

The Logic of Terrorism

by Michel Bounan¹

I

Terrorism can be defined as an ensemble of criminal operations, of a variable nature and importance, intended to frighten a particular population with a view towards obtaining political concessions. To attain their goals, terrorist crimes must be known as widely as possible, and terrorism – whatever it is – is first and foremost a mediatic² operation. It is always a question of making known to the members of a sensitive group the crimes that will remain suspended over their heads if they not give in to certain political demands or if they remain in solidarity with their representatives. It is even a question of revealing one's own political projects to other individuals who are interested in such demands, so as to lead them to an active solidarity, which is so much more probable than terrorism tearing a few concessions from its enemies.

The performers and planners of terrorist operations are sometimes overtly the States, as in the bombardment of London by the German Army in 1940, the bombardment of Dresden by the English air force in February 1945, or even the destruction of Hiroshima by the American Army in August of that same year. The proclaimed goal of terrorist acts is always to terrify the civilian population of the enemy, so as to neutralize its solidarity with its too bellicose government and to isolate this government so as to oblige it to capitulate.

Nationalist or autonomist terrorism is not directly State terrorism. Its operations aim to frighten an occupying army, or one considered to be such, and thus those who accommodate themselves to it. The anti-Nazi *Maquis* of the Second World War, the operations of the FLN in French Algeria, the current enterprises of the IRA in Northern Ireland and the ETA in the Basque Country, the Palestinian attacks against the population of Israel, the Afghans against the Soviet Army, and the Chechens against Russia reveal this form of terrorism.

Other terrorist enterprises claim to combat an unjust social order and promote revolutionary political or social transformation. Such was the case with the anarchist attacks committed in Russia at the end of the 19th century and intended, according to their authors, to terrorize the governing class. It was then a question of showing the population that a Czar, a Grand Duke or a provincial governor weren't untouchable, in the hope of inciting a generalized popular upheaval. Such were the announced goals of the anarchist attacks committed in Europe and in the United States during the same era, and similar objectives were sought by the Leftist terrorists of the 1960s, in Italy, Germany, Belgium and France. But such was also the position of certain pogromists in old Russia, determined to struggle against the influence of Jews in Holy Russia, and the punitive operations organized by the Italian fascists in the 1920s, who aimed to protect Italy from the grasp of Bolshevism. Likewise, current Islamist terrorism, to the extent that it intends to establish theocratic governments everywhere and to instaurate a social order founded on principles that are completely opposed to those of the States that it combats, is incontestably linked to this form of revolutionary terrorism.

¹ Michel Bounan, *Logique du terrorisme* (Paris: Editions Allia, 2003). Translated by Bill Brown and uploaded to the NOT BORED! website (notbored.org) in 2009. All footnotes by the author, except where noted.

² *Translator's note:* There is no adequate equivalent in English for *médiatique*.

Finally, there exists a terrorism that is exclusively founded on religious or para-religious argumentation, of which one finds examples among groups of fundamentalist Christians in the United States, as well as among other extremists, Jewish or Muslim, or even among certain millenarianist sects in the United States and Japan.

Such as it is presented by governmental leaders, journalists, the police forces and the terrorists themselves, the war fought by terrorism against its declared enemies is completely improbable. To be credible, this story demands – triply and simultaneously – an excessive stupidity on the part of the terrorists, an extravagant incompetence among the police services that specialize in anti-terrorism, and an irresponsible madness among the media. This improbability is such that it is impossible to admit that terrorism is really what it seems or claims to be.

Even a superficial examination of the terrorist enterprises undertaken for more than a century reveals to us their quasi-total ineffectiveness according to the political criteria announced by the terrorists themselves. Including State terrorism. Neither the bombardment of London in 1940, the bombardment of Dresden and Hiroshima in 1945, nor the bombardment of Baghdad before the invasion of Iraq succeeded in detaching the civilian populations from their governments; quite the contrary, as one might have expected. Thus one must believe that these terrorist attacks had other political objectives (the attacks upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki, for example, had the probable goal of making an impression on Stalin during the negotiations to divide up the world).

Concerning nationalist or independence-driven terrorism, is it necessary to say here that it wasn't the *Maquis* who liberated Europe from Nazi tutelage during the Second World War, but the allied armies that were supported by American economic power, which would have been just as effective without the existence of the *Maquis*? It wasn't the terrorism of the F.L.N. that liberated Algeria from French colonialism; it was the neo-capitalist restructuring of global capitalism that demanded from Gaullism – for Algeria and Saharan petroleum – this apparent political “independence” of which the FLN was the standard-bearer, that is to say, the end of the old privileged dependence of Algeria upon regional French capitalism. As for the current separatist movements – Basque, Irish, Chechen, Armenian, Kurdish or otherwise – one doesn't see that their methods have obtained any of their proclaimed goals, but have instead obtained those goals in which their declared enemies have been precisely interested.

One knows quite well the constant failures of revolutionary terrorism. The throwers of bombs in the 19th century in Russia, America and Europe did not succeed in rallying public opinion to their cause, but quite obviously the reverse. As for the European Leftist terrorists of the 1960s – Italian, German, Belgian or French – they didn't attain any of the objectives that they claimed were fixed, but, on the other hand, they obtained the reinforcement of police control and votes for repressive laws against the populations of their respective countries.

Same thing for current Islamist terrorism, whether nationalist, revolutionary or religious. Its procedures have ended up, in Afghanistan, in the American occupation of the country, and, in Chechnya, in the reinforcement of the Russian military presence. Its attacks in Algeria, Egypt and Indonesia have caused no other effects than the hardening of control and the repression of the civilian populations, the agitation of which threatens the public order, and those attacks committed in the European countries have only ended in the microscopic surveillance of the Muslim populations exiled in the West.

To this apparently inconsequential comportment of the terrorists is added a surprising and more or less prolonged powerlessness of the police forces, the anti-terrorist brigades and the surveillance services supposedly directed against these enterprises. Enemies of the State organize themselves in local, regional, national and transnational groups, but without appearing to arouse the suspicions of the police. In great secrecy, they procure explosives and weapons of war. In the shadows and without worry, they prepare criminal attacks. Finally, they execute them right under the noses and into the very teeth of surprised governments. After their exploits, the organizers disappear and begin again, a little further away and a little later, without being further prevented from doing harm. They assassinate State leaders and diplomats, people who are generally under a permanent state of surveillance and protected by specialized services; they destroy by means of modern explosives civilian or military buildings; they furtively transport stocks of weapons into a town, they place them into official locations and then, after the arrival of the media and the opening of the curtain, they commit a gigantic crime in the name of demands that are often vague and always unacceptable, demands that their crime obviously disserves. The terrorist groups are apparently neither surveilled nor infiltrated by the police or the intelligence agencies. Without arousing the suspicions of the police, they can procure weapons, explosives and vehicles, and deploy them where they are needed to commit monstrous crimes. The police never know where they are or what they are preparing to do until the attack that blows away the spectators who are timidly massed behind their saddened representatives.

