

DON MILLIGAN'S  
**Off The cuff** February 28, 2021

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## Child Abuse



**I AM ALWAYS ASTONISHED**, when I recollect that at the age of fifteen, I joined the Young Communist League, an organisation committed to the defence of brutal dictatorship, and within a year of receiving my cherished YCL membership card, also a stalwart defender of the Berlin Wall. Of course, my view of the Soviet Union, and its wretched history, was coloured by the astounding seizure of Hitler's imperial capital by the Red Army, a month before my birth, of Sputnik in 1957, and Yuri Gagarin's whizz around the planet four years later. It was coloured by the heroic struggle of the embattled Cuban masses attempting to bring in a harvest of ten million tons of sugar cane; if achieved it'd be a signal defeat for the Yanks, and the degenerate ballet dancer, Rudolf Nureyev, who'd fled his socialist homeland, despite all the accolades it had showered upon him.

This political fantasy, that had inspired me from the age thirteen or fourteen, was the product of a hatred of the powers that be, of the wealthy that dominated everything, and seemed to be wholly responsible for the narrowness of my life growing up with my parents and four siblings in three rooms in Kilburn, where I was, despite everything, well loved, and well fed. It was no surprise to my Dad, and his trade union pals, that the Soviet Union, the first socialist country, a beacon to the oppressed and exploited throughout the world, was hated and despised by the capitalists, by the radio, and the press barons. So, our love of everything Russian, our patronage of the *Daily Worker* Bazar, of international peace festivals, folk dancing from around the globe, and of the Red Army Choir, always ran counterpoint to the miserable lies and propaganda spewed out by the imperialists and the millionaire press.

Consequently, I'm not at all surprised that Shamima Begum, a British-Bengali girl growing up in the narrow confines of flats in Tower Hamlets, and going to school in Bethnal Green, should attribute her troubles to the decay of religion in the West, especially after she'd come into contact with the irate sisters of the Islamic Forum for Europe at the East London Mosque.

This is because the confusions and troubles of those who often find themselves at the bottom of society's heap, despised, and ignored, rarely result in the development of temperate political reasoning. Of course, just as when I was a child, most working-class children and teenagers didn't become Stalinists, so most British-Bengali girls have not become jihadists, but we can take little comfort from this. Witness the conspiracy traumas afflicting the South Asian community on the take up of Covid vaccinations.

In fact, conspiratorial accounts for the way we are governed, and the resulting conspiracy traumas, have purchase well beyond the Pakistani, Indian, and Bengali communities. The reason for this is to be found in the powerlessness widely experienced throughout society, and the distrust of the oligarchical arrangements that sustain the great and the good in power. The manifest unfairness of society eats away at people's capacity for rational thought and political reason, and often draws substantial minorities

inexorably towards elaborately contrived explanations for the brutal inequality of our circumstances.

Consequently, absurd accounts for our conditions lose their absurdity as malevolent reports of the secret doings of the rich and powerful begin to seem entirely plausible. So-called theories, unchallenged and unsupported by evidence of any kind, gain widespread traction. Intrinsicly, unanswerable questions pile up, fuelling dark imaginings, which grow into an impenetrable thicket of assertions, which to the entangled, hold secret truths. This is the world that Shamima Begum grew up in, in which as a child and teenager she came to believe that there is a war being waged against Muslims by the West, and against the abiding truths of the *Quran* and the *Hadith*.

This certainly explains why she fled to Syria and to the Islamic State. It explains why she was married at fifteen to a Jihadist fighter, and why she engaged in the crimes and repression deemed necessary in the struggle to restore the Caliphate and spread true submission to the Will of Allah. Shamima Begum's thinking was, by the age of fifteen, firmly confined within this grotesque mindset.

