State of Mankind

How much do you know?

Excerpts from *How the Specter of Communism Is Ruling Our World*

(54)

The Leninist Vanguard of Jihad

Qutb's writings are replete with vocabulary familiar to students of Marxism-Leninism, such as "vanguard," "state," "revolution," and the like. The situation and challenges Lenin faced at the time of writing his pamphlet What Is to Be Done? mirrors the circumstances faced by Qutb as he formulated his own radical ideology. Lenin placed all hope for a successful revolution on a proletarian vanguard party. Qutb copied this theory and replaced the Leninist political party with Islamic extremist organizations.

Lenin puts heavy emphasis on the importance of organization and the vanguard. He identifies a clear distinction between spontaneity and consciousness, and coined the idea of party-building. According to Lenin, with only spontaneous action, workers can only make superficial demands, such as pay raises and eight-hour work days, but they lack the consciousness needed to liberate mankind.

Lenin believes that external vanguards (usually bourgeois intellectuals, who have the privilege of education) are required to incite and indoctrinate the workers, so that they realize that revolution is their only way out, and reach the understanding that only by liberating the entire mankind can themselves be liberated. In order to fully utilize the vanguard, a tightly knit political party is needed to totally arrange their activities and provide them with opportunities for underground work as professional revolutionaries. This political party, the proletarian political party, is the proletariat vanguard.

Glenn E. Robinson, associate professor at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, and Research Fellow at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of California–Berkeley, said of radical Islam: "Although for obvious reasons jihadi ideologues do not cite Lenin as an inspiration, their concepts and logic, especially Sayyid Qutb's, betray this influence. Having been educated in Egypt in the 1940s, Qutb would certainly have been exposed to Lenin's writings. Two key concepts from Qutb come straight from Lenin: jama'a (vanguard) and manhaj (program)."

Drawing from the essence of Leninism, Qutb advocated the organization of a Muslim version of the Leninist vanguard party.

"Qutb made precisely the same argument for the Muslim world," Robinson wrote. "The vast majority of Muslims were too caught up in and corrupted by the system of unjust and anti-Islamic rule to know how and when to take up arms against the state. A dedicated vanguard of jihadi cadres was needed to organize direct action against the state." Also, "Lenin's insistence on the centrality of the vanguard's having a

detailed and coherent program for undertaking and then consolidating the revolution was likewise echoed, with an Islamic tone, in Qutb's writings."

To Qutb, this vanguard, which consists of what he calls "true Muslims" — or extremists — has the revolutionary mission of liberating all Muslims and the whole of human civilization. The vanguard must strike hard on false Muslims, follow Islamic ideology as determined by Qutb's interpretation, establish a new nation based on Islamism, and use violence to impose Islam on the rest of the world.

In addition to the vanguard, Qutb's theory also includes rhetoric advocating "social equality," elimination of classes, anti-government activity, and the liberation of mankind. All these points echo the stated aims of communism.

After Qutb's death, his brother Muhammad Qutb continued to publish his books. The book Ma'arakat ul-Islam war-Ra'samaaliyyah, published in 1993, again exposes Qutb's communist inspiration. Qutb blatantly states that Islam is a "unique, constructive and positivist aqidah, which has been moulded and shaped from Christianity and Communism together, [with a] blending in the most perfect of ways and which comprises all of their (i.e. Christianity's and Communism's) objectives and adds in addition to them harmony, balance and justice."