

obvious option.

Finally, we must be prepared, if necessary, to help guarantee the integrity and the security of the new nations. This could mean helping to defend them militarily, though surely that is a last resort. Their best defences will be healthy, educated populations and stable productive economies. This is where we can be of greatest assistance and it is in our interest as much as theirs. In short, the West must look beyond the Public Face of the East-West struggle and see the Great Game in the Third World for what it really is. To win the support of the South would be to win in what is the most important arena of conflict.

BOOK REVIEW

THE TIE THAT BINDS

by

David Charters

Claire Sterling

THE TERROR NETWORK

Holt Rinehart Winston, New York, 1981

The Reagan Administration took office on the very day the American hostages, victims of a major terrorist act, were flown to freedom. The new Secretary of State, General Alexander Haig, was himself the intended target of an assassination attempt in 1979. These two facts may go some way to explain the new administration's preoccupation with terrorism as a foreign policy issue, an issue which has become clouded in controversy in recent months. Secretary Haig opened the debate on January 28th when he accused the Soviet Union of "training, funding and equipping" international terrorists and of fostering, supporting and expanding their activities.¹ The issue reached a high point at the end of April as the new Senate Subcommittee on Terrorism and Security opened its hearings with testimony from four witnesses (Mrs. Sterling among them) who stated that there was evidence to support Mr. Haig's assertions.²

Some of the controversy relates to the perennial problem of defining terrorism. Secretary Haig's remarks seemed to leave the definition broad enough to encompass all national liberation movements, including those the Americans might feel inclined to support — the Afghan resistance, for example. The clear absurdity of so sweeping an interpretation caused the *Manchester Guardian* to query, not without some ironic justice, "Was George Washington a

Terrorist?"³ Most of the debate, however, has focussed on the question of evidence of Soviet support for terrorism. The CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency and the State Department all denied initially that such evidence existed. This despite the fact that the CIA described such activities in its first public report on terrorism in 1976. All three agencies were asked to review their data and in their 1981 report on international terrorism the CIA acknowledged that the Soviet Union is deeply involved in support of revolutionary violence which "frequently entails acts of international terrorism."⁴ That there should be a controversy about this issue at all is perplexing to the scholar of terrorism; Soviet involvement in support of terrorism has been a matter of public record for some time. Nowhere is this more evident than in Claire Sterling's book, *The Terror Network*, which combines in one volume information previously available only in a widely scattered collection of sources.

Relying almost entirely on published material Mrs. Sterling, an American journalist based in Italy, has woven a detailed account of international cooperation between terrorist groups and of the ways in which the Soviet Union has assisted them. Conspiracy-watchers beware! She does not see the Soviet Union as the mastermind behind a globe-encircling plot — a spider at the center of a web of its own making. She recognizes that the various terrorist campaigns described (Italy, Northern Ireland, the Palestinian among them) developed largely for reasons indigenous to the particular national circumstances. Only in the case of Turkey does she suggest that the Soviet Union set out with a deliberate plan to destabilize the country through a "brutal campaign of urban terrorism, kidnapping and assassination".⁵ The evidence presented by Mrs. Sterling suggests that the Soviets were largely opportunist, prepared to exploit — for their own ends and to the best of their abilities — volatile political situations and extremist groups which already existed.

In what ways did the Soviets assist domestic and transnational terrorist groups? A few examples will suffice:

1. Provision of weapons — either directly, as in the case of the Palestinians, or indirectly through the KGB-controlled Czech arms company, Omnipol.
2. Training facilities, instructors and courses — in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Libya, South Yemen and Cuba.
3. Sanctuary for fugitive terrorists — in Soviet-controlled territory, Czechoslovakia being a case in point.

These efforts were merely the tip of the iceberg. Through their embassies and clandestine services — principally the KGB — the Soviets facilitated cooperation between various terrorist organizations, by providing safe houses, communications, forged passports and, if necessary, money. They did not always meet with success; large arms shipments to the Provisional IRA were intercepted enroute on several occasions. Moreover, from time to time their efforts were exposed and Soviet "diplomats" were sent packing. By and large, however, they were assisted by Western leaders who simply chose to remain blind to the mounting evidence of Soviet complicity in terrorism. This, and much more, is documented in Mrs. Sterling's book.

The book is not without its flaws or critics. It provides a catalogue of evidence

without much analysis. Moreover, the sheer volume of detail is confusing — the reader may be excused for losing his way in the welter of names, dates, acronyms and statistics. The process of tracing international connections also allows for considerable repetition. The reviewer was irritated by a limited number of factual errors: Vladimir Sakharov is called Viktor; James Richard Cross, the British diplomat kidnapped in Quebec in 1970, is identified as Richard Gross. And the author's estimates of Soviet arms transfers to Libya are exaggerated.⁶ The book also lacks any serious analysis of Soviet strategic objectives and the way in which support for terrorism could serve those ends. This is much better done in another recent publication, *The Soviet Strategy of Terror*, by Samuel T. Francis.⁷ Finally, Brian Jenkins, the Rand Corporation's authority on terrorism, criticizes Mrs. Sterling for ambiguity on the question of the extent to which the Soviet Union actually directs the terror network. This ambiguity, he feels, could be used to reinforce prejudices already held by the new administration and could thus skew American policy on this issue.⁸

These criticisms notwithstanding, *The Terror Network* is an important, well-researched and timely contribution to the political and academic debates about terrorism. The reviewer recommends it highly to all those whose business is the study of terrorism, as well as to the general reader who wishes to be better informed on this subject.

Footnotes

1. *New York Times*, 9 Feb. 1981.
2. *New York Times*, 25 April 1981. The other witnesses were Arnaud de Borchgrave, former *Newsweek* correspondent and co-author of *The Spike* (reviewed in *Conflict Quarterly*, Fall 1980); Dr. Michael Ledeen, historian, foreign policy analyst and editor; and William Colby, former Director of the CIA.
3. *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 8 Feb. 1981.
4. *New York Times*, 9 Feb. 1981, 3 May 1981; *Newsweek*, 11 May 1981. Central Intelligence Agency, *Patterns of International Terrorism: 1980* (Washington, D.C., 1981), pp. 8-9.
5. See John Barron, *KGB: the Secret Work of Soviet Secret Agents* (New York, 1974), pp. 76-77.
6. For a more conservative estimate see International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1980-81* (London, 1980), p. 45.
7. Washington, D.C., Heritage Foundation, 1981.
8. Brian Jenkins, "World Terrorism — The Truth and Nothing but the Truth?", *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 24 May 1981.