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The main reason the environmental radical is given support by the urban liberal and some academics is the lack of identification they have with the victims of eco-terrorism. Until recently, the victims of the Earth Liberation Front have been people living in rural areas and academics in fields like Forestry Management or Plant Genetics. Their victimization by the environmental radical is not experienced by many urbanites or academics in other fields.² This could change now that apartment complexes and car dealerships in urban areas are targeted.

Ackerman also states that because the ELF is not seen as an immediate threat for perpetrating mass-casualty or CBRN attacks, local law enforcement can deal with their criminal activities. Following this recommendation would increase the attacks by the ELF. Local law enforcement and even the FBI have not had a great amount of success in apprehending domestic terrorists. Members of the Symbionese Liberation Army were able to elude authorities for over 25 years. The United Freedom Front evaded capture for over ten years, and Eric Rudolph was able to hide from the FBI for five years. Local law enforcement, due to lack of training, cannot deal with the threat posed by the Earth Liberation Front.³ Local law enforcement is trained to apprehend 'common criminals', and terrorists behave differently. The Elves of the Earth Liberation Front are committed to a cause, disciplined and trained. Until local police are educated to deal with this new and different type of criminal, they cannot be expected to investigate and contain the actions of the ELF without federal assistance. A partnership between the FBI and local law enforcement departments such as the Joint Task Forces presently being used in various cities of the United States makes sense until local law enforcement can be properly trained. Of course, training must be balanced with the structures committed to the protection of individual rights.

NOTES

1. B. Smith and H. J. Vetter, *Theoretical Approaches to Personality* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall 1982) pp.198-212.
2. A. Lurigio, 'Are All Victims Alike? The Adverse, Generalized, and Differential Impact of Crime', *Crime and Delinquency* 33 (1987) pp.452-67.
3. D. D. Bodrero, 'Law Enforcement's New Challenge to Investigate, Interdict, and Prevent Terrorism', *The Police Chief* 69 (2002) pp.41-8.

THREAT ASSESSMENTS AND RADICAL ENVIRONMENTALISM

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Recent claims that Radical Environmentalists are becoming increasingly likely to deploy weapons of mass death are characterized by a selective reading of the facts, a failure to apprehend significant differences among radical groups, and injudicious speculation. A more careful analysis of the likelihood of violence emerging from radical environmentalist, animal rights, and green anarchist groups requires an analysis of the differences that characterize these groups as well as their intersections. Such an analysis suggests that among these three groups, only green anarchism can provide a possible ideological rationale for the use of weapons of mass death, but even in this case, there are many reasons to doubt they will utilize such tactics.

Gary Ackerman's 'Beyond Arson?' responds directly and indirectly to my analysis in 'Religion, Violence and Radical Environmentalism', published in these pages in 1998.¹ I had argued that a variety of variables internal and external to radical environmental subcultures make it unlikely members will seek to kill or maim people as means to their ends. If this occurs, I suggested, it would likely be an anomalous event and due to psychological disturbance rather than result from a shift in the character of such movements. I also indicated that the use of arson and other sabotage tactics would increase, a prediction that appears to have been accurate. I did not, either in this article or a more recent one exploring radical environmentalist and kindred movements within the 'cultic milieu' of North America and Europe,² address the possible use of 'WMD or Chemical or Biological Weapons' which is Ackerman's chief focus in 'Beyond Arson?'

Ackerman analyzes a variety of incidents and concludes that not only is violence against the adversaries of these groups likely but recent trends suggest their motivation and ability to cause mass casualty incidents is 'increasing'. A scary deduction from his argument logically follows—since the motivation and capability of such groups to commit such acts is 'increasing'—unless something reverses this

trend, eventually a violent threshold will be breached and such tactics will be deployed. Ackerman concludes that prudence requires careful surveillance of such groups.

