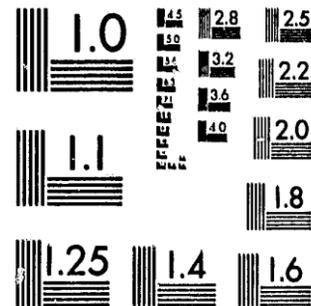


National Criminal Justice Reference Service

ncjrs

This microfiche was produced from documents received for inclusion in the NCJRS data base. Since NCJRS cannot exercise control over the physical condition of the documents submitted, the individual frame quality will vary. The resolution chart on this frame may be used to evaluate the document quality.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS-1963-A

Microfilming procedures used to create this fiche comply with the standards set forth in 41CFR 101-11.504.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author(s) and do not represent the official position or policies of the U. S. Department of Justice.

National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice
Law Enforcement Assistance Administration
United States Department of Justice
Washington, D. C. 20531

DATE FILMED

29358

TERROR as a Political Weapon

Dr. Hendrik van Dalen

People don't like to talk about terror. It evokes mental pictures of goose-stepping Nazis, screaming communists and wild-eyed anarchists. Terrorist actions are bloody and brutal. The subject makes lousy conversation at cocktail parties. Why discuss it?

We cannot escape so easily. Terror is an extremely sophisticated and dangerous weapon. When used with skill and intelligence it can be a very effective means to an end. If handled badly, it is almost always counterproductive. If we don't know what terror is all about then we leave ourselves at the mercy of those who do. We must understand the weapon in order to protect ourselves against it.

The aim of terror is control through fear, not military force. The successful practitioner of terror attains his goals because he is a master of psychology and politics. If terrorist organizations are to be defeated, they must be met on their own ground. For this reason the following discussion will deal at some length with the political and psychological aspects of the subject.

Terror may be defined as a *symbolic act designed to influence political behavior by extranormal means, entailing the use or threat of violence.*¹ In this article, *political behavior* means the extent to which a population will support the existing government. Support can be either active or passive. The person who actively supports the government takes part in elections and turns in people who break the law. The passive supporter quietly obeys the law and does nothing to either help or hurt the government. The word *symbolic* is important. It means that the significance of a terroristic act does not lie in the act itself. The true terrorist cares little about whom he

shoots, but he cares a lot about how the population will interpret the shooting. *Terror symbolizes power.* The significance of this will become apparent in the paragraphs that follow.

The psychology of terror is rooted in the nature of man and the nature of politics. We must understand these respective natures in order to see why terror is such a potent political weapon. We will first deal with man, and then with politics.

Man's control over the physical environment has been advanced because researchers in the so-called "hard" sciences were able to perceive simple patterns in things that looked infinitely complex to the untrained eye. The social or "soft" sciences will advance for the same reason. Human behavior takes many forms, but there are simple ways of viewing it. For example, it would be impossible to predict with any degree of accuracy what John Jones will have for dinner tonight unless we know him extremely well. We do not have to know him at all in order to predict that he will die in a certain length of time if he does not eat. We won't be proven wrong if we predict that he will become dissatisfied if he can't eat at regular intervals.

In short, people have certain needs that must be met if they are to survive as a species. They also have certain needs that must be met if they are to approximate what people in a democracy call human beings. The late A. H. Maslow, a Developmental Psychologist, came up with a list of five needs which establish *homo sapiens* as a unique species. The needs are *physical* (food, water, etc.); *safety* (the need to be secure in the search to fulfill needs); *love* (the need to be valued and wanted by another individual); *self-esteem* (the need to feel that one is a unique individual, equal to others in the profound sense of being part of the human species); and *self-actualization* (the need to develop one's inherent talents to the fullest, to "leave a mark on people and history," as it were).² James C. Davies, a Political Scientist, modified this list by removing the safety need. He argued that safety was not a need in its own right but a *prerequisite for the fulfillment of the other needs.*³ Man lives by the law of the jungle when the

Dr. van Dalen received a B.A. degree and an M.A. degree in Political Science from San Francisco State College. He also has a Ph. D. in Political Science from the University of Oregon, where he worked with Professor James C. Davis, originator of the J-Curve theory of revolution. Dr. van Dalen teaches "Politics of Violence" at the University of Georgia, Athens, GA.

safety need is not met. In the jungle, says the philosopher Thomas Hobbs, life is nasty, brutish and short.⁴ People cannot develop completely as humans unless they fulfill the self-esteem need and begin attempting to self-actualize. This is not possible when every ounce of energy is spent fighting for sheer physical survival.

