

# Listen or Die: The Terrorist as a Role

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## Preface

I still remember the day in the mid-eighties when a friend arrived at my house limping from injuries he got at a demonstration the previous day. I was in the middle of reading an article in the paper about the demonstration. There were pictures of a fire-engine in flames. The truck had been struck by a Molotof cocktail bomb. When my friend came in the house he asked, "What are you reading?" I told him I was catching up on the riot news. I read out loud to him that the police were looking for someone who was responsible for the injury of a fire-fighter.

Fire trucks used for crowd control in Greece are covered with metal shields to protect the crew from flying stones and firebombs. The driver made the mistake of rolling his window down. A Molotof bomb struck the metal shield in front of his window. The gas and flames spread all over the man and caused him serious burns. He was in the hospital in stable condition. We started talking about the demonstration and the clash with the police. He seemed distant and preoccupied. He was unusually silent.

After a while, he looked at me and said, "It's me they are looking for. The stupid fool rolled down his window! How was I supposed to know? I didn't intend on burning him."

I remember looking back and forth, between him and the newspaper. I was shocked at the fact that the "young anarchist wanted" was standing in front of me, at the same time angry at the police for the brutality they demonstrated earlier in the rally.

I asked him about it; why did he aim the bomb at the fire-truck, how did he feel when he saw the fireman rolling on the ground trying to put out the fire on his clothes?

He started talking to me, saying he had no idea that the window was rolled down, that he felt bad about injuring the guy. After all, he was just a fireman. His head was bowed down, he seemed depressed about it. He was feeling guilty. Then he suddenly looked at me and said "But then again, what is a fireman doing performing crowd control?"

Their job is to protect us, not beat us with water streams to stop us from marching." He seemed to be going back and forth. When he thought of the fireman as a person he felt bad for having injured him. When he thought of the fireman as just another law enforcement representative, he felt no remorse.

This was one of many discussions we had on political activism, terrorism, law enforcement brutality and social change. I was always challenged by his strong opinions and political positions. Since I knew him as a friend, I had an additional perspective on who he was. The person who, according to the police was an "irresponsible, young anarchist, committing illegal acts of violence," was in my eyes also a friend, an activist, an anarchist, a passionate human being. He founded ACT-UP<sup>1</sup> in Athens, and battled with both AIDS and the medical, social and political systems in Greece. He died in September, 1994. had intended on doing an interview with him, but he died a few days before I arrived in Greece. While in the midst of working on my dissertation, I received a calendar he created for ACT-UP. It was his last project before he died. In it he has the following dedication:

There, where society passes by with indifference, and the state is overtly absent, some people are fighting an agonizing battle.

To those who tried to help me

One of my hopes in this dissertation is to break through the shield of indifference.

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<sup>1</sup> AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power. A legal and political advocacy group for people infected with the HIV virus and people with AIDS

# Chapter I: Introduction

If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who prefer to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are people who want crops without plowing the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. That struggle might be a moral one; it might be a physical one; it might be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and never will. People might not get all that they work for in this world, but they must certainly work for all they get.

Frederick Douglas  
Abolitionist

## Statement of the problem

I am writing about terrorism, violence, conflict and social change. My hope is that anyone reading this PDE will be affected in a certain way, meaning that next time they read or hear news about another terrorist attack, they will think of different parts in conflict, they will ask themselves "when did I give up on listening to someone who feels oppressed, deprived of their rights? How am I responsible for this?" This is a big thing to ask; in asking this question, I am making a lot of assumptions. I am considering us all parts of an interactive field that affects what we think and feel and how we experience life. I am assuming that anything that happens in one part of the world affects the rest. I assume that terrorist events represent power dynamics which actually exist on many levels of society. I am assuming that a few people making a difference in one part of the world can affect something happening far away.

In my mind, social change towards a more truly democratic society is connected with education and awareness. Social change happens on many levels, both internally and externally. People change, families change, communities change, organizations and institutions change. Social change can come in the form of legislation, as in the human rights legislation. I believe that social change can also be facilitated through education on awareness of diversity and tolerance of differences. There is also a spiritual aspect to social change. It is a matter of faith: faith in people's ability to be open-minded and open-hearted; faith that we can all live together despite our differences; faith in certain values concerning mutual respect and self-definition.

Terrorist activity has existed or occurred for many centuries. One of the earliest known examples of a terrorist movement is the "sicarii", a highly organized religious sect that was active in the Zealot struggle in Palestine (AD 66-73).<sup>1</sup> Systematic terrorism first appeared in the second half of the 19th century. It came in many forms, including working-class terrorism in the United States, as practiced by the Molly Maguires, and agrarian and industrial terrorism in Spain. At the turn of the century, terrorism prevailed in Russia. Throughout the twentieth century, terrorism has been present on every continent. The political goals and aims, tactics, and targets may differ, but the common thread remains: sudden attacks on people or property have gained attention to the causes of terrorist groups.

In recent years terrorist groups have formed political branches. This has happened with the IRA (Irish Republican Army) in Ireland and the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) in the Middle East. People who previously favored terrorism as a means for political change became willing to leave their guns and talk with their opponents in an effort to reach agreement. While some terrorist groups have shifted tactics, the same conflicts still involve acts of terrorism performed by different groups. In the Middle East conflict the Hamas are engaging in terrorist activity that was once performed by members of the PLO.

According to a report by the State Department of the United States, in 1994, international terrorist attacks dropped to their lowest annual total in 23 years.<sup>2</sup> The State Department defines international terrorism as terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country. In the same report there was a warning that domestic terrorism is increasing worldwide. Even though investigations are not complete, the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, in April 1995, seems to be an act of domestic terrorism. If that is the case, it will be one of recent history's most deadly terrorist attacks in the United States, leaving over 160 people dead and more than 400 injured.<sup>3</sup>

The threat of terrorism affects everybody in both direct and indirect ways. Some people live in constant fear of being attacked. People living in Belfast or the Gaza strip are reminded constantly of the presence of death. Even in everyday life, in countries that are not in war-like situations, we see the effect of the terrorist threat. Security is tight and meticulous in airports and border checks between countries. Cameras record every move outside government buildings, banks, embassies and major business headquarters. As technology becomes widespread, the weapons of attack and the means of surveillance become more sophisticated.

In 1994, in Europe, there was a wave of arrests involving the illegal sales and transportation of nuclear weapon supplies and technology. The collapse of the Soviet Union created a market for these supplies. Research centers in the ex-Soviet Union were left

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<sup>1</sup> for more information on the history of terrorism see Laquer, Walter. (1987) *The Age of Terrorism*. Little Brown and Company: Boston, MA.

<sup>2</sup> The Associated Press, April 29, 1995

<sup>3</sup> *The Oregonian*, April 20, 1995

with powerful technology and weapons, but without the funding or policy to guard them. Politicians speculate that some terrorist groups are accessing nuclear capability. All this creates an air of insecurity and fear to which no one is immune. All over the world people suffer the consequences of terrorism. Belfast, London, the Gaza strip, and South Africa, carry a lot of terrorist activity. Those living in places that seem more peaceful live with the constant threat that it could be their city any day. The bombing in Oklahoma City reminded us all of this fact.

I believe it is more important than ever to gain a deeper understanding of terrorism, of how terrorism occurs in conflict, of how we as a global community deal with it and address it. Many people in the world live in a climate of oppression. On every continent, in every country, there are groups of people, some small, others larger, who are oppressed, neglected or persecuted. Some of these people may begin to engage in terrorist like behavior. I see terrorist acts as acts of desperation. I see them not only as acts of murder, pain and suffering, but also as extreme acts of social action, desperate cries for attention to issues repressed or intentionally disregarded by those in authority. I see them as "wake-up calls" to mainstream society. There is something very impersonal about terrorism. The goal is not the violence; rather, violence is the means to get attention. The threat of violence, the infliction of terror, is used to coerce a mainstream group to pay attention to demands of a sub-group. Terror makes people stop and look. We are shaken up from our everyday reality and have to notice other parts of the world. Nobody is safe.

## **Purpose of the PDE**

"What is a terrorist?" is one of the most difficult questions to answer in the study of terrorism. Each person defining it is affected by their personal experience with terrorism in the world, which of course influences their perceptions of terrorists. The words "terrorist" and "terrorism" are used a lot in the media. Members of the IRA in Ireland are called terrorists. In their fundraising letters, advocates for abortion in the United States refer to opponents of abortion as terrorist groups. The religious right refers to some gay and lesbian rights groups-like ACT-UP or the Lesbian Avengers-as terrorist groups. Many Israelis refer to the members of the Palestinian Liberation Organization as terrorists. The Greek dictators in the early seventies referred to the underground communists as terrorists. It is an emotionally charged word, connected with images of

violence and victims.

Some people approve of certain terrorist groups based on their political ideas, and disapprove of others. Some people with liberal ideas find that terrorism appeals to their political ideals for self-determination. Such people often refer to so-called "terrorists" as "freedom fighters." This attitude is changing as the radical right adopts terrorist values



and tactics. The Christian Coalition and the Christian Militia groups in the United States advocate terrorist tactics to stop abortions and intimidate public officials. Some advocate murder of abortion providers as an act of defense for unborn babies. Under the threat of terrorist activity, abortion providers are spending time, energy and money on building tighter security systems around their facilities, instead of using those resources to provide health care and education to women.

The world suffers from the effects of terrorism. Victims deal with the physical and emotional pain. Even those who are not directly impacted by terrorist acts are affected by an environment of terrorism. All citizens deal with a constant threat, give up some of their rights and privileges to live with increased security systems. In providing more security for their citizens, governments increase surveillance on all people regardless of their connection to terrorist activity. Anyone who travels by plane has to go through metal detectors, and anyone entering a government building or bank is video-taped. Some consider this a violation of basic rights, and wonder if they can be sure that the people in power will use information about citizens with respect and responsibility. In sum, terrorism creates an atmosphere of threat.

The main focus of this PDE is to address terrorism in the wide context of human interactions. I will address terrorism not only as direct violent action from an individual or group aimed towards social or political change, but also as an everyday occurrence in the form of a communication style between people. In the latter context, verbal threats between people can be seen as a representation of the terrorist role. Ultimatums people set for each other in families, in the workplace, and in the community can also be seen as terrorism. The role of the terrorist is the one where people's behavior is perceived as rebellious, challenging, disrupting and threatening. This can be seen in the verbal content or body signals of their communication style.

What is a terrorist? The terms "terrorist" and "terrorism" are relatively recent terms; they appeared in the French language during the 1790s to denote the activities of the Revolutionary government during the "Terror," when thousands of government opponents were put to death. The terms broadened towards their present meanings in the 19th century.<sup>4</sup> Although the term in its present usage is relatively new, the use of threat or violence against people and property has been around since the beginning of humanity.

The terrorist can be viewed not only as an individual identity but also as a social role. I want to address the role the terrorist plays in society. My hypothesis is that viewing terrorism as a social role increases our understanding of both terrorism and the people involved in it. The word "role" was first used as a technical term in the 1930s in the writings of Mead, Moreno and Linton<sup>5</sup>. Mead examined problems of interaction,

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<sup>4</sup> Ayto, John. (1990) *Dictionary of Word Origins*. New York: Arcade Publishing.

<sup>5</sup> See Mead G. H, (1934) C. W. Morris (Ed). *Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Moreno, J.L. (1934), *Who Shall Survive?* Washington, D.C.: Nervous and Mental Disease Publication. Linton, R. (1936) *The Study of Man*. New York, NY: Appleton - Century.

the self and socialization and employed the concept of the role. At the same time Moreno was experimenting with role-playing in groups and pioneered in the use of role-playing in psychodrama. Moreno distinguished different categories of roles and provided descriptions for them. Linton's contribution was also influential. He suggested that people's roles and positions in society were elements of the social structure. He also linked individual behavior and social structure with the idea that an individual's behavior can be seen as a role performance. According to role theory, people's behaviors can be described and explained in terms of their roles<sup>6</sup>. In other words, a given role defines how a person should act.

Is there a "terrorist" role in society? If so, what are its characteristics? Roles carry characteristics that describe and define them. Recognizing these characteristics may offer us tools to recognize tendencies towards terrorism in conflict situations. If we can recognize the likelihood of a terrorist role emerging, we may be able to intervene, so that not every debate evolves into a conflict. Not every conflict involves terrorism. Conflict often arises in situations where the communication breaks down. Often, such escalation of conflict can lead to terrorist activity between the different sides. I propose that we examine terrorism as a social role and see the characteristics and behavior that it carries.

## Process work

Process work, originated by Arnold Mindell, offers tools for working with roles in groups, especially in conflict resolution settings. Process work has its philosophical roots in alchemy, Taoism and Jungian psychology. Alchemy contributes the insight that raw experience gradually produces meaning and becomes useful when it is processed in a manner appropriate to the situation. Taoism contributes appreciation for the nature of all things and faith in the inherent "rightness" of events, no matter how harmful or pathological they may at first appear. Jungian psychology provides a basic set of techniques for amplifying and unfolding human experience to help one find the background meaning and potential usefulness of events which plague us.<sup>7</sup>

Mindell uses a sociological and psychological approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the conscious and unconscious process of individuals and groups. The goal of this work is to access creative information behind the unconscious process. In this way, the disturbing aspects of individual or group life can be studied, transformed and integrated. In addition to providing a psychological approach to the individual, process work theory and practice provide an approach to large group behavior where one of the goals is to understand and support all parts of a group and empower individuals. Mindell's model works simultaneously with the individual and the group process. In

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<sup>6</sup> Penner, L. (1986) *Social Psychology: Concepts and Applications*. St Paul, MN: West Publishing Company.

<sup>7</sup> Mindell, A. 1982. *Dreambody*. Boston, MA: Sigo Press.

process work theory, individual psychological processes and group processes are seen in the larger political and social context. From that viewpoint, issues of conflict and power represent both individual processes and group processes.

Individuals often find it difficult to give equal value to all aspects of their experience. We tend to identify ourselves in a certain way, for example, as weak or strong, loving or detached, spiritual or worldly. By so doing, we tend to disavow those parts of our experience that conflict with our identities. A central aspect of process work is to support the totality of people's experience and to help the less valued aspects of their experiences reveal themselves as valued parts of each person's wholeness.

Process work with groups is focused on helping both individuals within the group and the group itself to explore and move beyond the boundaries of their immediate identities. Through doing so, experiences which have been viewed primarily as disturbing or pathological help to expand the view and experience of the group. A group may explore its wholeness by having its members become fluid in experimenting with different roles in the group.

Process work integrates concepts from role theory to work in conflict situations.

People's behaviors can be described and explained in terms of their role. In other words, a given role defines how a person should act. The terrorist, in this context, can be seen as a role in a group. A person occupying the role of the terrorist in a group can have the same emotional effect on the group that real terrorist activity has on its victims and on the larger culture. There is a distinction between the "terrorist" and the "terrorist role." A terrorist has actually been involved in political activity using violence or the threat of violence to achieve goals. A person occupying the terrorist role is using a

communication style that resembles terrorist activity. People are not necessarily physically or emotionally hurt by the actions of the terrorist role, but they can feel the effects of the threat of violence. In this sense, every person has the ability to act like a terrorist. From this point of view, terrorism can be seen as an everyday occurrence in human interactions.

Group members may or may not be conscious of or identify with the roles they occupy. Process work group facilitation is based on the idea that it is to the group's benefit to bring the roles that are present to the awareness of the group's members. Once the group is aware of the roles, it may be possible to work through conflict situations.

Through realizing that we all carry the potential to act like terrorists, we may be able to find new ways to deal with terrorism based on our own experiences in groups and in situations where conflict is present.

## Contacts, sources and discussions

Throughout my years of research on terrorism I have had discussions with various people involved in different global issues. When I started my research I did not know how to approach these people. I couldn't imagine that any terrorist would actually respond to an ad in the newspaper—"terrorists needed for interviews." I started by talking to people I knew. Some of them were political activists who used tactics referred to as "terrorist" acts. As word about my research spread, I started being referred to different people. Some were reluctant to speak, and first needed to understand my approach. My political position was questioned. Others were eager to speak, grabbing the opportunity to share their stories with me.

Among them was a woman from Canada who had been involved in the struggle of the African National Congress. She had traveled to South Africa and worked in the underground movement against apartheid. Another was an African American/Native American man who had joined forces with the Palestinian Liberation Organization. I also met with an Israeli woman who had carried a machine gun while patrolling the Gaza Strip. It was fascinating to see both perspectives on the Middle East conflict, and to meet two humans behind the same conflict.

In Greece I had the chance to talk to Turkish political refugees who were smuggled to safe countries in Europe. They entered Greece with the help of Greek citizens who were concerned about the violation of human rights in Turkey. The Greek police and the army's border patrol had been willing to look away at the right moment, unless, for reasons of diplomacy, they had to prove that they were indeed trying to stop Turkish revolutionaries from being smuggled through Greece, in which case both Greeks and Turks would be arrested after having a few pounds of heroin thrown in their baggage. Talking to these refugees showed me that people who have been denied their human rights feel they have no other alternative but to use violence against situations they perceive as oppressive and abusive.

Through mutual acquaintances I also met with an extreme right wing activist in Greece. He was a member of the Blue Brigade, a pro-dictatorship militant group in Greece in the 1970s. It was the first time in my life that I had had a one-to-one discussion with someone from that political position. I didn't know what to expect. I had heard many stories from older people who were persecuted by the military junta that ruled Greece at that time. I've seen the scars on people's bodies. I've heard people talk about waking up in the middle of the night terrified, even now, twenty-five years later. I've seen the pictures, felt the agony of the families. They were totally powerless in front of the military tanks. I wondered if I could I listen to this man's story without allowing myself to be hypnotized by the pain of the other side. Acknowledging that objectivity is not always possible in this kind of research, I focused on being aware of my own biases.

Another man I met was from England. He had been involved in the gay men's movement and the left-wing activist groups in England during the 1970s, and had

supported the Irish Republican Army. I was familiar with the era he was describing, since the unrest in Europe and the movements created by students, workers and unemployed marginalized populations strongly affected leftist movements in the universities in Greece in the 1980s. Paris, Prague and London were all centers of revolt in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the years I was involved with politics in the Greek university, we all read about May of '68 in Paris, the Soviet tanks rolling into Prague and the resistance of the Czech people, and stories from the squats of London, Leeds and Liverpool. I was fascinated talking with someone who had been politically active in that environment.

I also spoke with gay and lesbian political activists. One of the interviews I will present is with a young woman, an American, involved in the gay and lesbian rights movement. In the United States, the gay and lesbian rights issue has not been addressed as an issue involving terrorism. Yet pro- and anti-gay rights groups have started accusing each other of terrorist tactics. Is this a sign that terrorism-in the form of attacks on people and property-might become an aspect of the issue, or is it the intensity of the word and the emotional reaction it creates that both sides are trying to achieve?

I am still surprised at how many people I've met have been involved in some sort of terrorist activity. I consider myself a politically active person, and at times I have supported radical political groups. Yet I too was under the impression that terrorists are mythical beings who live in dark corners and emerge only to strike. The more I talked to people, the more I realized that terrorists are also ordinary human beings, living amongst us all, carrying on with everyday life. They deal with making a living, pursuing their dreams, falling in love. They too can have families and children, celebrate holidays with friends.

I was surprised at how easy it was to find terrorists. I couldn't access Abu Nidal, Carlos, or the "17th of November" group, but I didn't need to. When I walked into conflict

resolution seminars, sooner or later someone would come up to me and say "Are you researching terrorism? You might want to talk to so-and-so, they belong to the IRA" or "They belonged to the Baader-Meinhof group." There are many more terrorists than we might imagine. Every country, every political system, every society has members opposing, fighting, challenging and disrupting the status quo of the system.

## Methodology

My research on the psychology of terrorism includes two parts. One is a set of four interviews with members and individuals affiliated with terrorist groups (such as the PLO and the IRA). The other is the analysis of a set of group processes where I studied how the terrorist role emerges in situations of conflict. Later in this chapter I will describe the context and content of the group processes.

In order to find terrorists to interview, as mentioned above, I connected with mutual acquaintances and people to whom I was referred. Some of my interviewees were people who have been involved in terrorist activity in the past, have done "time" in the judicial system and are now living as free citizens. Through my conflict resolution studies over the last four years, I had the opportunity to meet people who were involved in terrorist activities in the past and are now looking for new ways of interacting and problem-solving. The interviews are anonymous to guarantee the confidentiality and the rights of the interviewees.

Some people were willing to talk to me but not willing to do a taped interview. I respected their hesitation and did not insist on a taped interview. I present the four people who agreed to be interviewed and taped. They come from different cultures and ethnic groups, and had different levels of involvement with terrorism.

All of the people interviewed fought for social change. Their goals were both personal and political. John, an African American/Native American man is struggling with racism. Peter, a gay man from England, is struggling with homophobia and class issues. Sara, a young lesbian woman from the United States, is struggling with sexism and homophobia. Curse, a middle-aged man from Greece, is struggling with political oppression and class issues. Sara does not identify herself as a terrorist, although she acknowledges that she may be perceived as one. Peter identifies himself as an ally to terrorist groups. John refers to his "terrorist past," yet when asked does not identify as a terrorist. Curse identifies as a terrorist and spent sixteen years in jail for his actions.

The research participants were informed of the nature of my study. I offered them a copy of my PDE proposal so that they were also aware of my theoretical approach. The interviews were recorded on audio tape. Due to the nature of my research, confidentiality was an important prerequisite for completing the interviews. To protect the anonymity of the interviewees, I do not use their real names or any names of places that could identify them. In some cases, names and places have been changed in the taped interview itself. In others, I have made these changes in preparing the transcript. The tapes will be held until the completion of my Ph.D. and then destroyed.

Since terrorist acts are illegal, asking interviewees to sign a consent form would pose a risk for them. Therefore, their consent was given in a verbal agreement with me, and was evidenced by their willingness to participate in a taped interview. A copy of the letter that was distributed to each of the interviewees is available in the appendix.

## **Research Part I: Approach to the interviews**

Since I was interested in each person's experience, I used a qualitative approach with a conversational tone.<sup>8</sup> I included open-ended questions and also gave an opportunity for the interviewee to address additional areas. I began with general questions that opened the topic for discussion. Some of these questions were:

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<sup>8</sup> Patton, M. (1980) *Qualitative Evaluation Methods*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

- When and under what political and social circumstances were you involved in terrorist activity ?
- What results were you anticipating from your actions? Did the actual results fulfill your expectations?
- What contributed to your decision to stop terrorist activity?

The interviews were two to three hours long. They were transcribed verbatim and analyzed. The research focus of these interviews was to elicit the goals, dreams and motives of people involved in terrorist activity. My hypothesis was that the goals and motives of terrorist activists include more potential roles than just that of the terrorist.

## **Research Part II: Analysis of group process**

Another aspect of my research was the study and analysis of group processes in conflict resolution settings. Some of the group processes took place in the context of World Work and Conflict Resolution seminars. These annual seminars have been organized by the Global Process Institute for the last four years. They provide the opportunity for people from around the world to come together and work with political, social and environmental issues using group process skills. The seminars offer the theoretical presentation and discussion of process work with groups as well as the opportunity for experiential learning through group processes.

The seminars were led and facilitated by Dr. Arnold Mindell, Dr. Amy Mindell and certified process workers. The number of participants varied from two to three hundred. Participants came from varied cultural, ethnic and professional backgrounds. The seminars included work in the large group, in sub-groups and individual work. Process work with groups offers methods of facilitating groups at many levels of interaction, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, sub-groups and large groups levels. These seminars offered the unique opportunity for people to come together and address both social and personal issues.

World Work and Conflict Resolution seminars were held in the following locations: Waldport, Oregon (twice); Stoos, Switzerland; and Stupava, Slovakia. For the past four years I have attended these seminars as a participant, and in the last year I also participated as an assistant facilitator during small sub-group work.

In Oregon, as well as in all the other places in the world, I saw similar patterns in group processes where the terrorist role was present. The examples I chose to present are all from sessions in Oregon. This is due to the fact that in Oregon I had access to video-tapes and the technical equipment needed to study the material. Participants in these seminars were bound by confidentiality. A confidentiality form was read and signed upon registering for the seminar. I used pseudonyms and when necessary altered details to ensure confidentiality.

Some of the group processes I studied were also part of a series of town meetings that were organized by the Process Work Center of Portland, in Portland, Oregon. The

town meetings served two purposes. The first goal was to provide a forum for people in the Portland community to come together and address issues that were causing conflict. The hope was that bringing people from communities in conflict together would offer them the opportunity to listen to other sides and interact on a personal level. It was often the case that different sides in conflict would communicate through the media and through press releases. The second purpose was to televise the town meetings and broadcast them through Portland Cable Access for the larger Portland community. The town meetings included between one to two hundred participants and addressed issues of gay and lesbian rights and of racism. Dr. Arnold Mindell and Dr. Amy Mindell facilitated these meetings.

Another group process that I used for my research was a meeting organized by Dr. Sara Halprin, a cinematographer and process worker in Portland, Oregon. In May 1992, she gathered thirty women to discuss the role of women in war and peace. The women came from different ethnic, national and cultural backgrounds. They also represented a wide range of professions: writers, artists, teachers, mothers, air-force pilots, therapists. The group process was taped, edited, and used to raise funds for a broadcast quality documentary on the topic of women, war, and peace. The organizer was inspired to do this was when she noticed during the Gulf war that women were not involved in the decision-making process, even though what was happening affected women and men equally, including participation in active combat. Her dream was to create a public forum for women to discuss these issues.

Issues commonly emerging in all the above mentioned arenas included: racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, power, privilege, money and political conflicts. I studied video tapes from the above mentioned group process interactions. I analyzed the verbal content and personal interactions between participants. I was especially interested in the process that happens when specific participants "blow up" during the group process, and thus create an atmosphere of intimidation, anger and emotional pain. I am referring here to situations where a participant suddenly and unexpectedly stops the process by making a threat or accusing the group of something. This communication style goes against the agreed upon style of the group.

My analysis of the group process is based on process work theory with groups.

## **Limitations to the research**

There are certain limitations to the research in this project. The four people interviewed is a not a fully representative sample of people involved in terrorist activity. They are also not in the present time involved in terrorism. They come from western cultures, identifying with wanting to achieve social change and with belonging to an oppressed group. In most of the interviews there was a strong relational contact, where both the people interviewed and I shared common political and social beliefs.



The group processes that I describe were attended by people primarily interested in personal growth and social change. They were interested in broadening their knowledge on conflict resolution and willing to expand their understanding of themselves and the way their interactions affect larger groups. The group processes may have been different had the people attending come from a different background or with different goals.

## **A note on language**

I alternate the use of feminine and masculine pronouns in an attempt to provide readability and inclusiveness. I use the term "mainstream" to refer to the most widely accepted element of any culture, even of a sub-culture that in its whole is not accepted by the larger culture.

## **Overview of Chapters II - VI**

In Chapter II, I begin with a literature review on approaches to terrorism. I conclude the chapter with a working definition of terrorism for the PDE. Chapter III includes an analysis of terrorism as a role. Using process work I describe the terrorist as a role in groups and I offer four examples of the terrorist role appearing in group processes. I also discuss field and role theory and their contributions to process work. In Chapter IV are four detailed interviews with people connected with terrorist activity. The interviews present terrorists' stories in their own words. Chapter V contains an analysis of the data. In Chapter VI offer my concluding thoughts.

# Chapter II: Definitions of terrorism and approaches to terrorism

## My personal experience

Terrorism has been around in different forms for centuries. Many debates about terrorism have been focused on whether it is right or wrong (one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter), or on how law enforcement agencies can eliminate terrorism. My experiences growing up in Greece, a country seen to be full of "terrorist activity," fueled my interest in the topic. Though I was immersed in a political climate of terrorism, I have not had the worst of experiences. I have not been the victim of a terrorist attack and thus have the luxury of talking about the topic from a somewhat detached point of view. In my first 18 years, I lived through a monarchy, a dictatorship, a democratic and a socialist government. When I was eleven, I saw students occupying the polytechnic school in Athens and tanks rolling over their bodies. Political opposition was part of my everyday life. These experiences were my first teachings in role theory and social systems. I have been part of a culture that had "good" and "bad" terrorists. A man who had tried during the military junta to assassinate the dictator was mysteriously killed in an automobile accident on May 1, 1976. At his funeral he was honored as a national hero. The "terrorist" of the junta was the "freedom fighter" of democratic rule.

Soon after, more terrorist groups started striking against various targets: Americans, Israelis, Palestinians, Turks, Lebanese. It was as if the whole world had its fights in the middle of Athens. Greece gained a reputation as an easy place for terrorists to strike, and many groups operated there. The public's reaction to the attacks varied according to whom the target was and the reasons for the attacks. In research polls terrorist groups at times gained a 5-10% public approval. Approval came not necessarily for the killings, but for the cause or the reasons behind them. It always mystified me that something as appalling as a sudden attack on a person could create an atmosphere of excitement and fire up debates on righteousness and justice.

My exposure to a government and citizens whose perspective of the same "terrorist" could shift from "good" to "bad" led me to consider the question: are they terrorists or are they freedom fighters? Because this question could not be answered definitively on either side, I unconsciously, in a way, saw the terrorist as a role, rather than an absolute quality of an individual. I was aware of the contradictions in the political

situation around me, and aware that no one position or belief about terrorism could fully explain or encompass these contradictions.

