

Clarity versus Confusion II

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On 30 September, 2007, Norman Podhoretz, author of "**World War IV: The Long Struggle Against Islamofascism**" was interviewed by Charles Peña, senior fellow at the Independent Institute and author of "**Winning of the Un-War: A New Strategy for the War on Terrorism.**"

The interview lasted about one hour, and was marked by a lively interchange between the two scholars. My comments, based on the notes I made during the interview, illustrate the great gulf that separates those who take the global threat of Islam seriously, and those who minimize it, and deny the similarities between **Islamofascism** and the totalitarian ideologies of the 20th century, **Communism and Nazism.**

By way of introduction, I should mention that Norman Podhoretz had contributed an article to the September 2004 issue of **Commentary Magazine**, with the title: "**World War IV: How It Started, What It Means, and Why We Have to Win.**" We may conclude that his newly published book expounds and amplifies the thesis he had set forth three years earlier, in **Commentary Magazine.**

Charles Peña began by asking Mr. Podhoretz to clarify the premise that "**World War IV**" is a struggle against Islamofascism. "*Who are the Islamofascists, and how are they a threat to America.*"

Norman Podhoretz responded by explaining that he chose the term "**WWIV**" because after the end of **WWII**, the West was engaged in the Cold War which may be considered as "**WWIII.**" It was an ideological struggle with global dimensions. It took around 42 years to win "**WWIII.**"

As to the word, "**Islamofascism**" it refers to a political movement within a religion that began in the 7th century. Islamofascism is a creature of the 20th century and is modeled after Nazi and Communist movements. The same applies to the Baathist movement in Syria and Iraq, as it was also fashioned in the image of Communist and Nazi ideologies.

Charles Peña remarked that the appeal of Islamofascism was "*very small, and that it was a minority movement.*" He couldn't see the equation or similarity between it and the powerful ideologies of the 20th century. Norman Podhoretz disagreed strongly and said that within the more than one billion Muslims of the world, there are around 150-200 million Muslims who sympathize with Islamofascist ideology. This is much more than the number of Communists and Nazis in the USSR and Germany. He added that Islamofascists succeeded in attacking us where we live. Thus, their threat is real and mortal.

Charles Peña retorted by asking, "*Is it a mortal threat to the USA? They don't possess the*

ability to annihilate us like the USSR or the Nazis could have!” Mr. Podhoretz responded that Islamofascism posed “a greater danger, as they could use nuclear weapons against us.” Charles Peña interrupted, “How do you make this claim, and why do you seem to be so sure? Podhoretz explained, “Iran would supply nuclear weapons to terrorists. Iran believes in the Islamic Umma and not in the nation-state, as Khomeini had said.”

Peña disputed Podhoretz’ thesis about the danger posed by Islamofascists; while Podhoretz stuck to his point and added that we must take the words of the Islamists seriously. He referred to the fact that Hitler’s words were not taken seriously; which led to WWII and the loss of millions of lives.

Charles Peña kept on minimizing the danger posed by Iran’s Islamofascist regime and its attempt to acquire nuclear weapons and cited a statement by General Abizaid “*that we could live with Iran possessing a nuclear weapon.*” Podhoretz disagreed, and explained that what worked with the USSR’s possession of nuclear weapons would not work if Islamofascists acquired such weapons. **MAD** (Mutual Assured Destruction) theory worked with the Communist powers (USSR & China) but won’t work with Islamofascists. These would like to annihilate Israel even if, at the same time, it would cost the lives of millions of Muslims.

The Interview having become a lively debate between two men with completely opposite worldviews, turned into the consequences of bombing Iran in order to prevent it from acquiring nuclear weapons. Charles Peña insisted that such an action would be unthinkable and would cost a great amount of civilian casualties. Podhoretz’ response was to remind his interviewer [turned debater] that the price for doing nothing would be higher than bombing the nuclear sites in Iran. To allow Iran to continue its nuclear program would mean “*another Munich.*”

The debate tone intensified as Charles Peña would not relent in his attack on any policy of **preemption**. Then he referred to the possibility that Iraq might be dominated by the Shi’ites who would forge an alliance with their co-religionists in Iran. Podhoretz discounted that scenario by reminding his interviewer [debater] that Iraqi Shi’ites don’t love Iranian Shi’ites, and gave the example of the persecution of Arabs in Western Iran, a region known in Arabic as **al-Ahwaz**.

Charles Peña returned to his offensive and tried to demolish every part of Norman Podhoretz’ analysis of the reason for the USA’s war in Iraq. “*Saddam did not attack us,*” was one of his mantras, and continued his relentless attack on Podhoretz thesis in his new book, “**World War IV.**” However, Mr. Podhoretz did not flinch in his conviction that Islamofascists have declared war on the West, and that this war would take a long time to win.

