

“Leaving the Logic of Security Behind”¹

Counter-terrorism is reaching its logical conclusion.² Even going as far as passing a series of laws in the middle of July³ and, sometime between 14 July and 15 August [2014], concluding an investigation that, for [the last] six years, has laid bare the scandal of counter-terrorism’s mechanisms (the Tarnac Affair). Like a desire for annihilation that insists on having and defying⁴ all kinds of obstacles so as to arrive, blindly, at its final destination.

It is obvious that the new arrangements prescribed by these “Socialist” laws⁵ are absurd, vague and unenforceable; even before they were voted on, we could see all the twisted ends for which they would eventually be used by the security services at the conclusion of a calculated [downward] slide and precisely *because of* their vagueness and absurdity.

In Italy, they are trying to use counter-terrorism to minimize [*réduire*] the tenacity of the struggle against the construction site for the Lyon-Turin TGV⁶ line, which is a movement that includes the inhabitants of an entire valley as well as tens of thousands of partisans from all over the country. In the Ukraine, the Army’s open use of military force isn’t described as warfare, but a “counter-terrorist operation.”

In Palestine, the murders of three young Jewish settlers or a young Palestinian boy aren’t simply instances of accounts being settled, but “acts of terrorism.” The bombardment of Gaza, of course, targeted “terrorist sites.” In England, it is due to the counter-terrorism laws that the authorities were able to divert [*délester*] a messenger in transit who was carrying documents furnished by [Edward] Snowden.

Who is surprised that, for the very same crime, the penalties mandated by the counter-terrorist legislation of the Italian democracy are on average three times heavier than those of the Rocco Code, which was the penal code during the fascist regime? No one.

¹ “Sortons de la logique sécuritaire,” signed by Christophe Becker, Mathieu Burnel, Julien Coupat, Bertrand Deveaud, Manon Glibert, Gabrielle Hallez, Elsa Hauck, Yildune Lévy, Benjamin Rosoux, and Aria Thomas, and published in *Le Monde* on 18 July 2014. Translated by NOT BORED! on 31 August 2015. All footnotes by the translator.

² The French here, *ira au bout de sa logique*, can also mean “implementing its logic.”

³ At a time when people are on vacation and thus preoccupied with other things.

⁴ The French here, *se joue de*, can also mean “makes use of.”

⁵ Promulgated under the administration of François Hollande, who heads the French Socialist Party.

⁶ The French acronym for “high-speed train.”

With the Cazeneuve Counter-Terrorism Law,⁷ a reborn anti-globalization movement will not fail – the day after a new Seattle⁸ – to see its Internet sites closed down, [all] protesters forbidden from traveling and the most active elements prosecuted for “criminal association in relation to a terrorist enterprise” or, for the less sociable, an “individual terrorist enterprise.”

What editor-in-chief today would agree to publish a piece like the one Baudrillard wrote about September 11th⁹ if he or she expects to be summoned before a judge at la galerie Saint-Eloi¹⁰ for “supporting terrorism”?

Nothing – no formal or fundamental critique, no juridical quibble, no patent corruption – manages to stop the [runaway] train of counter-terrorism. Contrary to what people claim, terrorism, far from constituting the Absolute Other of democracy, stems from it logically.¹¹

Despite the impressive legal vagueness that surrounds the definition of “terrorism,” Western common sense defines it as a premeditated attack – either due to cowardice or convenience – against an innocent civilian population. But in a democracy, who is a civilian?

Who is innocent when each person, even the humblest citizen, is reputed to be sovereign and thus responsible for his or her government’s machinations, if only because he or she pays his or her taxes and doesn’t rebel? And what is more democratic than bombing a territory blindly and annihilating legions of civilians? If the People are sovereign, then the People are a legitimate target.

The fact that, in a democracy, there can be no possible distinctions made between civilians and soldiers, between those who are innocents and those who are guilty, is one of the truths that the carnage of the 20th century has made obvious. It was through such reasoning that the British air force came to elaborate its famous doctrine of *moral bombing*¹² during the Second World War – killing, injuring or dislodging the maximum number of civilians so that they would put pressure on those in charge to capitulate.¹³

Was that terrorism or an ingenious form of psychological warfare in the

⁷ Proposed April 2014 and put into effect July 2015. Cf. <http://www.gouvernement.fr/action/la-lutte-contre-le-terrorisme> (French only).

⁸ An allusion to the highly effective anti-WTO protests in Seattle, WA, November 1999.

⁹ Jean Baudrillard, “L’esprit du terrorisme,” *Le Monde*, 2 November 2001. Translated into English here: <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jean-baudrillard/articles/the-spirit-of-terrorism/>.

¹⁰ The location of the headquarters of the French counter-terrorism judiciary.

¹¹ Cf. Guy Debord, Chapter IX, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (1988): “This perfect democracy fabricates its own inconceivable enemy, terrorism.”

