

# *The K.F. Stone Weekly*

(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")



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## QU'ALLONS-NOUS FAIRE AU SUJET DE CHARLIE?

The first section of this morning's *Sun Sentinel* contained no fewer than 6 articles dealing with Islamic terrorists and acts of terror -- and not just in Paris. A sampling of the various news items includes the following titles or headlines:

- *French end rampage of terror*
- *Standoff spreads fear to Paris neighborhoods*
- *Saudi Man gets 50 lashes in public for insulting Islam*
- *Suicide bomber kills 5 outside Pakistan mosque*
- *Boko Haram reportedly kills hundreds in Nigerian attacks*
- *British cleric gets life in U.S. prison on terrorism charges*



Lamentably, it's gotten to the point that a day without some sort of Islamist-inspired act of terror is as rare as a desk without a flat top monitor or a garage without remote entry. These acts of terror, like the screen or the remote, are just facts of modern life. The international response to the attacks at both the offices of Charlie Hebdo and Hyper cacher Alimentation Générale in

Paris's Porte-de-Vinences has been a mélange of shock and fury tinged with anxiety, uncertainty and a desperate search for answers. These twin acts of

terror, reported and recorded on a horrifying minute-by-minute real-time basis, are but the latest deadly confrontations between what people are increasingly referring to as "the civilized West and barbaric East."

And because the world is so terribly small, terrorist attacks against innocent men, women and children in Paris or Peshawar or Petah Tikva can no longer be considered as merely localized atrocities; they are lethal assaults against each and every one of us. Every new act of terror greatly increases the number of Islamophobes. Every bombing, every fanatic seeking Paradise in a hail of bullets and blood increases our search for a resolution -- of how to deal once and for all with a criminal class masking its hideous crimes behind the phony veil of religion. For make no mistake about it: many -- if not most -- of these young men (and, as we have seen, women as well) who become radicalized and receive terrorist indoctrination in places like Iraq, Syria and Yemen, are from largely secular Muslim families living in places like Paris or London or Munich . . . or Dearborn. The neighborhood in which the Kouachi brothers -- and many other French-born would-be terrorists -- grew up, is Paris's 19th arrondissement, a district of exceptional ethnic diversity and dilapidated social housing. It is the home to Paris's largest Muslim and Jewish communities. When the Kouachis -- the terrorists who committed the murders at Charlie Hebdo -- were growing up, unemployment in the *quartier* was as high as 60%. Chérif



Paris's 19th Arrondissement

Kouachi, like his older brother Saïd, had been raised in foster homes. He was adrift, delivering pizzas, smoking hashish. A lawyer who represented him later on remembers him as an "apprentice loser" and "a clueless kid." What Saïd, his brother Chérif and so many other lost young men and women found . . . was Islam . . . or at least a perverted form of Islam as preached by radicalized, Western-hating Imams. And before you know it, these dispossessed youth are convinced to enter a fight which is truly not their own, mouthing war cries in a language they can barely speak, on behalf of a religion they have only recently come to. In the Muslim world, these people are frequently referred to and condemned as *takfiris* -- roughly equivalent to "wannabe Muslims."

In the search for a resolution or path to effectively dealing with Islamic terrorists, some urge all-out war. Although perhaps understandable from a psychological point of view, this approach lacks even a whiff of reality. Then there are those who push for greater and greater security measures; beefing up the military and police, arming all citizens, monitoring and putting all Muslims on watch lists, etc. In essence, this approach seeks to make fortresses of our cities while shredding civil liberties in the name of national security.

With the ever-increasing number of Islamophobes spawned by all these terrorist events, more and more are coming to the conclusion that Islam is a religion of terror. What this attitude fails to take into account is that *all* religions have their fanatics; people more than willing to kill in the name of whatever god they pray to. Christianity certainly has had its fanatic;; Orthodox Serbs making war against Catholic Croatian; Northern Irish Catholics against Protestants; fundamentalists who, are more than willing to claim that their religion justifies the killing of doctors who perform abortions.

Even Judaism has its fanatics; men who throw stones at girls who they believe are improperly garbed. Just the other day, Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon announced that he would seek to have the anti-assimilation group *Lehava* – an acronym in Hebrew for "Preventing Assimilation in the Holy Land" – named a terrorist organization. Recently, nearly a dozen members of the group – which was inspired by the late Rabbi Meir Kahane – were indicted for allegedly setting fire to an integrated (Arab/Israeli) school in Jerusalem.

Frequently, the claim that "*The vast majority of Muslims are peaceful and don't agree with the fanatics who murder in the name of Allah,*" are challenged with "*So if they are so peaceful and disagree with the terrorists, why don't they open their mouths and say something?*" It's a good question. Two things come to mind.

**First**, speaking out against people who think nothing of cutting off a hand or a head isn't nearly the same as speaking out against people who stand at funerals holding signs proclaiming "God hates fags." Then too, I personally have a problem demanding or expecting other people to become heroes and heroines.

**Second**, there actually *are* Muslims who do their best to teach their co-religionists what the *Quran* really says about *Jihad*, "infidels," war and peace, life and love. The problem is *not* that so-called "moderate" or "reasonable" Muslims sit on their hands and keep their mouths shut; the problem is, I believe, the non-Muslim's definition of what it means to be "moderate" or "reasonable." Generally speaking, most people cannot understand that "moderate," or "modern" or "reasonable" people can also religiously practice Islam. The horrendous attacks in Paris *have*

caused an awful lot of Muslim opinion-makers and leaders worldwide to issue [statements of condemnation](#), and workaday "Muslims-in-the-street" to gather in solidarity and denounce the murders in France. All these things are, of course, a good sign. What these condemnatory proclamations and mass gatherings bode for the future is anyone's guess. I do know, however, that statements trump silence every day of the week.

Many will recall that over the years, I have written several articles and essays on the history and divisions within Islam -- of what the difference between *Shiite* and *Sunni* is. One of the online sources I came across when doing my research was a site called [MuslimMatters.org](#). This website does more to explain Islam *to Muslims* than any I've seen. It goes to great lengths to explain how terrorism [violates Islamic law](#), and discusses the absolute necessity of Muslims [condemning acts of terror](#) perpetrated by fellow Muslims.

*Qu'allons-nous faire au sujet de Charlie?* "So what are we going to do about Charlie?"

Certainly not to kill every last Islamist on the planet. Certainly not throwing them out of non-Islamic countries or arming every citizen. Perhaps one helpful measure would be to improve the economies of those cities, *quartiers* and bergs where uneducated Muslim men and women, boys and girls live lives without jobs, without futures and without hope. For nothing breeds radicalism better than poverty and hopelessness.

Then too, I believe we should both applaud and encourage groups like MuslimMatters.org for doing everything in their power to counteract the radicalizing Imams who preach nothing but war, hatred and martyrdom.

There are hundreds of millions of reasonable Muslims in this wide world. And they too are beginning asking "What *are* we going to do about Charlie?"

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