

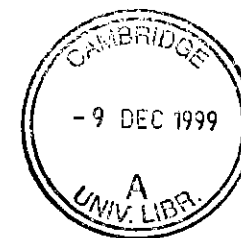
Terror and Taboo

THE FOLLIES, FABLES,
AND FACES OF TERRORISM

Joseba Zulaika

and

William A. Douglass



beyond any illusion of communal redemption through exemplary testimony. It is the repressed or criminalized witness who ends up confusing testimony with ultimate truth, and who is thereby unable to escape a secret loyalty toward the violent actor. It is after being allowed to bear free testimony that one can problematize the claims of innocence for both the agent and the witness.

It was while working in the field as ethnographers that we were exposed to the equivocal yet critical nexus between witnessing and truth in matters of terrorism. It is in a world of secrecy, masks, and hidden agendas that violence prospers—that is, in situations in which witnessing is not allowed to impact on the lives of the violent actors. If we learned anything from the successful town meeting, it was the crucial role that face-to-face encounters could have in revising collective representations and promoting tolerance. It is the kidnapper and the torturer who abhor the witness. Counterterrorism's policy of defacing the activist and reducing his/her narratives to sheer criminality only replicates the violence's original logic of secrecy and dehumanization. Both the terrorist and the counterterrorist join forces in eradicating the witness. Both are engaged in systematically ignoring the human condition of the other.

A requisite for achieving this mutual nonintelligibility is adherence to a discourse of strict literalness in which any ambiguity can be singled out as an abomination. Abraham ended up accepting the ritual substitution of a ram for his beloved son. But no such symbolic equivalence can be tolerated by a discourse bent on demonizing the enemy with metaphors of unredeemable bestiality. In such contexts of univocal truth and survival strategy, the gift of symbolism—ritually substituting an offering for actual murder, dismantling one's mythology to save the life of the son—is most unwelcome.

Taboo and the sacred are two aspects of the same coin, as Freud insisted. The stronger the imposition of a taboo by the counterterrorist, the greater the sacredness obtained by the realm of violence. Databooing terrorism implies liberating its victims. It is the decanonization of terrorism—the unveiling of masks, the transgression of silence, “the liberation of the testimony through its desacralization”⁷⁸—that counterterrorism cannot bear.⁷⁹

Epilogue as Prologue

THE APOTHEOSIS OF TERRORISM FORETOLD

History, I read recently, does not light the way forward but, like the stern lamp on a ship, illuminates its wake. Perhaps what offends the Western nations most about their victory over Communism is that in cutting a path to the future, they have unleashed the sleeping demons of their accusing past.

—John le Carré, “The Shame of the West”

As we write these last lines, Carlos the Jackal sits in a French jail awaiting trial, seemingly ignominiously traduced by the Sudanese hosts grown weary of harboring a debauched, middle-aged, international fugitive. Abimael Guzmán, the leader of Peru's “Shining Path”—the most notorious “terrorist” group in South America—languishes in prison. Sheik Omar Abdul Rahman is also incarcerated, in New York State, more an embarrassment than an exemplar for a U.S. foreign policy now more obsessed with a Middle East Peace Accord than with Arab-bashing. The hapless Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi, yesterday's bogeymen and today's international pariahs, maintain the lowest of profiles, while Yassir Arafat and Shimon Peres stand shoulder to shoulder (albeit perched precariously) against Hamas and Zionist zealots. The ANC is now the ruling party in South Africa. The Brigata Rossa and Baader Meinhof are but recent memories in a western Europe increasingly preoccupied more by the revival of fascism and a racist backlash against its political and economic refugees than by class warfare. Sinn Fein has been negotiating with Great Britain and Ireland on behalf of an IRA that agreed to a cease-fire. ETA is

increasingly isolated within both Spanish and Basque societies. In short, our generation's cast of terrorist activists and movements seems all but moribund. A blinkered optimist with little sense of history might even be prepared to pronounce "terrorism" itself dead.

