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Bombing for Justice: Urban Terrorism in New York City from the 1960s through the 1980s

Jeffrey A. Kroessler
John Jay College of Criminal Justice

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New York is no stranger to explosives. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Black Hand, forerunners of the Mafia, planted bombs at stores and residences belonging to successful Italians as a tactic in extortion schemes. To combat this evil, the New York Police Department (NYPD) founded the Italian Squad under Lieutenant Joseph Petrosino, who enthusiastically pursued those gangsters. Petrosino was assassinated in Palermo, Sicily, while investigating the criminal background of mobsters active in New York. The Italian Squad was the genesis of today’s Bomb Squad. In the early decades of the twentieth century, anarchists and labor radicals planted bombs, the most devastating the
noontime explosion on Wall Street in 1920. That crime was never solved.¹

The city has also had its share of lunatics. In 1957, police arrested George P. Metesky at his home in Waterbury, Connecticut. During the preceding sixteen years, the “Mad Bomber” had planted forty-seven pipe bombs that caused many injuries, though no one was killed, luckily. He was finally caught after he answered an open letter in The New York Journal-American and provided a clue to his identity: he held a grudge against Consolidated Edison, which had dismissed him many years before. Metesky was committed to a mental institution until December 1973.² On Sunday October 2, 1960, a bomb exploded in Times Square near the statue of George M. Cohan, injuring six persons. A week later, a device exploded near the public library at Fortieth Street and Fifth Avenue. On October 13, a bomb went off in the Times Square subway station near the shuttle, injuring thirty-three, and ten days later there was an explosion on the Staten Island ferry Knickerbocker. On November 6, a bomb exploded under a seat on the A train in the 125th Street station, killing one young woman and injuring eighteen. On November 26, police arrested Walter Long, a twenty-nine-year-old Staten Islander employed as a watchman for a construction company. Long was responsible for safeguarding the dynamite and blasting caps. He was also an escaped mental patient (Long had actually walked into a police station to complain that detectives were spying on him).³

In the 1960s, a different kind of urban terrorism afflicted New York, as the city became a battleground for various groups advocating racial justice, national independence, ethnic pride, and revolution. For more than two decades, the city endured jetliner hijackings, bank robberies, attacks on police and other arms of government, and many, many bombmings, several resulting in death and serious injury. The groups responsible for these terrorist actions included anti-Castro Cubans, the Jewish Defense League, the Black Panthers and the Black Liberation Army, FALN (Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion National), Fighters for Free Croatia, the Weather Underground,


and the United Freedom Front, as well as black, white, and Puerto Rican radicals acting on their own.

Conservatives and law and order proponents condemned the bombings, of course, but the response of leftist intellectuals was mixed. Many on the left were loath to criticize means if they sympathized with the ends; others explained away the violence as nothing compared with the enormity of the country’s crimes at home and abroad, or glibly compared rioters and radicals to the generation of the American Revolution. Writing in the New York Times Magazine in 1967, historian Staughton Lynd compared Stokely Carmichael and H.Rap Brown to Abraham Lincoln and Patrick Henry. In a 1971 interview in Partisan Review, Allen Ginsberg said, “The government is indulging in murderous violence on so vast a scale that nobody’s mind can contain it. That’s why it’s easy to headline the Weatherman’s bomb, lonely little bomb, lonely little antirobot bomb, that wasn’t intended for humans there.”

Leonard Bernstein famously hosted a fund-raiser for the Panther 21 in his expansive Park Avenue penthouse duplex on January 14, 1970, spurring Tom Wolfe to coin the phrase “radical chic” in a piece in New York Magazine. Those Black Panthers were on trial in Manhattan on charges of conspiracy to murder police officers and plant bombs in department stores. They were acquitted on all charges after an eight-month trial, during which the Weather Underground firebombed the residence of presiding judge John M. Murtagh. Although some voices on the left condemned violence as a “dead end,” others were reluctant to criticize the radicals out of deference to the presumed justice of their cause, for Amerika—with a “k”—was an essentially oppressive, brutal, and racist entity, probably the worst in history. Writing in The Nation soon after the Brinks robbery, Todd Gitlin suggested that it was hard to condemn the fringe elements because, in the context of their opposition to the


war in Vietnam, “whoever opposed imperialism was on the side of the angels.”

The essential conflict between the state and the terrorist is always one of perspective. In his introduction to a 1979 collection of *New York Times* articles about terrorism, historian Mike Wallace wrote: “Supporters of established systems often characterize violent protesters as thugs or gangsters. Calling them criminals underscores the usually undeniable fact that they have violated existing law.... Opponents of a regime reject charges of criminality and dismiss the official legal order as an instrument of imperial or class power.” Clearly unwilling to condemn terrorist violence in principle, he continued, saying, “In the welter of charge and countercharge, how are we to decide if a government claim to be protecting ‘national security’ or a revolutionary group’s claim to be advancing ‘national liberation’ is the more accurate? Horrendous actions have been taken in the name of just sounding causes.” Obviously, there are ample examples of the abuse of police power against dissidents, just as there are examples of cowardly acts of terrorism. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) bombing of pubs in Birmingham, England, in 1974 comes to mind: the bombings were deadly, and the framing of six probably innocent men unforgivable. But Wallace further explains that “systems—social, economic, and political arrangements constructed and perpetuated by human beings—can kill too. It is particularly important to keep the systemic in mind when we move from description to judgment.”

If the terrorist has a just cause, who are we to question his choice of targets? As one of the white jurors in the 1971 Panther 13 trial explained to justify his vote to acquit, “It


can’t be that the oppressor can tell the oppressed that his thinking is wrong.”

This period of urban terrorism, linked to protests against the Vietnam War, racial injustice, or claims of ethnic mistreatment, has been lightly studied. There are certainly more academic articles about the 1995 bombing of the Arthur P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City than about the years-long bombing campaign carried out by the FALN. Indeed, a search of the America History and Life database using the terms “bomb*” and “radical” brought up six articles about Oklahoma City and right-wing terrorism, but none about the Puerto Rican independistas. A search using “bomb*” and “Puerto Rican” yielded no articles on the FALN, but a handful about the controversy over the US Navy’s use of the island of Vieques for gunnery practice.

Some New Yorkers may be inclined to romanticize the political idealism and fervor of those years and gaze at that dangerous and declining city through a nostalgic lens. Largely omitted from that idealized narrative is any consideration of the violence perpetrated by radical groups acting in the name of racial or ethnic justice or Marxist revolution. For some, in fact, such incidents only add to the romantic gloss. Whatever the motives, however, each terror campaign left damage and casualties in its wake, almost always innocent victims.

Cuban exiles targeted the trade offices and consulates of nations doing business with Castro’s Cuba. To protest the treatment of Jews in the Soviet Union, young American Jews planted bombs in the offices of companies doing business with USSR and torched cars belonging to Soviet diplomats. Croatian nationalists hijacked airliners, took over the Yugoslav consulate at gunpoint, and planted bombs in Grand Central Terminal and LaGuardia Airport (that bombing was never officially solved). Members of the Weather Underground blew themselves up in a Greenwich Village townhouse while preparing bombs (that incident has

not been forgotten, in part because of the mythology of the Weathermen, and in part because the townhouse in the historic district was rebuilt with an innovative design by architect Hugh Hardy). The Black Liberation Army robbed banks and assassinated police officers on the streets, and other black radicals planted explosives at symbols of corporate America. And the FALN, seeking independence for Puerto Rico and the liberation of their imprisoned freedom fighters, planted bombs across the city in a campaign lasting years, most notoriously exploding a device on January 24, 1975, in Fraunces Tavern during a crowded lunch hour, killing four and injuring fifty-three.

Looking back from a post-9/11 perspective, these terror campaigns and the response of law enforcement, the courts, and the public belong to another world. Today, an individual of questionable mental stability mumbling a vague threat to an undercover operative is sentenced to decades in prison. Then, individuals caught with dynamite and blasting caps received a suspended sentence, if they were even convicted. In general, the police strove to target the specific individuals involved and did not demonize a wider population. The courts demonstrated serious concern for the rights of the accused and were always alert to the possibility of police entrapment. In several high-profile cases, juries were reluctant to convict, or only convicted on lesser charges. For many New Yorkers, it seemed, the bombings were just another indication of urban decay, rising criminality, and social instability.

New York was targeted by both international and domestic terrorists. The two groups of international terrorists operating in the city were the anti-Castro Cubans and the Croatians seeking independence from Yugoslavia. These terrorists believed that bombings in New York would attract publicity to their cause and, perhaps, foment resistance and unsettle the government in the home country. With those exceptions, the acts were the work of homegrown terrorists. By one definition, domestic terrorism was “carried on by autonomous nonstate actors, in their country of origin, against domestic targets…motivated by indigenous causes.” Their purpose is to influence the political environment and “usually arise out of larger political movements or tendencies [and] virtually always believe they are acting in the interests of some larger group.”

The situation was by no means unique to the United States in these decades. In Canada, the separatist group known as the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) engaged in 166 actions between 1963 and 1972, including bombings, kidnapping, and murder. The Provisional Wing of the IRA engaged in terrorism in England and Northern Ireland in the 1970s (a hybrid of international and domestic terrorism), targeting civilians no less than soldiers and police officers. Italy endured the Red Brigades, who engaged in bank robberies, kidnappings, assassination, and bombings throughout the 1970s in the name of Marxist revolution, and West Germany combated the Red Army Faction, also known as the Baader-Meinhof gang.\(^\text{12}\)

This era of domestic terrorism was rather brief, beginning in the mid-1960s and all but over by the mid-1980s. New York enjoyed only a brief respite before the specter of Islamic terrorism announced itself with the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993. Arguably, the terrorism of those years left few permanent scars on the body politic, excepting, of course, those individuals injured by the bombs and the families of those killed.\(^\text{13}\) No special laws were enacted to protect the citizenry or specifically prosecute terrorists. This is in contrast to Britain, where police were granted expanded powers of arrest and detention following the Birmingham pub blasts. If anything, what emerged in New York were very clear constraints upon police surveillance of political organizations. In 1985, the NYPD entered into a consent decree known as the Handschu agreement, the culmination of a lawsuit filed in 1971 by political activists (including Abbie Hoffman) contending that the police were violating activists’ constitutional rights by conducting surveillance of legal protest and association. Under the consent decree, the NYPD was prohibited from deploying undercover agents to infiltrate political groups or sharing information with


other law enforcement agencies; further, they could only launch an investigation of political activities with the approval of a special panel. After 9/11, the NYPD successfully appealed to the court for relief from those strict guidelines.  

