



Terrorism beyond the spectacle

August 14, 2004

Recently, on a French television channel, I had the good surprise to watch a young and handsome Marlon Brando answering questions about his career and his hobbies in rather fluent French. Soon the discussion veered to his favourite topic: The Native Americans. He explained in detail how his country, the United States of America, had broken each and every treaty that it had signed with the Indian tribes. I think he mentioned more than 500 such treaties.

This is the sad history of the White Man on the New Continent. Today, more than a century after the massacre of Wounded Knee, has the mindset of the White Man in Washington changed? In their dealing with other continents, one often gets the impression that for the American officials, the history of mankind began with their arrival in the New World.

When I went through the 9/11 Commission Report, I had again the same impression. The US can only see its own perspective. Terrorism seems to have started only when America was attacked on that dreadful day of September 2001.

When the commission goes into the background of what it called the "declaration of war", it was only about the rise of Osama bin Laden. There are only nine passing reference to Kashmir.

The report says: *"In February 1998, the 40-year-old Saudi exile Usama Bin Ladin (SIC) and a fugitive Egyptian physician, Ayman al Zawahiri, arranged from their Afghan headquarters for an Arabic newspaper in London to publish what they termed a fatwa issued in the name of a 'World Islamic Front'." Bin Laden and Zawahiri called for the murder of any American, anywhere on earth, as the "individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it". For the United States (and most European nations), this was the beginning of terrorism.*

Unfortunately, in India, the meaning of the word 'terror' was known since a few decades. Without going into the details of the terrorist crimes of the "raiders" in Kashmir in 1947 or the same "tribal forces" during Operation Gibraltar in the Valley in 1965, it is enough to remember the speech General Zia-ul-Haq gave in April 1988 to a select gathering. The words of the military dictator will remain in the annals of state-sponsored terrorism. Let us not forget that Zia was the Head of State, represented in the United Nations.

Speaking to the Army officers of his nation, he said: "Gentlemen, as you know, due to our pre-occupation in Afghanistan, in the service of Islam, I have not been able to put these plans before you earlier. Let there be no mistake, however, that our aim remains quite clear and firm-the liberation of Kashmir Valley. Our Muslim Kashmiri brethren in the Valley cannot be allowed to stay on with India for any length of time now. In the past we had opted for ham-handed military options and, therefore, failed. So, as I have mentioned before, we now keep our military option for the last moment as a coup de grace, if and when necessary."

Zia detailed the planned terror campaign in Kashmir as "a coordinated use of moral and physical means other than military operations, which will destroy the will of the enemy, damage his political capacity and expose him to the world as an oppressor. This aim, gentlemen, shall be achieved in the initial phases".

Zia was killed a few months later, but the ISI put the plan to execution a year thence. We know what happened to the Pandits in 1989-90. Mr Jagmohan, the upright Governor sent by Rajiv Gandhi to Srinagar, somehow partly retrieved the situation, but the consequences are visible till today. Of course, this was not terrorism for the West; it only noticed and reported on the human rights violations committed by the Indian forces. I still remember speaking to a European Ambassador posted in Delhi a couple of years ago. When I mentioned the role of Mr Jagmohan, he told me, "Oh, Jagmohan, he is a controversial character." The world in reverse!

However, this was not the first time that the notion of terror was articulated by the state of Pakistan. Already, 10 years earlier, a small book, *The Quranic Concept of War*, written by Brigadier SK Malik, was published in Lahore. An interesting aspect of this jihad manual was that it was prefaced by none other than General Zia himself, the head of the Pakistani state.

Zia recommended to "both soldiers and civilians alike" to read the book because jihad *"is not the exclusive domain of the professional soldier, nor is it restricted to the application of military force alone"*. The Pakistan President added: *"The book brings out with simplicity, clarity and precision the Quranic philosophy on the application of the military force, within the context of the totality that is JIHAD."*

Since then, Pakistan has been following the guidelines described by the General.

Osama bin Laden was hardly 20 when Brigadier Malik published this book.

When the US Commission Report spoke of bin Laden's declaration of war, it had already been expounded upon in 1979 by Brigadier Malik: *"The war he (the Prophet) planned and carried out was total to the infinite degree. It was waged on all fronts: Internal and external, political and diplomatic, spiritual and psychological, economic and military."* At that time, Afghanistan and Kashmir were targeted.

It was only in 1998, when bin Laden's fatwa targeted the United States (and to a lesser degree the West), that terrorism became a world phenomenon. Another question is why did India keep quiet and not scream about terrorism on its soil?

Probably it is tolerant to a fault. Would not India have rendered a great service to humanity if it had made known to the world what it was going through? The problem is India's leaders always wanted to be the ones wanting to make peace with Pakistan. It is impossible to say the truth and not displease the military dictators in Islamabad (and their protectors in Washington).

Recently, India Today ran a cover story on former Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Though one can doubt some of Mr Sharif's statements, the fact remains that for once India played its role well. The interception of conversations between General Musharraf (in Beijing) and his Chief of Staff did the trick; nobody could deny this time that jihad originated in Pakistan. When a couple of weeks later, Mr. Sharif was received by then US President Bill Clinton, he was asked: "What have you done, Nawaz Sharif?" But, of course, once again the temptation to make friends with Pakistan was too strong for India and "Mr President Musharraf" was received in Agra. Fortunately, it was a flop. The gods sometimes help India's cause.

Unless New Delhi calls a spade a spade, there is no chance that terrorism will stop.

One last example: The intelligence agencies know perfectly well that terror in Kashmir comes from the camps located in "Azad Kashmir". Now, this area is a part of the Indian territory (just try to print a map of India and omit this part of the Jammu & Kashmir State, and you will see what happens to you), so why describe the attacks originating from these camps as "cross-border terrorism"? It is just plain terrorism!

As for the United States, if 9/11 made it realise that terrorism is something which exists not only on American soil but elsewhere in the world as well (and first of all in Kashmir), perhaps, despite the horrific loss of lives, the 9/11 tragedy was a blessing in disguise.