Yet there is suddenly a new promised land for terrorism—the United States. Its major networks now dispatch their reporters to London to determine how civilized Europe adjusted to mindless terrorism. They send back the sobering warning that Americans better get used to it. William Pierce, author of *The Turner Diaries* and spiritual father of the militia movement sweeping the country, agrees. After the Oklahoma City explosion, he predicted in a radio address that resentment among "normal Americans" of politicians, Jews, minorities, and female executives would lead to more terrorism "on a scale that the world has never seen before."¹

Our terrorism discourse closes its circle, its apotheosis expressed in the sealing off of Pennsylvania Avenue by a president besieged in his White House. Two world wars, a Cold War with its terrorist networks masterminded from Moscow, and the domestic divisions of the Vietnam era all failed to merit such a quarantine. Seemingly, the New World Order equates to a new Era of Terror. What a triumph for Timothy McVeigh—to accomplish what all the horrors of the twentieth century could not! And what vindication for the army of public officials, experts, journalists, and academics who orchestrate terrorism discourse. As for the rest of us, we are left to inhabit a world configured by the *True Lies* of our terrorized imaginations.

The most recent actor in the "new" terrorism discourse is McVeigh—"the American terrorist." There is, however, a sense that in considering the Oklahoma City bombing to be a terrorist act we are stretching the categorical bounds of conventional wisdom regarding "terrorism." Hitherto, for terrorism experts, the term referred to the political violence of disaffected groups; as yet, it remains to be seen whether McVeigh acted for an organization in the name of its cause. Curiously, Oklahoma City (like the World Trade Center bombing) remained unclaimed, scarcely the *modus operandi* of the "old" terrorism. If McVeigh's action turns out to be the personal political statement of an army veteran who was denied the honor of becoming a Green Beret, we may actually be dealing with an act more akin to the random shootings by the demented, dismissed employee (a not uncommon occurrence in American life) than with the actions of an IRA, PLO, or ETA. Indeed, by reducing a common form of American violence to "terrorism," the future of terrorism discourse should be guaranteed.

Yet we oppose the practice of transforming the Oliver Norths into heroes and the McVeighs into tabooed kooks. Seeking to understand them in their own terms is the only viable alternative to the proliferation of metal detectors and the further closure of avenues—whether Pennsylvania or simply those of communication. McVeigh adopted the pseudonym taken from the avenger T. Tuttle as his alias on his mail drop and along the gun show trail. If we fail to understand what made him do so, we indeed face the prospect of one day living in some kind of futuristic "Brazil"—a world in which bombings are commonplace and civil liberties minimal as society musters most of its resources for the counterterrorism campaign of a ruthless, dehumanized bureaucracy. The future can be discerned in the counterterrorism bill prompted by the Oklahoma City bombing which provides for 1,000 additional counterterrorism agents, fewer impediments on the arbitrary deportation of foreigners, a broadened authority to wiretap, and tighter restrictions upon the legal appeal process of prisoners under sentence of death.²

Thus, lest any citizen of the New World Order be so foolhardy as to relax, counterterrorism experts assure the public that Terrorism is alive and well. Could we even imagine a world without it? Indeed, so we are told, it has become much worse. The capture of Carlos, for example, gave *The Economist* more pause for thought than cause for celebration. While noting that the state-sponsored terrorism that formerly gave employment to Carlos and his kind might be waning, nevertheless, "Terrorism has not gone away." In fact,

the terrorism of autonomous groups is harder to deal with. They have no protector to be leaned on, no vital interests other than their own cause—or lives—to be threatened. Some have goals so utopian that no compromise exists that could entice them to cease fire.³

If we are to assess the truly dangerous situation of the world out there, all we have to do is combine this autonomy of the various potential terrorist groups with the quintessential terror of the nuclear age:

What is worse is that the technology available to terrorists is becoming more sophisticated. Twice within days German police have seized samples of Russian plutonium. True, building a nuclear bomb demands more than a bit of plutonium and a spanner. Yet the problems are not insuperable for a serious group. Even if they were, radioactive material could be packed around a conventional device to threaten a city center. And nuclear-armed terrorists could be more

dangerous than a nuclear-armed state. Sane or crazy, a state's leaders must always fear a counter-attack upon their own cities. How could one threaten some Sikh dreamer's "Khalistan," let alone the wildest-eyed bearers of an ideal called Islam?⁴

