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State Terror in the Middle East

International Terrorism: Image and Reality

Noam Chomsky

Introduction

St. Augustine tells the story of a pirate captured by Alexander the Great, who asked him “how he dares molest the sea.” “How dare you molest the whole world?,” the pirate replied. “Because I do it with a little ship only, I am called a thief; you, doing it with a great navy, are called an emperor.”

The pirate’s answer was “elegant and excellent,” St. Augustine relates. It reaches to the heart of the cynical and hypocritical frenzy over “international terrorism” currently being orchestrated by our propaganda systems as a cover for western violence, though a second factor is still lacking: thieves and emperors alike are exempt from the charge when they are on “our side.” There is also a further qualification: emperors on the other side may be accused of complicity in these crimes, often on spurious grounds, when such charges will help arouse public support for expansion of the military system or Third World intervention. Two major factors, then, yield the working definition of the concept “international terrorism” among civilized people in the West: the term refers to acts carried out by an official enemy, not “one of us”; and by a thief, not an emperor, though an enemy emperor may be charged with complicity when some purpose of our own terrorist states is served thereby.

The second factor also provides the working definitions of the paired concepts “terrorism” and “retaliation,” the latter a form of terrorism carried out by “our side,” sometimes called a “preemptive strike” when no prior act can be conjured up by the propaganda system. In the real world, every terrorist act

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has its antecedents, but only certain of these may be justified as “retaliation” or “preemption” — those that fall within official usage as just explained.

The second factor carries over to outright aggression, a war crime carried out by enemies, from which the West is exempt by definition. A study sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation, the British Council of Churches, and other organizations counts some 125 military conflicts since World War II, 95% in the Third World, in most cases involving foreign forces, with western powers accounting for 79% of the interventions, and communist powers for 6% (Sivard, 1981). Only the latter constitute aggression. Thus when the United States attacked South Vietnam in 1962 — the year when the U.S. Air Force began direct bombing as part of an effort to drive several million people into concentration camps, after the U.S. client state had already massacred some 80,000 southerners — this was not aggression, but rather defense, and so it remained as the U.S. aggression escalated throughout Indochina. It was defense against “internal aggression,” so Adlai Stevenson declaimed in a wonderfully Orwellian phrase in 1964, or defense against terrorists supported from abroad.

Soviet party liners explain the “defense of Afghanistan” in similar terms, and with no less justice. The conventions extend to the outer reaches of the imperial domains. Thus the editor of *Die Zeit*, Josef Joffe, describes the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan simply as “the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan”: in the case of an official enemy, facts are facts. But the U.S. attack against South Vietnam, and then all of Indochina, is merely “the hapless, costly, and society-rending intervention in Southeast Asia” — the reference is to the “rending” of American society, not the societies of the victims, needless to say (Joffe, 1981).

U.S. International Terrorism and “Deviant Democracy”

The concept “terrorism” has undergone an interesting evolution over the years as it has been adapted to the needs of the emperor. A United Nations study observes that the concept came into use at the end of the 18th century, primarily to refer “to those acts and policies of Governments which were designed to spread terror among a population for the purpose of ensuring its submission to and conformity with the will of those Governments.” That concept, plainly, is of little benefit to the practitioners of state terrorism. It has therefore been abandoned, and the term “terrorism” has come to be “mainly applied to actions by individuals, or groups of individuals” (U.N. Secretariat, 1975). Whereas the term was once applied to emperors who molest their own subjects and the world, now it is restricted to thieves who molest the powerful.

In the true sense of the term, Libya is a terrorist state: the latest Amnesty International Report lists the killings, through 1985, of 14 Libyan citizens by this terrorist state, four abroad, which comprise the major acts of terrorism

plausibly attributed to Libya. In the course of the hysteria orchestrated about Libya for other reasons, all sorts of charges have been made, but the official record confirms the statement of a senior intelligence official that “what happened a few weeks ago is that Quaddafi, who previously had used his people primarily to assassinate Libyan dissidents, made a clear decision to target Americans” (Beecher, 1986).¹ In the same years, the U.S. client regime of El Salvador killed some 60,000 of its citizens in what the Archbishop described as “a war of extermination and genocide against a defenseless civilian population”; a few weeks later, the security forces who perform the task were hailed by Jose Napoleon Duarte, for their “valiant service alongside the people against subversion,” although while he conceded that “the masses were with the guerrillas” when this exercise began under the Carter-Duarte alliance. Note that this is not mere state terrorism, but international terrorism, and on a massive scale, given the organization, supply, training and direct participation of the ruler of the hemisphere. So too is the massacre of some 70,000 Guatemalans in the same years, when U.S. arms to the murderers flowed at close to the normal level, contrary to many lies, though it was necessary to call in U.S. proxies, the neo-Nazi Argentinean generals and Israel, to implement the slaughter more efficiently, while Reagan and his associates extolled the killers and torturers for their human rights improvements and “total dedication to democracy.” “The striking feature of Libyan atrocities,” two observers note in reviewing the Amnesty International study of state terror, “is that they are the only ones whose numbers are sufficiently limited that the individual cases can be enumerated,” in striking contrast to Argentina, Indonesia, or the Central American states where the emperor molests the world.²

U.S. international terrorism in El Salvador is hailed as a magnificent achievement across the mainstream political spectrum in the United States because it laid the basis for what is called “democracy” in western parlance: namely, the rule of elite groups serving the needs of the Global Enforcer with the public reduced to occasional ratification of elite decision. In El Salvador, the United States organized what Edward Herman and Frank Brodhead call “demonstration elections” to pacify the home front, carried out in an atmosphere of “terror and despair, macabre rumor and grisly reality,” in the words of the observers of the British Parliamentary Human Rights Group, while the U.S. press lauded this demonstration of our passionate commitment to democracy, as *Pravda* perhaps also does under similar circumstances (Herman and Brodhead, 1984).³

Guatemala is also considered a success, for similar reasons. When half the population is marched to the polls at gunpoint after it has been properly traumatized by U.S.-backed violence, American liberals and democratic socialists are overjoyed at this progress towards democracy — untroubled by the rise in death-squad killings after the elections (including at least 94 deaths and 35

disappearances in the weeks following President Marco Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo's January inauguration; by the open recognition by the newly elected president that he can do nothing given the roots of actual power in the military and the oligarchy; by the perception that those in civilian government are merely "the managers of bankruptcy and misery" (Council on Hemispheric Affairs, 1986a), and by the fact that the enthusiastic reaction of the left-liberals, displayed with the typical pose of self-congratulation, converts the elections into a means for the U.S. to participate more fully in state terror and repression, as in El Salvador. For this essential reason, elections in U.S. terror states are often a tragedy for the domestic population.

When U.S.-trained elite battalions sweep through villages to torture and mutilate, or the U.S. proxy army bombs fleeing peasants and defenseless villages under direct control and coordination by the U.S. Air Force, that does not count as "terrorism" in official parlance, and certainly not as "international terrorism." But if someone were to try to provide arms to enable the victims to defend themselves from the Pol Pot-style terrorism organized by the emperor who molests the world, that would be "subversion," a crime that calls forth wrath and retribution, even when it is merely fabricated to justify further acts of international terrorism against Nicaragua.

In its *Human Rights Report for 1985*, the Council on Hemispheric Affairs singles out Guatemala and El Salvador as the hemisphere's worst rights violators, the sixth consecutive year that these two terrorist states — and U.S. clients — have been so honored. These were "the only two governments in this hemisphere that abducted, killed and tortured political opponents on a systematic and widespread basis," thanks to the commitment of the U.S. and its clients to wholesale terrorism and the enthusiastic support mobilized at home, particularly in the case of El Salvador. The only competitor for first prize in Central America is the proxy army organized, trained and supplied by the emperor and sent into Nicaragua from its Honduran and Costa Rican bases to torture, terrorize, mutilate, and destroy and thus to compel the government to desist from the crime of diverting resources to the needs of the poor majority (Council on Hemispheric Affairs, 1986b).

Organization of a terrorist proxy army to subdue the domestic population of a client state is considered a legitimate if distasteful chore. More generally, as Jeane Kirkpatrick explained, "forceful intervention in the affairs of another nation" is neither "impractical" nor "immoral" — merely illegal, a crime for which people were hanged at Nuremberg and Tokyo, a trifling irrelevance to the totalitarian mind. The assumption is so broadly accepted that there is no detectable opposition to forceful U.S. intervention in El Salvador, as long as it succeeds in suppressing "the people's organizations fighting to defend their most fundamental human rights," in the words of the martyred Archbishop Romero as he pleaded with President Carter not to send military aid to the

murderous junta, as of course he did, setting off the huge slaughter that still continues.

