

The Misery of Islam

Al-Djouhall

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When I was lying in my warm, damp bed these questions did not interest me one jot and at such a time it did not matter to me whether God really existed or whether He was nothing but a personification of the mighty ones of this world, invented for the greater glory of spiritual values and the easier spoliation of the lower orders, the pattern of earthly things being transferred from the sky. All I wanted to know was whether or not I was going to live through to the morning. In face of death, I felt that religion, faith, belief were feeble, childish things of which the best that could be said was that they provided a kind of recreation for healthy, successful people...

(The Blind Owl. Sadegh Hedayat.)

* * *

God gives nuts to the toothless.

(Spanish proverb)

* * *

Strange, is it not that of the myriads who
Before us pass'd the door of Darkness through
Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too.

(Rubáiyát. Omar Khayyám)

* * *

Enter and learn the story of the rulers,
They rested a little in the shadow of my towers
And then they passed.
They were dispersed like those shadows

When the sun goes down;
They were driven like straws
Before the wind of death.
(*Inscription at the City of Brass*)

* * *

Go and tell my friends that I have set off for the high seas
And that my boat is dashed to pieces;
It is in the religion of the gibbet that I shall die; Mecca
And Medina no longer mean anything to me.
(*Al-Halladj, 858–929 AD*)

* * *

The challenge of our times — for us proletarians who live in countries where Islam is part and parcel of the status quo — is to criticize this “religion of the desert”, not for God’s sake but for our very own. So that we don’t have to worry anymore about anyone coming back from the dead to tell us if there is life after death. It seems more human to find out whether there is life before death.¹

The ruling classes in countries in which Islam still holds sway have enforced a silence on Islamic matters, to the extent that even a simple critique cannot be allowed, because those who rule in the various feudo-bureaucratic dictatorships, use Islam to maintain their hideous grip on the wretched populations. Here we can see a similarity with Eastern bloc countries where truth and freedom of expression are muzzled, stalinism and Islam have a lot in common. Recently the Salman Rushdie affair has brought up to the surface a wealth of materials for analysis. One minute the President of Iran, the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei declared that the death order would be rescinded if Mr Rushdie apologised, a few hours later the Ayatollah-in-Chief Khomeini declared that even if Mr Rushdie repented it was the duty of every Muslim to put him to death. Iran today is a tweedeldum and tweedeldee country. The rulers of that devastated part of the world constantly need an external enemy in order to keep the minds of its people away from the mounting daily miseries at home. Mr Rushdie’s book was a Godsend opportunity to unite the flocks. But for how long?²

¹ [...] “The basis of irreligious criticism is: Man makes religion, religion does not make man. In other words, religion is the self-consciousness and self feeling of man who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again. [...] “Religion” is the fantastic realisation of the human essence because the human essence has no true reality. The struggle against religion is the spiritual aroma. Religious distress is at the same time the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is required for their real happiness. The demand to give up the illusions about its condition is the demand to give up a condition which needs illusions. The critique of religion is therefore in embryo the criticism of the vale of woe, the halo of which is religion. [...] Religion is the illusory sun which revolves round man as long as he does not revolve round himself. [...] K. Marx, *Contribution to the critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, 1844.

² Mr Rushdie should have never apologised to the ayatollahs. He forgot what Junius once said: “The liberty of the Press is the palladium of all the civil, political and religious rights of an Englishman.” Still it was a brave attempt to criticize Islam. As Lord Acton once taught us: “Nothing is safe that does not show it can bear discussion and publicity.”

The Muslim world from Morocco to Indonesia passing through Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Iran, Irak, straight over to Pakistan and down to Nigeria etc... is a real cauldron of misery and possible change. Different forces are at work to make this world collapse. First, the dispossessed no longer want to suffer Allah's "Law" are those who squander the wealth which is the fruit of their exploitation and who are imposing harsher and harsher conditions.³

