



FERRORISM

Probing
the
Dynamics

Jeremiah
8:15

Robert F. Smylie

A major event occurred in the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that led many in the church to focus attention on terrorism. That event was the kidnapping in Beirut, Lebanon, of a missionary, Benjamin Weir, who was then held hostage for eighteen months, presumably by a Shiite Muslim group. His captivity galvanized the energy of our church. His release and his remarkable spirit following the long ordeal for him and his family contributed eventually to his election as the Moderator of the General Assembly, the highest elected official of the Presbyterian Church, for the 1986-87 church year. Since then much consideration has been given the issue of terrorism.

Why should the church be involved with an issue like terrorism? The basic reason is that terrorism, however we define it, impacts the global mission of the church. Those regions where terrorism and violence are the most evident and prevalent are precisely those areas where Christian global concerns are most pressing and where Christian witness is perhaps the most difficult: the Middle East, Central America, and South Africa. In these areas the church has encountered the suffering of marginalized and oppressed people, people with incredibly unmet human needs. The church has itself suffered for trying to stand with those people and address those needs.

Paradoxically, the theology of liberation, with its note of hope to the marginalized and oppressed, has been branded in both the United States and Latin America as a source of and a stimulus to terrorism. In its witness and service the church has encountered repressive and oppressive systems and regimes, both internally and externally based, and has had to minister in those contexts. The church has occasionally sided and identified with the oppressed even to the point of resistance, rebellion, or revolution. But as often the church has been identified with the oppressors, justifying oppression and repression in the name of order, Christian civilization, or anti-communism. In so doing the church frequently bases its support on the passage in Romans 13, with its counsel of allegiance to the state. In many situations the church in its ecumenical and confessional diversity is on both sides simultaneously.

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American churches also encounter state interference in their mission. That state interference comes from two sources, from the U.S. government as Americans seek to minister in other parts of the world and from the receiving governments that frequently place restrictions upon or otherwise hinder the witness of the church. The church has also encountered the resurgence of other faiths and faith traditions occasionally hostile to Christianity but occasionally also newly stimulated by identifying with their peoples for the first time in their particular struggle. So we have a church that is called to think in new ways about its mission and its concern for the poor and the oppressed and the powerless.

The phenomenon of terrorism is a global reality. It takes a variety of forms and occurs in most, if not all, societies. Its victims include not only the terrorized and the terrorists themselves but also society at large. The recent frequency and scope of terrorist acts set the context for addressing this phenomenon. Public attention to terrorism waxes and wanes in relation to the frequency or spectacular character of terrorist events. However, the reality of terrorism must be of continued concern to us as Christians and as citizens in our society.

We would probably very readily identify the Middle East as a central arena for terrorism. Images of terrorism might also come to mind at the mention of Sri Lanka, Haiti, Northern Ireland, South Africa or Nicaragua. Can we not, however, identify forms of terrorism that are occurring in the United States such as the bombings of abortion clinics and the acts of violence against Arab-Americans? Can we identify certain actions of the United States against other countries as terrorist?

It is not necessary here to tally the incidents or typologize the different kinds of terrorism. In the current literature one can find dozens of different ways of approaching the subject. Nor is this a case study such as of Shiite or Palestinian terrorism or of the state terrorism, say, of South Africa or El Salvador or Chile. Nor is this intended to be a short course on how to be a terrorist or how to avoid terrorism. Such courses are available in the United States, the first through paramilitary camps, the second through private enterprise seminars that are offered in Washington to corporate executives. These are designed for corporations that do business abroad and deal with corporate and individual safety and security from what is being defined as terrorism. Nor is moral judgment our purpose here, although certainly any deliberate action that causes individuals or people to suffer should be of concern for the Christian. The church's judgment and ministry must be clear wherever people are suffering.

Some of these approaches have value, but they do not necessarily help us to understand the contemporary challenge of terrorism. Rather, a series of propositions will help us consider the multiple dynamics involved in the

topic. A proposition, in logic, is a point to be discussed or maintained. It is a statement to be believed, doubted or even denied. Use these propositions, then, for reflection, for discussion, for reaction.

Proposition One: No generally or universally accepted definition of terrorism exists.

This fact has a paradoxical effect. In one way it makes absolutely no difference whether we have a definition or not. In another way it makes all of the difference in the world how terrorism is defined. In the first sense terrorism is an emotional word. It is not a descriptive term. Other words exist to describe virtually any pattern with which we are familiar: murder, assassination, bombing, rape, kidnapping, hijacking, piracy, and so on. These are the descriptive words. Terrorism is the emotive word that is attached to them. In this respect we could probably do without the word terrorism. These other acts are crimes in virtually every contemporary society, regardless of ideology or form of government. To call such acts "terrorist" is to focus on the emotion, not the act.

In the second sense, it is precisely because there is no accepted definition that specific definitions are usually formulated to fit the framer's intentions. The question becomes: what is it that the framer of a definition is seeking to accomplish by the definition itself? The importance, obviously, lies more in the *intended* policy, practice, result or desired response that is to be justified or defended by the definition than the definition in and of itself. In this sense the definition becomes determinative of policy and practice. The absence of a concrete definition allows a continuous shifting, depending upon the need or the intention. Definitions vary within studies, from speaker to speaker, institution to bureaucracy, user to victim. There are scholarly definitions, political definitions, legal definitions, domestic definitions (e.g., spouse abuse or child abuse).

Sensationalist definitions also abound. Terrorism has been defined as "cancer," "the hydra of carnage," "violent graffiti," and "pathological stagecraft." A 1985 study for the Department of the Army by a former CIA researcher suggests that several hundred definitions are currently used by government and nongovernmental sectors in the United States. A common expression of the problem is verbalized in the frequently used phrase, "One person's freedom fighter is another person's terrorist." Although this is a popular observation, the frequent supercilious response to this self-evident fact is a charge of moral deficiency in trying to suggest that acts of terrorism are morally equivalent no matter who commits them.

Two definitions of terrorism will serve to make the point. U.S. governmental literature contains specific references to terrorism as a crime and

terrorism as war, two very different conceptions. The players in Washington and in the press change the definition to suit the concerns of the moment. In recent years it has been the Secretary of State George Shultz who has focused on the term, idea, or conception that terrorism is war. Shultz has been basically consistent in this, beginning with speeches made in 1983 and 1984. The President has suggested otherwise.

For instance, when the 1985 attacks occurred in the Rome and Vienna airports at the El Al Israeli Airline counters, where more than 20 people were killed, the President was pressed by reporters as to why the United States had not responded. It will be recalled that the American people had been assured the United States was going to respond to acts of terrorism wherever they occurred. Why had we not responded? The President answered precisely and clearly. He called the actions in Rome and Vienna "crimes," noting that the people who had perpetrated those crimes were either killed in the process or had been captured and would be subsequently tried for the crimes. That relieved him from the necessity of further explanation. On the other hand, if terrorism is an act of war, as Secretary Shultz has maintained, then the situation is more complicated. That definition usually provides the rationale for military action in the name of retaliation. But if terrorism is war, do the rules/laws that govern the conduct of war become operative? Is the enemy given the status of a belligerent under international law? Is the War Powers Act of Congress operative in determining the limits or parameters of presidential response?

