifty percent of the students choose to attend the motivational course.

This clash was aptly described by a Turkish woman who moved to Germany from Turkey when she was twelve. In an interview as part of a study conducted by the German sociologist, Hiltrud Schröter, she describes how difficult it was to adapt to German culture and attend school. At first, she worried that she would be academically behind her friends in Turkey because she started back two grade levels. Later, she worried that she would never catch up in Germany. Finally, just when she began to do well and to feel more at home in her new country, her parents became much stricter with her. They wouldn't let her do the things that "normal" girls her age in Germany did—go out with friends, socialize with boys, spend the night at girl friends' houses. While her parents had been relatively relaxed about social interactions in Turkey, she had the impression that they had gotten much stricter and more fearful in Germany. They seemed very concerned about what others in the Turkish community would think of them and the behavior of their daughter. Her father tried "to be her friend" and explain why he wasn't allowing her to do everything she wished, but she began to lie more and more to her parents. They tried to negotiate rules—she would only go out with friends once a week or spend the night at a girl friend's house every two weeks. But it just didn't work. When she was nineteen, she packed her bags and moved out (Schröter 2003:49–62).

It is precisely these kinds of situations that may prompt parents to send their children to a learning center, not only for the academic help, but also for the help in conveying particular cultural or ethical messages. These centers may be particularly able to provide reassurance to the parents because of their religious orientation and emphasis on Turkish roots and culture at the same time that their staff are able to speak the language of modern university-educated students. The teachers interact intensively with parents and students and provide a particular model of integration to both. Indeed, teachers from the learning centers also help parents negotiate the bureaucracy at the public schools and relations with their children's teachers (Interview 2). In any case, a main goal for all the centers I visited is to help students find a way to live comfortably and productively in German society; education of students and parents alike is essential for such integration.

Establishment of Private Schools

A second controversial issue relating to Turkish integration and the educational system has to do with the establishment of private schools. In contrast to England and France, where a relatively high percentage of students are educated in private schools, only about four percent of German children attend private schools (Fetzer and Soper 2005:116). Thus, although article 7, section 4 of the German Basic Law established the right to operate private schools, the issue of opening Muslim private schools has remained much less central for the Turkish population of Germany than for the Muslim residents of France and Great Britain. The state governments of Bavaria and Berlin approved the establishment of two Muslim elementary schools in the 1980s to offer instruction in German and Arabic. Nevertheless, virtually all Turkish students continued to receive their education in public schools where they also continued to suffer from problems with performance, low levels of matriculation at the college-preparatory high schools, and high drop-out rates at the vocational high schools.

A recent study of the performance of Berlin students on the new 10th grade math exam illustrates the continued problems Turkish students face. While 96 percent of the students at college-preparatory high schools passed the exam, only 42 percent of those in vocational high schools, which have a much higher percentage of immigrant students, did so. Similarly, the results of the exam broken down by neighborhood indicate that the two areas of the city with the highest proportion of Turkish residents scored worst overall.² An official in charge of education described this outcome as "unsatisfactory" in that barely two thirds of the Turkish students managed to "cross this hurdle" and pass the

² Neukolm, 78% and Kreuzberg, 77%, compared to Steglitz-Zelendorf at 89%.

exam (*Tages Spiegel* 2006:7). Another telling statistic is that in Berlin 20 percent of those matriculating in first grade are of Turkish background. However, only eight percent of those taking the 10th grade math exam were of Turkish background. The vast majority of Turkish students leave school only with a Vocational Certificate or without any certificate of completion at all (*Tages Spiegel* 2006:7). Currently, children with an immigration background are three times more likely to leave school without a certificate than children of German origin. According to the most recent PISA study—the OECD’s comparative analysis of primary and secondary education—young people from immigrant backgrounds are significantly less likely to attend a university-track high school in Germany than those of German background. In other words, they have trouble even getting as far as university. Currently, there are only 26,000 Turkish students at German universities or roughly three percent of the university population (Dowling 2006).

In response to this situation and in keeping with its strong emphasis on education, the establishment of private schools has been a goal of the movement in Germany. After several years of attempting to convince the authorities of both the need for private Turkish schools and the ability of the Gülen movement participants to operate them, permission was granted to establish private, college-preparatory high schools in Berlin, Stuttgart, and Dortmund. Feasibility studies for new high schools projects in other cities are currently underway.