Hobbs contends that the concept of government is rooted in a desire to escape from the jungle. The first governments came into being when men traded their sovereignty or freedom for protection from a strong leader. We can carry his argument further by saying that the state rests upon an exchange relationship between the people and their representatives. Citizens are willing to trade allegiance for safety. They support the government because it provides the security necessary for satisfactory need fulfillment.

Democratic governments function only where people have achieved enough self-esteem to confidently speak their minds and willingly give their fellow citizen an equal voice in the selection of political leaders. Fear and democracy don't mix. Frightened people do not express their opinions. Frightened people cannot respect themselves or their neighbor. Frightened people will not support a government that does not protect them from fear.

Fear and democracy don't mix. Frightened people do not express their opinions.

No government can last long without at least the passive support of the population. Military and police forces can deal with the handful of lawbreakers and insurgent organizations that crop up occasionally in the ranks of the disaffected, but they cannot handle a situation where the majority is actively opposed to the regime. The wealth of the nation would be consumed in the process of maintaining order, and the alienation of the population would affect the law enforcers and divide their loyalties. If revolt were slow in coming from the outside it would soon come from within. Further, as the Germans discovered in World War II, people in chains do not make productive workers. Thus, terror is seldom used by legitimate governments. The risk of alienating the population is greater than the benefits that might be gained. When a government in power resorts to this weapon it is a sure sign that it lacks support. Terror is usually employed by revolutionary groups bent on the total overthrow of the political order. In their initial stages of development they have little to lose and everything to gain.

Acts of terror are meant to symbolize government's inability to provide safety for its citizens. They strike fear into the population and draw people away from their legitimate representatives. If left unchecked, terror will destroy the exchange relationship between the rulers and the ruled. This is

why it is so powerful. It is a political weapon aimed at the heart of the state.

Now that we have an idea of what terror is supposed to do, we will take a closer look at the weapon itself. Terrorist acts must be unpredictable if they are to succeed. People fear the unknown because they have no way of protecting themselves against it. It is also extremely difficult to capture a terrorist if law enforcement authorities have no idea where he will strike next. Terror, therefore, always has a random element to it.

Terrorist acts must be unpredictable if they are to succeed. People fear the unknown because they have no way of protecting themselves against it.

The astute terrorist will avoid hitting an obvious target, such as a police chief. People will figure that it is just another criminal out after revenge. Better to lob a grenade into Ma Friedel's delicatessen as she wraps a couple of gherkins for a customer. "Oh no, not Ma Friedel." Everyone will wring his hands in despair, feel helpless, ask what the world is coming to, and jump on the authorities for letting the whole thing happen. As the terrorism continues, people will withdraw into their own worlds, become alienated from themselves and their neighbors, and cease to even passively support the government.

If this sounds too good to be true when viewed from the perspective of a revolutionary, rest assured. It is. I stated at the beginning that terror was a sophisticated and dangerous weapon. In untrained hands, it can backfire and delay the progress of the revolutionary movement or stop it altogether.

The terrorist begins his activities at a time when the forces of law and order have the advantage. He is engaged in a conflict that involves breaking laws accepted by a majority of the population. Other things equal, "conflict makes group members more conscious of their group bonds and increases their participation ... (Conflict) also mobilizes the group's defenses among which is the reaffirmation of their value system against the outside enemy."⁶ If not handled carefully, the effect of terror will be opposite to the one intended. *It can get people to support the legitimate authorities like never before.* Many a revolutionary group has floundered because of this.

