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# THE HIDDEN TERROR

Tony Sheather

2018, Spring

The world is now too familiar with daily stories and tragedies of terror. The most conspicuous culprits are fundamental Moslems in both the Middle East, remnants of AL-Qaeda, the Muslim Brotherhood and ISIS and the disillusioned, disenfranchised or malevolent in the West. The result has been a series of shocking attacks, the most infamous scar the lives of people in Europe, U.S, Asia and Australia. Yet the history of terror is long and the greatest exponents are those that are most ignored.

In modern times, the anarchist symbolised by Nechayev and depicted by Conrad persisted as the popular image of the terrorist. For many in the 19th and 20th century the fanatical revolutionary, the ruthless assassin, the black-clothed bomb-carrying figure represented this reality. Anarchists of the deed there were, but these were a minority of anarchists and often those so designated were either not anarchists, like the Serbian nationalist, Gavrilo Princip, or innocent, such as Sacco and Vanzetti.

One exception was the American anarcho-communist, Alexander Berkman, whose attempted killing of industrialist Henry Frick resulted in survival for one and long imprison-

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Anarcho-Syndicalist Review, #73, Spring, 2018, page 15

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ment for the other. Berkman's book, "Prison Memoirs" reads as the story of a brave and intelligent man, a person of great idealism, far removed from the necrophilic bombers of today.

The revival of individual or small group terrorism resurfaced in the 1960's, and grew in the 1970's. U. S. publicity anointed the Weathermen as such, despite their assault on property and not people, but their philosophy was Marxist-Leninist as were the beliefs of the Red Brigade in Italy who kidnapped and killed former Prime Minister, Aldo Moro. The German Red Army Faction (popularly titled Baader-Meinhof Gang) were avowed Marxist -Leninists, so too was the Japanese Red Army. The former killed banker Jurgen Ponto in 1977, shortly after industrialist Hanns Schleyer. The latter specialised in hijacking planes, twenty-six passengers dying in the Lod Airport massacre in Tel Aviv in 1972.

The most notorious individual, Venezuela's "The Jackal", was a student from a Moscow University, in effect a Russian agent of the Cold War, allying himself closely with the Palestinian liberation movement. To exonerate modern libertarian socialists and clarify the main traditional and contemporary thrust of anarchism, in 1976 the Brisbane-based Self-Management Group published a booklet entitled "You can't Blow up a Social Relationship: The Anarchist Case Against Terrorism".

The greatest terrorists throughout the centuries, indeed millennia, are those best equipped to do so—the states, particularly the strongest in terms of weaponry, military personnel, economic muscle as well as the social and political concentration of power to intrude, intervene, threaten and distort. All imperial powers have played their historical role, from the ancient Empires of Assyria and Persia, culminating in Roman hegemony, to British colonisation, fascist genocide and the superpowers of today. Of the latter, Russia returns to dictatorship, authoritarian China yearns for future glory and the United States stands over the earth like the colossus. Nuclear sabres are rattled while rebellious children are chastised.

of Afghanistan, as Trump flies to Saudi-Arabia to discuss the threat of “radical Islam”, we may indeed question the conventional wisdom that corporate power, pragmatic, self-interested foreign policy and ahistorical definitions and circumscribed perceptions of terrorism mirror truth, reality, humanity.

As I conclude this essay, the devastation and human grief of another extremist Islamic attack in Manchester, the particular obscenity of the murder of children at a concert, highlights the horror and injustice of any form of terrorism. It also yet again tragically portrays the urgency needed to address the deeper betrayals and hypocrisies represented most conspicuously by the Trumps of this world, more frighteningly by pervasive assumptions and accepted institutional violence.

TONY SHEATHER—May 2, 2018

(North Korea must “behave”, Trump tweets, while boasting of his readiness to destroy the world.)

