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Militants and the Media: Partners in Terrorism?

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MILITANTS AND THE MEDIA: PARTNERS IN TERRORISM?

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In March, 1977 in the Canary Islands, a KLM 747 and a Pan American 747 landed at Tenerife. They had been diverted from another airport where terrorist happened then to be interfering with flight operations. As the two jumbo jets prepared to resume their transoceanic flights, they collided on the foggy runway. Five hundred and eighty-one innocent traverlers met death in the firey mishap.

That record toll for a commercial aviation disaster could have come four years earlier. In 1973 a comparable number of airline passengers might have been blasted out of the Italian sky to publicize grievances not necessarily shared by any of them but passionately felt by one of the groups of frustrated people so ubiquitous in the modern world. It did not happen, though, because portable heat-seeking anti-aircraft rockets in possession of Palestinian terrorists were confiscated by authorities at the Rome airport in time to prevent such an incident.[1] Somewhere else, some other time, it may yet occur.

Modern terrorism is both shaped and invited by modern circumstances. Airline hijacking, for example, a frequent technique of international terrorism, was obviously unavailable as a tactic of militancy until commercial aviation came into being. Once airplanes had been invented, it was natural that they should undergo steady improvement on several dimensions, with their range, speed, and size of payload all being impressively increased. The engineers who accomplished these improvements could not be expected to foresee what opportunities and inducements they were providing to sufficiently desperate individuals and groups who might be tempted to practice a new form of piracy. Hijacking did not become common until airliners became huge, swift, and long-range. Only recently has it become possible for a commandeered airplane to be diverted to virtually any destination the terrorist might choose. Not until the jet age could be expected to reach even a remote part of the world within few enough hours for the hijacker's desperation to remain focused on political or quasi-political goals and not give way to preoccupation with his own bodily needs for sustenance or sleep. Not until aircraft grew large enough to carry passengers by the hundreds rather than by the dozen, in a world where life for some had lost its luster, was there substantial probability that someone on board would harbor some motive stronger than his own instinct of self-preservation. And then, of course, the impressive number of hostages he could hold in jeopardy by threatening destruction of

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the one aircraft provided substantial leverage for an act of political blackmail.

Technological developments have made potentially available for terrorist use an unprecedented arsenal of destructive devices and tactics. Not only are there such insidious weapons as letter bombs, but there hovers over the law-abiding world now the prospect of really massive blackmail if a terrorist group were to obtain possession of a nuclear weapon, or materials for biological warfare. Moreover, modern media of communication enable the terrorist to command the attention of far-flung millions, and perhaps to work his nefarious will upon whole nations instead of just the hostages in his immediate presence whom he threatens directly with physical violence.

Modern media of communication are thus subject to use in ways never contemplated by (and perhaps inconceivable to) the authors of the first amendment. New circumstances thus raise unavoidable questions. Is it possible, for example, to prevent unscrupulous perpetrators of violence from taking illicit advantage of the existence and nature of the mass media of communication? It it is possible to deny such groups access to the media, can this be done within the spirit of the first amendment? The latter question is for legal minds to consider; the former question is essentially technical, to be answered in the best available light of social science knowledge. First it is necessary to consider some things that are known about human beings in general, about social movements and terrorists in particular. Next the trends in terrorism will be discussed. Finally the media's role in light of these factors will be examined.

HUMAN NATURE, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND TEMPTATIONS TO TERRORISM

Terrorism has raised serious legal and ethical issues, and questions of policy. Resolution of these issues, and answers to these questions of policy may depend on what factors are assumed to constitute an explanation for the terrorist episodes that get our attention. An article in *Reader's Digest* by two members of its editorial staff provides an example of this connection between assumptions and answers.[2] It purports to discern three terrorist types: (1) "rootless rebels" who "invariably" believe devoutly in "a fairy-tale ideological world of good guys versus bad guys;" (2) rootless members of ethnic minorities "goaded by an outraged sense of injustice;" and (3) common criminals. The article ends by recommending congressional authorization of

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[1] Anable, *Coming to Grips with World Terrorism*, Christian Sci. Monitor, Dec. 19, 1975, at 14-15.