To the phenomenal incompetence of the police, the intelligence services and the counter-terrorism teams – and associated with the gigantic stupidity of the terrorists as far as the allegedly sought-after results of their criminal operations – one must add the insane irresponsibility of the media, which seems to serve at the pleasure of terrorist enterprises. The goal of an attack is always to be known by those whom one desires to terrify, first of all, and also by those who count on their solidarity. The sole practical objectives of this kind of operation is to make known both the grandeur of the crime and the cause for which it was committed. One can only be alarmed by the considerable efforts of the media to serve terrorist designs. It is on the first page of the large-circulation dailies that the threats and demands of the terrorists are published. The newspapers devote detailed expositions to them, sometimes accompanied by edifying photographs. For the televised news outlets, the most recent Islamist attack or merely the aborted plan for such an attack occupies a privileged place. The several-day-long crises that follow certain terrorist attacks are expounded upon, hour by hour, by feverish journalists, and the inquietude is maintained with much “professionalism” by means of terrifying or macabre details. One cannot deny that the newspapers largely work for the terrorists and that the terrorists’ advertising operations are well served by the media, which are crazily unaware or fantastically treacherous.

This history of terrorism – in which diverse actors (criminals, police officers and journalists), all of them so incompetent in their respective roles that they seem to ceaselessly betray the causes to which they are supposedly dedicated, insult each other and cross swords – is indeed the one that the media serve up to us and reserve for us after every attack. It nevertheless contains insurmountable improbabilities.

The complete absence of good sense and elementary logic among the bomb-throwers and machine-gunners, the heroes of explosive grenades and the cutters of throats, is certainly

probable and credible. Ideological fanaticism or pseudo-religious delirium can lead to all sorts of crimes, and individual heroism – like assassinations carried out in series – are parts of all human societies. These kinds of passions succeed in leading astray, according to their historical circumstances, young or less-young individuals, and they have long contributed to the construction of the history of humanity all through its wars, revolutions and counter-revolutions. One cannot be surprised that a machine-gunner or a kamikaze [pilot] commits acts whose political results are exactly the opposite of what he or she claimed to seek out. But these individuals are not those who are supposed to [be able to] negotiate on the international arms market, organize conspiracies, or execute minutely detailed secret operations without being discovered or apprehended before their crimes have been committed. Terrorist enterprises are conceived by minds of a completely different nature from those who perpetrate them. Such enterprises require the abilities to organize and strategize, which are more proper to politics than to heroics. Those who plan terrorist attacks obviously do not ignore the political consequences of their actions, which are completely contrary to their proclaimed demands. And it can only be political effects that they seek.

The incompetence of the police and the intelligence services, which is proclaimed by the police and these services themselves after each terrorist attack; their recurrent *mea culpas*; the reasons invoked for their failures, which are founded upon the dramatic insufficiency of their funds or coordination – these things no longer have the power to convince anyone. Quite simply, the first and most obvious task for an intelligence agency is to make it known that it does not exist or, at least, that it is very incompetent and that there is no reason to keep its completely problematic existence in mind. But the entire history of the last century shows that these agencies do in fact exist and that they have always been very competent and efficacious. Today, they are better equipped technologically than ever before. Any individual who is a well-known enemy of the social or political organization of his or her country and, even more, any groups of individuals who are constrained to declare themselves to be in this adversarial position (and how could such a group absolutely guarantee the secrecy that is the very precondition for the recruitment of members?) is known to several competing intelligence services. Such groups are constantly under surveillance. Their internal and external communications are known. They are rapidly infiltrated by one or several agents, sometimes at the highest levels and, in such cases, easily manipulated. (Historical examples will shortly be provided.) Thus, any oppositional group must be warned of and alerted to the fact that this unavoidable situation can bring harm to the cause that it serves – which is a fact that is completely compatible with revolutionary activity, but isn't compatible with terrorist activity, at least as it has been represented to us by the media's barnstorming. This kind of surveillance implies that any terrorist attack – whether it is Islamist, independence-driven, Leftist or nutty – has at least been permitted by the services tasked with surveilling the group that claimed responsibility for it; has even facilitated and materially aided it when its execution has demanded means beyond the reach of the terrorists; or has even been actively planned and organized by these services themselves. Here, such a complacency is completely logical with respect to the political effects and the foreseeable reactions to the criminal attacks. Even without referring to the numerous historical examples of this kind and zeal, many people have made similar observations after the attacks of September 2001 against the *buildings*³ in Manhattan and at the Pentagon. The American intelligence agencies, which claimed to know nothing before the attacks, were so well informed in the hours that followed them that these agencies could name those responsible and those who perpetrated these attacks,

³ *Translator's note:* English in original.

and could [even] reveal summaries of their telephone conversations and their credit card numbers. This imprudence was at the level of the crime itself, and several works have been published that affirm that, this time, the most monstrous terrorist attack in civilian history was quite simply fomented and executed by the American secret services.

Concerning the irresponsibility of the media, which is always happy to participate in terrorism's advertising campaigns: it is no longer credible. The large media companies serve their masters, governmental or private. In France in 1986, for example, no newspapers protested against the lying affirmations of the French government that assured the public that the radioactive cloud from Chernobyl had not contaminated French soil (didn't these journalists at least read the foreign newspapers, which were perfectly clear on this occasion?). On the other hand, the media of the Western world fabricated their information about the first war in the Persian Gulf from the lies furnished by NATO. It has since had the insolence to confess it, afterwards. The media is at the service of its owners, and this is the least of things. In matters of terrorism, the media's function is double. First of all, it consists in publicizing the attacks to those from whom one expects politically advantageous reactions. It also consists, more generally, in accrediting the three improbabilities mentioned above: the tragic inconsequence of the terrorists; the incompetence of the intelligence services; and, of course, their own proper role as simple [police] informants.

II

The historical Mafia – the latest trials and the imminent disappearance of which the newspapers announce and periodically comment on each time that an effort to modernize obliges the Mafia to eliminate its oldest members and modify some of its methods that have become archaic and unworkable – appeared in Sicily at the beginning of the 19th century with the development of modern capitalism. This association of former police officers and gangsters, completely banal today, was initially used by the Sicilian land-owning aristocracy to hinder the development of the new industrial and financial capitalism that threatened to ruin it. The Mafia was simultaneously an organization that maintained order, that is to say, financial revenue, against working class forces, and that practically refused all real power to the new industrial State. Thus, the Mafia was tasked with practically eliminating the modern State in its governmental, administrative, judicial and police duties, and to assure itself of these functions to the profit of the old order. It was the model of a counter-revolutionary organization, promoted by a threatened ruling class at a moment when history was moving quickly.