The first thing an insurgent organization must do is to work on the "other things equal" aspect of the relation between conflict and group cohesion. This can be done by attacking only those groups that possess a degree of internal conflict greater than the degree of conflict between the group and the revolutionary movement. In the area of international relations this explains why the Arab nations were so late in uniting against Israel. For a long time Arab hated Arab more than Arab hated Israeli. In the United States the terrorist organization could begin by attacking people

regardless of race, occupation, social class, area of residence or religion. A stack of phone books, a table of random numbers, a couple of high-powered rifles with scopes, and a few vehicles would do for starters. The history of consumer organizations examples the almost insurmountable difficulties involved in an attempt to unite a population that contains diverse and mutually antagonistic subunits. If terrorists attack citizens in a truly random fashion, every person has an equal chance of being killed, be he rich or poor, young or old, black or white, Republican, Democrat, or Independent. The result is more likely to be despair than a higher degree of internal cohesion.

With the stage thus set, the terrorist will do all in his power to exacerbate existing animosities in order to set one part of the group against another. If he plays his cards right, group members will do the work for him. The crowning achievement is to entice law enforcement personnel into creating more disaffection with the government than the revolutionaries could ever do by themselves. The killer who accomplishes this feat enters the Terrorist's Hall of Fame.



Consider the following scenario. Terrorists begin killing at random. This makes it nearly impossible for the authorities to establish a pattern that will allow them to reduce the danger to the population. They try concentrating on ghetto areas, but this doesn't help. They increase patrols of wealthy neighborhoods but that doesn't help either. The whole population gets aroused because the violence isn't limited to any particular race, creed, region, city or social class. Law enforcement officials did not identify the revolutionaries before the acts of terror

began, so now they have no way of knowing where violence will strike or who the next victim will be.

The terrorists are operating in a democracy, and protection of civil rights is held in high regard by organized and articulate members of the population. Roadblocks, extensive searches, curfews and talk of using "identification cards" alienate these people from the police. They initiate lawsuits, injunctions are issued, and everything is given full play in the press. The police find that their efforts to track down the rebels are hampered. In the meantime the population is gripped by fear and becomes increasingly disaffected because no one can understand why it is taking so long to bring the situation under control.

Law enforcement authorities are caught in a bind. As their frustration mounts, their fingers move closer to the trigger. Chances of an overreaction increase. A couple of minor incidents unrelated to the terrorists-- a student demonstration and the arrest of a drunk after an unruly crowd has gathered-- set off a series of spectator events that put the legitimate forces of law and order in a bad light. Attention moves away from the rebels and on to the police and then on to the government itself. Support for the political system erodes, people refuse to cooperate with the police, and the insurgents find a more hospitable population. They launch a propaganda campaign and it begins to take hold.

Law enforcement authorities are caught in a bind. As their frustration mounts, their fingers move closer to the trigger. Chances of an overreaction increase.

Once a revolutionary organization exists in a democracy there are two important factors that determine if the above scenario will actually take place. First, the terrorists must be able to swing attention away from themselves and on to the police. This is a crucial element in their formula for success, but it is something that is entirely out of their hands because it depends upon the behavior of law enforcement officials, courts, judges, newspapermen, and others over whom the revolutionaries have no control. This is a weak spot in their offensive armor. We noted that terrorists break the law and spread fear: fear of the unknown. If the cause of the fear becomes known, that is, if a revolutionary organization can be logically associated with the terror, then the fear can be explained. People become less frightened. They stop arguing with each other. They unite and vent their fury against the rebels.

The astute revolutionary is aware of his vulnerabilities and he takes steps to overcome them. He introduces a second factor into the equation: a division of labor between the revolutionary political or propaganda wing of the organization and the ter-

rorist apparatus. He works it out so that the political wing will never be forced into a position where it must take the blame for terrorist activity. Insurgent leaders can now parade around as paragons of virtue and reason while their henchmen gun people down in cold blood. Skillful use of propaganda may even get people to believe that the terror is inspired by the government in an effort to turn the population against the revolutionaries.

Terror is not child's play, however. The game becomes more subtle and deadly with each successive step the revolutionary takes to build his strength and cover for his weakness. The graveyards and byways of America are littered with the debris of insurgent groups shattered by radicals who were not up to the task: SDS, Weatherman, Symbionese Liberation Army, and probably a lot more that didn't even make it to the back pages of a weekly newspaper.

