

Religion, Violence and Radical Environmentalism

From Earth First! to the Unabomber to the Earth Liberation
Front

Bron Taylor

December 1998

Contents

Terrorism and Radical Environmentalism?	4
The Cultic Milieu: Spawning Ground of Green Violence?	7
Ecotage and Violence - the Record to Date	13
Tree Spiking	13
Power Line Sabotage	13
Hunt Sabotage and the Convergence of Radical Environmentalism and Ani- mal Liberationism	14
Arson by Animal Liberation Front/Earth First! Activists	15
Arson by 'Elves' (an Earth First! Splinter Faction?) Targeting Forest Service Offices	18
Traits and Dynamics Encouraging Violence	20
Traits and Dynamics Discouraging Violence	24
State Power	24
Relative Insularity or Social Isolation	24
Charismatic Authority and Freedom of Speech	26
Life as Sacred	27
Deep Ecological 'Identification', Interdependence and Anti-Dualism	35
Nature Bats Last and, 'Who Shall Be the Agent of Transformation?'	36
Fun and Eros	37
Caveats and Conclusions	40
Epilogue	43
Appendix A: The Unabomber-Earth First! Link	45
Appendix B: The Asylum and the Unabomber	48

Abstract

Since the 1980 formation of Earth First!, radical environmental movements have proliferated widely. Their adversaries, law enforcement authorities and some scholars accuse them of violence and terrorism. Here, I scrutinize such charges by examining 18 years of radical environmentalism for evidence of violence and for indications of violent tendencies. I argue that despite the frequent use of revolutionary and martial rhetoric by participants in these movements, they have not, as yet, intended to inflict great bodily harm or death. Moreover, there are many worldview elements internal to these movements, as well as social dynamics external to them, that reduce the likelihood that movement activists will attempt to kill or maim as a political strategy. Labels such as 'violent' or 'terrorist' are not currently apt blanket descriptors for these movements. Thus, greater interpretive caution is needed when discussing the strategies, tactics, and impacts of radical environmentalism.

‘Anyone who will read the anarchist and radical environmentalist journals will see that opposition to the industrial-technological system is widespread and growing.’

Serial Bomber Theodore Kaczynski, a.k.a. the Unabomber

Terrorism and Radical Environmentalism?¹

Radical environmentalism is best understood as a new religious movement that views environmental degradation as an assault on a sacred, natural world. Aggressively anti-dualistic and generally anti-nationalist (human-political boundaries are cultural artifacts to be transcended), it has evolved as a global bricolage with both religious and political dimensions.² Its nature-centered spirituality is patched together from bits and pieces of the world's major religious traditions, indigenous cultures, and the creative invention and ritualizing of its devotees - thus, a good umbrella term for this movement is pagan environmentalism.³ Its political ideology, while plural and internally contested, is an amalgamation influenced most prevalently by the world's radical intellectual traditions as informed by egalitarian (especially anti-imperialist and pro-peasant) social movements. All this is fused to a 'deep ecological' moral perception of the kinship and sacred value of all life that is tethered to an apocalyptic vision of the impending collapse of these sacred ecosystems. In a new twist on the domino theory, this collapse will topple the human political systems that depend on such ecosystems.

Among government and industry elites, alarm has escalated about radical environmentalism. This is in part because these activists have demonstrated an increasing ability to organize massive civil disobedience campaigns, sometimes including the sustained blockading of logging roads, in campaigns that have challenged established resource regimes and occasionally forced significant concessions.⁴ Alarm has been acute among Conservative Christians, many of whom perceive radical environmental activists as

¹ I wish to acknowledge collegial assistance and helpful comments from Jeffrey Kaplan, David C. Rapoport, Ron Arnold and Jean Rosenfeld.

² Bricolage refers to the process of amalgamating bits and pieces of ideas and practices originating among diverse cultures into new cultural forms. This is an apt description for much contemporary religious production.

³ See Bron Taylor (ed.), *Ecological Resistance Movements: The Global Emergence of Radical and Popular Environmentalism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press 1995) and B. Taylor, 'Resacralizing Earth: Pagan Environmentalism and the Restoration of Turtle Island', in D. Chidester and E. T. Linenthal (eds), *American Sacred Space* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press 1995) pp.97-151.

⁴ Since 1995 such campaigns have led to thousands of arrests in northern California over the so-called Headwaters forest complex, producing significant concessions from the government and landowners. Sustained road blockades in Oregon have produced two major victories for environmentalists defending old growth forests. B. Taylor, 'Earth First! Fights Back', *Terra Nova* 2/2 (Spring 1997) pp.29-43.

promoting a pagan revival bent on destroying Christian industrial-civilization, and of using terrorism as a tactic. Alarm has been further fueled by law enforcement authorities and ‘wise use’ partisans who have deployed the Unabomber’s stated sympathy for radical environmentalists and green anarchists as evidence that radical environmentalists engage in terrorism. As exhibit one, they cite the January 1998 conviction of Theodore (Ted) Kaczynski,⁵ his clearly stated sympathies for radical environmentalists and anarchists, and court documents (including his own stated acknowledgment) revealing that he drew on radical environmental tabloids when selecting two of his victims.⁶

But this charge of terrorism had been leveled long before the Unabomber articulated sympathies for radical environmentalists; and it was a charge advanced not only by theists hostile to green paganism. In *Terrorism in America*, Brent Smith warned that ecoterrorism would become ‘a major threat before the turn of the century’.⁷ In her analyses of Earth First!, Martha Lee concluded similarly, that it is ‘possible, if not highly probable, that more radical environmental movements will emerge’ and that those, like certain factions within Earth First!, which have ‘a millenarian belief structure . . . will be the most threatening [and best] prepared to use any tactics they deem necessary to achieve their goals’.⁸ Lee’s analyses were subsequently deployed by ‘wise use’ partisan Ron Arnold to buttress his claim that widespread ecoterror was emerging from radical environmental groups and worsening due to the absence of aggressive law enforcement response to these threats.⁹

Such fears are supplemented by scholars who warn that radical environmentalism promotes an atavistic primitivism reminiscent of the Nazi preoccupation with blood and soil¹⁰ or who criticize the irrationality they believe characterizes radical

⁵ On 22 January 1998 Kaczynski pleaded guilty to being the anti-technology serial bomber who between 1978 and 1995 killed three people and injured 23 others.

⁶ See Appendix A for more about the alleged Unabomber-Earth First! link.

⁷ Brent L. Smith, *Terrorism in America* (Albany: State University of New York Press 1994) p.129.

⁸ Martha F. Lee, ‘Violence and the Environment: The Case of “Earth First!”’, *Terrorism and Political Violence* (hereafter TPV) 7/3 (Autumn 1995) p.124; See also Martha Lee, *Earth First!: Environmental Apocalypse* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press 1995). Lee’s alarm has intensified: ‘Individuals who hold such beliefs are capable of wreaking significant havoc on . . . human civilization.’ See ‘Environmental Apocalypse: The Millennial Ideology of “Earth First!”’, in T. Robbins and S. Palmer (eds), *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem* (New York and London: Routledge 1997) p.133. See Appendix A for more discussion of efforts, including by Martha Lee, to link the Unabomber and Earth First!

⁹ Ron Arnold, *Ecoterror: The Violent Agenda to Save Nature - the World of the Unabomber* (Bellview, Washington: Free Enterprise 1997).

¹⁰ Luc Ferry, *The New Ecological Order* (Paris: Bernard Grasset 1992; reprint Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1995). In various works animal rights theorist Tom Regan has leveled a related attack on the environmental fascism of all ‘holistic’ environmental ethics. See John Clark’s telling critique of Ferry’s work which, he claims, provides ‘absolutely no support to his thesis that authoritarianism is implicit in the ecology movement’. Ferry’s central failure, Clark says, was failing to observe that the Nazi view of nature was thoroughly anthropocentric and instrumental, never suggesting

environmental spirituality.¹¹ Supplemented by statements by contemporary Nazis extolling nature and calling for its militant defense (such as by Charles Manson)¹² even empirically-grounded scholars such as Jeffrey Kaplan understandably wonder about possible affinities between radical environmentalists and participants within Far Right millenarian movements.¹³

that nature and non-human creatures have interests or rights deserving respect. J. Clark, 'The French Take on Environmentalism', *Terra Nova* 1/1 (1996) pp.112-19.

¹¹ Michael W. Lewis, *Green Delusions: An Environmentalist Critique of Radical Environmentalism* (Durham: Duke University Press 1992); George Bradford, *How Deep Is Deep Ecology? With an Essay-Review on Women's Freedom* (Ojai, California: Times Change Press 1989); and J. Stark, 'Postmodern Environmentalism: A Critique of Deep Ecology', in B. Taylor (ed.), *Ecological Resistance Movements* (note 3) pp.259-81. Even Michael Zimmerman, an early and prominent proponent of 'deep ecology' and a scholar who had been drawing on the anti-modernist and anti-technological writings of Martin Heidegger for his constructive efforts, dramatically reversed field, embracing enlightenment liberalism, when confronted with Heidegger's Nazi past. See Michael E. Zimmerman, *Contesting Earth's Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1994), and M. Zimmerman, 'Ecofascism: Threat to American Environmentalism?', in Roger Gottlieb (ed.), *The Ecological Community* (New York and London: Routledge 1996) pp.229-54. For a critique of Zimmerman's effort as a reactionary form of deep ecology that legitimates an environmentally destructive, market capitalism, see Val Plumwood, 'Free Market Deep Ecology', *The Ecologist* 26/5 (Sept./Oct. 1996) pp.234-5. Deep ecology is a philosophy developed by the Norwegian Arne Naess, positing that nature has value apart from its usefulness to humans.

¹² Few know about the Manson Family's ecological concerns, provided as follows in a description on their Internet site of their notion of ATWA: 'ATWA - Air, Trees, Water, Animals. ATWA is your survival on earth. It's a revolution against pollution. ATWA is ATWAR with pollution - a holy war. You are either working for ATWA - life - or you're working for death. Fix it and live or run from it and die.'

¹³ Jeffrey Kaplan, 'The Postwar Paths of Occult National Socialism: From Rockwell and Madole to Manson', in J. Kaplan and Helene Loow (eds), *Cult, Anti-Cult and the Cultic Milieu: A Re-Examination* (2 volumes) (Stockholm: Stockholm University & the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention 1998). Since 1996, Kaplan and I have been comparing notes about the respective groups we study. He has found a number of quotations in Nazi tabloids that he rightly concludes could have appeared, at least were their genesis unknown, in radical environmental publications. His work also highlights the occult and neo-pagan spiritualities animating much Far Right thought which he provocatively notes raises questions about possible affinities and cooperation between the Far Right and radical environmentalists. For a good overview of recent scholarship looking at Nature Religion in National Socialism, see also Edvard Lind, 'Religion of Nature', in J. Kaplan, *Encyclopedia of White Power* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC Clio, forthcoming).

The Cultic Milieu: Spawning Ground of Green Violence?

Colin Campbell's discussion of the cultic milieu suggests *the likelihood* of such a possibility. He argues that a cultic milieu exists as a 'constant feature of society' representing 'the cultural underground of society' including 'all deviant belief-systems'; that cultic groups 'rarely engage in criticism of each other [and] display a marked tolerance and receptivity towards each others' beliefs'; and that since mysticism is 'the most prominent part of the deviant religious component of the cultic world' a key characteristic of the cultic milieu is '*the continuing pressure to syncretization*'¹ (my emphasis).

Although Campbell's characterization of cultic groups is overbroad (many are intolerant and anti-syncretistic to other culturally marginal groups), nature mysticism does permeate radical environmental subcultures and sometimes the racist right.² It is prudent, therefore, to inquire about possible linkages and to wonder whether the cultural 'tent' represented by the cultic milieu is pitched so broadly that radical environmentalists, animal liberationists and those from the racist right might cross paths underneath it and reciprocally influence one another, perhaps mutating synergistically into increasingly violent forms.

The martial rhetoric and tabloid graphics found among radical environmentalists amplify such concerns and appear to promote violence, perhaps even terrorism; my own work provides the most detail about violence-related debates within these subcultures.³ Some Earth First! activists, for example, depict their struggle as a holy war against those who would desecrate a sacred earth, express solidarity with diverse revolutionary

¹ Colin Campbell, 'The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization', in *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* 5 (1972) pp. 122-4.

² Bron Taylor, 'The Religion and Politics of Earth First!', *The Ecologist* 21/6 (Nov./Dec. 1991) pp.258-66; idem., 'Evoking the Ecological Self: Art As Resistance to the War on Nature', *Peace Review* 5/2 (1993) pp.225-30; idem., (ed.), *Ecological Resistance Movements* (note 3); idem., 'Earth First!'s Religious Radicalism', in C.K. Chappie (ed.), *Ecological Prospects: Scientific, Religious, and Aesthetic Perspectives* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press 1994) pp.85-209. On the racist right, see Jeffrey Kaplan, *Radical Religion in America* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press 1998); 'Right Wing Violence in North America', *TPV* 7/1 (Spring 1995) pp.44-95; and 'The Postwar Paths of Occult National Socialism' (note 13).

³ Bron Taylor, 'Diggers, Wolves, Ents, Elves and Expanding Universes: Global Bricolage and the Question of Violence Within the Subcultures of Radical Environmentalism', in Kaplan and Loow (eds), *Cult, Anti-Cult and the Cultic Milieu* (note 13).

movements around the globe⁴ and endorse sabotage that involves at least some risk to human beings. One sabotage manual distributed by an anarchist faction associated with Earth First! even discusses firearms and firebombs. A few have expressed sympathy for the tactics employed by terrorist groups such as the Weather Underground⁵ and even the Unabomber.⁶ (See the attached graphics that seem to promote or accept violence as a tactic.)

Yet despite the recurrent debates about violence within radical environmental subcultures and the refusal by many activists to rule it out, there is little evidence of violence being deployed to cause injuries or death.⁷ The interpretations of scholars and partisans building careers by warning us about proliferating radical environmental violence, thus, deserve scrutiny. Such analysts often restrict their inquiries to archival research of movement documents, law enforcement and court records, and, at best, a few interviews, usually with prominent movement spokespersons, and often without a clear sense of who they are and which, if any, factions they represent. A clearer assessment of the prospects for violence emerging from radical environmental groups demands the inclusion of ethnographic data and judicious interpretation of all sources of information.⁸ Through my intensive qualitative fieldwork I have identified a number of variables that explain why the martial symbolism and apocalyptic worldviews found within radical environmental subcultures has not and probably will not yield

⁴ For example, many express support for the radical nature-focused MOVE movement, depict the Chaiprasitthinsakulinsurrection as a kindred movement and support many of the activities of the Animal Liberation Front, a clandestine complex of shadowy, autonomous cells that have been responsible for numerous arson and other attacks on animal industry and research facilities in North America and Europe.

