

# The Mind of Jihad

LAURENT MURAWIEC



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

# Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page</i> vii
Introduction	i
1 “We Love Death”	5
2 “An Elite of Amoral Supermen”	59
3 The Gnostic Mahdi	90
4 Manichean Tribalism	132
5 The Odd Pedigree of Modern Jihad	169
6 The Mutated Virus: “Islamic Revolution”	256
7 Jihad as Terror	295
Conclusion	324
<i>Index</i>	327

## Introduction

“It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma,” Winston Churchill said of Russia in a radio broadcast in October 1939. To forecast its future course he added, “perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest.” Today, however, rational self-interest has proven a poor guide to understanding the war waged against the West that so deeply troubles us. The motive force that drives the players, the policies of the players, and the religion that inspires them have all proven altogether immune to the standard calculus of self-interest.

Even several decades into the irregular war waged by the jihadi world against the West, this new Sphinx still transfixes us to the point of making our societies unable to answer the fateful question upon which hinges their fate. Many explanations are proffered, and some do shed light upon the matter, but the nature of modern and contemporary jihad often remains shrouded in darkness: The analyses offered, regrettably, are frequently monocausal and often fit their author’s particular agenda more than the facts of the matter. Many cogent approaches have yielded enlightening results but they have made little headway toward informing policy makers and public opinion, both engulfed in confusion.

The expressions “war on terror” or “terrorism” have been justly criticized; they err gravely by focusing upon the tool and do not even properly capture the essence of terror as a continuation of politics, of terror as a system of power: By drawing attention to the terrorist act, they remove it from context, history, and etiology. They not only lose sight of the mind holding the weapon, but they ignore the mind moving the minds: “the mind of jihad.”

This research started more than a decade ago, when I began working on a project to chart the “spirit of nations” of important cultures and civilizations. Under that title, a transparent homage to Montesquieu’s *L’Esprit des*

lois, I published the first results regarding China, Japan, India, and Russia as *L'Esprit des Nations*. A second volume was going to be devoted to the world of Islam. I had been gathering materials for several years when the thunderbolt of September 11, 2001, gave my work greater urgency. The research was equally grounded in the object's history, its theology, its religion, its sociology, and its anthropology. As the analyst of war Bernard Brodie so cogently put it: "Good strategy presumes good anthropology and sociology. Some of the greatest military blunders of all times have resulted from juvenile evaluations in this department." I had hypothesized that the politics of nations was their theology diluted; in no case was this truer than in that of the world of Islam. All my work on the subject is built on that assumption. How could events, trends, and developments that occur in the world of Islam not be based on Islam?

The starting point, though, was an investigation into what could be called "the Arab way of war." Just as Victor Davis Hanson has shown that cultures wage wars in ways that fit their specific outlook and sociology, I sought to establish a causal connection between the tribal and nomadic way of life of the Arabs in history and the way in which terrorist warfare was practiced. This conception soon proved to be too narrow, and I was forced to abandon it, or rather to broaden it considerably: The matter was rooted in Islam, including in the complex relationship between the religion and the people of its birth. It was a matter of the mind.

It was not the last surprise this venture held in store for me: Time and again, I had to jettison my initial hypothesis and feel my way into unexpected pathways. If wonderment is the beginning of science, it never failed to force me to reassess my own conclusions. I discarded the notion of an Arab way of war as I realized in the action of the jihadis the exceptional prevalence of a cult of violence, of a glee to inflict suffering, in short, of a bloodlust that had little if any counterpart. This led to an investigation of an underlying "theology of death," which soon turned out to be the kernel of the jihadi outlook. Chapter 1, "We Love Death," accounts for this discovery.

The next surprise occurred as I sought to find comparable events, conceptions and practices in history. It turned out that the closest peers of the contemporary jihadis were the medieval millenarians of Europe with their Gnostic world-outlook and their own bloodlust. Across the divide of vastly different cultural idioms and religious beliefs, a striking similarity pointed to the etiology of utopia: Sectarian eschatological movements tend to breed behaviors of a similar nature. The conviction that one knows God's will is heavy stuff that often leads to shedding torrents of blood in the name of

one's mission. Living in a "second reality" deemed superior to the "real" reality shared by the rest of mankind is a recipe for mass murder. This matter is presented in Chapter 2, "An Elite of Amoral Supermen."

The Gnostic inspiration of modern jihad, however similar to its earlier European counterparts, had to make sense within the world of Islam, its law, and its customs. It had to be authentic and organic. One concept emerged to embody revolutionary millenarianism within Islam, that of the Mahdi, the expected and divinely guided one who will appear at the end of times to set the world right. Muslim apocalypics, I had to discover, were never far from the mind of jihad, to the point that radical Islam was synonymous with Mahdism, the politicized version of the religious concept. This story is developed in Chapter 3, "The Gnostic Mahdi."

Cleaving the world between elects and damned, between the elects' territory and that of the rest, the separation of the human race between an "inside" and an "outside," irresistibly pointed to the spontaneous outlook of tribal societies, the radical split between "us" and "them." A tribal matrix had to be operative: I examined the nature and the implications of the concepts of *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-Harb*, the two abodes into which the world is sundered, and their mutual relationship in Chapter 4, "Manichean Tribalism."

I had long been tantalized by a certain "Leninist" tonality to many texts written by the leading ideologues of radical Islam, such as Abu Ala Maududi or Sayyid Qutb. Lines of communication between Bolsheviks and jihadis were not immediately apparent. What this inquiry dug up was one of the strangest revelations: I uncovered a lavish pattern of relations between radical Islam and Soviet communism, starting in the earliest days of Lenin's putsch, and, essentially, never ending. Strangely, this pattern had started with the First World War's "Jihad Made in Germany" before mutating into a Soviet-Muslim affair: What is reported in Chapter 5, "The Odd Pedigree of Modern Jihad," deserved sustained attention.

It was now possible to address the bizarre concept of "Islamic Revolution," which became so central to radical Islam. The intellectual "greenhouses," the cooperation between Shiites and Sunni, the Muslim Brothers, the ayatollahs, and the South Asian Muslims, which together created the contemporary jihadi ideology is the object of Chapter 6, "The Mutated Virus: 'Islamic Revolution.'"

Finally, reverting to the starting point, it became possible to address the question of "terror." Examining crucial turning points in modern jihadi action, Chapter 7, "Jihad as Terror," tried to establish how the Quranic

concept of war – “to strike terror in the heart of the enemy” – has morphed in modern times into a compound of Gnostic cult, tribal outlook, Islamic jihad, and Bolshevik terror. It has been the aim of this book to explore how this happened and what it generated.

*Washington, DC, September 2004–September 2007*

## The Mutated Virus

### “Islamic Revolution”

A further reason for my hatred of National Socialism and other ideologies is quite a primitive one. I have an aversion to killing people for the fun of it. What the fun is, I did not quite understand at the time, but in the intervening years the ample exploration of revolutionary consciousness has cast some light on this matter. The fun consists in gaining a pseudo-identity through asserting one’s power, optimally by killing somebody – a pseudo-identity that serves as a substitute for the human self that has been lost.

Eric Voegelin<sup>1</sup>

### Stealthy Borrowing

Prior to the twentieth century, the term *revolution* had never been applied to Islam or things Islamic. The juridical and theological framework of Islam radically preclude any notion of “revolution.”

Islam conceives of itself as the perfect political system, since it flows from a perfect revelation. It derives its entire body of law from God’s *expressis verbis* prescription. There is no conceivable change in a system of that kind. As Ayatollah Khomeini famously said, “You have no need for new legislation; simply put into effect that which has already been legislated for you. This will save you a good deal of time and effort. . . . Everything, praise be to God, is ready-made for use.”<sup>2</sup> Either a polity is ruled by God’s law, Sharia, in which case it is Muslim, or it is an infidel, pagan, a *jahili* society. If Sharia is

<sup>1</sup> Eric Voegelin, *Autobiographical Reflections*, Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 2006, pp. 46–7.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Martin Kramer, “Political Islam,” from Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, *al-Hukuma al-Islamiyya (The Islamic State)*, p. 134.

not being followed, this is a *prima facie* case of *fitna* ("sedition," "disorder," "troubles") a highly charged term describing an appalling situation wherein the normal course of things must urgently be reestablished.

In a situation where un-Islamic accretions have disfigured "genuine" (original) Islam, allowance is made for the *mujaddid*, the renovator said to appear every century to cleanse the body of Islam. The notion is based on a particular hadith: "Surely, Allah will send for this *Umma* at the advent of every hundred years a person (or persons) who will renovate its religion for it."<sup>3</sup> This "renovation" makes it "as new," it does not renew it. The distinction is fundamental: after the advent of the seal of the prophets, Muhammad, no adjunction is licit or even possible; the renovation, *tajdid*, restores the original beliefs and practices. The *mujaddid* is not like the prophet or the Messenger. He is the one who recreates and demarcates the authentic sunna from the counterfeit *bida*. Islam makes provision for what it terms "reform," a radical return to its postulated roots, the "ready-made" Islam.

Given this, revolution in the Islamic polity is a theoretical impossibility. There may be vicissitudes of fortune for the ruler, or the wheel of fate may favor some other leader; there may be rebellion or insurrection; but there will be no revolution.<sup>4</sup>

In the European sense that spread to the rest of the world and was adopted by it, revolution is opposed to mere rebellion, or rising, or disorder. It implies a radical change. The *Jacqueries* of yore were revolts; the French Revolution intended and partially succeeded in changing the order of things. But in turn, revolution was vested by history with two different meanings. The French Revolution intended to change human nature (Robespierre's "dictatorship of virtue") whereas England's Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution intended to bring the political order into conformity with the natural rights of man, and took full account of human nature to compose the new institutional arrangements.<sup>5</sup> Thenceforward, revolutions in the West and elsewhere were either of the one or the other type: the Anglo-Saxon "liberal" model intended to create equality of opportunity or

<sup>3</sup> Another hadith reports Muhammad as having said: "Verily, at the end of every century, Almighty Allah will send such a person to the *Umma*, who will revive the religion for them." Yet another one says: "Allah has indeed raised a *mujaddid* at the beginning of every century" or "Allah will raise a *mujaddid*."

<sup>4</sup> Bernard Lewis, *Islamic Concepts of Revolution*, in P. J. Vatikiotis, ed., *Revolution in the Middle East and Other Case Studies*, Totowa, NJ, Rowman & Littlefield, 1972, pp. 30-40.

<sup>5</sup> In particular, *Federalist Papers*, in George W. Carey and James McClellan, eds., *The Federalist*, Indianapolis, Liberty Fund, 2001, p. 10.



the French model with its equality of outcomes.<sup>6</sup> The former was built on tradition; the latter intended a *tabula rasa*.<sup>7</sup>

In the political language of Islam, “there was no positive term for the violent replacement of one regime by another until modern times, when the influence of the French Revolution, and of other European revolutions that followed it, percolated into Muslim political thought and language.” The word *thawra* (“rising,” “excitement,” “rebellion”) ended up as “the universal Arabic term for good or approved revolution.”<sup>8</sup>

Still, the Shiite Islamists who triumphed in Tehran in 1979 spoke of it as their “Islamic Revolution.” In a far-reaching statement of intent, the Ayatollah Khomeini had written: “Both the Shariah and common sense dictate that we do not let the existing governments persist in their [wrong] ways. . . . They have suspended the Shariah of God. For this reason it is the duty of all Muslims of the world, wherever they may happen to be, to rise up for the Islamic Revolution.”<sup>9</sup> Moderate Islamist Ibrahim Yazdi concurred: “Our revolution is Islamic. Let no one be in error about that.”<sup>10</sup> Article 2.5 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran clearly refers to the unorthodox notion of the “revolution of Islam” as follows, “continuous leadership (*imamah*) and perpetual guidance, and its fundamental role in ensuring the uninterrupted process of the revolution of Islam.”<sup>11</sup>

Abul Ala al-Maududi, one of the most influential figures of Sunni radicalism in the twentieth century, incessantly spoke of the need for an “Islamic Revolution.”

There is no doubt that all the Prophets of Allah, without exception, were Revolutionary Leaders, and the illustrious Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) was the greatest Revolutionary Leader of all. But there is something which distinguishes these Revolutionary Leaders who worshipped Allah alone, from the general, run-of-the-mill, worldly revolutionaries: these worldly revolutionaries, however honest and sincere their intentions may be, can never attain to a perfect level of justice and moderation,

he wrote in 1939. He added: “‘Muslims’ is the title of that ‘International Revolutionary Party’ organized by Islam to carry out its revolutionary program.

