Article, 29.07.2011
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http://aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/84C28144-DE61-4933-A600-E0538C96708C.htm

Oslo's Massacre and the Crisis of Islamphobes in Europe

Many young, politically interested people have paid a high price for the fact that anti-Muslim hatred with its separatist implications for society could be spread throughout Europe without obstacles for the last decades. 68 young people from Norway were killed by a terrorist coming from the centre of European society. The attack against the governmental quarter in Oslo and the vacations' site of the Social Democrats, where a multicultural reality has become normal, shows how an extreme culmination of conspiracy theories may look like. It has been cultivated by words and depictions throughout many years blaming "leftist politicians for accepting multiculturalism" and finally the destruction of "us" . Why didn't we take this hatred for serious? Hate-Speech is still underestimated as an important factor for hate-crime and a risk for democracy. Especially modern concepts like freedom of speech are abused to agitate against minorities, e.g. Muslims, but also social aid recipients, Blacks, asylum seekers and others more.

Instead of a reflection-pause after these incredible atrocities in Norway and the very humane reactions there, and the mourning, people in Germany and other European countries are fast in interpretations of what had happened. First, almost every one considered the attacks "islamist terror", which reveals the dominant frames and expectations in perceiving our world: "The Muslim is guilty", was a title in the Austrian daily *Der Standard*, which actually is a critical comment about the anti-Muslim reflexes and about the difficulty as a news-format, to held back information you really don't have. The pressure to speculate and conclude in advance is high, as show our "terror-experts" – at least this became an occasion to think about framings and rumours.

Only Standard, BBC and few others managed not to rush onto the wrong path. Only few, like a regional newspaper from Fulda in Germany, apologized meanwhile for the wrong suspicions. But, many newspapers and radio-debates are doing good critical analysis now, whereas some insist on "taking for serious the problems of a multi-cultural society (and to fight it)" – which fits exactly the intentions of the mass-murderer of Oslo and holiday-island Utoya. In this sense the publication of his Avatar-pose photos and the so called manifesto, which contains more than 1500 pages revealing his thoughts, could support his idea of "saving the occident". And, not only the anonymous blogger Fjordman is an important inspirer of the perpetrator.

The Role of the Media for the Muslim-Haters

The public debate still lacks consciousness, that the framing of Muslims was primarily achieved by the foreign news broadcasts during the 1980ies and 90ies. Strong frames were established and they reframe what is perceived today. E.g. the story of Betty Mahmoody, "Not without my daughter", set an important frame of (anti-feminist) oppression as a character of Islam, also the Salam Rushdie Affair about his "Satanic Verses", which imposed the idea of a contradiction between Islam (=Khomeini) and "freedom of expression" as part of democracies. What was right at that time, was wrong for the interpretation of the Danish anti-Muslim caricatures in 2005/2006. And this is only one of a long series of misinterpretations, misunderstandings and abuses. As the framing through news-formats in the Media is naturally focusing the negative, subjects like violence and terror are for many people in Europe THE character of Islam, not reflecting their generalizations.

Meanwhile the anti-Muslim fear was transferred onto our own Muslims here, with slight differences in each country – as e.g. France has a long tradition of "Beurs" immigration from Maghreb-countries, a post-colonial situation as in Great Britain. Today – and after several events that caused fear, the concept of a homegrown terrorism is prevalent. But, it's limited to Muslims, which almost became a synonym for „(potential) terrorists", as we witness how difficult it is to perceive the Norway perpetrator as a "homegrown" one, too. Even if there are some Think Tanks in the United States and Europe that are promoting anti-Muslim hatred, the extremely stereotyped coverage of Muslim issues is more due to the lack of reflection about our Media-made image of the world and only one of many examples, where highlighting some (negative) aspects and omitting all the others creates its own reality. The fear-mongering in blogs adds its impact to attacks on mosques or even the murder of Marwa El Sherbiny, while still many people think, that not spreading such stereotypes would be a threat to freedom of speech. The recent appearance of Salafis in Germany, mostly German converts, doesn't facilitate to make clear that any generalization and demonization is to blame.

The Role of the Rightwing Blogger-Scene

Not only these Salafis, who are estimated as provocation, and some other drawbacks in our Muslim community or worldwide nourishes the Muslim-hating blogger-scene, but also the mainstream-Media discourse. Meanwhile those bloggers are lamenting of a conspiracy of left-wing journalists, politicians and Muslims, against whom they have to blog – because in their view the true Muslim is a bad Muslim, and if he seems to be not bad, then he practices Takiya, in order to islamise Europe even more effectively. The negation of multiculturalism by politicians like Merkel, Cameron and Sarkozy are ignored, so that they can imagine themselves as victims of betrayers. This reminds us of the same unlogic theory of a "jewish-bolschevist conspiracy" in former times, which seems to have become a "muslim-marxist conspiracy" today. The bloggers and upcoming right-wing NGOs and parties are clever enough not to claim for violent action, because this is challenged by the law, but they found a more subtle rhetoric: First, they claim themselves "pro-Israel", which leads to the reflex, that many people don't understand their right-wing and extremists nature – because still many believe, that rightist-extremism is linked to anti-Jewish attitudes. This has changed through the last decade, as describes Uri Avnery in his

recent article about "New-Anti-Semitism".

