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Terrorism

Law Enforcement Policy

and Ego Defenses of the Hostage

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The Bank Robbery

At 10:15 a.m. on Thursday, August 23, 1973, the quiet early routine of the Sveriges Kreditbank in Stockholm, Sweden, was destroyed by the chatter of a submachinegun. As clouds of plaster and glass settled around the 60 stunned occupants, a heavily armed, lone gunman called out in English, "The party has just begun."¹

The "party" was to continue for 131 hours, permanently affecting the lives of four young hostages and giving birth to a psychological phenomenon subsequently called the Stockholm Syndrome.

During the 131 hours from 10:15 a.m. on August 23 until 9:00 p.m. on August 28, four employees of the Sveriges Kreditbank were held hostage. They were: Elisabeth, age 21, then an employee of 14 months working as a cashier in foreign exchange, now a nurse; Kristin, age 23, then a bank stenographer in the loan department, today a social worker; Brigitta, age 31, an employee of the bank; and Sven, age 25, a new employee, today employed by the national government.² They were held by a 32-year-old convicted thief, burglar, and prison escapee named Jan-Erik Olsson.³ Their jail was an 11- x 47-foot carpeted bank vault which they came to share with another convicted criminal and former cellmate of Olsson, Clark Olofsson, age 26. Olofsson joined the group only after Olsson demanded his release from Norrkoping Penitentiary.⁴

This particular hostage situation gained long-lasting notoriety primarily because the electronic media exploited the fears of the victims, as well as the sequence of events. Contrary to what had been expected, it was found that victims feared the *police* more than they feared the robbers. In a telephone call to Prime Minister Olaf Palme, one of the hostages expressed these typical feelings of the group when she said, "The robbers are protecting us from the police." Upon release other hostages puzzled over their feelings, "Why don't we hate the robbers."⁵

For weeks after this incident, and while under the care of psychiatrists, some of the hostages experienced the paradox of nightmares over the possible escape of the jailed subjects and yet felt no hatred for these abductors. In fact, they felt the subjects had given them their lives back and were emotionally indebted to them for their generosity.

The Phenomenon

The Stockholm Syndrome seems to be an automatic, probably unconscious, emotional response to the trauma of becoming a victim. Though some victims may think it through, this is not a rational choice by a victim who decides consciously that the most advantageous behavior in this predicament is to befriend his captor. This syndrome has been observed around the world and includes a high level of stress as participants are cast together in a life-threatening environment where

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each must achieve new levels of adaptation or regress to an earlier stage of ego development to stay alive. This phenomenon, this positive bond, affects the hostages and the hostage-taker. This positive emotional bond, born in, or perhaps because of, the stress of the siege environment, serves to unite its victims against "outsiders." A philosophy of "it's us against them" seems to develop. To date there is no evidence to indicate how long the syndrome lasts. Like the automatic reflex action of the knee, this bond seems to be beyond the control of the victim and the subject.

One definition of the Stockholm Syndrome takes into account three phases of the experience and describes it as:

The positive feelings of the captives toward their captor(s) that are accompanied by negative feelings toward the police. These feelings are frequently reciprocated by the captor(s). To achieve a successful resolution of a hostage situation, law enforcement must encourage and tolerate the first two phases so as to induce the third and thus preserve the lives of all participants.⁶

Though this relationship is new in the experience of law enforcement officers, the psychological community has long been aware of the use of an

emotional bond as a coping mechanism of the ego under stress.

Many years ago Sigmund Freud forged the theory of personality and conceived three major systems, calling them the id, the ego, and the superego.

The id is man's expression of instinctual drive without regard to reality or morality. It contains the drive for preservation and destruction, as well as the appetite for pleasure.⁷

In the well-adjusted person the ego is the executive of the personality, controlling and governing the id and the superego and maintaining commerce with the external world in the interest of the total personality and its far-flung needs. When the ego is performing its executive functions wisely, harmony and adjustment prevail. Instead of the pleasure principle, the ego is governed by the reality principle.⁸

The superego dictates to the ego how the demands of the id are to be satisfied. It is in effect the conscience and is usually developed by internalization of parental ideals and prohibitions formed during early childhood.⁹

Coping with reality is one function of the ego. The ego in the healthy personality is dynamic and resourceful. One of its functions is the use of defense mechanisms, a concept developed by Sigmund Freud in 1894 when he wrote "The Neuro-Psychoses of Defense." Freud conceived the defense mechanisms as the ego's struggle against painful or unendurable ideas or their effects.¹⁰ Since Freud, the defense mechanisms have been discussed, explained, examined, and defined repeatedly. They vary in number depending upon the author. However, they all serve the same purpose—to protect the self from hurt and disorganization.¹¹

