

Extreme Left Terrorism in Contemporary Europe: from “Communist Combatant Parties” to Militant Campaigns?

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Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to analyze the strategy and tactics of the of extreme left terrorism in Europe. Traditional red terrorist organizations (combatant communist parties like the RAF, the RB etc.) have been replaced by small militant groups, by violent militancy campaigns, by anti-globalist violence or by “single-issue” terrorism. The militant extreme left may itself be both a direct and indirect ally to other forms of terrorism, including Islamist terrorism.*

Key words: *Anti-globalist violence, Communist parties, European security, Extreme left, Militancy campaigns, Terrorism*

Introduction

From the mid-1960s to the beginning of the 1990s, one of terrorism’s dominant strains was its extreme left version. The fall of the communist regimes and intensive counter-terrorism policies after September 11, 2001 caused its decline; indeed, the last couple of years has seen the remaining original terrorist movements in Europe destroyed. Vestiges of red terrorism nevertheless survive in many places of the world, including the Old Continent, and the extreme left scene still exhibits militant tendencies which lead (or can lead) to terrorism. This article analyzes the potential of contemporary left terrorism in Europe.

Conceptualization of traditional European extreme left terrorism

Extreme left terrorism in Europe is usually understood as a specific and fairly homogeneous version of terrorism. Different terms have been used to describe the one phenomenon: European left terrorism, European red terrorism, Euroterrorism, etc. This terrorism is constituted by the activities of several terrorist groups active in the Western Europe since the end of the 1960s, and whose ideologies were based on various interpretations of marxism and/or anarchism.

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The most prominent groups were the following: German *Red Army Faction (Rote Armee Fraktion – RAF)*, *Movement 2nd June (Bewegung 2. Juni)*, *Revolutionary Cells (Revolutionäre Zellen – RZ)* and their feminist splinter group *Red Zora (Rote Zora – RZ)*; the Italian *Red Brigades (Brigate Rosse – BR)*; the French group *Direct Action (Action Directe – AD)*; the Belgian *Communist Combatant Cells (Cellules communistes combattantes – CCC)*; the Greek *Revolutionary Organization 17 November (Epanastatiki Organosi dekaefta Noemvri – 17N)* and *Revolutionary People's Struggle (Epanastatikos Laikos Agonas – ELA)*; the *Spanish First of October Antifascist Resistance Group (Grupos de Resistencia Antifascista Primero de Octubre – GRAPO)*, the British *Angry Brigade (AB)* and many others. Some authors include extreme left groups found in other western-type democracies (e.g. Japan) in the same category as the European extreme left (Dietl, Hirschmann, Tophoven 2006: 69-94).

The roots of those organizations are connected with the protest movements of the 1960s (against the Western European “capitalist regimes” or Southern European dictatorships of the Right). Some underwent “the long march through the institutions” in the Green and Socialist parties, while others transformed themselves into violent and terrorist groups.

The ideologies of Western European extreme left terrorism varied. Some groups endorsed dogmatic forms of Marxism-Leninism, especially in Southern Europe (e.g. GRAPO, 17N). Others employed an amalgam of traditional communist ideas, innovations of the New Left of the 1960s and some attributes of anarchism – or, at the very least, they were inspired by the anarchist terrorism of the turn of nineteenth and twentieth centuries (RAF, AD, BR).

Some groups considered themselves to be “communist combatant parties” which – during the long-term struggle – would help to create the revolutionary situation necessary for the overthrow of capitalism. A small number of groups was purely anarchist (e.g. Angry Brigade), but even marxist-based terrorism drew on support (at the very least, an ideological one) from the anarchists and the autonomists. The conception of the terrorist groups as the “revolutionary front” was strongly rejected by the then strong Western European communist parties enjoying Parliamentary representation: the latter refused terrorism as a way of mobilizing the masses and stressed the necessity of a mass revolutionary effort or a gradual transformation of the society as envisaged by the Eurocommunism, at that time constituting itself.

As far as strategy and tactics are concerned, the Western European extreme left terrorists were usually inspired by the concept of “urban guerilla”, which originated from Latin American terrorist circles but was elaborated further. However, the European groups often claimed that they were following the legacy of anti-fascist guerilla fighters, a statement which – given their tactics – did not correspond to the reality.

The tactics employed included above all kidnapping, assassination of selectively chosen victims (politicians, industrialists, members of security forces) and their bodyguards, damaging of property, etc. This terrorism was mostly funded by bank robberies, and the arms were often stolen from the state armouries; but the terrorists also enjoyed external support from the secret services of the communist and Baathist regimes and from Near Eastern terrorist organizations.

The most important groups were constituted by a relatively small circle of activists who enjoyed the wider support of the so-called militant environment. Some groups were formed exclusively of members constantly living illegally who dedicated themselves to terrorism completely, RAF being a case in point. Others lived a normal civic life on the outside and terrorism was for them a “hobby” (typically, the German group RZ and – as it was eventually revealed – it was also the case of the Greek group 17N).

The Western European terrorists conceived themselves as part of a world-wide front-line of fighters struggling for the freedom from capitalism and colonialism. They were supported by the secret services of the communist countries, especially by Stasi (German Democratic Republic), StB (Czechoslovakia) and KGB (Soviet Union). Paradoxically, the communist regimes at the same time feared that in their domestic politics the Western European terrorist could inspire some young radicals to attack the communist nomenclature which exhibited consumerist and bourgeois features. Some extreme left groups cooperated closely with the Arab regimes and Arab terrorism, especially with the Palestinians. Mercenary terrorist structures, hired by various customers, were created as well, the circle around the Venezuelan revolutionary Carlos being the most poignant example.

