

“A President Should Not Say That”

by Hugh Fitzgerald

Now that Francois Hollande has taken himself out of the running for President of France, knowing that he was certain to lose, it is time to consider his continuing education, and mixed signals, on the subject of Islam. In his speech on December 1, he worried about “extremism,” by which he apparently meant not Muslim terrorists but rather Marine Le Pen, whose *Front National* is outspoken in its opposition to the growing Muslim presence in France, a position that has earned the National Front the usual misleading epithets of “right-wing” and “extreme right-wing.” From this one might conclude that Hollande had learned little about the Islamic threat during his quinquennat. But just months before, in October, [an astonishing book appeared](#), *A President Should Not Say That... (Un président ne devrait pas dire ça...)*, which details 61 private conversations Hollande held with *Le Monde* journalists Gerard Davet and Fabrice Lhomme between 2012, shortly after his election, and this year.

Hollande showed in his replies to the journalists that he had indeed learned something about Islam, and consequently was anxious about the future of France in light of its burgeoning Muslim population.

The revelation that Francois Hollande is worried about the influence and power of Islam, disturbed by the demographic gains made by Muslims, can only be regarded as salutary, for if a Socialist President expresses alarm about Muslims, this acts as a license for others to do likewise. There is less inhibition, less fear of being tarred with that epithet “Islamophobic” when even Socialists— first Manuel Valls, and now Francois Hollande — speak some home truths about Islam in

France.

What did President Hollande say? He admitted what was obvious to many, but a big leap for the Left, that France has a problem with Islam: **“it’s true there’s a problem with Islam. It’s true. It’s not in doubt.”** And while he hadn’t recognized it before (before, that is, the series of Muslim terrorist attacks in Paris and Nice and Rouvray and Magnanville and Toulouse), he has also changed his mind on mass Muslim immigration; he now warns that **“I think there are too many arrivals.”** Everyone understood that he meant by that “too many Muslims.”

His most contentious and misunderstood remark was that **“the veiled woman of today will be the Marianne of tomorrow.”** Marianne is, of course, the symbol of France, the France of liberty and reason. Hollande’s remark was taken out of context, with many assuming he meant it as a warning of a Muslim takeover. Hollande himself explained that what he meant was merely this: that a Muslim woman who did not wear the hijab, who was “liberated” and fully integrated into the culture of France, could indeed symbolize France: “In a way if we can offer the conditions for her self-fulfillment, she will free herself from her veil and become a French woman, whilst remaining religious, if she wants to be, capable of having an ideal,” Hollande said. “This woman would prefer liberty to subjugation.”

The confusion here is not yours, dear reader, but Hollande’s. He seems to believe that a Muslim woman can still be considered a Muslim – by other Muslims – even when she not only stops wearing the veil, but becomes “a French woman,” which would mean, among other things, enjoying complete equality with Muslim men. What Muslim cleric, what Muslim man, would consider such a woman to be a “Muslim”? What Muslim man would permit his wife, or his daughter, to behave as if they were equal to men, no longer subject to his commands? In what way could such a hypothetical Muslim woman “remain religious,”

if she sheds everything that is required of Muslim women, including their submission to their husbands and fathers? Such a woman might well “prefer liberty to subjugation” – but the subjugation of women is central to mainstream Islam. Hollande’s hypothetical Muslim Marianne is only a forlorn hope, a Muslim-for-identification-purposes-only Muslim. But at least Hollande admitted that a Muslim, if veiled, should not be considered to be “French.”

Where does this leave Francois Hollande on the subject of Islam? Confused, and confusing. On the one hand, he says that “it’s true there’s a problem with Islam.” He does not say – he cannot allow himself to say – that this “problem” is not susceptible of solution, but only of amelioration (by limiting the number of Muslims in France, and by ending the support of all kinds, from every level of government, on which Muslim families batten, including free or heavily subsidized housing, free medical care, free education, even family allowances for children or, in some cases, free food), because that “solution” would require tampering with the texts of Islam, above all with the immutable Qur’an that cannot be touched. He says that “there are too many arrivals,” but does not follow that observation with a commonsensible demand for a halt to all Muslim immigration, and still less would he have dared to suggest that Muslim migrants ought to be sent home. He seems to think a Muslim woman can become in every respect a “French woman” and somehow still remain a Muslim in the eyes of other Muslims, which means he misunderstands the permanently subordinate role of women in Islam, an ideology that describes women as clearly inferior to men.

On December 1, announcing his decision not to run again, Hollande – as noted in the first paragraph above – spoke of his fear of “extremism.” By this, he made clear, he meant not the “extremism” of certain Muslims in France whose presence has forced the French nation into a permanent *etat d’urgence* (state of emergency), with both police and the military out in

force in cities, towns, and even villages all over France (offering an unnerving contrast to the many gaily-lit Christmas markets that are under special protection), but rather, Marine Le Pen, the one political figure who has consistently focused on the problem of Islam and is prepared to do something about it. And finally, as his last confusing word on the subject, Hollande tweeted on December 1 that “I only have one regret, and that’s to have proposed a policy allowing the government to strip citizens of their nationality. I thought it would unite us, but it has divided us.” For his *only* regret to be about what was perhaps his most sensible proposal, to strip convicted terrorists with dual-citizenship of their French nationality, and then to deport them, is disturbing.

So, when the hurly-burly’s done, and the battle’s lost and won, and the French election is over, and the successful candidate – whether Valls or Fillon or Le Pen, any one of whom will be harder on Islam than Hollande was while in office – would it be too much to ask of Francois Hollande to tell us exactly what he has learned about Islam in France, and what he thinks ought to be done about it, to speak without any regrets or backtracking, since now, out of office, he should feel freer to speak his mind, in order to clear up the confusion which he has exhibited so far, and left, so far, as his main legacy? Please, help us out, *aidez-nous*. Will the real Francois Hollande please stand up?

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