

Anarchist Direct Actions: A Challenge for Law Enforcement

Randy Borum & Chuck Tilby

2004

Contents

Ideology	4
Violence	6
Violent Resistance	6
Violent Resister	8
Structure	10
Tactics	14
Tradecraft	21
Recruitment	21
Training	21
Indicators	23
Information/Communications	24
Financing	25

RANDY BORUM
University of South Florida
Tampa, Florida, USA

CHUCK TILBY
Eugene (Oregon) Police Department
Eugene, Oregon, USA

This article provides a descriptive, operational analysis of the modern anarchist movement, emphasizing the actions of the criminal anarchists and implications for US law enforcement. It begins by explaining some core tenets of anarchist “theory,” and its relationship to violence, then describes the structure, tactics and tradecraft of militant anarchist activists. It concludes that Anarchism is a revolutionary movement, not just a “protest group.” Clearly not all anarchists advocate or engage in violence, but some do. Those individuals and factions pose a particular concern to law enforcement. This article offers some practical recommendations to law enforcement for preventing and managing those direct action attacks that may compromise public safety.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, much of the world trembled under the oppression of a terrorist siege. There was a virtual epidemic of assassinations of major national leaders,¹ including a sitting President of the United States.² Dynamite—the WMD of the day—was in widespread use, leaving waves of fear in its wake. Such was the state of the Anarchist revolutionary movement in the nineteenth century.

The threat posed by anarchists in the twenty-first century is not nearly as dramatic, but no less vexing for law enforcement. They have injured police officers and wreaked general mayhem on major cities. They ostensibly advocate for the same philosophy as their Victorian counterparts, but in a different era and with different tactics.

Understanding modern anarchists and the threat they pose to law enforcement can be challenging. Anarchists are a diverse group. Their ideology, motives, and attitudes toward violence vary considerably. With that acknowledgement, this article seeks to provide a descriptive, operational analysis of the modern anarchist movement, emphasizing the actions of the criminal anarchists.

This article will briefly explore some core tenets of anarchist “theory,” and its relationship to violence, then describe the structure, tactics, and tradecraft of militant anarchist activists. Finally, it offers some practical recommendations to law enforcement for preventing and managing those direct action attacks that may compromise public safety.

¹ In the 1870s, William I of Prussia, the King of Spain and the King of Italy all were assassinated. Queen Victoria was the target of seven assassination attempts. Tsar Alexander II was assassinated in 1881. In 1894 French President Carnot was assassinated by an Italian anarchist.

² In September 1901, President William McKinley was assassinated by an anarchist, Leon Czolgosz.

Ideology

One often confusing issue for law enforcement personnel is the distinction between anarchists and other “special issue extremist” groups, or what the FBI and other law enforcement agencies have referred to as “eco-terrorists,” such as the Animal Liberation Front and the Environmental Liberation Front. Because the groups are often seen together or referred to contemporaneously, they often have been seen as a monolith of “left-wing radicals,” a characterization that is not entirely accurate. Although some extremists for social causes may hold an anarchist philosophy, many do not. Moreover, some anarchists are activists for their social/political philosophy, but not specifically for ancillary social causes (e.g., animal rights or environmental protection). This article will describe the overlap and synergy that is generating between the movements, but it is important to understand that anarchists view anarchy itself as the main cause or objective for which they advocate; it is not merely a means to an end.

Although modern terrorism has its roots in the tactics of early Russian anarchists, anarchism itself is not a terrorist philosophy. Terrorism is tactic, or another way of fighting. It is distinguished from other forms of violence not only by its motive, but by how it defines a legitimate target (i.e., civilian non-combatants). Anarchists—like any extremist or activist group—may use terrorist tactics, but most would agree that anarchism as a social philosophy certainly does not require it.³

Anarchism is a philosophy that advocates for complete liberty, freedom, and equality. The nuances are myriad and complex. Regardless of their intellectual or social merit, though, it is not necessary for the law enforcement professional to completely understand them all to confront the challenges posed by their advocates.

Anarchy holds that individual autonomy and collective equality are fundamental and necessary for a functional, civilized society. It resists the existing hierarchical structure of society that gives some people authority and control over others. In their view, authority imbues power, and power always is used in illegitimate and self-serving ways by those who have it. Power is never used to support the collective good. Power (typically yielded by the “state”) is used to oppress others (i.e., the “workers”). This power is rooted in, and enforced by, violence. Anarchists desire a “social revolution” that destroys the existing conditions of hierarchy and class in society. They protest at political conventions, not because they specifically oppose *who* is in power, but they generally oppose the notion that *anyone* is in power.

During the summer of 2004, Anarchists turned out to protest both at the Republican National Convention (RNC) in New York City and the Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Boston. At the RNC, Anarchist Affinity Groups migrated in from Chicago, Seattle, Boston, San Francisco, and elsewhere. The primary strategy seemed to be disruption. Large groups comprising thousands of bicyclists (“Critical

³ William Reichert, “Toward a New Understanding of Anarchism,” *The Western Political Quarterly*, 20(4) (1967), pp. 856–865.

Mass”) jammed major city intersections in one of the convention’s most effective tactics. On 31 August, a Blac Bloc descended on an antiwar parade, setting fire to a 30-foot dragon float. Several hundred arrests were recorded during the convention, but no mass casualty incidents occurred.⁴ The DNC attracted a somewhat smaller Anarchist contingent (and a smaller contingent of protesters in general), although the Bl(a)ck Tea Society (BTS), a Bostonbased self-proclaimed “anti-authority” group coordinated logistics and “hosted” resistance activities among the group that did attend. Some speculate that protestors with an antiwar focus were reserving resources for the RNC. Others believe that attendance was affected by controversy over BTS’s strategic emphasis on “autonomous decentralized action,” rather than mass action and Blocs.⁵

Already, it should be clear how anarchists’ world view engenders antagonism toward law enforcement, and brings the two groups into conflict with each other. But beyond a few central, shared ideals, there is little consensus among anarchists about *how* the existing structure should be destroyed and *how* the social revolution should occur. What is generally accepted in the modern movement is that (1) actions speak louder than words and (2) it is more effective (and empowering) to act for oneself than through an advocate or third party (such as an elected official).

The emphasis on action—even violent action—over rhetoric gained momentum in the movement back in the nineteenth century when major figures such as Johan Most were advocating for “propaganda by deed.” The ideas of Peter Kropotkin, and later Emma Goldman resonated with this action-oriented philosophy. As noted in the introduction, some anarchists overseas took to assassinations and widespread, indiscriminate bombings. In the United States, the anarchist “call to action” was ignited mainly within the labor/workers movement, aspiring to the ideals of a new non-capitalist society (the “Chicago Idea”). Its flagship was the “Black International,” more formally referred to as the International Working People’s Association, which proffered trade unions as the agents of the people (“workers”) to act for the elimination of capitalism.

The emphasis on self-direction is embedded in their philosophy of “direct action.” Direct action (DA) is the general term used for acts of protest and resistance against existing societal structures and persons, institutions, or positions of power. In the language of the movement, it has been defined as

every method of immediate warfare by the workers [or other sections of society] against their economic and political oppressors. Among these the outstanding are: the strike, in all its gradations from the simple wage struggle to the general strike; the boycott; sabotage in all its countless forms; [occupations and sit-down strikes;] anti-militarist propaganda, and in par-

⁴ K. Burke, “In among the anarchists,” *New York Daily News* (31 August 2004). Retrieved online September 19, 2004 at (www.nydailynews.com).

⁵ Notably, the concept of “autonomous action” was highlighted by Anarchists at the RNCand DNC, and may represent the second generation of approaches to “leaderless resistance.”

ticularly critical cases, ... armed resistance of the people for the protection of life and liberty.” (Rocker, 1988, p. 66)⁶

In implementing a strategy of direct action, modern anarchist leaders have looked to the experience of prior revolutionary movements in America. One of the most prominent modern examples is the communist Weather Underground Organization, a radical splinter faction of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) that operated between 1969 and 1976. Although the underlying political philosophy of the Weather Underground was communist, in seeking to overthrow the U.S. government, they shared the anarchists’ goal of destroying capitalism, and they certainly shared the philosophy of direct action. The Weather Underground inaugurated its violent campaign on 6 October 1969 by bombing a police memorial in Chicago, igniting the “Days of Rage.” They then led a destructive mob of about 300 through Chicago streets, vandalizing businesses and vehicles. Several people were shot that night and there were other violent confrontations with the police for a couple of nights thereafter.

