

EUROPE AS 'TITANIC'

Thilo Sarrazin



THILO SARRAZIN — a German politician and public figure, and a member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany. He is the author of the sensational book, 'Germany does away with itself' (2010)

■ *Has the policy of multiculturalism really failed, as the politicians in London and Berlin claim? In your book, when you criticized policies in relation to migrants, were you speaking also about multiculturalism?*

I wrote about multiculturalism in my book but I never said that it had failed. There has always been some migration in the world. We have Christian and European culture, which takes different forms, so certainly between Christians from Eastern Siberia and Catholic Christians from Madrid there are cultural differences, but there is also a common European base. We also share this common base with people from North America, and we share a common base with Latinos because of the Christian faith and the unity in language. There will always be a mixing of cultures in different directions.

■ *Then what is the problem?*

Europe, as a rule, has had a problem of immigration from Muslim countries. The migration of Russians in Germany on the other hand is not a problem. There are about 1.5 million Russians in Germany, and 2 million people of Polish origin. They all mix very well within German society. Moreover, they all look alike, and they look like Germans. They also adapt and learn the German language rather quickly. And if any of these people stay married and have children, then I assume they will grow up largely as Germans. For example, I had a British grandmother, and I had an Italian great grand mother, but I am, nevertheless, a German. The problem is that migrants from Muslim countries have a tendency to keep to themselves and to stick to their own culture. And this causes tension in the countries where they choose to live. In Germany we have problems with many Turkish migrants, France has problems with Arab migrants, and the same is the case in the Netherlands. British people have problems with migrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh, but not with migrants from India. So, it must have something to do with Muslim culture, and it also has to do with the large numbers of those migrants, as well as their tendency to keep to themselves and to form societies of their own. It is also important to consider the degree of their success in the labor market and their success in education, which is below the average of the receiving society, something which likely has to do with the role of women in these cultures. There is also a higher fertility rate in this group, which again is connected to the role of women. So I think you get the picture. **We don't have a problem with multiculturalism in general, we just have a problem with immigration from Muslim countries.**

■ *Why is it hard for immigrants from Islamic countries to adapt?*

I believe the explanation is a religious one. Because the Muslim culture draws on faith, it is sufficient if one merely reads the Quran, knows it by heart and observes its rules. It is the primary task. Knowledge, science, and economic success are not that important in life. It is quite interesting to know that the test scores of the descendants of workers from Spain, Portugal, or Greece by contrast are about the same as the test scores of the German people.

■ *But is it really just about Muslim countries and culture? Maybe here we need to blame the political mistakes made by European countries, which affect the specific traits of the migrants' culture?*

There were policy failures because the Europeans failed to see the problems I have mentioned. One should have seen them and accepted that they were there. And the Germans failed to face the possible solutions. So, this is the problem, and now the question is what to do. First we have to accept that migrants who are here are here and will stay here. It would be unrealistic to assume anything else or anything different. And this is the number one question that everyone has to deal with. This is a task that also exists in all the European countries — in Germany, in the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Sweden, Denmark, and so on. But there is another set of questions that have to be addressed with the utmost urgency. These are questions of how to control and prevent further immigration from those countries. But there are three problems here. First, is the immigration of family members. What happens if a Turkish girl from Berlin marries a cousin from Turkey? It is a family

union, it is not a reunion. How can we deal with this issue? That's the first question. The second problem is how to deal with illegal immigration, and the third problem is how to deal with political asylum seekers.

