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THE SHOCK OF IRAN

"The Iranian revolution is the Pearl Harbor of our day ... the greatest thing that happened to America since the Second World War, the thing that shook America to its foundations." So said Dr. Charles Malik of Lebanon in a recent major address in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Malik, a former President of the United Nations, understands the middle east and its relationship to Western civilization as do few men of our time. He points out that even losing the Vietnam War, or the Korean War, or the Communist takeover of Cuba did not touch our vital interests to the extent that the Iranian revolution does.

Dr. Malik believes that the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini will turn out to be "the Kerensky of the Iranian revolution." In other words, his historic function is only to last long enough to get rid of the shah, and then to be replaced by a Soviet-Marxist=Communist regime in Iran.

If that happens, the loss of Iran would prove to be a far greater blow to the West than the recent loss of three countries in Asia and five countries in Africa. The uninterrupted flow of oil from the middle east is a matter of life or death to the West and to Japan, and we are now on the brink of having our mideast energy sources fall into hands that can blackmail us into economic submission on any terms they dictate.

Americans, who tend to think in practical terms, view the loss of Iran only in terms of higher gasoline prices at the pump. But that is only the symptom of the malady. The rest of the world perceives the collapse of Iran as proof that Western civilization has neither the will nor the wit nor the power to hold back the Marxist-Communist wave of the future.

The chief reason that our nation's economists cannot devise effective solutions for skyrocketing prices is that they do not understand that the causes are not merely economic. Oil did not suddenly become more expensive to produce. What happened was that our government, in signing SALT I in 1972, poured SALT into the gasoline tank of

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the free world, and we've been paying the price ever since.

Look at any chart of prices for the last decade or so: food, gasoline, fuel oil, or commodities. Prices were relatively stable until 1972, but started their steep upward climb after May 1972 when SALT I was signed in Moscow.

That was the day when the United States officially recognized that the Soviet Union is the superior military power by formally agreeing that, for every three ICBMs the Soviets have, we can have only two; and for every three nuclear missile-firing submarines the Soviets possess, we can have only two. That signed agreement folded up the nuclear umbrella which had sheltered the political and economic stability of the free world so effectively for 27 years, and the power brokers of the world woke up to the fact that they could thumb their noses at us -- diplomatically, economically, and militarily -- and there was nothing we could do about it.

The following year, the Soviet Union openly goaded the middle east oil producers to use their "oil weapon" against the West. They got the message, and have been using it ever since. They know they have us over a barrel (of oil), and we have no choice but to pay the highway robber five times what the oil is worth.

Dr. Malik, who has infinite respect for the 4,000 years of cumulative culture that form Western civilization, believes that our primary task is to "convince the world that the West is still alive and kicking and is not prepared to die." The chief challenge of the West is to reestablish its credibility after years of fumbling, hesitation, indecision, and retreat.

If American leaders do not display a faith that our civilization is the greatest, and that we are determined to defend it at any cost, how can envious aggressors or fence-sitters believe we are committed to survival?

If America accepts SALT II, it will be perceived by the world as one more craven attempt to appease the unappeasable barbarian who is determined to rule the world. With Dr. Malik, we hope that the shock of Iran, as the "Pearl Harbor" of our time, will make America resolve to build whatever weapons may be necessary to defend our priceless civilization against any and all attacks.

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