

SADDAM AND HIS EXECUTIONERS: A TALE OF TRIBAL SAVAGERY

By Claude Moniquet, President of ESISC

Let's start by making one point perfectly clear: the point of this editorial is not to offer pity to Saddam Hussein or, as too many good European souls have been doing, to contritely rant that the death penalty is monstrous. So let's settle this issue: **did the Nazi war criminals hanged at Nuremberg deserve to die? Yes, I think that they definitely deserved their fate.** Did Stalin's executioner, Lavrentiy Beria, deserve to die? Yes. Did those responsible for the genocidal acts committed by the Khmer Rouge or in Rwanda deserve the death penalty? Yes, I believe so. I think that, when it comes to crimes against groups of people, some of these acts are so abominable, so *inhuman*, that those who are responsible for them have thus removed themselves from the human race. And **if anyone deserved the noose, it was none other than Saddam Hussein**, who butchered his own people, who ordered his opponents to be tortured and slaughtered, who massacred Shiites and gassed Kurds (and Iranian children and soldiers whom the madman Khomeini hurled onto the battlefield, at a time when Hussein was backed by the United States and France). **But here's the thing: without questioning Hussein's sentence, the way in which it was carried out clearly reflects barbarity. And it reveals a monstrous political error.**

First of all, there is a question of principles: if the US-led international coalition invaded Iraq – and we believe that they were right to do so – they did so for lofty principles and to establish democracy. **The dance of death that was observed before and after Hussein's death contradicts these lofty principles and has nothing to do with democracy. It smacks, neither more nor less, of tribal savagery at its most primitive, at its purest. And we have weighed our words, even if they are not politically correct.**

Then there are the politics involved: it is clear that Iraq can only be rebuilt if the communities that comprise the country—the Sunnis, Shiites, Kurds, the Muslims and Christians—can reconcile. It would be an understatement to say that what took place during Hussein's final moments is not conducive to this process.

Lastly, there is the issue of the amount of confidence that can be placed in the Iraqi government. The (undeniable) democratic process initiated by the international intervention has led to **free elections that, unfortunately, have given power to an extremist Shiite clique that is largely pro-Iran and is backed by terrorist Moqtada Sadr.** A terrorist whose name was chanted by the executioners when the former dictator was put to death. Caught between two insults. This coalition is headed by Mr Nouri al-Maliki, the Prime Minister who promised to restore order and re-establish justice. And what have we seen? **The blind attacks perpetrated by Sunni terrorists – Baathists or al-Qaeda supporters – that have been killing tens of victims each day, have been met with acts of violence committed by a heavily Shiite-dominated police force that has created death squads that are free to abduct, torture, and murder. And this has also led to scores of killings.** How could we think that al-Maliki is going to rectify the situation (and let's say that he sincerely wants this...) in a country

that is in the midst of a civil war? As **Jim Hoagland** wrote in today's *Washington Post*, the leader could not even establish a semblance of order and dignity in the execution chamber, where only about twenty hand-picked close associates were admitted...

Hussein was an abject, bloody tyrant who met the fate that he deserved and for which he alone was responsible.

But our responsibility is to make sure that an old evil is not replaced with a new one. Hussein's executioners revealed the faces of barbarians who are taking advantage of the foreign intervention that has given them freedom (a freedom that they would have indeed been unable to win by themselves) to settle their sectarian scores using the savagery that they are claiming to eradicate. Is this why so many soldiers from the United States and other nations – and so many civilians – are dying each day? To paraphrase cynic Joseph Fouché¹, the failure to use what took place several days ago as an opportunity to call Iraq's leaders to order ***would be worse than a crime. It would be wrong...***

¹ He also commented on the execution of the Duke of Enghien on 21st March 1804.