

THE POWER OF NIGHTMARES

Transcribed by Mike Conley

<http://www.acutor.be/silt/index.php?id=573>

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES:

Portions of the audio are difficult to understand; where possible, I provide my best guess at the actual words spoken, and precede them with a {?} indicator. Corrections from those with better hearing, audio equipment, or sensitivity to Arabic accents are welcome.

Episode 1 - Baby It's Cold Outside

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Written and Produced by Adam Curtis

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/3755686.stm>

VO:

In the past, politicians promised to create a better world. They had different ways of achieving this. But their power and authority came from the optimistic visions they offered to their people. Those dreams failed. And today, people have lost faith in ideologies. Increasingly, politicians are seen simply as managers of public life. But now, they have discovered a new role that restores their power and authority. Instead of delivering dreams, politicians now promise to protect us from nightmares. They say that they will rescue us from dreadful dangers that we cannot see and do not understand. And the greatest danger of all is international terrorism. A powerful and sinister network, with sleeper cells in countries across the world. A threat that needs to be fought by a war on terror. But much of this threat is a fantasy, which has been exaggerated and distorted by politicians. It's a dark illusion that has spread unquestioned through governments around the world, the security services, and the international media.

VO:

This is a series of films about how and why that fantasy was created, and who it benefits. At the heart of the story are two groups: the American neoconservatives, and the radical Islamists. Both were idealists who were born out of the failure of the liberal dream to build a better world. And both had a very similar explanation for what caused that failure. These two groups have changed the world, but not in the way that either intended. Together, they created today's nightmare vision of a secret, organized evil that threatens the world. A fantasy that politicians then found restored their power and authority in a disillusioned age. And those with the darkest fears became the most powerful.

[OPENING TITLES: THE POWER OF NIGHTMARES / THE RISE OF THE POLITICS OF FEAR BABY IT'S COLD OUTSIDE]

VO:

The story begins in the summer of 1949...

[TITLE: COLORADO 1949]

VO:

...when a middle-aged school inspector from Egypt arrived at the small town of Greeley, in Colorado. His name was Sayyed Qutb. Qutb had been sent to the U.S. to study its educational system, and he enrolled in the local state college. His photographs appear in the college yearbook. But Qutb was destined to become much more than a school inspector. Out of his experiences of America that summer, Qutb was going to develop a powerful set of ideas that would directly inspire those who flew the planes on the attack of September the 11th. As he had traveled across the country, Qutb had become increasingly disenchanted with America. The very things that, on the surface, made the country look prosperous and happy, Qutb saw as signs of an inner corruption and decay.

JOHN CALVERT, Islamist historian:

This was Truman's America, and many Americans today regard it as a golden age of their civilization. But for Qutb, he saw a sinister side in this. All around him was crassness, corruption, vulgarity – talk centered on movie stars and automobile prices. He was also very concerned that the inhabitants of Greeley spent a lot of time in lawn care. Pruning their hedges, cutting their lawns. This, for Qutb, was indicative of the selfish and materialistic aspect of American life. Americans lived these isolated lives surrounded by their lawns. They lusted after material goods. And this, says Qutb quite succinctly, is the taste of America.

VO:

What Qutb believed he was seeing was a hidden and dangerous reality underneath the surface of ordinary American life. One summer night, he went to a dance at a local church hall. He later wrote that what he saw that night crystallized his vision.

CALVERT:

He talks about how the pastor played on the gramophone one of the big-band hits of the day, "Baby, It's Cold Outside." He dimmed the lights so as to create a dreamy, romantic effect. And then, Qutb says that "chest met chests, arms circled waists, and the hall was full of lust and love."

VO:

To most people watching this dance, it would have been an innocent picture of youthful happiness. But Qutb saw something else: the dancers in front of him were tragic lost souls. They believed that they were free. But in reality, they were trapped by their own selfish and greedy desires. American society was not going forwards; it was taking people backwards. They were becoming isolated beings, driven by primitive animal forces. Such creatures, Qutb believed, could corrode the very bonds that held society together. And he became determined that night to prevent this culture of selfish individualism taking over his own country.

[TITLE: CHICAGO]

VO:

But Qutb was not alone. At the same time, in Chicago, there was another man who shared the same fears about the destructive force of individualism in America. He was an obscure political philosopher at the University of Chicago. But his ideas would also have far-reaching consequences, because they would become the shaping force behind the neoconservative movement, which now dominates the American administration. He was called Leo Strauss. Strauss is a mysterious figure. He refused to be filmed or interviewed. He devoted his time to creating a loyal band of students. And what he taught them was that the prosperous liberal society they were living in contained the seeds of its own destruction.

Professor HARVEY MANSFIELD, Straussian Philosopher, Harvard University:

He didn't give interviews, or write political essays, or appear on the radio – there wasn't TV yet – or things like that. But he did want to get a school of students to see what he had seen: that Western liberalism led to nihilism, and had undergone a development at the end of which it could no longer define itself or defend itself. A development which took everything praiseworthy and admirable out of human beings, and made us into dwarf animals. Made us into herd animals – sick little dwarves, satisfied with a dangerous life in which nothing is true and everything is permitted.