Analysis

Charles Peña questioned the premise of Norman Podhoretz’ book, that the present-day attacks of Islamists against the West are aspects of “**World War IV.**” No matter how

many arguments Podhoretz advanced to show that we are actually involved in a global struggle with Islamofascism, his interviewer minimized the nature of the struggle, and advanced his strong arguments against Podhoretz' thesis.

Comments

Over the years, I have watched many interviews on C-Span2, and learned a great deal from their BookTV program. However, I was extremely disappointed by the choice of Charles Peña as an interviewer. From the very first words he uttered, he gave a clear impression that **he was engaged in a debate with Mr. Podhoretz**. I could not understand why Mr. Peña was asked to do the interview.

It is very likely that, when it comes to the crucial subject of Islam in the modern world, C-Span tends to shy away from its neutrality, and invites interviewers who are actually not interested in conducting a genuine interview. **They act as debaters**. This happened recently when Lawrence Wright interviewed Raymond Ibrahim, the author of *The Al-Qaeda Reader*. (See my article, **Clarity versus Confusion**, of 28 September, 2007 on FFI site)

I am sure, for example, that Connie Doebele, the Executive Producer of Book TV, would have done an excellent review with Norman Podhoretz. She is famous for the way she conducts her interviews, such as she did on Sunday, 7 October, 2007, when she interviewed David Horowitz of Front Page Magazine online. And what a delight it would have been had Brian Lamb, the founder of C-SPAN, talked to Norman Podhoretz about **“World War IV!”**

Unfortunately, that did not happen, and the viewers lost a golden opportunity to learn about **Islamofascism**, the greatest danger to world peace in our times. The **“interview”** turned into a **“debate”** manifested the inability of liberal ideologues to understand the true nature of Islam. This moral and intellectual blindness is basically not different from that obstinate blindness that kept many Western writers and intellectuals from acknowledging the horrific nature of the Communism of Joseph Stalin in the USSR, and Mao Tse-Tung of Communist China. Just as their doctrinaire and utopian ideology inoculated them from seeing the evils of Marxism, so do the liberals of the 21st century refuse to see the evil nature of Islamofascism, and its potential to precipitate an unimaginable conflagration of wars against the West.

However, we should realize that Islamofascism was not born in a vacuum. As Professor Podhoretz explained, this movement having borrowed a good deal from Communism and Nazism, its roots go back to the 7th century. While Islam began as a call for a strict type of monotheism, it soon became an aggressive religion after Muhammad's Hijra to Medina in 622 A.D. Soon after his death in 632, his followers launched their *futuh* or conquests of the world. In less than one hundred years, their empire was greater than the Roman Empire at its zenith. And unlike the other world empires, both ancient and modern, Islam **created a colonialism that obliterated the histories and cultures of the**

conquered peoples. Where Islam did not completely succeed to accomplish that, the remnant of the original inhabitants of the conquered lands, were marginalized and made to feel perpetually humbled, as the dictate of their sacred Book required.

Added to this historical trait of Islamic imperialism is the fact that the Islamic worldview is **triumphalist**, and it looks forward to the global triumph of Islam. Furthermore, Islamic theology teaches that when Muslims die in the cause of Allah, they are promised immediate entry into a Paradise of unending pleasures. This embedded belief in the psyche of Muslims emboldens them to engage in acts of unimaginable horrors.

Unfortunately, Western liberals discount the role of this conviction in the Muslim mind, and regard Islamic radicals as no different from other radicals. They point, for example, to the Japanese pilots who flew their planes into US warships, and claim that those suicidal attacks are similar in nature, to the Islamic suicide bombers. They forget, however, that those Japanese pilots were acting according to an ideology that had a brief history. But Islamic theology inoculates a would-be Muslim terrorist with a fourteen hundred year old supernatural belief that makes fantasy appear as real.

Unfortunately, liberals like Charles Peña, don't want to admit the reality of this strong belief that indwells the minds of Islamofascists, and its potential for launching wars of mass destruction. The liberals' motto is: **I've made up my mind, don't bother me with the facts.**

It is too bad that Norman Podhoretz' interview was marred by the confusing statements of Charles Peña. What a great loss for the viewers! As for **C-Span2**, it was a grave mistake, and a departure from its long standing tradition of offering its viewers good interviews. It is my hope that those who run this non-commercial institution would never succumb to the strictures of political correctness, when the topic of Islam is being discussed. On two recent occasions, this non-commercial cable channel failed to do its job. I hope it won't repeat such mistakes in the future.

Note: For those readers who are interested to read Norman Podhoretz article:
“World War IV: How It Started, What It Means, and Why We Have to Win”
Please click on the following URL:

<http://www.commentarymagazine.com/cm/main/printArticle.html?article=com.commentarymagazine.content.Article::9785>