

UNABOM

Nechayevist Front

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FC (hereafter referred to as "the Unabomber" and the convenient, and perhaps inaccurate, nominative "he") have engaged in a program of violence unparalleled in recent history for its longevity in the face of the coercive powers of the state and for its identification with anti-authoritarian politics. This program is also remarkable in its stated goal—the destruction of industrial consumer capitalism.

The insurrectionary violence so appropriate and romantic at a distance—whether historical or geographical—invariably finds condemnation from hypocrites and deserters when it occurs closer to home. The same cowards who cheer on the Zapatistas have been the first to condemn the Unabomber—an anarcho-terrorist who has upped the ante, who has taken his personal resistance into an arena that has not met with the approval of professional "anarchist" "activists." One particularly stupid and cowardly example of this archetype hysterically instructed *The New York Times*—via a letter to the editor soon after the Unabomber's announcement of the flavor of his politics—that the Unabomber is repudiated by real anarchists; that real (and historical, therefore more "real") anarchists (Berkman, Goldman) condemned violence (a falsehood)¹; that moral anarchists stand opposed to immoral violence. This self-appointed "anarchist spokesmodel," like so many others, presents himself as a salesperson, in an attempt to sell anarchism as a sanitized and palatable ideology to cowed liberals whose most profound challenges to power are donations to Amnesty International and smug support of public broadcasting. "Real" anarchists don't go fawning, hat in hand, to the ruling classes' paper of record to proffer apologies and explanations.

"Anarchism has nothing to do with violence," the spokesmodels bleat, when it obviously *does*. Anarchist history is punctuated by shootings, bombings, and battles. Those engaging in the struggle against coercive power often have used coercive power to prevent coercive power from being used against them violence has always been a weapon in the struggle between the powerless and the powerful. The question of its insurrectionary use is rife with contradiction and paradox. Some argue that the very nature of violence is authoritarian, and trumpet this insight as if it is a fatal contradiction in the thought of the non-pacifist.

It is the arbitrary, anonymous, impersonal nature of state violence that has set anti-authoritarians in opposition to the state. The violence of the bureaucrat signing the death warrant, the bombardier who kills and flies home for a beer never seeing those he's slain, the landlord who hires thugs to evict destitute tenants, the congressman who cheers on military action never seeing its consequences—these are those to whom we stand in unflinching opposition.

¹ The letter claimed that Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman repudiated violence; rejected it as a means for social change. Berkman did, after spending years in prison for his attack on Frick, come to reject the idea of individual violence, "propaganda by deed." He continued to support Anarchist struggles that were violent (Russian and Spanish civil wars). Goldman continued to have sympathy for individual terrorists throughout her life. See references in her autobiography, *Living My Life*, to Czolgosz's assassination of McKinley and attacks carried out during the Russian Civil War/Intervention.

The use of violence as a revolutionary tool *does* make of the anarchist terrorist a *reflection* of this violence, but does not (as many moralists suggest) a *replication* of it? The anti-authoritarian who makes use of violence must be aware of the irony of its use. He must be *aware* of the contradictions inherent in destroying to create, in using violence in hopes of creating a world without violence. Only under such circumstances is “revolutionary” violence revolutionary. When the anti-authoritarian terrorist loses that knowledge, or allows self-destructive cynicism to negate the acuteness and potency of this awareness, *then-and only then*, does he replicate the social relationships to be found in the coercive violence of the state.

The critics of violence are correct: to take a life *is* the ultimate act of domination; the most supreme method of coercion. To force the end of another’s consciousness is the most effective (and final) method of control. The *cancellation*, the absolute irrevocable removal of ‘all that is another takes a piece of us irrevocably away as well. This is why we - oppose murder—not because it is *wrong* to kill, but because it removes a part of the human community. It is wasteful. We despise murder out of sheer selfishness. Those least sensitive to this fact—a “fact” only made factual by a personal choice to embrace empathy—become the most effective slayers. Those in positions of authority—bureaucrats, officers, corporate heads—are those whose distance from their targets allows them the luxury of the most base forms of ideological justification for their actions. They hypocritically lay claim to the moral code that asserts that killing is *bad*, but they don’t see what they engage in as murder. The revolutionary who uses violence must entertain no such illusions. To use violence one must be completely honest about what it means, and be willing to take on the contradictions.

Certain plains Indian tribes called the encroaching settlers “the cowards of the long kill.” The *mediation of distance* in an act of violence strips it of its import; makes it *easier*. FC doesn’t get to see, to *feel*, the results of his actions—only to see, as we do, their spectacular results. FC doesn’t—as Alexander Berkman did for example in his unsuccessful attack on the murderous, parasitical, “captain of industry” H.C. Frick—get to see the blood, feel the fear, strike the damaging blow. The Unabomber’s violence is that of the B-52 bombardier over Cambodia—randomly flailing in the enemy’s general direction, never seeing his victims, putting hundreds between the intended victim and himself.

