

Is For
Good Men
To Do
Nothing

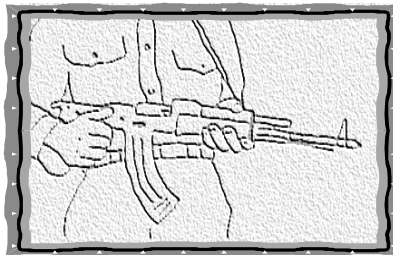
Chris Verrill

chrisverrill@yahoo.com



Seeds of Freedom
Xlibris

Excerpt from Chapter 17 of
Is For Good Men To do Nothing By Chris
Verrill



Talking with Freedom Fighters

“Father, please go to Pakistan,” Anwar said his young daughter told him while living in Afghanistan. “Please don’t stay here. We will die here.”

Thus, as I was passing through Afghanistan on my way from my home in the United States to do volunteer work in Pakistan, Anwar and Bahram began to tell me their individual stories. At first Anwar said I could use his name. I always try and ask. Moreover, when someone makes significant and possibly life threatening statements I reconfirm his granted permission. Upon confirmation however, realizing some of what he’d said, Anwar changed his mind and told me I couldn’t write about anything we discussed. After some convincing, he said I could write so long as I didn’t use his name; and thus Anwar is not his real name.

“Is dangerous for me” if you use my name Anwar said. “I am fearing now from these” people in the current government. He made it clear he feared for his life and also for his job. The mere fact that he has a job makes him better off than many Afghanis. Bahram, also not his real name, who I spoke with separately, made it clear from the beginning I couldn’t use his name. For the same reasons.

Now, I’m a smart boy, I realize that having a name behind these stories makes them more powerful. It certainly gives them more credibility. But the mere fact that these two men (or they could be women, but I’ll refer to them in the male sense) were concerned for their livelihoods and their safety speaks volumes about the current unstable and tumultuous political climate in Afghanistan.

“This is very sensitive,” Bahram said. While he was concerned for his life, he was more concerned with harm coming to his business. The ratio of life fears to business fears was about 30:70 he said. Bahram is a well educated well traveled Afghan with excellent insight into his country’s current situation. I’ll come back to his comments. But first Anwar.

Anwar, while an educated professional, repeatedly professed, “I have no politics.” But he is intelligent and has lived in Afghanistan through the hell of the last generation. Although “existed” or “survived” would be better verbs. His daughter, he said, was basically right.

“Here was no school, no education. They [his family] should go to Peshawar. There was no choice,” he said. Life in Afghanistan was just too hellish. In addition to the lack of school, there were no telephones and no electricity either.

In defiance of the Taliban, Anwar shaved every day. But this had severe consequences. “Five times they caught me and want to take me to prison.” Anwar said he was able to talk his way out of it each time, and despite the threats, continued to be defiant. When the Taliban were here, he said, “In this country is dark time.”

I mentioned to him that some people I’d spoken to in the Middle East opposed US intervention in Afghanistan. They argued that the Afghan people should have liberated themselves. Taken care of their own problems as it were. Anwar completely disagreed.

“Yeah, that’s impossible” to oust the Taliban without outside help, he said. “We need help from foreign country.”

“If America didn’t come here we were in darkness. Life was not good. There was no power to push the Taliban back from this country,” he said. “The Taliban was too powerful.”

How did the Taliban come to power, I asked? More importantly how did they stay in power? The Taliban stayed in control, Anwar answered, because outside countries supported the Taliban and the terrorist elements in Afghanistan. “The religious people in Egypt and Saudi Arabia they have a dark mind,” he said. That speaks volumes.

Despite the horrors of the Taliban regime, the current US supported government of President Karzai is also very bad. Hence Anwar’s insistence on anonymity. “Our current government is not so good.”

“My opinion is good US is here,” he said by way of giving his overall assessment of the situation.

“I think this is going to be better,” he said. “Now we are free.”

As heartfelt as Anwar is, Bahram is thoughtful, logical and well reasoned. Moreover, he has a very worldly perspective—a worldly perspective that is certainly the exception to the rule in developing countries.

“The problem of 9/11 was created by the Americans themselves,” said Bahram. We have no one but ourselves to blame, he argues. Referring to the tragedy of September 11 he said, “what happened in the United States was an American mistake.”

That may seem harsh, but his reasoning is sound.

“Throughout our resistance to the Soviets, America supported us. We appreciate that,” he said. As a former Mujahedeen freedom fighter, he should know.

“After the Soviets left Afghanistan it was a mistake of American administration that they decided to abandon Afghanistan.” Thus allowing Osama bin Laden and his cohorts in crime to breed unchecked. “When the Berlin Wall is collapsed, when former USSR is collapsed, they [America] forgot Afghanistan.”

