

The 2005 London Terror Attack

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As with any other cowardly, terrorist activity the central London attacks were perpetrated upon innocent civilians. On the 7th of July 2005, the London bombings took place at the Russell Square Tube Station during the busy rush hour, resulting in 56 deaths including the four terrorist perpetrators. The non-fatal injuries within the incident accounted for a staggering 700+ victims. The four mass murders responsible for this destruction were confirmed jihadists, Hasid Hussain, Mohammad Sidique Khan, Germaine Lindsay and Shehzad Tanweer.

Each of the four extremists detonated a series of three separate bombs consecutively within a period of fifty seconds of each other, aboard the London Underground trains at several locations around the city. A fourth bomb exploded within the following hour on an English double-decker bus outside of Tavistock Square. This has been viewed as one of Britain's worst terrorist events of all time and served as a wake-up call and entry of the country's first Islamist suicide attack.

Similar to our own Boston Marathon bombings these peroxide-based explosives were packed into backpacks and distributed to the bombing locations. During the BBC radio coverage of the event, one witness reported watching half of a bus being propelled through the air while another was terrified at the sight of a man exploding before their eyes.

In issue 94 of Socialism Today, the author states that the bombing and the following terrorist actions represent Britain's equivalent of our September 11th attacks. This can often be misleading as the scales of deaths were very different. In the New York City attack, America witnessed the deaths of just fewer than three thousand individuals whereas the London bombings contributed only a little over 50 victims. These needless deaths were not compatible. Many experts would contend that the ramifications associated with the two events were not equal as well, in view of the difference in status between the US disaster and the one which took place in Britain. However, the bombings which took place in London left a huge impression upon the British. Similarly, as with 9/11 a vast amount of emotions and feelings were expressed over the event. Naturally, one would find the psychological effects to be varied depending upon the level of involvement for the individuals. Those people who were directly involved with both our 9/11 or for those with the London bombings would be expected to experience long term effects resulting in increased fear along with uncontrolled periods of anxiety. These features would especially emerge when a person enters the airport boarding gate at the airport terminals or decides to take the London underground trains to their destination. Fear and panic began to grip the population as they realized that safety was not a factor that could be guaranteed. These daily trips on the British underground would never be viewed in the same light again.

After the dust had finally settled and the facts started to emerge revealing that the bombers were actually British born Muslims hysterical fear was present in all law-abiding British citizens. This observation gave the immediate impression that possibly the 1.6 million Muslims who resided in Britain were potentially involved in the bombing plots as well and before long race-hating crimes began to surface.

One parallel associated between the London attacks and our own 9/11 disaster was Tony Blair when he referred to the attacks as an unprecedented assault on our democratic ideals and the public's civil liberties. This was a "take-off" from President George Bush's views and the propellant needed to

perpetuate the America Patriot Act. Although Britain had previously enacted major anti-terrorist legislation, this failed to prevent Blair from declaring that the rules of the game have now changed. This referral of the terrorist acts as a game resulted in many negative responses towards Prime Minister Blair and questioned his agenda. Much like here in America after the 9/11, tragically life for the British was quickly changing. There were attempts to criminalize anyone who the government viewed as guilty of condoning or glorifying acts of terrorism. Efforts were quickly underway to deport extremists or for those prone to inciting violence. It is interesting to note that at the time of the London bombing, polls revealed that 5% of the Muslim population and 7% of that population under 35 years old fully justified additional suicide bombings within the country of Britain.

In view of the modern-day terrorist events which take place not only in America and Britain but all around the globe, I would like to review the concept that both attacks were intentional and unpredictable. This is a uniqueness which applied to the attacks of 9/11 as well as to the London bombings but will also be just as characteristic today as to then. These out of the ordinary attributes is what generated psychological trauma for the unsuspecting victims. The unexpected factor is unlike that found in a natural type disaster. We are currently at the end of the hurricane season and with each tropical storm which forms in the Atlantic we are forewarned many days in advance. As such we can take the proper precautions to protect ourselves and our loved ones. In the case of terrorist attacks such as the London bombings and our own 9/11, there is no warning and thus no protective measures to be taken. The psychological effects involving terrorist activities not only involve the victims and their families but strangers as well. I would pose the question in support of this statement as to how you may have felt personally as you watched the drama unfold for the 9/11 disaster?

Recovery times appeared short for the British unlike our 9/11 recovery simply because of the great difference in magnitude of the events in question. When you look at an event which took the lives of 3000 people as opposed to one which took only 50 plus there is a perceived difference. Additionally, we were attacked not only in New York and the Pentagon but the terrorists also hijacked a commercial aircraft which crashed in a Pennsylvania field. Don't get me wrong all life is valuable and should never be viewed as insignificant. With this additional suffering we required a longer period of time to recover.

As for the one-size-fits-all concept as it relates to trauma after a disaster, I feel that each disaster generates their own series of psychological factors which are based upon the age of those involved, the culture of the nation, the educational level of the victims, and the type of disaster being experienced. Children would likely have a difficult time adjusting to a series of disastrous events whereas the adults could cope much better.

After the attacks of 9/11 Americans were extremely cautious of flying and were very watchful as to who was aboard the aircraft with them. If the individual in the seat next to them was a Muslim we find that fear and concern quickly overcome logic and reason. This was a widespread problem and rightfully so. We were tasked in this rant to evaluate how America and Britain dealt with their own terrorist attacks and how each were affected psychologically along with how they dealt with the resultant trauma. We saw how one country quickly recovered while others took longer to regain its normalcy. Could both countries have handled the situation differently, who knows? All we can hope for is to better understand the terrorist mindset and be prepared in the future.