To complete these two tasks (maintain the [old] order and oust the new State), the Mafia had to brutally convince the population to accept its protection and its hidden government in exchange for its submission, that is to say, a pincher-like system of both direct and indirect imposition upon all commercial dealings that allowed it to sumptuously finance its functioning and expansion. To do so, it organized and systematically executed terrorist attacks against individuals and firms that refused its tutelage and justice. It was thus already the agency that organized protection against attacks and the attacks that imposed its protection. The recourse to a justice other than the Mafia's was severely repressed, as was any untimely revelation about its functioning and operations. As for the order that it ruled in place of the State, it conformed to the needs of the large landowners who had favored the Mafia's birth and development.

The success of the Mafia was such that it easily survived the disappearance of its first historical masters. A governmental enterprise from its birth, the Mafia was imposed by the same

terrorist methods in the slums of the large American cities in which it seized the commerce (prohibited or tolerated) that had traditionally been controlled by the State: tobacco, alcohol, games of chance and prostitution, all of which procured for it considerable wealth.

This new encroachment upon a practically governmental domain would not be the last. At the same time that it competed with the legal State, the Mafia began to conquer certain administrative and governmental posts thanks to its new riches. These positions permitted it to paralyze any judicial, economic or legislative action that was directed against it and, subsequently, to modernize itself by controlling new domains (construction, armaments, energy) after it deposed the old cadres of the Mafia and their archaic methods. These were the first resounding blows against the Mafia; and even today, each time that one hears someone speak about large-scale police operations against “the honorable society,” one can be assured that it is a question of its modernization and the elimination of old idiots who did not understand in time that the State was “respectable” now.

Such remarkable success could not fail to seduce other political men, who came from business or elsewhere, by showing them how a modern State has the means to resist the dissolving movement of History, thanks to the judicious use of Mafioso terrorism, utilized at an always-larger level. In fact, the Mafia did so well that, today, it is without interest to reveal the origins in the Mafia of this or that politician, businessman or head of State. Any modern State constrained to defend its existence against the population that puts its legitimacy into doubt is led to utilize against it the time-tested methods of the historical Mafia and to impose the following choice: terrorism or protection by the State.

The extraordinary success of the Mafia and its procedures must nevertheless not obscure its origins and how it was initially hatched and patronized by the Sicilian country gentlemen; or how it grew under the protective wing of a power in distress. Despite what its political success might lead one to believe, it wasn't the Mafia that subverted the modern State, but there have always been tyrannical States that have concocted and utilized the methods that the Mafia systematized much later on. Several examples will easily illustrate this point.

It is fitting to start out by rejecting certain accusations of terrorism against individuals or groups discovered to be in possession of weapons, explosives or attack plans, accusations that the newspapers periodically make and that [usually] conclude in the arrest of the guilty parties and the “dismantling of a vast terrorist network.”

On 29 May 1890, in Paris, a search of Russian refugees allowed the police to seize explosives and various documents that left no doubt about their plans for terrorism. The refugees were immediately arrested. The seized documents also authorized the arrest of many people who found themselves compromised by them, the carrying out of other searches, and the opening of investigations into a total of 64 people. At the moment of the arrests, one of the suspects, named Landesén, succeeded in escaping and was never found. Twenty years later, one learned that Landesén was an agent of the Czarist police. Infiltrated into the ranks of the Russian opposition abroad, he himself had on 28 May [1890] deposited with his “comrades” the explosives and documents that the police would later “discover.” During the course of the trial, the lawyer for the refugees, Millerand, revealed that it was the French police who had willingly let Landesén escape, following precise instructions that came from the Minister of the Interior himself. The Franco-Russian alliance was functioning perfectly well. Later, Landesén was made a

governmental advisor, ennobled, and occasionally tasked with protecting the security of the Russian imperial family.⁴

Much more recently, on 28 August 1982, three members of an Irish separatist organization were arrested in Vincennes. Their apartment was searched by the French police, on the initiative of the President's "anti-terrorist" unit. Weapons and explosives were discovered, which allowed the indictment of the Irishmen. But three years later, in October 1985, the indiscretion of a police officer revealed that the weapons and explosives had been deposited there by the police themselves, and the commander of this operation was sentenced to several months in prison (a suspended sentence) for his deeds. As a result, the investigatory chamber of the court of appeals at Versailles decided to annul the entirety of the proceedings and to classify the dossier concerning it.⁵

These two operations, launched a century apart, testify to what today one calls the collaboration of the States in matters of terrorism and make clear the continuity of a political maneuver that is independent from whomever is in power at the moment.

Real attacks are also actually perpetrated by authentic terrorists who never renounce their crime or the reasons that have animated them, even when facing serious penalties or death.

In the course of the 1880s in France, ten years after the Commune, social agitation once again became troublesome. It was urgent to energetically subdue the workers' strikes and insubordination by armed force, if necessary. It was necessary to muzzle the press organs that took offense; to arrest the most active ringleaders; to assuredly advocate laws of exception; and to devote oneself to getting the parliamentarians (not only reluctant, but largely discredited by the recent scandal in Panama) to vote for them.

Thus, on 8 December 1893, an anarchist, Auguste Vaillant, set off an hand-made bomb during a session of the Chamber of Deputies; the explosion caused many injuries, fortunately none were serious. According to its author, this spectacular attack was intended to extract social reforms from the political leaders. The following day, the criminal was apprehended; one month later he was condemned to death; and, three weeks after that, he was decapitated.

In the days following the attack, and during a single session that included no discussion, the Chamber voted for a series of laws concerning the press and "associations of evil-doers"; extraordinary powers were given to the police; many newspapers were seized, while others were prohibited from being sold in shops. Several arrest warrants were issued and more than sixty people were apprehended. Obviously, any critique of the parliamentarians was immediately suspected of complacency towards anarchism and terrorism.

One had to wait thirty-three years before this marvelous story was clarified by the publication of the *Souvenirs du police* by Commissioner Reynaud in 1926.⁶ According to a witness heard by the Commissioner just after the attack, the entire affair had been staged by the police. Auguste Vaillant, who was honest and truly revolted, had been maneuvered. The police had liberated from prison one of his old comrades, who sought Vaillant out and procured for him an explosive furnished by the police's laboratory. This "comrade" was newly imprisoned a little before the attack to protect him from the investigators. During his brief trial, the accused

⁴ Henri Rollin, *L'Apocalypse de notre temps*, Paris, Allia, 1991.