⁵ Earth First! activist Judi Bari was one of two victims of a 1990 bombing probably perpetrated by one of her adversaries in the Northern California 'timber wars'. Afterward she became one of Earth First!'s strongest advocates of non-violent tactics, even strongly criticizing the practice of tree spiking for risking injuries to timber workers.

⁶ Most but not all such sympathetic statements inhere to the Unabomber's ideological affinity for 'wild nature' and hostility to technology rather than to his terrorist tactics.

⁷ For the latest series of debates about violence (and a related debate about whether the journal should print articles that seem to promote it), see Gary McFarlane and Darryl Echt, 'Cult of Nonviolence', *Earth First!* 18/1 (1 Nov. 1998) pp.3, 17; Rod Coronado, 'Every Tool in the Box', *Earth First!* 18/2 (21 Dec. 1998) pp.2, 21; Lacey Phillabaum, 'Censoring the Journal', *Earth First!* 13/3 (1998) p.2; and the forum in *Earth First!* 18/4 (20 March 1998) pp.7-11. During this time the journal staff managed to overturn (during the February 1998 activist's conference) a 1993 policy censoring articles 'that could reasonably be interpreted to advocate violence or physical harm to human beings'. Many activists thought that, especially in the global context, such a restriction was naive - failing to recognize how environmental degradation is already a life and death struggle in many regions - and that sometimes violence might be justifiable.

⁸ As Kaplan states, no one can 'fully appreciate the millenarian worldview without considerable interaction with the group's leadership and with its adherents ... There is simply no substitute for fieldwork.' Jeffrey Kaplan, 'Interpreting the Interpretive Approach: A Friendly Reply to Thomas Robbins', *Nova Religio* 1/1 (1997) pp.30-49.

widespread or proliferating terrorist violence.⁹ But first we will examine the record related to violence during the first 18 years of the radical environmental movement.

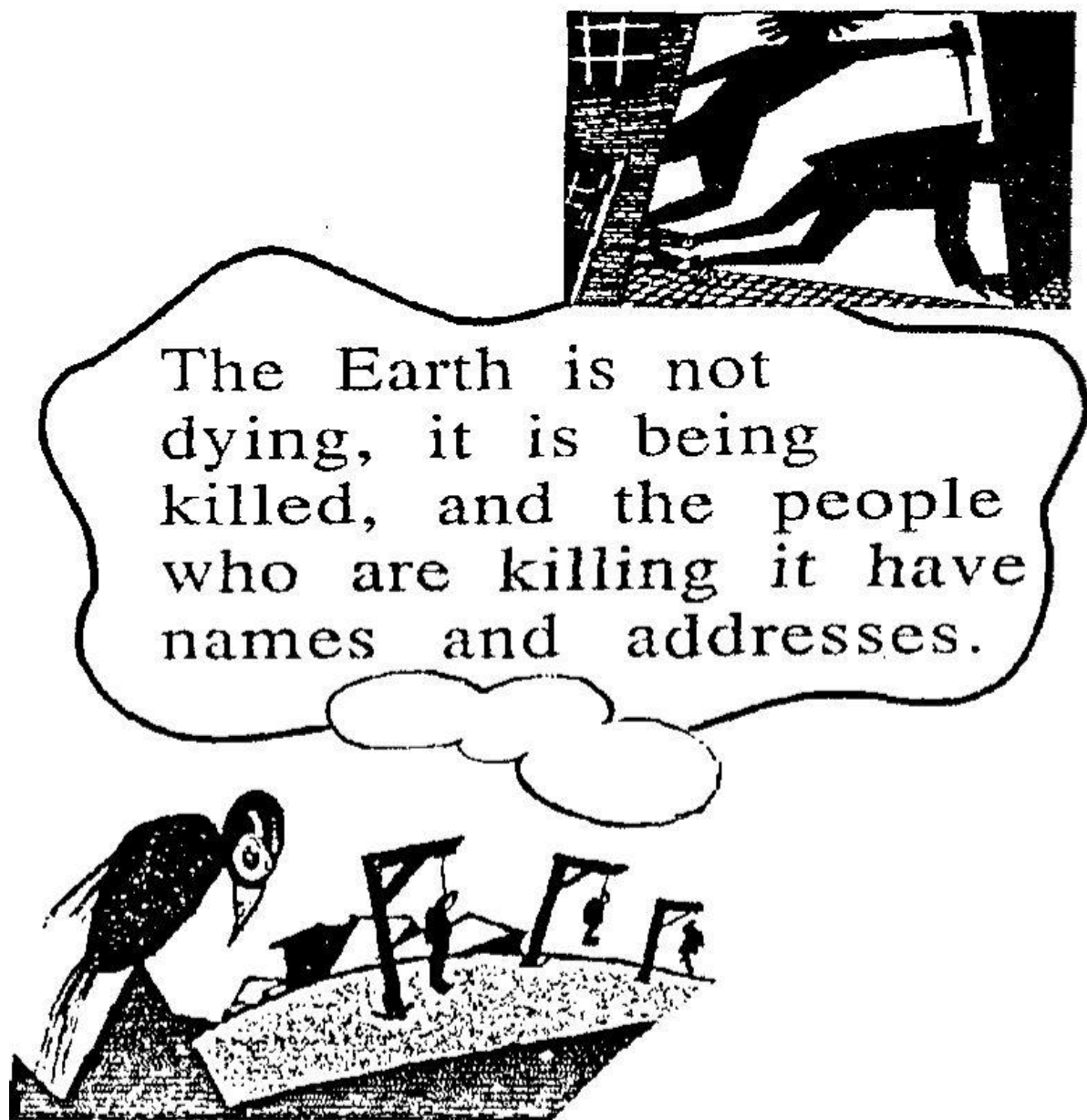


Figure 1

Source: Published in *Beware/Sabotage*, a sabotage manual distributed (undated, circa 1996) within radical environmentalist and animal liberationist circles. It includes 'a firearms primer for anarchists and punks'.

⁹ See B. Taylor, 'Diggers' (note 16).

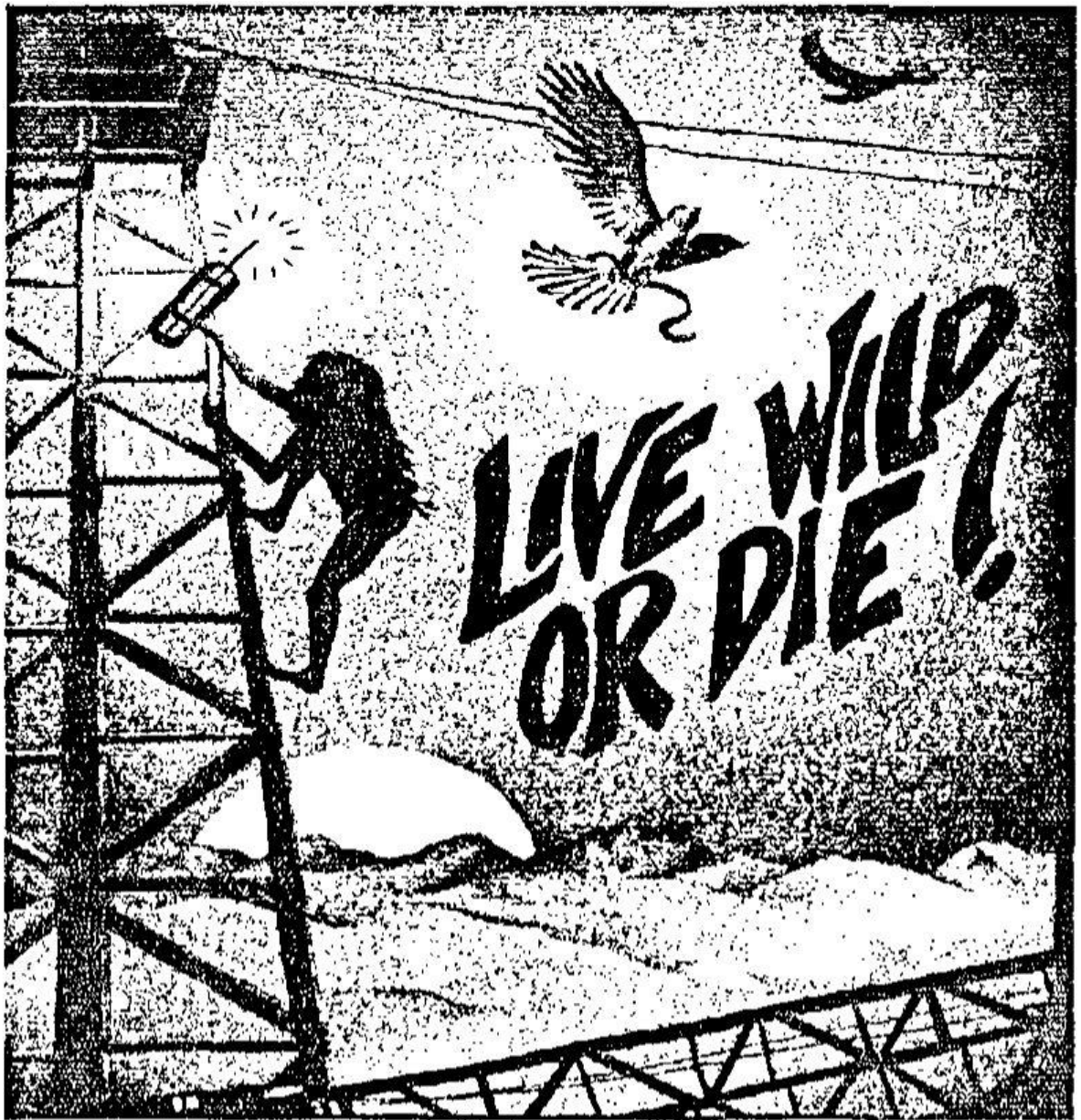


Figure 2

Source: This graphic, romantically depicting a feral human deploying dynamite to take out the electric infrastructure of industrial civilization, adorned the cover of the initial, 1989 issue of the United States greenanarchist tabloid *Live Wild or Die*.



At some point we must draw a line across the ground of our home and our being, drive a spear into the land, and say to the bulldozers, earthmovers, government and corporations, "Thus far and no farther." If we do not, we shall later feel, instead of pride, the regret of Thoreau, that good but overly bookish man, who wrote, near the end of his life, "If I repent of anything it is likely to be my good behavior."

- Ed Abbey

Figure 3

Source: This appeared in a regional Earth First! publication, the *Wild Rockies Review* 1/3 (1988) p.16, and provides a sense of the urgency that justifies illegal tactics in the minds of radical environmentalists.

Ecotage and Violence - the Record to Date

A brief review of activities undertaken by Earth First! activists that have risked or intended to cause injuries provides a good starting place to evaluate the likelihood of violence emerging from these activists. It is remarkable that there has not been more violence and injuries over this 18-year period - a time that has seen escalating environment-related conflict. Radical environmental activists have organized (sometimes massive) civil disobedience campaigns and have erected and sustained blockades of a number of logging roads, sometimes threatening the livelihoods of their adversaries and provoking violent opposition.¹

Tree Spiking

Among the most controversial tactics used by radical greens has been tree spiking (driving metal or hardened ceramic nails in trees to damage blades at the sawmill as a means of deterring logging). This practice began as early as late 1981 or early 1982 and at times has been widely practiced, especially in Oregon, Washington and the Northern Rockies.

Power Line Sabotage

Even more controversial acts of ecotage followed. (Ecotage refers to sabotage committed in an effort to defend ecosystems.) In 1989 five activists, including Dave Foreman, the most prominent co-founder of Earth First!, were arrested in the first officially designated act of environmental terrorism in the United States. Known as 'the Arizona Five', these activists faced a variety of charges related to efforts to sabotage power lines associated with nuclear power plants and water projects in Arizona. (Some of them had also sabotaged ski-towers at a ski area they considered both ecologically destructive and sacred, and a threat to Native American culture and religion.) A year later,

¹ It is important, but not the focus of this article, to recognize that most injurious violence in North America has been against environmentalists. See David Helvarg, *The War Against the Greens: the 'Wise-Use' Movement, the New Right, and Anti-Environmental Violence* (San Francisco: Sierra Club 1992); Andrew Rowell, *Green Backlash* (London: Routledge 1996).

power lines were toppled in an ‘Earth Night’ action near Santa Cruz, California. In 1995, the green-anarchist tabloid *Live Wild or Die* (produced by a number of figures originally active with Earth First!) praised saboteurs who attempted to down power lines in Vermont. This action, these activists believed, was a just campaign against Hydro-Quebec’s desecration of indigenous land.²

Hunt Sabotage and the Convergence of Radical Environmentalism and Animal Liberationism

In July 1990, Lee Dessaux, a ‘hunt saboteur’ who had, beginning in 1986, participated in efforts to stop the hunting of mountain lions, Tule Elk and Bighorn Sheep in California’s Mojave Desert, was later arrested (and eventually convicted) for assaulting with a ski pole two bison hunters near Yellowstone National Park in Montana. At the time Dessaux was involved with a ‘Fund for Animals’ protest designed to disrupt the hunt.

Because this incident has been used as an important example of Earth First!’s violent tendencies,³ it is important to provide further context. The bison hunts have resulted from the failure of governments to provide sufficient winter habitat for the bison herd outside of Yellowstone National Park. Dessaux explained in a 1997 interview that a ‘mother bison [had been shot and] was covered with blood, its calf running around bawling’. Meanwhile, the Fish and Game officers were ‘fucking with us while the hunters were violating safety laws’. We were trying our best to stop the killing and ‘I basically just lost it and attacked the guy with my ski pole, with a lot of anger . . . Part of it was anger. Part was an attempt to put the bison out of her misery. I was yelling at the guy, “put her out!”’.⁴

‘I’ve always felt really passionate’, he quietly explained. ‘Sometimes when you see an animal being slaughtered’, it’s hard to keep cool. ‘It’s not the first time I’ve felt that mad.’ Dessaux seemed neither proud nor ashamed of losing control of his temper in this case. He received a 90 day sentence and served about 30. Commenting on Ron Arnold’s *Ecoterror* book and other efforts to portray the movement as terroristic, he said, ‘It is a laugh to me when they call us violent or terrorists. I say, if we were, don’t you think we’d have killed people by now?’