³ [...] "On the 21st of June 1981, the youth from the popular districts of Casablanca rose up. By means of the general strike decreed by the CDT (Democratic Confederation of Labour), ten of thousands of young Casablancans, each in their district, occupied the streets, looted and committed areon and finally flushed out the forces of law and order for a period of several hours. Afterwards, thousands of policemen, of "merdas" (turds) (name given by the people to the auxiliary forces) and soldiers supported by light and armoured cars undertook to reduce the riot in an unequal combat. They did it in the sole manner that befits them: the pure and simple assassination of all those who dared to shout that they were fed up with being hungry. "If they haven't got any bread in their etomachs, we will fill them with bayonets". These words by a manufacturer from Lyons on the eve of the Canute insurrection surely were the intimate thoughts of those who on the 20th of June, gave the order to fire on the children of the Beb Msik quarries, of Derb as-Sultan, Sbata, Derb al-Fida, etc. "Sixty dead killed by confounding objects", the Ministry of the Interior lies outrageously, the people itself, knows that it has been mourning more than 600 dead, killed by bullets and buried clandestinely in pauper's graves. [...] In this year 1981, the droughts added to five years of war and of economic crisis, (which have already bled white Morocco's economy) and placed the poorest zones in the countryside on the edge of famine. The most varied and tho most dreadful rumours began to circulate in the souks and from there to the popular districts; tongues unleashed themselves and people began to express out loud their worries and discontent. The powers that be just as quickly mobilised thir police forces and their ulemas (the body of professional theologians, expounders of "The Law", in a Mohammedan country), "in order to explain to those seeing the origins of their distress driving round in Mercedes and building sumptuous villas, that God had so wished up and that one cannot rebel against God's will, for he punishes those who have strayed from his religion and from the precepts of his Prophet. There are for sure numerous faithful in the mosques, but the preachings of the appointed imams h3ve few listeners [...]". In Casablanca steeped in blood, *Sou'al* no 1, Paris 1981. These riots took place at the same time as the British proletarian carnival and yet not a word was spoken about them in the so-called "free" press.

The reason for this pamphlet is quite simple, to make sure that past⁴ and present struggles against bloody rulers in Islamic countries are not forgotten. Often it is only in books, pamphlets, posters, newspapers or radio from abroad that we manage to know what goes on elsewhere, or when we meet someone who has been involved directly in some actions, because most often “our” press reports nothing but trivia. For example for the last five years or more they have been showing the same pictures of Allah’s Deputy on Earth, the one and only Khomeini. If they announced that he had gone to meet his maker, things might take a different turn in Iran. I heard that a few people in London have been saying that he was dead for many years, but no one in the media has taken up this story. Journalists are a sorry lot, the more satellite dishes you have, the less news you get. Or you’ll get news in the sky when you die. The decomposition of the Press in the completion of media alienation is in full swing, this being the sub-title of a book recently published in Paris, called *The Crude Lie*.⁵

It is with sorrow and pleasure that we can remember the riots of Cairo (1st January 1977) or the ones in Tunis (26th January 1978), or the uprisings which made those in power tremble in Algeria (from the 10th March to the 24th April 1980), and more recently in that same poor country people took to the streets against the dreaded regime, more than five hundred people were killed by the Algerian army and police. There was widespread torture on those arrested. These uprisings are like a fire that will not go out, just as everywhere else since the conditions in which almost everyone is forced to live under, ensure that the flames of discontent will not die, proletarian revolution is like Mount Etna, it erupts, and Allah and those in power can do nothing to prevent it. No wonder Mohammed the Holy Profit declared that anarchy, “fawda” that is to say sedition

⁴ My aim is to bring back the memory of all the past struggles against the dead hand of Islam. Like for example the Qarmatian movement which was a revolutionary movement which swept through the Muslim world from the 9th to the 12th centuries AD. This movement organised itself on the bases of a system of communism into which initiation was necessary. They challenged the power of the caliph of Baghdad. In 931 AD the Qarmatians sacked Mecca and took the Black Stone of the Ka’ba to Mu’aminiyah for thirty years. Their only mistake was not to have destroyed it. In Khurasan, in Syria and in Yemen, they formed lasting hotbeds of discontent. The Qarmatians also introduced Greek philosophy and by so doing helped many minds to free themselves from the clutches of Islam. Pythagoras, Empedocles and Plato and the masters of Hermetism were presented as divine prophets. Other sources were also brought in, notably from Persia and India. Al-Halladj whom we mentioned to start with was a remarkable man, he set up in his own home a model of the Ka’ba and said: “The important thing is to proceed seven times around the Ka’ba of one’s heart”, those in power therefore accused him of being a Qarmati rebel who wished to destroy the Ka’ba of Mecca. Al-Halladj was mocking the ludicrous spectacle of having to run seven times round the black cube. In fact he was helping to demystify the whole Islamic death machine which rested in the hands of those who ruled. “Thus for having rejected the discipline of the arcana with which his predecessors and his contemporary shrouded themselves, far having indulged without restraint to the call of God’s love, for having revealed that the union of love with God was possible, for having sung this union up to crying out in a moment of ecstasy: “I am God” (ana al-haqq), he provoked a “crisis of consciousness” in the Muslim Community. Al-Halladj was flagellated, mutilated, hung upon a gibbet and finally decapitated, his body was burnt and his ashes thrown into the Tigris. Those who ruled at the time of Al-Halladj did not forgive him for bringing god down to earth. There are many similarities between Al-Halladj’s “programme” and Thomas Münzer’s who “demanded the immediate establishment of the kingdom of God, of the prophesied millennium, by restoring the Church to its original condition and abolishing all the institutions that conflicted with this allegedly early-Christian, but, in fact, very novel church. By the kingdom of God Münzer understood a society in which there would be no class foreign to the members” of society”. (cf *The Peasant Wars*, F. Engels, 1850). The Anabaptists and Münzer were a direct threat to the Princes of Germany, the Pope, and to Luther and they paid with their lives. For Münzer Christ was a mere man. Luther had started his career on the side of the insurgents but soon found out that they went too far for his thick head, years later Lenin would follow the same path. Don’t follow leaders...