The impression I have from talking to Ackerman and reading this study (in several drafts) is that, on the one hand, he is trying to analyze these subcultures in a more judicious way than their avowed adversaries. Such adversaries, politicians and law enforcement officials, on the one hand, and partisans from industry-financed watchdog groups on the other, often brandside radical environmental and related groups with the 'ecoterrorism' label, regardless of whether they engage in tactics that intend to cause physical harm or are indifferent to it. Ackerman, in searching for evidence of violent acts or tendencies emerging from such groups, has done a service for scholars interested in violence and radical environmentalism, animal liberationist, and green anarchist subcultures. His data provides an up-to-date review of the evidence that can be assembled. But despite his willingness to consider the views of fieldworkers who have conducted extensive fieldwork within the subcultures in question, I do not think he has provided a non-partisan analysis. His sources appear narrow and interested in certain outcomes: media sources which profit from sensationalistic stories and law enforcement, watchdog groups, and intelligence agencies, all of whom have their own interest in finding danger. Ackerman's methodology—which appears to consist of searching for evidence that supports the thesis that these groups are violent, or on the verge of violence, and will eventually in frustration turn to WMD—does not constitute good social science. Even when he cites my work he does so selectively, drawing on those aspects of it which best support what I surmise is an a priori agenda rather than a carefully balanced empirical argument.

Those wishing to come to their own conclusions should not accept uncritically my perception of Ackerman's article, of course, but might well benefit by comparing his perceptions with my ethnographically grounded analyses. I cannot recapitulate this work here, and will instead focus on specific aspects of Ackerman's article that suggest to me that biasing presuppositions may be shaping his conclusions.

THE VENEER OF SOCIAL SCIENCE VS. THREAT ASSESSMENT AS GUESSWORK

What troubles me the most about Ackerman's article is the social scientific veneer he puts over his most important conclusions, which are found toward the end in his charts. Charts and the language of

probability implies a precision that does not inhere to the kind of guess work that both he and I are engaged in; evaluating the prospects that individuals or groups might engage in acts other than those they have heretofore. The greater the intimacy one has with the community or subjects one is venturing a guess *about*, the more likely one is to get it right. A good ethnographer, like a good community police officer, has a distinct advantage over those reading reports in offices in judging the character or proclivities (violent or virtuous) of those with whom they are regularly engaged. Unfortunately, writing from a distance, there is much that one cannot perceive.

One concrete example is that, despite my cautions, Ackerman used an inflammatory quote by Earth First! co-founder Michael Roselle as evidence suggestive of an increasingly violent tendency within the movement. The passage cited certainly sounds alarming, given that Roselle likens the environmental struggle to a revolutionary jihad. But Ackerman did not know that Roselle was responding to a particular claim by rival Earth First! co-founder Dave Foreman, with whom he was engaged in a strident internal struggle, and who had recently claimed that there was nothing revolutionary about Earth First!. Roselle, Ackerman did not know, was one of the Earth First-ers resisting the growing power of anarchists within the movement, and was both buttressing his radical credentials with such rhetoric in the face of this influx as well as stressing his belief, against Foreman, that the entire structure of western civilization must be restructured if environmental harmony is to ever be achieved. So for Roselle, environmentalism is inherently revolutionary, but apart from that violent-sounding rhetorical flourish in the Earth First! journal, there is nothing in his career or overall worldview that would suggest that he would countenance violent tactics, let alone the deployment of WMD. Knowing where he sits in the movement, the specific contexts in which he made his statement, knowing him reasonably well as a person (both through discussions with him and listening to many tales about him percolating within the movement itself), provides an descriptive and intuitive basis to conclude that he would be unlikely to endorse or participate in violence, at least in America and non-totalitarian states with formal democratic structures. Indeed, Roselle believes economic boycotts work and corporations can be coerced through public pressure, so such tactics should be a high movement priority. He has, moreover, periodically worked for Greenpeace, which insists on strict adherence to non-violence. In Roselle's case as well as with regard to the movement as a whole the analyst must be very careful not to assume that martial

rhetoric signals a martial strategy or even a violent tendency. Ackerman's analysis does nothing to account for why, despite many examples of strong martial rhetoric and verbal endorsements of the permissibility of violence (at least as self-defense if earth defenders are attacked) from the early 1980s onward, there is as yet no clear evidence that radical environmentalists have unleashed lethal violence or even caused great bodily harm to movement adversaries.

