

separated two territories. Soviet imperialism, the Belgians argued, was no less imperial because land connected Russia and its subject territories. Current reasoning in the Soviet camp apparently agrees: There is salt water, after all, between Cuba and Angola. And, like the Belgians, the Soviets have evidently concluded that if imperialism is all right in one place, it is all right in another.

Of course Cuba, the Soviet Union, and their supporters do not concede that Cuban intervention is imperialistic. It was, after all, directed against the West and specifically the United States. That, for many "Third World" regimes, and for the liberal-left in the West, is excuse enough. And that is the really disturbing aspect of Syrian intervention in Lebanon.

At the very least we must be willing to agree that intervention is not a simple matter to be settled by some rule like "keeping out of other people's quarrels." The kind of people we are determines whom we regard as others, and in this world it is hard to separate the agonies and conflicts of others from our own.

EXCURSUS III

Peter L. Berger on Elements of Terrorism

It may be helpful to start with a definition: Terrorism is the politically motivated use of violence in order to spread fear. Both the motive and the goal are important to understand the phenomenon. The motive distinguishes terrorism from ordinary crime, the goal from acts of violence of a more functional character (such as, for instance, sabotage). Terrorism is not necessarily directed against civilian populations. Thus Che Guevara, during his Bolivian campaign, deliberately decided against this option, limiting his attacks to military and police forces (a decision, by the way, that probably had nothing to do with his eventual defeat). One of the most alarming aspects of the recent rise of terrorism in Western countries is its increasingly indiscriminate choice of civilian targets.

Terrorism is as old as human history. The peculiarity of modern terrorism is due to the peculiar vulnerability of societies that are *both* technologically sophisticated *and* humane (at least relatively humane) in their methods of law enforcement. Both qualities are essential if one is to understand what is now going on. A modern urban society, with its enormously complicated and interdependent institutions of life support, is peculiarly vulnerable to terroristic disruptions: Terrorism against fragile means of transportation is a promising strategy for exactly the same reason that strikes against municipal services are so effective. But, for example, the Soviet Union is almost as

technologically sophisticated (certainly its cities are) as Western countries, and yet there is no terrorism (just as there are no strikes). The reason, of course, is that the repressive apparatus of the Soviet Government is unhampered by humane scruples, at least as compared with Western societies, in which such scruples are not only a fact of public opinion, but in which there is an *institutionalization of scruples* in the law enforcement system.

The conventional wisdom is that terrorism is always rooted in oppression or misery, and sometimes it undoubtedly is. But human beings feel oppressed or miserable for very different reasons. My earliest memories with a political context are of the 1930's, when the Nazi underground conducted a campaign of terror against the Austrian Government: The Nazis felt oppressed because Austria was not a part of the Third Reich. Terrorists will invariably cite oppression or misery as legitimating their acts; one will have to decide case by case whether such legitimation bears moral scrutiny; an important element of such scrutiny, I should think, is the question of whether violence is the only available option.

Regardless of their cause, however, terrorists tend to resemble each other. To be sure, there are situations where individuals become terrorists against their natural inclinations. I don't think there are many such individuals in the terrorist groups making headlines today. Rather, most of them, by the evidence, are individuals for whom terrorism provides profound personal satisfactions. These satisfactions can be specified: a sense of fulfillment through total dedication to a political faith, to the point of self-sacrifice; a sense of power through inflicting fear, pain, and death upon other human beings; sheer adventure. These psychological components are probably present in different mixtures in different individuals. Only those in whom the second component is dominant have good employment prospects in the event of a terroristic movement succeeding in taking over a national government. They become the troops of the new repressive apparatus. The others are likely to become quickly disillusioned—and bored.

In the contemporary world democracies are more vulnerable to terrorism than dictatorships. This is due, however, to their ineffectiveness in developing instruments of internal self-defense, *not* to the democratic character of the political institutions. There have been very harsh democracies in history—and very ineffective despotisms. Contemporary dictatorships also vary in their success in dealing with terrorism. Spain, for instance, is a dictatorship that has been increasingly ineffective in coping with terrorism, probably in the exact degree to which the regime has relaxed its repressive apparatus (the same, very interestingly, may be true of Yugoslavia). There is only one contemporary form of government that seems immune to terrorism, and that is Soviet-type totalitarianism.