The marxist rhetoric of ETA and some Northern Ireland groups prompted cooperation between extreme left terrorist groups and some of the ethnic-separatist groups in Western Europe. RAF and AD especially attempted to establish alliances between various terrorist groups. The *Anti-imperialist front* (AIF) project in Western Europe, also conceived as the “united Western European guerrilla”, founded in the mid-1980s: AD’s core was destroyed and the Spanish, Greek and Italian groups were not interested in the proposed cooperation (Mareš 2006: 125-128; Rabert 1995: 136).

Some authors consider Western European extreme left terrorism at that time to have been part of a subversive network directed and organized by Eastern European secret services. According to them, the network was composed of Western European, Latin American and East Asian extreme left groups and of leftist ethnic-territorial groups from Europe and the Near East, especially from Palestine, but also from Kurdistan, Armenia, etc. (Sterling 1981: 302-314).

However, this concept has to be taken with a pinch of salt, because the aid supplied to extreme left terrorists was probably not centrally and continually administered. With high probability, it was the result of the activities of individual secret services and was coordinated only to a limited extent.

Extreme left terrorism – in the sense conceptualized above – is almost extinct in contemporary Europe. The rise of Islamist groups in the Arab world has gradually weakened the Near Eastern secular terrorist groups. They are no longer interested in supporting the declining red terrorism in the Western Europe, although they still maintain close relationships with extreme left non-terrorist structures. International pressure was instrumental in smothering the support lent to terrorists by some political regimes of the Arab countries, though not entirely.

Some terrorist groups were broken thanks to police efforts even before the fall of communism (AD, CCC). After the demise of communist regimes in Eastern Europe terrorists lost the backing of the secret services. The services' archives were opened, which further contributed to the breakdown of terrorist networks. (For example, the Czechoslovak president Václav Havel supposedly gave a folder containing information about the Czechoslovak aid to the Red Brigades to the Italian intelligence service, although some sources doubt that the Czechoslovak state actively helped the Red Brigades.) (Mareš2005: 88)

Seeing that the prospects of their efforts are not good, some groups have given up. The activities of some others have thinned out (for example the German group RZ). With their powers increased after September 11, the security forces were able to strike at the surviving "dinosaurs" of red terrorism with a new vigour. In 2002, members of the Greek groups O 17 N and ELN were arrested and later sentenced, the remaining BR structures were destroyed and in 2007, the supposedly last remaining cell of the Spanish group GRAPO was broken.

What remains of red terrorism in Western Europe?

The gradual reduction in the activities of traditional red terrorist groups did not spell the end of extreme left terrorism as such. The red terrorists in Western Europe today are organized into groups with lower membership rates and weaker structures than the traditional extreme left terrorist groups. They also have more limited funds and weaponry at their disposal.

The acts of violence they commit are usually – though not exclusively – both less extreme and on a smaller scale than in the "golden era" of Western European urban guerrilla warfare of the 1970s and 1980s (Mareš2006: 132). Some groups consider themselves heirs to the original

struggle, and express this in the names they choose. It is interesting to note that this new “small-scale red terrorism” is based mainly in countries with a strong red terrorist tradition.

However, it is not possible to distinguish between traditional and new red terrorism with absolute clarity, as there is a gradual tendency towards a transformation of character which we need take into account. It must also be stressed that contemporary red terrorism is in its tactics similar to some terrorist groups of the 1970s and 1980s, which at the time – with their limited attacks on offices or buildings endowed with symbolic meaning – constituted a sort of “second line” (this applies for example to the German *Revolutionary Cells*). On the other hand, some recent cases reminded observers of the Italian “Years of lead” or the “German Autumn”.

As already mentioned, some new groups did not reconcile themselves with the attenuation of the activities of traditional red terrorism and in the beginning of the 1990s launched their own campaigns. In Germany, the small group *Anti-Imperialist Cell* (*Antiimperialistische Zelle – AIZ*, probably composed only of two people) is worth mentioning. AIZ was active between 1992–1996 and was mistaken for a splinter group of RAF.

In 1999, *Autonomous Cell „In Memory of Ulrike Meinhof“* (*Autonome Zelle „In Gedenken an Ulrike Meinhof“ – AZUM*) was active in northern Germany, where it committed attacks against property, including arson, which threatened human lives. The most extensive attacks were carried out by the *Militant Group* (*Militante Gruppe – MG*) which, since 2001, has committed a range of attacks on properties (mostly arson, as it did not use explosives) and was active in the campaign against the G8 summit in Heiligendamm. The MG considered itself to be an embryonic communist combatant party.

In summer 2007 the German security forces announced that they had arrested MG’s core. Given that some of the evidence against Andrej H., a sociologist and supposed member of the group, was rather problematic, an international campaign was launched to support him. Even some mainstream German media started to question whether MG’s activities should be classified as terrorist (Hipp, Schmidt 2007: 48). A militant extreme left scene capable of terrorist activity remains active in Germany.

The Red Brigades in Italy have committed some brutal assassinations in the new millennium, but Italian marxist terrorism is also represented by several smaller groups. However, it is the anarchist terrorism that currently dominates in the country. The leading force is the *Informal Anarchist Federation* (*Federazione Anarchica Informale – FAI*), active since 2001 (MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base 2007). It has committed many attacks against property and government buildings, and became notorious for mail bombs sent to EU institutions in 2003.

