

Intolerance and Violence

Goga Abrarovic Khidoyatov

Terrorist acts, carried out in New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, have revealed deep changes that are occurring in the world. The brutality and dimensions of the actions show that, in the first place, powerful forces linked to world financial and economic groups, which are struggling for economic and political hegemony and a new repartition of the world, stand behind them. Globalization has enriched a small group of oligarchs. A super-rich class has been formed that turned Western power into a corporative power, globalization created new world conflicts that induce intolerance and violence, reject morals, laws, constitutions, and religions.

1. History and experience teach us that in every known age there was intolerance and violence, in one form or another, and they were always interconnected, there was always something mysterious and magic about them, and often afterwards their victims became saints and heroes, and frequently the instrumental forces torturing and executing their victims became martyrs and saints themselves. An attitude toward intolerance and violence determined the character of a nation or epoch. Each people had its own spirit, characteristic only of itself, and no violence could subdue it, for every violence provoked antiviolence expressed in craving for revenge. As a result, the instrumental forces themselves sometimes became the victims of violence. A spirit of intolerance and violence was a permanent feature of human society and no change in the society – increase in productivity, economy, education, culture, and civilization – could eradicate them. They adapted to changes, changed forms not changing their essence, not changing their qualitative specific characteristics.

Intolerance and violence form a main element in human life and represent a freedom for evil and an empire of evil. If there had not been this freedom for evil related to the main principles of human life, there would not have been any history and the world would have started not from the beginning but from the end, that is from God's perfect kingdom. The struggle between good and evil, that is the confrontation of tolerance and intolerance, violence and the grace of heaven, these are part of the roots of the historical process.

The freedom for evil, that is the combination of intolerance and violence, means the dehumanization of man, his engagement with an inhuman world and negation of his genuine destiny in history. At the same time the freedom inherent in humanism and humanistic principles of life that ennobled man, made him a central character in history that opposed it. Therein lies the tragic dual character of the entire historical process. The material progress of mankind reflects hardly at all the tragic conflict of the eternal principles of the historic development embodying the starkly opposite principles both bright and dark, evil and good, violence and non-violence, tolerance and intolerance.

2. The Church was the most intolerant opponent of heterodoxy and in the Middle Ages resorted to the most cruel and brutal acts of violence in her fight against dissidents. The Inquisition tortured scientists and poets for their attempts to find other explanation of the universe than that of the Roman Catholics. *Giordano Bruno*, a scientist-poet, was burnt at the stake, *Galileo* was exiled. In 1992 *Pope John Paul II* declared the decision of the Court of Inquisition to be mistaken and rehabilitated *Galileo*. The Pope also repented in public of sins and crimes committed by the Catholic Church. Information about the forthcoming rehabilitation of *Girolamo Savonarola*, a Dominican monk, called "Ayatollah of the Renaissance", is rather important. That mysterious monk committed to the flames much of the cultural heritage of Florence and was at that time a creator of the short-lived republic of Florence. He accused the Church of "great crimes". By his order crowds burnt priceless works of the Florentine artists and artisans considering them "devilish creations". There went also "immoral books" such as *Boccaccio's Decamerone*, manuscripts, musical instruments, masks, and carnival costumes. The Dominican monks created detachments of youth, a sort of police of morality which wandered along the town's streets, begging, exposing gamblers, and tearing the clothes off women whom they considered indecent. In the year 1532 *Pope Alexander VI* charged him before the Inquisition. *Savonarola* had turned Florence into an absolute hell. Now he turned also against the Pope himself. The Pope excommunicated him. In his turn, *Savonarola* excommunicated the Pope and called for reforms of the Catholic Church and the overthrow of the Pope. The Dominicans' enemies, the Franciscans, began to persecute him and by the Pope's order he was seized. He was brutally tortured, children cast stones at him while he suffocated on the gallows. Before his death he confessed to heresy.

Inquisition was the Catholic Church's major fighting tool against heterodoxy for almost six centuries. It applied torture widely as a means of finding proofs. The proofs obtained as a result of torture were considered to be the most important in the conviction of heretics. Their fate ended at the stake. The Inquisition killed hundreds of thousands of innocent people; some of whom were far from having committed the sins that they were charged with. Such was the price of intolerance and violence.

