



mentored a generation of young Indians writing in English, and spoken out against obscurantism and religious bigotry of every stripe. He has also witnessed -- mirrored in his own predicament -- the consequences of a Europe too paralyzed by deathwish multiculturalism and moral relativism to recognize the danger it faces. It has become a continent where an Islamist stabs a film director in broad daylight in Amsterdam, where bombs go off in Madrid commuter trains and London buses, where writers, directors and cartoonists suddenly find themselves bound by sensitivities imported not merely from alien lands but from another age altogether.

No Western country has done more to accommodate Islamists than Britain, and none better shows the folly of this course. Successive governments feted organizations such as the Muslim Council of Britain and the Muslim Public Affairs Committee, and welcomed as refugees a stable of jihadist clerics, including the Syrian-born Omar Bakri Muhammad and the hook-handed Abu Hamza al-Masri. Rather than moderate Muslim passions, this climate of permissiveness gave us Richard Reid the shoe bomber, Daniel Pearl's murderer, Omar Saeed Sheikh, the quartet behind the 2005 London bombings and the plotters who ensured that we must now worry about carrying moisturizing lotion and baby formula each time we board an airplane. A recent poll by Policy Exchange, a London think tank, shows that 28% of British Muslims would rather live under Shariah than under British law.

But at last it looks like the pendulum has begun to swing the other way. Mr. Rushdie's elevation signals an intention to draw a line between respecting Islam and allowing a small minority of Islamists to impose their hairtrigger hysteria on secular Muslims and non-Muslims. It highlights two of the core values of Western civilization conspicuously absent in most of the Muslim world: freedom of speech and freedom of inquiry. It squarely rejects the notion that the fossilized norms of Mecca and Mashhad hold sway over Manchester and Middlesex, and beyond them, over Malmo and Minneapolis. Above all, it honors a brave man who has come to symbolize our turbulent times. A little old-fashioned British spine has never been more welcome.

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