

We Must Hasten the Defeat of Terrorism

Following is excerpted from an address by Pope John Paul II to an assembly of Christian Democratic politicians.

My welcome goes out to all of you, members and representatives of the Christian Democratic World Union. You have political responsibilities in the governments and parliaments of your respective nations. In various ways you represent your countries in international and continental councils. You all have undertaken and continue to participate in political activity within the framework of democracy, while taking your inspiration from Christian principles.



I must first of all tell you of my esteem and give you my encouragement for the responsibilities that you assume. Is not your task that of helping, at the juridical and political level, to build an order of justice among men and women within societies that have freely elected you for that end, or which you desire to serve for that end, as well as among states constituting the general community of nations. The two touchstones for the worthy exercise of power are: protection of the life of every citizen, of his dignity, of his inalienable rights; and the search after the common good of society.

Democracy requires that such power be exercised "with the moral participation of the society or the people" in the interests of the citizens as a whole and with respect of fundamental liberties. This deep concern for the common good and care to make good laws ought to aim at establishing more equitable relations among citizens, but also at encouraging human values and guaranteeing the ethical values of the moral order.

All this requires clear-sightedness, competence, honesty, disinterestedness and courage. It shows the greatness of your commitment.

But I will not go any further into that today, for I am thinking rather of the very topical theme being considered by the international conference that sees you gathered here: "Terrorism, political violence and the defense of democracy and human rights."

We feel the demand for such a responsibility as I have mentioned in a particularly acute way when we have to face the senseless phenomenon of terrorism within a state and beyond the frontiers of a state. Terrorism is the antithesis of everything that you try to promote as democrats and as Christians.

Terrorism is against law and reason. Terrorism seeks to cripple and destroy persons and society by means of acts which are fundamentally acts of violation: violation of human values guaranteed by the law as well as violation of human dignity and human life.

But, first of all, what is it that gives terrorism today its extent, its impact, its perilous and worrying character?

There is certainly no lack of analyses of the phenomenon, and I will not discuss them here in any exhaustive way.

Everyone knows, in the first place, that terrorists are able to make use today of formidable weapons which they can obtain too easily. This helps their destructive work, but it is not enough to explain the roots of the phenomenon nor its acuteness.

There is above all the fact that terrorism has been able to become an effective psychological weapon thanks to the immediate and thorough repercussion that it can count on gaining through the mass media, which make it their duty to report the news.

Going deeper, it still has to be explained why human beings have recourse to this deplorable means. Drives toward violence have always slumbered in the hearts of men, together with drives for peace and love.

The former are undoubtedly more aroused today. Is it the recrudescence of injustices of fresh awareness of them that stirs up such violent reactions? But how can the cause just mentioned justify such a method. There is above all the more and more frequent diffusion of ideologies of violence, of hateful strife, which deform consciences to the point of removing all scruples from those who order or who execute such barbaric acts. More, they are led to justify themselves, to glory in such acts as duty or good deeds. Evil is deep in man's thought and heart.

Then there is the complicity of a whole international network of terrorism, finding support of secret incitement in one power or another. Certainly there are several sorts of terrorist. Some invoke justice for a cause that cannot gain a hearing. But justice deserves peaceful means. Or they invoke rights of peoples gravely offended in the past or present, and choose as targets persons or symbolic institutions, often outside their own countries. Others have the downright wish to create panic so as to destroy the bases of the society of their country, which they judge to be unjust and decadent.

They have no regard for democratic institutions already in place, and they have no constructive spirit.

After that summary analysis of roots, causes or pretexts, it is time to turn to an ethical evaluation of terrorist behavior.

Whatever the roots of terrorist activity may be, whatever attempts at justifying it there may be, we can only repeat

again and again: Terrorism is never justified in a civilized society; it is a sophisticated return to barbarism, to anarchy.

It is always a manifestation of hatred, of ideological confusion. It always has the intention of sowing uncertainty and fear in national and international life. It seeks to justify its end — often a miserable end — by means unworthy of man. It goes against goods and a precious inheritance without any regard for the rights that persons or society have over them lawfully.

Above all — and this may not be allowed under any pretext — it makes its assault in a base manner, by means of abduction, torture and murder. It assails the human life of defenseless innocents, who have nothing to do with the cause in question or are simply the symbol of a responsibility or power that the terrorists are against.

When we think of the number of innocent persons, heads of state, political men, policemen, industrialists, labor leaders or religious personalities, who all had contributed to society through their responsibilities and become victims of terrorism, we are at least struck with astonishment at these crimes.

When we see how the structure of society, so patiently built up, so zealously preserved by honest citizens and responsible leaders, can be plundered and destroyed, we really have cause to be alarmed.

When we consider the fact that these acts of terrorism are not limited to a single country, but seem to be the result of an insidious network, with international intrigues and aims involved, then we must take up the challenge boldly and unite in the name of all peoples to overcome the forces of hatred and evil and avoid letting them replace order and justice, the patient routes of reasonable negotiation and the difficult search after democracy. We must stop these being replaced by a system of arbitrary settling of scores, like fights to the death in the jungle.

