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The West's Help to Islamic Jihadists

Though Western leaders now lock arms in disgust over Islamic fundamentalism, the West's actions – from Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama – have often promoted the interests of jihadists from Afghanistan in the 1980s to Iraq in the 2000s to Libya and Syria in the 2010s.

William Blum recalls

1/23/2015

After Paris, condemnation of religious fanaticism is at its height. I'd guess that even many progressives fantasize about wringing the necks of jihadists, bashing into their heads some thoughts about the intellect, about satire, humor, freedom of speech. We're talking here, after all, about young men raised in France, not Saudi Arabia.

Where has all this Islamic fundamentalism come from in this modern age? Most of it comes – trained, armed, financed, indoctrinated – from Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. During various periods from the 1970s to the present, these four countries had been the most secular, modern, educated, welfare states in the Middle East region. And what had happened to these secular, modern, educated, welfare states?

In the 1980s, the United States overthrew the Afghan government that was progressive, with full rights for women, believe it or not, leading to the creation

of the Taliban and their taking power. [US Department of the Army, Afghanistan, A Country Study (1986), pp.121, 128, 130, 223, 232]

In the 2000s, the United States overthrew the Iraqi government, destroying not only the secular state, but the civilized state as well, leaving a failed state.

In 2011, the United States and its NATO military machine overthrew the secular Libyan government of Muammar Gaddafi, leaving behind a lawless state and unleashing many hundreds of jihadists and tons of weaponry across the Middle East.

And for the past few years the United States has been engaged in overthrowing the secular Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad. This, along with the US occupation of Iraq having triggered widespread Sunni-Shia warfare, led to the creation of The Islamic State with all its beheadings and other charming practices.

However, despite it all, the world was made safe for capitalism, imperialism, anti-communism, oil, Israel, and jihadists. God is Great!

Starting with the Cold War, and with the above interventions building upon that, we have 70 years of American foreign policy, without which – as Russian/American writer Andre Vltchek has observed – “almost all Muslim countries, including Iran, Egypt and Indonesia, would now most likely be socialist, under a group of very moderate and mostly secular leaders.” [Counterpunch, Jan. 10, 2015]

Even the ultra-oppressive Saudi Arabia – without Washington’s protection – would probably be a very different place.

On Jan. 11, Paris was the site of a March of National Unity in honor of the magazine Charlie Hebdo, whose journalists had been assassinated by terrorists. The march was rather touching, but it was also an orgy of Western hypocrisy, with the French TV broadcasters and the assembled crowd extolling without end the NATO world’s reverence for journalists and freedom of speech; an ocean of signs declaring Je suis Charlie ... Nous Sommes Tous Charlie; and flaunting giant pencils, as if pencils – not bombs, invasions, overthrows, torture, and drone attacks – have been the West’s weapons of choice in the Middle East during the past century.

No reference was made to the fact that the American military, in the course of its wars in recent decades in the Middle East and elsewhere, had been responsible for the deliberate deaths of dozens of journalists.

In Iraq, among other incidents, see Wikileaks’ 2007 video of the cold-blooded murder of two Reuters journalists; the 2003 US air-to-surface missile attack on

the offices of Al Jazeera in Baghdad that left three journalists dead and four wounded; and the American firing on Baghdad's Hotel Palestine the same year that killed two foreign cameramen.

Moreover, on Oct. 8, 2001, the second day of the US bombing of Afghanistan, the transmitters for the Taliban government's Radio Shari were bombed and shortly after this the US bombed some 20 regional radio sites. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld defended the targeting of these facilities, saying: "Naturally, they cannot be considered to be free media outlets. They are mouthpieces of the Taliban and those harboring terrorists." [Index on Censorship, the UK's leading organization promoting freedom of expression, Oct. 18, 2001]

And in Yugoslavia, in 1999, during the infamous 78-day bombing of a country which posed no threat at all to the United States or any other country, state-owned Radio Television Serbia (RTS) was targeted because it was broadcasting things which the United States and NATO did not like (like how much horror the bombing was causing). The bombs took the lives of many of the station's staff, and both legs of one of the survivors, which had to be amputated to free him from the wreckage. [The Independent (London), April 24, 1999]

I present here some views on Charlie Hebdo sent to me by a friend in Paris who has long had a close familiarity with the publication and its staff:

"On international politics Charlie Hebdo was neoconservative. It supported every single NATO intervention from Yugoslavia to the present. They were anti-Muslim, anti-Hamas (or any Palestinian organization), anti-Russian, anti-Cuban (with the exception of one cartoonist), anti-Hugo Chávez, anti-Iran, anti-Syria, pro-Pussy Riot, pro-Kiev ... Do I need to continue?"

"Strangely enough, the magazine was considered to be 'leftist'. It's difficult for me to criticize them now because they weren't 'bad people', just a bunch of funny cartoonists, yes, but intellectual freewheelers without any particular agenda and who actually didn't give a fuck about any form of 'correctness' – political, religious, or whatever; just having fun and trying to sell a 'subversive' magazine (with the notable exception of the former editor, Philippe Val, who is, I think, a true-blooded neocon)."

Remember Arseniy Yatsenuk? The Ukrainian whom US State Department officials adopted as one of their own in early 2014 and guided into the position of Prime Minister so he could lead the Ukrainian Forces of Good against Russia in the new Cold War?

In an interview on German television on Jan. 7, 2015, Yatsenuk allowed the following words to cross his lips: "We all remember well the Soviet invasion of Ukraine and Germany. We will not allow that, and nobody has the right to

rewrite the results of World War Two.”

The Ukrainian Forces of Good, it should be kept in mind, also include several neo-Nazis in high government positions and many more partaking in the fight against Ukrainian pro-Russians in the south-east of the country. Last June, Yatsenuk referred to these pro-Russians as “sub-humans,” directly equivalent to the Nazi term “*untermenschen*.” [“Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk talking to Pinar Atalay”, Tagesschau (Germany), Jan. 7, 2015 (in Ukrainian with German voice-over)]

So the next time you shake your head at some stupid remark made by a member of the US government, try to find some consolation in the thought that high American officials are not necessarily the dumbest, except of course in their choice of who is worthy of being one of the empire’s partners.

The type of rally held in Paris this month to condemn an act of terror by jihadists could as well have been held for the victims of Odessa in Ukraine last May. The same neo-Nazi types referred to above took time off from parading around with their swastika-like symbols and calling for the death of Russians, Communists and Jews, and burned down a trade-union building in Odessa, killing scores of people and sending hundreds to hospital; many of the victims were beaten or shot when they tried to flee the flames and smoke; ambulances were blocked from reaching the wounded.

Try and find a single American mainstream media entity that has made even a slightly serious attempt to capture the horror. You would have to go to the Russian station in Washington, DC, RT.com, search “Odessa fire” for many stories, images and videos. Also see the Wikipedia entry on the 2 May 2014 Odessa clashes.

If the American people were forced to watch, listen, and read all the stories of neo-Nazi behavior in Ukraine the past few years, I think they – yes, even the American people and their less-than-intellectual Congressional representatives – would start to wonder why their government was so closely allied with such people. The United States may even go to war with Russia on the side of such people.