The focus of my dissertation is on this role of the terrorist in conflict situations. Social scientists have not yet agreed upon a common definition for terrorism. Terrorism can be viewed as a strictly political act, practiced in reaction to a governing force. It can be viewed as an individual or group pathological condition, or it can be viewed as heroic action-the "freedom fighter." From a process work point of view, it can also be viewed as a social role in any group of people, be it a nuclear family, a community, a work place, a country, or the whole global community.

## Definitions of terrorism

In order to discuss terrorism, it is important to first define it. Defining terrorism has challenged researchers for several decades, and a common definition of terrorism does not exist. Terrorism has been approached from many different disciplines. Social scientists, political scientists, and psychologists agree that there are many factors involved in terrorism, including the personal psychology of the people involved in it as well as the social context in which terrorism takes place.

Currently the field is made of different views that range from a social psychological perspective, which sees terrorism as a role, (Mindell, 1995) to bio-medicine (Hubbard, 1983) which sees terrorism as the result of a chemical imbalance in the brain. The Encyclopedia Britannica gives the following definition of terrorism: "1. the systematic use of terror as a means of coercion, 2. an atmosphere of threat of violence."<sup>1</sup> This definition describes behavior that could apply to governments and individuals as well as to underground terrorist organizations. This definition would also cover everyday interactions between people in families, schools, and communities.

Literature around terrorism includes a wide range of definitions. Some narrow the meaning to strictly political acts of violence; others, including process work, consider terrorism a larger social phenomenon that occurs on different levels of human interaction. Definitions vary in the level of violence they consider to be terrorism and definitions also vary in whether or not they include both physical and emotional violence. Although I want to approach terrorism as role, in my mind, there is a clear distinction between actual terrorist activity, motivated by the desire for political and social change, and everyday behavior that is threatening or abusive. Terrorism and terrorist-like behavior range over a wide spectrum of possible actions. There is a difference between someone committing murder to reach political goals, and someone verbally attacking and intimidating another person in order to meet his goals. These two examples are on two ends of the spectrum. In the wide middle range are threats and actions which

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<sup>1</sup> Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Incorporated. (1981). p2361

damage people or property. Following are some of the various definitions of terrorism, given by political scientists, psychologists, and sociologists.

Some writers, like Virginia Held, approach terrorism from a philosophical and political point of view, and see it in a broad social context. Held notes that while those who challenge the authority of and disrupt the order of states and governments are terrorists, terrorism should be understood in such a way that states and governments—even friendly and democratic ones—also engage in acts of terrorism.<sup>2</sup> She focuses on who has the authority to decide what is legal and what is illegal use of violence. Terrorism is equated with the illegal use of violence by political scientists such as Richard Clutterback, who states that: "Even where it is used in a justifiable cause (e.g. freedom fighters resisting invasion or occupation by a foreign army) terrorism against unarmed victims... is never justifiable and should always be treated as a criminal (not a political) offense."<sup>3</sup> He defines terrorism as "... a lethal kind of intimidation. Intimidation, as a means of exerting social and political pressure." Both of these researchers see terrorism as an event which takes place in a social structure, and which cannot be considered in isolation from that structure.

Similarly, Arnold Mindell defines terrorism "to include politically motivated, premeditated surprise attacks by marginal groups which allow victims almost no means of protecting themselves."<sup>4</sup> He further expands on the definition of terrorism to include "not only revenge which destroys human life and property but also which causes psychological damage without immediate physical injury, such as shaming, belittling, humiliating and brain washing." This view also considers the social context, but additionally expands the concept of terrorist activity to include daily human interactions such as shaming or belittling.

Other writers, like Carl Wellman also offer a wide definition of terrorism. According to Wellman, "Terrorism is the use or attempted use of terror as a means of coercion."<sup>5</sup> He includes non-violent acts in his concept of terrorism. Wellman says: "I often engage in nonviolent terrorism myself, for I often threaten to flunk any student who hands in his paper after the due date. Anyone who doubts that my acts are genuine instances of terror is invited to observe ... the panic in my classroom when I issue my ultimatum."<sup>6</sup>

A teacher in a school can humiliate or threaten her students. This behavior might easily not be considered "real" terrorism, since there is no political motive behind the teacher's actions or because there is no violence. Yet the education people get is part of their socialization. The models they experience in school will effect their perception of the world and their actions as political beings. A teacher's communication style can

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<sup>2</sup> Held, Virginia. "Terrorism, Rights and Political Goals", in *Violence, Terrorism and Justice*, ed. Frey, R.G. and Morris, Christopher W. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1991. p64.

<sup>3</sup> Clutterback, R. (1994) *Terrorism in an Unstable World*. London and New York: Routledge, p 5

<sup>4</sup> Mindell, A.(1995) *Sitting In the Fire: Diversity, Violence and Multi-cultural Leadership*, Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press.

<sup>5</sup> Wellman, C., "On Terrorism Itself", *Journal of Value Inquiry* 13, No.4 (Winter 1979). p 250.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

suggest that intimidation is a reasonable way to achieve goals. Although no violence is visible through physical injuries, the violence lies behind the ultimatum.

Violence in society is not only a psychological or social issue, but also a political one. Regardless of whether violence has an obvious political motivation, it has political significance. Terrorism is often connected with politically or socially motivated goals. From this point of view, domestic abuse can also be a form of terrorism; a husband who physically or sexually abuses his wife is making both a personal and a political statement. Sexism in the larger society supports the abuse.

Most researchers consider the presence of political motivation in their definitions of terrorism. Virginia Held defines terrorism as "a form of violence to achieve political goals where creating fear is usually high among the intended effects,"<sup>7</sup> and violence as "action, usually sudden, predictably and coercively inflicting injury upon or damage harming a person."<sup>8</sup> Fear and threat are also elements of Burleigh Taylor Wilkins' definition of terrorism as "the attempt to achieve political, social, economic, or religious change by the actual or threatened use of violence against persons or property."<sup>9</sup>

Wilkins claims that terrorism is properly understood as an activity of not only the weak, but the desperate. This definition takes into consideration the psychological state that the terrorist is in. His actions are not seen only in terms of who his target is, but also in terms of the state his actions come from. Most conflicts do not start with actions of terrorism: rather, terrorism is the result of unresolved conflicts.

Other definitions of terrorism are narrower. For example Paul Wilkinson is very specific about the means that fit the description of terrorism. He defines terrorism as "the systematic use of murder and destruction, and the threat of murder and destruction in order to terrorize individuals, groups, communities or governments into conceding to the terrorists' political demands."<sup>10</sup> From this point of view, the presence of intimidation or physical or emotional abuse alone is insufficient to name an act terrorism. Similarly J.C. Coady views terrorism as "activity committed by an organized group or individual, involving the intentional killing or other severe harming of non-combatants or the threat of the same."<sup>11</sup> This definition of terrorism is presented in military language. For example, Coady uses the term "non-combatants" in his definition. This implies that terrorism exists when people who do not choose to engage in fighting are harmed.

Coady's definition raises some fascinating points. For example, in inner city neighborhoods in the United States, many African American, Asian American and Latino

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<sup>7</sup> Held, V. "Terrorism, Rights and Political Goals." In *Violence, Terrorism and Justice*, ed. Frey, R.G. and Morris, Christopher W. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1991. p64.

<sup>8</sup> Held, Virginia. "Violence, Terrorism and Moral Inquiry", *Monist* 67, no. 4 (October 1984). p 605-626

<sup>9</sup> Wilkins, B. T.. (1992) *Terrorism and collective responsibility*. Routledge: London and New York

<sup>10</sup> Wilkinson, P.(1986) *Terrorism and the Liberal State*. New York, NY: New York University Press. 1986. p. 51.

<sup>11</sup> Coady, C.A.J., "The Morality of Terrorism", *Philosophy* 60, (January 1985). p 52.

American youth experience their communities as battle fields. Guns, violence, random killings and threats are part of everyday life. Many people who are not interested in fighting experience their communities as war zones, despite the fact that the United States is not technically at war. Coady's definition actually has broader applications, and could be applied to such situations where people experience the environment as a war zone, regardless of whether or not a government has formally declared war. The concept of non-combatant is a military and political term, but it can be expanded. From a psychological perspective war can be happening in the family, in the school, and in the community, and all the people can feel like the innocent victims of terrorist activity. Thus, actions or threat of violence in an inner city can be considered terrorism, even though there is no official war taking place.

Along with varying definitions of terrorism, different motives are attributed to terrorist actions. In an article on understanding terrorist behavior, Walter Reich notes:

Persons and groups have carried out terrorist acts for at least two thousand years. During this considerable span of human experience, such acts have been carried out by an enormously varied range of persons with an enormously varied range of beliefs in order to achieve an enormously varied range of ends - including, in the case of at least one terrorist group, no end at all... Even the briefest review of the history of terrorism reveals how varied and complex a phenomenon it is, and therefore how futile it is to attribute simple, global, and general psychological characteristics to all terrorists and terrorism.<sup>12</sup>

One of the difficulties in defining terrorism seems to be due to the fact that researchers refer to many types of terrorism. People involved in terrorist acts come from different segments of the population, depending on the country, the culture, or the issue at stake. Terrorism is often presented in the literature as an undifferentiated phenomenon, yet its occurrence is the result of complex sociopolitical circumstances. Researchers have cautioned us about the emotional responses that the word "terrorism" elicits: the word "terrorism" is charged with an emotional reaction that depends on a person's social, political, religious and personal beliefs. In David Long's words:

The general public's perception of terrorism is all too often influenced by emotional responses to the responsible terrorist organizations: moral condemnation of groups whose acts are directed against friendly groups or countries, and political support of groups whose avowed political aims are considered worthy.<sup>13</sup>

The phrase "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" summarizes this position. Since the word "terrorism" creates a strong emotional reaction, using it as a characterization for acts of violence is equivalent to using a political weapon, through implying that the violence or threat of violence is not justified. Society accepts violence, under certain circumstances, as the last resort to one's survival. Killing someone in

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<sup>12</sup> Reich, W. (1990) "Understanding terrorist behavior: The limits and opportunities of psychological inquiry." In *Origins of Terrorism*, Reich, W. (ed) New York: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge.

<sup>13</sup> Long, D. (1990) *The Anatomy of Terrorism*. New York: The Free Press. p.10

self-defense is an act of violence that generally is not condemned in the same way that homicide is. In an article on the ethics of terrorism M.W. Jackson says, "to call every political act of violence outside war 'terrorism' is like calling every act of homicide in civil society a murder, without waiting for a trial to see if the act conforms to the criteria of murder."<sup>14</sup> He argues that terrorism is not necessarily unethical and that it should not be defined as immoral or condemned categorically. He encourages researchers to assess the ethics of terrorism by using analogies to other forms of political violence, such as war.

In my view, all acts that are called terrorism are not necessarily terrorism. At the same time, many actions that are not labeled terrorism, could be considered instances of terrorism. Often, even when nothing is known about the perpetrator, some acts are instantly labeled terrorism. For example, the bombing of the Oklahoma Federal Building, in April 1995, was instantly called terrorism, even though nothing was known about the people and the motives behind the attack.

Terrorism differs in levels of violence and choices of targets. Left-wing terrorism often takes the point of view that there is no such thing as an "innocent victim"-we are all responsible for the actions of our culture, and our governments. Right-wing terrorism often takes the view that targets should be people directly responsible for oppression and injustice. They frown upon the "collective responsibility" argument of the left, accusing them of taking the easy way out of more sophisticated actions. Terrorists also differ depending on their national, cultural, ethnic, class, educational, or religious backgrounds.<sup>15</sup>

Regardless of how we define it, terrorism affects the people involved in a tremendous way. Issues of right or wrong, justice served or not, do not take away the pain, confusion, and suffering that terrorism causes on all sides involved. I am not only referring to the victims, but also to the people who instigate the terrorist attacks. Both terrorists and the victims of their actions go through the emotional and physical strain that the situation creates. To portray terrorists as ruthless murderers does not do justice to the research on terrorism, which shows that it is a complex sociopolitical phenomenon. We do not know enough about the psychology of terrorists to simply condemn all acts of terrorism, and we also do not know how many times terrorists have refrained from acts of violence, before turning to violence as a means to an end.

However ugly and painful terrorist acts have been, they do not warrant the conclusion that every person called a terrorist is a ruthless murderer. Jackson notes that "we have reason to believe that some of those who have been called terrorists are moved

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<sup>14</sup> Jackson, M.W. *Terrorism*, "'Pure Justice' and 'Pure Ethics'." In *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol 2, Autumn 1990, Number 3, p.404

<sup>15</sup> For more information on differences between left-wing and right-wing terrorists see Ooots, Kent Lane and Thomas C. Wiegler *Terrorist and Victim: Psychiatric and Physiological Approaches from a Social Science Perspective*, in *Terrorism: An International Journal*. Volume 8, Number 1.

by moral concerns no less than the rest of us.”<sup>16</sup> He mentions a statement made by Bernadine Dohrn, an American Weather Front militant in the 1970s who said ”many people in the Weather collective did not want to be involved in the large-scale random offensive planned. Many had sleepless nights for days, and personal relations were full of guilt.”<sup>17</sup>

In my initial research on terrorism, I was struck by the fact that some of the people I talked to did not identify themselves as terrorists, even though their activity could be described as terrorist activity. Konrad Kellen’s study on terrorism describes a definition of the terrorist based on more than one characteristic.<sup>18</sup> He defines the terrorist not only based on her actions and the result of the actions, but also based on her motives and personal identity. He describes the terrorist as someone who commits acts that are designed to terrorize, to frighten. According to Kellen, the terrorist aims at spreading terror in order to move people to do, or desist from doing, certain things. He points out that the terrorist is different from madmen like the ”crazy” who spreads terror by brandishing a weapon or bomb; the actions of such ”crazies” terrify people and can affect their behavior, but they have no political content or impact. The political content, in his definition, is thus only a rational motive. ”Crazy” acts may also be unconsciously reacting to a socio-political climate.

Konrad describes the terrorist as different from the ordinary criminal in that she is not egocentric but pursues purposes beyond her person that, generally, she believes to be serving a good cause. The terrorist, finally, is a person who does not consider herself a terrorist. She may consider herself an ex-terrorist if she ever leaves the fold, but while she is pursuing her cause she does not consider herself as anything but a fighter for the cause. In other words, she does not see herself as we see her. This distinguishes her from a revolutionary or even from the professional robber or hit man. Robbers

agree with us that they are robbers. Terrorists never agree with the appellation we give them. On the contrary, they say our society and laws are the ”terrorists.”

For the purpose of this study I will use the following definition of terrorism, which is based on MindeH’s definition of the terrorist, mentioned earlier in this chapter: terrorism is the use of threat or violence (physical or emotional) by a person or a group of people, who identify as being an oppressed group, against people and/or property, in order to achieve social and/or political change. I consider violence to include physical injury as well as psychological damage without immediate physical injury. This definition does not make a distinction as to whether the person has the backing of a government or the law of a country.

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<sup>16</sup> Jackson, M.W. *Terrorism*, ’”Pure Justice” and ”Pure Ethics”.’ In *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol 2, Autumn 1990, Numbers, p.406

<sup>17</sup> Dorhm, Bernadine. *An End of Violence*. New York Times, January 19,1971. p. 37

<sup>18</sup> Kellen, K. ”On Terrorists and Terrorism.” In *Rand Library Collection*. December 1982, N-1942-RC, Santa Monica: Rand, p 10



This definition allows us to explore the role of the terrorist (without considerations of pathology or moral judgments of right or wrong) and hopefully expand the context of terrorism, in a way that illuminates new possibilities for conflict resolution. Expanding the definition of terrorism to include role and communication style issues may enhance the ability of conflict resolution practitioners to deal more effectively with terrorism. One way is by creating a broader context within which to study terrorism, on the different levels that are part of conflict (including structural oppression.) This broader definition and understanding would also enhance the skills of conflict resolution practitioners.

## **Terrorists: are they psychopaths?**

As we have seen there is no one common definition of terrorism. One of the issues which arises in the attempt to define and explain terrorism is the question of whether or not terrorists are psychopaths. The literature on the psychology of terrorism is split on this issue. Some psychological profiles present terrorists as antisocial psychopaths who have difficulty communicating their ideas with the general public and those in power. Others conclude that "the outstanding common characteristic of terrorists is their normality."<sup>19</sup> In this following section I will introduce both points of view, beginning with a brief summary of approaches taken in the early 1900s, as described by Walter Laquer:

It [terrorism] was considered altogether evil, and even a form of madness with perhaps an underlying physical disorder. It was noted that quite a few terrorists of the period [early 1900s] suffered from epilepsy, tuberculosis and other diseases. Lombroso saw a connection between bomb throwing and pellagra and other vitamin deficiencies among the maize-eating peoples of Southern Europe... The connection between terrorism and barometric pressure, moon phases, alcoholism and droughts was investigated, and cranial measurements of terrorists were very much in fashion.<sup>20</sup>

In more recent times, Richard Pearlstein argues that victims of narcissistic personality disturbances gravitate towards the role of the political terrorist, and that the practice of political terrorism is psychologically attractive to victims of narcissistic injury and disappointment. He says: "political terrorism offers its practitioners certain powerfully alluring psychodynamic benefits or rewards."<sup>21</sup> He goes on to conclude that "political terrorism is not only a stunning manifestation of, but also actually justified or otherwise rationalized by, an ostensibly legitimized regression to secondary narcissism." H.G. Tittmar says that "lowering of self-esteem and the increased frustration

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<sup>19</sup> Crenshaw, M., "The causes of terrorism." In *Comparative Politics*, 13, July 1981, p. 390

<sup>20</sup> Laquer, W. *The Age of Terrorism*, 1987. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, p 151

<sup>21</sup> Pearlstein, Richard M., *The Mind of the Political Terrorist*, 1991. Scholarly Resources: Wilmington, DE. p 46

mobilize a defensive response, which results in aggression”<sup>22</sup> David Hubbard, a psychiatrist, suggests that there may be a connection between inner-ear vestibular function and terrorism.<sup>23</sup> He also connected terrorism to varying levels of certain chemicals in the brains of terrorists, specifically norepinephrine, acetylcholine, and endorphins.<sup>24</sup>

In the interdisciplinary study of terrorism, from the point of view of psychology, sociology, and political science, the question around the pathology of the terrorist becomes complicated. Some see pathology as a chemical imbalance, as Hubbard does, and some see pathology as a manifestation of the dysfunction of the larger society. Even if we were to consider terrorists as personalities with signs of psychopathology, we still have the question of how we in the rest of the world contribute to the pathology. Mindell supports that pathological, borderline or psychotic people who are disturbing or threatening to themselves or the larger culture are often world changers. He says: “Our task is to enable ourselves in bringing out their messages in such a way as to create social change. Insisting that psychological work comes before social action is undemocratic.”<sup>25</sup> Mindell’s perspective reaches outside the question of whether or not the terrorist himself is disturbed and focuses on how all members of society can understand and work with terrorist activity.

Other researchers simply do not find any signs of psychopathology in terrorists. In a review of the social psychology of terrorist groups, McCauley and Segal conclude that “the best documented generalization is negative; terrorists do not show any striking psychopathology.”<sup>26</sup> Some of the views on the lack of psychopathology in terrorists are even presented as absolute truths. Sprinzak, in studying the Weathermen in Chicago in the late sixties, concludes:

1. Terrorism is neither a *sui generis* plague that comes from nowhere, nor an inexplicable, random strike against humanity.

2. Terrorism is not the product of mentally deranged persons.<sup>27</sup>

There is clearly no agreement about whether or not terrorists are psychopaths. Given the wide nature of terrorism as a phenomenon and the diversity of people involved in it, this makes sense. Some terrorists may show signs of pathology, while others may not. Psychopathology is also a broad concept. What is considered “sick” or out of

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<sup>22</sup> Tittmar, H.G. “Urban Terrorism: A Psychological Interpretation” in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 4, No. 3, (Autumn 1992), pp 64-71

<sup>23</sup> Hubbard, D. G., “Terrorism and Protest”, *Legal Medical Quarterly* 2 (1978) p 188-197

<sup>24</sup> Hubbard, D. G., “The Psychodynamics of Terrorism” in *International Violence*, edited by Y. Alexander and T. Adeniran. New York: Praeger, 1983). p 45-53

<sup>25</sup> Mindell, A. (1995). *Sitting in the Fire: Diversity, Violence and Multi-cultural Leadership*. Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press.

<sup>26</sup> McCauley, C.R. and Segal, M.E., “Social Psychology of Terrorist Groups,” in *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, vol 9 of *Annual Review of Social and Personality Psychology*, edited by C. Hendrick (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1987). p 26

<sup>27</sup> Sprinzak, E. “The psychopolitical formation of extreme left terrorism in democracy: The case of the Weathermen.” In *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, ideologies, theologies, states of mind*. Reich, W. (Ed) (1990) New York: Cambridge University Press, p 78

the norm in some cultures, is accepted in others. The way people deal with disagreement, sadness, pain, or anger changes depending on their culture and the political and social reality around them. Someone who uses terrorism to bring their point across under an authoritarian government (like a dictatorship) may have no other choice. Someone who does the same thing under democratic rule, may not be as accepted by the rest of the culture because they are living in a democracy, where it is assumed that different voices may speak up peacefully.

People who do not belong to the mainstream of any given culture will have a different perception of what democracy is and whether their voices can be heard. A person of color in a white western country, or a homosexual in a heterosexual culture can feel that democracy exists on paper but not in everyday life. The mainstream has the privilege of not having to listen to the minority's suffering, therefore making it even harder for minorities to be heard. Thus, even in a democratic society, disavowed groups can experience themselves as having no other choice but the use of violence to get their message across. Pathologizing terrorists also leaves out aspects of their personalities that may be positive: the intense idealism and the courage to give their lives for a cause they believe to be just. This is also supported by Kellen's description of the terrorist, where he notes that the terrorist is not egocentric but pursues purposes beyond his person.

## **Terrorism as a social phenomenon**

I believe that terrorism requires an approach that will not disregard the personal psychology (or psychopathology) of individuals responsible for terrorist activity, but will also take into consideration the environment in which terrorism occurs. Diagnosing pathology rests on the implication that a person's behavior is out of the norm. Some

extreme states of consciousness—like hallucinations or visions—are labeled pathology in the western world, while in different cultures, such as the aboriginal cultures, the same states are seen as spiritual experiences and people in them are often regarded as teachers or healers. Personal pathology is a relative term needed to be seen individually in each culture. Anger and pain are also extreme states of consciousness.

Psychotherapy mirrors collective ideals. A "normal" or "integrated" person acts like the majority of people, based on collectively agreed-upon rules of what is healthy and normal. Some people do not act or express themselves in the commonly agreed-upon ways. It is one thing to say what is healthy and what is not, and another thing to decide what is "acting like the majority." Mindell notes that "If 'health' means 'acting like the majority,' then being 'unhealthy' means that all minorities are in danger of being pathologized by the mainstream in any country."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Mindell, A. in an interview in the *Journal of Process Oriented Psychology*, Summer 1994, Volume 6, Number 1. Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press, p 7.

Individual pathology itself needs to be viewed within the context of the larger culture. Individuals who are seen as suffering from psychopathology may actually be suffering from the effects of their culture and may represent disavowed parts of the culture.

Within a culture the pathology of a person can reflect the larger culture<sup>29</sup> Violent political activism is both a personal choice, and a reflection of the beliefs of a larger segment of society. The campaigns of political terrorists in democratic societies emerge out of larger conflicts existing in the society. Ted Robert Gurr notes that "analysis of the ideologies and psychological traits of violent activists and of the sociodynamics of terrorist groups is incomplete unless we understand their reciprocal relations with larger publics."<sup>30</sup>

Pathological behavior cannot be explained only as a reaction to the environment, because that leaves out the individual psychology of each person. The culture alone does not create a "terrorist." David Long proposes a multi causal explanation of terrorist behavior. He says that explaining terrorist behavior as antisocial or psychopathic focuses on individual psychology and totally ignores the political, economic, and social environment. On the other hand, explaining terrorism in terms of environmental determinism ignores individual psychology. He concludes that "single-factor explanations overlook the fact that terrorist behavior is an interaction between individual psychology and external environment, not the result of one or the other."<sup>31</sup>

Members of the anarchist movement have taken a strong stand against terrorism, while simultaneously approaching the issue with compassion and a sense of detachment. Emma Goldman says:

To analyze the psychology of political violence is not only extremely difficult but also dangerous. If such acts are treated with understanding, one is immediately accused of eulogizing them... Yet it is only intelligence and sympathy that can bring us closer to the source of human suffering and teach us the ultimate way out of it... Compared with the wholesale violence of capital and government, political acts of violence are but a drop in the ocean. That so few resist is the strongest proof of how terrible must be the conflict between their souls and unbearable social inequities.<sup>32</sup>

It is insufficient to focus only on the pathological aspects of terrorists and terrorism.

Although extreme, terrorist groups still represent and are a part of the population. The distinction of a terrorist from a freedom fighter can only be made based on personal, political and moral judgments. Terrorists are despised, feared and alienated. Freedom

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<sup>29</sup> Mindell, A. (1988) *City Shadows: Psychological Interventions in Psychiatry*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

<sup>30</sup> Gurr, Robert Ted. "Terrorism in democracies: its social and political bases." In *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, ideologies, theologies, states of mind*. Reich, W. (Ed) (1990) New York: Cambridge University Press, p 86

<sup>31</sup> Long, D. (1990) *The Anatomy of Terrorism*. New York: The Free Press, p 16

<sup>32</sup> Goldman, E. (1910) "Anarchism and Other Essays." In Laquer, W. (ed) (1978). *The Terrorism Reader: A Historical Anthology*. New York: New American Library, pp 193-197

fighters are heroes in the eyes of the people they represent. The distinction between the two is made by those who choose one or the other name for them, and not by an objective description of their actions, motives, or beliefs.

People who decide to focus only on the pathology of the terrorist are in danger of imposing their own moral values/judgments on another individual's psychology.

Through focusing only on the pathology they do exactly what they accuse terrorists of doing: they apply their own self-proclaimed rules to others. People who focus only on the social reality that exists around terrorism are in danger of ignoring the personal responsibility of society's members. People around the world are constantly being oppressed, silenced and disregarded. Some chose to deal with this situation in non-violent ways, while others turn to terrorism. Depending on their personal, spiritual and political beliefs, people either see violence as a means for achieving political and social change, or do not believe violence is an acceptable alternative.

Some authors, like Clutterback, say that terrorism should be treated as a criminal, not political, offense. Wilkins suggests that the popular characterization of terrorists as criminals fails to take into account the reasons why terrorists resort to violence.<sup>33</sup> He claims that terrorism cannot be properly understood without considering the collective responsibility of organized groups, such as political states, for wrongs allegedly done against the groups which terrorists represent. I believe that it is important to try and understand terrorism from the point of view of the people involved in it, both the perpetrators and the victims, and to see everybody's potential to be, not only the victim, but also the perpetrator. Kellen says that "psychologically, however, by far the most important key to understanding terrorists is that they feel they are defending themselves against an aggressive, evil, intrusive, and murderous world."<sup>34</sup> From their view, terrorists feel that they are the victims of an unjust world. Both sides, terrorists and victims, feel that they are victims of injustice.

## **Terrorism as a result of oppression**

From a psychological perspective, oppression is an internal state and experience, as well as an external reality. Be it internal or external, the feeling of being oppressed doesn't come from choice. In situations where people feel oppressed, terrorism can be empowering; one is active rather than passive; terrorists take control of their situations. Often terrorists are the only strong role model available for members of oppressed groups. Dr. Rona Fields, a clinical psychologist, spent twenty years working with children in Northern Ireland and in the Middle East. Many of the children she worked with joined terrorist groups as adults. She says of these children:

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<sup>33</sup> Wilkins, B. T. (1992) *Terrorism and Collective Responsibility*. Routledge: London and New York.

<sup>34</sup> Kellen, K. Ideology and rebellion: Terrorism in West Germany." In *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, ideologies, theologies, states of mind*. Reich, W. (Ed) (1990) New York: Cambridge University Press. p55

Many of these children had survived the humiliation and powerlessness of childhood in life-threatening daily situations. For them, denial of death combined with chronic rage was characteristic, along with an inability to see any real way of advancing out of powerlessness for the rest of their lives. That this in turn created a flatly Manichean vision of the universe, as black or white, good or evil, should not shock us. The only positive models, the only adults that appeared to control their own destiny and to act as if their actions made a difference, were those who belonged to terrorist groups: it was they who filled the children's need for strong protective parents.<sup>35</sup>

From this point of view terrorism is a logical choice, an attempt at self-definition and empowerment. It seems necessary to consider the terrorist's background in order to come to any understanding of terrorist acts.

