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Have we had enough?

On reactions to the recent terror attack in Britain.

As we write, bulletins keep flowing in from Manchester, England, where a twenty-two-year-old jihadist called Salman Abedi, son of Libyan refugees, detonated a homemade nail bomb at a pop concert killing at least twenty-two and injuring scores. To date, the youngest named victim was eight-year-old Saffie Roussos. Abedi was a “known wolf,” someone who occupied a spot on the radar screen of the British police but who was not considered an immediate threat. Isis celebrated and claimed responsibility for the slaughter, but it is not yet known whether Abedi acted alone.

How many such atrocities have we reported on in these pages over the years? 9/11, the murder and mayhem following publication of the “Danish cartoons,” the Paris slaughter, Orlando, San Bernardino, and on and on. We hesitate even to minute this latest attack for fear of being overtaken by events. The British Prime Minister Theresa May has elevated her country’s security alert to “critical,” the highest level, and warned that additional attacks may be “imminent.” Who knows what may have happened in the time between our writing and your reading?

There has been a clarifying anger in the response to this latest attack. Notwithstanding the danger of events passing us by, we think it worth memorializing the atrocity in Manchester, partly to pay homage to the dead and injured, partly to note a significant change in the response to the slaughter. Horror was perhaps the predominant emotion, as it always, and rightly, is. There has also been the usual large quotient of that emetic sentimentality that the wry commentator David Burge, known by his online alias Iowahawk, summarized in a Tweet: “Heartbroken thoughtsprayers hashtag TownNameStrong buildinglightshow candlelightvigil bewarebacklash lather rinse repeat.”

But there has also been a clarifying anger in the response to this murderous attack. Yes, we’ve had the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan sound the note of resignation and warn that such attacks are just a normal part of life in a big city these days. But we’ve also seen a lot of steely-eyed responses like

Roger L. Simon's column at *PJ Media*: "Have we learned anything? Is this finally going to be enough? Will we at last wake up?" Simon asked.

Within hours of the attack, Bruce Bawer responded at the *City Journal* website with a piece called "Enabling Murder." "Damn these jihadist murderers of children," Bawer began. "And damn the politicians who have, in many cases, helped make these murders possible but who are quick, this time and every time, to serve up empty declarations of 'solidarity' even as the bodies of innocents are still being counted."

We think there is something salutary about that anger. For the usual response—to affirm "togetherness," to "meet hate with love"—is not only wholly inadequate to the provocation, it is also prelude to passivity and spiritual suicide. As the online journalist Brendan O'Neill put it, "It is becoming clear that the top-down promotion of a hollow 'togetherness' in response to terrorism is about cultivating passivity. . . . Where's the rage? If the massacre of children and their parents on a fun night out doesn't make you feel rage, nothing will. The terrorist has defeated you. You are dead already."

Donald Trump described Abedi and his fellow jihadists as "evil losers." There were some titters from the commentariat about that. "*Losers*"? *Why doesn't the President of the United States cultivate a larger vocabulary?* But we suspect that the canny cartoonist and blogger Scott Adams may be right when he observed that "losers" is the one label that repels young, aggressive males that are candidates for jihadist recruitment.

If you call them monsters, they like it. If you call them ISIS or ISIL they put it on a flag and wave it around. If you call them non-Muslim, it just rolls off their backs because they have Korans and stuff. Almost any other "brand" you can imagine is either inert or beneficial to Loser recruitment.

Loser is different. No one joins the Loser movement.

As it happened, it was only a few hours before the slaughter in Manchester that President Trump, speaking in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, outlined his policy with respect to the "evil" part of his formulation: annihilation. What Barack Obama dismissed as a "J.V." threat just a couple of years ago has grown and metastasized greatly in the intervening months. That is about to change.

Obliterating isis is the first order of business. But it is only one front in a much larger war. As Andrew C. McCarthy pointed out in his response to the Manchester bombing, "The threat we face is not merely terrorism. The main threat is the ideology because of which terrorism thrives." The name of that ideology is sharia, Islamic law, which is fundamentally incompatible with the traditions of democratic liberalism on critical issues from religious liberty and equality before the law to the status of women and the right of free speech.

A burgeoning awareness that the culture under threat is very much worth preserving.

McCarthy notes that the only way to prevent the spread of sharia is to scrutinize aliens wishing to immigrate to Western countries for allegiance to that ideology. Hitherto, the response of Western elites to terrorist outrages has been a combination of sentimentality and apology: Kumbaya

sentimentality about the murderous assaults, apology for Western culture, which, it is said, has its own faults and is somehow implicated in its own destruction.

We have certainly heard a reprise of that tired song in the immediate aftermath of the Manchester massacre. But we have also heard some refreshingly discordant, refreshingly adult notes. There is anger in that descant, justified anger. There is also the burgeoning awareness that the culture under threat, whatever its faults, is very much worth preserving. That dual reality—a newfound awareness fired by anger—may yet rescue us from our more hapless selves.

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