

We're all walking time bombs

You, me, your mom. We could all be terrorists. At least that's what politicians want us to think



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The alleged terrorists recently arrested in the Toronto area were described by the press as “nice guys,” “normal,” “outgoing.” One of the alleged leaders is “a soft person,” “a quiet suburbanite.” They “came to Canada as children,” but “were pretty much raised here,” “very religious.” A “quiet family . . . watered their lawn,” “never drink,” “never smoke,” “a very decent and good kid.” One “played basketball.”

In other words, *it could be you.*

I fear that the journalists' chorus about the suspects being like you and me is related to a deeper phenomenon. It reminded me of the sales rep I recently met chatting with villagers in a convenience store here, in Lac-Saguay, Que. Explaining his support for gun control laws, the salesman invoked some recent mad killing and, with his disarming commercial smile, said of the madman something like: “It could be anybody, it could be me.”

Intellectual sales reps are not very different than the potato chips variety.

Consider this Toronto reporter who, in the wake of the terrorist arrests, went to investigate security in the Parliament Buildings. She writes: “This reporter managed to get within inches of Cabinet ministers and on to the third floor of Centre Block, where Stephen Harper's office is located, without being asked for identification.”

Instead of complaining, shouldn't the reporter have congratulated the security people for being so perspicacious, discerning, hands-off, respectful, for behaving like servants not masters? I suggest that this is how a free man would react. This is how I felt recently when I entered the same Parliament Buildings as the reporter without showing anything else than a business card I printed on my PC.

But the self-righteous reporter who walked undisturbed in the Parliament Buildings with, as she says, “my press pass tucked under my coat” probably thinks that, after all, she could be a terrorist.

In fact, a terrorist would be utterly incapable of confidently walking into Parliament with an air of “don't bloody ask me for any ID card in a country that doesn't have any (officially).” On the contrary,

he would have a driver's licence, a medicare card, a social insurance card, a passport, and would be proud to carry them—if they were not counterfeit. He thinks it's normal that people be tagged. He wants more of that.

It is not only smokers that the state has “denormalized,” but pretty much everybody. Its brainwashing has made us think that anybody can be a serial killer or a terrorist. Anybody is liable to massacre his wife and children. You and me. A mad monster sleeps within every one of us. Thus, people expect to be subjected to prior controls, to be watched, processed, screened, and frisked—and say “thank you.”

However, it is unthinkable that the people who are granted such extraordinary powers to protect us could become, or work for, Hitler or Saddam Hussein. Only the private citizen is a walking time bomb. Fortunately, every four years, a warp in the space-time continuum makes these potential madmen suddenly—albeit for



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only a few hours—enlightened enough to elect soft, altruistic, caring masters.

There was at least one other period in recent history where (real) homegrown terrorists threatened our liberties. It was the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when Marxist anarchists were roaming all over Europe and blowing things up. There also lived at that time a former British MP, Auberon Herbert, who wrote a famous 1894 essay entitled “The Ethics of Dynamite” (which has been reproduced in *The Right and Wrong of Compulsion by the State*, a well-worth-reading book published by Liberty Fund). “If . . . the only effect upon us of the presence of the dynamiter in our midst,” Herbert wrote, “is to make us multiply punishments, invent restrictions, increase the number of our official spies, forbid public meetings, interfere with the press, put up gratings—as in one country they propose to do—in our House of Commons, scrutinize visitors under official microscopes, request them, as at Vienna, and I think now at Paris also, to be good enough to leave their greatcoats in the vestibules . . . I venture to prophesy that there lies before us a bitter and an evil time.” **WS**