In the case of Nicaragua, military aid to the U.S. proxy army is debated, but not on grounds of principle: the question is how it will affect U.S. interests, the only consideration that counts. As for international law, the few who deign to consider that frivolous issue can easily dismiss it. “The argument from international law lacks all credibility,” Irving Kristol explains. True, “a great power should not ordinarily intervene in the domestic affairs of a smaller nation,” but this principle is overcome if “another great power has previously breached this rule.” Since it is “beyond dispute” that “the Soviet Union has intervened in Nicaragua” by providing arms and technicians “in both the military and civilian spheres,” then the U.S. has the right, under international law, “to do what it certainly seems sensible and expedient to do,” namely, to send our proxy armies to attack Nicaragua (Kristol, 1981; 1986).

By the same token, the Soviet Union has a perfect right to invade Denmark — far more of a security threat to it than Nicaragua is to the United States — since it is “beyond dispute” that the U.S. provides Denmark with assistance, and certainly would if the USSR were to exercise the right of aggression accorded it by the logic of this respected commentator, one of the many reactionary jingoists who have misappropriated and abused the term “conservative.”

It should not be thought that this commitment to lawlessness and international terrorism is restricted to the jingoist extreme; it holds with little variation across the mainstream of opinion, as the great debate over the U.S. attack against Nicaragua shows with brilliant clarity. When we read in the editorials of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, and hear from Senatorial doves, that we must “contain” and “isolate” the tiny and impoverished country that we are attacking with our terrorist armies, and that “Nicaragua is a cancer, and we must cut it out” (Secretary of State George Shultz),⁴ the words evoke historical memories. I am just old enough to remember Adolf Hitler raving about defending Germany from the aggression of the Poles and excising the cancer of the Jews before they destroy Germany, while good Germans either applauded or were silent, as Americans are today. A high-ranking western diplomat in Managua with impeccable right-wing credentials described the U.S. as becoming a “deviant democracy” following a “crypto-fascist” foreign policy (Robert Ryan, 1986). The policies themselves and the domestic reaction to them, not to speak of the astonishing flood of lies in which they are clothed, lends credence to this view.

When the U.S. government states that the United Nations Charter permits it to carry out “self-defense against future attacks” — the official justification for the bombing of Libya — the last vestiges of international law and order have been torn to shreds by the “bizarre cowboy leader” engaged in acts of

“madness,” as Canada’s leading newspaper describes him. And in this operation, timed carefully to mobilize support for Our Leader as Congress prepared to vote on his plans to escalate the terror war against Nicaragua, the President acted with the full and enthusiastic support of elite opinion in this increasingly “deviant democracy.” Europe should take note, before it is too late.⁵

The *contra* forces are admitted to be a “proxy army” even by their supporters.⁶ Their grisly atrocities are recorded in careful and detailed studies by human rights groups, charitable development agencies, priests and others, and are occasionally noted, then forgotten. U.S. reporters, in contrast, are singularly incapable of discovering any such facts, and the State Department adopts a stance of “intentional ignorance,” in the words of a high-ranking official.⁷ That the *contras* are essentially a “terrorist” force headed by Somocista officers is noted in a 1982 Pentagon intelligence report, leaked in 1984. A March 1986 report by the same office finds the command unchanged, as are their practices, as of today (Defense Intelligence Agency, 1982; Council on Hemispheric Affairs, 1986).⁸ It should, then, not surprise us to learn that they have been adopted and trained more effectively in their terrorist vocation by the CIA, which was directed to “the support of terrorism around the world,” in the words of the document that launched its operations in 1947.⁹

The “Evil Scourge of Terrorism” and the Middle East

But U.S. terrorism in Central America and elsewhere is excluded from discourse over international terrorism on the principles already discussed, so let us rejoin the community of respectable and decent people and accept the conventions, focusing our attention on the Middle East, the source of the cancer that evokes such horror in the civilized world. A poll conducted by the Associated Press among editors and broadcasters, primarily American, selected “Mideast/Mediterranean terrorism” as the top story of 1985.¹⁰ In the early months of 1986, no issue had outraged the civilized public more and the same has been true in earlier years in respectable circles.

To begin with, how shall we understand “terrorism”? In keeping with the convention that the emperor must control our language and thought, let us accept with no further comment the definition provided in the official United States code “‘act of terrorism’ means an activity that”:

(A) involves a violent act or an act dangerous to human life that is a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or any State, or that would be a criminal violation if committed within the jurisdiction of the United States or of any State; and (B) appears to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the

conduct of a government by assassination or kidnapping (United States Congressional and Administrative News, 1984).

Still pursuing the convention, we will not dwell on the fact that under this definition, the U.S. political leadership would be brought to the bar of justice and condemned — hanged, were the standards of Nuremberg invoked — for Central America alone.¹¹ Let us consider just the terrorism originating in the Middle East/Mediterranean region.

On October 17, 1985, President Reagan met in Washington with Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres. “Mr. Peres’s visit comes at a moment of unusual American-Israeli harmony,” the *New York Times* reported. And indeed, Peres was warmly welcomed by the American media as a man of peace, and commended for his forthright commitment to “bear the cost of peace in preference to the price of war.” The President said that he and Mr. Peres discussed “the evil scourge of terrorism” and “agreed that terrorism must not blunt our efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East” (*New York Times*, October 17 and 18, 1985).

It would require the talents of a Jonathan Swift to do justice to this exchange between two of the world’s leading terrorist commanders, whose shared conception of “peace,” furthermore, excludes entirely one of the two groups that claim the right of national self-determination in the former Palestine: the indigenous population. So extreme is Reagan-Peres rejectionism that the Palestinians are not even to be permitted to select their own representatives in eventual negotiations, and the concept that they might have rights comparable to those of the settlers who largely displaced them is excluded *a priori*, with the full support of articulate opinion in the United States. The Jordan Valley is “an inseparable part of the State of Israel,” this man of peace and respected figure in the Socialist International declared while touring Israeli settlements there in 1985, consistent with his unwavering stand that “the past is immutable and the Bible is the decisive document in determining the fate of our land,” and that a Palestinian state would “threaten Israel’s very existence” (*Ha’aretz*, March 22, 1985; Chomsky, 1983: 54, 75, 202). His conception of a Jewish state, much lauded here for its moderation, does not *threaten*, but rather *eliminates* the existence of the Palestinian people. But this consequence is considered of little moment, at worst a minor defect in an imperfect world.

Neither Peres nor any other Israeli leader has moved an inch from the position of current President Chaim Herzog in 1972 that the Palestinians can never be “partners in any way in a land that has been holy to our people for thousands of years,” though the “doves” prefer to exclude West Bank areas of heavy Arab population from the Jewish State to avoid what they euphemistically term “the demographic problem.” Israel’s position, with U.S. support,

remains that of Prime Minister (now Defense Minister) Yitzchak Rabin, when the PLO and the Arab states submitted a proposal for a peaceful two-state settlement to the United Nations in January 1976: Israel will reject any negotiations with the PLO even if it recognizes Israel and renounces terrorism, and will not enter into “political negotiations with Palestinians,” PLO or not (Beilin, 1985: 147; Chomsky, 1982: 267–268). Neither Peres nor Reagan have been willing to consider the explicit proposals by the PLO — which has as much legitimacy as did the Zionist organization in 1947 — for negotiations leading to mutual recognition in a two-state settlement in accord with the broad international consensus that has been blocked at every turn by the U.S. and Israel for many years.

Israel's Bombing of Tunisia

These crucial political realities provide the necessary framework for any discussion of “the evil scourge of terrorism,” which, in the racist terms of American discourse, refers to terrorist acts by Arabs, but not by Jews, just as “peace” means a settlement that honors the right of national self-determination of Jews, but not of Palestinians.

Peres arrived in Washington to discourse on peace and terrorism with his partner in crime directly after having sent his bombers to attack Tunis, where they killed 20 Tunisians and 55 Palestinians, Israeli journalist Amnon Kapeliouk reported from the scene. The target was undefended, “a vacation resort with several dozen homes, vacation cottages, and PLO offices side by side and intermingled in such a way that even from close by it is difficult to distinguish” among them. The weapons were more sophisticated than those used in Beirut, “smart bombs” apparently, which crushed their targets to dust.