## **Terrorism as conflict with authority**

Terrorism is one means that people chose to deal with conflict with authority. Authority, as power that someone has over another person or group of people, can create conflict. Authority is either appointed through elections and democratic procedures, or is taken by force by a person or group of people. In both cases it should be expected that not everybody is going to be satisfied with the way that power is used by authority figures. Wherever there is authority one can expect that there will be conflict. Some researchers, like Ehuk Sprinzak, who studied the Weathermen movement in Chicago in the late 1960s and early 1970s, conclude that terrorism is a special kind of conflict with authority. Sprinzak views terrorism as an extension of opposition politics in democracy, a special case of ideological conflict with authority, where terrorism is "the behavioral product of a prolonged process of delegitimation of the established society or the regime."<sup>36</sup> He describes this behavior as a process, whose beginning is almost always nonviolent and nonterroristic. He says:<sup>37</sup>

In the main, the process does not involve isolated individuals who become terrorists on their own because their psyche is split or they suffer from low esteem and need extravagant compensation. Rather, it involves a group of true believers who challenge authority long before they become terrorists, recruit followers, clash with the public agencies of law enforcement from a position of weakness, obtain a distinct collective world view, and in time, radicalize within the organization to the point of becoming terroristic.

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<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Daniel Goldman, "The Roots of Terrorism," in *The New York Times* ^ September 2, 1986, pp. C1.

<sup>36</sup> Sprinzak, Ehuk, "The psychopolitical formation of extreme left terrorism in democracy: The case of the Weathermen." In *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, ideologies, theologies, states of mind*. Reich, W. (ed) (1990) New York: Cambridge University Press, p 79

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p 79

If we believe that terrorists begin as idealists who challenge authority, we could conclude that if a context existed, within which that challenge could be expressed, processed and respected, terrorist activity might become obsolete. Eliminating terrorists may be a desired yet impossible goal. As Franco Ferracutti says, "the best solution to political terrorism is to provide a place within the country's political system, for persons with dissenting, and even radical views."<sup>38</sup> While this can be easily said, it is difficult to actually put into practice. One would need to notice conflict in its early stages, and however difficult it would be to listen to opposing views, one would need to create a space for those views to be listened to.

## The terrorist as a role

From a process work point of view, in conflicts where terrorism appears there are many roles. Roles have specific characteristics that define their behavior. The terrorist role is the role of the one who acts and communicates in a way that causes pain, injury, death and suffering (physical or emotional.) The victim role is the role of the one who feels targeted and punished for acts that they personally do not define as oppressive or criminal, or the role of the one who feels assigned responsibility for evils they do not identify as being responsible for. The law enforcement role is the role of the one who is responsible for applying the laws and rules that society agrees to live by; this role protects consensus reality. Government also represents a role. Government is the role of the appointed or self-proclaimed leaders of the people; this is a role of leadership and guidance.

Society contains all these roles and many more. All individuals may fill any of these roles, and some may fill more than one role at any given time. For example, the larger society may call someone a terrorist. This person may also feel victimized by a system which oppresses them. Thus this person is simultaneously carrying two seemingly

opposing roles. Trying to understand the different roles in conflict situations can help us find different ways of dealing with conflict. I agree with Walter Reich when he says:

Although neither supernatural nor rationally inexplicable, the process that leads to ideological terrorism is nevertheless extraordinary, because for the people concerned it involves a remarkable personal and political transformation. An understanding of this group process and its painful developmental stages seems to be much more important than an understanding of the individual's personal psychology.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ferracuti, F. "Ideology and repentance: Terrorism in Italy." In *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, ideologies, theologies, states of mind*. Reich, W. (ed) (1990) New York: Cambridge University Press. p 62.

<sup>39</sup> Sprinzak, E. "The psychopolitical formation of extreme left terrorism in democracy: The case of the Weathermen." In *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, ideologies, theologies, states of mind*. Reich, W. (ed) (1990) New York: Cambridge University Press. \_p 79

## Terrorist as communicator

Terrorist groups seek attention for the issues they represent. The shock factor is an important aspect of terrorism. Any act that gets the public's attention becomes a success for the cause. Martha Crenshaw, one of the leading researchers in terrorism, notes that "terrorism has an extremely useful agenda-setting function. If the reasons behind the violence are skillfully articulated, terrorism can put the issue of political change on the public agenda... The government can reject but not ignore an opposition's demands"<sup>40</sup>

In April 1980 a group of anti-Khomeini Iranians seized the Iranian Embassy in London. After a few days the seizure ended leaving two hostages and five of the six terrorists dead. The terrorists had made extravagant demands that all sides knew would never be granted by Khomeini or the British Government. The seizure of the embassy captured international media attention. The following is from one description of the seizure:

When one of the hostages (a British BBC technician) obtained the time of transmission of a BBC World Service broadcast and ensured that the terrorists heard it, their delight was unrestrained, and most of the tension was lifted. Though all but one of the terrorists chose to die rather than surrender, they did so in the knowledge that their case had been brought forcibly and dramatically to the attention of the world.<sup>41-</sup>

If, for a moment, we put aside the personal psychology of the people involved and see them as the voices and representatives of an oppressed group, what does this statement say about their desperate need to be heard? They chose to die and not surrender, and were satisfied that their issue got attention from the world. I agree with Martha Crenshaw when she says that "terrorism can be considered a reasonable way of pursuing extreme interests in the political arena. It is one among the many alternatives that radical organizations can choose."<sup>42</sup>

It is difficult to listen to someone when they have a gun pointed at your face. Many politicians and governments take the position of not negotiating with terrorists. This stand has the advantage of making clear that terrorism is not an acceptable tool for political and social change, and the disadvantage of increasing the chance of lost lives.

Dealing with terrorism in a way that mirrors the same tactics terrorists use can be helpful in crisis situations. When people are held hostage and human lives are at stake, governments and law enforcement do their best to deal with the situation. But in the long run, it does not do much to prevent terrorism. Because technology is continuously

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<sup>40</sup> Crenshaw, M. The logic of terrorism: Terrorist behavior as a product of strategic choice." In *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, ideologies, theologies, states of mind*. Reich, W. (ed) (1990) New York: Cambridge University Press, p.17

<sup>41</sup> Clutterback, R. (1994) *Terrorism in an Unstable world*. Routledge: London and New York, p 177

<sup>42</sup> Crenshaw, M. "The logic of terrorism: Terrorist behavior as a product of strategic choice." In *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, ideologies, theologies, states of mind*. Reich, W. (ed) (1990) New York: Cambridge University Press, p.24



developing and access to weapons is ever easier, the increased use of sophisticated weapons and tactics by both terrorists and law enforcement groups will only escalate the conflict. Many law enforcement agencies around the world use information and know-how from ex-terrorists to build stronger units to combat terrorism; this simply ups the stakes for the next terrorist maneuver.

Terrorists are fellow human beings, people with dreams and ideals, who often come from hurtful and oppressive situations. Mindell says:

A terrorist is someone who experiences herself as fighting for freedom. Her goals are not much different than those of the people she is threatening, except that she has revenge in her heart and has suffered more than most people know, especially the people she's fighting. Terrorists are people whom the political machine has abused so much that the only way of expressing themselves is through ultimatums and revenge attacks.<sup>43</sup>

In recommending ways of working on terrorism, Mindell proposes that a representative of a terrorist group is allowed on television to present her views and goals. Why is she a terrorist? What is she fighting for? Has she changed in her approach? What changed her? In this way the public would gain a deeper understanding of both the terrorist as a person and the cause she fights for. Mindell says terrorism is "the result of not having been listened to over a long period of time. That's what a terrorist really is, a disturber who's been repressed and beaten and hurt until he or she finally riots. That's the final outbreak—murder and revenge. There's no other way out for that person."<sup>44</sup>

What fascinates me about terrorism is that despite its intensity and the negative way it affects people involved, it still remains a means and not a goal; terrorism rather looks like a communication style. Whether or not the means terrorists use are justifiable, their goal is always to gain attention to their cause. Just listening to the terrorist may help diffuse their frustration. Through listening, we go beyond the issue of attempting to explain, justify or eliminate something that is so complex and can be seen from many points of view.

In April 1995, the Unabomber sent an open letter to *The New York Times*. The Unabomber is an unidentified person (or group) who has killed three people and wounded twenty-three in attacks in the United States dating from 1978. In this letter, the person or people claiming to be responsible for the murders, damage and injuries promised to stop their activity if a major national newspaper or magazine published their long manifesto. In my mind, this might be worth a try. It is a clear example of the terrorist's demand to be heard.

Mainstream media does not value attempts by terrorists to communicate with the public nearly as much as they value the announcements of terrorist strikes. News

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<sup>43</sup> Cited in Summers, G. *Conflict: Gateway to Community*. Ph.D., Dissertation, The Union Institute, 1994. p 157

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.* *Conflict: Gateway to Community*. Ph.D., Dissertation, The Union Institute, 1994. p 157

reports on the Unabomber's mail-bomb to a logger lobbyist in California were on the front pages of the newspapers. The letter to *The New York Times*, asking for the publication of the terrorist's manifesto, was relegated to the ninth page,<sup>45</sup> as was the announcement of a major publishing company's agreement to publish the manifesto.<sup>46</sup> The following chapter will continue with some of the ideas raised about role theory by focusing on process work's approach to the terrorist as a role.

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<sup>45</sup> see *The Oregonian*, Thursday, April 27,1995. p. A9

<sup>46</sup> see *The Oregonian*, Thursday, April 27,1995. p. A7

# Chapter III: Terrorism as a role

This chapter will introduce the way field and role theory are applied in process work, and will go on to discuss terrorism as a role. I will give examples of group process settings in which terrorism arises as a role.

## Field theory

William James, philosopher and psychologist, said that people evaluate themselves according to how they are evaluated by others. He claimed that people change in order to adapt to those around them. In his words:

Properly speaking a man [sic] has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind. To wound any of these, his images, is to wound him. But as the individuals who carry the images fall naturally into classes, we may practically say that he has as many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion he cares. He generally shows a different side of himself to each of these different groups.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, the field an individual lives in affects her behavior and self-image. The term "field" first appeared in physics, to describe a space traversed by lines of force, as

of magnetic or electric force. There are many kinds of fields: electromagnetic fields, radiation fields, gravitational fields, etc. Fields are not always visible, yet their existence is felt by the people affected by them. For example, we cannot see gravity, yet we feel the effect of it in our bodies and our surroundings. Einstein described a field as "a totality of coexisting facts which are conceived of as mutually interdependent."<sup>2</sup>

Kurt Lewin was one of the first thinkers who tried to understand behavior in a psychological field as physicists try to understand the behavior of objects in a physical field.<sup>3</sup> He supported that in order to understand an individual's or group's behavior, one would need to understand all the forces operating in the psychological field. He proposed that people's overt behavior and thinking are constant struggles to resolve conflicting motivational forces<sup>4</sup>. His theory has been called field theory because he

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<sup>1</sup> James, W. (1950, original 1890) *The Principles of Psychology*. New York: Dover. Vol I, p. 294

<sup>2</sup> Mey, H. (1972) *Field Theory: A Study of its Application in the Social Sciences*. New York: St. Martin's Press, p xii

<sup>3</sup> Lewin, K. (1951) *Field Theory in Social Science*. New York: Harper.

<sup>4</sup> Lewin, K. (1951) *A Dynamic Theory of Personality*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

tried to understand behavior in a psychological field. Lewin argued that one reason it is so hard to change people is that their attitudes and values are anchored in groups. He showed that people could be changed if their groups could be changed. This demonstrates the power a group, or field, has on individual attitudes and behaviors.

Arnold Mindell, who is both a physicist and a psychologist, extended Lewin's work; Mindell sees the psychological field as a dreaming process manifesting in people's behavior.<sup>5</sup> Mindell defines the field as a "vague atmosphere that we sense with our feelings, fantasies and hallucinations, capable of differentiation and interaction between roles or parts."<sup>6</sup> Human behavior in groups is viewed not only from the point of view of an individual's personal psychology, but also as a manifestation of field they are part of. According to Mindell, fields exert forces upon things in their midst, like a magnet and filings which are all patterned by a magnetic field. Thus, not only do individuals organize their lives, but fields organize members' identities, acting on people like the magnet filings. Fields can be felt like forces; for example, the atmosphere in a group, the moods and feelings, can be felt yet not seen. Fields can be indirectly perceived. They appear in individuals' dreams, in the conflicts that a group has, and in the stories people tell. For example, an individual may dream about bombs exploding when a group field is full of unexpressed tension. In such a field, members might find themselves short-tempered with each other.

Fields have no well-defined limits. Physicists can't define exactly where an electromagnetic field begins or ends. In the same way everyone touched by a given field can be seen as part of it. This characteristic of fields affects how we see ourselves. Mindell says:

Fields exist regardless of time, space and physical separation... We consist of ideas, concepts, and feelings as much as we do of matter and substance... This characteristic of fields has important consequences for how we understand ourselves. Terms such as *personal* and *impersonal*, *individual* and *collective*, *me* and *you*, *inner* and *outer* are relativistic terms without absolute significance.

Every feeling, thought, movement, and encounter is simultaneously an inner and outer event.<sup>7</sup>

Fields evolve, change and transform; they become polarized, form different parts. For example, in the field mentioned above, different members might find themselves involved in conflict over the value of repressing versus the value of expressing

emotions. Fields are not static in space and time, but change. In the same way that fields affect people's identity, members of a field affect it and transform it as they grow, change and evolve. The field we have been discussing might evolve into one in which conflict is welcomed and explored. In that form, conflict can become a creative debate.

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<sup>5</sup> Mindell, A. (1992) *The Leader As Martial Artist*. San Francisco: Harper.

<sup>6</sup> Mindell, A. (1989) *The Year I: Global Process Work*. London: Arcana, p 149

<sup>7</sup> Mindell, A. (1992) *The Leader As Martial Artist*. San Francisco: Harper, p 17

## Role theory

Role theory serves as a bridge between personal psychology and group behavior. It considers social structures and norms as well as the individuals personal background. Mead, Moreno and Linton were some of the early thinkers to contribute to role theory,<sup>8</sup> which is actually not one solid theory, but a collection of many different thoughts about roles. Mead examined problems of interaction, the self and socialization and employed the concept of taking a role. Moreno was the first to use role-playing in psychodrama. Linton suggested that both positions people held in society and roles were elements of social structure. He also linked individual behavior and social structure with the idea that an individual's behavior can be seen as performing a role. Linton differentiated between status and role, defining status as a "collection of rights and duties" and role as "the dynamic aspect of status."<sup>9</sup> According to Linton when, a person puts the rights and duties which constitute his status into effect, he is performing a role. Although many behavioral scientists since the 1940s have contributed to the language of role theory, the writings and teachings of Mead, Moreno and Linton were particularly

influential. As research evolved in the fields of psychology, social psychology and sociology, a technical language was created to describe role theory.

Sociologist Peter Berger defined a role as a "typified response to a typified situation."<sup>10</sup> Using the analogy of roles and acting in theater, he says that society provides that script and actors perform the roles assigned to them. The roles carry emotions, behaviors, and attitudes. Once people are in a role then they carry these characteristics along with all the characteristics of their personal identity.

According to role theory, people's behaviors can be described and explained in terms of their roles<sup>11</sup>. In other words, a given role defines how a person should act. At any given moment in a group, people occupy roles. Common roles found in groups are those of the leader, the elder, the follower, the rebel. There are quiet roles and vocal roles, powerful roles and weak ones. Both the environment and a person's individual psychology impact who will occupy which role. Who occupies which role is affected by the environment. One's identity affects the roles a person may occupy in a group, while at the same time, the role one occupies transforms the person's identity in the moment. For example, a person who is vocal and expressive in one group may find herself quiet and reserved in another.

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<sup>8</sup> see Mead G. H, (1934) C. W. Morris (Ed). *Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Moreno, J.L. (1934) *Who Shall Survive?* Washington, D.C.: Nervous and Mental Disease Publication, Linton, R. (1936) *The Study of Man*. New York, NY: Appleton - Century.

<sup>9</sup> Linton, R. (1936) *The Study of Culture*. New York: Appleton. pp 113-114

<sup>10</sup> Berger, P. (1963) *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, p 94

<sup>11</sup> Penner, L. (1986) *Social Psychology: Concepts and Applications*. St Paul, MN: West Publishing Company.

Roles are specific positions in groups. They carry expectations of certain behaviors<sup>12</sup>. Roles develop because they are useful to a group. For example, the role of the leader serves to give the group a sense of direction and security. Therefore, the group will expect anyone in the leadership role to know what to do. Mead gives a sociological perspective on roles in human interactions, saying roles are impersonal and global. People can identify with a certain role, while at the same time finding themselves moving in and out of various roles.<sup>13</sup> For example, someone who identifies as an introvert follower may find himself in a vocal leadership role in certain circumstances.

## Process work

In this section I will describe how process work uses the concepts of field and role to gain a deeper understanding of groups, especially in conflict situations where terrorism occurs. The word 'field' in process work with groups refers to the atmosphere of a group or community, which one senses with one's feelings, perceptions, fantasies and thoughts. The field is comprised of roles that want to communicate with one another, and fields polarize themselves, creating roles and parts. The primary goal of group work in process work is to recognize and bring into relationship the various parts. For example, in the tense field discussed above, the roles might include one that wants to express all emotions and one that wants to repress them. This is a polarized field. Process work would work with the two different roles by creating a space where the roles can be expressed and by bringing them into dialogue.

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Parts of the group appear as roles which may be occupied by any individual in the group. When individuals occupy roles without knowing that they are in a role and not only in their own identity, they may be perceived as disturbers. For example, a group with a strong identity of being peaceful, loving and accepting may have difficulty seeing that some people pursue their goals in a way that seems aggressive. There is a role which no one will identify with: the maker of war and conflict. It can be an act of courage and compassion for an individual to notice that she is being violent in her pursuit of peace, and to stand for that role with awareness. What originally looks like violence in the group may then unfold to reveal itself as passion, energy or desperation. This information may then become accessible to other members of the group, and the group may use this information to grow and become more flexible instead of being split by an unmet challenge to its identity.

In this example, we see that the role of the disturber may provide access to something that is not yet part of the group's awareness. Identifying with and acting out

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<sup>12</sup> Schneider, D. (1988) *Introduction to Social Psychology*. Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers. p281

<sup>13</sup> Mead, G.H. (1934) *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

roles can help people bring out things that they wouldn't otherwise express. If all parts or positions are represented and allowed to interact, it is more likely that the group will reach an agreement or resolution. Interaction creates space for transformation. Processing the interactions between parts of a group by noticing the communication style, the verbal and non-verbal signals, escalation and de-escalation, and by bringing awareness to the style and the signals, offers a space for personal conflicts to be

completed and resolved. This then affects the larger field which can be the group or the world as a whole.

## The role of the terrorist

Process work contributes to our understanding of terrorism by offering a means of understanding the terrorist role not only as a personal identity, or as the result of personal psychology, but also as a systemic component of the larger field of society. Process work suggests that a person can move in and out of roles fluidly. This fluidity comes as a result of becoming aware of a particular role (in this case the role of a terrorist) in its social context.

The role of the terrorist is the role of the person who adopts a behavior and communication style that is rebellious, challenging, disrupting and threatening. These aspects of their behavior can be seen in both the content and the style of their communication. According to Mindell, there are a number of characteristics typical of a person in the terrorist role.<sup>14</sup> Typically, when a person experiences herself as a terrorist, she is working for her highest ideals and sense of justice; she also may be gaining vengeance for present and past wrongs. People in the terrorist role are likely to go against everyone who steps in their way. They will break accepted group communication styles and safety rules in order to force a group to accept their unpopular opinions, and may even risk their lives to make their point. Because terrorists and people in the terrorist role come from positions of less power and are also desperate, they use methods which others cannot easily defend themselves against. Terrorists are often unaware of their power. People in that role may feel so abused and oppressed that they are unaware of their own power to affect social change. Mindell concludes that "terrorism is a state of mind, not a permanent characteristic."<sup>15</sup>

The person occupying the terrorist role often identifies as a member of an oppressed group, which may be an ethnic, religious, national, or political group. One may experience oppression due to political beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, culture, or religion. People in such groups often experience themselves as being ignored by the mainstream and/or the oppressor. Furthermore, people who are oppressed often feel that they need to act in a threatening voice in order to be heard. Once in the terrorist role, a person

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<sup>14</sup> Mindell, Arnold (1995) *Sitting in the Fire*. Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

either intends to cause pain, suffering, or fear, or does not care about causing them. At that moment, feelings of remorse are split off, as a result of the desire for revenge due to experiencing oppression. The person in the terrorist role feels that she is fighting for a cause, which includes social change.

People who belong to the mainstream are typically unconscious of their social power and privilege, and of the ways their power and privilege structure the relationship between them and people belonging to oppressed groups. Gemma Summers, in describing mainstream privilege, notes:

The most basic privilege of any mainstream is the privilege not to be aware of the minority's suffering. As a group, they do not have to know the suffering of not being seen, heard or valued... This is a privilege which makes other less

powerful groups resentful. Unconscious power or privilege leads us to keep out or ignore those who are different; anyone who the mainstream feels is too "angry," "radical," "troublesome," "crazy," "vengeful" or "weird."... Thus minorities seek justice and revenge for past hurts and abuses, and for having been kept out, ignored or treated as less valuable than others.<sup>16</sup>

One way of working with roles in groups is to focus on a topic that is being discussed, and to encourage different roles to come forward and interact. Roles have a tendency to manifest in polarities, like insider-outsider, oppressor-victim, mainstream-minority. The roles which are closer to a group's identity will be expressed more readily. For example, in a conflict resolution training seminar one would expect that the roles of the social activist, of the leader, of the peace-loving person, will be relatively easily accessible to its members. Those roles which are further from the group's identity and awareness are harder to stand for. In the example of the conflict resolution training seminar, one could expect that the roles of the oppressor, of the disinterested observer and the terrorist will be further from the group's identity. When roles in a group are disavowed, they emerge in the form of disturbances. The disturbance can be expressed by the disturbing actions of a group member, or by some other disturbance such as a synchronistic event in the outside world (thunder, a car crash, a world emergency.)

Violence is usually a disavowed role, since nobody really wants to feel or be violent. When violence emerges in the form of verbal threats, intimidation, or strong emotional language, the group often seems to enter into a trance. People can become numb, not know how to react. One way of understanding this kind of violence, is that sometimes people resort to raising their voices not only because they like to scream, but also because they feel they are not being heard, or they have been waiting too long to be heard. No one is listening, which creates a tense and potentially violent situation. The problem is that those responsible for creating the violent situation by not listening are almost always unconscious of how they contribute to the escalation. They blame the people who are violent for the violence, instead of seeing the origin of violence in

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<sup>16</sup> Summers, Gemma. (1994) *Conflict: Gateway to Community*. Dissertation, The Union Institute.



the neglect and indifference of most of the group. These dynamics are typical of the psychology of privilege.

People with privilege can live comfortable lives, while people who do not have power and privilege are neglected. This is a situation which is likely to lead to upset or riot, but when riots break out people are often amazed that a riot erupted. It is typical to blame the riot on so-called "angry" or "undeveloped" people without considering how those in power create an untenable situation for the minority groups. Those of us who do not live in riot-torn situations have the privilege of not having to deal with them. The main manifestation of privilege—often the most subtle and difficult to pinpoint—is the assumption that we can and should negotiate peacefully with people who are angry. It is the privileged party's expectation that the other party should negotiate in a reasonable fashion. This assumption is possible only when someone comes from a peaceful setting.

One way to share privilege is to listen, to open up to the unhappiness of others, instead of only insisting upon one's personal safety. Many in the mainstream have the privilege of living relatively safe lives while others are living with chronic unsafety. The desire to keep things safe, and the insistence that other people should not be angry, become causes of riotous situations. Those of us who have the privilege of feeling safe can start sharing it by opening up to those who are furious. How does one open up? Some possibilities include giving space and time, listening, and starting to make changes without expecting the person who is in agony to change.

Process work's experience and research with groups has shown repeatedly that one of the main issues which arises when terrorism emerges is that of privilege. Addressing privilege and power differentials is one way to effect change in groups and in the world.

## **The terrorist role in group process**

I will give four examples of terrorism appearing as a role in a group process, and show how acknowledging and representing the role helped the individual move out of the role.

### **A woman "machine-guns" a group**

The first group interaction I describe occurred during the opening session of a process work World Work and Conflict Resolution seminar in Oregon in 1993. It was both a personal growth and a training seminar in group work, focusing on conflict and global issues. The people present (230 participants from 34 different countries) came from diverse cultural, national, and ethnic backgrounds. The group was trying to identify the issues present in the room. People were talking about their dreams for the world;

dreams of people living in harmony with each other, dreams of acknowledging and honoring diversity. Everybody seemed to be in agreement that this was the common dream for the seminar participants. As the session continued, the facilitators, Arny Mindell and Amy Mindell, encouraged people to identify the roles present in the room. One way of doing this is by encouraging people to voice their feelings and thoughts and then group those feelings and thoughts in roles. By providing a physical space in the room where each role can be represented, people can move in the space according to the role that they feel most connected with in the moment.

Some roles that were acknowledged were that of the social activist, i.e. the one who wants to change the world and the injustice that is happening; the spiritual person, i.e. the one who has faith in a higher power that will guide us through the difficulties in life and in the world; the observer, or the one that stays in the background and observes what is happening without intervening. Many people said at this point that they felt scared to do anything because the world situation is so violent and abusive.

This process happened in an atmosphere of tension and nervous laughter. The people speaking were mostly European or Americans of European descent. An African American woman finally stood up and said "There are no solutions to our problems!

You are trying to intellectualize the issues. You are either too scared, or too balanced, or you are trying to throw us in the pits." Another African American woman said "Talk, talk, talk... How long do you think you are going to last? If I had a gun I'd put it in." At that point, Mindell offered her an imaginary "gun." He said to her: "Here is a gun. What do you do?" The woman proceeded to "machine gun" everyone around her, shooting them with her imaginary gun. As she was doing this she was screaming at the group: "Now who wants to talk?" People were either looking at her in fear, or giggling nervously.

This incident was the beginning of a group process around the issue of power and privilege. From the point of view of the African American woman, people of color do not have the privileges that white people have in the western world. Everytime somebody made a comment that indicated a lack of awareness around these issues, she would pull out her imaginary gun and shoot the person. A Catholic priest from Belfast, who lives with the pain and terror of violence in his everyday life, tried to calm her down and explained that "violence is hopeless. It's useless. It solves nothing, we will all die." She proceeded to "shoot" him and said: "I already fgg! fucking dead! You don't get what it means to feel dead. You are still talking about it."

The facilitators saw her as a role in the field. They moved over to her side and started filling out the role by voicing the frustration, anger, and hopelessness of that role. This provided her the space to step back and disengage from the role. Another woman came forward, fell on her knees and said: "There are solutions. I'm here. I'm ready to shit in my pants because I see you here with a gun in my face, but I am here." The atmosphere in the group changed. The African American woman momentarily calmed down. The facilitator asked her: "What changed in you? You look different." She responded: "What changed is that she came from some deeper place inside of her."

So I listen.” The woman who came forward had listened, had heard the rage and pain being expressed and responded with sincerity.

After a long agonizing dialogue involving more participants, the group reached a point of momentary resolution. The role of the terrorist was unfolded and processed. To unfold a role means to enter into the stream of the experience it contains and consciously live it, rather than passively observing its movement and change. Process work considers that what occurs as a disturbance is potentially useful and meaningful. This represents the teleological aspects of the philosophy of process work. Every disturbance in a group holds within it the key to its solution.

In our example, the group acknowledged that it was the responsibility of those in power, those who represent the mainstream, to recognize their privilege. In the seminar setting, people of color were a minority, so white people represented the mainstream powers. One of the mainstream privileges is not having to be aware of how one excludes those who belong to minority groups. The group acknowledged that it is not the responsibility of oppressed groups to be able to communicate in a manner acceptable to the mainstream. Rather, it is the responsibility of the ones with privilege to acknowledge, admit, and-the hardest of all-give up their privilege.

The African American woman who at first appeared as a ”terrorist,” shooting anyone in sight, turned out to be a teacher offering a ”wake-up call” to the people present. When she was supported in her role and encouraged to communicate the feelings and ideas behind her actions, her message changed the group. One of the things that helped the African American woman reach a momentary resolution in her conflict with the group was also the facilitators’ awareness that she was enacting a role that needed to be expressed in the field. Viewing terrorism as both an individual and social process.

Viewing terrorism not only as a personal identity, but also as a social role, offers us the possibility to work on it in a different way. The assumption that the ”terrorist” is a social role and not only an individual creates the space for people identified with the role to move out of it.

## **”Petrol bombe with sand”**

The terrorist role is characterized by a communication style that includes accusations or threats of violence. People occupying the terrorist role hold the group ”hostage” with their anger and frustration; the group has no choice but to focus on the ”terrorist.”

Groups explicitly or implicitly agree on a communication style in their interactions. Any action that breaks the agreed upon communication style, such as a person that comes out angry and demanding, causes a sense of insecurity and fear in the group. This is a similar sense of insecurity and fear created by organized terrorist groups.

Following is an example of someone holding a group ”hostage” with their anger and threats. This group interaction occurred during the second week of the same seminar as the first example. During the first week various issues had been addressed, including racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, class issues, and human rights. Homophobia had not

yet been addressed yet. Whenever someone tried to bring the issue to the forefront, it would be dismissed as not important. The group focused on issues based on consensus, and homophobia did not get the necessary consensus.

