

## The Raging Headache I Have

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In the book, "The Rage and the Pride," noted political interviewer, activist and writer Oriana Fallaci's shouts out her message of intolerance of fascism, disgruntlement with the Muslim world and spreads accolades for the Florentine world. However, her sentiments would be better expressed if she tempered her enormous ego and embraced some of the philosophies she briefly espouses in her discourse.

There is no question that Fallaci transcends the role of an impartial reporting journalist and is a meticulous and insightful writer and with a keen grasp of human nature, historical perspective, resistance movements and the anatomy of war. Her jabbing prose tenors similar to the (often regrettably) charismatic dictators she condemns. Make no mistake, if this manuscript was submitted by anyone without the interview clout and wartime credentials she carries, it would have been sorted into the same file as a Unabomber Manifesto of sorts. That being said, she is able to invoke significant passion intertwined with her a keen eye of the reasons why the Muslims and ... well everyone else ... are doomed to dislike each other to the point that an all out war of annihilation is the likely outcome. Incidentally, for someone who repeatedly voices her dislike for war, disinterest in god and unafraid of death, she does seem oddly fixed on all three topics.

Her impassioned plea for intellectual thought is undermined by her whining rants, chest thumping idle threats and self-indulgent recounting of her own morality (and mortality for that matter) while she ladles out generalizations and demeaning remarks devoid of empathy to some while gushing compliments towards others with little empirical support aside from an Italian last name or singular accomplishment that meets with her jaundiced approval.

Tell us again how many men you've kicked in the groin and how many men ogled

at your <<ancient>> body. Cripes, now I don't mean to generalize national personalities here, but Italian men are somewhat known to catcall women and have rarely been accused of being progressive at all in attitudes towards women. And while Fallaci repeatedly reminds us that she is an atheist, her Italian-ness lumps her in with her Catholic countrywo/men who have wrecked atrocities throughout several continents in ways that the Taliban haven't even dreamed of yet (anthrax vs. burned at the stake - you choose). Perhaps a chapter on the Hindu's belief in karma would have lent more than a bit of irony the rant.

I did hope for a revelation of sorts when Ms. Fallaci visited with the exceptional Dalai Lama. His pleasant words and gentle insights were a relief to my ears after wading through the negative diatribes. For a few brief moments, it seemed that Oriana let her guard (apparently as thick as armadillo hide) down as she toyed with embracing his path of non-violence and acceptance of the forces at work that cause the misery - and for all Oriana's grisly bouts with war, the Dalai Lama is her match. Yet, while she graces him with her fleeting affections (though a lot of good that does a celibate monk), she rapidly returns to her condemnation of an ever-growing stack of enemies from the disenfranchised to misguided to under informed.

While Fallaci is clearly a writer of impact and strength, perhaps she should have extended her self imposed silence a bit longer until she had a chance to look in the mirror, check her ego and perhaps offer some conjecture of a solution besides <<these bad people are dangerous and strange in their ways thus we must fight before we are destroyed>>.

Now there are economic, populist politics and social justice considerations at play here which I will touch on only briefly.

Muslim countries tend to be less developed (the reasons for this are often by design but I digress) and the bulk of the people in them tend to be poorer than in

the (ahem) first world. This leaves them ripe for the fervor created around religious fanaticism. Even with all dogmatic reasons withstanding, hungry people can easily be swayed to anger against those with more material wealth by wrapping an angst-ridden message with a combination of a) religion b) patriotism and/or c) revenge/greed. Italy's involvement in both WW1 and 2 was little different. At no point did Italy even make the pretence of taking the "moral high ground." In WW1, blinded by greed, the Italians hopped into the fray in a nationalistic surge thinking of the skirmish as an easy way to gain more land and prestige. The efforts failed miserably (600,000 dead) and in the ensuing economic depression, the pendulum swung the other way and the majority of the fickle Italians embraced Mussolini's shtick which doesn't sound dissimilar to the rhetoric we hear from bin-Laden/HussienArafat/Gaddafi/Khomnei/Yusef-Islam or whomever the despised Muslim leader du jour is. Point being, combine hungry and under educated people living in unpleasant conditions and shake vigorously with religious fanaticism (or lack of it with the Communists), add a coating of flag waving quasi patriotism and top with a pretext of an old feud dating back dozens of hundreds of years and you got a tinderbox no matter which religion/culture/climate you are dealing with.