A number of other anarchist groups in Italy, often created *ad hoc*, have recently displayed smaller-scale terrorist tendencies.

In the last couple of years the Spanish security forces have destroyed the remaining structures of GRAPO, which was active –and this included assassinations –to the very end of its existence. As in Italy, a range of smaller marxist and anarchist groups have launched smaller-scale mobilizations in Spain.

Thanks to the group *Revolutionary Struggle* (*Epanastatikos Aghonas* – EA), extreme left terrorism remains most active in Greece. Since 2003, this group is involved in the traditional repertoire of terrorist activities, even after the members of the groups 17N and ELA were sentenced. *Revolutionary Struggle* has an effective arsenal at its disposition, which is clear from its missile attack on the U.S. Embassy in Athens in 2007. The Greek militant scene in general is very involved in arson and small bomb attacks. Small anarchist or marxist collectives usually claim responsibility for them.

The activities just mentioned are not all that remains of European extreme left terrorism. Its other component are the networks supporting imprisoned activists. To this day, they uphold the cause of the members of both the traditional terrorist groups, but also of the militant activists, for example from the anti-globalization movement. They mostly advocate release of prisoners. Attempts to institutionalize the transnational cooperation of extreme left terrorists can now be observed, because those support networks have a large, international scope. The German magazine *Gefangenen Info* is in this regard typical.

Efforts to release long-term imprisoned terrorists represents an important political topic, especially in Germany. We also need to keep in mind the fact that the security forces in many countries are hunting for unexposed members of groups which have not been active for some time.

The extreme left terrorism in Europe has left a certain romantic ethos, which is upheld in part of the continent's militant scene. This scene uses the symbolism of the left terrorism and collects artifacts related to its "golden era" of the 1970s and 1980s (period scene magazines, posters, sound and visual recordings and the like). Extreme left terrorism has also become something of a cultural phenomenon, being idealized in movies theatre etc.

Undeveloped extreme left terrorism in post-communist Europe

Although extreme left terrorism did appear in post-communist Europe, it remains undeveloped phenomenon. In some cases it has assumed a form distinct from that of its Western European counterpart; in others, the inspiration from the West is obvious.

With the exception of Romania –and partly also of Russia and the Baltic countries, where the ethnic dimension played a significant role –the fall of communism was not accompanied by significant violence caused by clashes between the advocates of the old and new regimes. Revolutionary and counter-revolutionary terrorism was rare.

After the fall of the communist regimes, there was an anxiety in some countries that former secret service structures would try to reverse the regime change by terrorist means, but that did not happen. The structures of the former secret services exerted their influence more in economic terms (usually without an ideological context), or in attempts to bring their adversaries into disrepute, or in legally functioning communist and ex-communist parties.

To fight for the cause of the old regime by terrorist means would have been counterproductive for the former secret services. However, a strategy of tension could have been employed, such as attempting to raise fear in society by staging bomb attacks for which no one would claim responsibility. It would be assumed they had been committed by political enemies.² There have been sporadic incidents involving the bullying of anti-communists in an effort to maintain a “positive interpretation” of the communist past.

Rather than the old communist structures, it was the very young adherents to communism (still children at the time of the old regimes’ demise) who exhibited tendencies towards communist terrorism. Their revolutionary zeal could not be expressed within the framework of strong parliamentary communist parties or in small dogmatic parties with no parliamentary representation. However, this was not a mass movement, as most young communists consider promotional campaigns, street demonstrations and showing support for discontent in those segments of society disadvantaged by capitalism to be the locus of their activities today –not terrorism.

The best known cases of post-communist red terror occurred in the second half of the 1990s and at the beginning of the new millennium in Russia, where the groups *New Revolutionary Alternative* (*Novaja Revolucionaja Alternativa – NRA*), *Revolutionary Military Council* (*Revolucionnyj*

² In Czechoslovakia, some people concluded that this scenario was the most likely explanation of the bomb attacks in Staroměstské náměstí in Prague and at the Hostivař dam in 1990, but the exact culprit(s) and their motives were never uncovered.

Vojennyj Sovet – Revvojensovet), *Revolutionary Partisan Groups* (*Revolucionnyje partyzanskyje grupy* – RPG) and *Red Partisans* (*Krasnyje Partyzani* – KP) committed several bomb attacks (Mitrokhin 2006: 17; Tarasov 2004; Zharinov 1999: 281-283).

Those attacks were mostly targeted at monuments and buildings symbolizing the imperial past, the new regime (including the Army or youth organizations supporting the new regime), and foreign capital. Members of those groups were usually connected to the various dogmatic communist organizations, and, in most cases, soon uncovered.³ In other countries – with the possible exception of the Czech Republic⁴ – there were no significant acts of communist terrorism.

In Russia and in countries with Russian minorities terrorist tendencies appeared in the National-Bolshevik spectrum, especially in connection with the activities of the Russian National Bolshevik Party in the Baltic countries at the end of the 1990s. A militant left national scene with communist *ressentiment* has also appeared in other post-communist countries.⁵

³ The background of the grenade attack against the U.S. Embassy in Moscow in 1995 remains unclear.