Bahram doesn’t fault America for supporting Osama, and for that matter even Saddam Hussein or the Shah of Iran, when we did. He’s quite visionary and sees the big picture. After all, he said, “this was a cold war era.” But he hastens to add, America’s “policy of abandonment” after the cold war ignored and by default permitted “what was happening in this country.”

“There was a total blood bath and they didn’t care,” he said. “Kabul became Beirut.”

During the cold war, the enemy of thy enemy was thy friend. Thus Bahram recognizes that Afghanistan—along with Vietnam, Iraq, huge portions of the Middle East, Central America, Eastern Europe and many other parts of the world—were pawns in a worldwide struggle of good versus evil. Indeed, even as a citizen of one of those kicked around pawns, he’s glad that America won the cold war against Stalin. Even if that meant supporting rotten, vicious, third world dictators in the process.

But the cold war is over now. The world has changed. But not everyone recognizes that. Not quite yet anyway. The USSR is gone, Bahram says, but the USA has left all the lesser enemies in place. It’s time to clean house. It’s time to reconsider, he says, that at this point in history, “the enemy of my enemy is not my friend.” Indeed, Bahram says, “he could be my enemy, too.”

That complaint made, Bahram now has a better-late-than-never attitude regarding the US intervention in Afghanistan after September 11.

(At some point during our conversation, another person came within earshot of us. Bahram deftly changed the subject to something innocuous. I don’t think we started talking about the weather, but whatever topic Bahram redirected us to, it was equally uncontroversial. As this nearby person didn’t go away, and Bahram and I moving might have caused suspicion, we weren’t able to continue this conversation until much later.)

“Taliban were try to take Afghanistan back to the stone age,” Bahram said. They imposed “inhumane restrictions on the personal activities.”

“In the last days of the Taliban the situation was intolerable,” he said. “Without American forces nobody could remove those nitwits.” Clearly Bahram’s English was more colorful than Anwar’s.

The Taliban was very clever at perverting the name of Islam to their cause, he said. “It was a very good pretext for them that they were defending Islam.” The fact that he recognizes this pretext demonstrates that he has much more insight than the average person.

“This is the freeing force of the Afghan people from tyrannies,” he said in support of the US military’s liberation of Afghanistan post September 11.

“What they did in Iraq, what they did in Afghanistan, was a good thing.” The military action was welcome. As a Phase One the military action was a success.

But there was no follow up. No Phase Two. America risks repeating the mistake it made when the Soviets were ousted. America “did not realize the ground realities in this country.”

“There are thousands and thousands of private armies” roaming the Afghan countryside. These renegade militias are controlled by individual warlords. They create so much fear and insecurity that he, and Anwar, fear for their lives. Fear enough that they won’t allow their names to be used. For all their evils, Bahram said, the Taliban at least provided security. Indeed, they were accepted because they provided security. The current government is comprised of former thugs and criminals who still make life intolerable in Afghanistan.

My Afghanistan traveling companion Diana would say, transitions are hard and “democracy is a messy business.” She’s right. But Bahram would argue, and Anwar would probably agree, the transition could have, and should have, been done better. Getting rid of the “nitwits,” as Bahram called the Taliban, isn’t enough.

So, if he’s pleased Afghanistan is liberated, but frustrated that there was no follow-up, no Phase Two, what would Bahram suggest? He suggests the creation of a government that is free of criminal elements. But he doesn’t stop with that pat answer. He goes so far as to agree that, even if that government is a non-Afghani government, so long as it is internationally sanctioned and provides real security, that’s a positive Phase Two. This more effective transitional leadership would govern, with the full moral authority of the United Nations, for four to eight years which would allow enough time for a gradual transition to democracy. Establishing the current transitional government was done too quickly and without enough authority from the UN. The result is that Afghanistan has thugs and criminals running the government.

“That’s it. People need security first. People need peace first,” Bahram said. As part of the international government, he strongly and repeatedly suggested that the first real step is the landing of a police force. A police force that, at first, would not be Afghani. It would be blue helmets. Or American. Or European. Any composition is okay to begin with so long as the people have security.

If people have security he argues—and I think he’s right—then free enterprise takes off and helps the economy far more than aid ever could. Not that the aid isn’t useful. It is. It’s tremendously useful. But giving entrepreneurs, both in and out of Afghanistan, the confidence that their budding enterprises will be protected by the full weight of the international community would give them the necessary confidence to launch all sorts of large and small business.

Not only would a secure environment boost the economy, but it would stabilize the political environment as well. Newspapers would publish, neighbors would talk, some might even talk to first time book writers on the record. Campaigns for elected office could be run with everyone participating. Starting small at the local level and then ending at the national level as the transitional UN government completed its mission.