<sup>6</sup> Tocqueville, *La démocratie en Amérique, Œuvres, II*, Paris, Ed. de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1992; Tocqueville *L’Ancien régime & la Révolution, Œuvres, III*, Paris, Ed. de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> See Gertrud Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments*, New York, Knopf, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, pp. 95–6.

<sup>9</sup> Ayatollah Khomeini, “An Islamic State – Point of View,” in *Concept of the Islamic State*, London, Islamic Council of Europe, 1979, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Kramer, “Political Islam.”

<sup>11</sup> Mr. Ramin Parham brought this point to my attention.

'Jihad' refers to that revolutionary struggle and utmost exertion which the Islamic Nation/Party brings into play in order to achieve this objective."<sup>12</sup>

The same was true for his Egyptian friend and counterpart Sayyid Qutb, the ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood. "No God but God is a revolution against the worldly authority that usurps the first characteristics of divinity," writes Qutb, using the word *thawra*. Revolution to him is "the only credible instrument of attaining social justice and of applying the *sharia*."<sup>13</sup> He insists on "the necessity of revolution as the only proper remedy for decaying societies. *Zalzalab* (shaking) or revolution is the word used to describe the first step in the process of building a new society." Prophet Muhammad led the greatest revolution, Qutb insists, and this should be repeated. He calls for "the comprehensive revolution in the government of man in all its forms, shapes, systems and situations, and the complete rebellion against every situation [contrary to the principles of Islam] on the whole earth."<sup>14</sup>

To say the least, the convergence of such authorities of radical Islam, both Sunni and Shia, on an un-Islamic concept emanating from the West, is paradoxical. Coming from compulsive haters of everything Western, the choice may not be simply ascribed to a desire to imitate, or to Islamic leaders and thinkers taking a leaf from the "secular nationalists" of the Arab world, whom they spent lifetimes insulting and combating when not slaughtering or being slaughtered by each other – the Nassers, Assads, and Saddam Husseins. Their word choice, for sure, betrayed their intent to signal how radical the change they intended to wreak was since they seized on a word the twentieth-century *Zeitgeist* propagated everywhere. Still, Islamists eager to eradicate any *bida*, any innovation and accretion on the holy body of Islam posterior to the Golden Age, should not have been hobnobbing with the *Zeitgeist*. Yet hobnobbing they were.

In intercultural exchanges, the first elements adopted and absorbed by a culture from another one are those easiest to perceive and assimilate. In turn, those elements that are easiest to perceive and to assimilate are those most similar to the adopting culture. The greater the cultural distance, the greater the difficulty in assimilating. Facing European culture, it turned out that the Muslim and especially the Arab Middle East did not assimilate liberalism,

<sup>12</sup> Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi, *Jihad fi sabilillah (Jihad in Islam)*, Huda Khattab, ed., translated by Prof. Khushid Ahmad, London, UKIM Dawah Center, n.d.

<sup>13</sup> This and following quotes from Ahmad S. Moussalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Ideological and Political Discourse of Sayyid Qutb*, Beirut, American University of Beirut, 1992, pp. 200–3.

<sup>14</sup> Qutb, *Maalim fi al-Tariq [Milestones]*, pp. 69–71.

democracy, constitutionalism, pluralism, or federalism but hastily discarded them all as inefficient.<sup>15</sup> When the world stage was dominated by the rivalry between the “Anglo-Saxon” culture of pluralist democracy, and Prussian-inspired authoritarianism, the heart of the Arab elites throbbed for the latter. When this was vanquished, its tyrannical successors, Soviet Bolshevism, Italian fascism, and German national socialism became the rage of the Arab and much of the Muslim world – in succession or simultaneously.

Muslims were attracted to those elements they recognized. Political pluralism was inconceivable in the cultural and intellectual terms of reference of the Muslim Middle East: Power there has ever been one, centralized and indivisible. Muslim culture is a culture of the One – *tawhid*, the unity of God, is reflected by unity on earth. The *umma* is and must be one; the Caliph is “God’s shadow on earth,” and thus sole ruler; all political relationships converge on a center.

The appeal of totalitarianism came not only from the efficacy ascribed to the totalitarian regimes; it also was culturally far easier to understand. *Ein Reich, ein Volk, ein Führer* had more allure than parliamentary debates, as had Stalin’s Five-Year Plan and NKVD (People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs) and Mussolini’s *stato totale* and the cries of *Duce! Duce!* That oneness was akin to something well understood in Islam, *tawhid*. As Maxime Rodinson, a French Marxist with strong feelings of sympathy for Islam, analyzed:

Islam has been totalitarian to an extreme. Indeed, in principle, it dominated every act and every thought of the faithful. This domination was symbolized, for instance, by the reciting of the *basmala* [*bismillab*] during even the most trivial actions, and by the hadith’s universal relevance. All actions, even those arising out of the most elementary biological needs, such as excretion and coition, were regulated by the ideological system. Even social actions of the kind which other cultures considered outside the realm of religion, be they technical, economic or artistic, were integrated into the system and interpreted in terms of it. . . . This totalitarian aspect of Muslim ideology persisted for a considerable time.<sup>16</sup>

As the conveying of European concepts to the Middle East proceeded, the transfers concerned in priority those elements that were compatible with Middle Eastern culture.

<sup>15</sup> See especially Hourani, *Arab Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1962; Kedourie, *Democracy and Arab Political Culture*, London, Frank Cass, 1994.

<sup>16</sup> Maxime Rodinson, *Marxism and the Muslim World*, translated by Michael Pallis, London: Zed Press, 1979, pp. 41–2.

How did revolution come to the jihadis? What else did they borrow? What mixture came out of the witches' cauldron where the new ingredients were mixed with the jihad of old? These are the questions we will now try to answer by looking at Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi, founder of Pakistan's *Jamaat-i Islami*, the intellectual godfather of the modern radical Islamist movement, the correspondent of Sayyid Qutb and Ruhollah Khomeini, and the original standard-bearer of the "Islamic Revolution."

### Maududi, the Terrible Simplificateur

In the Islamic universe Maududi is the purest modern embodiment of medieval Europe's millenarian prophetae. His person and work concentrate almost all the characteristics of the Gnostic ideologue and leader described in Norman Cohn's *Pursuit of the Millenium*. Maududi, like the prophetae of old, was largely self-taught, and "never felt himself tied to any school of theological thought as are the *ulama* who graduate from the great traditional establishments of Deoband or Lucknow."<sup>17</sup> He was a *déclassé*, whose aristocratic lineage and family intimacy with the Moghol court had given way to lean times; he had to leave school at 15 to earn his keep. The self-developed intellectual undertook "to reconstruct the religious thought of Islam" on grounds he alone selected.<sup>18</sup> Unshackled by obeisance to tradition, conceiving of himself as a self-created, "born-again" Muslim. ("In reality, I am a new Muslim."<sup>19</sup>) Maududi practiced his own *ijtihad* without being acknowledged by the Sunni world as worthy of this rare badge. He "overthrew the authorized interpreters of the Law."<sup>20</sup> He acted and thought like a prophet, and, as we will see, as a quasi-Mahdi. The dimension of his mission was unlimited: "Now the only way open for reform and resuscitation is to rejuvenate Islam as a movement and to revive the meaning of the word Muslim anew," Maududi wrote.<sup>21</sup>

His undertaking was based on a novel consideration, namely that "Islam is one rational whole." This he did by "reconstructing the entire history

<sup>17</sup> Marcel Gaboriau, "Le néo-fondamentalisme au Pakistan: Maududi et la Jamiaat Islami," in Olivier Carré and Paul Dumont, *Radicalismes islamiques*, vol. 2, *Maroc, Pakistan, Inde, Yougoslavie, Mali*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1986, pp. 33-76.

<sup>18</sup> Gaboriau, "Le néo-fondamentalisme au Pakistan," loc.cit., pp. 38, 40.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted by Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Maududi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 31.

<sup>20</sup> Gaboriau, "Le néo-fondamentalisme au Pakistan," p. 46.

<sup>21</sup> Abul Ala Maududi, *Musalman awr maujutab siyas*, Lahore, Kashmakash, 1940, 3:31, quoted in Nasr, *Maududi*, p. 55.

and thought of Islam in order to make it a rational whole. His presentation may seem to be simplistic and highly logical. He isolates the . . . cornerstone ideas of Islamic thought and orders them in a clear synthesis.”<sup>22</sup> Like the propheta, he needed to rebuild the entire edifice of his belief structure in ways that uniquely suited him:

Islam is not merely a religious creed or compound name for a few forms of worship, but a comprehensive system which envisages to annihilate all tyrannical and evil systems in the world and enforces its own program of reform which it deems best for the well-being of mankind. Islam addresses its call for effecting this program of destruction and reconstruction, revolution and reform not to just one nation, but to all humanity.<sup>23</sup>

His construct was an abstract-logical reconstruction that excluded considerations of facts. It was a “shocking method of argument and treatment of facts . . . [and] writing to a predetermined conclusion.”<sup>24</sup> *Islam and the World*, Maududi’s magnum opus, is a strange compendium of bite-size tidbits of knowledge, mythographic pseudohistory, Quranic quotes, and peremptory assertions, all designed to prove his overarching point. In order to do that, Maududi needed to “erase thirteen centuries of history with all the social and political arrangements that intervened in that period. . . . Between his doctrine and the traditional sources of law [*fiqh*] and theology, there is nothing; no school of thought, no mystical tradition, nothing, save Maududi himself.”<sup>25</sup>

Maududi does away with the depth of history between the Prophetic Age of Muhammad and the “well-guided caliphs,” and his “break with the past allows the irruption of modern and innovative aspects.”<sup>26</sup> But in order to do so, the charismatic leader of the *Jamiaat Islami* had to make himself into a *mujaddid*, the renovator of Islam for a century. In his words, which amount to a self-portrait:

Though a *mujaddid* is not a prophet, yet in spirit he comes very close to prophethood. He is characterized by a clear mind, penetrating vision, unbiased straight thinking, special ability to see the right path, clear of all extremes, and keep balance, power to think independently of the contemporary and centuries-old social and other prejudices, courage to fight against the evils of the time, inherent ability to lead and

<sup>22</sup> Gaboriau, “Le néo-fondamentalisme au Pakistan,” p. 44.

<sup>23</sup> Sayed Abul Ala Maududi, *Jihad in Islam*, Lahore, Islamic Publications, 1998–2001, p. 19.

<sup>24</sup> Nasr, *Maududi*, p. 130.

<sup>25</sup> Gaboriau, “Le néo-fondamentalisme au Pakistan,” p. 70.

<sup>26</sup> Gaboriau, “Le néo-fondamentalisme au Pakistan,” p. 58.

guide, and an unusual competency to undertake *ijtihad* and the work of reconstruction.<sup>27</sup>

For a Muslim, a claim of "coming very close to prophethood" comes very close to blasphemy. This was one of the reasons why the Deobandi school ultimately pronounced the *takfir* against their former favorite, declaring Maududi to be a *kafr*, an unbeliever.<sup>28</sup> Yet Maududi went even further. He insisted that "[t]he ideal *mujaddid* (or *Imam al-Mahdi*) can be a true successor to Prophethood" and added: "If the expectation that Islam eventually will dominate the world of thought, culture, and politics is genuine, then the coming of a Great Leader under whose comprehensive and forceful leadership such Revolution is to come about is also certain." This millenarian self-appointment as quasi-prophet and great leader has no limits.

In my opinion the Coming One [the Mahdi] will be a most modern Leader of his age possessing an unusually deep insight in all the current branches of knowledge, and all the major problems of life. . . . Most probably he will not be aware of his being the promised Mahdi. People, however, will recognize him after his death to be the one who was to establish 'Caliphate after the pattern or Prophethood' as mentioned in the prophecies.

Maududi's personal role was of messianic proportions. "With extensive study and practice one can develop a power and can intuitively sense the wishes and desires of the Holy Prophet. . . . Thus . . . on seeing a *hadith*, I can tell whether the Holy Prophet could or could not have said it."<sup>29</sup> This extraordinary claim turned Maududi into the pinnacle and center of the world, the decisive historical figure of the age, which in turn gave him unlimited rights. He "was" Islam. His Islam was "a universal ideology."<sup>30</sup> His party was the party of God (*Hizb Allah*). The party was so tasked:

We must . . . create out of nothing a minority of pure upright and educated men, in the image of the first Companions of the Prophet. In short, people who, like Muhammad himself . . . will rebuild from top to bottom the edifice of the State. . . . There must exist an upright community devoted to the principle of truth, and whose sole goal in the world is to establish, to safeguard and to realize correctly the system of Truth.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Abul Ala Maududi, *A Short History of the Revivalist Movement in Islam*, Lahore, 1963, p. 35, quoted in Nasr, *Maududi*, p. 136.

