

The man from Persia: A Tribute to Imam Khomeini

Were Islam to disappear into the farthest corner of the universe, a man from Persia would retrieve it.

— Prophet Muhammad.

For the first time in several centuries, a single voice emerged to speak for the whole of the Muslim World, and to speak with such magnificent force and power as to shake the world to its very foundation, changing, in the process, the tone and texture of global politics. That lone voice, that single, unique leader was Imam Khomeini the great Persian or Iranian scholar whose death on 29th, Shawwal 1409 (June 3, 1988), we now mourn.

No one familiar with Islamic history will be surprised that Imam Khomeini has come from Iran. From the very start, Islam recognized the sterling qualities of the Persians, as several statements of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) have indicated, one of which we have quoted at the beginning of this essay. The celebrated historian, Ibn Khaldun, has attributed many of the intellectual and scientific landmarks in the history of Islam to Persians, saying that these achievements were a fulfilment of the Prophet Muhammad's prophecies. It is indeed the universal recognition of the inherent qualities of the Persians as a force to reckon with as far as the cause of Islam is concerned that Muhammad Iqbal Islam's most accomplished poet of the present era predicted more than forty years ago, that the rise of Islam would start in Persia, now Iran. Possessed with a rich and very emotive language, the Persians have also an unbelievable capacity for sacrifice and an unshakable commitment to a chosen cause.

Probably no revolution in contemporary history has raised such passion and made such an impact on the whole world as the Iranian Revolution. Firstly, it was the first revolution which came to challenge the European Civilization frontally and from all angles, a challenge it was able to sustain since 1978. Secondly, the revolution threw overboard one of the most entrenched, most protected,

though also one of the most corrupt regimes in modern times. Shortly after America extorted Shah's Iran as an island of stability, the country was overturned by a revolution. Thirdly,



Imam: He altered history in favour of Islam

and indeed most importantly, the revolution was Islamic, a fact that took the world by surprise and threw it into utter bewilderment. Before the revolution, Islam was thought of universally as a spent force, a civilization so completely and irrevocably dead from the fatal blows inflicted by the West that its return to life was considered inconceivable. Islam, it was thought, has disappeared into the horizon, never to return.

Then, all of a sudden, Islam returned in a most cataclysmic manner. The spearhead of this unique event in modern history was Imam Khomeini. His revolution has been compared in well informed circles to the French Revolution. The French Revolution, it should be remembered, altered the course of history most profoundly, giving the European civilization for which it also served as a new foundation the supremacy it enjoys today all over the globe. Modern era, it can be claimed with some justification, began with the French Revolution. By the same token, the Iranian Revolution of 1978 can justifiably be said to have set the pace for another era in human history, when Islam re-entered the world stage after many centuries of subjugation, paralysis and near-oblivion to begin a new life as the

civilization of the future.

Imam Khomeini has irreversibly altered the course of history. Early signs of this are already visible. At home, he has virtually created a new nation with a new sense of identity, having a government that is cocultural with its own people, when surrogate regimes wage cultural war on their own people a nation full of confidence in itself, a nation well and truly free. Again, this is the first time since the rise of European civilization that a free nation, not subject to European cultural, economic or ideological control, has emerged. In just a decade the fruits of this freedom are there for all to see. Iran is on the verge of self-sufficiency in food, and is making so much breakthrough in science and technology, that fears are being expressed in the West that the world is witnessing the emergence of a global power. Even more remarkable is the fact that Iran is not indebted to any nation on earth, not indeed to the IMF, World Bank, the Club of Paris or any other economic power. Iran speaks, proudly and confidently, with any nation, any power bloc or any world institution as an equal. Perhaps most important of all is the cultural and spiritual renaissance that this nation enjoys today, which is the ultimate source of its strength.

Iran has paid, and continues to pay, a heavy price for its freedom. The West imposed all sorts of economic sanctions, subjected the country to all manner of political blackmail and subversions, attempted a military invasion, launched a vicious and sustained propaganda war, and finally imposed an eight-year war with devastating ferocity. But Iran stood its ground and survived the multi-dimensional wars. Iran has become a shining example and an inspiration not only for the Muslim countries but also the countries of the Third World. The remark once made by Denis Healey one time British Defence Minister to say that if Iran were allowed to prevail, it would mean the end of Western civilization which represents the West's beliefs and fear of the inhe-

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