The factors that finally caused the authorities to approve the establishment of these schools are varied. In the estimation of the Director of the Intercultural Center of Munich, it was first and foremost a matter of time. The movement has really only been active in Germany for about ten years; it has taken this length of time for its participants to establish credibility with the government and for the government to take seriously their request to establish private schools. Moreover, German-born and -educated professionals of Turkish background were able to lobby the government and to present a different picture of Turkish residents than the uneducated, working class stereotype that many officials seemed to possess. A critical part of the effort to persuade government officials appears to have been the decision to take some of them to Turkey, where they could observe first-hand the workings of the Gülen movement schools there (Interview 1). A final reason for the recent change of heart on the part of the state governments was offered by the Director of the Wedding Learning Center. According to him, the authorities finally overcame their skepticism when they saw that establishing private high schools could work to their advantage as a useful method of promoting integration. He pointed out that they are looking for groups that offer a “middle way” toward integration, and may believe that this group offers such a way (Interview 3).

The process of negotiating with the local authorities concerning the establishment and operation of learning centers and schools is necessarily one that occupies the attention of the parents and other individuals involved. Good relations with the local authorities are crucial. The directors of the learning and intercultural centers as well as the Berlin school described their relationship in a variety of ways. The Director of Atlantic Learning Center in Ingolstadt, a medium-size city of 120,000, described his relationship with local authorities in glowing terms. The mayor of the town regularly attends events sponsored by the learning center, for example celebrating Ramadan, and the Director is frequently contacted by relevant governmental agencies concerning matters relating to the center (Interview 7). For the Director of the Bodensee Learning Center, the problem has been one of access. While he had a close and cooperative working relationship with the authorities in the city of Augsburg, he found such a relationship difficult to establish in the much larger city of Munich (Interview 2). The Berlin-based TUDESB Association, in contrast, appeared to have received rather warmer attention from the Berlin city government (Interview 3). In March of 2006, the Wedding Learning Center was visited by the Mayor of Mitte-Wedding who expressed his interest in the center’s methods for teaching German to Turkish immigrants; he also asked what support his office could give them in their efforts to do so. The TUDESB Association, in its more than ten years of existence, has become increasingly adept at dealing with city authorities as its success at establishing the

first, private Turkish school in Germany testifies. The people with whom I spoke indicated that at least part of this success was due to the fact that members of the Turkish community have now joined the ranks of the academic and policy-making elite. In this case the efforts of Dr. Mahmut Saygılı, a well-respected Turkish academic, were crucial in drawing up the plan of instruction for the proposed school and presenting it to city authorities, along with other representatives of the TUDESB Association (Interviews 3, 4 and 5).

The most important question facing those attempting to establish the TUDESB high school was why a separate, private school was necessary or desirable. The simple answer to that question, according to the head of the TUDESB Parent's Association, is that German schools are currently failing their large Turkish population. Many parents see this first and foremost as the fault of the German teachers who have low expectations for Turkish students and always assume the worst about their behavior. These students then internalize these poor expectations and they eventually do poorly. Unlike the previous two generations of immigrant Turks, this generation of German-born Turks doesn't have the feeling that their homeland is elsewhere. Rather, they feel like second-class citizens in their own homeland (Interview 5). Language is certainly at the root of the problem for most Turkish students. As a teacher at the Wedding Learning Center put it, most of them know German and Turkish "three quarters," while very few have mastered either one or the other. Not only does this language deficiency hinder Turkish students' ability to master the material, but the fact that 50 percent of their grade is based on oral exams causes them additional problems (Interview 6).

