WHERE THE COLD WAR BEGAN, WHERE THE WAR ON ISLAMOFASCISM CAN END

A muezzin is calling people to prayer from a minaret nearby as I am writing this. I am in Hewlar, Iraq - more appropriately Iraqi Kurdistan, or even more appropriately South Kurdistan[i].

That's what Kurds in Iraq call their portion of Kurdistan. Kurds in Turkey call theirs North Kurdistan. Kurds in Syria call theirs West Kurdistan. And Kurds in Iran call theirs East Kurdistan. Here's the map:

I am here in Hewlar[ii] to participate in a conference of Kurdish leaders and intellectuals from all four regions of Kurdistan because of To The Point's The Kurdish Key to the Middle East (October 2006) being so widely read throughout the Kurdish community worldwide.

The speech I gave yesterday (4/4) was broadcast on live satellite television into Iran where, according to reports we received today, it caused an extraordinary reaction upon viewers. Especially in a region called Mahabad. It is an unknown bit of history that the Cold War began in Mahabad. Now it might be where the War on Islamofascism may be won.

Kurds are the original inhabitants of northern, and the mountains to the north of, Mesopotamia. Kurdistan was known to the ancient Sumerians 5,000 years ago as Karda, to the Assyrians as Kurti, the Babylonians as Qardu, the Greeks as Carduchoi, the Romans as Corduene.

Although Islam was forced upon them by Arab conquerors in the 800s, the Kurds freed themselves to form a number of principalities throughout the Middle Ages. Then in the 1500s they were divided and subsumed within the emerging empires of Safavid Persia and Ottoman Turkey.

They still were at the end of World War One. The Ottoman Turks had chosen the losing side and were forced to partition their empire with the Treaty of Sèvres (August 10, 1920), which provided for an independent Kurdistan.

The remnants of the Ottoman Army led by Mustafa Kemal (who renamed himself Kemal Ataturk, 1881-1938) rejected the treaty and defeated occupying Greek forces, resulting in it being replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne, which created modern Turkey.

So the Turks got North Kurdistan. The Brits then divided up the rest of the Ottoman Empire, creating Syria which got West Kurdistan, and Iraq, which got South Kurdistan. The dream of Kurdish independence had turned into an imperialist nightmare, with Kurds becoming second-class subjects ruled by Turk and Arab overlords.

The only chance left was East Kurdistan in Persia.

In 1797 a tribe called the Qajars took over Persia. Their first Shah, Fath Ali (1771-1834), went to war with Czar Alexander I of Russia and lost very badly. In desperation, Fath Ali turned to England for protection.

The Brits helped him hold off the Russkies but didn't take much interest until oil was discovered in 1908, whereupon they created the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (now British Petroleum) to siphon off the oil and manipulate the Qajars. After World War I, the Brits decided the current occupant of the Peacock Throne, Ahmad Shah, was impossibly incompetent, and in February 1921 ended Qajar rule and installed a peasant officer in the Persian Cossacks Brigade, Reza Khan Merpanj (1877-1944) in his place.

Reza Khan declared himself Shah in 1925, changed his name to Pahlavi after an ancient Persian language, and to curry favor with the new Nazi regime in Germany, in 1935 without warning or explanation, decreed that Persia would henceforth be known as Iran, meaning Land of Aryans.

Hitler was quite pleased that a country would rename itself as the original homeland of his Aryan Master Race, so an alliance was formed, resulting in a joint British-Russian invasion of Tehran in August 1941 that kicked out Reza and installed his 21 year-old son son Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (1919-1980) as the new shah.

The Soviets had to withdraw their forces from Iran, needed to fight the subsequent Battle of Stalingrad (August 1942-February 1943). When Stalin met with FDR and Churchill in Tehran (the "Tehran Conference") at the end of November 1943, he agreed in exchange for continued US aid, to make no move on Iran after the war. He of course lied.

At the war's end, a victorious and rejuvenated (thanks to US aid) Soviet Red Army occupied all of Eastern Europe. Yet America was in no mood, after the Great Depression and fighting a monumental war costing 295,000 American soldiers' lives, for another military confrontation.

So when, on March 5, 1946 in a speech at Westminster College in Fulton Missouri, Winston Churchill proclaimed that an "Iron Curtain" had descended across Europe due to Soviet colonization of its eastern half, America shrugged. Yet at the very time of Churchill's famous address, the Cold War had begun - far away from Europe, in Iran.

That first week of March 1946, Stalin ordered a Red Army column to march from Soviet Azerbaijan across the border into Iran and towards Tehran. That tore it for Harry Truman. He ordered his Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Walter Bedell Smith, to personally meet with Stalin in the Kremlin and deliver an "ultimatum" from the President of the United States.