The world today rightly abhors acts of Islamic terrorism. Yet how many people recall U.S. support for Saddam Hussein in an era when he was liquidating the Kurdish minority with chemical weapons purchased from this very country? Some. The world may know of the barbaric reign of the Saudi princes, but how many recall the continuing links with their closest Western ally? More now, after Trump’s visit. Who remembers the 1967 Israeli demolition of Egypt and the collapse of the Egyptian secular state of Nasser? Israel’s destruction of the Palestine Liberation Army saw the rise of Hamas and Hezbollah’s popularity in Lebanon increased as a result of driving Israel out of Lebanon in 2002 and introducing some social reform.

Pakistani extremism flourished as Reagan’s administration supported dictator Zia ul Haq. The jihadi of Afghanistan were funded and organised by the U.S. to counter Russian occupation during the Cold War. The fact that Osama Bin-Laden was active in supporting the mujahedeen and hence a beneficiary, even ally, may be noted.

Surveying these events, it is hard to deny Chomsky’s observation that: “Since the Second World War, the United States has been the world’s strongest outside support of extremist Islamic fundamentalism” (*What We Say Goes*, 25). One could add that the erstwhile supporter of regimes such as Assad’s in Syria and Saddam’s Iraq is now the effective invader of these devastated countries and a major contributor to the internal torment.

Many conventional observers criticise Noam Chomsky, but the criticisms should not surprise in a society bereft of any real semblance of radical query or thought. To hear his views regarded as un-American is not surprising, to hear this from the mouths of former radicals like David Horowitz illustrates the limitations of 60’s Leninist critique. To perceive Horowitz’s dramatic transformation as the revisionism psychologically necessary for someone immersed in childhood Communist fervour is

too simplistic, yet to see his present embrace of Donald Trump is to witness a seismic change.

Horowitz's move from celebrated author of the 60's critique of U.S. foreign policy, *From Yalta to Vietnam* and 60's/70's Ramparts editor, to author of *The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America*, an "outing" of 100 Marxist professors at U.S. universities and with Peter Collier, *The Anti-Chomsky Reader* (2004), now New York best-seller *Big Agenda: President Trump's Plan to Save America* (2017) is revelatory. Chomsky's rejoinder: "I never read Horowitz when he was a Stalinist and I don't listen to him now" is a little harsh as even Horowitz's parents had abandoned Stalin after Khrushchev's 1956 revelations. Nonetheless, the attacks confirm the libertarian perspective that dogmatism rarely fades, whatever the philosophical guise.

Could Chomsky be more critical of authoritarian states or movements, opposed to U.S. interests? Certainly one would see more stringent, even vehement, critiques in the writing of social anarchist, later social ecologist, Murray Bookchin. Whether circumscribed or not, Chomsky discerns his purpose as describing his country's aspirations and agenda, leaving the policies of other nations to their scribes. His voice is a unique and urgent one. One of Chomsky's primary virtues is his meticulous citation of damning or illuminating sources derived from the mainstream. A precis of political quotes is vivid illustration:

"A massive bombing campaign in Cambodia...using anything that fires on anything that moves." (Kissinger Tapes, *New York Times*, 27 May, 2004, Washington Post, 2004)

"A logical corollary" of opposition to "radical Arab nationalism" meaning independent Arab nationalism "would be to support Israel as the only pro-West power left in the Near East." (Issues Arising out of the Situation of the Near East, July 29, 1958 in *Foreign Relations of the U.S.* 1958-1960, Vol.12., Ibid, 127.)

It may be relevant to again consider the similarities between mass-ideologies, in this instance atheistic Marxist-Leninism and Islamic fundamentalism.

There is a world of difference between Abdel-Samad and Gilbert Achcar's interpretations. Achcar discerns widespread promotion and acceptance of 'Orientalism' the discourse (evident in pejorative popular notions), "explaining the state of Islamic countries or the fate of Muslims not by history but by some alleged, ahistorical, immutable essence of Islam." (*Perilous Power, Middle East and U.S. Foreign Policy* with Noam Chomsky, 2006, 213). Abdel-Samad recalls the talk that instigated his fatwah: "My argument... had been that a fascist mentality had made its way into Islam long before the rise (in 1928) of the Muslim Brotherhood, that it was a product of the religion's early history." (*Islamic Fascism*, 9). Nonetheless, each contributes to a more nuanced, honest and balanced understanding, one crucial in times of defensiveness, self-justification and mutual condemnation.

