

Sermon: GAPAN Installation Wednesday 16th March 2011...

I asked an Air Commodore a facetious question last week: *If we do impose a no-fly zone over Libya, will this involve both our aeroplanes?* It is, to say the least, puzzling to notice our Prime Minister making belligerent noises at the same time as he is depleting the Royal Air Force. Before I go any further, I should tell you that the Air Commodore gave me an equally facetious reply. He said, *A no-fly zone will not involve both our aeroplanes – as one of them is unserviceable.*

Our news editors in the national papers and the BBC are a fickle lot. For weeks there has been nothing but reports about turmoil in North Africa and the Gulf States. The catastrophe in Japan has, perhaps understandably, meant that for the last week these supposedly historic uprisings in the Arab world have received much less coverage. Well, whether the British press is taking notice or not, these revolutions are gaining pace and intensity. The Arab tyrants, encouraged by Gaddafi's example, have taken to shooting their own people wholesale.

Do you remember when these uprisings began, how they were wildly welcomed in the western media? We were supposed to be glad because the tyrants we have propped up for decades, in order to secure their oil, were supposedly being cast out. There was euphoria in Fleet Street and on the newsreels. I was reminded of William Wordsworth's response to the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789. Silly Willie wrote:

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive; and to be young was very heaven.

He soon changed his tune, and retreated into his Lake District bunker, when the Reign of Terror broke out in 1792. The tumbrels were in the streets and people were guillotined all over France by what was – with a wonderful preview of our own political-correctness – actually called *The Committee for Public Safety*.

It is an unpleasant truth of history that popular uprisings usually result in worse tyrannies than those they sought to demolish. It is simply absurd to imagine that centuries of oppression in the Arab lands is about to be replaced by *Guardian*-reading liberalism, and elections decided freely and fairly – perhaps by proportional representation on the single transferable vote. Waiting in the wings are the real revolutionaries, unflinching in their ruthlessness, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Al Q'aeda and other murderous Islamist sects, supported by money and weapons from Iran.

This is all very bad news for the West. Already Christians are enduring Islamist persecution worldwide. Even in the present tumult, the authorities in Libya are torturing four men for converting to the Christian faith. Before the Sri Lankan parliament there is a bill to make Christian conversion a criminal offence. Recently a seventy-five year old woman in Saudi Arabia was given forty lashes for socializing with her men friends. Christianity is illegal in Saudi – one of our most important middle-eastern allies with whom we do massive trade in weaponry. If you

are caught in that country with a Bible, or with the Cross around your neck, you will be arrested by the religious police and thrown into prison.

Recently in Pakistan, a thirteen year old girl was taunted for being a Christian by five Muslim youths who then raped her. The rapists were not charged. Churches are burned down every week in Pakistan. The British government has just doubled foreign aid to Pakistan to the sum of £445million – without even asking for religious freedom for Christians. A man is on trial for his life in Egypt for converting to our faith. In China a house church pastor has been slung into prison for *utilising superstition to undermine the law*. There have been ancient and established Christian churches in the Middle East since the time of St Paul. Now these are breaking up as never before in 2000 years as hordes of Christians flee to escape persecution.

In the face of endemic violence from the radical Islamists, the archbishops and bishops have set up an everlasting talking shop to promote *Christian-Muslim dialogue* and they issue vacuous communiqués from time to time. The uselessness of this project arises from the fact that it is only so called *liberal* Christians engaging in polite chit-chat with so called *moderate* Muslims. All ignored by the militants, naturally.

Ah but surely all the atrocities are taking place in far off countries of which we know little? Not at all. Let's come a bit nearer home: In England a Muslim girl who converted to Christianity from Islam has been removed from the home of her carer after she chose to be baptised. She was placed in a foster home because her father beat her and threatened to send her to Pakistan for a forced marriage. Her carer, who has fostered more than eighty children, did nothing to encourage her to convert. And then a senior officer in the Metropolitan Police said at a conference the other week that last year there were 250 so called *honour killings* in this country. Most of them don't even get reported.

But when anyone claims that our way of life is under threat, he is accused of *Islamophobia*. A phobia, I should point out, is an irrational fear. But there is nothing irrational about our apprehensiveness in the face of resurgent Islam. Professor Marcello Pera, former President of the Italian Senate, wrote as follows:

In Afghanistan, Kashmir, Chechnya, Dagestan, Ossetia, the Phillipines, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Bosnia, Kosovo, the Palestinian Territories, Egypt, Morocco and much of the Islamic and Arab world, large groups of fundamentalists, radicals, extremists – the Taliban, Al Qaeda, Hezbollah, Hamas, the Muslim Brothers, Islamic Jihad, the Islamic Armed Group and many more have declared a holy war on the West. This is not my imagination. It is a message they have proclaimed, written, preached, communicated and circulated in black and white. Why should I not take note of it?

The truth is sinister. We are dominated by a secular elite which hates Islam every bit as much it hates Christianity. This elite of atheists and metro-political despisers is also a cowardly elite and

dare not attack Islam for fear of getting its corporate throat slit. But it finds it useful to invoke an allegedly outraged Islamic sensitivity in order to persecute the Christian faith.

This secular elite – the Dawkins, Pullmans, Toynbees, Graylings and the BBC entire, targets Christianity because it sees Christianity as the embodiment of those historic and traditional values which, until the contemporary reversal, made this country a place worth living in. The new atheistic elite have declared many times that their aim is to remove Christianity from public life.

A few years ago I was at a conference run by the Liberty Fund of the United States. Academics mainly, talking about international relations. Near the end one member said, *Well, at least we can be glad that the longest confrontation in modern times – the Cold War – is now at an end.* A wiser member replied, *The longest confrontation has been going on for 1400 years. In the 17th century the Islamists were at the gates of Vienna. And if we do nothing, they will soon be here again.*

The reality is that the West has grown careless because it has enjoyed a few centuries of untroubled supremacy. But history has shown the usual order of things. The Islamic world is fairly quiet for long periods and then there is an aggressive resurgence.

In AD 732 a Muslim army of as many as 200,000 men were defeated by the Christian Charles Martel at Tours. If that battle had been lost, all Europe would have fallen to militant Islam. In 1565 the relief of the Siege of Malta, by a Christian alliance, ensured that the Mediterranean did not fall into Muslim hands and so give them a toehold in southern Europe. Then came the Battle of Lepanto on 7th October 1571 when a fleet of the Holy League decisively defeated the main fleet of the Ottoman Empire.

Then there was that other 11th September – 1683 when Christian armies under Jan Sobieski arrived at the gates of Vienna and defeated the last substantial Muslim incursion: the last, that is, before the one which we face at present. There is no doubt that militant Islam's current aggression – and its more subtle demographic incursion into Europe - will have to be firmly suppressed if the character of Europe as we know it is to survive. If the European powers cannot bring themselves to act firmly, then the continent will be dominated by the Islamic ideology within a generation.

What I have to say is shocking. But then I am speaking at a time of extreme crisis. What is certain is that the secular, politically-correct regimes of modern Europe have no power to repel militant Islam. Their true betrayal is that they have no desire to repel it. They are too busy Kowtowing to it. The secularists reserve their hatred for the Christian civilization which created them, gave them a decent set of political liberties, but which they now despise.

Our only hope is a revived Christianity, a rediscovery of the Church Militant. Like Charles Martel, like the heroes of Lepanto and the armies of Jan Sobieski, we must recover our faith and our courage. The future of Europe depends upon it.