¹² English in original

¹³ Cf. the bombing of Dresden, February 1945:

http://en.metapedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Dresden_in_World_War_II.

service of democracy? The very fact that the question arises attests to the dangerously terroristic character of democratic tactics.

The 20th century bequeathed to us these two truths, which are very hard for us to accept: (1) those who have something against our democratic governments wholly have the capacity [*le titre*] to strike out against anyone of us, in that democracy implies terrorism the way monarchy implies regicide; and (2) anyone who takes exception in any manner to any aspect [*élément*] of the People attacks the integrity of the sovereign him- or herself, in that *every crime is essentially an act of terrorism*. And no one can claim that we aren't traveling quickly in this direction.

No doubt we aren't far from the day on which what we absurdly call "road rage" [*violence routière*] will be replaced by "road terrorism." If they haven't started treating any and all criminal infractions as "terrorist" infractions, it is only because of pragmatic concerns.

The level of social pacification still isn't high enough: there are still too many crimes and offenses for the authorities to be able to denounce each one of them as a monstrous attack on everyone. But don't doubt that they are working on it. While the Minister of the Interior tries to justify the new counter-terrorist legislation by claiming that it is fitting to track "hatred" on the Internet and that people become dangerous as soon as they've been in contact with "violence" (the way people used to have contact with the Devil in prior eras), the fact of the matter is that there are people who don't hesitate to reject our air-conditioned paradise.

Here again, the ghostly character of the notions that the authorities hold up as absolutely repulsive ("hatred," "violent radicalization," even "self-radicalization") clearly suggests the scope of the prerogatives of democracy's knights who are tasked with destroying these chimera, as well as the always-increasing numbers of those who fall victim to such accusations.

As for the usual litany that, with each new excessive advance in counter-terrorism, Platonically wonders about the balance to be struck between freedom and security, perhaps now is the time to reveal the existence of a certain Michel Foucault to the official mourners.

From the depths of the obscure Collège de France, Foucault demonstrated once and for all that the growth of security apparatuses is the corollary of a very particular [form of] governmentality:¹⁴ liberal governmentality. It uses the freedom of those governed as its elementary mechanism; it rests upon that freedom, and

¹⁴ One of Foucault's coinages, the word *gouvernementalité* doesn't exist in French, just as "governmentality" doesn't exist in English.

maintains and strengthens itself through it. To critique “security excesses”¹⁵ in the name of “individual freedom” is to understand nothing of either freedom or security.

People will ask us, “but what is to be done?” Well, come back down to earth. Coming back down to earth means leaving behind the psychosis that sees children at the exit of a Jewish school as the accomplices as the Zionist entity, or kids gone off to fight in Syria as a “jihadist menace.” It means tearing ourselves away from the infantilism that only sees villains and no enemies.

It means that they are people who hate us and who, despite that, aren’t crazy or wild beasts. It means ceasing to see wolves everywhere, when in fact there are only people, be they solitary, murderous, lost or desperate. Coming back down to earth means accepting that there are other causes [*raisons*] than ours.

It means that we will never all be friends, that humanity will never be reconciled [with itself] in a vast global ecumenical society, and that this isn’t so bad. When you no longer fear your enemies, you no longer have the need to make them into criminals, lunatics or fanatics.

Coming back down to earth means ceasing to write headlines of this type, “Terrorism: the Jewish Museum in Brussels Attacked by a Jihadist,” and replacing them with headlines more in conformity with reality: “Stupidity strikes again: a Bloom¹⁶ believes he committed a political act by killing the cashier and several tourists at the Jewish Museum in Brussels.”

In general, it would be in better taste to substitute “Stupidity” for “Terrorism” and “Counter-terrorism.” Because everyone knows that no law or intelligence agency, even one as brilliant as the DGSE,¹⁷ will ever defeat all the Merahs¹⁸ of this world.

There are excellent reasons to fight the West, excellent reasons to want the end of this society, and they can’t be reduced to the desire to spread terror. Cazeneuve and the *spin doctors*¹⁹ of counter-terrorism can do nothing about it: Western democracies can never find their lost honor by imprisoning [*en enfermant*] their enemies in the figure of the Monster or by multiplying increasingly demented legal proceedings against them.

¹⁵ The French here, *dérives sécuritaires*, can also be translated as “downward spirals in security” or even as “mission-creep in matters of security.”

¹⁶ An allusion to *Théorie du Bloom*, a text by Tiqqun (La Fabrique Editions, 2000), translated into English as *Theory of Bloom* by Robert Hurley (LBC Books, 2012).

¹⁷ *Direction générale de la sécurité extérieure*, the French equivalent of the CIA.

¹⁸ Mohammed Merah, a 23-year-old Algerian who perpetrated lethal attacks on French soldiers and Jews in March 2012.

¹⁹ English in original.