VO:

Strauss believed that the liberal idea of individual freedom led people to question everything – all values, all moral truths. Instead, people were led by their own selfish desires. And this threatened to tear apart the shared values which held society together. But there was a way to stop this, Strauss believed. It was for politicians to assert powerful and inspiring myths that everyone could believe in. They might not be true, but they were necessary illusions. One of these was religion; the other was the myth of the nation. And in America, that was the idea that the country had a unique destiny to battle the forces of evil throughout the world. This myth was epitomized, Strauss told his students, in his favorite television program: Gunsmoke.

Professor STANLEY ROSEN, Pupil of Leo Strauss 1949:

Strauss was a great fan of American television. Gunsmoke was his great favorite, and he would hurry home from the seminar, which would end at, you know, 5:30 or so, and have a quick dinner so he could be at his seat before the television set when Gunsmoke came on. And he felt that this was good, this show. This had a salutary effect on the American public, because it showed the conflict between good and evil in a way that would be immediately intelligible to everyone.

BAD MAN on Gunsmoke:

Let's see what happens!

JAMES ARNESS:

No! [SHOOTS bad man; bad man DROPS to the ground]

ROSEN:

The hero has a white hat; he's faster on the draw than the bad man; the good guy wins. And it's not just that the good guy wins, but that values are clear. That's America! We're gonna triumph over the evils of...of...that are trying to destroy us and the virtues of the Western frontier. Good and evil.

VO:

Leo Strauss' other favorite program was Perry Mason. And this, he told his students, epitomized the role that they, the élite, had to play. In public, they should promote the myths necessary to rescue America from decay. But in private, they didn't have to believe in them.

ROSEN:

Perry Mason was different from Gunsmoke. The extremely cunning man who, as far as we can see, is very virtuous and uses his great intelligence and quickness of mind to rescue his clients from dangers, but who could be fooling us – because he's cleverer than we are. Is he really telling the truth? Maybe his client is guilty!

VO:

In 1950, Sayyed Qutb traveled back to Egypt from America. He too was determined to find some way of controlling the forces of selfish individualism. And as he traveled, he began to envisage a new type of society. It would have all the modern benefits of Western science and technology, but a more political Islam would have a central role to play, keeping individualism in check. It would provide a moral framework that would stop people's selfish desires from overwhelming them. But Qutb realized that American culture was already spreading to Egypt, trapping the masses in its seductive dream. What was needed, he believed, was an élite, a vanguard who could see through these illusions of freedom, just as he had in America, and who would then lead the masses to realize the higher truth.

Dr AZZAM TAMIMI, Institute of Islamic Political Thought:

The masses need to be led. And it is this vanguard group that will be responsible for the task of leading the people out of the darkness and into the light of Islam. Because the masses had succumbed to their own selfish desires, and he wanted the vanguard to be different, to be pure, to be standing together outside all of this corrupt situation, bringing people back to the truth.

VO:

On his return, Qutb became politically active in Egypt. He joined a group called the Muslim Brotherhood, who wanted Islam to play a major role in governing Egyptian society. And in 1952, the Brotherhood supported the revolution led by General Nasser that overthrew the last remnants of British rule. But Nasser very quickly made it clear that the new Egypt was going to be a secular society that emulated Western morals. He quickly forged an alliance with America. And the CIA came to Egypt to organize security agencies for the new régime. Faced with this, the Muslim Brotherhood began to organize against Nasser, and in 1954 Qutb and other leading members of the Brotherhood were arrested by the security services. What then happened to Qutb was going to have consequences for the whole world.

[ARABIC-SPEAKING VOICE FROM PRISON CAMP FILM]

VO:

In the 1970s, this film was made, that showed what happened in Nasser's main prison in the '50s and '60s. It was based on the testimony of survivors. Torturers who had been trained by the CIA unleashed an orgy of violence against Muslim Brotherhood members accused of plotting to overthrow Nasser. At one point, Qutb was covered with animal fat and locked in a cell with dogs trained to attack humans. Inside the cell, he had a heart attack.

General FOUAD ALLAM, Interrogator Interior Ministry 1958-87 (speaking in Arabic; subtitled):

Sayed Qutb thought of himself as a superior sort of person. He saw himself as an important Islamist thinker and a strong character. And so on and so on. But at the end of the day, when he was in the military prison he gave us the exact details about his secret group and the orders he had given. The most dangerous was the order to flood the whole of the Nile delta and drown this corrupt land of infidels.

VO:

Qutb survived, but the torture had a powerful radicalizing effect on his ideas. Up to this point, he had believed that the Western secular ideas simply created the selfishness and the isolation he had seen in the United States. But the torture, he believed, showed that this culture also unleashed the most brutal and barbarous aspects of human beings. Qutb began to have an apocalyptic vision of a disease that was spreading from the West throughout the world. He called it jahilliyah – a state of barbarous ignorance. What made it so terrifying and insidious was that people didn't realize that they were infected. They believed that they were free, and that their politicians were taking them forward to a new world. But in fact, they were regressing to a barbarous age.