■ *Can these problems be resolved without reconsidering the principles of liberal democracy that accept fundamental values and human rights? We would almost need to force these people to integrate into the European community without letting those into Europe who are seeking a better life.*

Nevertheless, one has to do it. Have you seen the movie 'Titanic'? Yes, of course you have. Well, all the people on the Titanic had the same value and the same attitude — to survive. Nevertheless, when the ship sank, there was this moving scene when all the people in the life boats watched people who were not in the life boats fight for their lives and finally drown. They had no choice. It is now a little bit the same with Europe. Europe is an aging continent with very low birth rates. If you include Russia, the total number of new births a year in all of Europe only amounts to about 7 million. By contrast, Africa alone has 35 million births per year, and the Middle East has another 7 million births per year, totaling 42 million births per year. And these are all people who will eventually try to get into Europe 20 years from now. So, if Europe, as an aging country with a very low fertility rate, accepted 1 million immigrants from Africa and the Middle East per year, it would certainly endanger the culture and the future of our societies, for different reasons, but it would hardly help out Africa and the Middle East either. So, I think that all countries have a task to transform their structures in a way that can form a better future for themselves. It is their responsibility. We can give economic aid, we can give educational aid, we can aid in different ways, but in the end the countries and **the regions have to help themselves and have to develop their own human and national resources. Europe cannot solve the problems of Africa and the Middle East** by accepting even more immi-

grants within its borders.

And now comes the question of what to do with the migrants that are already here. It is apparent that we have to integrate them. First, is the matter of schooling, child care, and pre-school training. We have to make clear what kind of behavior is desirable and what is not. Behavior that is not desirable has to be discouraged in some form. Here one can imagine different measures. For example, the right to receive social welfare could be made dependent on one's progress in language skills. Every migrant could receive social welfare and at the same time attain concrete language skills. So, for example, if we have a Turkish family as welfare recipients, the condition would be that the whole family improves its language skills in a certain period of time. If they fail to do so, especially the wife, then the welfare amounts would be cut down or perhaps stopped altogether. The same would go for child benefits.

Child benefits would only be paid if the child attends kindergarten, pre-school, and school. And this should be supported by the parents properly. The family policy in Germany involves very substantial child benefits, and child benefits in Germany are higher than the average cost of keeping up an additional child, especially if you are in the low income bracket. So, for the German underclass, as well as for the Muslim migrants, which live on welfare, each and every additional child raises their standard of living because of child benefits. Clearly these are completely wrong incentives. In the United States they had the same problem with their so-called welfare mothers, and under president Clinton there was a social reform in 1995 that cut down on welfare benefits including child benefits. This produced very quick results. The number of children born from these welfare mothers dwindled to about 20 to 30%. But there are additional problems.

The first problem is that of the family reunion. For me, the family reunion in this case results mainly from the attraction of the European welfare state. To a large part, it is a reunion which is paid for by the European welfare system. So, the

first reform, which I proposed in my book, is that we do something that the United States, Australia, and Canada have already done, and that is institute a long transition time — in short, no social transfers for those who join our country. A family reunion should only be possible when the person involved in Germany has been living here and earning his living for quite some time. This should be the first condition. The second condition should be that the person, or children, or spouse who join them cannot get social transfers for at least the first ten years of their stay in Germany. Thirdly, they should have to master, before the reunion, a minimum amount of the language of their receiving country. These people need to sustain themselves and I think under these conditions the reunion rates would go down by at least 70-80%.

The second problem I mentioned is illegal immigration. Illegal immigration is a big problem that is not statistically visible for the reason that it is illegal. But it is estimated that in Berlin alone we have about 50 thousand illegal immigrants. And illegal immigration is an issue connected with the challenge of efficient and effective border control, which of course is a big problem everywhere. Even the United States has a difficulty in controlling their border with Mexico effectively, but the problem has been aggravated by the so-called Shenghen treaty. One can now go from the North pole to Sicily. Once you are inside, you can go to the country of your choice. So, we need to have a really effective border control.

The third problem is those who seek political asylum. Those who seek political asylum and have a right to get it, of course get it, but these should only be people who are politically active in their own countries and are persecuted exactly for those reasons. This is only a small number of people. It is not as though they are criminals, but of the young men who came from Tunisia over the last month, I am quite sure that 98% of them were not politically active, and even those who were are now no longer threatened because the matter is finished and they have won.