Apparently without appreciating the contradiction, however, Dessaux expressed disappointment that the movement so quickly distanced itself from the Unabomber after Kaczynski’s arrest. He understood it ‘from a PR perspective’, but complained

² This article reports on a bomb that exploded at a Hydro-Quebec transmission tower and states that dynamite that had failed to detonate was removed by authorities from two other towers. See Anonymous, ‘Powerline Sabotage’, *Live Wild or Die* 5 (1995) p.21.

³ For example, by Ron Arnold in *Ecoterror* (note 9) p 144, which refers to the ‘multiple stabbings’ without explaining that no blood was drawn, due to the bulky winter coats worn by the victims

⁴ Quotes from 4 July 1997 interview with Lee Dessaux, Nicolet National Forest (Wisconsin)

that since the Unabomber is anti-industrial and anarchist it is cowardly for movement people to disavow him. A number of movement activists feel sympathy for Kaczynski, more often for his anti-industrial ideas than for his tactics. A small number of movement activists, however, privately suggest that violence may sometime be necessary. An anonymously-produced flyer distributed at the 1997 Earth First! Rendezvous, for example, romantically proclaimed 'Free Ted Kaczynski' and seemed to endorse violence.⁵

Source: This handout was selectively distributed at the 1997 Earth First! rendezvous, showing that the Unabomber enjoys some sympathy among radical environmentalists.

Dessaux was one of a small number of activists who - especially beginning in 1986 and with increasing success (that is apparently gaining momentum in the mid-1990s) - promoted links between the animal liberationist, anarchist and radical environmental movements. He explained that the early hunt saboteurs in the movement were inspired by their British counterparts who pioneered such tactics beginning in 1962, and expressed happiness that the journal now welcomes contributors from all three movements.

Arson by Animal Liberton Front/Earth First! Activists

Rodney Coronado (who with British national David Howitt became one of the famous 'Sea Shepherd' activists who sank two whaling ships and destroyed a whaling processing station in Iceland)⁶ has consistently urged nonviolence, insisting that a spiritual path precludes violence. Interestingly, despite this view, Coronado calls

⁵ The back side of this 'Free Ted Kaczynski' handout included this text:

Joan of Arc and the 19th century abolitionist John Brown employed violence and gave their lives in struggle These visionaries were considered demented by their contemporaries, but are now revered It may be that the Unabomber will be looked upon similarly, as a kind of warrior-prophet who, as Arleen Davila wrote, 'tried to save us' To un-learn our illusions is to begin to save ourselves . . . Return to Wild Nature - Destroy the Worldwide Industrial System - FREE TED KACZYNSKI

Some movement activists viewed this flyer as a joke. Others attributed such statements to 'cointelpro' operations designed to discredit the movement and erode public support for it. This flyer, however, was distributed by a long-term movement participant, making implausible such a rejoinder in this particular case. It is worth noting, however, that the case of Earth First! activists Darryl Cherney and the late Judi Bari, who sued the FBI and other law enforcement authorities for violating their civil rights after a bomb exploded in their car in 1990, continues to work its way through the courts. Cherney and Bari believe the authorities' response to them was part of an FBI cointelpro operation. For a description of the lawsuit effort, see Judi Bari, 'FBI Files Reveal New Civil Rights Abuses in Earth First! Bombing Case', *Mendocino Environmental Center Newsletter* Issue 15 (Spring 1994) p.6. For background on cointelpro operations, see Brian Glick, *The War at Home* (Boston: South End Press 1989).

⁶ Rik Scarce, *Ecowarriors* (Chicago: Nobel Press 1990) pp.187-200.



Figure 4

for a 'war' in defense of Mother Earth⁷ - illustrating that martial and revolutionary rhetoric should not, without corroborating evidence, be equated with a call to arms. Complicating matters further, in the minds of some activists, nonviolence is consistent with actions that do risk injuries and even death (although sometimes these activists simply do not foresee the risks). According to Ron Arnold and a 31 July 1995 US 'Government's Sentencing Memorandum',⁸ Coronado risked causing injuries to people in a 1992 arson attack on a Michigan State University animal experimentation facility in which two students, working late in the building, had to flee after the time-delayed incendiary device ignited.⁹ Coronado claimed (through a confidant) that he intended

⁷ Rod Coronado, 'Letter to Friends', *Earth First!* 12/8 (22 Sept. 1992) pp.17, 25.

⁸ United States of America v. Rodney Adam Coronado, US District Court for Western District of Michigan, No 1:93-CR-116.

⁹ *Ecoterror* (note 9) pp.267-9. Coronado was eventually convicted and sentenced to prison for this crime. To his credit, Arnold attempts to be factually accurate. He has even reported statements by a law enforcement officer that put some young monkeywrenchers in a sympathetic light (p.205). In my view, this lends some credibility to the descriptive efforts in his book. Unfortunately, Arnold tends to take many reports by movement enemies and law enforcement authorities at face value, and tends to ignore the context in which actions occur. He called a barricade erected by Earth First!ers to protest and halt temporarily the environmentally destructive Barstow to Las Vegas desert a 'death trap . . . designed to cause a fatal accident' (pp.38-9). He made this charge, parroting uncritically the spin and outrage expressed by the racers and by the public officials who had authorized the race. Yet he ignored or failed to ask probing questions to learn that race rules precluded racers from riding their bikes, under power, through the tunnel. Riders had to dismount because even without the barricade, attempting to ride into this tunnel could be fatal. When I asked the designer of the barricade, Mike Roselle, about this incident he replied that the tunnel's 'measurements were 6' high by 8' wide and about 200' long. A rider sitting on his bike would be about five feet high, so the dangers of high speed racing in a dark tunnel are obvious.' Roselle stated that race rules, including information about the ban on riding through the tunnel, and requiring the entire route to be inspected the morning of the race before it was to begin, were leaked to him by a sympathetic wilderness society activist. (E-mail message from Mike Roselle, 11 May 1998. His recollections cohere with those of an activist I interviewed in July 1997 who wishes to remain anonymous.)

Even more problematic is the way Arnold frames his interpretations and definitions. He calls many acts of civil disobedience and sabotage that do not risk injuries to anyone (other than the activists themselves) 'violence' and 'terror'. When I expressed to him during a 17 June 1997 telephone interview that I thought this was misleading, Arnold told me he used the word 'ecoterror' rather than 'ecoterrorism' to avoid the implication that physical violence is always involved. This was not, however, made clear in his book, and this claim is hard to sustain when considering the genre and tone of his book.

Moreover, Arnold unconvincingly denies any distinction between terrorism and sabotage and uncritically adopts the FBI's definition of terrorism (p.12). Arnold also assumes that an intent to kill or maim exists whenever activists take part in actions where injuries could result. These criticisms suggest that Arnold's book requires careful scrutiny. Yet Arnold has tried harder to verify facts than some academic observers and newspaper columnists (such as Linda Chavez, 'What Motive for Unabomber?', *USA Today* 10 April 1996, A). Moreover, he has documented in more detail than any other source how widespread (and costly) direct action environmental resistance (including sabotage) has become. He also analyzed fairly the May 1990 incident when a bomb exploded under the car seat of Earth First! activist Judi Bari, concluding that neither she nor her companion Darryl Cherney were knowingly involved in transporting the bomb or in planning to use it (Ron Arnold, *Ecoterror* [note 9] pp.256-63).

to torch the researcher's files, not the animal research facility itself, and that the additional damage to the room was unintentional.

Whatever his intent in this case, more than any other single figure Rod Coronado represents the increasing cross-fertilization between the radical environmental and animal liberation movements. He has written regularly in both movement's tabloids and is lauded uncritically for his courage in them. As a bridge figure he raises an important question, taken up later in this analysis, about the prospects for unification between these movements.

Arson by 'Elves' (an Earth First! Splinter Faction?) Targeting Forest Service Offices

Such links might have contributed to a significant escalation. Early on the morning of 31 October 1996 the Oakridge Ranger Station (a US Forest Service office located about 40 miles southeast of Eugene and long at the epicenter of Oregon's contentious battles over logging) was torched and burned to the ground. On the roof of the Detroit Ranger Station 70 miles to the north, another incendiary device had failed to ignite. In graffiti scrawled at the Detroit site, 'elves' (note the pagan symbolism) from the so-called 'Earth Liberation Front' claimed responsibility. The ELF, a shadowy group that first emerged in 1992 as an anarchistic offshoot of England's Earth First! movement,¹⁰ was also assumed responsible for the Oakridge fire, although no graffiti was left there.¹¹ Such arson attacks are widely considered counterproductive or immoral by the majority of Earth First! activists.

Not surprisingly, authorities and other adversaries of radical environmentalists overstate the risks posed by sabotage. Tree spiking, for example, does not threaten tree fellers because Forest Service regulations require that they cut the trees within twelve inches of the ground.¹² Spiking should pose no risks in the mill if mill owners install the proper safety barriers and insist that workers follow safety procedures. If power

¹⁰ 'Tara the Sea Elf' explained in Earth First! that the elves had created 20 clandestine cells in England by 1993, subsequently coordinating numerous attacks (including arson) on corporations in Europe and North America. Tara the Sea Elf, 'The Earth Liberation Front', *Earth First!* 16/7 (Sept.-Oct. 1996) p.18.

¹¹ My thanks to James Barnes who reviewed a draft of this article and in a 24 July 1998 e-mail message clarified that graffiti was found only at the Detroit site.

¹² This was explained to me by logger (and 'wise use' partisan) Tom Hirons. He said that although no one had yet been injured by tree spiking, the real risks occur in the mill, for when saw blades hit spikes they can shatter and ricochet. He also expressed anger at another tactic employed by some Earth First!ers - the dumping of silicone in a crankcase - which, he said, can make an engine explode. He concluded, 'I consider Earth First! nothing more than a terrorist group.' Hirons also confirmed that the prevalence of monkeywrenching was costing him dearly for security (\$1,000 a month), and that even hiring watchmen does not guarantee the protection of one's equipment (interview, 3 March 1992, Portland, Oregon).

line destruction were to continue, injuries would likely result, but probably more from a failure to foresee consequences (and possibly from callous indifference) than from an intent to kill or maim. Clearly, however, such tactics can and likely will cause injuries, at least indirectly.

Arson has been probably the most dangerous tactic employed thus far,¹³ with one exception: On 30 November 1992, after repeated acts of sabotage targeting a chip-mill company engaged in clear-cut logging in North Carolina, the on-guard mill owner shot at a fleeing figure after awaking to find his chip-mill on fire. The apparent ecoteur eluded capture by shooting back, the bullet knocking the owner to the ground without causing serious injury.¹⁴ To my knowledge, this is the only incident where it appears that a radical environmentalist used a firearm.

To summarize, most radical environmentalists refuse to deploy sabotage that risks injuries to humans. During efforts to disrupt logging there have been scuffles resulting in minor injuries with workers and sometimes with law enforcement officers. And as we have seen, in one case, an activist was apparently willing to employ lethal violence to avoid apprehension. There is, nevertheless, even after 18 years of radical environmental action, little evidence that radical environmentalists intend to maim and kill their adversaries or to foster 'terror' among the general populace.

If David Rapoport is right, however, and nonviolent direct action has often appeared 'as an initial step in conflicts which later matured into full-scale terrorist campaigns' and that the drama of such campaigns 'may intensify and broaden commitments by simultaneously exciting hopes and fanning smoldering hostilities',¹⁵ it makes sense to look deeper for clues regarding the possibility of these movements evolving terrorist dimensions. Although I cannot here offer detailed ethnographic description regarding traits and dynamics among radical greens that encourage and discourage violence,¹⁶ I can broadly discuss such tendencies and offer some judgments about their relative importance.

¹³ In the Santa Cruz power line incident, authorities easily turned public opinion against the saboteurs by explaining how the lack of power put at risk infirm individuals dependent on electrically powered life support systems.

¹⁴ After information about the incident arrived at the *Earth First!* journal, and a subsequent internal debate, a report about it was published with this disclaimer, 'The *Earth First!* journal staff is not advocating any actions reported in Earth Night News. There were concerns about printing the shooting incident but we felt it would be deceitful to report the monkeywrenching while ignoring the gunfire.' Originally in *Katuah Journal*, reprinted as 'Arson, Monkeywrenching, and Gunfire in Katuah', *Earth First!* 13/3 (1993) p.31.

¹⁵ David C. Rapoport, 'Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions', *American Political Science Review* 78 (Sept. 1984) p.671.

¹⁶ For this see Bron Taylor, 'Diggers' (note 16).

Traits and Dynamics Encouraging Violence

One dynamic that could fuel the prospects for violence is the tendency for both radical environmentalists and many of their adversaries to view their activities as defending sacred values.¹ Radical environmentalists generally locate the sacred beneath their feet while their adversaries perceive the sacred as somehow above or beyond the world (or even as centered in the nation state and constitution).²

A related but often overlooked dynamic that can encourage violence between these adversaries is the role and result of watchdog groups waging campaigns to demonize members of the radical group in question. Jeffrey Kaplan's analysis of the role of watchdog groups opposing racist groups is provocative in this regard.³ He suggests that watchdog groups often promote a self-fulfilling prophesy in which only those with violent propensities are drawn to the demonized movement while potentially moderating voices are scared away. This could increase the likelihood that violence will emerge from the individuals and groups under scrutiny. Applied to the social context in which radical environmentalists and their opponents are engaged it is reasonable to wonder if the demonizing of radical environmental activists by 'wise use' partisans (such as Barry Clausen and to a lesser extent Ron Arnold), abetted by the alarm expressed by some academicians (such as Brent Smith and Martha Lee), might also add fuel to the

¹ For one extreme example, a letter from someone claiming responsibility for the May 1990 bombing of Earth First! activist Judy Bari's car stated (after accurately describing the type of bomb used), 'I built with these hands the bomb that I placed in the car of Judi Bari This possessed demon Judy Bari . . . [told] the multitude that trees were not God's gift to man but that trees were themselves gods and it was a sin to cut them. My Spirit ached as her Paganism festered before mine Eyes, I felt the Power of the Lord stir within my heart and I knew I had been Chosen to strike down this demon The wicked shall know no Refuge . . . I AM THE LORDS (sic) AVENGER.'