ROXANNE EUBEN, Political Scientist:

The sense is that jahilliyah is so dangerous now, because not only is it advanced by Western powers, but Muslims – this is like a charge of false consciousness – Muslims have become infected with this jahilliyah, so now the threat to Islam is also from within. It's from without, and within. It's a state of emergency, because jahilliyah is a condition that pervades everything and everybody. It's even infected our powers of imagination – we don't even know that we're sick! That we now worship materialism, and the self, and individual truths over the real truths. Um, so it's an incredible sense of epic confrontation, where Islam is being insulted on all fronts – from within, from without, culturally, militarily, economically, politically. And under those circumstances, any way of fighting it becomes justified and legitimate, and in fact has a kind of existential weight, because somehow it's doing God's will on earth.

VO:

To Qutb, this force of jahilliyah had now gone so deep into the minds of Muslims that a dramatic way had to be found to free them. In a series of books he wrote secretly in prison, which were then smuggled out, Qutb called upon a revolutionary vanguard to rise up and overthrow the leaders who had allowed jahilliyah to infect their countries. The implication was that these leaders could justifiably be killed, because they had become so corrupted, they were no longer Muslims, even though they said they were. Faced with this, Nasser decided to crush Qutb and his ideas, and in 1966 Qutb was put on trial for treason. This is the only known film of Qutb as he awaits sentence. The verdict was a foregone conclusion, and on August 29, 1966, Qutb was executed. But his ideas lived on. The day after his execution, a young schoolboy set up a secret group. He hoped that it would one day become the vanguard that Qutb had hoped for. His name was Ayman Zawahiri, and Zawahiri was to become the mentor to Osama bin-Laden.

[TITLE: AMERICA 1967]

VO:

But at the very moment when Sayyed Qutb's ideas seemed dead and buried, Leo Strauss' ideas about how to transform America were about to become powerful and influential, because the liberal political order that had dominated America since the war started to collapse.

[TITLE: 11pm, JULY 25th 1967]

PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON:

Law and order have broken down in Detroit, Michigan. Pillage, looting, murder...

VO:

Only a few years before, President Johnson had promised policies that would create a new and a better world in America. He had called it "the Great Society."

[TITLE: President LYNDON JOHNSON, 1964]

JOHNSON:

The Great Society is in place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind. It is a place where the City of Man...

VO:

But now, in the wake of some of the worst riots ever seen in America, that dream seemed to have ended in violence and hatred. One prominent liberal journalist called Irving Kristol began to question whether it might actually be the policies themselves that were causing social breakdown.

IRVING KRISTOL:

If you had asked any liberal in 1960, we are going to pass these laws, these laws, these laws, and these laws, mentioning all the laws that in fact were passed in the 1960s and '70s, would you say crime will go up, drug addiction will go up, illegitimacy will go up, or will they get down? Obviously, everyone would have said, they will get down. And everyone would have been wrong. Now, that's not something that the liberals have been able to face up to. They've had their reforms, and they have led to consequences that they did not expect and they don't know what to do about.

VO:

In the early '70s, Irving Kristol became the focus of a group of disaffected intellectuals in Washington. They were determined to understand why the optimistic liberal policies had failed. And they found the answer in the theories of Leo Strauss. Strauss explained that it was the very basis of the liberal idea – the belief in individual freedom – that was causing the chaos, because it undermined the shared moral framework that held society together. Individuals pursued their own selfish interests, and this inevitably led to conflict. As the movement grew, many young students who had studied Strauss' ideas came to Washington to join this group. Some, like Paul Wolfowitz, had been taught Strauss' ideas at the University of Chicago, as had Francis Fukuyama. And others, like Irving Kristol's son William, had studied Strauss' theories at Harvard. This group became known as the neoconservatives.

WILLIAM KRISTOL:

Well, many of them couldn't get academic jobs, and the political science and philosophy faculties were not terribly friendly to those of a conservative or moderately conservative disposition. And the truth is that a lot of people who ended up in Washington started out as academics. I did; Paul Wolfowitz did; and decided they probably didn't have very good prospects in the academy. What we all had in common, I think, was a certain doubt about what once seemed a kind of great certainty and confidence in liberal progress. The philosophic grounds for liberal democracy had been weakened. So I think Straussians who came to Washington, they didn't think of themselves as Churchill or Lincoln, let me assure you, but they did that, you know, there's something noble about public life, and about politics, and they tried to make a contribution in many different areas.

VO:

The neoconservatives were idealists. Their aim was to try and stop the social disintegration they believed liberal freedoms had unleashed. They wanted to find a way of uniting the people, by giving them a shared purpose. One of their great influences in doing this would be the theories of Leo Strauss. They would set out to recreate the myth of America as a unique nation whose destiny was to battle against evil in the world. And in this project, the source of evil would be America's Cold War enemy: the Soviet Union. And by doing this, they believed that they would not only give new meaning and purpose to people's lives, but they would spread the good of democracy around the world.