The people who were in the bombed buildings were torn to shreds beyond recognition.... “Some of the wounded were brought out from under the rubble, apparently healthy and unhurt,” my guide told me. “Half an hour later they collapsed in contortions and died. Apparently their internal organs had been destroyed from the power of the blast” (*Yediot Ahronot*, November 15, 1985).

One of the victims of the Tunis bombing was Mahmoud el-Mughrabi, born in Jerusalem in 1960, under detention 12 times by the age of 16, and one of the informants for the London *Sunday Times* exposé of torture in Israel (June 19, 1977), who “managed to escape to Jordan after years of increasingly marginal existence under steadily deteriorating conditions of the military occupation,” according to a memorial notice by Israeli Jewish friends that was repeatedly denied publication in Arab newspapers in East Jerusalem by Israeli military censorship.¹² These facts would, of course, be meaningless in the United

States, if only because the *Sunday Times* study was largely excluded from the press, though in the liberal *New Republic* it was noted, with an explicit defense of torture of Arabs.¹³

Tunisia had accepted the Palestinians at Reagan's behest after they had been expelled from Beirut in a U.S.-supported invasion that left some 20,000 killed and much of the country destroyed. "You used a hammer against a fly," military correspondent Ze'ev Schiff was informed by "a leading Pentagon figure, a general who is familiar with the Israeli military (IDF) and several other armies of the region." "You struck many civilians without need. We were astounded by your attitude to the Lebanese civilians," a feeling shared by Israeli soldiers and senior officers who were appalled at the savagery of the attack and the treatment of civilians and prisoners¹⁴ — though support in Israel for the aggression and for the Begin-Sharon team increased in parallel to the atrocities, reaching its very high peak after the terror bombing of Beirut in August. Shimon Peres, the man of peace, reserved his doubts until the costs to Israel began to mount with the postwar Sabra-Shatila massacres and the toll taken by the Lebanese resistance, which undermined Israel's plan of establishing a "New Order" in Lebanon with Israel in control of large areas of the south.

There can be no serious doubt of U.S. complicity in the Tunis attack. The U.S. did not even warn the victims — close American allies — that the killers were on the way. No one can seriously credit the American pretense that the Sixth Fleet and the U.S. surveillance system in the region were incapable of detecting the Israeli planes refueled on route over the Mediterranean.

The U.S. officially welcomed the Israeli attack as "a legitimate response" to "terrorist attacks" (Gwertzman, 1985), but drew back from such open support after an adverse global reaction while abstaining from the U.N. condemnation, alone as usual. The abstention was bitterly condemned in the U.S. as yet another instance of a "pro-PLO" and "anti-Israel" stance, and a refusal to strike hard at — carefully selected — terrorists.

The attack on Arafat's PLO headquarters was allegedly in retaliation for the murder of three Israelis in Larnaca, Cyprus, by assailants who were captured and face trial for their crime. "Western diplomatic experts on the PLO" doubt that Arafat was aware of the planned mission, which appears to have been carried out by a Syrian-based Palestinian group, and "the Israelis, too, have dropped their original contention that Mr. Arafat had been involved."¹⁵ Apologists for Israeli terrorism here, who assure us that "Israel's Tunisian raid precisely targeted people responsible for terrorist activities," are unimpressed, explaining that whatever the facts, "the larger moral responsibility for atrocities...is all Yasir Arafat's" (*New Republic*, October 21, 1985; January 20, 1986).

In an address to the Israeli lobbying group AIPAC, Attorney-General Edwin Meese stated that the U.S. will hold Arafat "accountable for acts of international terrorism," quite generally, facts being irrelevant (Associated Press, April 4, 1986). The Tunis attack was consistent with Israeli practice since the earliest days of the state: retaliation is directed against those who are vulnerable, not the perpetrators of atrocities. A standard condemnation of the PLO is that "instead of directly attacking security-minded foes like Israel, for example, Palestinians have attacked softer Israeli targets in Italy, Austria and elsewhere" (McFadden, 1985), another sign of their vile and cowardly nature. The similar Israeli practice, initiated long before and vastly greater in scale, escapes notice in the midst of the general praise for Israeli heroism and military efficiency.

One might argue that the Israeli bombing does not fall under state terrorism because it is an instance of the far more serious crime of "aggression," as the U.N. Security Council maintained; but that mistakes the moral and intellectual climate in the United States, where nothing of the sort can even be contemplated. Or one might hold that it is unfair to apply to Israel the definition of "international terrorism" designed by others. To counter the latter complaint, we may consider its own doctrine, as formulated by U.N. Ambassador Benjamin Netanyahu. The distinguishing factor in terrorism, he explained, is "a deliberate targeting of civilians," "deliberate and systematic murder and maiming designed to inspire fear" (Beyette, 1986). Clearly the Tunis attack and other Israeli atrocities over the years fall under this concept, though most acts of international terrorism do not, including the most outrageous terrorist attacks against Israelis (Ma'alot, the Munich massacre, the coastal road atrocities in 1978 that were the pretext for invading Lebanon, etc.), or even airplane hijacking or taking of hostages quite generally, the very topic of the conference he was attending.

As 1985 came to an end, the press reviewed the record of "a year of bloody international terrorism," including the murders in Larnaca on September 25 and the Achille Lauro hijacking and murder of an American tourist on October 7. Israel's October 1 attack was not included in the list. In its lengthy year-end review of terrorism, the *Times* briefly notes the Tunis bombing as an example of retaliation, not terrorism (UPI, *Los Angeles Times*, December 28, 1985; McFadden, 1985).

The Tunis raid yields a measure of the hypocrisy of those who fulminate about international terrorism while applauding the terrorism of their client states. Suppose that Nicaragua were to carry out bombings in Washington aimed at Reagan, Shultz and other gangsters, killing some 100,000 people "by accident." This would be entirely justified retaliation by American standards, if indeed a ratio of 25 to one is acceptable, as in the Larnaca-Tunis exchange, though we might add for accuracy that in this case at least the perpetrators

would be targeted and there is no question about who initiated the terror, and perhaps the appropriate number of deaths should be multiplied by some factor in consideration of the relative population sizes. "Terrorists, and those who support them, must, and will, be held to account," President Reagan has declaimed (*New York Times*, June 29, 1985), thus providing the moral basis for any such act of retaliation.

In fact, Nicaragua could justify the bombing of Washington on other grounds, appealing to U.S. precedents, in particular, the claim that the U.N. Charter permits the right of "self-defense against future attacks," a right that not even Hitler claimed but that the U.S. now asserts — at a moment when Congress is solemnly debating the administration's plans to escalate the terror attacks against Nicaragua. And Quaddafi plainly has had the right to attack U.S. targets since August 1981, when a U.S. plan to overthrow his government by sabotage and possibly assassination was leaked (Haley, 1984: 271 *fn.*). Indeed, one may ask why the U.S. did not bomb South Africa in May 1985 when South African special forces units were caught in northern Angola on their way to bomb U.S. petroleum installations — not a "future attack" but one then underway.¹⁶ The question, of course, answers itself. A terrorist state constructs its version of "law," and applies it, as the occasion demands.

Israeli "Counterterrorism" in Lebanon

Peres had already distinguished himself as a notable man of peace in Lebanon.¹⁷ After he became Prime Minister, Israel's "counterterror" programs against civilians in occupied southern Lebanon intensified, reaching their peak of savagery with the Iron Fist operations of early 1985, which had "the earmarks of Latin American death squads," reporters on the scene observed. In the village of Zrariya, for example, after several hours of heavy shelling of this and three nearby villages well north of its then-current front lines, the IDF carted off the entire male population, killing 35–40 villagers, some in cars crushed by Israeli tanks; other villagers were beaten or murdered, a tank shell was fired at Red Cross workers who were warned to stay away, and Israeli troops miraculously escaped without casualties from what was officially described as a gun battle with heavily-armed guerrillas. The day before, 12 Israeli soldiers had been killed in a suicide attack near the border, but Israel denied that the attack on Zrariya was retaliation. Unaware of the official posture of deception, Israeli soldiers painted the slogan "Revenge of the Israeli Defense Forces" in Arabic on walls of the town.¹⁸

Elsewhere Israeli gunners shot at hospitals and schools and took "suspects," including patients in hospital beds and operating rooms, for "interrogation" (prisoners are sometimes shot "while trying to escape," in the familiar fashion) or to Israeli concentration camps, among numerous other atrocities that a western diplomat who often travels in the area described as

new depths of “calculated brutality and arbitrary murder” (*LG*, March 2, 6, 1985).

