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On the questions posed by the murder of Theo Van Gogh

THE FACTS

On 2 November 2004, the Dutch film-maker and polemicist Theo Van Gogh, 47 years old, was killed with several bullets fired from a handgun when he was cycling in Amsterdam. Then his throat was slit, and finally he was stabbed, by a young man of Moroccan origin. He had received death threats after the transmission on TV at the end of August of his short film, *Submission*, supposed to be against the oppression of women in the name of the Koran. Based on a screenplay written by the liberal MP of Somali origin, Ayaan Hirsi Ali – herself under permanent police protection since the appearance of her pamphlet against “*the backwardness of Islam*” – the film caused a scandal in the Muslim community. Arrested by the police after an exchange of fire, the presumed killer was a 26 year old man, with dual nationality, Moroccan and Dutch, who had moved on the fringes of a group of fundamentalist Muslims. Nevertheless he was not part of the almost 150 Islamists who were under surveillance.

Around 20,000 people were in the centre of Amsterdam on Tuesday evening for a demonstration in memory of Theo Van Gogh. Church bells rang and trains sounded their sirens. At The Hague, twenty or so people who shouted anti-Moroccan slogans were taken in for questioning. The government avoided any excessive stigmatisation of the act and called on the municipalities to open a dialogue with the Muslim community, 900,000 strong in the Netherlands (around 5.5% of the total population of the country; about 20% of them practicing) of which a third are Moroccan.

After that twenty or so anti-Muslim attacks were carried out, followed by other attacks on churches. A bomb exploded at dawn in an Islamic primary school in Eindhoven, causing serious damage but without harming anyone. Mosques in Rotterdam, Utrecht, Breda and Huizen were also targeted. Three of them were subjected to arson attempts, two being targets of Molotov cocktails, while two more were covered in insulting graffiti. Extreme-right activists organised a few demos in Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam.

According to some surveys, 47% of people asked said that they were less tolerant towards Muslims since the murder of the film-maker. According to all the polls, if elections had taken place that week, the party of MP Geert Wilders, a fervent partisan of stopping Turkish and Moroccan immigration, would have gone from 1 to 19 seats in Parliament.

On 9 November, the funeral of Theo Van Gogh was broadcast on television and declared a national event.

On 10 November, the police launched a large-scale operation in The Hague against some presumed fundamentalist Muslims, holed up in a building. Two people were arrested and three cops were injured during a siege which needed 200 members of the forces of repression, the cordoning off of the neighbourhood and the closing of air space over the capital. The police believed that the building was not packed with explosives. The authorities refused to make a link between the two people arrested and the murder of the film-maker.

On 13 November, Nazis burnt down a mosque in Helden, a small industrial town to the north of Limburg, in the south of the country.

THE RANGE OF REACTIONS

The Dutch state woke up and promised to be less *laissez faire*. The Belgian state for its part immediately announced restrictions on travel and the reinforcement of border controls. Who's going to suffer? Immigrants, all immigrants, Muslims or not, whose movements will be made harder, without even mentioning deportations.

In Germany, the political class wondered about “the integration of immigrants” and prepared additional measures of control while immigrants had reason to fear reactions from the extreme-right much more intense than those in the Netherlands.

While the political class floundered and couldn't see any solution apart from repression, the wave of reactions touched every part of Dutch society.

“His opinions about Islam were awful and hurtful, but nothing justifies murder”, said Ayhan Tonça, spokesman of one of the principal organisations of the Muslim community in the country¹, on 3 November.

We can read in *Le Monde* on 9 November: *“The Islamists scare me. If they don't like the Netherlands, they can leave it ...The problem, she added, perplexed, is that they have two passports, so they can't be deported.”*

“It's true that Theo Van Gogh insulted the Muslims – he regularly called them ‘goat fuckers’. He loved provocation. But that was not a reason to kill him. In the Netherlands, the freedom to say what you want, including insulting people, is an old tradition. If people were not happy, why didn't they use the law? You can't kill someone because of their ideas or because of their rudeness. When they murdered Theo Van Gogh it was our democratic system they wanted to break.”