In the mid-1990s, in a parallel to what happened when ultra-radical members of SDS factioned into a terrorist organization, several strong voices in the modern anarchist movement began to reject the left wing’s willingness to work within the established political system. The left was chastised for obtaining permits to protest, and working with authorities to assist in holding a lawful protest. Doing so was considered a “sellout.” In addition, some within the movement argued that peaceful and lawful civil disobedience had been totally ineffective in creating change, and therefore, it would be necessary to resort to unlawful actions in order to deliver the “message” effectively.

Violence

Violent Resistance

Violence exists as a potential tool of resistance. The questions of whether, when, and to what extent violence is a legitimate tactic, however, are—and historically have been—a matter for substantial debate within the anarchist community.^{7,8} Charles Merriam once suggested that anarchists could be classified into two types: “the philosophical and the fighting anarchists, one believing in the attainment of anarchy by the peaceful process of evolution and the other by the employment of force and revolution.”⁹ Today, the issue is referred to as “Diversity of Tactics” (DoT). Strong arguments

⁶ Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism* (London: Phoenix Press, 1988).

⁷ Westel Willoughby, *The Ethical Basis of Political Authority* (New York: McMillan, 1930).

⁸ Charles Merriam, *American Political Ideas* (New York: McMillan, 1926).

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

exist on both sides.¹⁰ Some take the “philosophical” position advocated by Tolstoy¹¹ that anarchism must be a movement of nonviolent resistance, and that using violence as a form of activism is completely contrary to anarchist ideals.

In the middle are those who strongly endorse and advocate for destroying property, but not for violence directed toward people. Anarchists oppose property rights, so the destruction of property has symbolic value and is not seen as a violation of an individual’s rights. This is the position held by anarchists such as Michael Bakunin who has said: “in order to launch a radical revolution, it is ... necessary to attack positions and things and to destroy [the institution of] property and the State, but there will be no need to destroy men and to condemn ourselves to the inevitable reaction which is unfailingly produced in every society by the slaughter of men.”¹²

On the other extreme, there are those who argue that the current hierarchical structure is maintained by violence (from the oppressors) and, therefore, can only be defeated with violence. In this view, violence not only is justified, it is necessary. An example is found in the writings of Errico Malatesta who argued it is “necessary to destroy with violence, since one cannot do otherwise, the violence which denies to the workers.”¹³

Some contemporary organizations continue to maintain this idea. The U.K.-based Anarchist Federation lists among its “Aims and Principles”: “It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation” (#6).¹⁴

Among those who do advocate violence, most would claim that violence is instrumental as a tactic. It is not an end to itself. The intent is twofold: first, to breakdown or destroy the existing structure and second, to precipitate a public uprising that will prepare for, and facilitate, a revolution.

It is interesting to note the similarity in objectives between those offered by violent anarchists and those offered by extremist apocalyptic millennialist groups in their various forms. Many such groups have justified their acts of extreme violence as attempts to hasten or “jump start” a world-ending apocalypse and/or a new order. For example, in 1995, the Aum Shinrikyo cult in Japan dispersed sarin nerve gas in the Tokyo subway system. Their ultimate objective was not just to create a large number of deaths,

¹⁰ William Reichert suggest, however, that “the division of anarchist ideas into two separate categories on the basis of whether or not violence is considered a legitimate social means is not a valid distinction.” Reichert, “Toward a New Understanding of Anarchism,” p. 856.

¹¹ Leo Tolstoy—through personal correspondence—was actually quite instrumental in influencing Mohandas Gandhi to adopt and advocate for a model of nonviolent resistance.

¹² G. P. Maximoff, ed., *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism* (New York: Free Press, 1953).

¹³ Errico Malatesta, “The Revolutionary ‘Haste,’” *Umanità Nova*, N. 125, 6 September 1921.

¹⁴ Anarchist Federation. Aims and Principles. Accessed online 17 May 2004 at (flag.blackened.net).

per se, but rather to create havoc and upheaval that would result in uncontrollable apocalyptic chaos, which then would provide an opportunity for them to come in to establish a new order.¹⁵ Anarchists are not explicitly vying for power over society, but they are seeking the complete destruction of its institutions, as they currently exist.

A substantial contingent in the anarchist community suggests that violence is legitimate for self-defense. The doctrine of self-defense, however, becomes quite fluid. For example, if protesters are creating a public obstruction and choosing not to obey lawful orders to move or disperse, police riot teams may be called in to enforce the order. Some resisters may need to be physically removed. Some anarchists view this police action as a form of violence, from which they are then justified to defend themselves with violence. Legally, though, this would not qualify as self-defense.

Violent Resister

Because of the substantial diversity of views *within* the anarchist movement regarding the use of violence, it is difficult to characterize all anarchists as collectively being violent or not. Clearly, distinguishing between violent and nonviolent extremists is a critical task for law enforcement, as violence raises the threshold of concern, response, and consequently counterresponse. Philosophically, however, some within the movement advocate violence; others passionately oppose it. The fact remains that anarchists engaged in direct actions do frequently engage in illegal behavior and sometimes in violent actions.

This, of course, does not imply that the philosophy itself or the entire movement is violent, but it does mean that certain radical activists (or factions) will pose a more serious operational concern for law enforcement. Law enforcement agencies and personnel must respond to criminal and violent acts wherever they occur. Therefore, law enforcement officers must manage violent resisters, not because they are anarchists, but because their behavior violates the law and threatens the officer and/or public safety.

Having discussed the issue of violence within the philosophy of anarchism, this article now turns to the issue of violence by people within the movement. Perhaps the most important fact to convey here is that people engage in violent behavior at anarchist-sponsored actions for a multitude of reasons, many of which have little or nothing to do with the social philosophy itself. These causes mostly fall in three categories.

First, people with unusual attitudes, behaviors, and views of the world frequently (and disproportionately) are drawn to counterculture movements and extremist groups.¹⁶ This is not to say that anarchists are mentally ill or that adherence to an

¹⁵ D. W. Brackett, *Holy Terror: Armageddon in Tokyo* (New York: Weatherhill, 1996), pp. 98–108.

¹⁶ Edward Erickson, “The Anarchist Disorder: The Psychopathology of Terrorism in Late Nineteenth-Century France,” *Dissertation Abstracts International*, Vol. 60(2-A), 1999.

anarchist philosophy is in any way indicative of mental disorder or abnormality. It is not difficult to imagine, though, how people who have antisocial attitudes and those who might otherwise be predisposed to interpersonal violence and conflict may find elements of anarchist rhetoric and propaganda to be particularly attractive. For example, the presence of the “anarchist punk” is very significant in the occurrence of violent behavior seen at protests. Generally, these are youths who are disenfranchised from society and have found belonging and empowerment by associating with the anarchist movement. Responding to calls for gatherings connected to protests, they travel from all over the country to engage in social interaction and violent protest. This dynamic is similar to what others have observed among youthful street gangs.

These individuals would likely be engaging in criminal or violent behavior, regardless of their circumstances.¹⁷ Affiliating with a movement or ideal, however, gives them a reason and adds some sense of legitimacy. Robert Fein and Bryan Vossekuil refer to these as “murderers in search of a cause.”¹⁸ Similarly, the idea of gathering together for the explicit purpose of creating disorder and causing destruction may draw certain kinds of (violence-prone) people to an event, regardless of whether they support its underlying cause. In essence, they are not engaging in violence because they are anarchists; rather, they are drawn to anarchist activities because of the potential to engage in violence.

A second cause is the contextual effects and dynamics of large-scale protests and confrontations with police. Much has been written about “mob violence” and riot behavior.¹⁹ In a resistance action, the presence of a collective—particularly when combined with the anonymity of masks and face covering—provides a diminished sense of individual responsibility for a person’s actions.²⁰ Moreover, both groups (demonstrators and police) bring to the confrontation a set of hostile attributions and expectations about the behavior of the other. Each perceives that they are threatened, expecting the other is there to harm them. This tension dramatically increases the likelihood that violence will erupt in the encounter.