CONFLATING GROUPS AND ASSUMING FACTS NOT IN EVIDENCE

One way that Ackerman arrives at his alarmist conclusions is by conflating the radical environmental, animal liberationist, and green anarchist movements. To be sure, and as I have discussed in depth elsewhere, there is some overlap in personnel and these different actors increasingly come into contact in activist venues. Not uncommonly, activists in one stream find certain ideas and tactics common within the other streams plausible or compelling. But when push comes to shove, the issues activists choose to prioritize, and the tactics they select in the struggle, signal which subcultural axiology and ideology has captured their primary allegiance. The Earth Liberation Front resists environmental despoilers, the Animal Liberation Front confronts those who they believe abuse sentient creatures, and anarchists battle industrial civilization, both its rulers, infrastructure and symbols. Although Ackerman acknowledges that observers ought not to conflate these groups, it seems to me that his alarmist strategy benefits from doing so. This allows him to assemble a wider range of violent incidents, blurring the line between animal liberationists and anarchists who have used explosives (although arguably, thus far, for intimidation and coercion not to commit murder) and radical environmentalists who, perhaps with one exception, have not. It is certainly appropriate to note that under what I would call the 'radical environmental milieu' (playing off of Colin Campbell's 'cultic milieu' trope³), there is a cross-fertilization, but it is also important to reflect critically on its limits. Doing so does not, however, serve an alarmist agenda. A few examples (of many more I could cite) illustrate my point:

- Ackerman spends a great deal of time on two former ELF spokespersons, Craig Rosebraugh and Leslie James Pickering, both of whom felt so constrained by the ELF's professed commitment to nonviolence that they left behind these roles in order to foment

an anarchist revolution. Ackerman concludes that 'while the extent to which Arissa [their new group] can be construed as an offshoot of the ELF is debatable, *Rosebraugh and Pickering's close ties with the environmental movement will likely remain and their explicit rejection of non-violence could exert a strong influence on the main body of the ELF*' (my italics). Ackerman here assumes facts for which he provides no evidence and which I believe are untrue, especially regarding their allegedly 'close ties' to the environmental movement. This is an imprecise assertion. Both figures were not significantly involved with the environmental movement before they took on their self-designated roles as ELF spokespersons. I think they were drawn to the ELF because as anarchists if not anarcho-primitivists, they perceived fellow travelers behind the anti-industrial rhetoric of some ELF statements. They left the movement because their primary identity and motivation is located in anarchism, not the environmental cause, although they believe if human freedom/anarchy can be achieved, environmental well-being will follow. But I wonder why, since these two figures would not be embraced by and are generally unknown to most environmentalists, Ackerman claims they have 'close ties' to the environmental movement?

- Another troubling example is Ackerman's claim that the murder of a politician in the Netherlands was perpetrated by an 'environmental radical'. The accompanying end note, however, reveals the problematic nature of this claim. The offender had been involved in the formation of an environmental organization but his identity may well have been primarily that of an animal rights activist. As further evidence of the perpetrator's environmentalism Ackerman states that 'a search of his home revealed environmentalist material', yet Ackerman acknowledges that that the perpetrator's 'motivation for the shooting has not been confirmed'. Although the murdered politician was best known for right-wing, anti-immigration demagoguery, Ackerman does not entertain the possibility that this was what offended the murderer, nor does he consider the possibility that mental instability had been involved. From the absence of clear evidence of an environmental, animal liberationist, or even green anarchy-related motive, why cite this terrible incident at all? This is another example where Ackerman assumes facts not in evidence, in this case, that this was an environment-related crime. And this example begs a question, if after nearly a quarter century of radical environmental activism this is the kind of flimsy evidence Ackerman must rely on to make his case, one can only wonder, How strong is it?