TUDESB High School in Berlin is intended to remedy the problems experienced by this generation of Turks resident in Germany by offering a demanding curriculum taught with an eye to their particular needs and problems. While some officials have begun to call for a reduction in admissions requirements at the university for Turkish students, parents and staff at the TUDESB High School generally appear to reject this approach (Interviews 3, 4 and 5). Rather, they insist that their high school must have more rigorous academic standards; only such outstanding academic training could justify the tuition payments required in a culture unused to private, tuition-based education (Interview 4). Moreover, the school must do a better job at bridging the gap between the Turkish parents and the largely German teaching staff than ordinary public schools. For this reason, a representative of the parent's association was hired full-time to communicate closely with parents and teachers alike about the cultural needs and assumptions of the respective groups. Not only does this representative know all of the families personally and visit them frequently, as a trained teacher himself he is well equipped to explain the educational standards and processes of the German educational system as well as the best manner in which the parents can support their children's academic performance.

The goal upon graduation for the vast majority of these students and their parents is a place at a Germany university and a successful professional career.

While an emphasis on Turkish culture and language is an important goal of the school, instruction in religion is not. Although Berlin law currently provides for some form of Islamic religious instruction in the public schools, the TUDESB gymnasium in Berlin does not offer such a course. Instead, school authorities opted for a more general ethics course, which will be offered for the first time in the fall of 2006. This course in comparative religion will highlight the similarities in all the world's great religions as well as the importance of learning from one another (Interview 4). Such an approach is intended to dovetail with the school's general emphasis on intercultural interaction and understanding. This past year the school was chosen by the European Union as a participant in its Comenius Project, which offers intensive exchanges among schools from five countries: Poland, Bulgaria, Turkey, France, and Germany (Tuebest 2006).

Integration for this school, as for other Gülen-related centers, is a two-way process. Turkish culture is to be acknowledged and celebrated within the curricular framework of the German educational system and considerable energy expended in helping the German staff

understand their largely Turkish clientele. According to the representative of the parents' association, this approach has begun to pay off. German teachers are expressing an increasing interest in learning about Turkish culture and two of them have begun Turkish language instruction. Moreover, the number of Turkish faculty has been steadily increasing since the establishment of the school two years ago; while the only Turkish member of the teaching staff in its first year was the Turkish language instructor, next year the school will have added two more teachers of Turkish background. In short, according to those involved with the school, integration must first and foremost involve appreciating the culture in which one lives, in this case Germany; but it does not require giving up who one fundamentally is. It is this philosophy of integration that the newly established private schools such as the TUDESB High School of Berlin are attempting to convey.

The Headscarf Dispute and Educational Policy

A final, highly contested area of educational policy concerns the issue of headscarves in the classroom. This has been a particular area of concern all over Europe, and Germany is no exception. Muslim women have been made a symbol of all that is ostensibly incompatible between "eastern, Muslim" culture and the west. In the words of one observer "the headscarf has become the symbol of a cultural conflict about the position of women in society" (Rohe 2004:93). While under the German Basic Law's freedom of religious expression clause (article 4, sections 1 and 2), German students may wear headscarves in the classroom, the situation concerning teachers has been much more complex. Since teachers are representatives of the state, and the state is constitutionally bound to maintain its neutrality in matters of religion, the state officials in Germany have generally ruled that teachers may not receive certification or receive permission to teach at state schools if they choose to wear a headscarf.

The case that set off what is referred to in Germany as "the headscarf dispute" began in 1998. Fereshta Ludin, the daughter of the ex-ambassador to Afghanistan, whose family was granted refugee status and who later gained citizenship through marriage, had wanted to be a teacher since she was thirteen when she also decided that she would wear a headscarf. The trouble began when she wanted to begin her student teaching and was told that it was not acceptable for her to wear her headscarf into the classroom. After petitioning the Minister of Culture in Bavaria, and being accepted into another School of Education in a different town, Ms. Ludin continued her teacher training. Nevertheless, when it was time for her to take her state certification examination, she was denied certification. This time the Ministry of Culture ruled that she "was not suitable to become a classroom instructor" as long as she was wearing a scarf (Oestreich 2004:37). The ruling determined that the headscarf was not necessary for religious observance, since most Muslim women do not wear it, but was rather a matter of personal expression. As such, the state was not required to extend protection to headscarf wearing under the freedom of religious expression guaranteed under the constitution. Moreover, and not quite consistently, the decision argued that headscarf-wearing teachers might exert pressure on female students to wear a headscarf "and in this way to separate themselves culturally" (Oestreich 2004:37). Thus, it was not in the interests of the state to allow teachers to wear headscarves in the classroom.