When the self is threatened, the ego must cope with a great deal of stress. The ego enables the personality to continue to function even during the most painful experiences, such as being taken hostage by an armed, anx-

ious stranger. The hostage wants to survive, and the healthy ego is seeking a means to achieve survival.¹² One avenue open is the use of defense mechanisms. The mechanism used most frequently by hostages interviewed by the author has been regression, which Norman Cameron defines as a return to a less mature, less realistic level of experience and behavior.¹³ Several theories have been advanced in an attempt to explain the observable symptoms that law enforcement and members of the psychiatric community

"The Stockholm Syndrome seems to be an automatic, probably unconscious, emotional response to the trauma of becoming a victim."

have come to call the Stockholm Syndrome.

In her book, *The Ego and Its Mechanisms of Defense*, Anna Freud discusses the phenomenon of identification with the aggressor. This version of identification is called upon by the ego to protect itself against authority figures who have generated anxiety.¹⁴ The purpose of this type of identification is to enable the ego to avoid the wrath, the potential punishment, of the enemy. The hostage identifies out of fear rather than out of love.¹⁵ It would appear that the healthy ego evaluates the situation and elects from its arsenal of defenses that mechanism which best served it in the past when faced with trauma. The normal developing personality makes effective use of the defense mechanism of identification, generally out of love, when modeling itself after a parent.

Identification often takes place in imitative learning, as when a boy identifies with his father and uses him as a model.¹⁶ Some authors have called this

type of identification introjection and use the Nazi concentration camps as an example of people radically altering their norms and values.¹⁷

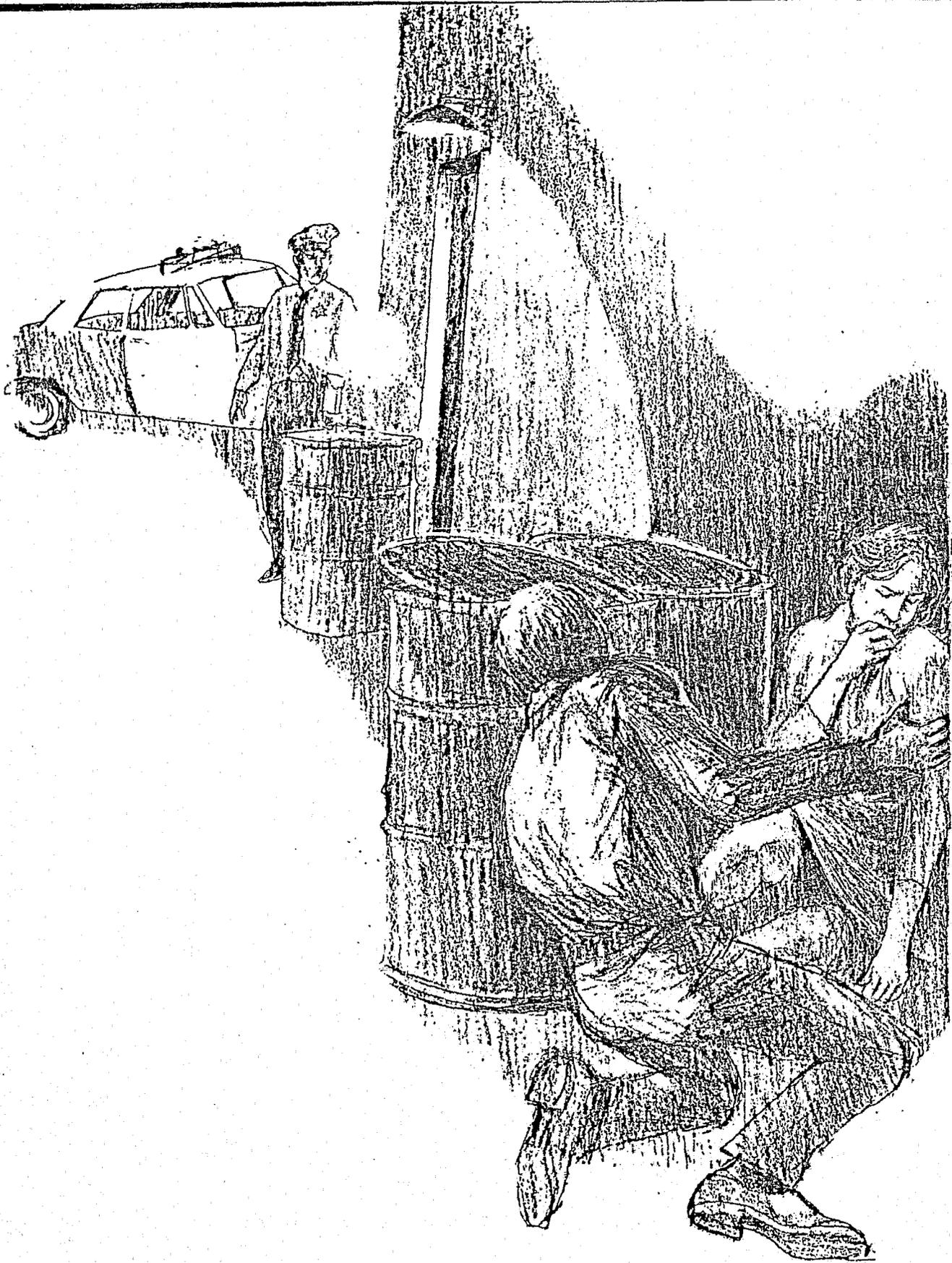
According to James C. Coleman in his book, *Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life*,

