

# Four Years Since

## An Afterword to the German Edition of *Conjuring Hitler*

Still, Hitler hasn't ceased from haunting current events—and as of late, ever more frequently, so it indeed seems. His name is repeatedly invoked whenever a petty tyrant challenges the United States, or whenever the Far Right comes a-troubling a political joust that is much too rehearsed. Yet, [...] rather than appealing to the somewhat unscientific notion of 'evil', wouldn't it be more urgent to understand more precisely what came to pass in those days?

Olivier Delpa, *La face cachée de 1940*.<sup>1</sup>

I knew Germanness was something to conceal [...]. All things considered, I would prefer to bear the burden of the Jew to that of the German. One is liberating, that of moral outrage and survival, while the other is confining, that of inherited guilt [...]. Multi-cultural:...this is the Germany [I ] believe in [...]. I am an American correspondent again, safely back on home turf. I've escaped Hitler's Reich for the [healthy world] of Ronald McDonald.

Frederick Kempe, *Father/Land*.<sup>2</sup>

**I**ndeed, because *Conjuring Hitler* was written very much with the German readership in mind, it is with the greatest pleasure and expectancy that I witness the release of this edition.

As I had hinted in the Preface, the book's composition represented an attempt to put into proper perspective a variety of riddles and cultural anxieties,

which are part of the uneasy legacy of a great many westerners, especially Europeans—anxieties such as fathoming the unspeakable experience of our grandfathers' generation, the cultural future and the presently lost greatness of Germany, the nature of Hitlerism, and the prospects of world peace in the era of American dominance. It was along these, rather customary, lines of investigation that the book project proceeded, until 9/11 struck.

Incredibly, up to that caesura in time it seemed as though one had lived in some kind of insular stupor. All of a sudden, one found himself awakened to the reality of geopolitics—the event beckoned the straggler that war was on. In truth, prior to 9/11, the NATO bombing of Serbia during the battle for Kosovo in 1999 was a maneuver grave enough to have jolted anyone out of such political numbness and pushed him to connect the dots, so to speak: to acknowledge in other words that the act was part of the unbroken US design to fracture Eurasia along its main fault-lines with a view to world control. Of course, some analysts did—references to Brezinski's standard opus<sup>3</sup> occasionally surfaced in the petulant debates of the day (I was in Italy at the time), but no cohesive explanation of the war in Yugoslavia within a wider framework of geopolitical and historical analysis found its way into the mainstream. The episode was then forgotten, its significance muffled by the usual tedium of diplomatic rounds. And so we went back to sleep, for a couple of more years.

I was just beginning my second year as Assistant Professor at the University of Washington when the Twin Towers fell. I recall the shock with which I witnessed the literal metamorphosis of the public mood in the aftermath. For a day or two, timidly yet with reason, people questioned the happening, but before they all could further articulate a sensible response to it, they were swept, ravished as it were, by the civil mobilization