The outcome of this case met with various reactions. While some applauded the Minister for refusing to buckle under pressure from strongly religious women, others argued that she had missed an opportunity to show that not all women wearing headscarves were doing so under pressure. Discussion of Muslim dress and its significance exploded onto the public and legal stages, as many other cases began to make their way through the courts. Nevertheless, as one legal expert points out, the issue is not fundamentally a legal one, but one that involves deeper issues of cultural integration. "In my opinion, the true solution of this problem is not to be found within the sphere of law. As long as the headscarf is regarded as an instrument of suppression of women and of religious fundamentalism contrary to the values of

the German democratic and humanitarian legal order by large parts of German society as whole, including a considerable number of Muslims, the problem will last" (Rohe 2004:100).

What is the role of education, as conducted by the Gülen movement in its centers and schools, in addressing the problems and challenges faced by Turkish women and girls? How can "the headscarf disputes" best be brought to a satisfactory conclusion, one that fosters the integration of the Turkish population in Germany? This is a subject that I intend to research in greater depth, but I will offer a few preliminary observations here. First, it is important to note the very high level of female activism; by some estimates up to 50 percent of the Gülen movement participants both in Germany and in Turkey are women. The efforts by these female participants "to explain to their German friends," as one interviewee put it, as well as to the public the reasons they have chosen wearing a headscarf as a form of religious observance can go a long way toward dispelling the "cultural clash" such dress currently symbolizes. As one observer put it, the fact that Germany has become such a secular society means that the public may be shocked not so much by the treatment of women as by public religious expression itself (Rohe 2004). The more that women who choose this form of religious observance can make clear to non-Muslims the difference between religious expression and cultural repression, the greater the chance for integration.

Second, the Gülen movement will most likely continue to avoid direct controversy and will eschew a highly visible role in the current struggle over permitting teachers to wear the headscarf in the classroom; such a stance is in keeping with the general goal of the organization to avoid highly charged political battles that could detract from its educational mission. At the moment, however, involvement in this controversy, at least in the private TUDESB High School, has been avoided only because there are currently no female teachers who have expressed a desire to wear the headscarf in the classroom. Nevertheless, a request to do so appears to be only a matter of time as these schools add more Turkish teaching staff. (The restrictions on headscarf wearing do not apply to the learning centers, and roughly one third of the female teachers of the centers I visited wear headscarves while they teach.) Meanwhile, the approach of the Gülen movement schools appears to be to walk a fine line between offering a model of education and integration based on the Turkish experience and culture while avoiding debates over emotionally charged issues, such as the role of women.³

Third, given their educational mission, it would appear that Gülen-inspired schools and centers have an excellent opportunity to tackle some of the difficult problems faced by Turkish women and girls. Since the majority of teachers at the Learning Centers are female, and in some centers, the majority of students, these are excellent settings to take steps to discourage cultural practices that result in the oppression of women. The existence of a large number of female teachers already sets an example, as do programs such as the Girls' Day celebration in the Berlin TUDESB High School, but more can be done. Cultural practices that threaten the rights of women and girls can be resisted in the context of the ethical learning or motivation programs of the centers and schools. Similarly, women can be encouraged to play leadership roles in the movement and its institutions. At the moment, there is a noticeable lack of women in leadership positions such as directors of the learning centers and representatives of the parent associations, as well as a lack of programs in the centers and schools designed to address issues of gender equality. The Gülen movement in Germany is well positioned through its educational and other institutions to lead the way in demonstrating that maintaining Turkish-Muslim identity can be compatible with gender and human rights. In so doing, it will be taking a huge step toward the integration of the Turkish minority into European society while maintaining its cultural and religious roots.

³ When I asked the representative of the parents' association about the eventuality of such a situation and the current laws in Berlin, he answered that when such a situation arose, they would have to inform themselves about the current Berlin laws concerning the wearing of headscarves in private schools; it is currently forbidden in public schools.

Conclusion

The issue of the integration of the Turkish community into German society has grown in importance since the events of 9/11 and the ensuing "war on terrorism." There are two, perhaps contradictory, forces presently at work in Germany concerning its large, mainly Turkish, Muslim population. On the one hand, there is a growing fear of the Muslim community in Germany. On the other, there is a sense that integration must be tackled seriously and approached differently than it has been thus far. The Gülen movement is currently attempting to pick its way carefully between these two forces in promoting its vision of integration.