Introduction is closely related to identification. As a defense reaction it involves the acceptance of others' VALUES AND NORMS as one's own even when they are contrary to one's previous assumptions.¹⁸

Coleman goes on to discuss the common occurrence of people adopting the values and beliefs of a new government to avoid social retaliation and punishment. This reaction seems to follow the principle, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em."¹⁹

Though identification with the aggressor is an attractive explanation for the Stockholm Syndrome, and may indeed be a factor in some hostage situations, it is not a total explanation for the phenomenon. This reaction is commonly seen in children at about the age of 5 as they begin to develop a conscience and have resolved the Oedipal complex. They have given up the delusion of being an adult and now begin to work on the reality of growing up. This is usually done by identifying with the parent of the same sex and is generally healthy. However, when this parent is abusive, we see the identification serving the dual purpose of protection and as an ego ideal.

The Stockholm Syndrome is viewed by this author as regression to a more elementary level of development than is seen in the 5-year-old who identifies with a parent. The 5-year-old is able to feed himself, speak for himself, and has locomotion. The hostage is more like the infant who must cry for food, cannot speak, and may be bound. Like the infant, the hostage is in a state of extreme dependence and fright. He is terrified of the



outside world, like the child who learns to walk and achieves physical separation before he is ready for the emotional separation from the parent.

This infant is blessed with a mother figure who sees to his needs. As these needs are satisfactorily met by the mother figure, the child begins to love this person who is protecting him from the outside world. The adult is capable of caring and leading the infant out of dependence and fear. So it is with the hostage—his extreme dependence, his every breath a gift from the subject. He is now as dependent as he was as an infant—the controlling, all-powerful adult is again present—the outside world is threatening once again. The weapons the police have deployed against the subject are also, in the mind of the hostage, deployed against him. Once again he is dependent, perhaps on the brink of death. Once again there is a powerful authority figure who can help. So the behavior that worked for the dependent infant surfaces again as a coping device, a defense mechanism, to lead the way to survival.

Domestic Hostage Situations

Since 1973, local law enforcement has been faced with many hostage situations. The subject-hostage bond is not always formed, yet case studies show that it is frequently a factor. As such, the Stockholm Syndrome should be kept in mind by police when they face such a situation, plan an attack, debrief former hostages, and certainly when the subjects are prosecuted.

Hostage situations seem to be on the increase. Today more than ever, police are responding to armed robberies in progress in a fraction of the time it required a few years ago. This increased skill in incident response unfortunately promotes a perpetrator's need to take hostages. In the past, the armed robber was frequently gone before the employees felt safe enough to sound the alarm, but today silent alarms are triggered automatically. Computerized patrol practices place

police units in areas where they are more likely, statistically, to encounter an armed robbery. An analysis of past armed robberies dictates placement of patrol units to counter future attempts. Progress in one phase of law enforcement has created new demands in another.

The vast majority of hostage incidents are accidental. In cases such as these, it is likely the robber did not plan to take hostages. However, the police arrived sooner than anticipated and as a new form of flight, a method of escape, the now-trapped armed robber takes a hostage so he can bargain his way out.

In his desperation the armed robber compounds his dilemma by adding kidnaping and assault charges. These considerations are initially minimal to him. His emotions are running high; he wants to buy time, and in this succeeds. Research has shown that the leader of the abductors usually has a prior felony arrest.²⁰ Therefore, though desperate, the hostage-taker is not ignorant or inexperienced in the ways of the criminal justice system and realizes the consequences of his new role.