During a morning session, a gay man stood up, paced in the middle of the group, and demanded to be heard. He sounded threatening and he held the group "hostage" by insisting on its focus without gaining consensus. He started by mentioning a racist remark he had heard the day before, which was like: "The blacks don't have their shit together. They are out there shooting each other. Shooting is a behavior of choice, just like homosexuality." He went on to say: "If I hear this one more time, I just want to smash their fucking faces!" The man was still pacing and went on to say that he felt the urge to be violent, that he was not just using a metaphor. He said: "I am *stunned* by the sexism, racism and homophobia, even in a group like this. I can't understand why people are not in a huge affect about this. I am scared, I need help, because I *really* feel like smashing someone's head!"

He started yelling: "I feel like throwing petrol bombs at you all!" There were a few seconds of silence. People froze because of the intensity in his voice. The man started describing his fantasy: he would make the petrol bomb, add sand to it so that it would really hurt when it struck people. He fantasized how people would burn and suffer, just so they could feel some of his pain.

In the midst of this, a woman stood up and started screaming at the top of her lungs: "There is so much abuse here, it is horrifying, it is terrifying, it is disgusting." She was referring to his communication style. Some of the participants started "scolding" the gay man for his communication style, telling him that this was not the right way to get attention. Some said things like: "I refuse to listen if you threaten me that way." The gay man went on shouting: "When anybody has a fucking affect because they have been fucking put down for hundreds of years, they are told they are being abusive..."

A participant started yelling at him: 'You speak, then *I speak!* I'm not playing with your rules.' Arny Mindell, one of the facilitators, said: 'You speak, I listen. We are listening because we know you are right!' By saying this, Mindell was allowing for the gay man's voice to be heard, creating a space where he could focus on the content of his affect and not only on his communication style. For a few seconds the room was quiet. The participant who had wanted a turn to speak said, "OK I'll listen," but his tone of voice was condescending. More people moved into the center of the room. A woman stood by the gay man and said to the other side: 'You say that you listen; that's not enough. If I'm right, why aren't you angry too! Everybody loses with racism, sexism, homophobia!'

Another gay man added: "This man got beat up *three* times this week because he looks gay. Then someone says that homosexuality is a behavior that can be corrected.

Homosexuality can't be hidden! It can't be hidden!" He went on screaming at the top of his voice: "We are dying! We can't hide! We are being killed! I can't have people any more telling me I can hide it. I don't have a choice!" He was crying and yelling. Mindell encouraged him: "Tell them, just tell them how it is..." The man went on: "I

get *killed* when I hide; I get killed when I don't!" Then he started begging people for help: 'You guys have to stand up for me too. You *can't* leave me alone.'" He was in agony. People gathered around him.

Mindell encouraged him further: 'You are waking us up. We are stupid not to see what you are talking about. You are waking us up. *Nobody* knows what you are going through. You need to be met with the same energy. It is impossible what you are living through. If you are living through it, I am living through it. I am furious at myself, I am *stupid* not to see that. And there is no excuse to not change!"

The gay man who instigated the process started to speak again. He talked about racism and homophobia as two different issues. He warned the group to be careful not to jump to the conclusion that every oppression is the same. He warned other people of oppressed groups to be careful not just to jump on the wagon to get attention. He talked about the danger of members of oppressed groups fighting each other and competing for whose oppression was worst. His outrage led to a group process where people in positions of privilege talked about their luxury of not having to deal with all those issues. People of color spoke of the homophobia in their communities. People from the gay and lesbian community spoke of their privilege in being able to disguise their homosexuality in situations that become dangerous for them, whereas a person of color has no choice.

The group was forced to focus on the anger of the gay man who started the session because of the intensity of his anger and the threat in his voice. He felt it as his last resort to get the attention of the group, to get people to listen. The terrorist role is perceived as being threatening and abusive (physically or emotionally). The person in the role will react in violent ways, and is willing to go to extremes to get his point across. Many times people occupying this role hold a group's attention with their anger and intensity; it's as if the group is held "hostage." The person in the terrorist role tends to alienate himself from the group, to feel unappreciated, unacknowledged and disregarded. This person is eventually left with no other resource but anger to get the group's attention. The terrorist role is also one where a person perceives himself as being oppressed, silenced, and deprived of his rights.

## **"Nazi tactics"**

The terrorist role can be present on both sides of a conflict. People from both sides intimidate and threaten with accusations and ultimatums. It is important to remember that the person who acts like a terrorist often is fighting for ideals and for her sense of justice. Both sides in a conflict can represent the terrorist role without identifying with it. The role of the terrorist is carried in the unintended communication signals. This leads to a split between one's self-identity and others' perception of them. In the following example the role can be seen in the body language and the accusations that the two sides express.

This following interaction occurred during a town meeting facilitated by Arnold Mindell and Amy Mindell in Portland, Oregon, in October 1993. The town meeting focused on the conflict between the Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA) and gay and lesbian rights groups. In 1992 the OCA had placed a measure on the ballot (Ballot Measure 9) that would have discriminated against gays and lesbians. Both sides had had strong public support. Oregon was split in two. In the election, the measure failed by a narrow margin. This town meeting was the first time since the election that representatives of both sides were talking to each other face-to-face and not through press releases or across picket lines.

Present in the room were gay and lesbian activists, fundamentalist Christians, church pastors, members of the OCA, politicians, and others. The tension in the room was obvious. Representatives of the OCA were sitting as a group on one side of the room.

Most people in the room were in favor of gay and lesbian rights. In some sense the OCA was in "enemy territory," even though the event was meant to be a meeting on "neutral ground." The purpose of the town meeting was to have both sides communicate with each other. The underlying hope was that personal communication would lead to a different level of interaction between the two sides.

The OCA representatives addressed the fact that they felt intimidated by the visibility and extreme behavior of gays and lesbians. They felt threatened and forced to agree with a lifestyle that went against their spiritual, moral, and religious beliefs. They accused gays and lesbians of recruiting young people and being a threat to their communities. Two of the OCA members were wearing T-shirts with the phrase "We're outraged and we are not going to take it any more."

At one point in the meeting, a representative of a gay rights group said to the OCA representative: "You are Nazis!" He was referring to the firebombing of a gay man's and lesbian woman's house in Salem, Oregon. They were burned to death. The OCA man stood up suddenly, pulled his belt up and started to cross the room towards the young gay man, shouting: "I will not allow you to use this word for me!" His stance and voice appeared threatening. A couple of people were on the edge of their seats to prevent physical violence.

Mindell asked the OCA representative to say more, to say what happened to him when he was accused of enforcing Nazi tactics. The man spoke of being in France during the Second World War. He was five years old. The Nazis came to his town and shot his mother before his eyes. It was totally unreal to him that anyone would think that he would act like a Nazi. In front of the cameras he guaranteed that he would not allow physical violence as a means of solving the gay rights conflict.

It is often the case that stories of abuse or pain are behind strong reactions like the reaction of the OCA representative. This man's memories of his mother's death were behind his reaction to being accused of being a Nazi. What could have been an escalation in the conflict was transformed by the facilitator's intervention. By supporting

the man to talk about his feelings when he was called a Nazi, the facilitator shifted what had started as an escalation into a momentary resolution on the issue of violence.

Regardless of the fact that some people did not necessarily believe that the OCA wouldn't use violence, the atmosphere in the room changed. Everyone felt for the young child whose mother was shot in front of his eyes. Perhaps, for a moment, he connected his personal experience to how gays and lesbians feel in Oregon: unfairly persecuted. The incident was shown on television through Portland Cable Access. Most local news stations broadcast reports on the town meeting, noting that it was the first time that both sides actually talked with each other.

In this example the role that was not represented was that of the "Nazi." The OCA did not identify themselves with this role, yet the actions of some of the people supporting their cause were using Nazi tactics, including fire-bombings and direct physical violence on the streets. In some of their literature they supported the idea of emptying their communities of homosexuals to make sure their children would not "be recruited to the homosexual lifestyle." Gays and lesbians experienced the OCA campaign as being brutal, inhumane, and dangerous to their physical safety. At the same time, the OCA experienced gays and lesbians as threatening to their religious beliefs and family values. In the OCA representatives' minds, homosexuality was a sin and a threat to their families and communities. In this example, neither side identifies as the one posing the threat. Both sides feel intimidated and in self-defense. The "Nazi" role came out in the accusations both sides made-though neither side identified with their aggression, just their weakness-and in the righteousness of their communication style.

The facilitators dealt with the role of the aggressor indirectly, respecting the conversational style of the group. Each time someone made an aggressive or hurtful statement, the facilitators named it and brought the verbal attack to the attention of the whole group. They would say "That was a heavy statement. You have a lot to say. I'm listening. They may not be able to listen, but I am. Where does that opinion come from? Say more."

The goal of the meeting was for both sides to communicate. Although some understanding and communication was reached, the meeting ended on a note of conflict. The facilitators said: "With that last disagreement, we'd like to bring this X

meeting to a close, and thank everybody for coming." It was relieving to be able to close the meeting in disagreement, which was closer to reality than a quick fix of the problem. At the same time, it respected the diversity of the group.

## **Everyone deserves a homeland**

Trying to reach a quick resolution is not always helpful when an aggressive role is present in a group. As in the previous example such a role can be occupied by both sides in the conflict. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict both sides accuse each other of terrorism. I will give one more example of a group process setting where the role was

present on both sides. The meeting I describe was organized by Dr. Sara Halprin, a cinematographer and process worker, in Portland, Oregon. In May 1992, she gathered thirty women to discuss the role of women in war and peace. The women came from different ethnic, national and cultural backgrounds. The group met for three hours and the discussion was exciting. There was no set agenda. One topic which eventually captured the group's attention was an encounter between an Israeli and a Palestinian woman. A verbatim description of the interactions follows:

*Palestinian woman:* I am Palestinian and I grew up in Jerusalem. My culture is the only thing I can identify with. I have lost my homeland.

*American Jewish woman:* I am a Jewish woman and I am ashamed of what my people have done to your people.

*Israeli woman:* I grew up as a Jewish Israeli woman. I am the child of holocaust survivors and I am sitting here listening to Palestinian women telling me they don't have a home, listening to Jewish women say they are ashamed of their Jewishness... and... this is so emotional. I am so disconnected from my roots, I don't even know where my family is buried, and now I'm not even allowed to return to Israel. We tried Russia, we tried Poland, we have to go to Israel. So we go to Israel and look at what happens to us. We are the bad guys. Here we are struggling for so many years and now we are seen as the oppressors.

*Another Palestinian woman:* I was born in Palestine in 1948 and I was *forced* to leave my homeland when I was an infant. My own family divided all over the world. I feel with the victims of the holocaust. But to the holocaust survivors, to let the families live while creating another big problem is not fair. The Palestinian people were not enemies to the Jews. They became enemies after. If you hear my story you will understand what I am talking about. If I hear your story I will feel with you. Without hearing each others' stories we are just looking at each other as the enemy.

*Palestinian woman:* Think now mostly of the people who are living on the West Bank of the Gaza. For me these are the people that are suffering and not me. I was there for nine months during the Gulf war and I came back full of the suffering of the people living there. I look at you, a Jewish woman and see the oppressor.

*Another American woman:* How can you say that? You just met her. Has she done anything personal to you?

*Israeli Jewish woman:* You see, I *have* oppressed her. I *have* carried a gun. I have patrolled the Gaza strip. I have helped start a settlement in the West Bank. And she knows it. I was in the West Bank, I carried an Uzzi. Yes, I was trying to kill you. And I would have. But I am also here to tell you that I have been trained to defend my life. But I am here also to tell you that I am an oppressor. The problem is that the audience only hears that I am the oppressor. If we get to know each other...

*Palestinian woman:* I have no problem with what you said on a personal level. The problem is that there is always someone saying that the Jewish or the Israeli perspective is not heard. To tell you the truth... I don't give a damn about the Israeli perspective. It has been heard. The Israeli people are storming into Palestinian villages,



hurting people with the excuse that they are looking for terrorists. They have labeled my people *terrorists*. They have labeled them as people that are just there to kill. That is outrageous to me. And when I am given the chance to speak, I am faced by another woman saying to me I can't speak.

*Israeli woman*: Is she saying "don't speak" or is she saying "speak, but listen to the other side too?"

*Palestinian woman*: I don't *want* to hear a justification of what is happening.

When someone from a disavowed group, one who has been put down for so long, finally has the chance to speak, she has a lot to say. Anger and rage need to be listened to and appreciated. When anger and rage come out in most groups, it is labeled as terrorism. In this incident, both sides feel unacknowledged and unheard. Each side, in the larger picture, accuses the other of terrorism. The role of the terrorist is filled, but nobody identifies with it.

The role of the oppressor is lurking in the background, still incompletely expressed. For Israelis and Palestinians, it is difficult to identify with the role of the oppressor. Both sides feel they are defending themselves against a world that doesn't allow them to exist in peace. Palestinians are struggling for a homeland, and so are the Israelis.

Jewish people have been oppressed for centuries and suffered immensely during the second world war, enduring horrendous persecution. Palestinians have been abandoned by the Arab world, left to fight for their right to exist.

This example illustrates the point that one person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter. From the Israeli point of view, the Palestinians are members of a long line of hostile peoples who oppress others and create fear with their terrorist threats, kidnappings, and bombings. The Israeli person identifies as a member of a group of people who have been persecuted, enslaved, and exterminated in the holocaust, and who only want a land to call home. To the Israeli, these Palestinians are terrorists.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian woman identifies as a member of a group that has been treated harshly by the world. Forcibly evicted from their homeland, they saw the world turn its back on their plight. They lost citizenship, voting rights, and recognition as a legitimate people. They cannot expect justice in the courts. The actions of some Israeli settlers and the law enforcement and military branches of the Israeli government are viewed as perpetrating the abuse and terror among the Palestinian people (i.e. with arbitrary arrests and detention). Since the Israeli police and military have the power-the majority opinion backing of a nation state-they are not called terrorists, although that is how the Palestinians view and experience their actions. Most of the rest of the world has historically sided with political power, in this case with the nation-state.

The oppressor role exists in both sides of the conflict. Each side has difficulty identifying with the role, but the role is there. Supporting both sides to recognize the role and momentarily identify with it can help them gain a deeper understanding of each other.

## Summary

Based on concepts from field and role theory and process work, the terrorist can be seen as a role within society. Since the roles that people play in part define their behavior, it is important to understand the behavior of the terrorist role in order to understand terrorism. Noticing terrorism as a role in a group and bringing the role of the terrorist to the group's and individual's awareness may assist the individual and group in moving more consciously out of this role, thus providing more possibilities for change in the individual and group. In the following chapter I will present four interviews with people who have participated in various forms of terrorist activity.

# Chapter IV: Interviews

The stories people have to tell are powerful. Regardless of whether I agree or disagree with their way of thinking or way of dealing with struggles (personal, social, political) it is *their* way. My role is to try and understand them. I have edited to reduce repetitiveness and for the sake of brevity. I include a brief description of the setting of the interview, of how I made contact, and some of my preliminary observations. After presenting the interviews, I will analyze them in the next chapter.

## Interview with John

I will call the person in this interview John. He is a man, forty years old, of African-American and Native American decent. I will not use his real name to protect his identity. The interview took place in Oregon, in July 1993. We were both part of a conflict resolution seminar. The atmosphere was friendly and collegial. We were acquainted before this interview, so the interview happened in a friendly atmosphere. During an evening session of the seminar we were attending he made a reference to his "terrorist past." I asked his permission to do an interview. In retrospect, I see that there was an unspoken agreement between us that we "agree" on certain issues. During the interview we would often laugh at the same time or get very passionate about social issues we addressed. Time went by quickly and the discussion was done in a passionate tone. John's story concerns his involvement in the Black Panther movement in the United States as well as his training with the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

**A:** Let's start off with what you said last night; at some point; you said "I was a terrorist".

**J:** Yes,... <laughs>

**A:** So, tell me a story.

**J:** When I say "I was a terrorist", I shouldn't say I was. To me a terrorist has done terrorist activity. They have bombed something or killed someone or sabotaged something. Fortunately I did not get to that stage. But, I was trained to do those things.

**A:** How come?

**J:** I got started out of the Black Panther movement in the United States. I was caught internally between whether or not violence was going to free black people or non-violence. That question was answered for me around the assassination of Dr.

Martin Luther King. He was killed violently. So, the message to me was "OK, this is the way to go". What we do is about violence, its about killing, its about taking freedom by arms. So, I joined the Black Panthers.

**A:** How old were you at the time?

**J:** Eighteen, nineteen, I was also going to school, so I was involved in the student strikes there as well. One of my best friends was a Palestinian. We took classes together, we demonstrated together. I was a Black Panther doing all this stuff that was going on at the time. I was convinced that the message was freedom through violence.

**A:** What did it mean for you to be a Black Panther?

**J:** The Black Panthers were a movement that started in Oakland. It meant that I belonged to a mission that was about bringing dignity, structure, and protection to the black community pretty much. It really wasn't about "go out and blow up white people", it was the fact that we believed in self defense. That was misinterpreted by the media a lot, that we were about going out and being very aggressive and violent. So, for me it was being in a brotherhood and a sisterhood, that was about protection of black people. There was a lot more going on. A lot of craziness, a lot of drugs, a lot of rage and dysfunction and everything else. But I was not aware of that at that time. For me it was wearing the beret, yelling "Black Power"... all that stuff. My views became more and more extreme. I began to feel that we don't have time to get organized as a black community. I also had become a Maoist. Ho Chi Minn was my hero. I was really connected with Africa, with the liberation struggles in Africa. I was filled by my rage. I was thinking "I don't want to sit on all this." I was furious, full of rage about the fact that things were going too slow. And things were getting worse; people were going to fight in Vietnam, and this shit was worst back here. I even resisted the draft. I mean, if they had sent me to Vietnam, I was going to join the Vietcong. It was clear to me who the enemy was.

**A:** Did you have any ideas at the time about how the black community would regain its dignity? Was there a way that you connect at that time how the violence would lead to dignity for the black people?

**J:** Yes, I felt that the level of violence, being victimized as a black person during slavery, had never been resolved. Black people in the US have only been free for 124 years. The sense of us being defenseless, not being able to protect our children, women being raped, men not being there..... all those things, was still there. To me self defense meant that we were taking a stand and working through the being a victim of violence. We were not able to do anything about it, you had to watch your mother get raped, or watch your kids get abused. For me, it was working out that stuff. Which we are actually still working on in the black community.

**A:** Was the violence, your violence directed towards certain people?

**J:** It was directed towards the Klan, any type of white movement that was about keeping black people from their due through violent means. So, if black people were marching in a demonstration, we protected them. So that they would not be attacked.

They had the right to march. It was on that level. It wasn't like "we are going to get them". But later on my views did become just that.

**A:** Tell me about how that changed.

**J:** From Mao's readings and reading Ho Chin Minn, from reading about the PLO., from connecting with the liberation movements in Africa and the death of Martin Luther King. It wasn't going to happen if you passively sit and protect black people and all that. Even though I did realize that most of the liberation struggles that did happen in the third world countries, did start from a self defense format. But I wasn't aware of that. I thought they just kicked ass. I was pretty naive around the developmental stuff around liberation struggles getting to that point. There wasn't enough information around it. I just wanted to go do something. So, I became really frustrated with how the Panther party was operating. There were a lot of drugs and at that time, even though the sexism issues were not popular in the black community, I was becoming sensitive to seeing how women were treated in the party and it didn't make sense to me. A lot of abuse was going on. So, I backed out. I saw that they weren't going anywhere. That to be doing drugs and talk about the revolution, it just didn't jive. At this time I was also in connection with my Palestinian friend. So, I graduated. I graduated and left the Black Panther party and I was stuck. I was lost. For a while I joined the RMA which was called the Republic Movement of Africa. That was a movement that was trying to take the issue of African Americans to the United Nations.

That after slavery the reparation were going to be "20 acres and a mule" in the five southern states; now that never happened. So the format of the RNA was to bring that

to the United Nations. That we wanted five states; if not, give us our 20 acres and a mule or give us something for that. The RNA believed in that. There was a whole movement of blacks going to the south to make that the reality.

**A:** I didn't know that the blacks were promised five states.

**J:** It wasn't a promise; it was an option, if they didn't get 20 acres and a mule then the five states would compensate. That was their approach. I joined them for maybe six months. Because there was no real military format as well. What happened was, I joined the African American Liberation Army which did have a philosophy of terrorism and building the black army in the five states. I had contacts with them. I also kept on writing to my friend who was a Palestinian. At this time he had graduated and he had gone back to Cairo. His father was an Egyptian colonel with the Egyptian Army. I was just writing about my frustration and he said "Well look, come to Cairo". So my goal was to join the PLO through him, get training and go fight somewhere in Africa. Either in Angola or in Mozambique. They were fighting the Portuguese at that time. That was my goal. If I survived that, come back to the States and do something here. <we both laugh>Grandiose, huh?

**A:** That put a sparkle in your eyes. Tell me more about that.

**J:** I figured that if I survived these struggles I'd have a sense of what it means to fight for freedom. Then I would have the battle experience behind me to come back and really organize here in this country. At that time there was also the secret notion of a third world army here that combines Blacks, Chicanos, Asians and the Native Americans. I am also part Seminole, so I really resonated with that. My dream was to come back and organize that army based on those principles. Which never happened. So, I left with a friend of mine and we went to Frankfurt. Actually our original intention was to go to China. We wanted to check out the Chinese Embassy in Stockholm.

Maybe get training with them first. They had a more direct link to the struggles going on in Africa. And we managed to arrange a meeting with some of the diplomats.

**A:** Wait, you go to the Embassy in Stockholm and say "I want to come to your country and get trained"?

**J:** Sounds crazy doesn't it? <laughs>We wrote a letter saying we were coming and we didn't know what exactly was going on. Also at that time Mao was still alive and China was definitely sponsoring Africa in their struggles.

**A:** So, you write a letter to the Embassy and say "I want to come and meet you"?

**J:** Yes, you say "We want to go to China and get training and go and fight in Mozambique or somewhere in Africa". That's what we did. Sweden at that time was a neutral country. At that time hardly any countries had a Chinese Embassy. But Stockholm did. So, we did it. <laughs loudly>We talked to a diplomat and he heard us and they were looking at us; there were some people from the Red Army there which was fascinating to us because they had the Mao hats on and they were our heroes and <we both laugh>I guess they were looking at these two rambunctious black guys, I don't think they really took us seriously. So, we had tea and we talked for maybe three or four hours and we talked about the struggles of Mao, and how Mao was supposed to support the African movement. They didn't have any ways of getting us to Africa. We could get to China but it would be difficult to get to Africa. So, we said we would like to wait. We left and then we went to the Egyptian Embassy where I had a connection from my friend. We went to the Egyptian embassy as well and there the attachment was immediate. We had a hook up.

**A:** You went to the Egyptian embassy in Stockholm and said the same thing?

**J:** There was an immediate connection. Immediate. We had two contacts with the Democratic Front which was an alternative Palestinian front and the PLO. They arranged the contacts.

**A:** How did they trust two young men with a contact to the PLO?

**J:** It took them two weeks. We were meticulously screened for two weeks there. And we were crazy. You know, when I think about your question "What got them to trust us", I think it is the fact that we had resigned ourselves to death. That was in our presence I guess, we just wanted to do something, we just kind of laid ourselves on the line.

**A:** Were you aware of the time, did you have knowledge about the struggles of the Palestinian people?

**J:** Not that much. My Palestinian friend would discuss it. He would connect the struggle of the Palestinians with the struggle of the black people here. Since that was the only viable connection that I could get my hands on a gun, that was the way I went. What I found out later on was that it was so easy at the time, because the PLO was also training the Red Army, which had become an international student terrorist organization. Many Japanese in it. We were kind of connected with the PLO as students. A lot of the Japanese were in it, some Pakistanis, some European students. From there we went to Egypt. I stayed at my friend's house in Cairo. We were there for a week. Then one night we were kind of swept out of our beds at three o'clock in the morning and were driven by truck all the way into Aman. It was an amazing ride. They took us in the truck and said, "You are coming with us". At that time the Palestinians had a refugee camp outside of Aman. I stayed and worked with a Palestinian family and was trained at the same time. I went through their training as a propaganda unit.

**A:** What does it mean to be trained?

**J:** Ideology, how to break down an AK-47, getting used to hearing bullets zooming over your head. Regular military stuff. Basically the training was about the difference between being a guerrilla and the mentality of a guerrilla versus a regular soldier.

**A:** What is the difference?

**J:** The difference was how one acts, how one moves, the ability to work in cells. A tremendous dependency on team work. And the killing instinct. To kill, and to really get in touch with what it meant to die. Dying was always put before you in a way that you always thought "thara bouca" which means "there is no tomorrow". So, as we were crawling through the obstacle courses, that was constantly being repeated like a mantra. There is no tomorrow, as bullets are being shot over your head. You keep moving. It gets instilled in you what you are up to. We went through a year of that.

**A:** A year?

**J:** There was a year of training coupled with working with the Palestinian people. Because they didn't trust us. My first day there the kids were throwing rocks at me. Americano..., and all that. There was this whole thing about integrating us in the community. And being educated on the history of the PLO, particular battles that had happened between the PLO. and how it evolved, the kind of support and all that stuff. After that training we got specific training on how to build bombs, how to conduct oneself, and how to control oneself in situations where you might have a bomb, or how to kill silently. The methods got more specialized based on what they had in mind for you. If I had gone through with this I would have been one of those people that were spraying airports with llzzi machine guns. A lot of times terrorists would spray airports and get killed. Which means that I would not have survived. That is ultimately what they had in mind. So, after that training there was more ideological training .

**A:** I need to go back for a moment. That was a strong thing you said there. You would have been one of those people spraying airports. How does it make you feel?

**J:** <deep sigh>. the fact that it didn't happen?

**A:** Anything that comes to your mind.. .

**J:** That matched my intent, which really was to die; if this was going to be my mission, hey, it didn't matter, death was in it. I would try to take as many people out as possible.

**A:** Would you be doing this for the PLO?

**J:** Actually for the world, for all oppressed people. And about the fact that everyone was responsible.

**A:** Tell me. I want to hear about that.

**J:** People who traveled colluded with the oppression of third world people. And that it was a privilege to travel. The airways, flying back and forth and going to all these places, where people who were privileged and considered to be a part of the system of oppression. So, to really disturb their fun, to really say, "Yeah, it's not safe for you...

you are not going to feel safe traveling; you are going to have to go through holy hell to see the pyramids or go to some other country that you have colonized and you continue to oppress and continue to not really get to know. You just come, spend your money, fuck the women and leave. You are not going to have that fun anymore. We are going to let you know that it is not going to be safe. You are going to have this instilled in your consciousness that to fly means you can die. Period. There will be a price." That's what it meant to us. To stop the machine, to stop the flow of all this stuff that was going on. There will be a price. And the price is you are going to have to think, "Are there terrorists on this plane?"

**A:** So its not about innocent victims, its about everyone's responsibility.

**J:** That's right. They feel like innocent victims but that is their viewpoint. But for us it was "Wake up!". If this is allowed to happen in third world countries then the balance just has to be struck. The balance will be ... you are going to think about dying when you are able to fly to a country. So, I went through the training. For a while there, a month or so, before we finished the training, suspision did come up around us. Myself and my colleague, we were sent to Aman and held in a hotel room for two weeks. We were interviewed by a commander. I knew it was a process, because I had resigned myself to die, it didn't matter. Getting shot by them or by others didn't make any difference. That was going to happen. So, I stayed with it. It was my attitude that got us past it. Because they were definitely looking at us.

**A:** That was the PLO screening you?

**J:** It was the PLO. Because we had gone through the training, what it really meant to me was I knew that they were getting us ready to do a mission. So they really needed to check us out. I knew that the next step was that they were going to send us out to do something. So for me, I was excited. Check me out, you know?

**A:** What kind of questioning did you go through?

**J:** Ideological questioning. About the Black Panther movement, about our connections with Malcolm X. They asked us questions about the whole movement, about Martin Luther King, questions about why we wanted to die, questions about our goals...



**A:** Why would you want to die?

**J:** I wanted to die because I was so frustrated about really feeling the level of oppression, of what was going on in the world. I wanted to do something about it and I did not know what to do. The only thing that I knew was at least I would be dying for a cause. I wouldn't be living as an oppressed man. This black person was going to go down, you are going to have to take me down this way with some kind of dignity. That was my impression, that's what it meant to be a man. <laughs loudly>I've seen my father die beat and broken, he was a broken man all his life. Very oppressive, full of rage, alcoholic, I couldn't deal with that. I felt as if I had exhausted everything about what it meant to get people to respect me, to know who I was. Death to me was a way of proving that. More than anything, I was excited all the time. There was always a message of death around. You always heard gun shots happening, you were seeing dead bodies. It was an adrenaline thing. We had gotten past that phase of the intense interviews. A week after the interview we were sent to go back to our cell and I was still working with the Palestinian family and their farming. And then they would ship us back to Aman in the afternoon, we didn't stay there all the time. We would go back and forth. One morning there was a sortie, a jet sortie. Israeli jets had fire-bombed a segment of the Palestinian camp, napalmed a segment of the Palestinian refugee camp, which was the area that I had worked in, the family I had worked with. I had become a friend of one of the children named Omar. He was killed in the fire bombing, in the attack. And that was a heavy blow to me. Something switched in me. When I saw his body, when I saw what that was about, something was shaken in me. I thought "What the fuck am I doing?". The wound continues, you know? That killing of another person continues the process. There is really nothing to it. I didn't realize it then when I was being trained, but seeing Omar's body and seeing what had happened to the family shocked me. I was still determined to go through with what I wanted to do, but something else was triggered. I must have cried for three days around that. Seeing him,... what a waste.