<sup>28</sup> Gaboriau, "Le néo-fondamentalisme au Pakistan," p. 70.

<sup>29</sup> Abul Ala Maududi, *Mizajshinasi rasul*, Lahore, Tafhimat, 1965, 1:102, quoted in Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Maududi*, p. 137.

<sup>30</sup> Abul Ala Maududi, *Toward Understanding Islam*, 14th ed., 1976, quoted in Gaboriau, "Le néo-fondamentalisme au Pakistan," p. 43.

<sup>31</sup> Abul Ala Maududi, *Moral Foundations of the Islamic Government*, quoted in Gaboriau, "Lenéo-fondamentalisme au Pakistan," p. 51.

Let us sum up: a déclassé semi-intellectual with a powerful, charismatic personality sets himself up as a figure of Messianic qualities whose cosmic mission is to establish perfection on earth on behalf of and according to the prescriptions of God. He is the quasi-peer of the great prophetic figures, and is possessed of extraordinary abilities. He is also possessed of a complete knowledge of how to move the world from its present, desolate *nadir* to the zenith of perfection: He is a man with a plan. He expounds that plan, which encompasses all aspects of life. He will radically transform the entire order of the world and replace the destroyed old order by a new one according to the plan. His total knowledge allows him to pay no heed to traditions and their present bearers, since he is clearly vested by God with this stupendous mission. He is in charge of the immense bloodshed God requires for the Plan to be implemented. A population group is selected as representing Satan, and is liable to be destroyed.

In 1941, Maududi created the *Jamat-e-Islami* to implement the plan outlined here. In his conception, “[R]evolution did not involve society as a whole, it was *inqilab-i Imamat*, revolution in leadership.” Also: “[S]ocieties are built, structured, and continued from the top down by conscious manipulation of those in power.”<sup>32</sup> For all practical purposes, his party was established on a Leninist–Stalinist model. The Jamaat was a highly centralized party led by an *amir*, with a consultative council (central committee) and an executive committee (politburo). It had central departments for finances, propaganda, welfare, education and research, and parliamentary affairs, and parallel professional organizations for students, youth, labor, peasants, and ulama. The party’s nucleus was a core of professional revolutionaries, with a first circle of committed sympathizers and a second circle of more loosely connected supporters. The party recruited in the first place lower middle class semi-intellectuals who had not yet made it in the “modern” (English-speaking) sector of the economy. “In sum, most of the members of the Jamaat-i Islam came from layers of society that had a veneer of education but little means and little success.”<sup>33</sup>

The resemblance to the Soviet model was not limited to organizational similarities, as Maududi repeatedly expressed his admiration for totalitarian movements and parties, communist and fascist alike. His ambition was no less universal than theirs: “Islam has prescribed that through a systematic effort (*jihad*) – if necessary by means of war and bloodshed – all these [corrupt] governments should be wiped out. In their stead must be

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Nasr, *Maududi*, p. 77.

<sup>33</sup> Gaboriau, “Le néo-fondamentalisme au Pakistan,” pp. 51–8.

erected a just and equitable government based on the fear of God and established on the basis of the canons He ordained."<sup>34</sup> "In short, not only was 'Revolution' . . . an axis around which Maududi conducted his debate," but he "appropriat[ed] the myth of revolution" to apply it to "a utopian sociopolitical order," a biographer writes.<sup>35</sup> "Revolution" was not just a semantic loanword. In his *Jihad in Islam*, Maududi waxes endless on the subject:

Islam is not the name of a "religion," nor is "Muslim" the title of a "Nation." In reality, Islam is a revolutionary ideology and program which seeks to alter the social order of the whole world and rebuild it in conformity with its own tenets and ideals. "Muslim" is the title of the revolutionary party organized by Islam to carry into effect its revolutionary program and "jihad" refers to that revolutionary struggle and utmost exertion which the Islamic party brings into play to achieve this objective.<sup>36</sup>

Revolutionary jihad is defined:

Like all revolutionary ideologies, Islam shuns the use of current vocabulary and adapts a terminology of its own, so that its own revolutionary ideals may be distinguished from common ideals. The word "jihad" belongs to this particular terminology of Islam. Islam purposely rejected the word *harb* and other Arabic words bearing the same meaning of "war" and used the word "jihad" which is synonymous with "struggle." . . . The sole intent of Islam is the welfare of mankind. Islam has its own particular ideological standpoint and practical program to carry out reforms for the welfare of mankind. Islam wishes to destroy all states and governments on the face of the earth which are opposed to the ideology and program of Islam regardless of the country or the nation that rules it.<sup>37</sup>

Never one to spare emphasis, Maududi adds, "Islam requires the earth – not just a portion, but the whole planet." A "mental revolution" is needed; "a revolution in the system of life." Islam is a "revolutionary creed": "[It] was the call for a universal and complete revolution. . . . [T]he call of the Prophet was never a metaphysical proposition; it was a charter of social revolution. . . . There is no doubt that all the Prophets of God without exception were Revolutionary leaders, and the illustrious Prophet Muhammad . . . was the greatest revolutionary leader."<sup>38</sup>

Maududi politicizes religion. If Lenin and Hitler replaced God with a secular religion, Maududi turns religion into a political cause. "These men

<sup>34</sup> Abul Ala Maududi, *Al-Jihad fil Islam*, quoted in Gaboriau, "Le néo-fondamentalisme au Pakistan," p. 59.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Nasr, *Maududi*, pp. 71, 76.

<sup>36</sup> Abul Ala Maududi, *Jihad in Islam*, Lahore, Islamic Publications, 1998–2001, p. 8.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9–10.

<sup>38</sup> Maududi, *Jihad in Islam*, pp. 13, 14, 17.



who propagate religion are not mere preachers and missionaries, but the functionaries of God (so that they may be witnesses for the people), and it is their duty to wipe out oppression, mischief, strife, immorality, high-handedness and unlawful exploitation from the world by the force of arms.” What the communist utopia desired – the classless society, the liberation from the realm of necessity and the advent of the realm of freedom; what Nazism wanted – the unimpeded rule of the Race; Maududi’s Islam equally calls forth. All evils shall disappear, harmony will prevail, all troubles will vanish. God’s kingdom will be realized on earth.

What is so distinctive about Maududi and his co-thinkers – Sayyid Qutb, Ruhollah Khomeini, and their like – is the central role they award the state in their overall scheme. Islam does not separate “Mosque and State” in the sense that the same law, Sharia, applies to the public and the private realm, and the state is tasked first and foremost to ensure the implementation of Sharia. Islam is not a *theocracy* but a *logocracy*. And Quran, hadith, and Sharia are the only law.<sup>39</sup> But there has long been a pragmatic separation between the affairs of the state, the preserve of dynasts, and the affairs of religion, the realm of the *ulama*. The latter have traditionally shunned the affairs of state, the only condition being that the caliph, or any ruler for that matter, must not go against divine law. Even an impious scoundrel will legitimately be recognized as caliph, provided he does not try to hinder Sharia, says Sunni orthodoxy. It is a political quietism. As the great codifier of that orthodoxy al-Ghazali had it, any revolt was illegitimate, even against an oppressive and evil ruler, since it would likely generate anarchy and chaos. The radicals decisively broke with that hallowed doctrine and made the conquest of the state the central objective of their political action, as if Lenin’s *The State and Revolution* had become their bedtime reading.

So Maududi’s claim: “Hence this party [of God] is left with no other choice except to capture state authority.”<sup>40</sup> Why is this so? “Apart from reforming the world it becomes impossible for the party itself to act upon its ideals under an alien state system. No party which believes in the validity and righteousness of its own ideology can live according to its precepts under the rule of a system different from its own”: the absolutist claim of ideology to have unlimited writ. The example Maududi chooses to illustrate his assertion is noteworthy: “A man who believes in Communism cannot order his life on the principles of Communism while in England or in America, for the

<sup>39</sup> On logocracy, see Jean-Paul Charnay, *La charia et l’Occident*, Paris, Ed. de l’Herne, 2001.

<sup>40</sup> Maududi, *Jihad in Islam*, p. 21.

capitalistic state system will bear down on him with all its power and it will be quite impossible for him to escape the retribution of the ruling authority," he writes, not without some semantic legerdemain. He adds:

Likewise, it is impossible for a Muslim to succeed in his intention of observing the Islamic pattern of life under the authority of a non-Islamic system of government. All rules which he considers wrong; and taxes that he deems unlawful; all matters which he believes to be evil. The civilization and way of life which, in his view, are wicked; the education system which seems to him as fatal – all these will be so inexorably imposed on him, his home and his children that evasion will become impossible. Hence a person nor a group of persons are compelled by the innate demand of their faith.

As a result of all this, "the acid test of the true devotion" of the believer is that he commits himself to world revolution.<sup>41</sup>

Maududi the Leninist elaborates on his concept of "World Revolution," which he sees as synonymous with "jihad:"

[T]he objective of the Islamic "jihad" is to eliminate the rule of an un-Islamic system and establish in its stead an Islamic system of state rule. Islam does not intend to confine this revolution to a single state or a few countries: the aim of Islam is to bring about a universal revolution. Although in the initial stages it is incumbent upon the members of the party of Islam to carry out a revolution in the state system of the countries to which they belong, but their ultimate objective is no other than to effect a world revolution. No revolutionary ideology which champions the principles of the welfare of humanity as a whole instead of upholding national interests can restrict its aims and objectives to the limits of a country or a nation. The goal of such an all-embracing doctrine is naturally bound to be world revolution.<sup>42</sup>

This was vintage Lenin, with a strong whiff of Trotsky added. As a biographer noted, "Maududi's program did indeed sound revolutionary in intent and possibly Marxist in origin when he wrote in *The Process of Revolution* "Islam is a revolutionary ideology with a revolutionary practice, which aims at destroying the social order of the world totally and rebuilding it from scratch . . . and jihad denotes the revolutionary struggle."<sup>43</sup>

Maududi appropriated the image and concept of "Revolution," this potent myth of the twentieth century, in the sense the French radical anarchosocialist Georges Sorel gave to the word in his *Réflexions sur la violence*: Given the violent and irrational motivations of social and economic conduct,

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 21–2.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 22–4.

<sup>43</sup> Nasr, *Maududi*, p. 70.

a deliberately-conceived “myth” must be concocted to sway masses into concerted action. The revolutionary mobilization of the masses

could not be produced in a very certain manner by the use of ordinary language; use must be made of a body of image which, by intuition alone, before any considered analyses are made, is capable of evoking as an undivided whole the mass sentiments which correspond to the different manifestations of the war undertaken by socialist agitation against modern society. This problem [is solved] perfectly by concentrating the whole of socialism in the drama of the general strike; there is no longer place for the reconciliation of contraries in the equivocations of the professors; everything is clearly mapped out, so that only one interpretation of Socialism is possible. The method has all the advantages which the “integral” knowledge has over analysis.<sup>44</sup>

For Sorel, the shibboleth was “the general strike”; for his disciple Mussolini, it was “the total State”; for Lenin, “communism” and “The Revolution”; for Hitler, the “Aryan Race”; and for Maududi, “The Islamic world revolution.” Different creeds used the same structure: The myth is the actualization of redemption in the here and now. All were Manicheans and Gnostics. All cultivated the drama that overwhelmed analysis and placed the mass under the sway of the propheta. Based on his sociopolitical reading of the Quran, Maududi redefined Islam from faith to ideology and converted religion into a mass movement fostering the drama of world Islamic Revolution.

The starting point to identify lines of communication through which Leninist thought came to Maududi is Maududi’s active membership in the Khilafat movement at the very early age of 16.

From the *Khilafat* activists he learned about the West and about politics; he learned the value of social mobilization and political propaganda, as well as the utility of putting Islamic slogans and symbols to communalist and political use. Many of the ideas of the *Khilafat* movement, such as its anti-imperialism, its effort to unite the various expressions of Islam in India, its appeal to Pan-Islamist sentiment, and its belief in the viability and desirability of resuscitating the institution of the Caliphate remained hallmarks of Maududi’s political thought.<sup>45</sup>

In turn, we have seen how leading figures in the Khilafat movement were mesmerized by and attracted to Bolshevism, and how at the same time the Deobandi school drew close to Moscow. The conclusion, if needing to be fleshed out, is: However inescapable it was that the multifarious Bolshevik influence we have charted found potent ways to shape Maududi’s thinking,

<sup>44</sup> Georges Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence*, 8th ed., Paris, Marcel Rivière, 1936, pp. 122–3.