⁵ *Le Mensonge Cru*, Mezioud Ouldamer & Remy Ricordeau. (Editions Siham, Paris, 1988)

was even graver than assassination. This saying was quickly inscribed into the Koran in order to make sure that those who had power would retain it for ever. Many specialists of Islam cannot criticize this, maybe they are too hypnotized by it.

The essence of Islam is resignation, submission to the order of things, and the will of God, the temporal and spiritual powers are one, as we said earlier there is a similarity between stalinism and Islam, no wonder there is trouble in the Eastern bloc countries. People have had enough of the Kremlin Big Brother telling them what to think and do. The Islamic religion is part and parcel of the State, and the same with stalinism. In Christian countries, the bourgeoisies which rose out of the feudal dark ages could not afford such luxuries such as an all powerful Church which went hand in glove with the State. From then on the bourgeois made sure only the commodity would rule and it would be the next God to be worshipped. What we have today proves it. Nothing is sacred, only things with price tags. In other words the society of the spectacle, having reached its integrated spectacular stage as Guy Debord recently wrote in his *Commentaries*.⁶

I am certain that a wider critique will continue to move from country to country, because what is said here many feel deeply in their hearts and they whisper truths about the misery inflicted upon them by those who live well. As in the time of the Old Man of the Mountain, no one is safe in power. This is why I hasten to pen this little treatise on Islam. It has taken 148 years for an ex-Muslim to jump into L. Feuerbach's shoes. A few years ago I had the chance to read his *Essence of Christianity* when I was abroad. Among all the titles I literally devoured, since you could not find anything critical under Pahlavi, ironically you can find even less under the Khomeinists. Only the *Koran* seems to be allowed. It is like having an iron mask on one's head. It is truly barbarous. Therefore it is not Allah which knows and sees everything — that Cosmic Voyeur — since 'he' does not exist, but well and truly those eyes and ears of the police aided by their sordid informers who always want to know if anyone knows more than they do about the rule of their masters, that is to say the whole of the misery which rests on economic and religious alienation, in order to persecute those who fight back. All this reminds us of the Spanish Inquisition. The Islamic "revolutionary" guards and the different kinds of police in countries where Islam prevails are what George Orwell called the "thought police" in his *1984*.

The critique of Islam necessitates taking apart everything that this legislation stands for. And because: the signs of the decay of this religion are all but apparent. Islam offers nothing but the acceptance of the status quo, that "Heavenly Body" resembles a capsizing ship. Islam is archaic, reactionary in all aspects. The respect for those in power is enshrined in the *Koran*, as of property, as of the family,⁷ and the *Koran* is the infallible word of God. All this to ensure that "the exploitation of one class by another is the basis of civilization" as Engels remarked in *The*

⁶ *Commentaires sur la Société du Spectacle*, Guy Debord. (Editions G. Lebovici, Paris, 1988). Some idiots in London writing in *Marxism Today* about May 1968, came up with the conclusion that the dream was over, really! It seems rather that their nightmare is continuing. As usual stalinists enjoy spreading confusion.

