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## THE MIND OF A TERRORIST

*Four articles on this subject published by News Central Asia, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan in 2005.*

### **Chapter One: To Kill a Prime Minister**

It was a particularly hot afternoon when I decided to go shopping for permission (Fatwa) to kill the Prime Minister. It was probably the summer of 1994 and Benazir Bhutto was laboriously inching through her second non-productive term as Prime Minister of Pakistan. At that time, Pakistan's Blasphemy Law was a sword in the hands of the unscrupulous and they were flailing it blindly, right, left and center.

One day, there was a small news item that a Christian from the Punjab province had been taken into custody for allegedly using some derogatory words against the Prophet of Islam. A few days later, there was another, even smaller, news story that the Benazir Bhutto government had released the young man quietly and he had been granted asylum in some West European country. Having a deep love for Prophet Mohammad, I was among those who were very angry with Benazir Bhutto.

The dense mass of anger squirming in my mind took a particular direction when the same evening I happened to stumble into a religious gathering where an especially eloquent 'religious leader' reproached Benazir Bhutto in many languages and urged the crowd quite convincingly: 'Is there not even one among you who can take out this enemy of Islam?' I promised myself that I would be the one to 'take out this enemy of Islam.'

Next afternoon I went to the same mosque to seek permission from the Pesh-Imam (prayer leader) to kill the Prime Minister. He said that since he was not a Mufti (a religious scholar who is authorized to issue religious edicts – Fatwa), he was unable to issue the kind of permission I sought. He referred me to a well-known Mufti in Karachi. I went dashing to this Mufti and put my case before him.

“So, you want to kill the Prime Minister?” asked the Mufti.

“Indeed, I do. I feel it is my duty to do so,” I said.

“And why do you think it is your duty to kill the Prime Minister,” asked the Mufti with a hint of a smile in his eyes.

I narrated all the ‘known details’ of the case and said heatedly, “This proves that the government has deliberately set free a person who insulted our beloved Prophet. There is no choice but to kill the Prime Minister because, as the head of the government, she is responsible for what happens in her administration.”

“Let’s view the whole thing from a distance and we shall soon find out whether I can give you permission to go ahead with your plans,” reasoned the Mufti. In his lengthy discourse over a cup of tea laced with substandard milk powder, the Mufti presented the following scenarios:

- The speaker in the last evening’s gathering may have been politically motivated. One needs to verify whether he is a man of ‘solid character’ (Swaleh) and whether one can trust that he had no hidden motive when inciting a crowd to take an extreme action.

Are there at least four witnesses of solid character who can testify that the Christian young man really insulted the Prophet? What were his exact words, and in what context did he utter those words? Was he aware of what he was saying? Is it possible that he said something in answer to an argument where a Muslim may have insulted Jesus Christ? If so, then the other person who insulted Jesus Christ, should also have been charged under the same law because Jesus is also the prophet of Islam, as are Moses, Abraham and all other prophets.

- Even if we assume that the charges are correctly leveled against the Christian in question, are we sure that Benazir Bhutto personally authorized his release? Is it not possible that some local functionary released him because of sympathy or monetary gratification?

Killing someone is an extreme action. The basic principle is that we cannot take what we cannot give. Since we cannot give life we should be extremely reluctant to take it. The Blasphemy law, as it stands, has many loopholes.

Moreover, killing or imprisoning someone means that we are unable to find arguments to refute what they are saying.

My conversation with the Mufti, and his set of arguments mentioned here, would probably come as a surprise to some who make a beeline to a particular seminary in Pakistan and rush back breathlessly with exciting stories about “breeding grounds of terrorism and havens for *Al-Qaeda* and *Taliban*.”

The Mufti’s last sentence changed my mindset – and my life – then and there: “Killing or imprisoning someone means that we are unable to find arguments to refute what they are saying.”

I died that day, right on the worn-out rug in the Mufti’s office. Or, to put it more precisely, I was born that day. I rushed back to Noor Baba.

## **Chapter Two: Noor Baba**

Drums rolled and trumpets shouted. A motley assortment of percussion instruments tried to overwhelm each other. This was the mausoleum of Abdullah Shah Ghazi and I was looking for Noor Baba.

The trouble with Noor Baba was that every time he appeared in a different guise – or, should we say, in a different shell. Today, he was selling watermelons.

