

## A Cold-Hearted Reminder of the Essential Struggle -- A Reflection from Belgium

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April 2016



The terror attacks on the Brussels National Airport and the Maalbeek Metro Station were a first for Belgium. We'd never been confronted so directly with blind terror, but it had been close to us in recent times because of the attacks on Charlie Hebdo and Le Bataclan in Paris. We have a saying in Belgium: When it rains in Paris, raindrops begin to fall in Brussels.

Thus the attacks came as no surprise. Sooner or later there would be an attack. The question was only when it would be. It happened on March 22, on a bright and sunny morning.

Traveling twice via Maalbeek Metro Station almost every working day -- before the rush hour in the morning, but in the midst of it in the evening -- I had often wondered, which escape route would be best in case of an incident. I often thought it was a plus to have wider metro tunnels, accommodating trains driving in both directions. This would allow more space alongside the trains in case one had to escape by walking on the rails. It shows the plans were in the air for some time already.

I was at Erasmus University College in Brussels preparing to give a lecture. When around 9.30 AM the news broke about the attacks, I understood why no student had turned up by then. Via social media, apparently, they had found out before I.

So, the time had come for Brussels, and it would not be the last time. The terrorists had not been idle since Paris. While many people do their best to live good and decent lives, those terrorists had been thinking how most to shake the nation.

People were advised to stay indoors and not to venture into the streets of Brussels. We were virtually locked in at the campus until 2:00 PM. The students who had come to the campus were watching live news coverage projected onto large screens in various classrooms or just on their laptops or mobile devices. Everybody looked preoccupied; attending any class was out of the question.

We received scores of telephone calls from worried parents who were wondering about their children. Luckily, none of them had been hurt, even though six students were doing a work placement at Brussels Airport.

Being located in downtown Brussels, in the capital of Europe, our university college has plenty of students of foreign origin. Many are Moroccan and live in Molenbeek, the Brussels borough that quite unjustly has been dubbed the "Capital of Jihadism."

The events undoubtedly cast a shadow on people's relations toward one another. Any youngster (especially one of North African origin) carrying a rucksack, could be a suicide bomber; any woman could be hiding a bomb belt under her clothes. One could feel people were suspicious of each other and feeling ill at ease.

As all public transportation had been stopped in and around Brussels, I started a five-mile walk home at 2:00 PM, when we were allowed to leave the campus. It was a relief to see that to a certain extent normal life was still going on in town. Many, though, decided to leave the city, often by walking or by car, so as to avoid a super rush hour in the evening.

In the aftermath of the attacks, there was no end of debates and discussions in the media--about islamophobia, the possible polarization of society, the role of Europe, etc. Politicians were looking for scapegoats.

It was made clear that even though those terrorist attacks were made in the name of Islam, the perpetrators are not Muslims. Muslim religious leaders clearly distanced themselves from the terrorists.

Belgium practices separation of church and state, and freedom of religion is guaranteed by its constitution. Belgian law officially recognizes many religions, including Catholicism, Protestantism, Anglicanism, Islam, Judaism, and Eastern Orthodoxy, as well as non-religious philosophical organizations.

An ecumenical commemorative service was organized in St. Michael's Cathedral in Brussels to memorialize the victims of the terrorist attacks. Nothing, of course, justifies any of the violent acts committed by IS or any other terrorist organization in the Middle East or elsewhere in the world.

Discussing Islam, though, points out the absence of a value system in our western society, due to the disappearance of our Christian foundation. The sanctity of filial piety, pure love, marriage and worship is on the decline, while it remains and is more alive among Muslims. These are values shared with Christianity. Is the problem that today's society has marginalized Christianity? This calls for some soul-searching.

It makes us feel all the more the need to propagate a higher truth, which can take us beyond all religious discussion. Mankind needs True Parents' all-embracing guidance and love. More police officers in the streets or more military action in the Middle East will not solve the threat of terrorism. Eliminating Bin Laden or the leadership of IS is not a solution. Individual, independent cells of terrorism are mushrooming all over the place.

Likewise, we, blessed families, should be independent cells of true love, operating independently in society. Come what may in our Church organization, we should nurture our lifeline with Heavenly Parent and True Parents and change this society by love-bombing. In this respect, that an increasing number of young people are receiving the blessing worldwide is encouraging. This is Heavenly Parent's blueprint for an ideal world.

Growing up in a loving family, a peaceful environment, is the best remedy against the lure of fundamentalism. In the wake of the terrorist attacks, we have seen great outpourings of love and sympathy. It has brought out very good things from people and a determination not to be dominated by fear and terror.



*Belgians publicly mourn the deaths and horrible injuries suffered by their fellow citizens after the heinous attack on their capital city*