Violence only begets violence. In the end, terrorism will destroy itself, for it bears the seeds of its own destruction in its blind and senseless hatred. Nonetheless, we must hasten its defeat and the conversion of its followers by cooperation among all, each at his own level of responsibility.

It is not enough to take note and lament. There is need to take up the challenge. One must act and act effectively. An adequate remedy must be applied to this evil which is undermining our societies. And the remedy must be at several levels.

At the international level, solidarity among states must be made to progress so that every act of terrorism may be unanimously unmasked, denounced, condemned and penalized with sanctions, whatever pretexts for it may be offered. Terrorism is a savage, inhuman method, to be absolutely banned. A state that encourages such a method and makes itself the accomplice of its perpetrator disqualifies itself from speaking to the world about justice.

At the level of each society remedies must be applied which result from a lucid analysis of the causes of terrorism. It is certainly more necessary than ever to protect the lives and rights of innocent individuals — through laws, decrees, and appropriate security measures, which belong partly to the domain of your responsibility — just as it is necessary to protect the lawful rights of democratic institutions to prevent those who have chosen not to respect them and to put these people in a position of not being able to do harm.

But while recognizing that part of subversion which comes from the exterior, the question must be asked: Why does terrorism continue to recruit so many members among men and women of this generation? Everything must be done to give attention to rights that may have been offended, to establish or re-establish equitable relationships among the various partners in society, to accomplish honest service at all levels, notably among those holding power, those who wish to retain or to assume political responsibilities. In this way we can deprive terrorists of a pretext that they offer for winning certain sympathizers.

At the same time, while maintaining healthy liberty of opinion, a special climate must be created in which teachers and publicists cease to kindle hatred, cease to present violence as a remedy, cease to despise the rights of others, cease to foster a belief that only the radical destruction of society can enable a more humane society to be founded. Are not terrorists of today the product of a certain education?

Educators must be formed who will show how to build a more just society through peaceful means and in accordance with authentic responsibility.

Yes, definitely, the best response to political violence is always and everywhere a kind of society where laws are just, the government does everything to meet the legitimate desires of the populations concerned and citizens are able to live together in security and peace and build their own future together with that of their fellow countrymen.

Such a society assuredly requires very great honesty at all levels, as I have already mentioned, above all on the part of rulers. Without such uprightness of character in political leaders, every act of government rapidly becomes suspect and the social atmosphere deteriorates.

Is there need to emphasize that such honesty, such trustworthiness, such disinterestedness concerns not only members of governments but members of parliaments and officials in the various institutions as well and, in a particular way, persons working in the information fields at all levels.

Citizens have the right to expect those with responsibility to be honest. They have a right to know the truth, free of alteration and manipulation. Lies, tendentious insinuations and erroneous statements rend society and prepare the field in the long or short run for the absolutely senseless actions of terrorists.

This capital and permanent task of cleansing and overhauling the functioning of ruling circles in the service of the people in every nation calls greatly for tenacity and coolness of mind, in spite of incomprehension, unjustified criticisms or violence. The admirable qualities required may even discourage those who devote their talents and lives to the task. We know how the word "discouragement" is not worthy of man, still less of a Christian.

I meditated much on the mystery of evil during the days following the event of May 13 and during my long convalescence. I considered its sometimes contagious expansion, but I also meditated on the even more astonishing mystery of people's solidarity in good and in construction and reconstruction of a society and civilization founded on love and sharing. I was helped in this meditation by the incalculable number of expressions of sympathy which I received.

The well-coined phrase of St. Paul often came to my mind: "Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good."

Dear friends, I hope you will end your meeting in Rome and depart from this encounter with renewed convictions and energies. If all who bear responsibility at various levels of the life of each nation or in international life will at last agree to join hands, to constitute a chain of solidarity, to do away with the frightful plague of terrorism and prevent every reason for it to rise again, then we can believe in the future of the world and the coming of a truly humane civilization.

And, since I am speaking to Christians, I invoke the light and the power of God to be for you and with you, so that you may advance courageously and calmly along the ways of what may authentically be called peace, liberty, responsibility, democracy and justice. I bless you with all my heart.

20th Anniversary
ABOVE GROUND
POOL SALE

"20 Years of Service"

Ace Swim Service
"Your Complete Pool Headquarters"

CHILI AVE. & PAUL RD. SUBURBAN PLAZA
"Chili Center" 2171 E. Henrietta Rd.
Opposite Star & K-Mart Just S. of Rt. 390
889-9624 334-8688

NATIONAL SWIMMING POOL INSTITUTE

THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

EDWIN SULEWSKI
FUNERAL DIRECTOR

Ways to cope with stress after the death of a loved one.

Death changes the lives of survivors — sometimes drastically. Survivors must reorganize their lives as well as cope with many strong emotions. In the early period after the death we need to take time to face our emotions and feelings. A meaningful funeral, talking with friends and relatives allows us time to do this. As time goes on we need to put our affairs in order. We should not act hastily but make careful plans for our new lives without the deceased. When necessary we should seek professional advice about finances, education, raising children, work and other practical concerns. We should give special attention throughout our grieving process to good diet and getting a reasonable amount of sleep and exercise.

SCHAUMAN FUNERAL
2100 St. Paul St. HOME 342-3400