⁴ The small group *Defence of Czech Republic – The Faithful Guard of Socialism* (*Obrana České republiky – Věrná stráž socialismu – OČR-VSS*) was involved in quasi-terrorist activity aimed at the office of an anti-communist newspaper. A series of explosions in 1998–1999 in Přerov, Central Moravia, Czech Republic had more distinct terrorist dimension to it. The culprits remain a matter of speculation. Two main versions have been voiced. According to the first, the bombing was organized by a group of dogmatic communists in Northern Moravia, which was close to the *Party of Czechoslovak Communists* (*Strana Československých komunistů – SČK*) and *United Front* (*Sjednocená fronta – SF*). According to some speculations, the policeman who perished when he discovered the explosives was a secret member of SČK. This was not proved, however. The second version claims that the bombings were initiated by a member of the Czech Security Information Service (*Bezpečnostní informační služba – BIS*) Vladimír Hučín, who was responsible for the fight against left extremism in the region (Mareš 2005: 95-98). Hučín was cleared by a court in 2006.

⁵ Certain elements of leftist nationalism and attacks against anti-communist and “Germanic” targets, accompanied, however, by strong traits of psychopathological terrorism, have been manifest in the bombing campaign of Vladimír Štěpánek (who signed himself as the “Cripples” [Mrzáci] group) in the Czech Republic between 1999 and 2003. The attacks were as follows: a bomb on the railway at Praha-Kyje on 19 November 2002, at the peak of the preparations for the Prague NATO Summit; an unsuccessful attack on a statue of Winston Churchill in Prague on 5 March 2003; an attack on the Czech-German “Cross of Reconciliation” at Teplice nad Metují on 22 May 2003 and the removal of a noticeboard there; two attacks on Hotel Duo in Prague where German tourists were accommodated on 21 July and 23 October 2003; an attack on a memorial in Teplice nad Metují and an explosion at the J.A. Tichastka memorial in Teplice nad Metují in August 2003; an unsuccessful attack on the Memorial to the Victims of Communism in Prague in September 2003 and successful attacks on the same memorial on 11 October 2003 and 8 November 2003; and,

Fairly soon after the fall of communism, the militant extreme left scene in post-communist Europe became influenced by earlier Latin American and Western European extreme left terrorism and its symbolism. This was also apparent in the post-communist anarchist scene, though here more as a cultural form, rather than in actual terrorism. On top of that, there was lively discussion on the anarchist scene as to whether one should be inspired by groups adhering to marxism, a too authoritarian ideology for anarchists.⁶ The anarchists and autonomists have generally opted for other ways of promoting their interests, and have not embraced terrorism.

The Polish *Group of 13th December* (*Oddział 13 Grudnia – O13G*) and its heir *Popular Front For Liberation* (*Ludowy Front Wyzwolenia – LFW*), which committed several bomb and arson attacks (without causing loss of life) at the beginning of the 1990s, was therefore an exception rather than a rule. One of those attacks was aimed at the Soviet consulate in Gdańsk, because Soviets allowed Jewish citizens to emigrate to Israel. O13G and LFW were strongly inspired by secular Palestinian terrorism and their leadership maintained contacts with Arab students in Poland. However, the groups belonged to the anarchist spectrum (Forum Anarchistyczne 2005).

Although there were also some terrorist tendencies in Czech Anarchism, they did for a long time remain at the level of threats by groups not embarking on real action, such as *The Czech Red Army Faction* (*Česká Frakce Rudé Armády – ČRAF*)⁷ or *The Revolutionary Partisan Autonomy* (*Revoluční partyzánská autonomie – RPA*) in the first half of the 1990s. At the same time, *Front of Individual Freedom* (*Fronta individuální svobody – FIS*) and *Cells of Active Resistance* (*Buňky aktivního odporu – BAO*) were involved in terrorist propaganda and anti-fascist violence (Mareš 2005: 78-79). A bomb attack on the Peruvian Embassy in Prague was committed in 1997 in support of the commando *Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement* (MRTA). Although the perpetrator was never found, it is highly probable that he originated from the Prague anarchist environment. (Mareš 2005: 81)

Post-communist Europe is aware of the imprisoned Western European red terrorism activists and is in solidarity with them. Conversely, the Western European scene supports imprisoned militant activists from Eastern Europe. The progressive cooperation of the Western

finally, an unaccomplished attack on the Czech-German “Cross of Reconciliation” at Teplice nad Metují on 29 December 2003 (Mareš 2003: 98-100).

⁶ See, for example, the Polish anarchist magazine *Podaj Dalej* (Owca 1997: 16-17).

⁷ The *Czech Faction of the Red Army Faction* (*Česká frakce RAF*) was founded again in 2007. The main goal was an anti-American struggle in the context of the planned installation of the U.S. anti-missile radar base in the Czech Republic. However, according to the statement of the speaker of the CFRAF Pavel J. Hejátko, it was only medial provocation (Hejátko 2007).

and Eastern European extreme left, which is related to the general movement towards the unification of Europe, has homogenized the environment in which extreme left terrorism exists, although many specific areas can be found (e.g. the strong communist militant scene in Russia which is ideologically linked with the Soviet past).

Anti-globalization violence: a substitute for red terrorism?

At a time when traditional extreme left terrorism recedes, a distinct new form of violence connected with the extreme left appears: the violence of the anti-globalization movement (of which, only part is violent, of course). It manifests itself mainly in the form of mass riots during marches, but in the last couple of years in other ways as well, some of which are close to extreme left terrorism. The expectation of some experts (Hirschmann 2003: 24) that new extreme left groups will arise from this movement has thus far not been fulfilled, but the question remains whether the violence of the anti-globalization movement is an instance of red terrorism.