² As did Howard Hutchinson, Executive Director of the Coalition of Arizona and New Mexico Counties, who in a 30 Jan. 1997 telephone interview explained to me his reasons for airing a 1993 radio advertisement with the following, alarming narrative, 'Did you know that modern environmentalism is rooted in pagan worship? . . . Many of these environmental leaders aren't just demanding better conservation practices, they are seeking a total transformation of society, one that seeks to destroy or totally restructure our current economic system and [dismantle] technology and civilization.' New Mexico Earth First!, 'Deep Ecology Cults', *Earth First!* 3/6 (21 June 1993) p.25.

³ Jeffrey Kaplan, 'The Anti-Cult Movement in America: A History of Culture Perspective', *Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture* 2/3-4 (1993) pp.267-96.

possibility that violence could emerge from radical environmental groups.⁴ (Advocates of logging, ranching and mining on public lands use the term ‘wise use’ to contrast their own approach to natural resources, which they consider to be prudent use of them, with the ‘environmental extremists’ or ‘preservationists’ who hope to ‘lock up’ the land and preclude anyone from responsibly making a living from it.)

Certainly some radical environmentalists likewise demonize their adversaries. Stuffed ‘Smoky the Bear’ dolls symbolizing Forest Service employees (who are often called ‘freddies’, a derogatory term meaning ‘forest rape eagerly done and done in endless succession’) are occasionally hung in effigy from trees in movement campsites. Earth First! activists sometimes use Biblical metaphors like ‘Babylon’ to label the government evil and corrupt, and some radical environmental activists engage in their own incendiary and revolutionary rhetoric, intensified by apocalyptic urgency and their deep moral conviction. So it certainly is possible that violence could escalate as radical environmentalists and their adversaries engage in crusade rhetoric to justify their competing missions. It is certainly possible that some troubled soul or souls will decide that God or Gaia is calling them to defend their given sacred space through a terrorist holy war.

Much more likely, however, are continued scuffles with relatively minor injuries occurring at blockades and during other resistance campaigns, or somebody getting hurt while responding to or fighting an arson-fire. Sooner or later, someone probably will be badly injured by one or another act of monkeywrenching. Perhaps this will result from an environmentalist-placed tree spike, or from gunfire employed to avoid capture, or when a vehicle crashes after hitting an obstacle created to thwart industry or law enforcement.

Such possibilities, however, do not automatically suggest the likelihood that concerted terrorist violence will emerge from such subcultures. Based on the record of nearly two decades of radical environmentalism and a variety of impressions derived from my ethnographic field work, I believe that if terrorist violence does emerge from radical environmental groups, it will most likely come from people Kaplan calls ‘un-

⁴ See notes 8 and 9. See also Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony, ‘Sects and Violence’, in Stuart Wright (ed.), *Armageddon at Waco* (Chicago: Chicago University Press 1995) originally, and later, Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer, ‘Introduction’, in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem* (note 8) make a helpful distinction contrasting two types of variables that should be analyzed when assessing the likelihood of violence emerging from a group or movement: ‘endogenous factors implicating the leadership, beliefs or organization of the group’ and ‘exogenous or environmental factors often involving some kind of hostility or persecution in the movement’s environment’ (pp.16-17). They acknowledge that exogenous repression can contribute to and provoke violence. Robbins especially, however, fears that an emphasis on such factors can obscure the criminal culpability of those in radical groups. See also T. Robbins, ‘Religious Movements and Violence: A Friendly Critique of the Interpretive Approach’, *Nova Religio* 1/1 (Feb. 1997) pp.13-29 and for a rejoinder see J. Kaplan, ‘Interpreting the Interpretive Approach’ (note 21) pp.30-49.

guided missiles' or 'lone wolf assassins' - namely from those untethered to the broader subculture with which the terrorist identifies.⁵

This said, even an individual like Judi Bari, who battled long and hard against violence promoting rhetoric in *Earth First!*, and who had repeatedly criticized tree spiking as ineffective and dangerous, did not rule out violence.⁶ In a 1993 interview, after the second major wave of movement debate about violence, she said that she agreed with those in the movement who believe that the movement should divide along strategic lines based on attitudes toward violence: 'I think we need a split, like the Weather Underground and

SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] so those who want to do such tactics can do so without any official connection to Earth First!.' Bari then mentioned what she considered to be a similar relationship between the Animal Liberation Front and the above-ground People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, and other groups, that support and publicize ALF actions.⁷ But in her reference to the Weather Underground,

⁵ Jeffrey Kaplan, 'The Context of American Millenarian Revolutionary Theology: The Case of the "Identity Christian" Church of Israel', *TPV* 5/1 (Spring 1993) pp.30-82; idem., 'Right Wing Violence in North America' (note 15).

⁶ Yet she was also clear that the time was not ripe to take up arms. Nicholas Wilson, 'Judi Bari Dies But Her Spirit Lives On', *Albion Monitor* (5 March 1997), <[http://www. Monitor.Net/Monitor](http://www.Monitor.Net/Monitor)>. See Judy Bari, 'Monkeywrenching', *Earth First!* 14/3 (2 Feb. 1994) p.8, and idem., 'The Secret History of Tree Spiking', *Earth First!* 15/2 (21 Dec. 1994) pp.11, 15, for her arguments against tree spiking, especially that it does not work. See also Steve Marsden, 'Kalmiopsis EF! Replies', *Earth First!* 13/1 (2 Nov. 1992) p.30, who argued similarly that the tactic is ineffective, while former timber worker Gene Lawhorn argued that spiking was dangerous to workers because management does not care about worker safety. See Gene Lawhorn, 'Why Earth First! Should Renounce Tree Spiking', *Earth First!* 10/8 (22 Sept. 1990) p.9. See also Jamie Melanowski, 'MonkeyWrenching Around', *The Nation* (2 May 1987) pp.568-70, for specific dangers to mill workers posed by tree spiking. On the other hand, after Leroy Watson, 'Spikin', *Earth First!* 2/2 (21 Dec. 1981) p.6, first introduced and promoted the tactic, many more writers have defended it, including Dave Foreman, who has advocated many forms of ecotage (e.g. Dave Foreman, 'An Environmental Strategy for the 80s', *Earth First!* 2/8 (21 Sept. 1982) p.7, Paul Watson who claims to have invented the tactic, Paul Watson, 'In Defense of Tree Spiking', *Earth First!* 10/8 (22 Sept. 1989) pp.8-9, and idem., 'In Defense of Tree Spiking', *Earth First!* 15/3 (2 Feb. 1995) pp. 10-11. Watson might have written the article attributed to Leroy Watson; see also William Haywood, 'Tree Spiking', *Earth First!* 4/4 (1984) p.14; George Wuerthner, 'Tree Spiking and Moral Maturity', *Earth First!* (1 Aug. 1985) p.20; Mike Roselle, 'Forest Grump', *Earth First!* 15/2 (21 Dec. 1994) p.23; idem., 'Meares Island: Canada's Old Growth Struggle', *Earth First!* 5/3 (2 Feb. 1985) pp.1, 5; idem., 'Spike a Tree for Me', *Earth First!* 15/3 (2 Feb. 1995) p.9; Alexander Berkman, 'Of the "War on Drugs" and Tree Spiking', *Earth First!* 9/4 (21 March 1989) p.35; CM, 'An Appraisal of Monkeywrenching', *Earth First!* 10/3 (2 Feb. 1990) p.30; and Anonymous, 'Comment on Spiking', *Earth First!* 2/3 (2 Feb. 1982) p.6. Cf. the recent letters continuing the tree spiking debate by May, Haun, Bari, Woo and Lawhorn in *Earth First!* 15/3 (2 Feb. 1995).

⁷ The ALF is made up of autonomous underground 'cells' known for liberating captive animals and for arson attacks on meat factories and research laboratories. The ALF in the United States has at least two publications devoted to their activities: *Underground: The Magazine of the North American Animal Liberation Front Supporters Group* and *No Compromise: The Militant Direct Action Magazine of Grassroots Animal Liberationists & Their Supporters*.

which engaged in armed robbery and bombings, Bari implied a greater sympathy for violent tactics than she was willing to acknowledge publicly.⁸ After her death Bari was simplistically portrayed as the saint of the nonviolent faction of Earth First!; clearly, the reality was more complex. Indeed, ‘a few days before her death Bari requested that her obituaries depict her occupation as a “revolutionary” ’47 - not a term usually associated with nonviolence.

⁸ Interview with Judi Bari, Willets, California, Feb. 1993. Bari further explained that underground groups should not hold or attend movement gatherings and asserted, ‘I’m not against monkeywrenching, most of it, but I can’t talk to EF! because I’m totally discredited.’ She was referring to her stance renouncing tree-spiking which was extremely unpopular in many movement sectors. Long-term Earth First! activist Andy Caffrey believes that much of the anger by Earth First! activists toward Bari was due to resentment about her trying to impose an anti-tree spiking and anti-monkeywrenching rule on the entire movement, a perception Bari believed was unfair. But this perception was widespread, and was reinforced by her apparent efforts to get Earth First! as a whole to renounce monkeywrenching at the national Earth First! rendezvous in California in 1995. This endeavor was consistent with Bari’s belief that Earth First! should develop a mass movement. Bari later articulated a similar sentiment, noting that the Zapatistas in Mexico are mindful that they are an underground organization and they don’t publish a ‘Zapatista Journal with tips on taking down powerlines’. She declared that Earth First! in the US should divide into Earth First! and ELF factions, just as the movement did in England, allowing the original group to focus on non-violent civil disobedience and the latter one to focus on sabotage: ‘Civil disobedience and sabotage are both powerful tactics in our movement. For the survival of both, it’s time to leave the night work to the elves in the woods.’ Judi Bari, ‘Monkeywrenching’, *Earth First!* 14/3 (2 Feb. 1994) p.8.

Traits and Dynamics Discouraging Violence

State Power

Within radical environmental groups rebellious and revolutionary rhetoric is consistently tempered with realism if not exaggeration about the repressive power of the state.¹ As Kaplan observes with regard to Nazis, intense scrutiny of radical groups by law enforcement makes it ‘tantamount to organizational suicide’ to ‘seriously contemplate violent action’ - and this provides a strong disincentive to violence.²

Relative Insularity or Social Isolation

Another variable within radical groups that scholars find helpful in analyzing the likelihood of radical groups turning violent is the relative isolation of the adherents from mainstream society. As Kaplan puts it, ‘The more distant a particular group tends to be from the values and beliefs of the mainstream society, the more difficult it becomes for an adherent to moderate or give up the belief system altogether.’³

When viewed through such an analytic lens, radical environmentalism seems less likely than many other radical groups to yield the kind of unbridled extremism that promotes violence. Earth First!ers do not, as a general pattern or membership requirement, sever ties to their natural families; indeed, some rely on such connections for part of their material resource base. While stridently critical of the consumerism they believe is prevalent among their friends and families, most Earth First!ers still celebrate holidays and life-passages with them. Although there probably are some cases where familial ties have been completely severed, this is not a general tendency. Although there are intentional and ‘back-to-the-land’ communities within radical environmental subcultures, they do not generally sever all contact with the wider world. There are cases and contexts where terrorists, especially early in their campaigns, do not

¹ Bron Taylor, ‘Diggers’ (note 16).

² Jeffrey Kaplan, ‘Right Wing Violence’ (note 15) p.47.

³ Ibid., p.46.

sever their ties with family, friends and the wider society which harbors them.⁴ My point here is simply to suggest another variable that reduces the likelihood of violence emerging from radical environmental groups.

The Unabomber provides an important contrast that demonstrates the potential importance of the ‘withdrawal’ variable. Ted Kaczynski severed ties with his family and society at large. This was one of many factors that led each of the three court-empowered psychology experts who examined the documentary record and interviewed Kaczynski to diagnose him ‘schizophrenic, paranoid subtype’. Moreover, Kaczynski’s refusal to acknowledge his own illness and to allow his attorneys to use it in his defense, these experts agreed, is a common aspect of the illness.⁵ In any case, despite the prosecutor’s zeal to link Kaczynski with Earth First! by introducing into the record the existence of movement literature in Kaczynski’s cabin and one-time reliance upon it in victim selection, the strong evidence of mental illness clearly erodes the implication that the Unabomber case proves Earth First! is a terrorist breeding ground.

Indeed, in the absence of mental illness, it is the *activist* engagements of radical environmentalists that can prevent social withdrawal and the dangerous ‘insularity-dynamic’ linked by scholars to violence. Except for a tiny and unknown number of completely underground and isolated ecoteurs, most movement activists are engaged face-to-face with many of their adversaries - from loggers, to Forest Service bureaucrats, to attorneys. Such encounters are often unpleasant for all parties, but they play nevertheless an important role in humanizing the ‘enemy’, continually forcing the message on all involved parties that, however much we might dislike them, *adversaries are human*.⁶ Sometimes activists must acknowledge that some adversaries are likable enough creatures, even if their values are messed up. This moderates movement demonologies and reduces the possibility of violence. Indeed, much of the rage felt by movement activists is directed less at the mass of ‘functionaries’ in governments and corporations than at high government and corporate officials. Ordinary workers are often viewed as brainwashed and deluded, trapped by the evil system due to their livelihood needs or advertising-manipulated lifestyle preferences. The way Earth First!ers view loggers is markedly different from the way the most militant pro-life activists view abortionists. They do not, generally speaking, view them as murderers.

⁴ As David C. Rapoport and Jeffrey Kaplan pointed out (personal communication), in most guerrilla wars, familial ties are often not severed. Kaplan suggests, however, that ‘leaderless resistance’ whether radical right, anarchist or green often depends on breaking ties.

⁵ These conclusions are drawn from a careful reading of the declarations submitted to the court by three court-appointed psychiatric experts. For details see Appendix B.

