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## TERRORISM—THE CHALLENGE

By W. Clifford\*

Terrorism is a modern growth industry. It is not only that the bomb, the assassination or the hijacking have become commonplace to an extent (thanks to television and the modern media) that no previous generation could have ever appreciated, but the number of publications have vastly increased — almost in inverse proportion to our demonstrated incapacity to deal with the problem: terrorism now has its own library — and scientific journal. And what the rise of terrorist methods has really done to promote, extend and develop the public and private security services, general law enforcement and specialist counter measures, we can, perhaps, only imagine. We know it has changed our travelling life styles, financed a wide range of psychological profile studies and led to massive investments in protective technology. But the shape and size of investments to counter increasing terrorism may never be known. Moreover, like all crime, we are aware of only the officially recorded tip of the terrorist iceberg. Perhaps if we really knew the extent to which terrorism or the threat of terrorism operates within political, economic and social circles around the world, we may have a great deal more to worry about.

Playing on people's fears is a venerable technique of religion, of government, of crime, of business, in peace and war, in good times and bad. It is fear of disease and death which promotes the medical profession, fear of aging which promotes a whole range of tonics, beautifiers, virility potions and cosmetics, fear of failure which maintains various kinds of education, and the fear of poverty or loss which sustains insurance and the various forms of private and public welfare. Now, the fear of victimisation which once seemed readily dispelled by good government and the existence of the laws, courts and police, has generated an almost incalculable investment in private security, locking and alarm devices, guard dogs, and secret services around the world. Those rich enough to be profitable targets keep bodyguards: the big companies have security departments and there are political parties in Europe and America which maintain their own trained strong-arm units. Every government now has to develop an anti-terrorists capacity within its agencies for law and order.

The word terrorism came into use at about the time of the French Revolution of the late 18th century and for long thereafter referred primarily to a method of government. History is replete with examples of terrorist regimes. Only gradually did it come to be applied to the actions of anarchists and others who sought to change the forms of government. It was a technique of the gangs and the different varieties of "mafia" either to maintain a conspiracy of silence or to extend the scope of their protection rackets — and in the years preceding the Second World War, it was a recognised tactic of both fascist and

communist parties in opposition or in power. In "Main Kampf", Hitler wrote —

"The very first essential for success is a perpetually constant and regular employment of violence."

But terrorists are not only political fanatics or criminals. The media coverage of such events and the immediacy of modern world communications serves not only political ends but the ego-needs of the mentally disturbed. The impersonality of modern urban life styles, no less than the increased mobility of populations and the development of modern weapons with remote killing potential, all make terrorism easier to perpetrate and more difficult to prevent or detect. And this, in turn, makes indiscriminate killing, or the threat of it, more tempting to the extreme political groups, the organised criminal syndicates and the mentally disturbed. Finally, the evidence is that terrorism works — often by the policy effects of the horror that it evokes — but frequently by eliminating opposition to releasing imprisoned colleagues or more prosaically raising funds.

There was a time when the peoples of the northern hemisphere could associate such bombings and terrorist attacks with the vagaries of the hot-blooded Latin American republics, the fierce internal divisions of southern European or Mediterranean states and, whilst it might happen in Asia or the Far East, assassinations, bombings and violent civil conflicts were regarded as a kind of genetic aberration to which the Western nations were not really heirs. During the Algerian struggle, the terrorism in Cyprus and the Mau Mau atrocities in Kenya, there were many in England heard to say "it could not happen here". The creeping ubiquity of terrorist attacks, kidnappings and hijackings, the fomenting of guerilla warfare in Ireland, the activities of politically extreme splinter groups in Germany, France, Holland, Belgium, Spain and the Netherlands, to mention only one group of countries, has shattered any remaining confidence in the immunity of any nation or culture. There are assassinations, hostage-taking escapades, indiscriminate bombings and organised ambushings of the police in the U.S. and, as this is being written, Italy is torn between left and right factions and 17 families are negotiating for the release of kidnapped persons. More than 2,000 terror-connected bombings occurred there in 1977 and from 1975 to 1977 there were 34 political killings.

Against this background, Australia is a fortunate country indeed. Its bomb outrages have been interspersed by years and even the horror of the indiscriminate killings occasioned by the bomb explosion outside the Sydney Hilton, where the Commonwealth Prime Ministers were meeting, hardly justifies such rhetoric as the emotive statement that, by

this incident, Australia has been "blasted into the world of international terrorism".

