

A Year of Resolve

The temptation on an anniversary like today's is to recall our loss and grief, and there is a place for that in the ceremonies in Washington, Pennsylvania and New York. But we also want to remember the anger, and the resolve, this country felt a year ago because the great task that started that day remains unfinished one year later.

Nearly 3,000 civilians were murdered on September 11, for no other reason than that they were Americans or foreigners who worked with Americans, as Ted Olson reminds us in the passionate November speech we reprint nearby. Our duty today remains not only to avenge those deaths, but to eradicate the sources of that terror so completely that they no longer threaten innocents. Today's memories will be worth fresh tears only if they rededicate us to that fight.

A year later we can at least say that fight has been well begun. Knocked out of our own offices that day, we nonetheless wrote optimistically that "modern industrial society" has "a certain resilience," and the last year has proved this true. The country has united in its anti-terror purpose, at least that part of it outside college faculties and certain editorial boards. President Bush has led well for the most part, notably through a moral clarity that has ended a century of rationalizations, and often romanticization, of terrorism. One man's terrorist is now, finally in America's mind, another man's terrorist.

The war itself has had some setbacks but more successes. The Taliban who protected al Qaeda are dead or dispersed; perhaps Osama bin Laden is himself dead, or perhaps in hiding, but in either case his threat is diminished because his network is playing defense for the first time. In that sense, we are safer than we were a year ago. We are safer because we are aware of the danger and finally doing something about it.

On that score, Mr. Bush's new pre-emption doctrine is a strategic breakthrough appropriate to this new era. We learned on September 11 that the internal chaos of even the most backward country can breed those who would do us great harm. The principle of "non-intervention" in the internal affairs of lunatic regimes is a luxury of an age before weapons of mass destruction. Consistent with this doctrine, the President has accurately described an "axis of evil," and is now urging the world to help America depose its most dangerous member, Saddam Hussein. That challenge was taken up later than we might have preferred, but the delay seems not to have done tangible harm.

As in the first year of any war, some of the progress is ambiguous or incomplete. Pakistan's military government no longer winks at al Qaeda, but its lack of democratic consent makes it a vulnerable ally. Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi support for terrorism has been exposed as

a devil's bargain, but that kingdom has also not yet decided whose side it is on. Only this week we learned of its latest refusal to cooperate in interdicting the flow of terrorist cash. And while Afghanistan is better off than it was a year ago, Hamid Karzai's government is a long way from secure and his country further still from prosperity. We don't agree with those who say that nation-building in Afghanistan is the test case for Iraq, because the countries are so different now and historically. But the U.S. still has much to do in Kabul.

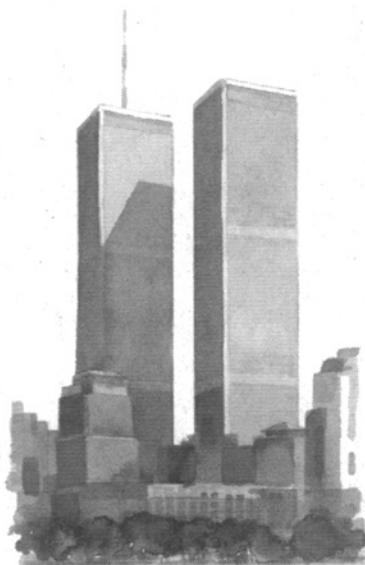
Here at home we have been struck above all this year by the American public's consistent determination. This can be measured in the high approval ratings for Mr. Bush, despite economic news that would normally take him down toward 50%. We'd measure it as well by the public's refusal to heed persistent media alarms about an alleged war on civil liberties as part of the anti-terror campaign. The public has more faith in our democracy's ability to adapt to new threats while preserving our freedoms than do the Vietnam-era elites now running some of our institutions.

For the most part the Bush Administration is merely repairing the damage done to our security and intelligence agencies by those same elites since Vietnam. The exception is homeland security, where even the White House has so far let itself be intimidated by political correctness (no racial profiling in airline screening), health-care overcaution (limited smallpox vaccinations) and bureaucratic inertia (the too narrow FBI probe into last year's anthrax attacks). The solutions here don't lie in rearranging the federal furniture but in leader-

ship willing to challenge liberal shibboleths.

We especially reject the argument, from both right and left, that Mr. Bush has somehow failed to "mobilize" the country as FDR did after Pearl Harbor. What these critics usually mean is that he hasn't taken their advice to expand the federal government—on everything except defense. But while the U.S. last year was taken by surprise as at Pearl Harbor, today's battle is not another World War II fought directly against imperial nation-states. The better analogy is to the Cold War, a long contest often fought in the shadows and by proxy but during which most Americans went on leading normal lives. We won that war a decade ago with the same highly trained volunteer military that has performed so ably in Afghanistan, and no doubt will in Iraq.

Those of us who write these columns recently returned to our offices 11 floors above the pit that once was the World Trade Center foundation. We will observe today's ceremonies from that perch with grief at our national loss, praying for the dead and their loved ones. But more than that, and like most of America, we will resolve anew to persist in the war against terrorism until we have won.



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