The anti-globalization movement (AGM) is difficult to conceptualize. It is a very heterogeneous phenomenon which went through various phases of development, and its shape is influenced by regional political and cultural factors. It is composed of actors with different ideologies and varied organization. Among the movement's currents are the traditional and new extreme left, the Greens, plus various ethnic and individual groups. Extreme right groups are interested in participating in the movement as well, but they are ostracized by its majority. Different parts of the movement employ widely varying methods of self-presentation and means of promoting their interests. Some resort to violence.

There is not even a consensus regarding the date the contemporary anti-globalization movement was born, as scholars and movement's prominent members relate the movement's beginnings to different events. In searching for the origins of the contemporary AGM, it seems most logical to look into the global networks supporting the *Zapatista Army of National Liberation* (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional – EZLN*) in Mexico. Although AGM has taken many of the ideological attributes, forms of self-presentation and methods from the previous activities of the extreme left (e.g. street parties or the tactics of the Black Bloc), it has nevertheless given them a new dimension. The AGM became progressively stronger and accommodated a range of political activities.

For the extreme left resistance to globalization represented a seemingly new theme that could be integrated into its identity, one that had been shaken by the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. The EZLN's uprising in the Mexican state of Chiapas in 1994 provided

a significant ideological boost to the various factions of the extreme left. The uprising was justified at the time as a struggle for the rights of the indigenous peoples, but was also a response to the impact of the trade bloc NAFTA on poor Mexicans, especially the native inhabitants.

Although the EZLN uprising was totally ineffective as military operation, it has succeeded in entering the general consciousness thanks to the use of information technology and to the spread of the ideas of its charismatic leader, the Subcomandante Marcos. From the point of view of strategy and tactics, this was a “postmodern guerrilla war” which differs from the classic “Guevara-style” guerrilla war by emphasizing propaganda and ideology at the expense of military action.

An extensive world-wide network of activists supporting EZLN has been created in the industrialized countries with the members of the New Left and the anarchists at the forefront. The ethos of the guerrilla fighters “emerging from the wilderness” against globalization has provided an inspiring impulse for the left and prompted it to find its own new forms of self-presentation. The trans-national cooperation established in support of the EZLN soon evolved into a broad resistance to economic globalization, bringing together various ideological currents (see above). The activities of AGM today vary widely. On the basis of AGM, a range of relatively stable organizations with consistent behaviour was created, and existing organizations have become active in the movement. Initially, the main forms of presentation were the marches organized on specific dates in multiple countries. Later, protest marches against important summits (especially IMF/WB and G8) became the dominant activity, the aim being to stop those negotiations. Participation in social forums at global, regional, sub-regional and national levels also represent important topics. With strong links to the anti-war movement, international anti-militarist demonstrations once again play an important role.

The demonstrations against globalization, organized at first as so-called street parties, have from the very beginning turned into street violence – see the first “Peoples’ Global Day” on 16 May 1998. The loci of these activities were the Western and Eastern European metropolises. Violence escalated in the mass protests against meetings of the global economic institutions (IMF, The World Bank, G8, European Council) between 1999–2001 (especially in Seattle, Prague, Göteborg and Genoa).

In the fall of 2001 and in 2002, after the tragic events in Genoa, where Carlo Giuliani was shot (and quickly became the movement’s martyr), and the Islamist attacks on the USA, the violence at anti-globalization events decreased. However, a new wave of violence has been apparent since 2003 (e.g. the protests in Evian or Thessaloniki). The increased militancy of the

movement is related to the fact that the AGM has embraced the agenda of the fight against the War on Terror as conceived by the Bush administration, and the boundaries between the AGM and the anti-war movement has become blurred. Further large-scale violent events were carried out by the anti-globalization movement, especially in connection with the protests against the G8 summits: in Scotland (2005), St Petersburg (2006) and, above all, in Northern Germany (2007).

The best known type of anti-globalization violence is related to the activities of the Black Bloc, which has its roots in the German "autonome" scene from the beginning of the 1980s. In the USA, it was strongly influenced by the anarchist and punk riots of the 1980s and 1990s. In a sense, the Black Bloc is not an entirely new phenomenon, as various violent activists have been present at extreme left demonstrations since the beginnings of the modern labour movement in the 19th century. Some of those past activities were well organized, such as the violent street protests of the 1960s. However, the contemporary image and ethos of the Black Bloc, created in part by its media presence and world-wide publicity (including the new media), and the fact that it is linked with a specific type of mass anti-globalization event, all contribute to the fact that it is a new phenomenon *sui generis*. It first appeared in its present form during the protests in Seattle in December 1999.

Black Bloc is more a set of tactics than a stable organization. The method consists of assembling, during the demonstrations, militantly-minded individuals who operate in small autonomous cells and are willing to use violence to achieve their goals. They are usually clad in black and wear black masks, in order to avoid being identified by authorities and to promote egalitarianism within the Bloc.⁸

The Black Bloc manuals encourage readers to obtain offensive weapons such as spray paint, projectiles, slingshots, poles, Molotov Coctails, ladders for scaling barriers, bright flashlights to obscure police or camera vision, especially during night operations, etc. (Black Bloc 2003: 7). The activists can also carry out cyber warfare against the security forces. As far as is known, the Black Bloc has not used firearms or explosives during demonstrations –yet.