In Islam there was no inquisition and inquisitors, but there were sects that were also distinguished by their intolerance of dissidents, and violence was turned in their hands into a main weapon. Such were the sects of the *Ismā'īlīs*, Assassins, and *Wahhābīs*, "[...] ye should remain steadfast in Religion, and make no divisions therein [...]" – is said in the *Qur'ān* (*Sūra* 42,13). The disintegration of Islam into sects led to the emergence of sects that misinterpreted its genuine essence. They became the guards of order and claimed the role of genuine protectors of "genuine Islam". They demanded the restoration of the fundamental principles in Islam and were the apostles of modern Islamic fundamentalism.

The most ominous of these sects was that known as the Assassins or killers. Its creator – *Ḥasan ibn aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ* was able to seize the fortress of Alamūt in northern Iran and turn it into a stronghold of his power. His name inspired with horror not only the Muslim world, but Europe as well. He killed two of his sons for disobedience and the breach of his orders. He established a hierarchy of 7 grades, the first of which was *fidā'ī*, that is suicide militants ready to sacrifice their lives for the faith and *Ḥasan*. Those were the killers. They were carefully selected. They were notable for their selfless courage and devotion and knew no mercy. They had clear and strict instructions – to destroy all the enemies of the genuine faith, that is all those who did not belong to the sect of the *Ismā'īlīs* or killers. Evidently there is a peculiar regularity in the fact that intolerance and violence can degenerate into killings and terrorism.

The *Ismā'īlīs* and killers were defeated by Mongol troops headed by *Hulagu Khan* in 1256. Their remnants fled to Afghanistan and the territory of present-day Pakistan and later formed the basis of that menacing force that is called *Taliban*. After *Ḥasan* the leadership passed to the dynasty of the *Aga Khans*, which became their hereditary title. He is held to be a descendant of 'Ali, the first *Imām* of the *Shī'īs*. A present-day leader of the *Ismā'īlīs* and killers, *Aga Khan V*, lives now in Bombay and is a genuine leader of the Afghan *Ismā'īlīs* and killers.

3. The victory of capitalism in Europe in the 18th century led to a new turn in social relations. Capitalist conditions led to greed when people wanted to be not only rich but the richest. The response was the emergence of many secret societies whose activity was directed against the authorities, and the rising money monster. Masonic lodges that spread in France (Frank masons), Scotland, England, and Italy were among them. At the beginning of the 19th century Freemasonry became a worldwide phenomenon. The major concern of Freemasonry was a call to work and protest against idleness, for work was considered to be the most important duty in a civil society. Imbued with the principle of brotherhood, Freemasonry advocates worldwide tolerance. Its cult was worship of the Divine and a belief in mankind.

Freemasonry taught men to oppose evil and not to submit to injustice in whatever form it presented itself. But it was surrounded with mysterious rituals and secrecy that aroused the suspicion of the authorities and the ruling establishment. That is why every government pursued it and tried to destroy it. In 1737 *Pope Clement XII* issued a decree against Freemasonry that prohibited participation in Masonic lodges on pain of confiscation and death penalty without the right of appeal. The Masons were dismissed, their lands and property were confiscated, and decrees were issued against them that proclaimed them criminals.

Intolerance and violence and the coercive measures against Freemasonry practically led to the end of Freemasonry as a system, but the spirit of the Freemasonry, its rituals, its secret gatherings and secret decisions ensured its revival in the modern epoch. In the epoch of globalization it was needed as a political force in the struggle of different opposing political groups, financial companies and corporations. Now Freemasonry itself with its lodges, rituals, and ceremonies has become a tool for intolerance and violence.

4. The second half of the 20th century is marked in the world as a transition from one epoch to another – to the epoch of globalization. The entire achievement does not correspond to those social aims that mankind expected. The establishment of financial capital has divided the whole world into rich and poor countries and peoples. Internal conflicts transformed into global ones have deepened all the previous economic and social polarities. Over and above that, in due course, conflicts with the use of violence and civil wars flared up in many countries.

An active revival of national self-consciousness and efforts made by some nations and ethnic groups for self-determination is under way in the world.

It is impossible to forget that every people wants to be not only satisfied but also eternal; no one wants to leave history without leaving any traces behind. A growth in interethnic intolerance can be observed, and on that basis bitter interethnic and regional conflicts take place. The development of various forms of religious fundamentalism and extremism rouses intolerance and efforts aimed at the forcible solution of problems. World drug trafficking, transborder criminality, creation of worldwide criminal groups, lack of resources, population growth, the rapid spread of mass deceases increase tension in the world and create a favourable ground for intolerance and violence.

