

1985 was the Year of Victims — including some Americans. Each month brought fresh terrorist attacks. The Soviet Union learned its citizens are not exempt. The dawning year finds governments and their law enforcement agencies grimly determined to end the menace.

The world's capitols and chanceries are rapidly becoming forbidding fortresses. Citizens of even free and democratic nations gladly surrender their persons and their liberty to security procedures. Followed to their logical conclusion, the proliferating protective methods hold the promise of an Orwellian police state, supported by scared men and women.

There is no question the times call for strict measures. Those tried and found guilty of murdering innocents must themselves be put to death. As I wrote during the Achille Lauro piracy, society has no choice.

Imprisoned terrorists become excuses for more aberrational violence. The announced price for releasing the American hostages in Lebanon is the exchange for prisoners convicted of bombing deaths in Kuwait. The refusal to make the swap receives support — however painful — from the logic that it would open the door for the kidnapping of more innocents.

However, in our time, virtually no one stays in prison his entire life. At their freeing, history shows, political murderers usually kill again, until they die themselves. The probability alters only with an overhaul in the political climate. In some instances, yesterday's terrorist becomes tomorrow's respected statesman. But the world cannot wait for that hopeful metamorphosis, it must protect itself today!

Still, the threat of gallows and gas chambers, bullets and electric chairs has not slowed the growth of terrorism. By open and covert means, the more notorious assassins have been meted justice. Men like Abul Abbas live on borrowed time. Only each time a terrorist falls, a new face steps up to take his place — or so it seems — and more innocent victims are murdered.

Massive retaliations against the people who produce the new terrorists serve chiefly to recruit the new faces. One reason given for Friday's attack on the Rome airport was the bombing of PLO headquarters in Tunis, which was staged because of the deaths of Israelis in Cyprus. In pursuing this policy, Israel is following the teaching of Karl von Clausewitz.

In his book, *On War*, the Prussian general advocated the razing of towns and the inflicting of heavy casualties as the only answer to attacks by irregulars. Forty years after Clausewitz' death, the policy failed in the Franco-Prussian War. It created new enemies for the German army in World Wars of this century. The theory worked no better when applied by U.S. forces in Vietnam: *On War* has long been a standard text at West Point.

Using terror to fight terror goes back into ancient times; its use has very rarely produced the desired end. The Roman emperor Caligula told his troops: "Let them hate us as long as they fear us." The Roman empire was finally torn to bits by peoples enraged at their treatment by the Legions.

Nor is the answer to be found in imprisoning or assassinating leaders. South Africa hoped to finish off the terrorism of the African National Congress when it jailed Nelson Mandela more than 20 years ago; look at that country today. Nasser's death did not end Israel's troubles with Egypt; the Yom Kippur War came three years later.

Nothing the civilized world can muster will stop all the senseless slaughter. This is no excuse for the failure to attempt civilized means, based on a consideration of the human beings involved.

There could have been a comprehensive peace in the Middle East by now: this entire year all the involved parties concurred on that single point — and nothing else. Nations, groups and individuals diddled over details while innocent men, women and children died. Maybe a Middle East peace would not have saved 11-year-old Natasha Simpson and the four other Americans killed last week; no one can say.

Natasha was an American child; we mourn her death especially. However, in this Year of Victims, she was but one. A note was found on one Palestinian involved in the Rome attack; it spoke of tears for his people's dead children. It threatened more innocent blood to pay for Palestinian tears.

In Israel, hundreds of thousands men and women want all the dying stopped; they support an organization called Peace Now! Their voices must be amplified in this country. Washington must hear. This nation's way of life is at stake, as well as American lives.

We have no choice. Waging war on terrorism has brought only a horrible increase in victims. We must give peace a chance.



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Viewpoint

Victims

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