

# Action Directe Chronology

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Action Directe was a communist guerilla organization active in France between 1979 and 1987. AD grew out of the French autonomist scene, drew heavy inspiration from both the struggles of the Third World proletariat and the intellectual legacy of the new communist currents of the 1960s and 70s. It carried out a number of spectacular attacks, many of which were in cooperation with West Germany's Red Army Faction.

See also: Interview with Joelle Aubron of Action Directe, conducted in 2002 and 2003 for the webzine Future Noir.

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Here is a historical timeline of Action Directe. It is mainly (but not only) comprised of information from a document that was distributed a few months ago in the autonomist "movement".

# 1972–1976: The Background

At the end of the 1960s, the most revolutionary elements of post-68 were grouped around the group Gauche Proletarienne, whose newspaper was called Cause du Peuple (CDP). The political context is understood as being a “new fascism” heading towards “civil war”.

A “new resistance” develops within the anti-authoritarian youth movement and workers’ struggles. Certain activists from GP are killed by the police and factory guards, and so the GP organized an illegal armed group, “la Nouvelle Resistance Populaire” (NRP — translation: New Popular Resistance).

The NPR tries to kidnap a deputy, kidnaps a Renault company officer, but ends up dissolving itself after a little while, refusing to take the step to armed struggle and entertaining high hopes for the social movements like the self-management of the LIP watch factory or the occupation of military land at Larzac.

Yet this is not the end of armed struggle in France. In May 1974 the Groupes d’Action Revolutionnaire Internationaliste (GARI — trans.: Groups for Revolutionary Internationalist Action) are formed. The GARI intended to offer financial, material and military support to the struggle against Francoism in Spain, especially the ex-MIL (Mouvement Iberique de Liberation, tran.: Iberian Liberation Movement). From 1971 to 1973 the MIL had carried out expropriations and published revolutionary texts...

One of its best known activists was Salvador Puig-Antich, killed with a garrot on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1974.

The GARI intend to “struggle by direct action against the Franco dictatorship, against Capital, against the State, for the liberation of Spain, Europe and the world.”

On March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1974 the GARI kidnap the bank director from Bilbao in Paris, carry out 25 attacks and 5 holdups in Paris, in the Midi of France and in Belgium. The GARI are dismantled after a certain time.

Next to appear are the Brigades Internationales (BI — trans. International Brigades). The BI form “a politicomilitary anti-imperialist Maoist organization of revolutionary French militants.” (Liberation, June 30<sup>th</sup> 1976)

Formed after the coup in Chili in 1973 to remedy the “inability of the revolutionary organizations to mount an adequate response”, the BI carry out very hard actions for three years and are never destroyed by the police.

On December 9<sup>th</sup> 1974 the BI Raul Sendi group (named after the founder of the Tupamaros) executes Colonel Trabal, Uruguayan military attache. On October 8<sup>th</sup> 1975 the BI Juan Manot group (names after a Basque militant who was killed by

firing squad on September 27<sup>th</sup> 1975) tries to execute the Spanish military attache Garcia.

On May 10<sup>th</sup> 1976 the BI Che Guevara group executes the Bolivian ambassador in Paris.

On November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1976 the BI Reza Rezay group (named after an Iranian militant killed on June 16<sup>th</sup> 1973) attempts to execute the Iranian cultural attache.

On July 7<sup>th</sup> 1977 the BI Ouali Sayed attempts to execute the ambassador from Mauritania.

The Noyaux Armes Pour l'Autonomie Populaire (NAPAP — trans. Armed Nuclei for Popular Autonomy) formed next. On March 25<sup>th</sup> 1977 Jean-Antoine Tramoni was executed — he was the factory guard who had killed the GP militant Pierre Overney.

On March 27<sup>th</sup> the NAPAP set fire to the Renault-Flins factory parking lot; on April 3<sup>rd</sup> there was an attack against the CFT; on June 6<sup>th</sup> an attack and gunfire against Chrysler-France; October 8<sup>th</sup> an attack against the Sceaux guardhouse; on October 14<sup>th</sup> against the Supreme Court and the Ministry of Justice; finally an attack against a Mercedes exposition hall.

Who are the NAPAP?