[2] Strother & Methvin, *Terrorism on the Rampage*, READER'S DIG. [hereinafter cited as Strother & Methvin]. For more sophisticated analyses of terrorism, see C. BAUMANN, THE DIPLOMATIC KIDNAPPINGS (1973); D. CARLTON & C. SCHAERF, INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM AND WORLD SECURITY (1975); B. JENKINS, INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM (1975); W. LAQUEUR, TERRORISM (1977). For a medical view of the topic, see F. HACKER, CRUSADERS, CRIMINALS, CRAZIES (1976).

FBI wiretapping for anti-terrorist "intelligence collection," and quotes Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn as an advocate of firmness in suppressing hijacking and other forms of terrorism. According to the *Digest* authors,

> Ultimately . . . the only truly effective counter-weapon is *intelligence.* That means—in the United States—giving the FBI the legal and scientific tools it needs, plus public understanding and support for their aggressive use. It means spies, networks of paid informers, wiretaps, bugs, computerized dossier systems—the whole spectrum of clandestine warfare so necessary to the cause, yet so vulnerable to attack by civil-libertarian extremists.[3]

To put terrorism in better perspective, some basic insights into the nature of social movements are essential. Social movements, even those that employ terrorist tactics, are products of the social nature of *Homo sapiens.* To understand terrorism, then, requires basic knowledge of the sources and characteristics of human sociality.

Human beings have to be social to survive. As a species, we are helpless in infancy and we appear to have few inborn patterns of behavior that could enable us to cope as lone adults. So we develop the very traits that make us human as a result of the myriad interactions we have with others, especially as we are growing up. Above all we become communicators; we learn language. Communication looms larger in human life than in the life of any other species, even the most social of the insects, birds, or pre-human mammals.

In these basic respects, terrorists are human ("inhuman" as their actions may seem to those of us who live within the law). Some terrorist acts perhaps need, therefore, to be viewed as (lamentable, desperate, incoherent) attempts to communicate. To some extent terrorists are people for whom more conventional means of communication seem unavailable or ineffective. In some instances, at least, the conventional means *seem* unavailable because they *are* unavailable. Sometimes, however, appearances are deceptive.

Having acquired human traits and skills from participation in groups, continued group involvement becomes for all of us a major drive. Some sort of loyalty to the group(s) we identify with is also a normal human response to the group incubation of human personality. More or less unquestioning preference for in-group thoughtways and behavior patterns, and aversion to out-group thoughtways and behavior patterns (when they differ from familiar ways), are also normal. Genetically, we humans are so constituted that we are destined to spend our lives absorbing from our associates a non-genetic heritage (i.e., culture). As that kind of creature, we are naturally and almost inescapably ethnocentric. Some instances of terrorist ideology and behavior may need to be understood as (perverse) manifestations of such humanly normal group loyalty and ethnocentrism.

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[3]Strother & Methvin, *supra* note 2, at 77.

For most of us, these drives (to communicate, to identify with our group, to reject alien ways) arise and express themselves first in the context of that kind of group we call a family; but as we mature, we acquire interests that can be implemented by other sorts of groups. Our ethnocentrism may become somewhat tempered with fascination for the exotic. One result of human maturation is the formation of voluntary associations, or clusters of people who share interests somewhat more segmentally than the way interests remain all-encompassingly mutual in the intimacy of a family.[4]

Now a distinction needs to be made between two broad categories of activity. Some voluntary associations engage in activity that is mainly consummatory—concerned with members' interest in self-gratification. The behavior is indulged in for its own sake, rather than as a means to some more ultimate goal. (A hiking club or a camera club would be an obvious example of a voluntary association that was mainly consummatory.) In other associations, the principal activities are more instrumental; the behavior of the members is addressed to the pursuit of some purpose other than direct personal pleasure. Gratification may be a by-product of such activity but it is not the aim. Professional associations, such as the American Bar Association (ABA) or the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), tend to be of this instrumental type.

For some members even in groups like the ABA or the AAUP, organizational activity as such may be especially gratifying. The line between instrumental and consummatory activity can thus become blurred. Recognition of this fact can help us to understand variations in motivation toward terrorism. For some individuals in some circumstances, *participation* may become a goal in itself.

Sometimes an association that originated from consummatory interests takes on a more instrumental cast (as when a fraternal organization provides insurance and other services for its members, or when it becomes a pressure group seeking to influence public policies). It is important to recognize, however, that the drift can be in the other direction, from instrumental to consummatory. This, too, must be borne in mind if we are to avoid misleading inferences about what makes terrorists tick. Their violence may not always be as goal-directed as it purports to be.

