

Count Bennigsen and the 'Islamic card'

by Rachel Douglas

In early December, while Islamic fundamentalist terrorists tortured American and other hostages aboard the Kuwaiti Airlines plane held in Iran, government officials in Washington, D.C., had on their desk the November-December issue of the U.S. Information Agency's *Problems of Communism*, containing Alexandre Bennigsen's article "Mullahs, Mujahidin and Soviet Muslims."

Once again, Professor Bennigsen was given a rostrum by the U.S. government to vent his enthusiastic hopes for the spread of Islamic revolt, inspiring turmoil in Soviet Central Asia and trepidation in the Kremlin—the stuff of his frequent testimony before Congress and academic dissertations that fueled the doomed "arc of crisis" policy under the Carter administration. Publication of his latest article demonstrates the dangerous persistence in Washington—the more tenacious the closer to the State Department—of dwelling on the potential "crumbling" of the Soviet empire, even as the Russians count their gains in areas near and far from their borders.

As *EIR* wrote on March 20, 1984, Bennigsen's constant promotion of "Islamic fundamentalism as a bulwark against communism" helps nobody but the Soviets and the oligarchical circles in the West who count on the U.S.S.R. to destroy the nation-states of the world. We called for the Sorbonne professor, grandson of the last Czar's keeper of the hounds, to be unmasked.

"Count Bennigsen," we reported, "is . . . deployed on behalf of the strategic policy objectives of the Soviet KGB. . . . It is worthwhile to ask whether dear Alec, in helping to destroy the secular nation-states of the Middle East on behalf of Islamic fundamentalism, *knows* that he is working for the KGB? As the U.S. presence is driven out of nation after nation by Moscow-associated Islamic fundamentalists, the question in that form misses the point. Just as the Shi'ite fanatic who rams a hexogen-laden truck into a U.S. Marine compound may think he is doing the work of Allah, while on this side of Paradise, he is aiding and abetting a Soviet takeover of the region."

For us, having perused Bennigsen's propaganda in scholarly garb, the most striking feature of this latest article, which otherwise contains his usual hopes for Sufi Brotherhood-led upsurges of "self-awareness" and "political dynamism" in Central Asia, is the belated correction by Bennigsen of certain untruths noted in *EIR*.

Bennigsen, writing with his daughter Marie Broxup in a 1983 book (*The Islamic Threat to the Soviet Empire*), asserted that the Soviet deployment of Soviet Muslim officials for foreign-policy purposes had become drastically less effective after the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. "The period of cooperation between the Soviet Islamic establishment and Moscow . . . seems to have come to an end with the invasion of Afghanistan," they wrote. Broxup, writing in 1983, claimed that only one delegation from the official Islamic hierarchy of Soviet Central Asia and the Transcaucasus area had gone abroad since the breakup of an international Islamic conference in Tashkent, Soviet Uzbekistan, in September 1980. That, as we showed in the *EIR Special Report* on Soviet operations in the region, *How Moscow Plays the Muslim Card in the Middle East* (1983), was a self-serving lie.

Having been exposed, Bennigsen now attempts to clean up his record. He writes in *Problems of Communism*: "Without doubt, the official Soviet Islamic establishment is once again entrusted with an important high-level diplomatic mission. Moscow's aim in sponsoring the official Islamic establishment is both transparent and highly successful. . . . The message they bring to their co-religionists abroad may not be very different from official Soviet propaganda . . . but it is accepted with a certain sympathy because it is presented by authentic Islamic scholars. . . . Thanks to the activity of these representatives, Moscow managed to neutralize to a certain degree the disastrous propaganda image of the Afghan genocide. . . . It also enables the Soviet regime to retain in the larger Muslim world political options it might otherwise find more problematic."

Bennigsen then lists some of the dozens of delegations coming to and from the Muslim Boards of Soviet Central Asia, Azerbaijan, and Daghestan during 1982-83. Behind the times, as is the academic habit, Bennigsen omits the high-level 1984 diplomacy: *Haj* to Mecca in August by Mufti Babakhan of the Central Asia Spiritual Board; visits to the U.S.S.R. by Syria's Minister of Religious Trusts Muhammad al-Khatib in May, North Yemen's Minister of Awqaf and Guidance Al-Qadi Ali as-Saman in July, Indian Member of Parliament Syed Asarul Haq with a Muslim delegation in July, Jordan's Minister of Religious Affairs and Holy Places Abd Khalaf al-Dawudiyah in October, and Muslim delegations from South Yemen and Mozambique in July.

Bennigsen admits all that, but refuses to abandon his main line: "One might well ask how long the Soviets can play the sophisticated but dangerous game of supporting Islam abroad while trying to destroy it at home." The answer may be: As long as anybody in the United States is dumb enough to follow the advice of Bennigsen, who hails the "Islamic Revolution" of the fanatics in Iran, even as they commit more atrocities.

Still available: *How Moscow Plays the Muslim Card in the Middle East*, *EIR Special Report*, \$250.