*We have nothing to do with the 'Maoists' label the press has stuck on us. If it is true that some former Maoists belong to the NAPAP, it is not only as a result of the liquidation of Gauche Proletarienne...*

*It is clear that we are not the fighting party of whatever, and even less the new 'Baader gang'.*

*We have learnt the lessons of the politico-military experience in other countries, which leads the fighter 'specialists' in solitary and suicidal struggle against the modern State apparatus. Our practice is a part of the construction of workers' autonomy within the popular movement.*

*Our goal is not to call for the formation of A, 10, 100 NAPAP controlled by a central leadership in the manner of a General Staff of the people's potential violence.*

*We are entering a new stage which consists of our melting into the movement's activity, not trying to lead it either officially or through intrigue.*

# 1977–78: Preparation

In France the autonomous offensive, meaning the autonomist movement, started from small groups which confronted the police during the big anti-nuclear demonstration in Malville.

”Malville brutally brought back those who had been drifting aimlessly since 1972.” (the autonomist magazine “Camarades” #6)

The autonomist movement does not reject armed struggle, as can be seen by its slogans (“armed struggle and workers’ autonomy”, “autonomy and attack”, “offensive autonomy, armed struggle, for communism”) for “the developpment of violence is a fact of the movement.” (Camarades #4–5)

But by the same token, the violence cannot be the simple act of an organization, it depends on the movement.

”The movement is read and able, without waiting for permission from the lefties, to defend its needs and massively assume a high level of conflict with the State... so that the entire movement can recognize itself in the each violent action acried out by small groups.” (Camarades #6)

The militants from Action Directe, which does not exist yet, carry out sabotage and other illegal actions.

And so there is a night of co-ordinated action against the construction of the Malville nuclear plant (23 attacks claimed by CARLOS — “coordination autonome radicalement en lutte ouverte contre la societe” — trans.

”Autonom9ous Coordination Radically In Struggle Against Society).

Another night of coordinated activities against the extradition of Klaus Croissant, the lawyer of prisoners of the Germany Red Army Faction, actions following the news of the RAF prisoners’ “suicides”; in Toulouse the CACT (coordination autonome contre le travail; trans.: Autonomous Coordination Against Work) attacks the ANPE and temp agencies.

In the summer of 1978 militants from MATRA (Mouvements armes terroristes revolutionnaires anarchistes — trans. Revolutionary Anarchist Terrorist Armed Movements) are arrested, accused of 35 attacks against ANPEs, EDF buildings, temp agencies, police stations, court-houses, etc.

# 1979: The Beginning

May 1<sup>st</sup>: the organization “Action Directe” appears, claiming the machine-gunning of the CNPF ((conseil national du patronat frangais, trans.: French National Employers’ Association) building in Paris.

September 15<sup>th</sup>: Attacks against the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Health.

September 16<sup>th</sup>: the destruction of the SONACOTRA headquarters (a mixed corporation that manages immigrant workers’ housing) after the massive police evictions following a rent strike that had gone on for several months. Machine gunning of the offices of the secretariat of immigrant workers (in the same building as the Ministry of Labour).

September 27<sup>th</sup>: attack against the employers’ offices in charge of managing employment for the Paris region.

# 1980: Armed propaganda

February 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>: attacks against the management of the inspection of work.

February 10<sup>th</sup>: attack against the UCPI, a real estate company implicated in the expropriation of housing in the working class neighbourhoods of Paris.

March 12<sup>th</sup>: attack against another real estate company implicated in above expropriations.

March 14<sup>th</sup>: attack against the offices of the section of the DST (direction de la surveillance du territoire) in charge of surveillance of foreign political and trade union organizations. Attack against the office of the l'Organisation Internationale de Cooperation des Polices.

March 16<sup>th</sup>: a commando enters the Ministry of Cooperation; Minister Galley barely escapes the shots fired.

March 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>: 32 autonomist militants — close to or members of Action Directe — are arrested; this is answered by actions against the Maison-Alfort Fort (a GIGN barracks) and against the central police station in Toulouse.

April 15<sup>th</sup>: attack against the Ministry of Transport, missile fired against the same Ministry and against the direction of Roadway Safety.

July 4<sup>th</sup>: The City Hall of 14<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement of Paris is pillaged by an armed group.

August 28<sup>th</sup>: An armed confrontation between police and AD members in Paris during an attack on a bank.

September 13<sup>th</sup>: a dozen militants are arrested after a gunfight.

September 17<sup>th</sup>: machine gunning of the guard post at the School of Warfare.



# 1981: End of the first match

Action Directe suspends its actions for the opresiential campaign.

April 15<sup>th</sup>: gunfight during an attack on a bank at Place des Ternes in Paris; a police officer is killed.

