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What Should Be Done About Terrorism

TERRORISM

How the West Can Win

Edited by Benjamin Netanyahu

Farrar Straus Giroux. 254 pp. \$18.95

By Robert McFarlane

THERE IS THE DANGER, frighteningly obvious to all of us, that terrorists will eventually possess nuclear weapons," writes historian Paul Johnson, early in this volume. "But a more immediate risk is that they will secure—perhaps already have secured—the devastating modern equipment now moving into the inventories of official armies: high-speed machine pistols firing 1200 rounds a minute and almost soundless, lightweight grenade launchers and mortars, squirtless flamethrowers, short-range portable anti-tank weapons, shoulder-fired rocket launchers, and most alarming of all, the new generation of portable (air defense) missiles which have long ranges, are highly accurate, and can be carried and fired by one man or woman."

Johnson is a thoughtful man not given to hyperbole. Yet he has a way of concentrating one's mind, in this case on the point that we in the West don't have forever to counter the problem of terrorism. His voice is the most urgent among those included in this excellent compendium of speeches and remarks delivered to a 1984 conference on terrorism, held in Washington. The meeting was sponsored by the Jonathan Institute, an organization named for Jonathan Netanyahu, the Israeli lieutenant colonel who led and died heroically in the Entebbe raid.

His brother, Israeli U.N. Ambassador Benjamin Netanyahu has assembled and edited the results of that conference, including the texts of talks by Secretary of State George Shultz, former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Jeane Kirkpatrick, journalist Claire Sterling, FBI Director William Webster and a distinguished and experienced group of international experts who took part in the Conference. *Terrorism: How the West Can Win* is the best assessment we have of what the west knows about international terrorism and how to cope with it. The book is also clear in its expression of confidence that the west can defeat terrorism.

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The opening chapters, the first written by Netanyahu himself, define terrorism ("the deliberate and systematic murder, maiming and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear for political ends"), explain

why it is happening now, and why the West is particularly vulnerable.

Much evidence is marshalled to make the connection between the Soviet Union and today's terrorism. Several contributors, among them Michael Ledeen, from Georgetown's Center for Strategic and International Studies, and Arnaud de Borchgrave, now editor of *The Washington Times*, make the case that the Soviets encourage terrorism by surrogate states. This affords them protection from direct accountability and the risk of confrontation with the United States.

Small states choose terrorism for different reasons. They are able to kill one person and traumatize millions of others in countries they could never challenge using conventional military forces. Terrorism is especially appealing to small states that aspire to destroy the existing order and replace it with their own, be it the demented theocracy espoused by Iran or the misguided pan-Arab leadership pursued by Qaddafi. Through terrorism, these countries may be able to avoid retaliation and by playing upon the vulnerabilities of Judeo-Christian societies, achieve the withdrawal of Western nations from the Middle East.

When one considers the implications for Western interests of being pushed out of the Middle East (and the corollary Soviet interest in having us leave) the stakes involved in international terrorism become much more clear.

The book's most penetrating chapters are devoted to making clear what terrorism is not; that is, to dispelling the well-meaning but misguided notion among some westerners that terrorists are pursuing a legitimate end and are the victims of social injustice, racial or religious intolerance or some flaw in Western policy. Writing in the prose-equivalent of white-knuckled restraint, Ambassador Netanyahu points out that PLO violence pre-

dated the loss of the West Bank and Gaza in the 1967 war and that violence is not an expression of frustration over the pace of negotiation toward peace but a manifest disruption of any hope for such talks. (And to those who invest Colonel Qaddafi with great sympathy for the PLO, let us remember that when, in 1982, Yasir Arafat was looking for a home for Palestinian fighters leaving Beirut, the colonel suggested that they all commit suicide.)

In short there is nothing that justifies an attempt by a self-appointed elite to impose its will by the purposeful murder of innocent women and children. Nor should we lapse into the flaccid notion that self-designated underdogs have no recourse except to terrorism. The French resistance did not resort to killing innocents when dealing with a superior Nazi force in World War II.