Fighting Terrorism with Terrorism

The head of the IDF liaison unit in Lebanon, General Shlomo Ilya, said that “the only weapon against terrorism is terrorism and that Israel has options beyond those already used for ‘speaking the language the terrorists understand.’” The concept is not a novel one. Thus, Gestapo operations in occupied Europe also “were justified in the name of combating ‘terrorism,’” and one of Klaus Barbie’s victims was found murdered with a note pinned to his chest reading “Terror against Terror” — incidentally, the name adopted by Israeli terrorists in the West Bank. A U.N. Security Council resolution calling for condemnation of “Israeli practices and measures against the civilian population in southern Lebanon” was vetoed by the United States on the grounds that it “applies double standards”; “We don’t believe an unbalanced resolution will end the agony of Lebanon,” Jeane Kirkpatrick explained.¹⁹

To the Israeli high command, the victims of the Iron Fist operations were “terrorist villagers”; it was thus understandable that 13 villagers were massacred by SLA militiamen in the incident that elicited this observation. Yossi Olmert of the Shiloah Institute, Israel’s Institute of Strategic Studies, observed that “these terrorists operate with the support of most of the local population.” An Israeli commander complained that “the terrorist...has many eyes here, because he lives here,” while the military correspondent of the *Jerusalem Post* described the problems faced in combating the “terrorist mercenary,” “fanatics, all of whom are sufficiently dedicated to their causes to go on running the risk of being killed while operating against the IDF,” which must “maintain order and security” despite “the price the inhabitants will have to pay,” arousing his “admiration for the way in which they were doing their job.”²⁰

The same concept of terrorism is widely used by U.S. officials and commentators. Thus the press notes, without comment, that Secretary of State Shultz concern over “international terrorism” became “his passion” after the suicide bombing of U.S. Marines in Lebanon in October 1983, troops that the population saw, quite naturally, as an foreign military force sent to impose the “New Order” established by the Israeli aggression: the rule of right-wing Christians and selected Muslim elites (Oberdorfer, 1986).

As Reagan and Peres were congratulating one another on their principled stand against “the evil scourge of terrorism” before their admiring audience, the press reported yet another terrorist act in southern Lebanon: “Terrorists Kill 6, Demolish U.S.-Owned Christian Radio Station in S. Lebanon,” the headlines read on the same day (*Los Angeles Times*, October 18, 1985). Why should Lebanese terrorists destroy “the Voice of Hope,” run by American

Christian missionaries? The question was barely raised, but let us look into it, in the interest of exploring the concepts of terrorism and retaliation.

Terrorism and Retaliation

One reason is that the station “speaks for the South Lebanon Army” (*New York Times*, October 18, 1985), the mercenary force established by Israel in southern Lebanon to terrorize the population in its “security zone.” The location of the station, near the village of Khiam, is also worthy of note. Khiam has a history, unknown in the U.S. Ze’ev Schiff alluded to this history in the midst of Peres’s Iron Fist operations. He observed that when Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, the village of Khiam was “empty of inhabitants,” though now it has 10,000, and that the Lebanese town of Nabatiya had only 5,000 inhabitants, today 50,000. “These and others will once again be forced to abandon their homes if they permit extremists in their community or Palestinians to attack Israeli settlements,” Schiff explained.²¹ That will be their fate if they mimic the IDF, which was then attacking Lebanese villages, randomly murdering civilians and destroying in defense against the “terrorism [that] has not disappeared” as “Israeli soldiers are harassed daily in southern Lebanon,” the editor of *Ha’aretz* explains (Schocken, 1984).

For his Israeli audience, or the Lebanese to whom the warning was addressed, Schiff did not have to explain why the population of Nabatiya had been reduced to 5,000 and Khiam emptied by 1982. The population had been driven out, with hundreds killed, by Israeli terror bombardment from the early 1970s, and the handful who remained in Khiam were slaughtered during the 1978 invasion of Lebanon, under the eyes of the elite Golani brigade, by Israel’s Haddad militia, which “succeeded in establishing relative peace in the region and preventing the return of PLO terrorists,” the man of peace declared.²² Khiam is also the site of a “secret jail” maintained by “Israel and its local militia allies in south Lebanon...where detainees are held in appalling conditions and subjected to beatings and electric-shock torture, according to former inmates and international relief officials in the area”; the Red Cross reported that “Israelis were running the center” and that it had been refused entry by the IDF. That remained true as of early 1986.²³

There might have been more to say, then, about the terrorist attack by “fanatics” at Khiam on October 17, 1985, were matters such as these considered fit to become part of historical memory alongside of other acts of terror of greater ideological serviceability.

Nabatiya too has further stories to tell. The expulsion of 50,000 of its 60,000 population “mostly because of fear of the [Israeli] shelling” was reported by two *Jerusalem Post* correspondents who were touring southern Lebanon in an effort to unearth evidence of PLO terror and atrocities, and finding little, though there was ample evidence of Israeli terror and its ef-

fects.²⁴ One such bombardment was on November 4, 1977, when Nabatiya “came under heavy artillery fire from [Israeli-supported] Lebanese Maronite positions and also from Israeli batteries on both sides of the frontier — including some of the six Israeli strong points inside Lebanon.” The attacks continued the next day, with three women killed among other casualties. On November 6, two rockets fired by Fatah guerrillas killed two Israelis in Nahariya, setting off an artillery battle and a second rocket attack that killed one Israeli. “Then came the Israeli air raids in which some 70 people, nearly all Lebanese, were killed” (*Economist*, November 19, 1977). This Israeli-initiated exchange, which threatened to lead to a major war, was cited by Egyptian President Sadat as a reason for his offer to visit Jerusalem a few days later (Cooley, 1979; see also Chomsky, 1982: 321; and Chomsky, 1983: 70, 84).

The torment of Nabatiya was rarely noted by the western press, though there are a few exceptions. One of the Israeli attacks was on December 2, 1975, when the Israeli Air Force bombed the town killing many Lebanese and Palestinian civilians, using antipersonnel weapons, bombs, and rockets (Markham, 1975). This raid was unusual only in that it was reported; it evoked little interest or concern in civilized circles, perhaps because it was apparently a “retaliation”: namely, retaliation against the U.N. Security Council, which had just agreed to devote a session to a peace offer by Syria, Jordan and Egypt — supported by the PLO and even “prepared” by the PLO according to Israel’s U.N. representative Chaim Herzog, now President — calling for a peaceful two-state settlement on the internationally recognized borders in accordance with the international consensus blocked by Israel and the U.S., which accordingly vetoed the resolution.

Hostage Populations and the Function of Massacres

Israeli bombing in the early 1970s turned much of southern Lebanon into a wasteland, driving hundreds of thousands of refugees to the north with unknown thousands or tens of thousands of casualties — unknown, because civilized people did not care enough to observe or assess the consequences. In many cases, there was not even a pretense of “retaliation.” The bombing, however, was far from purposeless. As noted by the Israeli diplomat Abba Eban, considered a leading dove, “there was a rational prospect, ultimately fulfilled, that affected populations would exert pressure for the cessation of hostilities.”

Translated into plain language, Eban’s remark means that the entire population of southern Lebanon was being held hostage, to exert pressure on them to compel the Palestinians to accept the status assigned to them by the Labor government represented by Eban, who had declared earlier that the Palestinians “have no role to play” in any peace settlement. Chief of Staff Mordechai Gur explained in 1978 that “for 30 years...we have been fighting against a population that lives in villages and cities.” He noted such incidents as the

bombing of the Jordanian city of Irbid, and the expulsion by bombing of tens of thousands of inhabitants of the Jordan Valley and a million and a half civilians from the Suez Canal, among other examples, all as part of the program of holding civilian populations hostage in an effort to prevent resistance to the political settlement that Israel first imposed by force, and then proceeded to maintain while rejecting the possibility of political settlement, such as Sadat's offer of a full peace treaty on the internationally recognized borders in 1971. Israel's regular practice of "retaliation" against defenseless civilian targets unrelated to the source of terrorist acts (themselves, often retaliation for earlier Israeli terrorism, etc.) also reflects the same conception. It represented a departure, by the early 1950s, from Ben-Gurion's earlier dictum that "reaction is inefficient" unless it is precisely focused: "If we know the family — [we must] strike mercilessly, women and children included" (Chomsky, 1983: 181–182).