Ambassador Smith reminded Stalin of Mr. Truman's decision to end America's war with Japan seven months earlier with nuclear bombs. "President Truman is determined that Iran remain a free and independent country," he explained to Stalin, "and should you not withdraw your forces promptly from Iran, he is prepared to make a similar decision regarding Moscow as he did with Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

Truman had just threatened to nuke Moscow. As Stalin would not acquire an atomic bomb until August 1949, he told Smith he would comply with Truman's demand. Of course, he lied.

Stalin had his Red Army troops halt their march to Tehran and begin withdrawing from Iran back to the Soviet Union. He stopped the withdrawal in Mahabad.

Mahabad has been a center of Kurdish resistance to Persian imperialism for 500 years. At the end of World War II, the Kurds of East Kurdistan saw their chance to finally break free. In Mahabad on August 16, 1945, they formed the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran, led by Qazi Mohammed. Five months later, on January 22, 1946, they formed the independent state of the Republic of Kurdistan with Mahabad as the capital, and seceded from Iran.

On their withdrawal from northern Iran, the Soviet Red Army halted in Mahabad. Stalin wanted to know if Qazi Mohammed would like his soldiers to stay and "protect" them from those of the Shah of Iran. As a Sunni judge, Qazi Mohammed despised atheistic communism and well knew what Stalin's "protection" meant. So he declined, saying he had his own army, thank you.

That Army of Mahabad was commanded by an extraordinary Kurdish general, Mustafa Barzani (1903-1979). From South (Iraqi) Kurdistan, he organized and led a revolt against the Hashemite[iii] rulers of Iraq installed in Baghdad by the British in the 1930s. Finally defeated by the Brits, he and several thousand of his Peshmerga guerrillas escaped into Iran to join with Qazi Mohammed.

Qazi Mohammed and Mustafa Barzani sent an urgent appeal for help from America which reached Truman. He had Bedell Smith remind Stalin of their previous conversation, and to inform him that US warships were on their way to the Persian Gulf. By April, the Soviets had fully withdrawn from Mahabad and all of Iran.

The Cold War had begun. By the summer of 1946, Stalin had deployed 25 Red Army divisions near Turkey, Truman dispatched an aircraft carrier to protect Turkey, Soviet-backed Communists were ready to stage a coup and colonize Greece for Stalin, Truman delivered his "Truman Doctrine" speech to Congress on March 12, 1947 - which has traditionally been called the starting date of the Cold War.

Congress voted massive aid for Greece and Turkey - but none for the fledgling Kurdistan Republic. Truman was quite unable to provide any support, and the young Shah was determined to destroy it. Barzani proved to be a brilliant commander inflicting several defeats upon the invading Persian Army, while Qazi Mohammed attempted to negotiate a federal autonomy for East Kurdistan within the state of Iran. All attempts were dismissed.

By December 1946, Barzani's forces were finally overwhelmed and the Shah's army seized Mahabad. Barzani and his Peshmerga escaped back into Iraq but Qazi Mohammed refused to flee. He was captured and publicly hung, along with his cousin and his brother, in Chwarchira Square in the center of the city of Mahabad on March 30, 1947.

The conference I am attending here in Hewlar is to commemorate the Republic of Mahabad on the 60th anniversary of Qazi Mohammed's execution. Hosting the conference is the Kurdistan Regional Government - the first Kurdish state in modern history, albeit within a federal Iraq.

The President of this Kurdish government is Massoud Barzani - Mustafa Barzani's son. He was born in 1946 - in Mahabad.

That he and his government would sponsor a conference of Kurds from around the world and all four regions of Kurdistan to commemorate a Kurdish independence movement in Iran sends a very powerful message to the mullahs of Tehran.

And to the Kurds of Iran - especially those in Mahabad. That is why my televised speech affected them so strongly. I frankly didn't know I was going to be asked to speak, so I hastily scribbled down some notes and headed for the stage with a translator. I thought I was speaking just to the attendees, who numbered over a thousand. I had no idea it was being broadcast live into Iran.

When you're giving a translated speech, you have to speak simply, directly, clearly and concisely. I had to keep it short. Here is what I said:

> It is an honor and privilege to be here today.
>
> I am from America. And although Americans are a young people and the Kurds an ancient people, we have two great things in common. First is a love of freedom. Second is the willingness to *fight* for freedom.
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> It is so appropriate to have this meeting in Hewlar or Erbil, as it is the oldest city in the world. And not like Damascus and other very old cities, this city has always been inhabited by the same people.
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> The Kurds are the original people of the Middle East. They were here before all the others, the Babylonians, the Arabs, the Turks, the Persians, before them all.
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> Yet although the Kurds have triumphed over history, they still remain the largest ethnic group in the world without their own country. This must change.
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> But how can this change come about when all the nations that divide Kurdistan are so afraid of it?
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> It is by understanding that the Kurds are not a threat, but that instead, the Kurds are the *key*, the *solution*, to peace, democracy, and freedom in the Middle East.
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> We can see this here in Iraqi Kurdistan. It is the Kurds who are holding Iraq together. Without the Kurds, Iraq would have broken apart by now. Kurdistan is the only part of Iraq that is today peaceful, prosperous, and free.
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> The peoples of Turkey, Syria, and Iran must understand this. They must understand they can only have a truly free country when *all* their people are not oppressed by their governments.
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> It is the Kurds of Syria who can bring freedom to Syria. It is the Kurds of Turkey who can