Especially from anti-Jewish discourse long before the Nazi-period and the Shoa, we could learn a lot about hate-speech and its impact for possible further action – as the bloggers e.g. use the method of suggestive questions. Instead of calling for violent action, the ask: "How long shall we wait? Until it is too late?" And they use metaphors to dehumanise Muslims. The conceptionalising of Jews as parasites or dangerous illness, should be known, but applied to Muslims it seems to pass undetected and accepted. Of course, this creates the idea of a self-defensive situation. It's exactly the idea of „defending the occident", that inspired the terrorist from Norway.

After a few days of irritation and some efforts to show one's distance towards the "methods" of the killer of children and young adults, not his confessions, they already came back to "business as usual" – as described before. But, also in mainstream-Media the fight for "the right to continue to criticize Islam and Muslims" begun, using another rhetoric trick: Those who criticize this hate-speech are accused of trying to limit freedom of speech, and many fall into the trap not realizing that this blame is exactly that: seeking for censorship. So, not even one week after the disaster in Norway we again face the audacity of claiming, that it's multiculturalism that causes the problems, not terrorists like this "conservative": Again "The Muslim is guilty", as was "the Jew" in former times. This is a disgrace for anti-racist education especially in Germany, but also throughout Europe. The right-wing popular parties with their icons, like racist Geert Wilders and Thilo Sarrazin, use this monstrous construction of "the Muslim as an enemy" to gain votes. With their turn from anti-Jewish to anti-Muslim hatred they may become more successful, because Islamophobia is widespread. In times of economic crises this is very dangerous - as we should know from history.

Henryk Broder is guilty

While many journalists are critically analyzing now, what is going on, many politicians try to apply their old "security dreams" to control public communications and reduce the question for resolutions to a criminological level. The claims from Jens Stoltenberg from Norway for more democracy and openness seem not to reach far into Europe's soul. And in order to project a possible responsibility or guilt far away, because of the acceptance of so much hate-speech during the years, other causes are found responsible: the internet, a right-wing isolated man (networks seem reserved to Muslims and Jews), a psychiatric lunatic, a free-mason or a Mossad-agent are only some of the efforts to consider him not as a part of the centre of our society. Also, some fundamentalist Christian point of views are taken as a proof that he is none of us.

And as the manifest shows that he is inspired by the hate-mongering discourses of the last years, then it is discerned to be the fault of Henryk Broder. This well-known cynic, who actually and continually is spreading his disrespect for human dignity focusing Muslims, the Middle-East conflict and German society in blogs and mainstream-Media faces a campaign against his contribution to the perpetrators world view. Nobody asks who invites him to publish his polemics or to "discuss" on TV. This would draw the attention to a much bigger problem than only Broder, because he is not alone in producing hate-speech – although he is quite a central figure.

If the analysis that now begun shall end successfully, we must include the question why and how our "Foreigners" of former times have become "Muslims" today. How

was the attention drawn to this marker of group perception, what actually contributed Muslims to this and what came from outside? What we know so far is that minorities always got and get attention, when there are economic problems - and now, we are facing another turn of economic crises. To withdraw attention from that and from the powerlessness of European politicians, acknowledging that political power is limited by financial power, as show the billions for failing banks and the man-made hunger in other parts of the world. Islam and Muslims are "useful" toys to discuss endlessly about and to keep us busy.

Some groups of people realize what's going on, especially the connection between a neo-liberal economic system, war and racism. In Great Britain a big coalition of diverse groups joined the „Enough Coalition" to resist the anti-social politics of the government. In Germany, too, an initiative against the splitting of society is seeking for support: „Eure Hetze kotzt uns an!" follows almost the same concept as the Enough-Coalition in GB to invite Muslim organizations, political- and anti-racist groups, trade unions, anti-war organizations etc. to join and become active like those many different people in Arab Spring. They are doubtful about the new (= old) "security concepts" proposed in a hurry after the atrocities in Norway, because these could be used against this democratic movements. There is a long tradition of criminalizing leftist and democratic groups instead of right-wing activists, so doubts about the real intentions of the actual proposals may be useful. The coming together of more and more people from different corners of society to show solidarity gives hope. Awareness of disinformation campaigns is also necessary as confidence in human kind – the majority of people wants to live in peace and dignity and this majority will finally be successful, by standing together to reach these precious aims.