Another post, unsigned, announced the end of the Dutch *“multicultural society”* and cried *“stop the Islamisation of the Netherlands”*. Islam was accused of wanting to *“conquer the world”* by war and terror. Further on a furious hand had scrawled three lines demanding the departure of the town's mayor, Job Cohen, accused of letting things go: *“Enough bla-bla, we have to act. The solution: out with Cohen!”*

The climate of unease and suspicion which has reigned in Amsterdam since the murder of Theo Van Gogh affects the *“born and bred”* Dutch, who are scared of Islamist terrorism (this crime is the first of its kind), as well as the *“foreign origin”* Netherlanders who dread the return of the baton of xenophobia. A ditch is being dug, as if between two countries on the verge of conflict. *“Now people talk in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’... There is anger, despair and hatred everywhere”,* noted the daily *Nederlands Daqblad*.

“Theo started from the idea that you can freely criticise the Bible or the Torah and he felt it legitimate to do the same with the Koran”, stressed Gÿs Van de Westelaken. *“Theo demanded the right to sacrilege”,* added Yoeri Albrecht, journalist on the weekly *Vrij Nederland*, which published, on 6 November, the last interview with the film maker. *“His trick was poking the finger where it hurt. He wasn't afraid of anything or anybody”,* insisted the journalist, who suspected the authorities, in particular the police, of having *“underestimated”* the risks run by his friend.

“Theo Van Gogh was very aggressive. The Muslims didn't like him, neither did a lot of Dutch people”, said Mr. Van Tuyl van Serooskerken, defector from the VVD liberal party and cofounder of a little political group, *Democratic Europe*. *“It's on the base of three principles, liberty, equality and fraternity, that our society is constructed. Unfortunately – perhaps it is a heritage of our old ‘system of pillars’? – the principle of fraternity is not very strong in the Netherlands. And notably with the Muslims”,* he regretted. *“I hope that they don't use this tragedy as a pretext to reduce freedom of expression”*.

In the Netherlands 3 million inhabitants out of a population of 16 million are born abroad or at least have one parent born abroad. In addition to 750,000 Europeans, 350,000 immigrants are from Turkey, 300,000 are from the Maghreb and 300,000 come from Surinam. Living in the centres of cities, apart from Amsterdam where they reside in dormitory suburbs, the working class originating from Turkey or the Maghreb is mostly employed in industry, construction and public works or unskilled service work. It's not a case of ethnic discrimination, but the undocumented migrants who do the jobs that the locals no longer want don't have access to these jobs.

Although politically active immigrants are traditionally drawn to the green parties or the social-democrats, they have also recently joined the Christian Democrats or the Liberal Conservatives, a sign of a certain integration of the middle classes.

¹ He was in the Muslims and Government Contact Committee (CMO) and the Turkish Islamic Cultural Federation (TICF) – an organisation which works closely with the Turkish government's Department of Religious Affairs (Diyanet). He had also been active in the Christian Democrats and served as a council for them.

If the populist right is gaining ground with 20% of intended votes, the extreme right remains tiny. Anti-Semitism remains firmly outside the social consensus. In workplaces Dutch workers are preoccupied by measures like the raising of the retirement age and seem little concerned by the question of immigration, neither showing solidarity nor hostility.

Arriving from Turkey and Morocco in the 1960s, the "Muslims" of the Netherlands today represent a very strong minority. *"Contrary to France, where populations of foreign origin come from very diverse social backgrounds, the ones in the Netherlands above all come from poor rural ones. They are Turks or Moroccans, often illiterate. And the Dutch, we have to recognise, have not done very much to help them integrate. Over the years they have been left to one side"* and Theo Van Gogh took the risk of *"playing with fire"*, according to the novelist Fouad Laroui, himself of Moroccan origin, living in Amsterdam for many years, in his latest article in the weekly *Jeune Afrique L'intelligent*, and entitled *Chronical of a death foretold*.

The argument put forward by professor Ellian, former opponent of the regime of ayatollah Khomeini, is completely different. *"Please, mock Islam!"*, he proclaimed in an *"appeal to intellectuals"* appearing on Saturday 6 November in the columns of the daily paper *Volkskrant*. According to him, it is up to Islam and its faithful to adapt to *"modernity"* and not the other way round. *"When we can see, on television and in the theatre, jokes about Islam, when the thinkers and the academics begin to treat Islam in a more critical manner, then, and only then, will the Muslims learn tolerance"*, insisted Mr. Ellian.