Modern warfare has broken down the distinction between combatants and noncombatants. If the Rome and Vienna airport attacks were acts of war by Shultz's definition, how shall we classify the victims of those attacks? Must the primary attack then be seen as an attack upon the economy of Israel, an attempt to weaken the economy of Israel by curtailing tourist travel? Then do the victims simply become "collateral" damage, persons caught in the conflict situation? If one calls a terrorist act by an unknown party an act of war, then how does one identify the enemy? Domestic jurisprudence would never allow punishment of a *suspected* perpetrator, unless there has been a reversion to lynch law. If one asserts that an international conspiracy of terrorism is responsible, involving, for instance, Syria, Libya, Cuba, Iran, and North Korea (and the others that the Administration has from time to time identified), and if we are dealing with it as war, does that mean we declare war against all of those countries at once or that we are selective in our process?

Combatants are often eager to end hostilities through negotiations, particularly when continued conflict is costly and unlikely to resolve the conflict. Yet the paradox is that in most situations where there are high levels of terrorism, one of the problems is the failure or the unwillingness of the United States to enter into negotiations with the parties that are involved.

The U.S. has foreclosed negotiations, for instance, with the Palestine Liberation Organization and the African National Congress.

If the definition of terrorism depends on identifying the victims as innocent civilians, as is often argued, then it stands to reason that the terrorist event upon which the Reagan Administration has focused the most attention, the tragic deaths of 241 marines in the bombing of marine barracks in Lebanon, was, in fact, *not* an act of terrorism. The marines, all combatants, were there in a conflict situation, injected into the middle of a civil war. They were perceived by the parties there as representing the country which had supported Israel in its invasion of Lebanon and which had chosen sides in a civil war, demonstrated by the shelling by the battleship New Jersey of Muslim positions that were opposed to the government. They were not there as innocent civilians. That was not their purpose or mission.

President Reagan's temporizing definition that terrorist acts are crimes did not answer all the questions, but it was a much neater and simpler way to deal with the problem. It avoided both the emotional and the political consequences of a definition that seeks to define terrorism as an act of war.

The problem of definition is potentially all-important. Would we be better off if we found other words and different categories to discuss current events than the use of the word "terrorism"? Probably not. The problem is that we are not consistent. Terms and concepts are used and misused, and they are used to manipulate public emotions and responses. We should be asking, "What is it that produces fear? What is it that intimidates? What are the ends that one seeks when one deliberately seeks to intimidate or create fear in other people either by acts themselves or by the interpretation given them?"

Proposition Two: The form of terrorism and violence which is the focus of contemporary attention is socio-political as distinct from psycho-social behavior.

The latter, psycho-social behavior, involves isolated acts or even patterns of acts such as murder, rape, arson and so on, whether intentional or random, by individuals or groups of individuals. These are the actions of criminals, the demented, the psychopaths, the psychotic, the vengeful—or, tragically enough, the thrill-seeker. These forms of antisocial behavior are and have been a constant in human history. While tragically commonplace, they can shock society, particularly in their extreme forms, and on occasion they may even be of such character to shake or have a long-range impact on society. The assassination of a President, whether committed as a psycho-social or a socio-political act, can lead to changes in the body politic if that death leads to a power struggle, the termination of a political program, or the ascendancy to power of a leader whose goals, styles, and conduct cause basic shifts in a society's directions. Societal response is

normally limited in this kind of violence and terrorism to either prevention or retribution, that is, punishment for the perpetrator.

Our primary concern is socio-political terrorism. Socio-political terrorism involves the use of violence or intimidation for social, religious, economic, or political purposes. It can be used either by the state, directly or indirectly or internally or externally, or by individuals or privately organized groups. It can be used to bring about or to prevent change, to alter the balance and/or the possession of power within a society, or, in some cases, to destroy the very basis for society. The political aftermath of an assassination, as for instance that of Anwar Sadat, has more to do with society and its political conditions than with the act itself.

The state itself usually represents the powers within a society that are seeking to prevent change in order to protect the interests of the power structures, the power elites in the society, including the religious, political, economic, or military elites. Any society may contain forces that are seeking change, reflecting conditions perceived by some as unacceptable. In the extreme these forces may be calling for rebellion or revolution. Activists seeking to embody or express the will of a people may lead the struggle against systems of exploitation, colonial or imperial power, or occupying forces in a nation. These conditions exist where, to reflect our own political rhetoric, a government governs *without* the consent of the governed. In this context, resistance or rebellion usually has a political agenda. That is, the people who engage in violence or terrorism in this situation normally have a vision or a goal in mind defining what they want to accomplish. Recent examples are many: ending French, Dutch, Portuguese or British colonialism; driving the Israelis out of occupied lands; ending the apartheid system. In other words, intentionality governs the resort to force. Occasionally, small groups of people emerge who are ideologically or philosophically opposed to the very concept of social structure, who believe that all social order is corrupt. Anarchists or nihilists, they seldom have a political program to implement. Violence becomes random, even blind, protest. In analyzing current political activity, we see that power and violence can be used to either prevent or bring about change within a social structure.

Proposition Three: Our understanding of terrorism is shaped by our world and our religious views.

These two views are sometimes the same or are interacting and reinforcing. They relate to our understanding of human nature, of the nature of social organization and identity, of history and conceptions of destiny, of

the nature of good and evil, and of the nature and responsibility of power. Do people, for instance, act the way they act because they are inherently evil or because they are responding to the condition of their society? Does the first call for severe restraints? Does the second imply that correction of conditions will alter behavior? Are people violent because the human species is naturally violent? Then is the social goal to be behavior modification or the establishment of restraints curtailing freedoms or even the possibility of change? Occasionally we modify our presumptions about human nature to stereotype *one* people, race, ethnic group as violent (or evil) by nature.

We respond to terrorism partly by our understanding of the nature of human institutions. American political and social thought is heavily influenced by Manichean and Machiavellian terms. Manicheanism induces people and societies to think in terms of absolutes of good and evil, right and wrong, black and white. Normally, people are conditioned to identify their own society as good and to conclude that what it does is right and just. In the extreme, we assume that our opponents represent evil and that what they do is automatically evil. In response to evil we can then do whatever is necessary to destroy or isolate the evil. This concept has been a powerful force in shaping our country's history and it influences our contemporary thinking. The Reagan Administration began by identifying the Soviet Union as the "evil empire"—a concept the President re-affirmed on the occasion of the 1987 U.S.-Soviet summit, but modified after the May 29-June 1, 1988, summit.

The American people, in some respects, are basically Machiavellian. That is, we are a society oriented toward power. Machiavelli argued that power was good when it was used to maintain order or to create order out of chaos. Power, we believe, is determinative in human relations and our society. We therefore seek to maximize power. A powerful society assumes that it has the right, and even the duty, to exercise power. Furthermore, a powerful society acts as the judge of its own behavior. In effect, we operate on the fundamental assumption that might makes right, even though we do not wish to acknowledge that reality. Since power is unevenly distributed, this leaves us with a difficult problem: how do people who are essentially powerless in a world where power is everything make known their will or realize their concerns? The United States can bring incredible power to bear against any group that claims that it is fighting for its rights but has no comparable power.