The Black Bloc can also be employed for economic sabotage (the direct damaging of capitalist companies) and its manuals propose intimidating the cities in which it is active. Cities should be discouraged from further large-scale political events which force them to vacate the streets and seal off the city centre (Black Bloc 2003: 7). In such cases, we can speak of a certain

⁸ However, the extreme left critics of the Black Bloc point out that black-clad masked individuals do not go well with the general public, they alienate the work-force from the movement, and increase the militarist and macho tendencies (Slačálek 2002: 2).

“calculus of terror” and consider part of anti-globalization violence – in the context of the symbolism of traditional extreme left terrorism, as used by protesters – to be a specific form of terrorism (Moreau 2003: 9).

Black Bloc places great emphasis on the fact that its constituent cells operate autonomously. Despite this, some activists stylize themselves as leaders and organizers coordinating the actions (for example, by announcing the places of meetings and describing the actual targets, the distribution of forces within the particular cities, the immediate strategic and tactical advice before the action starts, and the like). The entities composing the Black Bloc are international. They have hard cores that know each other through long-term contacts, and new activists are incorporated either *ad hoc* or on a more stable basis. Some smaller entities are active within the Black Bloc as well.

It could be said that for some members of the “Black Bloc community” their activities represent a certain type of adrenaline sport: several times per year, they fight police in various countries and enjoy this “fun” in the company of equally-minded friends; later, they discuss it in internet chat rooms, magazines, etc. However, many are active for deeper ideological reasons rather than those of entertainment. In June 2007, for example, the Black Bloc group *Calisse Brigade (CB)* actively embraced blanquism (Calisse Brigade 2007: 13).

Black Bloc is composed mostly of anarchists, autonomists and activists with a vague ideological orientation. Trotskyists, neo-communists and dogmatist marxist-leninists condemn the Black Bloc⁹ (in this they are in agreement with the majority of the anti-globalization movement, part of which has “excommunicated” – in as much as it can – the Black Bloc from their midst). As a rule, the three last ideological currents mentioned consider the organization and preparation of “self-defence” against the violence of the state security apparatus to be a legitimate endeavour.

But anti-globalization violence is not limited to the riots: some of its other forms are important for the study of terrorism.¹⁰ As a response to the police action and arrests of militants on some demonstrations, international campaigns were organized, some of which exhibited traits

⁹ However, it is interesting to note that Carlo Giuliani, shot by the Italian Carabinieri during the protests against the G8 summit in Genoa in 2001, has become a martyr for widely different currents of the extreme left, from the dogmatic marxist-leninists up to the anarchists and autonomists.

¹⁰ Some are, on the contrary, rather irrelevant, as for example the violent clashes of the various factions at the AGM forums (in the form of small brawls) or the skirmishes between the anti-fascists and extreme right at anti-globalization events. It is interesting that during the Prague NATO Summit, threats were voiced that neo-fascists would attack extreme left protesters by terrorist means. However, such threats were not fulfilled.

of terrorism. Amongst those were arson and small-scale bomb attacks on diplomatic and commercial premises of the countries in which anti-globalization protests were underway. Most recently, this happened after the German Police action at the G8 summit in Heiligendamm, when the property of German companies was attacked by arsonists in Greece.

The G8 summit in Heiligendamm was also instrumental in the appearance of a new form of connection between anti-globalization protests and extreme left terrorism. For several months before the summit proper, the German extreme left militant scene was organizing a large-scale protest campaign, including a terrorist campaign by the *Militante Gruppe*. It was discussed on the pages of German extreme left magazines as a part of the so-called "militanz-debatte" about the meaningfulness of extreme left violence and about its organizational structure (hierarchic long-term organizations versus ad hoc "no name" campaigns) (Mares 2007b).

It has to be said that other contemporary extreme left terrorist groups use anti-globalization rhetoric. They often conceive of themselves as part of the anti-globalization movement. From a global perspective, the connection between terrorism and anti-globalization movement is also manifested in the participation of terrorist groups at several social forums. This peaked with the World Social Forum in Bombay in 2004, at which representatives of several terrorist (mostly maoist) groups were present, as well as a number of European extreme left activists.

However, the most important instances of violence within the anti-globalization movement cannot be understood as "substitutes" for extreme left terrorism. The strategy of anti-globalization violence is to attract attention to specific events organized by the movement as a whole; as such, it concentrates on those very events (usually important summits). Extreme left terrorism chooses the timings of its actions independently; its activities are more frequent, less predictable and usually more brutal than those of the anti-globalization movement. The extreme left terrorist groups have a more consistent organization than the loose militant formations opposing globalization. Nevertheless, both phenomena can complement each other and the boundaries can become blurred.

Militant campaigns of the extreme left and "single-issue" terrorism

The wider social campaigns in which the extreme left is involved currently exhibit tendencies which point towards extreme left terrorism. On the basis of those campaigns, specific versions of terrorism have appeared that are sometimes described as instances of "single-issue" terrorism. They nevertheless exhibit strong extreme left leanings.

The extreme left is traditionally involved in the anti-fascist struggle. Its most important manifestation in contemporary Europe is Antifa, which exists as a borderline form between a campaign and an organizational platform. One of its most important organizations is *Anti-Fascist Action (AFA)*. Its foundations were laid by the German communists in the 1930s. Today it exists in most European countries; sometimes it is connected to anarchism and exhibits anti-bolshevik and anti-trotskyist tendencies. Elsewhere, the ideological conflict does not play a significant role within the extreme left. The ideological background of the contemporary AFA in Germany draws upon autonomist propaganda and New Left inspired by the Frankfurt School.

