

Islam and the Propaganda War (Part I): In Print and Online

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Among the many weapons of the American government during the Cold War were its programs to disseminate, behind the Iron Curtain, and especially in the Soviet Union, information that exposed the cruelties of Communism. Millions in Eastern Europe listened to Radio Free Europe, millions more in the Soviet Union listened to Radio Liberty, and everywhere people

listened to the Voice of America broadcasts. There was also a publication program, including hundreds of editions published by the C.I.A., often in easy to hide – small-format, onion-skin paper – copies, of such dystopian novels as Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984*, economic and historical studies of the capitalist United States, even fiction by Russian émigré writers. Such books were made available to Soviet visitors in Europe. Though trusted enough by the Soviet state to be allowed out on missions (e.g., Soviet intellectuals sent to endless "Peace" conferences), many of these visitors willingly accepted these books. Some would read them and then leave them behind; others, more daring, would smuggle the books back with them when they returned to the Soviet Union, to be passed from reader to reader, with multiple copies often made, samizdat-style (meaning the clandestine copying, by hand, and distribution by individuals, of texts censored by the Communist authorities), by tireless typists.

The C.I.A. took a broad view of what helped to turn people away from Communism, and found that giving them a glimpse of freedom of expression – in the literature, art, music of the free world – which they could then compare with the dullness of their regulated and constricted lives, made miserable by Communism, was particularly effective.

For example, on Voice of America there was a music program, Voice of Jazz, hosted by Willis Conover, a name hardly known in America but well-known above all, in Russia, where people would listen to his program of American jazz, picked up on short-wave radios, despite the static, and listeners were given an aural glimpse into another world, of exhilarating freedom, that his Soviet audience found quite mesmerizing. Nothing overtly political was conveyed, but the presentation of another world – America! Dzhazz! – did have a political impact, made people long even more for something other than grey Soviet life.

Still another example of the *Kulturkampf* conducted during the

Cold War was the Congress for Cultural Freedom, founded in 1950 and supported by C.I.A. money, which sponsored conferences and meetings by anti-Communist intellectuals, many of them leftwing, and some of them former Communists, in the West, and also put out a monthly magazine, *Encounter*, that was possibly the best magazine in the English-speaking world, covering art, literature, music, philosophy, history, fiction, poetry, all of it for an audience aimed, like the meetings of the Congress itself, at Western intellectuals. Of course, there were also overtly political reports on Communist parties in the West (especially in Italy and France, where the parties were still very strong in the 1950s and 1960s) and on life behind the Iron Curtain.

It is disturbing to compare the multifaceted campaign during the Cold War to undermine an implacable ideological foe, a campaign which was successful, both in weakening any residual faith in Communism in Russia and Eastern Europe, and in keeping Western intellectuals in the liberal democratic camp, with the modest, almost nonexistent effort now being made by the world's Infidels to combat the ideology of Islam, its apparent appeal to some in the West, and its continued hold on those in Dar al-Islam. That this should be so is due, in the main, to Islam being able to present itself as a religion, rather than as what we know it to be, both a religion and a political system that attempts to regulate every area of life, from the most homely and intimate of domestic details to geopolitical relations. And as a "religion," it is too often treated with kid gloves, as if that mere label made it off-limits to criticism, providing the ideology with an invisible protective shield. The more attention given to aspects of Islam that suggest not a religion but a cult, a cult from which you are not permitted to leave, the better.

Unfortunately for us, Islam is the least pacific, the most dangerous, of the world's religions, and we have a duty to understand the ideology of Islam in order to better protect

ourselves. Islam is based on an uncompromising division of the world between Believer and Infidel, Muslim and non-Muslim. It is the duty of Muslims to conduct Jihad against non-Muslims, by violent means if necessary, and once they have been subjugated, to offer them the choice either of conversion to Islam, or death, or permanent inferior status as dhimmis, subject to a host of political, economic, and social disabilities. Furthermore, it is the duty of Muslims to enlarge the territory of Dar al-Islam, where Islam dominates and Muslims rule, at the expense of Dar al-Harb, the territories where non-Muslims still dominate. To understand this requires some study of Islam, but not only are Western governments reluctant to provide such an education to their own peoples, but many of the Western leaders seem intent on misleading their own people, and themselves, about the nature of Islam. For if they were at this point to tell the truth, the obvious question the public would want answered would be: *"What? You knew that Islam meant nothing good for Infidels, and yet you allowed all these people who believe these things to enter our country, to settle in our midst? Why? On what theory? We counted on you to protect us, we assumed you knew what you were doing, and now you tell us, after you've let in hundreds of thousands, or even more than a million, Muslim migrants, that you were wrong?"*

It's hard to know at what point enough people in the West will finally come to their senses on the subject of Islam, but that moment is surely coming. Too many bombs have gone off, too many suicide belts have exploded, too many knives have decapitated too many helpless Infidels, to keep up the pretense that Islam means "peace." Or to still insist, after so many terrorist attacks, the idiotic conclusion that "Islam has nothing to do with it." Or that "these people (terrorists) are just mentally ill." Or the usual *tu-quoque* of "all religions have their extremists." Every ludicrous excuse has been offered, but their effect is wearing off. By now many are tired of being misinformed – that is, lied to about – Islam,

and as they start to grasp the real nature and scope of the menace, they become increasingly eager, even anxious, to learn what Islam is all about. Those who tell them that they are right to be afraid, but that it is not too late for the West to save itself, can no longer be briskly dismissed as “Islamophobes.”