As for the Russian plutonium, the *New York Times* reported the words of a high-ranking German official: "This could turn into the most serious security threat since the end of the cold war, and it is getting steadily worse."⁵ There followed suggestions that the smugglers were possibly negotiating with Iraq or Iran. The worst fears concerning nuclear terrorism, long anticipated by the experts, were seemingly becoming true. The problem was that the operation had been "a plot concocted by the German secret agencies" themselves, with the consent of German politicians.⁶ Why the deception of what came to be known as "plutoniumgate"? The collapse of the Soviet Union had left thousands of German spies with no enemy to fight. What better to do than create some antiterrorism hysteria so as to preserve their jobs? As the spokesman of the Social Democratic party in the European Parliament put it, "Those who are fighting this market are those who created it."⁷ Leaders of the opposition argued that the operation was orchestrated to help Chancellor Helmut Kohl win reelection.⁸

It is, in fact, not difficult to fabricate such reality, since it only requires a slight distortion of the existing thriving international arms' bazaar, a "furtive and frantic market" in which American companies buy Russian arms and nuclear technology in a "feeding frenzy."⁹ This should not concern us, presumably. The only real danger is the possibility of the crazy terrorists acquiring any of the coveted merchandise. It is legitimate business as usual for *our* markets, it is an apocalyptic taboo for *them*.¹⁰ Nor does there seem to be anything wrong with democratic armies stockpiling obscene arsenals of mustard gas and other agents of chemical and biological warfare for the next virtuous war, except for the danger that terrorists may get hold of them. And so, with the grey certainties of the Cold War no longer obtaining, it seems that probing the New World Order is becoming a lot like the earlier exploration of the New World, during which the fearful yet fascinated imaginations of the explorers created their own phantasmagoric bestiaries. Once again we are exhorted to contemplate dog-headed cannibals, only now they are armed with nuclear weapons and poison gas.

The sham of plutoniumgate is an all too obvious case of the culture itself imposing the reality. Far more insidious are the instances in

which the reality-making force of the discourse is concealed under layers of mythical stereotypes, fundamentalist premises, or morality tales. Consider, for example, critical cases such as the "disposal problem" posed by CIA-trained and financed by anti-Communist crusaders who apparently recycled their jihad in Afghanistan into the World Trade Center explosion. Revolutionary freedom fighters when attacking Soviet communism for the sake of Islam, they are depicted as loathsome terrorists when fighting capitalism for the same cause. If Sheik Omar's followers fought side by side with the Green Berets in Afghanistan,¹¹ a prospective Green Beret repudiated by the Army, Timothy McVeigh, had the opportunity to fulfill his warrior dreams as a civilian in Oklahoma City. Educated in the Reagan-Bush period of massive military intervention against "terrorist" targets, the alternatives for a war hero like McVeigh seemingly oscillated between becoming a defending Rambo or an avenging Rebel. In this sense the counterterrorist and the terrorist are not so different.

Remember Oliver North, the hero of the Reagan administration's Iran-Contra fiasco, the counterterrorist who promoted counterinsurgencies of his own while making secret deals with alleged terrorists? Should we be surprised to learn that McVeigh viewed North as a role model and actually campaigned for him?¹² To suggest an ideological link between the "patriotism" of the two men was far too disturbing for the public. Instead of seeing Oklahoma City as "motivated by a brand of politics not as detached from the mainstream as we'd like to think,"¹³ the media and the public were quick to attribute it initially to Muslim fundamentalists. When this proved wrong, it was easier and more palatable to conclude that the bombing was the senseless action of a pair of "lunatics." Blaming the Oklahoma City tragedy on a couple of "kooks," thereby ignoring the cultural connection between the militia movement and its potential for violence, is a way of denying any relationship between the counterterrorist/terrorist, Rambo/Rebel alternatives. Since we are considering the power of discourse to generate its own reality, remember also that Oklahoma City was meant to commemorate Waco, itself an egregious example of self-fulfilling prophecy on the part of both the Davidians and the ATF police.