⁵ *Le Monde*, 25 January 2002.

⁶ Henri Rollin, *op. cit.*

certainly “confessed” that a “patron” had procured the money for him to rent a room in Paris and to build his bomb, the principal elements of which had even been furnished to him. But the police deployed no efforts to locate this patron and the court did not bear his confession in mind.

Thus, this attack, which was committed by a real terrorist who was ready to claim his crime, even upon the scaffold, was the perfect instrument that the most repressive faction of the government needed to reinforce its police apparatus and to suffocate social agitation.

This kind of operation is hardly exceptional. Forty years later, on 30 January 1933, Hitler was named chancellor of Germany and the head of executive power. He had two potential adversaries: above all, the Reichstag, which alone voted upon laws, could shut down the budget and decide upon making war; and the German Communist Party, which in the economic depression of the era could unexpectedly rise up and constitute a dangerous competitor. On 22 February, Goering, then President of the Reichstag, gave auxiliary police functions to the SA. On the 23rd, the police searched the headquarters of the Communist Party and “discovered” a plan for armed insurrection, complete with the taking of hostages, multiple attacks and collective poisoning. On 27 February, a Leftist activist, Van der Lubbe, entered the Reichstag building without any difficulty and, with several matches, started several fires. The fire spread so rapidly that the building was destroyed. The arsonist was caught at the scene, condemned to death and decapitated. During his trial, Van der Lubbe continually affirmed that he had acted alone and, no doubt, he was sincere. But all the experts, technicians and firemen testified that such a fire could not be the work of a single person. They even declared that the chamber had been doused with flammable materials or that a team of at least seven people had been involved. Later on, former Nazis and other people indicted during the same trial confirmed the role of the SA in the attack.⁷ In the aftermath of the fire, several thousand Communist representatives and activists were arrested, a state of emergency was declared, and the Communist Party was outlawed. Fifteen days later, the Nazis won election to the Reichstag, Hitler gained full control and, starting in July 1933, banned all the other political parties.

A century after the Vaillant affair, in 1993, a new French government was in power and its Minister of the Interior, Charles Pasqua, proposed reforms seeking to “construct a police force capable of confronting the turbulence of the 21st century”⁸ – a turbulence that could indeed be foreseen. In brief, Pasqua wanted to generalize the video surveillance of the country by distributing cameras in public places; to legalize searches and seizure carried out without warrants from the District Attorney’s office; and to arrest a certain number of people in advance of any political demonstration. In addition, the Minister foresaw the construction of 150 new police stations, the hiring of 5,000 new police officers and an increase in the police’s budget of 10 million francs (an increase of 70%). Such a project could not help but provoke many protests, and a large number of amendments were proposed, aiming to empty it of its content.

Thus it was that, on 4 October 1994, two young libertarian *squatters*,⁹ Audry Maupin and Florence Rey – excited by “extremist revolutionary theories” – held up a car-impound lot to procure weapons and, in the course of the chase that followed, killed four people, three of whom were police officers. Maupin was killed and Florence Rey was arrested.

Several days after the hold-up, of which the media were zealous chroniclers, the National Assembly voted for the police measures proposed by the Minister of the Interior, following the same scenario as in the Vaillant affair.

⁷ Charles Bloch, *La nuit des long couteaux – 30 June 1934: Hitler liquide les siens*, Paris, Julliard, 1967.

⁸ *Le Monde*, 23 June 1994.

⁹ *Translator’s note*: English in original.

During the trial, witnesses affirmed having seen a third person who acted as a lookout. After fifteen months of silence, Florence Rey admitted that this person had procured for the couple a firebomb intended for use during the operation. He called himself Abdelhakim Dekhar and he was 29 years old. The man himself did not deny that he purchased the weapon used during the shooting, but claimed not to know either Maupin or Florence Rey. He only declared that he was “part of the Algerian military security forces,” and that, ever since 1990, he had been tasked with infiltrating Islamist [terrorist] networks.¹⁰ What did the Algerian military security forces have to do with this banal hold-up? Was it truly to deal with a few stray children that the French police needed an increase of 10 million francs, 150 supplementary police stations and 5,000 police officers?

To finish up with this kind of “individualist” terrorism, one should recall here the [relatively] recent attack in Oklahoma City. On 19 April 1995, a veteran of the Gulf War, Timothy McVeigh, attacked the FBI building in Oklahoma City with a truck loaded with fertilizer and petroleum. The building collapsed and there were 168 victims. During his testimony, McVeigh declared that he’d been scandalized by the FBI’s assault, two years earlier, on a sect of Adventists in Texas, during which more than 80 members of the sect, 27 of them children, were killed. Revolted by this crime, McVeigh fought a solitary war against the FBI. At the end of his widely covered trial, he alone was executed by a lethal injection, in front of American television cameras.

After the attack, 58% of the American people were in favor of renouncing certain liberties to contain terrorism.¹¹ And in the popular effervescence maintained by the media, President Clinton signed the consternating *Anti-terrorism Act*,¹² which authorized the police to commit many infractions of the American Constitution, created an armed force capable of rapid intervention and deployment and made up of 2,5000 men under the authority of the Attorney General, who was given dictatorial powers.

Given the ravages caused by McVeigh’s attack, General Partin affirmed that “this type of damage was technically impossible without supplementary explosive charges being placed at the base of certain reinforced-concrete pillars.” Samuel Cohen, the father of the neutron bomb, confirmed that “it is absolutely impossible and against the laws of physics that a truck full of fertilizer and petroleum (...) could bring the building down.”¹³ Two experts from the Pentagon

¹⁰ *Le Monde*, 16 February 1996 and 19 September 1998.

¹¹ Gore Vidal, *La Fin de la liberté: Vers un nouveau totalitarisme?* Paris, Rivages, 2002. [Translator: a French translation of “The End of Liberty,” an essay that Vidal wrote for, but was not published by, *Vanity Fair*. It was later included as the first chapter in Vidal’s book *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace: How We Got to be So Hated*, Nation Books, 2002.]

¹² *Translator’s note*: English in original. The full title of the law was “The Effective Death Penalty and Anti-Terrorism Act of 1996.”