The vision of integration embraced by participants of the movement is based first and foremost on education. In the past decade, the Gülen movement in Germany has been building an educational infrastructure that aims to improve the socio-economic situation of residents of Turkish background and promote their integration into German society. With hundreds of learning centers, cultural centers and schools operating throughout the country, it has attempted to put its ideals of "dialogue, education, and social engagement" into practice. Since much of the debate concerning integration revolves around educational policy, the work of these educational centers has been having a quiet but significant effect.

The education offered in these learning institutions is two-pronged. First, it is designed to provide educational support to Turkish students enrolled in German schools in all the major subjects, especially in German language. This support extends to the parents, who are coached not only on how to best promote their children's schooling, but also on difficult situations arising from the "cultural divide" that sometimes appears between them and their children. Establishing private schools will undoubtedly become increasingly important in the future, as the movement attempts to adapt its successful model of private education in Turkey to conditions in Germany. Whether viewed as a kind of transitional measure or a more permanent fixture, the goal of Gülen movement schools is the same: to promote the educational success of Turkish students through preparing them to enter the university and achieve professional success.

The second aspect of education offered by Gülen movement schools and centers involves the German population. A goal of the learning centers and schools, and especially the intercultural centers, is to promote a better understanding of the richness of Turkish culture, religion and language. The centers engage in outreach work in the community by offering Turkish language courses, organizing trips to Turkey, hosting Round Tables on topics relating to Islam and Turkish history and culture, inviting Germans to dinner at Turkish homes, including local officials in religious celebrations and other events. This educational work is intended to convey a vision of integration that is based on a two-way exchange of cultural understanding, and to counteract the cultural stereotypes about Turks held by many Germans. Such attitudes are increasingly difficult for many in the Turkish community to tolerate, especially the second and third generations of German-born Turks who feel like second-class citizens in their German homeland.

Thus, the vision of integration promoted by the Gülen movement centers is one of cultural exchange and enrichment rather than assimilation. Despite the denials of some German officials that there are Turkish ghettos in Germany many, if not most, Turks live a good portion of their lives separately from native Germans. Gülen movement centers are attempting to build a bridge between the two communities. But, the directors and teachers with whom I spoke insist that this cannot be done through assimilation. Such an approach would not work and is humiliating to the minority population. The Director of the Intercultural Center in Munich and others used the image of "Noah's pudding" to describe the process of integration they endorse. This pudding is composed of many ingredients that, while they enhance the flavor of the pudding, do not lose their distinctiveness since they are not ground together (Interview 1). Germans cannot simply hope that Turks will look exactly like they do

in the end. Integration also means willingness on the part of the host population to understand and accept the values and experiences of the Turkish minority.

The Gülen movement is composed of a cadre of well-educated men and women, adept at operating in German society and able to represent the interests of the Turkish population in Germany. Gülen movement participants in Germany have avoided controversial political activities (and contact with other Turkish groups who engage in them), and have focused on providing education and cultural understanding. While Islam can be a component of this education, it is presented within the framework of Turkish culture and history. Gülen movement participants emphasize that this culture and history offer a more cosmopolitan, tolerant, and moderate form of Islam than many current models. It is this vision of a middle way that they hope can foster the integration of the Muslim population in Germany.

Interviews

- Interview 1: Isa Güzel, Director of the Interkulturelles Dialogzentrum, Munich
- Interview 2: Mehmet Kervan , Director of Bodensee Bildungscenrer
- Interview 3: Serdar Amecidağ, Director of the Wedding Bildungszentrum
- Interview 4: Yusuf Şeker, physics teacher and Head of the Parents' Association of the TUDESB- Privatgymnasium in Berlin
- Interview 5: Anonymous, parent of TUDESB Privatgymnasium student, active member of TUDESB
- Interview 6: H. Hümevra Olçes, teacher at the Wedding Bildungszentrum
- Interview 7: Mehmet Pekince, Director of the Atlantik Schulungs und Bildungscenrer, Ingolstadt