Nevertheless, our government appears not to have developed the slightest understanding of the predicament of this child-bride, or of the young woman she has become – lingering stateless in a refugee camp in Syria, forcibly separated from her husband, mourning the death of all three of her infant children. Ministers and courts have become embroiled in shameful attempts to deny her British citizenship with dodgy assertions that she's really a Bangladeshi. Apparently, the British government, Tower Hamlets Council, the East London Mosque, Bethnal Green Academy, Old Uncle Tom Cobley and All, have had no part in this tragedy. Our Home Secretary, ably assisted by the justices of the Supreme Court, have collectively washed their hands of the girl, like a gang of latter-day Pontius Pilates: "It's nothing to do with us gov'nor!"

Just as the fourteen and fifteen-year-old girls sexually groomed by Pakistani cab drivers and small businessmen in a number of northern cities, were ignored by the police and the local authorities for years, so the fate of the so-called Jihadi child-brides are being disregarded, because for

the purposes of this case a fifteen-year-old is not a 'child', despite the fact Shamima Begum clearly was a child in 2015 when she fled to Syria.

The authorities and the press appear to be muddling up the criminal age of responsibility, with the age of majority. From the age of 10 children are said to be answerable for the crimes that they commit, from the age of 16 they may consent to marriage and sexual relationships, but do not reach the age of majority – adulthood – until they are 18. So, there can be no doubt, no doubt at all, that Shamima Begum, although a child during most of her time in the Caliphate, must be held responsible for her actions and her crimes.

The problem for the British authorities is that Begum has probably not done anything which could be successfully prosecuted in the UK. What are they to do with children so evidently hostile to 'our way of life' and to 'our' institutions? This is indeed a real problem which, demands a frank engagement with widespread ideas of Muslim victimhood, and the belief that society should be governed by the precepts of the *Quran*, the *Bible*, or the *Pentateuch*.

In a world in which theocratic nostrums inspire mass movements in Gaza, Palestine, India, Myanmar, and the governments of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, along with armed insurgencies in Afghanistan, the Philippines, and a number of other places, it is time for the British authorities to come out boldly in the defence of children against the corrosive influence of religious enthusiasm of any kind. The authorities must come out against the lies perpetrated by those who insist, against all evidence, and historical experience, that Islam "is a religion of peace". The truth is that Islam is no more a religion of peace than Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and all the rest of the revealed and magical systems of belief. Along with the traumas associated with thoughts of conspiracy, religious truths share a robust resistance to the demands of reason and the production of evidence.

In a society haunted by fear of paedophilia, child-trafficking, modern forms of bondage and slavery, it is striking that the authorities have chosen to abandon those children entrapped by enthusiasm for Islamism and

theocratic solutions to their real problems. Faced by those attempting to paper-over problems by encouraging teachers and parents to winkle out the early onset of 'radicalism' in kids, one can only conclude that they fear public hostility to the idea of letting a young woman, a one-time supporter of bloodshed and beheadings in the service of Allah, back into the country. This is because, our political class has never, despite a great deal of *hoo-hah*, deigned to take much practical action with regard to the ill-treatment of kids misled by adults. They have never paid much attention to grievously neglected youngsters, the poorly educated, or the badly fed – the kids at the bottom of our social pile.

They prefer scapegoats, they prefer the arraignment of Shamima Begum, of slipshod social workers, abusive cab drivers in benighted neighbourhoods of benighted towns, and of knife-wielding drug couriers on embattled estates. Rather than facing up to the necessity of waging a relentless fight against debilitating narratives of victimhood and religious particularism, they blame police, social workers, 'hate-preachers', drug barons, and the conspiratorial doings of 'people-traffickers'

The authorities appear to be countering conspiracies with conspiracies rather than engaging frankly with the mind-numbing truths promoted in madrassas, or of the frequent stabbings of black boys on our streets, and the sexual abuse of young lads and girls trapped within and narratives of racial, religious, or ethnic, victimhood. Encouraging children to believe that they are the victims of unseen forces and powers is truly disastrous. In the lives of many children victimhood promotes a fatalism of subordination and failure that assume the tragic character of self-fulfilling prophecies.

Shamima Begum must have her citizenship confirmed and she must be allowed home immediately whether or not she has to face criminal charges for her childhood commitments. She grew up here saturated with ideas of victimhood and religious redemption, fully developed in Tower Hamlets; she's our problem, not anybody else's.