"Theo Van Gogh? The one who insulted the Muslims?", repeated one of the young Moroccans approaching the El Tawheed mosque on Sunday evening, one of the fiefdoms of radical Islamism in Amsterdam according to the local press. *"Who showed naked women with Koranic phrases written on their skin?"* insisted the young man. *"The brothers warned him. They told him to keep quiet. But he didn't listen"*, he added, smiling unpleasantly, before slipping away to prayers. *"In the Netherlands, Muslims are not liked"*, remarked a man with a long beard and strong shoulders, dressed in a parka and white baggy trousers. As if that explained everything. He himself was Dutch *"born and bred"*, but he refused to give his name. *"They say the murderer came to this mosque. Possibly. He also for sure had to buy bread from the baker's. Do we have to conclude that the baker is an accomplice in the death of Van Gogh?"* he quipped.

A few days after the murder, the popular daily *De Telegraaf* published on its front page photos of people designated as "targets to kill" in one of the letters written by the murderer of Theo Van Gogh. Amongst them was the MP Ayaan Hirsi Ali but also the mayor of Amsterdam, Job Cohen, and the minister for integration, Rita Verdonk.

"I don't believe that true Muslims could do this", commented Amina, the mother of a family coming from Morocco, who'd come along with two friends to tour the altar of Linnaeustraat. *"Yesterday, I was already here. I live round the corner. People glared at me. Someone even said that I had to take off my headscarf."* That did not discourage her. *"I understand very well that people are afraid. Me, I don't have the same Islam as the killers of Van Gogh, but how can they know that? My three children were born here. And they, I can swear to you, are true Netherlanders."*

ISLAM AGAINST THE WEST?

Political Islamism draws its strength from the combined defeats of Arab nationalism in the Maghreb and the Middle East and of workers' organisations in the working class neighbourhoods of the big cities of Europe. Arab nationalism tinged with socialism in a Russian sauce had come to power in Egypt, Algeria, Syria and Iraq. After having been centre stage in the 1960s and '70s, influencing the Palestinian movement, it didn't survive the demise of its Russian godfather. Even its last vestiges of leftism were chased out by the dictators in power – Algeria, Egypt – with the help of Islamist groups.

In Europe, particularly in France, workers' organisations (parties, unions, self-help groups) which traditionally contained immigrants (activists of Polish, Italian, Spanish and Algerian origin played an important role in these organisations), are today almost completely absent from the everyday life of poor neighbourhoods. Politico-religious organisations have rushed in, notably by means of charitable and/or cultural works.

For the most determined political Islamists, the objective is clear. It's a question of mobilising the populations of Muslim origin to demand a religious space autonomous from the wicked Western

States, where Koranic law can be applied in its entirety over all the believers. The establishment of a sort of state side by side with the state therefore represents their end goal. An “implicit” state endowed with the power to legislate in matters of private life, finance, education, defence of believers and housing. An authority gathered around places of worship and possessing a military strike force with its own militias charged with making people respect its law.

The demand for this kind of right to secession (following the example of the first black American nationalists in the 1920s, who aimed at the creation of a black state in the South) does not however go as far as renouncing the advantages assured by the old western infidel states, such as social security or the right to remain or to nationality. These states, and above all the infidel populations (whether they are “native” or not), are told to not interfere in the internal affairs of the Muslim community and that they must show great respect towards its worship and its religious practices. The whole thing can (but not necessarily) be seasoned with the ideological ingredients of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism and support for immigrants.

In the Dutch affair radical political Islam has achieved two objectives – terrorising their critics and polarising society. And it’s done this by exploiting, at the same time, the great permissiveness which the Dutch state has traditionally shown in the domain of private life (drugs, sexuality, freedom of expression etc.), the difficulties of insertion of immigrants (language, racism and education) and the immediate intervention of the Dutch extreme right after the murder of Theo Van Gogh, which was responsible for attacks against mosques and Muslim schools. A veritable civil war within the proletariat between opposed fractions and communities is not, at this stage, inconceivable, something that will bring great joy to the Islamists and the white Fascists.

If such a thing comes to pass, it will be a real catastrophe for the cause of workers autonomy in a country where, during the Second World War and the Nazi occupation, the native “Dutch” working class effectively protected its fraction coming from the Jewish community. Finally, the choice of the city of Amsterdam for the perpetration of this crime is not insignificant. The mayor, Rob Cohen, of Jewish origin, is today the target of criticisms tinted with anti-Semitism, on the part of both the extreme right and the Islamists.