What about Pan Am flight 103? Was it also the result of terrorism rhetorics? The tragic incident over Lockerbie epitomizes, for the American public, the ultimate proof of terrorism's extreme danger. What is altogether missing is a public appreciation of the extent to which terrorism discourse itself might have contributed decisively to the tragedy. Pan Am flight 103 was preceded by the downing, "by mis-

take," of an Iranian passenger airliner by the American warship *Vincennes*. Most experts and family members of the Pan Am victims remained skeptical with the official version that blamed two Libyan officers; the clues pointing to Iran were simply too obvious to ignore. In any case, what made the crew of the *Vincennes* commit so grave a mistake as to sacrifice with impunity the lives of 290 airline passengers? Isn't this the reality-making force of a discourse that allows itself to act as it assumes the enemy will? In doing so it provokes as well the self-fulfilling reaction from the enemy that proves that it was the feared monster after all. Nevertheless, the incident that has turned into the paradigm of terrorism for the American public has been viewed by some terrorism experts as a type of "blood feud." It is by forgetting the symmetry between the Iranian airliner and Pan Am flight 103, and by erasing the assumptions and justifications surrounding the *Vincennes*' "error," that terrorism discourse conceals its own self-generating logic.

As we have seen, the use and abuse of the Unabomber by the authorities provide a classic example of the categorical and definitional vagaries of terrorism discourse. Glittery "terrorist" when it suits the forces of counterterrorism and unglamorous "serial killer" when it doesn't, the Unabomber, more than any other example, exposes the game. But the threat posed by the Unabomber acquired credibility due partly to the explosion of Pan Am flight 103. According to some reports, because of the lack of appropriate scanning technology "passengers are travelling virtually unprotected."¹⁴ Yet this begs a question. If bombing an airliner is so simple and the world is so populated with lethal masterminds (including the agents of anti-American "terrorist" governments), why haven't there been a dozen or more Pan Am 103s? That would seem to be the real question that the promoters of terrorism discourse—from the Transportation Secretary to the FBI to the experts and the media—should answer for the frightened public.

We were once astonished that the politicians and the media could confidently include under the same "terrorist" rubric such disparate characters as Sheik Omar, Mr. McVeigh, the Unabomber, and the Chechen Dudayev. From now on our real surprise will be if the counterterrorism crusade does not increasingly regale the American public with a new "war" game and all sorts of "successes" against terrorism. We assume that the reality-making power of terrorism discourse is by now almost unstoppable. All that is necessary to produce the loathsome thing are some CIA-trained "rebels" turned against their mentors (as with Sheik Omar and his followers) or a military "error" (as in the shooting down of the Iranian passenger flight that preceded Pan

Am 103) or a disgruntled, Ramboesque army veteran (such as Timothy McVeigh) or some uncontrolled arm smuggler in the thriving post-Cold War arms bazaar (as in plutoniumgate). This emerging terrorism "reality" appears to be already a blooming, self-fulfilling prophecy in the United States. The prognosis is bullish for the counterterrorism industry, whether made manifest in security, academia, or journalistic circles.

If, until now, modern terrorism discourse has been to a large extent a function of the Cold War confrontation and nuclear predicament, many of its premises are currently in flux. The full detail of the emerging political agenda remains unclear, but certain trends are obvious.

First, it is clear that the repeated use and abuse of terrorism discourse has enshrined the term—with all its vagueness and vagaries—into late-twentieth-century global consciousness. As an instance, it has been codified as "sin" by the Catholic Church, which in its recently released catechism stated:

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2297 *Kidnapping and hostage taking* bring on a reign of terror; by means of threats they subject their victims to intolerable pressures. They are morally wrong. *Terrorism* which threatens, wounds, and kills indiscriminately is gravely against justice and charity.¹⁵

Unfortunately, the Catholic theologians fail to specify which one of the hundreds of definitions of terrorism we should accept.