The third cause is the inevitable development of ultra-radical (often violent) spinoff groups that operate at the fringe of extremist movements. Fein and Vossekuil have referred to these as “fringe of fringe.”²¹ It has repeatedly been demonstrated in extremist groups that a certain subset holds or develops ideas that are more radical than

¹⁷ Stephen Lyng, “Dysfunctional risk taking: Criminal behavior as edgework,” in Nancy Bell and Robert Bell, eds., *Adolescent risk taking* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1993), pp. 107–130.

¹⁸ R. Borum, Understanding the terrorist mindset. *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, 72(7), (July, 2003), pp. 7–10.

¹⁹ A. P. Goldstein, *The Psychology of Group Aggression* (New York: Wiley, 2002).

²⁰ A. Bandura, “The origins and consequences of moral disengagement: A social learning perspective,” F. M. Moghaddam & A. J. Marsella, eds., *Understanding Terrorism: Psychosocial Roots, Consequences, and Interventions* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2003).

²¹ Robert A. Fein and Bryan Vossekuil. Protective intelligence and threat assessment investigations: A guide for state and local law enforcement officials. (NIJ/OJP/DOJ Publication No. NCJ 170612). (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 1998).

those of most adherents and believes that more immediate and more violent action is necessary than most in the movement are willing to endorse. This may result from some synergistic reaction of the two factors noted earlier (predisposition and group dynamics).

Nevertheless, it has been found in the anti-abortion movement with the Army of God; in racist and Christian Identity circles with the Phineas Priests;²² in antigovernment militia groups with outliers such as Timothy McVeigh;²³ and in the animal rights movement with the Justice Department—a group perhaps best known for its 1995 campaign of letters rigged with razor blades that had been covered with rat poison sent to hunting outfitters and fur retailers.²⁴ It is not unreasonable to expect a similar faction to emerge within the anarchist movement and to have a presence at high-profile symbolic events.

Structure

Consistent with their social philosophy, there is no central authority or hierarchical command structure, even within the militant element of the anarchist movement. Large protest gatherings such as those at the RNC and DNC are coordinated mainly by posting notices and disseminating information to give people the tools to act for themselves. Often, before the event there are scheduled meetings where intended participants exchange information and make certain strategic or tactical decisions through an exhaustive process of “consensus.” Also consistent with the wide diversity of ideas, there are a range of divergent views on the appropriate role (if any) of creating structure and organization in the movement.

An essay written in the 1980s seeks to draw on lessons from the feminist movement, and argues that anarchists must commit to better organization if they are going to create revolutionary change:

If the movement is to move beyond these elementary stages of development [raising consciousness], it will have to disabuse itself of some of its prejudices about organisation and structure. There is nothing inherently bad about either of these. They can be and often are misused, but to reject them out of hand because they are misused is to deny ourselves the necessary tools to further development. We need to understand why “structurelessness” does not work.²⁵

²² Richard Hoskins, *Vigilantes of Christendom*, 2nd ed. (Lynchburg, VA: Virginia Publishing Company, 1995).

²³ Mark Shaffer (May 6, 2001), “McVeigh Factor Destroys Militias,” *The Arizona Republic*. Accessed online 17 June 2004 at (www.rickross.com).

²⁴ Wikipedia (2004). “Animal Liberation Front. Accessed online 17 June 2004 at (en.wikipedia.org).

²⁵ Jo Freeman, “The Tyranny of Structurelessness.” Accessed online 17 May 2004 at (flag.blackened.net).

Others, of course, disagree, believing that structure will inherently produce elitism and imbalances of power.

There have been increasing attempts to bring more cohesion—or at least better coordination—among anarchist groups regionally and internationally. There are numerous designated groups that can be joined.²⁶ Likewise, there is an international secretariat founded in 1968 called the International of Anarchist Federations (IAF or IFA). “To counter the internationalisation of state and capital powers that are developing their influences ever rapidly on a global scale the IFA has aimed since to build and improve strong and agile international anarchist structures.”²⁷

At this point, it is probably fair to say that functional units within the movement (at least in the United States) share greater acceptance and visibility than any particular “named” groups per se. The two most basic functional units within the movement are affinity groups and clusters. The concept of affinity groups developed during the Spanish Civil war. In their contemporary form they comprise a small collective (usually between 5 and 20 people) that comes together around a common task. In resistance movements, an affinity group may collaborate on a specific direct action initiative. In some ways, this is akin to a structural cell in paramilitary groups. A cluster is simply “a grouping or network of affinity groups that come together to work on a certain task or part of a larger action.”²⁸

Some influential anarchists believe that the movement’s diminishing success in protest settings is the result of larger affinity groups, which has had two negative effects on the outcome. First, the larger group is much less secure than smaller groups, and affinity groups have been infiltrated by law enforcement, resulting in a loss of anonymity and the element of surprise, which had been so successful in Seattle and other large protests since. Second, the effectiveness of individual or small group actions has been diminished because of increasing pressure to conform to established standards for a particular event, violating the DoT principle.

There are influential people in the movement, but they would be unlikely to define themselves as leaders. The role of leadership is inspirational rather than directive. Like many domestic extremist movements in the United States, anarchists embrace the concept of leaderless resistance.

Of particular concern to law enforcement has been the cooperation and coordination that has occurred between anarchists and other extremist groups over the past decade. For heuristic purposes, this article will classify these inter-organizational connections into two types: consonant links and inconsonant links. Consonant links are strategic and tactical alliances with groups that share some of the same core social values and aspirations and often share “members” as well. Inconsonant links are primarily tactical alliances—often event specific—whose primary basis is a common opposition to police

²⁶ See, for example, the list of links on the website of the UK-based “Anarchist Federation.” Accessed online 17 May 2004 at (flag.blackened.net).

²⁷ International of Anarchists Federation Website. Accessed online 17 May 2004 at (www.iafifa.org).

²⁸ Cluster. Accessed online 29 April 2004 at (www.rncnotwelcome.org/cluster.html).

or other state authority, even when other values and objectives of the two groups are unrelated or antithetical.

Strong consonant links have developed between anarchists and the environmental and animal rights extremist movements. Because of their decentralized organizational structure, many are “members” (a term often not used officially) of both movements. The Animal Liberation Front (ALF), Environmental Liberation Front (ELF), and their associated militant factions (e.g., Justice Department) all serve as fertile ground for drawing new people into the anarchist movement. People often migrate into one of these movements after already being affiliated with another. The link between ALF and ELF has been central to the existence and growth of both groups for more than a decade.

Some of the same indicators of that early strategic alliance are now seen between these groups and the anarchists. They link to each other’s websites and cross-publicize events. Anarchists also draw heavily on the tactics and training materials developed and used by ALF and ELF, which those groups make freely available. This includes resources such as “The Direct Action Handbook.” The movements share many ideals, such as passionate opposition to capitalism and globalization, and as a result often colocate their major protests.

The Rainforest Action Network (RAN), for example, is a forest conservation group based in San Francisco; however, they also have had a major presence in anti-capitalist and antiglobalization movements, dating back at least to the WTO protests in Seattle in 1999. RAN conducted a DA training in advance of the meeting that included, among other things, “sessions on how to climb buildings for ‘banner drops’, conduct surveillance, calm angry protesters, deal with nervous police and deliver meaningful sound bites.”²⁹ They sponsored a similar training camp in the Washington, D.C. area in anticipation of the IMF/World Bank meeting there in 2000.³⁰ Then in April 2003, several RAN activists were arrested in Manhattan after launching a traffic-stopping banner protest against Citigroup. RAN is an environmental rights group, but clearly one that has goals and complaints that resonate to anarchist themes.

Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, anarchists have gained a new cadre of tactical allies in proponents of the antiwar movement. They lie in the middle ground between consonant and inconsonant links. The two major players in this movement are ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism) and NION (Not In Our Name). ANSWER leader, Ramsey Clark, and his members would probably not identify themselves as anarchists (nor would the anarchists claim them), but links in the philosophical lineage are intriguing.

ANSWER has been characterized as “neo-communist,” “Marxist,” and “anti-American.”³¹ Although they share socialist underpinnings, they have a different

²⁹ *Seattle Times*.