The connections between the organization specializing in terror and the political part of the movement must be distant and tenuous or the police will link the two, people will turn against the rebels, and everything will fall apart. This creates a new set of problems for the revolutionary. There is not enough space in a short article to dwell at length on the personality and social background characteristics that differentiate insurgent political leaders from their terrorist counterparts, but some introductory statements need to be made on the subject.

Generally speaking, people in the leadership ranks of a revolutionary movement in the early stages of development possess upper and upper-middle class backgrounds. They come from good families, attend college, and avoid the seamier side of life when they are growing up. In their formative years they never encounter anything that could be called a real test of their principles, and they are never forced to compromise these principles in order to get along. One might say that their minds are not cluttered with the many contradictions that are part of everyday life in the real world. They are idealists. Their knowledge of politics is limited. In most cases they know just enough to be dangerous, as the saying goes. They have an infinite love for humanity as a whole and a poor understanding of the person who just likes to kill. Terror is condoned because they believe it will hasten the arrival of a utopia where the bad can be forgotten and the good, the pure, and the beautiful will reign forever. The idealists would never think of killing anyone themselves, at least not directly, face to face. The trauma would be so great if one of them actually did such a thing that he would probably drop out of the movement, write a novel, and turn himself in. The idealists are happy to let someone else do the job.

Killers are attracted to the insurgent organization because it provides a haven from the law and gives them a chance to put their skills to work. They are

disturbed and unstable individuals with background characteristics worlds apart from the movement's leaders. Many revolutionaries fail to take note of this fact because they are blinded by idealism and their unshakable belief in the inherent goodness of man. The insurgents welcome the killers with open arms, entrust them with positions of power and provide the tools of their trade. The killers soon control the terrorist wing of the party.

The killer is a law unto himself. He wants to do his own thing. He cares little about whom he serves and he cares even less about politics. The political arm of the movement is bound to run into difficulty with the terrorist wing. The two groups have very different perspectives, and the state of near isolation that must exist between them makes supervision difficult. The terrorist organization begins to get out of control and the movement faces a major threat from within. Now it is a question of who controls the firepower. The situation is extremely sensitive and there is no way for anyone to escape unscathed. Internecine war is inevitable.

The astute revolutionary will move quickly, before things get out of hand. He will quietly build a paramilitary force that is politically and personally committed to the movement's leaders and their ideology. He will use this force to purge the terrorists and kill anyone in the political organization who has thoughts about using them in an attempt to take over the party leadership. The insurgent organization is very vulnerable at this point if it has not already built up a strong basis of support in the population, for by its own actions it brings the links between the terrorist and political factions closer to the surface. The movement will disintegrate if the leaders are too idealistic and naive to see the handwriting on the wall. In this case, our budding young activists run into another of the pitfalls that the terror weapon holds in store. They are either kicked out of the movement or, more frequently, killed by their former colleagues.

The use of terror engages the revolutionaries in a deadly race against time. It subjects their organization to centrifugal forces of tremendous magnitude. Only the actions of the government in power can keep these forces in check. The longer the government holds out, the greater the probability that the insurgent movement will fold. If the police do not respond to terror in a heavy-handed and indiscriminate manner, and if the government works efficiently to alleviate some of the problems that create widespread discontent, then it will not be long before the revolutionaries are at each other's throats.

Combatting Terrorism in a Democracy

The key to successful terrorism is also the key to combatting it. Make someone else do the work for you. Terrorism succeeds when it gets law enforcement personnel to commit acts that alienate people from the government. Countermeasures succeed

when they increase the centrifugal force in an insurgent organization to the point where the revolutionaries destroy themselves. It would not be exaggerating things to say that revolutionaries attain power only when their degree of internal disorganization is less than that of the government they overthrow. As a rule of thumb, keep your own ranks united and sow the seeds of discord in the enemy camp.