After the election of Mitterand two hunger strikes within six months and a large campaign of political support on the outside (around the newspaper Rebelles) leads to the liberation of all of the communist and anarchist political prisoners.

Action Directe splits into four different tendencies; two of which (so-called “movementists”) stop all armed struggle, and one embarks into militant anti-Semitism (the so-called “Lyons branch”).

In November Action Directe takes part in the occupation of clandestine workshops (illegal sweatshops) in the Sentier and buildings in Barbes.

December 22<sup>nd</sup>: Laouri “Farid” Benchelal, an AD militant, is beaten to death in the Helsink central police station a few hours after his arrest.

December 24<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup>: 7 attacks againts luxury stores, like Rolls Royce in Paris and in the countryside.

# 1981: Once again...

February 13<sup>th</sup>: AD executes Gabriel Chahine, a Lebanese refugee who gave the police information about militants' safehouses.

February 19<sup>th</sup>: attack against the headquarters of Turkish fascist organizations in Paris.

March 30<sup>th</sup>: machine gunning of the Israeli Ministry of Defense headquarters in Paris by a commando made up of AD members and Turkish revolutionaries.

April: "Pour un projet communiste" (trans.: For a Communist Project) is published. The AD's line can be said to be "libertarian communist", or more precisely anarcho-Marxist. No references to Lenin or Mao — AD calls itself anarchist but wants a "communist society."

It is a month of arrests, raids on the Barbes squats, the organization's headquarters is destroyed a few hours after the police come by.

June: To protest the G-7 Summit in Versailles, AD carries out a major attack against the European seat of the IMF and the World Bank (Benchellal Combat Unit).

The text "On Imperialism" is released, in which the USA and USSR are put on the same level.

August: The Lebanese Phalange massacres Palestinians under the eyes of the Israeli Army in the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps. Action Directe (Marcel Rayman Combat Unit, whose members are of Jewish origin) carries out actions against Israeli and American companies, including the Chase Manhattan Bank, and describes itself for the first time as part of the "anti-imperialist front."

August 19<sup>th</sup>: The State dissolves Action Directe — any sympathiser can be accused of "reconstituting a dissolved organization". The newspaper Minute is attacked.

# 1981: ...Running Forward

May 31<sup>st</sup>: gunfight on Trudaine Street in Paris between an AD commando and the police. Two police officers are killed and another is seriously wounded. The police freak out, and demonstrate (some of them in uniform) in front of the Ministry of Justice.

July 30<sup>th</sup>: An attempted expropriation on the jeweler Aldebert at Place de la Madeleine.

September 26<sup>th</sup>: attack against the National Navy.

September 29<sup>th</sup>: Attack against the Inter-Allied Military Circle.

October 14<sup>th</sup>: Gunfight in the 17<sup>th</sup> Arondissmenet in Paris; Ciro Rizzato, an Italian militant with the COLP (communistes organises pour la liberation proletarienne; trans. Communists Organized for Proletarian Liberation) is killed and two police officers are wounded. There were court cases against Italians and French as a result of this gunfight.

Autumn: The monthly “Internationale” appears; it consists of texts from the armed struggle groups in West Europe and trhe United States (and, rarely, the Third World).

# 1984: Towards the Front

January 29<sup>th</sup>: attack against Panhard.

February: Ten militants are arrested in France and Italy.

March 13<sup>th</sup>: AD militants escape a trap set by the police in Brussels, Belgium. A few days later a number of militants are arrested.

Spring: AD and revolutionary militants in Belgium expropriate from banks and rob the Vielsam barracks' armory, and make off with almost a ton of explosives from the barracks in Ecaussines.

July 11<sup>th</sup>: AD launches its offensive for the "unity of revolutionaries in Western Europe" with an attack against the Atlantic Institute. "The ability to organize the advanced sections of the proletariat in the metropolises depends on the success or failure of imperialism's plans: superexploitation, war, annihilation..."

July 12<sup>th</sup>: attack against the Institute of Atlantic Affairs (Ciro Rizzato Combat Unit).

July 13<sup>th</sup>: Attack against the Ministry of Defense's research and programming office's computer services and the offices of SIAR (Industrial Surveillance of Armements) (Benchellal Combat Unit).

July 14<sup>th</sup>: Attack against the Ministry of Industry's annexes.

