

# The Antiabortion Vigilantes

By Warren M. Hern

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BOULDER, Colo. – Two dozen abortion clinics or office have been bombe, burned or otherwise attacked this year. Some have been destroyed. In previous years, other clinics have been bombed or burned. One physician was kidnapped with his wife and held hostage for a week. Another was threatened at gunpoint and released. Another doctor's wife and child narrowly escaped injury when rifle bullets riddled their house.

If 24 synagogues or churches had been bombed, there would be a national investigation. But the Federal Government has made no serious efforts to stop or even investigate the bombings of abortion clinics.

William H. Webster, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, recently stated that the attacks on abortion clinics do not constitute "terrorism" because they were not committed by an "organized group" that publicly took responsibility for the attacks. The F.B.I., he said, only investigates "true terrorism" that aims to "overthrow the Government" or "shift the Government"; attacks on abortion clinics – not politically motivated – are "low priority."

This is an incredible statement by a Government official, coming dangerously close to official sanction of terrorism. Mr. Webster almost invites terrorists to go ahead and blow up abortion clinics as long as they don't take credit for it.

Abortion is legal in the United States and has been since 1973. The right of women to seek safe abortions and the right of doctors and others to help them is protected by law. The President is sworn to uphold those laws. So are Federal law-enforcement officials.

Mr. Webster ignores this fact when he states that violence against abortion clinics is excluded from the definition of "terrorism" by "organized political groups." Maybe he doesn't know that abortion is a political issue.

President Reagan ran on Republican platforms in 1980 and 1984 that included a pledge to appoint United States Supreme Court Justices who are opposed to abortion. His first official act on his Inauguration Day was to meet in the White House with top representatives of the antiabortion movement. His new Secretary of Health and Human Services, Richard S. Schweiker, speaking at a right-to-life rally the same day, promised a "pro-life Administration."

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## Almost sanctioned by Reagan

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President Reagan has appointed numerous high officials whose sole qualification has been fanatic opposition to abortion. These include Dr. Everett C. Koop, Surgeon General of the United States, and Marjorie Mecklenberg, a foe of birth control and abortion who was put in charge of Federal pregnancy and family planning programs for teenagers. She is now Deputy Assistant Secretary for Population Affairs at the Department of Health and Human Services. President Reagan has welcomed into the White House Joseph Scheidler, head of the extremist Pro-Life Action League, who openly condones violence against abortion clinics and has even done so on ABC television's late-night news program "Nightline."

Now, President Reagan permits the F.B.I Director to declare open season not just on doctors who perform abortions but on their families as well. As a physician committed to providing safe and humane abortion services to women who want them, and as a citizen who

believes strongly in democratic institutions and personal liberty, I am shocked and frightened by Mr. Webster's statement. It is appalling and outrageous.

The Reagan Administration has not only declared war on abortion clinics and their personnel but on women and civil liberties. A basic issue posed by the war against abortion is the definition of power: who has it and who doesn't. Will power be wielded absolutely by men, who cannot get pregnant, or will it be shared with women?

It is also a question of respect for law. Will the Government uphold and follow all the laws or just those of which it approves? By winking at those who bomb abortion clinics, the Government encourages an atmosphere of violence and lawlessness in which justice and respect for individual rights has no place.

Ultimately, the issue is whether abortion will become a political crime against the state. Under the Reagan Administration abortion has become not only a difficult personal decision and medical procedure. It has become a political act. □

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