5. Globalization had a deep and negative influence in the sphere of culture. Cultural globalization turned culture into an economic affair and a means of profit and loss. It fell so low in its aesthetic and moral meaning that it became simply information that is closely linked with advertisement. World export of culture is rising rapidly. If in 1980 it was valued at 47.5 billion dollars, in 1998 it rose to 174 billion and 40 % of it represents the works of English-speaking culture. That is mainly the production of printed materials, music, films, photo materials, radio and television transmissions, games, and sports goods. In the West a pop culture was created that is based on mass entertainment and pleasure. Hollywood and CNN transmit cultural signals all over the world – they destroy the moral and ethical values of other societies, forcing them not only to consume but also to imitate western values. It is not difficult to imagine how such cultural intervention affects the young generations of the world.

The terrorist acts of September 11, 2001 forced the American leadership to introduce order into their cultural milieu. American radio stations were recommended to remove from their broadcasts about 150 titles of songs by popular performers in which words such as 'ruin', 'destruction', 'death', 'murder', 'gang', etc., were used too often. The Beatles, Pink Floyd, *Paul McCartney*, and *Elton John* were put on this list. As a result of prohibitive measures, 9 Hollywood studios produced only 16 films instead 68 by the end of 2001. Films portraying mainly terrorists, explosions, destruction of cities, and doomsday were cancelled.

6. A reaction responding to cultural globalization, as to the policy of the West as a whole, was an ideology of Islamism that was spreading in all the Muslim countries. This is not a religious dogma or stream but a sort of protective measure taken by the Islamic civilization against Westernization.

Islamism expressed its disappointment over both Russian socialism and Western liberalism. Decolonization did not change much the social and economic situation in Muslim countries. An attempt to improve the situation by way of industrialization and modernization has failed. It led to a rise in poverty, corruption and unemployment. In Egypt 22 % of the population have no work, in Algeria 30 %, in Turkey 15 %. Such forms of poverty as the exploitation of child labour and child prostitution are spreading widely. Up to now most of the population has been illiterate. In Pakistan 80 % of population are illiterate, in Afghanistan 85 %. What kind of democracy and social progress can one speak of in these countries?

Islamism seeks to work out its own way of development based on Islamic values, traditions, and history. Today 40 Muslim countries are represented in the UN. They can form a huge political and economic force. They can also play a positive part in the historical development of mankind.

Although we may recognize that the political, social, and economic content of Islamism's protest may be well founded, we may none the less face another danger that can lead to global conflict – the conflict of civilizations. The ideologists of Islamism call for the eradication of all values and norms alien to Islam; some of them call for an attack to strike "Western imperialism". Perhaps it is these calls that inspire Islamic terrorists in Algeria, Palestine fighters in Israel, Pakistani terrorists in Kashmir, and others creating conditions for the al-Qaida organization. The events of September 11, 2001 in New York confirmed a gloomy truth that intolerance, violence, and terrorism are tied together by a single logic and represent a huge danger in the modern world. The world public accused Muslim extremism in the person of *Osama Bin Laden* of these dreadful events. The USA began to bombard Afghanistan, where thousands of civilians died. It might have been worse.

Intolerance is a perpetual attribute in human life, and violence is its tool. The heart of the matter is that mankind will learn to constrain intolerance within reasonable limits and will not allow it to use violence. The life of the world community becomes more and more complex. Now more than 180 countries are members of the UN and conflicts are quite possible between them. And they must not be allowed to exceed peaceful and civilized limits.

Questions and Interventions

massacres in
history and the
ideologies
behind

KHODR It is very difficult to distinguish between just a massacre in history – and they have always been because people are wicked – and an ideology behind it. Hence we are facing either concrete facts and state that this is violence, or we are also facing a certain ideology behind these facts. Behind the massacre of the Mu'tazilis, was there also an ideology or was this just a policy? I do not think that Islamism is a new phenomenon. Thus it was *Ibn Taymiyya* (died 1328), who constructed the ideology which led to the killing of the Alawites in Syria. Thus the Shi'īs in South-Lebanon were killed by the Ottoman Turks not without an ideology. And the massacre of the Druzes in Lebanon was not carried out by the Shi'īs without a relevant ideology. There is a book which comes to the conclusion that, as long as we are not completely purified ideologically of *Ibn Taymiyya*, there will again and again be new Ibn Taymiyyas. In the 13th century, when the Sunnī Mamlūks conquered the areas, in Kasrawān, in one of the regions of Lebanon, why was all the Shi'ī population displaced?