The first incident seemed almost clownish at the time. On December 11, 1964, three members of an anti-Castro group calling itself the Cuban Nationalist Association fired a bazooka shell from Long Island City toward the United Nations at the moment Che Guevara was addressing the General Assembly. The shell exploded harmlessly in the East River, and the police soon arrested three young men: Julio Perez, Ignacio Novo, and Guillermo Novo. At trial, the judge quickly dismissed the charges because the men had been denied access to an attorney during their interrogation. At the time, of course, this appeared to be an isolated act, an angry gesture against a communist regime, but over the next decade the Cubans committed many more terrorist acts in New York, as well as in Miami, Chicago, Los Angeles, Montreal, and finally, Washington, DC.

At first, it seemed that the Cubans were intent on arming themselves for taking the fight to Castro by either guerilla operations or another Bay of Pigs type invasion. On June 30, 1965, the NYPD seized a cache of weapons at the M and D Sport Shop at 6422 Fourteenth Avenue in the Boro Park section of Brooklyn intended for anti-Castro Cubans in Florida. The arsenal included machine guns, submachine guns, automatic rifles, automatic pistols, mortars, and thousands of rounds of ammunition. The shop owner and a Cuban were arrested. But as the anti-Castro Cubans became


discouraged at the possibility of launching operations in the home country, they turned to acts of terrorism against Cuban targets in the United States. On April 3, 1967, Nicolas Rodriguez Astiazarain, the acting chief of the Cuban mission to the United Nations, was burned when a bomb hidden in a book sent to him exploded. The level of mistrust was such that the Cubans refused the NYPD Bomb Squad access to the site to examine the device.\textsuperscript{17}

The exiles announced their intentions two weeks later at a gathering of about five hundred anti-Castro Cubans at a midtown club. Ignacio Novo, the same individual arrested in the bazooka incident, brazenly declared the start of a campaign targeting not only the Cuban government, but also the property and offices of “any other nation which supports Castro.”\textsuperscript{18} The bombings in New York began on April 22, 1968; the first targets were the Mexican consulate at 8 East Forty-first Street and the Spanish Tourist Office at 589 Fifth Avenue. Found near the Spanish tourist office was a drawing of a Cuban flag with the words “Cuban Power.” A time bomb exploded outside the studios of WNET-TV Channel 13 at Ninth Avenue and Fifty-fifth Street at about 2:45 in the morning on May 30. A caller claimed the blast was in response to an interview the station had broadcast that cast the Castro regime in a favorable light. In the following weeks, similar bombs detonated at the consulates or tourist offices of Spain, Canada, Australia, France, Mexico, Yugoslavia, Japan, and, of course, Cuba (the Yugoslavs lodged a formal protest, and in a press release noted that their building on East Sixty-seventh Street, the 1905 mansion of R. Livingston Beekman, was “[a] historic landmark under the protection of the City of New York”; actually, the Landmarks Preservation Commission had only proposed it for designation). Also targeted were the leftist Jefferson Book Shop at 100 East Sixteenth Street and the offices of Grove Press at 80 University Place in Greenwich Village. Soon after that blast a caller to the Associated Press (AP) said, “We have begun to commemorate the morning of the 26th of July. Commandos of the M.N.C.C. [Movimento Nacional de Coalicion Cubano] have attacked the office of Evergreen magazine.” The monthly had recently published excerpts from Che


Guevera’s diary. The last of the bombings hit the West Side Liberal Club at 2328 Broadway at Eighty-fourth Street. The ground floor housed a thrift shop run by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, which had resettled over five thousand Cuban Jews since Castro took power in 1959. Club chairman Arthur Brook said, “It was the word ‘liberal’ apparently that made them pick on us. Obviously they were not aware of our anti-communist position.”

In a radio interview in the middle of the bombing offensive, Ignacio Novo claimed responsibility on behalf of the Cuban Nationalist Association. The intent, he said, was “to hurt them where they feel it the most,” adding that the next phase would include the execution of Cuban government officials outside of Cuba. This he explained was “the way to start a movement within Cuba.” His bravado notwithstanding, the authorities were closing in. In August 1968, the New Jersey State Police raided a farm in Warren County that had been used as a training ground for anti-Castro Cubans and confiscated twelve cases of dynamite, guns, mortars, and ammunition. Michael A. DeCarolis, the farm owner, was a veteran of the Bay of Pigs.

The exiles did not cease, however. The next year the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) arrested Guillermo Novo and two others in New Jersey and charged them with conspiring to bomb Cuban targets in Montreal.


In December 1972, a group calling itself the Cuban Secret Government bombed a travel agency in Queens and offices in New York, Miami, and Montreal handling packages for Cuba. Soon after, the AP received a letter warning “no more packages for Cuba”: “[t]o do business with the Communist tyranny that oppresses Cuba,” it explained, “means to recognize them as the legitimate government.”

In July 1973, the same group bombed the headquarters of Local 1199 of the Drug and Hospital Workers at 310 West Forty-third Street, injuring a maintenance worker; the union had rented space for an exposition marking the twentieth anniversary of the start of Castro’s revolution (Moe Foner, the union’s executive secretary, was an old communist and thus somewhat disingenuous when he claimed they rented space to all kinds of organizations). In 1975, the Cubans bombed the Venezuelan consulate and, in 1976, again targeted the Cuban mission to the United Nations at 6 East Sixty-seventh Street (the guard stationed outside the building had briefly abandoned his post to use a nearby restroom). But the police obviously took the Cubans seriously and anticipated their moves. On the eve of a program called “In Concert with Cuba” organized by the same pro-Castro Committee for July 26, they staked out the Academy of Music on East Fourteenth Street. Three Cubans were arrested as they attempted to light the fuse of a bomb outside the theater.

There is a tragic end to this spate of anti-Castro terrorism. On September 21, 1976, Orlando Letelier, the former ambassador to the

follow-up articles on the alleged plot to bomb Cuban targets in Montreal; however, a story published after the assassination of former Chilean ambassador Orlando Letelier reported that Novo “fled authorities in New Jersey last June 6 after being convicted of a 1974 plot to destroy the Cuban consulate and trade commission in Montreal” (“2 Connected to Letelier Arrested by Miami F.B.I.,” New York Times, April 15, 1978).


United States under the Allende government, was killed by a car bomb in Washington, DC. Also killed was his assistant at the Institute of Policy Studies, Ronni Moffitt; her husband Michael was injured. Investigators quickly focused on the Chilean secret police, and the trail led to the Cubans. In 1978, the FBI arrested Alvin Ross Díaz, Guillermo Novo, and Ignacio Novo. The Novo brothers had launched the bazooka shot at the United Nations in 1964, and had been involved in all the anti-Castro bombings during the following twelve years. The men were tried and convicted in 1979, but a year later a federal court overturned the verdicts. They were not retried.25

With the conviction of the Novo brothers, the Cuban Nationalist Movement collapsed. But that was not the end of anti-Cuban terrorism in the United States. In Newark, New Jersey, on September 11, 1974, seven exiles from different anti-Castro organizations formed Omega 7, a secretive group that engaged in terrorist actions in New York and northern New Jersey and in Florida. They targeted the Cuban Mission to the United Nations six times between 1976 and 1979, and hit the Russian, Venezuelan, and Mexican consulates, as well as businesses with ties with Cuba. In December 1978, Cuban artists performed at Avery Fisher Hall; that night, a bomb shattered a glass entry, forcing the cancellation of their last two performances. Omega 7 even planted a device on the hull of a Soviet freighter tied up in Port Elizabeth.26


These anti-Castro extremists also engaged in assassination. On November 25, 1979, they killed Eulalio Jose Negrin, director of Cubano Programo in Weehawken, in a drive-by shooting; his twelve-year-old son was in the car with him. Eight months earlier, Omega 7 had bombed his storefront office (the same day they bombed the TWA terminal at JFK Airport and a New Jersey business shipping parcels to Cuba). A member of the Committee of 75, Negrin had traveled to Cuba and met with Fidel Castro, successfully negotiating the release of three thousand political prisoners and reaching an agreement that Cubans in the United States could visit relatives on the island. A caller claiming responsibility stated, “We will continue with these executions until we have eliminated all of the traitors living in this country.”

In March 1980, they planted plastic explosives on the car of Raul Roa-Kouri, the Cuban ambassador to the United Nations, but the radio-controlled device was discovered before it could be detonated. They succeeded in killing a Cuban attaché that September, gunning him down as he drove on Queens Boulevard in Woodside in the early evening. An official with the Cuban mission said, “We are not scared by what happened. This has been part of our normal life here in the last couple of years, receiving threats, bombs that blow up. If we worried it would be very difficult to perform our duties.”

The extremely secretive nature of Omega 7, together with the professionalism they brought to their operations, made it almost impossible to infiltrate the group. But authorities caught a break in December 1980 when they nabbed two Cubans entering the United States after a bombing at the Cuban consulate in Montreal. This led the FBI to Eduardo Arocena, founder and leader of the group. Testifying before a federal grand jury in Manhattan in September 1982, he initially denied any knowledge of Omega 7, but then decided to cooperate, briefly, before going underground. Eventually, the entire organization was brought to trial, and all received significant sentences.


