



REVIVAL OF ISLAM

The cry can be heard around the globe: Revival is coming! Revival is coming to the Middle East! But this is not the kind of revival you and I may think about when we hear that word...not the tent meetings of our childhood, with their sawdust trails and mourner's benches, or the football stadiums filled to capacity with those who traveled from miles around to hear Dr. Billy Graham. It's not even the weekend revival with a special guest speaker or a Christian rock band, or the campmeeting programs that abound on religious broadcasting networks.

No, this revival will be vastly different and infinitely more deadly. It is a revival of the desire inherent in jihadists for a worldwide caliphate (a form of government that draws its authority from *Shari'a* law), a revival of Islam and its twisted, demon-inspired desire to see every knee bow to Allah and every tongue confess that there is but one god—Allah—and Mohammed is his messenger.

The revivals of our childhood were designed to bring men and women inside and outside the Church to repentance. The purpose was to renew the fire of love for Christ and for His Word. They were designed to bring believers closer to God and make them better people—more Christlike, more loving, and more determined to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

This newest revival fire is the essence of *jihad*, a holy war waged by Muslims against infidels—and all who disagree with jihadists are infidels regardless of religious affiliation. Perhaps this is a lesson President Barack Obama, ever the Pollyanna, needs to learn. When invited to address a group of students at the famed St. Xavier's College in Mumbai,



India, the president was asked his opinion of jihadists. His answer is most enlightening:

The phrase *jihad* has a lot of meanings within Islam and is subject to different interpretations. Islam is one of the world's great religions. More than a billion people who practise Islam. The overwhelming majority view their obligations to their religion as ones that reaffirm peace, fairness, tolerance. All of us recognize that this great religion in the hands of a few extremists has been distorted to violence, which is never justified. One of the challenges we face is, how do we isolate those who have these distorted notions of religious war? We can all treat each other with respect and mutual dignity. We should try to live up to universal principles and ideals that Gandhi so fought for. We live in nations of diverse religious beliefs. It's a major challenge in India and around the world. Young people can make a huge impact in reaffirming that you can be a strong observer of your faith, without putting somebody else down or visiting violence on somebody else. I think a lot of these ideas are formed very early and how you respond to each other is going to be as important as any speech that a president makes in encouraging the kind of religious tolerance that is so important, in a world that is getting smaller and smaller. More and more people of different background and different territories and ethnicities are interacting and learning from each other. All of us have to fundamentally reject the notion that violence is the way to mediate our differences.¹⁰

I can but wonder if presidential rhetoric can overcome the wild-eyed radical with his or her hand on the plunger of a backpack filled to capacity with plastic explosives, nails, screws, glass, ball-bearings,

and other instruments of torture designed to wreak maximum damage on innocent civilians nearby. There is no remorse at the jihadist revival. There is no repentance, no turn from hatred and evil toward love and good. There is only revulsion for the Jew, the Christian, and even for the Muslim who dares to disagree. You must bow your knee to Allah or die in the conflagration of the jihadist battle for supremacy on Earth. That is the underlying principal of *jihad*.

One of the difficulties with revival in the Middle East is that no one seems to know exactly who the players are. It is difficult to align with the “right” side when the soldiers wear no uniforms and the man or woman or even the child next door—no matter the race or country of origin—could be as much a threat as the fanatic halfway around the world. The lines of terrorism have become so blurred, so ameliorated, that we no longer hear the phrase “War on Terror.”

Since George W. Bush left office, the definition of the battle in which we daily fight has succumbed to political correctness. We now talk of the “enduring struggle against terrorism and extremism” or the “ongoing struggle.” It has also been referred to by the almost romantic moniker “twilight struggle.”¹¹ This is no struggle; it is war. As I wrote in the Introduction, it is a war between two spirits and two books.

Since taking office President Obama has done everything possible to court the Muslim world—from toning down the rhetoric used to refer to the conflict to choosing an Arab network for his first televised interview. He has bowed awkwardly to the King of Saudi Arabia and taken the administration’s dog and pony show to Cairo for a broadcast designed to win over the fanatics who simply want us dead, period.