³⁰ *Washington Post*, “Rebellion Without a Cause,”

³¹ John Tierney, “The Anti-War Movement in 2004,” *Organization Trends* (April 2004), pp. 1–7. Capital Research Center.

worldview and different objectives than anarchists. Anarchists, seeking full social and economic autonomy for all people, view themselves as “Libertarian Socialists,” whereas the followers of Stalin, Trotsky, and the like desire a “dictatorship of the proletariat.” Whereas anarchists want to eliminate all state power, the so-called Authoritarian Socialists want to seize it and transform it into a “worker’s state”—a worker/people-controlled dictatorship.³²

NION, whose leaders cut their teeth in 1960s Revolutionary Communist Party and Students for a Democratic Society, is even more radical, openly allying “itself with terrorist sympathizers, Communist fronts and radical Muslim groups...”³³ NION activists and other antiwar groups such as the National Lawyer’s Guild, the Green Party, and Code Pink (antiwar feminists) are likely to be tactical allies with anarchists in mass protests, such as those at the RNC.

The inconsonant links are more narrow, but no less concerning to law enforcement. It is not surprising to some that the (typically) ultra-liberal animal and environmental rights activists might find some common ground and solidarity with their anarchist counterparts; however they also share with neofascists and other right-wing extremists a disdain for the government and its enforcers. Their causes are different, but their symbolic and tactical enemy—the police—is the same. An old Arab proverb says: “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.” This is the essence of inconsonant links, and the foundation for what many predict will be the future of militant extremism.

Louis Beam, an activist and strategist of right-wing militants, suggests the following: “The new politics of America is liberty from the NWO (new world order) Police State and nothing more.” This collective interest in opposing the police (and the state)—regardless of differences in other social philosophy or ideals—has come to be known as “The Third Position.” In the same essay, Beam continues: “The New American Patriot will be neither left nor right, just a freeman fighting for liberty. New alliances will form between those who have in the past thought of themselves as ‘right-wingers,’ conservatives, and patriots with many people who have thought of themselves as ‘left-wingers,’ progressives, or just ‘liberal.’”³⁴

Anarchists and the “left” have recognized the mutual interest as well. Christopher Plummer, an anarchist from Texas who has been organizing others around opposing the prison-industrial complex, stated in a recent interview that he has great admiration for “militias.” He stated, “... I see them as a vast pool of people who want to resist, but really don’t know how...” Plummer’s campaign and support for “political prisoners” has risen to a significant level and he is revered by some of the most radical anarchists in the movement. Also, in a recent issue of the *Earth First! Journal*, special recognition was given by conference organizers to successes in “building alliances.” including

³² Lorenzo Komboa Ervin. (2002). “Anarchist vs. Marxist-Leninist Thought on the Organization of Society.” Accessed online 14 May 2004 at (www.infoshop.org).

³³ John Tierney, “The Anti-War Movement in 2004,” p. 4.

³⁴ Louis Beam, “Battle in Seattle: Americans Face Off the Police State.” Accessed online 29 April 2004 at (www.louisbeam.com).

acknowledgement that “militia members built lockboxes for environmental actions in Tennessee.”³⁵

Tactics

It would be easy, but inaccurate, to portray anarchists in a monolithic way. As already noted above there is great diversity in ideology and in the perceived acceptability of tactics. Even the concept of direct action (DA), while generally accepted, encompasses a broad range of activities, many of which are legal—such as strikes, marches, and boycotts—but some of which are not. It is not the role, nor the objective, of law enforcement to interfere with lawful activity and free speech. Their role is, however, to enforce existing laws whether or not they—or those violating them—agree with them.

This section will focus primarily on those DA tactics that bring anarchist activists into conflict with law enforcement. Within the past decade there appears to have been a marked resurgence in illegal DA activity in the movement. Whether the movement has become much more violent is a matter of some debate, depending in part on whether property damage is included in the definition of violence. What is clear is that factions within the movement have become much more active and have engaged in resistance actions in greater numbers. This has led law enforcement to pursue more assertive containment efforts, which the anarchists interpret as violent oppression, and by which they feel provoked and justified to respond with force. This may account for some increased violence in large-scale protest actions. There is evidence from some anarchist tactical guides to suggest at least some of the violence done during protests is designed to elicit a more aggressive level of police response, and thereby justify the statements that they are being oppressed.

Affinity groups are the basic unit of direct actions. It is rare—although not without exception—to hear of “lone wolf” or “berserker” actions within the modern anarchist movement. Andrew McCrae is arguably one example of an anarchist berserker. McCrae is accused of assassinating a Red Bluff, California, police officer while the officer was refueling his police car in November 2002. Following the killing, “Andy” posted a claim of responsibility on the San Francisco Indy Media web-page.³⁶ His stated motive was to draw attention to problems of police state tactics and corporate irresponsibility. McCrae fled to New Hampshire where he was eventually taken into custody, after negotiating for the release of his “manifesto” (a term also used by Ted Kaczynski). The manifesto is, in essence, a lengthy missive about the ills of the U.S. government, capitalism, global economy, and technology.³⁷ More commonly, groups tend to act

³⁵ Womyn Gemini, “2002 Organizers’ Conference Report,” *Earth First! Journal*, Eostar 22(4) (2002).

³⁶ Andrew McCrae. (2002). “Proud and Insolent Youth Incorporated.” Accessed online 7 June 2004 at (sf.indymedia.org).

³⁷ Andrew McCrae. (2002). “The Declaration of a Renewed American Independence.” Accessed online 7 June 2004 at (sf.indymedia.org).

collectively, rather than in functional cells, where each member separately performs his or her individually assigned tasks for the mission. Particularly when resisting the police, they find strength in solidarity.

Protests are the most common type of direct actions, and major meetings and events are the most common venues. Historically, modern anarchists have not targeted specific individuals for violence in direct actions. One thing that has changed, however, is the increased nature and degree of coordination between groups and clusters from different geographic areas (and often with some philosophical differences) for larger events. Many of these improvements are a function of advances in, and accessibility to, electronic communications technology such as websites; document search, storage, and transfer; two-way radios; cell phones; text messaging, and so on. For example, prior to the scheduled WTO meetings in Washington, D.C. that were canceled because of the 9/11 attacks, over 100 websites were devoted partially or exclusively to disseminating logistical information and discussing tactics for the planned protest, which included shutting down all traffic into and out of the District. Effective communication has a force multiplying effect on “hit and run”-style tactics.

As already noted, anarchist’s strategic objectives are diverse, but their tactical objectives also vary considerably. Many would suggest that the primary goal is to communicate to others the message of their social philosophy or at least to make evident that there is a voice of dissent. In that sense, DAs might be viewed as “theatre.” Other tactical objectives are sometimes to disrupt activities that oppose their philosophical interests, and/or to interrupt the forward motion of a particular decision or action (e.g., election of an authority figure or passing of a resolution).

Anarchists’ enemies are myriad. Philosophically, they oppose government (at least governmental control), capitalism, and globalization. This translates into a large number of institutions and causes that are considered fair targets. Banks and financial institutions are symbolic of many things antithetical to the movement. Economic policies and agendas such as NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) and its extension, The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) are vehemently opposed, as are institutions of global or transnational power (political or economic) such as the WTO (World Trade Organization) and its General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), as well as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and European Union (EU). Ideologically, while diverse, they also tend to support animal rights, environmentalism, and “free education,” while opposing varying forms of oppression, discrimination, and abuse of rights, including racism, imperialism, genetic engineering, and sexism/misogyny.

Many of the actions used in protests have been used for decades. The tactics are primarily designed to obstruct. Protesters will appear at events to strike or protest in massive numbers, engaging both in legal and illegal activities. In protest actions, encounters with law enforcement typically occur because of two types of illegal tactics—*passive resistance* and *active resistance*.

Passive resistance occurs when an activist fails to act to comply with the lawful order of a law enforcement officer, but otherwise does not take proactive aggressive action. Although many forms of protest are lawful and protected, certain restrictions may apply to the location (e.g., required to maintain a minimum distance from a site or to remain within a “free speech zone”) or form (e.g., not blocking public avenues of transportation) they may take. Some anarchist activists disagree with the legitimacy of these restrictions and refuse to abide by them. Police may physically move those who choose not to comply. Even passive resistance, however, can become complicated. Protesters may, for example, sit down, link arms, and/or attach themselves (via handcuffs or chains or connect their hands inside PVC pipe in devices known as “sleeping dragons”) to each other or to objects to prevent being arrested or moved. Passive resistance can also escalate into active resistance. If a resister is apprehended by the police, others may use *de-arresting* or *un-arresting* techniques. This is a tactic by which other protesters physically insert themselves between the detainee and the custodial officer, or swarm the officer(s) and extract the detainee from the grip or physical custody of the officer. Once freed, a group will then link arms with each other and with the liberated protester, then attempt to “disappear” into the crowd.