Gur's understanding of Israel's wars is surely widely shared among the military command. During the Iron Fist operations of early 1985, Defense Minister Yitzchak Rabin warned that if necessary, Israel would conduct "a policy of scorched earth as was the case in the Jordan Valley during the war of attrition" with Egypt. "Lebanon is a more serious source of terror than it was in 1982," he added, with Shiite terrorists now holding Western Europe in fear (they did not do so prior to the summer of 1982, for unexplained reasons), so that Israel must maintain a zone in the south in which "we may intervene." The veteran paratroop commander Dubik Tamari, who gave the orders to level the Palestinian camp of Ain el-Hilweh by air and artillery bombardment "to save lives" of troops under his command (another notable exercise of the fabled "purity of arms"), justified the action with the comment that "the State of Israel has been killing civilians from 1947," "purposely killing civilians" as "one goal among others."²⁵

Tamari cited as an example the attack on Qibya in 1953, when Ariel Sharon's Unit 101 killed 70 Arab villagers in their homes in alleged retaliation for a terrorist attack with which they had no connection whatsoever; Ben-Gurion pretended on Israeli radio that the villagers were killed by Israeli civilians enraged by Arab terror, "mostly refugees, people from Arab countries and survivors from the Nazi concentration camps," dismissing the "fantastic allegation" that Israeli military forces were involved, a brazen lie which, furthermore, placed Israeli settlements under threat of retaliation for this cold-blooded massacre.

Less known is the fact that a month before the Qibya massacre, Moshe Dayan had sent the terrorist force Unit 101 to drive 4,000 Bedouins of the Azzazma and Tarbin tribes across the Egyptian border, another step in expulsions that had been proceeding from 1950, shortly after the cease-fire. In March 1954, 11 Israelis were murdered in an ambush of a bus in the Eastern

Negev by members of the Azzazma tribe (“unprovoked terrorism”), evoking an Israeli raid on the Jordanian village of Nahaleen with nine villagers killed (“understandable retaliation”). In August 1953, Sharon’s Unit 101 had killed 20 people, two-thirds women and children, at the al-Bureig refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, in “retaliation” for infiltration.²⁶ The cycle of “retaliation” (by Jews) and “terror” (by Palestinians) can be traced back, step-by-step, for many years, an exercise that will quickly reveal that the terminology belongs to the realm of propaganda, not factual description.

The Iron Fist operations of the Israeli Army in southern Lebanon in early 1985 were also guided by the logic outlined by Eban, as already discussed. The civilian population were held hostage under the threat of terror to ensure that they accept the political arrangements dictated by Israel in southern Lebanon and the occupied territories. The warnings remain in effect; the population remain hostages, with no concern in the superpower that finances these operations and bars any meaningful political settlement.

Israeli Wholesale Terrorism in Lebanon

In Lebanon and international waters Israel carries out attacks with utter impunity and abandon. In mid-July 1985, Israeli warplanes bombed and strafed Palestinian camps near Tripoli, killing at least 20 people, most of them civilians, including 6 children under 12. “Clouds of smoke and dust engulfed the Tripoli refugee camps, home to more than 25,000 Palestinians, for several hours after the 2:55 p.m. attack,” which was assumed to be “retaliation” for two car-bomb attacks a few days earlier in Israel’s “security zone” in southern Lebanon. Two weeks later, Israeli gunboats attacked a Honduran-registered cargo ship a mile from the port of Sidon; the ship was delivering cement, according to its Greek captain, when the Israelis set it ablaze with 30 shells and wounding civilians in subsequent shore bombardment when militiamen returned the fire.

The mainstream press did not even bother to report that the following day Israeli gunboats sank a fishing boat and damaged three others, while a Sidon parliamentarian called on the U.N. to end U.S.-backed Israeli “piracy.” The press did report what Israel called a “surgical” operation against “terrorist installations” near Baalbek in the Bekaa valley in January 1984, killing about 100 people, mostly civilians, with 400 wounded, including 150 children in a bombed-out schoolhouse. The “terrorist installations” also included a mosque, a hotel, a restaurant, stores, and other buildings in the three Lebanese villages and Palestinian refugee camp that were attacked, while Beirut news reported that a cattle market and an industrial park were also struck with scores of houses destroyed. A Reuters reporter in the bombed villages said that a second round of bombing began 10 minutes after the first, “adding to the number of those killed or wounded” since men and women had begun dragging dead and

wounded from the wrecked buildings. He saw “lots of children” in hospitals while witnesses reported men and women rushing to schools in a frantic search for their children. The leader of Lebanon’s Shiites denounced “Israeli barbarism,” describing its attacks on “innocent civilians, hospitals and houses of worship” as an attempt “to terrorize the Lebanese people,” but the incident passed without comment in the U.S., in no way affecting Israel’s status as “a country that cares for human life” (*Washington Post*, June 30, 1985), so we may conclude that the victims of this surgical bombing were less than human, as indeed they are, within the racist western consensus.²⁷

The story continues today, with little change. While the eyes of the world were focused in horror on the lunatic terrorists in the Arab world, the press reported that Israel tank cannon poured fire into the village of Sreifa in southern Lebanon, aiming at 30 houses from which the IDF claimed they had been fired upon by “armed terrorists,” resisting their military actions as they allegedly searched for two Israeli soldiers who had been “kidnapped” in the Israeli “security zone” in Lebanon. Kept from the American press was the report by the U.N. peace-keeping forces that Israeli troops “went really crazy” in these operations, locking up entire villages, preventing the U.N. troops from sending in water, milk, and oranges to the villagers subjected to “interrogation” — meaning brutal torture of men and women by Israeli forces or their local mercenaries. The IDF then left with many hostages including pregnant women, some taken to Israel in further violation of international law, destroying houses and looting and wrecking others, while Shimon Peres, the man of peace, said that Israel’s search “expresses our attitude towards the value of human life and dignity.”²⁸

A month later, on March 24, Israeli forces, either IDF or SLA mercenaries, shelled Nabatiya killing 3 civilians and wounding 22 as “shells slammed into the marketplace in the center of town at daybreak as crowds gathered for trading,” allegedly in retaliation for an attack on the mercenary forces in southern Lebanon. A leader of the Shiite Amal vowed that “Israeli settlements and installations will not be beyond the blows of the resistance.” On March 27, a Katyusha rocket struck a schoolyard in northern Israel, injuring 5 people, and eliciting an Israeli attack on Palestinian refugee camps near Sidon, killing 10 people and wounding 22, while Israel’s northern commander stated over Israeli Army radio that the IDF had not determined whether the rocket had been fired by Shiite or Palestinian guerrillas. On April 7, Israeli planes bombed the same camps and a neighboring village, killing two and wounding 20, claiming that terrorists had set out from there with the intent of killing Israeli citizens.²⁹

Of all these events, only the rocket attack on northern Israel merited anguished television coverage and general outrage at “the evil scourge of terrorism,” though this was somewhat muted because of the mass hysteria then be-

ing orchestrated over a Nicaraguan "invasion" of Honduras, as the Nicaraguan Army exercised its legal right of hot pursuit in expelling terrorist gangs sent by the U.S. to demonstrate a show of force just prior to the Senate vote on *contra* aid; recall that the only serious issue under debate in the terrorist state is whether the *contras* can succeed in their aims.

Israel, of course, was neither exercising a legal right of hot pursuit in shelling and bombing towns and refugee camps, nor have its acts of wholesale terrorism and outright aggression in Lebanon ever fallen within this category. But as a client state, Israel inherits from its master the right of terrorism, torture and aggression. And Nicaragua, as an enemy, plainly lacks the right to defend its territory from U.S. international terrorism. Consequently, it is natural that Israel's actions should be ignored, or dismissed as legitimate "retaliation," while congressional leaders of both parties denounce Nicaragua for this renewed demonstration of the threat they pose to regional peace and stability.