The trapped subject is outgunned and outnumbered, and with each fleeting moment, his situation becomes less tenable. Perhaps he takes hostages as a desperate offensive act, one of the few offensive acts available to him in his increasingly defensive position. Whatever his motivation, the subject is now linked with other individuals, usually strangers, who will come to sympathize and in some cases empathize with him in a manner now recognized and understood.

The stranger—the victim—the law-abiding citizen—is forced into this life-and-death situation and is unprepared for this turn of events. Suddenly his routine world is turned upside down. The police, who should help, seem equally helpless. The hostage may feel that the police have let him down by allowing this to happen. It all seems so unreal.

Stages of Hostage Reaction

Many hostages seek immediate psychological refuge in denial. According to Anna Freud,

*When we find denial, we know that it is a reaction to external danger; when repression takes place, the ego is struggling with instinctual stimuli.*²¹

Hostages, in interviews with this author, frequently discuss their use of denial of reality. The findings of denial are not limited:

*As I continued to talk to victims of violence, I became aware that the general reactions of these victims were similar to the psychological response of an individual who experiences sudden and unexpected loss. Loss of any kind, particularly if sudden and unexpected, produces a certain sequence of response in all individuals. The first response is shock and denial.*²²

Hostages have also repressed their feelings of fear. Frequently these feelings of fear are transferred from fear of the hostage-taker to fear of the police. Research has shown that most hostages die or are injured during the police assault phase.²³ This is not to say that the police kill them.

Denial is a primitive, but an effective, psychological defense mechanism. There are times when the mind is so overloaded with trauma that it cannot handle the situation.²⁴ To survive, the mind reacts as if the traumatic incident is not happening. The victims respond: "Oh no;" "No, not me;" "This must be a dream;" "This is not happening."²⁵ These are all individually effective methods of dealing with excessively stressful situations.

Denial is but one stage of coping with the impossible turn of events. Each victim who copes effectively has a strong will to survive. One may deal with the stress by believing he is dreaming and will soon wake up, and it will be all over. Some deal with the stress by sleeping; this author has interviewed hostages who have slept for over 48 hours while captive. Some have fainted, though this is rare.



Frequently hostages gradually accept their situation, but find a safety valve in the thought that their fate is not fixed. They view their situation as temporary, sure that the police will come to their rescue. This gradual change from denial to delusions of reprieve reflects a growing acceptance of the facts. Although the victim accepts that he is a hostage, he believes freedom will come soon.²⁶

If freedom does not immediately relieve the stress, many hostages begin to engage in busy work, work they feel comfortable doing. Some knit, some methodically count and recount windows or other hostages, and some reflect upon their past life. This author has never interviewed a former hostage who had not taken stock of his life and vowed to change for the better, an attempt to take advantage of a second chance at life. The vast majority of hostages share this sequence of emotional events—denial, delusions of reprieve, busy work, and taking stock. The alliance that takes place between the hostage and the subject comes later.

Time

Time is a factor in the development of the Stockholm Syndrome. Its passage can produce a positive or negative bond, depending on the interaction of the subjects and hostages. If the hostage-takers do not abuse their victims, hours spent together will most likely produce "positive" results. Time alone will not do so, but it may be the catalyst in nonabusive situations.

In September 1976, when 5 Croatian hijackers took a Boeing 727 carrying 95 people on a transatlantic flight from New York to Paris, another incident of the Stockholm Syndrome occurred. Attitudes toward the hijackers and their crime reflected the varying exposures of those involved in the situation.²⁷ The hostages were released at intervals. The first group was released after a day. The debriefing of the victims in this situation has clearly

indicated that the Stockholm Syndrome is not a magical phenomenon, but a logical outgrowth of positive human interaction.

TWA flight 355, originally scheduled to fly from New York City to Tucson, Ariz., via Chicago, on the evening of September 10, 1976, was diverted somewhere over western New York State to Montreal, Canada, where additional fuel was added. The hijackers then traveled to Gander, Newfoundland, where 34 passengers deplaned to lighten the aircraft for its flight to Europe, via Keflavik, Iceland, with the remaining 54 passengers and a crew of 7. The subjects, primarily Julianna Eden Basic, selected passengers to deplane. She based her decision on age and family responsibilities. The remaining passengers, plus the crew of seven, were those who were single, married with no children, or those who had volunteered to remain on board, such as Bishop O'Rourke. After flying over London, the aircraft landed in Paris where it was surrounded by the police and not allowed to depart. After 13 hours the subjects surrendered to French police. The episode lasted a total of 25 hours for most of the passengers and about 3 hours for those who deplaned at Gander.²⁸

During the months of September and October of 1976, all but two of the hostages and all of the crew were interviewed. The initial hypothesis before the interviews was that those victims released after only a few hours would not express sympathy for the subjects, while those released later would react positively toward the subjects. In other words, time was viewed as the key factor.

