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# KGB 'Brutality' Saves Lives Our 'Humanity' Would Lose

By BENJAMIN ZYCHER

Having embarrassed itself by awarding its peace prize to Andrei Sakharov's tormentors, the Nobel committee has just been handed, free of charge, an opportunity to make amends next year. For an action already has been taken that will do more for peace and for the protection of innocent life than any other likely to emerge before the prize is awarded again.

And precisely who is so richly deserving of such early and loud acclamation? No, it is not President Reagan or Secretary of State George P. Schultz or promoters of charity rock concerts or any of the other usual suspects. It is instead, believe it or not, our peace-loving humanitarians at the KGB.

Skeptical? Well, consider the recent news report that the KGB last year "secured the release of three kidnaped Soviet diplomats in Beirut by castrating a relative of a radical Lebanese Shia Muslim leader, sending him the severed organs and then shooting the relative in the head."

The organs, according to the news story, "were sent to the Hezbollah leader with a warning that he would lose other relatives in a similar fashion if the three remaining Soviet diplomats (one had been murdered) were not immediately released. They were quickly freed."

Brutal, you say? Uncivilized? Inhumane? Then let us compare the implications of this type of response with that of the Reagan Administration. The "inhumanity" of the KGB limited the death toll among innocents to two; it also is a safe bet that terrorists will think twice, or more, before attacking or threatening Soviet diplomats or civilians again. In short, it is the "brutality" of the KGB that will minimize the loss of innocent life.

Consider on the other hand the utterly civilized policy of the Reagan Administration as it stands tall, attempts to build confidence in its unshakable resolve and avoids difficult choices at all costs. If there is one lesson easily available to all murderers, psychopaths, political fanatics and other assorted "freedom fighters," it is this: There is little penalty for murder and mayhem to be feared from the "hawkish" Reagan Administration.

This humane approach guarantees the continuing slaughter of more innocent Americans until such time as political pressures force the Administration to take actions other than such cheap and easy ones as the capture of the Egyptian airliner after the Achille Lauro episode. Indeed, it may be Vice President George Bush who will push for real military action as a means of protecting his right political flank.

This military action is likely to include bombardment of military targets by planes and battleships, which inevitably will result in the deaths of more innocent people. Such a policy ultimately will deter much terrorism if it is maintained, but in its confused quest to avoid charges of brutality the Administration has chosen a path certain to produce more corpses. Unlike that of the KGB, the humane approach maximizes the loss of innocent life.

In other words, it is impossible to prevent erosion of democratic and moral values once undemocratic groups decide to substitute weaponry for compromise as a means toward political ends. This is particularly true when the weapons are directed at innocent individuals, and is the direct result of pressures inherent in the political competition of democratic processes.

This political competition means that assaults on innocent life, which is the supreme moral value, will not go unanswered indefinitely. Responses cannot consist solely of defensive measures, because free societies cannot be on alert always and everywhere, and because the enhanced police power necessitated by defense itself erodes our democratic values.

Democratic societies, then, inevitably will respond either with brutality or with retaliation, causing more unintentional deaths among innocent people. Therefore, any course available to a democracy inexorably entails the sacrifice of some moral ideals. An attempt to prevent rather than minimize such erosion is doomed to failure, and in the end will do greater violence to our ideals—not to mention human beings—than is likely to be caused by cold realism at the outset.

In the strange world of terrorism—characterized by a refusal to adhere to even the most basic of rules—"civility" requires decidedly uncivilized responses. Paradoxically, the end justifies the means, and the use of appropriately "brutal" means is the only vehicle by which innocent life can be protected.

Reagan's attempt to establish a moral equivalence between the deliberate slaughter of the innocent and the tragic but unintentional killings that accompany military retaliation is preposterous, and is designed to provide an excuse for inaction.

Reagan is wrong also in his argument that retaliation should be directed surgically only at those directly responsible. Not only is that impossible, if reliance is placed on the more "humane" but cruder forms of retaliation, but it also means that retaliation almost never will be imposed in practice because of the difficulty of identifying and locating the actual killers. Non-response is hardly a useful tool for the protection of innocent lives.

Instead, protection of lives and morals requires only that retaliation be directed at parties who can influence the future behavior of terrorists. The closer they are to the terrorists, the better. Therefore, the Libyans and Syrians are appropriate targets, both morally and practically, regardless of the actual degree of their complicity.

In short, let those in Washington who are so concerned with fastidiousness consider the implications of their self-righteous "humanity." If the lives of their own children were at stake, would they prefer the civilized policy of the Administration or the "brutal" one of the KGB?

In any event, for the Nobel committee the opportunity for redemption has fallen into their laps, as it were, on a red platter. They cannot believe their good luck. As for me, well, awhile back I believed that the Administration, good conservatives all, would not prove even weaker than the Carterites, and I bet my hard-earned money accordingly. Life is not fair.

*Benjamin Zycher was a senior staff economist at the Council of Economic Advisers from 1981 to 1983. He now works in Los Angeles.*