Some of the literature defines terrorism as "warfare on the cheap." The phrase, while perhaps intended to denigrate, does point to the realities. If you do not have \$300 billion a year for a military establishment to match the United States, or the billion dollars that might be necessary for a battleship New Jersey, then a car bomb may be your only way to equalize the

power. One study of the role of Zionist terrorism in establishing the State of Israel in 1948 documents how the Palestinian people had been systematically deprived both of any access to military hardware or equipment and of the right to organize and train themselves to defend their society. On the other hand, the Zionist organizations were provided equipment and training by supporters. They were allowed to organize and train themselves in military units. Consequently, an imbalance of power determined the outcome of the ensuing conflict between the Palestinians and the Zionists.

One of the arguments against terrorism is that it does not work. Much of historical experience tells us otherwise. Does violence work? Yes, it does—when there is an imbalance of power and no other means to resolve conflicts.

Societies are often influenced by dominant religious conceptions that are directed either toward their destiny or their eschatological end. Throughout history many peoples have been driven by the belief that they are a chosen people and the bearers of a manifest destiny. Peoples who believe that they are chosen often assume that anything can be done to fulfill their specific destiny, that nothing should be allowed to stand in the way. The concept of chosenness has manifested itself in many forms: Islamic expansionism, Russian Messianism, Zionism, and “Manifest Destiny,” the concept that inspired the westward movement of the American people, rolling over the Indian, the Mexican, and others who stood in the way.

Proposition Four: Terrorism as a historical phenomenon has both old and new dimensions.

Popular contemporary writers on terrorism often adopt perplexing historical methodologies. Three varieties are of interest: *creational history*, which picks a specific moment in time and builds its argument—“this is where it all began”; *selective history*, which picks and chooses those parts of the record that confirm the conclusions that have been predetermined; and the variation on selective history, *forgetful history*, that provides for conveniently forgetting that some things ever happened.

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon. Its existence is almost as old as recorded history. The oldest known terrorist groups were all religious in their origins. These included the Assassins, the Thugs, and the Zealots—names of historical groups—who came respectively out of Muslim, Hindu, and Jewish traditions. All were inspired by religious motivations, all were considered terrorist in their activities, and one of them, the Thugs, was a movement that lasted for well over 1,000 years.

History is also marked with spectacular periods of terrorism. The French Revolution had at its core the Reign of Terror. Terrorism played a key role

in the anti-czarist movements in 19th century Russia. Closer to home, the Ku Klux Klan utilizes terror as a means of suppressing blacks. The Klan developed terrorist techniques to perfection for its social ends. The burning cross—perversion of Christianity's most sacred symbol—became one of its trademarks, along with the monk's hood. In our big cities, crime syndicates perfected and still use terrorist techniques called "protection" as a means of extortion. Awareness of the history is important. But our concern is less with the long history itself than with the use of the history. We need to disabuse ourselves that terrorism is a new phenomenon and that our country is the first or even the primary target of terrorism.

First of all, let us examine the perspective of *creational history*. Popular or propagandistic literature suggests that terrorism began at a particular time. A frequently mentioned date is 1968. *The Reader's Digest* published a book called *The Terrorist Network*, by Claire Sterling, an American journalist. A popular account, it is found on most contemporary bibliographies including those prepared by government agencies and is cited so often that it has almost become part of the terrorist canon. Chapter 1 is entitled "1968, When It All Began." 1968 was when the post-war generation came of age. What happened to history before that year? In this view, one marks a particular point or event from which all else flows. The particular event is chosen in order to establish a particular interpretation of history. The historian, the journalist, the politician all find it convenient to argue that a particular event is the beginning, if not of violence itself, then certainly of a cycle of violence. For instance, the TWA hijacking in 1985 was seen in the American media as the beginning of a new cycle of violence. Hostages were literally taken out of the blue. Little attention had been given to the fact that some months before Israel had taken 700 Lebanese citizens to Israel and held them hostage without trial. The hijackers were seeking the release of a prior set of hostages. How much media attention did those hostages receive? For many Americans the beginning point of a cycle of terrorism is when an American or an American interest is involved in the act. In other words, it becomes definitional. It was Americans who were involved, it was an American plane. So the question is, when do you begin the history and why?

With *selective history*, the question becomes: what is the underlying interest that guides our interpretation of history? American propagandists, when viewing the history of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle, for instance, link terrorism only with the Palestinians in their struggle. Terrorism is identified with the name of Yasir Arafat and is made synonymous with the Palestine Liberation Organization, the PLO. Yet Menachem Begin was a terrorist long before Arafat became a household word. The activities of the Stern Gang, the Haganah, and the Irgun, the primary (Jewish) Zionist

agents of violence, are seldom mentioned in contemporary literature. One has to search for references to them in our popular coverage.

Begin was an international terrorist. Wanted in England with a price on his head, he was responsible for the 1946 destruction of the King David Hotel in which 91 people were killed, including Jews, and 45 were wounded. He was director of the Irgun group, which was responsible for the massacre of 254 people—more than half of whom were women, many of them pregnant—in the village of Deir Yassin in 1948. Yet Begin was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and, as head of state, was received with open arms by American presidents. This cannot be attributed to forgetfulness. We are frequently reminded of the events of the Holocaust, why are we silent on other acts that have caused incredible suffering for other people? Can it be attributed to the phenomenon of legitimization or to the license of interpretation? Those who seek to justify those events argue that they were not terrorism but self-defense, justifiable retaliation or “blows struck in the name of freedom.”

So the questions are essentially, “Who writes history, what historical events do you choose, and how do you interpret them?” If the Nazis had won, the history of the Holocaust would be written quite differently—the Germans would have been saved from an internal enemy.

Finally, there is the variant which can be called *forgetful history*. As we

Kampuchean refugees waiting to enter Thailand



make chronicles of history and keep score of the events of the Middle East—whether of Palestinian, Shiite, Libyan, Syrian, or Iranian acts—we “forget” that the first recorded hijacking of a plane in the Middle East was an Israeli hijacking, in 1954, of a Syrian plane in order to force Syria to release five Israeli soldiers who had infiltrated Syria to tap Syrian telephones. The first mail bombings—letter bombs—were reportedly from Israel to German scientists working in Egypt. Should we be surprised that these events provided inspiration and modeling?

Two comments can be made in conclusion to the discussion of this proposition. Drawing the illustrations from the Middle East is not meant to confirm the popular stereotype that terrorism is simply a Middle East phenomenon. The Middle East illustrations are in fact more familiar to American people. This should not obscure the fact that the same problem of historical interpretation occurs with any world trouble spot: Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, the Punjab, Central America, or wherever.

The second point is that history is *always* interpretive. Current history is almost always biased history because current interests and ideology are active agents in the historical process. The way we “remember” and define the past validates our present and helps to shape the future by influencing the ways we respond to what is taking place around us.



Proposition Five: Clarity about the ethical and the moral dimensions of our problem requires shifting the terms of discussion.

