

NEW AGORA

SYMPOSIUM

Muslims: Partners in Dialogue

Berlin, 27-29 November 2009

In the name of The Borderland Foundation we would like to invite you to the 'New Agora' Symposium in Berlin. The Symposium – organized each year in a different place in Europe – is dedicated to the reflexion on the crisis of multicultural society and the attempts to overcome it. The title of the Berlin meeting is 'Muslims: Partners in Dialogue'.

The crisis of a multicultural society is being discussed more and more often. Nowadays, we are facing new waves of refugees and immigrants, close contact with Islam and other cultures, the return of the old national and religious traumas. Moreover, we are witnessing the rebirth of the attitudes hostile towards the other, hostile towards sharing common values and common life in a culturally differentiated society.

Therefore, one can fear the total decline of *agora* in the modern multicultural democratic societies. We pride ourselves with cultural diversity and act so as to preserve distinct identities. However, is there still *agora* present and the culture of dialogue which accompany her? If not, how is then the rebirth of *agora* possible? Do we need New Agora at all? Would it not be in contradiction with strong emphasis on diversity and distinction? What are the sources of the contemporary crisis of multiculturalism and what are the possible ways out? These are some of the main questions for the Symposium in Berlin to be raised.

The Symposium is the fourth of the series of meetings devoted to the abovementioned problems. The first 'New Agora' took place in Sarajevo, 2006. In 2007 the event was organized in Wrocław, Poland, in co-operation with one of the local universities and with the support of the City and Mayor of Wrocław. In 2008, the meeting took place in Sejny under the title: 'New Educational Utopias: Philosophy of Intercultural Education.' Now, we chose Berlin for the next meeting on purpose. It will bring together more than 20 speakers from European, African and American countries, who will discuss three main topics:

- **Historical and cultural heritage of Islam and Europe** (November 27, 2009)

This day will be devoted to exploring and discussing, in lectures and debates, the historical and cultural links connecting Islam (both as culture and religion) and Europe. We will talk about the Muslims presence in Europe through the centuries. We will also consider general questions connected to intercultural dialogue as such – how it can be understood and practised.

The participants of our debate on these issues will be: Mustapha Tlili, Moha Ennaji, Selim Chazbijewicz and Krzysztof Czyżewski.

- **Prospects and threats for intercultural dialogue: interreligious dialogue** (November 28, 2009)

We will explore examples of, prospects and threats for dialogue with the Muslims, reflecting sometimes on the history, but focusing mainly on contemporary situation. A special part will be devoted to interreligious dialogue as one of the most sensitive issues in the relations of the West and Muslim worlds.

These questions are of special importance for the future model of a multicultural society. The cultural tensions and conflicts in Europe with a Muslim population of over 20 million (more than 15 million living within the borders of the EU) are likely to be increasingly rooted in religion. Can religion be helpful in neutralizing these conflicts? If so, then how? What role can religion play in the building of civil society?

The participants of the debate will be: Moshe Shner, Fatima Sadiqi, Krzysztof Czyżewski and Basil Kerski.

- **How to build *neighbourhood* together with the Muslim immigrants in Europe? Case studies, e.g., Berlin, Birmingham, Mostar, Rotterdam** (November 29, 2009)

We will consider the ways how a "neighbourhood" (common space/society) can be built together with the Muslim immigrants in Europe. Here the concrete examples and case studies from the places throughout Europe will be presented. Special attention will be given to Berlin, as one of the main borderland cities in Europe.

The participants of this debate will be: Faouzi Skali, Isabella Thomas, Huso Oručević, Krzysztof Czyżewski and Basil Kerski.

This year's edition of the 'New Agora' Symposium is entitled 'Muslims: Partners in Dialogue'. We chose Berlin as the city where resides a large Muslim community. Due to this, it creates a proper context for the reflection on the co-existence and dialogue with the Muslim world. We would like to dedicate the first day to the meditation on the tradition of the intercultural dialogue in the Islamic culture and its contemporary realizations. The second day will be concentrated on certain examples in which threats and chances for the contemporary multicultural society are revealed. The stress will be laid on interreligious dialogue. On the third day, we will look on the common places: Berlin above all, but also Birmingham, Rotterdam, Sarajevo, Mostar or Hania, where building a new neighbourhood community with the Muslim immigrants is the biggest challenge. We would wish to underline the role of the young generation in the dialogue with Islam; also in such countries as Poland, where along with the Muslims living there for ages, the number of 'alien' newcomers from the Muslim world is steadily growing. We pay a special interest to the actual examples of social, cultural and educational activities responding to the challenges of contemporary multiculturalism.

The meeting will be held in the English language.

The organizers provide meals and accommodation.

For further information look at:

http://www.pogranicze.sejny.pl/?s=warsztaty&a=Programs_new_agora&lang=eng

Location of the Symposium:

The House of Brandenburg-Prussian History

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