> bring freedom to all the peoples of Turkey.
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> And it is the Kurds of Iran who can end the horrible tyranny of the mullahs in Tehran and bring freedom to Iran.
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> It is so appropriate that now we celebrate the life of Qazi Mohammed and the establishment of the Republic of Mahabad.
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> The Republic of Mahabad was a cry for freedom from a terrible tyranny. This cry for freedom must arise again today.
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> Today there is the opportunity for Kurds to join with other people, such as the Azeris, the Ahwazi Arabs, the Baluchis, and democratic Persians to rid Iran of Mullah Fascism and bring freedom to Iran.
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> I want to thank Hussein Yazdanpaneh, president of the Kurdish Freedom Party of Iran, Sherkoh Abbas, president of the Kurdish Assembly of Syria, and the Kurdistan Regional Government led by President Massoud Barzani, for inviting me to be among you.
>
> I congratulate you for holding this conference, and join you in your prayers for freedom for the entire Kurdish people.

You can see how the focus of the speech, just like the conference as a whole, was on Iran, on Eastern Kurdistan. There were in attendance leaders of Kurdish democracy parties in Turkey (*not* the terrorist PKK) and in Syria, but things are slowly improving for Kurds in Turkey while Syria is Iran's puppet. Everyone here sees that the target has got to be Iran.

They see Iran as acutely vulnerable right now, its economy in ruins, its government hated, absolutely ripe for revolution.

That is why it is so acutely frustrating for them to see the revolting capitulation of Britain to the mullahs over the recent hostage-taking, and Pelosi Galore's revolting submission to Ahmadinejad's poodle, Bashar al-Assad.

They had nothing but derisive laughter for the British soldiers who allowed themselves to be captured, photographed wearing headscarves, confessing guilt, not trying to escape, and for the entire British military in general. They called the captured Brits *tislem*.

Tislem (tiss-leem) is Kurdish for yellow-bellied pussies exhibiting such cowardice that it borders on the sub-human.

For the one thing above all the Kurds are not is *tislem*. They have been struggling for their freedom for eons. They see that this long struggle is almost over, that there is only one impediment in their way: the vulnerable Mullacracy in Iran.

They see the Mullacracy as the originator of Islamic terrorism in the world, its principal sponsor today, and the primary obstacle to the democratization of the Middle East.

"If Iran were a real democracy with the mullahs overthrown," a delegate to the conference from Kermanshah (in Iranian Kurdistan) told me, "peace would come to Iraq and the pressure for dictators to give up power and countries to democratize, from Syria to Egypt and even to Saudi Arabia, would be irresistible. Aid to Hezbollah would end and Lebanon could be free. Aid to Hamas would end and the Palestinians could have a chance to make peace with Israel. Aid to terrorists over the world would end."

"The way to end the threat of 'Islamofascism' as you put it, Jack," one of the conference organizers said, "is for America to help the Kurdish resistance in Iran. It's not just in East Kurdistan. Did you know there are two million Kurds in Tehran? [Out of a total of 12 million for the city.] Give us the kind of support America gave to the Mujahaddin in Afghanistan or Solidarity in Poland against the Soviets. We will put an end to this Islamofascism for you."

It would be a great historical irony if the place where the Cold War began was the place where our war with Islamofascism was won. History is full of such ironies. The Kurds are determined that this one shall come true - with our help or without it.

"Never before, Jack, had the people of Mahabad and East Kurdistan heard words like yours," I was told, "spoken by an American. That an American would say such things was very inspiring to them. America is such an inspiration for all Kurds. You fought for your freedom and won it. We shall do the same."

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[i] . See The Kurdish Key to the Middle East as to how the Kurds are reluctant Moslems, many of who are returning to their original religion of Zoroastrianism. Religious freedom flourishes in Iraqi Kurdistan. One sees, for example, Christian churches of various denominations dotting Hewlar.

[ii] . Pronounced *how-lair*, Hewlar is the oldest continuously-occupied city on the world - and by the same people. The Kurds have lived here for over 7,000 years. On maps, its Arabic name is variously spelled Erbil, Arbil, and Irbil as Arabic is written without vowels (so a true transcription would be "Rbl").

[iii] . The British installed various sons of the Sharif of Mecca, head of the Hashem clan, as rulers of Ottoman partitions: Ali of the Hashemite Kingdom of Hejaz (conquered by Ibn Saud and subsumed within Saudi Arabia), Abdullah of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (the current King

Abdullah II is his great-grandson), and Faisal, first of the Hashemite Kingdom of Syria (quickly overthrown in 1920), then of the Hashemite Kingdom of Iraq (erased by a military coup in 1958).