<sup>45</sup> Nasr, *Maududi*, p. 19.

as it did many other Muslim leaders and intellectuals, at the hand of this terrible simplificateur, jihad and world revolution became one.

Sayyid Qutb, the ideologist for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, was Maududi's disciple. He in turn made Maududi's absolute dichotomy between Islam and un-Islam into the cornerstone of his revolutionary Islamist ideology.

### Gnostic Mullahs and Smaller Satan

The nationalism of the Arab-Muslim peoples [has a] double profile. On the one hand, it presents itself as a nationalistic movement of the conventional European style, based on a sense of racial kinship, and with certain general claims that are justified on historical grounds. On the other, it is a thinly disguised Mahdist movement aimed at forcible purification of Islam and at the revival of the traditionally demanded imperialism of the Umma. The interlocking of those two activistic drives gives [the movement] its strength.<sup>46</sup>

Jihadis of all stripes in the modern age share the same highly toxic mix of messianism, revolution, and the cult of blood and violence. Modern jihad is the tapestry resulting from the weaving together of different warps and woofs: Pan-Islamism and Bolshevism, Nazi and fascist ideology and practices, and Gnostic-Manichean beliefs within Islam. Originally distinct and distant threads have been woven together by artisans. We have so far described the German, Ottoman, Russian, Indian, and some Arab craftsmen of the weaving. We will now examine the Iranian threads, and how they were woven into the tapestry.

Khomeini and the militant clerics aimed at establishing an Islamic state by means of an Islamic revolution: "[T]he proponents of Islamic traditionalism had appropriated the most potent myth of modern politics, the myth of the revolution."<sup>47</sup> They had to learn the art of accessing the masses from the Iranian Communist Party, the *Tudeh* ("Masses"). In bringing about a fusion of Marxism and the Gnostic tradition of Shia Islam, they received the invaluable input of Ali Shariati and Muhammad Navab Safavi. Safavi showed them how to make terror a principal instrument of politics, much of which he had learned from Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb. Ayatollah Motahhari merged the lessons learned from his friend Shariati and from his other friend Navab Safavi. With spectacular cunning, Ayatollah Khomeini

<sup>46</sup> Grunebaum, *Modern Islam*, p. 224.

<sup>47</sup> Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 105.

used them all to develop his revolutionary Mahdism, a doctrine he had in part learned from his correspondent Abul Ala Maududi.

The militant clerics led by Khomeini were avid readers of the writings of Sayyid Qutb and of Maulana Abul Ala Maududi. “Their influence is unmistakable in the revolutionary slogans and pamphleteering” in Iran.<sup>48</sup> In his preface to *Social Justice in Islam*, Qutb’s clerical translator praised the author for having established “a living and invaluable ideology.”<sup>49</sup> The Iranian Islamists readily acknowledged their intellectual debt to the Sunni revolutionaries. Had Navab-Safavi, Khomeini’s old terrorist acolyte, not consorted with the Muslim Brothers in Cairo as early as the 1940s? “Maududi . . . had met the chiefs of the Muslim Brotherhood. . . . The Iranian *fedaiyan-e Islam* had serious relations with the Muslim Brothers of Egypt, Syria [and] Jordan. . . . Khomeini’s ‘Islamic Revolution’ is a resurgence of that of the defunct *fedaiyan* movement. Ali Shariati’s ideas, which are explicitly claimed by the heroes of the Iranian Islamic revolution . . . [they] are close to Sayyid Qutb’s.”<sup>50</sup>

### Navvab Safavi, Iran’s First Modern Propheta

Muhammad Navvab Safavi, nee Sayyid Mujtaba Mir-Lowhi (b. Tehran 1924), was the purveyor of al-Banna’s brand of fascist Islamism to Iran. This “young and not very well educated cleric,” who had spent two years at the Najaf Seminary, established the *Jamiyat-e Fedaiyan-e Eslam* (“those who sacrifice their lives for Islam”) in 1945. The movement rapidly attracted a large membership of lower class and urban poor, and the religious middle class, and acquired powerful protectors among wealthy bazaar merchants and influential clerics. At its peak, the organization of the charismatic Navvab Safavi boasted 7,000 members.<sup>51</sup> It quickly emulated the Muslim Brotherhood’s terror campaigns and murders of “corrupt,” pro-Western political figures. All the atrocities perpetrated by his group were blessed by prominent clerics. Ayatollah Murtaza Motahhari, a student, disciple, and trusted lieutenant of Ruhollah Khomeini, was a close friend and associate. The first killing was that of the modernizer Ahmad Kasravi, an author whose 1946 assassination was signed off on by Khomeini himself; by Ayatollah

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>50</sup> Olivier Carré, “Introduction,” in Carré and Dumont, *Radicalismes islamiques*, 8.

<sup>51</sup> Mahmood T. Davari, *The Political Thought of Ayatollah Murtaza Mutahhari: An Iranian Theoretician of the Islamic State*, London & New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003, p. 20.

Abdol Hoseyn Amini, who issued a fatwa calling for the elimination of the "Satanic" writer; by cleric Mohammad-Hasan Taleqani, who provided the money; and by the most prominent political leader of the Iranian clergy of the time, Ayatollah Kashani, speaker of the *Majlis*, the Iranian Parliament, who was to make extensive use of Navvab Safavi's murderous services in years to come.<sup>52</sup> Clerical pressure forced the government to let the killer go with but a slap on the wrist.<sup>53</sup>

Kashani gave the upstart plebian cleric a serious religious cover and in return acquired the support of an organization able to mobilize activists. After a failed assassination of the shah, the top clerics again protected the fugitive Navvab Safavi, who hid at the house of Ayatollah Mahmud Taleqani, while the young killer of Kasravi now killed the minister of the court. The *fedaiyan's* rampage went on undisturbed. The prime minister, the tough General Ali Razmara, fell victim to one of their assassins, who again was protected by Kashani. The organizer of the targeted assassinations, Navvab Safavi was now a celebrity, granting menacing interviews and meeting Arab heads of states in the course of a late 1953–early 1954 tour of the Middle East. He was feted in Cairo by the Muslim Brothers and treated as a guest of honor by the Egyptian government.<sup>54</sup> When he returned to Iran, the Shah tried to co-opt him, even as the fedaiyan openly called for the shah's death: "[T]he Shah was a usurper of Islamic rule and the government was illegitimate; the usurper of Islamic rule must be killed and the illegitimate government banished."<sup>55</sup>

Navvab Safavi now published a manifesto that foreshadowed the Islamic state that arose in Iran after 1979. Bearing some resemblance to Italian fascist and German national socialist propaganda, it was a curious jumble of reactionary–romantic nostalgia for an idealized past, violent rejections of anything modern or Western, panicked fear of female sexuality, statist and redistributionist economic and social views, and radical demands for clerical executive power. Society was to be placed under "the university of the Quran" and "the barracks of Islam." The manifesto described an idyllic Islamic state, "where the government would be the father of the people, where nobody would fear the state's representative nor the thieves, where stores and houses had no more locks and keys. Sexual passions are released

<sup>52</sup> Davari, *The Political Thought of Ayatollah Murtaza Mutahhari*, p. 21.

<sup>53</sup> Yann Richard, "L'organisation des *fedaiyan-e Eslam*, mouvement intégriste musulman en Iran (1945–1956)", in Carré and Dumont, *Radicalismes islamiques*, pp. 24–8.

<sup>54</sup> Richard, "L'organisation des *fedaiyan-e Eslam*," pp. 35, 40, 51.

<sup>55</sup> Davari, *The Political Thought of Ayatollah Murtaza Mutahhari*, p. 22.

in marriage” – though temporary marriage must be promoted – “there is no more unreason, no alcohol, no binges. Truly it would be a paradise.”<sup>56</sup> Of course, the pathway to paradise was brutal: “Reform can only be achieved under the shadow of force; force is sacrifice, and sacrifice is but under the shadow of Islamic education. Hence, we, children of Islam, with God’s help, we can achieve these reforms through our own sacrifice.” War was necessary and beautiful: “Human wars come from ignorance, and Islam’s wars come from God’s command.” With this creed, Safavi recruited very young men – was Ayatollah Khomeini later not to say that “people over 20 were already contaminated by Satanic civilization”?<sup>57</sup> These candidates for martyrdom were “processed” by Navvab Safavi himself, in a functional equivalent of brainwashing, a technique that was later refined for mass use by the regime.<sup>58</sup>

The charismatic Navvab Safavi was finally executed in 1956. He “left a deep imprint on the religious opposition to the regime.”<sup>59</sup> He was the first incarnation of the Gnostic propheta in contemporary Iran, but he was by no means the last. In 1963, barely seven years after his death, three activist religious groups, which he had deeply influenced, coalesced to form the *Heyat-e Motafelehaye Eslami*. Composed of bazaar people and youngsters, it was led by a four- or five-man clerical committee appointed by Ayatollah Khomeini, including Ayatollahs Beheshti and Motahhari, and able to deploy about 500 activists. The clerics issued guidelines to propagate Islam, to extend Islamic “ideology,” to establish classes to that effect, and to establish groups for training speakers and teachers. They started to organize members into semisecret ten-person groups. By November 1964, the leadership had decided to establish a military branch for targeting the regime’s anti-Islamic figures. The following year they succeeded in killing Prime Minister Hasan Ali Mansur after the clerical committee issued a fatwa to that effect.<sup>60</sup> The *Vehme* assassinations executed in the early 1920s by the German *Freikorps* had found an echo.<sup>61</sup>

Navab Safavi’s fellow *Fedaiyan-e Eslam* Sayyid Mahmud Taleqani (1910–79), a genuine scholar of Islam, has been called “The Father of

<sup>56</sup> Richard, “L’organisation des *fedaiyan-e Eslam*,” pp. 54–63.

<sup>57</sup> Taheri, *Holy Terror*, p. 81.

<sup>58</sup> See Farhad Khorokhavar, *Les nouveaux martyrs d’Allah*, Paris, Flammarion, 2002, passim.

<sup>59</sup> Richard, “L’organisation des *fedaiyan-e Eslam*,” p. 81.

<sup>60</sup> Davari, *The Political Thought of Ayatollah Murtaza Mutahhari*, p. 39; Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 95.

<sup>61</sup> Robert G.L. Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism: The Free Corps Movement in Postwar Germany 1918–1923*, New York, W. W. Norton, 1969.

the Revolution.”<sup>62</sup> Many of the themes and doctrines he originated or formulated became common property of most revolutionary groups and individuals in later decades. To discuss private proper, “he adopt[ed] and islamicize[d] patently Marxist terminologies.”<sup>63</sup> He proposed that “the East” was virtually exempt from “Western” class struggle. His famous 1963 speech on holy war and martyrdom was seminal to much elaboration of the matter in later years. So was his Orwellian theory treating knowledge as a “veil that prevent[s] direct thinking about and seeking guidance from the [Quranic verses].”<sup>64</sup> Like many of his fellow radicals, Taleqani’s voluminous exegesis of the Quran was a crucial power in a reengineering of Islam into a revolutionary creed. His Quran had created “a new man,”<sup>65</sup> as it was geared “to manifest the hidden intent of the Quran.”<sup>66</sup> No wonder that his followers later established the Organization of People’s Guerrilla!<sup>67</sup>

### How to Organize Masses: The Tudeh

Iran is possessed of a long tradition of urban and rural uprisings. In 1913, in the northern region of Ghilan which abuts the Caspian Sea, an anti-imperialist uprising with “radically Pan-Islamist” leanings had taken place against Russian and British encroachments, under the leadership of a religious figure, Mirza Kuchik Khan. The Muslim warriors were supported, funded, and armed by the Germans and the Ottomans. Shortly after the collapse of the czar’s army in Iran, in 1917, “socialist ideas reached the Jengeli,” and contacts were made with Red movements in Azerbaijan and Persia. In June 1920, the Soviet commander of the Red Fleet in the Caspian, and member of the Central Asian Bureau of the Communist International, Admiral Raskolnikov, proclaimed an alliance with the Jengeli, as the insurgents were known. The Soviet Socialist Republic of Ghilan was “the first Soviet satellite outside the Soviet Union.”<sup>68</sup> Less than a year later, having chosen to turn Reza Shah into an ally, Moscow betrayed its Jengeli allies and established diplomatic relations with Tehran. In retaliation, Kuchik slaughtered the entire leadership of the Iranian Communist Party; he was then hunted down by the Iranians.

<sup>62</sup> Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, p. 220.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>68</sup> Benningsen and Wimbush, *Muslim National Communism*, pp. 79–80.