Antifa employs a range of methods in its public activities, from propaganda and education through demonstration and the blocking of neo-fascist demonstrations, to violent street clashes with the extreme right. Sometimes it resorts to methods that have a terrorist dimension, such as arson and bomb attacks on buildings and activists connected with the extreme right and its allies.

Support of Third World immigrants by the extreme left is related to its anti-fascist activities. The campaigns supporting immigrants are based on various organizational platforms, especially the "No Border Network". The extreme left also violently opposes those who want to prevent the illegal immigrants' stay in Europe, or to make their existence in Europe more difficult. (In the past, this was part of the agenda of the traditional extreme left groups.) The extreme left has also tried to capitalize on the immigrant uprising in the French suburbs in 2005. In Central and Eastern Europe, the extreme left attempts to get the Romani involved in violent anti-racist struggles, so far with little success.

The most important connection between the extreme left and "single-issue" terrorism in Europe is Eco-terrorism, meaning individually conceived struggle for the rights of Nature and animals. In the USA, Eco-terrorism is linked with deep ecology movements which are typically not part of the extreme left. In Europe, however, Eco-terrorism is routinely linked with eco-anarchism and eco-marxism and some scholars consider Eco-terrorist groups in general to be part of the extreme left terrorism (Lutz, Lutz 2004). On the German scene, some of the American eco-activists were even criticized as too bio-centric, though the activists imprisoned in USA are supported by the European extreme left networks (Gefangenen Info 2007: 12).

Great Britain is Eco-terrorism's stronghold. It is even possible to voice a difficult-to-verify hypothesis that the strong presence of the eco-anarchist terrorism – and possibly also of the strong *Anti-Fascist Action* – in the Great Britain since the 1970s has meant that those two currents have seized the militant potential, which would explain why there is no important

domestic extreme left terrorist group in the country. Eco-terrorist organizations are active on the Continent as well, especially in the Netherlands, Italy, Central and Eastern Europe and in Russia (Mareš 2007a). In many countries, with the German-speaking ones at the forefront, the environmental agenda has already been for some time an important part of the activities of extreme left militant groups which support a large number of causes, including the traditional extreme left terrorism (cf. the militant resistance to the Castor-transport in Germany).

Originally from Great Britain, the *Animal Liberation Front* (ALF) now has branches in many countries of the world. This also applies to the *Animal Rights Militia* (ARM). The branches of the original American groups, such as *Earth First!* or *Earth Liberation Front* (ELF), are also active in Europe (the former group has been moderate in the last couple of years). There is also a number of local eco-terrorist groups. All of the abovementioned transnational Eco-terrorist networks have a loose structure of individual cells and no clear, centralized leadership.

The methods employed usually consist of freeing animals from breeding farms, a behaviour that is difficult to describe as terrorist, and destroying the property of companies which supposedly damage the environment and violate animal rights. The attacks on property are sometimes carried out by destructive means, such as the bomb attack of the Czech ALF on the control room of the cableway in the Protected Landscape Area Moravian Karst (Moravský kras) on 20 February 1995 (Mareš 2005: 308). There are also threats to and attacks on specific individuals, e.g. vivisectionists. Some groups have threatened to poison food of "enemy" companies or distributed by "enemy" supermarket chains, aiming to damage the economics of these companies.

Another "single-issue" terrorism which split off from the mainstream of the extreme left was feminist terrorism,¹¹ whose most important representative was the German group *Red Zora*. In the last couple of years, this terrorism has not been present in Europe. *Red Zora* is, however, still promoted within the extreme left spectrum, for example in connection with the legal process with one of the group's former activists in Germany. Within the framework of some of the militant campaigns of left feminists, only small-scale sabotages have been practised, such as the damaging and destroying of billboards. The visual imagery of feminist terrorism is spread in the subculture *Riot Grrrls!*, which hails from the USA, but it is more of a cultural phenomenon.

The beginnings of another type of terrorism have appeared in connection with the struggle for gay and lesbian rights. They are most obvious in post-communist countries, where

¹¹ In a way, the terrorism practised by some of the suffragettes in their quest for women's rights in turn-of-century England could be understood as its predecessor.

the extreme right violently attacks homosexuals, both verbally and physically. This leads to militant forms of self-defence. The *Gay Power Brigade* (GPB) group has deployed dummy bombs in Warsaw, Poland in 2005 (Centrum Studiów i Prognoz Strategicznych 2005: 32). The militant methods of asserting gay and lesbian rights in Eastern Europe enjoy support from the West. However, the appearance of a larger-scale gay and lesbian terrorism is improbable, though isolated violent incidents aimed against the extreme right or the Church cannot be ruled out.

More campaigns and specific activities with extreme left components exist¹², but their future forms and fates are hard to predict, as they will be determined by overall political and social developments.¹³ It is possible that in future terrorist acts linked with those campaigns and the engagement of militant extreme left activists in single-issue groups will be significantly greater than activities in groups influenced by traditional extreme left terrorism.

Extreme left terrorism of diasporas – Old and new amanuensis of the European militant extreme left

Extreme left terrorism has been practised in Europe not solely by domestic groups, but also by groups active in diasporas. The primary goal of the terrorism practised by members of diasporas is to solve issues in the areas they hail from, or factional conflicts within the diasporas. As such, they usually only use the European territory for logistics (including funding originating in organized crime), for propaganda and, possibly, for attacks on diplomatic or commercial buildings of their traditional enemies or for attacks on enemy factions.