Professor STEPHEN HOLMES, Political Philosopher:

The United States would not only, according to these – the Straussians, be able to bring good to the world, but would be able to overcome the fundamental weaknesses of American society, a society that has been suffering, almost rotting, in their language, from relativism, liberalism, lack of self-confidence, lack of belief in itself. And one of the main political projects of the Straussians during the Cold War was to reinforce the self-confidence of Americans, and the belief that America was fundamentally the only force for good in the world, that had to be supported, otherwise evil would prevail.

VO:

But to do this, the neoconservatives were going to have to defeat one of the most powerful men in the world. Henry Kissinger was the Secretary of State under President Nixon, and he didn't believe in a world of good and evil. What drove Kissinger was a ruthless, pragmatic vision of power in the world. With America's growing political and social chaos, Kissinger wanted the country to give up its ideological battles. Instead, it should come to terms with countries like the Soviet Union, to create a new kind of global interdependence. A world in which America would be safe.

HENRY KISSINGER, Interviewed 1975:

I believe that with all the dislocations we know – now experience, there also exists an extraordinary opportunity to form, for the first time in history, a truly global society, carried by the principle of interdependence. And if we act wisely and with vision, I think we can look back to all this turmoil as the birth pangs of a more creative and better system.

VO:

Kissinger had begun this process in 1972, when he persuaded the Soviet Union to sign a treaty with America limiting nuclear arms. It was the start of what was called “détente.” And President Nixon returned to Washington to announce triumphantly that the age of fear was over.

PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON, June 1, 1972:

Last Friday, in Moscow, we witnessed the beginning of the end of that era which began in 1945. With this step, we have enhanced the security of both nations. We have begun to reduce the level of fear, by reducing the causes of fear – for our two peoples, and for all peoples in the world.

VO:

But a world without fear was not what the neoconservatives needed to pursue their project. They now set out to destroy Henry Kissinger’s vision. What gave them their opportunity was the growing collapse of American political power, both abroad and at home. The defeat in Vietnam, and the resignation of President Nixon over Watergate, led to a crisis of confidence in America’s political class. And the neoconservatives seized their moment. They allied themselves with two right-wingers in the new administration of Gerald Ford. One was Donald Rumsfeld, the new Secretary of Defense. The other was Dick Cheney, the President’s Chief of Staff. Rumsfeld began to make speeches alleging that the Soviets were ignoring Kissinger’s treaties and secretly building up their weapons, with the intention of attacking America.

DONALD RUMSFELD, US Secretary of Defense, Speaking in 1976:

The Soviet Union has been busy. They’ve been busy in terms of their level of effort; they’ve been busy in terms of the actual weapons they’ve been producing; they’ve been busy in terms of expanding production rates; they’ve been busy in terms of expanding their institutional capability to produce additional weapons at additional rates; they’ve been busy in terms of expanding their capability to increasingly improve the sophistication of those weapons. Year after year after year, they’ve been demonstrating that they have steadiness of purpose. They’re purposeful about what they’re doing. Now, your question is, what ought one to be doing about that?

VO:

The CIA, and other agencies who watched the Soviet Union continuously for any sign of threat, said that this was a complete fiction. There was no truth to Rumsfeld’s allegations. But Rumsfeld used his position to persuade President Ford to set up an independent inquiry. He said it would prove that there was a hidden threat to America. And the inquiry would be run by a group of neoconservatives, one of whom was Paul Wolfowitz. The aim was to change the way America saw the Soviet Union.

MELVIN GOODMAN, Head of Office of Soviet Affairs CIA, 1976-87:

And Rumsfeld won that very intense, intense political battle that was waged in Washington in 1975 and 1976. Now, as part of that battle, Rumsfeld and others, people such as Paul Wolfowitz, wanted to get into the CIA. And their mission was to create a much more severe view of the Soviet Union, Soviet intentions, Soviet views about fighting and winning a nuclear war.

VO:

The neoconservatives chose, as the inquiry chairman, a well-known critic and historian of the Soviet Union called Richard Pipes. Pipes was convinced that whatever the Soviets said publicly, secretly they still intended to attack and conquer America. This was their hidden mindset. The inquiry was called Team B, and the other leading member was Paul Wolfowitz.

Professor RICHARD PIPES:

And the idea was then to appoint a group of outside experts who have access to the same evidence as the CIA used to arrive at these conclusions, and to see if they could come up with different conclusions. And I was asked to chair it, because I was not an expert on nuclear weapons. I was, if anything, an expert on the Soviet mindset, but not on the weapons. But that was the real key, was the question of the Soviet mindset, because the CIA looked only at – they were known as “bean counters,” always looking at weapons. But weapons can be used in various ways. They can be used for defensive purposes or offensive purposes. Well, all right, I collected this group of experts, and we began to sift through the evidence.

VO:

Team B began examining all the CIA data on the Soviet Union. But however closely they looked, there was little evidence of the dangerous weapons or defense systems they claimed the Soviets were developing. Rather than accept that this meant that the systems didn’t exist, Team B made an assumption that the Soviets had developed systems that were so sophisticated, they were undetectable. For example, they could find no evidence that the Soviet submarine fleet had an acoustic defense system. What this meant, Team B said, was that the Soviets had actually invented a new non-acoustic system, which was impossible to detect. And this meant that the whole of the American submarine fleet was at risk from an invisible threat that was there, even though there was no evidence for it.