¹³ *Translator’s note*: In his essay entitled “The Meaning of Timothy McVeigh,” and published in *Vanity Fair* in September 2001, Vidal wrote: “Thus far, David Hoffman’s *The Oklahoma City Bombing and the Politics of Terror* is the most thorough of a dozen or two accounts of what did and did not happen on that day in April. Hoffman begins his investigation with retired air-force brigadier general Benton K. Partin’s May 17, 1995, letter delivered to each member of the Senate and House of Representatives: ‘When I first saw the pictures of the truck-bomb’s asymmetrical damage to the Federal Building, my immediate reaction was that the pattern of damage would have been technically impossible without supplementing demolition charges at some of the reinforcing concrete column bases. . . . For a simplistic blast truck-bomb, of the size and composition reported, to be able to reach out in the order of 60 feet and collapse a reinforced column base the size of column A-7 is beyond credulity.’ In separate agreement was Samuel Cohen, father of the neutron bomb and formerly of the Manhattan Project, who wrote an Oklahoma state legislator, ‘It would have been absolutely impossible and against the laws of nature for a truck full of fertilizer and fuel oil . . . no matter how much was used . . . to bring the building down.’”

even came to say that the destruction had been “caused by five distinct bombs,” and concluded that McVeigh’s role in the attack(s) had been that of “useful idiot.”¹⁴

During his trial, McVeigh recalled being approached by members of a “group of special forces personnel involved in criminal activities.” The FBI did not seek or find them. But in this affair, the federal police had concealed so much information during the investigation and trial that former Senator Danforth threatened to serve the director of the FBI with a search warrant, which he unfortunately did not obtain. Gore Vidal affirms without hesitation that “there is overwhelming proof that there was a plot involving the militias and government infiltrators (...) to make Clinton sign the despicable *Anti-Terrorism Act*.”¹⁵

No doubt it wasn’t simply to neutralize future McVeighs that the American government needed anti-constitutional laws and this special armed force. The director of the FBI admitted that his office was more preoccupied by “certain individuals and organizations that suspect the government of participating in conspiracies at the global level; individuals who are organized against the United States.”¹⁶

In the preceding examples, terrorist attacks have been perpetrated by apparently isolated and sincere individuals. Those attacks permitted the passage of repressive laws and the reinforcement of the police forces at moments when civilian disobedience could thwart governmental projects. During their respective trials, overwhelming indications have strongly suggested that these terrorists were manipulated and materially assisted by the secret services, because it is not so easy for a single person to procure detonators, firebombs and explosive charges capable of blowing away an FBI building. Likewise, it is not so easy to torch the Reichstag with matches, unless it has previously been soaked with inflammable substances. However, other attacks of the same genre do not permit one to reach these conclusions, because quite often the terrorists have been killed in the act or afterwards, during a manhunt, and there is no chance for them to make indiscreet revelations to the court.

Nevertheless, the majority of current terrorist attacks are not committed by isolated individuals who are badly equipped and easily manipulated, but by well-organized groups that operate at a high level and whose leadership always escapes justice, commits other attacks elsewhere and later on. It is fitting to provide a few historical examples.

At the beginning of the 20th century, in Czarist Russia, a powerful terrorist organization called the Combat Organization of Social Revolutionaries committed many attacks against the Russian ruling class, aristocrats and government functionaries. Its members would sometimes hurl themselves, as well as their bombs, at their victims and thus would also die during their attacks. The leader of this revolutionary organization was the engineer Yerghei Filipovitch Azev. He had carefully planned, organized and successfully executed the murder of several grand dukes, a half-dozen governors, the Minister of the Interior, the president of the Douma and even the head of the Okhrana.

It happened one day that the police were alerted about the movements and activities of these terrorists. The members of the organization were arrested, hanged or exiled. An investigation conducted by the revolutionaries and their leader revealed that the spy, a certain

¹⁴ Gore Vidal, “The End of Liberty.”

¹⁵ Gore Vidal, *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Gore Vidal, *Ibid.*

Tartarov, belonged to the Central Committee of the organization. He was killed by the conspirators and, several years later, Minister Stolypine revealed that this person had indeed been working for the police. Nevertheless, the arrests continued and the suspicions of the conspirators no longer spared anyone. Then Azev, the organization's leader, fled. He remained beyond the reach of the conspirators and under police protection. Later on, at the Douma, Stolypine responded to the questions of the Social-Democrat faction by saying "Azev was a police collaborator since 1892." The government had paid him a salary of 14,000 rubles.¹⁷ Enzensberger quite justly observes about the terrorism of this period that "the secret agents of Czarism played such a role that it is impossible to separate the history of the revolution from the revolution of their provocations."¹⁸ And Hannah Arendt concluded: "The tradition of the Russian Revolution of 1917 was quite substantially a substitute for the Russian secret police."¹⁹

This form of terrorism remains incomprehensible to those who firmly believe that the ruling class of a country or an era forms an indivisible and totally solid unity. In reality, opposed interests and confrontations between power and diverse political groups can also cause – with the goal of terrorizing an adversarial faction – the assassination of a Czar, an American President, an Italian or Israeli Prime Minister or an Egyptian head of state. And it is also possible to have such assassinations executed by manipulated terrorist groups. Thus, in the case of Russian terrorism, political leaders at the highest levels can make each other disappear in this manner, as in the example of the attempt of Colonel Degaiev to have the Minister of the Interior assassinated by terrorists, or the successful murders of Minister Pleve (1904) and the Grand Duke Serge (1905) by revolutionaries "inspired" by the Okhrana.²⁰

In the course of the 1970s, Italy was near a social revolution. Strikes, factory occupations, the sabotage of production, and the refusal of all union representation put into question the [entire] social organization, and the State itself no longer seemed able to put the revolt down by the usual methods of propaganda and police violence. It was thus that terrorist attacks intended to cause many injuries and deaths and attributed by the press to a "revolutionary" group (namely, the Red Brigades), came to turn Italian public opinion upside-down. Popular emotions allowed the government to take diverse legislative and police measures: the freedoms of expression and association were suppressed without resistance, and many people among the most active in the revolutionary movement were arrested. Social agitation was finally mastered. Later on, after the return of calm, investigations revealed that this or that attack had been executed by a neo-fascist group inspired by "uncontrollable" elements in the police forces, and that others were inspired by a conservative party that precisely intended to provoke political change.

Concerning the other European terrorist groups of the 1970s and 1980s, Leftist or independence-driven, there is no doubt that – after simply considering the methods of recruitment and the functioning of these groups – diverse police forces had placed paid informants within their ranks. And the intelligence that they had access to (obtained in the course of long-distance surveillance or thanks to listening devices in their apartments) could favor or prevent certain attacks, could provoke bloody confrontations with the police, and could (with the "logistical" support of the media) permit the demonization, not only of the group itself, but the demands that it claimed to make, too. Thus, one was not be surprised to learn, several years after the disappearance of these groups, that the Italian Red Brigades were manipulated by the military

¹⁷ Henri Rollin, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Les Rêveurs de l'absolu*, Paris, Allia, 1998.