Yet, all this is part of our history. We do not believe that the Catholic Church was the only Church that did terrible things. Whether they are called Catholics, Orthodox, Sunnīs or Shi'īs, there have always been Churches that massacred each other throughout history – in the name of God or without the name of God.

a dogmatic position
needed that
condemns killing
once and for all

In all monotheistic religions we must have a dogma, a dogmatic position that condemns killing once and for all. In Israel *Rabbi Meir Kahane* says, "You must kill all the Palestinians!" He does not say, "You must declare war" or something similar, but, "You must kill all the Palestinians". He also put this down in writing and signed it. Why is that? This is a tragic question. Why does killing belong mainly to the history of the monotheistic religions? Why is it that in comparison the so-called pagans have behaved utterly differently?

which arguments
justify killing?

KHOURY That in the history of all religions violence and mutual killing happened again and again is a fact which we have to confront. We cannot take our eyes off this fact, saying that this is how it used to be in former times. However, if we confront our history, we also have to ask what lessons we learn from it. Above all, how do we deal with the arguments of former generations

which did such things? Having a dogma, as Msgr. Khodr demands, which forbids killing once and for all, is one thing. Yet, what goes beyond this condemnation of violence and to me seems indispensable is how we deal with the arguments which, at that time as well as today, again and again have to serve as justification for killing.

what is behind
the concept
'Islamism'?

SCHABESTARI: I would like Professor Khidoyatov to explain what he meant with the term 'Islamism' and how he understood the relation between Islamism and tolerance.

ideologies – and
how they develop

KHIDOYATOV: The development of an ideology is always a very long and complicated process. It starts at the prejudices, results in intolerance, gradually settles down to become a doctrine, finally becomes a dogma which then, on its part, evolves into a programme of action, which puts forward something new. However, by being intolerant towards this new ideology, one will not be able to correct it.

Today we have in mind the international events that bore the decisive imprint of certain ideologies, of those new ideas that led to a programme of action. If we have to react to these international events, we also have to react to the ideologies behind them.

'Islamism' or
protest against
'Westernization'

In the case of Islamism, at issue is a phenomenon of intolerance against the westernization of a country. In many countries of Asia it was the American movies that spoiled young people; the new generation wants to live like the Americans. In order to protect the Muslims – and not only them – against this, Islamism wants to set up a barrier. There is of course much that is good in Western civilization, which is worth treating seriously. In some spheres however, in the West culture became business. And the business it became spoiled Western culture. Thus, Islamism has now set out to take the first steps towards a programme and towards an ideology.

From the perspective of the present, it is hard to predict the further development. Of course the direction will not be that of the *Hisbollah* or of a *Meir Kahane*, whereby the former does not go back indeed to the tradition of the *Shī'a*, but to that of Zoroastrianism, and the latter to the ideology of *King David* – hence in this conflict the issue is the antagonism of very old ideologies. Perhaps we will develop a new programme and a new ideology, perhaps it will be up to us to develop something new in the history of culture. As the case may be, it will be a cultural development, which will be purified of a

number of new ugly examples in Western civilization. In the Islamic countries, it would for instance never be permitted to show pornography. Yet, in all these efforts towards purification, we have to be very careful and develop something that is suitable to keep very alien, ideological influences away from the young generation in the Islamic countries.

Islamic religion – Islamic ideology? GABRIEL For Marx the term 'ideology' had a negative connotation. For him it was identical with an false conscience. Professor Khidoyatov, where do you see the difference between Islamic religion and Islamic ideology?

Islam – religion and one of the great civilizations of humanity KHIDOYATOV It is the first time that I hear an 'Islamic ideology' being spoken of. It was however the negative side of the Marxist ideology to be intolerant towards other ideas. The Soviet state and the Communist Party respectively could never permit themselves to be for instance penetrated by the Bourgeois ideology. Hence Lenin taught that there must only be one, namely the Communist ideology. They therefore set up obstacles against the intrusion of other ideologies.

Islamism and Islam: in the case of Islam at issue certainly is not only a religion. It is at the same time one of the great civilizations of humanity. Why did five million Americans now turn Muslim? It is hard to explain this fact. However, in my eyes Islam is a very noble way of life, last not least as to the respect of women. Sometimes Islam is reproached for lacking in balance in its relation to women. However, the Qur'ān is inspired with a deep respect for women. Thus, the tradition says that "Paradise lies at the feet of the mothers". Therefore there are many who do not see Islam as an ideology, but as a very high culture. The first university in Europe was established in Andalusia and many people from Europe came to study at this Islamic university in Cartagena in Spain. For this reason I would not think of Islam as an ideology, but as a civilization, a new civilization. Perhaps in future a programme will develop from it for further cultural development, and it may be that some problems that are today topical on the political level will tomorrow lead to the cultural development of the Islamic countries.