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The Editor
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Sir, I am genuinely puzzled by the restraint shown by the United States in the recent emergency and would be grateful to be instructed what the moral or political arguments are against the kinds of steps which in the past any of the great powers would have taken in such a situation. It seems to me that the future of peaceful international relations ~~between nations and the safety of persons in foreign~~ and the safety of persons in foreign countries would have been much better served if, after the Iranian government placed itself outside the comity of nations by approving the holding captive of the personal of the U.S. embassy, the U.S. government had at once sent an ultimatum saying that, unless every single member of the embassy staff were within forth-eight hours handed over unharmed to representatives of the U.S. government at some place outside Iran, bombs would be falling at an increasing rate at the seat of the Iranian government.

Assuming it to be true that a military operation to free the hostages was impracticable and would probably have led to their being killed, the Iranian government have created a position in which violence governs. In such a situation in which the future principles of the relations between nations are at issue the lives of fifty employees of government cannot count more than that of fifty soldiers in another war situation. Nobody would hesitate to risk the lives of fifty naval personnel if pirates had placed themselves in command of a modern warship and began preying upon trade, nor doubt that even the lives of private citizens threatened for blackmail in a foreign country must not be allowed to force government to do anything contrary to the basic laws of the country. I believe that in the long run not only many lives would have been saved but peaceful intercourse between nations been better secured a government with the power to punish international evildoers had promptly done so. IS it not yet understood that the new international organisations do not yet possess this indispensable power?

Yours faithfully,

F.A.Hayek