Unlike some people I’ve spoken to on my journey, I most definitely did not get the impression that Anwar or Bahram were telling me what I wanted to hear. Despite their fears, they were speaking from their hearts.

“Security and peace is the first priority. Then food,” Bahram said. “Then other assistance.” That’s insightful. The security, Bahram argues, and I agree, will beget the other necessities of life. Security gives people confidence—and hope—to help themselves.

Chris Verrill is the author of the international travel biography Is For Good Men To Do Nothing, now available for order at your local bookstore or online at Amazon and over 200 other online booksellers.



Contact and Ordering information

Contact

Chris Verrill
chrisverrill@yahoo.com
650/245-8745
735 Hickey Blvd #608
Pacifica, CA 94044

Publisher

Is For Good Men To Do Nothing is published by Seeds of Freedom and Xlibris in strategic partnership with Random House.

How To Purchase

Order at your local bookstore or online at Amazon, Borders, Barnes and Noble, and over 200 other booksellers.

About the Author

Do I really need an About the Author section? I mean, weren't you subjected to me enough in the book itself? Oh, so you didn't read the book. I see. Well, in that case, the author is an amazingly brilliant, devilishly handsome multimillionaire. I am a non-profit director, e-commerce pioneer, and global humanitarian. I was born in California in 1964 and graduated from UC Davis with a great degree that has nothing to do with international volunteerism. I'm single, never married, no kids, no pets, one dying plant. How else could I take off for a year long adventure? I don't know where I live, but in my heart, I will always call Pacifica home. On the back cover, that's me in the Khurasan Refugee Camp shaking hands with the little boy. I am available for lectures, panel discussions, and children's parties.



Summary

Is For Good Men To Do Nothing Why Did September 11 Happen?

On September 11, 2001, like everyone, the author awoke to a different world. In addition to taking up a collection at his Rotary club meeting that morning, he

What motivated the terrorists?

decided he wanted to do more. What caused this tragedy? What motivated the terrorists? These questions

sent him on a journey. Not simply a physical journey to the Middle East and beyond, but a journey of discovery.

The Western world wrung its collective hands in response to a new survivalist fear of traveling following that fateful fall morning. Suicide bombers breathed their last in the West Bank. SARS contaminated the air. War ravaged Iraq. Or war

“Americans go home,”

said a university student in India.

“And take me with you.”

liberated Iraq, depending on your perspective. In as lighthearted a way as was possible under the circumstances, the author sets

out to explore these troubled hot spots and figure out why America continues to be sometimes loved and sometimes hated. Sometimes by the very same people. “Americans go home,” said a university student in India. “And take me with you.”

Is For Good Men To Do Nothing chronicles the author’s trek from the USA to Afghanistan, and 27 countries along the way, on a quest to try and figure out why this tragedy occurred; and maybe even do something about it. Along the way he is interrogated by Israeli security, enjoys the breathtaking views of Liechtenstein, stomachs the poverty of Ethiopia, gets abducted by an angry bus driver in Greece,

**Interviews former Mujahedeen
fighters in Afghanistan**

meets with UN officials in New York and Geneva, gets his pocket picked in Rome, says goodbye to his aging grandfather on Maui, talks politics in Kuwait, visits the

last of the white rhinos in Tanzania, crosses from Pakistan into India in a motorcade under full military escort, and finally interviews former Mujahedeen fighters in Afghanistan. All the while trying to make a small difference in the world by creating a vocational education program to aid Afghan refugees. International politics with a human touch—and a human mission.

Praise for *Is For Good Men to do Nothing*

“A balanced reflection upon the events and the aftermath of September 11th and the Iraq conflict.”

—**Mark Sykes**

“Constructively critical of the Bush administration, Verrill doesn’t just complain, he suggests solutions.”

—**Jennifer Gusman**

“A natural ability to conjure up vivid images with the written word.”

—**Eric Jackson**

“This is just a tremendous read from a human chronicler of an historic venture and adventure who happens to be a Rotarian—that is, a humanitarian in the trenches—who decided that his personal life paled in comparison to what he might do in the real world after 9-11 in America. And then he went and did it. This book is a testimonial, a monument, a recognition of the power of a single person to make a change.”

—**Steve Wright**

“Instead of taking a walk in the woods, Chris Verrill travels to the world’s hot spots. He’s the next Bill Bryson.”

—**Linda Monden**

“Witty, colorful, always entertaining. It’s *The New Yorker* magazine meets *National Geographic*.”

—**Heidi Davis**

“*Is For Good Men To Do Nothing* will awaken the spirit of travel in all those who read it.”

—**Courtland Grove**

“From April to December I had a lot of time on my hands. But I still didn’t read this book. My spider hole lighting wasn’t very good.”

—**Saddam Hussein**