Two other common tactics of passive resistance that may occur outside of a mass protest are squatting and rooftop occupations. Squatting involves the collective occupation of an unoccupied building or land area to which the actors have no title or legitimate right of access. Recall that anarchists do not believe in property rights, and particularly defy the concept of land ownership. This form of protest has symbolic meaning, but may also serve a function of providing shelter for people who would otherwise be homeless. Rooftop occupations begin similarly, but the objective typically is to use the rooftop (or media coverage of its occupation) as a vehicle through which to communicate the message of their social philosophy. Activists may hang banners, create a street party, or begin a hunger strike.³⁸

Active resistance occurs when activists use force against the police (which the activist themselves may view as defensive) or proactively engage in illegal activity such as vandalism, sabotage, or property damage. When activists engage in planned violence against the police or other targeted illegal activity, they will often do so in a group, using a “Blac Bloc” tactic. Contrary to popular perception, Blac Bloc is not a discrete, standing organization; rather, it is a tactic in which activists dress completely in black—including a black face covering (e.g., mask or bandanna) to conceal their individual identity and commit some action. It is also common to wear protective gear to counter the effects of pepper spray, tear gas, and less lethal projectiles. Protective equipment may include gas masks, bandannas soaked in vinegar or other liquids, hel-

³⁸ Anonymous. “Rooftop Occupations,” in Shawn Ewald, ed., *Anarchism in Action: Methods, Tactics, Skills, & Ideas*, 2nd ed. (Draft). Retrieved 10 May 2004 from (www.radio4all.org/aia/act_rooftop.html).

mets, skating pads, and shields. The specific actions will vary, depending on the target, objective, Bloc attitudes, and resources.

In the DoT debate, there are those in the movement who oppose the use of Blocs either on principle, or because they believe they are ineffective. Significant concerns include the increased propensity for violence and non-adherence to agreed-on rules of engagement, and the Bloc's vulnerability to infiltration by undercover law enforcement gathering information or acting as *agent provocateurs* (embedding themselves to provoke violence with the police, making it appear the anarchists started it).

When Blac Blocs convene, it is typically for purposes of engaging in illegal—although not necessarily violent—activity. In mass protest actions, sometimes Blocs will engage in aggressive confrontations with police. They have used human formations, with or without shields and objects (such as connected metal bars) to break police lines and penetrate protected perimeters. The Bloc has been known to throw objects at law enforcement officers and their use of wrist rockets (high-powered slingshots) to propel rocks, ball bearings, or paint balls has been well documented by numerous police agencies who have experienced black bloc tactics since 2000. Eggs (real and synthetic) filled with acid also have been seized from radical anarchists. More dangerous, but less common devices also have been used, including torches or “smilies” (a chain with a lock attached to the end) to launch flaming rags. The “Molotov Cocktail” has been used by anarchists to the extent that the device has become an icon of the movement. Indeed, in May 2003 a major west coast police agency located stashes of Molotov Cocktails along a known parade route, designated for an upcoming event. Interestingly, it is not uncommon to find photographic evidence of possession and use of such devices.

More commonly, Bloc activists will simply use tactics that destroy property or divert and consume law enforcement resources. As noted earlier, anarchists do not believe in property rights, so destruction of property is not seen as illegitimate, and certainly not as violent. Banks and storefronts may be vandalized with anarchist graffiti. Windows may be broken by throwing objects or by heating the glass with a blowtorch before dousing it with cold water. Glass etching solutions also may be used. One Bloc technique that has been used effectively in some large cities (where police have more personnel) is the use of “roving” traffic blockades. With this, the Bloc will place itself in an intersection to disrupt the flow of traffic. While police are on the way, but before they arrive, the Bloc will disperse and reconvene at another pre-determined location in the city.

The “white overalls” movement also has a presence at many anarchist resistance actions. Sometimes referred to as *tute bianche*, it has been described as

a non-institutional anonymous group, who act dressed in white workers overalls and chemical suits. Their wish is to symbolize the invisibility of citizens with no rights, no power, all the same, masses of bodies rendered ghosts by neoliberal policies of the “Global North.” Their tactics are hardly passive, however, and usually involve large crowds, utilizing horizontal or-

ganization and decision making. They attend demonstrations with pads, shields and helmets, as protection from police brutality. They usually have no pre-defined strategy, instead leaving the decision open to the moment, with the only criteria being not to do anything that would alienate the mass of people involved.³⁹

Like most collectives within the movement, these are not standing groups; rather they unite for a particular action. They operate with equal input from all members, often seeking to suppress “attacks” on protesters by police and deny their attempts to restrain group movement and communication. They are also referred to with the acronym “WOMBLES,” which stand for “White Overalls Movement Building Libertarian Effective Struggles.”

Looking toward the future, it is important to consider the tactical influence that may come from anarchists in other countries and the movement’s consonant and inconsonant links. Whereas illegal DAs by modern anarchists in the United States generally target property, in other countries anarchist factions reportedly have a much more extensive history of violence. As recently as December 2003, a group identifying itself as “Informal Anarchist Federation” (based in Italy) claimed responsibility for a series of letter bombs sent to officials of the European Union throughout Europe.⁴⁰

Although ALF and ELF—two of the strongest anarchist consonant links—historically have touted with pride the assertion that no human life has been taken, both groups have become much more aggressive in planned acts of property damage. Some within those movements have become frustrated and impatient with the limited scope and pace of progress that has occurred by using only nonviolent resistance. As early as 1988, Fran Trutt, a 33-year-old substitute teacher from Queens, New York, was convicted of attempted murder for creating and planting a radio-controlled nail bomb intended to kill Leon Hirsch. Hirsch was the president of U.S. Surgical Corporation—a medical company that used animals to research the use of staples in human operations. In September 2001, ALF co-founder Ronnie Lee declared: “so far no one on the other side has ever been seriously harmed or killed. But that may now change.”⁴¹

³⁹ Heidi Beirich and Bob Moser. From Push to Shove: Radical environmental and animalrights groups have always drawn the line at targeting humans. Not anymore. Intelligence Report, #147 (Fall, 2002), Southern Poverty Law Center.

⁴⁰ Shawn Ewald, ed., “Anarchism in Action.”

⁴¹ Sylvia Poggioli, Letter bombs addressed to EU officials panic Europe. National PublicRadio, Weekend Edition Sunday (1:00 PM ET)—NPR. 25 January 2004. It should be noted, however, that in the wake of these reports, the coordinating committee of the Italian Anarchist Federation (Federazione Anarchica Italiana) issued a press release denouncing the use of bombs and claiming that the “Informal Anarchist Federation” is a non-existent “phantom” organization created to cast aspersions on the true Italian anarchists. Italian Anarchist Federation (2003). *Press Release*. Accessed online 9 June 2004 at (www.federazioneanarchica.org/20031228cdc.html#eng).

It is significant that in the last few years, some leaders in the ELF and ALF movements have advocated a position that not only legitimizes violence, but encourages it. Craig Rosebraugh, who worked in the anti-fur campaign for years before becoming the spokesman for the Earth Liberation Front, has resigned his position as spokesman and organized a new group under the name of "Arisa."⁴² He had been an advocate for the ELF tenet of "... taking all necessary precautions not to harm any form of life, human or animal..." His philosophy under Arissa has advocated revolution, ostensibly because all of the efforts to change the U.S. government in the last "228" years have failed. Rosebraugh clearly legitimizes violence: "Terrorism can be OK, can be justified. We use terrorism in the U.S. every day. Our government does it every day. It can be effective. But I do believe you have to have letter writing. You can't draw a line between nonviolence and political violence."⁴³ In his presentation on "The Legitimacy of Political Violence, Lessons in Reform and Revolution," which has been delivered in several places around the country, Rosebraugh further states, "we must use a range of tactics, legal and illegal, violent and non-violent ... terrorism can be justified, can be OK ... " and that "bombing and assassination can be legitimate forms of self defense against political oppression..."⁴⁴ Of note, "self defense" in this context does not mean only defending one's life, but defending animals, the environment, or one's politics.