This first experience with Soviet trustworthiness did not prevent the establishment, in September 1941, mostly by intellectuals, of an Iranian Communist Party. To avoid alienating the mullahs, the party's provisional program of February 1942, in typical "united front" manner, kept Marxist-tainted demands out. Stating its attitude toward religion, the party explained: "The *Tudeh* party has sincere faith in the true religion of Islam. Most of the members . . . of our party are Muslims by background and believe in the religion of Muhammad. We shall never divert from the straight path of Islam." *Dar barih-i Eslam*, a party manifesto addressed to the clerics, averred: "Not only is the *Tudeh* party not against religion in general, but we feel a particular allegiance and deep respect toward Islam. We do not see any contradiction between the teachings of Islam and the principles that our party is advocating. We follow the same path and struggle for the same objectives. We hope that the *ulama* of Islam join us in this holy struggle and assure them of our loyalty to the true faith."<sup>69</sup> The Islamic technique of *taqiye*, dissimulating the truth to advance the cause and protect its partisans, was clearly not lost on the *Tudeh*.

In August 1946, as Soviet power rose and rose, three party members received cabinet positions in the government. The party was outlawed in 1949 but reemerged in 1951–2 in the complex game played by multiple actors – the shah, the clerical party, the bazaaris, the Soviet Union, the United States, and Britain – over the issue of the nationalization of Iran's oil. *Tudeh* supported Dr. Mohammad Mosadeqh on and off, as suited its own goals, just as did the clerical party. Having built a remarkable apparatus to mobilize masses, the party was an essential player. It had established a large array of front organizations, each of which published periodicals openly propagating Marxist causes: youth, women, peasants, an association to fight illiteracy, a society for a Free Iran, workers, journalists, a society against the imperialist oil companies, a society of the Partisans of Peace, high-school students, lawyers, teachers, engineers, civil servants.<sup>70</sup> The party was the first force ever in Iran to organize in this "European" manner, directly inspired by the way socialists and especially communists organized various layers of society. The party's ascent was not even dampened by Stalin's failed test-operation of setting up a satellite Soviet republic in a part of the Soviet wartime occupation zone of Iran closest to the USSR, Azerbaijan. When the puppet state collapsed, its leaders fled to the Soviet Union, where they were rounded up and either executed or shipped to Siberia. In the 1960s,

<sup>69</sup> Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, pp. 24–25.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

the survivors returned to Iran. "Most remained true to their Communist ideal, although their faith in the Russians was spent. It was possible that their influence on the Communist movement in Iran is responsible for the emergence in the *Tudeh* party of a strong religious-national wing which in a curious way attempts to reconcile radical Islam and Marxism," researchers were able to report in 1979.<sup>71</sup> In that, the Iranians were rather successful – if not to the benefit of communism, certainly to that of radical Islam.

In July 1952, a few days before the resignation of Premier Mosadeqh, the Communist Party appealed to all anti-imperialist groups to join in a united front and "specifically requested [Ayatollah] Kashani to take the initiative toward this goal. When Kashani sent an appeal to the working and youth members of the *Tudeh* party, the Tehran press reported that an alliance had come into being between the *ulama* and the Iranian Communist Party." The day Mosadeqh effectively resigned, "Kashani sent a public letter to the pro-*Tudeh* organizations thanking them for their invaluable contribution to the national victory." The meanders of on-and-off alliances and enmities that mark the period are of little interest here – *Tudeh* now supported Mosadeqh, Kashani opposed him, but the communists' influence and power grew by leaps and bounds. Three of its leaders again were members of the cabinet. By July, the *Tudeh* was the strongest and best organized political force in the country.<sup>72</sup> It was demanding official recognition for the Communist Party as such and the expulsion of American military advisers. When Stalin died, in March 1953, huge marches were organized along the breadth and length of the country. *Tudeh* was even recruiting prominent clerics, such as Sayyed Ali Akbar Burqai who campaigned for the Partisans of Peace. After the pro-Western counter coup, *Tudeh* was banned but maintained a prominent and efficient clandestine presence.

Even though Khomeini ranted against Marxism and materialism, he allowed and encouraged his supporters to ally and cooperate with *Tudeh*. In turn, the latter sycophantically supported the Ayatollah. All the way into the 1979 Islamic Revolution and thereafter, this was true of Khomeini's trusted faithful who ran the mass organizing: "The *Tudeh* ideologues, from whom the IRP [Islamic Revolutionary Party] cadre took many of their cues," were in a partial symbiosis with the Communists. This persisted until the Imam decided to ban the party, arrest its members by the thousands, and exterminate its cadre. When that happened, in April 1983, the regime discovered several hundred *Tudeh* infiltrators in the military. The crackdown was

<sup>71</sup> Benningsen and Wimbush, *Muslim National Communism*, pp. 111–12.

<sup>72</sup> Davari, *The Political Thought of Ayatollah Murtaza Mutabbari*, pp. 26–7.

probably motivated less by the party's influence in the intelligentsia, which lay supine under the Imam's spell or his killers' ways, but rather "the party's ideological impact on the clerics while they were novices in Iranian politics." In fact, "The militant clerics learned many of their political and journalistic tricks and tactics – first used during the anti-liberal, anti-nationalist smear campaign following the occupation of the American Embassy, their coining of political slogans and their models for political analysis from the *Tudeh* party."<sup>73</sup>

### Ali Shariati's Theology of Liberation

The revolutionizing of radical Islam in Iran did not follow one line of communication only. We have already explored the cult of blood and redemptive violence that is a hallmark of Shariati's "Islam-Marxism," the doctrine he called *tashayyo-e sorkh* ("Red Shiism").<sup>74</sup> We will now examine his doctrine and actions from the vantage point of their contribution to the transfer of Marxism and Marxian existentialism into radical Islam. Shariati is one of the most significant of the Gnostic *prophetae* of the contemporary age. This "most furious revolutionary among the ideologues of the Islamic revolution" managed "to capture the revolutionary imagination of an entire generation" and extended far and wide into the entire spectrum of radical Islam, Shiite and Sunni alike.<sup>75</sup>

The modern myth of revolution is a modern form of the millenarian creed. Earthly redemption and the millennial kingdom, preached by all the totalitarian movements of the twentieth century, found especial resonance among religious masses whose creeds incorporated massive doses of apocalyptic and eschatological beliefs, such as the peculiar Mahdism of Shia Islam. In Twelver Shia, the dominant sect of Shiism, the starting point of Mahdism is the unbroken continuity of the Prophet's family's Imamate, through Fatima, Ali, Husayn, and Hassan. It did not end with the disappearance of the Twelfth and last Imam.

Muhammad al-Mahdi ("the guided," b. 868, d. ?), hidden since birth, appeared at the age of 6 to assert his claim to the Imamate, only again to disappear, this time down a well, to avoid his father's and grandfather's sad fate. For the next seventy years he maintained contact with his followers through a succession of four assistants, each known as *Bab* ("Gate"). On

<sup>73</sup> Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, pp. 157–9.

<sup>74</sup> Murawiec, *The Mind of Jihad*, esp. pp. 47–57, 130–7, 215–23.

<sup>75</sup> Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, pp. 107, 103.

his deathbed in 941, the fourth Bab, as-Samarri, produced a letter from the Imam stating that there should be no successor to the latter and that henceforward the Mahdi would not be seen until he reappeared as champion of the faithful in the events leading to the Judgment Day. This long period, which has not come to an end yet, is known as the Greater Occultation. Some titles of the Twelfth Imam include: Master of the Age (*Sabib az Zaman*), Master of Command (*Sabib al Amr*), the one to arise (*al Qaim*), remnant of Allah (*Bagiyyat Allah*), and the awaited Imam (*Imam al Muntazar*).<sup>76</sup> This belief-structure was the perfect foundation on which to generate Gnostic-eschatological expectations, in short, Mahdism. In turn, the great renovator of Mahdism in the modern age – its prophet, the man who turned it into a political religion – Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, was a far-reaching influence on Shariati.<sup>77</sup>

Shariati's Mahdist historiography is a hagiographic fairy tale made for the edification of the credulous. His supposed familiarity with Western intellectual currents is shallow, his sociology is sophomoric, and his scholarship is embarrassingly feeble: He is an ideologue who nibbles on bits and pieces of history, philosophy, and sociology. Shortly before his premature death, he entrusted his (still unpublished) testament to Mohamad Reza Hakimi, a noted follower of Khomeini's, who in turn reported: "Of Shariati, let us first and foremost retain his potent and delicate gift as a communicator; with just a few words, simple slogans, he succeeded in radicalizing the mass of the people, which the clergy had been trying to do for a thousand years."<sup>78</sup> He cites one such slogan coined by Shariati at the time, "The martyr is the heart of history." The homology of Shariati's role and self-conception with that of Europe's medieval prophetae could not be more striking. He is "the intellectual who knows the formula for salvation from the misfortunes of the world and can predict how world history will take its course in the future,"<sup>79</sup> though it would be more appropriate to call him a semi-intellectual: As J. W. Goethe wrote in his *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*: "Fools and intelligent people are equally harmless. It is only the demi-fools who are really dangerous."

The "Third International" merged with Russia, the "Third Rome" the "Third Reich" merged with the "third age" (Age of the Spirit) in the

<sup>76</sup> Encyclopedia of the Orient, <http://lexicorient.com/e.o/12thimam.htm>, accessed Jan. 1, 2006.

<sup>77</sup> Nouchine Yavari-d'Hellencourt, "Le radicalisme chiite de Ali Shariati," in Carré Dumont, *Radicalismes islamiques*, p. 113. Also Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, p. 131.

<sup>78</sup> Yavari-d'Hellencourt, "Le radicalisme chiite de Ali Shariati," p. 117.

<sup>79</sup> Eric Voegelin, *Science, Politics & Gnosticism*, Washington, DC, Regnery, 1977, p. 67.

Gnostic parody of Christianity; likewise Shariati, like an alchemist, blended Islamic Mahdism with Marx's Manichean millenarianism. Two Gnostic traditions intersected, recognized one another, and recombined their compatible strands. A suggestive simile to his undertaking was a group of Bolshevik leaders and intellectuals, today rather forgotten, but who individually and collectively played a major role in the Russian Revolution and the development of the Bolshevik Party. It is not uncommon – "Revolution devours its children" – for such groups to create an intellectual atmosphere conducive to the mobilization of revolution only to be discarded by the new masters once they are securely in power.

This Russian group called itself the "God Seekers;" its leaders were the pro-Bolshevik writer Maxim Gorki, the engineer and Bolshevik leader Aleksandr Bogdanov, and the future People's Commissar for Culture Anatolii Lunacharsky. These three had adopted Nietzsche's perspective of the "superman." In his hatred for "individualism," Gorki had dreamed of a Russian Superman who would lead the masses in a struggle for liberation. Lunacharsky and Gorki during the 1905 revolution developed a Marxist surrogate religion of *Bogostroitel'stvo* (God building). It extolled the heroic proletariat as savior of humanity, preached worship of collective humanity, and promised collective immortality to encourage people to risk death fighting for socialism, and to inspire heroism and self-sacrifice. It was in large part a response to Nietzsche, as was the obsession of the Russian radicals, from Chernychevsky onward, with creating a new culture and a New Man (*chelovek*) who would shed human nature and become more than the normal humans.<sup>80</sup> In the 1950s, Shariati was a member first of the "Movement for the Islamic Renewal," and then the *Nezhat-e Khoda parastan-e Sosyaliist*, the "Movement of the Socialist Worshipers of God."<sup>81</sup> Like the Russian he emulated, Shariati loathed Christianity as a "religious individualist" faith and praised Islam as "religious collectivism."<sup>82</sup> To him, "monotheism" (Islam) and "polytheism" (including Judaism and Christianity) were expressions of class struggle, and congruent with his invented polarity of disinherited and oppressors.<sup>83</sup>

Shariati's children Ershan and Sarah Shariati, both professors in France today, report their father's fondness for his correspondent, the revolutionary

<sup>80</sup> Luciano Floridi, *Nietzsche: Impact on Russian Thought*, London: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, 1988. <http://lists.paleopsych.org/pipermail/paleopsych/2006-August/005656.html>, accessed Aug. 8, 2006.

<sup>81</sup> Yavari-d'Hellencourt, "Le radicalisme chiite de Ali Shariati," p. 111.