The discussion must move from terrorism to the question of violence as a method and means to achieve political, social, or economic ends believed to be just or, if not just, at least desirable. Every society, including our own, accepts and assumes the legitimacy of violence in a variety of situations and exercises violence in a number of forms. Every act of violence involving individuals carries with it an aspect of terror (with perhaps the qualification that terror may be absent when death is unexpected and instantaneous). Violence normally involves fear and terror for the victim or victims. Every state that uses violence in the conduct of affairs accepts the reality that innocent people may be harmed in the pursuit of its interests. Secretary of State Shultz, in explaining his theory that terrorism is war, took pains to warn the American people that innocent lives might be lost in any United States response. He was asserting the right of the United States to put innocent life at risk, thereby creating further terrorism.

When does the state's use of violence constitute terrorism? State terrorism, whether of the "right" or "left," takes two basic forms. One is the repression of one's own people through terrorist practices to maintain order or to maintain certain groups in power. State terrorism also involves the use or support of terror or violence to accomplish foreign policy goals and objectives. Terrorism, as we have seen, can be a form of violence, physical or psychic, to achieve political ends. Violence in our society takes many forms. Are we used to it? Are we gratified when it works? A society that is repressing its own people or utilizing the range of options from torture to harassment, from jailing to extra-judicial executions, can always claim it is for law and order. In its international involvements, American justification ranges from traditional just-war criteria to barely veiled doctrines against communism. Apart from Vietnam and Central America, the United States has seldom had great difficulty in justifying *to itself* the use of violence in its global dealings.

The difficulty comes when the violence is used by people, not states, seeking change. Those who seek change normally also believe that their cause is just, that the reordering of society is necessary to remove an oppressor, correct injustice, and make possible a more just society. But the reality is that justice is generally described and defined by the "ins," not the "outs." Therefore people outside the system who are seeking change have a much more difficult time in establishing legitimacy for what they are doing than does the social faction that controls the instruments of both law and communication. If we argue on our own behalf that self-defense is a just cause, are a people who are being oppressed just in using violence against their oppressor? In this context the question must then be asked: Do

just-war concepts have any applicability for people who are involved in patterns of resistance or revolution that may involve terrorism for political ends? Can they or do they provide guidance for revolutionary groups seeking change, thus making legitimacy easier to achieve?

Proposition Six: Political change that is achieved through the use of violence is sometimes politically and historically legitimized. Other times it is not.

Legitimacy requires both self-acceptance and acceptance by the international community. Around the world one finds independence movements, separatist movements, and civil wars. In every instance of change there will come a time when the question of legitimacy and world acceptance becomes necessary to consider. For example, it is well established that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has a legitimacy and an acceptability among the Palestinians themselves. It is community-based and supported. It has the recognition of the United Nations, the Arab League, and most of the world. However, it has no legitimacy in the eyes of two key actors: Israel and the United States. We do not grant that organization any legitimacy at all as the representatives of the needs or the interests of the Palestinian people.

Political change is constant. Past diplomatic practice made a distinction between *de facto* and *de jure* recognition. For most of our early history we extended recognition when governments changed, in a sense recognizing the country although the government had changed. Normally, the United States did not attempt to pass moral judgment upon the legitimacy or authority of those who ruled or on the method of obtaining power: revolution, corruption, election, or heredity. The fact that a government may have been disliked did not determine legitimacy. If change was initiated by a coup or even a guerrilla war, normally the U.S. adjusted and accepted it. In the 20th century that particular practice changed. The United States has refused to acknowledge legitimacy in numerous situations even though the change that has occurred within a society has been accepted by the people themselves.

The United States refused to recognize the revolutionary government of the Soviet Union that came into existence in 1917. Indeed, the United States joined other World War I allies in 1918 in an invasion of Soviet territories, and it was not until 1933 that the United States recognized the legitimacy of that government. This delay occurred despite the fact that during World War I Woodrow Wilson in his famous "Fourteen Points" had welcomed the Soviet Union into the society of free nations with governments of their own choosing.

In 1949 a long civil war ended in China when the forces of Mao Tse-tung defeated those of Chiang Kai-shek. The defeated forces took refuge on the island of Formosa (Taiwan), which had recently been "liberated" from Japan. While protecting the Kuomintang on Taiwan with the U.S. 7th Fleet, the United States withheld recognition of the government of the People's Republic of China. John Foster Dulles, soon to become the Secretary of State, took the position at the time that the United States had to wait and see whether the government would last. Self-deception coupled with partisanship led to the conclusion the revolution would not survive and Chiang Kai-shek would return. Therefore we waited almost 25 years before we were willing to recognize the *de facto* government of the largest population and land mass on earth.

Clearly, the determining factor in these two particular situations was ideological. Other illustrations can show the inconsistencies.

In 1973 the duly elected President of Chile, Dr. Salvador Allende Gossens, was overthrown and assassinated following a controversial period. The CIA is known to have been involved in his overthrow. The United States quickly extended recognition to the new military junta headed by General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte.

In 1986 the government of the Philippines changed. Ferdinand Marcos, entrenched in power for almost two decades, had been supported by the United States up to the very end. He was still deposed. Within 24 hours after he was deposed, we recognized the legitimacy of the new government led by Corazon Aquino and supported her. We provided for Marcos' escape, as we had for Jean-Claude Duvalier from Haiti and as we have for other people. But we accepted the reality of the change that had occurred without question.

Why is it that our practice varies? A hundred new countries have come into being since the end of World War II through a variety of means. United States practice is not consistent.

U.S. "recognition behavior" cannot be that we do not recognize revolutions, because we have and do recognize revolutions with great regularity, sometimes in fact before they are consolidated. It cannot be based upon whether a country is "viable." Some oppose Palestinian self-determination on the grounds that an independent Palestinian state would not be viable. If one were to go by that argument, there are probably 50 countries around the world that would not be considered viable if one really sat down to analyze size of population, ability to produce, and so on. Nor can it be based on whether a government has fulfilled its promises, the constant claim made by the United States to justify its opposition to the government of Nicaragua. Which political party in the United States would like its legitimacy determined on the basis of whether it has fulfilled

its campaign promises? In reality the basis for such decisions often seems arbitrary and quite ideological. The United States has supported many governments with unenviable records of state terrorism. The Sandinista movement brought about the downfall of the Somoza government which the U.S. had supported. Though the U.S. finally cut support for Somoza, it never really transferred support to the new leadership of Nicaragua. Could it be that we prefer governments to come to power that are beholden to the United States and its interests? Whether governments come to power through U.S.-style elections is not the key. Many Americans feel that an election or referendum is the hallmark of democracy. Yet we are acutely aware that we sometimes deny the validity of basically genuine elections and bestow legitimacy on some that are shams.

Probably nothing that could have happened in the 1984 election in El Salvador would have made the U.S. doubt that its preferred candidate won, no matter what the irregularities. By the same token, the U.S. was not prepared to accept the validity of the Sandinista victory in the 1984 Nicaraguan elections and the legitimacy that would be conferred regardless of the widespread reports that the elections were basically without fraud.