He was one of the children that would always come to me in the field and we talked and he would ask me questions and things like that.

**A:** Seeing Omar dead could send you either way. What do you think? Couldn't it have sent you into revenge, into, "Give me a mission now"?

**J:** Yes... I don't know. Something else just happened. I think he was innocent and I don't know if you have seen a napalm victim.

**A:** No, I haven't.

**J:** His body was burned like a stick. When I picked his body up parts just fell off... I was like "Wow", it was a trance state.

**A:** How old was Omar?

**J:** He was six years old. He had two sisters and a mother. One of the sisters was also killed in the sortie. In seeing Omar's body... I was suddenly exhausted. It wasn't complete because I was still very much ambivalent about it, and I still wanted to do a mission. All this stuff was kind of going over in my mind. Three weeks after that...

**A:** You weren't at the camp at the time of the bombing?

**J:** No, we were going out that morning. Actually we were driving out and we could see the jets dropping them so we were maybe a quarter of a mile away, or whatever, but we could see it happen. We got upon it to put the fires out and to help with some of the bodies. So we saw it happening as we were driving. I cried for three days and I processed this with Ahmed who was kind of like our guide and he was crying and we were all feeling bad about it. A week after that we were told to pack our stuff. And they shipped our cell out to Cairo.

**A:** Your cell meaning your unit?

**J:** Yes, our unit of five. My colleague and I were in one place. They spread us around and we waited. We knew that we were going to get instructions on what our next step was going to be. We waited for four days, which was a very intense wait because I was going through what had happened to Omar, the ambivalence was still in me. Waiting and going through the changes that were happening, the ambivalence that was happening, Omar... violence..., what was I really there for? It began to drive me crazy. I couldn't sleep, we got into arguments, we had a couple of physical fights. One night my colleague had gone to take a shower and he was in the shower for two hours. A very long time, and all I could hear was the water running. So, I went and knocked on the door and said "Are you OK? What's going on?". There was no answer. So, I forced the door open and he was unconscious on the bathroom floor. I picked him up and he was bleeding here <shows me his forehead>, somewhere on his head and he was unconscious. So, I revived him and got him to the bed. I asked him what had happened. He told me the weirdest fucking story I could ever believe in my life. He said that he was washing his face in the face bowl, and he looked in the mirror, and he saw this dark figure loom up behind him; it was telling him to yield and he refused to yield to it. And according to him, this thing took him by the head, banged his head on the sink... He said to me that he was knocked out. I never had heard any shit like that before, after he told me the story he went to sleep, I couldn't sleep. Oh, God! What the fuck is this? What is going on? I couldn't sleep and I was trying to make sense of the story, but it would also go through my mind that I should kill him. Because I thought he was bullshitting me and he had made it up. I mean, I felt that if he made this up, they are going to come by and I was going to kill him... I mean, I was going absolutely insane around it. God, the gash on his head was just incredible. That next morning he was not right. He was hallucinating. He kept constantly seeing this thing. "There it is! There it is!", really, real paranoid and schizophrenic and ... I didn't know what to do with this.

So, I was struggling with this guy for a day, around, trying to get him to calm down. I'd never seen insanity before.

**A:** Did the idea cross your mind that maybe he had seen so much insanity up to then

that ...he lost it?

**J:** He was one of the guys that I admired. He was my model. So it could never phase me that that would be the reason. I went through that horror with him for a day and he wasn't getting any better. The PLO come to give us the mission, they see what is going on,... so we became a security risk. They left us high and dry in Cairo. So, I'm left there with no money, I had one contact, with my best friend, who is insane, who is crazy. On top of that I was fearful that they would come back and kill us. So, I didn't know what to do. I was just there, and just hoping that it would be OK and all that. After about four days they never came back, so I kind of felt that we had been...

**A:** ...let go?...

**J:** ...let go.

**A:** I would have expected that they would consider it very dangerous to have you out there.

**J:** Yes, but the fact that we had gone through all of that, I think they felt that there was nothing we could do. I had pleaded with them "Can I join another unit?". They said "No, this is your brother".

**A:** Did you stay in Cairo?

**J:** I stayed in Cairo for two months and took care of my friend. I finally I got tired of taking care of him, I was barely eating, I myself was going through a lot of stuff. After they had dropped us, the ambivalent part in me was beginning to take more control over my thoughts. I began to see that maybe this is a blessing as well. Because I was keeping up on the news and at that time there were three or four airport terrorist activities that had taken place in two airports... And those people never survived those missions. So, I realized that my original goal, which was not to fight for the Palestinian cause, but to fight for third world countries, wouldn't have been realized. My Egyptian friend was telling me that I was lucky that I was not killed, that I really need to think about leaving, and bringing my friend back to the States. Which I ended up doing.

**A:** What do you think when you read in the paper today, when you read about the PLO, the IRA., or the 17th-of-November in Greece, and the Red Brigades in Italy?

**J:** I feel sad and I feel blessed. I still don't realize why I survived that. There's guilt and there is sadness about it, because sometimes when I read about the actions, I go, "Yeah! Do it!", and the other part of me realizes that that is feeding in; it's just perpetuating and playing in to the same field. You know? The "Yeah!" to me is braking the norm. The identity of a terrorist to me is this intensity to break "business as usual". There you go again with the same old shit? Warn!!!! I want to crap on that shit! <makes loud noise by slapping his hands together^ The more you do that to it, <makes the same sound with his hands>it will shock people into another sense. For me the energy is explosion, but the explosion happens because the energy is disavowed in people. Those of us who keep the line, who keep in touch with the injustice who are constantly tired of the mundane, hum-drum shit of the world, we become channels for that. If we are pushed to a point where something traumatic or something painful or harmful happens, I feel, that if anything happened right now, I could easily flip back into becoming a terrorist. It's not gone. I have a world view now, I know why I did

these things, but I recognize that the fire is still in the gut, in the belly. I channel it through martial arts, Tai Chi, art, meditation. I do as much as I can to make it a creative process. Not to play into the cycle of the violence. I find my energy in wanting to take on momentous projects. My dissertation is a momentous project. The energy matches the project. I always take on huge things.

**A:** Terrorists are called terrorists because of the experience that the mainstream culture has of them.

**J:** The terrorist stops their world.

**A:** Right. The term freedom fighter is as biased as the term terrorist. There is a judgment to that too.

**J:** I prefer to see them as freedom fighters. The terrorists themselves see themselves as freedom fighters. It's freedom from colonization and oppression. I saw myself as a crusader for people who are oppressed. Plus myself. I was oppressed. I still am oppressed. I was a freedom fighter for oppressed peoples in the world. I was so sensitive to the issues of oppression, everything that I identified that was western to me, the shoes that we wore was blood money. People died. Everything that I associated with what westerners had on, what we wore, and the lamps, and everything, was won through people's blood. People died just so that they could have a light bulb. My sensitivity went to that point and it was painful. I cried at night, in frustration, just feeling what was happening. There were points where I felt that I could feel the collective violence that was happening in some of the liberation struggles in Vietnam. I didn't have to be there. I could stop for a moment, think about, feel the energies and really be in the battlefield. Feel the pain.

**A:** What do you think about the approach that terrorists come from abusive families?

**J:** Well, ...it's partly true. I was abused. My father abused me physically and emotionally. I took on his rage...

**A:** So you can recognize abuse...

**J:** Yes, I think, I feel that because of getting in contact with the visceral feeling of how I wanted to take a life, I know I got that from my father beating me. Feeling what he was putting into my body. But I also see that that is what oppressed people do to their kids. It's in a context, it's not just coming from a bad family. It's from coming from oppressed powerless families where there is abuse.

## Interview with Sara

I will call the person in this interview Sara. She is a woman, twenty-eight years old. The interview took place in Oregon, in September 1994. We were brought together by mutual acquaintances. She was aware of my position on gay and lesbian rights and

therefore the interview was done in an atmosphere of support and encouragement. It was a safe environment for her to speak about her ideas and experiences.

Sara is one of the founders of the Lesbian Avengers in Portland, Oregon. The Avengers are a radical political activist group. They got the attention of the religious right. One of the ways that the religious right is organized is under the Gay Agenda Resistance (GAR.) On one of the GAR Bulletin Board Systems (electronic BBS) they posted an alert with the subject title "Homosexual Terrorism". In it they say:

Homosexual Terrorism is escalating in the state of Oregon with the arrival of the "Lesbian Avengers". This is a New York based terrorist group that is spreading it's tentacles across the state. Now, these creeps are here in our state. Their motto is "Get Mad! Get Even! Join the Lesbian Avengers and join the Riot! WE RECRUIT!" It goes on to say that The following information is provided so that Gay Agenda Resistance activists can begin taking immediate action against the Avengers.

1. The main Lesbian Avenger contact person is XXXXX XXXXXXXX (name) and her number is (XXX) XXX-XXXX. Call this terrorist and let her know how you feel about her activities in your community. Don't forget to dial \*67 before the phone number. [Entering \*67 before a number in Oregon, prevents caller identification on the receiver's end]

2. The Lesbian Avengers will be meeting the first and third Thursdays at the "XXXXXXX" Bookstore in Portland. Show up at these meetings and bring your cameras and camcorders. This will be a good place to ID our local homosexual terrorists.

[signed] Metal

P.S. Any information on this group will be gladly appreciated by the Gay Agenda Resistance.

Sara does not identify herself as a terrorist yet she sees the value of shock in getting the attention of the mainstream. This would fit the definition of terrorism for some, for others not. The Lesbian Avengers have a bomb as a logo, the phrase "We recruit!" and "our fuse is short" as a motto, and a tongue in cheek attitude about shocking people. I was interested in an interview with one of their members. Even though they identify with civil disobedience rather than terrorism their use of those explosive symbols and mottoes fascinated me.

**A:** O.K., let's start from this (I show her the Gay Agenda Resistance announcement) which is from the Gay Resistance Electronic Bulletin Board that is titled "Homosexual Terrorism in Oregon" and named you as the main contact person here in Portland. They say "Call this terrorist and let her know how you feel about her activities in your community." How did that make you feel?

**S:** It was *really* scary. Here is the terrorist! I heard about it originally from a newspaper in Seattle, a gay monthly, "Twist", and they did an article on this guy's bulletin board, and had found out how to get access to it. Someone from Seattle called me when they saw that my name was on it. So, I logged on and found it, and it was alarming. Part of it was really amusing to me, because it is so out there, you know "homosexual terrorists are spreading their tentacles across Oregon!" <we laugh>. It's

interesting to me, having at that point done nothing as a group, we were a brand new group. We had had our dyke march at that point, but that was it. Being seen as that threatening was really interesting. But, it was alarming having my name and number out there. We had to have our number changed within a couple of days. It was alarming having skinheads show up at our meetings. And I had done a lot of talk with the Coalition for Human Dignity around that, they took it so much more seriously than I did originally. It was really kind of eye opening. They said, "You have to be really careful, you never walk to your car alone, be careful with your license plate numbers, they can find out where you are." It did totally scare me for a while. Then they went away and I got I suppose more reckless again.

**A:** You are the founder of the Lesbian Avengers here in Portland. What fascinates me about the Avengers, compared to other gay rights groups, is that even in its name the group starts off provocatively. There is a provocation, and then if you look at a flyer it is one big provocation from the first to the last word. Is this provocation on purpose?

**S:** Oh, absolutely! <laughs>

**A:** How do you feel about that? What is it about provoking that appeals to you? The Avengers have taken all the accusations that the mainstream has about gays and basically in their flyers say "Yes, this who we are! We recruit, we like women, we like cruising, we like everything". How is that helpful when you think about what the Avengers are about?

**S:** I think people need to be pushed. One of my favorite philosophies about social change is the whole moving-the-middle philosophy. We can be out there and radical and people can be very uncomfortable with us, which makes mainstream queers more acceptable. You can look at the environmental movement in the same way. Earth First gets in there and makes the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society look really good. I also feel that it's really good to stretch people's boundaries around stuff like that.

**A:** How do you think social change happens?

**S:** You are asking me some pretty tough questions. <laughs> Speaking specifically about queer politics and out queer politics, a lot of it is around education. Now, a lot of this is going to contradict some Avenger stuff, but anyway... Around knowing out lesbians and out gay men and knowing what that lifestyle is about. I don't believe doing that in a polite way is really very fruitful...

**A:** How come?

**S:** People won't notice, you know?

**A:** How come they won't notice?

**S:** It's not challenging enough. I've been doing a lot of activism lately around transsexual, transgender issues, that's another thing I can tell you all about. Even in the queer community where a lot of lip service is given to trans people, there is still a lot of transphobia and bringing trans people into the scene really visibly brings up a lot. There is a lot of conversation and people are really divided on how they think about it. But it brought up all this discussion and I think that just saying "hi, I'm your next

door neighbor and I'm a lesbian, and this is my nice home and this is how I live my nice life", I don't think that is enough to get people to talk, unless you do something really in their face that makes people uncomfortable and that makes conversation happen. Like, "Well, how do you feel about this?", and "That's a bit much, but why is that?"

**A:** What would you define as your goal in your political work?

**S:** The long-term goal or the short-term goal?

**A:** Both.

**S:** The thing I've been thinking about lately is around queer politics, around this whole thing of "we are just like you!". We have jobs, we have lives, we have families. And I don't really agree with that. My philosophy is "we're *not* just like you! Get used to it!", "deal with it". That would be my long term goal.

**A:** You get a smile on your face when you say that. Who are "we"?

**S:** You can't define that easily. Queer politics is so interesting because it covers such a broad spectrum.

**A:** When you fall upon attitudes like those of the OCA, they have an idea about what is right and what is wrong. Those ideas are based on religious beliefs. How do you deal with that? How do you imagine working with conflict with opposing groups who base their ideas on religious beliefs? It's not about "you go live your life and I will live mine"...

**S:** It should be though. It's unfortunate and unfair. In the U.S. at least, there are more religions beside Christianity. Why should Christianity dominate? There needs to be an acceptance of a broader spectrum of religious beliefs. Not one legislating everyone else. How do you go about doing that? I don't know. These two camps that are so opposed, there is almost no middle ground. There are supportive religious communities obviously, but, ...it's a hard one.

**A:** If the gay rights movement "wins" and becomes the dominant law, then what do we do with the OCA voice? If we imagine three or four elections down the line, the OCA is in the defending position in the same way that now gays and lesbians are in the defending position. If we let this escalate, this polarized opposition, what do you imagine as the end result? What would be your dream or ideal situation concerning Oregon and this issue?

**S:** I don't see anything like that even happening in one generation, any totally satisfactory end result. It has to come from generations of work and changing the ways that we are raised and believe things, so that we don't even have this polarization. I don't think there is any way that that can be decided or resolved.

**A:** What would be a momentary, short-term resolution for you?

**S:** Gay rights win of course! <laughs>

**A:** How would you advise the OCA to deal with their position? Would you advise them to have a movement as strong as the gay rights movement in Oregon and try to win or would you advise them to remain silent?

**S:** Are you talking about my personal feelings?

**A:** Yes.

**S:** Of course I would like them to just go away. Just go on with your lives,... of course that would be my ultimate dream. I also know on a more intellectual level that I can't say that and I also believe that they have rights to have their opinions too. I would hate to censor that even though on an emotional level I feel like saying, "Go away, your opinions suck...".

**A:** It's important to be able to differentiate between the two. It's tricky though, because the personal feelings are so different from the intellectual idea. I think that somewhere in this gap violence comes in.

**S:** I can feel "I'm sick of them, I should live my life, I want them to keep their opinions to themselves,.."; and they are thinking the same thing about my sex life, "As long as you just keep it to yourself, keep it private in your home". But that is not what my life is about.

**A:** Especially around issues that are connected with "what is right and what is wrong". How do you know what is right and what is wrong for you?

**S:** My gut feeling. It's a more instinctual thing, and of course it has to do a lot with how I'm socialized, how I've been raised. I don't have a strong religious background. I was raised without any religion. But it doesn't make me immoral! <laughs>I'm a good girl most of the time!

**A:** When you say that, it makes me think you are answering to someone saying, "If you are raised without religion, you have no morals". Is that the accusation you are answering?

**S:** Yes, absolutely.

**A:** Where do your morals come from?

**S:** From my parents,... <pause>... I can't shut religion totally out of that, because religion permeates our culture so much. But a lot of it has to do with how I was raised. A lot of it is about basic human morals, being honest, being respectful, about standing up for what you believe in. Being respectful? <laughs>I'm not always very respectful. Being tolerant is hard. Again I'm feeling like I'm contradicting myself here. I'm not showing much tolerance for the OCA.

**A:** I appreciate you doing that. It puts you in a vulnerable spot, especially if you are politically active and working for social change. One of the most difficult things to see is how we are all similar. That might sound challenging to you, that you and Lon Mabon (the founder and director of the OCA) have something in common. I think that Mabon would also say that respect, honesty and standing up for what one believes in are his morals. We all have those morals. The thing is, how do we interpret those in everyday life? Can you tolerate someone that is oppressive to you? What are the things that you would never accept? What is your bottom line?

**S:** My line would be anyone dictating how I live my life, that infringes on my personal beliefs and lifestyle. Anyone who threatens my safety, emotional, physical or spiritual safety.

**A:** If you did feel threatened, do you see violence as one way of defending yourself?

**S:** I would use violence in self-defense.



**A:** What is your definition of violence?

**S:** Obviously the first thing that comes to mind is physical violence. In the feminist movement, I think there is growing acceptance of violence, especially around self-defense. I took my self-defense course, it was amazing and satisfying and felt good to kick things really hard <laughs>and know that I could do that and would advocate for that. If anyone messes with me, I would love to be able to hurt them. But as far as political violence and terrorism, I'm uncomfortable with that.

**A:** What is political violence for you?

**S:** Hard core terrorist stuff, fire-bombings, things like that. You know, I've had people target me by having my name and number on an electronic bulletin board. And it is scary. I'm uncomfortable with targeting one person in that way, where they feel physically unsafe. That again contradicts a lot of what the Lesbian Avengers are doing. Despite having our bomb logo.

**A:** Tell me about that.

**S:** A lot of it is "tongue in cheek". Many Avenger stuff has a lot of humor to it but many people don't see it as funny. And many people could interpret that as violence. On one level it is. It's threatening to people.

**A:** When the Avengers say, "We will be your dream and their nightmare", who's nightmare do they want to be and what kind of nightmare? If you were to be a dream in Lon Mabon's night life, what kind of a dream would you be?

**S:** <laughs>Let's see. I could be Jesse Helms' nightmare! I'm really a pacifist at heart. <laughs>I can't think of anything concrete, it's more of a foreboding, something that would make him really uncomfortable, something to make him sweat a little bit, something ...cold.

**A:** You have a smile on your face... <laughs>What is the pleasure?

**S:** It's fun to fantasize in that kind of a removed way. Making someone just a little bit scared is powerful. There is a sense of power to that. We should be talking about power! It's hard, being someone who has never really had power, as a woman, as a lesbian, power is not something that we have had much experience with. It's even hard to identify with having that kind of power. I get a thrill out of that.

**A:** Yeah, you can walk the streets of Portland and roughen up your look a little bit, and throw the Avengers shirt on, you can walk through Pioneer Square and make a few shoppers step out of your way. Do you feel that? That you can actually intimidate people?

**S:** I've felt that. If I'm in a mood, I get a kick out of it.

**A:** You said that being a woman and a lesbian you didn't have power. Who first told you? Where does that come from?

**S:** Here is a brilliant example. When the Avengers did our first action, the dyke march, we didn't have a permit, there were about seventy women, we took over the streets, and it was incredible for us. We were waiting for the cops to show up and arrest us for marching on the street without a permit, being disorderly. And we didn't see one cop, the whole entire time. We were discounted. It's like, "They are not threatening.

They are not threatening enough". If we had been seventy eight year old African-American men there would be cops all over the place. We are not threatening enough in that way. We don't even have the power to be threatening. Which is why I get a thrill out of the bomb logo. You bring the bomb logo in and suddenly people take us a little more seriously.

**A:** Are you saying that not having the cops there was even more disempowering than having them there?

**S:** Yeah, because that shows they don't take us seriously. They take us more seriously now, but at the time the attitude was "a bunch of harmless girls on the street."

**A:** How does it feel when you know there is a culture out there that doesn't consider you worth a cop car in your march?

**S:** It was weird! We thought, "What is this? What does it take? I would personally like to see the Avengers in Portland being more radicalized. Nationally the Avengers have been radical.

**A:** What would be radical in your mind?

**S:** I'd like to see us take bigger risks. Going where we are not supposed to go. I'm thinking of an action we had last week at Mark Hatfield's<sup>1</sup> office. We were there with other groups. The Avengers helped organize the action but we were not... At some point people tried to go up to Hatfield's office to speak with him. The security would not let them in. So they turned around and went back out. I would envision the Avengers being more..., sneak in or push their way past, or get up there and make a bigger noise, a bigger fuss, a bigger statement. And we haven't done that at all in Portland. We are not aggressive enough.

**A:** Do you see violence down the line?

**S:** I'm thinking more of civil disobedience. I guess that could be perceived as violence. We have never done anything that puts us in a risk of arrest. We don't want to be arrested... I have fantasies. <smiles>

**A:** What kind?

**S:** I have riot fantasies! I would love to see three thousand queers on the street pissed off! And rioting. Maybe not running through the streets and smashing windows, but... a can of spray paint.

**A:** What would you be writing?

**S:** I'd be writing "No more! No more...". No more being squashed down. No more being scared of being firebombed. No more being shut into tight closets. It was such a thrill when we did our action at Portland State. We were responding to a "kick a dyke in the cunt" sticker. We had the campus completely covered on the Park Blocks<sup>2</sup> with chalk.

Fairly innocuous, it washes off and people can't be too upset about it. It was so thrilling to be there and see the campus completely covered with chalk and stickers and

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Hatfield is an Oregon senator.

<sup>2</sup> The Park Blocks go through the Portland State University campus in downtown Portland.

stuff. It felt good, it was so visible and people couldn't help but notice. And it made people think and it made people talk for a couple of weeks. Articles in the University paper and just the visibility of it and the presence of all of that. All those words of anger that people had to read, they had no choice but to read them. It was invigorating. So imagine three thousand queers spray painting the campus!

**A:** What stories are there in your life that make you want to say "No more!"?

**S:** As far as my personal life, I've been lucky with getting a lot of support from people.

In fact, there is no one that I have come out to that has not been at least semi-acceptive. I feel lucky in that way. I've never been bashed either and I feel lucky in that way. I've been threatened and I've had to have my phone number changed, and I've had to live with an unlisted address. I get very frustrated about AIDS too. I've got friends dying right now. But a lot of it is things I feel for other people, who have not been as lucky as I have when coming out. People who's families shut them out.

<repeats>It's just incredible to me. And I've been lucky with my family too. My family has been great. They still have stuff they are working on. But I have a lot of faith that with time they will be and I've never questioned that. My mom was raised Unitarian - my parents are Unitarians, both of them, so religion has a part in their belief system. My parents are remarkable people too. My dad marched in the civil rights marches in the sixties. The thing my dad said to me when I came out to him was that he knew me as a person and that he loved me and he would always love me, and this was another aspect of myself, but I am still essentially the same person he has always known and loved. There is a lot of support that way. There is an undeniable love.

**A:** I have the belief that if we knew our opponents personally, it would be different. Do you think so?

**S:** I think you are right. We surround ourselves with people who are like-minded. My work environment is like-minded and my home environment and social environment and everything. It hasn't always been the case... I personally do not fit my own stereotype of a Lesbian Avenger, which is really interesting to me, as far as the image that the Avengers put across.

**A:** What is the image?

**S:** Being very aggressive, angry, very out, with a sense of humor too. Which is something that attracts me to it, but I have that on some level but I'm also very soft spoken and behind the scenes kind of person. People don't view me as being a radical.

My politics may be radical, so I wonder about that myself. What does that do for me when I don't see myself in that mold. I like pushing myself in that way... Stretching myself a little bit.

## Interview with Curse

This interview took place in Athens, Greece, in November, 1994. I will use this person's street name in the interview. He was known as "Curse". We got connected through a chain of mutual acquaintances. This was the most challenging of all the interviews I did. Curse and I carry opposing political beliefs. He started off the interview by asking me a question. As the interview proceeded he became more relaxed. In the end, he offered to meet with me again if I needed him. Knowing his resistance to talk to me before we did the interview, I took that as a sign of him being satisfied with our discussion. We met at a mutual acquaintance's house. He also brought a friend of his along. Curse has served sixteen years of jail time and was released less than a year ago. Days before he was arrested by the police in a shoot-out, his son was born. He was released from prison sixteen years later to find his son a young man, his wife still in poverty, and the Greek political scene not much different than how he left it. The interesting thing about our interaction was that although our political views were opposite, I liked him as a person. Even though he supports military dictatorship as a favored political system, something that violates many human rights, as time went on we relaxed and talked like friends. The interview was done in Greek. I transcribed it and translated it into English.

I tried to stay as close as possible to his way of expressing himself.

**C:** Before we start, I have a question for you. Why can't you write everything up as if you have done an interview but not really do it? Why not just put yourself in my place and write the interview. This is what I think, this is what I feel. We are all terrorists anyway. When you sue the neighbor about the trash or threaten to break his car if he parks it in front of your driveway, isn't that terrorism?

**A:** Tell me your story. I was fifteen years old when your name was all over the newspapers.

**C:** If you are a terrorist, you have to be invisible. You can't show up at public funerals and beat journalists up and then also be a terrorist. Then the police know you, have a file on you and you become one of the famous "known unknown ones". An acquaintance of mine, whenever we would do an action, the police would go arrest him, interrogate him for a couple of days and then let him go. The last time they got him and they had nothing better to do, Balkos was Minister of Justice. They set him up and arrested him. We let them go on with the whole story, allowed time for the prosecutor to make his report, for the interrogation to finish and for a trial date to be arranged. Within fifteen days everything was set. He was in jail waiting for trial. The police were proud. They "extinguished a terrorist group". We then went and planted thirty bombs in Athens. The same bombs that they had arrested the other guy for. How did you extinguish the terrorists? It shows it is the same bombs, same construction, same explosives. The moment this hit the news, the police were humiliated, the prisoners were let free.

**A:** What was the motive behind the thirty bombs?

**C:** To create turmoil, without victims, to show that democracy is not working well in Greece. For this to be the spark that will give a military officer the motive to enforce a new dictatorship.

**A:** Was there a belief at the time that the army had to offer solutions that the democratic government didn't have?

**C:** Yes, the army could govern in a different way. Many people, if you find them in the right moment, will say that Papadopoulos (leader of the dictatorship rule from 1967 to 1973) was better than Mitsotakis (head of the Conservative Party, 1990 -1993 prime minister) or Papandreou (head of the Socialist Party, 1981 -1990 and 1993 - present prime minister). The only thing was that then (during the dictatorship) you couldn't go to the coffee shop and say anything against the government. But when it came to employment, strength of economy, things were better then. That was the only period that the drachma's (Greek currency) value increased by 10%. This has never happened since, the drachma is constantly devalued.

**A:** You mentioned that you wanted your bombings to be without victims.

**C:** Look, there is a reason. Those who are in the far left kill someone or injure someone and say "We killed him for this and that reason, for doing this and that...". The far right organizations warn people. The far left says "We are killing him; everyone else be careful, the same can happen to you." The far right organizations say, "Look, we have the power to do this; we are not doing it though...". When in one night we plant fifty-five bombs and do not produce victims, we are saying, "We have the infrastructure and the organization to plant so many bombs, we have the knowledge and the materials to build them."

**A:** Eventually you did time in jail for these actions...

**C:** Yes, after the first assassination of Mallios by the 17th of November<sup>3</sup>, some friends gathered, different people from different places; from the shooting range in Kesariani, ... there was a strong anti-Communist movement then. This doesn't exist anymore because communism has fallen, no one cares anymore. At the time there was an anti-Communist nucleus that said, "We need to get organized, what are we going to do if something happens with the communists?" So, we decided to set up an organization. In the beginning it was called the Blue Brigade. Later it was called OEA (Organization for National Reinstatement). We got together with royalists, and with people supporting the junta. The most hard core ones were the royalists and the followers of Ioannides (one of the junta colonels). Those favoring Papadopoulos (the junta leader) were calmer. The others were more extreme in their ideas for action. First we plant bombs with warnings, then maybe murder a big politician. Not go kill the black American sergeant in retaliation for the military action of the U.S. in the Gulf. He was a wreck. An oppressed American. Blacks in America are oppressed. In

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<sup>3</sup> The "17th of November" is a terrorist group that has been striking in Greece since 1973. No member of the group has ever been arrested. Speculations on its origins and connections include the full spectrum from CIA involvement to left-wing militia. The language and political perspective the group uses is leftist and its economical analysis stems from Marxist thought and analysis.

the face of an oppressed you take revenge on the American? You found an easy target, a sergeant, to show your opposition to the American military action in the Persian Gulf? Why did the 17th of November do that?

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**A:** Some say that there is no such thing as an innocent victim. They say that everyone is responsible as a global citizen for the actions of their governments. Even when one goes as a traveler to a country with oppressed people, they are perpetuating the oppression by going about life as usual. In that sense they say that everyone is responsible.

