



A Fatwa in Spain

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Police protection and armored cars have been regular features in Gustavo de Arístegui's life for the past decade. This is because the author and Foreign Affairs Spokesman for Spain's conservative Partido Popular has devoted a large part of his 25 year career denouncing radical Islam. After the publication of Arístegui's latest book [*The Jihad in Spain: The obsession to reconquer Al-Andalus*](#), Yusuf Fernandez, the spokesman for the Spanish Federation of Islamic Religious Entities, branded him an "enemy of Islam." Then last week came the discovery of death threats against the Spanish politician on encrypted Jihadist websites based in Saudi Arabia. I spoke with Mr. Arístegui by phone on Monday about the threats facing his country and himself.

Q: Why are radical Islamists obsessed with reconquering Spain and

why should this obsession be a concern for all Westerners?

A: It's very much about the objectives and goals that they have and that to a large extent the West has not understood. They want to: A) Overthrow governments that they consider anti-Islamic, corrupt, and above all apostate. Therefore, in considering governments and regimes apostate they are entitled, even obliged, to overthrow them and destroy their leaders. B) Reconquer any kind of country or territory that has at any time in its history been under the domain of Islam. C) Reestablish the caliphate. D) Extend their domain and power over the whole world.

So, yes, the symbolism of Spain is extremely important to them. Spain was under the domain of Islam for

800 years. It's not just Andalucía as some people say. It is almost all of Spain. And if we are to consider the whole of Europe, then it would be 4/5 of the Iberian Peninsula, some parts of the South of France, half of Italy, all the Balkans, and definitely all the islands of the Mediterranean. We are facing a very serious threat.

To understand the risks that we face, we've got to read what our enemies have to say about us. Ayman al-Zawahiri said in his book *Knights Under the Banner of the Prophet* that Europe had become a spiritual vacuum that only Islam could fill and that Europe is the new frontier of Islam, the new land of conquest, and above all the new battleground of the global jihad. Europe is the weakest link in the chain because it has 27 million Muslims of which some have a certain degree of sympathy for radical ideas. Therefore, they think that when Europe actually becomes a continent with a very important Muslim minority, it will be a very easy target and its land very easy to conquer.

Q: Describe what you call the "síndrome andalusí" or the obsession for lost glory. Who is guilty of perpetuating the myth of Al-Ándalus?

A: Many people, not only Muslim scholars. Romantic scholars were guilty of perpetuating the myth. Just take a look at the 19th century novelists and intellectuals who were obsessed with medieval times. (An example is Sir Walter Scott and his famous novel *Ivanhoe*.) That had an exact equivalent among the Muslim

scholars and intellectuals who were Romantic. They had an obsession with medieval Spain and the importance that Al-Ándalus had as the highlight of their civilization.

Western intellectuals have also had a grave responsibility in perpetuating this myth. Some books like *The Ornament of the World*, which is very well-known in the United States and has been awarded and praised, are completely false. It is not true that medieval Spain was a perfect and peaceful coexistence between the three most important monotheistic religions. Muslims only tolerated Jews and Christians when they were very powerful and not so much when they were not so powerful. It had a lot to do with the political and historical moment. The myth of Al-Ándalus is a very dangerous myth because people tend to think that everyone else was responsible for the lost glory of Al-Ándalus. They believe that Spaniards who were not Muslims or those who had been Muslim in the past and converted to other religions such as Christianity are to blame for the loss of that glory and the preeminence that they had historically until the 15th century. It is extremely dangerous because self-criticism does not exist in a large part of the Muslim world. They believe that everybody else is to blame for the tragedies that they suffered, and one of those is definitely the loss of Al-Ándalus.

People tend to forget what Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri say. There are a great deal of communiqués of Al-Qaeda signed by these two individuals which clearly

state that the loss of Al-Ándalus was a tragedy. Zawahiri recently said that Islamic land had to be reconquered from “Al-Ándalus to Iraq.” This is a very serious threat that not only Spain and Europe, but all serious, advanced, and modern democracies should take very seriously.