Two other examples may suffice. It has been noted that when the Zionist victory in Israel was legitimized the onus of terrorism was removed from Menachem Begin. Eventually he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for an agreement that some argue made the 1982 extension of Israeli violence and terrorism into Lebanon possible. He was accepted as the head of state. And in 1957 the Mau Mau began an anti-British terrorist campaign that led to civil anarchy. Jailed by the British as a Mau Mau terrorist, Jomo Kenyatta, after an electoral victory in 1963, won British recognition of Kenyan independence. He is now one of the heroes of African liberation.

The ability to give or withhold legitimacy in the struggle for self-determination and freedom represents incredible power. The United States exercises this power in withholding legitimacy from South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the African National Congress (ANC), and others. The question is, if legitimacy—with its grant of access to processes seeking peaceful change—with withheld, what methods for redress or for change remain?

Proposition Seven: State responsibility for its citizens when they are victims of terrorism is quite ambiguous.

What is the state's responsibility for a citizen's welfare? This would seem simple enough in a democratic society, but in fact the issue frequently involves a conflict of values. The conflict can be illustrated most obviously in hostage situations. Is the primary value for the state the pro-

tection of the individual or individuals that are held hostage, the protection of its own image, the protection of state secrecy, or the protection of social order? A government policy which says that it will *not* negotiate for a hostage says, in effect, that the hostage is expendable. In a sense, it has reduced the value of the life below the value placed on it by the hostage takers. It is saying that it will not be intimidated no matter what happens to individuals.

In other situations the choice may be between the value of the individuals involved and the protection of security secrets. For instance, some question remains about the Korean Air Lines tragedy which occurred in 1983, when Soviet pilots shot down KAL flight 007 after it flew into Soviet air space over Siberia. Did the United States' desire to protect its espionage or its technology result in a situation that put American lives at stake? How many citizens are expendable to protect state interests? Asked a different way, how many lives do you put at risk to rescue other lives? Many Americans experienced an emotional thrill when the Israeli rescue attempt at Entebbe succeeded. What if it had failed? That rescue did not establish a pattern for the success of future international rescue attempts. More often rescue attempts have turned into disasters. Note President Carter's attempt to rescue the embassy hostages in Iran (1980) and the attempt of the Egyptians to rescue a hijacked plane in Malta which cost 59 lives as compared with the two hostages who had been killed (1980). The question arises, how many lives are you willing to put on the line in order to save other lives?

There is an irony in the present situation. The Vice President's Task Force on Combatting Terrorism criticizes families of hostages concerned for their relatives who many unintentionally play into the hands of the terrorists by raising public issues, or who pressure the government for action that may be inappropriate. An Israeli ambassador, often cited as an expert on terrorism, goes further and asserts that public pressure on government by families of hostages can only be called a dereliction of civic duty. In other words, the individual is expendable to the concerns of the state.

Proposition Eight: State responsibility for the actions of its own citizens is also ambiguous.

This in effect is the other side of the coin. What is the responsibility of the state for the behavior of its citizens or of people who may be linked to it if they are involved in the commission of terrorist acts, whether at home or abroad? Simple logic might argue that if a government orders its agents to assassinate a political figure in another society, the government would be responsible. But how is it to be held accountable when that occurs? Inter-

national tribunals have neither the authority nor power to prosecute governments or their officials. In other words, are there international tribunals to do such? Acts of retribution such as the 1986 bombing of Libya, while satisfying domestic cries for vengeance, are something quite different from the establishment of accountability on the world scene.

How far, indeed, can public accountability be pushed? Popular Israeli and American public practice holds Yasir Arafat and the PLO responsible for every act of violence committed by a Palestinian, wherever that act is committed. We want to apply the same logic to Libya, North Korea, Iran and their leaders: Quadaffi, Kim Il Song and Khomeini. Would we accept the same logic that the President of the United States is therefore responsible for the acts of terrorism by the contras, which the U.S. has financed, in Nicaragua, or for every assassination attempt by CIA personnel or persons financed by the CIA such as Omega 7, the CIA-supported Cuban group that has reportedly carried out assassinations *in* the United States? Is the President of the United States responsible? Most Americans would consider the question ludicrous but have no hesitation to apply a different standard or logic to others. It is like applying economic models to terrorism: state-owned versus free enterprise. But we are playing ideological tricks with our value perspectives and our understanding of accountability. The Nuremberg Principles ensured that individuals were accountable for crimes even though obeying superior orders. Yet such principles are hard to apply.

When it actually comes to the question of extradition of persons who have created terrorist offenses, United States policy is inconsistent. The U.S. responds critically, sometimes angrily, when other governments refuse to extradite individuals known or alleged to have committed terrorist acts against Americans. Congress recently passed a law that says a crime committed against an American anywhere in the world is subject to prosecution under American law, a law difficult to enforce without access to the alleged criminals unless they are captured, kidnapped, or extradited. While perhaps understandable in intent, it carries with it the implication that other criminal systems are inferior. Yet the United States government also often refuses to extradite persons to other countries. Long considering the country a refuge for political dissenters from other countries, U.S. courts have tended to refuse to extradite persons accused in other countries of crime or terrorism if it is established that their actions were politically motivated. The British would like the U.S. to extradite Irish terrorists who find refuge and support from Irish compatriots in the U.S., but U.S. officials refuse on political grounds. Thus we witness selective indignation and inconsistent practice.

Proposition Nine: Present United States response to terrorism is a conscious policy shift.

Current United States response to terrorism is a result, not so much of terrorist events in recent years (no matter how spectacular), but of a conscious policy shift publicly enunciated at the outset of the Reagan Administration by Secretary of State Alexander Haig in 1981. Haig announced that antiterrorism was to replace human rights as the prime focus in American foreign policy. Can a negative policy—whether it is anti-communism, antiterrorism, or anti-anything else—really provide the basis for effective U.S. foreign policy? The antiterrorism policy stimulated and facilitated and sometimes even necessitated public behavior that is counterproductive to our country's best interests.

A rehearsal of the recent Iran-contra affair is not necessary to make the point. The shift from the human rights emphasis of the Carter Administration to antiterrorism was, in reality, a reflection of the growing militarization of United States foreign policy. The Reagan doctrine has been analyzed as containment plus roll-back of Soviet influence. Since the Soviet Union is allegedly behind the international terrorist conspiracy, if the United States either openly or covertly assists countries resisting terrorism as the U.S. defines it, the country will be helping to check Soviet influence and expansionism. By such a strategy the U.S. could keep its troops out of combat but still assure the final triumph of U.S. values. Our commitment to democracy would, as one official put it, enable us to be on the side of history. We did not come into antiterrorist activity because of the events of terrorism. We came into it by a conscious decision to shift our foreign policy emphasis and to provide justification for that shift.

Proposition Ten: The United States has both supported and practiced its own forms of terrorism.

Despite our posturing, rhetoric, and stance as a nation against international terrorism, a case can be made that the United States has both supported and practiced its own forms of terrorism. Four patterns should be noted.