Europe offers examples of despair (as reflected in the policies of Angela Merkel), but also hope. In France both leading candidates for the presidency, Le Pen and Fillon, warn about “Islamic totalitarianism.” In the Netherlands, the outspoken Geert Wilders, despite all the efforts to silence him, has been declared politician of the year for 2016, is leading in the polls, and his party, the PVV (Party of Freedom) is predicted to win the most seats in the March election, giving Wilders a chance to form the next Dutch government. Meanwhile, his chief opponent, Prime Minister Mark Rutte, has stunned many with his open letter, published online and in full page newspaper ads, in which he claimed that there is “something wrong with our country” and the “silent majority” would no longer tolerate immigrants who “abuse our freedom.” Rutte then mentioned those people who do not respect women or gay rights. He warned immigrants “to be normal or be gone.” He did not explicitly mention Islam; there was no need. The wildersization of Dutch politics is a welcome development; it means Wilders has already partly won, by forcing his opponents to echo his views.

And there are other growing anti-Islam political movements, in Germany, in Austria, in Denmark, in Sweden, in Finland, and in Switzerland, all of them constantly described, tendentiously, and inaccurately, as “far-right.” Many of these supposedly far-right groups have deplored the huge expense of supporting Muslim immigrants because, among other consequences, that has made it difficult to support the indigenous poor and aged. In other words, these groups want to prevent cuts in social security and other benefits for the poor and aged – not

exactly policies one thinks of as being “far-right.” But simple statements of the truth have to be endlessly repeated. To wit, there is nothing irrational about fear of Islam. Islam is not a race, and being anti-Islam has nothing to do with racism. Some opponents of the spread of Islam in Europe may be “far right,” but there are also plenty of people in the center and on the left who regard Islam as a threat to freedom. Obvious statements, all three, but apparently for many in the media not obvious enough.

In many of these countries, the adherents of Islam have recently suffered sobering defeats. There have been court cases, upholding everything from [upholding a Swiss requirement](#) that Muslim parents send their daughters to mixed-sex school swimming lessons; in the interests of “social integration” they could not be exempt. The [Swiss court upheld school officials](#) who insisted that Muslim students could not be exempt from the custom of shaking the teacher’s hand at the beginning and end of the school day, even if that teacher were female.

These are all victories, often in seemingly small matters, but they add up, and all point in one direction, which is that of growing opposition to the steady encroachments by Muslims on the laws and customs of the peoples of Europe. A European-wide poll in February 2017 confirms the growing support for a complete ban on Muslim immigration; [calculated by one Swedish economist](#), over the lifetime just of those migrants who arrived in one year, 2015, as close to 600 billion kroner, or about 55 billion dollars. A staggering sum.

This figure – 55 billion dollars for the estimated costs, over their lifetimes, just of those Muslim migrants who arrived in 2015 – ought to be constantly repeated, for the actual expense of supporting Muslim migrants (never mind the damage to a nation’s sense of itself, or the menace of demographic conquest, or the threat of terrorism) is something everyone can grasp, and which can grab the attention of even the most

outwardly phlegmatic. Break-the-bank issues matter.

Still, these judicial decisions, these referenda that have rejected specific challenges by Muslims to those Infidel laws and customs, these signs of pushback against the demands of Muslim immigrants and their spiraling expenses, while welcome, do not constitute the kind of ideological warfare that was engaged in during the Cold War. Even if Muslim migrants were able to pay for themselves, instead of being parasites on the economies of Western Europe, there is still the permanent danger that Islamic doctrine represents for all non-Muslims. The political and even geopolitical aspects of Islam, as a permanently aggressive faith, receive insufficient attention; we are constantly told that there is something called "political Islam" which we must not confuse with "Islam," but this misstates the case: Islam may not be identical to, but it certainly contains, rather than contradicts, what we mean by "political Islam." And even while they ban some things Muslims want (the burka, the minaret), and uphold others Muslims don't want (the student-teacher handshake, mixed-swimming classes), Europeans are still chary of appearing to disfavor Islam, and continue to treat it as a religion rather than as a political ideology of conquest and subjugation.

