

FOUND 276-94 A6

Cannistraro's Volley In 'War of Words'

Ira Stoll's account of the clash between Steven Emerson and me at the University of South Florida contains one inaccuracy ("War of Words Erupts Among the Experts at Parley on Terror," Forward, Jan. 26). I did not tell Mr. Stoll that Mark Berroso, president of the Tampa chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, paid for my trip to Florida. In fact, I paid for the trip myself. My mother, who is retired in the Tampa region, was the occasion of my visit. In addition, Mr. Stoll refers to a letter from Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman's attorney informing prosecutors of "Mr. Cannistraro's intention to testify on behalf of the Sheik." Mr. Emerson referred at the debate to a subpoena compelling my expert witness testimony on the nature of international terrorism. It is more than a fine point — I never suggested to the defense that I would provide an apologia for the sheik or his followers.

It must be pointed out as well that my disagreement with Mr. Emerson is substantive. He believes that a loose confederation of like-minded radical Islamists are conducting and supporting terrorism on American soil, and he has cited the World Trade Center bombing and the so-called Landmarks cases in support. On the contrary, there is now sufficient evidence available that the World Trade Center was an act of state-sponsored terrorism. The New York and New Jersey radicals who were convicted of the crime were organized and manipulated by Ramzi Yousef (currently pending trial), an Iraqi intelligence agent. A failure to analyze the true nature of the terrorist threat will cost us dearly in the future.

*Vincent M. Cannistraro
McLean, Va.*