Dr ANNE CAHN, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 1977-80:

They couldn’t say that the Soviets had acoustic means of picking up American submarines, because they couldn’t find it. So they said, well maybe they have a non-acoustic means of making our submarine fleet vulnerable. But there was no evidence that they had a non-acoustic system. They’re saying, “we can’t find evidence that they’re doing it the way that everyone thinks they’re doing it, so they must be doing it a different way. We don’t know what that different way is, but they must be doing it.”

INTERVIEWER (off-camera):

Even though there was no evidence.

CAHN:

Even though there was no evidence.

INTERVIEWER:

So they’re saying there, that the fact that the weapon doesn’t exist. . .

CAHN:

Doesn’t mean that it doesn’t exist. It just means that we haven’t found it.

PIPES:

Now, that’s important, yes. If something is not there, that’s significant.

INTERVIEWER:

By its absence.

PIPES:

By its absence. If you believe that they share your view of strategic weapons, and they don't talk about it, then there's something missing. Something is wrong. And the CIA wasn't aware of that.

VO:

What Team B accused the CIA of missing was a hidden and sinister reality in the Soviet Union. Not only were there many secret weapons the CIA hadn't found, but they were wrong about many of those they could observe, such as the Soviet air defenses. The CIA were convinced that these were in a state of collapse, reflecting the growing economic chaos in the Soviet Union. Team B said that this was actually a cunning deception by the Soviet régime. The air-defense system worked perfectly. But the only evidence they produced to prove this was the official Soviet training manual, which proudly asserted that their air-defense system was fully integrated and functioned flawlessly. The CIA accused Team B of moving into a fantasy world.

PIPES:

The CIA was very loath to deal with issues which could not be demonstrated in a kind of mathematical form. I said they could consider the soft evidence. They deal with realities, whereas this was a fantasy. That's how it was perceived. And there were battles all the time on this subject.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you think it was a fantasy?

PIPES:

No! I thought it was absolute reality.

CAHN:

I would say that all of it was fantasy. I mean, they looked at radars out in Krasnoyarsk and said, "This is a laser beam weapon," when in fact it was nothing of the sort. They even took a Russian military manual, which the correct translation of it is "The Art of Winning." And when they translated it and put it into Team B, they called it "The Art of Conquest." Well, there's a difference between "conquest" and "winning." And if you go through most of Team B's specific allegations about weapons systems, and you just examine them one by one, they were all wrong.

INTERVIEWER:

All of them?

CAHN:

All of them.

INTERVIEWER:

Nothing true?

CAHN:

I don't believe anything in Team B was really true.

VO:

The neoconservatives set up a lobby group to publicize the findings of Team B. It was called the Committee on the Present Danger, and a growing number of politicians joined, including a Presidential hopeful, Ronald Reagan.

[TITLE: The Price of Peace and Freedom / Committee on the Present Danger, propaganda film 1978]

VO:

Through films and television, the Committee portrayed a world in which America was under threat from hidden forces that could strike at any time, forces that America must conquer to survive.

ALEKSANDR SOLZHENTSYN, through interpreter:

A concentration of world evil, of hatred for humanity, is taking place. And it is fully determined to destroy your society. Must you wait until the young men of America have to fall defending the borders of their continent?!

VO:

This dramatic battle between good and evil was precisely the kind of myth that Leo Strauss had taught his students would be necessary to rescue the country from moral decay. It might not be true, but it was necessary, to re-engage the public in a grand vision of America's destiny, that would give meaning and purpose to their lives. The neoconservatives were succeeding in creating a simplistic fiction – a vision of the Soviet Union as the center of all evil in the world, and America as the only country that could rescue the world. And this nightmarish vision was beginning to give the neoconservatives great power and influence.

HOLMES:

The Straussians started to create a worldview which is a fiction. The world is not divided into good and evil. The battle in which we are engaged is not a battle between good and evil. The United States, as anyone who observes understands, has done some good and some bad things. It's like any great power. This is the way history is. But they wanted to create a world of moral certainties, so therefore they invent mythologies – fairytales – describing any force in the world that obstructs the United States as somehow Satanic, or associated with evil.

TITLE:

EGYPT 1979

[CLIPS FROM WESTERN - STYLE EGYPTIAN TV COMMERCIALS]

VO:

By the late 1970s, Egypt had been transformed. On the surface, it had become a modern, Westernized state with a prosperous middle class who were benefiting from a flood of Western capital that was being invested in the country. One member of this prosperous Egyptian élite was Ayman Zawahiri. He was now a young doctor, just starting his career.

OMAR AZZAM, Cousin of Ayman Zawahiri:

Ayman, he was an ideal person, who was a doctor coming from a very good family. His father was a professor in the university, his grandfather was an ambassador, his other grandfather was Sheikh of al-Azhar; very well-respected family. He used to be the sort of person that acted by the book. Not looking for prestige, not looking for money, not looking for propaganda. Ayman became a leader because of his attitudes.