But there is growing recognition that the wider public needs to know much about Islam that it is not getting from what is called the mainstream media. When, for example, have you read in the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*, or heard on any major news program, the terms "Jizyah" or "dhimmi"? When have you read in those papers a single one of the 109 Jihad verses (such as 9:5 and 9:29) that just might give their readers pause, and a real sense of the anti-Infidel violence that is everywhere in the Qur'an? When have you read, or heard, in the mainstream media, the Qur'anic quote describing non-Muslims as "the most vile of creatures"? The answer in each case is "Never." And why do we still hear, over and over again, reporters and anchormen translating "Allahu Akbar" as "God is

great," instead of as the war cry it is: "My God – Allah – is greater (than yours)?" That mistranslation is not trivial. Meanwhile, Muslims have been busy promoting widespread campaigns to convince non-Muslims of their innocuousness. These are all "just folks" affairs, with Mosque Outreach nights, and Visit My Mosque days, and Meet Your Muslim Neighbors (and Put Your Mind At Rest), all variants on the same script, where ostentatiously friendly Muslims eager to put Islam's best foot forward offer an evening of smiling *taqiyya* and (if need be) indignant *tu-quoque* to non-Muslims trustingly eager to "learn about Islam" by meeting real-life Muslims. What they discover, unsurprisingly, is what swell people Muslims on their best behavior can turn out to be, and while nothing of substance is learned about what Islam inculcates, at the end of the suave presentation, the baklava beckons, and a good time is had by all..

Governments may hesitate or falter in confronting the ideology of Islam, for they have been made leery of charges of bias and Islamophobia. However baseless or misconceived or idiotic those charges are, they are repeated so often that they take on a life of their own. That does not mean that nothing can be done until Western leaders such as Wilders and Le Pen are voted into office. Those outside of government should pick up the slack. Deep-pocketed private parties can step in, and help fund those groups and individuals who have become alert to the dangers of Islam, and are attempting to educate Western publics. (Jihad Watch is a model worth supporting, and emulating.) Private parties can also underwrite the educational material that needs to be disseminated. It would be helpful to have published—or posted online – special "student editions" of the Qur'an, with a running commentary in the margins, of exegetical and critical commentary, focusing on the most troublesome verses (such as 9:5, or 98:6) and also collections of selected Hadith (taken mainly from the compilations of Muslim and Al-Bukhari, the two most respected *muhaddithin*), and excerpts, too, from the Sira, or biography

of Muhammad, with emphasis on the very stories about what Muhammad did and said, that propagandists for Islam attempt to keep off the radar of Infidels (the marriage to little Aisha, the murders of Asma bint Marwan and Abu Afak, the attack on Khaybar, the killings of the Banu Qurayza). And these texts should be made available for free, and widely distributed, in print editions, and made even more widely available – and just as free – on the Internet.

These editions of the three main Islamic texts, with the all-important critical commentaries, ought to be supplemented by other works critical of Islam, especially those by ex-Muslims. The studies by such writers as Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Ibn Warraq should be translated into at least a dozen of the major languages of the non-Muslim world, including but not limited to, English, French, Spanish, German, Russian, Italian, Dutch, Portuguese, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Japanese, and a half-dozen of the major languages of Islam: Arabic, Urdu, Farsi, Bahasa, Turkish, Malay. It is disturbing that such a translation project, which would cost so little and potentially do so much, has still not been undertaken by any foundation. The ideological war, then, must be conducted both among non-Muslims and Muslims, in the same way that during the Cold War the C.I.A. had two target audiences: the first was the audience trapped behind the Iron Curtain, that was kept informed by broadcasts about what life was like in the West, and the second was an audience in the West, consisting of left-leaning intellectuals whom the C.I.A. wanted to keep from succumbing to the ideological blandishments of Communism. We want to educate Western publics about Islam, by showing them the Qur'anic verses and Hadith stories that Muslim propagandists try to avoid discussing, or when they can be forced to discuss them, exhale a *taqiyya* smokescreen that is hard to dissipate. And we want to carry the ideological war to the enemy, attempting to weaken the hold Islam has on its adherents. Not nearly enough has been done, for example, to exploit the fact that Islam has been a vehicle for Arab

supremacism which, given that 80% of the world's Muslims are not Arabs, may well be the most potent argument in weakening Islam's appeal.

But again, the times are very different from those of the Cold War, and print publication is no longer the main way to disseminate information. Now it is a question of posting online, and reaching audiences of tens of millions rather than tens of thousands, a reach that could never have been imagined even twenty years ago. But it will still be up to private parties to ensure that these Islamic texts, and the critical commentaries on them, and the major works by articulate ex-Muslims and other major critics of Islam (including Robert Spencer, as the prime mover of Jihad Watch), are faithfully translated into nearly twenty languages, including the eight major languages of Muslim peoples, and then making sure that all of these translations are attractively presented and easy to find online, as part of what is already the first great cyberwar. It's a war the West has come to late in the day, but must now, without further delay, enter the ideological lists, relying necessarily on private support for as long as governments still fear to tread, to prevail in a war which that West cannot afford to lose.

First published in