Second, as the sole superpower, the United States now has a newfound love affair with the United Nations that is nothing short of startling. Suddenly, Washington issues solemn pronouncements in support of "international law" and threatens to punish its violators, when for the past two decades in the eyes of the rest of the world, it has scarcely been a paragon of international virtue—consider Grenada, Panama, Libya, the Iran-Contra affair.

One can only speculate that the *Pax Americana* will have to invent its enemies. We are reminded incessantly that the post-Cold War world is a "most dangerous place" and that "New World Disorder" is becoming the more appropriate label. There are currently more than one hundred wars being fought around the globe. In a world no longer populated by convenient Communist foils and constrained by a superpower balance of nuclear terror, it seems likely that the clarion call to fear might actually require a greater range of "terrorist" adversaries than in the past.

Third, future terrorism discourse is likely to be nourished by the flawed democracies proliferating throughout much of the former Soviet empire and sphere of influence. The temptation to brand their opponents as terrorists in order to demonize them as the first step in legitimizing their eradication is proving to be quite tempting. The invasion of Chechnya was justified in part as a cleansing of a nest of "bandits and terrorists," while the outgunned Chechen leader, Dudayev, placed the Russians on notice by dispatching a team of hostage takers to the Russian heartland itself.

Fourth, the threat posed by Muslim fundamentalists who attack foreign residents and tourists in Algeria and Egypt, while unnerving governments throughout the Middle East, is akin to the kinds of political violence that we have considered in this text—violence that is high in symbolism and relatively low in casualties. The perpetrators have been labeled "terrorists" by their respective governments as a first step in a no-holds-barred campaign to obliterate adversaries. Indeed, for many governments this all too familiar ploy has seemingly not lost any of its demonstrable appeal—witness developments in Argentina and India.

In the wake of the bombing of the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, President Menem "has created a security agency to oversee the military, the police and the intelligence-gathering services in emergencies, reviving memories of a time when an all-powerful military terrorized the country." According to the director for human rights at Argentina's Center for Legal and Social Studies, "This is but one more example of what has always happened in Argentina: facing a real and concrete necessity—in this case the fight against international terrorism—the military is used to render the common individual totally defenseless against the powers of the state."¹⁶

India legislated its Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA) in 1985 to quell terrorism in the Punjab. By 1994, 65,000 persons had been detained under its provisions, including 19,000 in Gujarat, "where there is no terrorist activity." There even have been environmentalists arrested under TADA. According to one source, the act "enables the police to detain people temporarily without charge. Witnesses who give evidence of crimes need not be named. The act allows confessions made before senior police officers to be used in court, even if these are later retracted. Human rights activists believe this has opened the door...for confessions extracted by torture."¹⁷

Finally, terrorism discourse has not lost any of its allure for world leaders in political difficulty. Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of the Likud

party is a good case in point. According to various reports, his chances for becoming prime minister depended largely on whether terrorist attacks occurred or not in Israel, and "Netanyahu's future is thus heavily dependent on terror."¹⁸ This fits well with his entire career for he, "a sort of Israeli Rambo," has always seen himself as the leader of the antiterrorism cause. Even if "not perceived in Israel as having anything particularly interesting or authoritative to say about terror, or anything else," he has, nevertheless, "built a successful career in the U.S. as a regular and articulate participant in talk shows, much sought after because of his reputation as a leading expert in 'the war against terrorism.'"¹⁹ One of his "students" was Ronald Reagan who, as claimed by Netanyahu himself, decided to attack Libya after he read in *Time* magazine excerpts from a conference that Netanyahu organized at the Jonathan Institute.

After the Oklahoma City bombing and the gas attack in Japan, "Terrorism is back—with a vengeance," Netanyahu wrote in the opening line of his new book, *Fighting Terrorism*. Late Prime Minister Rabin's words were not mere sarcasm: "Bibi Netanyahu is a Hamas collaborator."²⁰ It only attests to how strong the umbilical cord is between terrorists and counterterrorists.