⁶ On the role of dehumanization in terrorist violence, see Ehud Sprinzak, ‘Right-Wing Terrorism in a Comparative Perspective: The Case of Split Delegitimation’, in Tore Bj0rgo (ed.), *Terror From the Extreme Right* (London: Frank Cass 1995) pp.17-43, esp. p.20.

Charismatic Authority and Freedom of Speech

Another variable, one linked to the relative isolation of adherents and postulated by some scholars of apocalyptic movements to have predictive value related to the likelihood of violence, is ‘charismatic authority’. Robbins and Palmer agree that this is a crucial variable as they summarize the argument that charismatic authority increases the ‘volatility and violence in apocalyptic or “world rejecting” sects’.

[C]harismatic leadership . . . probably enhances the antinomian potential of apocalypticism. Indeed, the combination of charismatic leadership and an apocalyptic worldview may create a kind of tinderbox, although much will depend on the particular qualities of the visionary leader [including whether he] demonize[s] any opposition. [Moreover,] world-rejecting sects manifest a stance of total rejection of or detachment from the broader society that may require . . . a revered charismatic prophet with a compelling vision.⁷

Yet again, when viewed through such an analytic lens, radical environmentalism seems less likely than many other apocalyptic groups to turn violent. There is no charismatic figure to follow blindly; indeed, any figure who even begins to consider her or himself an authoritative leader is usually quickly and effectively blocked or deposed by other activists within this radically egalitarian group.⁸

The anti-hierarchical dimension to Earth First! not only makes this movement inhospitable to charismatic authority. It also manifests itself in another trait found among them - their enthusiasm for debate. The *Earth First!* journal itself - led at times by an anarchistic insistence that every one be allowed to speak even in favor of unpopular articles apparently promoting violence - provides a venue for debate that, on balance, has a moderating effect. No movement individual who is contemplating violence and in contact with other movement people, whether through the journal or at movement gatherings, will fail to hear the many and good strategic and moral arguments against such tactics. Moreover, because of their activism, the most astute in these subcultures will surely notice that their greatest and most consistent successes have been won

⁷ Robbins and Palmer, ‘Introduction’, in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem* (note 8) pp.20-21.

⁸ Dave Foreman was clearly the most charismatic of Earth First!’s founders, but was unsuccessful at ‘reducing internal pluralism’ and failed to convince those with other views. His opponents in the movement had ‘inhibitions against unconditional obedience’. Some of which makes it difficult to establish charismatic authority (Robbins and Palmer, ‘Introduction’ (note 8) p.21). Although Foreman clearly wanted a smaller group more in line with his own views, on his own anti-authoritarian principles, he did not aspire to, and indeed feared, leadership of the charismatic variety (various personal communications with the author since 1989). One possible exception here are the ‘Environmental Rangers’, a militia-like radical green group that threatens to use firearms to defend the Blackfoot river in Montana against despoliation by mining. Interestingly, however, the leader of this group has willingly complied with Earth First!’s non-violence code when participating in civil disobedience protesting logging in the so-called Cove-Mallard roadless area in Idaho.

from the judicial branch of the federal government; an inconvenient fact for rigid ideological anarchists, to be sure, but certainly one that makes difficult a comprehensive demonology of the federal government.

A couple of anarchist Earth First!ers, for example, after a time of observing and figuring out who are the most effective activists, have decided to become lay or credentialed attorneys. The presence of open lines of communication, including increasingly via the Internet, further erodes insularity and thus the number of recruits available for a rigid, violence prone, revolutionary anarchism.

Certainly there are troubling insular dimensions to the subcultures of radical environmentalism, including certain anti-intellectual streams. I have heard startlingly ignorant statements about politics and ecology, especially by activists who grew up in these subcultures or were drawn into these groups at a young age. Because of the ideological commitment to free speech and expression within these groups, however, countervailing and moderating opinions will continue to be heard, along with the prevailing green militancy.

Life as Sacred

There are also general religious sentiments - that the earth and all life is sacred - that lessen the possibility that movement activists will engage in terrorist violence. Sometimes such arguments are advanced explicitly during movement gatherings and in its publications. In response to Barry Clausen's efforts to link Earth First! and the Unabomber, for example, one Earth First! group insisted that, 'Earth First! practices non-violent civil disobedience'. They continued asserting that sabotage is controversial and there is no official position about it and 'Earth First! does not advocate violence towards any person because . . . Earth First! considers all life sacred, even Barry Clausen's.'⁹ Often, the sacredness of all life is conveyed through various forms of movement ritualizing. It is hard to avoid the logic that, if all life is sacred, one ought to eschew violence, especially when defending sacred places.¹⁰ This would seem to reduce the potential for such a movement spawning terrorist action.

The Unabomber and reverence for life. Here, again, the Unabomber case provides an interesting contrast. In a journal entry written in April 1971, Kaczynski wrote,

⁹ Cascadia Forest Defenders, 'Barry Clausen: The Unreal Truth', <<http://www.Igc.Apc.Org/Cascadia/Clausen.Html>> (1996).

¹⁰ Jeff Kaplan points out, however, that the anti-abortion rescue movement also sees life as sacred and some of them turned to deadly force, suggesting that the contradiction can be resolved in the terrorist's mind through a simple, rational calculus. By killing one doctor, X number of babies are saved. He wonders, 'Why would radical environmentalism be immune to such logic?' (e-mail message, April 1998). His point is well taken. It only takes one individual to adopt such a logic for terrorism to occur. But in general, 'intrinsic value' theory that reveres all life places a strong *prima facie* barrier against the turn to violence.

I believe in nothing . . . I don't even believe in the cult of nature-worshippers or wilderness-worshippers. (I am perfectly ready to litter in parts of the woods that are of no use to me - I often throw cans in logged-over areas or in places much frequented by people; I don't find wilderness particularly healthy physically; I don't hesitate to poach.)

This quote is included in the prosecution's 30-page sentencing memorandum. By quoting from Kaczynski's writings the prosecution successfully portrayed him as a hate-filled, revenge-seeking and remorseless man. Prosecutors went further, however, asserting a more difficult claim that he was never motivated 'by a love of nature or concerns over technology'.¹¹

This claim was skewed by a desire to both anticipate and counter defense assertions of mitigating circumstances (such as an understandable but 'misguided' idealism). Perhaps this is why prosecutors quoted Kaczynski's manifesto, 'The Future of Industrial Society',¹² primarily to debunk as disingenuous its claims to concern about freedom and wilderness. Yet even more than 25 years ago Kaczynski expressed his rage at the destructive powers of technology. It may be, as prosecutors powerfully argued, that this is little more than a cover story for his hatred of any entity that interfered with his social withdrawal.¹³ Nevertheless, Kaczynski did subsequently articulate a complex ideology that counter-posed a hegemonic and freedom-devouring industrial system with the greater freedom available in small-scale societies characterized by foraging lifeways.¹⁴

The better known part of his ideology, his hatred of technology, was stated clearly in the manifesto, perhaps most pointedly in this passage:

With regard to revolutionary strategy, the only points on which we absolutely insist are that the single overriding goal must be the elimination of

¹¹ According to the prosecution's 4 May 1998 sentencing memorandum, 'In June of 1995, late in his bombing career, Kaczynski sent a manuscript (which came to be known as the 'Unabomb Manifesto') to newspapers under the alias 'FC espousing an ideological basis for his crimes. He [Kaczynski] claimed that he 'had to kill people' to 'get a message before the public' that technology was destroying mankind. While Kaczynski adopted the pretense that he was killing for the greater good of society, two points are clear from the writings seized from his home. First, his desire to kill preceded by several years any serious concerns about technology. Second, he wanted to kill not out of some altruistic sense that he would thereby benefit society, but, in his own words, out of 'personal revenge' and without 'any kind of philosophical or moralistic justification'.

¹² Henceforth simply 'manifesto'. It is widely available on the Internet and was published on 19 Sept. 1995 by *The Washington Post*.

¹³ For further details see Appendix B.

¹⁴ See section 198 of the manifesto, for example: 'Primitive INDIVIDUALS and SMALL GROUPS actually had considerable power over nature; or maybe it would be better to say power WITHIN nature. When primitive man needed food he knew how to find and prepare edible roots, how to track game and take it with homemade weapons. He knew how to protect himself from heat, cold, rain, dangerous animals, etc. But primitive man did relatively little damage to nature because the COLLECTIVE power of primitive society was negligible compared to the COLLECTIVE power of industrial society.'

modern technology, and that no other goal can be allowed to compete with this one.¹⁵

Yet whatever part of his ideology we focus upon, it seems that his thinking developed new emphases and detail over time. By the 1990s, his ideology intersected with typical elements of the worldviews of radical environmentalists and green anarchists. Certainly in Kaczynski's case, this developing ideology was grafted upon a hate-filled and, almost certainly, mentally ill and paranoid personality. Prosecutors have not proven, however, that ideals played no role in motivating Kaczynski.¹⁶

Note this passage from the section of the manifesto where Kaczynski contrasts the negative goal of eliminating modern technology with 'wild nature' as a 'positive ideal'; an aspect of his message which most radical environmentalists would surely endorse:

An ideology, in order to gain enthusiastic support, must have a positive ideal as well as a negative one; it must be FOR something as well as AGAINST something. The positive ideal that we propose is Nature. That is, WILD nature; those aspects of the functioning of the Earth and its living things that are independent of human management and free of human interference and control. And with wild nature we include human nature, by which we mean those aspects of the functioning of the human individual that are not subject to regulation by organized society but are products of chance, or free will, or God (depending on your religious or philosophical opinions).¹⁷

In addition to stating a positive ideal, this passage suggests that Kaczynski's views about religion also changed over time. In the manifesto he expressed greater tolerance for nature-based spirituality than was apparent in the 1971 journal entry cited previously: he concedes in it that nature-based religion *can* contribute to the revolution against the industrial system. Nevertheless, he was also subtly condescending toward those animated by nature-religious perceptions and beliefs, implying that such religiosity is contrived and incredible. This complex perspective is apparent in further discussion of 'Nature as Counter-Ideal to Technology':

Nature makes a perfect counter-ideal to technology for several reasons. Nature (that which is outside the power of the system) is the opposite of technology (which seeks to expand indefinitely the power of the system).

¹⁵ 'Manifesto', section 206.

¹⁶ Shortly before I submitted this article for publication, during his 3 May 1998, sentencing hearing, Kaczynski issued a statement claiming that the government in its sentencing recommendations made 'false and misleading statements'. He argued that 'by discrediting me personally, they hope to discredit my political ideas'. He then promised to have more to say in later this regard, 'I ask that people reserve their judgment about me and the Unabomb case until I have a chance to respond.'

¹⁷ 'Manifesto', section 183.

Most people will agree that nature is beautiful; certainly it has tremendous popular appeal. The radical environmentalists ALREADY hold an ideology that exalts nature and opposes technology.¹⁸

The related note expands this line of thought into a discussion of religion:

A further advantage of nature as a counter-ideal to technology is that, in many people, nature inspires the kind of reverence that is associated with religion, so that nature could perhaps be idealized on a religious basis. It is true that in many societies religion has served as a support and justification for the established order, but it is also true that religion has often provided a basis for rebellion. Thus it may be useful to introduce a religious element into the rebellion against technology, the more so because Western society today has no strong religious foundation . . . there is a religious vacuum in our society that could perhaps be filled by a religion focused on nature in opposition to technology. But it would be a mistake to try to concoct artificially a religion to fill this role. Such an invented religion would probably be a failure. Take the 'Gaia' religion for example. Do its adherents REALLY believe in it or are they just play-acting? If they are just play-acting their religion will be a flop in the end. It is probably best not to try to introduce religion into the conflict of nature vs. technology unless you REALLY believe in that religion yourself and find that it arouses a deep, strong, genuine response in many other people.¹⁹

The public record, including this passage which is the clearest extant expression of Kaczynski's thoughts about religion, provides no indication that Kaczynski shared the sense, so prevalent in radical environmental subcultures, that life is worthy of reverence and the earth is sacred. He seems to take a purely instrumental attitude toward religion - only if it promotes the rebellion is it useful and thus good. Clearly, Kaczynski does not really confess a spirituality kindred to that which permeates radical environmentalism. Thus, any of the ways that a life-revering philosophy can erode violent strategies were, apparently, unavailable to him.

Other saboteurs and the reverence for life. Other voices strongly urge nonviolence, even those of respected movement monkeywrenchers like Peg Millett (one of the Arizona Five). But as with regard to Rodney Coronado, movement activists often employ martial or revolutionary rhetoric while simultaneously (or on other occasions) defending nonviolence for pragmatic and/or spiritual reasons.

¹⁸ 'Manifesto', section 194.

¹⁹ See 'Manifesto', section 184 and the related endnote #30. I wonder if these sentiments are among those in the letter to Earth First! from 'FC' found in Kaczynski's cabin. As of this writing the full text has not been released by authorities.

Earth First! co-founder Mike Roselle provides another good example. He once scoffed at movement rival Dave Foreman's claim that monkeywrenching (ecological sabotage) is not revolutionary, raving

What we want is nothing short of a revolution. Fuck that crap you read in [Foreman's writings in] *Wild Earth* or *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior*. Monkeywrenching is more than just sabotage, and your (sic) goddamn right it's revolutionary! This is jihad, pal. There are no innocent bystanders, because in these desperate hours, bystanders are not innocent. We'll broaden our theater of conflict Everything, every assumption, every institution needs to be challenged. Now!²⁰

Not surprisingly, Roselle's statement was seized upon as an example of the movement's violent tendencies. The 'jihad' rhetoric could suggest how a 'reverence for life' ethic could produce a 'holy war' strategy. Roselle himself, however, was not using the term to promote violence but a radical transformation of thought and action with regard to nature. Elsewhere, he battled romanticism about violence, arguing that non-violence is an essential movement tactic. Joining into one more of the periodic debates about violence in *Earth First!*, he acknowledged that 'losing the message is a real risk in nonviolence'. He asserted, however, that losing the ability to communicate the movement's message to the public 'is a bigger risk with monkeywrenching [and] a greater risk still with violence'.²¹ This is one of many examples I could provide urging caution about assuming that rhetoric that seems sympathetic or enthusiastic about violence will lead to it.