VO:

In reality, Zawahiri was the leader of an underground Islamist cell. The group that he had started as a schoolboy, which he had modeled on the ideas of Sayyed Qutb, had grown. Sayyed Qutb's ideas were now spreading rapidly in Egypt – above all, among students – because his predictions about the corruption from the West seemed to have come true. The government of President Sadat was controlled by a small group of millionaires, who were backed by Western banks. The banks had been let in by what Sadat called his open-door policy. To the Western media, Sadat denied any corruption. All Egyptians knew that this was a blatant lie.

PRESIDENT SADAT 1977:

Who has benefited now from the open-door policy? Taxi drivers. The liberals. All of those have benefited from the open-door policy. It is not like they say, that there are millionaires here and so. No, not at all. This is pure, um, pure black propaganda from the side of the Soviet Union and agents here in the country.

VO:

Zawahiri was convinced that the time was now approaching to fulfill Qutb's vision. The vanguard should rise up and overthrow this corrupt régime. And the man who would give the Islamists that opportunity would be Henry Kissinger. As part of his attempt to create a stable and balanced world, Kissinger had persuaded President Sadat to begin peace negotiations with the Israelis. To Kissinger, the ruthless pragmatist, religious divisions and hatreds were irrelevant. The most important thing was to create a safer world. And in 1977, Sadat had flown to Jerusalem to start the peace process. To the West, it was a heroic act. But to the Islamists, it was a complete betrayal. It showed that Sadat's mind had become so corrupted by the West that he was now completely under their control. And under the theories of Sayyed Qutb, this meant that he was no longer a Muslim, and so could justifiably be killed. And then, in 1979, the Ayatollah Khomeini showed Zawahiri that his dream of creating an Islamist state was possible.

[SUBTITLE OVER RIOT SCENE : God is great!]

VO:

Khomeini had inspired an uprising against the Shah of Iran. The Shah was another leader who had allowed Western banks to corrupt his country.

[SUBTITLE OVER RIOT SCENE : Armed struggle is the road to freedom!]

VO:

Khomeini had put forth the idea of an Islamist state...

[SUBTITLE OVER RIOT SCENE : Death to the Shah's mercenary army!]

VO:

... that was remarkably similar to Qutb's ideas. He acknowledged this by placing Qutb's face on one of the postage stamps of the new Islamic republic. In his first sermon, Khomeini addressed the West. "Yes," he told them, "we are reactionaries, and you are enlightened intellectuals. You who want freedom for everything, the freedom that will corrupt our country, corrupt our youth, and freedom that will pave the way for the oppressor – freedom that would drag our country to the bottom."

REPORTER (off-camera):

You sound very dissatisfied with what's happening in Iran now.

PRESIDENT SADAT 1979:

Not... MORE than dissatisfied, this is disgraceful! Really! I was myself, I was the Secretary-General of the Muslim Congress at one time. This, putting the name "Islamic revolution," is a crime. A crime against Islam in the first hand.

REPORTER :

President Sadat, do you expect that the Shah will accept the invitation? It seems like a good solution right now.

SADAT :

Quote me: My aeroplane is ready to bring him here. Any moment.

VO:

At the end of 1980, Ayman Zawahiri, with a number of other followers of Qutb who had formed cells, came together. They created an organization they called Islamic Jihad. Its leader was a man called Abdel Salam Faraj. And Faraj argued that they should kill Sadat in a spectacular way that would shock the masses. It would make them see the true reality of the corruption surrounding them, and they would rise up and overthrow the régime.

KAMAL HABIB , Founder member of Islamic Jihad (speaking in Arabic, subtitled):

The jihadi movement - some of the leaders are still alive - I was one and so was Ayman Zawahiri. We spearheaded the jihadi state of mind rather than the earlier, more moderate ideas in the liberal era that simply accepted reality. Psychologically we thought we were superior to reality. We despised the everyday vision of the world, and we wanted to transform or change this reality. Therefore our dream was to get rid of Sadat.

[SCENES OF SADAT ' S ASSASSINATION]

VO:

Those who carried out the assassination were a group of Army officers who were a part of Islamic Jihad. They were immediately arrested, and the régime launched a massive manhunt for those behind the plot. But the effect of the assassination on the Egyptian people was not what Zawahiri had hoped for. That night, Cairo remained calm. The masses failed to rise up. And in the following weeks, Zawahiri and many other conspirators were arrested. The assassins were tried immediately and executed. But then, nearly 300 Islamists, including Zawahiri, were put on trial in a pavilion in Cairo's industrial exhibition park. It was agreed that Zawahiri would be their spokesman.

MAN IN CAGE , shouting:

... for [unintelligible], for the whole world, this is our world... Doctor Ayman Zawahiri!

AYMAN ZAWAHIRI , in cage, shouting:

Now, we want to speak to the whole world! Who are we? Who are we? Why did they bring us here? And what we want to say? About the first question: we are Muslims! We are Muslims who believed in their religion, in their broad feelings, as both an ideology and practice. We believed in our religion, both as an ideology and practice. And hence, we tried our best to establish [unintelligible] Islamic state and Islamic society!

