



Terrorism's Enablers

By David Frum

The war on terrorism demands that we focus not only on terrorists abroad, but also those who—by making excuses for them—aid and abet terrorism at home.

Attention nervous flyers: don't think you can escape the terrorists by taking the train.

On July 31, an alert German train conductor spotted an abandoned suitcase on a regional train as it passed through the city of Dortmund, in western Germany. That same day a similar suitcase was found near Koblenz, in the German south. The two suitcases contained bottles of gasoline, propane gas, and detonators—a deadly effective firebomb that could have killed or horribly burned hundreds of travelers. The bombs were wired to explode at the same time, with at least as much force as the 7/7 bombings in London.

At a press conference on August 18, German police announced they had identified two suspects in the case: two men were photographed by surveillance cameras carrying the suitcases into the Cologne railway station—the station from which the Dortmund and Koblenz trains had departed. The suitcases had been stuffed with clothes to prevent the gasoline bottles from rattling. On examination, the clothes proved to contain little pieces of paper covered in Arabic lettering.

With London and Toronto, the German suitcase bombs raise to three the number of megamurder plots exposed this summer. Had police

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been less vigilant or less lucky, we could well now be mourning the deaths of thousands of American and British air travelers, Canadian office workers, and German commuters.

But let's not get carried away by relief and enthusiasm.

For even as Western police forces become more capable, our terrorist enemies become more dangerous.

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Increasingly they are born on native soil. They speak the language with a local accent and are protected by all the legal rights of citizenship.

Three of the twenty-four British suspects arrested have turned out to be converts to Islam. Daniel Pipes

has long warned that extremist Islam might replace radical leftism as the default ideology for angry and alienated young people looking for an alternative to democratic capitalism. Those warnings now seem to be coming true.

Some might have hoped that the spread of extremism among Western Muslim communities would jolt those communities into soul-searching and self-criticism, into a rejection of violence, intolerance, and anti-Semitism. Some suggested that Western Muslim communities would develop a new democratic Islam that might be exported back into the Middle East.

No doubt there are individual Muslims in the West working hard at these vital tasks even as we speak. But at the same time, it has also become

evident that many of the organized Muslim groups in the West have reacted in exactly the opposite way. For some of these groups, terror has ceased to be (if it ever was) a community disgrace—and has come to be seen instead as an exploitable opportunity.

On August 12, for example, thirty-eight British Muslim groups as well as three of the four British Muslim MPs published an open letter to Prime Minister Tony Blair, blaming his government for bringing terrorist attacks upon Britain:

It is our view that current British government policy risks putting civilians at increased risk both in the U.K. and abroad. . . . The debacle of Iraq and now the failure to do more to secure an immediate end to the attacks on civilians in the Middle East not only increases the risk to ordinary people in that region, it is also ammunition to extremists who threaten us all.¹

The letter-writers demanded immediate changes to British policy toward both Iraq and Israel.

United Kingdom Home Secretary John Reid brusquely dismissed the letter as dressed-up extortion. The left-wing newspaper the *Observer* eloquently editorialized:

If young British Muslims are alienated, that is sad and their anger should be addressed. But anyone whose alienation leads them to want to kill indiscriminately has crossed a line into psychopathic

criminality. Policy cannot be dictated by the need to placate such people.

British Muslim leaders are entitled, along with everybody else, to raise questions about the conduct and consequences of Blair's foreign policy. But they have a more immediate responsibility to promote the truth: that Britain is not the aggressor in a war against Islam; that no such war exists; that there is no glory in murder dressed as martyrdom; and that terrorism is never excused by bogus accounts of historical victimization.

That is well said, but it is only the beginning of what needs to be said. There is something more: the willingness of many Muslims in the West to accept "anger" as a justification for terrorism is itself one of terrorism's most important and immediate causes.

The success of police in Germany, London, and Toronto offers real hope that the West is making progress against terrorism in North America and Europe. But we are making disturbingly little progress against terrorism's enablers: not just the killers who carry the bombs, but the larger community that while pretending to condemn them, seeks to make use of them.

Note

1. British Muslim leaders to Tony Blair, London, 12 August 2006, *BBC.co.uk*, August 12, 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4786159.stm (accessed August 25, 2006).