First, the United States has supported, directly and indirectly, the violent practices of its friends, the state terrorist regimes that have systematically brutalized their own people. The recent record has included Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Haiti, the Philippines, South Korea, El Salvador, Guatemala, and South Africa, among others. The violence in these states is unquestioned. The political/public relations question is one of interpretation: is the violence terrorist or antiterrorist? A Presbyterian missionary, Jaime

Wright, has participated in the most extensive documentation from Brazilian government sources of one government's systematic use of torture over a ten-year period in the book *Torture in Brazil*.

Second, the United States has been a major supplier in the international arms trade, including sales to countries that are violators of the human rights of their own people. In a 30-year period the United States was responsible for about \$107 billion in transfers of armaments to friendly governments and another \$121 billion in sales of arms to those governments. The U.S. has helped to train the military police in at least 14 countries, with between 4,000 to 5,000 military police trained for each of those governments. More than 5,000 of them were trained and used by President Anastasio Somoza Debayle in Nicaragua and some of them are now active with the contras. Robert McNamara once argued that U.S. training for Latin American military systems would be a democratizing force. Subsequent events do not appear to have borne out that expectation. Numerous military coups have since occurred in Latin American countries. People trained by the United States have helped to turn democracies into military-oriented structures.

Third, United States intelligence agencies have carried out activities that clearly violate international law and the sovereignty of other countries. The contras have been assisted, even directed, by the CIA. A manual on assassination was prepared for use in Central America. The CIA supports the movement of Jonas Savimbi in Angola to overthrow the government there. It is paradoxical that we should be supporting a person who had been considered a Maoist. Now the United States and South Africa cooperate and conspire to overthrow the Angolan government. In 1954, the CIA helped overthrow President Jacobo Arbenz Guzman in Guatemala. In addition to the effort to overthrow Fidel Castro in Cuba by supporting an invasion at the Bay of Pigs in 1961, the CIA is reported to have arranged for six attempts on his life in a two-year period. Even the Mafia was enlisted to help do that—a paradox for democracy. The CIA helped engineer the 1953 ouster of Premier Mohammed Mossaddeq in Iran, consolidating the power of Mohammed Reza Shah. It supported the 1973 military coup resulting in the assassination of President Salvador Allende Gossens in Chile and the establishment of the continuing dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte. As Americans we either want to deny these realities or find excuses that justify them.

Finally, the United States has occasionally used its allies or clients as surrogates, either direct or indirect, in carrying out activities in which we do not want direct involvement. Israel and Argentina have provided such services. A 1985 study on antiterrorism policy produced by the Congressional Research Service lays out the pros and cons for the use of surrogate forces recruited among the locals for antiterrorist or terrorist purposes. The

study states:

This would allow the United States to disassociate itself from the actual operation. It would make possible the use of tactics and methods that would be unacceptable if used by U.S. military. It would eliminate the danger of U.S. personnel being hurt or taken prisoner. It would minimize chances of retaliation of terrorists against the United States. (Report No. 85-832f, July 10, 1985, *Congressional Research Service*, p. 5.)

One might add the phrase contributed by a key Iran-contra figure: such practice provides the President "plausible deniability." Most baldly stated, we can stimulate acts of terrorism and violence and not be held accountable.

Proposition Eleven: The threat that terrorism raises to democratic societies depends partly on what is meant by terrorism and on whether the source of terrorism is internal or external in its origin.

Part of the official rhetoric is that international terrorism is directed toward democratic societies. What is the danger? Is it likely that a single act of terrorism could destroy a constitutional democracy?

One of the characteristics of a democratic society such as the United States is that our institutions are designed to provide for the orderly transfer of government, even in the event of the assassination of the President or, in large part, of the Cabinet. Therefore a single act is not apt to destroy a democracy although it may change its direction. United States society absorbs tremendous violence. The October 1983 car-bombing of an American marines barracks in Lebanon, with its 241 deaths—the most tragic and costly "terrorist" event that has impacted Americans—can be put in perspective with the 56,000 killed in America's annual automobile slaughter or the 20,000 murders committed each year with hand-guns that we are reluctant to control. Internationally, from 1981 to 1985 an average of 15 Americans each year were killed by terrorists, if the marine casualties are classified differently. Again, this does not make it right, but it does lend perspective to an emotional issue.

The primary danger of terrorism for a democratic society comes less from specific acts of terrorism than from their potential manipulation by demagogic forces within a society to undermine its value patterns and to accept one of the premises of terrorism, that the end justifies the means. Single or multiple acts of terrorism can therefore, in fact, shake fragile democracies already unsure of their values or further unsettle societies already divided in conflict. Terrorism and violence can pressure those societies to forgo their own basic values. For example, the multiple patterns of

communal violence and terrorism in India and Sri Lanka make progress toward the permanent realization of democracy in those countries tenuous.

One of the normal characteristics of nation-state systems is that the state holds a monopoly on police and military power, even though these powers may be distributed through various levels of government. A state makes itself vulnerable when it tolerates the privatization of violence. As revealed in the Iran-contra affair, the Reagan Administration permitted and encouraged a secret government to operate, engaging in diplomatic, economic, and military activity. In other words, when the state deliberately surrenders its monopoly on the exercise and control of power and violence within the society, it endangers itself. Democracy has seldom had a chance in societies where private armies, militia, or paramilitary groups operate freely. Lebanon and the Philippines are but two illustrations of the difficulties attendant upon such internal divisiveness.

Two forms of social vulnerability exist irrespective of political structures. First, the technological sophistication that enables the functioning of an industrialized society makes it vulnerable to technological crippling. The technological infrastructure of modern industrialized societies is highly integrated and concentrated, especially in communications, electric power, certain forms of transportation, and water purity and control. These systems are vulnerable to sabotage. Such attacks, however, are directed at property and structure, not individuals, although the full impact will be borne by the people. The accidental blackout of the Northeastern United States in 1965 is illustrative of what could happen if technological systems were targeted. Such events could paralyze a whole society. Israel's surprise attack in 1981 on the Iraqi nuclear reactor is probably the most spectacular attempt to destroy social and economic infrastructure.

Second, the threat of nuclear holocaust is a reality, not only for democratic countries, but for all societies. The root word of deterrence is *terror*. The technological revolution in weaponry has made every society vulnerable to nuclear terrorism. The United States and the Soviet Union place not only their respective societies hostage under terrorism but also the rest of the world, because a nuclear war between the two superpowers would, by its very nature, involve every other society. As the Theological Commission of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America put it in 1980:

In the nuclear age, deterrence is nothing more than a massive hostage system with whole populations compelled to live under the constant threat of genocide.

Two other dimensions of nuclear terrorism exist. One is the possibility of a terrorist group getting possession of a nuclear weapon and either using it or threatening its use. The other is the possibility of an attack on a nuclear energy installation that would not only knock out the energy supply but

also create an environmental catastrophe similar to the contamination that occurred in the Chernobyl disaster. Vulnerability does exist because of our technological development.

Proposition Twelve: Efforts have been made in the United States to use terrorism as an excuse, or rationale, for two things: to extend the executive powers of the government and to curb civil liberties.

The first effort was reflected in a bill (S.2335) introduced in 1986 by Senators Robert Dole (R., Kansas) and Jeremiah Denton (R., Alabama) which in effect would have given a blanket authorization to the President of the United States to define terrorism in any way the President chose and to respond accordingly. While the bill died, the fact is that military force has been used in retaliatory strikes, such as that on Libya, bypassing the War Powers Act.