Combatting terrorism in a democracy is not an easy task. The first requirement is information. One should know who the terrorists are, or at least something about their parent political organization. This information should be gathered prior to the outbreak of terrorist activities. How do we get this information? Now there's a real touchy subject. Democracies are particularly vulnerable to terrorism because of the legal problems involved in obtaining information on insurgent organizations. Further, many of the actions that could be taken to combat terrorism are antidemocratic in nature and open the government to charges of engaging in behavior that smacks of fascism and "secret police" activities. Infiltration of a revolutionary organization and the employment of *agent provocateurs* is one way to break into an insurgent movement and crack it open, but it involves a great risk to the legitimate government. We could talk around this subject all day and never come up with a satisfactory answer given the nature of the problem. The problem is this: *the only way to fight terrorism in a truly democratic fashion is to have government, with the consent of the citizenry, remove all conditions that either cause discontent or create people who enjoy killing for its own sake. Anything short of this involves a trade-off between the cure and the disease.* Which alternatives pose the greatest danger to the government? Should law enforcement authorities gather information prior to an outbreak of terrorist activity and take the chance that a citizen's rights will be infringed upon, or should they wait until the murders begin? We now face the horns of the dilemma that impales naive revolutionaries. If an insurgent organization is to be nipped in the bud it will have to be infiltrated or at least watched closely by free-wheeling agents who can be dissociated from law enforcement authorities if they blow their cover.⁷

The trade-offs involved in combatting terrorism are just as subtle and delicate as the terrorist weapon itself. Ideally, decisions are made on the basis of reason rather than emotion. Political and psychological factors are entered into the calculations. The effects of each move are considered from the perspective of the insurgents and the population at large. This demands that government forces possess a good knowledge of politics. Here we encounter another stumbling block in the fight against terror in a democracy. It is fashionable to argue that the military should avoid politics altogether. The disastrous actions of the German Army during the years 1918-1933

are frequently cited as an example of the perils that a politically active military pose to a democracy. Once this premise is accepted the next logical step is to argue that the military must be kept altogether ignorant of politics. This, I contend, is a comfortable but erroneous idea. It is comfortable because it frees the civilian government from concern with the military, and it allows the military to avoid a subject that contains no absolute rights or wrongs. The idea is erroneous because the German Army failed not by entering the political sphere, but by engaging in something that it knew little about. A counter-terror campaign could fail for the same reason. Ignorance of the law is no defense, a judge will say to a defendant. Where terror is concerned, ignorance of politics is no defense either.

A little knowledge about revolution and revolutionaries can go a long way toward combatting terrorism. The above discussion pointed to the fact that an insurgent organization needed two groups with separate areas of expertise -- politics and murder -- to get off the ground. Therefore, organizations that merely talk revolution will not be a threat until the conversation turns to the planning of violence. The danger point is reached when revolution ceases to be parlor conversation and hard-core killers join the movement or are created from within the existing ranks. Most of the killers recruited from the outside will have police records, and this should provide the authorities with a handle on the terrorist faction. Anything that brings young, idealistic, educated intellectuals from the upper classes together with hardened criminals or psychopaths ought to be given a second look. The Symbionese Liberation Army got its start when university students began to teach courses at The California Medical Facility at Vacaville, which has been described as a **maximum-security prison staffed and oriented to deal not with the physically disabled but essentially with the mentally and emotionally disordered. The prison has always held a number of intelligent but quixotic and highly volatile inmates. Restless types. Doers. Achievers.**⁸

The students sympathized with the inmates and the two took up arms together. In terms of the perspective on terror presented here, they were doomed from the start. Nevertheless, they made a lot of noise before they were silenced.

What first appears as a weakness in the government's position can often be turned to advantage when viewed in a different light. Talk is cheap, the old saying goes. The freedom that allows civil liberation organizations to publicize alleged infractions of individual rights by law enforcement authorities is the same freedom that most revolutionary groups

use to announce their presence. The existence of a revolutionary movement is usually signalled by its own propaganda. As long as the movement functions in the open it can be monitored without infringing upon the liberties necessary for the continued existence of a viable democracy. The longer the revolutionaries talk, the more contradictions they find in their own position, and the greater the number of internal squabbles that arise to divide the movement.