<sup>82</sup> Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, p. 116.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

Frantz Fanon, and his conception of "creating a new man." The raw material of the dream was to be "the oppressed masses." To convey that imitation of Marxian class struggle, Shariati borrowed Fanon's expression of "*les damnés de la Terre*," "the wretched of the earth," and translated it into Persian by reviving the Quranic term of *mostazafin* ("the disinherited") – "a term that was to occupy a central position in the Islamic revolutionary rhetoric," since Shariati, even posthumously, was its leading sloganer.<sup>84</sup>

Shariati also borrowed from the Quran and the stories of Muhammad's companions. In his fictionalized biography *Abuzar Qaffari the Socialist Worshipper of God*, he fished out this figure from relative obscurity to embody his theology of "liberation:" "I am the disciple of Abuzar, my doctrine, my Islam, my Shiism, my yearnings, my anger and my ideals are his. My purpose begins like his: in the name of God, God of the oppressed (*mostazafin*)."<sup>85</sup> Elsewhere, Shariati develops the fiction: "Abuzar, Companion of the Prophet, disciple of Ali. . . . He is a great revolutionary who fights against aristocracy, authoritarianism, capitalism [*sic*], misery, and segregation. His word is higher than that of Proudhon."<sup>86</sup> And yet more:

A poor Bedouin, illiterate and rebellious to the idolatry of his time. . . . His material misery has endowed him with a keen sense of social justice; a man from the desert, remote from the depravation of the city, his illiteracy sheltered him from any reference other than Islam; his 'primitive' revolt against idolatry made him a proto-Monothest, a *hanif*; his Islam is pure and coarse.<sup>87</sup>

Abuzar, in other words, was a good savage, the degree zero of humanity: he was nothing, a man without attribute; therefore he was dispossessed and ready to become the apotheosis of super-humanity, the martyr. Of course, the Westernization, or modernization, of Iran, was a grievous attempt at further dispossessing the good savage of his authentic identity, culture, and religion.

Taking all the leaves from Fanon's book, Shariati hammered: "I hate modernism." He hated as well its effect on Iran, *qarbzadegi* ("plagued by the West"), or in Jalal Al-e Ahmad's word, "Westoxication." The later, an early communist leader, was a born-again Muslim who rediscovered the might of religious myth and superstition, "the most real of all realities" against the hateful, alien, artificial modernity which, like a disease,

<sup>84</sup> Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 94.

<sup>85</sup> Ali Shariati, *Che bayaad kard?*, Tehran, Complete Works, 20, 1982, p. 249, quoted in Yavari-d'Hellencourt, "Le radicalisme chiite de Ali Shariati," p. 86.

<sup>86</sup> Ali Shariati, *Baz-gasht*, Tehran, Hoseiniye Ershad, Complete Works, 4, 1978, p. 308.

<sup>87</sup> Quoted by Yavari-d'Hellencourt, "Le radicalisme chiite de Ali Shariati," p. 87.

caused all evils.<sup>88</sup> Branded “the majesty of all men of letters” by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Al-e Ahmad was the most influential essayist of post-World War II Iran and the creator of “a language for social criticism.”<sup>89</sup> Identity politics, which played a central role in mobilizing for the 1979 revolution, was rooted in his influence. He had the borrowed ugly term *Westoxication* from the Iranian standard-bearer of German existentialist philosopher and Nazi Martin Heidegger,<sup>90</sup> Ahmad Fardid (1912–94), who in turn may have borrowed it from the ideologue of reactionary post-modernism Ernst Jünger.<sup>91</sup> Shariati burdened his imaginary “West” with all the sins and flaws, social and moral, marital and political, economic and religious. In contest with this “satan” stood his demigods, Muhammad, Ali, Husayn.

Prophet Muhammad himself was a revolutionary, but a Gnostic one who intended to establish God’s perfect order on earth *hic et nunc*, just as Shariati: “The Prophet does not talk of a ‘virtuous city,’ of a ‘divine city,’ or of a ‘promised land,’ he implements it. It is not a theoretical construct but an objective one. The virtuous city of Islam is a real community (*Umma*). It is the city of the Prophet.”<sup>92</sup> To him, the Quran was the blueprint for the perfect social life. Muhammad was “this revolutionary shepherd of the people.”<sup>93</sup> Like his Bolshevik predecessors, and just as Dostoyevsky’s “Possessed” equated God and the People, Shariati divinized the People: “Jihad in the way of God is jihad in the way of the People.”<sup>94</sup> It was a “radically populist theory of revolution.”<sup>95</sup> His “man” is Godlike; his ethics are those of The Perfect Man.<sup>96</sup> He is a propheta: “He was convinced, like no other one in his historical vicinity, that he had . . . to the fullest extent seen the light.”<sup>97</sup> Marxism was a rival rather than an enemy. He himself was the great enlightener, endowed with a sacred mission, to redeem Iran from “cultural colonialism” and therefore redeem the Iranians to their true nature.

<sup>88</sup> In Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, pp. 47–92, passim.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>90</sup> See Emmanuel Faye Heidegger, *L’Introduction du Nazisme dans la philosophie – Autair des séminaires indits de 1933–1935*, Paris, Albin Michel, 2005.

<sup>91</sup> See Daryush Shayegan, “Heidegger en Iran,” *Le Portique*, numéro 18, 2006.

<sup>92</sup> Shariati, *Che bayad kard?*, 417, quoted in Yavari-d’Hellencourt, “Le radicalisme chiite de Ali Shariati,” p. 90.

<sup>93</sup> Ali Shariati, *Jehat-giri-e tabaqati-e eslam*, Tehran, Complete Works, 10, 1980, quoted in Yavari-d’Hellencourt, “Le radicalisme chiite de Ali Shariati,” p. 96.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>95</sup> Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 93.

<sup>96</sup> Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, pp. 120, 132.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

In a double movement, the Gnostic actualizes the Absolute by establishing Perfection in the finite and imperfect human world and mobilizes the strivings of people for the same Absolute and Perfect. What is properly Gnostic in this double process is the claim that man can escape his condition, abolish his finite character – in other words, change his nature. This is the myth of revolution as embodiment of eschatological millenarianism. A utopia is essentially empty: It consists only of the desires projected into it by believers. So it had been for the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, for the National Socialist Revolution of 1933, for the Chinese Revolution of 1949, and so it was to be in 1979 for the Islamic Revolution of Iran.

Shariati's ideas contributed directly to the revolutionary outbreak through his influence on Iranian students and young intellectuals, especially the highly organized and motivated *Mojahedin-e Khalq*, who did some of the decisive fighting in the fateful days of February 1979. His ideas also had an important influence on the writings of the clerical pamphleteers and preachers, who were quick to take up the rhetoric of social justice and the cause of the disinherited. Furthermore, Shariati's writings won over a substantial part of the lay intelligentsia to Khomeini's side by leading them to believe the Islamic Revolution would be "progressive." Presumably, as a reformer Shariat was a model to be followed; he had written that Prophet Muhammad had preserved the form of traditional norms but had changed their contents in a revolutionary manner.<sup>98</sup>

This was Muslim Brother Maaruf Dawalibi's "Marxist drink in a Muslim cup" all over again. The Islamic Revolution was the Shiite millennium, the Imam-Mahdi reappearing in the shape of Ayatollah Khomeini.

Shariati's concept of the party as the instrument of revolution was a Leninist one: the party was the locus where belief (faith: *iman*) connects with revolutionary action (jihad). Shariati

succeeded to re-Islamicize a youth to which the religious leaders had lost access. . . . He transmogrified the Westernized youth into Islamic fighters. This psychological and behavioral transformation expressed itself as an increasing rejection of the Western model. . . . Shariati made himself the "bridge" connecting the dynamic element of the [Islamist] middle class, the educated youth, and the people traditionally led by the clergy.

This "triangle" carried out the revolution.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 94.

<sup>99</sup> Yavari-d'Hellencourt, "Le radicalisme chiïte de Ali Shariati," p. 110.



Now, Shariati – the young Islamist disciple of semi-Marxists Herbert Marcuse, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Frantz Fanon – was a darling of the radical Shiite clergy. “Very early on, the revolutionary clerics are in contact with him and throughout his life bestowed him with marks of respect and protection. The best-known *mujtahids* . . . ayatollahs Taleqani, Tehrani, Beheshti, Mofatteh and especially Ayatollah Motahhari collaborated closely with him.”<sup>100</sup> When clerical agents of the regime asked him to condemn Shariati, Ayatollah Khomeini pointedly refused. Khomeini’s point-man Motahhari maintained a close friendship and collaboration with Shariati. In 1965, Motahhari (whose functions in the *Hetyat* included pronouncing on the killing of “enemies of Islam”) cofounded the *Huseiniyeh-ye Ershad* institute for research and education which later “played a major role in the religious movement of young activists before the Islamic Revolution.” In November 1967, Motahhari sent a letter to Shariati asking him to contribute to a book about the life of the Prophet the institute was going to publish, and soon afterward, he invited Shariati to come lecture there. “His lectures were livered with emotion, firing his audience with enthusiasm and were warmly welcomed by the young students, His teachings, too, had a major influence among the older men and women students. This essentially turned the Ershad Institute into the most attractive religious center in the country.” In a letter Motahhari wrote to the trustees, he depicted Shariati’s lectures as “so popular during the four years [in question] that it exerted an influence on all groups of the country from the Grand Ayatollahs to the government officials.”<sup>101</sup> Only Shariati’s early death – probably at the hands of agents of SAVAK, the regime’s secret police – prevented a continuation of his collaboration with Motahhari: “In his late texts and lectures. . . . Shariati sought to modify his views and present an affirmative view of the *ulama* by mentioning their revolutionary and anti-imperialist role in contemporary Islam.”<sup>102</sup> Shariati had journeyed to the West and brought back the worst he could find, which he then placed in the service of the Islamists’ spirit of destruction.

Shariati’s heirs were many, although in the end the legacy was channeled exclusively in the direction approved by the mullahs. Established at the beginning of the 1970s, the “Iranian People’s Guerrilla,” *Fadai-ye Khalq-e Iran*, which took its name from Navvab Safavi’s old group, had started as a student group at Tehran University a half a dozen years before. Members became Marxists, read and discussed Che Guevara, Régis Debray, and

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>101</sup> Davari, *The Political Thought of Ayatollah Murtaza Mutahhari*, pp. 42–4.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

the Brazilian theorist of urban guerrilla Carlos Marighela. Their theoretical pamphlets extolled guerrilla warfare, mass spontaneity, and heroic activities; they added Castro, Mao, and Giap to their repertoire. Another group, the *Guruh-e Furqan*, also established by Tehran University students, was the origin of the later Mujahideen. They read the Quran, Bazargan, and Taleqani but also literature on modern revolutions – Russia, China, Cuba, Algeria. A favorite was Algerian FLN (Front de libération nationale) ideologue Ammar Ouzegane's book *Le meilleur combat (The Highest Struggle)*. Ouzegane, a former communist, argued in his book that Islam was a revolutionary, socialistic creed and that the only way to fight imperialism was to resort to armed struggle and appeal to the religious sentiments of the masses. After years of study and debate, the Mujahideen assembled a team to provide its membership with their own theoretical handbook. They wrote a series of pamphlets, which included very primitive discussions of the theory of evolution, Marx's theory of value, and "historical materialism," as well as a two-volume introduction to Quranic studies (*The Principle of Quranic Thinking*). Here they wrote that God is absolute evolution, not perfection; prayer is the connection between party members; the visible and invisible worlds are two hidden and overt stages of struggle and revolution; and the afterworld is a socioeconomic system of a higher world. They interpreted Quranic verses according to class struggle and concluded that property was nothing more than a colonial phenomenon. This was very much in keeping with the pseudohistory that is always to be heard from the Gnostic revolutionaries from wherever they hark, and which Shariati, Maududi, and Qutb had refined to a great art.

The Mujahideen also issued two large booklets on the history of the prophets and on Imam Husayn. The interpretation was that of class struggle between rich and poor, ruled and rulers.<sup>103</sup> One of the Mujahideen's leaders summed up their syncretic effort:

Our original aim was to synthesize the religious values of Islam with the scientific thought of Marxism . . . for we were convinced that true Islam was compatible with the theories of social evolution, historical determinism, and the class struggle. . . . [W]e say "no" to Marxist philosophy, especially to atheism. But we say "yes" to Marxist social thought, particularly to its analysis of feudalism, capitalism and imperialism.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>103</sup> The foregoing is a paraphrase of Davaris's report on the matter, *ibid.*, pp. 75ff.

<sup>104</sup> Quoted by E. Abrahamian, *Radical Islam: the Iranian Mojahedin*, London, Tauris, 1988, p. 92.

The Mujahideen represented the inherent radicalism of Shiism, a form of socialism, a Muslim renaissance and reformation. They advocated an alliance with the Soviet Union. They were Shariati's "third way" to development.