A brief, if deadly, terrorist episode arose from an unexpected quarter. Croatian nationalists made New York a front in their battle for independence from Yugoslavia. Tensions between the Catholic Croatians and the Eastern Orthodox Serbs had been present in the artificial nation from its birth, but intensified in the 1970s. Croatian nationalists assassinated the Yugoslav ambassador to Sweden in 1971, and the next year hijacked a Swedish jetliner to obtain the release of the conspirators from prison. In 1973, a small group of armed Croatians crossed the border from Austria; those not killed immediately were executed later. Against that background, a small group sought to make their cause known in the world's greatest media market.

At 6:33 p.m. on December 29, 1975, a bomb containing perhaps twenty-five sticks of dynamite exploded in a coin locker in the baggage retrieval area in the main terminal at La Guardia Airport. Eleven people were killed, and more than seventy-five injured. No one claimed responsibility. The magnitude of this act brought a sad editorial in the *Times*:

No major community in the free world today is exempt from the kind of terror attack suffered by New York .... There are too many mad or vicious people, nursing too many private or group hatreds, which they seem to think can be assuaged by the random slaughter of innocent men, women and children.... In an age of violence such as we are now experiencing, efforts to respect civil rights and individual privacy sometimes result in the creation of massive security gaps that make every public place a potential human deathtrap.

On September 10, 1976, four men and a woman claiming to have a bomb hijacked a TWA flight bound for Chicago from LaGuardia, the first


act of air piracy since screening of passengers and luggage was instituted in 1972. “Fighters for Free Croatia” also left a bomb in a locker in Grand Central Terminal, along with a manifesto they demanded be printed in newspapers. The Bomb Squad removed the device to the NYPD firing range at Rodman’s Neck in the Bronx, but in attempting to disarm the bomb, Officer Brian J. Murray was killed and three others seriously injured; unit commander Lieutenant Terrance McTigue lost an eye and several fingers. The hijackers, meanwhile, forced the plane to Montreal, Newfoundland, Iceland, London, and finally Paris. Thousands of their propaganda leaflets were dropped from the air over Chicago, New York, Montreal, London and Paris. The terrorists surrendered after the French announced they would not permit the plane to depart and shot out the tires. None of the passengers or crew was injured during the thirty-hour ordeal.32

The hijackers were indicted on federal air piracy charges and state murder charges. The NYPD questioned Zvonko Busic about the LaGuardia bombing and identified several important discrepancies in his story, but he was whisked into federal custody and the case was never made. Federal agents in fact threatened NYPD investigators with arrest if they did not immediately turn over Busic to them. Busic and his wife, Julienne, were convicted on federal charges of air piracy resulting in death and conspiracy; Frane Pesut and Petar Matanic were convicted of air piracy and conspiracy, and Mark Vlasic pleaded guilty to attempted kidnapping. Busic admitted that he alone had planted the bomb at Grand Central, but denied involvement in the fatal explosion at La Guardia, even while conceding that he had arrived at the airport on a flight only an hour before the blast. In April 1979, federal judge John R. Bartels adjusted the sentences so the terrorists would be eligible for parole at the end of the year, because they had shown “exemplary adjustment” to confinement in federal prison. The court had received thousands of petitions and personal appeals on behalf of the imprisoned “patriots” from around the world.

Lieutenant McTigue, who underwent more than a dozen operations, bitterly remarked, “Terrorists use the system to destroy it, and then when you try to protect society your effort is frustrated by a judge.” Julienne Busic was released in 1989, and Zvonko Busic in 2008. He was immediately deported to Croatia, which had declared its independence from Yugoslavia in 1991.33

On June 14, 1977, less than a year after the hijacking, three armed Croatian nationalists invaded the Yugoslav Mission to the United Nations at 854 Fifth Avenue, wounding one person. After a few hours the NYPD convinced the men to surrender, reminding them that the Yugoslavs could act with impunity against them in the consulate because they were technically not on US soil. The three were sentenced in federal court to terms of between four and seven years.34 This was the last terrorist act by the Croatians in New York.

The New York-born Jewish Defense League (JDL) may also be classified as an international terrorist organization because they were not attempting to have an impact on the policies of the United States, but were acting to affect the internal policies of the Soviet Union. Adopting the slogan “Never Again,” Orthodox rabbi Meir Kahane founded the JDL in Brooklyn in 1968, originally to patrol the streets to protect elderly Jews from muggings and to escort teachers to and from schools in black neighborhoods. Historian Martha Biondi labels the JDL a “right-wing vigilante organization” formed “to combat alleged anti-Semitism by black New Yorkers [and] became notorious for fanning the flames of black-Jewish division in the city.” Threats against Jewish teachers during


the divisive fifty-five-day teachers strike in 1968 provided a further context for the JDL’s new, muscular tactics. But very soon Kahane expanded the mission to advancing the cause of Jews in the Soviet Union, who were discriminated against but still refused permission to emigrate to Israel. In the spring of 1969, the JDL established schools and camps to train members in firearms and self-defense, and, it turns out, bomb making.

On April 22, 1971, the organization went on the offensive against Soviet targets in New York, planting bombs at the Soviet trade office in Manhattan. Twenty minutes before the explosion, calls were placed to the company, the AP, and United Press International (UPI): “There have been several time bombs placed in the offices of Amtorg, at the Soviet freight office, at 355 Lexington Avenue. They will go off in less than 15 minutes. Free all Soviet Jewish prisoners. Let my people go. Never again.” One bomb exploded in a stairwell on the nineteenth floor, but police found and disarmed another on the twentieth floor.

On May 12, agents of the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) division of the US Justice Department and members of the NYPD raided the offices of the JDL at 440 West Forty-second Street, arresting Kahane and six others for conspiracy to make bombs at a JDL summer camp in the Catskills. Undeterred, only a month later members of the JDL planted fifteen sticks of dynamite at the Glen Cove estate housing the Soviet Mission.

35. Biondi’s use of “right wing” and “alleged anti-Semitism” betrays a certain lack of objectivity. One must wonder what Sonny Carson would have had to have said to have the “alleged” removed. Martha Biondi, “Brooklyn College Belongs to Us: Black Students and the Transformation of Public Higher Education in New York City,” in Civil Rights in New York City from World War II to Giuliani, ed. Clarence Taylor (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 176–77.


to the United Nations. Fortunately, the device was found and disarmed before it could explode.\textsuperscript{38}

In federal court in Brooklyn in July, only two months after their arrest, Kahane, forty-one-year old Chaim Bieber, and eighteen-year-old Stewart Cohen, both of Queens, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to manufacture explosives; all charges were dropped against ten others. As part of the deal, the JDL agreed to surrender explosives and weapons. An anonymous caller directed police to 197 sticks of dynamite concealed in shrubbery along the Palisades Interstate Parkway in New Jersey, and Kahane’s attorney, Barry Slotnick, informed the US Attorney about a cache of blasting caps and black powder in a locker in the East Side Airlines Terminal. To the surprise of Kahane and Slotnick, district court judge Jack Weinstein did not impose a prison term. Kahane received a suspended sentence of five years and was fined $5,000; his co-defendants received three-year terms, suspended, and were fined. Addressing the men, Judge Weinstein said, “In this country, at this time, it is not permissible to substitute the bomb for the book as the symbol of Jewish manhood.” Outside the courthouse afterward, Kahane told the press, “Sometimes, there is no other way. I am not against the use of violence if necessary,” before adding that the JDL would decide for itself when violence became necessary.\textsuperscript{39}

On September 8, seven individuals were arrested in connection with the bombing of the Amtorg offices: Chaim Bieber and Stewart Cohen, the men who pleaded guilty with Kahane to conspiracy charges in July; Eli Schwartz, age twenty-one; Eileen Garfinkle, age twenty; Sheldon Siegel, age twenty-five; Jacob Weisel, age twenty-five; and Avraham Hershkovitz, age twenty-six. Hershkovitz was already in a federal penitentiary for lying on a passport application (he had been stopped at JFK Airport with four handguns and a grenade in his possession, intending to hijack an Arab airliner in London).\textsuperscript{40}

Despite the arrests, and despite the presence of a government informer in their midst, the JDL was not deterred.

On January 26, 1972, their strategy turned lethal. They firebombed the offices of Hurok Concerts, Inc. and Columbia Artist Management, booking agencies that represented Russian artists. Iris Kones, a twenty-seven-year-old secretary in Hurok’s office, died of smoke inhalation. Five young men were arrested, including Sheldon Siegel, who was in fact already cooperating with the authorities. Despite the arrests, young JDL members continued planning acts of terror. On May 23, 1972, ATF agents and members of the Nassau County Police Department arrested four young men in the Lido Beach Jewish Center in the act of manufacturing bombs. Mark Binsky, age seventeen, David Levine, age nineteen, Robert Fine, age twenty-five, and Erza Gindi, age sixteen, were accused of plotting to bomb the Glen Cove mansion housing the Soviet Mission to the United Nations; Fine was later sentenced to three years, and Levine to a year and a day.41

Investigators had zeroed in on Sheldon Siegel based on information obtained through an illegal FBI wiretap placed in the JDL offices from October 1970 to July 1971. A search of his car turned up bombs and wires similar to the device planted at Glen Cove. Siegel’s attorney, Alan Dershowitz, successfully argued that the police had promised his client immunity and that therefore he could not be compelled to testify in the Amtorg case. Dershowitz concluded that “[t]his was not a case where the constable accidentally bungled. It was a situation in which the government simply could not have penetrated the JDL—and could not, therefore, have prevented potentially disastrous consequences—without breaking the law. Accordingly, it made a calculated and deliberate decision, at the highest level, to violate the laws—to engage in ‘civil disobedience’ in the interests of a higher cause.” He concluded that it was right for the government to have lost this case. “It is one thing for agents of the government, acting under enormous pressure, to take expedient actions deemed necessary to protect important values,” he wrote, but “it is quite another thing for courts, reflectively reviewing that action in the context of criminal prosecution, to lend an air of constitutional legitimacy to such actions.” Other witnesses refused 43–60.

to cooperate, and ultimately the government had to dismiss the case. On July 14, 1975, the government filed an order ending all proceedings against all defendants in the fatal Hurok bombing. No one was ever convicted in that case.\footnote{Arnold H. Lubasch, “2 in J.D.L. Cleared in Hurok Bombing,” \textit{New York Times}, June 28, 1973; and Dershowitz, 59–60.}

The JDL essentially vanished from New York after Meir Kahane moved to Israel in 1971, where he turned his political energies against the Palestinians.