The second element has been seen in specific legislative efforts and in the report of the Vice President's Task Force on Terrorism. Under consideration have been limitations on the Freedom of Information Act on the grounds that information might be available to terrorists, restrictions on travel and association, restrictions on the freedom of press, and the denial of visas to journalist and intellectuals who may be in sympathy with movements to which we are opposed. Some legislative proposals have even suggested that people who have any sympathy or any dealings with groups that are arbitrarily identified as terrorist might themselves be subject to criminal prosecution. In response to Congressional legislation—the Grassley Bill (1987)—the State Department closed the Palestine Information Office in Washington, D.C., and the Justice Department has sought to close the PLO Office related to the United Nations in New York City. Such action not only represents a repressive approach to problem solving but also arguably violates the First Amendment rights of Americans in the one case and international treaty commitments in the other. The implications of these efforts should be of deep concern to American people.

Proposition Thirteen: Myths about terrorism abound in the literature and media; they blur our understanding of the problems and inhibit the search for solutions that might be just and successful.

Myth #1: Terrorism depends upon the media for impact. The underlying assumption is that terrorists are using terrorist events either to gain media attention to a group or cause, affording an opportunity to interpret issues or



A member of an Ethiopian farmers association guards crops against vandals

complaints, or to use the media as a vehicle for spreading fear, uncertainty, and frustration. Certainly there is validity to this view in some situations. The media often does, and can at will, turn events into spectacles. But the argument has its limitations. First, many more acts of terrorism go unmentioned in the media than are fully covered. The media can be and is selective in its coverage. As often as not, it seems that there is a conspiracy of silence on some situations that, by most popular definitions, would be considered terrorist, for instance, attacks by South African forces in neighboring countries.

Second, media coverage of even spectacular events is more often apt to focus on the drama itself and the human interest aspects (e.g., interviews with relatives of victims and the expert/insider/analyst) than upon the underlying factors that have set the context for the event. It could be argued that the average American knows little more about the Palestinian people and their circumstances after an event involving Palestinians than was known before. The media did make a 444-day spectacle of the Iranian hostage situation. Nightly attention focused on Tehran, on Washington, or on someone's family. It got big billing: America held hostage.

On the other hand, little attention was given in the media during the long captivity of Benjamin Weir, and little is given on a regular basis for those still held hostage. No interview has been held with a representative of the hostage holders. Presbyterian officials had to hold strategy sessions to figure out how to get to the media concerning Ben Weir, but when he was finally released the Administration sought to orchestrate the event.

Because getting attention is only one of numerous motivating factors, it is not likely that terrorism would end if the media were censored or practiced self-censorship. The argument that terrorism depends on the media is at the very least based on insufficient analysis.

Myth #2: A massive international terrorist conspiracy exists. Undoubtedly conspiracies exist, but the conspiracy-thesis approach tends to be more popular than useful. Easy to foster, it needs no verification only a voracious gullibility on the part of a public seeking easy analyses and answers.

A convenient listing of the "international conspirators" is readily available. Apropos earlier comments, they are identified as states. But the pool is fluid: the list has included Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Libya, Cuba, North Korea, Nicaragua, and the Palestine Liberation Organization. In governmental statements countries are on or off the list for obvious reasons of political expediency. Syria was taken off when it helped negotiate the TWA hijacking resolution in 1985. Iraq came off the list when the U.S. tilted toward it in its conflict with Iran. Most of these countries do oppose United States policies. So do countless others. But the reverse is also true. U.S. policies toward those countries have been detrimental to their interests. It can probably be established that people from these countries communicate with and may even occasionally meet with each other and that they deal in arms. But there is an open arms market, and the U.S. is the main merchant. At least one account has surfaced that the United States purchased a large supply of arms from the Soviet Union to be transferred to the contras. Does that make the U.S. part of the "conspiracy"? The reality of the arms trade seems to be that if you cannot get what you need from one source,

you will try someplace else. The interest and concerns of these countries differ widely. Cooperation in matters based on self-interest does not constitute conspiracy.

Myth #3: The Soviet Union is behind this international terrorist conspiracy. The U.S. government has consistently presented this position in an effort to justify continuing hostility toward the Soviet Union. Presentations by U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Shultz, will assert the Soviet role but will almost always include the explicit statement that no evidence of Soviet involvement in terrorist activity exists. The continued innuendo—without proof from the most sophisticated intelligence agencies in the world—serves only the purpose of perpetuating U.S.–Soviet tension. It hinders cooperation in preventing certain forms of terrorism that are of concern to all including the Soviet Union. It diverts energies from more adequate causal analysis. But it is the U.S. way of saying that it is the Soviet Union that has set about to undermine democracy around the world through terrorism.

Myth #4: The U.S. is the prime target of terrorism. One of the leading scholars of terrorism, Brian Jenkins of the Rand Institute, suggests this is “true” by virtue of definition: international terrorism is when an American is involved. And, naturally, if you define it that way then the United States is the prime target of terrorist activity.

Myth #5: Negotiations do not work. The fact is that negotiations do work. Deals and compromises are made all the time, depending on the intended purpose. Negotiations are argued to be a sign of weakness, of giving in to terrorist demands, rather than as a method for problem resolution. Having established this concept as the operating principle, it then becomes difficult for the government to have any visible flexibility. Therefore this remains part of the U.S. rhetoric: You do not negotiate because negotiations do not work.

Myth #6: Terrorism does not work! While platitudinous if intended to discourage would-be terrorists, there is ample evidence that terrorism does work. But spelling out this reality requires an analytical approach that must probe the intention, tactic, or goals involved. Only then can it be evaluated. Zionist terrorism in the 1940's did work if it was intended to frighten Palestinians into leaving their homes. The 1985 hijacking of the TWA airliner did work if one considers the goal to be the Israeli release of Lebanese held in Israel. One could argue that even the tragic Munich event in 1972 worked if the goal was to attract attention to the Palestinians' problem. Terrorist behavior can involve a whole range of purposes. Seen, however,

from a different perspective, occasionally costs can be disproportionate to gains, even counterproductive. Palestinians now have recognized status through the PLO—but the Munich stigma remains. Terrorism can be a meaningful attention-getter. It can also, in certain situations, be a successful tactical instrument in a small group's political strategy.

Proposition Fourteen: The United States has failed to deal with the underlying causes of terrorism as they have developed in major conflict situations.

The factors that give rise to terrorism and that encourage its perpetuation are not adequately addressed by our government. The U.S. tends to focus on the events themselves rather than the causes behind them. Therefore we stick to and reinforce failed policies in the Middle East and South Africa and Central America. With all of the rhetoric about justice for the Palestinians, the United States has yet to come up with a plan that would actually mean justice for the Palestinians. Virtually every U.S. "peace initiative" in the Middle East begins with pre-conditions that preclude the achievement of any credible sense of justice for the Palestinian people. The rejectionist stance of the U.S.—parallel to and reinforced by that of Israel—denies validity to Palestinian claims for redress and justice: No PLO! No statehood! No negotiations! Only capitulation and oblivion. This proposes no alternate choices or methods.