By attacking one of NATO Pillars and attacking French imperialism head on, Action Directe is showing once again the ability of the working class to hit imperialism at the right moment, as well as its desire to militarily sabotage the transition the political project of global restructuring of production by imperialist war.

By attacking the Ministry of Industry, Action Directe is showing it is determined to oppose the mass layoffs in the automobile and steel industries, and the ever-increasing superexploitation of millions of proletarians.

(Regis Schleicher, AD militant who was later arrested, in his July 1984 statement).

August 8<sup>th</sup>: attack against the headquarters of the European Space Agency.

August 23<sup>rd</sup>: a booby-trapped car is parked in front of the Assembly of the West European Union.

August 28<sup>th</sup>: Attack against the headquarters of the Socialist Party and against the Ministry of Defense.

September: Thirty eight Action Directe prisoners begin a hunger strike against solitary confinement and for regroupment. Other political and social prisoners join them.

October 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup>: Attacks against the Hispano-Suza and Dassault arms merchants.

December 18<sup>th</sup>: The explosives used in the RAF action against the NATO Officers' School in Oberamargau in South Germany come from the stock expropriated from the Ecaussine barracks.

December: The collective who publish Internationale are arrested. They receive heavy fines for "association of troublemakers", some are released on appeal after four years in preventative detention! Internationale is taken down without facing repression which specifically targets the press. It must be said that any idiot who read Internationale would be able to tell it was connected to Action Directe...

December 31<sup>st</sup>: AD militants narrowly escape arrest; in Bonn (FRG) there is an attack against the technical arms mission of the French Embassy.

# 1985: The Front

January 15<sup>th</sup>: A common Red Army Faction — Action Directe statement is released. The RAF and AD decide to struggle together in a front against imperialist projects.

January 25<sup>th</sup>: The Elisabeth Van Dyck Commando of Action Directe (Van Dyck was a RAF member killed during her arrest) execute General Audran, who was in charge of international affairs for the Ministry of Defense.

April 13<sup>th</sup>: Attack against the Leumi bank and the ONI.

April 14<sup>th</sup>: Attack against Minute (Sara Meidle Combat Unit).

April 24<sup>th</sup>: A Turkish revolutionary is arrested on the French-Belgian border with two kilos of dynamite coming from the Ecaussines barracks. He was identified as being close to Action Directe and as having lived in the Barbes squats.

April 27<sup>th</sup>: Attack against the IMF's European headquarters.

April 30<sup>th</sup>: Attack against the TRT and SAT arms merchants (Benchellal Combat Group).

June 26<sup>th</sup>: A failed attack against General Blandin, Controller General of the Army. The attempt is claimed by the Commando Antonio Lo Muscio (an Italian militant from the Noyaux Armes Proletariens who was killed while being arrested).

July/August: Discovery of safehouses and arms caches belonging to Action Directe and the FRAP (front revolutionnaire arme proletarien, trans.: Armed Proletarian Revolutionary Front).

August 8<sup>th</sup>: A joint RAF-AD commando (named George Jackson after the martyr of the Black Liberation movement in Amerika) attacks the U.S. airbase in Frankfurt; 3 American soldiers are killed.

September 5<sup>th</sup>: Attacks against ATIC, Pechiney, Renault, and Spie-Batignolles (Winthertur tower).

October: Attacks against Radio-France, Antenne 2, and the Audiovisual Higher Authority.

# 1986: The Front Continues

February: interview in the German anti-imperialist underground newspaper “zusammen kämpfen” (trans. Struggle together).

April 15<sup>th</sup>: the Christos Kassimis Commando claims an attack against Guy Brana, the vice-president of the CNPF and the Director General of the arms branch of the Thomson multinational.

May 16<sup>th</sup>: The Kepa Crespo-Gallende commando manages to get inside the Interpol headquarters and machineguns the different offices and leaves several dozen kilos of dynamite.

July 21<sup>st</sup>: The Ciro Rizzato Combat Unit claims an attack against the OCDE headquarters.

September 9<sup>th</sup>: The French State adopts extraordinary anti-terrorist legislation: 30 year sentences, special courts, establishment of a special professional jury, extension of preventative detention...

November 17<sup>th</sup>: the Pierre Overney Commando (named after a Maoist militant killed by a Renault factory guard) executes George Besse, Director General of Renault.

# 1987: Military Defeat

February 21<sup>st</sup>: Nathalie Menigon, Joelle Aubron, Jean-Marc Rouillan and Georges Cipriani are arrested.



## The Ted K Archive

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