Perhaps the most serious terrorist campaign was waged by the FALN, a group dedicated to the independence of Puerto Rico through revolutionary “armed struggle.” Between 1974 and 1983, the group was responsible for more than 130 bombings, most in New York and Chicago.\footnote{“FALN,” \textit{Encyclopedia of Terrorism}, ed. Harvey W. Kushner. vol. 1 (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Reference, 2003), 128–30, accessed April 12, 2012, http://go.galegroup.com/ps/retrieve.do?sgHitCountType=None&sort=RELEVANCE&i nPS=true&prodId=GVR&userGroupName=cuny_johnjay&tabID=T003&searchId=R3&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&contentSegment=&searchType=BasicSearchForm&contentSet=GALE|CX3438800107&docId=GALE|CX3438800107&docType=GALE.}

Oscar Lopez-Rivera, an FALN member arrested in Chicago in 1981 and sentenced to fifty-five years in federal prison for “seditious conspiracy,” explained that he did not consider himself a terrorist “because I was born a colonized subject, and as such I have an inalienable right to fight for my nation’s self-determination, for its natural drive towards democracy and justice, its search for freedom and truth, and for the human rights of the Puerto Rican people. The fact that I was born a colonized subject was an accidental matter,” he continued, “but the fact that my place of birth was accidental does not exempt me from my responsibilities to fulfill my patriotic duties and obligations. And one of those duties is to fight, by any means necessary, for the liberation of Puerto Rico, so that, as a nation, my people can exercise their right to self-determination and national sovereignty. Ninety-one years of colonial domination has denied my people that right.”\footnote{Oscar Lopez-Rivera, “Who Is a Terrorist? The Making of a Puerto Rican Freedom Fighter,” \textit{Social Justice} 16 (1989): 162–63.}

The FALN announced itself on the night of October 26, 1974. Bombs exploded in Chase Manhattan Plaza in the financial district, outside the Exxon and the Banco de Ponce Buildings in Rockefeller Center, and at the Union Carbide and Lever Buildings on Park Avenue, causing significant
damage but no injuries. Reporters received calls directing them to a telephone booth at Broadway and Seventy-third Street. “We have just bombed imperialist banks,” the caller said. “Free all Puerto Rican political prisoners.” They took credit for explosions outside the Newark police headquarters a month earlier and demanded the release of the individuals convicted of attempting to assassinate President Harry Truman in 1950 and of wounding five Congressmen in the House of Representatives in 1954. On December 11, his first night on patrol in Harlem, twenty-two-year-old rookie police officer Angel Poggi, himself Puerto Rican, was blinded in one eye by an FALN booby trap at a building on East 110th Street. A caller claimed the attack was “the response of the Puerto Rican people to the brutal murder of Martin (Tito) Perez by the sadistic animals of the 25th Precinct on Sunday, Dec. 1, 1974.” Perez had been found hanging in his cell after an arrest for disorderly conduct.

Their next act was their most dramatic, and deadly. On January 24, 1975, a bomb exploded in historic Fraunces Tavern on Pearl Street in Lower Manhattan at the height of lunch hour, killing four and injuring fifty-three. An hour after the blast, UPI and the AP received calls directing them to a message left in a nearby phone booth. It read: “We did this in retaliation for the CIA ordered bomb that murdered Angel Luis Chavonnier and Eddie Ramos, two innocent young workers who supported Puerto Rican Independence and the conscienceless maiming of ten innocent persons and one beautiful Puerto Rican child six years old in a Mayaguez, Puerto Rico dining place on Saturday the eleventh of January of 1975.” The note went on: “We, FALN, the Armed Forces of the Puerto Rican Nation take full responsibility for the especially detornated \( \text{sic} \) bomb that exploded today at Fraunces Tavern with reactionary corporate executives inside … You have unleashed a storm from which you comfortable Yankies \( \text{sic} \) cannot escape.” Interviewed in Cuba in 1993, FALN terrorist William Morales said of the Fraunces Tavern bombing: “It may sound heartless to say it that way, but it is hard to fight a war without bystanders getting injured.”


At about 9:30 a.m. on August 3, 1977, a handbag containing a bomb was found at the Department of Defense offices on the twenty-first floor of 342 Madison Avenue. The device exploded a few minutes later, but the employees had been moved out of harm’s way. An hour later, another bomb exploded in the ground floor personnel office in the Mobil Oil Company building at 150 East Forty-second Street, killing one man, Charles S. Steinberg, and injuring twenty-six others. Threats of additional bombs forced the evacuation of the Twin Towers, the upper seven floors of the Empire State Building, and other buildings, affecting 100,000 workers in all. In a call to WABC-TV Eyewitness News and in a note placed at the statue of Jose Marti at the entrance to Central Park at Seventh Avenue, the FALN claimed responsibility, again calling for the independence of Puerto Rico and freedom for imprisoned Puerto Rican nationalists. In September Carlos Alberto Torres and his wife, Marie Haydee Torres, were charged in the bombings, based on the discovery of her fingerprint in the Mobil Oil office. They were arrested in 1980. Marie refused to participate in her four-day trial and was convicted on May 23, 1980; she was sentenced to life, but released in 2009. Carlos was convicted in another case and released in 2010.

Puerto Rican nationalists engaged in nonviolent protest as well, with an eye toward publicizing their cause and garnering public sympathy. On October 25, 1977, twenty-eight Puerto Rican nationalists and one undercover police officer occupied the Statue of Liberty and draped the Puerto Rican flag from Miss Liberty’s crown to demand, again, the release of the four Puerto Ricans imprisoned for shooting up the House of Representatives in 1954. Park Police made seven offers of amnesty before moving in and making arrests at 6 p.m. All were quickly released on minimal bail. Miguel Rodriguez, an undercover officer, worked under his own name and, to protect his cover, was convicted of trespassing along with the others. After 9/11, Rodriguez, still working in law enforcement, found

himself on the Homeland Security terrorist list because the conviction had never been expunged. 49

The perceived justice of their cause—the nationhood for Puerto Rico and the liberation of what they called political prisoners and freedom fighters—gained sympathy on the left. An editorial in *The Nation* from 1979, for example, argued that independence might be the best long-term solution for the island. 50

The bombings continued. In August 1977, an unexploded device was found outside a building at Fiftieth Street and Avenue of the Americas, and on October 11, the same kind of bomb was found outside the GM building at Fifty-ninth Street and Madison Avenue, and a pipe bomb exploded near the entrance to the public library on Fifth Avenue. A note found nearby declared: “We the members of the F.A.L.N. are today engaged in a war of nerves against Yank imperialism. Today’s political military actions show the world the united discipline and strength of our organization.” They set off two pipe bombs near the Con Edison headquarters on Irving Place on the night of January 31, 1978; no one was injured, but the building and a police car were damaged. On May 22, FALN bombs went off at JFK, LaGuardia, and Newark airports and outside the Department of Justice building in Washington, DC. 51

Just before midnight on July 12, incendiary devices went off in Macy’s and E. J. Korvette’s department stores in Herald Square, but another explosion that night marked the end of this chapter of FALN terror. In an ordinary house at 26–49 Ninety-sixth Street in East Elmhurst, Queens, FALN bomb maker William Morales was careless and a device he was assembling


went off; he lost both hands and an eye in the blast. Police found sixty-six sticks of dynamite, two hundred pounds of explosives, and three pipe bombs with timers in his bomb factory. On March 9, 1979, Morales was convicted of possession of dynamite, chemicals, and a .45 automatic, and sentenced to twenty-nine to eighty-nine years. He escaped from the prison ward in Bellevue Hospital on May 21, 1979, cutting through the window guards with a smuggled wire cutter (allegedly brought in by his attorney, Susan Tipograph) and lowering himself to the ground forty feet below with elastic bandages; he had been in Bellevue to be fitted with artificial hands. Morales was captured in Mexico on May 26, 1983, after a shootout with Mexican police. He was never extradited to the United States, because he was tried for killing a police officer during his capture. He was released from prison in Mexico in June 1988 and found refuge in Cuba, where he remains a fugitive from justice (on learning of Morales’s release after the fact, the United States recalled its ambassador from Mexico). 52

The arrest of Morales did not end terrorism in the cause of Puerto Rican independence. On December 21, 1980, a group calling itself the Puerto Rican Armed Resistance planted two pipe bombs in coin lockers at Pennsylvania Station. No one was injured. A message found in a wastebasket on a nearby street stated the bombs were “in retaliation for crimes against Puerto Rican nationalists in Puerto Rico.” On May 16, 1981, a bomb exploded in a men’s room in the Pan American World Airways Terminal at Kennedy Airport, killing Alex McMillan, a twenty-year-old airport worker. Another device was found a few hours later, and a third, the next day. The Puerto Rican Armed Resistance again claimed responsibility. On May 18, the Bomb Squad removed two similar pipe bombs sent to the United States Mission to the United Nations and the Honduran Consulate. Messages placed in trash cans demanded “freedom for our political

prisoners in the U.S.A. and in Puerto Rico” and claimed that “[t]he governments of Guatemala and Honduras are collaborating with the U.S.A. in the training of counter-revolutionary soldiers to obliterate the popular fight of the Salvadoran people. Let’s make clear to the collaborators, such as Guatemala, Honduras, Argentina, United States of America and other governments that their actions will not go unpunished.”