Even Ron Arnold's book, *Ecoterror: the Violent Agenda to Save Nature - the World of the Unabomber*, provides little evidence that violent terrorism is being planned and perpetrated by radical environmentalists, despite its alarmist title. The most dangerous incidents Arnold reports (with the exception of the Unabomber) were perpetrated by animal rights activists, who Arnold does not distinguish from radical environmentalists.²²

²⁰ M. Roselle, 'Forest Grump' (note 44) p.23.

²¹ M. Roselle, 'Movement Building Basics: Please Open to Michael 3:16', *Earth First!* 18/4 (20 March 1998) p.8.

²² In one recent case, for example, a 19-year old ALF activist named Douglas Joshua Ellerman was convicted of a March 1997 pipe-bombing of a Utah Fur Breeders Agricultural Co-op Faced with a 35 year prison sentence, Ellerman agreed to cooperate with law enforcement officials, and five of his associates were soon arrested His prison sentence was reduced to seven years See Sheila McCann, 'Animal Rights Bomber Gets 7-Year Prison Term', *The Salt Lake Tribune*, B4 For earlier coverage see Anonymous, '35 Year Sentence for ALF Activist', *No Compromise* 8 (1998) p 5, and Anonymous, 'Josh Ellerman Update', *Underground* 10 (Spring 1998) p 8 Interestingly, apart from the Unabomber, this may be the most extreme ALF action in America yet, but it occurred too late to lend credibility to Arnold's *Ecoterror* title Although arson is a common ALF tactic, this may have been the first use of explosives by ALF activists in North America Interestingly, despite its claim that it practices nonviolent direct action, neither of these ALF support tabloids expressed discomfort about the use of explosives

The convergence of animal liberation and radical environmentalism? To a significant extent, the animal liberation and radical environmental movements represent distinct subcultures.²³ My own perception is that within *Earth First!* there are at most a few dozen activists who regularly participate in both movements. Yet there is increasing cooperation and overlap between radical environmental and animal rights activists, and since a major movement schism in 1990, *Earth First!* has printed articles about animal liberationist resistance. Given the much greater propensity for ALF activists to engage in arson (one need only compare ALF and *Earth First!* tabloids in North America or Europe to be convinced of this difference), the future extent of collaboration between these groups is certainly of interest in attempting to assess the likelihood of injuries resulting from radical environmental actions.

In addition to Rod Coronado, two other figures have attempted to bridge the gap by appealing to and writing for animal liberation tabloids and the *Earth First!* journal. Like Coronado, both David Barbarash and Darren Thurston have been convicted of crimes for which the Animal Liberation Front took credit, including the theft (or 'liberation') of 29 cats from the University of Alberta on 1 June 1992. During a related search of property owned by the two activists, according to Ron Arnold, Canadian police found 'an AK-47 assault rifle, ammunition and two hand grenades'.²⁴ When informed that Arnold had reported this on his website, Barbarash replied

Ron Arnold, like most of his kind, are idiots who twist facts. During a raid on Darren's place in Edmonton in 1992 in relation to the university raid, police found an AK-47 type of rifle, as well as a dummy grenade being used as a paperweight. The weapon was fully legal and registered, and the dummy grenade was not illegal either.²⁵

and *No Compromise* included an address for legal support. Apparently, in the minds of these ALF supporters, there is no morally significant difference between arson and bomb attacks, for such attacks are considered nonviolent if directed at property, not people.

²³ Ron Arnold was unaware of the shooting incident I described above and apparently of the extent of violent-sounding rhetoric that I have documented in 'Diggers' (note 16). Arnold's book does reinforce my growing impression that there is a small overlap, and an increasing one, between radical environmental and animal rights activists. This development deserves further empirical scrutiny. (In October 1997 Arnold told me he was working on a revised edition of *Ecoterror* that would correct a couple of minor errors and contain significant new information.)

²⁴ Also, according to Arnold's Internet site, the 'Ecoterror Response Network', Barbarash and Thurston were convicted of torching several trucks belonging to the Billingsgate Fish Company. But in e-mail and telephone communications on 10 and 11 May 1998, David Barbarash stated that only Thurston was charged and convicted of the fish company crime. When I asked him about the possible motive, he stated, 'I'm assuming that the grievance against the fish company would not have been any different than the grievances you will find against any company which kills or exploits animals for food. Most animal liberationists do not draw a line between fish, crustaceans, and other species.' He later qualified this statement that he was referring to the animal liberationists he knows best, and acknowledged a wide gap between such wilderness oriented animal liberationists and that of more urban-oriented Animal Liberation Front and animal rights activists.

²⁵ E-mail message, 10 May 1998.

Since no charges were ever filed with regard to the firearm and grenade, it appears Arnold did not report all pertinent facts.

Thurston and Barbarash are currently, however, suspected of a number of additional crimes. According to articles in animal liberation tabloids and *Earth First!*, these include four 1995 cases where mail bombs were sent to two Canadian racists (the Nazi propagandist Ernest Zundle and Aryan Nations leader Charles Scott), John Thompson of the right-wing MacKenzie Institute, and Terrence Mitenko, a geneticist with Alta Genetics in Calgary. Yet neither activist has been charged with mailing bombs.

Although they have not been arrested in the bomb cases, they were charged in March 1998 with 27 counts related to sending packages booby-trapped with razor blades. The alleged aim was to injure big game ‘trophy’ hunters in Canada, who might cut themselves on the blades when opening the letters. Barbarash was also charged with possessing an illegal weapon (a stun gun) and, with Rebecca Rubin, of ‘an explosive substance’, according to *Vancouver Sun* reporter Rick Ouston, a nine-volt battery and wire.²⁶ They deny the charges and attribute the arrests to unfair, ongoing police harassment. If true, however, these actions represent one of the very few cases where activists at the intersection of animal liberationism and radical environmentalism have clearly intended harm to their adversaries.

These crimes did not have a clearly stated *ecological* purpose, however, in the articles written by supporters of these activists. Therefore, it is worth wondering if these qualify as ‘radical environmental’ actions.²⁷ Yet clearly, some ALF activists, seeking support widely and viewing *Earth First!*’s eco-teurs as kindred spirits, regularly send news updates on their activities and encounters with law enforcement to *Earth First!*. By publishing these stories, *Earth First!* creates an impression that these two movements are unifying or, at least, that they cooperate and are mutually supportive.²⁸ There is something to this impression, although it is probably exaggerated by watchdog groups and most law enforcement officials. The printing of such material is probably influenced

²⁶ With regard to the ‘explosive substances’ charge, Barbarash told me that the ‘items seized during one of the raids last year were not explosives at all, but items which they say can be used in the construction of an incendiary device’ According to movement tabloids, Thurston faces an additional charge of ‘impersonation’, which Barbarash said has something to do with possessing a false identification card See Gina Lynn, ‘Courageous Activists Under Fire’, *Underground* 10 (Spring 1998) p 14, and ‘Dogged by the Mounties in the Great White North’, *Earth First!* 18/5 (1 May 1998) p 9 See also ‘Charges Laid in “Razor Blade” Case’, a 27 March 1998 news release issued by Sargent Russ Grabb, Media Relations, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (604) 264-292, and Rick Ousten, ‘Activists’ “secret” lives probed’, *Vancouver Sun*, 30 March 1998, A1

²⁷ Although Barbarash’s own animal liberationist friends may not prefer one species to another, most animal liberationists prioritize efforts to save sentient creatures, usually mammals

²⁸ Barbarash, for example, in a letter written from prison for the above-mentioned crimes, exhorted readers to greater rebellion:

Let’s hit them where it hurts the most Figure it out Be secure Be tribal Go for the jugular There are many options to focus on; it doesn’t matter where, so much, as it matters when - time is running out . Our lives on this Earth are but the blink of an eye in the time and age of this planet. But our actions in this day will have an effect which could determine the future.

by the anti-authoritarian and anti-censorship views widely shared by radical environmentalists more than it is dictated by ideological agreement with animal liberationist ideology.

Significantly, collaboration between these groups usually occurs where animal rights beliefs intersect with concern for ecosystems and species survival. (For example, when hunting of predators is underway, which negatively impacts ecosystems, or where species themselves are threatened with extinction by human activities.) Most radical environmentalists are more concerned for ecosystems and species than for individual animals.

When radical environmentalists and animal rights activists collaborate, the latter tend to become radically ecologized - developing greater concerns for ecosystems and endangered species. Consequently, such activists often turn their attention increasingly toward wild animals rather than domestic ones, or those exploited in the fur trade (the traditional priority concerns for animal liberationists). I know of no cases where radical environmentalists have suddenly converted to an animal liberationist perspective, abandoning forest protection work to liberate hogs, mink or fox.

This is in part because of the inescapable conflict between animal liberationism and an ecosystem-centered radical environmentalism. The most ecologically literate of the radical environmentalists object to the 'liberation' of mink and fox. These animals are selectively bred by fur farmers for certain genetic traits. Ecologists fear blending their genes, which rarely evolved near the farm site, into the wild populations surrounding it. Such breeds, they argue, are ill equipped to survive in the wild and, thus, releasing them is not the compassionate act the liberators believe it to be.

As we have seen, however, there are a number of activists who dwell in both camps, even if sometimes uneasily. Often such activists are anarchists, opposed to all hierarchies, whether in human society or between humans and non-human nature. One woman activist who writes under the pseudonym 'Anne Archy', for example, has made it a personal goal to unify the three movements, by writing for each of their tabloids.²⁹

Despite such efforts, profound ideological differences remain between radical environmentalists and animal liberationists. Radical environmentalists promote an ecosystem- and species-focused ethics (including plant life) while animal liberationists

My brother and sister warriors, I love all of your courageous spirits. My prayers and magic are with you on the front lines. . . . be proud and supportive of each other. . . . Keep in touch, my family. Hoka Hey!. Geronimo Lives Forever!

See D. Barbarash, 'Greetings from a Northern Alberta Concrete Bioregion!', *Earth First!* 14/7 (1 Aug. 1994) p.9. Occasionally rhetoric suggesting that activism can significantly change the course of history is heard, but such rhetoric rarely if ever qualifies as millenarian optimism. At best, activists think they have 'a ghost of a chance', to borrow a phrase from a song by Earth First! musician Danny Dollinger.

²⁹ She recently published the lead article in *No Compromise* explaining Earth First! to ALF activists, arguing that habitat destruction is an animal rights issue, and urging greater collaboration between these movements. See Anne Archy, 'Frontline Forest Defense for Earth and Animal Liberation', *No Compromise* 8 (1998) pp.16-19.

focus more on the well-being of individual, sentient animals.³⁰ This will continue to cause tensions between these groups and will reduce the occasions for their collaboration and mutual influence.

Moreover, my strong impression is that animal liberationists who come in contact with radical environmentalists without finding their priorities changing, withdraw to their more 'individualistic' and traditional animal rights groups. It is possible, however, that the more arson-friendly ALF may win tactical converts even if they do not change the focus of the radical environmentalists they know.

Deep Ecological 'Identification', Interdependence and Anti-Dualism

Deep ecology's goal of fostering a 'deep ecological sense of identification with all life', as Bill Devall and George Sessions once argued, including a sense of the interrelated sacredness of all life, works against both misanthropy and violence in radical environmental groups. 'Ecology has taught us that the whole earth is part of our "body" and . . . we must learn to respect it is as we respect ourselves', they wrote. 'As we feel for ourselves, we must feel for all forms of life.' It is difficult to advocate or justify violence against any life form when animated by such spiritual perceptions, as Devall and Sessions concluded: 'Both on practical and ethical grounds, violence is rejected as a mode of ecological resistance.'³¹

Perhaps even the most 'spiritual' or 'woo woo' activists (woo woo is a musing movement term referring to religious ritual or one's 'spirituality') have a moderating influence. Some of them wear buttons with 'us/them' crossed out with the universal sign 'Not!' - suggesting that if movement people take their anti-dualistic, metaphysics-of-interdependence seriously, they will refuse to demonize opponents. On balance, the politics and metaphysics of the sacred, which permeates radical environmental groups, helps erode the kind of absolutist-Manichean demonizing of the 'enemy' that otherwise might more forcefully emerge in these movements, given their apocalyptic urgency.

³⁰ Terms common in environmental philosophy for the wholistic ecosystem and species- oriented approach are 'ecocentrism' (ecosystem-centered ethics) and 'biocentrism' (life-centered ethics). Although animal liberation and rights philosophies are often also concerned for such things, when push comes to shove, they privilege individual creatures over the well-being of ecosystems. If they do not, then they become traitors to their philosophy, converting to wholism.

³¹ Bill Devall and George Sessions, 'Direct Action', *Earth First!* 5/1 (1984) pp. 18-19, 24. Illustrating, however, that everything continues to be contested among radical environmentalists, Spike and Friends, 'Cult of Ass Kissing', *Earth First!* 18/4 (20 March 1998) p.10, single out such professors for 'depraved toadying that passes for activism' that promotes a nonviolence code certifying 'we will not destroy any property'. While urging that activists refuse to be restrained by the dominant society's rules and advocating sabotage, these anarchistic writers suggested that more aggressive resistance prevents violence.

Such dualism has been widely noted by scholars as an important variable that increases the likelihood of violence by radical groups.³²

Nature Bats Last and, ‘Who Shall Be the Agent of Transformation?’

It could be deduced from one of David Rapoport’s arguments, however, that religiously motivated apocalyptic groups are especially prone to violence. He asserts that with such groups there are two conditions for terrorist violence: an expectation of an imminent day of deliverance and a belief that violent human actions ‘can or must consummate the process’.³³

The critical question Rapoport addresses is, ‘Who (and what means) shall be the agent of transformation?’ A related question is, ‘How does the answer to such a question influence the likelihood of violence emerging from a social movement?’ Jeffrey Kaplan’s answer is that when apocalyptic groups envision no divine intervention or rescue, violence is more likely.³⁴

Although it might seem that Earth First!ers do not anticipate a divine intervention that will usher in a green millennium, there is a strong belief that if humans do not radically change their lifeways, nature (whether personified as Gaia or goddess and/or conceived as ‘population dynamics’ within ecosystems) will eventually do it itself. This is symbolically represented in the popular movement slogan and bumper sticker, ‘Nature Bats Last’ (coined by ecologist Paul Ehrlich) that musingly anticipates the eventual restoration of Eden on earth, even if by means of a tragic ‘cataclysmic cleansing’. Here is expressed the widely shared movement belief that sacred earth herself will eventually shake off species pathogenic to her long-term health. This belief might, in a way similar to that observed by Kaplan in a different context, reduce the possibility that movement activists will feel it is justifiable and possible to, by their own actions, violently force the needed transformations.