¹⁹ Quoted in Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Ibid.*

²⁰ Vladimir Burtsev, *Biloe*, 1918, cited in Henri Rollins, *op. cit.*

intelligence services²¹ or that an attorney for the German Red Army Faction had received 120,000 Deutsche Marks from the political police.²²

The same is true for current Islamist terrorism; and the infiltration of the Armed Islamist Group (AIG) by the Algerian security forces is known by all of the intelligence agencies in the West.²³ Thus, in December 1994, after the hijacking of an Airbus plane by an AIG commando, the French Prime Minister openly declared he would “hold Algiers responsible” for the attack.²⁴ Likewise, after the Islamist attacks in Paris during the summer of 1995 (eight dead and 200 injured) – attacks that were attributed to Islamists in the AIG – the French Minister of the Interior, well placed to know what goes on in matters of terrorism, declared that he could recognize in these attacks the hand of the Algerian secret services.²⁵ Moreover, the “Emir” of the AIG, responsible for the attacks carried out in France, is so well-known as an agent of the Algerian security forces (consistently protected by the government in Algiers) that he ended up making it disappear by announcing its death in 1998.²⁶

The final form of terrorism in our list differs a little from the preceding ones. If it is still a question of a political faction manipulating terrorist groups so as to provoke an advantageous overturning of public opinion, the goal is not to reinforce police mechanisms that attempt to counter current or foreseeable social agitation, but to unleash an offensive military operation to which the majority of the nation is firmly opposed.

A classic maneuver on the battlefield consists in placing the weakest and least sure troops at the center of the front line; these troops will be condemned to be crushed and destroyed by the enemy, who will in turn be caught between stronger and more trustworthy columns. The officers and soldiers placed at the center and destined to die are certainly not those one holds dearest, but rather those whom one perhaps is not annoyed to be rid of. This maneuver thus permits one to simultaneously defeat an enemy and suppress certain undesirable members of one’s own partisans.

In 1914, Bismarck and William II desired a European war in which the greatest advantages would go to Prussia. Nevertheless, they had to reckon with powerful opposition in Prussia itself and especially from their Austrian allies. On 28 June 1914, the Arch Duke François-Ferdinand, nephew and heir to the Austrian emperorship, was assassinated in Sarajevo by a Serbian terrorist, a student named Princip. Judiciously exploited, this attack was sufficient to enflame the situation and unleash the First World War. Today, one is a little surprised that the Serbian nationalist groups were so poorly surveilled by the imperial police that their activities were not foreseeable, and also that the heir from Austria was so poorly protected during such [serious] historical circumstances. One is less surprised that the heir, who was presented as “prickly” and “violent,” would express opinions and announce plans that were completely opposed to those of the imperial government and that, in addition, he was brought to Sarajevo following an interview with William II, perhaps at his instigation; in any case, one does not

²¹ Acts of the Court of Cassation relative to the attack on the Bologna train station, heard on 23 November 1995.

²² *Le Monde*, 20 February 1993.

²³ *Libération*, 1 November 2002.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Le Monde*, 1 November 2002.

²⁶ *Libération*, 1 November 2002.

know the tenor of this interview. Whatever it was, the assassination allowed Prussia to get the war it desired and to rid its “ally” of an irritating heir.

Likewise, in 1939, the entourage of President Roosevelt openly desired to enter the war on the side of England so as to channel an over-full American industrial capacity towards war and, in the long term, to prepare the immense Asian market for the USA. But they, too, had to manage a frankly isolationist public opinion. On 26 November 1941, Roosevelt addressed to the Japanese an improbable ultimatum that demanded “the immediate retreat of all Japanese troops from Manchuria and Indochina.” Japan was forced into the war and, on 7 December [1941], the American military base at Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese air force without any declaration of war and without any of the base’s officers being alerted. In two hours, the American Pacific fleet was lightened of eight battleships, three cruisers, eight *destroyers*,²⁷ forty-five airplanes and a large number of young American soldiers. This “terrorist” attack changed public opinion and determined the entry of the United States into the Second World War. The *brain-trust*²⁸ got its war.

Several questions were later posed. Why was Pearl Harbor so badly defended, despite the facts that, in January 1941, G. Crew (ambassador of the United States in Tokyo) had announced in a letter to Roosevelt that Pearl Harbor would be the “first target” of a possible Japanese attack, which was a warning reiterated in August 1941 by Dies, a member of Congress? Japan’s secret code had long been known by the American secret services, and several allies and the Dutch Admiral Helfrich, among others, had already warned Washington of the attack. But the commanders at Pearl Harbor were never alerted. The night before the Japanese aggression, Roosevelt brought several non-commissioned officers to the White House to await the “surprise” attack and, several days later, he demanded absolute silence concerning this state secret from a half-dozen officers: “Gentlemen, this goes to the grave with us.”²⁹

Nevertheless, there was an investigation, but according to the historian J. Toland, “the witnesses changed their testimony under diverse pressures; dossiers were destroyed or ‘misplaced’; leading figures of the government ‘forgot’ where they were, what they said, and what they did in the crucial hours preceding the attack.”³⁰ The Japanese aggression against Pearl Harbor allowed the Roosevelt Administration to involve the United States in the Second World War, and the large American companies (General Motors, ITT, Standard Oil, Ford, etc.) – after having greatly contributed to the Nazi war effort that would eventually destroy Europe³¹ – became engaged in a global war in which victory would, not surprisingly, belong to the country with the most dynamic military-industrial production. And this war opened to the United States, not only the Asian market coveted by Roosevelt, but also that of a deathly pale Europe.

Today, the global situation has changed. The opening of new markets is no longer the only concern of the large industrial groups; above all, the energy resources necessary to fuel production itself is at stake. The search for new petroleum deposits to cover a growing demand in all countries, the immense reserves of the Arab countries, and the possibility of channeling these energy resources through controlled zones are, today, the objects of incipient conflicts between the United States, which is committed to maintaining its hegemony in this crucial domain, and the other industrial countries in Europe and Asia.

²⁷ *Translator’s note:* English in original.

²⁸ *Translator’s note:* English in original.

²⁹ John Toland, *Pearl Harbor and its Aftermath*, New York, Doubleday, 1982.

³⁰ John Toland, *Ibid.*

³¹ *Historia*, September 2002.