PRISONER , shouting:

La illah la-illallah!

PRISONERS :

La illah la-illallah! (etc.)

GILLES KEPEL , Historian of Islamist Movement:

Zawahiri, the man is an aristocrat. He comes from a major Egyptian -Saudi family. And he thinks that, you know, he is a visionary, and the means do not matter, just as in Lenin – I mean, revolution in one country or revolution worldwide. He was convinced that this was a means to mobilize the masses, that they had tried something, that it had not worked, then he failed that – you know, the masses that were still under the spell of ideology, the ideology of America. And he is looking for a new strategy.

VO:

At the trial, Zawahiri was sentenced to three years in prison, along with many others of Islamic Jihad. He was taken to cells behind the Police National Museum, where, like Sayyed Qutb, he was tortured. And under this torture, he began to interpret Qutb's theories in a far more radical way. The mystery, for Zawahiri, was why the Egyptian people had failed to see the truth and rise up. It must be because the infection of selfish individualism had gone so deep into people's minds that they were now as corrupted as their leaders. Zawahiri now seized on a terrible ambiguity in Qutb's argument. It wasn't just leaders like Sadat who were no longer real Muslims, it was the people themselves. And Zawahiri believed that this meant that they too could legitimately be killed. But such killing, Zawahiri believed, would have a noble purpose, because of the fear and the terror that it would create in the minds of ordinary Muslims. It would shock them into seeing reality in a different way. They would then see the truth.

Dr AZZAM TAMIMI , Institute of Islamic Political Thought:

Ayman Zawahiri came to the conclusion that because you have what you believe to be a sublime objective, then the means can be as ugly as they can get. You can kill as many people as you wish, because the end means is noble. The logic is that "we are the vanguards, we are the correct Muslims, everybody else is wrong. Not only wrong, but everybody else is not a Muslim, and the only means available to us today is just to kill our way to perfection."

[TITLE : AMERICA 1981]

COUNTRY SINGER :

I'm goin' to a city where the roses never fade. . .

VO:

And at this very same moment, religion was being mobilized politically in America, but for a very different purpose. And those encouraging this were the neoconservatives. Many neoconservatives had become advisers to the Presidential campaign of Ronald Reagan. And as they became more involved with the Republican Party, they had forged an alliance with the religious wing of the party, because it shared their aim of the moral regeneration of America.

IRVING KRISTOL , Founder of Neoconservative movement:

The notion that a purely secular society can cope with all of the terrible pathologies that now affect our society, I think has turned out to be false. And that has made me culturally conservative. I mean, I really think religion has a role now to play in redeeming the country. And liberalism is not prepared to give religion a role. Conservatism is, but it doesn't know how to do it.

VO:

By the late '70s, there were millions of fundamentalist Christians in America. But their preachers had always told them not to vote. It would mean compromising with a doomed and immoral society. But the neoconservatives and their new Republican allies made an alliance with a number of powerful preachers, who told their followers to become involved with politics for the first time.

JAMES ROBISON , Fundamentalist Preacher, 1980:

I'm sick and tired of hearing about all of the radicals, and the perverts, and the liberals, and the leftists, and the Communists coming out of the closet! It's time for God's people to come out of the closet, out of the churches, and change America! We must do it!

PAUL WEYRICH , Religious activist - Republican Party:

The conservative movement, up to that point, was essentially an intellectual movement. It had some very powerful thinkers, but it didn't have many troops. And as Stalin said of the Pope, "where are his divisions?". Well, we didn't have many divisions. When these folks became active, all of a sudden the conservative movement had lots of divisions. We were able to move literally millions of people. And this is something that we had literally no ability to do prior to that time.

INTERVIEWER (off-camera):

Literally millions?

WEYRICH :

Literally millions.

VO:

And at the beginning of 1981, Ronald Reagan took power in America. The religious vote was crucial in his election, because many millions of fundamentalists voted for the first time. And as they had hoped, many neoconservatives were given power in the new administration. Paul Wolfowitz became head of the State Department policy staff, while his close friend Richard Perle became the Assistant Secretary of Defense. And the head of Team B, Richard Pipes, became one of Reagan's chief advisers. The neoconservatives believed that they now had the chance to implement their vision of America's revolutionary destiny – to use the country's power aggressively as a force for good in the world, in an epic battle to defeat the Soviet Union. It was a vision that they shared with millions of their new religious allies.

UNIDENTIFIED PREACHER :

I take a personal and public stand as a minister, a stand against Communism. To destroy it, to wipe it from the face of the Earth, because believe you me, these people are dedicated to the destruction of the United States of America and freedom as we know it.

VO:

But the neoconservatives faced immense opposition to this new policy. It came not just from the bureaucracies and Congress, but from the President himself. Reagan was convinced that the Soviet Union was an evil force, but he still believed that he could negotiate with them to end the Cold War.