After the rocket attack on northern Israel, the press noted that this was "the first time since Israel invaded Lebanon in June 1982, that any Israeli civilians have been hurt in a cross-border attack from Lebanon" (*Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 1986). The reference is standard. The press endlessly repeats that the "Peace for Galilee" operation secured Israel's northern border, preventing Katyusha rocket attacks that had made the northern Galilee a living hell, with many human interest stories on the anguish of the Israeli civilians subject to relentless bombardment by PLO terrorists prior to what the *New York Times* called "the liberation of Lebanon" in 1982.

In so doing, the press merely follows the lead of the two men of peace, Shimon Peres and Ronald Reagan. Peres writes that the "Peace for Galilee" operation was fought "in order to insure that the Galilee will no longer be shelled by Katyusha rockets," and Ronald Reagan, in a typical display of moral cowardice, asks us to "remember that when this [the invasion] all started, Israel, because of the violations of its own northern border by the Palestinians, the PLO, had gone all the way to Beirut," where it was "10,000 Palestinians [!] who had been bringing ruin down on Beirut," not the mad bombers whom he was joyously supplying.³⁰ These and innumerable other accounts, many with heart-rending descriptions of the torment of the people of the Galilee subjected to random Katyusha bombardment, help create the approved picture of Soviet-armed Palestinian fanatics, the central component of the Russian-based international terror network, who compel Israel to invade and strike Palestinian refugee camps and other targets at will, as any state would do, to defend its people from merciless terrorist attack.

The example gives some further insight into the concept of "terrorism" and "retaliation," as conceived in the U.S. ideological system, and into the racist assumptions which, as a matter of course, exclude the suffering of the primary victims, who are Arab and hence less than human.

The Ideological Function of "Palestinian Terrorism" in Israeli Policy

Abandoning the conventions of civilized discourse, we observe, again, that the real world is somewhat different. After the 1978 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Israel carried out extensive bombardment of Lebanon, killing probably thousands of civilians and preparing the ground for an eventual invasion. This was a central part of the Camp David "peace process," which removed the Egyptian deterrent and led to a huge flow of U.S. military and economic aid, thus, quite predictably, allowing Israel to pursue its intended goals: taking over the occupied territories and attacking its northern neighbor. In June 1981, Israel once again broke the cease-fire, bombing Palestinian bases in Lebanon. This evoked Palestinian rocket attacks against northern Galilee, and renewed Israeli bombing, including terror attacks on Beirut. When the cease-fire was again established, some 450 Arabs and six Jews had been killed. Of all these events, history records only the anguish of the Israelis subjected to rocket attacks by PLO terrorists.

It was evident at once that Israel would renew its efforts to invade Lebanon, and it did so, with a long series of provocative actions designed to elicit a PLO response to justify the planned aggression. There was no response, even when Israel bombed Lebanese towns, killing dozens of civilians. As the press occasionally concedes, the northern border was "quiet" — meaning that only Israel carried out terrorist attacks. Finally, Israel seized on the excuse of the attempted assassination of its London ambassador by a group that was at war with the PLO and did not even have an office in Lebanon, invading Lebanon with the full support of the United States, in a manner which is well known.

The real reason for the 1982 invasion was not the threat to the northern Galilee, as the sanitized history would have it, but rather the opposite, as was plausibly explained by Israel's leading specialist on the Palestinians, Yehoshua Porath, shortly after the invasion was launched. The decision to invade, he suggests, "flowed from the very fact that the cease-fire had been observed." This was a "veritable catastrophe" for the Israeli government, because it threatened the policy of evading a political settlement. "The government's hope," he continued, "is that the stricken PLO, lacking a logistic and territorial base, will return to its earlier terrorism; it will carry out bombings throughout the world, hijack airplanes, and murder many Israelis," and thus "will lose part of the political legitimacy it has gained" and "undercut the danger" of negotiations with representative Palestinians, which would threaten the policy — shared by both major political groupings — of keeping effective control over the occupied territories.³¹ The plausible assumption of the Israeli leadership was that those who shape public opinion in the United States — the only country that counts, now that Israel has chosen to become a mercenary state

-serving the interests of its provider — could be counted on to obliterate the actual history and portray the terrorist acts resulting from Israeli aggression and atrocities as random acts of violence ascribable to defects in Arab character and culture, if not racial deficiencies. Recent U.S. commentary on terrorism fulfills these natural expectations with some precision.

The basic points are understood well enough in Israel. Prime Minister Yitzchak Shamir stated over Israeli television that Israel went to war because there was “a terrible danger.... Not so much a military one as a political one.” This prompted the fine Israeli satirist B. Michael to write that “the lame excuse of a military danger, or a danger to the Galilee is dead”; we “have removed the political danger” by striking first, in time; now, “thank God, there is no one to talk to.” Many Israeli journalists have made essentially the same point.

In short, the goals of the war were political, the occupied territories being the prime target. The tale about protecting the border from terrorism is agit-prop, eagerly swallowed by the docile western media. If Palestinian terrorism can be revived, so much the better. And if we can't pin the blame on Arafat, he can at least be stigmatized as “the founding father of contemporary Palestinian violence” (*New Republic*, January 20, 1986), so that his efforts at political settlement can be evaded.

Returning to the Larnaca murders, the PLO claimed that the three victims were Mossad agents, who had been involved in hijacking ships travelling from Cyprus to Lebanon; the Israeli journalist David Shaham, however, writes that they were Israeli doves, known for their pro-Arab sympathies (Bulloch, 1985; Shaham, *Al Fajr*, November 29, 1985).

Let us assume Shaham to be correct. There is, however, no doubt that Israel has been carrying out hijacking operations and kidnapping at sea for many years, with little notice over this crime, which arouses great passion and anger when the perpetrators are Arabs. In 1976, according to Knesset member Ret. General Mattityahu Peled, the Israeli Navy began to capture boats belonging to Lebanese Moslems, turning them over to Israel's Lebanese Christian allies, who killed them, in an effort to abort efforts at conciliation between the PLO and Israel. Prime Minister Rabin conceded the facts but said that the boats were captured prior to these arrangements, although Defense Minister Shimon Peres refused to comment. After a prisoner exchange in November 1983, a front-page story in the *Times* mentioned in its 18th paragraph that 37 of the Arab prisoners, who had been held at the notorious Ansar prison camp, “had been seized recently by the Israeli Navy as they tried to make their way from Cyprus to Tripoli,” north of Beirut, an observation that merited no comment there or elsewhere.³²

Israeli Practices of Maritime and Air Piracy and Hijacking

In June, 1984, Israel hijacked a ferryboat operating between Cyprus and Lebanon five miles off the Lebanese coast with a burst of machine gun fire and forced it to Haifa.³³ Lebanon denounced this “act of piracy,” which *Economist* correspondent Godfrey Jansen described as “another item” in Israel’s “long list of international thuggery.” “To maintain the maritime terrorist fiction,” he adds, “the Israelis then bombed and bombarded a small island off Tripoli which was said to be a base for PLO seaborne operations,” a claim that he dismisses as “absurd.” The Lebanese police reported that 15 were killed, 20 wounded, and 20 missing — all Lebanese, fishermen and boy scouts at a scout camp run by Sunni fundamentalists which was the “worst hit” target (Jansen, *Middle East International*, July 13, 1984).

In its report on the Israeli “interception” (i.e., hijacking) of the ferryboat, the *Times* observes that prior to the 1982 war, “the Israeli Navy regularly intercepted ships bound for or leaving the ports of Tyre and Sidon in the south and searched them for guerrillas,” as usual accepting Israeli claims at face value; PLO “interception” of civilian Israeli ships on a similar pretext might be regarded a bit differently. Similarly, Israel’s hijacking of a Libyan civilian jet on February 4, 1986 was accepted with equanimity. On April 25, 1985, several Palestinians were kidnapped from civilian boats operating between Lebanon and Cyprus and sent to secret destinations in Israel, a fact that became public knowledge (in Israel) when one was interviewed on Israeli television, leading to an appeal to the High Court of Justice for information; presumably there are others, unknown. Members of Arafat’s personal bodyguard (Force 17) seized on the high seas under the claim that they were planning to attack Israel were, according to Arab sources, travelling from Cyprus to Sidon where several pro-Arafat Palestinians had been murdered, as Patrick Seale reported (*News from Within* [Jerusalem], November 1, 1985; Seale, *Observer*, October 6, 1985).

None of these cases, most of them known only through incidental comment, arouse any interest or concern. It is considered Israel’s prerogative to carry out hijacking of ships and kidnappings at will, as well as to bombard what it calls “terrorist targets,” with the approval of articulate opinion in the United States, whatever the facts may be.