The FALN reemerged in 1982, setting off dynamite bombs around Wall Street on March 1. A letter found in a phone booth by police claimed the action was “a strike against imperialist forces that are depressing the Puerto Rican people.” Bombs went off outside the Merrill Lynch offices at 1 Liberty Plaza, the New York Stock Exchange, the American Stock Exchange at 86 Trinity Place, and the Chase Manhattan Building at 1 Chase Plaza. On New Year’s Eve, they planted bombs at 1 Police Plaza, the building housing the US Attorney’s office at 1 St. Andrew’s Place, the FBI offices at 26 Federal Plaza, and the federal courthouse at Cadman Plaza in Brooklyn. Police officer Rocco Pascarella was badly injured when the bomb exploded at police headquarters, losing his left leg, the fingers on his right hand, and most of his sight.

In 1999, President Clinton made a conditional offer of clemency to sixteen imprisoned members of FALN. White House Spokesman Barry Toiv said, “The President feels they deserved to serve serious sentences for these crimes, but not sentences that were far out of proportion to the nature of the crimes they were convicted of.” Officer Pascarella testified at a hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee on clemency for members of the FALN. “When terrorists strike,” he said,

they are not just maiming me, they are striking at the very foundation of America. Our very freedom makes us particularly vulnerable to the demented minions of terrorists all over the world. In the press, their supporters describe these FALN terrorists as freedom fighters and political prisoners. That characterization is an abomination. The basis of American Democracy is dialogue and compromise within the political process…. The indiscriminate killing and maiming of innocent people to make a political statement is an attack on the

American political system and should be dealt with accordingly. Nor do these misfits, as some would imply, represent the goals and ideas of Puerto Rican people, who have democratically rejected Puerto Rican independence, and morally rejected slaughter as a means to a political end. In this very forum the clamor is heard for more severe sentences for hate crimes. What greater hate than to kill, not because of some demented distaste for another race or ethnic group, but to kill anyone; man, women, or child to make a merely political statement? And finally, what kind of message does this exercise of clemency send to the world’s terrorists?  

Officer Pascarella was not the only one outraged at President Clinton’s offer of clemency. When the US Senate held confirmation hearings on the nomination of Eric Holder to attorney general in 2009, Joseph F. Connor testified passionately in opposition. He had been nine years old when his father, Frank Connor, was killed in the Fraunces Tavern blast. Connor was outraged that the man who engineered the pardons of FALN members for President Clinton could be nominated to be the highest law enforcement officer in the land.  

As futile as their acts were, the Cubans, the Croatians, and the Puerto Ricans had a specific goal. By contrast, young white radicals acted in the cause of a vaguely defined revolution and against an unyielding establishment. The titles of books by Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin express the spirit perfectly: Revolution for the Hell of It (Dial Press, 1968) and Do It! Scenarios of the Revolution (Simon & Schuster, 1970), respectively. The increasing militancy of the civil rights movement, the widespread


urban riots, and the continuing war in Vietnam radicalized many young Americans, but while hundreds of thousands engaged in protest of one sort or another, only a deeply committed—or wildly deluded—minority embraced violence. White middle-class youth entered the 1960s to the words of President John F. Kennedy’s inaugural address. They believed that the country could be reformed and that they were the generation destined to do so. Assassinations, civil disorder, and the election of Richard M. Nixon to the presidency in 1968—after the violent and divisive Democratic convention in Chicago—soured such ideals and convinced some radicals that the United States could be redeemed only through revolution. To that end, they split off from the student left and formed the Weathermen. As “Weatherman Education Secretary” Bill Ayers explained in August 1969, “If it is a worldwide struggle, if Weatherman is correct in that basic thing, that the basic struggle in the world today is the struggle of the oppressed peoples against U.S. imperialism, then it is the case that no thing we could do in the mother country could be adventurist, nothing we could do, because there is a war going on already and the terms of that war are set.”

Writing in The Nation two months after the fatal Brink’s armored car robbery in 1981, Todd Gitlin attempted to explain how the left could have reached to such an irrational end:

Here were the Weathermen, spunky and personable, displaying an indisputably total commitment at a time when most activists were pulverizing themselves with guilt at being white and American and, most of all, ineffectual. Ten years of New Left activity, the greatest portion of it nonviolent, had accomplished much for civil rights and student dignity. It had rekindled a radical confidence that had been extinguished by McCarthyism, and it had mobilized hundreds of thousands of people against the Vietnam War. But it had failed to produce a coherent vision of a small–‘d’ democratic society, it had failed to cross the class divide and mobilize the working class, and it had failed to find a convincing route to national reforms.

As a result, many left-leaning liberals could not condemn the radicals too harshly, for if the United States was indeed a force for evil in the world, then those fighting it were “on the side of the angels.” In *The Sixties*, Gitlin put it this way: “In the name of what compelling strategy for ending the war could we oppose the Weatherpeople?” The antiwar radicals soon turned from street theater to bombs—“Bringing the War Home,” in the words of Bernardine Dohrn, who married Ayers after they emerged from years underground.\(^\text{58}\) Between July and November 1969, a loosely organized group of radicals based in the East Village planted bombs at eight sites around Manhattan: the Hudson River pier of the United Fruit Company (July 27); Marine Midland Grace Trust Company at 140 Broadway (August 20); the Federal Office Building, 26 Federal Plaza (September 19); the Armed Forces induction center at 39 Whitehall Street (October 7); the RCA Building, the General Motors Building, and 1 Chase Manhattan Plaza (November 11); and the Criminal Courts Building, 100 Centre Street, and an army truck parked outside the Sixty-ninth Regiment Armory (November 12). In a letter sent to the press, they exclaimed: “[t]he Establishment is in for some big surprises if it thinks that kangaroo courts and death sentences can arrest a revolution. The anger of youth and all oppressed people is mounting against this mockery of justice. There’s one thing the cowards who rule the world might as well know now: the will to freedom of the people is stronger than the fear of any repression. Liberty or Death!” On November 13, 1969, the FBI arrested the group of freelance radicals: Samuel Melville, thirty-four years old; George Demmerle, thirty-nine years old; John D. Hughey, twenty-two years old; and Jane Lauren Alpert, twenty-two years old. Twenty-two year old Pat Swinton remained at large. An FBI informant, Demmerle was released without bail, but the others were held. On May 4, 1970, Melville, Alpert, and Hughey pleaded guilty to conspiracy for the bombings. Hughey received a sentence of six years’ probation. Alpert skipped bail and went underground, later connecting with the Weather Underground; finally surrendering in November 1974, she was sentenced to twenty-seven months. Melville was sentenced to thirteen to eighteen years on federal charges, and six to eighteen years on state charges; he was killed during the Attica uprising in 1971.\(^\text{59}\)

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The Weathermen split off from Students for a Democratic Society at the organization’s last convention in 1969, and by year’s end, the most radical members had gone underground. Between 1970 and 1975, the Weather Underground was responsible for perhaps twenty bombings. “It could always be said in extenuation, if not in defense,” wrote Gitlin, “that they had never destroyed a human life.” Not that they did not try. In February 1970, a rash of bombings hit the San Francisco area; one blast at a police station in Golden Gate Park killed a sergeant and injured several other officers. In New York, they tossed firebombs at the home of the judge presiding over the Panther 13 Trial, with his family asleep inside. The individuals responsible blew themselves up on March 6, 1970, in their bomb factory, a townhouse on West Eleventh Street. Ted Gold, Diana Oughton, and Terry Robbins were killed, and two survivors, Cathy Wilkerson and Kathy Boudin, went underground. Boudin, daughter of leftist civil rights lawyer Leonard Boudin, resurfaced as a participant in the Brink’s robbery. Wilkerson voluntarily surrendered in 1980 and served two years in prison.60

The Weather Underground bombings continued after the townhouse explosion. On May 23, the New York Times received “the first communication from the Weatherman underground,” a “declaration of a state of war” prepared by Bernardine Dohrn. “We cannot live peaceably under this


system,” it said. The declaration announced that the radicals were “adopting the classic guerrilla strategy of the Vietcong,” and promised to attack within two weeks “a symbol or institution of Amerikan injustice. This is the way we celebrate the example of Eldridge Cleaver and H. Rap Brown and all black revolutionaries who first inspired us by their fight behind enemy lines for the liberation of their people.”

They made good their threat on the evening of June 9, 1970. A bomb with the force of ten to fifteen sticks of dynamite exploded in a second-floor men’s room in police headquarters on Centre Street. Soon after the AP and the Times received letters signed “Weatherman” claiming the bomb was in response to the killings at Kent State and the murder of Fred Hampton: “The pigs try to look invulnerable but we keep finding their weaknesses….Every time the pigs think they’ve stopped us, we come back a little stronger and a lot smarter. They guard their buildings and we walk right past their guards. They look for us—we get to them first….The time is now. Political power grows out of a gun, a Molotov, a riot, a commune—… and from the soul of the people.” While searching the scene of the blast, Lieutenant Kenneth W. O’Neil, commander of the Bomb Squad, remarked, “These are difficult times. The bombs that we have been finding are well made and can do a lot of damage.” At about 3:30 in the morning on July 28, a pipe bomb exploded at the entrance of the Bank of America headquarters at 41 Broad Street. A caller to the Daily News claimed the blast was “in honor of the Cuban revolution” and boasted that Vietcong flags had been left at the scene. At 1:20 in the morning on October 10, ten minutes after a warning call was placed to the Daily News, a bomb exploded in the traffic court building adjacent to the Queens House of Detention in Long Island City, which had been wrecked by inmate rioting the previous week. UPI received a letter signed “Weatherman” two days later: “[l]ast night as part of an international conspiracy we blew up the Long Island City criminal courthouse—adjacent to branch Queens [House of Detention] where it [the prisoner rebellion] all began. With rallies and riots, with marches and molotovs kids in New York City and around the country will continue the battle.” (Adding to the general climate of violence, a pipe bomb went off outside the Hilton Hotel on West Fifty-fourth Street on the night of October 12; no one claimed responsibility.)