For this reason I disagree with Martha Lee’s insistence that the Earth First! faction she calls the ‘apocalyptic biocentrists’ are more likely to engage in terrorist violence than one she claims (in a very strained typology) are optimistic millenarians.³⁵ It is hard to see how despair regarding the possibility of human action bringing about the desired transformations can provide a basis for revolutionary violence.

³² E.g., ‘Apocalypticism is also, at least in its catastrophic manifestations, decidedly dualistic. Absolute good and evil contend through history such that there is no room for moral ambiguity.’ Robbins and Palmer, ‘Introduction’, in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem* (note 8) p.6.

³³ David C. Rapoport, ‘Messianic Sanctions for Terror’, *Comparative Politics* 20/2 (1980) pp. 197-8.

³⁴ Kaplan, ‘Right Wing Violence’ (note 15) p.52.

³⁵ Martha Lee, *Earth First!* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press 1995).

This conclusion does not, however, address Rapoport's belief that there is a strong psychological need, by at least some devotees, to think their actions are central. Here he says that there is a strong tendency for apocalyptic groups to turn terrorist:

When a sense of imminence takes root, some believers must find it psychologically impossible to regard their actions as irrelevant, . . . *At the very least*, they will act to secure their own salvation. And once the initial barrier to action has been overcome, it will only be a matter of time before different kinds of action make sense too. Soon they may think they can shape the speed or timing of the process.³⁶

Moreover, Rapoport adds, 'It would seem rather obvious that, when the stakes of any struggle are perceived as being great, the conventional restraints on violence diminish accordingly.'³⁷

Such assertions are certainly sobering. Radical environmentalists do believe the stakes are high: the survival of *Homo sapiens* and untold other species is at stake. Consequently, it is possible to imagine some radical environmentalists, despairing of peaceful social change, and having no expectation of divine rescue, splintering off into militia-like survivalist movements. Or perhaps revolutionary cells will emerge, grounded in tragic, romantic scripts that argue that the only hope for the planet is in a vanguard of green-anarchist revolutionaries willing to resist violently the industrial juggernaut. Nevertheless, with regard to radical environmentalism, I am currently unconvinced of the psychological tendency Rapoport cites. The anti-anthropocentrism in radical environmentalism works strongly against placing hope in human agency. Perhaps the musing movement slogan, 'There is hope, but not for us' captures some of the fatalism to which I am alluding.

Fun and Eros

Perhaps one of the most important factors that reduce the likelihood of violence emerging from radical environmentalism is the riotous sense of fun that characterizes its activists. In keeping with their conviction that 'rewilding' is an essential part of the needed transformations, many of these activists are hearty 'party animals'. Indeed, the fraternity/sorority scene celebrated in the motion picture 'Animal House' might even be considered a ritual source. 'Body shots', where activists take turns drinking Tequila off increasingly intimate body parts, has become a trust-building and group-bonding rite - even self-consciously so.³⁸ It might also lead to even deeper intimacies in nearby fields or woods. Alcohol-fueled antics can become serious fun - and real ritualizing.³⁹

³⁶ Rapoport, 'Messianic Sanctions' (note 80) p.201.

³⁷ Ibid., p.204.

³⁸ As explained to me by several activist-participants.

³⁹ Indeed, it might even be worth suggesting the politically incorrect (and problematic) possibility that the eros-charged nature of Earth First! gatherings - their celebration and encouragement of

Also popular at most wilderness gatherings is an ‘amoeba’ made up of circling and encircled, mostly inebriated activists. With arms and hands intertwined around shoulders and hips, swirling chaotically around fields and campfires, the amoeba captures unwary human organisms, absorbing them into itself, all the while chanting ‘eat and excrete, eat and excrete’. Not only does it provide a wild good time - although sometimes angering those trampled by it or whose *overtly* spiritual ritualizing was disrupted - the amoeba draws even some of the most retiring activists into the group. It also conveys other important messages: as another ritual of inclusion, it represents the value and importance of the so-called ‘lower’ organisms, while simultaneously bonding activists together in the ritual play.⁴⁰ It also articulates symbolically the kinship of all creatures who share the same primal urges. Perhaps it also signals that activists should not take themselves too seriously - for like amoeba food, they too will be reabsorbed into the biological processes from which humans emerged.

Early in their history, Earth First! activists appropriated from a Native American culture the ‘mudhead Kachinas’ - trickster-like figures known for making fun of solemn occasions - a role itself viewed as a sacred, anti-hubristic endeavor. In any case, the lampooning, the ridicule and the mirth-making that characterizes Earth First! gatherings mitigates the sullen bitterness and brooding anger that can characterize the radical personality of the ‘true believer’ - the personality type especially prone to violence.⁴¹

widespread reveling in and experimentation with sexuality, their approval of gender-bending, bisexuality and gay- and group sex (so long as these are fully consensual) - might prevent at least one kind of ‘deprivation’ that political theorists suggest might provide the ‘real’ impetus toward radical rebellion.

⁴⁰ See Christopher Manes, ‘Paganism as Resistance’, *Earth First!* 8/5 (1 May 1988) pp.21-2, for a movement discussion of the importance of play.

⁴¹ Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer* (New York: Harper 1951). When I presented an earlier version of this article at the November 1997 meeting of the American Academy of Religion, David Rapoport reminded me that much of the radicalism of the 1960s started as Yippie-like fun-fests, but did not end up that way. His point is well taken, frustrations can multiply, transforming the character of a movement or of some of its participants. Jean Rosenfeld’s cautions are also relevant in this regard, illustrating how quickly millenarian groups can ‘alternate between peaceful and violent phases’. J. Rosenfeld, ‘Pai Marire: Peace and Violence in a New Zealand Millenarian Tradition’, *TPV* 7/3 (Autumn 1993) pp.83-108. She also suggested (during the aforementioned American Academy of Religion session) that the likelihood of violence emerging from millenarian groups escalates during periods of official repression. I simply do not find close the comparisons between these examples and the groups I have studied. Rosenfeld writes, for example, ‘a millennial movement does not respond to threat or force in conventional terms, but acts according to its own revelation concerning God’s plan. When it is attacked, it may resist to the last person. When it is least vulnerable, it may perceive a delay of God’s judgment and pour its energies and expectations into peaceful religious creations’ (p.96). Such theistic assumptions are largely absent from the worldviews of most radical environmentalists. In my view, this absence reduces the prospects for violence emerging from them. Indeed, if Rapoport is correct (and this seems right to me) that (1) with religiously-motivated terrorism ‘the transcendent source of holy terror is its most critical distinguishing characteristic; the deity is perceived as being directly involved in the determination of ends and means’ [David C. Rapoport, ‘Fear and Trembling’ (note 37) p.674] and (2) that religious terrorists believe ‘only a transcendent purpose which fulfills the meaning of the universe can justify terror’ [ibid., p.659], then

again, I would suggest widespread terrorist violence is unlikely to emerge from radical environmental groups.

Caveats and Conclusions

It is impossible to predict confidently the extent to which radical environmentalists (or the animal liberationists with whom they sometimes collaborate) will employ tactics that, intentionally or not, risk injury or death to humans. There are many examples of groups with non-violent records making a transition to violence. Sometimes, as Jeffrey Kaplan shows with regard to the rescue movement, it only takes someone to show the way, focusing pent-up frustration in a violent direction.¹

Nevertheless, much expectation that these are or will be violent, terrorist movements is based more on *a priori* expectations than on the historic record of these groups or on an understanding of their worldviews and how they precipitate action. Upon examining the record and characteristics of radical environmental groups, I conclude that claims that these are violence-prone subcultures are inaccurate. I make this statement mindful that some animal liberationists and radical environmentalists have been willing to risk injuries to their adversaries and, in a few cases, have intended to do so. To summarize, excluding the Unabomber and perhaps one other case where an ecoteur sought to evade capture, there is as yet no proven case where animal liberationists or radical environmentalists have attempted or succeeded in using violence to inflict great bodily harm or death on their adversaries.

Radical environmental subcultures certainly threaten 'business as usual' in western industrial societies. If such societies are to respond in a way that does not exacerbate environment-related conflicts, it is critical that the nature of such threats be apprehended accurately. Such an appraisal will not be achieved if exaggerated and ill-informed perceptions of the violent tendencies in these movements become conventional beliefs - and, especially, if such perceptions are allowed to be shaped by the most trenchant adversaries of these movements.²

Responding to an earlier version of this article, 'new religions' scholar J. Gordon Melton asserted that we need to de-mythologize and carefully consider the links between violence and rhetoric. Often those most likely to employ violent rhetoric are the least likely to engage in violence. He reasoned that violence requires a double process: first, a rationale for it, and second, a decision that it is the *most* acceptable option at the present moment. Applying such a reasonable standard to radical environmental

¹ Jeffrey Kaplan, 'Absolute Rescue: Absolutism, Defensive Action and the Resort to Force', *TPV* 7/3 (Autumn 1995) pp.128-63.

² Jeffrey Kaplan, 'The Anti-Cult Movement in America' (note 41) pp.267-96.

subcultures, I have found little evidence that both conditions are in place, or are likely to be in the foreseeable future.³

Although partisans on various sides of environmental disputes will no doubt continue demonizing their adversaries, scholars must scrupulously avoid incorporating dualistic worldview elements as their own analytic categories and refuse the temptation to sensationalize the environment-related conflicts. A good start in this regard would be to eschew broad definitions of the term terrorism, whether such definitions are promulgated by law enforcement authorities, self-appointed watchdog groups or scholars. This would require a rejection of the FBI's ('full employment') definition of terrorism in which violence is not even a necessary element of 'terrorist' crime!⁴ Moreover, this would mean refusing to label environment-related violence 'terrorism' unless these kinds of characteristics are present:

The distinguishing characteristic of the terrorist . . . is a deliberate decision to abandon [conventional moral] restraints or to refuse to accept as binding the prevailing moral distinctions between belligerents and neutrals, combatants and non-combatants, appropriate and inappropriate targets, legitimate and illegitimate methods. The terrorist *knows* that others will regard his actions as shocking or as atrocities, and this is one reason why he acts as he does, for his object in using terror . . . is to create a 'new consciousness' by methods which provoke extreme emotional reactions - panic, horror, revulsion, outrage, and sympathy . . . The nature of the act, not the status of the persons who commit it, is the critical feature.⁵

Such an understanding helps us, and properly so, to reserve our strongest opprobrium for this kind of politically-motivated terrorist violence. Insisting on such an understanding of terrorism can facilitate penal justice by reinforcing that (when individuals are charged and sentenced for violent crimes or crimes that risk causing injuries) the individual's specific intent remains an important, morally relevant consideration. Blurring such distinctions by placing non-violent blockades, loud, 'scary' and obnoxious protests, and injury-risking sabotage all under the 'terrorism' label, misleads the public about the social movements engaged in them. This can also exacerbate social conflicts by fanning fear and hatred, thereby encouraging and promoting a violent reaction by vigilantes, and even by law enforcement authorities themselves. Moreover, such oversimplifications reduce the possibility that society will recognize and respond

³ Formal response at the 1997 American Academy of Religion meeting. Melton also noted that, in general, 'the bodies are not found with apocalyptic groups', and when this does occur, 'it is usually triggered by the paranoia of the society around them'.

⁴ See Arnold's *Ecoterror* (note 9) p.12, for an uncritical recitation of this definition and his entire volume for an example of the result of such an overbroad definition. Brent Smith (note 7) pp.3, 160, at least tries to defend the use of the FBI definition, but his use of the term contributes to his tendency to express greater alarm than the facts he compiled would suggest is necessary.

⁵ As identified by D.C. Rapoport in 'Messianic Sanctions' (note 80) pp.196-7.

to the legitimate grievances such movements may express. It would be tragic if needed reforms of current resource regimes turn out to be a casualty of such rhetorical excess.

Environmental deterioration creates social conditions that produce and exacerbate social conflicts. Ecological science demonstrates that such deterioration is accelerating and thus, we can expect environmental struggles to intensify and occasionally, if not increasingly, to yield violence. Reducing environment-related violence requires more, however, than a carefully measured response to its manifestations. It also depends on comprehensive (but currently anemic) social efforts to arrest environmental deterioration - an endeavor itself inextricably tied to the quest for greater social equality and a reduction of consumption by the affluent. Only by addressing environmental degradation at its varied roots will we reduce environmental decline. Only thus will we halt the threat it poses to human livelihoods, the insult it represents to the deeply held moral duties that many individuals feel toward non-human nature; only then will we eliminate environment-related violence.

Epilogue

On 9 June 1998 (after this article was accepted) United States Congressman Frank Riggs held a ‘Hearing on Ecoterrorism’. The witness list was stacked with some of the most vocal adversaries of radical environmental and animal liberation movements, including Ron Arnold, Barry Clausen and Bruce Vincent (a logger and President of the Alliance for America). Riggs himself described a scary protest by anti-logging activists in his Northern California district office. He then falsely claimed that a tree spiking incident ‘In Ukiah, California . . . killed a logger’. Riggs was exaggerating an incident when a millworker was seriously injured after a metal spike hit a band-saw and shattered. This spiking was not attributed to Earth First! by either law enforcement officials or by Ron Arnold. Although Riggs offered no evidence, he also claimed that ‘many times’ monkeywrenching has ‘caused grave injury and even the loss of life. Many a rigger, logger and treefeller have suffered injury because of a severed hydraulic line or tree spike.’ My requests for documentation of these charges have gone unanswered. Further ‘ecoterrorism’ hearings are planned for the US Senate by Senator Orin Hatch.

In July 1998 Earth First! held its national Earth First! Rendezvous in southcentral Oregon. Green anarchists among them distributed the seventh issue of *Live Wild or Die*. It included a striking amount of violent and revolutionary images, including a reproduction of a previous ‘Ecofucker Hit List’. It was the same list that had previously been published and that included on it a Timber Association official and that some believe the Unabomber may have used to target one of his victims. The Association official and address was crossed out and the words ‘Who’s next?’ were scrawled nearby. On the opposite page was printed a statement made by Theodore Kaczynski protesting his defense team’s efforts to portray him as insane and promising that ‘more will be heard from me in the future’.

