

The French Ambassador to Sweden is Wrong: France is Not a Muslim Country

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Another telling story about the Decline of the West that we briefly noted [here](#): the French ambassador to Sweden, who bears an ancient French title of nobility, has declared that “France is a Muslim country” during an interview on Swedish television.

The French Ambassador to Sweden, Etienne De Gonneville, was interviewed on the public channel SVT in the Agenda program. There, he was asked if there was a risk of conflict between France and the Muslim world following the beheading of Professor Samuel Paty in Conflans-Sainte-Honorine on October 16.

“First of all: France is a Muslim country. Islam is the second religion in France. We have between 4 and 8 million Muslims in France”...

While a few Muslim clerics, notably Hassen Chalgoumi, the imam of the Drancy mosque, have declared themselves appalled by the murder of Samuel Paty, and a handful of others who head Muslim groups have expressed, in a more muted fashion, dismay while also excusing the “real Islam,” many “peaceful” Muslims in France, including almost all of its clerics, have remained tellingly silent, or even expressed their indignation that such mockery of the prophet could be allowed. “People should have freedom of speech but should know when it is wrong to exercise it – it is not right to mock religion” seemed to sum up the view of many. There have been no marches by French Muslims to honor Paty’s memory, no mass expressions of regret by Muslims at Paty’s murder. Meanwhile, around the world, Muslims have been enraged, not at the killer of Samuel Paty, but at Macron for daring to defend the cartoons of Muhammad as examples of the exercise of free speech. Boycotts of French goods are already underway in Qatar, Kuwait, Pakistan, Turkey, and Bangladesh. Macron has been described by Turkish president Erdogan as a “mental case” for his defense of free speech.

But what about the first part of the French ambassador’s speech? First, it is notable that he has no clear idea of the number of Muslims in France; it’s somewhere “between four and eight million.” This cavalier attitude about the real number of Muslims no doubt reflects the French government’s own inability to keep track of Muslim immigration, legal and illegal. If it cannot even be sure of the numbers of Muslims, how can France possibly come to grips with the true dimensions of its Muslim problem, assuming that, following the decapitation of Paty and of a woman at a church in Nice, the government is determined to wage an all-out war against what it still calls “Islamist” separatism?

But what is most disheartening is Etienne De Gonneville’s insistence that “France is a Muslim country.” What can he possibly mean by that? Yes, of course there are millions of Muslims in France: anywhere, he says, from four to eight

million. And there are about 60 million non-Muslims in France. How many Muslims, what percentage of the population must be Muslim, for a country to be described as “Muslim”? There must be some percentage below which Etienne De Gonnevile thinks a country need not be described as “Muslim.” If there were two million Muslims, or one million, would France cease to be a “Muslim” country? Would Etienne De Gonnevile describe the U.K., the Netherlands, Germany as “Muslim” countries because the Muslim percentages of their populations are similar to that of France?

Surely what counts is not mere numbers, but whether the Muslims in France see themselves as part of a wider society, contributors to its culture, inheritors of its history. In what sense have Muslims been contributors to French culture? Muslims have left no mark in French literature until the last two decades, when a handful of works in French – a dozen – have been produced by French Muslims with roots in the Maghreb. Muslims have not contributed to French art, which is understandable, given that in Islam all depictions of living creatures are forbidden, including not all portraits, but also all paintings that have humans as part of the tableau. Islamic art has largely limited itself to geometric designs, architecture, ceramics, Iznik tulip tiles, and Qur’anic calligraphy. Instrumental music is also forbidden in Islam; there is no “mosque music” to compare to the “church music” in the West.

Do Muslims in France take a sympathetic interest in, think of themselves as inheritors of, French history? For them the victory of Charles Martel at Tours in 732 is not their victory, but a defeat for them as Muslims – an identity that takes precedence over that of being French. They do not want to learn about the Crusades, and Christian victories over Muslims; similarly, Muslim students have expressed their opposition to studying such topics as the French monarchy, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, French colonialism, and

even World War II and the Holocaust. The Christian kings of France have no significance or appeal for them; the Enlightenment undermines religious faith (including Islam), the history of the French Revolution encourages secularism and skepticism, attitudes or habits of thought deemed dangerous to Islam, which requires the habit of mental submission; the Rights of Man, including freedom of speech and of conscience, contradict the letter and spirit of Islam. French colonialism includes the histories of Muslim peoples being humiliated by more powerful European armies, which Muslim students have little desire to hear about; the Holocaust encourages sympathy for Jews. That history of France is not their history; for French Muslims, their history is that shared by their fellow Muslims across the world: the glorious history of Muslim conquests and caliphates, a history made not in Paris or Marseille or Toulouse but, rather, in Baghdad, Cairo, and Damascus.

Are Muslim in France trying to integrate into the larger society, to “become French”? Or do they hold themselves aloof from the Infidels among whom they have been allowed to settle? What are those “no-go neighborhoods” they have created, if not signs of an unwillingness to become part of the larger society? Why do we find that other – non-Muslim –immigrants, including Vietnamese, Chinese, Hindus, African Christians, Andean Indians, Brazilians, Filipinos, all manage to integrate into French society, while Muslims so seldom do? If they are told in their holy book that they, the Muslims, are “the best of peoples” (3:110) while the non-Muslims are the most vile of created beings” (98:6), of course they will be reluctant to become part of a society created by, and for, those “most vile of created beings.” Why should anyone expect them to think otherwise?

Ambassador De Gonneville, France is not “a Muslim country.” Its democratic political system and guarantees of individual rights, its literature, art, music, philosophy are not, in any

way, Muslim. The full equality of women, the freedom to mock any and all religions, the freedom to change one's religion – all these are flatly contradicted by Islam. And if the French, now at last fully awake after the two latest Muslim atrocities – both decapitations – in France, have their way, it never will become a Muslim country. Muslim migration will be ended; mosques will be monitored and Friday sermons taped; all foreign financial support for building and maintaining mosques, and to pay the salaries of imams, will be prohibited. Muslim non-citizens will be returned to their countries of origin. The extravagant package of benefits that Muslims have taken such great advantage of in France will, one hopes, be made less generous in the future, with a work requirement imposed on those who receive free or subsidized housing. Family allowances will stop after the second child. Oaths of loyalty to the French state will be required of all recipients of welfare benefits of any kind. If Muslims don't like these changes they are, of course, free to leave.

Millions of Muslims now live in France, where they receive a great many government benefits but do not appear to be grateful, nor to consider themselves part of the same society, or loyal to the same state, as French Infidels. They are *in France*, but not *of France*. There is, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, a difference. They consider themselves Muslims first. And so should we.

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