Rodney Coronado, a convicted ALF arsonist who formerly abided by the ALF guidelines against harming life, recently stated, "I think [food producers] should appreciate that we're only targeting their property. Because frankly I think it's time to start targeting them."⁴⁵ Moreover, he recently wrote in an article in which he stated that:

When under attack, we must fight back. Now is the time to ready ourselves for war. It's not enough to defend; we must confront the real terrorists when they least expect it, in traditional guerrilla warfare fashion, knowing that the spirits of all past rebels and resisters are within us. It's time to be strengthened, not weakened, by recent FBI and ATF attacks on our nonviolent supporters. We are having an impact. The animal abusers and earth destroyers are circling their wagons my friends; let's not let our warriors in the A.L.F., E.L.F., Revolutionary Cells and other groups down.

⁴² According to the Arisa website, "The primary goal of Arissa is to create a social and political revolution in the United States." Furthermore, the group believes that "everyone has the responsibility to take action and assist in the effort to stop the U.S. government, an entity that has plagued the domestic and international arena throughout modern history with unprecedented murder, destruction, and injustice. We encourage you to become involved in our efforts to bring about the necessary political and social revolution in the United States of America." Accessed online 17 June 2004 at (www.arissa.org).

⁴³ Amy Roe. (2003). "He Says He Wants a Revolution." Willamette Weekly Online, 1/8/2003. Accessed online 9 June 2004 at (www.wweek.com).

⁴⁴ Amy Roe. (2003). "He Says He Wants a Revolution."

⁴⁵ Center for Consumer Freedom. (2003). Campus Radical. Posted 27 January 2003. Accessed online 9 June 9, 2004 at (www.consumerfreedom.com ID=1758).

It's time to fight with all the rage and love that the crimes we are aware of deserve.⁴⁶

Revolutionary Cells (the work of Daniel Andreas San Diego), which he mentions specifically, claimed credit for two bombings of Huntingdon Life Sciences partner corporations wherein one pipe bomb was timed to explode one hour after the first—clearly targeting responding emergency personnel—and another pipe bomb was wrapped in nails.

Especially troubling have been the terroristic actions by the most recent generation of militant animal rights activists, such as the Justice Department and Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC). Kevin Jonas, the 21-year-old leader of SHAC's North American chapter has warned that: "When push comes to shove, we're ready to push, kick, shove, bite, do whatever to win."⁴⁷ In 2002, SHAC activists vandalized the apartment of a Chicago Insurance executive. They also threatened to burn the building and to harm (by name) his two-year-old son because one of the insurance company's clients was an animal testing lab.

This strategy of terrorizing people who work for companies that support, or do business with, their primary opponents is part of a larger campaign. SHAC's own website declares that 34 companies that formerly did business with Huntingdon have severed those ties, presumably (at least in part) because of SHAC actions.⁴⁸ Some anarchist websites have lauded SHAC's strategic and tactical acumen and posted information about their activities as exemplars of what can be done.⁴⁹

Some environmental extremists also have turned to violence. In 2000, 32-year-old environmental rights activist Volkert van der Graff assassinated political candidate Pim Fortuyn (who spoke out publicly against the environmental extremists) in the Netherlands, shooting him six times. If the tactics of these consonant links are regarded as an aspirational standard, then more violence in anarchist DAs can be expected in the future.

⁴⁶ Heidi Beirich and Bob Moser. From Push to Shove: Radical environmental and animalrights groups have always drawn the line at targeting humans. Not anymore. Intelligence Report, #147 (Fall, 2002), Southern Poverty Law Center.

⁴⁷ Rod Coronado. (2003). "In the Spirit of Solidarity," *No Compromise*, Issue 22. Accessed online 9 June 2004 at (www.nocompromise.org).

⁴⁸ Roll of Honour: Companies that Have Ditched Huntingdon. Retrieved 10 May 2004 from (www.shac.net).

⁴⁹ *How to Rip A Corporation Apart Piece by Piece* (article about the Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty's success with their campaign against Huntington Life Sciences).

Tradecraft

Recruitment

It should not be surprising to learn that jails and prisons are major recruiting sites for extremists groups, including anarchists. It is not difficult to imagine how people who feel alienated, disenfranchised, and rebellious might find the antisociety passion and rhetoric to be attractive. They may even find a source of support and purpose. “Anarchists in particular, with their cries to ‘smash the state’ and to eradicate prisons, appeal to inmates, including many convicted of common crimes who only come to believe they are ‘political prisoners’ after their incarceration.”⁵⁰ Similarly, there are examples of these groups recruiting from various youth gangs, another haven of disenfranchised young people looking for a cause.

Many are drawn into the movement through other forms of activism and consonant links. As previously noted, disdain for capitalism and globalization is increasingly pervasive among eco-radical groups. It is not uncommon to hear of an anarchist who first became interested in activism through an animal rights or environmental conservationist group. Once trained and involved in DA and resistance tactics, they may even attend mass protests where members of their own group are joined by anarchist protesters to decry the evils of multinational economic initiatives such as the WTO. They are increasingly exposed to additional elements of the social philosophy and ultimately “become” anarchists.

College campuses continue to be a fertile breeding ground for radicals and extremists from a variety of persuasions, including anarchists. Radical domestic social movements in the 1960s gained visibility and much of their momentum through student protests. In Europe, many of the Marxist-Leninist factions grew out of social protests and even modern Islamist ideology has been energized and disseminated through universities both in the United States and abroad. Even today, radical movements easily blend in among the myriad special interest, social activist, and political advocacy groups that pervade many institutions of higher learning. Intellectually, college students are more likely to be open to radical—even revolutionary—social philosophies. As a target population for radical recruitment, they tend to be young, energetic, and idealistic with time available to act.

Training

Activists can acquire skills in basic and advanced DA techniques through self-study or by attending workshops. Some organizations such as Ruckus Society and Anarchist Black Cross Federation even specialize in providing training in activism and varying forms of civil disobedience. There are many resources freely available to teach interested

⁵⁰ AntiDefamation League, “Dangerous Convictions: An Introduction to Extremist Activities in Prisons” (New York: Gorowitz Institute, 2002), p. 43.

anarchists how to conduct surveillance, prepare for protests, climb and descend, build shields, and craft weapons. The legality of the proposed actions is secondary to their perceived effectiveness. Some manuals and instructional resources limit themselves to nonviolent tactics; others do not.

For those seeking to learn on their own, there is no shortage of available information. Activists interested primarily in protests might consult *Bodyhammer: Tactics and Self-Defence For the Modern Protester* by “Sarin.” This book covers group movement situations, shield wall movement, and tactics, and “how to” tips for constructing and employing shields and body armor. The Ruckus Society offers manuals on “Action Planning,” “Scouting,” and “Hanging Yourself From a Billboard.” A group of activists from New York City have prepared a guide for those inclined to civil disobedience in the city called “How To Fight The Man (And Get Away Safely).”

The Encyclopedia of Direct Action (1995)—also freely available on the Internet—covers blockades and occupations, how not to be moved, product contamination, instructions for damaging windows and glass, breaking and entering, lock picking, ethical shoplifting, economic sabotage, bomb scares and other hoaxes, and how to deal with the police. Consonant linked groups such as ALF and ELF also have an extensive and evolving library of training materials, including the ELF’s “Direct Action Manual” and *The A.L.F. Primer: A Guide to Direct Action and the Animal Liberation Front*.⁵¹ ALF’s Primer contains both general and specific guidelines for breaking windows; breaking through shutters; vandalizing buildings, toilets, vehicles, and telephone lines; committing arson; and getting through locks. There is even a Direct Action Journal.⁵²

Workshops, seminars, and training camps are another “hands on” mode of DA training. Very often training camps are sponsored in anticipation of specific events such as a major political convention or meeting of an international group. Again, some trainers limit themselves to nonviolent tactics whereas others do not.

The Ruckus Society declares that its mission is to equip activists with the necessary tools to engage in nonviolent direct action. Nonviolent, of course, does not mean that it’s legal. They sponsor three levels of training. The premiere training is an Action Camp, a week-long workshop typically focused on a particular cause or theme. “At Action Camp, participants split their time between theoretical and strategic workshops focusing on a wide array of advanced campaign skills and hands-on technical training in tactics for nonviolent actions.”⁵³ More specialized training is provided at microRUCKUS, workshops lasting from 1 to 4 days, usually conducted in collaboration with one or more partner groups and with a training agenda tailored to the specific

⁵¹ Animal Liberation Front. *The A.L.F. Primer: A Guide to Direct Action and the Animal Liberation Front*, 2nd ed.