A social movement, then, is a voluntary association whose goal is to bring about change in a larger society.[5] Perhaps it only seeks to change public opinion, or it may actually strive to change behavior, or to restructure social relationships. Insofar as the group's actions are calculated to serve these ends, the movement is instrumentally oriented, but actions of an organization that are ostensibly instrumental may in fact sometimes be more nearly consum-

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[4]M. HAUSKNECHT. THE JOINERS (1962).
[5]R. ASH. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN AMERICA (1972); J. MCCARTHY & M. ZALD. THE TREND OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN AMERICA (1973).

matory. For example, when some group trying to promote a lost cause vainly continues its activities, the interest it really serves is its members' need for reassurance of their own enduring virtue and significance. Their ostensibly instrumental behavior is actually "expressive." It expresses their earnest desire for self-respect. In many instances such a desire probably underlies acts or threats of violence by terrorist movements.

James Q. Wilson has suggested that for many of the black people involved in the race riots of the 1960's those riots were *expressive* acts, satisfying to the extent that they gave expression to a state of mind.[6] He further suggests that whereas the previous generation "was absorbed by Camus's intricate analysis of how in existential terms one might have justified the effort to assassinate the czar," some young people have more recently been impressed with the argument by Frantz Fanon that violence practiced by the wretched and oppressed may be intrinsically valuable as an assertion of self. What Wilson says of racial violence probably applies more generally to contemporary terrorism. Much of it is rewarding to the militants who engage in it because it serves as an assertion of self in an age that oppresses even middle class youth with what we might term "significance deprivation." In a city of several million inhabitants almost anyone can wonder at times, "Do I, as one individual, really matter?"

Writing about the sometimes violent activism of university students who were so largely of white middle class origin, John W. Aldridge has emphasized the expressive element:

> They were born twenty years too late to have a part in that knightly crusade against tyranny which World War II now seems sentimentally to symbolize for their fathers. . . .
> The virtue of activism is that it provides a fair substitute for this lost opportunity. It . . . makes it possible for the young . . . to fight their own morally acceptable war, carry on their own knightly crusade against tyranny, in brick-throwing street battles with the police and in stalwart confrontations of nerve with authorities old enough to be as enviably favored by history as Dad.[7]

Perhaps not all, but some, terrorist activity arises from expressive interests of the same sort as these.

TRENDS IN TERRORISM: IS IT ON THE RISE?

In addition to general social stimuli it is also useful to consider the question, "Why now?" What is it about the state of our world today that enables

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[6]Wilson, *Why We Are Having a Wave of Violence*, N.Y. Times, May, 19, 1968 (Magazine), at 116.

[7]Aldridge, *In the Country of the Young, Part II*, HARPER'S MAGAZINE, Nov. 1969, at 93-94.

(and provokes) human beings to terrorize other human beings? Answers to that question must involve consideration of both the changing opportunities for, and changing compulsions toward, terrorist activities. Unless the changing structure of opportunities and compulsions is taken into account, common sense assumptions about the causes and motivations of terrorism are likely to give rise to quite ineffective remedies. Opponents of terrorism may embrace their own fairy tale, one that prescribes no better strategy than clandestine warfare by the good guys (i.e., the spies, paid informers, wiretappers) and, when the occasion arises, as at Entebbe or Mogadishu, overt combat by commando squads.

Clearly, in view of the middle class origins of many militants, terrorism does not arise merely in response to economic hardship or political repression personally experienced by the individuals who participate in these movements. Especially insofar as terrorism may be expressive, it arises from subtler forms of deprivation—deprivation associated with being born too late in the world's history.

Much of the culture that most of us have internalized was formed in a world very different from the world of today. The change in circumstances between then and now bears heavily upon the social movements of our time. A darkening future may make many movements less instrumental and more expressive then their members suppose. This may be a crucial consideration for understanding the roots of at least some of the publicity-seeking terrorist episodes that pose difficult moral and legal dilemmas.