"One swallow", said Aristotle, "does not make a summer" — but at least it tells us that summer is nigh! One, two or even three bomb outrages do not blast the country into international terrorism: but they forewarn us of the prospect. Moreover, experience in other parts of the world has made it abundantly clear that terrorism needs a measure of public silence, if not collusion, which it can assure only *after* it has demonstrated its ability to defy prevention and its capacity to strike at will. Successful prevention then comes at the beginning — not when the movement is in full swing. Once the authorities lose the full advantage of community support through fear or doubt, the terrorists have won. This is also true of criminal gangs developing protection rackets. If they succeed in getting away with their first reprisals on those who refuse to pay, then they are established and the police problem becomes more difficult as witnesses will no longer testify.

So, there is no joy in complacency — even at the beginning. For that reason, at the time of the postal bombs two years ago, I suggested that the Australian community was reaching a cross-roads, when it would have to decide how much violent determination it would tolerate in the campaigns for political objectives. Under-estimation is dangerous. The first bombs thrown in Cyprus were poorly made petrol bombs flung at 4 a.m. through the windows of the tax office in Nicosia. After the first alarm had subsided, there were jokes about the appropriate choice of target and disdain was openly expressed for the style of bomb-making. But the quality of bombs and the choice of targets improved remarkably in the months that followed and soon a frightened population was gradually forced to keep silent even when friends were to be killed. In fact, to be killed became its own proof of perfidy: "he *must* have been giving information". Peace-loving Africans were not good material for terrorist tactics, but they could be trained — and populations could be divided and kept in fear. In Latin America, there are examples of terrorism being exported to states where it could not easily be home-grown. Terrorism is a well tried technique — often with innocent people as pawns in a game of power. And terrorists have internationalised, shared their knowledge and skills and have mutually supported each other long before the criminal justice systems of the individual states have even begun to think about it.

Of course the polemics are extensive, profound and ramified. Most political terrorists genuinely feel themselves to be engaged in a struggle against unjust, even terrorist regimes. The United Nations Ad Hoc Committee on International Terrorism has bogged down in the contradiction of terrorism and freedom fighting. Some countries have only repressed the problem by means of military regimes which practised the methods they sought to outlaw and there is nothing remarkable about the fact that terrorism cannot flourish in a police state, for there terrorism can be countered by its own ruthlessness. There are justifications for armed revolt or even terrorism which are philosophically respectable and there are precedents galore from political history which will attract the radical and render obscurantist the blind attempts to preserve the status quo in a period of world change and deep value conflict. There is, as we have seen, a library on the subject for those who now wish to pursue the subject. But one thing is clear, namely that freedom can be

its own worst enemy, and most countries with a genuine respect for human rights (not the same thing as its perfect implementation) are at a disadvantage when confronted with ruthless terrorism. They are forced into an unenviable balancing of counter-measures against the preservation of respect for liberty. Goethe once wrote —

"I have always had an antipathy for the apostles of liberty: the final object they always have in mind is the right for themselves to act arbitrarily."

So, it is possible to think of sophisticated counter-terrorist agencies, the infiltration of terrorist groups by informers, the judicious application of emergency measures and even laws to detain without trial those known members of terrorist groups who can never be brought to court because the witnesses would be killed. But for real effectiveness, these have to infringe traditional human rights in a Western culture and so they are never very popular — and they are readily attacked by the psychological or overt, political arm of the terrorist group. For this reason the community is the only effective counter for terrorist activities in a democratic society. If the community does not want terrorism and is prepared to work closely with the authorities in preventing it, then it cannot develop too far. If police intelligence is a another word for close police-public co-operation, then terrorists cannot cover their tracks. Where they get the explosives, where they make the bombs and where they hold meetings to plan their strikes will soon become known. This may still leave us exposed to the mentally unbalanced, who is seeking ego-satisfaction rather than political ends, but as the "Son of Sam" murders in the United States have shown, even he can be uncovered if his neighbours and friends are really curious. The tendency when terrorism strikes or a crime crises develops is to strengthen law enforcement, to build up social squads, to tighten laws and build more secure prisons. But none of these will be effective without community backing and they can at no time be a substitute in a democratic society for the public collaboration which prevents rather than represses. In fact, if they are attempted without the fullest community co-operation, they become self-defeating by emphasizing a use of power likely to alienate the very people whose help is essential.

The explosion at the Sydney Hilton may then have done one of two things. First, it may be, as suggested, a portent of things to come with bombings or terrorist activities becoming more and more a feature of political life in Australia and with extremist groups turning more and more to the violent methods which seem to work. On the other hand, the explosion may have blasted the complacency from Australian consciousness. It may have alerted the people to the real dangers of tolerating such extremists and to a new era of public co-operation in developing the protective public sinews of resistance which will stifle this monster at birth. It may provoke a closing of ranks to deal, not only with terrorism, but with violent crime in general.

On this note it is appropriate to quote the opinion of Jean Jacques Rousseau, the apostle of the Enlightenment and the man whose writings instigated so many of the revolutions of the past two centuries. He said, very simply —

"nothing on this earth is worth buying at the price of human blood".

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