The Mujahideen courted Ayatollah Khomeini. The story of their dealings sheds a fascinating light on the Islamic Revolution. The Mujahideen sent two members of their ideological team to Najaf in 1972 to ask Khomeini to give them his public support. With them they had letters of introduction from Ayatollahs Taleqani and Montazeri, and from Ayatollah Motahhari, who was in effect Khomeini's operational chief in Iran. The pair held twenty-four secret audiences with Khomeini, who urged them to de-Marxify themselves. He failed to grant his support, but he wrote letters to some of his followers in Iran urging them to support the families of Mujahideen who had been hurt by the shah's repression. The *Mujhideen* and Khomeini were now in a united-front relationship. The Mujahideen had created an aura of organizational efficiency, of revolutionary fervor, of religious martyrdom around themselves. They made headways into the religious seminaries at Khunsar, Qom, and Tehran; they debated with Taleqani and Shariati. One of their best-known slogans was "*Bi nam-e Khuda va be Nam-e Khalq-e Qahraman-e Iran*" ("In the name of God and in the name of the People of Iran"). This infuriated the orthodox Gnostics, as it "gave God an associate" – the people – the very definition of the sin of polytheism in Islam.<sup>105</sup>

After some bloody internal conflicts, the Mujahideen published a "vehemently anti-Islamic manifesto" which discarded Islam in favor of Marxism-Leninism.<sup>106</sup> Khomeini's associate Motahhari blasted the Mujahideen for their "new stratagem" and branded them "Batinists," an old insult denoting those who see allegorical and esoteric meanings in the Quran. The increasingly radicalized *Furqan* followed in the footsteps of the medieval millenarians in developing a vision of an Islam without institutionalized leadership. They targeted and assassinated a number of the leading ulama and officials, starting in May 1979 with Murtaza Motahhari himself.<sup>107</sup> Khomeini unleashed on them the full fire of his fury, calling them *munafiqun* ("hypocrites") – worse than unbelievers.

The falling out was inexorable. The chemical combination of Islam and Marxism is an unstable and explosive one, but its syncretic-Manichean

<sup>105</sup> Davari, *The Political Thought of Ayatollah Murtaza Mutahhari*, p. 79.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 76–7.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81–2.

content is indisputable. Even when they slaughtered one another, they all promoted – Ayatollahs and lay prophetae – the same fundamental Gnostic gospel. Their views on who should preach it and be in power differed, as different mafia gangs compete for the loot but fight together against the authorities. The “Mobilization” (*Basije*), the regime’s organization for the recruitment of the 12- to 14-year-old volunteers for death and martyrdom, was intellectually the joint offspring of both, of clerical and of lay revolutionaries. Likewise, the first president of the Islamic Republic, Abolhasan Bani-Sadr, left-winger, demi-Marxist, “monotheist economist,” was a Manichean doctrinaire of strong Gnostic leanings, the author of a utopian, and rather preposterous economic theory deeply rooted in reactionary German romantic tropes, one altogether free from any constraint that reality might have imposed. His 1971–2 *Manifesto of the Islamic Republic* gave a name to the dreams of leftists and Islamists alike – it was a cosmic, neo-Manichean program for his “economy of the Imam.”<sup>108</sup>

### **Jihad and Revolution: Ayatollah Motahhari**

Motahhari the cleric was no less of a Gnostic than his lay friend and rival Shariati. Although human history externally consisted of wars and contradictions between the poor and the rich, or between the ruling and the ruled classes, internally these were wars between right and wrong, good and evil. Outwardly Motahhari was a semi-Marxian cleric, but inwardly he was a Gnostic-Manichean.<sup>109</sup> As he wrote in his discussion of martyrdom: “A martyr’s motivation is different from that of ordinary people. His logic is the blind logic of a reformer, and the logic of a Gnostic lover. . . . A martyr’s logic is unique. It is beyond the comprehension of ordinary people. This is why the word martyr is surrounded by a halo of sanctity.”<sup>110</sup> But as a thinker, Motahhari also was in a form of constant dialogue with Marxism, as if no clerical doctrine could be developed which did not, point by point, face and answer Marxism. In his biographer’s words, “The importance of Motahhari’s works is based, first, on their comprehensiveness and complexity. While similar to Marxist totalism,” [holism] they challenge it, since he “presents an alternative total Islamic system, Islamic world-view and

<sup>108</sup> Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, pp. 220–5.

<sup>109</sup> Davari, *The Political Thought of Ayatollah Murtaza Mutahhari*, p. 48.

<sup>110</sup> Morteza Motah-hari [Murtaza Mutahhari], *The Martyr*, Houston, Free Islamic Libraries, 1980, p. 14.

social-political ideology.” How much he felt the urge to meet Marxism, rival but not enemy as Shariati had put it, emerges from his anguished interrogation regarding the attractiveness of Marxism for the young:

Today, it is more or less established in the minds of youth that one must either be a theist – a peacemaker, complacent, calm, motionless, neutral – or a materialist – active, rebellious, opposed to colonialism, exploitation and despotism. Why has such an idea infiltrated the minds of young people? . . . They observe that it is just the supporters of materialism who lead uprisings, revolutions, battles and struggles, while theists are mostly static and neutral. [ . . . ] At present, the majority of heroic struggles against despotism [and exploitation] are guided by persons with more or less materialistic feelings. Undoubtedly, to a high extent, they have occupied the heroic trench.<sup>111</sup>

In order to reoccupy the heroic trench and regain the youth in it from Marxism, Islam had to marxify itself. While it may be doubted whether Motahhari and his fellow clerics would have seen the matter in this light, the wholesale adoption of Marxian categories to analyze the world and of Marxist–Leninist rhetoric to transform it, encapsulated in slogans a thousand times repeated, created an Islamo–Marxist hybrid – a monstrous laboratory experiment that was unleashed on the body of Iran and thence the rest of the world of Islam. The clerical agents of that innovation thought their immutable Islam immune to the loan-ideas, and probably saw themselves as both responding to urgent tactical requirements and cunningly borrowing effective devices from their rivals. The issues caused “a considerable division between the militant *ulama*.” A delegation was sent to Najaf to ask Khomeini’s ruling. “Although Khomeini took a cautious position and did not issue a statement, he privately supported Motahhari.”<sup>112</sup>

Motahhari’s project was to create an Islamic ideology, every bit as “holist” as Marxism. Just as Afghani before him, and Maududi, and Qutb, he sought an “ideologization” of Islam, to turn Islam into a political ideology similar to the secular religions of twentieth-century totalitarianism, though couched in the Islamic cultural idiom. The new Islamist ideology

meant the arrangement of readily available maxims constituting the sources of the Islamic tradition, the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet and the [Shiite] Imams, in accordance with a new pattern suggested by the Western total ideologies such as Communism and Fascism. A number of clerics took up the challenge of constructing the requisite Islamic total ideology. They were quick to learn the art of constructing an ideology from the lay intellectuals. They learned this art both from their

<sup>111</sup> Davari, *The Political Thought of Ayatollah Murtaza Mutahhari*, pp. 64–5.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

opponents – most notably the ideologues of the *Tudeh* party – and their allies lay Islamist reformers such as [Mahdi] Bazargan and Shariati. Here, the importance of intense ideological debate between the *Tudeh* ideologues and the militant clerics in the Shah's prisons in the 1960s should be noted.<sup>113</sup>

In the economic and social planks of his total Islamic ideology, Motahhari was a corporatist socialist, keen on limiting economic freedom and eager to confiscate and nationalize wealth. The ambit of cases justifying state takeover was so huge and its terms so vague that it amounted to confiscating everything but the bazaar and peasants' lands.<sup>114</sup> Rarely did Motahhari, and most others, bother reading the original Western sources that they knew only from bowdlerized versions. His judgments on the West are thunderous, but slipshod, his knowledge vague and superficial; his contempt for such a thinker as Aquinas is based on an utterly trivial detail.<sup>115</sup> He taught classes on Marxism, culled from the Farsi translations of third-hand and third-rate Western authors. But "because Marxism appeared to be the main alternative, Shia writers developed a dual attitude toward it: on the one hand, they tended to argue their own case through refutation of Marxism while, on the other, they tried to interpret Islamic laws and traditions as being no less revolutionary than Marxist ideals."<sup>116</sup>

Motahhari's Marxian graft took to the Islamic stem. The project worked: "The major achievement of the clerical activists was to [offer] an ideology attractive to the intelligentsia and of maintaining their intellectual authority and leadership over the latter."<sup>117</sup> *Tudeh* and others had been the laboratory experiment, but the corporate interest reaping the fruit of their labor was the Islamic Revolution. The new jihad would be the result. Motahhari's "three sacred concepts" of "faith, *hijrat* [migration] and jihad" were now applied to political struggles through their Marxist repatterning.<sup>118</sup> Materialism and monism were *tawhid* ("the unity of God"); together they meant fighting against oppressors, the *taghut* ("idolaters"); the Marxist proletariat was the Islamic *mostazafin* ("the disinherited"); the shah was the anti-Christ, *ad-Dajjal* in the Muslim apocalyptic tradition; and Khomeini his messianic counterimage. All the facile dichotomies of a Gnostic worldview that erases differences and rubs out complexities were mobilized. Beviés of useful idiots from the Left, the intelligentsia, and the good society enthusiastically joined

<sup>113</sup> Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 97.

<sup>114</sup> Davari, *The Political Thought of Ayatollah Murtaza Mutahhari*, pp. 103–6.

<sup>115</sup> Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, p. 155.

<sup>116</sup> Davari, *The Political Thought of Ayatollah Murtaza Mutahhari*, p. 87.

<sup>117</sup> Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 97.

<sup>118</sup> Motahhari, *The Martyr*, p. 78.

the Islamic Revolution, typified perhaps by the first president of the Islamic Republic Abolhasan Bani-Sadr, one of the muddled ideologues of Islamo-Marxism. In the end, another slogan expressed the reality of the situation: *Shah raft Imam amad* (“The Shah has gone, the Imam has come”). Among the illiterate and the young urban professionals oscillating between past and present, between Islamic identity and modernization, Motahhari was an immense influence, notably through his popular 1960 collection of stories and anecdotes from the Muslim prophetic tradition, canonical sources, and ethical vignettes. After he aired the stories on national radio, starting in the month of Ramadan in 1963, “millions” were reportedly “glued to the radios.”<sup>119</sup> Motahhari was thus doing in practice what the left-wing intelligentsia was clamoring for, the reinjection of Islam into society.

Motahhari systematically plied the meetings and sessions of the “Islamic societies” that attracted young urban professionals; his reengineering of the Shiite doctrine was a critical element in putting Iran’s Shiite body on a war footing against the regime of the shah. He was instrumental in developing the revolutionary image of “Karbala,” the venue of the martyrdom of Ali’s grandson Husayn – “Karbala is not only in one day, it always is,” summed up the doctrine that abolished time and space and helped transfer the minds of millions from the real world into the “second reality” of myth. This radical reinvention of tradition opened the way to revolution. As early as 1968, Qom religious scholar Salihi Najaf-Abadi’s book *The Immortal Martyr* had triggered a major debate among religious circles. Prefaced by Ayatollah Montazeri, the 500-page tome was “the first serious, daring and semi-scholarly attempt to transform the quiescent character of the Karbala paradigm into an active, worldly oriented drama,” and to politicize what had been a “mystical, lyrical and emotional” interpretation.<sup>120</sup>

As the Islamic Revolution triumphed, it established a totalitarian apparatus of rule that came directly from the book of Hitler’s, Lenin’s, Stalin’s, and Mao’s dictatorship. The militant clerics manned the Islamic Revolutionary Committees (*komiteh*), which meted out summary “justice” to the “enemies of God” and the “corruptors on earth,” as the Cheka’s flying three-men tribunals and later the Gestapo’s *Blockwart* system once had. The clerics created and manned the “Political-Ideological Bureaus” in the various branches of the armed forces – like the Red Army’s *politruk* and the structure of political commissars. In 1979, they created an equivalent to the SS, the Corps of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution (*Sepah-e Pasdaran-e Enqelab-e*

<sup>119</sup> Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, p. 157.

<sup>120</sup> H. Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, Austin, University of Texas, 1982, p. 184.