Q: Please tell us about the buying of land and houses and the controlling of neighborhoods and cities as a way of regaining Spain. Why is the reslamification of the mosque of Córdoba so important to ultra-conservative Muslims?

A: They call it the policy of the “foot in the threshold.” Once the foot is in the threshold, they think they will be able to get in there and reconquer Spain. I state in *The Jihad in Spain* that there is a part of the University of Al-Azhar in Egypt that is obsessed with a very clear strategy to reconquer land that was once under the domain of Islam. But this is becoming more and more popular in many parts of the Islamic world. They believe that conquering a neighborhood, then a town, then a city, then a province, and then a region will eventually lead to the reconquest of the whole country.

Recently, there was a research program carried out by the Spanish television channel *Telecinco*. One of the reporters questioned many Muslims off camera. They said that because they had been able to conquer Albaicín (a very important and prominent neighborhood in Granada) they would absolutely be able to conquer the city and then all of Al-Ándalus. As the expression

goes: Andalucía first, Al-Ándalus thereafter.

I want to quote Joschka Fischer, the German foreign minister from 1998 to 2005 and member of the Green Party. He said that if by any chance Israel were to be fall and be defeated, the next in line would definitely be Spain.

Q: How have multiculturalism and political correctness allowed the penetration of radical Islam into Spain and lowered the country’s defenses?

A: Multiculturalism and political correctness are the most tried systems for coexistence in Europe and they both have failed miserably. Multiculturalism is in many ways a return to the Middle Ages. It means in fact that whoever is a Christian, a Jew, or a Muslim is going to be ruled by laws and courts of justice that are either Christian, Jewish or Muslim. This is preposterous. It is very much like the communities in which the Ottoman Empire was divided up into.

The Western Left has chosen to see radical Islamism as the only enemy capable of confronting the West, the United States, and its allies. They truly believe that it is in many ways their ally. If you are to observe the way that Venezuela, Bolivia and other countries dominated by populist regimes have acted, you will see that they vote consistently with countries like Iran or Syria, which are very anti-Western. Political correctness and the obsession of the Left with radical

Islamism are deactivating the self-defense capabilities of Western democracies. By not denouncing radicals and the movements that are clearly linked to radical associations, institutions, and even terrorist organizations, the West is getting closer to being dominated by them.

Q: How has the Left in Spain responded to the recent death threats made against you?

A: The radical Left has joined forces with radical Islamists against me. When they saw the popular and overwhelming reaction of so many people in Spain supporting me—even from the moderate Left, they thought things had gotten out of hand. As a result, they decided to discredit me and the reality of these threats that have been confirmed by the Spanish Ministry of the Interior. The Minister of the Interior called to tell me that the Spanish Police Intelligence has found these threats which are on several Jihadist websites that are encrypted and based in Saudi Arabia. Their message is clear: I need to be killed. The Spanish Minister of Defense, who was the Interior Minister for two years, also called me to show his solidarity and support.

I deplore the very fact that these extremists from the far Left in Spain have decided to join forces with those that attack democracy, because no matter how deep our differences may be we are supposed to be on the same side.

Q: Do you think there is a chance that radical Islamists will one day achieve their dream and Spain will once again be under Islamic rule?

A: I don't think so, but the fight will become more difficult and extensive because Spanish society today is not willing or ready to accept the threat we face. People here have become prosperous in a very short time. Spain is the eighth most prosperous nation in the world. We have a per capita income of around \$28,000 a year. People want to pay their mortgages, go out on Friday night, take 15 to 30 days off a year from work, buy nice cars, and generally enjoy the good life. They are not listening to those of us who are in some ways apocalyptic. But it is our job.

I'm not going to compare myself to Churchill; it would be extremely preposterous if I ever did. But in many ways I do feel that some of the intellectuals and politicians who are denouncing this century's threats against democracy are facing the same criticisms that Churchill once faced before the Nazi threat was evident to the whole world. While some people are quite aware of the huge danger that Islamism represents for a large part of the world, they don't believe it is capable of jeopardizing their way of life or their liberties and freedoms in the 21st century. In fact, this is very much the case.