

Udo Lindenberg, „Bunte Republik Deutschland“ (1989)

Abstract

The rock musician and composer Lindenberg, famous in East and West Germany, received the “Cross of Merit on the Ribbon of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany” in 1989. The italicized verses of his bilingual anthem “Bunte Republik Deutschland” [Colorful Republic of Germany] against racism and xenophobia are originally in Turkish and speak – incomprehensibly for German-speaking listeners – of a monster that slumbers in the shallows of our minds and weaves an invisible barbed-wire fence between us and the Other. The phrase “Bunte Republik Deutschland” became an ironic quote that ran through many critical commentaries on multiculturalism in the years after the fall of the Wall.

Source

Doesn't matter if you're an Italian /
Doesn't matter if you're a smooth German /
or a good-looking Turk, /
or Chinese, Iroquois /
Greek, or Torero. /
Doesn't matter if you're a Japanese sumo wrestler /
or a technician for Bolero. /

Doesn't matter if you're an African, /
[...] /
Doesn't matter if you're an Indonesian /
or an Indian. /
A Capuchin, Argentinean, Franciscan, or Frenchy, /
or if in your cut-off wool pants, /
your balls hang freely.

Colorful Republic of Germany /
whole planes full of Eskimos /
just like in New York City /
always something going on. /
We stand on the platform and greet every train, /
cuz we've had enough /
of those dull, mousy Germans. /

Colorful Republic of Germany . . .
*That tender monster /
is sleeping in the dark depths /
at the base of our minds /*

*and knits an invisible chain-link /
between us and others. /*

Colorful Republic of Germany . . . /
Colorful Republic of Germany...

Source of the original German text: Udo Lindenberg, *Bunte Republik Deutschland*, Polydor (Universal), 1989.

Source of English translation: Udo Lindenberg, "Colorful Republic of Germany," in *Germany in Transit. Nation and Migration 1955–2005*, ed. Deniz Göktürk, David Gramling and Anton Kaes, Berkeley: University of California Press: 2007, pp. 436–37.

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