In typical irony, the very day on which Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated Netanyahu had published an op-ed article in the *New York Times*, entitled "Act Now Against the Terror Network." It began: "The West had better wake up to the new terrorism. When even a small group like Islamic Holy War can threaten worldwide attacks..."²¹ The article warned of the existence of at least 14 terrorist militant groups in Europe, "their active membership reaching tens of thousands," as well as "a number of terrorist groups" in America with widespread connections to Iran, Sudan, Egypt, Gaza, Tunisia, Pakistan and Indonesia. "This new terrorism poses unprecedented dangers," he went on, "especially because...a nuclear Iran could resort to indirect blackmail."²² One thing that Netanyahu didn't alert the readers about was the possibility that, as the columnist Thomas Friedman put it, his own Prime Minister and political adversary Rabin might be murdered by a "gunman whose politics is virtually identical with that of Mr. Netanyahu's Likud Party and its allies in the Orthodox Jewish right."²³ In his op-ed article Netanyahu demanded a "systematic investigation of groups openly preaching terror," but had no qualms in allowing himself to be photographed in the company of West Bank settlers who "routinely described Rabin as an evil killer."²⁴

President Clinton, too, has learned how to get political mileage

out of terrorism. During his first two years in office, smarting from the criticism that he is unschooled in international affairs and a draft evader, the president alternatively sought to transcend his predecessors as both historic peacemaker and consummate world policeman. Consequently, in autumn of 1994 he traveled to Syria to meet with Assad, who the president proclaimed a "great statesman," and on St. Patrick's Day he invited Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams to the White House (to the utter chagrin of the British).

Conversely, Iran is, for the Clinton administration, *the* terrorist state, even though during Clinton's first two years in office the United States was Iran's largest trading partner and American exports to Iran had increased tenfold since 1989,²⁵ notwithstanding the charade of blocking oil exploration by American firms in that country. In his recent State of the Union address, touted as the most important political speech in the beleaguered president's career, Clinton confounded his own supporters with a lengthy declaration of war against international terrorists, which included a pledge to seize their American bank accounts. The next day administration officials conceded that they were unaware of such assets. One confused terrorism expert, who had served Clinton, was at a loss to explain "what—other than the terrible bombings in Israel—brought the terrorism issue to such prominence in the State of the Union speech."²⁶ However, as the *New York Times* noted, "Secretary of State Warren Christopher has made the fight against terrorism a linchpin of American foreign policy, and has searched for creative ways—however farfetched—to make it happen."²⁷

In view of such highly choreographed sermons by their presidents, it is not surprising that the American public is terrified of terrorism. Even before Oklahoma City, Clinton had proposed a new Omnibus Counterterrorism Act. In an article entitled "Back to McCarthy," Anthony Lewis criticized the bill because it "imposes guilt by association" with groups defined as terrorist by the government. Lewis observes that, under the new law, the thousands of American who gave money to support Mandela's ANC "would now be punishable by 10 years in prison." This would take us back to the McCarthy era when "officials often insisted that they denied a fair process to the accused because the national security was at stake—but in time, case after case was shown to have been built on lies. And judges, far from being vigilant, usually deferred to the executive's supposed expertise."²⁸

The new antiterrorism powers sought by the FBI after the Oklahoma City explosion were sternly criticized by both the left and the right. In William Safire's words, they amounted to "proposing a

bureaucratic subversion of our civil liberties."²⁹ Wary of "the paranoid streak in American politics," the press issued warnings of "False Choices on Terrorism."³⁰ Even Louis Freeh, the Director of the FBI, told the Senate that his agency did not need the relaxation of investigative guidelines proposed by the White House. "Desperately in Need of Winning Streak," the *New York Times* entitled a front-page piece, and went on to report Clinton delivering "rousing red-meat speeches on Mideast terrorism (to Jewish groups)" to rally voter support.³¹ In short, another U.S. administration had learned that counterterrorism is politically expedient as a substitute for thornier and riskier public policy—both foreign and domestic. The Waco and Ruby Ridge Hearings during the summer of 1995 helped to defeat the broad new counterterrorism legislation that earlier in the year had passed in the Senate by the lopsided vote of 91 to 8. However, in the latest political waltz, it was revived and made into law.