For Americans especially, but also for people elsewhere in the world, there had grown up in the last two or three centuries a faith in progress and an expectation that whatever might be the shortcomings of the present, they could be rectified in the future. Today that faith seems to have waned.[8] Its waning was foreshadowed as early as 1890 by the Census Bureau superintendent's announcement that America no longer had a frontier of settlement. The delayed but cumulative effects of that change were global rather than merely national.[9] The expectation that the future would be better than the present or past was nurtured by the existence for about four centuries of a New World. Opportunistic expansion of people from the Old World into an unexpectedly enlarged habitat helped democratize their political, economic, and religious institutions, and wrought equally significant changes in family mores. But eventually this expansion had to result in invalidation of the sense of limitlessness that had come to be the central premise of people's lives. The once-New World became more filled up with people than Europe had been when Columbus set sail. *The future,* therefore,

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[8]This loss of faith was noted in the first State of the Union address of the Nixon administration, as discussed by Stewart Alsop in *The Mysterious American Disease,* NEWSWEEK, Feb. 9, 1970, at 98. It was exemplified even more compellingly in R. HEILBRONER. AN INQUIRY INTO THE HUMAN PROSPECT (1974).

[9]W. WEBB. THE GREAT FRONTIER (1952).

is not what it used to be.[10] This is a fact of life that must be recognized if we are to understand the desperation of some of our contemporaries. Giving the FBI or any other agency "the legal and scientific tools" for waging "clandestine warfare" against terrorists will hardly alleviate the oppressive sense of lost limitlessness, or prevent recent changes from nurturing predispositions toward expressive violence. Wiretapping is unlikely to make the planet seem less crowded or the future less constrictive.

Potent twentieth century technology has magnified the power of each of us to get in the way of others (and inadvertently interfere with each other's pursuit of happiness). We are now much more geographically mobile than people were when the virgin hemisphere seemed so endless, and our per capita resource appetites have been enormously enlarged. So we are vastly more competitive in our quest for shares of the world's finite resources, such as oil from the Middle East. Our competitiveness is channeled by such factors as the division of human societies into contrasting categories—"developed" versus "underdeveloped" countries. But to label the nations of the Third World "*under*developed" is to go beyond simply denoting their comparative poverty; it is to recognize the aspiration of their peoples to become "developed," and to presuppose that their destiny does include acquisition eventually of resource appetites as prodigal as those now characteristic of either the capitalist or socialist industrialized worlds.

In an ineluctably finite global habitat, however, where resources will not suffice to assuage universalized and perpetually escalating desires, a revolution of rising expectations must be expected to have nurtured a revolution of rising despair. If there has been a growing sense of "oppression" it has *ecological* roots—less visible, perhaps, but more inexorable than the ideologically touted tyrannies of ruling classes or regimenting activities of overzealous bureaucracies. As people have reluctantly begun to sense that the impossible dream of universal modernization probably *is* impossible, this may have helped foster an epidemic tendency to resort to revolutionary violence as a means of denying unwelcome truth.

Suppose the impediments to fulfilling our dreams *were* merely political. As Charles Reich noted: "To young people, one of the most frustrating things about the system is that it does not even have to respond—and usually it gives no sign that it has even heard. Young people want to kick it—to at least force it to bestir itself."[11] Ecosystems can be at least as nonresponsive to unrealistic human aspirations as political systems may have been. At any rate, terrorists seem to agree with Reich that "[a]nger is better than complacent indifference."[12]

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[10]Catton, *Why the Future Isn't What It Used to Be (And How It Could Be Made Worse than It Has to Be)*, 57 Soc. Sci. Q. 276 (1976).

[11]C. REICH, THE GREENING OF AMERICA 237 (1970) [hereinafter cited as REICH].

[12]*Id.*

In the long run, however, if limits to growth are as binding as informed investigators now take them to be, anger may turn out to be "better" only in an *expressive* sense, not in any instrumental way. Customers too far back in the queue to withdraw funds from a failing bank before it goes broke cannot, by their anger, convert bankruptcy back into solvency. For some, though, the very futility of angry reactions to such circumstances may intensify the sense of outrage. The tendency today for militant movements to present their demands as non-negotiable may arise partly from fear that postponing attainment of goals means never attaining them. When time is felt to be running out, the virtues of tolerance and compassion can easily degenerate, and compromise is seen as permanently wasted opportunity.

Episodes of violence (and threats of violence) that now and then make headlines are manifestations of an unrest that has become worldwide. Often the violent acts seem to be committed *for the purpose of* generating headlines. The immediate victims of those acts are often not the objects of the terrorists' antagonism. They are pawns, used merely as a means of checkmating more powerful entities elsewhere. Some of the groups so desperate for publicity want it as a presumed means of attaining political, economic, or nationalistic goals, but some appear to crave publicity for its own sake—i.e., as an antidote to the ignominy of seeming superfluous in a world too vast to have otherwise noticed their existence.