Knowing that dark-humor is a common trait among movement activists, I asked editors of this issue of *LWOD* about the apparent embrace of Kaczynski and how serious was their implicit endorsement of assassination and terrorist tactics. The editor told me it was about one-third satire, one-third scare-tactic and one-third serious. A second editor later confirmed that this interpretation was ‘about right’. Such sentiments leave unresolved what it would take for people to risk ‘paying the price’ (a phrase I heard during such discussions) that a resort to violence might exact.

Another interesting development during the 1998 rendezvous came during discussions of the so-called ‘millennium bug’. Also known as the ‘Y2K’ or ‘year-two-thousand’ crisis, the millennium bug refers to possibly severe computer system problems likely to occur on or before 1 January 2000 as a result of obsolete date-codes remaining embed-

ded throughout such systems. Some computer analysts predict as a result widespread panic, social disorder, hunger and even the devolution of industrial society itself.

Prone to apocalyptic expectation to begin with, many of the assembled radical environmentalists seized on these cataclysmic scenarios. Some did so taking hope, thinking that this bug might precipitate the destruction of the technological society they abhor. Others expressed fear that during such a cataclysm, humans would behave badly, rapidly assaulting the planet's remaining wildlands in their desperate struggle for survival.

One individual used the issue as a springboard for arguing that the time was nearing when assassination and other forms of violence should be deployed in an effort to overturn industrial society. More often, the resulting discussions turned to survival ideas and the need for green groups to be ready to render mutual aid and to defend themselves, with activists speaking against offensive violence. Still others reminded everyone that the important thing was to defend the biological diversity of the planet, even during times when human societies are in chaos.

Such discussions illustrate the perils of prediction. Under current social conditions, due to the many variables I have identified in these pages, I do not expect widespread violence (as defined) to emerge from radical environmental and animal liberation groups. Under social conditions characterized by widespread social disruption, however, all bets are off. Some individuals may decide that violence might be the avenue that could transform social chaos into an envisioned, benign 'future primitive'.

Indeed, in another ominous sign, shortly before the present analysis went to press, a tabloid published by animal liberationists reported that in the United Kingdom, a group calling itself the 'Hunt Retribution Squad' had begun beating hunters - three were attacked in December 1997. In March 1998 a man was beaten unconscious, apparently precipitating his mother's death from a stroke, and a hunt master was also dragged off his horse and clubbed unconscious. The tabloid also reported that a new group, 'calling itself the Provisional ALF, in February 1998, sent out a series of hoax bombs some of which went to blood-sport targets. The Provisional ALF have warned that a real bombing campaign will start shortly.'¹ Later in the year, the Earth Liberation Front claimed responsibility for the 19 October 1998 arson fires that destroyed five buildings and four ski lifts, causing \$12 million in damages to America's largest ski resort in Vail, Colorado. Claiming that the action was to defend the Lynx habitat against the resort's 'inexcusable plans for expansion', the communique concluded with a subtle threat: 'For your safety and convenience we strongly advise skiers to choose other destinations.'

¹ See Noel Molland, 'A New Spectre?', *Underground* 1 (Summer 1998) pp.21-2, who added that although he disapproves of violence he nevertheless thinks readers should know about it.

Appendix A: The Unabomber-Earth First! Link

Prosecutors have worked hard to establish a link between Theodore Kaczynski and the wider radical environmental movement. They succeeded in forcing Kaczynski to acknowledge, in a series of ‘factual representations’ as a part of his plea agreement, that in April 1995 he killed with a mail bomb California Forestry Association official Gilbert Murray, and later wrote a letter to the *Earth First!* journal signed ‘FC’ (FC was his signature-ruse suggesting that a multi-person ‘freedom club’ was responsible for the bombing). Authorities have not released the full content of this and possibly other letters written to *Earth First!* and as yet there is no evidence that such letters were received by the journal itself, although rumors within the movement suggest that at least one such communique was received.

Kaczynski also acknowledged the December 1994 killing of an executive with the national advertising firm of Burson-Marsteller, having selected the firm for targeting after reading a 1993 *Earth First!* article. The proof of this claim follows from the court transcript:

Prosecutor: Your Honor, in a letter to the *New York Times* dated April 20th, 1995, the Unabomber stated in part, ‘We blew up Thomas Mosser last December because he was a Burston-Marsteller [sic] executive. Among other misdeeds, Burston-Marsteller [sic] helped Exxon clean up its public image after the Exxon Valdez incident. But we attacked Burston-Marsteller [sic] less for its specific misdeeds than on general principles. Burston- Marsteller [sic] is about the biggest organization in the public relations fields. This means that its business is the development of techniques for manipulating people’s attitudes. It was for this more than for its actions in specific cases that we sent a bomb to an executive of this company.’. . . a carbon copy of that letter was found in the defendant’s cabin.

It is also worth pointing out . . . that that letter contained a number of misstatements, one of which was that Burson-Marsteller had anything to do with the Exxon Valdez cleanup; it did not. Also, Burson-Marsteller was misspelled. The first name, Burson, did not contain a ‘t’ . . . Searchers also found a copy of the *Earth First!* journal dated June 21st, 1993, in which the statement was made that Burson-Marsteller did have responsibility for the Exxon Valdez incident, for the cleanup of the image over that incident.

Furthermore, in that *Earth First!* article, the name Burson-Marsteller is misspelled in the same fashion it is misspelled in the Unabomber letter. Furthermore, during the search of the defendant's cabin, the Government found a letter written to Earth First!ers. Its title was 'Suggestions for Earth First!ers from FC'. That letter stated in part, 'As for the Mosser bombing' - and I'm quoting now - 'our attention was called to Burson-Marsteller by an article that appeared in Earth First!, Litha,' which is the way of describing the edition of that journal, 'June 21st, 1993, page 4'.

Although the prosecutor demonstrated that a crime victim probably was selected from an article harshly critical of a public relations firm in *Earth First!*, this association hardly proves a link between the movement and the criminal. Indeed, assuming the prosecutor is factually correct that that article falsely accused this firm of providing advice to Exxon with regard to the Valdez oil spill, the same 'guilty by association' logic could implicate many others, including Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who also published harsh criticism of the firm. See John Cronin and R.F. Kennedy Jr., *The Riverkeepers* (New York: Scribners 1997) p.237.

The prosecutors were zealous to place into the court record all evidence that could buttress the alleged Earth First!-Unabomber link. In a sentencing memorandum presented to the court on 4 May 1998, prosecutors described Kaczynski's efforts to contact *Earth First!* and the more anarchistic anti-technological tabloid, *Live Wild or Die*. Prosecutors claimed that 'copies of correspondence sent to . . . radical environmental groups "Earth First!" and "Live Wild or Die" ', were found in Kaczynski's cabin, 'offering secret codes for communicating and seeking an audience for his "strategy for revolutionaries seeking to destroy the industrial system" '.

The alleged link between Kaczynski and radical environmentalists has been promoted also by Martha Lee: 'Recent evidence . . . suggests that Theodore Kaczynski, the alleged Unabomber, attended Earth First! gatherings and read the movement's literature.' [For evidence she cited Linda Chavez, 'What Motive for Unabomber?', *USA Today*, 10 April 1996, A; see Martha Lee, 'Environmental Apocalypse: The Millennial Ideology of "Earth First!"', in Robbins and Palmer (eds), *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem* (New York and London: Routledge 1997) pp.133, 135.] Lee qualifies the allegation she passed on by acknowledging that 'the vast majority of Earth First!ers would likely deplore his actions'. Nevertheless, she asserted that the 'biocentric faction' of Earth First! 'would [likely] support such activity'.

It is troubling that for her source of information about this link to the Unabomber that Lee uncritically cites the ultra-conservative columnist Linda Chavez. The charges Chavez was repeating originated with Barry Clausen, a self-described 'infiltrator' of Earth First! who, by his own admission, was not very successful and was viewed as unreliable by law enforcement authorities. [See Barry Clausen and DanaRae Pomeroy, *Walking on the Edge: How I Infiltrated Earth First!* (Olympia, Washington: Washing-

ton Contract Loggers Association 1994) and B. Clausen, *Report on Terrorism* (Port Ludlow, Washington: North American Research 1996).]

Clausen did not even charge that Kaczynski had been at Earth First! gatherings, but rather, that he had been at a conference sponsored by activists of the Native Forest Network (an activist organization resisting the deforestation of temperate forests). Clausen knew that many Native Forest Network activists had been, and currently are, associated with Earth First! He thus simplistically portrayed the Native Forest Network as an Earth First! front group. As of this writing (July 1998), however, Kaczynski's presence at the Native Forest Network conference has not been proven and, to my knowledge, no law enforcement or other source has claimed that Kaczynski attended 'official' Earth First! gatherings. Even if he did, however, it is illogical 'guilty by association' alarmism to imply that radical environmentalists must have terrorist tendencies if the Unabomber attended a meeting sponsored by its members.

According to Ron Arnold [16 June 1997 telephone interview] the allegation regarding Kaczynski's presence at the Native Forest Network conference may have originally come to light via Barry Clausen. The FBI now believes Kaczynski was there, according to Arnold, who explained that a (non-federal) undercover law enforcement officer apparently wrote down the names of people he overheard introducing themselves during the conference. He noticed, after Kaczynski's arrest, a close similarity between one name in his notes and the suspect Kaczynski's name.

For movement rebuttals to efforts to link Earth First! to the Unabomber see L. Helmstreet, 'The Unabomber: Up Close and Personal', *Earth First!* 16/5 (1 May 1996) pp.1, 26; J. Barnes, 'Barry Clausen: Flim-Flam Man or Private Dick?', *Earth First!* 16/5 (1 May 1996) p.27; and C. Benneville, 'An Open Letter to ABC Network News', *Earth First!* 16/5 (1 May 1996) pp.26, 29.

Appendix B: The Asylum and the Unabomber

Kaczynski's defense attorneys sought to portray him as mentally ill; this was bitterly contested by the prosecution and Kaczynski himself, who claimed that he only accepted the plea agreement in order to prevent his attorneys from making such a case. Yet all three of the court-approved psychiatric experts agreed that Kaczynski's actions were fueled by mental illness.

Dr. Xavier F. Amador provided a representative passage in this 16 November 1997 report to the court:

Like the overwhelming majority of males with schizophrenia, the prodromal phase of his illness began in his mid-twenties and was manifested by a significant degree of neglect in his grooming and hygiene and increased withdrawal from social relations. His writings show unambiguous evidence of delusions, another hallmark symptom of schizophrenia. From the material I have reviewed he clearly exhibits delusions of reference, bizarre delusions and paranoid delusions. The organization of his delusional beliefs and his well organized behavior in response to these delusions are consistent with the additional diagnosis of paranoid subtype.

Mr. Kaczynski, is capable of being extremely organized as evidenced by his journals and behavior. His symptoms and behavior are typical of patients with schizophrenia, . . . paranoid subtype... Research on delusions shows (sic) that . . . when delusions turn to the paranoid type, the themes commonly involve government agencies and spiritual deities.

. . . The government's suggestion in its 11/14/97 pleading - that Mr. Kaczynski has willfully defied the Court's order - demonstrate that the fact of Mr. Kaczynski's disease and his predictable resistance to being evaluated have not been understood in light of what those of us who conduct research on schizophrenia know to be true about this disorder

Many people suffering from schizophrenia do not believe they have an illness and are unaware of the specific deficits caused by the disorder. Indeed, many of these individuals feel that the only thing they really suffer from is pressure from relatives, friends, doctors and courts to accept evaluation

and treatment. Lack of insight frequently obstructs treatment, as disagreement that treatment is even necessary leads to patients feeling coerced to accept care for an illness they don't believe they have. Large scale studies have suggested that from fifty percent to more than eighty percent of all patients with schizophrenia do not believe they have an illness. These are not people who would be expected to agree to an insanity defense. Owing to its prevalence and disruption of the therapist-patient relationship, this type of discrepancy in perspective, or what is commonly labeled 'poor insight' has become integral to our conception of schizophrenia.

Prosecutors challenged both the mental illness claim and denounced claims that he was a political visionary out to save the world from a pernicious technocracy. Prosecutors claimed instead:

while Kaczynski wrote extensively on a need for revenge, he was less articulate in explaining what he was seeking revenge for. Instead, his writings simply reveal that his hatred extended to virtually anyone who irritated him or represented some aspect of society he disagreed with. Kaczynski did, however, give considerable thought to how he would exact a plan of revenge, and was clear-eyed enough to admit (at least to himself) that he was not acting for anyone's gratification but his own.

As evidence for such conclusions the prosecutors cited, among other things, Kaczynski's April 1971 journal entry:

My motive for doing what I am going to do is simply personal revenge. I do not expect to accomplish anything by it. Of course, if my crime (and my reasons for committing it) gets any public attention, it may help to stimulate public interest in the technology question and thereby improve the chances of stopping technology before it is too late; but on the other hand most people will probably be repelled by my crime, and the opponents of freedom may use it as a weapon to support their arguments for control over human behavior. I have no way of knowing whether my action will do more good than harm. I certainly don't claim to be an altruist or to be acting for the 'good' (whatever that is) of the human race. I act merely from a desire for revenge.

Prosecutors also cited his rejection of morality, quoting from an 'autobiography' found in his cabin in which he states that he

never had any interest in or respect for morality, ethics, or anything of the sort The fact that I was able to admit to myself that there was no logical justification for morality illustrates a very important trait of mine . . . I

have much less tendency to self-deception than most people . . . Thus, I tended to feel that I was a particularly important person and superior to most of the rest of the human race . . . It just came to me as naturally as breathing to feel that I was someone special.

Despite such damning passages, Kaczynski's available writings paint a more complex portrait than do his prosecutors, defense attorneys or mental health examiners. Kaczynski almost certainly is mentally ill, paranoid and hateful. Yet he articulates a complex worldview and social critique that includes thoughtful analyses (even if brutal and naive) about how to overturn the industrial technocracy. Mono-causal explanations for Kaczynski's turn to terrorism are bound to fail.

The Ted K Archive

Bron Taylor
Religion, Violence and Radical Environmentalism
From Earth First! to the Unabomber to the Earth Liberation Front
December 1998

Terrorism and Political Violence, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Winter 1998), pp.1-42.
<doi.org/10.1080/09546559808427480>

www.thetedkarchive.com