We might tarry a moment over the Israeli attack on the island off Tripoli north of Beirut, in which Lebanese fishermen and boy scouts at a camp were killed. This received scant notice, but that is the norm in the case of such regular Israeli terrorist atrocities. Palestinian attacks fare differently. None is remembered with more horror than the atrocity at Ma’alot in 1974, where 22 members of a paramilitary youth group were killed in an exchange of fire after Moshe Dayan had refused to consider negotiations on the terrorists’ demands

for the release of Palestinian prisoners. One might ask why the murder of boy scouts is a lesser atrocity — in fact, none at all, since it was perpetrated by “a country that cares for human life” (*Washington Post*), whose “high moral purpose” (*Time*) is the object of never-ending awe and acclaim, a country which, according to its American propaganda chorus and most clearly articulated by Walter Goodman, “is held to a higher law, as interpreted for it by journalists” (*Washington Post*, June 30, 1985; *Time*, October 11, 1982; Goodman, *New York Times*, February 7, 1984).

Two days before the Ma'alot attack, Israeli jets had bombed the Lebanese village of El-Kfeir, killing four civilians. According to Edward Said, the Ma'alot attack was “preceded by weeks of sustained Israeli napalm bombing of Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon” with over 200 killed. At the time, Israel was engaged in a large-scale scorched-earth policy in southern Lebanon, with air, artillery and gunboat attacks and commando operations using shells, bombs, napalm, incendiary, and anti-personnel weapons, with probably thousands killed (no one cared, so there are no accurate figures) and hundreds of thousands driven north to slums around Beirut (Chomsky, 1983: 188 *fn.*). Interest was slight and reporting scanty. None of this is terrorism; nor did it even happen, as far as sanitized history is concerned, though the murderous Palestinian terrorist attacks of the early 1970s were (rightly of course) bitterly condemned, and still stand as proof that the Palestinians cannot be a partner to negotiations over their fate. Meanwhile the media are regularly condemned as overly critical of Israel and even “pro-PLO,” a propaganda coup of quite monumental proportions; the fact that these charges can be voiced without ridicule in itself reveals the extraordinary commitment of the American intellectual establishment to U.S.-Israeli rejectionism and violence.

It should be noted that Israel is not alone in enjoying the right of piracy and hijacking. A Tass report condemning the Achille Lauro hijacking in October 1985 accused the United States of hypocrisy because two men who hijacked a Soviet airliner, killing a stewardess and wounding other crew members, were given refuge in the U.S., which refused extradition. The case is not exactly well known, and the charge of hypocrisy might appear to have a certain merit (*New York Times*, October 12, 1985).

This is far from the only case. One might mention the first airplane hijacking in the Middle East, which is also not familiar fare. It was carried out by Israel in December 1954, when a Syrian airways civilian jet was intercepted by Israeli fighters and forced to land at Lydda airport. Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan's intent was “to get hostages in order to obtain the release of our prisoners in Damascus,” Prime Minister Moshe Sharett wrote in his personal diary. The prisoners in question were Israeli soldiers who had been captured on a mission inside Syria; it was Dayan, we recall, who ordered the rescue attempt that led to the death of Israeli teen-agers in Ma'alot who had been taken

hostage in an effort to obtain the release of Palestinian prisoners in Israel. Sharett wrote privately that “we had no justification whatsoever to seize the plane” and that he had “no reason to doubt the truth of the factual affirmation of the U.S. State Department that our action was without precedent in the history of international practice.”

The incident, however has disappeared from history, so that Israeli U.N. Ambassador Benjamin Netanyahu may appear on national television and accuse the PLO of “inventing” the hijacking of airplanes and even the killing of diplomats, with no fear of contradiction (Rokach, 1980: 20 *fn.*; “Sixty Minutes,” CBS, 7:00 p.m., January 19, 1986). As for the killing of diplomats, we might only recall the assassination of U.N. Mediator Folke Bernadotte in 1948 by a terrorist group commanded by Netanyahu’s immediate superior, Foreign Minister Yitzchak Shamir, who was one of the three commanders who gave the orders for the assassination (a second is now dead, the third writes regularly in the Israeli press). A close friend of David Ben-Gurion privately confessed that he was one of the assassins, but Ben-Gurion kept it secret, and the Israeli government arranged for the escape from prison and departure from the country of those responsible (Persson, 1979; Bar-Zohar, 1978: 180–181; Green, 1984: 38 *fn.*).

Conclusion

In our usefully selective memory, only Arab actions remain as “the evil scourge of terrorism.” It is important to stress again the limits of the Orwellian concepts of contemporary political discourse, in which such terms as “terrorism” and “hostage” are construed so as exclude the most extreme examples, as in Nicaragua or southern Lebanon, where entire populations are subjected to unremitting terrorism and held hostage to ensure obedience to the foreign master. Such usage is obligatory, given the true nature of international terrorism and the obvious necessity to prevent any comprehension of it.

The record of Israeli terrorism goes back to the origins of the state — indeed, long before — including the massacre of 250 civilians and brutal expulsion of 70,000 others from Lydda and Ramle in July 1948; the massacre of hundreds of others at the undefended village of Doueimah near Hebron in October 1948 in another of the numerous land-clearing operations conducted while the international propaganda apparatus was proclaiming, as it still does, that the Arabs were fleeing at the call of their leaders; the murder of several hundred Palestinians after the conquest of the Gaza strip in 1956; the slaughters in Qibya, Kafr Kassem, and a string of other assassinated villages, the expulsion of thousands of Bedouins from the demilitarized zones shortly after the 1948 war and thousands more from northeastern Sinai in the early 1970s, their villages destroyed, to open the region for Jewish settlement, and on, and on. The victims, by definition, are “PLO partisans,” hence terrorists; thus the

respected editor of *Ha'aretz*, Gershom Schocken, can write that Ariel Sharon "made a name for himself from the early 1950s as a ruthless fighter against Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) partisans," referring to the slaughters he conducted against civilians at Al-Bureig and Qibya in 1953 (long before the PLO existed). And the victims in Lebanon and elsewhere are also "terrorists," as must be the case, or they could not have been killed by a state that is so devoted to "purity of arms" and is held to a "higher law" by the pro-Arab American press.

The terrorist commanders are honored. When the leading contemporary U.S. terrorist took over the presidency in 1981, Israel's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister were both notorious terrorist commanders while the highest position in the Jewish Agency was held by a man who had murdered several dozen civilians he was holding under guard in a mosque in a Lebanese town during yet another land-clearing operation in 1948, to be quickly amnestied, all trace of the crime removed from the record, and granted a lawyers license on the grounds that "no stigma" could be attached to his act.³⁴

Even terrorism against Americans is perfectly tolerable. The Israeli terrorist attacks in 1954 against U.S. installations (also, public places) in Egypt in an attempt to exacerbate U.S.-Egyptian relations and abort secret peace negotiations then in progress were ignored at the time and are barely remembered. Similarly, there is the case of the attempt in 1967 to sink the U.S. spy ship *Liberty* in international waters by Israel bombers and torpedo boats that even shot lifeboats out of the water to ensure that no one would escape, with 34 crewmen killed and 171 injured, in the worst peacetime U.S. naval disaster of the century, but dismissed as an "error" — a transparent absurdity — and barely known.

What is striking about this record, which includes ample terrorism against Jews as well from the earliest days, is that it in no way sullies Israel's American reputation for moral standards unequalled in history. Each new act of terrorism, if noted at all, is quickly dismissed and forgotten, or described as a temporary deviation from perfection, to be explained by the hideous nature of the enemy which is forcing Israel to depart, if only for a moment, from its path of righteousness.

Meanwhile the media are regularly denounced for their "double standard" as they ignore Arab crimes while holding Israel to impossible standards, and respected scholars inform us soberly that "numerous public figures in the West, even a number of western governments" (naturally, all unnamed) have encouraged the PLO to destroy Israel (Robert Tucker, *Commentary*, October 1982). Across the political spectrum in the United States and among the educated classes with remarkable uniformity and only the most marginal of exceptions, the unchallenged doctrine is that it is the terrorism of the Palestinians and their Arab allies, urged on by the Kremlin, their unremitting commitment

to kill Jews and destroy Israel, and their refusal to consider any political settlement that is the cause of the endless Arab-Israeli conflict, of which Israel is the pathetic victim.