Next ...Today I witnessed "state of the city" speeches by the 3 local mayors and the local county executive. By far the most engaging speaker managed to go well over his time limit, mug repeatedly for the camera, gave his wife flowers and related a long-winded anecdote with absolutely no relevance to the topic. Yet his rallying appeal for an interesting but non-controversial and less important issue in his speech eclipsed the other speakers' more informative and practical presentations. He stole the show with anecdotes and presence in a similar way as the promise of "cheap license registration" continues to cripple the state's pathetic transportation system while they scramble to raise beer tax to fill the general fund (by the way, what happened to the surplus of a few years ago?). The point here is it doesn't take a brilliant thinker to stir the crowd in a direction, no matter how benign or combustible - it does require timing, knowing your

audience and something sometimes called charisma, sometimes called intangibles, sometimes called mojo. No matter, some "leaders" tap it well and are able to steer the general public mentality past the consequences and bring them on board (especially if they are hungry, in fear of the wrath of god or under-educated). Unfortunately for many non-Muslim nations (and non communist countries for that matter), several Muslim clerics/politicos have successfully completed this course in "influencing your sheep and irritating your enemy" and are managing to lure affected people into some dangerous exploits. This is human nature and evolution won't work fast enough to change it.

Another disconcerting by-product of integrating visible religious minority cultures into other cultures dominated by other religions is that all of the religions in the land are supervised by a common secular government. For example, while growing up in the Vancouver BC suburbs, what seemed like the entire Sikh population of India moved to my neighborhood over the course of a few years. My school was filled with the training-turbans, restaurants were bought by immigrant entrepreneurs and changed, stores displayed signs only in Punjabi, large groups of old men wandered the neighborhoods with long robes, beards, turbans and often decorative saber swords. In retrospect, oddly enough it wasn't that big of a deal (though the neighborhood strong smells around dinner time would melt my eyes while delivering newspapers). When problems did start occurring is when the immigrants would move several families into a single family residence, creating illegal apartment suites, parking far too many vehicles, including dump trucks, on their yards, alienating themselves from the easy-going communities. In Canada there are zoning and building permit laws, as well as laws as about human rights, public health as well as employment legalities, insurance and the like that these immigrants didn't really seem to understand applied to them. The enforcement was difficult as there was no apparatus designed to deal with the cultural gaps with this rather mysterious religion (I am still not sure what is all about to be honest though I know the food better mmmm). Soon though, the Sikh population established themselves in every

industry and many political offices and worked positively for change and fostering respect and mutual benefit. Years later, immigrants still arrive, often motivated to excited to embark on economy boosting entrepreneurial endeavors or menial labor jobs which are often hard to fill with an increasingly educated population. The Sikhs are happy to be out the Hindu/Muslim sandwich (which they have the British to thank for) and all in all the Vancouver area is better for it.

What happens though when punishment for religious laws (particularly against women) is exacted in the home in a country where such things are illegal? Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn dared to ask and purported a policy where immigrants would be encouraged to integrate into normal Dutch life where women (and men too) can do as they please without suffering "religious" punishment in the home or mosque. Well Pim was branded a right wing racist and fascist (imagine when an openly gay man is described as right wing in American politics) and shot dead by animal right activists. Where Pim was right perhaps is that immigrants populations often group themselves into small geographical enclaves and insulate themselves from the customs and laws of the new country, somewhat intentionally ghettoizing themselves in an attempt to maintain control over their families/congregations etc. rather than subjugate to local governance. So at what point does freedom of religion take a back seat to human rights or other secular laws?