NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

TIME, SEPTEMBER 24, 2001

THE TWIN TOWERS

Should They Be Rebuilt?

Recovering human remains and removing the mountain of debris in lower Manhattan will be an enormous, grim and time-consuming job, but at least there is no doubt about what needs to be done. Once the area has been cleared, the next step is far less certain. Should the World Trade Center be rebuilt, as Mayor Giuliani seemed to promise last week? Or should the 16-acre site be turned into a memorial for the thousands who perished there?

At this point, no one at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which owned the buildings, is prepared to make any such decisions—and even the mayor has admitted that "rebuild" doesn't necessarily mean rebuild in their original form.

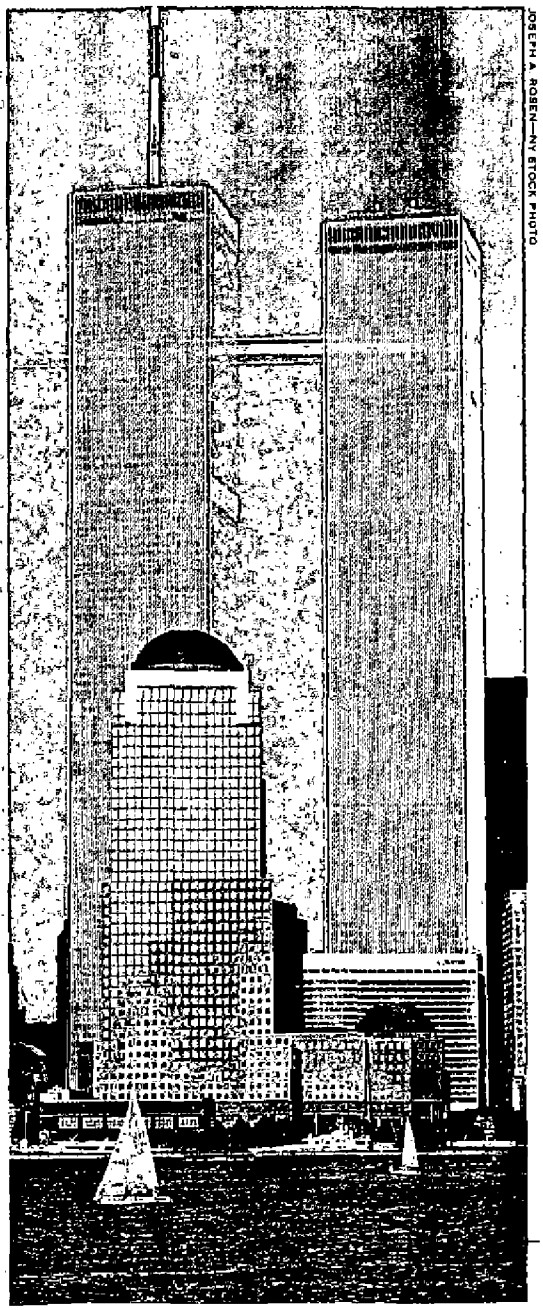
There is, of course, no technical obstacle to reconstructing the Twin Towers, and some terrorism experts think there are good reasons for doing so. "You want to send the message that we won't allow this to permanently change our society," says Ric Stoll, professor of international relations at Rice University. Rebuilding would be one way to get that message across.

After World War II, reconstruction of iconic buildings was a major civic project in some bombed-out European cities, a way of affirming continuity and triumph over death. Vienna, for example, spent decades rebuilding the medieval Cathedral of St. Stephen.

But restoring the Twin Towers is a different proposition. The cost would run into billions of dollars, and it's hard to imagine tenants lining up for space in buildings that would be targets for terrorists even before they went up. On the other hand, this field of rubble occupies one of the world's most valuable pieces of real estate in an area where tens of thousands of people need a place to work. Another possibility, therefore, would be to rebuild but in a different form that would allow the new structures to serve as a memorial to those who died.

Whatever is built may be seen as a de facto memorial. Says Carol Ross Barney, who designed the new federal building in Oklahoma City to replace the one destroyed in the 1995 bombing: "I don't know if you can build anything that's not a symbol. Every building tells you what people were thinking when they built it." But Oklahoma City erected a separate memorial nearby, and aside from its symbolic presence, says Barney, "there's nothing about the building that specifically commemorates the bombing."

Perhaps New York City will eventually adopt a similar solution: new structures quite unlike the old as well as a separate memorial. Whatever happens, says Hans Butzer, who co-designed Oklahoma City's memorial, it shouldn't happen in a hurry: "One of the things that proved to be so useful for Oklahoma City was the process by which the community tried to make sense of the tragedy. It was open and participatory. While it may be prudent for politicians to make bold statements or shows of courage and strength, it may not be wise in the long run to be deciding right now how we should react." —*By Michael D. Lemonick. Reported by David Bjerklie and Christine Gorman/New York*



JOSEPH A. ROSEN—NY STOCK PHOTO

CITY_21MC100_011829583

NYC-WTC_000412293