We wrote this about the situation created by the 11 September 2001 attacks and the consequent reaction of the so-called free world aligned with the US:

“This situation contributed to the radicalization of certain parts of the Middle East and Central Asian populations and took the form of a dissent which more and more borrowed its weapons from Islamic ideology. The story is that this utterly backwards ideology – an expression of the failure of the ruling classes of these areas to create the economic and social conditions for modern capitalism – far from supplying a well-fitted frame to the justified revolt of the oppressed people, traps them in an outdated fight, whose true goal is to subordinate the more and more oppressed “faithful” to the whole of the “Muslim” ruling classes. What is there in common between the young unemployed in Gaza or Algiers and the billionaires from the Gulf or ruling classes from the area’s states, except religious belonging? Obviously nothing. Islam is used here only to create a fake community between “Muslim” oppressors and oppressed which the area’s proletariat never cease to pay for.

Political Islamism, as a substitute for the class struggle, has also been chosen by minority fractions of immigrant youth in Europe (France and Belgium particularly). Here, resentment has been fed by mass unemployment and racism and has been made use of by some religious groups. The real revolt has then been trapped in the reactionary ghetto of Islam, of the oumma (Faithfull community), which has contributed, along with the surrounding racism, to isolate these rebellious people from working class people of European extraction. In the end this plays the game of all those, from governments to bosses, who have an interest in dividing exploited people.” (Leaflet “Against crusade and jihad! For class struggle!”, 2001) We still hold completely with these analyses and judgements.

Thus it is a duty for communists to fight Islamism as one of the reactionary and anti-worker expressions of this society.

“Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness.” (Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, 1843).

WHAT IS THE COMMUNIST RESPONSE?

The short-term effect of this attack on the Dutch population in general and, more particularly, on the consciousness of the working class (which has recently carried out important strikes) is more harmful. It's a question of a terrible anaesthetising defeat. The only viable outcome would be for the working class and particularly its immigrant fraction to directly settle accounts with the Islamist Nazis as well as with the defenders of the "white race". Unfortunately, this solution is hardly even envisaged by the exploited class of this country, leaving in the short term only the active necessity of communist and anti-clerical propaganda and the organisation of militant responses blow by blow to the aggressions committed by the various components – extreme or not – of the dominant classes.

On our part, we consider it to be of the utmost importance to recall the basic points of communist theory, notably in relation to individual freedoms. It is well established that we demand the most complete freedom of circulation and movement of human beings, independently of any consideration of economic, cultural, religious, sexual and other compatibilities. Our position on the most complete right to migration does not allow any weakness or complicity with regard to the numerous reactionary ideologies which proletarians here or elsewhere may be carriers of, consciously or unconsciously.

“Tradition”, religions and the particular customs of “peoples” (especially in matters of family, relations between men and women and between young and old), including of those who have been or are oppressed because of these things, are most often expressions of the ideological domination of the exploited by the dominant classes. And we include those who have already had to cede their privileged position to other dominant classes, who are more modern and more in conformance with the planetary dictatorship of the capitalist mode of production.

*“The economic oppression of the workers inevitably calls forth and engenders every kind of political oppression and social humiliation, the coarsening and darkening of the spiritual and moral life of the masses. The workers may secure a greater or lesser degree of political liberty to fight for their economic emancipation, but no amount of liberty will rid them of poverty, unemployment, and oppression until the power of capital is overthrown. Religion is one of the forms of spiritual oppression which everywhere weighs down heavily upon the masses of the people, over burdened by their perpetual work for others, by want and isolation. Impotence of the exploited classes in their struggle against the exploiters just as inevitably gives rise to the belief in a better life after death as impotence of the savage in his battle with nature gives rise to belief in gods, devils, miracles, and the like. Those who toil and live in want all their lives are taught by religion to be submissive and patient while here on earth, and to take comfort in the hope of a heavenly reward. But those who live by the labour of others are taught by religion to practise charity while on earth, thus offering them a very cheap way of justifying their entire existence as exploiters and selling them at a moderate price tickets to well-being in heaven. Religion is opium for the people. Religion is a sort of spiritual booze, in which the slaves of capital drown their human image, their demand for a life more or less worthy of man.” (Lenin, *Socialism and religion*, 3 December 1905).*

Although we fight religion, all religion, fiercely as the first choice of social truncheon, we nevertheless defend the possibility that no one should be persecuted for their beliefs as long as they are not expressed in the life of society, thus taking on a counter-revolutionary role. Thus we fight against any restriction on the freedom to express personal inclinations. We oppose all the thought police or lifestyle police.

