

COMMENTARY

How to handle the poison of Farrakhan and pipe bombs

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CANDID COMMENTS



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Some tests are simple and direct. Reaction to Louis Farrakhan is such a test. Reaction to the San Francisco pipe bombs is a different kind of test.

To pass the test on Farrakhan, one has to reject and condemn him thoroughly and without hesitation. A number of people in Los Angeles, including Mayor Tom Bradley, just failed that test. It doesn't matter that some of the things Farrakhan says are attractive or make sense. If a central part of his presentation is evil, dangerous and intolerable, then the entire presentation — and the presenter — must be rejected. Otherwise we fall into the Trap of the Poisoned Fruit: eating a piece of fruit which is suffused with poison on the grounds that it still contains much good and delicious nutrient.

Father Charles Coughlin, for example, who in the 1930s led

the largest anti-Semitic movement this country has ever seen, titled his newspaper *Social Justice*. He called for programs to end hunger and economic distress. Hitler called for programs to end hunger and unemployment. People flocked to Coughlin and Hitler because they promised to attack genuine social problems. In the course of doing that, these people swallowed Coughlin's and Hitler's anti-Semitism. In one survey, about a third of all Americans said they would vote for a rac-

ist and anti-Semitic candidate for Congress, if he otherwise proposed measures which they wanted. That is the Trap of the Poisoned Fruit.

In Los Angeles, one of the 15,000 people who gathered to hear Farrakhan said, "A lot of these people are not his followers and we're not his followers. But there's a lot in his message that I do relate to." And Mayor Tom Bradley who, of course, roundly condemned Farrakhan's anti-Semitism, said also that "I am sure there are many people who agree with much of what he said last night. He talked about economic development." Bradley fell into the trap. He ate the poisoned fruit. He failed the test. It was not enough to reject Farrakhan's anti-Semitism; it was necessary to totally reject

Farrakhan.

The pipe-bomb terrorism in San Francisco is different. It is pure poison. You won't find a dozen sane people in San Francisco who will approve of it in part or whole. That's easy to condemn. And it is easy to see the difference in the two consequences, both intolerable. Pipe-bombers will remain underground, will receive no public approval and gain no political power, but can kill or maim many people — for which rea-

son they must be zealously ferreted out and convicted.

The bottom line is that while there doesn't seem to be substantially more anti-Semites than in the recent past, the anti-Semites have become more terroristic. They have joined the world pattern of terrorism. On the same day of the San Francisco pipe bombs, Americans were killed in anti-American terrorism abroad. They must be stopped — and because they are often small underground cells it may take much increased intelligence activity here and abroad. Otherwise, many lives will be lost.

On the other hand, "partial acceptance" of the Farrakhans of the world can help build political movements which publicly and proudly bear the most humane slogans, but end up killing many more people. We have always had, and always will have Farrakhans. But they will succeed only if the Bradleys of the world fail to stand up to them and reject the poisoned fruit, however seductive.

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