The hypothesis was not proven. Instead, it seemed the victims' attitudes toward the subjects varied from subject to subject and from victim to victim, regardless of the amount of time they spent as captives. Although this seemed illogical, interviews with the victims revealed understandable reasons. It was learned that those victims who had negative contacts with the subjects did not evidence concern for them, regardless of time of release.

Some of these victims had been physically abused by the subjects; they obviously did not like their abusers and advocated the maximum penalty be imposed.

Other victims slept on and off for 2 days. This could be a form of the defense mechanism of denial, a desperate ego-defensive means of coping with an otherwise intolerable event.²⁹ These victims had minimal contact with the subjects and also advocated a maximum penalty. They may not have had distinctly negative contact, but they experienced no positive association. Their only contact with the subjects was on three occasions, when hostage-taker Mark Vlastic awakened them in Paris as he ordered all of the passengers into the center of the aircraft where he threatened to detonate the explosives unless the French government allowed them to depart.

The other extreme was evidenced by victims, regardless of time of release, who felt great sympathy for their abductors. They had positive contact with the subjects, which included discussing the hijackers' cause and understanding their motivation and suffering. Some of these victims told the press that they were going to take vacation time to attend the trial. Others began a defense fund for their former captors. Some recommended defense counsel to the subjects, and others refused to be interviewed by law enforcement officers who took the subjects into custody.³⁰

Perhaps one of the most self-revealing descriptions of the Stockholm Syndrome was offered by one of these hijack victims:

"After it was over and we were safe I recognized that they [the subjects] had put me through hell and had caused my parents and fiance a great deal of trauma. Yet, I was alive. I was alive because they had let me live. You know only a few people, if any, who hold your life in their hands and then give it back to you. After it was over, and we were safe and they were in handcuffs, I walked over to them and kissed each one and said, 'Thank you for giving me my life back.' I know how

foolish it sounds, but that is how I felt."³¹

Yet, this feeling of affection seems to be a mask for a great inner trauma. Most victims, including those who felt considerable affection for the subjects, reported nightmares. These dreams expressed the fear of the subjects escaping from custody and recapturing them.³² Dr. Ochberg reports similar findings,³³ as did the psychiatrist in Stockholm in 1973.³⁴

Again the hostages aboard the plane developed a personal relationship with the criminals. The feelings of one hostage were expressed when she said, "They didn't have anything [the bombs were fakes], but they were really great guys. I really want to go to their trial."³⁵ This is a very different view from that of New York City Police Commissioner Michael Codd, who said in an interview, "What we have here is the work of madmen—murderers." The interview of the commissioner followed an attempt to defuse a bomb left

by the hijackers; the bomb killed one officer and seriously injured three others.³⁶

The situation in 1973 in Stockholm is not unique. These same feelings were generated in the Croatian aircraft hijacking, and more recently the Japanese Red Army hijacking of JAL flight 472 in September/October 1977,³⁷ and also in the hostage situation that took place at the German Consulate in August of 1978.³⁸

Isolation

But the Stockholm Syndrome relationship does not always develop. Sir Geoffrey Jackson, the British Ambassador to Uruguay, was abducted and held by Tupamaro terrorists for 244 days. He remained in thought and actions the ambassador, the Queen's representative, and so impressed his captors with his dignity that they were forced to change regularly his guards and isolate him for fear he might con-

vince them that his cause was just and theirs foolish.³⁹ Others, such as the American agronomist Dr. Claude Fly, held by the Tupamaros for 208 days in 1970, have also avoided identification with the abductor or his cause.⁴⁰ He accomplished this by writing a 600-page autobiography and by developing a 50-page "Christian checklist," in which he was able to create his own world and insulate himself against the hostile pressures around him.⁴¹

According to Brooks McClure,

*In the case of both Dr. Fly and Sir Geoffrey Jackson, and other hostages as well, the terrorist organization found it necessary to remove the guards who were falling under their influence.*⁴²

In most situations, the Stockholm Syndrome is a two-way street.

However, most victims of terrorist or criminal abductors are not individuals of the status of Dr. Fly or Ambassador Jackson, and as such do not retain an aura of aloofness during their captivity. As yet, there is no identified personality type more inclined to the Stockholm Syndrome. The victims do share some common experiences, though.