With all of what our government has said about the evils of apartheid, the United States still defers to the South African government, assuming it will change its character without real pressure from within or without. The policies of the U.S. government currently defined as "constructive engagement"—a continuation of previous executive policies by a different name—amount to expressed sympathies for black Africans but unwavering support for the government that perpetuates the blasphemies of apartheid policy. Violence used by the government is excused or tolerated as necessary for order. With nonviolent methods of change foreclosed, the occasional acts of violence by the African National Congress are used as justification for basic policy.

In Central America, still claiming the mantle of Manifest Destiny and asserting the presumptions of the Monroe Doctrine, the United States pursues policies designed to insure violence—whether it is the support of rightist military dictatorships or of counter-revolutionary forces (such as in Nicaragua) that themselves use terrorism to obtain objectives. The U.S. bases its positions on the analysis that communism is the danger—not poverty, injustice, or fascism.

Proposition Fifteen: Christian behavior and practice must be based on faith, not fear.

Christians, individually and corporately, should be seeking to build societies that are characterized by justice, freedom, and compassionate order. Terrorism is incompatible with these values. Violence and terrorism lead to fear, and fear destroys community. Therefore the church must address the underlying causes of the fear, alienation, estrangement, injustice, deprivation, repression, and oppression that occur in our own society as in others. Those dynamics lead to both individual and corporate acts of desperation and frustration. The Presbyterian Church has been trying to address underlying causes in its policies on the Middle East, Southern Africa, and Central America. This has meant that the church has frequently criticized U.S. policies and called for change. As in our evaluation of just-war situations,



A Palestinian child's drawing

the church must be concerned about the justice of the cause of the alienated. It must oppose the hypocrisy of policy and practice that condemns and perpetuates violence. It must seek to assure that our structures, our media, our interests do not foreclose the option of just conduct on the part of those seeking change.

The primary responsibility of the church in the United States in responding to the problem of terrorism or, for that matter, any other international problem is first and foremost to address the policy and practice of the United States government itself. This is our initial concern: both how our government reacts to the terrorism of others and how it uses or supports violence for its own purposes. For those who want to argue that we should be more concerned about the behavior of others there is a biblical reference: we are first responsible for the beam that is in our own eye before we can see clearly enough to go after the mote in the other's eye.

Churches need to develop flexible strategies to enable response to six specific challenges, each of which creates value conflicts.

First, the church must be able to cope with situations where the church, or individuals for whom the church has direct responsibility, become the victims or targets of terrorist activity. Neither the church nor its workers are immune from victimization, even by people it has tried to assist. Actions by an individual, group or state can be as devastating to the church as to any other segment of society:

- Ben Weir, missionary worker in Beirut for many years, is held hostage for eighteen months. Others related to church-assisted schools remain in captivity.
- Catholic sisters and lay workers are murdered in El Salvador by military personnel.
- Archbishop Oscar Romero is gunned down at the altar by death squads in San Salvador.
- a missionary is kidnapped and held for ransom in the Philippines.
- a missionary compound is overrun in the Sudan and its personnel held by warring forces.
- the Sidon Boys School is devastated by Israeli forces as they ravage South Lebanon.

These situations may be even more complicated for the church than for governments. Like others, the church does not want to endanger the lives of others by its responses. The church does not have military forces at its disposal. Its international mission could be compromised if it asked for or received unrequested military support. Withdrawal of missionaries under

threat could mean the surrender and sacrifice of years of work. It could mean that the church has proven that it was subject to the dictates of the government in cases where the government requested withdrawal. It could be interpreted to mean that the church was running from danger, unwilling to stand with those whom it has sought to serve when they are in jeopardy. Circumstances could mean that others suffer because of overarching concerns. The allegation that Ben Weir was exchanged for military transfers to Iran means, if accurate, that others died because of that transfer.

But as noted earlier, the media gave little sustained attention to the Ben Weir hostage situation until well into the time when the efforts of church and family demanded attention. Church officials and the Weir family concluded that the government was making little effort to gain his release. The campaign for his release caused consternation at the State Department, even leading to a request that the pressure be called off. Government innuendo was that it was inappropriate for the government to be pressured. Ironically, having sought to keep the situation low-key, the Administration tried to control and benefit from his release. The later revelations about Iran-contra dealings were a surprise to all.

There are other challenges with value-laden implications.

What are the appropriate options for the church to follow in relations with the government, in seeking help if the government is in a position to help where other channels are not available, in pressuring if the government appears to be an obstacle in the resolution of the problem?

What should the church/Christian's response be when religion is seen as the driving force behind the patterns of terrorism? While something like Islamic radicalism might come immediately to mind for Americans conditioned to view the Arab-Muslim world with anxiety, militant Zionism has its advocates of violence, as do Sikhs and Hindus, and fundamentalist Christians have their militarists. But this issue has greater domestic implications as recent decades have seen the growth of paramilitary organizations with their own religious ideologies in the United States. Many groups that combine racist, nationalist, and exclusive Christian assumptions with military types of organization, e.g., the Christian Patriots Defense League and the Christian Identity Movement, practice intimidation and have used violence against perceived enemies. Other religious passions have led to bombings of abortion clinics in the U.S.

What should the church's response be to legislative efforts or curbs on activities which, if imposed, would raise questions of church/state separation and endanger religious liberty?

How does the church pastorally minister to persons whose security and identity seem to be affirmed only in the process of denigrating or intimidating others?

Finally, what role does the church have in the quest for peace with justice in those areas of the world where violence/terrorism stems from systems/structural patterns involving injustice and oppression? In the occupied territories of the Middle East, Palestinians are systematically intimidated and in recent months subjected to almost continuous brutality for seeking their rights. In South Africa, the apartheid system consigns millions of Africans to perpetual inferiority and cruel repression, while the passionate Christian defenders of apartheid are named apostate by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches? In specific country situations in Latin America and Asia, Chile, Brazil, El Salvador, the Philippines, or Korea, repression has been systematized with the Christian community frequently being identified with the victims.

In response to these developing conflict situations, the General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have, over the years, developed basic policies. In the Palestinian conflict, the church has consistently called for and affirmed twin goals: the right of Israel to live in peace and the rights of Palestinians to self-determination with statehood and leaders of their own choosing. In Southern Africa, the church has condemned apartheid as a heresy, calling for its abolition; supported blacks and black organizations in their quest for equality, liberty, and justice; opposed the illegal occupation of Namibia and called for U.S. economic sanctions and a boycott of military and related sales. In a multitude of other country-specific situations, the church has spoken on behalf of the oppressed and in favor of the emergence of democratic institutions, and has cried out against U.S. government support for regimes that live by terror.

Only as we seek to understand the role of violence in society, the processes of social change and legitimacy, and only as we seek to resolve the systemic patterns of injustice that exist around the world, will we learn whether the spirit of forgiveness can overcome the legacy of hatred and fear that is being bred in new generations. When there is no policy that holds hope for an end to the terror of oppression, terrorism will always be the policy of last resort.



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