

What makes a terrorist?

The mounting hysteria over terrorism and the outpouring of pious articles on the need to combat terror leave me with a certain sense of acid cynicism. "Terrorism," as we see over and over, is something bad done to your side.

When it happens to people we don't like, then it's not really terrorism at all.

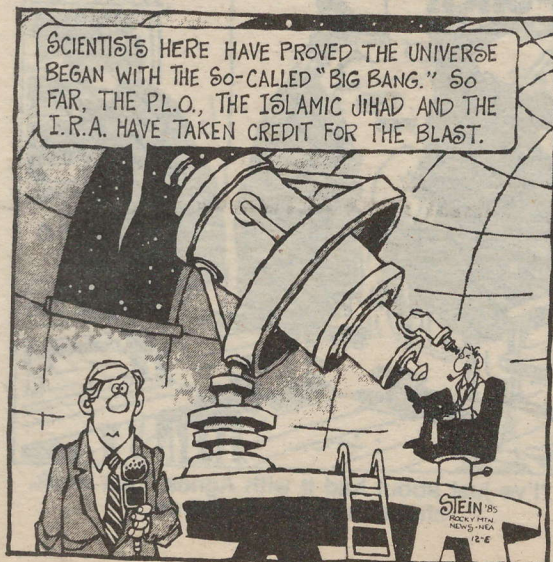
While our western media were busy covering the outrages in Rome and Vienna, 13 white South African civilians were killed by bombs planted by the African National Congress (ANC). Among them were women and children. Two bombs blew up vehicles on game reserves; the third exploded at a vacation resort. In all cases, the ANC took credit for the attacks.

Last fall Israel bombed PLO headquarters at Tunis, Tunisia, in retaliation for the killing of three Israelis on Cyprus. Over 70 people, PLO members and civilians, died. The U.S. applauded the bombing as "justified" and "self-defence."

But when the ANC exploded a car bomb in South Africa's capital, Pretoria, killing and wounding a score of people and South African commandos retaliated by attacking ANC headquarters in the neighboring country of Botswana, the raid was condemned by the U.S. and world media as "aggression."

Now, I ask, why are ANC land mines and car bombs any less "terrorist" than those of Palestinian groups? Why are murdered or maimed Israelis "victims of terrorism" and murdered or maimed South African civilians "casualties?" Are 12-year-old white South African girls somehow legitimate targets while 12-year-old American girls are not?

We see the ANC, based in Lusaka, Zambia, announcing that it seeks the violent overthrow of the South African government by means of terror attacks and revolution. Yet the ANC is recognized by the UN and supported by Canada, many foreign nations, much of the world media and the World Council of Churches. South Africa is told it must



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negotiate with the ANC; yet Israel is told it never has to negotiate with PLO "terrorists."

The U.S., Israel and the media are baying after the blood of Libya's Col. Moammar Khadafy, accusing him of supporting Palestinian terrorists and providing them with training camps and funding. Yet Khadafy also funds, supports and trains ANC guerrillas and no one raises a peep. Zambia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania house and support the ANC — but no one cares. Why single out Libya and not these nations? The USSR and the World Council of Churches finance the ANC — should we not denounce them for abetting terrorism?

Take another example. Last November the Colombian Marxist M-19 group staged a bloody attack on that nation's Palace of Justice. In the process, scores of civilians and judges were murdered by M-19 terrorists who were armed with Nicaraguan-supplied weapons. Yet these killers were described by the media as "guerrillas," not terrorists. Why? What makes them different from the PLO?

Let's recall that the Soviet press describes Afghan freedom fighters as "bandits" and "terrorists;" Soviet troops in Afghanistan are termed "anti-terrorist units." In much of Africa and Asia, Palestinians are called "freedom fighters" and their terrorists attacks viewed as no more reprehensible than our media portrays ANC attacks against South Africa.

How, then, can we denounce terrorism — the killing of innocent civilians — and ignore the ANC? Does not this particular and glaring omission make a mockery of our pious outrage over terrorism? Does it not put us in the same position as a Col. Khadafy who says, "Well, yes, we deplore violence but, you know, the Palestinians are greatly wronged and have no other means of expressing their outrage."

As Ronald Reagan rightly said, he would never negotiate with the killers of 11-year-old girls. Why then should the South Africans? Or, conversely, if South Africa is to be forced to negotiate with the ANC, then why should Israel not be forced to talk to the PLO?

One final example from Africa. Last year an explosives-filled truck was driven into a military barracks at Huambo, Angola. The detonation killed over 50 soldiers inside. In short, a dramatic replay of the 1983 Beirut "terror" bombing of U.S. Marine barracks. Except the victims were Cuban troops, guests of the Angolan government. The bombers were anti-communist UNITA guerrillas.

In the case of Beirut, Washington denounced "terrorism;" but about the Huambo bombing, Washington remained curiously silent.