As for the United States, it is powerless in the face of “the evil scourge of terrorism,” from Central America to Lebanon and beyond.

NOTES

1. Quaddafi’s alleged decision followed the Gulf of Sidra incident, when a U.S. air and naval armada sank Libyan vessels with many killed, under circumstances that merit more comment than I can give here.

2. Where specific references are not given here and below, see Amnesty International (1985; 1983); Krueger and Enge (1985); Haiman and Meigs (1986); and Chomsky (1985).

3. Herman and Brodhead define “demonstration elections” as a device of foreign intervention in which elections are “organized and staged by a foreign power primarily to pacify a restive home population,” discussing several other examples as well and showing in detail that they are no less farcical than elections held under Soviet authority. Their term was borrowed and radically misused with reference to the election in Nicaragua by Robert Leiken (*New York Review*, December 5, 1985), as part of his campaign in support of the terrorist proxy army established by the U.S. to attack Nicaragua from its Honduran and Costa Rican bases. See Brodhead and Herman’s letter, published after half a year’s delay, along with others by British Parliamentary observers (June 26, 1986), and Leiken’s response, tacitly conceding the accuracy of their critique (by evasion) while claiming that they designed their concept “as a way of focusing attention on western imperialism while diverting it from Soviet imperialism...in line with their apparent belief that there is only one superpower villain”; this is the standard reflex of propagandists whose deceit is exposed, in this case, requiring the suppression of Brodhead and Herman’s harsh critique of elections in Poland along with much else. The remainder of Leiken’s responses and his articles themselves maintain a comparable level of integrity and merit careful reading for those interested in the workings of the U.S. ideological system.

4. Shultz, cited by the Associated Press (April 14, 1986), after making this statement in a talk at Kansas State University (and frequently before).

5. See presidential spokesman Larry Speakes, “ABC News,” 7:30 p.m., April 14; Ronald Reagan, speech, *New York Times*, April 15; *Toronto Globe and Mail*, editorials, March 18 and 28, 1986. Perhaps the most bizarre justification for the murderous bombing of Tripoli and Benghazi was given by Shimon Peres, who described it as “self-defense” against Libyan orders to murder American soldiers in Beirut *New York Times* (April 16, 1986).

6. See, for example, Bruce Cameron and Penn Kemble, “From a Proxy Force to a National Liberation Movement,” a paper circulating in the executive branch, and written by two people regarded as liberal human rights advocates, discussing how the “proxy force” image might be changed by U.S. efforts to provide them with “a political base” within Nicaragua.

7. See Fox and Glennon (1985: 21) for a careful inquiry into *contra* atrocities by two distinguished and experienced international lawyers.

8. See also Anthony Lewis (*New York Times*, April 10, 1986) for a report of *contra* terrorist atrocities in February 1986, based on the Swiss press. The foreign press has been less disciplined than the American in avoiding this unacceptable subject.

9. Cited by Halperin (1981: 3). Halperin is a former Pentagon analyst.

10. See *World Press Review*, February 1986. The poll was taken prior to the December terrorist attacks at the Rome and Vienna airports, which surely would have eliminated all doubts.
11. For further discussion of this point, see Francis A. Boyle (1985). Boyle, a member of the Law Faculty at University of Illinois, develops the same point with regard to U.S.-Israeli war crimes in Lebanon in an essay in T. Buerghenthal (1984).
12. It appears in *Against the Current*, January 1986.
13. See Chomsky (1983: 127; 176).
14. See Schiff (1985) and Chomsky (1983) for testimony from participants, not reported in the U.S.
15. See Schumacher (1985) and Inbari (1985) on the Syrian connection.
16. See *Africasia*, July 1985. The story was hushed up in the U.S. media.
17. This was true for Israel as well. After his accession to power, there was an increase in the use of torture in prisons, preventive detention, and expulsion in violation of international law, practices that were common under the previous Labor government much lauded by the American Left, and reduced or suspended under the hated Menahem Begin. On torture, see *Ha'aretz*, February 24, 1986.
18. See Curtis Wilkie, *Boston Globe*, March 10; Julie Flint, *LG*, March 13; Jim Muir, *Middle East International*, March 22; Nora Boustany, *Washington Post*, March 12, 1985.
19. See Ilya, *Jerusalem Post*, February 27, 1985; Linklater et al. (1984: 111); *New York Times*, March 13, 1985.
20. See UPI, *Boston Globe*, September 22, 1984; Olmert, interview, *Al Hamishmar*, January 27, 1984; Hirsh Goodman, *Jerusalem Post*, February 10, 1984.
21. See Schiff, 1985; also General Ori Or, commander of the IDF northern command, IDF radio; FBIS, April 15, 1985.
22. Shimon Peres, *New York Times*, July 8, 1983. On the atrocities in Khiam, see Chomsky (1982: 396-397); Chomsky (1983: 191); Yoram Hamizrahi, *Davar*, June 7, 1984; press reports cited in the Democratic Front publication *Nisayon Leretsach-Am Bilvanon 1982* (Tel Aviv, 1983). On Nabatiya, see Chomsky (1983: 70; 187).
23. See Jim Muir, *London Sunday Times*, April 14, 1985; *Christian Science Monitor*, April 15, 1985; Joel Greenberg, *Christian Science Monitor*, January 30, 1986; Sonia Dayan, Paul Kessler and Gerard de la Pradelle, *Le Monde diplomatique*, April 1986.
24. See Benny Morris and David Bernstein, *Jerusalem Post*, July 23, 1982; for comparison by Israeli journalists of life under the PLO and under Israel's Christian allies in Lebanon, a picture considerably at variance with approved doctrine, see Chomsky (1983: 186 *fn.*). Particularly significant is the report from Lebanon by Maronite journalist Atallah Mansour.
25. Rabin, speaking to the Knesset, *Hadashot*, March 27, 1985; Tamari, interview, *Monitin*, October 1985.
26. See Rokach (1980); Uri Milshtein, *Al Hamishmar*, September 21, 1983; Love (1969: 10 *fn.*; 61-62).
27. See *Toronto Globe & Mail*, July 11; *Boston Globe*, July 24; *New York Times*, July 24; *Boston Herald*, July 25, 1985; *New York Times*, January 5, 6; *Boston Globe*, January 5, 6, 1984.
28. AP, *New York Times*, February 21; Julie Flint, *LG*, February 24; Ihsan Hijazi, *New York Times*, February 28; AP, February 20, 1986. The only serious account in the U.S. press, to my knowledge, was by Nora Boustany, *Washington Post*, March 1, though with the IDF role largely excised, probably by the editors, since reporters on the scene knew well what was happening.
29. See Ihsan Hijazi, *New York Times*, March 25, April 8; Dan Fisher, *Los Angeles Times*, March 28; AP, April 7, 1986.
30. See Peres, *New York Times*, July 8, 1983; Reagan, press conferences, *New York Times*, March 29, 1984, October 28, 1983.
31. See *Ha'aretz*, June 25, 1982; see also Chomsky (1983: 200 *fn.*) for further quotes and similar analyses by other Israeli commentators.

32. See Chomsky (1983: 77); David Shipler, *New York Times*, November 25, 1983; *New York Times*, January 26, 1984, last paragraph.

33. Nine people were removed and held, eight Lebanese and the ninth Syrian. Five were freed after interrogation and four held, including one woman and a schoolboy returning from England for a holiday in Beirut; two were released two weeks later while the fate of the others remains unreported. The matter was considered so insignificant that one has to search for tiny items in the back pages even to learn this much about the fate of the kidnapped passengers (*New York Times*, June 30, July 1; *Boston Globe*, July 1, 4, 12; *Middle East Reporter* [Beirut], June 30).

34. On the Lydda-Ramle expulsions, see Benny Morris, *Middle East Journal* (Winter 1986); on the other cases, see Chomsky (1983; 1985; and sources cited); Schocken, *Foreign Affairs* (Fall 1984). On efforts to assassinate the Palestinian political leadership in 1948, organized by Moshe Dayan, see Uri Milshtein, *Al Hamishmar*, September 21, 1983; *Hadashot*, January 11, 1985. For some recent evidence on Haganah/IDF responsibility for the flight of refugees in the face of efforts of the Arab leadership to stem the flow, see Benny Morris, *Middle East Studies*, January 1986.

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