"The root cause of terrorism lies not in grievances but in a disposition toward unbridled violence. This can be traced to a world view which asserts that certain ideological and religious goals justify, indeed demand, the shedding of all moral inhibitions. In this context, the observation that the root cause of terrorism is terrorists is more than a tautology," writes Netanyahu in the book's concluding chapter.

Terrorism includes a long treatment of the history of politically and religiously motivated terror in Islam. However, this section seems to imply that all Muslims espouse terrorism or oppose the peaceful resolution of disputes. One contributor to the book—but only one among 30—points out this is not the case.

THE INTERNATIONAL dimensions of terrorism are particularly well developed by Ledeen. The blatant involvement of the Soviet Union and East bloc subordinates in training thousands of terrorists and overseeing their activities is exposed in accounts by defectors as well as the mountain of evidence uncovered in PLO camps in Beirut in 1982. The issue is not in doubt.

Continued

The question concerns whether and how the West will deal with this fact of life. Surely it is central to the credibility of any doctrine founded upon "realism, strength and dialogue." As surely as we are cowed into ignoring aggression out of the false notion that to criticize the Soviet Union will risk the possibility of reduced tensions, the Soviets (and surrogate terrorists throughout the

world) will have achieved their purpose.

The subject of "Terrorism and the Media" is treated well, in particular by the contribution of John O'Sullivan, deputy editor of *The Times* of London. In his chapter, called "Deny Them Publicity" O'Sullivan explains the three objectives of terrorists with regard to media: To sow fear (and thereby evoke pressure for concessions) through circulation of the credible threat of *future* violence; to seduce viewers/readers into sympathy to their cause; and to gain legitimacy (by appearing as politicians and not just criminals) through the standing established by interviews, published communiques and so forth. Lord Chalfont, a British elder statesman, accuses some journalists of being unable to distinguish between "an attack by a violent minority on the institutions of a democratic majority and the right of that state to defend itself." He states that journalists "must decide whether a news item or even a scoop is more important than defeating a menace to the fabric of free society." By way of prescription the contributors from the media urge such self-policing measures as refusal to broadcast interviews uncritically, objective comment on the violent backgrounds of terrorists being portrayed and simple boycotts of certain stories.

In the closing section, Ambassador Netanyahu proposes a number of tactics for countering terrorism. Reduced to their essentials, they are: Refuse to negotiate with terrorists and make clear that there will be costs associated with terrorism. The costs would include political measures (severing relations with terrorist states and closing their embassies), economic sanctions (through trade boycotts and embargoes as well as terminating air service by commercial air carriers) but also violent actions at appropriate times and places.

Netanyahu's confidence that ter-

rorism can be defeated is to be admired and perhaps expected of a citizen of such a young country as Israel. It is also to be expected of the United States. It remains to be seen whether Europe can admit the clear threat to our civilization posed by terrorism and muster the courage to stand against it. To date the European response has been characterized by greed and fear.

The steps required to succeed are not novel. They include passive measures—self-protection (better guards, barriers), better intelligence and sharing of it, better planning to use intelligence in coordination with law enforcement officials, etc. But it also requires the use of the kind of active measures proposed by Netanyahu, including controlled violence executed in a fashion compatible with our concept of civilized self-defense. We can improve our capabilities in this last category if we establish a truly clandestine force of specialists in counter-terrorism, and if we establish a pattern of cooperation—again clandestinely—with counterpart forces in other countries.

Any passive and active counter-terrorism strategy will by necessity involve the periodic use of force. Thus, it must be founded upon a solid base of popular support. The first step in building a viable policy for defeating terrorism is education of the American people. Americans have a short tolerance for violence unless they understand why it is necessary and that its use will, over time, be vindicated. This book is a seminal contribution to that education effort. Its thesis is best summarized in its closing passage: "The terrorist challenge must be answered. The choice is between a free society based on law and compassion and a rampant barbarism in the service of brute force and tyranny. Confusion and vacillation facilitated the rise of terrorism. Clarity and courage will ensure its defeat." ■