This was a new face of Noor Baba but I had been chasing him all my life and it was no big deal to spot him in the crowd: The neatly cut, unequal watermelon slices were hidden from flies by thin gauze and the stack of plates and forks were covered by a plastic sheet.

Two things gave away the identity of Noor Baba: The unequal slices of watermelon and the method of cleaning soiled plates. While other vendors were recycling the plates in a bucket of murky water, Noor Baba had a small boy run to the nearest water tap to wash the plates with soap and running water. And, other vendors had cut their watermelon slices in equal sizes to avoid annoying the customers.

“I want to buy a slice of watermelon,” I asked blandly.

“I am not selling any watermelon to you,” he said angrily.

Sure. This was Noor Baba. “I am sorry, Babaji.”

“Get out of my sight. You have let me down.”

“I am sorry, Babaji.” Oblivious of the milling crowds, hot tears rolled down my cheeks. I am sorry, really sorry, Babaji.”

Silence. Painful silence.

Then he put a big slice of watermelon on a plate. I bit into the slice directly and as the sweet juices sprayed the farthest corners of my mouth, peace and contentment enveloped my whole being.

“Read,” said Noor Baba in his soothing voice.

All of a sudden there was no mausoleum of Abdullah Shah Ghazi, there was no milling crowd and it was not mid-afternoon. There was only Noor Baba. The hurricane lantern was perched on a high stool, issuing its yellowish liquid light in a weak circle. I was sitting cross-legged opposite Noor Baba.

“Read,” said Noor Baba.

It was early dawn and the darkness was still reluctant to yield to the morning. This was one of my first lessons, and this was my first Noor Baba.

“Read! In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created -,” Noor Baba traced the words with his finger.

“Read! In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created -,” I repeated, hardly understanding a word.

Then, Noor Baba recited in his rich, resonant voice: “Read! In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created man, from a (mere) clot of congealed

blood: Read! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful, He Who taught (the use of) the pen, taught man that which he knew not.

I was very little and all I understood was that someone, someone even bigger than Noor Baba, wants me to read, read, read.

### **Chapter Three: Iraq Letters**

In early June 2005 I received three e-mails that shed some light on the complicated way the mind of an insurgent – or a terrorist – works. The e-mails were from someone who signed off as Asad (The Lion) and they gave the impression that they were sent from Iraq although the e-mails were from a masked address and it was not possible to verify the origin of the (attached) letters.

Asad – obviously not his real name – said that I may use the substance of the letters but not the exact language and he also requested that I delete the letters after reading. So, in compliance with his request, I deleted the letters immediately after reading them and in this chapter I will use their substance but not their language.

From the language and substance of the letters, one can learn that Asad is not a part of the Iraq insurgency but that he is a close observer with plenty of inside knowledge. He reports that according to the insurgents in Iraq, a wounded American soldier is infinitely better than a dead American soldier because a dead soldier would just leave behind a head marker but a wounded soldier would go back to his community with tales of horror and would remain an expensive reminder of the continuing war in Iraq. He says that an injured soldier, with serious wounds, costs a lot more than a dead soldier and that makes him a preferable choice for the insurgents.

Asad says that although the US government admits that about 12,000 American soldiers have been wounded in Iraq since the start of the occupation, the real numbers could be as high as 35,000. He asserts that the cost of treating the soldier, the expenses of his hospitalization, transportation back to the United States, the financial considerations involved in his medical discharge from the army with disability pension, his

inability to make a living on his own because of his injuries, the pain and strain this exerts on his near family and friends, his own state of mind that continuously reels with horror and frustration, all add up to the 'benefit' for the insurgents that cannot be achieved simply by killing an American soldier.

This is a revealing piece of information because from the reports one gets from the US government and media, the losses are evaluated in terms of the dead only, while the injured are brushed aside as a comparatively irrelevant statistic.

Asad says that the main force behind insurgency is anger, not ideology. He says that many of those fighting against the American and British forces are not particularly devout Muslims. Some of them would commit major 'sins' without feeling bad about it. Swift entry to paradise, Asad says, is not the prime objective of suicide bombers; swift ouster of occupying forces *is*.

In an ornate and flowery language, showing that his ideas were originally conceived in the Arabic language and then translated into English, Asad asks how the Americans or the British would react if someone occupied their land? According to the insurgents, every tactic is justified if the objective is to liberate the homeland from the occupying forces.