Positive Contact

The primary experience that victims of the syndrome share is positive contact with the subject. The positive contact is generated by *lack* of negative experiences, i.e., beatings, rapes, or physical abuse, rather than an actual positive act on the part of the abductors. The few injured hostages who have evidenced the syndrome have been able to rationalize their abuse. They have convinced themselves that the abductor's show of force was necessary to take control of the situation, that perhaps their resistance precipitated the abductor's force. Self-blame on the part of the victims is very evident in these situations.



Stockholm Syndrome victims share a second common experience. They sense and identify with the human quality of their captor. At times this quality is more imagined than real, as the victims of Fred Carrasco learned in Texas in August 1974.⁴³

On the afternoon of July 24, 1974, at the Texas Penitentiary in Huntsville, Fred Carrasco and 2 associates took approximately 70 hostages in the prison library. In the course of the 11-day siege, most of the hostages were released. However, the drama was played out on the steps of the library between 9:30 and 10:00 on the night of August 3, 1974. It was during this time that Carrasco executed the remaining hostages.⁴⁴ This execution took place in spite of his letters of affection to other hostages who were released earlier due to medical problems.⁴⁵

Some hostages expressed sympathy for Carrasco.⁴⁶ A Texas Ranger who was at the scene and subsequently spoke to victims stated to the author that there was evidence of the Stockholm Syndrome.⁴⁷ Though the hostages' emotions did not reflect the depth of those in Sweden a year before, the hostages admitted affectionate feelings toward a person they thought they should hate. They saw their captor as a human being with problems similar to their own. Law enforcement has long recognized that the trapped armed robber believes he is a victim of the police. We now realize that the hostage tends to share his opinion.

When a robber is caught in a bank by quick police response, his dilemma is clear. He wants out with the money and his life. The police are preventing his escape by their presence and are demanding his surrender. The hostage, an innocent customer or employee of the bank, is also inside. His dilemma is similar to that of the robber—he wants

to get out and cannot. He has seen the arrogant robber slowly become "a person" with a problem just like his own. The police on the outside correctly perceive the freedom of the hostage as the prerogative of the robber. However, the hostages perceive that the police weapons are pointed at them; the threat of tear gas makes them uncomfortable. The police insistence of the surrender of the subject is also keeping them hostage. Hostages begin to develop the idea that, "If the police would go away, I could go home. If

"The primary experience that victims of the syndrome share is positive contact with the subject."

they would let him go, I would be free,"⁴⁸ and so the bond begins.

Hostage-Taker Reaction

As time passes and positive contact between the hostage and hostage-taker begins, the Stockholm Syndrome also begins to take its effect upon the subject. This was evident at Entebbe in July 1976. At least one of the terrorists, one who had engaged in conversations with the hostages from Air France flight 139, elected at the moment of the attack to shoot at the Israeli commandos rather than execute hostages.⁴⁹

A moving account of this relationship is presented by Dr. Frank Ochberg as he recounts the experience of one hostage of the South Moluccans in December 1975. Mr. Gerard Vaders, a newspaper editor in his 50's, related his experience to Dr. Ochberg:

"On the second night they tied me again to be a living shield and left me in that position for seven hours. The one who was most psychopathic kept telling me, 'Your time has come. Say your

prayers.' They had selected me for the third execution. . . . In the morning when I knew I was going to be executed, I asked to talk to Prins [another hostage] to give him a message to take to my family. I wanted to explain my family situation. My foster child, whose parents had been killed, did not get along too well with my wife, and I had at that time a crisis in my marriage just behind me. . . . There were other things, too. Somewhere I had the feeling that I had failed as a human being. I explained all this and the terrorists insisted on listening."⁵⁰

When Mr. Vaders completed his conversation with Mr. Prins and announced his readiness to die, the South Moluccans said, "No, someone else goes first."⁵¹

Dr. Ochberg observed that Mr. Vaders was no faceless symbol anymore. He was human. In the presence of his executioners, he made the transition from a symbol to be executed to a human to be spared. Tragically, the Moluccans selected another passenger, Mr. Bierling, led him away, and executed him before they had the opportunity to know him.⁵²

Mr. Vaders goes on to explain his intrapsychic experience, his Stockholm Syndrome:

"And you had to fight a certain feeling of compassion for the Moluccans. I know this is not natural, but in some way they come over human. They gave us cigarettes. They gave us blankets. But we also realize that they were killers. You try to suppress that in your consciousness. And I knew I was suppressing that. I also knew that they were victims, too. In the long run they would be as much victims as we. Even more. You saw their morale crumbling. You experienced the disintegration of their personalities. The growing of despair. Things dripping through their fingers. You couldn't help but feel a certain pity. For people at the beginning with egos like gods—impregnable, invincible—they end up small, desperate, feeling that all was in vain."⁵³

