



The Islamist threat to freedom

GERARD BATTEN MEP argues that Islamism is incompatible with western democracy

THIS magazine is written and read by people who believe in freedom. There is of course enormous scope for material for articles and letters, given the Labour Government's crusade over the last ten years to abolish what freedoms we have left. But there is one great threat to freedom in Britain, and indeed to the whole democratic world, that has failed to gain the attention it deserves in these pages and that is the threat posed by Islamism.

Islamism is political Islam. It is an ideology that depends on a fundamentalist, extremist and literalist interpretation of the Qur'an. It spreads that ideology by means of 'jihad', or struggle. Its goal is to convert the world to Islam by whatever means necessary. The tactics used include terrorism at one end of the spectrum, down to constant agitation to gain public concessions to Islamic practices, such as the adoption of halal meals in schools and the recent legal recognition of shari'a law in some United Kingdom (UK) tribunals. Every concession, however small, is a victory for jihad.

Islamism grew out of fundamentalist movements such as the Wahhabists of Saudi Arabia in the eighteenth century, and the Moslem Brotherhood in the twentieth century. The spectacular growth and success of Islamism over the last fifty years or so has been due to two main factors: the massive transfer of wealth from western countries to the Middle East in the form of billions upon billions of dollars in oil revenue, and the mass immigration into western countries by Muslims.

Saudi Arabia has spent billions of dollars supporting Islamist movements around the world. It exports the threat posed to its own regime by the extremists by sending them elsewhere. The uncontrolled, unlimited and indiscriminate immigration policy of Britain and other western countries enables the Islamists to freely come and settle as they wish.

When President Bush launched his counter attack after 11 September he dubbed it, "the war on terror." This was a mistake. Terrorism is just a tactic. What we now face is not a war with a tactic but a struggle with the ideology of Islamism. We have to realise that, and that there should be no accommodation with it. The slightest acquaintance with Islamism

reveals that it is totally incompatible with western liberal democracy.

This confrontation between Islamism and the West is sometimes referred to as a clash of civilisations. This too is a mistake: it is a clash between civilisation and barbarism. It is a clash between everything that has made the modern world what it is and an ideology that wants to enslave us to a belief system that belongs in seventh century Arabia and which was primitive and backward even then.

Of course, most Muslims are not extremists or terrorists, or even sympathetic to terrorism. Most of the Muslims we come into contact with are hard-working, decent, law-abiding people. I doubt they spend much time poring over the Qur'an to come up with extremist interpretations: but they do go to the Mosque and listen to the Imams. And therein lays the problem. It is estimated that over half

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the Mosques in the UK are now run by fundamentalist and extremist sects paid for by money from countries such as Saudi Arabia.

This is not a problem unique to non-Muslim countries; countries such as Egypt and Turkey, which have pursued secular political agendas, find themselves threatened by the fundamentalists' agenda. What then can be done about it? The first step is to understand the ideology that threatens us. There is a great deal of material available in which the Islamists themselves explain what they are about in their own words.

One such example is a short film entitled 'Fitna' ('disagreement or division') by Geert Wilders, the Dutch MP. Fitna shows texts from the Qura'n, read by Imams and prominent Muslims, interspersed with shots that show where a literal belief in those teachings leads: the planes flying into the twin towers, the Madrid bombings, and the aftermath of

the London bombings.

I invited Mr. Wilders to the European Parliament in December 2008 to attend a showing of Fitna to an invited audience of MEPs. We were however prevented from showing the film by the Parliamentary authorities. It did not surprise me that the Parliament that likes to boast about democracy and tolerance should ban the free speech of those it disagrees with. But more recent developments are even more worrying.

A few days before writing this article I learned that the Amsterdam Court of Appeal has ordered the criminal prosecution of Geert Wilders for his statements and opinions on Islam, on the grounds of incitement to hatred and discrimination. Mr. Wilders now faces years of court proceedings, ever mounting legal costs, and possible conviction. Being a Dutch court, he will not enjoy the safeguard of a trial by jury.

What has he done exactly? He has criticised an ideology that wants to destroy the very culture, civilisation and legal system that tolerates and protects it. He has always made it clear that he respects Muslims as individuals but has the right to criticise their belief system. I don't agree with everything that Mr. Wilders says but he is a brave man trying to defend western civilisation in the face of its own loss of the most basic instinct of self-preservation.

To find out more and to listen to Islamists in their own words, search the internet under 'Fitna the movie' and 'Obsession the movie'.

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