However, they can also fight against the governments of their host countries and look for support within the local anti-systemic opposition in Europe. This support can be ideologic, logistic or operational (Karmon 2005: 49). In this way, the terrorism of diasporas could become an engine driving domestic extreme left terrorism forward. Such trend is not very apparent lately,

¹² Czech Republic, and Slovakia partially as well, have witnessed a specific activity called “darking”. This involved targeting the electricity grid by turning off the electricity at major substations, resulting in large areas being disconnected. At the beginning, this was done purely for amusement, but later, anti-globalization motives referring to a struggle against large energy-supplying corporations were added. Most culprits were arrested in 2002 when they planned to disconnect part of Prague, where, at that time, the NATO Council was in session. However, the behaviour of the “darkers” was more of a collective antisocial act rather than a well thought-out extreme left terrorism (Smolík 2004).

¹³ The campaign supporting Mumia Abu-Jamal, who is to be executed in USA, is currently causing strong emotions. This fact can even lead to the appearance of extreme left anti-American acts of terrorism in Europe.

however. Cooperation has been limited to the level of ideology, and as such has not led to a joint action on terrorist operations.

In the past, mutual support between extreme left European terrorists and Palestinian secular terrorists employing marxist rhetoric was the most apparent example of such cooperation (Karmon 2005: 249-277). Links between the European militant extreme left and Palestinian secular terrorism remain active to this day. There is also fairly close cooperation between the European radical left on the one side and Kurdish and Turkish extreme left terrorists on the other. However, the participation of Palestinian, Kurdish, Turkish and Latin American “revolutionaries” in the structures of organized crime in Europe (human trafficking, illegal trade in drugs, diamonds, etc.) is for the European extreme left difficult to accept.

The European extreme left also supports secular Iraqi resistance and sharply opposes the Iraqi extreme left which cooperates with the new regime and the American administration. A similar scenario would probably also ensue should the USA increase its support to the Iranian extreme left groups which are currently allied with the European extreme left.

European extreme left terrorism – an ally of Islamist terrorism?

As previously mentioned, the situation after September 11, 2001 has influenced European extreme left terrorism. Security forces have received greater authority for their anti-terrorist activities and the laws against terrorism have become more stringent. Terrorism is now viewed by the general public in an even less favourable light than before. For a large section of the public in Europe Islamist terrorism is now terrorism “as such” and therefore occupies the position previously held by ethnic-separatist and extreme left terrorism in the public imagination.

Part of the militant extreme left has adjusted to the new conditions: it has moderated its activities and causes fewer casualties. For strategic reasons – and unlike Islamist terrorism – extreme left terrorism only rarely in the past used non-selective attacks on civilians. By contrast, the militant extreme left still aims its activities at the main political forces that are fighting against Islamist terrorism. In this way, it becomes – at least indirectly – its ally (Laqueur 2003: 294-296).

Although the extreme left mostly refuses Islamism and Jihadism for ideological reasons, it usually condones their activities with the view that they are the result of poverty and Western Imperialism. The militant left aspires towards cooperation with the moderate Islamists. A range of extreme left activists privately admire the potential of Islamist terrorism. The militant extreme left’s main enemies are the countries of the Western World. It is therefore willing to support, by

way of propaganda, the struggle of the Islamists against these countries: on many occasions, it has given space in its media to the Islamist declarations.

However, extreme left terrorist actions within the framework of the campaign against the current war on terror have not primarily been justified by a swing towards Islamism; rather, they have been justified by reference to the struggle against capitalism and imperialism. Nor were they aimed at the immediate operations of the anti-terror coalition, unlike some attacks in the past against the West's war efforts.¹⁴

There have also been some more significant cases of cooperation between extreme left terrorism and islamism. The activities of the already-mentioned small German group *Anti-Imperialist Cell* can serve as an example. According to its own proclamation from 1995, this group has decided to cooperate with militant revolutionary Islamist forces because it has discovered "Islam as a revolutionary weapon in all its rigour and beauty" (Bundesministerium des Innern 1996: 41). This activity did not meet with a positive general response in the extreme left scene at the time.

It is true that many contemporary European converts to Islam, including Jihadists, were previously active in the extreme left environment. However, it is necessary to stress that it is not possible to assume, without further qualification, that every member of the European militant left scene is a future Jihadist!

Conclusion

The European extreme left in its original strength and influence is now history. The activities of its successors are less violent overall. Unlike the brutal operations of Islamist terrorism which targets masses of civilians, the main tactic of extreme left terrorism is that of damaging property, with only isolated selective attacks on individuals. Weapons with greater damaging effects are very rarely used (as in Greece by the *Revolutionary Struggle* group).

A militant extreme left that at least partially avows the legacy of traditional extreme left terrorism, and is willing to employ violence, still exists on the continent, including post-communist Europe (where extreme left terrorism has assumed some specific forms).

In the future, we can expect ad hoc terrorist activities within the framework of extreme left campaigns and the blurring of boundaries between extreme left terrorism, anti-globalization violence and some types of "single-issue" terrorism, rather than fully-fledged, consistent groups

¹⁴ The attack on a railway in Austria in February 1991, a track by trains carrying NATO military equipment for operations related to the Gulf War, can be cited as an example (Tozzer, Zelsacher 1995: 207).

operating over long periods of time. The violence will probably be less intense, and many within the political establishment and even some experts will tend not to perceive it as terrorism – especially if the current brutality of other forms of terrorism is sustained, or if they become even more destructive (for example by employing weapons of mass destruction). However, the militant extreme left can itself be both a direct and an indirect ally of other forms of terrorism.

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