“Religion must be declared a private affair. In these words socialists usually express their attitude towards religion. But the meaning of these words should be accurately defined to prevent any misunderstanding. We demand that religion be held a private affair so far as the state is concerned. But by no means can we consider religion a private affair so far as our Party is concerned. Religion must be of no concern to the state, and religious societies must have no connection with governmental authority. Everyone must be absolutely free to profess any religion he pleases, or no religion whatever, i.e., to be an atheist, which every socialist is, as a rule. Discrimination among citizens on account of their religious convictions is wholly intolerable. Even the bare mention of a citizen's religion in official documents should unquestionably be eliminated. No subsidies should be granted to the established church nor state allowances made to ecclesiastical and religious societies. These should become absolutely free associations of like-minded citizens, associations independent of the

*state. Only the complete fulfilment of these demands can put an end to the shameful and accursed past when the church lived in feudal dependence on the state, and Russian citizens lived in feudal dependence on the established church, when medieval, inquisitorial laws (to this day remaining in our criminal codes and on our statute-books) were in existence and were applied, persecuting men for their belief or disbelief, violating men's consciences, and linking cosy government jobs and government-derived incomes with the dispensation of this or that dope by the established church. Complete separation of Church and State is what the socialist proletariat demands of the modern state and the modern church.” (Lenin, *Socialism and religion*, 3 December 1905).*

This approach understands by conviction that these false ideas will finally be eradicated by the development and establishment of the real community of human beings, made possible by a transition dominated by the revolutionary proletariat organised as the dominant class.

*“It would be the biggest and most grievous mistake a Marxist could make to think that the millions of the people (especially the peasants and artisans), who have been condemned by all modern society to darkness, ignorance and superstitions — can extricate themselves from this darkness only along the straight line of a purely Marxist education. These masses should be supplied with the most varied atheist propaganda material, they should be made familiar with facts from the most diverse spheres of life, they should be approached in every possible way, so as to interest them, rouse them from their religious torpor, stir them from the most varied angles and by the most varied methods, and so forth.” (Lenin, *On the Significance of Militant Materialism*, 12 March 1922).*

The fight against the obscurantist ideas of the clerics becomes still more precise and decisive when we are dealing with revolutionary proletarians.

*“So far as the party of the socialist proletariat is concerned, religion is not a private affair. Our Party is an association of class-conscious, advanced fighters for the emancipation of the working class. Such an association cannot and must not be indifferent to lack of class-consciousness, ignorance or obscurantism in the shape of religious beliefs. We demand complete disestablishment of the Church so as to be able to combat the religious fog with purely ideological and solely ideological weapons, by means of our press and by word of mouth. But we founded our association, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, precisely for such a struggle against every religious bamboozling of the workers. And to us the ideological struggle is not a private affair, but the affair of the whole Party, of the whole proletariat.” (Lenin, *Socialism and religion*).*

And to go on:

“Our propaganda necessarily includes the propaganda of atheism; the publication of the appropriate scientific literature, which the autocratic feudal government has hitherto strictly forbidden and persecuted, must now form one of the fields of our Party work. We shall now probably have to follow the advice Engels once gave to the German Socialists: to translate and widely disseminate the literature of the eighteenth-century French Enlighteners and atheists.

But under no circumstances ought we to fall into the error of posing the religious question in an abstract, idealistic fashion, as an “intellectual” question unconnected with the class struggle, as is not infrequently done by the radical-democrats from among the bourgeoisie. It would be stupid to think that, in a society based on the endless oppression and coarsening of the worker masses, religious prejudices could be dispelled by purely propaganda methods. It would be bourgeois narrow-mindedness to forget that the yoke of religion that weighs upon mankind is merely a product and reflection of the economic yoke within society. No number of pamphlets and no amount of preaching can enlighten the proletariat, if it is not enlightened by its own struggle against the dark forces of capitalism. Unity in this really revolutionary struggle of the oppressed class for the creation of a paradise on earth is more important to us than unity of proletarian opinion on paradise in heaven.

