

## **The Woke are fast asleep, and the Ersatz Left are missing in action . . .**



**EMMANUEL MACRON**, the president of France, is being attacked across the world for daring to say that Islam is a religion in crisis. He made this apparently controversial statement following the beheading of a schoolteacher. The teacher, Samuel Paty, was killed by a Muslim for showing his students cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed, during the course of a class discussion on free speech and freedom of the press. The man who murdered Samuel Paty was not simply, a Muslim, but an Islamist, a Muslim who believes that society should be governed by religious edicts in a theocratic manner.

Then more recently, an Islamist shouting, “Allahu Akbar” stabbed three Roman Catholics to death in Notre-Dame de Nice on Avenue Jean Médecin in the centre of the city. On this occasion, no images of the Prophet were involved, those killed were murdered for simply being Roman Catholics, or

perhaps, just because they were Christians in a Christian church.

In response, President Macron and the French state have pulled out all the stops to insist that commitment to freedom of speech and thought will continue to be guaranteed in France. He has also dared to repeat the observation that Islam is a religion in crisis.

Now, this seems to me to be an entirely uncontroversial observation. I do not support the French Republic's attempts to implement state-imposed dress codes on Muslim women, and I am not entirely convinced by the trumpeting of the virtues and consistency of its republican *laïcité* – which never seem to be evenly applied to Roman Catholics for example, despite many anti-clerical episodes in the country's history. However, France is a bourgeois democratic republic which for all its failings; its wretched historical complicities with antisemitism, colonialism, and much else, does today, uphold freedom of speech and religion, and insists upon the secular nature of its state and politics.

Consequently, it comes as no surprise that Islamists, world-wide, are the enemies of France. However, widespread Muslim outrage is not confined to Islamists. Numerous Muslim leaders, claiming to represent mainstream Muslim opinion, are exercised by the fact that the President of France is defending the right of a schoolteacher to show his students cartoons of the Prophet, and of Roman Catholics to light candles before images of the Virgin Mary in their parish church.

Emmanuel Macron clearly believes that beheading or stabbing people who insult, outrage, or simply annoy one, is unacceptable in all circumstances. That Muslim leaders from Turkey to Malaysia irately disagree, rather makes Macron's case for him. Because the idea spread abroad by Muslim leaders, in one country after another, that blasphemous words or images, justify, explain, or excuse murder, is *prima facie* evidence of a religion in

crisis. Islam is in crisis if it cannot tolerate opposition from co-religionists, who've decided to quit the religion – apostates – or those who simply disrespect religious dogmas, that reject evolution, the social equality of women, or of freedom of thought and belief.

Imran Khan, prime minister of Pakistan, and Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, are both campaigning for the introduction of blasphemy laws which would criminalise any criticism of the basic tenets of Islam worldwide. This extraordinary proposal is now even finding purchase in Scotland where the Scottish National Party, in the person of, Scottish Justice Secretary, Humza Yousaf, is attempting to pass the Hate Crime and Public Order Bill, which would outlaw hostile criticism of Islam as "hate crime".

The crisis of Islam is truly worldwide. Belief that people should not be allowed to criticise, or lampoon one's most deeply held convictions, or simply one's point of view, is tyrannical. It is an attack upon freedom of thought and speech. It is an attack upon the right to discuss and argue, and to disagree. Such measures can only blunt our critical faculties and prevent us from testing ideas in open debate.

Demands for blasphemy laws and 'hate speech' legislation, are not only exposing the internal crisis in Islam, they are also exposing a crisis on the broad left of politics too. Here in Britain, it is now common for people on the left to argue that the defence of freedom of speech is merely a cover for reactionary or right-wing ideas and opinions. Freedom of speech is now often regarded as an *optional extra*, that must be curtailed if Muslims, or any other group or identity in society, is in danger of being offended.

This is a rejection of the universal values currently being defended by the President of France, and was until thirty or forty years ago, axiomatic for anyone identifying with the left by advocating the emancipation of women, and indeed of all humanity. Now Imran Khan and his supporters are attempting to oppose our 'European' universal values as culturally specific, and in need of restriction because Muslims

find themselves in disagreement with evolution, with the social equality of women, in disagreement with the rights and freedoms of individuals to choose their own religious, or philosophical, path.

This is indeed a defining issue and moment. One in which we either defend freedom of speech and conscience, or throw our lot in with those who would crush open discussion and debate. There is, in fact, no middle position here. The only speech or writing that should be prohibited is that which explicitly advocates violence against particular groups and individuals. No, not speech, “which might lead to, or tend towards violence or hatred”, just speech and writing which calls explicitly for acts violence. Everything else, no matter how distressing or repulsive, must be allowed in a free society anywhere in the world. By the same token, opposition in speech and writing to grievous or egregious opinions, must have free rein too.

The consistency of France’s defence of freedom of speech is undermined, of course, by the outlawing of Holocaust denial in various European countries. The fascists and antisemites who wish to deny the mass murder of Europe’s Jews between 1941 and 1945, must be allowed to do so. In opposition we must produce the evidence for the mass murder of Jews carried out by Einsatzgruppen, ably assisted by soldiers of the Wehrmacht, and local antisemites in countries throughout Eastern Europe. Incidentally, we must also note the participation of politicians, trade unionists, train drivers, and police forces, throughout Western Europe in the Holocaust. We must not shrink from trouncing those who would deny the death camps, and malign antisemitism within our society. However, banning them from speaking, simply provides an opportunity for the Imran Khans of the world to take further steps against freedom of speech and conscience in the defence of Islam, and of the use of terror against anyone who disagrees with the sacred authority of the *Quran* or the *Hadith*.

It is here that we come to the real crisis in the West: the relative isolation of Macron and France in the defence of freedom of thought and opinion. It is notable that the so-called socialist left and the Woke in general have been remarkably silent on the brutal Islamist murder of a school teacher for teaching his students about freedom of speech. They have been silent about the Islamist attack upon Roman Catholics for daring to light candles in their parish church.

There has been no major demonstrations, no raising of fists, or taking the knee, no outright defence of free thinking in the face of Islamofascism. I imagine this is because Muslims and Islamists are regarded as the victims of imperialism, and should therefore be given a free pass on their social oppression of women, their denial of evolution, and their violent intolerance towards freedom of thought and conscience.

Such a left has no right to be called left-wing, it is an ersatz left, just as the so-called Woke amongst us are evidently fast asleep, and missing in action, when the struggle against Islamist terror is concerned.