⁵² Accessed online 17 May 2004 at (www.directactionjournal.org).

⁵³ Ruckus Society. “Ruckus Society Action Camps.” Accessed online 17 May 2004 at(<http://www.ruckus.org/training/actioncamps/index.html>).

needs of the group. Finally, Ruckus also provides training for trainers and facilitators to grow and advance activism in their own local groups.

To prepare for the RNC in New York City, the “NoRNC Clearinghouse Training Group” sponsors a monthly training in which they “analyze the terms direct action and civil disobedience; discuss affinity groups and the process whereby these groups make decisions before, during and after a political action; and practice blockading technics (sic) involving our bodies, lock boxes, and other devices.”⁵⁴ Many other strategic and tactical trainings of this type are widely offered throughout the country.

Indicators

Indicators of anarchist involvement usually are not reliably *specific* to anarchism. That is, because they share tactics and enemies with a number of extremist groups, it is sometimes difficult to discern which—if any—component constitutes an anarchist presence. Media reports often group together a number of otherwise distinct causes and movements, viewing them collectively only as protesters against a given cause.

Anarchists often are fairly overt about their beliefs and ideological inclinations. The term anarchism (or anarchy) is used liberally and adherents readily self-identify as anarchists. In this sense, identification is not particularly challenging. However, when they are blended in among other radical or extremist factions with similar agendas, it may be useful to make the distinction. The following observations are offered with the clear caveat that not all anarchists will display these indicators and some who display them are not anarchists.

Red and black are the dominant symbolic colors of the anarchist movement. These may be reflected in clothing, signs, and symbols. Red armbands may be worn against black shirts. Flags are often used (as a symbol of the solidarity and presence of the movement); typically they are either all black or half red and half black, separated by a diagonal line. Many adaptations have evolved. On some, the line runs from the lower left to upper right corner, with the upper portion in red and lower portion in black. Oftentimes, however, the diagonal and/or color scheme will be reversed. Another banner sometimes seen at protests or at homes is the “Jolly Roger” (skull and crossbones). The symbolic inference is to an identification with the pirate mentality in its battle with the gentry.

There are dozens (if not hundreds) of symbols used throughout the movement, but the most common is the letter “A” (sometimes asymmetrically drawn, with a horizontal line that extends outward beyond the two diagonals) surrounded by a circle. The oft-cited meaning of this “Anarchy is Order.”⁵⁵ Black cats with raised backs may symbolize revolution or sabotage, a form of DA legitimized among many anarchists. The raised

⁵⁴ NoRNC Clearinghouse Training Group. “Direct Action Training.” Accessed online 17 May 2004 at (www.rncnotwelcome.org).

⁵⁵ Peter Peterson, “Flag, Torch, and Fist: The Symbols of Anarchism,” *Freedom*, 48(11), p. 8.

fist and its variants represent power imbued to “the people.” The “Chaos” symbol is found extensively in tattoos and is marked by multiple arrows pointing out from the center in all directions (typically eight directions). This can be stylized for artistic purposes and also combined with other symbols. In addition, the “Conflict” symbol is sometimes used, typically represented by a circle with a horizontal lightening bolt through it. One end of the bolt is formed as an arrow and the other as a cross. These symbols may be seen on tattoos, flags, stickers, patches, clothing, and so on.

Anarchist activists often wear black masks or bandannas to cover their faces, a ritual known as “masking up.” The functional value of this is that activists are more difficult to identify and (ostensibly) less likely to be subjected to later harassment and retribution. The symbolic value is that the “facelessness” increases solidarity and decreases indications of class, race, gender, or other individual features that might distinguish individuals from each other or lead to classist assumptions and preconceptions.

The glitch for law enforcement is that the anarchists know the stereotype and may seek intentionally to dress or present themselves differently to avoid early identification and possible apprehension before an action has been completed. Thus, a collective of 20 people all dressed and masked in black, gathered together at some anticapitalism rally, bearing signs and symbols of the circled “A” are fairly likely to be anarchists (or persons masquerading as such). But an anarchist affinity group planning a DA may not be clad in the prototypical garb.

Are there indicators that distinguish the violent from the nonviolent anarchists? Their behavior is really the only reliable indicator, although some other information may be valuable in assessing the potential for threat. Printed materials produced by a certain group may contain direct references to armed resistance or the need for violence to create revolution. Symbols or logos the group creates or uses may give some indication of their affinity (or not) for violence. For example, the circled “A” may be superimposed over an AK-47 or a Molotov Cocktail. Finally, it may also be useful to explore the anarchist “icons” and pioneers on which they most heavily rely in forming, defining, and describing their group. Are they men like Malatesta who believed in the inevitability of violence in revolution, or those who believe in nonviolence at virtually any cost? The answer is not dispositive of the modern group’s propensity for violent action, but it is a relevant line of inquiry.

Information/Communications

Strategic communications—the spreading of their message of social philosophy—is a central feature of activism generally and direct actions specifically. Anarchists tend to be quite sophisticated about methods for disseminating information. There are countless newsletters and magazines, known as “zines,”⁵⁶ hundreds of websites, chatrooms, and discussion lists. Flyers, posters, banners, and stickers are freely available

⁵⁶ Infoshop.org. Library: Zine Kiosk. Accessed online 17 May 2004 at (www.infoshop.org).

to download from various websites. Radical bookstores exist in most major cities (and often serve as a good starting point for those seeking to link with other anarchists in a particular area). They even have their own source of media. Opposing the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)—as they do all forms of governmental control and regulation—many anarchists have created their own independent media via “pirate” radio stations, in what they refer to as the “free radio movement.”⁵⁷

Tactical communications —exchanges of operational information during an action—are critical for successful DAs, and technologically they are becoming more sophisticated. Organizers/facilitators need to be able to communicate with each other and with members of the affinity group, especially when the action is “going mobile.” DA trainings increasingly discuss the role and operation of scouts “who keep track of activity and police presence (these can be equipped with hand radios or cell phones with which to communicate with the main group, and can ride bicycles for extra speed and mobility; it usually makes the most sense to position them a block or so away from the group, so they can provide early warnings and broader perspective on the area).”⁵⁸ Other communications operators also may be used “to exchange information with the scouts and other groups, runners to communicate new information to nearby groups.”⁵⁹

Financing

Given anarchists’ opposition to capitalism and enterprise the question of how they fund their operations is intriguing. Anarchists typically lead a simple and inexpensive lifestyle. Many are vegetarian or vegan and are accustomed to a communal life where food and other resources are shared. On a daily basis, most anarchists have jobs (typically low paying service jobs). They often travel by shared rides in cars, but many have become proficient at hopping trains to travel long distances. A series of projects throughout the country known as “Food not Bombs” often provide collective food for the anarchist community (the food is not necessarily only consumed by anarchists). Therefore, it does not require much money to facilitate subsistence and travel. Many of the higher level organizers and activists have taken to traveling by bus or even airplane and many of them have traveled internationally, especially to Europe. Little is known of the financing structure for that kind of work. Funding sources such as voluntary contributions, book sales, “distros” (selling of shirts, symbols, etc.), and ‘zine sales appear to be the backbone of financing. A relatively new source of income is the production and sale of videos mostly depicting DA and large protest incidents. Alternative media may be the single most prolific source of funding for the movement at this time. However, as the connection between anarchists and ALF and ELF solidifies, more complex and lucrative financial relationships may also evolve.

⁵⁷ Ron Sakolsky and Stephen Dunifer, eds., *Seizing the Airwaves: A Free Radio Handbook* (Oakland, CA: AK Press). Accessed online 18 May 2004 at (www.infoshop.org/seizing/toc.html).