To seize such resources at the expense of the rest of the world requires an absolute military supremacy and, most of all, a considerable increase in the “defense” budget, which are measures that the American population – even recently – had not been disposed to ratify. But, as noted by Brzezinski, who is one of the most influential thinkers of American foreign policy and who has been recommending the military occupation of Central Asia ever since 1997: “The efforts of power do not spontaneously raise the passions of the people unless the people feel that they are abruptly threatened.”³² He even supported the idea that, to impose such measures, a “new Pearl Harbor” would be necessary.³³ On 11 January 2001, the Rumsfeld Commission – tasked with defending the idea of an American “anti-missile shield” – again evoked the idea that “a spatial Pearl Harbor, so to speak, would constitute the event that would bring the nation out of its lethargy and push the American government into action.”³⁴

On the morning of 11 September 2001, four American planes were hijacked by terrorists. Two of the aircraft crashed into the two largest towers in Manhattan. The buildings collapsed, one after the other, causing the deaths of several thousand people. The third airplane struck a quasi-unused wing of the Pentagon; the fourth crashed in the countryside. The attack on Manhattan, recorded by American television, was retransmitted all over the world: the fires, the collapse of the towers, the bodies falling from the tops of the *buildings*,³⁵ torn apart, burnt. National and international emotions were obviously considerable.

In the hours that followed, and even before an investigatory commission had been formed, one learned that the operation had been conducted by a commando unit belonging to Al-Qaeda, animated by the Saudi Arabian millionaire [Osama] Bin Laden. The former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger demanded an immediate military response that “would end in the same results that followed the attack on Pearl Harbor: the destruction of the network responsible for the attack: a network of terrorist organizations that are sheltered in the capitals of certain countries.”³⁶ In several days, the popularity of the American president went from 55% to 86% in the public opinion polls.³⁷ America was ready for war. One knows what happened next. First, there was the invasion of Afghanistan, which was accused of serving as a base for the Al-Qaeda network and the refuge of its leader, Bin Laden. Then there was the conquest of Iraq, after the American government affirmed to the world that it had proof that this State had “weapons of mass destruction” and that it was preparing to provide them to terrorist organizations. Finally, there were even vague threats made against several “rogue” nations.

³² Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Le Grand échiquier*, Paris, Hachette, 2002. [Translator: originally published in English as *The Great Chessboard: American Primary and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, 1997.]

³³ Brzezinski, *Ibid.*

³⁴ P. Franssen, with the participation of Pol De Vos, *Le 11 Septembre – Pourquoi ils ont laissé faire les pirates de l'air*, Antwerp, EPO, 2002.

³⁵ Translator's note: English in original.

³⁶ Henry Kissinger, “Destroy the Network,” *Washington Post*, 11 September 2001. [Translator: in the original English: “[...] the government should be charged with a systematic response that, one hopes, will end the way that the attack on Pearl Harbor ended – with the destruction of the system that is responsible for it. That system is a network of terrorist organizations sheltered in capitals of certain countries. In many cases we do not penalize those countries for sheltering the organizations; in other cases, we maintain something close to normal relations with them.”]

³⁷ P. Franssen, *op. cit.*

The improbabilities and incoherence of this story have already been revealed by several authors (Chossudovsky, Franssen and Meyssan). Among the most remarkable:

1) In the attacks on Manhattan, amateur pilots succeeded in executing maneuvers that few professional acrobats would claim to be able to do. On the other hand, one knows that such precision could easily be obtained through “global hawk”³⁸ technology, developed and used by the American military; it allows one to take [remote] control of a plane in flight and teleguide it.

2) The passport of one of the terrorist pilots was found *intact* in the smoking ruins of the twin towers, permitting the FBI to identify his presumed accomplices.

3) In the week preceding the attacks, many people were warned of what was to come. The intelligence agencies of Germany, Egypt, France, Israel and Russia tried, in vain, to alarm their American counterparts. Much more seriously, there were several “insider trading” scandals implicating the American airline companies whose planes were made part of the attacks, and the corporate tenants of the buildings. Unfortunately, the justice system has remained silent on the subject of the identities of these “insiders.” One can thus suppose that particularly influential people were involved.

4) The financial backer of the operation has been identified. It was the Pakistani General Mahmoud Ahmad (on his orders, 100,000 dollars was transferred to the leader of the hijackers, Mohammed Atta). The same week as the attack, he had personal meetings with the head of the CIA, several Senator and former American Secretaries of State. The very morning of 11 September 2001, he had breakfast in the capital with the head of the Senate Intelligence Committee.³⁹

5) The invasion of Afghanistan has not led to the capture of the Saudi Bin laden. The army has contented itself with seizing Afghanistan itself. And the conquest of Iraq has not

³⁸ *Translator's note:* English in original. There is a slight misunderstanding here, but it is quite understandable. The “Global Hawk” is an unmanned, remote-controlled spy plane developed and currently employed the US military. (It is a much larger version of its better-known sibling, the “Predator,” which is also used as the launch pad for teleguided missiles.) The system that Bounan clearly has in mind has been called “Home Run.” In the words of an online author (mknemesis):

In the mid-seventies America faced a new and escalating crisis, with US commercial jets being hijacked for geopolitical purposes. Determined to gain the upper hand in this new form of aerial warfare, two American multinationals collaborated with the Defense Advanced Projects Agency (DARPA) on a project designed to facilitate the remote recovery of hijacked American aircraft. Brilliant both in concept and operation, “Home Run” [not its real code name] allowed specialist ground controllers to listen in to cockpit conversations on the target aircraft, then take absolute control of its computerized flight control system by remote means.

From that point onwards, regardless of the wishes of the hijackers or flight deck crew, the hijacked aircraft could be recovered and landed automatically at an airport of choice, with no more difficulty than flying a radio-controlled model plane. The engineers had no idea that almost thirty years after its initial design, Home Run’s top secret computer codes would be broken, and the system used to facilitate direct ground control of the four aircraft used in the high-profile attacks on New York and Washington on 11th September 2001.

³⁹ *Translator's note:* Wikipedia confirms and even extends these facts to include the following: “General Mahmud was known to visit the United States regularly during his time as the head of ISI consulting senior officials in the U.S. administration in the weeks before and after 9/11. In fact, he was with Republican Congressman Porter Goss and Democratic Senator Bob Graham in Washington, discussing Osama bin Laden over breakfast, when the attacks of September 11, 2001 happened. He was immediately called into meetings with American officials where demands of Pakistani cooperation were made and he was told to convey this to the Pakistani government.” Porter Goss later became head of the CIA; Senator Graham was on the Intelligence committee.

allowed the army to recover the “weapons of mass destruction” that the American government promised to “discover” there (not even the chemical weapons that the Americans themselves provided the Iraqi government, which used them upon the Kurds).⁴⁰ The lie appeared the plain sight when, even before the entry of the Anglo-American troops into Iraq, the goal of the war was blatantly modified and without explanation. This time one claimed to be liberating Iraq from a truly terrifying dictator, who tortured and assassinated his opponents, but whom the United States generally treated in a paternal way, just as it does everywhere in the world that regimes that massacre people are useful to it (Indonesia, Turkey, Colombia, the Dominican Islands, Haiti, Grenada, et. al). As for the criminal leader of the Iraqi State, who was condemned by the U.N. in 1986 and 1987 for his use of chemical weapons: he only escaped international sanctions thanks to the American government, which *increased* its aid to the (ex-)exterminator of the Kurds.