The latest terrorism dynamic in the United States has a particularly ominous component: the mutually reinforcing roles of official discourse and right-wing violent activism. This is conducive to a process that is reminiscent of the strategies proposed by the guerrilla manuals of the 1960s under the slogan "action/reaction/ action." The primary goal of insurgent action was deemed to be to provoke more government repression (assumed necessary to raise the consciousness of the people) resulting, in turn, in more popular action. Nothing is more relevant than reelection in American politics, and if terrorism can help to bolster a beleaguered president's standing in the polls by raising the specter of national security (as Clinton most clearly did after Oklahoma City), then barricading Pennsylvania Avenue, getting tough with terrorism (even at the expense of *habeas corpus*), and turning counterterrorism into the "linchpin" of foreign policy is all good for the reelection campaign.

In the meantime the time-honored politics of imprisoning yesterday's friend and turning him into today's archterrorist continues under the Clinton Administration. In the tradition of Noriega, Sheik Omar and others, the latest case involves Haiti's Emmanuel Constant, the leader of the hit squad FRAPH, who, beginning in mid-1993 while working for the CIA, launched a campaign of terror with arms shipped from the United States. This continued even after the knowledge "of the myriad murders, arsons, rapes and tortures then being attributed—often openly—to Constant's men in FRAPH. The United States, though, kept on paying Constant, and the weapons flow increased."³² Constant declared: "People say the C.I.A. was opposed to Clinton, but

I don't think so. Clinton knew everything concerning me."³³ Various reports from Aristide advisers and U.S. envoy Lawrence Pezzullo confirm that the Administration did indeed use the threat of FRAPH to pressure Aristide in Washington.³⁴ The expert Brian Jenkins didn't need to invoke the future when he wrote that "national governments will recognize...and begin to employ"³⁵ terrorism as a new form of warfare. As we have insisted throughout this book, one of the royal advantages of controlling terrorism discourse is that our most trusted allies can, by the stroke of a pen, be redefined as frightening monsters, while we ourselves, acting as their judges, remain innocent and even enhance our moral legitimacy.

In this book we have argued that the American quest for "terrorism" has had a lot to do with a Beckettian theater of the absurd as well as with the political manipulations of collective fantasies of nuclearism and savagery. It doesn't take an uncommon sagacity to perceive that the journalistic and academic fashionings of the "thing" itself are flawed and self-deceptive. But, even if we have concentrated on showing the discursive basis of the culture of terrorism, there is a point in which the thing itself (whether the created category is "race" or "ethnicity" or "taboo"), no matter how reified or distorted or banal, becomes a structural reality and a historical force. It appears that "terrorism" is fast becoming a dominant medium through which American society and domestic politics need to be interpreted. We may laugh at an American public overwhelmingly obsessed with terrorism during the 1980s—a time when little terrorism actually transpired. Yet the rhetorical forces and foreign policy interests that promoted it in the first place are not becoming a thing of the past. Terrorism is now becoming a functional reality of American politics, an autonomous prime mover of enormous consequence affecting national policy and legislation. This is no longer mere phantasmagoria but rather an irreducible dimension of a political ideology that profoundly affects the material reality of American society. Terrorism has been "naturalized" into a constant risk that is omnipresent out there, a sort of chaotic principle always ready to strike and create havoc, and against which society must now marshal all its resources in an unending struggle. Now that it has become a prime *raison d'état*, its perpetuation seems guaranteed.

It is against such a prospect that we have engaged ourselves in scrutinizing terrorism discourse in order to challenge both the inquisition and its witches. As the world moves forward into uncharted political waters, it is well to deprive both sides unchallenged access to,

and control of, terrorism discourse, since ultimately it is we, the public, who are the real targets (and victims) of the manipulation. If we take away their witches from the self-styled, emblematic protectors of the moral order, elected or otherwise, then they must justify their activities in other terms. Stripped of their scapegoats, the architects of the New World Order and its flawed democracies will have to explicate and defend their agendas in terms of political rather than terroristic discourse. Similarly, by dissolving the category and unmasking the rhetorics of terrorism, the "terrorists," denied their roles within a plausible script would cease to be actors capable of a credible apocalyptic performance. Terrorism discourse must be disenchanting if it is to lose its efficacy for all concerned.