⁵⁸ CrimethInc. Blocs, Black and Otherwise. Accessed online 18 May 2004 at (www.crimethinc.com).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

*Law Enforcement Strategies/Implications

Prior to the Seattle WTO demonstrations in September 1999, criminal anarchists relied heavily on maintaining internal operational security. That is, they discussed, wrote about, and tried many techniques to ensure that law enforcement was not able to infiltrate their particular group or cell or trace responsibility for any action back to the larger group. This was partly inspired by the concept of Leaderless Resistance adopted and advocated by their colleagues in ALF and ELF. However, it was also a natural outgrowth of their criminal mindset combined with the belief that law enforcement was singularly the arm of the government that was able to suppress their desires for forceful social change. There were efforts to organize a larger, more coordinated effort for the WTO where some anarchists were facilitating large affinity groups and other relatively sophisticated networks. The increased scale of coordination and organization assumed a more prominent role as the next year progressed due to an increase in the number of anarchists willing to become involved in DA, and the fact that they were traveling to large demonstrations from around the country (in some cases internationally).

As anarchist protests and resistance actions increased in size and intensity, many jurisdictions across the country rushed to implement hastily crafted legal countermeasures, often in anticipation of a particular planned event. As often as not, however, these efforts have failed to accomplish their objectives and arguably have given victories to the activists. For example, in anticipation of Bloc activists “masking up,” there was a trend toward passing ordinances that made it a violation to wear a mask or hood. Yet, this tactic has failed (legally and strategically) most everywhere it has been tried. Some jurisdictions attempted to create “protest zones” so far away from the event that it was impractical or unattractive to protesters who wanted their message heard by event participants. Although this has been effective in some circumstances (as in the Salt Lake Olympics and to some extent at the G8 Summit on Sea Island, Georgia), in other places it has failed. Others attempted legal countermeasures have included requiring demonstration permits with high fees and designating approved parade routes in remote areas.

As the scale of the activists’ coordinating and networking increased, however, so did the vulnerability to their operational security. Meetings had to be opened to hundreds of people and plans discussed more freely. In that environment, it became much easier for law enforcement to gain access to plans and general tactical information, even though many action decisions were left to individual affinity groups or even to individuals. The cost of decentralizing their decision making was reduced cohesion and increased isolation and subsequent vulnerability to arrest. In order to counter law enforcement’s new degree of intelligence and planning, activists had to develop new tactics and to modify them constantly.

The security concerns were openly discussed and many critical analyses were offered locally and via the Internet. A particular effort was made to learn techniques for identifying law enforcement officers working in undercover capacities. This posed a serious concern for undercover officers, especially given the level of hatred many anarchists

express toward the police. In addition, anarchists actively sought to learn much more about police operations and tactics. In the era of community-oriented policing, law enforcement agencies have been encouraged to be more “transparent” to the public and have often put tactical planning information on the Web, making it easily available. Another layer of response was to emphasize documenting and reporting police operations via “independent media” outlets. This provided anarchists an opportunity to study police tactics on a broader scale, but also to use this information in a media campaign to discredit law enforcement.

In recent years, some analytical anarchists have questioned the cost–benefit effect of participating in large-scale demonstrations. The debate is growing about the need to abandon large-scale DA for smaller scale DA, often referred to in the movement as “guerilla tactics.” Small-scale DA have many advantages because they are generally conducted covertly, under the cover of darkness, within a very secure “cell” and the targets can be chosen more carefully in order to ensure maximum effect, both tactically and strategically. The disadvantage to the criminal anarchist factions is that many criminally prone anarchists are energized or motivated by the “mob mentality” of large groups and may not be willing or able to conduct DA on their own. Within the movement, debate continues about how best to build a large, revolutionary, movement using the method of leaderless resistance.

Internal conflicts are another major source of vulnerability within the movement. The DoT debate has already been addressed, but the movement also is struggling with a perceived lack of power among women, and the lack of inclusion of ethnic minorities. This kind of conflict occurred three decades ago within the leftist revolutionary movement in the United States. Some commentators have suggested that the Weather Underground essentially imploded because of conflict over similar issues. As anarchists are noted to be scholars of history, some leaders in the movement recognize the similarities and their potential for harm and are attempting to address or remediate these grievances on a national scale. One example is the “Total Liberation Fest 2004,” which was held in Erie, Pennsylvania in January 2004.⁶⁰ The stated goal was to produce a “revolutionary conference on state repression, political prisoners, social justice, and Earth & Animal Liberation.”⁶¹ The special guests listed exemplify the attempts to include a broader spectrum of ethnicity. Rodney Coronado, a featured presenter, is a member of the Yaqui tribe, living in Tucson, Arizona. Ramona Africa is an African-American woman billed as, “former political prisoner, MOVE survivor,” a reference to the MOVE organization from Philadelphia. Ashanti Alston, also an African American, is “... a former Black Panther and Black Liberation Army soldier.” In addition to events such as this, a documentary about the Weather Underground is currently being toured around the country. The film is generally accompanied by testimony from

⁶⁰ Accessed online 9 June 2004 at (www.total-liberation.com).

⁶¹ Accessed online 9 June 2004 at (total-liberation.com).

former members of the Weather Underground sharing lessons learned in their failed attempt at revolution.

Although conflict and instability within the movement can make it more vulnerable, it also creates another potential set of challenges for law enforcement. The development of revolutionary anarchist factions poses a potential threat beyond even their DA protest activity. By definition, those advocating for revolution seek to overthrow the existing government and/or social system. Some revolutionaries in the anarchist movement believe that violence is a legitimate or even necessary mechanism to create that change. Clearly not all anarchists advocate or engage in violence, but some do. Those individuals and factions pose a particular concern.

Many law enforcement professionals view modern anarchists simply as a protest group. As long as the activity at large-scale protests is relatively contained and the protests do not devolve into riots, law enforcement may be tempted to ignore the movement. Violent revolutionary actions—including guerilla warfare—however, pose a threat to the communities and people that law enforcement officers are sworn to protect. To monitor that activity seems prudent, not because of the ideas they hold or advocate, but because of the tactics that may be used to enact them.

Intelligence gathering among the most radical—and often most violent—factions is particularly difficult. Infiltration into large affinity group meetings is relatively simple. However, infiltration into radical revolutionary “cells” is not. The very nature of the movement’s suspicion and operational security enhancements makes infiltration difficult and time consuming. Few agencies are able to commit to operations that require years of up-front work just getting into a “cell,” especially given shrinking budgets and increased demands for attention to other issues. Infiltration is made more difficult by the communal nature of the lifestyle (under constant observation and scrutiny) and the extensive knowledge held by many anarchists, which require a considerable amount of study and time to acquire. Other strategies for infiltration have been explored, but so far have not been successful. Discussion of these theories in an open paper is not advisable.

Informant development is a critical function in law enforcement’s response to criminal anarchism. Some key personnel within the movement are similarly aware of this and have developed and disseminated methods for resisting grand juries in a way to help avoid long-term incarceration.⁶² Although Grand Jury investigations are routinely successful against criminals, they have been less successful against activists and “true believers.” The criminal is generally motivated solely by his or her own self-interest, whereas activists are often more concerned with their beliefs and the effects their actions may have on others and on the movement more generally. A potential informant bears both the scrutiny and support of his or her peers. It is not unusual for a sizable “support group” to respond with someone who is called before a grand jury. This group

⁶² Larry Weiss. (Undated). “Walking Through a Grand Jury.” Accessed online 9 June 2004 at (www.animalliberation.net).

certainly may provide support, but it also may serve as an intimidating reminder of the price of cooperation. Investigators and law enforcement officers should be cautious during questioning not to divulge more to the subject about the case (via questions), than is learned through their testimony. These challenges notwithstanding, law enforcement should continue to develop informants and to utilize tools such as grand juries to investigate anarchist crimes, knowing that through patience and persistence law enforcement ultimately can contain any momentum of violence and minimize risk and harm to the public.

The authors are extremely grateful to Doug Bodrero of the Institute for Intergovernmental Research for his insightful suggestions and contributions to this manuscript.

The Ted K Archive

Randy Borum & Chuck Tilby
Anarchist Direct Actions: A Challenge for Law Enforcement
2004

Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 28:201–223, 2005.

<<https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100590928106>> & <libcom.org>

Do zines fund the anarchist movement? A chief of the Eugene, Oregon police department seems to think so. Archiving as a historical curiosity.

Address correspondence to Randy Borum, Dept. of Mental Health Law and Policy,
Florida Mental Health Institute, University of South Florida, 13301 Bruce B. Downs
Blvd., Tampa, FL 33612, USA. E-mail: borum@fmhi.usf.edu
Taylor & Francis Inc.

www.thetedkarchive.com