He also tells of certain policy weaknesses that are feeding the insurgency.

There is an impression in Iraq, Asad says, that the present government, propped up by the Americans, is deliberately dragging its feet on development projects. The people have the feeling that, if the development projects were implemented, they would create job opportunities for the local population and fewer people would be inclined to join the police and the security forces. At present, the police and the security forces are the only job openings available to the local population and they have no choice but to join if they want to make a living.

Asad says that local population would not join the police and other security structures if alternative employment opportunities were open to them. It is for this reason, he stresses, that the government is not allowing the development projects to move forward so that the people should continue to

join the police and other forces. So for a number of reasons the popularity of Saddam Hussein is on the rise again.

#### **Chapter Four: Raw Anger**

There were eleven of us and we were traveling in the back an army truck that should have been sent to the junkyard years ago. We had been living and moving in that truck for the past 38 days. There were hardly any public baths in Karachi at that time so all of us were filthy and our collective stink soared a mile high.

It was the afternoon of 16 December 1971. India and Pakistan had been fighting a war for some time and we were just school kids, too young to join the army although some of us had tried our best to fake the age. Since we were unable to join the army, the second best thing to do was to collect relief goods and gifts for the civilian population at the border areas that had been affected by the war, and we were doing just that: Going door to door, gathering whatever the people could spare, and unloading the truck every evening at a central collection point. It was time for the three o'clock news and all of us leaned toward the tiny pocket radio one of us was carrying. The newscaster said, "Indian military has entered Dhaka and the Pakistan army has surrendered."

The truck driver also heard the news on the AM radio in his cabin and his mind went ka-boom. He lost control; the truck swerved to the side, hit a tree and came to a halt with a sickening krrrunch from the bonnet. We, in the back of the truck, fell over each other in a heap. We just lay where we fell, staring vacantly, oblivious of our surroundings, unable to comprehend fully what had happened to the truck or to Pakistan.

Then Waseem, the youngest of us, pierced the silence with a monumental scream. It was not a human cry; it was the howl of a mortally wounded animal.

Javed went mad and started banging his head against the tailboard.

Shabbir, the bull, the strongest and gentlest among us, ripped open his shirt, the startled buttons flying every which way, jumped from the truck, and ran away like a mad dog. He returned home three days later, having lost more than 30 pounds and resembling a dehydrated rodent.

All of us reacted with one basic emotion - anger, red hot, blistering anger; anger that stems from helplessness, rises from the soul and reaches for the sky....

Noor Baba was sitting at the tiller of the small, dirty fishing boat with an engine that spewed noxious fumes and coughed helplessly. It was 1977, long before OBL and long before the 11<sup>th</sup> of September [2001]. It was monsoon season. The sea was choppy. I had missed the last regular boat and there was no way to reach the naval academy except hiring a boat. No one was in sight except Noor Baba and I boarded his shaky contraption with misgivings.

“Anger is the primary emotion,” said Noor Baba.

“What about love?” I said disinterestedly.

“Love??” he roared, “You think love is an emotion?! Love is the substance you are built of, love is the basic ingredient of your being,” Noor Baba thundered. According to Noor Baba, anger is a foundation on which one can build many different things. Anger can be of numerous kinds; there is individual anger and there is collective anger. There can be personal anger and there can be national anger. Anger can be acquired and anger can be inherited.

“You are carrying about eight centuries of anger. It has seeped into your genes,” Noor Baba said dramatically: “You are angry because the Mongol armies sacked Baghdad in 1258. You are angry because your countries and your people were colonized by Europe. You are angry because the British army desecrated the tomb of Mahdi Sudani in 1898.

“You are angry because British General Sir Edmund Allenby, on entering Jerusalem in 1917, said, “The Crusades have ended now!”

"You are angry because French General Henri Gouraud, on entering Damascus in 1920, walked to Saladin's tomb, kicked it, and said, "Awake Saladin, we have returned. My presence here consecrates the victory of the Cross over the Crescent."

"You are angry because in 1953 the United States, Britain and Israel orchestrated a coup to unseat Mossadegh, the democratically elected Prime Minister of Iran because he had nationalized the oil industry."

"You are angry because in 1963 the same states sponsored a coup in Iraq to kill Prime Minister Assem, paving Saddam Hussein's way to power. This coup was also related to oil supplies and had nothing to do with democracy or the interests of the people of Iraq."