The Unabomber so cushions himself from his acts not so much from cowardice or dishonesty as from necessity. He doesn’t want to get caught; an impulse with which we can most certainly sympathize. The point of war is to win, and to win you must be able to fight. You win by not dying, and as the living death of imprisonment would be all that would await the Unabomber upon capture, we cannot find fault with his attempts to separate himself from his acts. We can, however, find fault with his method of attack. To randomly jeopardize all who come into contact with his packages—postal employees, secretaries, the children of his targets—is unconscionable. The state makes no such distinctions in its homicidal exercises. We do. The Unabomber does not. This is his choice.

Even more questionable for us are the Unabomber's targets—we could suggest more appropriate ones, but to do so would certainly be beyond the bounds of propriety. We have not chosen his path, so who are we to speak for him? However, we find the idea that individuals can be assigned responsibility for the acts of the larger beast ludicrous. The Unabomber's targets are all cogs in a machine, and some cogs are bigger than others, but the machine is geared so that the removal of even a large cog will not significantly alter its operation.

This is not to say, as many so tiredly have, that "you can't blow up a social relationship." Obviously, you can—one by one, at least. The anarchists who allege that one authoritarian will inexhaustibly continue to step in the vacated place of another destroy their own arguments for anarchism itself—by ascribing to the power of the state an infinite recuperative, regenerative quality. If this were the case, their question—"Why fight"?—would be unanswerable. Fortunately, this is not the case. Wars are winnable. The machine *must be made obsolete*, and violence *can* be one of many tools in that project... but its use must be tempered. We question the Unabomber's use of the tool not from a moral perspective but from a *practical* one.

To distance themselves from his acts, the aforementioned moralists, organizers, "activists" and spokespeople—the anarchist sycophants always willing to play lapdog to the media, the ones who seem to truly believe that getting their names in the paper lends their ideas more validity, the lickspittles who beg the attention of talk show hosts and television crews with the conversion of the public as their excuse—have busied themselves these past months decrying his actions. Declaring the Unabomber not to be an anarchist, they reveal their own failings. The Unabomber is of course no more of a "real" anarchist because of his engagement of the apparatus of the state in a "premature" personal war—*but neither is he less of one*. Those who declare him excommunicated from their ineffectual, ghettoized religion, however, show their true colors.

This should be no surprise—moralist ideologues masquerading as anarchists have *always* stood opposed to acts of open revolt. From Spain's civil war to the May Days of Paris, the liberals and electoralists who adopt the anarchist label have unfailingly repudiated all acts of violence and terror committed in the name of anarchy. One would do well to question, "when *do* such acts become legitimate?", knowing that their answer will be that the time will never come. When *do* the acts of "terrorists" become the acts of revolutionaries? Always, "the time is not right"; "social conditions are not correct"; "the power of the state is too megalithic to be challenged"; "everything has moved into the realm of simulation, is forever recuperable, and therefore unchallengeable." These are the arguments of those who see change as impossible, who cower beneath the blanket of their ideology, afraid of change and violence and afraid that someone like the Unabomber will spark conflicts that they hoped never to have to deal with. These are all cop-outs—and when repeated by the most self-servingly cynical—lies.

Who decides when it is appropriate to fire the first shots in this war? When the offenses of power (and consequently life itself) are no longer tolerable, when the depre-

datations of the enemy become too much to bear, what is the appropriate "moral" action? To attack the staggering golem that destroys us can be seen as a common-sense act of self-preservation; a refusal of the slow suicide and mind-death sold to us as life every day. Our air, water, our *souls* have been poisoned by this machine. Who can blame *anyone* for making a stab at the heart of this vile, amoebic beast, this amorphous, tentacled monster that worships death? Those who judge such an action in "moral" terms evidence that their hearts have been killed; that their training is intact.

We oppose acts of individual terror, but we *understand* them, and realize that in a war, someone must take the first shot—and the state and its minions have been shooting for years. We *can* condemn the manner in which individuals shoot back, but we *cannot condemn them for shooting back*.

Even if the individuals he has slain were willing agents of this beast, whether they may have believed in it and supported it with all their power, we think killing them is pointless. Here we part with FC. Our problems with leviathan are too big to be assigned to a *single* symbol, a single *individual*. The very nature of our enemy makes this impossible for us. Our enemy *is* huge, but, unlike the pacifists and fatalists who seem content to carve out "temporary" shards of "freedom" in the face of what they" see as the machine's invulnerability. *WL* see its size and cartoonish malice as evidence of its instability. The ruse becomes more ridiculous every day. Its caricatures of life become more ersatz, its advertised palliatives more ineffective. This monster is a teetering, wheezing one—a fact of which FC is aware, as he states that with his attacks he hopes to "promote instability in industrial society, and give encouragement to those who hate the industrial system." One good push and it'll fall over. We agree with the Unabomber that it should be pushed. We disagree on where—and how

Though we strongly question and reject his *tactics*, his *tactical decisions*—and primarily his targets—we must support the' Unabomber prolificacy. If he is caught, we will support him as we do all prisoners of the state, and even more so because of his actions against it. In the terms in which he has framed his actions, he—regardless of questions of the self-contradictions and coercive nature of violence—has stated his goal as the abolition of state power. For "anarchists" to condemn his actions from a moralist's stance is the most vile hypocrisy; a felt-contradictory position which negates all radical posturing... and one which we rebuke. **-Nechayevist Front**

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