Most people cannot inflict pain on another unless their victim remains dehumanized.⁵⁴ When the subject and his hostages are locked together in a

vault, a building, a train, or an airplane, a process of humanization apparently does take place. When a person, a hostage, can build empathy while maintaining dignity, he or she can lessen the aggression of a captor.⁵⁵ The exception to this is the subject who is antisocial, as Fred Carrasco demonstrated in August 1974. Fortunately, the Fred Carrascos of the world are in a minority, and in most situations the Stockholm Syndrome is a two-way street. With the passage of time and occurrence of positive experiences, the victims' chances of survival increase. However, isolation of the victims precludes the forming of this positive bond.

In some hostage situations, the victims have been locked in another room, or they have been in the same room but have been hooded or tied, gagged, and forced to face the wall away from the subject.⁵⁶ Consciously or unconsciously, the subject has dehumanized his hostage, thereby making it easier to kill him. As long as the hostage is isolated, time is not a factor. The Stockholm Syndrome will not be a force that may save the life of the victim.

Individualized Reactions

Additionally, it has been observed that even though some of the hostages responded positively toward their captors, they did not necessarily evidence Stockholm Syndrome reactions toward all of the subjects. It was learned, logically, that most of the victims reacted positively toward those subjects who had treated them, in the words of the victims, "fairly." Those hostages who gave glowing accounts of the gentlemanly conduct of some subjects did not generalize to all subjects. They evidenced dislike, even hatred, toward one hostage-taker who they called an animal.

A hypothetical question was posed to determine the depth of victims' feelings toward their captors. Each former hostage was asked what

he would do in the following situation: A person immediately recognizable as a law enforcement officer, armed with a shoulder weapon, orders him to lie down. At that same instant, one of his former captors would order him to stand up. When asked what he would do, his response varied according to the identity of the captor giving the "order." If a captor who had treated him fairly, hypothetically yelled, "Stand up," he would stand up. Conversely, if he thought it was the command of the subject who had verbally abused him, he would obey the law enforcement officer. This would indicate that the strength of the syndrome is considerable. Even in the face of an armed officer of the law, he would offer himself as a human shield for his abductor. As absurd as this may seem, such behavior has been observed by law enforcement officers throughout the world.⁵⁷

Whether the incident is a bank robbery in Stockholm, Sweden, a hijacking of an American aircraft over western New York, a kidnaping in South America, or an attempted prison break in Texas, there are behavioral similarities despite geographic and motivational differences. In each situation a relationship, a healthy relationship (healthy because those involved were alive to talk about it), seems to develop within people caught in circumstances beyond their control and not of their making, a relationship that reflects the use of ego defense mechanisms by the hostage. This relationship seems to help victims cope with excessive stress, and at the same time, enables them to survive—a little worse for wear, but alive. The Stockholm Syndrome is not a magical relationship of blanket affection for the subject. This bond, though strong, does have its limits—logical limits. If a person is nice to another, a positive feeling toward this person develops, even if this person is an armed robber, a hijacker of an aircraft, a kidnaper, or a prisoner attempting to escape.

The victim's need to survive is stronger than his impulse to hate the person who has created his dilemma. It

is his ability to survive, to cope, that has enabled man to survive and claw his way to the top of the evolutionary ladder. His ego is functioning and has functioned well and has performed its primary task of enabling the self to survive. At an unconscious level, the ego has activated the proper defense mechanisms in the correct sequence—denial, regression, identification, or introjection to achieve survival. The Stockholm Syndrome is just another example of the ability of the ego, the healthy ego, to cope and adjust to difficult stress brought about by a traumatic situation.

The application for law enforcement is clear, though it does involve a trade-off. The priority in dealing with hostage situations is the survival of all participants—hostage, the crowd that has gathered, the police officers, and the subject. To accomplish this end, various police procedures have been instituted. Inner and outer perimeters are longstanding procedures designed to keep crowds at a safe distance. Police training, discipline, and proper equipment save officers' lives. The development of the Stockholm Syndrome may save the life of the hostage as well as the subject. The life of the subject is preserved, as it is highly unlikely that deadly force will be used by the police unless the subject makes a precipitous move. The life of the hostage may also be saved by the Stockholm Syndrome, the experience of positive contact, thus setting the stage for regression, identification, and/or introjection. The subject is less likely to injure a hostage he has come to know and on occasion to love.⁵⁸

It is suggested that the Stockholm Syndrome can be fostered while negotiating with the subject: By asking him to allow the hostage to talk on the telephone; asking him to check on the health of a hostage; or discussing with

him the family responsibilities of the hostage. Any action the negotiator can take to emphasize the hostage's human qualities to the subject should be considered by the negotiator.