The current Islamic revival seems to have begun sometime in the 1970s. During that decade the world began to see more overt signs of the growing influence of Islam in countries outside predominately Muslim nations. It manifested in a resurgence of Islamic culture, dress, division of the sexes, the introduction of *Shari’a* law, and the inclusion of Islamic terms in general conversation. Another sign of the resurgence of Islam was the increase of attendance during the Hajj—or annual

pilgrimage—to Mecca. What had been a relatively small gathering of some 90,000 in 1926 has grown to over 2 million.¹² Attendance would be exponentially larger except that many adherents of Islam are too poor to afford the trip to Mecca.

There are those Muslim historians who believe that just as the Christian Church has experienced periods of revival—with men like Martin Luther, John and Charles Wesley, Dwight L. Moody, Billy Sunday, Hudson Taylor, and of course, Azusa Street¹³ in Los Angeles in 1906—so the Muslim community experiences waves of revival. Academic Michael Cook wrote:

What is striking about the Islamic world is that, of all the major cultural domains, it seems to have been the least penetrated by irreligion; and in the last few decades, it has been the fundamentalists who have increasingly represented the cutting edge of the culture.¹⁴

The men credited with keeping the flame alive before the 1970s are hardly household names: Jamal-al-Din Afghani (who has been called “one of the most influential Muslim reformers of the nineteenth century;”¹⁵ Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928; and Rashid Rida. It was Rida who wrote concerning the importance of *Shari’a* law for the Muslim masses:

Those Muslim [rulers] who introduce novel laws today and forsake the *Shari’a* enjoined upon them by God... They thus abolish supposed distasteful penalties such as cutting off the hands of thieves or stoning adulterers and prostitutes. They replace them with man-made laws and penalties. He who does that has undeniably become an infidel.¹⁶

Under *Shari’a* law those who gamble or drink alcohol can be flogged; husbands are permitted to beat their wives for any infraction deemed inappropriate. In cases of an injury, the injured party can demand payment

in kind—an eye for an eye, limb for a limb. Regardless of gender, thieves can be punished by having a hand cut off, and highway robbery is punishable by crucifixion or mutilation. Homosexuality is punishable by execution. Adulterers may be stoned to death or beaten. Anyone who is openly critical of the Quran or *Shari'a* law can receive the death penalty.

Two actions in the 1970s are primarily responsible for the resurgence in Islamic fanaticism. The first was the emergence of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) on the world stage. In 1973, after gaining a major role in the pricing of crude oil, OPEC flexed its oil-gorged muscles and precipitously raised the price of a barrel of oil. It was a means of punishing the U.S. for resupplying Israel with weapons during the Yom Kippur War. Though not an attack with guns and explosives, the resulting rise in oil prices rocked global markets and created long lines at the gas pumps.

To cope with the rise in oil prices, smaller and more efficient cars were introduced to the consumer. As buyers became more energy conscious, demand decreased and OPEC lost its dominant place atop the world market. OPEC members began to quarrel among themselves, and new suppliers began to present a challenge. To counter the rise in alternate energy sources, Saudi Arabia increased its production, thereby pushing the price of crude down.

President Jimmy Carter feverishly tried to avoid another energy crisis during his precarious one-term presidency. In July of 1979 the situation exploded and Carter faced yet another calamity as OPEC announced additional price increases. Gasoline prices went through the roof, followed by purported shortages nationwide. The result was another series of long lines and short tempers at gas pumps. Gasoline that had sold for \$14 per barrel rose to \$40 per barrel on the spot market. Prior to that time, the price of OPEC oil had fluctuated between \$2.50 per barrel and \$14 per barrel.

James R. Schlesinger, Carter's energy secretary, lit a match to an already volatile situation when he reported to Congress that the energy crisis and lack of Iranian oil imports were "prospectively more serious"

than the oil embargo enforced by the Arabs in 1973.¹⁷

The second event that would rock the United States in particular and the world in general was the deposing of the Shah, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, and the return to Iran of the fanatical Shi'a imam, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

It is incomprehensible to think that Khomeini could so mesmerize the majority of an entire nation with his persuasive rhetoric that the populace would blindly follow him. Khomeini had promised what would be in American political terms "a car in every garage, and a chicken in every pot," and they believed him. Much like Jimmy Carter, Khomeini championed everything but promised nothing in the way of programs to achieve his ends. Even though he emphasized "change," Khomeini offered no plan to implement change.