Here, as in so many other questions, the distinction between dictatorship and totalitarianism is crucial: The two are utterly different political phenomena. The totalitarian government effectively controls terrorism *because it controls everything else*. What is more, even if once in a while the pervasive control system slips up, this is a containable failure, because the government *also* controls all communications. A terrorist act derives most of its political utility from the publicity surrounding it; conversely, such an act is almost completely meaningless if no one knows about it. Today the only genuinely totalitarian regimes are in the Soviet Union and its satellites (China, in all likelihood, cannot be characterized as totalitarian in the same way—it is, very likely, not sufficiently centralized to be). Outside the Soviet orbit dictatorships differ greatly in their ability to control terrorism; on the whole, though, they are more effective than democracies.

Aside from a totalitarian system, what methods have worked against urban terrorism? The answer is short and depressing. Counterterror has worked, at least in some places. Brazil and Chile are cases in point, and Argentina may soon provide another case. Counterterror becomes effective when the organs of repression operate as ruthlessly as the terrorists, in a zone free of legal inhibitions and the restraints of public opinion. Counterterror, like terrorism, uses spectacular acts of violence to produce fear: random assassination, the taking and execution of hostages, violence of various kinds inflicted on the families of putative opponents, a policy either of taking no prisoners or of torturing prisoners. These methods, as the Brazilian case shows clearly, are always threatened by an independent judiciary and/or an even residually free press. This is why they are not likely to succeed under democratic conditions. To be sure, some methods other than counterterror have shown some results, such as the new security provisions for air travel. Comparable techniques of self-defense may be possible in other areas. It is unlikely, though, that these, by themselves, will end terrorism.

As to whether capital punishment is an effective deterrent against terrorism, I think the answer is a flat No. The imposition of the death penalty for terrorists, *while all other facets of a Western legal system remain in force*, is likely to make things even worse. Not only would it dramatize condemned terrorists as heroic martyrs, but it would encourage further terroristic acts (notably the taking of hostages) intended to free terrorists who are under a sentence of execution. These arguments carried the day in a recent debate over this matter in the British House of Commons—rightly so, I believe (which, incidentally, is a conclusion quite independent of one's feelings about capital punishment as such—that is, independent of one's moral or humanitarian ideas about the death penalty).

It may seem then that we face a stark alternative between living with terrorism or accepting counterterror. I hope that is not the case. I hope that techniques of self-defense, comparable to those that have so effectively reduced terrorism in the air, notably hijackings, will be developed. Such techniques leave intact our Western values on the limits of government repression. In addition to these, there may be ways of making the legal system more effective without making it less humane (the same possibility pertains to ordinary crime, especially in this country). The solidification of public opinion against terrorists of all political colorations will also be helpful; this process, it seems, is well under way. Also, there is an element of fashion in this as in most other human activities.

Nevertheless, given the character of modern society, it is more likely than not that terrorism will be a recurring phenomenon. If so, the following thought is worth holding on to: Even in the totalitarian state terrorism does not really end. What ends is, so to speak, free enterprise terrorism; the State acquires a monopoly in the field—and exercises it with a vengeance. Given the imperfections of history, terrorism by individuals acting occasionally may be preferable to terrorism as a continuous government activity. The question, I suppose, is one of degree. If a certain level of insecurity is reached, most people will opt for *any* political measures that promise security. Quite apart from other dangers facing it, Western democracy (and with it just about everything we mean by decency in government) is gravely threatened by the possibility that this level may be reached in our lifetime.

EXCURSUS III

*James Finn on
Peace Against the U.S.*

There is no peace movement in the United States today. But then there wasn't a peace movement in the late sixties when the term was accepted and promoted as legal tender by most of the media in this country. The term—always a misnomer—was used then to encompass all the individuals, groups, and organizations that were opposed to the war in Vietnam. It did not clarify the situation to say that the end of the war would bring peace, and therefore all the protesters were joined in a common enterprise. On the basis of that proposition Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon belonged to the "peace movement," for they too wanted an end to the war. The terms on which the war was brought to an end, the cost of the "peace" achieved, were all important then, and they remain important now. The "peace movement" was actually a protest