I was tempted to entitle these reflections "The Voldemort Terror"- "He (U.S. capitalism, the bourgeois state) who shall not be named". Australian Prime Minister Turnbull cosies up to Trump as Holt did to Johnson. The corporation-owned media dutifully fulfil their compliant role. Here, too, alternative perspectives are caricatured, dismissed or largely ignored. A touch of levity accompanied a small article on page 9 of *The Australian* (Australia's national newspaper) (May 9) entitled: "Nuke Button finds a new home in Trump Tower." We were assured that nuclear annihilation could ensue if pressed and the writer regaled us with amusing anecdotes of Bush's I.D. being thrown in the bin after the assassination attempt and Clinton absent-mindedly mislaying his device. Irony? Fatalism? Surely the stimulus for outrage, condemnation, the exhortation of a saner world? But no.

As the Australian government obsequiously accedes to US "requests" to renew its commitment to the anguish and futility

nam War, voices of sanity and conscience do remain. The spirit of The Catonsville Nine is seen in the enormous and continuing courage of “activists” (in contrast to establishment “thinkers”?) such as Ciaron O'Reilly and The Ploughshares Movement. The seeds of new fruit may emerge from the soil of growing worldwide unease.

In the outpouring of anti-Islamic phobia and vitriol and continuing blindness to the major perpetrators, it is nonetheless important to consider the views of writers such as Hamed Abdel Samad in exploring all manifestations of terror. As a former devout Moslem, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, an Egyptian national living and studying for many years in Germany, a linguist and political scientist, now an atheist, he is in a unique position to observe the dramatic and tragic contrast between West and East existing in the Middle East. His present vulnerability to the literal execution of a threatened fatwah is evidence of his courage and integrity.

His connection of the Moslem religion to Fascist ideology may be contentious—not least to the moderate Moslem majority—but the prophet's pronouncements, writings and actions, however perceived, differ enormously from those of the founder of Christianity. People from an Islamic background may of course point quickly and accurately to the horrors depicted in the Old Testament and the actions of so many Christian leaders throughout history. Hamed Abdel-Samad also poses uncomfortable questions—and offers uncomfortable answers—about the blinkered centuries, the inherent failures of Arab countries in seeking plurality, (representative) democracy and modernisation, their embittered role as historical exiles and victims.

Lebanese-born Marxist academic Gilbert Achcar's positing of Islamic fundamentalism as primarily evident in the institutions of U.S. –supported Saudi Arabia, and his references to the mass-Communist parties existing in Iran and also Indonesia before the CIA- supported coup, does broaden the discussion.

“The Clinton Doctrine was that the United States reserves the right to use military force ‘unilaterally when necessary,’ to defend vital interests such as ‘ensuring access to key markets, energy supplies and key resources’ (Pentagon report to Congress, 1997).

“There's no telling how many wars it will take to create safety in the homeland” (George Bush Junior, 2002).

“There is nothing bin Laden could have hoped for more than the American invasion of Iraq (which is) Osama Bin Laden's gift from America” (Michael Scheur, senior intelligence analyst in pursuing Bin Laden from 1996, *Imperial Hubris*, 2006).

(Selections from Chomsky's *What we say Goes: Conversations on U.S. Power in a Changing World and Interventions*, both 2007)

The litany of perverse state and corporate intent continues in word and deed.

Here, in Chomsky, we listen to the voice of a syndicalist anarchist, a man who exhorts education and popular organisation, not futile violence to confront the corporate and state elites. A more measured and discerning perception than the passionate populist rage to “drain the swamp” as articulated by Trump, one of the very elite he supposedly purports to destroy.