■ *Are you willing to acknowledge the special status of minorities?*

Germany has no national or cultural minorities. **We used to be, ethnically and culturally, a homogeneous country, just like the Netherlands, France, Italy, and so on. And it should stay that way.** So, those who come have to integrate. There is no clear definition of multiculturalism. There will always exist different cultures, and every culture lives on its own right, and it is not our right to censor other cultures, but once they are in Germany, they have to adapt to German traditions. I am all for the freedom of religion; if they are Muslims they can go to church on Saturdays. Everyone can exercise his religion freely, under the condition that he takes care of himself and his family, and abides by the laws. Then he can live as he pleases. These are universal human rights, which are valid for all people.

■ *Perhaps you want to tell them, 'Just don't become parasites.'*

Yes, exactly. On the other hand, we have to see the risks within a policy that allows for a growing number

of disintegrated, culturally different people in a society.

■ *Since its publication your book has received fierce criticism. What conclusions have you made from the discussion that followed the publishing of your book?*

Well, a certain percentage of journalists, in my view, have not read my book at all. And their comments prove it. Sometimes I am accused of something I haven't even written about. I raised the problems in a very clear and a very harsh manner, but this is the only way to get public attention. I would have preferred it if more journalists used facts from the book. But I am not at all unhappy about the way it went, because the discussion is here, and it is here to stay. The tendency in the media and the so-called political decision-makers is to make the problem small and even to deny its existence. **This tendency has been checked. It has always been there, but it has been checked. And I think this is very important.**

■ *What attitude prevails in Germany? Does German society support your ideas?*

About 65% of the people support my views, another 15 to 20% have no opinion, and about 20% do not agree with my views. There were also other polls, including some by *Spiegel* and *Focus*, which is another periodical, and the results were more or less the same. 52% said it is good that I am in the social democratic party, while 30% said it is not good.

■ *So, the public supports you. And what about the political circles?*

The majority of political circles don't support me, because they blame me for taking up the matter in a way that did not please them, and which did not flatter them. **My book was an accusation of the political class, and they got the message well, they were not pleased.** But right now they are trying to steal my subject. It is not that bad, because the agenda has been set by my book, and they are following, at least partly, that agenda. For example, Angela Merkel said publicly that multiculturalism was a failure, and she would not have said that without my book. ■

Yulia Netesova exclusively for the Yaroslavl Forum

THILO SARRAZIN AGAINST THE SOCIAL STATE

In 2010, German politician Thilo Sarrazin dropped a real bombshell – he wrote the book, 'Germany does away with itself. How we put our country at stake', in which he tried to describe a process of Islamization of the European Union. A resonant title, the author's high standing in society and a cleverly conducted PR-campaign ensured a wide success for the book. Who could have thought that a high-ranking member of the Socialist Democratic Party of Germany would venture to publish the work, whose ideas drastically contradict what is accepted as the party's orthodoxy, i.e. the principles of tolerance, multiculturalism, and a respect for ethnic and other minorities.

Sarrazin was listened to, in part because of a speech given by German chancellor Angela Merkel at the convention of the youth wing of the Christian Democratic Party, in which she claimed that the sacred cow of the post-war development of Germany, the concept of multiculturalism, is rather

dead than alive, and that immigrants must exert more efforts in order to integrate into German society. It is clear that Sarrazin and his book are unleashing wrath on the main achievement of post-war development in Germany – the social state.

The social state created in Germany attracts migrants who come to the country with the objective of living on social welfare. It is true that quite often social welfare in Germany provides an income that migrants could hardly count on back in their own countries. And since a guaranteed income is ensured to a migrant, he completely loses the stimulus to integrate into German society, to achieve self-fulfillment, and to generate any value for the country. These migrants don't know the language very well, they do not wish to look for a job, and they tend to form ethnic ghettos, which gradually expand due to a higher fertility rate in their families. With such conditions, German workers have found themselves pushed increasingly to the fringes of society.