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ISIS and the Far Right: a Joint Assault on Multicultural Countries

By Robert Fisk
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There is something infinitely naive in our pursuit of the identity of those behind the massacres which Isis is committing in Europe. Yes, we need to know the names. Sure, we need to know what their wives or parents thought. Did they know? How did the perpetrator of Monday's Berlin truck killings communicate with Isis? Or did he merely imbibe their political instruction manual? After the Bataclan mass murders and the lorry slaughter in Nice, we asked the same questions.

But we didn't bother to ask what Isis was trying to do. Was it a tactic of 'terror' – 'terror' being the pejorative word that enables us to avoid all rational thought in the aftermath of any bloodbath – or a strategy, a thought-through political attempt to produce a profound crisis in the societies of western Europe.

And the simple answer is that it was a strategy. The 'grey zone', a phrase invented by Isis almost two years ago, first made its appearance in the group's French-language publications, obviously intended for those Muslims who make up perhaps 10 per cent of the population of France – the nation with the largest number of Muslims in Europe. Isis wanted to eliminate 'the grey zone' which it identified as those western – 'Crusader', 'Christian', etc – countries with a large Muslim immigrant community. Muslims should revolt against their European nations (or their host nations, if not actually citizens) and create conflict within the countries.

The intention was to provoke European states to “persecute” the Muslims within their frontiers in acts of reprisal for the mass killing of Western Europeans – presumably non-Muslim – civilians. In fact, it didn’t matter to Isis if their victims were Muslims – since the latter were mere ‘apostates’ who had accommodated to non-Muslim societies and adapted to their secular rules for economic or political advantage. In a mass flight from the vengeful ‘Crusaders’, according to a French edition of ‘Dabiq’ in early 2015, the Muslims of Europe would migrate to the Caliphate of the Islamic State” and thereby escape persecution from the Crusader governments and citizens.”

In other words, they wished to provoke the non-Muslim people of Europe to reject their millions of Muslim fellow-citizens. An uprising among Isis followers – however few – would produce mass murder by the ‘Christians’ of Europe. That was – and obviously still is – the strategy. And it has had some success. The rise of far-right parties in both western and eastern Europe has a strong anti-Muslim/anti-immigrant detonation, and the hunt for political power by those who wish to discriminate against Muslims (or ‘persecute’ them) has been fueled by mass killings carried out in Isis’ name. Thus Angela Merkel, the angel of the one million refugees who sought sanctuary in Europe last year, is herself now dressing in the dark robes of Mephistopheles (by objecting, ironically, to the dark robes worn by Muslim women). Faustus, of course, was a character of German folklore long before Christopher Marlowe wrote about him.

It took years, and the terror assaults by the Germans which they had used in eastern Europe, before armed resistance to their rule became a serious problem for Nazi occupiers. And today’s western Europeans, however much the right may try to earn their votes with their anti-Muslim hatred, are not Nazis – much as Isis may wish them to be. The ‘Crusaders’ ceased to exist six hundred years ago. Millions of Muslims cannot be turned into ‘apostates’ because Isis identifies them as such. They wish to live in Europe.

Besides, the Muslims of the Islamic world had their chance of joining the Isis Caliphate last year. They could have walked, marched or trekked across the deserts to Raqqa and Mosul to join the ‘Caliph’ al-Baghdadi. But they didn’t. Instead, they took the train to Germany. Which remains the greatest defeat Isis has suffered in more than two years. Europeans can maintain that defeat by turning away from those of their non-Muslim fellow citizens – in effect Isis’ allies – who advance a policy of revenge and racism.