Professor RICHARD PIPES , Adviser to President Reagan 1980-83:

Reagan at first didn't quite understand that their aggressiveness is rooted in the system. He had a rather benign view of human beings. He was a very kindly man, and he attributed kind motives to others. There was another form of mirror imaging. And he would say on more than one occasion, something like this: "If I could just sit down with the Soviet leaders and explain to them that they're following a wrong ideology, and if they adopt the right ideologies, they could make their people happy and prosperous." So [unintelligible] "Mr. President, that is not going to do it! You have to go after the system. Force them to reform the system." It took him a very long time to assimilate this view.

VO:

To persuade the President, the neoconservatives set out to prove that the Soviet threat was far greater than anyone, even Team B, had previously shown. They would demonstrate that the majority of terrorism and revolutionary movements around the world were actually part of a secret network, coordinated by Moscow, to take over the world. The main proponent of this theory was a leading neoconservative who was the special adviser to the Secretary of State. His name was Michael Ledeen, and he had been influenced by a best-selling book called *The Terror Network*. It alleged that terrorism was not the fragmented phenomenon that it appeared to be. In reality, all terrorist groups, from the PLO to the Baader-Meinhof group in Germany, and the Provisional IRA, all of them were a part of a coordinated strategy of terror run by the Soviet Union. But the CIA completely disagreed. They said this was just another neoconservative fantasy.

MICHAEL LEDEEN , Special Adviser to the US Secretary of State 1981-1982:

The CIA denied it. They tried to convince people that we were really crazy. I mean, they never believed that the Soviet Union was a driving force in the international terror network. They always wanted to believe that terrorist organizations were just what they said they were: local groups trying to avenge terrible evils done to them, or trying to rectify terrible social conditions, and things like that. And the CIA really did buy into the rhetoric. I don't know what their motive was. I mean, I don't know what people's motives are, hardly ever. And I don't much worry about motives.

VO:

But the neoconservatives had a powerful ally. He was William Casey, and he was the new head of the CIA. Casey was sympathetic to the neoconservative view. And when he read the Terror Network book, he was convinced. He called a meeting of the CIA's Soviet analysts at their headquarters, and told them to produce a report for the President that proved this hidden network existed. But the analysts told him that this would be impossible, because much of the information in the book came from black propaganda the CIA themselves had invented to smear the Soviet Union. They knew that the terror network didn't exist, because they themselves had made it up.

MELVIN GOODMAN , Head of Soviet Affairs CIA, 1976-87:

And when we looked through the book, we found very clear episodes where CIA black propaganda – clandestine information that was designed under a covert action plan to be planted in European newspapers – were picked up and put in this book. A lot of it was made up. It was made up out of whole cloth.

INTERVIEWER (off-camera):

You told him this?

GOODMAN :

We told him that, point blank. And we even had the operations people to tell Bill Casey this. I thought maybe this might have an impact, but all of us were dismissed. Casey had made up his mind. He knew the Soviets were involved in terrorism, so there was nothing we could tell him to disabuse him. Lies became reality.

VO:

In the end, Casey found a university professor who described himself as a terror expert, and he produced a dossier that confirmed that the hidden terror network did, in fact, exist. Under such intense lobbying, Reagan agreed to give the neoconservatives what they wanted, and in 1983 he signed a secret document that fundamentally changed American foreign policy. The country would now fund covert wars to push back the hidden Soviet threat around the world.

President RONALD REAGAN :

The specter of Marxist-Leninist controlled governments with ideological and political loyalties to the Soviet Union proves that there's a direct challenge to which we must respond. They are the focus of evil in the modern world.

VO:

It was a triumph for the neoconservatives. America was now setting out to do battle against the forces of evil in the world. But what had started out as the kind of myth that Leo Strauss had said was necessary for the American people increasingly came to be seen as the truth by the neoconservatives. They began to believe their own fiction. They had become what they called “democratic revolutionaries,” who were going to use force to change the world.

LEDEEN :

We were aiming for an expansion of the zone of freedom in the world. And in part that had to do with fighting Communism, and in part that had to do with fighting other kinds of tyrannies. But that’s what we were about, and that’s what we’re still about.

INTERVIEWER (off-camera):

When you say you were democratic revolutionaries, what do you mean?

LEDEEN :

It meant that we wanted to support the people who wanted to carry out revolutions against tyrannical régimes in the name of democracy, in order to install a democratic system.

INTERVIEWER :

As simple as that.

LEDEEN :

Yeah. It’s not nuclear physics, you know. I mean, freedom is a fairly simple thing to get.

JAMES ARNESS on Gunsmoke (VO):

It’s a chancy job – makes a man watchful and a little lonely. But somebody has to do it.

VO:

The neoconservatives now set out to transform the world. In next week’s episode, they find themselves joining forces with the Islamists in Afghanistan, and together they fight an epic battle against the Soviet Union. And both come to believe that they had defeated the Evil Empire. But this imagined victory would leave them without an enemy. And in a world disillusioned with grand political ideas, they would need to invent new fantasies and new nightmares, in order to maintain their power.

[END CREDITS - MUSIC : “Baby It’s Cold Outside”]