Whichever may be the incentive in a particular case, one social movement after another-one day in the Middle East, or Africa, another time in Europe or Asia, or next day somewhere in North or South America—does in fact *call attention to itself* by some dramatic act. The specific event (or threat) is but a paragraph in the script of modern history.

Have these theatrical episodes waxed more violent in recent years? Have they become more frequent? Or are they merely the current manifestations of an old, old story? Has terrorist activity "always" been more prevalent than nice people wanted to acknowledge?

It may not be possible to answer these questions. As violence drew increasing attention in the 1960's, it became fashionable in some circles to insist that this was not new. Past American brutality toward slaves, Indians, and aliens was cited to support assertions that violence had long been "as American as apple pie."[13] Reckless use of certain key words, however, obstructs careful analysis of serious matters. For example, the author of one best-seller went so far as to assert that American schools controlled development of young people through a "total atmosphere of violence."[14] But he went on to reveal the flagrant semantic inflation implicit in his excessive use of that word; he defined violence as "any assault upon, or violation of, the personality"[15] (not necessarily or even usually physical). "An examination or

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[13]H. GRAHAM & T. GURR, THE HISTORY OF VIOLENCE IN AMERICA (1969).

[14]REICH, *supra* note 11, at 100.

[15]*Id.*

test is a form of violence,"[16] he said. "Compulsory gym, to one embarrassed or afraid, is a form of violence. The requirement that a student must get a pass to walk in the hallways is violence. Compelled attendance in the classroom, compulsory studying in study hall, is violence."[17]

While terrorists have typically used (or threatened to use) *physical* violence, so that there is little doubt that their violence is *real*, issues of its changing abundance are beclouded by tendencies to label as "terrorists" only those users of violence whose goals or affiliations we disapprove. Approved users of violence are labeled "patriots," "freedom fighters," etc. Moreover, statistical data purporting to show historic trends toward increased or decreased incidence of terrorism may be discounted by arguments over changing definitions of socially acceptable or unacceptable forms of coercion. Inferences that violence has risen or declined may also be vitiated by recognition that methods of collecting information have changed. Record keeping efficiency has also changed.

The pertinent issue, however, is not whether terrorism is more abundant or more vicious today than at some time in the past. The real question is whether terrorism is more abundant as a result of identifiable pressures *than it would be now* if those pressures were not operating. A major aim of this paper is to point out some of those pressures.

Because of the ecological interdependence of our world and the numbers of human beings trying to live on it, progress by one movement toward attainment of its avowed goals constitutes resented interference with pursuit of conflicting goals by some other group. Movements therefore induce counter-movements. Faced with opposition, passion on behalf of an ideology sometimes expresses itself in extremely unconventional ways. Antagonism escalates into open conflict. Once-peaceful tactics give way to violence. But much of the violence is committed by groups too small or not powerful enough to win their ends by direct application of force. Instead they often hope for an amplification process whereby their comparatively puny efforts will influence the flow of larger forces.

We now live in a time when the news media regularly report that some organization "has claimed responsibility for" someone's murder, for a kidnapping, or for a bomb blast in a consulate or in the offices of an international corporation. It used to be that the perpetrators of illegal acts tried to conceal their identity and avoid being tagged with responsibility for their transgressions. Under present circumstances, however, groups "claim responsibility" for heinous acts because only thus can they reap publicity value from such events.

The *Reader's Digest* article previously cited spoke of "Today's epidemic of savagery."[18] An editorial in the Jesuit magazine *America* alluded to the "rash

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[16]*Id.*

[17]*Id.*

[18]Strother & Methvin, *supra* note 2.

of episodes of international terrorism."[19] But in September, 1975, a Special Assistant to the Secretary of State (and former head of the international relations faculty at the National War College) reported that worldwide there had been some eight hundred persons killed by acts of international terrorism since 1968.[20] Have those eight hundred deaths produced, or merely reflected, a climate of fear? In one sense, eight hundred is hardly a very large number. More than twice that many people die in a *single* year in the United States from asthma, and few of us live in dread of that malady or regard it as "epidemic." The annual death toll from influenza in the United States is almost ten times the seven or eight year global toll from terrorism, yet people tend to think of flu as more of a nuisance than a dire peril.

Minor though it may be statistically, terrorism has coerced governments and giant business firms. It has complicated the boarding procedures at airports in all parts of the world. It has harrassed diplomatic staffs. It has impeded the administration of justice. It has diverted public attention from less dramatic but more fundamental dangers facing our civilization. Thus there has indeed occurred an amplification effect, as sought by the terrorists.

