

TERRORISM NEVER CHANGES

By Roosevelt Fitzgerald

It was a day like most days. Some people were asleep or at least in bed. I say it that way because my grandfather told me, when I was just a youngster, that: "Just because a person says goodnight, it doesn't mean they've gone to sleep." There were some who were out and about and still others who were involved in more solemn activities. The stillness of some and the revelry of others was shattered by the loud report of an explosion. There were some dead, some wounded and some grieving. The culprit or culprits got away.

There were utterances of outrage. A clamor that something should be done about such acts of terrorism seemed unnecessary. The authorities carried out their investigations and everyone on the planet, with the possible exception of yak herders, knew the source of the destruction and the head of state who not only condoned it but who encouraged it. No action was taken.

It was not the first time that terrorists had struck and had killed innocent people. It had been going on for years and, for some, their whole lifetime had been punctuated by it. In all probability, the first time such occurred it had been such a shock that decent, law-abiding people had been traumatized. After all, such behavior was not normal. Demented deviants had been the perpetrators. They have no place in a civilized society. Everyone agrees to that — or, at least, they say they do. Civilized people, however, do not rush into acts of vigilancy so they waited for justice to be meted out through the proper

channels.

There was much talk and it seems that somewhere along the way, justice got bogged down in rhetoric. Before any resolution could be found, the terrorists struck again. Young men who thought they had their whole lives ahead of them, children, women, the elderly, men, the newly born and the unborn and everyone else who dared exist and be a part of the targeted group were constantly at risk.

Each time, for years, that a dastardly deed was done and more innocents died or were maimed nothing was done. The absence of punishment gave courage to those who wrapped their heads and bodies in sheets and met in dark, dank places plotting their next venture into terrorism.

Some of the people began to wonder if America had the guts to protect its citizens. They knew that America had no reluctance in asking its citizens to protect it but apparently there was no reciprocity in the relationship.

Shortly thereafter fear began to take over. It found its way into everything; travel, the workplace and even just being at home or going to church. The acts of terrorism occurred with such regularity that they began to appear normal — routine. They seemed to no longer warrant discussion.

Waiting. That's what the people did. They waited for the country to do something about those atrocities. They listened to the arguments representing both sides and they began to wonder if the opposing views had become the issue and the problem itself had taken a secondary position. I suppose it is



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reminiscent of acts of oppression or terrorism throughout the history of the world. We've seen it in movies if we've not actually experienced it. In the movie "Shane" we find sod busters being terrorized by cattlemen. Their fields were trampled and burned as were their homes and it was not unusual for nightriders to come calling and shoot up the place and every now and then they'd kill someone. Jack Palance played Wilson the gunfighter and he was a super power because of his skill with a "colt." Elisha Cook, Jr. played "Reb" and he was just a farmer with a big pistol and a big mouth. Wilson goaded "Reb" into a gunfight and killed him. All of the gang of terrorists had a laugh and they kept laughing until Shane, played by Alan Ladd, decided that they had gone too far. Enough's enough. The same story was repeated in "Robin Hood" where Normans terrorized Saxons until Robin said "back off." Again in "Wagonmaster" with gentiles terrorizing Mormons or "My Bodyguard" with bullies terrorizing other school kids or "The Burning Bed" with a husband terrorizing his wife.

In every instance, acts of terrorism would occur and those terrorized waited for the proper authorities to do something about it. While they waited the terrorism not only continued but it grew worse. Terrorists interpret the absence of response as a sign of weakness and they

grow stronger, more daring and bolder.

No one knows at what point a people who is being terrorized will reach a juncture in which they decide that they've had enough. In any case, terrorists are like crap shooters — when their point keeps coming up they think it will keep coming up. Each roll of the dice increases the odds of their crapping out but they do not contemplate such things. The gambler's mentality with which the terrorist operates has created an illusion that it will not happen to them. Sometimes, eventually, it does.

So. It was a day like most days. Some people were asleep and others were out and about. Still others were involved in more solemn activities. Whatever all of them were doing, they were minding their own business. Asleep, having a drink, trying to get to second base and hopefully home or any number of other things which people might do while in the course of shaping human events when their stillness or their revelry was shattered by the loud report of an explosion. Four were dead and many others were wounded and the culprit or culprits got away.

Even as the smoke rose and the echoes of the explosion grew faint, there could be heard the woeful moanings of the injured while dazed others stumbled through the debris like so many zombies.

Even though acts of terror-

ism had been directed against American citizens in similar circumstances many times before, none had been quite like this one. Even in the haze there was great clarity. Even in the confusion there was comprehension. Screaming, wailing, crying, bleeding, death and dying and for a moment the victims became normal. If you've ever been to Yellowstone and waited for Old Faithful to spout and felt the ground tremble underfoot as the pressure built you would have a pretty good idea of what occurred outside the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church of Birmingham, Alabama on the morning of September 15, 1963 at 10:25 a.m. when Addie Mae Collins, age 14, Carol Robinson, age 14, Cynthia Wesley, age 14 and Denise McNair, age 11 had their young lives blown away by those who cover their heads and bodies in sheets.

Terrorism may be something new for most Americans but, for some others, it is as old as the country itself. The Emmett Tills, Medgar Evers and James Chaney's bear testimony to that reality. All of the victims were not black. Some were white school teachers with the Freedmans Bureau, others were Freedom Riders and they had names like Schwerner, Lieuzo and Johnson. Most Americans have been appalled at the acts of terrorism which have occurred around the world against innocent people and I am one of that number. I've not been shocked, however because terrorism has become normal for some of us. We get terrorized every day in places like Orange County, wine country California, aboard ships of our own navy, at our own military installations,

while jogging in Salt Lake City, while walking through certain neighborhoods of San Diego, for moving into a house in Philadelphia, in the wrong pub in Boston, just driving through some parts of Chicago, in Carson City or on our jobs and we get treated like "tramps" in the 4400 block of West Flamingo and we wait for those in authority to do something about it.

In the past, the latter has elected to handle each case of "domestic" terrorism on an individual basis and then only if the terrorizee has brought charges and gone to court. The courts have not, historically, ruled favorably for us in pretty much the same way that the world court has not approved of our nation's recent response to terrorism. Paraphrasing the President, he said that we

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moral position in the community by confronting the dope dealers and the moral decay.

The article opened people's minds as to the real responsibility of the preachers and churches. Only a thinking people can be a truly free people. Are we afraid for the people to think? The Constitution mandates the separation of church and state, which to me means politicians should not be allowed in the churches' pulpits to further their political careers.

The preachers have stepped so far out into public and political life they have given up the sanctuary of the church.

Sincerely,
Leonard Mason,



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