6) It is certain that the Saudi Bin Laden has recognized his “Islamist” responsibility for the attacks of 11 September, but what value should we accord his testimony, given that Bin Laden himself has long been linked to the CIA, for which he still worked in Belgrade in 1999 and in Chechnya in 2001, just before the attacks on Manhattan?⁴¹

To conclude this tidy and summarized history of Mafioso terrorism, one could arrange its operations under various rubrics, but, to one degree or another, one can find all of them in certain recent instances of terrorism. From falsely accusing political adversaries by means of evidence fabricated by the police, to the manipulation of fanatical individuals and the control of important terrorist groups, to military attacks intended to justify a war of expansion, all of these forms of manipulation can be observed in the most recent events.

Perhaps the reader might object that examples of such manipulations, even if they are numerous, cannot be extended to other terrorist operations for which it is difficult to establish these kinds of connections. But the sole fact that, after an attack, neither the media nor the authorized specialists [in the subject] refer to any of these examples of police manipulation renders all of their contingent speeches suspect, and it is strange that these commentators do not realize it.

III

In the many instances of terrorism previously cited, it seems that victory will always and necessarily belong to those who possess all of the instruments of disinformation and the means of manipulating popular opinions and sentiments by creating the events that serve them, as well as to interpret them at their own convenience. The extraordinary success of the historical Mafia testifies to the fact that the bipartite system of terrorism and [military-industrial] production possesses monstrous efficacy in governing people according to the exigencies of a power that is enslaved by economic laws. In such conditions, one can wonder what advantage there might be in exposing what one believes to be the truth; why pass time lashing about on an ocean of lies and crimes, and finally, why publish a text such as this one?

But if terrorism is a redoubtable weapon in the hands of the modern State, it also possesses relative weaknesses. First of all, it attests to the fact that public opinion is a

⁴⁰ *Le Monde*, 25 January 2003.

⁴¹ Peter Franssen, *op. cit.*

fundamental concern for the modern State, which motivates crimes like current-day terrorism. It even proves that all of the other means – whether they are police-based or mediatic in nature – will be insufficient without it. Therefore, it is obvious that terrorism only has real efficacy to the extent that the truth of terrorism remains secret and the identity of those who foment its crimes remain hidden. In this war, truth has a quite practical utility.

In addition, the alternative posed today between terrorism and the protection of the State begins to lose its value as advertising in places where protection had become hardly more advantageous than the terrorist threat, and where the two pinchers of the Mafia grip confound each other more and more. The terrorist threat cannot have a great dissuasive effect in the immense regions of the world where the elementary conditions of survival have recently collapsed in the innumerable economic, political and ecological refugee camps, and even in the less devastated zones where permanent conflict between various economic sectors has led to repeated massacres. Likewise in zones where terrorism is used in a quasi-permanent fashion to maintain the pressure of a State power upon impoverished populations. A countryman of Kabyle understands – without difficulty and without historical references – the collusion between so-called “Islamist” terrorism and the protection offered by the Algerian government.

Even in the West, the repulsion that terrorism must induce is already diminished in certain places that are excluded from protection, for example, where young people no longer have a future and where the famous “risky conduct” testifies to the little value that some people accord to their own lives. In the desolate zones, controlled by drug dealers and growing larger every year: What can Western “liberty” oppose to the tyrannies that the terrorists would like to instaurate? Many people have observed that the scorn that the current economic system has for our own simple biological survival does not give great value to its “protection” against death, which the Western governments promise us in exchange for our submission to their suicidal directives.

If one adds that the conflicts between economic groups more and more often leads their respective managers to denounce each other like Mafioso and sometimes even reveal the collusion of their rivals with current terrorism, one can conclude that the Mafia either/or option is no longer an absolute weapon and that the truth begins to emerge, despite the media’s iron curtain. The extraordinarily popular success of Thierry Meyssan’s book *L’Effroyable Imposture*⁴² (two hundred thousand copies sold), which emphasizes the role of the American secret services in the attacks of 11 September 2001, shows the quantitative importance of public opinion, for which current-day terrorism is greatly manipulated by its alleged enemies. This public opinion that terrorism seeks to enslave undeniably begins to turn against those who have manipulated it. Would the editor-in-chief of *Le Monde* dare to publish his editorial of 12 September [2001], “We are all Americans” today? Even in the United States, despite the shock of the attacks, war-fever has receded a bit and the American government would not risk putting together a public forum that would aim at approving its next military operations.

Thus, the efficacy of the Mafioso pincher, maneuvered by the current managers of the economy, no longer seems as perfect as it did only two years ago, and its future will probably be less long-lasting than that of its folkloric, Sicilian ancestors. One can certainly imagine that these managers will be or are capable of deploying sufficient police, military, et. al. resources without receiving popular approbation, and they can overtly show themselves as they really are without hiding themselves behind their roles as protectors and saviors. But beyond the fact that the more and more frequent recourse to terrorism contradicts such a supposition, the march of the

⁴² Translated into English as *9/11: The Big Lie* (Carnot Press, 2002)

economy, of which they are the servants, brings about its own unavoidable and devastating effects. The very possibilities of biological survival are ceaselessly diminished; new shortages of potable water, consumable food and breathable air, and the poisoning of the planet, with all of its ecological, climatic and ghoulish consequences, becomes worse every year; it nibbles away at a new State, in a new region of the world.

Because the triumph of the economy has necessarily ended up in the following impasse: its successes destroy the very conditions of life; the safeguard of these conditions requires more or less economically unsupportable efforts, and there will soon be less and less wealth (human and otherwise) to manage. The economic monster dies from its own successes, like a cancer that invades a living organism and ends up killing itself because it terminally exhausts its victim.

In the course of this descent towards death, that is to say, these days, the Mafioso rulers of our “modern” world must maintain themselves despite larger and large populations for whom the very conditions for life are less and less tolerable, and who are without illusions concerning the nature of their leaders – while modern terrorism proves that this illusion is necessary for the conservation of current power. This promises confused and long-lasting confrontations, but victory is impossible for those who destroy the very basis of each one of their successes. On the other hand, on the contrary, we can make – at each instant of this long war – the decisive choices to reject servitude, discouragement and hyper-powerlessness, which more and more quickly lead to death, and we reject an order[ing] of the world that owes its current existence to the criminal enterprises of Mafiosi managers.