Finally, at 3 a.m. on December 4 (the first anniversary of the killing of Black Panther Fred Hampton), six individuals were apprehended by detectives as they were about to fire bomb the First National City Bank at Ninety-first Street and Madison Avenue. An undercover police officer had infiltrated their organization months earlier. The indictment stated that “[a]s part of this conspiracy the defendants and others constituted themselves a ‘cell’ or ‘collective’ organized for the purpose of executing a series of ‘heavy actions’ against the ‘Establishment.’ As part of a broad plan to destroy public and private property, the defendants agreed to select and evaluate numerous targets for fire-bombing or dynamiting,” including police precincts, the Mathematics and Science Building at New York University, the Bolivian Consulate, and the offices of Mudge Rose Guthrie & Alexander, President Nixon’s old law firm.63

The arrests interrupted the pattern of Weathermen bombings in the city for a time, but the group continued its campaign in New York against corporations and the government for years after, even if the bombings occurred at irregular intervals, and always tied to some external event, however tenuous. At 3:35 a.m. on May 18, 1973, an explosion damaged three police cruisers in downtown Jamaica, Queens. About twenty minutes later, a woman called the Times: “[t]his is the Weathermen’s group and we are moving in on the 103d Precinct in Queens for the death of the little boy killed last week by the policeman” (on April 28, Officer Thomas Shea had shot 10-year-old Clifford Glover in South Jamaica, setting off rioting in the neighborhood). At about 2:30 a.m. on September 28, a similar time bomb destroyed I.T.T. offices at 437 Madison Avenue, and again, the Times received a call before the blast. A man said, “I am the Weatherman Underground. At the I.T.T.-American building, a bomb is going to go off in 15 minutes. This is in retaliation of the I.T.T. crimes they committed against Chile.” In June 1975, the Weather Underground Organization claimed responsibility for the bombing of the Banco de Ponce branch in Rockefeller Center (FALN had bombed the same

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building on October 27, 1974) as an “act in solidarity” with striking cement workers in Puerto Rico. Calls to news organizations directed police to a three-page letter left in a phone booth at West Tenth Street and Greenwich Avenue.64

By December 1980, Mark Rudd, Cathy Wilkerson, Bill Ayers, Bernardine Dohrn, and others surfaced after federal charges were dropped due to prosecutorial misconduct. Dohrn pleaded guilty to the state charges in Chicago and received probation.65 But others remained underground, engaging in criminal acts culminating in the Brinks robbery in 1981.

Another group of radicals called themselves the United Freedom Front. They began as the Sam Melville/Jonathan Jackson Unit and were responsible for a string of bombings and bank robberies in New England in the late 1970s. On December 21, 1981, self-styled revolutionaries Thomas Manning and Richard Williams killed New Jersey state trooper Philip Lamonaco after he stopped their car on Route 80 near the Pennsylvania border, not far from the house the Mannings had rented. Interestingly, one of the early suspects who was quickly cleared, a man living in rural Maine, was represented by William Kunstler.66

On December 16, 1982, the United Freedom Front launched their first action in the metropolitan area. They planted one bomb at a South African Airways facility in Elmont and another at an IBM building in Harrison. Over the next two years, they planted over a dozen more devices at government and corporate buildings. In January 1983, they planting explosives at the federal building housing the FBI in Manhattan and military recruiters.

Bombing for Justice

... on Staten Island; on May 12, they bombed the Army Reserve Center in Hempstead and a navy recruiting office in Whitestone; and on December 13, a navy recruiting office in East Meadow. In that incident, police recovered a three-page document in a Manhattan mailbox protesting involvement in Central America. On December 15, an unexploded device was found outside a Honeywell Corporation office in Long Island City in an attaché case helpfully labeled “bomb”; on December 19, a bomb exploded at an IBM office in Purchase. On January 29, 1984, a bomb (again, conveniently placed in a canvas bag labeled “bomb”) was planted at a Motorola Corporation facility in Whitestone; this time, a caller to UPI said, “This is the United Freedom Front and we’re planting a bomb at the Motorola Company. We are continuing our campaign against warmakers and profiteers. U.S. out of El Salvador.” The group planted bombs at an IBM building in Harrison on March 19, leaving leaflets declaring “Death to Apartheid” in an adjacent parking lot; at a GE facility in Melville on August 22; and, their final actions, at the South African Mission at 425 Park Avenue and at a Union Carbide headquarters in Mount Pleasant on September 26. A caller told the AP, “We bombed the South African Consulate in New York in solidarity with resistance to South African human rights violations. Down with Apartheid. Defeat U.S. imperialism. Guerilla Resistance.”

The group may have been underground, but they were not unknown to state and federal authorities. In Ohio in November 1984, police arrested Raymond Luc Levasseur and Patricia Gros, Jaan Karl Laaman and Barbara Curzi-Laaman, and Richard Williams. In those raids the police found eighteen weapons, including the 9mm pistol that had killed Trooper Lamonaco. Thomas Manning and his wife, Carol Ann Manning, were captured in Norfolk, Virginia, in April 1985. Soon known as the “Ohio Seven,” they faced charges of bank robbery, murder, conspiracy.

and sedition in several jurisdictions. In March 1985, the seven were indicted in federal court in Brooklyn for the string of bombings in the metropolitan area over the preceding two years. Lynne Stewart, attorney for Richard Williams, declared he was “definitely not” a terrorist, claiming the government used that label against “anyone who is anti-imperialist or believes in the common good.”

The first trial began in Brooklyn Federal Court in October 1985; it lasted nearly five months. After deliberating for sixteen days, the jury delivered guilty verdicts on about three-quarters of the seventy-two counts, with convictions for conspiracy and several bombings. Representing Thomas Manning, William Kunstler said his client was “another victim of a political trial.” On January 18, 1987, Manning was convicted in New Jersey of felony murder for causing the death of the trooper in the course of robbery—retrieving his weapon from Lamonaco—and escaping the scene, but not actually killing the trooper. Again, his attorney was William Kunstler. It is difficult to understand what he expected to achieve by portraying his client as “a proud but dedicated revolutionary who believes one must fight with more than meaningless platitudes the evils in our national and international society.” A mistrial was declared when the jury could not reach a decision about Williams. During the trial, Williams’s attorney Lynne Stewart said, “[O]verground supporters of the underground movement nearly all come out of the 1960’s [sic] movement. They are people who came to the view, as I did, that the kind of change that needed to take place could not be accomplished without violence and struggle and a willingness to die for it. We feel that the system is so corrupted that the only way to change it is power versus power—revolution.” In a second trial in 1991 that lasted two-and-a-half months, Williams was finally convicted of murder. Already serving sentences for the string of bombings, both men were sentenced to life. Williams died in federal prison in 2005;

Barbara Curzi Laaman was released in 1991, and Carol Ann Manning in 1993. Levasseur was released after twenty years. Jaan Laaman and Thomas Manning remain in prison. Although earlier radicals could expect relatively light sentences, or even probation, in the 1980s, the political mood had clearly shifted and the public was less willing to explain away violent acts based on the motives of the perpetrators. After all, Ronald Reagan had been elected in 1980.

By the mid-1960s, nonviolent civil rights movement had spawned offspring willing to achieve racial equality by “any means necessary.” The earliest incident was a plot in early 1965 to blow up landmarks of liberty in New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC. The NYPD, working with the FBI and the Royal Canadian Police, arrested three “Negro extremists” and a white Canadian woman on charges of transporting thirty sticks of dynamite and blasting caps from Montreal to bomb the Statue of Liberty, the Liberty Bell, and the Washington Monument. Rookie police officer Raymond A. Wood had infiltrated the group (he was promoted to detective for his work). The woman, Michelle Duclos, had been involved with the Quebec nationalists; the three men, Walter Augustus Bowe, Khaleel S. Sayyed, and Robert Steele Collier, were members of a group called the Black Liberation Front. During the trial, Detective Wood testified that Collier, who had earlier travelled to Cuba and claimed to have met Che Guevara, had said, “We’re not radicals; we’re revolutionaries, and as long as we can do something to show we’re getting off our behinds here in America we’re revolutionaries.” Duclos pleaded guilty; her sentence of five years was suspended in September. The three men were convicted and sentenced


to the maximum, ten years, but their sentences were reduced after a few months. Collier was later indicted as one of the Panther 21.\textsuperscript{72}

The Black Panthers engaged in a combination of political and criminal acts, and in the case of the Panthers, it was not merely the state labeling dissenting political activities as criminal. Although the state indeed prosecuted political crimes under criminal statutes, some Panthers engaged in purely criminal acts. In October 1971, for example, four armed Black Panthers robbed patrons (also black) at the Red Carpet Lounge, 173 West Eighty-fifth Street. As the police arrived, the robbers came out shooting, wounding two officers, but all were captured. One of them was fugitive H. Rap Brown, who was shot twice in the stomach during the incident. The men were indicted for attempted murder and robbery; once again, William Kunstler was the defense attorney. In March 1973, Brown, Sam Petty, Arthur Young, and Levi Valentine were convicted of robbery and weapons possession, but the jury deadlocked on the attempted murder charge for shooting at the police. Brown was sentenced to five to fifteen years in prison, but received parole in 1976.\textsuperscript{73}

But there certainly was revolutionary action also, first by the Panthers and then, lethally, by the Black Liberation Army. Both targeted police officers directly. Panther rhetoric of violence was ubiquitous in the late 1960s, and they indeed backed up their words with action on several notable oc-


casions. At 2:30 in the morning on August 2, 1968, three Black Panthers ambushed two patrolmen outside 1054 Eastern Parkway in Crown Heights, blasting them with shotguns. Officers Thomas Dockery and Leonard Fleck spent seven weeks in the hospital, but later returned to duty. Fleck told reporters, “It wasn’t anything personal. They wanted just any two cops.” Chief of Patrol Harry Taylor was stunned by the intentional targeting of police officers. “This is something new,” he said. “I have never heard of anything like this.” Eight months later three Panthers were indicted; Joudan Ford and Ronald Hill, both twenty years old, were arrested, but William Hampton, twenty-eight, remained at large. On January 16, 1969, police entered a Crown Heights apartment searching for an army deserter. Inside they found sixty sticks of dynamite, thirty-six sticks of TNT, blasting caps and fuses, and a rifle and arrested Trudie Simpson, a twenty-four-year-old lieutenant in the Black Panther Party. In September, she pleaded guilty to possession of a weapon and was sentenced to a conditional discharge and five years’ probation.