Khomeini had been in exile since 1963, first in Turkey and then in Najaf, Iraq. His exile was the direct result of political protests against the rule of the Shah. He opposed what he referred to as the "Westoxication"¹⁸ of the monarchy. He ranted against giving Iranian women the right to vote and called for the unification of the Muslim world. Khomeini spent a brief time under arrest in March 1963, but he soon returned to his fiery attacks against the Shah. He was arrested again in June of that year and spent two months in prison in Iraq. In October 1963 he urged an embargo on parliamentary elections; that cost him eight months in prison and then deportation.

Moving from Turkey to Najaf, Khomeini found himself in an important center of Shi'a piety. It was there that he established his reputation as an uncompromising opponent of Reza Pahlavi. Khomeini was to forever change the West's view of Iran and Shi'a Islam, and he would drastically change the future of one young revolutionary, Osama bin Laden, and a future politico, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

A CIA memorandum states, "While in Iraq, Khomeini began working closely with the Islamic Terrorist Group *Mujahedeen-e-Khalq* (the People's Strugglers). In late 1972 Khomeini issued a religious declaration, or *fatwa*, that enjoined faithful Shi'a to support the *Mujahedeen*

and called for the devout to provide funds for their use. The money was raised from the *ulema* (Muslim scholars trained in Islamic law) and in the bazaars and funneled to Khomeini, who in turn gave it to the terrorists.¹⁹ The Grand Ayatollah did, indeed, hold the strings of the purse filled with blood money from other Arab sources, including Libya and the PLO.

Two events then took place in Iran, both linked to the Shah and both spurring Khomeini and his followers to revenge. These two events essentially sealed the fate of the monarch. First, Ayatollah Hossein Ghaffari, a vocal critic of the Shah's regime, was allegedly tortured to death by Pahlavi's security forces. The cleric and Khomeini had corresponded during Khomeini's exile in Najaf; his death only added fuel to the Islamic revolutionary fires already burning in the Grand Ayatollah's bosom.

Second, in October 1977 Khomeini's son Mustafa died of bulimia with heart complications, but antigovernment forces pointed the finger at the Shah's secret police, SAVAK, and Mustafa was proclaimed a martyr. This only served to further incite Khomeini's followers against the Shah. While there were various groups opposing the Shah's regime, i.e., leftists, the People's Mujahedin of Iran (MEK), communists, and other groups, Khomeini had suddenly become the most popular opponent to Pahlavi's rule.

While the Shah made impressive internal changes, young men and women in Iran were swarming to radical Islam. Iran had never seen anything like this in its history. University students gathered at Islamic study centers to debate the imams of Shi'a Islam. Young women clothed themselves in the *chadors* (long black veils) that had been outlawed by the Shah. This new, radical Islam exploded on the campus of Tehran University in October 1977. A group of students calling for the isolation of women on campus rioted, leaving behind a trail of burned-out buses and broken windows.

Khomeini's ability to turn local mosques into cauldrons of revolutionary turmoil was absolutely remarkable given the territorial nature of the mullahs and other ayatollahs. In a move that, in hindsight, was one

of the most imprudent decisions by the Shah, Pahlavi freed a number of pro-Khomeini mullahs from Iran's prisons in 1978. These disgruntled clerics bent on revenge gladly joined Khomeini's underground and were among the many whose mosques were made available to the radicals.

The network of mosques proved to be much more effective than the efforts of the National Front. Khomeini was slow, methodical, and determined to seek revenge against his adversary, the Shah, no matter the time or cost in money or lives. The Grand Ayatollah recruited from the ranks of mid-level mullahs who whipped their followers into rabid, pro-Khomeini militants.

The ayatollah's charisma was especially appealing to the lower classes, the *mostazafin*...the dispossessed. They saw him as their savior, the one who would rescue them from their lives of toil. Ahmad Ashraf wrote of the Ayatollah: "Khomeini gave the masses a sense of personal integrity, of collective identity, of historical rootedness, and feelings of pride and superiority."²⁰

The Carter administration opted to join forces with Khomeini's choice for prime minister, Mehdi Bazargan, a weak and ineffective puppet, rather than back the Shah's choice, Shaphur Bakhtiar. In less than eight short months, Bazargan would be ousted and Khomeini would choose as Prime Minister Mohammad-Ali Rajai. He was a member of the Islamic Republican Party, which had been formed specifically to help Khomeini achieve his objective of an Islamic republic. It was disbanded in 1987—mission accomplished.