We should remember that a revolutionary's base of support is a population dissatisfied with the existing government. Insurgent organizations are a good source of cogent and sometimes compelling analyses of conditions that are alienating the electorate. Radicals may lack firsthand knowledge of social and political reality, but their heartfelt sympathy for the victims of inequality and injustice often makes up for it. If allowed to speak -- within reason, of course -- the insurgent will point out areas where the government can improve its relation with the populace before things reach a breaking point. If he is dismissed out of hand and silenced, then conditions that may seem intolerable continue and the revolutionary goes underground. His activity is now much harder to monitor and his base of support is likely to widen. This may be a bitter pill to swallow for those who believe that every instance of organized anti-system behavior is the work of godless communists and crackpot professors who should be shot as soon as they open their mouths. If the problem was that simple then the solution wouldn't be so complex.

Forcing premature silence on an insurgent group not only deprives the government of needed criticism and drives revolutionaries underground. It also takes the powerful weapon of co-optation out of government hands. Most revolutionaries are young people who have achieved substantial amounts of self-esteem but have not found an economic position in the existing order that will allow them to self-actualize. Anyone who has seen co-optation in action has seen the revolutionary process work in reverse. It's like magic. Overnight, the chance for a meaningful career in the system can convert a furry, slogan-shouting apparition in dungarees to a clean-shaven citizen in a button-down suit. The vehemence with which rebels decry co-optation is a measure of its effectiveness.

Overnight, the chance for a meaningful career in the system can convert a furry, slogan-shouting apparition in dungarees to a clean-shaven citizen in a button-down suit.

Most leaders of revolutionary organizations can be bought off in the early stages of the movement without much trouble. If the lid is clamped down hard, however, they will go on to raise all kinds of hell. Lenin is a good example. He was a brilliant student

with a first rate mind. His brother was implicated in a plot to assassinate the Czar and was hanged. Lenin was blacklisted. He was not allowed to continue his formal education or emigrate. Only a fool would let a man of Lenin's caliber become an enemy. He could have been neutralized by sending him to Switzerland. There, after mourning the loss of his brother, he would have opted for an academic career. Today, digging through the dusty archives of a Swiss university, we would find a writeup on Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (*Lenin was a nom de guerre*), who taught economics and collected butterflies in his spare time. It seems that Professor Ulyanov was born in Russia but eventually lost contact with folks back home. His preoccupation with mathematical models of the economic system was a standing joke. Student radicals found him a complete bore. He retired with a small pension. The old Prof cut quite a figure at the local beergarden, where he would meet with former students and hoist a few with his cronies. Instead, Lenin went to jail and then to exile in Siberia. This forced him to concentrate on events in Russia rather than a career in a foreign country. It put him in contact with other political prisoners and taught him how to survive in the underground.⁹ By the time he finally left Russia he was a seasoned revolutionary totally committed to overthrowing the Czarist government.

Conclusions

Terror is a political and psychological weapon which requires as much knowledge to fight as it does to use. An uninformed response is likely to be worse than no response at all. America's terrorists have been so unsophisticated and inept that we have not had to meet their challenge head on. Lenin spent years studying the process of revolution and the role that terror plays in it. When the time came he was ready. If there are any Lenins around -- and we know less than they -- terrorism could be our number one problem.

FOOTNOTES

1. Thomas Perry Thornton, "Terror as a Weapon of Political Agitation," in *Internal War*, ed. by Harry Eckstein (New York: The Free Press, 1964), p. 73.
2. A. H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review*, 1943, 50, 370-396.
3. James C. Davies, *Human Nature in Politics* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1963), pp. 9-10.
4. See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958). This volume is reprinted from the edition of 1651.
5. See David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1965).
6. Lewis A. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York: Free Press, 1956), p. 80.
7. The Watergate nightmare illustrates some of the problems that can arise when people who are politically naive go looking for information. The fatal flaw in the whole operation involved target selection rather than choice of methods, per se. One does not use surreptitious means to gather information about groups that the population considers legitimate, and one has to be utterly naive to employ such methods against the largest legitimate political party in the country. If the Watergate burglars were caught in an apartment reportedly occupied by Bernardine Dohrn, the leader of the radical Weatherman faction of SDS, not much would have been said.
8. John Pascal and Francine Pascal, *The Strange Case of Patty Hearst. A Signet Special* (New York: The New American Library, 1974), p. 82.
9. See Bertram D. Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1960), pp. 87-9 for a brief discussion of this period in Lenin's life. See pp. 127-146 for a description of his activities while in jail and exile.

END