SYMBIOSIS AND REINFORCEMENT

Human societies have become much more interdependent, partly as a result of the technological progress that has enabled us to use commodities obtained from all corners of the world,[21] and partly because modern communications enable us to witness events almost anywhere in the world as they happen or almost immediately thereafter. But this also means that human societies have become more vulnerable.[22] There are more opportunities than ever before for kicking the system and trying to compel it to bestir itself. The scale on which blackmail can be practiced has been prodigiously enlarged.

Terrorists sometimes take hostages. Hostages can be used quite explicitly to blackmail the mass media into providing publicity for the movement and its goals. The price exacted for sparing the hostages' lives, that is, may be provision of access to television network time for a propaganda speech by the movement's leader, or provision of front page newspaper space for a movement-written editorial.

It must be recognized, however, that even without resorting to blackmail, terrorist movements use the media. Terrorist activity is basically a form of theater. Terrorists play to an audience. Without the mass media they would

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[19]O'Hare, *Of Many Things*, 137 AMERICA (1977) (inside front cover).

[20]*Terrorism:* "Growing and Increasingly Dangerous," U.S. NEWS & WORLD REP., Sept. 29, 1975, at 78 (interview with Robert A. Fearey).

[21]Gibbs & Martin, *Urbanization, Technology, and the Division of Labor: International Patterns*, 27 AM. SOC. REV. 667 (1962).

[22]Hauser, *The Chaotic Society: Product of the Social Morphological Revolution*, 34 M. SOC. REV. 1 (1969).

seldom be able to reach audiences as large as those from which they do now gain attention. The events they perpetrate would be witnessed only by persons in the immediate locality at the time, and the terrorist group would tend to be only locally known. Television especially has been crucial to the amplification effect upon which modern terrorism depends for its effectiveness.

On the other hand, television itself is also a form of theater; it also requires an audience. So do the other mass media. The larger its audience the more each medium thrives. This may be especially so in a country where the communication industries are commerical enterprises, but it is at least partly a matter of the very nature of the media. The availability of attention-getting content (such as acts of terrorism) serves the audience-attracting needs of the communications industry and has contributed in recent years to the "success" of the media (in the business sense). In short, there is a kind of "symbiosis" between terrorists and the media. Each provides something the other can use. It is as natural for the media to provide terrorist movements the pubicity they seek (without being blackmailed into doing so) as it is for the terrorists to provide the media with the audience-exciting content they seek.

This brings us to the heart of the matter: Does media coverage of terrorist activities foster such behavior? Does reporting what terrorists do increase the incidence of such activity? If news coverage of terrorism publicizes their demands, does this aid and abet their antisocial efforts? The principal dimensions of any social science attempt to answer such questions have to do with (a) the nature of learning processes, and (b) the nature of "success" in terrorist activity.

Among social scientists, learning processes are today most widely interpreted according to the operant conditioning model.[23] In simplest terms, this model says that among all the different ways one might behave in given circumstances, any particular way is more likely to be repeated when the circumstances recur if the previous time it was done it was followed by some gratifying experience. The probability of repeating a given act in particular circumstances is reduced if that act's occurrence in those circumstances tends to be followed by some disliked experience. In short, behavior that is followed by a "reward" is "reinforced." Behavior that is followed by "punishment" is "inhibited," and eventually "extinguished."

All this is close to common sense. But note that the "reward" need not be a *result* of the behavior to reinforce it; it need only follow it. The association can be quite coincidental. The gratifying experience need not have been *sought* by the learner, nor does it have to have been given deliberately for any behavior-guiding purpose by a "teacher." All that is required is that the associated experience be gratifying and that it be more or less reliably associated with the behavior, and the behavior will thus be reinforced.

[23]Gerwitz, *Mechanisms of Social Learning: Some Roles of Stimulation and Behavior in Early Human Development,* in HANDBOOK OF SOCIALIZATION THEORY AND RESEARCH 57-212 (D. Goslin ed. 1969).

In reality, however, learning is, among humans, a more involved process than this. For one thing, a person can learn as a result of "vicarious reinforcement" in a process of "observational learning."[24] If a person observes another individual, with whom he more or less identifies, and sees that in certain circumstances a certain action by that other individual tends to be followed by an experience that is rewarding to that other person, the probability that the observer would behave in those circumstances in about the way the observed person did is enhanced.