The day after the Brooklyn raid, a Panther operation went into motion to bomb two police precincts. The plan was to set off one bomb at the Twenty-fourth Precinct in Manhattan, and a second at the Forty-fourth Precinct in the Bronx. Panthers with sniper rifles would be stationed across the Harlem River from the Forty-fourth Precinct and would pick off police officers as they ran out of the building. The device at the Twenty-fourth Precinct failed to explode, and an undercover police officer had replaced the dynamite with inert materials in the other bomb, so only the blasting cap ignited. As it happened, a police cruiser saw three individuals by a car parked off the Harlem River Drive, the sniper station across from the Forty-fourth Precinct. When they inquired what the problem was, the Panthers opened fire. Two men escaped, but nineteen-year-old Joan Bird was apprehended.

On April 2, 1969, twenty-one men and women were indicted in Manhattan on charges of conspiracy to set bombs in public places. The “Panther 21,” later the “Panther 13,” quickly became a cause celebre, and it was for their defense fund that the Bernsteins had hosted their party. The Panthers, several of whom had criminal records, were charged with planning to plant bombs at police precincts, department stores, the New York Botanical Garden in the Bronx, and on the New Haven Railroad tracks north of 148th Street. Their attorney, William Kunstler, called the charges “a frame-up” and the $100,000 bail as “ransom.” He compared the indictment to the infamous Reichstag fire. From the start, both sides set the charges “into the context of a national war between the police and radical dissidents.”

The trial began in February 1970 and lasted eight months—the longest criminal trial in state history to that point. Prosecutors endeavored to keep the focus on violations of the law and maintained this was a criminal trial, whereas the Panthers asserted it was essentially a political trial and claimed they were political prisoners, not criminals. On the night of February 21, two firebombs exploded at the front door of Judge Murtagh’s home in the Bronx, and a third ignited under the family car (a courageous neighbor extinguished that one with snow). No one was injured. “Blood-red” graffiti on the sidewalk in front of the house exclaimed: FREE THE PANTHER 21; THE VIET CONG HAVE WON; and KILL THE PIGS. No one was ever prosecuted, but it was likely the work of the Weatherman cell that would blow itself up in a Greenwich Village townhouse two weeks later.

As the trial dragged on, there was another spurt of bombings. On March 11, 1970, explosions rocked the Manhattan offices of IBM, Mobil, and General Telephone & Electronics (GTE); another bomb exploded in the Electric Circus nightclub on March 22, injuring seventeen (the club had recently hosted a fund-raiser for the Panthers, and there was speculation that the blast was linked to a financial dispute). On March 28, an explosion in an East Fifth Street tenement killed Ishmael Brown, a City College senior, and maimed Godwin A. Bernard, a senior at Lehman College. Police soon linked them to the blasts and to the Panthers, claiming that Panther literature had been recovered in their apartment. Richard Moore, state


78. Murtagh, “Fire in the Night.”
field secretary for the Panthers, denied the two were in any way associated with them: “We do not condone violence against the mass of people who are looking for a better life,” he said. “The pigs are just trying to infer [sic] that Black Panthers are all bombers.” His protestations notwithstanding, there was evidence. Bernard had been held as a material witness the previous year in the killing of a sixteen-year-old boy who had tried to leave the Panthers.79

After an eight-month trial, the Panther 13 jury deliberated for only two hours and forty minutes. Skeptical of all aspects of the prosecution’s case, “the jurors refused to apply to the prosecution’s witnesses and evidence the same common-sense reasoning they likely would have applied to themselves and their daily affairs.” The Panther 13 were acquitted on all counts. The jurors exited the courtroom “with our arms raised, and our fists clenched, and we were hugging each other.”80

Following the trial, black nationalists began targeting police directly. The more radical elements emerged under a new name: the Black Liberation Army. For the next two years that group targeted police officers, killing five and wounding several others. But this was a short-lived offensive. By the end of 1973, almost all the major figures involved were either in custody or dead.81

Just days after the acquittal of the Panther 13, Officers Thomas Curry and Nicholas Binetti were stationed outside the home of District Attorney Frank Hogan on Riverside Drive on May 19, 1971, confronted a car that had committed a traffic violation and were met with a burst of machine gun fire. Both survived, but never completely recovered from the multiple gunshot wounds. A few days later, the New York Times received a package containing a license plate from the assailants’ car, and a typed message:

All power to the People. Here are the license plates sort (sic) after by the fascist state pig police. ...The armed goons of this racist government will again meet the guns of oppressed third world peoples as long as they occupy our community and murder our brothers and sisters in the name of American law and order; just as the fascist marines and Army occupy Vietnam in the name of democracy and murder Vietnamese people in the name of American imperialism are confronted with the guns of the Vietnamese liberation army, the domestic armed forces of racism and oppression will be confronted with the guns of the black liberation army, who will meet out in the tradition of Malcolm and all true revolutionaries real justice. We are revolutionary justice. All power to the people. Justice.

In the early morning on Saturday, June 5, police arrested Richard Moore and Eddie Joseph, both named in the original Panther 21 indictment, for the robbery of a social club in the Bronx, and quickly discovered that their gun was the same one that had been used against Officers Curry and Binetti. In 1973, Richard Moore (he later took the name Dhoruba al-Mujahid bin Wahad), one of the Panther 21, was convicted of attempted murder in the case (his first trial ended in a hung jury; the second in a mistrial). In 1990, his conviction was overturned on a technicality, and he filed a civil suit. Even after the FBI settled for $400,000, the city refused to yield. David S. Connolly, a lawyer with the Corporation Counsel, said, “The bottom line is that he did it. Our position is that there was no conspiracy and this was not a malicious prosecution. The crime that he is alleged to have committed, he did, in fact, commit.” Eventually, though, the city, although admitting no wrongdoing, settled and agreed to pay $490,000, largely to eliminate potential liability for all his legal fees incurred over the entire life of the case.82

Eddie Joseph changed his name to Jamal Joseph and went underground. He was later convicted of harboring fugitives involved in the Brinks robbery; he spent five and a half years in federal prison, where he completed undergraduate and graduate degrees. After his release, Jamal Joseph was appointed an associate professor in Columbia University’s School of the Arts. 83

Two days after Officers Curry and Binetti were shot, Officers Waverly Jones and Joseph Piagentini were ambushed, shot in the back while on duty at the Colonial Park Houses, 159th Street and the Harlem River Drive. A witness to the killings was told by the gunmen, “Cool it, baby, you’ve got nothing to worry about it. We’re only after cops.” Chief of Detectives Albert A. Seedman said that if the two incidents were connected, then “this homicide is the forerunner of violent action by militant groups, and it could be more important to American society than the Vietnam War. These shooting were directed at the Establishment, not at whites or blacks. Once they begin killing cops, then all society is threatened.” Three members of the Black Liberation Army, Herman Bell, Albert Washington, and Anthony Bottom, were convicted in the murder of Officers Jones and Piagentini in 1975 (their first trial had ended with the jury deadlocked, despite that fact that they had had Officer Piagentini’s service revolver in their possession when they were arrested). They were sentenced to life, and at their sentencing guards found explosives and weapons in their possession. 84


Led by Joanne Chesimard, the Black Liberation Army continued its attacks for another year and a half, funding their operations by robbing banks. In Maspeth on the night of December 20, 1971, police chased three men and a woman—Chesimard—in a stolen car. A fragmentation grenade was thrown out of the fleeing car, destroying the police cruiser. The officers escaped serious injury. On January 27, 1972, Chesimard and Herman Bell ambushed Officers Rocco Laurie and Gregory Foster at Avenue B and East Eleventh Street. Both men were shot in the back multiple times and died from their wounds. Laurie, who was white, and Foster, who was black, had served together as Marines in Vietnam and had requested that they patrol the streets as partners.85

In an ambush at Newport Avenue and Sackman Street in Brownsville on January 23, 1973, the Black Liberation Army members shot and wounded Officers Carlo Imperato and Vincent Imperato, brothers who patrolled together. Barely seventy-two hours later, Jackson and Chesimard ambushed Officers Michael O’Reilly and Roy R. Pollina as they sat in their police cruiser at the intersection of Farmers and Baisley Boulevards in Jamaica, wounding both.86

Their war on the police ended dramatically near Exit 9 on the New Jersey Turnpike at 12:45 a.m. on May 2, 1973. New Jersey State Troopers stopped a car carrying three members of the Black Liberation Army. In the


ensuing gunfire, Trooper Werner Foerster was killed and Trooper James M. Harper wounded. Chesimard was wounded, and James F. Colson, former information minister of the Black Panthers, was mortally wounded before they sped off. Caught a few miles away, Chesimard surrendered and Colson collapsed, dead. Clark Edward Squire escaped into the woods, but was captured after a thirty-six-hour manhunt.87

Even after all the murders of police officers and the shootout on the turnpike, juries were still difficult to convince. The first trial of the Black Liberation Army bank robbers ended in a mistrial on December 14, 1973, with the jury deadlocked at eleven to one for conviction. The defendants repeatedly disrupted the proceedings and Chesimard’s attorney refused to participate despite directives from the bench. In a second trial a week later, with Chesimard acting as her own defense attorney, all were acquitted; jurors said they didn’t believe government witnesses, Avon White and John Rivers, both of whom admitted taking part in the robbery.88


Chesimard was finally convicted of murder in the death of Trooper Foerster in March 1977; Squire had been convicted in 1974. She was sentenced to life, but escaped in 1979 with the help of the Weather Underground and fled to Cuba, where she remains a fugitive from justice.\textsuperscript{89} With Joanne Chesimard, the “soul” of the Black Liberation Army gone, the organization, such as it was, did not die, but the remnants were reduced to essentially a criminal enterprise.

