

MADNESS - OR PATTERN?

What's going on in the world? Is it just madness, or is there some kind of pattern?

Thirty years ago, we thought we had a rather neat mess in the world. There was the relatively free world, run by the U.S.; and the relatively totalitarian world run by the U.S.S.R. Most events in the world could be explained in terms of the conflict between the Two Big Camps.

Then China pulled out of the Soviet orbit and called itself a Third Camp. A number of other countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America began to call themselves part of an "uncommitted" Third World. That scrambled things a bit.

Now, suddenly we seem to be faced with the rise of yet another camp -- of all things, a theocratic camp, calling on Muslims only.

However, there are, today, *still* two principles abroad in the world, although there are more independent actors. The last great political revolution in modern history began a few centuries ago around the rise of the individual. In previous centuries, life had been corporate, and the individual had been subservient to the corporation, whether symbolized by king, bishop or feudal lord.

The essential nature of that revolution could be expressed in terms of *individual achievement*. It was now possible for the individual to achieve his or her status, rather than be assigned that status by the state. And politically, that meant that sovereignty lay in the people, not in the state.

However, in this century one political stream which took over the mantle of that revolutionary ("left") movement, headed towards the idea of an all-powerful state which would arrange things beneficently. This backwards direction was towards state-assigned status rather than achieved status, towards the corporate rather than the

individual. To that extent did the "left" turn to the "right," and to that extent did the "liberal" become "reactionary," rendering those terms somewhat useless.

Now, Khomeini has pronounced a *Muslim* "revolutionary" movement -- but its political purpose is also directed against individual achievement. The Soviet Union, China, much of the ideological "Third World," and the Muslim "revolutionary" movement, are not compatible. They are in power competition. But they are in the same "historic" "camp," in the sense that they would all obliterate the individual and the achieving society. In the other camp, centrally, is their common enemy, the United States -- along with Israel, some Western nations and a few satellites.

In historical perspective, then, the Khomeini impulse is still part of the long-range two-camp struggle about the status of the individual -- and a definable part of the overall pattern. In practical political terms, however, the Khomeini impulse is a deviation. He would like to return us to a 15th century corporate state. The others in his philosophical camp would like a 20th century corporate state, with technological trappings.

The latter are destined to be more successful than Khomeini. He is not going to sweep the world in another Muslim takeover. Most Muslims are not behind him, and there is a certain distance between Persians and Arabs. Besides, it is hard to run a *jihad* these days without a lot of tanks or industrial back-up. Many tragic and dangerous events could be set off in the days ahead -- but the chances are that some form of what is still called the "left" will eventually take over in Iran, to continue the two-camp struggle more conventionally.