*Eslami*). In 1984, they established the Vigilante Patrols for Combating the Forbidden (*Gashta-ye Mobarazeh ba Moukarat*), a modern variation on the traditional moral police – the *mutawwa*, under the Central Bureau of the Revolutionary Committees. A ministry of intelligence – a KGB or SS Sicherheitsdienst, or better, the Nazi Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA) – was established in 1983, along with a supreme command of Islamic propaganda that imitated the Soviet Central Committee's agitprop department. Islamic societies "were established in all organizations and enterprises of consequence to act as watchdogs for Islamic conformity" – precisely what Soviet party cells were designed to do. Islamic societies of ministries and government departments like the teachers, the military, and factory workers have been particularly important. They have formed nationwide organizations, and there is even a committee for the coordination of the Islamic societies of governmental departments and agencies. There is also a council for the coordination of Islamic propaganda.<sup>121</sup>

The "oneness" so prized by Islamists of all sorts under the rubric of the "unity of God" (*tawhid*) was eerily redolent of the Soviet *jedinstvo* or the National Socialist unity. A sermon pronounced in 1980 by Ayatollah Montazeri, one of the great luminaries of the Islamic Revolution, stated:

The entire nation is coming to the Friday prayers. . . . All classes come and they have one slogan: and their slogan is based on the faith in God, in Islam. All are saying "God is the greatest." All kneel down before God. They have one slogan: the slogan of Islam, of God, of religion, and they follow one leader who stands before them. When he kneels down, all kneel down, when he bows, all bow. He obeys, all obey unitedly [and] in harmony.

*Ein Reich, ein Volk, ein Führer*, all under one God.<sup>122</sup>

But Khomeini went further. By 1980, he launched an "Islamic Cultural Revolution" aimed at re-Islamicizing society, reshaping the people and the state, desecularizing the educational system, and fully establishing the Islamic Republic as an ideological state. The cultural revolution, "an interesting extension of the modern myth of revolution due to Mao Zedong and the repercussions of the Chinese Revolution," was designed to eradicate all traces of Western cultural influence from high schools and universities. "It was natural for [Khomeini and his clerical activists] to look at the latest model of revolution, with added features. Khomeini therefore ordered the

<sup>121</sup> Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, 163, 165, 170. Also Ram, *Myth and Mobilization*, p. 24.

<sup>122</sup> Ram, *Myth and Mobilization*, 200–1, sermon of January 4, p. 1980.



creation of the Committee for Cultural Revolution to take charge of the Islamicization of the universities.”<sup>123</sup>

The relationship between Islam and Marxism, between Islamists and communists, Marxists and sundry ideologues, was never free of tensions, but ever an unstable coalition of Gnostics whose ideologies were convergent enough to permit cooperation and interchange but divergent enough to cause strain and conflict. As long as they all fought uphill to oust the shah, Khomeini cunningly kept silent or even encouraged the Leftist revolutionaries and gave his clerics a wide mandate to work with them.

### The Imam–Mahdi of the Revolution

In Iran’s second presidential “election,” in 1981, about 5 percent of the vote, or 400,000 ballots, were cast for the Twelfth Imam, the Mahdi. The myth was becoming flesh. In the event, the Mahdi did not become president, but he had a readily available substitute: Over many years, with the fevered help from his flock, Ayatollah Khomeini had painstakingly boosted himself to be the next best thing to the Twelfth Imam – a quasi-Mahdi.

Shiism owed its establishment in Iran to the supreme leader of an aberrant millenarian warrior order. The founder of the Safavid dynasty in the sixteenth century had claimed Mahdihood for himself. The intense personalization of the cosmic drama in Shiism – around the doomed figures of Ali, Husayn, and Hasan – was a powerful, inherent booster to millenarian eschatology. The orthodox interpretation given over the ages by the clerics kept the millenarianism within bounds: The last Imam, the Mahdi, had gone into hiding and would return at some unspecified time in the remote future; societies cannot exist in a permanent state of eschatological expectation, everlastingly suspended to a hypothetical. The millennium was a hope, not a daily matter. It was thus contained but not eradicated: The chiliastic belief lay now dormant, now fully reawakened. “As part of the general revival of religion in the late 1960s and 1970s, there was a marked increase in the popularity of *duaye nodbeh*, the supplication for the return of the Hidden Imam as the Mahdi, and special sessions were being arranged for its recital.”<sup>124</sup> The etiology of millenarian upsurges needs social dislocation and mental disorientation as preconditions and catalysts for its emergence as a mass phenomenon. Especially after the oil manna upset all norms and shook all rules as a result of the 1973 oil crisis, the shah’s Iran qualified as a society

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., pp. 142–3.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

gripped by anomie. A fundamental dimension of the Islamic Revolution was the systematic exploitation, not least by Khomeini, of nostalgia for the old times, for the old stability.

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood had developed with a notion of supreme leadership – Hasan al-Banna was *al-Murshid* ("the Guide"). The charismatic Persian divine Musa al-Sadr, had organized the Lebanese Shiite community around a novel mix of social activism, truculent identity politics and the fanning of millenarian expectations, and was called *Imam* by his followers. He was a harbinger of the future Khomeini as "leader of the Good in [the Lebanese Shiites'] Holy War against the forces of Evil."<sup>125</sup> Influenced by those examples, by 1970 Khomeini's militant followers were calling him *Imam*: "The acclamation of Khomeini as *Imam* by his followers was a startling event in Shiite history in Iran. Never since the majority of Iranians had become Shiite in the 16th century had they called a living person *Imam*. The term had hitherto only been used in reference to one of the twelve holy *imams* and its connotations in the minds of the Shiite believers as divinely-guided, infallible leaders undoubtedly worked to build up Khomeini's charisma."<sup>126</sup> It was now suggested that the Ayatollah was linked to the Hidden Imam of the Age, the Lord of Time.

"An unmistakably apocalyptic mood was observable during the religious month of Moharram 1399 (December 1978) among the masses of Tehran. Intense discussions were raging as to whether or not Khomeini was the Imam of the Age and the Lord of Time."<sup>127</sup> Khomeini's face was allegedly seen on the moon in provincial cities. Without claiming to be the returning Mahdi, Khomeini ingeniously exploited the messianic yearning by encouraging his acclamation as the *Imam*. He suggested that he was the forerunner of the Mahdi.

The slogan most frequently chanted by the "Followers of the Line of the *Imam*" was: "O God, O God, keep Khomeini until the Revolution of the Mahdi."<sup>128</sup> In September 1982, a clerical member of the Majlis, the parliament, predicted the imminent Advent of the Mahdi. A soldier wounded at the front during the war between Iran and Iraq reported that he had seen the Mahdi who had spoken to him thus: "Your prayer... has expedited my Advent by a few hundred years." The story was printed in *Sorush*, the intellectual journal of the Islamic militants in November 1982.

<sup>125</sup> See Taheri, *Holy Terror*, pp. 65–73.

<sup>126</sup> Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 101.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

The influential Ayatollah Saduqi of Yazd reported a miracle performed by Khomeini many years earlier: The Imam had created a spring in the middle of the desert under a scorching sun.

Khomeini's self-appointment as quasi-Mahdi was rooted in the revolutionary doctrine he had developed, that of the "government of the jurist," *velayat-e faqih*. In Islam, the law is *fiqh* and the jurist is the *faqih*. This covers a much wider ambit than is connoted by the English words, since "in Islam, theology is law and law is theology," a conception that derives seamlessly from the undivision of the religious and the political sphere. Khomeini now claimed absolute political power for the *faqih*, that is, himself. His theory overthrew centuries of accepted Shiite doctrine: During the Occultation of the Twelfth Imam – that is, until his Advent – the ulama's mandate does not extend to the political sphere, and their mandate is a collective mandate, not one vested with any one individual. Khomeini rode roughshod over traditions and objections. From the 1963 riots onward, Khomeini and his followers stirred up the masses with the perspective of a political revolution; "to secure the leadership of this political revolution for themselves, they . . . revolutionized the Shiite political ethos."<sup>129</sup>

In January 1988, Khomeini asserted his God-given, absolute mandate to rule and govern as "the most important of the divine commandments [with] priority over all derivative divine commandments, even over prayer, fasting and pilgrimage to Mecca."<sup>130</sup> This was an extraordinary innovation in Islam, since the "derivative" commandments have always been considered the "Pillars of Islam." This clerical absolutism (hierocracy) exercised by one man, the quasi-Mahdi, became, as it were, Gospel truth in the Islamic Republic. Then-President Khamenei, now Supreme Guide himself – though lower in the scale of Mahdihood – asserted that the commandments of the ruling jurist, *valiye faqih*, "are like the commandments of God." He added: "It is the ruling jurist who creates the order of the Islamic Republic . . . and requires obedience to it. Opposing this order has become forbidden as one of the cardinal sins, and combating the opponents of this order has become a . . . religious duty."<sup>131</sup>

Khomeini even set himself up on a par with Prophet Muhammad and Caliph Ali, "the Perfect Man," if not religiously, which would have been blasphemous, but politically, also arguing that the Islamic Republic was a community superior to the Prophet's own in Medina and later Mecca:

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>131</sup> *Jomhuri-ye Eslami*, January 1988, in Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 183.

"Our people are better than the community of the Apostle," he dared<sup>132</sup> – the flirtation with blasphemy was intense. His tortuous rhetoric relentlessly advanced the notion that the jurist (*velayat-e faqih*), that is, himself, was the deputy of Muhammad, that as replacement for the occulted Imam, he was the inheritor of the Prophet, and therefore "ha[s] the same authority as the Prophets . . . [is] like [the] Prophets."<sup>133</sup>

This extraordinary innovation had been enabled by, and was rooted in, the status of leadership in twentieth-century totalitarian states. In the Muslim world, Hasan al-Banna's role as *al-Murshid* had been one of the conveyors of this conception, but Antun Saada's Nazi-modeled Syrian Socialist National Party in Lebanon,<sup>134</sup> Ahmad Hasan in Egypt, and others had shared and propagated it. *Al-Murshid* was a notion with an old Sufi pedigree; it merged and blended with the *Duce* leading his *stato totale*, with Hitler's *Führerprinzip*, and with Stalin as the *Vozhd*. Ayatollah Khomeini in his incarnation as the *velayat-e faqih* was the very embodiment of Carl Schmitt's decisionist leader, as well as a repeat of the great medieval prophetae of Europe, Thomas Müntzer, or the Anabaptist "king" of Münster. When in 1982 Khomeini ordered twenty-five Islamic organizations to merge into one "party of Allah," *Hezb-Allah*, it stood to reason, or unreason, that the slogan should be "Only one party, the party of Allah! Only one leader, Ruhollah!" It rhymes in Persian, with a ring similar to "*Ein Reich, Ein Volk, Ein Führer!*" and "Proletarians of all lands, *unite!*" Khomeini "represent[ed] Allah's will on earth," just as Hitler was the Will of the Race and Stalin the Will of History and The People.<sup>135</sup> The Iranian regime orchestrated the same type of spectacular collective ceremonies that Albert Speer had arranged for Hitler at Nuremberg and Berlin and that Stalin had organized on Red Square, with a keen eye on manipulating masses in order to mobilize them.<sup>136</sup>

Even though he was a politician of great cunning, Khomeini displayed the coarse brutality of a *Cheka* commissar or a Herman Goering. His ruthless cruelty was based on his very conception of Islam: "Muhammad was not only instrumental in bringing the Islamic law, he was also its first executioner. He cut off hands, chopped off limbs, stoned adulterers to death."<sup>137</sup>

The results have been of the same order. The rampant jihad that has radiated from Tehran since 1979 has been one of the principal causes of

<sup>132</sup> Ram, *Myth and Mobilization*, p. 112.

<sup>133</sup> Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, pp. 413, 445.

<sup>134</sup> Becker, *The PLO* p. 114.

<sup>135</sup> Taheri, *Holy Terror*, p. 80.

<sup>136</sup> Ram, *Myth and Mobilization*, pp. 17–18.

<sup>137</sup> Quoted by Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, p. 440.

destabilization and destruction in the region since; it has fanned the flames not only of Shiite jihad but also of Sunni jihad. Indeed, Sunni-Shiite revolutionary and jihadi collaboration started the minute Khomeini returned to Tehran in 1979. Further, the Saudi–Wahhabi nexus was startled and frightened by the jihadi eruption across the Persian Gulf. The Kingdom’s legitimacy as Custodian of the Holy Places was under relentless attack. The storming and seizure of the huge complex of the Great Mosque in Mecca, on November 20, 1979, the first day of the fifteenth century according to the Muslim calendar, shook the royal family to its foundations. The assailants had a Saudi core, but included in their ranks Egyptians, Kuwaitis, Sudanese, Iraqis, and Yemenis, among others. They had received military and tactical training in Libya and South Yemen from East German, Cuban, and Palestinian (members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) instructors. They also included a contingent of apprentice terrorists trained in Iran.<sup>138</sup> The International Brigades of the new jihad were at work. As befits things modern, they had been born in a test-tube – the Palestine Liberation Organization – with a mad scientist operating the laboratory – the Soviet Union.

<sup>138</sup> Laurent Murawiec, *Princes of Darkness: The Saudi Assault on the West*, Lanham MD, Rowman & Littlefield, 2004, esp. Chapter 2.