

ONLY 1799 DAYS

There was varied response to a column suggesting that the most dire consequences would flow from the current Iranian scene. Some thought it went too far. Because Iran promises to be not just another episode, but a pivotal episode in modern history, a few witnesses are called to the stand:

We call first on Ayatollah Ruhollah Kohmeini, the chief spokesman for the fundamentalist Moslem force which just toppled the Shah:

"Today at a time when imperialism and its agents among the traitorous rulers together with Zionism and atheistic materialism are joining forces to pervert and mutilate Islam, our responsibility is greater than anytime in the past. Before us we see the Jews making a mockery of the Koran, and distorting its text in new editions printed in the occupied lands and elsewhere. It is our duty to reveal this treachery and to shout at the top of our voices until people understand that the Jews and their foreign masters are plotting against Islam and are preparing the way for the Jews to rule over the entire planet."

Any questions?

Now we call on Irving Kristol for his sober analysis:

"The crisis represented by the turmoil in Iran might well mark the end of an era for American foreign policy. It seems highly improbable that out of this turmoil there could emerge a stable government friendly to American interests. More likely is a Communist regime in the not too distant future, or a national-socialist-Islamic regime (on the Libyan model), or some peculiar amalgam of the two -- from the American point of view it hardly matters.

"The economic, political and military consequences of such an event are almost impossible to exaggerate. We can manage, if uncomfortably, without Iranian oil, but we -- and Europe and Japan -- cannot manage without Saudi Arabian oil. Yet it is fairly certain that a friendly (or at least not hostile) Saudi regime cannot survive in the kind of isolation that now looms ahead for it.

"The Camp David agreement inevitably will become a dead letter, as Egypt falls into line with the new Middle Eastern realities. Jordan, Iraq and Syria too will forsake whatever 'moderation' they have, in recent years acquired. Under those circumstances, a new Arab war against Israel -- the one nation in that part of the world that is still a friend to us -- would seem certain. The United States would 'deplore' such a war, of course -- but what would it do? What could it do?"

We could now call on Billy Carter's testimony that "there's more Arabs than there is Jews." Billy is, after all, an expert witness on the state of morality in much of the world today. And we might ask everyone to re-read George Orwell's novel, *1984*, to fill out the scenario. But why belabor the point?

Jeremiads are never very popular. But the point of jeremiads is *not* that everyone should dive under their beds and dissolve in pools of gloom. The point is *not* to suggest that terrible things are going to happen. The point is to suggest what terrible things are going to happen *if* something isn't done to prevent them.

The actions that have to be taken are in Washington D.C., in American foreign policy. The current arena is the Middle East. It may be the last important arena for the United States. Certain predictions can be made about Africa, Japan and finally Western Europe, if the Middle East falls.

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But it is no longer enough to write our Congressmen and Senators saying that the United States must "support Israel." The United States must take other action in the Middle East if either Israel or American interests are to be protected. We obviously should be doing whatever there is left to do in order to try to shore up a moderate interim regime in Iran. We obviously should be using *every* means at our disposal to urge Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan, and Israel, that they had better draw up their wagons together in a circle, with our support, if they want to survive. We have to convince them that we intend to dig in without equivocation. The problem seems to be that our foreign policy is not clear enough, is not tough enough, is not insistent enough. And do our Congressmen know that we want such a tough policy?

There are only 1799 working days until 1984.

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