That is the reason why we do not and should not set forth our atheism in our Programme; that is why we do not and should not prohibit proletarians who still retain vestiges of their old prejudices from associating themselves with our Party. We shall always preach the scientific world-outlook, and it is essential for us to combat the inconsistency of various “Christians”. But that does not mean in the least that the religious question ought to be advanced to first place, where it does not belong at all; nor does it mean that we should allow the forces of the really revolutionary economic and political struggle to be split up on account of third-rate opinions or senseless ideas, rapidly losing

*all political importance, rapidly being swept out as rubbish by the very course of economic development.” (Lenin, *Socialism and religion*).*

To summarise, as Marx synthesised it in *On the Jewish Question* (1843), to avoid proletarians being divided and opposing each other in the name of their respective gods means, purely and simply, the “*the abolition of religion*”. “*How is religious opposition made impossible? By abolishing religion. As soon as Jew and Christian recognize that their respective religions are no more than different stages in the development of the human mind, different snake skins cast off by history, and that man is the snake who sloughed them, the relation of Jew and Christian is no longer religious but is only a critical, scientific, and human relation*”.

It goes without saying that we put all religions in the same bracket, Islam included. The pseudo solution advocated by some in the French government, particularly Nicolas Sarkozy, of promoting integration of various chapels into the state, in line with the cultural, behavioural and ideological assimilation of immigrants and minorities of all kinds, really only makes sense as a way to expand the electoral base of its proposers.

IMPLACABLE CRITIQUE OF THE NEW SUPPORTERS OF CLERICALISM

In the present conditions of struggle against the clerical rabble, whether it’s Christian, Islamic, Judaic or whatever, a choice place must be reserved for the denunciation of their new accomplices (unconscious or not, it doesn’t matter): the third-worldists, leftists and alter-globalists who, in all countries, make themselves fellow travellers of the Islamist Nazis.

One such is the British SWP which supported a Labour MP in the elections who had been expelled from the Labour Party in November 2003 for having received money over several years from the Emirates, Saudi Arabia, etc. and having had dozens of meetings with his mate Saddam Hussein. George Galloway, the MP cherished by the SWP and by almost all of the left of the left, cynically explained that he had material needs and that his MP’s pay wasn’t enough! And this is not an isolated incident in the history of the main Trotskyist organisation in the UK.

In Preston, the SWP candidate in the local council elections was elected, very happily, with the votes of the Islamic candidate! A fashionable Islamist cleric, Tarik Ramadan, was invited like a real star to the latest European Social Forum held in London in October. On this occasion, the Islamists were able to set out their stalls and propagate their reactionary ideas.

In the football stadiums of Belgium, you can hear at least once a week “*Hamas, Hamas, send the Jews to the gas!*” The leaders of the new local Islamist party, the European Arab League (LAE), judged the slogan “not very helpful”, but, in any case, it didn’t seem important to them. Over the border in France the leftists considered these anti-Semitic comments as secondary and continue to intensify cooperation with the LAE. Consequence: on the fringes of the pro-Palestinian and anti-Semitic demo in Anvers in February 2003 there were some attacks on Jews, just like in Amsterdam, in April 2002.

In France the leftists have been spewing support for Saddam Hussein on numerous anti-war demos. What’s more, the French leftists have covered up the attack by pro-Palestinian Islamists on a group of activists from Hashomer Hatzair, a pacifist Zionist formation. Their support for the so-called Iraqi resistance ignores the obscurantist barbarism which it’s largely responsible for. How can they give their support to the defenders of Sharia, of filmed executions, of the oppression of women and any component of Iraqi society which cannot be assimilated to Islam or, more precisely, to the various forms of Islam which confront each other in the country?

How can they dare to remain silent about the horrible excesses committed by the so-called resistance towards the Iraqi population and helpless hostages while only going on about the barbaric acts carried out by the occupation forces?

No, we do not have to support imperialisms, whether they are big or small, active or embryonic, mature or under development, democratic or dictatorial, secular or clerical. Nor do we have to defend states, any states, nor movements which aspire to establish new states. It is in the nature of all states to be imperialist, to want to extend their domination beyond their borders to ensure better prices for mineral, energy or food resources than their competitors or to obtain protected markets, with or without the use of military force.

The distinction made by the leftists of all stripes between aggressor states and oppressed states serves to justify unholy alliances between some fractions of the world proletariat and their own executioners, on the basis that the executioners are themselves the target of attacks by bigger ones. By their convoluted explanations, following the example of their Stalinist grandfathers, the leftists of today call for a *union sacrée* between the Iraqi proletariat and its old blood-drenched masters and/or its new crusaders of Islam. So in the name of the defence of the oppressed Muslims here and over there, they go from the critique (certainly incomplete) of all religions to the defence of just one, that of Mohammed.

"The more man puts into God, the less he retains in himself"
(Marx, *1844 Manuscripts, First manuscript, Estranged Labour*).

Brussels-Paris, November 2004.