**C:** That sounds like cheap philosophy to me.

**A:** How come?

**C:** I'll tell you. The American will go there and leave his dollars. In the hotel that he will stay there will be people working. The black who makes the beds, the cook, the grocer, the taxi driver, the safari guide, the guy who feeds the animals there for a year so that you can go shoot them and pay thousands of dollars. There is a whole economy, like Greece. The first three to four billion dollars of income comes from tourism. There are ten million tourists a year in Greece. There is a whole world evolving around tourism. The money the American or European tourist will leave will go to the butcher. He will build a house, start a business, he will give a job to me the blacksmith. The constructor, the painter, the worker... everyone will get money. So, the tourist is not taking advantage of you. Maybe Europe and America can say, "Here is a travel advisory, forget about traveling to Africa". But in Zaire 60-70% of the people are HIV + or they have AIDS. No one is going to go for tourism to Zaire... I don't know. Without tourism what will Greece do? It will waste away. These countries do not have wealth-producing resources to live off of. All they have to sell is the tropical weather, the safari, the exotic dances... and maybe smuggle some snake skin or something. So, tourism is their only

chance. If someone is willing to be a kamikaze terrorist, why go to an airport and kill innocent people and not have the bravery to kill someone. Like the guy who killed Rajid Ghandi. And his mother earlier on. He was a walking bomb, he fell on them, he killed him. Of course, the body guards by him are liable too. Why? Because they are selling their bodies to get a salary of 200.000 drachmas a month [not very high]. They put their body as a shield to protect the man. When they hear the first shot, they won't try to hide behind a car. As you saw with President Reagan, when they shot him, the bodyguards fell on him. They were willing to get hit by the bullet instead of Reagan. So, you are selling your body at any given moment to save the president, or he who gives you 200.000 drachmas a month. And all those are young, strong men. They aren't old people with nothing left to lose, or someone dying of cancer thinking, "I've only got a year to live anyway, why not get that job?". Why don't these young men get a pick and start digging (a Greek expression for hard manual labor)? Why don't

they become farmers? Why don't they go work in construction? They like to brag next to the president, saying, "Hey, I'm so-and-so's bodyguard!". They have their bonuses and free passes, they call themselves daring men... and when the bad moment comes, they leave behind them orphans, a widowed wife, their parents devastated! Why? To put their bodies to save the life of who? Papandreou? He is ready to die anyway. If he doesn't go from a terrorist's bullet, he will go on his own <laughs>He is drooling already of old age...

**A:** So, the organization you belonged to had a very specific goal?

**C:** Yes. We demanded the release from jail of Papadopoulos. The proclamation we sent was telegraphese. It wasn't a document like the 17th of November sends, that fills a whole page of a newspaper! They explain their reasons and give details and facts that no one can really verify unless one is a journalist or a political analyst. One can falsify the truth and I would never know. And in the long run, what did the man do for you to kill him? Why don't you do a braver thing? Kidnap him - if you are such a big organization like the 17th of November, you must have the infrastructure. The police and the Americans say that they are at least twenty people. In the killing of Monferatos it was verified that eleven people took part. There are new faces in the picture, younger men. Twenty people can surely organize a kidnap, like Aldo Moro's, of some big name politician. They can interrogate him. The 17th of November obviously has knowledge of information that a common citizen doesn't have. Everybody knows that. Even the American Embassy has sent out false information, as if it was true, through the embassy. For example that some official is coming for a visit. This information goes to certain journalists "off the record". The secret service then tries to track the information. To see if the 17th of November will have access to the information. That way they narrow down the suspects. They start from five hundred people and narrow it down. The Americans have tried that experiment too...

**A:** Did it ever work?

**C:** I don't know. I know the information flow started. I don't know if they succeeded in anything. So, they can kidnap someone. They are knowledgeable on deep issues and they are political analysts. After they interrogate him and make him confess, make a video tape of him, and then blackmail and say, "If the television doesn't show the tape we will assassinate him". Because if Mega and Antena<sup>4</sup> don't show it, since they are free, non-aligned television stations, then ...kill him. Off course the television stations are not free. They have interests in the government support. They are all working illegally, with temporary permits. This situation has been going on for five years. It suits everybody. The government is never going to finish the law regarding television stations. Because this way, they can close down any station they don't like, since they have no permits. The stations don't mind either. Since they are not fully legal, they are not paying taxes. There are no laws about how they should work...

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<sup>4</sup> Greek private television stations.

So, show the tape of the interrogation, and then ask the officials to come to the television station and give explanations for what the accusations are. They had no reason to kill the banker that was involved in the selling of the cement company<sup>5</sup>. They could have kidnapped him very easily and he would have told them everything about what happened with the sale of the company. Or kill him after all the investigation is over. Now? They closed his mouth forever before the case was closed.

**A:** So, your way was different?

**C:** Our way was to intimidate, influence through power, having the organization and the power. We asked for the free function of the royalist organization. Not to be illegal.

What do you mean illegal? The communists were illegal until 1974. Since you have 31 % that voted "Yes" during the 1973 referendum<sup>6</sup> that is a big number of people. It's not as if it is five hundred or a thousand people that you can just blow off like that. It was 31 %! That 31% needed an organization to represent them. They can't function illegally. We also asked for a new referendum. In 1974 memories were still raw from the end of the civil war in 1949<sup>7</sup>. Others had lost their fathers, others had lost their brothers. If you are going to have a referendum about whether people want the king or not, have a referendum about whether people want the communist party legalized or not.

**A:** If the Greek people said for example that the communist party should not be legalized and if that vote had 70% of the people, what would we do with the other 30% that would want the party legalized? My question is, how, as a society, do we live together in disagreement? What should that 30% of people do?

**C:** They would do whatever the 31 % who were royalists did. They go underground. Or let the referendum happen after ten years. Karamanlis<sup>8</sup> was known as the old "communist-eater". He came back to Greece with a new face. After ten years everyone would have forgotten about it. Or maybe in 1981, when we entered the European Union, we could have said that the E.U. is forcing us to legalize them. They could have presented it in a different way, more subtle. We were also asking for the release of Papadopoulos and Ioannides. (Junta colonels) Until then there was a vacuum in the constitution saying, "A revolution that prevails creates law." This had happened in Greece. When the revolution happened on April 21st, 1967, there was no guerrilla warfare in the cities. Besides the Democratic Defense that was a party of thirty people.

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<sup>5</sup> At this point, Curse is referring to a financial and political scandal involving the selling of a publicly owned cement producing plant. Government officials were also involved in the controversy.

<sup>6</sup> In 1974 the Junta government held a referendum vote on whether Greece would be ruled by a democratic government or by a king.

<sup>7</sup> The civil war between Greek communist troops and Greek government troops took place after the end of World War II, and lasted until 1949.

<sup>8</sup> Constantine Karamanlis, a well respected figure in Greek politics in the last forty years, fled from Greece when the dictatorship took power. He returned to Greece in July 1974 as a savior after the dictatorship fell. He lived in Paris, in self-exile during the dictatorship.



And Alekos Panagoulis who tried to assassinate Papadopoulos. Outside of Athens, in the towns and villages, people were not rebelling.

**A:** So in your mind this makes the junta as a lawful government?

**C:** Yes, a revolution that prevails creates law. It's the constitution. That is why they were saying, "Long live the revolution of April 21st!", they were not saying, "Long live the military coup!" or "Long live the junta!". This dictatorship in Greece was unlike the ones in South America, with thirty-five thousand disappeared people in Argentina or Chile. It was a dictatorship where no one was sent to court or to the execution squads.

**A:** How about all the communists that were sent to exile on dry islands?

**C:** Those were three hundred and fifty people. They arrested a lot more during the first week, and in one week all those were sent home.

**A:** Didn't the colonels fill the stadiums in Athens with political prisoners?

**C:** Yes, during the first week. The jails were full, the military police was full, the stadiums were full. Only for four or five days until the dictatorship wins. After that they were all set free<sup>9</sup>. There were three hundred and fifty left in Yaros<sup>10</sup>.

**A:** I see...

**C:** Russia, the metropolis of communism, was the first to recognize the dictatorship in Greece. And they gave instructions to not hassle Theodorakis, [a well known music composer] Katrakis [a well known theater actor] and four or five more celebrities.

I have a book, I'll give it to you to read, about all the dictatorships that have happened in Greece. Plastiras staged seven military coups and didn't go to jail not even for a day. His government was a military coup too. Only it wasn't right-wing, it was more towards the center. Pangalos, Plastiras, so many dictators and not one day of jail! Why keep these in jail now?

**A:** So, all of you in your organization believed that those issues were a matter of justice. Legalizing the royalists and setting the dictators free. Was there a way for you to express your ideas in public? To let other people know what you thought?

**C:** We weren't like the communists that do an action and send a message to the newspapers and say, "We did this for this reason and that reason, to get public support". The masses do not understand this stuff. We were not interested either in killing someone just to get public support. We were interested in the results. The result we wanted was to pressure the government to free the military officers from jail and legalize the royalists. We just wanted results!

**A:** What were the results of your bombing in Athens?

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<sup>9</sup> Reports on the activities of the Junta show that thousands of people were sent to exile, hundreds were executed and hundreds kept in jail. I chose not to bring in my opinion, since that would distract us from the discussion of the value of the dictatorship.

<sup>10</sup> Yaros is a dry rocky island outside of Athens where many communists were sent in exile. The living conditions were very difficult and many people died in exile.

**C:** It created a huge commotion. The foreign papers wrote, "Democracy is collapsing in Greece!" "Athens is shook by bombs!". There was an insecurity in the air. In that moment we offered the chance to a military officer to start a new dictatorship.

**A:** How was it for you that this did not happen?

**C:** We continued... as a counterbalance to the actions of the 17th of November and other left-wing terrorist groups. All that action, I had told them would have no result. One of my colleagues had a psychopathic condition that wouldn't show much. It shows now more that he is in jail. He put a bomb in a movie theater without asking anybody, without getting a second opinion. The movie theater was playing a communist film. He put a bomb without causing fatal injuries to anybody. He had made the bomb in such a way that the fragments would go up to thirty or forty centimeters high. He caused eighteen injuries. Then he put a bomb in another movie theater that was playing another communist film. He caused another twenty injuries there. A total of almost forty injuries in both movie theaters. We all gave him shit, "What was that, that you just did?" He just went on... As if that would change anything. That action would only produce grassroots heroes. I had told him. They will come out the next day and say, "Look at what the right wing is doing to us!". Communists are not the people that go see a communist film. Communists are the politicians.

**A:** Do you think your organization produced results that were good for you?

**C:** No. It just strengthened the state.

**A:** In what way?

**C:** When I was in jail I understood that, in that way, you give the state power to enforce laws. Like the anti-terrorist law they passed. The "establishment of a gang" or "creation of an armed group" is now punished with five years in jail. If the group is working for a political cause the law enforces life imprisonment. With this I want to show you that they (the state) make the laws to protect themselves, but for robbers or killers they don't make any laws. And that is who is dangerous for you. If you and I make a gang to murder people to get their money, and if we are caught in the planning phase, we will go to jail for five years. If we make a group for political reasons, we will go to jail for life.

So they are securing their positions forever. When you possess guns, ammunition or explosives you can get five years in jail. If it is proven that you possess them for political causes you get twenty years in jail.

**A:** Knowing that your actions empower the state, would you have done things differently?

**C:** Yes. I would have created a group with only two members, to ensure no leaks. I would have electronic gear, communications equipment and good guns. We would strike targets that are considered to be inaccessible. Tidy strikes, and not every two to three years-like the 17th of November does-just as people are forgetting, we go do a deed so people remember us!

**A:** What would be different then? How do tidy strikes on inaccessible targets change the picture?

**C:** I think they would change their tactics (the state.) Things would change. And there would need to be much care to not hurt innocent citizens. Like the mistake that the 17th of November made. They tried to assassinate Paleocrasas (minister of Finances) in the center of Athens, knowing that hitting a Mercedes with a bazooka would cause the gas in the car to explode and kill many more than the minister. They missed the target and killed a poor innocent young man. The media used that to say to the people, "See, they are murderers, you are all in danger". Until then the 17th of November had shown that they were careful not to cause innocent victims. From then on they lost popular support. The targets need to be big and precise.

**A:** Do you think that fear can change those in power? Or will it just make the next one in charge create even stricter laws and drive around in a more armed Mercedes?

**C:** Yes, but you see in that way he is creating the dictatorship. What Papadopoulos did, by putting a policeman in each city-block he drove by. And then people get resentful against him. Look at Italy. They can put someone in jail for five years with no trial, just based on suspicion. In Greece the law says you can keep someone only for twenty-four hours. After that you need to issue an accusation and a trial date. In Italy it's five years. When they had kidnapped the NATO general, the police went into a town and searched every single house with no warrant. Just like the Nazis did in Athens. That reminds us of different times, we would want to forget those. A government becomes disliked. The vagueness of the anti-terrorist law is also a problem. In the law anyone spreading terror and fear is a terrorist. A group of children playing soccer can cause terror and fear. Are those terrorists too? A law can't be that vague. That gives them the power to arrest anyone they do not like, a politician or a journalist, and call him a terrorist.

**A:** You said that a dictatorship would become disliked in that way.

**C:** Yes, when you oppress people like that.

**A:** Your organization believed that it was in the interest of Greece to have a military dictatorship. Wouldn't that dictatorship be disliked? What is the difference?

**C:** Look, I'm forty-eight years old, and I experienced the military dictatorship, [from 1967 to 1973] Everybody reacts a little bit in the beginning. They grouch about not being free to talk or assemble. This goes on for a couple of months. There is also a few who instigate reactions by telling people, "Look, you are not free, you can't talk...". But even now that you are free to speak, does anything change? Go out and curse anybody you like. Nothing changes...

**A:** When you set off all those bombs in Athens in one night what was your feeling?

**C:** My feelings?

**A:** Yes, what did it feel like when you turned on the television and heard that all the bombs went off?

**C:** I felt that I, an insignificant man, could play a role. I could affect change.

**A:** After a couple of months you were arrested and had to do fifteen years of jail-time for that. How was that for you?

**C:** I re-examined my view-point.

**A:** In what way?

**C:** That the people I had for collaborators were worms, they were not worth it. And along with them I gave up on everybody else. It's not worth fighting for anybody! Only for yourself. I was in jail for fifteen years and I didn't even get a letter. Everybody acted as if they didn't know me.

**A:** How come?

**C:** They considered me spent force. Since my name was public they wanted nothing to do with me. Then I was useful to them. I could do everything they couldn't. They act all macho, they are trained in the army special forces, they have all the privileges of the military, and they don't have the courage to stand up to knowing me. But we believed in the same ideas? We put the bombs together!

**A:** Do you think there are other ways to affect change?

**C:** Yes. To enroll in a local political organization, work hard, slowly go up the ladder, become president of the youth, later become a parliament member, than go on and see how you can become a minister. Then try to become a prime minister!

**A:** The thing is though, we have only one prime-minister and thirty ministers. What do we do with ten million Greeks wanting to affect change? How can we make all those people that feel insignificant feel significant?

**C:** You have to have the germ of politics. Not everyone is crazy about politics! If you have the will, you work hard. There is something else I want to tell you. Do you think that the Democratic Defense [a left political party], when they were putting their bombs in trash cans in the center of Athens, do you think they believed the dictatorship would fall? Or that by bombing Truman's statue they could succeed in something? They weren't even good enough in making the bomb. They tipped it over without destroying it! (laughs] I even think that the Democratic Defence was wanting to be arrested. The moment they caught one of them, they arrested thirty-two of them. They went to jail for a few years and then got a general amnesty from the dictators in 1973 - a short time before the fall of the junta. They just became national heroes. Verivakis, Karagiorgas, Alexandris, Mangakis, they all went to jail for three years only. Papadopoulos embraced them all, gave them amnesty and look at them now. They are parliament members and ministers. If I had done the same things, a few years earlier and with a different political party, I would now be a big shot!

**A:** If you were a "big shot" today and had power and a terrorist group arose with opinions opposite to your own, if you arrested those people, how would you deal with the situation. Given that wherever there is authority there is reaction to it.

**C:** Even if I liked them, I couldn't ask the judge to give them short or long time...

**A:** I am asking if you were in power how would you deal with opponents? You know what its like to be underground, you know what unemployment is, you know what jail is like...

**C:** Look... They gave eighteen years to the guy that bombed the T.W.A. plane, the Palestinian, Rasid. They had him in jail in Athens. A well-known international terrorist, the Americans were asking for him. And despite all the noise they gave him

only eighteen years. Me? They gave me life in prison. Condensed, it became sixteen years. My collaborators? Two to three years at the most. Why? They were all military people, family members of people in the army and the police. People who gave us the guns and all the information. They got off easy. They gave me all those years because I didn't give away anybody. They put pressure on us, we didn't squeal, they went heavy on the jail-time. Later I regretted not talking. I should have, if I was smarter. I didn't have the chance to think. I was injured, the police had shot me during my arrest. I was almost in isolation at the time. They had me in a single cell by the guards. Anybody coming to visit me was seen. They would then call him in to find out what we were talking about. So, people stayed away from me. All that time I was injured, alone in my cell, going to court on crutches... I didn't know anybody in jail, I was new. If I had experience I could have dealt with things differently. I could have sent a friend to the Ministry of Justice and say to them, "What do you want? Do you want the one who put the bombs or the ones who instigated, financed and supported the cause?". And make an agreement for just two years of jail. Everyone who had ties to the military, the secret police or the police got away with a very light sentence. Me? No one came to defend me. If I was a left-wing terrorist, lawyers would be volunteering to help me. Look at all the cases in courts these last years. Me? I didn't have money for a lawyer. If you are left, you get all the political support and the lawyers. The right-wing never does that for its people.

**A:** How come?

**C:** They have sold their souls... Look at Papadopoulos. He is still in jail. If he was a communist, Amnesty International would have been involved, concerts would happen...

**A:** What keeps you in the right-wing politically?

**C:** I'm not right-wing anymore. I've seen them. They have sold their souls! Why should I go plant the bombs? Where are all those people that benefited from the dictatorship? They are the ones that should be putting the bombs. I didn't benefit anything. I was a blacksmith and that's what I still am. I never had status or privileges or anything. Why didn't they take their responsibility? Why didn't they pay for a lawyer? Why didn't they support my wife and son while I was in jail? Why didn't they give my family an apartment? Why didn't they put twenty million drachmas in a bank account for me? They sold me... All I wanted was to make my life better. I didn't care about politics that much. I wanted to change things in a way that would make my life better. After a while you become indignant, you just want to make your life better. You can't always live from hand to mouth... Maybe it would have been better if I wasn't so smart and skilled with bombs and mechanisms... A little more scared, a little more stupid. Why did I go and play smart? Why did I do it? Why did I make all those bombs? Things are not better today. But, I'm not in the position to get involved anymore. For what reason? I think sometimes of the 17th of November. If they are caught, the jail-time they will serve.

Who will support them? There are now people saying "good for them!", but if they are caught will they send them a letter in jail? Will they send them some money to buy some decent food? I ate spaghetti and boiled potatoes every day for sixteen years. Will they be supported? Nothing ...its not worth fighting for anything ...only for yourself.

## Interview with Peter

I will call the person in this interview Peter. He is a man from England in his forties. The interview took place in Oregon, in June, 1993. This was the longest of all the interviews. Peter is a good story teller, he speaks in an animated way. The interview was emotional and intense. I found myself being shocked at some of the stories he told me. Especially stories of abuse from his family and from the police. I caught myself having feelings of revenge. His storytelling triggered my memories of Greece, of stories during the military junta in the seventies, stories of police brutality on young anarchists in the eighties. I was haunted by the images of those young men hanging from the top floor windows of the police building, being told, "You punk, we'll just let you drop and call it a suicide." Images of the young women being forced to take their clothes off and stand naked while the police officers stood in front of them and spat on them while laughing at their embarrassment. These are stories I've heard from friends and acquaintances. These are experiences that people I know in flesh and blood have had. Yet, what do we do with our tendency to want revenge? Is it an oppressed person's responsibility to stand above and beyond this dynamic?

**P:** Can I say something about how I'm feeling?

**A:** Sure.

**P:** I realized how terrified I was to talk to you, still, years later. I haven't been involved in anything that I'm talking about since 1984.

**A:** So its been almost ten years.

**P:** My experience was being part of a radical gay men's group who allied themselves with the struggle of various terrorist groups. That identifies me within six people straight away. Because it hadn't been done before, in England, in those days. The fact that I am so nervous is so telling. We used to say "careless words cost lives." I was a very rebellious kid. Born in the early fifties, in a part of South London that had been heavily bombed during the war. We were still on rationing until 1955-56. I was a partially blind kid. And I also went often to the hospital with very unusual and serious illnesses, and often with very unusual and serious injuries, which I now know my father caused. He hit me for the first eight years of my life. The explanation that, "He is blind and bumps into things and fell down the stairs" washed. Finally social workers figured this was not flying down stairs, that you don't break ribs and arms like that on a regular basis. He went through a few years in my early childhood of being extremely violent. My mother would be clinically diagnosed as being some kind of

psychotic-depressive, (laughs) Which gives her the most incredible ability to blank off what is happening. They were also at the time both on heavy medication , sedatives, which is why he doesn't remember things. In 1991, my mom went into the mental ward of a hospital. It was like a vigil coma. I was shocked to find her there. The medication kept her in that state. They were worried she was going to attempt suicide, which she had tried when I was four or five. She was on tranquilizers at the time and just took a few too many. It's also how my grandmother, her mother, died. Of an overdose. It seems to be a process in our family. Extremely depressed women.

Anyway, my mother would make drawings of scenes that turned out to be what things had happened to me as a child. Horrific pictures of my father hitting me, pictures of me dragging my father off my brother. I was nine at the time. My brother was under seven. I am the oldest of three boys. I hit him under the chin. There was blood coming out of his mouth and he was knocked out under the kitchen table. I hid in the closet for four hours. She drew that and another incident which really affected my childhood, in which my father broke off a thermometer inside my asshole. I got mercury poisoning inside my asshole. The resulting medical attention was very traumatic. In other words, I lay for months and months in hospitals having things being poked up my ass, time after time. I have since then a continuous symptom of bleeding through the asshole. So anyway, I know these stories from my mother's drawings.

In the background I'm thinking, "What is she going to make of this in a thesis on terrorism?" It would be easy to say that anybody involved in terrorism must himself have been abused as a child. There is a horrific truth in that actually. But I think its a mistake. Because it denies the collective abuse. While I think it is true to draw links between the way people have been treated and the way they treat others, or their ability to cut off from the effect of what they are doing, it is dangerous to not bring in collective aspects. My childhood story is horrific. I'm forty-one and I can just connect with the horror of it. But the space in which to feel the pain is a huge privilege. A lot of my friends died, as drug addicts. A third of the boys in my class died of heroin. People have been so fucked over by the mental health system. When I see my privilege today in having the space and being alive to deal with all these things, it brings tears, I think, "Why me? What did I do to deserve that privilege?" Terrorism for me is an extreme state. Everybody is the enemy. It's like a war state.

Anyway, I was sick as a child. I was often in the isolation ward by the age of five. For months on end. They kept thinking I had meningitis. I was very weak. It turned out I had tonsillitis. A bad case of it. Also I was in the hospital from injuries due to my father. I started to run away from the age of four. I would do anything. I would cling to the back of a lorry. I learned how to hide myself in bushes, in the local woods. They had to bring police dogs in to find me. It is still one of my skills. I can disappear. It had to do with terrorism later, too. I can disappear. I can walk down the streets and not be seen.

Here I am, a very violent kid, who tries to get out of the house as much as possible. Eventually I left home and went and lived with a couple of artists who had adopted

thirteen children. I was the oldest. I went to experimental public schools, was a very bright student and eventually focused on music. I learned to play many instruments and was part of the national children's chorus, national jazz orchestra and so on. By fifteen I changed everything. I left home, dropped out of school, changed my appearance, got a flat. I watched a television "wanted" program showing pictures of me, knowing I wouldn't be recognized. I bought a television. We didn't have a television in my parent's house. I was earning more than my father was, I was making money playing music. I thought, "I made it, man." I started having a relationship with a girl who was three years older than me. She was a singer from New York, which was very glamorous. I was working for a record company. I could easily look twenty one. I had a beard. In some ways I matured young, in others I didn't. I was into heavy politics. There was a sense in which I was "other than them." I was leading a subversive life. I was involved in heavy drugs. Inside of me cheered every time a bomb went off in London. I did the work I was doing only for money and just loved that I was earning more than my father. I had a huge amount of anger and was totally unaware that that is what it was called.

**A:** Let's talk about politics around that time...

**P:** We are talking about 1967. You are getting a big revolt of students in Europe, which peaked in 1968. I'm touring as a musician, I've played in most cities, I've met a lot of people. One of the bands I played in did benefits for radical causes in Universities in Britain, France, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Greece.

**A:** In 1968 Greece had a dictatorship.

**P:** Yes I know. We did benefits for the opposition to raise money.

**A:** What was it like in England at the time in 1968? For students it was a very powerful time all over Europe. I'm thinking of May 1968 and Paris...

**P:** At that time, that month May, I was in the hospital recovering from a very bad accident in Iceland.

**A:** You were injured in an accident?

**P:** Yes, I could spend three tapes talking to you about my injuries. I've literally broken most of the bones in my body, at one time or another. Both arms, both legs, both feet, both hands, bits of my jaw, bits of my skull. So anyway, at that time here I am, a radical dude, playing in radical bands, with the most radical label in England, full of myself, taking a heck of a lot of drugs, and still I was fascinated to study. So I started to study the history and philosophy of science. That is when I first fell upon Kuhn, Peris, Reich...

These were the textbooks of my generation. I was getting pretty radical about my ideas. So I went to the University to do biology and history and philosophy of science. From there I was sent to Iceland as a botanical illustrator. There we got caught in a terrible storm and let ourselves be blown. We ended up in Greenland a thousand miles away from our course. It was an incredible storm. I loved it.



To make a long story short, we eventually ended up in Iceland again, where I was blown off the top of a mountain by a gust of wind, right in the middle of an icecap in the middle of nowhere. I was almost killed.

I ended up in friend's house to recuperate. I was isolated from the rest of the world for a few months so I wasn't aware of what was going on in Prague and Paris. After I recuperated I decided to go back to school. I hadn't gone so far, because they seemed to me middle class affairs, that I would feel alienated. I knew I was bright but I was intimidated by middle class voices. I thought they were all jerks, I was angry, I was angry at their privilege. I hated them. They had never seen life as far as I was concerned. But I suddenly had the idea that now would be the time to be in school. So I went to Sussex. They asked for some extraordinary grades in tests, I could have entered Cambridge with those grades. But I did it. I was challenged, I wanted to prove to them that I can do it. And I went. I was utterly dismayed within the first minutes there. They insisted that every student lived in a hall of residency. I was living away from home since I was fifteen. I could cook by the age of ten. I wasn't used to this kind of being treated like a baby away from home. Anyway I went. With my big pot to cook soup for twenty people and vegetables from the communal farm I lived on. I walked into the kitchen, opened the refrigerator and saw twelve little pieces of cheese with names on them. I was so disillusioned. My ideas about community were shattered. We had phrases like, "Property is theft." I was into stealing in a big way and living without really thinking what is yours and what is mine. I was destroyed. This was supposed to be the hot bed of radicalism in England and here I am in a kitchen with labels on pieces of cheese. I just hated the jerks. I was scornful and unhappy.

Eventually, in three to four weeks, I found holes in the system and managed to move out of there. I moved into a hippie commune nearby. People were older than me. In school I was disappointed. It bored me, I wasn't studying what I thought I would be. It was tame by my standards. I thought it was going to be a radical place and it was just a bunch of middle class kids wanking, as far as I was concerned. The commune was a squatting place. We had our clashes with the police, as far as we were concerned, this was a war. The war was against a society.

**A:** Who personified that society?

**P:** The police and to a certain extent the university establishment. Mainly the police, though. And they were fair target and I would often do it in a very mocking way. I would go to the drug bar of the town and pin signs on the back of the drug squad officers saying, "I am a drug squad officer"; I could sniff them a mile away. And the signs stayed on them for half an hour or more! That was when I began to develop more radical politics.

I got involved in the radical politics in the university. Then I found out that they were doing secret biological warfare research in the university. So I walked in the staff room one night and went through the lockers of teachers who I believed were involved, until I found the information about the stuff they were doing. I passed this around to a few students and within a weekend we painted the entire building outside, including

windows, gloss red. Saying, "Warning! Keep out! Secret biological arms research!" This didn't endear me to the faculty. Then I found out that these students were doing a youth club show. A real story about a farmer I knew who hung himself in front of the bulldozers. We did a show about that.

The theme that got me into real political trouble and nearly prison was a show I did on Guy Fawkes<sup>11</sup>. A guy in the sixteenth or seventeenth century who tried to blow up the houses of parliament. We still have on November 5th a festival which is called "Guy Fawkes day" where we bum bonfires and effigies of Guy Fawkes. If you study though the history of that event it is the history of Catholic repression in England. There is a big history in England around anti-Catholic church.

You could do a show on Guy Fawkes in any middle class establishment. But what they did not know was that I drew links between Catholic repression then and Catholic repression now in Ireland. So, I sold it as a Guy Fawkes show and was delighted to make cynical comments about the radical, rich, left middle class. It really challenged them. It said, "Look! You are doing it now. Your culture is repressive and its happening now and people are trying to blow you up." This was at a time when bombs were going off all over the place.