"You are angry with the Balfour Declaration and the creation of Israel."

"You are angry with your own government and all the other governments in the Muslim world that are totally corrupt and are propped up by the West."

"Raw anger is dangerous but process the anger - refine it - and it is the best tool you have for progress. Anger can be your biggest asset and anger can be your biggest liability. Just remember: There are some physical laws in force and God does not intervene between nations."

***Editor's Note:** We are publishing these four "chapters", which are really one study, because they describe the minds and mindset of Muslim terrorists much better than any non-Muslim terrorism expert could. Though often describing anger, the style is almost dispassionate. This is not a tirade to convince anyone. It is the real thing. The reader who reads it (and in particular its concluding chapter) will get a realistic idea of how terrorists think – not only in Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan but also throughout the Arab world.*

*Let me stress that the mindset here described belongs, first and foremost, to the masterminds and organizers of terrorism – preachers in the mosques as well as first-rank or second-rank leaders of individual terrorist movements. They are the group best acquainted with the historical successes and*

*reverses of their faith, and they pass on the doctrine of hatred to their followers, embellishing the facts whenever necessary. But there are certain matters Western statesmen must grasp if they are ever to deal with the Islamic threat successfully:*

- 1. The Moslem's first priority is **land** – and not necessarily his own land. The Quran regards jihad – war to conquer the land of others and when possible convert its population to Islam – as a religious duty. The life of the Prophet Mohammed is a permanent example to Moslems how this duty should be carried out. Since conventional wars cannot be successfully waged against much stronger or very distant opponents, terrorism is the obvious and effective substitute. Ignoring the religious motivation for it only assures its long-term success.*
- 2. The first “chapter” shows why Moslem dictators, however cruel, are rarely displaced by their own people. When they are assassinated (which happens more often), the reason is almost always their dealings with non-Moslems, but even then every possible excuse for their behavior will first be put to the test. In the overwhelming majority of cases, a Moslem tyrant will be preferred to any non-Moslem “liberator.”*
- 3. In Iraq, a crucial factor helping the Americans is that the oppressive tyrant, Saddam Hussein, and all his predecessors were Sunni Moslems, while the huge majority of the population (80%) was and is Shiite or Kurd. However, Washington is doing everything possible to neutralize this factor. Instead of ruthlessly suppressing the mainly Sunni Moslem Arab rebellion, while arming and training the Shiites and the Kurds, it is trying to “conciliate” the Sunni Arabs by intervening to assure that the new Iraqi constitution gives them more influence than their numbers entitle them to. It will receive no gratitude from them; more likely a painful kick in the pants.*
- 4. The fourth chapter illustrates why there can be no lasting peace between Israel and the Arab states. Again Islam is the crucial factor. Mohammed's deceit and consequent defeat of the Jews at*

*the outset of his period of conquests marks them as the eternal enemy of Moslems. Noor Baba, after dealing with insults heaped on Moslems by Christians, discovers that he has not mentioned Jews for too long, so he blames Israel for unseating Mossadegh in Iran and sponsoring a coup to remove a ruler of Iraq though it had nothing to do with either. Ehud Barak offered Yasser Arafat all the territory he wanted at Camp David, but demanded an end to the conflict. He was rewarded by an "intifada" that is still in progress. Any Israeli leader blind enough to attempt negotiations to "end the conflict" will get more terrorism – not less - because this is a conflict the Arabs have no intention of ending until Israel ceases to exist. But in Jewish hearts hope must spring eternal! So Ariel Sharon "disengaged" from the Gaza Strip, destroying Jewish settlements there and perhaps his own political party. He may hope for "fruitful negotiations." He will get what Ehud Barak got or worse, - plus victory celebrations from the Palestinians.*

5. *The Christian West has not yet realized that negotiating with Moslem terrorists can only produce two results: (a) you give them what they want (b) they will try to kill you. (Besides, whatever you give them, they may try to kill you again anyway). It is even less aware that Islam will never give up its jihad – against Western or any other "unbelievers" – until and unless it has conquered the world. The West is not aware, though the evidence is mounting and is staring its statesmen in their unhappy faces. Unless these statesmen come to understand the threat and do something quickly to defuse it, Islam may dominate the world before the 21<sup>st</sup> century ends. But for the present they seem too afraid of the Moslems to act.*