⁷ The following should please all those who have an interest in keeping private property, the family in other words the State going: "The Old Testament contains a certain number of traces which seems to indicate that among the ancestors of historical Israel the matriarchate was in force — that is a child was considered to belong, not to the father's clan or family, but that of the mother. In these primitive times the father was not definitely known. Polyandry prevailed — i.e., a woman was visited by various men. Strabo (*Geographia*, XVI) mentions as prevalent among the Arabian peoples akin to Israel. Under such conditions only the mother knows her child, and therefore it is she who gave it its name. This practice lasted in Israel far down into the historical period, although the reason for it had long disappeared and was forgotten [...] A further surviving trace of an earlier matriarchate is seen in the fact that the tent belonged to the woman [...] Among the Arabs when a woman had grown tired of a man she simply reversed her tent — i.e. — she turned the door to the other side. When the man returned and found the tent thus

Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State. Indeed Mohammed himself must have been rich since he could afford more than one wife.⁸ Mohammed started with the idea of giving to the poor, but once in power — as did Luther and Lenin — quickly forgot to continue on this golden path. Later he reinforced his power and that of Islam by building mosques in towns “where the basis of Islamic communal prayer” could take place. The Bedouin tribes were truly dispersed and weakened by these new developments. Mohammed scorns the Bedouins in the *Koran*. The 10 commandments, the Talmud, the *Koran* are laws. The lawgivers are the ruling class.

Once this goddam pamphlet starts to circulate from dawn till dusk the wheel of change will never stop spinning, just as Khomeini’s cassettes kept arriving from outside Paris when he was in exile on a main street, so other gestures of protest, critique and anger will keep contradicting those who believe that “God is that which does not pass away”, that is to say traditions. The various ruling classes in Muslim countries are besieged on two fronts:

The bourgeoisie (by the rapid improvements of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian nations into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarian’s intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, i.e. to become bourgeois themselves. In other words, it creates a world after its own image”. (*Communist Manifesto*).

No wonder some already speak of the petrobourgeoisie. So Ibn Saud, probably never realised what he was getting into when he boarded that US warship to meet the New Deal, i.e. Roosevelt wayback in 1945. Frank even allowed him to bring a few sheep for his meals! Roosevelt knew all the way what quagmire Ibn Saud was plunging into, i.e. the capitalist mode of production. The other front is proletarians who are fed up!

So Mohammed once said: “Whoever monopolizeth is a sinner”, it obviously did not apply to him, no more than it applies to all those who exploit us. Those who stole and who were caught had their hands cut off, and often their heads, Mohammed the Holy Profit ordered this. It went down in the *Koran* for future generations. After all Mohammed had God’s word. I hear that the present Chancellor of the Exchequer in Britain is taxing those who live in sin. It is really disgusting.

Speak not of fate: Ah! change the theme,

And talk of odours, talk of wine,

reversed he knew that she wished to have nothing further to do with him. [...] Finally, there is another piece which is not without value. There is reason to suppose that the word for “class” mishpachach is connected with shipcha; in the ‘Old Testament’, shipchach means a female slave, or even a concubine, but under the matriarchate, it had meant the matriarchate wife. In the nomadic period the mishpachach seems to have been the ultimate social unit! In the settled period “the Israelite family has now passed from the earlier stage of the matriarchate [...] to that of the patriarchate — the wife is her husband’s property. To have many wives, therefore, means to be rich!! In Israel the main purpose of marriage was the procreation of children. [...] The wife is of secondary importance. All that we hear of her makes it impossible for us to forget for an instant that her husband is her lord and master.” *A History of the Hebrew Civilization*. A. Berthelot (Payot, Paris 1926)

⁸ Another case of primitive accumulation!

Talk of the flow'rs that round us bloom:

'Tis a cloud, 'tis all a dream.

(*Hafiz*)

Pour us wine to make us generous

And carelessly happy in the old way

(*Ibn Kolthúm* (6th century)⁹)

About this table

Sat hawkeyed kings

With many one eyed kings

To bear them company;

But now all sit in the dark and none are able

To see.

(*The Thousand and One Nights*)

A critique of Islam is but a necessary contribution to a new world. with no commodity, no State and the rest that stands in our way. The tongue of the hidden has started to speak, the Pax Islamica is dissolving like a piece of ice in the midday Mecca sun! Islam is "the arbitrary having broken loose" as Hegel once pointed out. The second part of this document will follow shortly...

Down with the spectacular-commodity economy!

Down with Allah!

Down with the *Koran*!

Down with all the marxist-leninists who don't criticize religion (Islam in particular)

Long live all those who fight tyrannies in Muslim countries!

Long live all those who are fighting the other ruling classes elsewhere!

Written in a still Muslim country on February 18th, 1989. By Al-Djouhall

In the hour of adversity be not without hope

For crystal rain falls from black clouds

(*Nizami*)

⁹ "The ancient poetry of Arabia, immediately before the advent of Mohammed, is the most delightful wild flower of literature the Eastern world can show..." Notes to *The Anthology of World Poetry*. (1929)

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