At 10:30 in the morning on April 16, 1981, at the corner of 202nd Street and 116th Avenue in St. Albans, Queens, Officers John Scarangella and Richard Rainey attempted to pull over a van linked to a series of robberies. According to police, “[t]he van went around the corner and stopped, blocking the street. The occupants went to the rear of the van and, as the radio car approached, the two men fired through the windshield of the radio car. The two suspects then went to the side of the radio car and continued to fire into the auto, firing a total of thirty shots.” Rainey took fourteen bullets, but survived. Scarangella was shot twice in the head and was on life support for two weeks before he died. James Dixon York and Anthony LaBorde of the Black Liberation Army were arrested. In August 1982, after a thirteen-week trial, they were convicted of attempted murder in the second degree, but the jury deadlocked ten to two for conviction on second-degree murder. William Kunstler and C. Vernon Mason represented LaBorde and York (who changed their names to Abdul Majid and Basheer Hameed). In October 1983, a second trial on the murder charges ended in a mistrial, again with the jury split, but both were finally convicted of murder in the second degree in June 1986, a verdict Kunstler called “totally unfair.”\textsuperscript{90}


Evidencing how isolated and detached the last members of the Weather Underground had become, they joined forces with the Black Liberation Army for a series of violent bank robberies. They made off with $500,000 in an armored car robbery in Inwood on Long Island on March 22, 1980, and on June 2, four men ambushed an armored car in the Bronx, killing one guard and permanently crippling another; they took $292,000. Indicted in that case were Donald Weems and Edward Joseph, both of whom had been acquitted in the Panther 21 trial. Two other attempted armored car robberies were aborted. In each case, the robbers used a rented van acquired by using a fraudulent driver’s license. Police tracked the names on the licenses to Broadway Baby, a children’s clothing boutique on the Upper West Side. From September 1979 to February 1980, the manager of the store was Bernardine Dohrn, still underground and living in the neighborhood with Bill Ayers, the father of her children.  

On October 20, 1981, in what turned out to be the final terrorist operation of this era, they robbed a Brink’s armored car at the Nanuet Mall, killing one guard, Peter Paige, and wounding another, Joe Trombino (tragically, Trombino perished on 9/11). In a shootout at a roadblock a few miles away, two Nyack police officers, Waverly Brown and Sgt. Edward O’Grady, were killed. The police apprehended four at the roadblock, Samuel Brown of the Black Liberation Army and three members of the Weather Underground—David Joseph Gilbert, Judith Clark, and Kathy Boudin. Escaping were Jerel Wayne Williams (Mutulu Shakur), Cecilio “Chui” Ferguson, Samuel Smith (Mtayari Sundiata), Donald Weems (Kuwasi Balagoon), Eddie (Jamal) Joseph, and others. Three days later, an NYPD patrol car spotted a license plate linked to the Brink’s job and chased two suspects through Queens, capturing Nathaniel Burns (Sekou Odinga), another of the Panther 21, and killing Samuel Smith, who was wearing a bulletproof vest containing a slug from Sgt. O’Grady’s gun. Asked why his client was wearing the vest, attorney William Kunstler said, “He is a black living in Brooklyn. Carrying


a 9mm and wearing a bulletproof vest shows careful planning for the possibilities.”

In the following years, the participants in the robbery were all convicted and given lengthy prison terms. In this case, at least, the juries did question the motives, tactics, or testimony of the police, or show reluctance to convict due to sympathies with the cause espoused. On September 14, 1983, Donald Weems, Judith Clark, and David Gilbert were convicted and sentenced to three consecutive terms of twenty-five years to life. Earlier that day Gilbert and Kathy Boudin were married in the Orange County Jail (Dohrn was jailed for seven months for refusing to cooperate with the federal grand jury investigating the crime by declining to provide a writing sample that might link her to the fraudulent licenses).

In Westchester County Court in White Plains on April 26, 1984, Kathy Boudin pleaded guilty to murder and robbery for her involvement in the Brink’s job. “I feel terrible about the lives that were lost,” she told the court. She was sentenced to twenty years to life. At her sentencing, she said, “I want my motivations to be understood. I was there out of my commitment to the black liberation struggle and its underground movement. I am a white woman who does not want the crimes committed against black


people carried out in my name.” Over the objections of the victims’ families and the police unions, she was released on parole on August 20, 2003.94

In federal court in Newark on March 17, Susan Lisa Rosenberg, twenty-nine years old, and Timothy Blunk, twenty-seven, were convicted on eight counts of possessing weapons, explosives, and fake identity cards. They had been apprehended in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, while unloading hundreds of pounds of dynamite and weapons into a storage facility. Rosenberg was also wanted as the suspected driver of the getaway car in the Brinks armored car robbery in 1981. She told the jury, “We are not criminals. We are revolutionaries.” She and Blunk were each sentenced to fifty-eight years. She served sixteen; President Bill Clinton commuted her sentence on his last day in office. After her release, she taught literature at John Jay College of Criminal Justice as an adjunct professor, but once that became publicly known the college dropped her.95

Marilyn Buck, another member of the Weather Underground involved in the Brink’s job, was captured in a diner in Dobbs Ferry in May 1987. She had originally been convicted of running guns for the Black Liberation Army in 1973, and went underground while on furlough from federal prison. She was convicted in 1988 of racketeering, armed robbery, and murder—counts covering the 1979 escape of Joanne Chesimard and a 1981 armored car robbery in the Bronx that left a guard dead—and was sentenced to fifty years in federal prison. She told the court, “I am a political prisoner, not a terrorist” (already serving seventeen years for other crimes, her co-defendant Mutulu Shakur had been arrested in 1986 in Los Angeles and


was sentenced to sixty years). In 1990 plea agreement, she was sentenced to ten additional years for bombing public buildings, including the 1983 bombing of the Capital building in Washington, DC. Dying from uterine cancer, Buck was freed from federal custody by order of Attorney General Eric Holder in July 2010 and died three weeks later.\textsuperscript{96}

This era of urban terrorism came to a close on the night of November 5, 1990. JDL founder Meir Kahane had just addressed a crowd of supporters at the Marriott Halloran House Hotel in Midtown when El Sayyid Nosair, an Egyptian immigrant, shot him dead. Fleeing onto the street, Nosair wounded two others; one, a member of the postal police, fired back and brought down the assassin. Represented by William Kunstler, Nosair was acquitted of murder but was convicted of assault and gun possession. Judge Alvin Schlesinger called the verdict contrary to “the overwhelming weight of evidence and devoid of common sense and logic,” adding that he thought the defendant “conducted a rape of this country, our Constitution and of our laws, and of people seeking to exist peacefully together.” He sentenced Nosair to seven and a third to twenty-two years.\textsuperscript{97}

But as one historical period ends another begins. The FBI followed Nosair’s trail to the Masjid al-Salam mosque in Jersey City. Many members of the congregation voiced support for Nosair and his deed, opening a window into fundamentalist Islam and its adherents and revealing possible links to groups capable of acts of terrorism, including the Muslim Brotherhood. The\textit{Times} quoted a teacher at the Jersey City Islamic School as saying that Muslims were all agents of Allah: “We must implement and carry out His mission because we will be asked about it. Our short-term role is to introduce Islam. In the long term we must save American society. Allah will ask me why I did not speak about Islam, because this piece of land is Allah’s property.”\textsuperscript{98}


\textsuperscript{98} Chris Hedges, “F.B.I. Investigates Group of Zealots who Praise Kahane
Despite the boxes of evidence taken from Nosair’s home containing plans of New York City landmarks, including the World Trade Center, bomb-making diagrams, and documents relating to radical Islam, and despite clear indications of a conspiracy to murder Kahane, neither the FBI nor the NYPD followed the threads to the Jersey City mosque. Later, it became known that Osama bin Laden had personally contributed to Nosair’s defense fund. While incarcerated, Nosair had visits from followers of Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, the same men who then carried out the bombing of the World Trade Center in February 1993. Nosair was later convicted on federal charges of terrorist conspiracy for his role in the 1993 plot to bomb targets in New York and sentenced to life in prison.99

When this era of domestic terrorism began, New Yorkers were largely sympathetic to the social movements that had pushed a loud critique of America’s ills into the national discourse. The nation’s legacy of racial and economic injustice, victimization, and discrimination, could not be denied, and those who challenged the “establishment” on that basis often found support in the press and in the courts. In political cases, however, juries were not eager to convict, even in the face of solid evidence, and the radicals often received lenient sentences if convicted. Strictly criminal acts, however, even when committed by leftist radicals, black or white, received little sympathy. But even before the Brink’s robbery, however, the zeitgeist had shifted. In the years since, the families of victims of the bombings and assassinations have remained vigilant in fighting parole for the perpetrators. There was little public applause when President Bill Clinton offered pardons to the Puerto Rican terrorists or other radicals. In fact, Clinton only pardoned Susan Rosenberg in his final hours in office.

The attacks on the World Trade Center in 1993 and 2001 were entirely different from the domestic terrorism of the 1970s. In the 1970s, many Americans were sympathetic to the causes and grievances of the radicals, even if they rejected their terrorist methods. Today, few Americans support the cause of militant Islam, or the nations who back them. Also different is the response of the police. Since 9/11, New Yorkers have been subject to more intrusive surveillance, and the police have shown less tolerance for the creative energy and quirkiness that made the city so dynamic. The zero-tolerance approach to civic disorder and low-level crime has made more New Yorkers subject to aggressive policing. This is in sharp contrast to the previous age of urban terrorism. Police then tried to target the radicals without limiting the traditional freedoms of the city. Then, too, the legal system was wary of police entrapment, the involvement of agent provocateurs, and the infringement of individual rights. Today, juries have readily convicted Muslim terrorists of conspiracy, regardless of the sometimes thin evidence and the questionable role of police informants, and judges have rendered long sentences. On one hand, the criminal justice system has dealt sternly with the plots, but on the other, the public is subject to police controls far more extensive than even the most aggressive tactics of that earlier war on terror.