Somehow I'm going increasingly beyond the acceptable. And then I did another play where we depicted a gay wedding. And those were two topics which were outside the allowed agenda. In the gay show I got arrested. I was playing saxophone and the police came along because the shopkeepers were saying it was disturbing their customers. And they started to kick us off the crates we were standing on. I tried to carry on playing. When the beer crate was kicked my principal anxiety was my saxophone which was worth a few thousand dollars. So, I'm being kicked, I'm falling, I'm holding my saxophone up to protect it and I'm falling on my back. My saxophone severely damaged a policeman's jaw. So I was arrested for grievous bodily harm and assaulting a police officer which is a heavy offense. I went to prison for a few days and then went to court. That was my first experience of real prison, as opposed to mental institutions.

**A:** How old were you at the time?

**P:** Twenty-one. So, here I am risking to go to prison for a few years and this strange thing happens. Two nuns had seen the show, they went to see the head nun and took special permission to break their vow of silence and come testify in my behalf. They said they were so completely horrified by the police violence. They said that if I had wanted to hit the police officer I would have hit him and they believed I hit him accidentally. I got off completely. But that meant that amongst the police I was a ready target. The Ireland show made big news in England. Maybe only a few thousand knew about it in England, but it was a very hot subject amongst a certain very small section of the very radical left. I became a bit of a sought-after person in that crowd. That was the first time I hid someone I knew who was in England to be connected with bombing.

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<sup>11</sup> Guy Fawkes, 1570 -1606. English conspirator.

**A:** So, this is the time when the connection with the IRA begins.

**P:** Yes. I was working with an Irish actor, doing street shows on the beach, to make money. He was a political radical dude, grown up in Belfast, an Irish Catholic. He had brothers who had been shot in the conflict. It was he who introduced me to a bar in which sympathizers of the IRA met. I would go to play Irish folk music. We would collect money directly for the IRA. I lived in a perfect spot. I lived in a cottage that nobody knew existed. The only building anywhere near was a big Victorian mental institution, an asylum. That was another cause I was involved in, the mental institutions. We would do theater productions in the locked wards. We were into freedom for everybody. It was the first time that I really saw how the extreme states people got into were responses to everybody. Once or twice I'd harbored people who had run away from that institution. My landlord, who owned the cottage, was a crooked horse farmer. He did a lot of illegal trading in race horses. He was the only person that knew that the cottage existed. So there was a safety. It was way off the map, had no water, no electricity. There was a certain safety in living there. The owner himself didn't want the police sniffing around. I knew things about him that were enough to get busted. He knew I lived outside of society.

That was the first time I consciously supported the armed struggle. I knew two people had been using my cottage when I wasn't there. I accidentally came across a case of high velocity rifle bullets in the woods. That for me was an interesting change point. I somehow felt that, "Yes! Shoot the fuckers!" And I would consciously cheer inside when somebody was shot dead by the IRA.

This has to do a lot with my personal, emotional life and my politics. The police were the target. Especially the Special Branch, a police squad who were routinely violent. They used terror and violence as a weapon themselves. My war was against the police and the National Front, a rising fascist organization in England. In those days the radical gay men and lesbian women were very separatist but there was a parallel respect. They would work together as seeing capitalism as the main enemy, all groups together, gays, lesbians, blacks, but the groups would remain separate. We all lived outside society. We would routinely squat. We were very organized, we had telephone trees, we had a free phone, our electricity was wired into the street lighting system so they couldn't tell where the electricity was coming from. We were pretty fucking organized. We had ways of hiding people and getting them in and out of the country. In one of the communes I lived in there was a woman who was the daughter of a head politician in the government, responsible for the Irish situation. He was a representation of the enemy. We broke into his house several times. We didn't steal anything but we would photocopy documents. Throughout the years I had made connections that would allow me to access state documents that then I would pass on to radical journalists with whom I had links. There were a couple of people that you could trust. It was an "us and them" culture and there I was in the middle of it. For me, I'm doing pretty well today. But I've been consumed with guilt at how hurtful I was to people at that time in my life.

**A:** Before we go to that aspect of things, your personal guilt, tell me about the spark of those days. There is a spark in your eyes when you say those stories.

**P:** Think of this. The Special Branch would go into the ghettos of London and smash black kids head's on the walls. In England, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, West Indian, African, Turkish, were all identified as black. So, the police would routinely go and intimidate. They would not pick out the few radical activists, but they would randomly pick people. It is the randomness of it that is the terror tactic. They will just draw up in a car, bang a few heads on walls, leave kids badly injured on the ground and drive off. The National Front (fascist group in England) is doing the same thing. The National Front is given the police protection of the blind eye.

**A:** How did you respond to those actions?

**P:** I broke into the printers that print the police posters that say "wanted". I'd worked as a printer myself, I knew the technology. I steal, not the posters, but the plates to print those posters. We had set up a radical print shop that was already printing materials for radical groups in Angola, Namibia, Ireland. Technology is in itself power. So, anyway, I printed posters saying, 'Wanted, for the beating up of three black kids' and two Special Branch named police officers who I knew had done it. We knew their names, we knew where they lived. This poster created a huge police crackdown on the housing estate in which we put it out. You don't want to be caught with a poster like that in your hands.

I wasn't caught. But the police knew I was a gay man working with radical groups. They couldn't pin anything on me. I had escape routes too. I had three identities and an incredible ability to disguise myself. Anyway, they picked me up one night, they stripped me naked, they laid me face down on a steel table and ran a broom handle up my ass. You know? And they are enjoying it. That's the kind of terror tactics they used with gay men. I'm only telling you that to tell you the level of terror that is routinely practiced by police. I believe its true around the world.

They beat me up, tortured me, tried to question me. One of my techniques of dealing with pain as a child was what I called "moving out of my body". And I would watch what they were doing. The reason why its been so difficult for me to think about talking with you, has been that I nowadays feel the pain of all that. Physically it was painful, emotionally it was painful. To have four big men hold you down like that, and them saying, "Fucking queers, you are supposed to enjoy this!"

Of course that serves to alienate me further and strengthen my hate against the bastards. Also, it's mostly radical leftist groups that have been extremely anti-gay. Historically, I can tell you examples from the Russian revolution, the French revolution where gay men were being shot. Most of the radical left groups in England would give their eyes and teeth to get me in there. Because it would give them street credibility. But they would never give me power within the organization. Because you see, as a gay person you are a security risk.

By the late seventies I started to build the links that would form a very small radical gay group that established its credentials so clearly. That it would say, "Look,

we are not unreliable, we are as well organized as you are, we have code words, we have ripped off printing machinery, we live as underground as you do.” We decided to campaign actively around issues that are not specifically gay issues, because we see it as part of the class struggle. We never joined a political party. We almost joined the Revolutionary Communist Party, but never did. We had to establish street credibility in campaigning for things other than gay issues. I would call myself in those days a ”social chameleon”. I could dress up in a suit, walk into an office and pretend I was somebody I was not. At the same time I could shed my suit, wear my dirtiest jeans and a very different appearance and distribute the information I gathered. So, I became an asset. I had links to people. I would get hold of government classified documents concerning issues of public security. If you know about the security measures taken around civil servants (public employees) it gives you a lot of insight into the thinking of the state. So I found out a lot about security of civil servants, i was interested in anything that could embarrass the government.

**A:** What kind of information would be useful to you to know?

**P:** Who does what? Who is a target. That is relatively important. Even more important is what security measures are taken. How they do their secrecy. How documents don’t leak. That, I was responsible to find out. You then get drunk with people and find out who knows what. So, I met a woman who was afraid to bring out documents but she could tell me in which filing cabinet documents were. She was also able to tell me where the burglar alarm system was. I broke into that building and again didn’t steal anything. Nobody would know I had been there. We would photograph the documents. My connections with Ireland go back to the whole story with the woman in the commune whose father was a politician. They were already busting groups of Irish people randomly for conspiracy to bomb. There was a very famous trial in the early seventies of the ”Gillford four” and I acted as a researcher for the defense. Once again there is the ”them and us.” The difficult thing for me is to not see everybody as the enemy. To believe that I have friends.

We used to say that something ”wants bombing.” And we would cheer if it did get bombed. If people were in the way... that’s just the risk you took. There is a war on.

Get it? My exuberance was frowned on and so I would squash it. But in private I wouldn’t squash it. I didn’t feel pain in those days, I was a completely and utterly defiant person. You could stick a broom up my ass and it would only hurt later. I really don’t know how to describe it enough.

Like the riots of the early eighties. Leeds, Liverpool, London. By chance, I was in each city when the riots went off. I did make petrol bombs. And I could make them so they were really nasty. You see if you pack sand in with the petrol it sticks to things. It bums you, its a bit like napalm.

**A:** Were you involved in the riots?

**P:** In a big way. Again it was ”them and us.” I didn’t get badly hurt in any one of them.

Only a couple petrol bomb bums.

**A:** How does your support of the IRA come in the picture?

There were pubs in every city in England where people who sympathized with the IRA would gather. I used to know those pubs in Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool and London.

They were meeting places. After the pub had closed, they were meeting places. The pub would close, six of you would be in the back room. Houses are too easily bugged. I would assume right through the seventies and eighties that my phone was bugged. It would never cross my mind that it wasn't.

**A:** What were those meetings for?

**P:** Planning demonstrations mostly. And occasionally... people from the Irish Republican Socialist Party come and talk to groups of English left-wing people. They have to be gotten in and out of the country.

Once I'm in danger I'm not scared. Once I'm in the scene of the blood bath I'm not scared. I just get on with it. I remember arriving at Kings Cross Station in London, just after a nail bomb had gone off, were people with bit of nails sticking all over them and my principle feeling was exuberance. I was thrilled. Hey, the boys have done it. We got into Kings Cross station. Fucking good show. I had to physically restrain myself from laughing with pleasure.

**A:** Tell me about the delight.

**P:** I measured my street credibility by my level of whether I'd really got it... I would measure my success as a warrior by my ability to have no emotion but delight when a soldier was shot. And I was delighted in myself when I could find nothing in myself but delight. It was just a pleasure. We've done it. We are winning the war. There is a war on. Britain is going to blow up. The nation is going to crumble. They want bombing. It wants bombing bad. It's only guilt that makes it difficult to talk about it now. Or now being able to take the other side. But I couldn't feel any hurt myself.

**A:** So you couldn't feel any hurt on the other side too. What got you out of all this?

**P:** Severe illness is the main answer. In the late seventies I was once again in the hospital with a very serious hepatitis. In 1984, I was a freelance musician. I fell in love with a gay man who was stabbed to death after we'd only had a short affair. He picked up a young gay man in a bar and the young gay man killed him. It was June that he was killed. That is the second of my lovers to die. The first was a woman I was in a relationship with, who was killed in a car crash in the late sixties. Anyway, I was absolutely mortified. We had planned a future together. He was as radical as I was. We were an outrageous pair. We were going to go write plays about being gay and the gay experience. The scene in the gay bars in those days was that heavy. You knew always when you picked somebody up that you might get killed by them. I don't know if people know how heavy that scene was. The hatred with which I hated myself and my own sexual perversity, the gay clubs in the heart of the city where rough places. When you went out you knew there might be fascists out there. I didn't haunt the richer gay bars. They were the people who sold out. I haunted the rough gay bars. And I still like it that they were so blatant about sexuality. We used to say "better

blatant than latent.” My lover was killed. I felt desperate. My lover’s death was only part of a big dying that was going on around me. The first people began dying of AIDS in England, one of them an ex-lover of mine. A lot of my teenage friends had died of heroin addiction. What a time in my life! For some reason I started doing a naturopathic training. Why the fuck did I do that? On the one hand saying what the fuck do you worry about health and at the same time doing a naturopathic training. It’s totally not understandable. I said at the time I did it so that I could take care of my own health and it wouldn’t interfere with my political work. There is a Puritanism about naturopathy. If you eat the right things and have the right thoughts you will be well. That went against my experience. I became interested in why certain people get well and others don’t. I also realized I was getting

ill. So I got interested in the psychological aspects of illness. So, in the mid-eighties I sought neo-Reichian therapy training. I could identify a bit with Reich because he also was into radical politics. It was still liberal, I was completely ostracized by my friends for even considering it, but somehow I felt I had nothing left to lose. I knew I was getting ill, I was diagnosed as having liver cancer that year. I was told I had three months to live, I have a dream about my own death, a dream about how I really do die. It was a very violent death.

The theater company I was part of was taken over by the lesbians. I was stuck in a room drinking vegetable juices and waiting to die in three months. Within a month I went from one hundred and fifty to ninety five pounds. I looked like a skeleton, my hair went white. I looked over fifty years old, most people thought I would die. I became part of a self-help cancer group. Twelve out of the sixteen people in the group died in the first year. It needed to be something that heavy to render me inactive politically. But the very fact that I had to retire from that scene, I have never heard from those people again, never have to this day. There’s a brutality about that.

**A:** What is brutal about that?

**P:** That if you are no longer useful, you no longer exist.

# Chapter V: Analysis

## I. Themes

I approach the interviews and the group processes with the hypothesis that the terrorist is not only a personal identity but also a social role. I proposed that we consider the terrorist as a social role and study the circumstances that make someone occupy this role. By seeing how one occupies the role we may also find ways of stepping out of the role. As shown in the examples from group processes, roles are impersonal and people occupying them can learn to move fluidly in and out of them. In this chapter I evaluate the hypothesis that terrorism is also a social role in regards to the data gathered from the interviews.

People occupying the terrorist role identify as members of an oppressed group. They not only speak and act based on their own feeling of being oppressed, but also as representatives of larger groups of people in situations similar to their own. They experience themselves as not being heard by people representing the mainstream, the ones who do not have to deal with the oppression that they experience. Furthermore, they feel that in order to be listened to they need to act in a threatening way. Even though they may become aggressive in their threats, the terrorists feel that they are acting in self-defense. The person in the role of the terrorist does not always intend on causing pain or suffering, but they do not necessarily care whether they cause it all. When causing pain or suffering is intentional it often stems from feelings of wanting

Once again, we see how terrorists and the public act in relationship to each other.

Causing fear is a means to get the public's attention. It also serves as a compensation for the powerlessness that an oppressed person feels. It is interesting to me that terrorists spoke of inflicting fear as a means to engage the public rather than as a means to alienate them. John refers to terrorism as *the wake-up call*. Terrorists need public response. It is society they are trying to reach.

## Abuse

One theme that appears in both the interviews and the group processes is abuse. In considering how people's personal life experiences might lead them to terrorist actions, I noticed that all the people I interviewed mentioned having had some abusive experience in their childhood, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse.



Similarly, people carrying the explosive behavior in the group processes spoke of experiencing abuse.

### **Abuse in the family**

Peter spoke of being sexually, physically and emotionally abused by his father. Many of his childhood illnesses and present symptoms are caused by those traumatic experiences. He carries not only the memories, but also the bodily experience of abuse in his everyday life. John also spoke of being abused by his father.

If abuse happens when a person is young, people may feel that they have no means of protecting themselves against pain and suffering. A child abused in her family—sexually, emotionally or physically—is taught from an early age that she can't defend herself. Young children unconditionally love their parents, never questioning whether the parents are right or wrong in causing pain. Punishment is part of parenting, but when punishment includes abuse the child has no way of differentiating between the two. The child is torn between loving and needing the people that are not only responsible for her survival and well being, but who also cause her pain and suffering. Additionally, abuse can create strong feelings of revenge.

### **Abuse in the schools**

Abuse happens not only in families, but also in schools. Educational abuse can lower people's self esteem, make them feel voiceless and defenseless in front of their peers, teachers, and all authority figures. The education people get in schools and universities molds them as social beings. The first models of community life and conflict in groups, apart from the immediate family, come from schools. As children we are encouraged to trust in the education we are given, and to not question whether a teacher is right or wrong. Teachers' behavior is as important as the knowledge they pass on. When teachers become abusive, they model abuse as a way of using power over others. This leaves survivors of such educational systems with the idea that the way to relate to those with less power is through intimidation and abuse.

### **Abuse in the world**

Abuse in the world, in the form of racism, classism, sexism and homophobia, can make people feel alienated, feel that something is wrong with them, and that they will never be equal members of society. As a result anyone who has the privileges or status of the perpetrator becomes a symbol of the abuser. For example, someone who has been oppressed by an ethnic group may come to the conclusion that all members of that group are oppressive. Revenge and hatred can blur one's ability to differentiate between individuals and the world.

### **Abuse and terrorism**

The entire world can be seen as an abusive environment: abuse occurs in families, in schools and communities, in conflict and war, in racism, sexism and homophobia. Even as we try to teach our children respect and acceptance, we offer them a world full of unresolved conflict and a model of what not to do. If one accepts that abuse issues are partly responsible for terrorist behavior, even if Sara, Peter, John or Curse work

through their abuse issues, as long as abuse continues there will always be someone else who will become a terrorist.

The abusive experiences these people have suffered may have affected their choices to resort to terrorist tactics in their political and social struggles. There is a cycle of abuse happening in the world. If abuse is instrumental in an individual's choice to resort to terrorist tactics, one would need to focus on abuse in the family (emotional, physical, sexual), abuse in the school system, abuse in communities, abuse of one culture or ethnic group by another, in order to eliminate terrorism. Gemma Summers notes the effect of abuse on people's ability to participate in democracy:

The epidemic occurrence of abuse, whether familial, social or political, has severely undermined people's capacity to participate in democracy. Abuse drives people inward, silencing them and destroying their confidence. Without knowledge of the psychological and emotional consequences of abuse, and without psychotherapeutic tools to support healing and participation, democracy cannot work.<sup>1</sup>

In my mind, focusing only on how abuse perpetuates itself through terrorism is not sufficient in dealing with terrorism for a number of reasons. Some people with abusive backgrounds become terrorists, but not everyone with an abusive background becomes one. What makes the difference? The connection between abuse and terrorism may focus only on the individual psychology of the terrorists without addressing their external social reality. Although abuse is dealt with on a systemic level by psychologists and social scientists, when it comes to terrorism we tend to focus (from a psychological perspective) only on the terrorists and not on the oppressive situation that they respond to (which is usually addressed from a political or socio-political point of view.) Terrorists operate independently, yet represent a larger segment of society. This aspect of terrorism is addressed in the literature around the origins of terrorism in democratic societies:

The campaigns of political terrorists in democratic societies almost invariably emerge out of larger conflicts, and they reflect, in however distorted a form, the political beliefs and aspirations of a larger segment of society... Analysis of the ideologies and psychological traits of violent activists and of the sociodynamics of terrorist groups is incomplete unless we understand their reciprocal relations with larger publics.<sup>2</sup>

In sum, I believe that terrorists have not clearly been more or less abused than other people. If we do focus on the abusive background of some terrorists, I believe it is also important to focus on the larger social context, on the larger system which is in itself abusive.

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<sup>1</sup> Summers, G. *Conflict: Gateway to Community*. Dissertation, The Union Institute, 1994. p 60

<sup>2</sup> Gurr, T.R. *Terrorism in Democracies: Its Social and Political Bases in Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, ideologies, theologies, states of mind*. Reich, W. (ed) (1990) New York: Cambridge University Press, p.86

## Revenge

Revenge makes victims of abuse or mistreatment want the perpetrator to feel the same pain that they have felt. Pain, and the intensity of the desire for revenge varies, but most of us have felt it, even in seemingly harmless situations. Have you ever thrown a curse at another driver? Even if you don't really intend it, that moment is a moment of wanting revenge. In more extreme situations, the desire for revenge may be much greater. Many, but not all, people who have experienced systematic or extended oppression may feel a strong need for revenge.

Like all of us, terrorists are humans. Like everybody else, they have feelings of anger, sadness, happiness, depression, guilt and satisfaction. These feelings motivate their struggles. While terrorists feel all the same feelings every human can feel, they need to split off certain feelings and focus more on others in order to complete their terrorist

actions. If one's goal is to gain revenge for mistreatment, feeling the desire to "get back" will help one achieve that goal, while feeling empathy for the suffering of the victims will not be useful in carrying through with their actions.

Terrorists' struggles are motivated by feelings of being oppressed, feelings of compassion for others in similar situations, and feelings of revenge and anger towards those perceived as oppressors or as collaborators with oppression. Somewhere along the way, terrorists create in their minds and hearts an "us and them" framework that helps them survive. Anger and revenge are focused on one group, while compassion, understanding and a sense of comradeship are focused on the other group. Terrorists simply cannot afford to have feelings of compassion for the oppressor's side. They do not have a model for feeling compassion for the "enemy." Similarly, the mainstream does not provide a model which sees both sides as human.

I was struck by Peter's intense description of his experience in a train station that had just been hit by a terrorist group. I will repeat his words, since they describe best the point he is making:

*/ remember arriving at Kings Cross Station in London, just after a nail bomb had gone off, and there were people with bit of nails sticking all over them and my principle feeling was exuberance... Fucking good show... There were very few people killed, but there was a lot of blood around and it was just delight... I would measure my success as a warrior by my ability to have no emotion but delight when a soldier was shot. And I was delighted in myself when I could find nothing in myself but delight. Its only guilt that makes it difficult to talk about it now. Now I am able to take the other side.*

What makes someone able to be exuberant in the presence of death, blood and pain?

Remember Peter's description of the torture he had to endure from the police? He said:

*They picked me up one night, they stripped me naked, they laid me face down on a steel table and ran a broom handle up my ass. You know? And they are enjoying it.*

*One of my techniques of dealing with pain as a child was what I called "moving out of my body." And I would watch what they were doing.*

From an early age, Peter was forced to learn to split off pain. He used his ability to not feel pain to survive the abuse in his childhood and to survive the pain and humiliation of the police torturing. Peter said: *I couldn't feel any hurt myself.* It is clear that he would not be able to feel the pain on the victim's side. Early abuse may help immunize someone to further endangering one's own and others' lives in terrorist activity.

John had a different experience. When he lived on a farm, in Aman, he witnessed the death of Omar, a young Palestinian boy. Omar's death was a heavy blow, and it made John reconsider his choice to kill. He describes that moment of reconsidering:

*Israeli jets had napalmed a segment of the Palestinian refugee camp... I had become a friend of one of the children named Omar. He was killed in the fire bombing, in the attack... Something switched in me. I mean, when I saw his body... I thought, "What the fuck am I doing?" The killing of another person continues the process... I didn't realize it then when I was being trained, but seeing Omar's body and seeing what had happened to the family shocked me. Seeing him... what a waste.*

John further describes the moment, saying: *His body was burned like a stick. When I*

*picked his body up parts just fell off...* In my mind, I thought having Omar's body in his hands could also have fueled his anger and need for revenge. When I asked him about it, he said it was Omar's innocence that made him reconsider the usefulness of killing. Innocence is a word that many people would use to describe children. It is easier to see the innocence in a child than in an adult. Yet the innocent victim is also a role in the field, the role of the one who pays for other people's crimes without being directly or indirectly responsible for them. John was lucky, in the sense that in the midst of his training he experienced the pain of the other side. This experience helped him access more parts of himself and feel for all parts in the conflict. This process eventually led him to abandon terrorism as a way to achieve social change.

Like the theme of abuse, the theme of revenge was present in the interviews. It is understandable that someone who has been abused would feel the need for revenge, yet this is not sufficient to explain the cause of terrorism because abuse and revenge do not always lead to terrorist activity.

## **Self defense**

Terrorists feel that they are defending themselves against an unjust world. Even when performing murderous acts, they experience their actions as self-defense. This belief is part of a moral system of terrorist acts, which actually is similar to the mainstream sense of morality. The mainstream believes that people who murder in self-defense should not be found guilty in court. Terrorists, like the rest of us, are influenced by society's morals. If they are acting in self-defense, then according to

mainstream views, their actions are understandable and should not be punished. Yet who decides what is "self-defense" when it comes to terrorist activities? If the rest of the world could see terrorists as acting in self-defense, they would also listen to the terrorists' messages of desperation and oppression.

In the "nazi tactics" group process from Chapter III, both sides felt that they were acting in self-defense. The OCA representatives felt that they were defending themselves and their families against an immoral and sinful lifestyle and aggressive tactics. The gay and lesbian community felt that they were defending themselves against people who were attempting to prevent them from living their lives according to their own morals and beliefs.

John clarifies the difference between acting in self-defense and acting out anger and aggression when he says: *It really wasn't about "go out and blow up white people," it was the fact that we believed in self-defense.* Later on in his life, when he joined forces with the PLO, he was also fighting against oppression to save his life. Whether he was fighting for the Black Panthers or the PLO, he was fighting for his freedom. One could use that point to suggest that his personal psychology just made him want to fight. Even if this is in part the case, at the same time he represented a role in the field, the role which is tired of not being listened to, the one that is frustrated by the oppression he experiences.

Curse also felt that he was acting in self-defense. He thought the government was doing a bad job dealing with the economic situation in Greece. Curse belonged to the working class and felt the consequences of the dysfunctional economy. As a citizen, he expected his government to do its best to better his financial situation. It is true that the Greek drachma gained value during the military dictatorship (1967-1973.) Since then it has lost its value on the international market. Curse felt it was in the best interest of Greeks to be ruled by the strong hands of military colonels.

Curse was willing to pursue his political goals through the widely accepted political system. In order for him to do so, the political party he belonged to, the royalists, would need to be legitimate. Curse talked about how he felt that the royalists were disregarded in the 1973 referendum in Greece, when they got 31% of the vote. A year later, the new democratic government proclaimed the royalist party illegal. Curse said: *What do you mean illegal? 31% of the vote is a big number of people that you cant just blow off like that. That 31% needed an organization to represent them. They cant function illegally.*

Peter was also clearly defending himself against an abusive and threatening environment. In his childhood he dealt with a very abusive family and as an adult he dealt with homophobia and racism. Even Sara, who does not feel comfortable with violence, said: *I would use violence in self-defense.* John talked about how he felt that violence was going to help the black community regain its dignity. He described the

sense of black people being defenseless against abuse and racism, of not being able to protect their families, of their women enduring rape, and their men being absent. He felt that blacks were fighting to regain a dignity unjustly stripped away. People

who resort to terrorism feel they are acting in self-defense. They feel oppressed by a political, social or financial situation that deprives them of what they consider to be their basic rights.

## **Social change**

All the people interviewed mentioned social change as one of their goals. It seems that changing the social environment is an important motivating factor in doing terrorist acts. John was fighting for equal rights for black people in the United States. He wanted a social system that would treat all people equally, and was not satisfied with changes emerging from the civil rights movement. He was determined to fight until his people were treated equally in daily life, and not just considered equal on paper.

Peter was fighting for recognition of gay men as equal members of society. Even when he allied himself with other groups struggling for social change, including the IRA and anti-racism groups, he experienced homophobia within the groups. Peter was not willing to give up fighting for equality in all areas of society. Sara identified more with fighting for social change than with being a terrorist. Her struggle involved fighting against sexism and homophobia. In her mind, the terrorist tactics that the Avengers use were more metaphors than realities: they symbolized the passionate desire to change social structures. Curse was fighting for social change and political change. He was proud that out of thirty bombs he planted, none caused damage to a person. This indicates his goal was not to hurt people, but to effect political change.

In the group processes, conflict resolution seminars and town meetings, people attending were trying to find ways to achieve social change. That identity was stronger than the one of acting like a terrorist.

The Lesbian Avengers are an example of a group in the terrorist role. Their political actions affect the politics around gay and lesbian rights. They are using terrorist symbols and communication style that allows them to shock people and get their attention. They use those means to achieve their political goals. Their symbols and tactics are more easily acceptable by a larger number of people as long as they remain symbols and not actual injuries of people and damage of property. There is a difference between having a bomb as a logo and planting an actual bomb in a public space. Once terrorist groups start injuring or killing people it becomes increasingly difficult for the public to see their attempts for social change as a positive aspect of their actions.

## **Leaving terrorist activity**

My hypothesis was that people entering the terrorist role would be able to leave the role if they felt listened to. In the examples of the group processes I described in Chapter III participants were stepping out of the role of the terrorist once the facilitators helped in creating a space where they were listened to.

This was not the case with the people interviewed. Although all of them have abandoned terrorist activity they didn't mention in their interviews feeling satisfied in their demands that initially drew them to terrorism or feeling listened to by the mainstream. They mentioned personal reasons. This shows that there is also a personal psychological component to leaving terrorist activity that goes beyond the relationship of the terrorists with the people they are trying to reach.

John chose to leave the PLO after he saw the child, Omar, killed and after his comrade in the cell unit he belonged to had a nervous breakdown before they could carry out a terrorist mission. Omar's death and the innocence he represented caused John to think again about whether he wanted to use terrorist tactics to reach his goals. Curse spent fourteen years in jail as punishment for his terrorist activity. This discouraged him. Also, he was abandoned by his partners in the terrorist group after his arrest, and he grew disillusioned with the rest of the group.

In a follow-up discussion a few months after our interview, Sara mentioned distancing herself from the Lesbian Avengers. She felt that if she wanted to create long-term sustainable change she would need to direct her focus and energy in different organizations. She started a job with the Lesbian Community Project, focusing on their anti-violence campaign. Sara said that one thing that made her change was the realization that just shocking people was not producing sustainable change. She also said that as she grows older, she feels the need to participate in society in ways that include long-term planning and create lasting change.