The police negotiator must pay a personal price for this induced relationship. Hostages will curse him as they did in Stockholm in August 1973. They will call the police cowards and actively side with the subject in trying to achieve a solution to their plight, a solution not necessarily in their best interests or in the best interest of the community.

Unfortunately, it may not end there. Victims of the Stockholm Syndrome may remain hostile toward the police after the siege has ended. The "original" victims in Stockholm still visit their abductors, and one former hostage is engaged to Olofsson.⁵⁹ Some American victims visit their former captors in jail.⁶⁰ Others have begun defense funds for them.⁶¹ A hostile hostage is a price that law enforcement must pay for a living hostage. Antilaw enforcement feelings are not new to the police. But this may be the first time it has been suggested that law enforcement seek to encourage hostility, hostility from people whose lives law enforcement has mustered its

resources to save. However, a human life is an irreplaceable treasure and worth some hostility. A poor or hostile witness for the prosecution is a small price to pay for this life. **FBI**

Footnotes

- ¹ Daniel Lang, "A Reporter at Large," *New Yorker*, November 1974, p. 56.
- ² Interviews with Stockholm, Sweden, police officers, FBI Academy, March 22, 1978.
- ³ Lang, p. 56.
- ⁴ Interviews with Stockholm, Sweden, police officers, FBI Academy, November 8, 1978.
- ⁵ Lang, p. 118.
- ⁶ Interview with Dr. Frank M. Ochberg, M.D., Acting Director, National Institute of Mental Health, November 2, 1978.
- ⁷ Calvin S. Hall, *A Primer of Freudian Psychology* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1954), p. 34.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.
- ¹⁰ Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*, rev. ed. (New York: International Universities Press, 1974), p. 42.
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- ²⁶ U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, *Terrorist Activity; Hostage Defense Measures, Hearings before a subcommittee to investigate the administration of the Internal Security Act and other internal security laws Part 5*, 94th Cong., 1st sess., 1975, p. 265.
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- ²⁹ Henry P. Laughlin, *The Ego and Its Defenses* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970), p. 57.
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- ³³ Frank M. Ochberg, "The Victim of Terrorism: Psychiatric Considerations," *Terrorism: An International Journal* 1, no. 2 (1978): 151.
- ³⁴ Interviews with Stockholm, Sweden, police officers.
- ³⁵ David M. Alpern, "A Skyjacking for Croatia," *Newsweek*, September 20, 1976, p. 25.
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- ³⁸ Interviews with victims of hostage situation, German Consulate, Chicago, Ill., August 19, 1978.
- ³⁹ Sir Geoffrey Jackson, *Surviving the Long Night* (New York: Vanguard, 1973), p. 49.
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⁴¹ Fly, pp. 151-220.

⁴² U.S., Congress, p. 267.

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⁴⁵ Aline House, *The Carrasco Tragedy* (Waco, Tex.: Texian Press, 1975), pp. 104-7.

⁴⁶ Larry Cooper, "Hostage Freed by Carrasco Aided Prison Officials in Assault Plan," *Houston Chronicle*, August 5, 1974, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Interview with Ranger Captain G. W. Burks, Austin Tex., December 1975.

⁴⁸ Interviews with victims of hostage situation, German Consulate.

⁴⁹ William Stevenson, *90 Minutes at Entebbe* (New York: Bantam Books, 1976), p. 116.

⁵⁰ Ochberg, p. 151.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁵⁴ Elliot Aronson, *Social Animal* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1972), p. 168.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁵⁶ Interviews with victims of Hanafi Muslim siege, Washington, D.C., March 1977.

⁵⁷ This was observed in the hijacking of a Philippine Airlines flight on September 17, 1978; during a hostage situation in Oceanside, Calif., February 3, 1975; during an aborted bank robbery in Toronto, Canada, in November 1977; and during a hostage situation that grew out of an aborted bank robbery in New York City in August 1976, that was later made into a movie entitled, "Dog Day Afternoon."

⁵⁸ Aronson, p. 168.

⁵⁹ "Swedish Robin Hood," *Washington Post*, Parade magazine supplement, November 14, 1976.

⁶⁰ This was evident during the hostage situations in Cleveland, Ohio, on October 29, 1975, and in Chicago, Ill., August 18, 1978.

⁶¹ Interviews with hijacked victims of TWA flight 355.

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