According to the theory of operant conditioning, then, if a terrorist gets something he wants by committing an act of terrorism, he is more likely to repeat such an act if the circumstances recur than if he had not been rewarded. Moreover, according to the principle of observational learning, if a would-be terrorist observes another person's terrorism "succeeding" (i.e., producing, or being followed by, results desired by, or apparently gratifying to, the other person) then the probability is thereby enhanced that the would-be terrorist will learn to engage in similar overt acts of terrorism when he finds himself in similar circumstances.

If publicity is what terrorists seek, then the attainment of publicity is "success" and is rewarding. If the media provide terrorists with publicity, the media thereby reinforce terrorist activity.

A distinction must, however, be made between publicity about terrorist activities and publicity about terrorists' goals. And a distinction also needs to be made between instrumentally oriented terrorists and expressively oriented terrorists. For instrumentally oriented terrorists, publicity about their *goals* (resulting from, or following, their commission of acts of terrorism) would be reinforcing, but publicity merely about their *actions*—with no mention of their goals—would presumably not be reinforcing. On the other hand, for an expressively oriented terrorist group, any publicity at all that results from or follows their commission of acts of terrorism would be reinforcing. They seek publicity "for its own sake," i.e., as a sign of their personal significance. Media attention to their actions is rewarding insofar as it provides relief from "significance deprivation" even if the media ignore their ostensible goals.

To such expressively oriented terrorists, moreover, *any* publicity about terrorist activities *by others,* with or without mention of goals, would be vicariously reinforcing. It should follow, though, that for observer-terrorists who were instrumentally oriented, publicity about *activities* by other terrorists would not be vicariously reinforcing unless the actions were portrayed as resulting in attainment of goals identical to or closely similar to goals sought by the observers.

If most terrorists were in fact instrumentally oriented, then studious avoidance by the media of mentioning goals when terrorist activity is reported

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[24]Bandura, *Social-Learning Theory of Indentificatory Processes,* in HANDBOOK OF SOCIALIZATION THEORY AND RESEARCH 213-62 (D. Goslin ed. 1969).

would suffice to keep the publicity from providing positive reinforcement, vicarious or otherwise. No other compromise with first amendment liberty of communication would be needed in that case. Indeed, by making terrorism appear to be purposeless, such publicity could provide punishment. That is, it would "give terrorism a bad name" in the eyes of terrorists.

It is highly doubtful, though, that anywhere near all terrorists are strictly instrumental. As has been suggested earlier in this paper, much of the motivation for much terrorist activity is probably expressive. Accordingly, letter-of-the-law reliance on the first amendment as authorization for the news media to report whatever aspects of terrorist activity they deem news-worthy probably means that the media *are* (unintentionally) fostering ter-rorism. Media publicity about any terrorist act provides vicarious reinforce-ment for expressive terrorist tendencies in persons exposed to that publicity.

There are, of course, offsetting tendencies. Most people are for various reasons disinclined, and by many social constraints inhibited, from respon-ding in overtly terrorist ways to such observational learning opportunities even if beset by some of the contemporary kinds of frustration earlier described. But *a few* are not so disinclined or so constrained. Even the old "crime does not pay" formula cannot disengage the media from involvement in the obser-vational learning process, for even the publicized death of a terrorist may be vicariously rewarding to the seeker of escape from oppressive anonymity.

The legal dilemma is therefore real, but it may be quite generally mis-conceived. Freedom to report terrorist activities is tantamount to freedom to reinforce them. But, as media spokesmen will insist, what the first amend-ment really protects is the public's right to know. Why, then, in practice, are editors less insistent on our "right to know" in detail all about each asthma fatality or flu death than about each victim of terrorism? Why have we less "right to be alerted" by the media to each million tons of potentially climate-changing CO_2 added to the atmosphere, or each ton of radioactive waste ad-ded by the electric power industry to the albatross around posterity's neck? When did the authors of the Bill of Rights decide it was violence committed by militants that we most needed to be informed about?

Editors may judge the comparative "news value" of such varied events either wisely or myopically. Issues about the legitimacy of publicizing ominous happenings turn upon the validity of an unstated assumption: that the first amendment declared such editorial judgments to be the ultimate criterion for regulating the flow of information and made media managers (and those with whom they may develop symbiotic interdependence) the ultimate arbiters of the public interest.