

Terrorist psychobabble mixes good guys with bad

John S. Day

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Spare me, please, any more sob stories about the “Unabomber.” Or the “Oklahoma City Bombers.”

I got my fill of that 20 years ago, with Maine’s “Bicentennial Bomber.”

Frankly, I’ve heard quite enough about the Freeman, Patriots, Citizen Militias, David Koresh and the shootout at Ruby Ridge.

Why, I ask, must we habitually cast these whacked-out criminals as good-men-gone-wrong, or society’s victims?

After the arrest of Theodore John Kaczynski, the man authorities suspect is the Unabomber, reporters obsessed over the serial killer’s brilliant academic career, his mountain man lifestyle, and the fact that his own family gave him up to the FBI.

The man attempted 23 murders. He killed three individuals. Many victims were maimed and disfigured.

The crime wave seems forgotten.

Instead, we’re subjected to an endless parade of psychobabble experts eager to explain the political passions that drove this

Harvard graduate to murderous deeds.

“I’ve always said that people like [Kaczynski] are manufactured, not born. They’ll find something connected to the father and mother. These people just don’t come from outer space,” behavioral scientist John Douglas told The New York Times.

Don’t be so sure.

If they try this guy in California, the odds are good he’ll walk, like O.J. Simpson, and end up as Ralph Nader’s running mate on the Green Party’s presidential ticket. Sure, he killed and disfigured a lot of people. But most of them were timber industry lobbyists.

Thursday night, Peter Jennings of ABC News did his best to turn Oklahoma City bombers Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols into a couple of Middle America farm boys who strayed into mischief. The Republicans in Congress held 31 days of hearings on the Waco, Texas, disaster with the apparent objective of trying to prove that David Koresh was a Christ figure murdered with his followers in a federal massacre.

I’ve seen this kind of “Stockholm syndrome” played out before. That’s the phenomenon where hostages identify more with their captors than the authorities trying to rescue them. We, the hostage public, seem driven to make heroes of these hardened criminals.

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— John Douglas, a behavioral scientist, told The New York Times

In 1976, on the eve of America’s bicentennial, a series of bombs rocked New England. (The first exploded at Central Maine Power Co.’s Augusta headquarters. Then, others at the Suffolk County, Mass., Courthouse and Logan International Airport in Boston.

Twenty-three people were injured in the courthouse explosion, including a man who lost his leg.

The terror spree of bank robberies and bombings lasted nearly a decade. Three members of the group were arrested on their way to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard to blow up a nuclear submarine on public display for Fourth of July celebrations. New Jersey's most-decorated state police officer was murdered in a shootout with the terrorists. The ringleader, Raymond Luc Levasseur of Sanford, was finally captured in 1981

Like Kaczynski, Levasseur was fixated on manifestos.

"The blood of innocent people stirred my conscience," he said at his trial. Citing U.S. policies toward Nicaragua, El Salvador, Puerto Rico and South Africa, the Maine man declared, "I think you ought to ask this question: Who are the real criminals?"

A Texas prison sentence for selling \$7 worth of marijuana after his combat tour in Vietnam, he said, had hardened his views toward America. Witnesses testified that Levasseur had been an exemplary father to his children during the decade on the lam.

Give me a break.

The guy netted \$900,000 robbing banks.

He blew up buildings.

His henchmen gunned down a state trooper.

The only difference between Levasseur and McVeigh is McVeigh figured out how to use fertilizer to make bigger bombs.

The most disturbing thing about Levasseur's terrorism spree is the fact a lot of people in Maine knew what he was up to but kept their mouths shut. Levasseur was a folk hero to Portland's tiny leftist community. He founded a convicts' rights group called the Statewide Correctional Alliance for Reform and sometimes testified before legislative committees. When Spiro Agnew addressed Maine's GOP convention in 1972, Levasseur threw eggs at the vice president.

SCAR supposedly split on the issue of violence. Levasseur took his cell of ex-cons down the road to a decade of terrorism. Like good Nazis, the remaining members kept their mouths shut. Even after the bombs started going off, they played dumb and complained about police harassment.

David Kaczynski, the Unabomber's brother, was made of better stuff. Noting the similarities between the bomber's long environmental manifesto and letters from his brother Ted, Kaczynski hired a private detective who confirmed that dark suspicion.

The brother's choice was this:

Betray a family member and stop the killings.

Remain silent, like Levasseur's SCAR buddies, and prolong the terror wave.

The Unabomber's brother did the right thing.

Now he's taking heat for ratting out his brother.

New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd took issue when comedian David Letterman mocked David Kaczynski as "the Unasquealer." She decried the fact that CNN's "Talk Back Live" debated whether the brother was a "saint or snitch."

She's right.
So are the people who say America is in moral decline.
— Washington

The Ted K Archive

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