Peter abandoned terrorist activity after he grew quite ill. This serious illness rendered him politically inactive. He also watched his comrades and friends die, and the loss of close people made him reconsider his terrorist lifestyle and what he really wanted to do with his life.

Curse abandoned terrorist activity after serving a sixteen year sentence in jail. During the time he was in jail he felt abandoned by his comrades and betrayed by the rest of the terrorist group. This caused him to distance himself from the right wing political groups he belonged to and question the sincerity of their motives. He says, *They [the right wing] have sold their souls... Why should I go plant bombs? Where are all those people that benefited from the dictatorship?* He felt that his life had not become any better because of his terrorist activity. Given that our interview took place a few months after his release from jail, the feelings of betrayal and abandonment were still strong in him. He was still struggling to find work to support himself and his family, and to adjust to life as a free citizen.

## II. Defining terrorism

Terrorists don't always define themselves as such. Konrad Kellen stresses this point in his description of the characteristics of a terrorist. He says "a terrorist is someone

who doesn't consider himself a terrorist."<sup>3</sup> Let's look at how the people interviewed identified terrorism and terrorists.

In his interview, John said to me: *Actually when I say "I was a terrorist," I shouldn't say I was. Because to me a terrorist, a real terrorist, has done terrorist activity. They have bombed something or killed someone or sabotaged something.* For John, the fact that he did not actually take part in a mission distances him from defining himself as a terrorist. He just refers to his "terrorist past." However, if he had been arrested during his training with the PLO, he would have been labeled a terrorist and treated accordingly, regardless of how he defined himself. One's self-definition as a terrorist and cultural labeling as a terrorist may not be the same thing.

Sara does not identify with being a terrorist. She even admits not being comfortable with terrorist activity. She agrees that the Avengers bomb logo can be threatening to people, and that their actions may be perceived as terrorist activity, but she supports their choice as coming from a "tongue in cheek" attitude. She says: *There is a lot of Avenger stuff that has a lot of humor to it. A lot of people don't see it as funny. And a lot of people could interpret that as violence. On one level it is. It's threatening to people.* Here again we see the discrepancy between how the mainstream perceives Sara and the Lesbian Avengers, and how she perceives herself and her group.

Curse identified himself as a terrorist. He was not only involved in terrorist activity, but also did time in jail for it. An interesting element of his definition of terrorism is clear in his introductory remark to me. He expressed it as the following question: *When you sue the neighbor about the trash, or threaten to damage his car if he parks it in front of your driveway, isn't that terrorism?* Curse is defining terrorism based on whether someone has threatened or performed terrorist activity, yet his definition of terrorism includes neighborly disputes and threats. In that sense, he sees terrorism as a behavior that ordinary people perform. We see again that individual definitions of terrorists and terrorism vary from person to person.

Peter identified himself as an ally to terrorist groups. He says: *My experience was being part of a radical gay men's group who allied themselves with the struggle of various terrorist groups.* He does not identify himself as a terrorist, but identifies with being a radical political activist. At the same time, he lived a lifestyle full of illegal activity, aspects of which could be described as terrorist activity. One can see aspects of a terrorist lifestyle, which has to be hidden from mainstream authorities, in his phrases *paranoia ruled* or *careless words cost lives*.

I did discover that all of the terrorists defined themselves in ways which fit my definition of terrorism, in that they all caused intimidation, fear and suffering; their actions were based on political goals, and they lived the life or chose the symbols of terrorists. After completing the interviews, it became clear to me that the debate around the definition of terrorism which I had seen in the literature is also apparent in

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<sup>3</sup> Kellen, K. "On Terrorists and Terrorism." In *Rand Library Collection*. December 1982, N-1942-RC, Santa Monica: Rand, p 10



conversations with terrorists. Just as there is no single definition of a terrorist in the literature, terrorists all define themselves differently.

### III. Roles

Terrorism does not operate in a vacuum, but in the context of society as a whole. Terrorist acts have causes behind them and are aimed at specific targets. Even if the target includes random victims, the fact that the victims are random is an intentional part of the act. Sometimes the victims of terrorist acts are the people considered responsible for the oppression that the terrorist is trying to stop; the attack is aimed at the victims, yet the message is intended for the rest of society. The battle doesn't end with the injury or death of the target, which is a means of conveying a message to the rest of the world.

According to process work, the world is a field which becomes polarized. This polarization is expressed through the creation of roles and segments. The terrorist is just one of many roles; its message is directed toward other roles in the field. Following are some of the roles that manifest in fields affected by terrorist attacks.

#### **Other roles in relation to the terrorist role**

The terrorist role grabs everybody's attention. It is perceived by the victims as an attacker. The terrorist may identify as an attacker, but often identifies as acting in self-defense. Terror gets people's attention; all of the interviewees referred to terror as *the wake-up call*. The victim role is the one who is unsuspecting, innocent and surprised. The victim is either killed or left to deal with the emotional/physical abuse that the terrorist act has inflicted.

The media role serves as the main informer of the larger population. This is a powerful role because information is power. At times the media seem to thrive on the sensationalism of fear and pain, exacerbating polarization. At other times they ignore terrorists, increasing their sense of powerlessness.

The politician role carries decision-making power. This role may gain in some ways from terrorist actions. Politicians at times can capitalize on the effect of threat on people. Their reward is power through votes and through decision-making policies. The law enforcement role represents the protector and enforcer of laws. Organizations spend enormous amounts of money on anti-terrorism research, training and practice. Some carry a mediation philosophy, others mirror the tactics and methods of terrorist organizations. Ex-terrorists are valuable advisors for these agencies.

The audience consists of all those who observe what is happening. These same people vote for politicians, consume news reports, support law enforcement, and mourn the victims. Some people in the audience despise the terrorist. Others support the cause

behind the attack, and in their minds justify the use of extreme violence. All of the above are targeted by the message sent by the terrorists.

## The terrorist role

Terrorism was described as a role in the interviews. John says: *The identity of a terrorist to me is this intensity to break "business as usual." The more you do that, it will shock people into another sense.* Later, he adds: *To me the terrorist energy is disavowed in every part of the world.* He goes on to describe this energy as an energy that happens like an explosion. *Those of us who keep the line, who keep in touch with the injustice, who are constantly tired of the mundane, hum-drum shit of the world, we become channels for that energy. If we are pushed to a point where something traumatic or something painful or harmful happens, we become terrorists. I feel that if anything happened right now, I could easily flip back into becoming a terrorist.*

John calls the terrorist *a channel for energy*. The impersonal aspect of this term suggests that the terrorist is a role which could be occupied by anyone in the field. The terrorist expresses something that already exists. John also says that terrorist acts happen when people are pushed too far. This points out the context of the terrorist role—that terrorist acts occur in response to other positions in the field. He talks about the role of the terrorist being to shock people. John seems to see the terrorist role as addressing the audience, the groups who commit injustice.

Sara talks about how the Lesbian Avengers make mainstream gays seem more acceptable to the larger culture. She says, *We [the Lesbian Avengers] can be really out there and really radical and people can be very uncomfortable with us, which makes mainstream queers more acceptable.* She describes the Avengers taking a provocative and challenging role. Once they represent that aspect of the lesbian community, mainstream lesbians are more accepted, since they do not challenge the larger culture in the same way. They are less threatening in comparison to the extremity of the Lesbian Avengers.

In January 1995, the Lesbian Avengers did an action in Salem, Oregon. Their purpose was to oppose a proposal by Kevin Mannix (an Oregon state representative) which would make it illegal for an unmarried woman to be artificially inseminated. Their presence stirred the state capitol. They carried signs saying "Turkey Basters forever," chanted "Two, four, six, eight, it's all right to inseminate. One, three, seven, fuck you and your bill, Kevin" and handed passers-by leaflets saying "Kevin Mannix is not pro-family, he's pro-penis." They were thrown out of Mannix's office and then physically escorted out of the building by state police. Their language, style and presence offended many people. Some claimed that the Avengers threatened society and family values. Another state representative who happened to be present was Kate Brown, an ardent supporter of reproductive freedom and lesbian, gay and bisexual rights. When asked to give her opinion about the Avenger action she said "Let's just say that [the Avengers] provoked much discussion among my colleagues here, and quite frankly,

some times citizens *have* to do bizarre stuff in order to get [legislators and the public] to focus on social issues.” She also said, ”Someone asked me ‘Doesn’t this only hurt your cause?’ and I replied, ‘Listen when they are here, they make me look moderate.’ I really do believe that we need to hear from all spectrums of the community.”<sup>4</sup>

Through occupying the role of the provocateur, of the bizarre behaving citizen, the Avengers make other gay and lesbian rights activists seem less threatening and more moderate to the mainstream. In that sense they do a favor for more mainstream gays and lesbians. They sacrifice their personal safety to make a point for the whole gay and lesbian community.

The Avengers are in an extreme role relative to the lesbian sub-culture as well as relative to the larger culture. Lesbians who are perceived as less extreme become more accepted by the larger culture because they are not as threatening. That attitude creates the alienation of sub-groups in the lesbian community, where the lesbian ”mainstream” outcasts sub-groups such as the S/M groups, the transgender/transsexual groups, and the radical political groups. The cycle of non-acceptance and alienation continues.

John talks about the sexism and abuse present in the Black Panthers movement. Peter talks of the homophobia in the traditional and radical political movements in England. Curse talks of the betrayal he felt from his comrades after his arrest. Terrorists and the

groups they belong to are not immune to the dysfunction found in all levels of society.

Just because someone is oppressed does not mean they cannot be also oppressing.

John’s reference to sexism in the Black Panthers and the black community at large makes me think of the Palestinian women and their struggle with both the Israeli oppression and the sexism in Palestinian culture. These women are considered ”soldiers” fighting side by side with men in the Intifada, but then the same women ought to behave like subordinate people when it comes to male-female relationships. Eileen MacDonald interviewed a number of women who were prepared to use violence to achieve their political aims. On the issue of sexism in the communities of the West Bank, she says:

Palestinian women are well aware that they are on the front line in every aspect of the Intifada... They recognized even, as they fought, the similarity between themselves and the Algerian women in the war against the French colonial rule in 1958-1964. Then, Muslim women also carried weaponry under their clothing and sacrificed their freedom and lives for the cause. After independence was won, however, the men made sure they went back into the home and the traditional role of the Muslim wife... Palestinian women are thoroughly determined that they will not meet the same fate once the battle is won... They are not prepared to be soldiers now and second-class citizens later. Their battle for independence as women has to be fought along with the Intifada, while they are in a position of power. It is a lesson that women guerrillas

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<sup>4</sup> Sorensen, I. *Zapping Mr. Mannix* in *Just Out*, Vol 12, Number 7, February 3,1995. p 13

from other societies are learning too. One thinks of the ETA [Basque independence movement in Spain] women and their determination to destroy the machismo that is so deeply ingrained in their men. The IRA women, too, have realized that the struggle for women's rights has to go hand in hand with their fight to evict British presence from Ireland.<sup>5</sup>

So while fighting side by side with the men, the women belonging to the PLO, the ETA and the IRA are at the same time aware of the sexism in their groups. They become then voices for change within the terrorist groups, fighting for equal rights for women. They are fighting against the mainstream ideas and beliefs of the terrorist groups they belong to. The women represent the terrorist role within the terrorist groups. Therefore if any group uses just pure force to overcome another group the world will not change. The structural problems within groups remain and the same issues that they are fighting for in the larger society are being recreated within the groups. The concept of role takes the focus off the content of a conflict and puts it on the process of what they are trying to achieve and how they feel and experience their actions in the moment.

Another example where the content is different, yet a similar role is present is, in the differentiation between left-wing and right-wing terrorism. Left-wing terrorism often involves "innocent victims." The targets may be civilians who serve as a symbol for mainstream society or the oppressor. The bombing of the Oklahoma federal building, in April 1995, would be the first right-wing terrorist act in the United States with innocent victims. People adopting left wing ideology as a backbone of their terrorist activity often come from disadvantaged groups of people, come from a position of less power, and are often stripped of rights that the mainstream culture takes for granted. Peter talked about being gay in a heterosexual culture; John spoke of being a black man in a racist society; Sara mentioned of being a woman and a lesbian in a homophobic and sexist society. These people all experience the whole world as oppressive.

Until recently, right-wing terrorism had targeted specific victims with assigned roles, i.e. government officials, politicians, military people, law enforcement agents. Right-wing terrorists have more often used destruction of property than physical injury or murder. In right-wing terrorism when people were targeted, they were usually specific people with assigned roles. Right-wing terrorism has tended to attract older people than left-wing terrorism. Also, larger numbers of left-wing terrorists have had access to higher education.<sup>6</sup>

Left-wing terrorism usually comes from oppressed groups. As members of oppressed groups, they tend to see all members of the group which oppressed as the oppressor. Coming from this "put down" position, left-wing terrorists tend to have an ideal for a different, better world. They see themselves as working towards more positive future

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<sup>5</sup> MacDonald E.. (1991) *Shoot the Women First*. London: Arrow Books, p 74

<sup>6</sup> for more information on left-wing and right-wing terrorism see: Laquer, Walter. (1987) *The Age of Terrorism*. Boston: Little Brown and Company.

for all people. Right-wing terrorists tend to come from groups that once had privileges which they have now lost. For example, certain members of the working class in the United States and other countries have lost jobs as production plants have moved to areas with cheap labor and as more immigrants have moved in and taken jobs. Some of these working class people may turn to terrorism in an attempt to regain privileges which they feel have been taken by minority or other groups.

As we see, there are differences between left-wing and right-wing terrorists in terms of their background and their choice of targets and goals. But in terms of looking at them as a role-in both communication and behavior aspects- these differences do not hold up. Terrorists may assign different people to occupy a given role (i.e. the role of the one "responsible" for the oppression) but the communication style is the same regardless if they are left-wing or right-wing. When terrorists begin to interact with the public the differences in their background, approach, and goals do not show up in their communication style. They may appear to be different because their goals or techniques are different, but their communication style remains threatening and abusive. What we see as a trait of an individual or a political position can be seen in this context as a characteristic of a role.

All of the interviewees at some point contradicted themselves. My idea of a terrorist was of someone who is righteous and absolutely clear of his positions and beliefs. I imagined that even if they did have second thoughts about their beliefs and ideas that they would not communicate about them since that would go against the righteousness that is connected with terrorism. John and Sara admitted their self contradictions.

Curse contradicted himself without recognizing it in the moment. He supported that a political party that had 31 % of the vote should be legally represented, yet at the same time considered the legalization of the communist party a political mistake. In all three interviews I was surprised to see this happen.

For example, when Sara talks about her morals, she says that *Being honest, being respectful, standing up for what you believe* are important. Then she pauses, thinks about what she is saying, and goes on: *Being respectful? I'm not always very respectful. And being tolerant. Which is hard... again I'm just feeling like I'm really contradicting myself here. I'm not showing much tolerance for the OCA.* Sara identifies as being respectful, tolerant and as someone who believes in people's right to stand for what they believe. Once she starts interacting with the Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA), her behavior doesn't match her morals. This is a common occurrence. In a polarized field where terrorism occurs, the other side isn't seen as human, and thus does not get respect or tolerance from the terrorist.

John believed that joining forces with the PLO would give him the training he needed to join the liberation struggles in Africa, and then to travel back to the United States and use his training to fight racism. Only later did he realize that his first mission with the PLO would have, most probably, been his last one. Even though he continued to believe that he was becoming a terrorist to save his own people, he saw that it was an illusion that he would live to reach his ultimate goal.

Curse, an adamant supporter of military dictatorship and an outspoken critic of the socialist and democratic party in Greece, supports the legalization of the royalist party, but disagrees with the legalization of the communist party. Even while he believes that all people should have the right to their political beliefs, he does not support this right for every kind of political belief. At this point he contradicts his own reason for terrorist activity. He represents two roles at the same time. One says "I know which political parties should be legitimate and which not" and another role that says "everyone is allowed to have their own political beliefs."

Maybe the fact that Sara does not identify as a terrorist, and that John and Curse are ex-terrorists makes it easier for them to contradict themselves. Had they been in the present active in terrorism, would they be open to seeing their contradictions? To a certain point we all contradict ourselves. Self-contradictions are part of our personal growth. They indicate internal conflicts which push us to look at different parts of ourselves, to negotiate between them, and to expand our world views. Noticing and addressing various parts helps us resolve internal conflicts. Self-contradictions can be seen as representing different roles that we occupy when we have many contradictory ideas. Because all of us can represent more than one role, our positions are relative, depending on the role we represent in the moment. The many roles we occupy are part of our wholeness as human beings and we can and do represent many different ideas and positions at any given time.

Another point of interest in viewing terrorism as a role is people's decision to leave a terrorist activity. As described earlier in this chapter, people leave terrorist activity, for various reasons. This indicates, in part, that the terrorist is a role which people can enter into when they need to and drop when it no longer serves them, and not a psychological trait which endures. At the same time, people step out of the role for both personal reasons as well as after being listened to in relationship to the larger social context.

## IV. Listening

In the group processes and the interviews, a common theme was that the terrorists and those occupying the terrorist role need to be heard. In the "machine-gun" example from the previous chapter III, the woman in the terrorist role was so angry at not being heard that she felt like killing people. It was only when she felt heard that the terrorist role dissipated. It needed to exist as long as her position was ignored by the mainstream.

Often people, particularly members of oppressed groups, do not feel listened to, attended to, or heard. According to Gemma Summers, the most basic privilege of the mainstream is "the privilege to be not aware of the minority's suffering."<sup>7</sup> The mainstream perpetuates oppression through its privilege not to listen, and this escalates

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<sup>7</sup> Summers, G. *Conflict: A Gateway to Community*. Dissertation, The Union Institute. 1994. p 124

the conflict between the two sides. By not listening, the mainstream indirectly sends the message to the minority group that the only successful way to gain its attention is through threats.

Some of the group processes I described in Chapter III occurred during World Work and Conflict Resolution seminars organized by the Global Process institute. These seminars provided the opportunity for people from around the world to come together and work with political, social and environmental issues using group process skills. One of aspects of the seminars that interested me was the focus on learning how to listen to many different voices. Not listening only out of politeness, but really engaging with someone who feels the need to be heard. The kind of listening I am referring to involves a sincere interest in the other person's experience and a commitment to engaging in a discussion, however difficult that may be.

The larger the differences between people and the larger the diversity of voices and communication styles, the more difficult it becomes to listen to different voices. As a society we often do not have a framework for this kind of listening. We tend to disregard the early signals of someone's frustration at not being heard and then become surprised when they express themselves in an explosive and threatening way. In the group process examples that I presented in Chapter III it was shown that once the people acting like terrorists in the group were listened to they did not feel the need to remain in that role. In order for us to be able to listen we need to create a container for our differences of opinion and communication styles. The World Work seminars, in this sense, are also social experiments in creating these containers.

The need to be listened to and to be paid attention to came up in the interviews. Sara commented on how the first Lesbian Avenger march in Portland got no police attention, which disappointed the Avengers, since police presence would have given them credibility. Sara talked about feeling discounted: *We were waiting for the cops to show up and arrest us for marching on the street without a permit, being disorderly. And we paid attention to by the larger public.* All of the above themes emerged in the interviews with terrorists.

Terrorists define themselves differently in ways that fit the definition of terrorism that I offered in Chapter II: they all caused intimidation, fear or suffering; their actions were based on political goals; and they lived the life or chose the symbols of terrorists. The debate around the definition of terrorism exists, not only in the literature around the issue, but also in the self-definition of people involved in terrorist activity.

Terrorism does not operate in a vacuum, but in the context of society as a whole.

Terrorism can be viewed as a social role in human interactions. The terrorist role can be seen in the communication style people use, regardless of the content of their communication. The terrorist role exists and operates in relationship to other roles in the social field, such as the oppressor role, the audience role, the law enforcement role, etc.

Terrorists and people occupying the terrorist role often feel not listened to. By not listening, mainstream society indirectly sends the message to these people that the

only successful way to gain its attention is through threats. Creating a container for different voices and opinions to be heard can help people in the terrorist role move out of the role.



# Chapter VI: Conclusion

Various themes emerged out of the group process examples presented in Chapter III and out of the interviews with terrorists presented in Chapter IV. People engaging in terrorism often come from oppressed groups, experiencing themselves and their actions as being in self-defense and wanting to achieve social and political change. Terrorism is not always the goal, but rather the means of communicating with the larger public. People often resort to terrorism after having tried other means of communication with the people responsible for the oppression they experience, and with the larger public that is witnessing their oppression. The theme of abuse and revenge was present in some of the interviews, but is not adequate to explain the reason why people become terrorists. Terrorists come from a position of desperation. They have assumed that they can't get their needs met by any other means. They do not feel they have the power to make changes; they therefore feel driven to terrorist activity and behavior.

The themes emerging from the interviews and the group processes support the complexity of defining terrorism. The debate about whether people resorting to terrorism are terrorists or freedom fighters shows how subjective the definition is. When we study terrorism, we need to study not only the terrorist actions, but also the context in which terrorism occurs.

Terrorism needs to be approached not only from a personal psychological perspective, but also from a socio-political perspective. I offer the idea that the terrorist is a role in the field. Once we recognize that most people have the ability to enter this role, and once we find our own ways of moving fluidly in and out of this role, we may find ourselves in a better position to deal with terrorist activity around the world. Terrorism as a role in groups is a common activity that many of us at some point in our lives take part in. The presence of terrorism as a role can be seen in the communication style people use. Raising one's voice, storming out of a meeting, refusing to engage in dialogue, giving ultimatums to a group are only some of the ways that the role becomes present.

Using role theory to address these situations offers people the possibility to describe and observe and participate in the situation. One can move in and out of a role without identifying only with that aspect of themselves or the group. This can happen by giving roles a voice and physical space in a room so that people can move in and out of them at their own choice. By allowing roles to interact, groups are able to gain a deeper understanding of a conflict situation without threatening members' identities too much. Role theory also offers the choice of identifying with a role or not. This

can be relieving to someone who is part of a disavowed group. They do not need to feel frozen in one particular identity. They can choose to express themselves from different roles. It is often the case that someone who comes out strong in a group, with an intense and powerful language and intimidates everyone, is eventually seen as a teacher, teaching the mainstream, waking them up. The role of the teacher is often present in groups. People who resort to a more violent communication style are often relieved to be able to step out of the terrorist role and move into the role of the teacher. They are given the power to teach and wake people up, by the group's willingness to support their communications, both in style and content, and to interact with this new information. The terrorist role appears as a disturber in the group, disrupting the status quo. By noticing the role and allowing it be expressed, the larger socio-political context is engaged, listening happens and change occurs.

Listening to this aspect of terrorism may help to de-escalate conflict situations. Why wait for terrorism to appear before we listen to people's pain, suffering and demands? It is understandably uncomfortable to listen to opposing views. If we let this discomfort stop us from listening, then we as a world create the circumstances that allow for the terrorist's acts to happen. I believe that, paradoxically, we all need to learn to live a bit more uncomfortably in order to have more peace. Share the discomfort and the growing pains. Most people like to live in a comfort zone; there is nothing wrong with comfort. The comfort zone becomes dangerous when it excludes certain ways of being. I would like to see a world where people would trust that dealing with the discomfort of allowing other people the right to their different beliefs will eventually make the world more comfortable for everybody. The privilege of mainstream society to not have to notice a minority group's suffering and fear of diversity and change are all factors that can contribute to the emergence of terrorism in conflict situations.

## **Suggestions for further research**

### **Role**

The beginning conclusion that terrorism is a role is also worthy of further investigation to see if the role can be related to, transformed or changed. One of my hopes is that this work will stimulate readers from a range of approaches to further explore terrorism in our world. I would also encourage us to learn more about other roles present in a field where terrorism occurs: the role of the oppressor, the role of the audience, the role of the law enforcement, etc. By exploring and understanding these roles we may find new ways of dealing with conflict where and when it occurs.

Anarchists have taken a strong stance against terrorism. Their basic argument is that terrorism empowers the state by creating an atmosphere where strict laws-that often violate human rights-are welcomed by the public. This makes the state more authoritarian and powerful. Bufe says,

You can't blow up a social relationship. The total collapse of this society would provide no guarantee about what replaced it. Unless a majority of people had the ideas and organization sufficient for the creation of an alternative society, we would see the old world reassert itself because it is what people would be used to, what they believed in, what existed unchallenged in their own personalities.<sup>1</sup>

Exploring the roles emerging in the social field we belong to includes challenging our own personalities, while at the same time trying to understand other people's experience and perspective.

## Privilege and Oppression

Terrorism emerges in situations with power differentials. Someone has a higher rank which allows him more power to determine the fate of another person with less political, social or financial power. The one with less power tries to communicate her frustration, desperation and feelings of injustice, but the other side does not listen. One of the main characteristics of privilege is to not have to listen to those who do not share the privileged perspective. Thus, attempts for attention on the side of the underprivileged become more forceful. This situation often ends up in explosions of violence. One area for further research and study is the psychology of privilege. Arnold Mindell has begun to research how privilege affects conflict situations. Process work facilitators are researching the application of interventions which address privilege in group process and conflict situations.

Another point to consider is who defines which person or group is responsible for another person's oppression? Does the terrorist, the law or public opinion decide? My personal view on responsibility is that the people who have financial, social and political privilege are higher on the responsibility scale than people without; the more privilege one has, the more responsibility, because with privilege comes the power to effect change. I am referring to privilege gained directly from the position the person has related to the issue around which terrorism occurs. For example, in the Gulf war of 1991 which spurred terrorist attacks around the world, I see the United States government and high ranking military officers, such as the strategic chairperson, as having more responsibility than a black lieutenant in the US army, who was killed by a terrorist group in Greece. There are many ways of viewing responsibility. One distinction is between active and passive responsibility. As John Stuart Mill said, 'To make anyone answerable for doing evil to others is the rule; to make him answerable for not preventing evil is, comparatively speaking, the exception.'<sup>2</sup> Yet terrorists often consider passive responsibility worthy of punishment, as in the previous example.

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<sup>1</sup> Bufe, C. (ed) (1990) *You Cant Blow Up a Social Relationship: The Anarchist Case Against Terrorism*. See Sharp Press: San Francisco p.20

<sup>2</sup> Mill, J.S. (1926) *On Liberty in Utilitarianism. On Liberty, and Reoresenatative Government*. Lindsay, A.D. (ed), London: Dent. p. 74

The problem with considering levels of responsibility is that it creates shades of involvement in social issues, a gray zone where things are subject to individual interpretation. Terrorism, on the other hand, especially assassination, is not a "sort of situation. You can't be "sort of dead" or "sort of injured." I believe it is important for people to be aware of their own political and social beliefs when trying to understand terrorism, because those beliefs act like filters, selectively leaving out aspects of the problem.

## Definition

Another interesting area which deserves further consideration is the biased construction of the definition of terrorism. The "terrorist" is defined in relationship to and by the group which is "terrorized." Both sides in a conflict often accuse each other of being terrorists. This has happened in the Middle East, and in the conflict between the religious right and gay/lesbian groups in the United States. Even though I am studying terrorism from the stance of supporting all sides and listening to all sides, I am influenced by my political beliefs.

For example, when incidents like the assassination of two workers in abortion clinics happen (Brookline, MA, December 30,1994) I find myself considering the terrorist as a murderer. I consider the anti-abortion groups that support violence against abortion clinics collaborators to the murders, and I lose tolerance for their explanations or justifications. In the recent Brookline attack, I caught myself wishing the terrorist would be condemned to the electric chair.

Depending on the issue at stake, the word "terrorism" is charged with different feelings for me. When I read about terrorist acts performed by oppressed groups—groups that I believe are oppressed-I have an understanding for their actions. I am more open to their point of view, even though I condemn acts of violence. I justify inside of me the acts of violence of these groups as defenses against oppression. My own research results suggest that I have my own personal areas for particular issues where I do not feel listened to. From this point of view, I recognize in my sympathy towards left-wing causes the areas in which I need to communicate more about my ideas and dreams for the world-where I feel oppressed or disrespected by the larger culture.

The research into a definition of terrorism and into the social construction of terrorist activity is in its seminal stages. Areas which call for further exploration include

developing a definition of terrorism which takes into account all sides, i.e., a definition which is not determined by the group with the most social power. Also, exploring the bias of researchers into terrorism is an exciting area. The psychology of privilege, and the effect of privilege in conflict situations where terrorism occurs is a new area of study. Class-related social identities and issues of privilege create fertile ground for the emergence of terrorism by imposing barriers of perception and understanding between privileged and disadvantaged groups.

## **Listening**

Another research question is whether listening to an individual or group's pain and suffering will work in part to de-escalate conflict before it reaches the stage of terrorist activity. For example if experiments could be designed to determine what the transformative potential of listening actually is. With the advancement of technology and transportation, and the increased mobility of people around the world, comes a time where communities are becoming more diverse than ever. Differences in ethnicity, religion and economic status create an environment where conflict can emerge. As a global community we are faced with the challenge of dealing with diversity between the members of our communities. Even though differences between people cause tension, I also see them as a challenge in expanding our perception of each other and of the world.

My hope is that this research project will offer a new perspective on the phenomenon of terrorism. Another hope is that the presentation of people's individual stories will give researchers a deeper and more humane understanding of the people involved in terrorist activity.

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