North Korea epitomises the most vile repression and indoctrination. State fanaticism at its worst. Yet one may ask would Stalinism have become so implacable without Western sanctions? Would the youthful tyrant be now vowing revenge had the U.S. not sabotaged peace initiatives in 2005 over the highly questionable Banco Delta Asia allegations during the rule of his father?

U.S. ideological assumptions are illustrated not merely through chilling or pragmatic observations or actions. The very essence of foreign policy is the presupposition that nationalistic interest is the foundation of every political,

strategic or economic endeavour. Trump's triumphalism is blatant but more disturbing is the implicit acceptance that "Large nations do what they wish, while small nations accept what they must" (Thucydides) The very definition of terror becomes absurdly and tragically distorted— "you are terrorists, we are pursuing our legitimate interests in whatever way we choose".

Chomsky is one of the foremost voices viewing nuclear terrorism as the greatest threat to mankind. For those philosophically suspicious or alienated, there are 'neutral' warnings of dire possibilities. Hans Kristensen and Robert Norris from the Federation of American Scientists are regarded as the most reliable and informed voices in relation to the present national stockpiles of these heinous inventions. They discern about 8,000 to 10,000 operational warheads, fairly evenly divided, in the possession of the two superpowers, the U.S. and Russia, 93% of the world's total. 1,800 of the international warheads are on high alert. The writers observe the significant decline in the number of nuclear weapons since the 1980's while attributing this more to the modernisation of these armaments than any great desire to find accord with the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks or Agreements.

The voices reminding the world of these lurking shadows are drowned out by the damning cacophony directed over recent years at Iran, Iraq now North Korea. The U.S. daily death count, domestically and abroad, is an unabated slaughter yet the world press generally still see even a Trump's America as more restrained and responsible than the maverick minnows. The military -industrial complex condemned in the Vietnam years reigns supreme yet is barely discussed in left-liberal let alone more mainstream circles today.

The U.S. annual defence budget hovers around 600 billion dollars a year—over 800 billion if "secondary" expenditure areas are included— and its contribution to arms sales is predictably, by far, the greatest. From 2012 to 2016 the United States ex-

ported State-approved arms worth around 200 billion dollars, with *Defence News* enthusing about the "healthy" prospects for 2017. This was a 21% increase since the previous 5 years, almost half to the Middle East.

As I write, Trump has signed a 110 billion dollars armaments' deal with Saudi Arabia, to reach 350 billion dollars over the next ten years. This, with the nation producing the majority of terrorist attacks within the United States, including of course, 9/11. The five main recipients of international armaments in this period included Saudi Arabia, the Arab Emirates, China and Pakistan, countries with tyrannical regimes, one party rule or chaotic internal injustice and instability. Australia now approves the contract worth 50 billion dollars for 12 submarines from France and is seventh on the list encompassing the past 5 years. The major corporations are names redolent of complicity in the Vietnam War—Lockheed, Boeing, Northrop, Honeywell, General Electrics... (Stockholm Institute). A perusal of the internet, notably the *Financial Times*, reveals the gathering of the same vultures, to now sell arms to Communist Vietnam. Political ideology does not impede the business of mutually assured terror and profit ("Obama lifts 50 years Arms sale Embargo on Vietnam", *Financial Times*, May 23, 2016).

Chomsky cites international law specialists Friel and Falk's critique of the *New York Times* to the effect that 70 editorials in relation to the U.S.'s incursion into Iraq did not include the words "U.N. Charter" and "International Law" (*The Record of the Paper; How the New York Times Misrepresents United States Foreign Policy*, 2004). The United States since the early 1970's has easily overtaken and outstripped the former U.S.S.R as the foremost user of the Security Council veto, always, as with the latter and other Big Powers, to stymie opposition to invasion or control in its perceived "spheres of influence".

However, while a far cry from the C.N.D. mass-rallies of condemnation and the international protest against the Viet-