AN 'EXTREMELY PERSUASIVE' CIRCUMSTANTIAL CASE OF 'INCREASING' VIOLENT TENDENCIES

This case in the Netherlands was included as evidence of a violent 'European contagion' that could spread to the United States. This 'contagion' (note the choice of an inherently scary word), in turn, was one of 'six trends' that Ackerman thinks demonstrate a dramatically increasing threat:

None of the six trends identified above provide incontrovertible proof of an increasing threat. However, when taken together, *the accumulation of circumstantial evidence is extremely persuasive* that motivational stimuli that would allow for substantial levels of violence are growing. (my emphasis)

As supporting evidence (to his overall argument that some activists will likely endeavor to develop and use WMD), Ackerman then quotes my conclusion in *Ecological Resistance Movements*, where I wrote 'The apparent escalation of a violent dimension to these conflicts is likely to continue because the conditions leading to ecological radicalism and *reactionary* violence show no signs of abating' (my emphasis).

The words he cited were from a book that provided a number of case studies from around the world where environmental movements, or social movements which took on environmental dimensions, used civil disobedience and sabotage in their struggles.⁴ My quote modified the noun 'violence' with the adjective 'reactionary', a nuance ignored by Ackerman: the book clearly showed that environment-related violence is generally against environmental advocates. It is curious that Ackerman cited this research and my summary of its findings to buttress his contention that 'circumstantial evidence' of a growing motivation toward violence by radical environmentalists is 'extremely persuasive'. This is another place where Ackerman's evidence and word choice are questionable, moving his argument beyond the facts he has mustered. What are Ackerman's 'rules of evidence' and what for him constitutes 'extremely persuasive' evidence? There is no such discussion and I am certainly not convinced that he has gathered 'extremely persuasive' evidence for his alarming conclusions. Indeed, as I know these subcultures as well as any outsider, my skepticism could be considered evidence that his evidence is not 'extremely persuasive' at all. I surmise the following hypothesis, therefore, that Ackerman was predisposed to arrive at his alarming conclusion or was otherwise interested in arriving at and convincing others of it.

If it is true, as he stated elsewhere, that 'at the current time, there is very little evidence to suggest that the ELF could or would utilize CBRN weapons to cause mass casualties'—should we not consider the paucity of evidence of an ideological rationale for deploying such tactics, and the absence of evidence that the ELF or groups with some affinity with it have or plan to develop such capability, important evidence in the opposite direction to Ackerman's conclusions? While it is legitimate to look for trends that could lead to the emergence of new ideologies, rationales, and tactics, if it is usually the case that the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior, then greater interpretive caution should accompany speculation about the possibility that the future will deviate from the past.

One further example: Ackerman argues that 'most weapons experts agree that relatively small groups with limited resources are unlikely to be able to field a CBRN device capable of causing mass casualties, at least in the short- to medium-term'. He nevertheless concludes in the box immediately following this statement that the overall threat potential is 'increasing' for CBRN attacks and states that it is already 'moderate-high' for general anti-personnel attacks and moderate for other mass-casualty attacks. I am astonished by such claims and the confidence with which they are advanced, which is reflected in the manner of presentation, in a chart, which conveys a scientific ethos. But how can Ackerman claim the threat potential is increasing in one case, and is moderate to high in another, in the absence of clear evidence that they have as yet occurred in either case? It is hard to escape the impression that Ackerman's conclusions are invented phantoms pulled out of thin air to buttress a desired outcome. And if they are such phantoms, it is not unreasonable to ask, What ideologies or material and status interests do they serve? One possible answer is that they serve the interests of those who benefit from and wish to further empower the national security state itself. I believe scholars and other observers (including the media) should refuse to adopt the inflammatory rhetoric of partisans (whether activists, law enforcement agents, resource extractors, or intelligence agency analysts) on any side of many, trenchant, social conflicts related to the use of natural resources. Ackerman's article fits more a partisan than a scholarly genre. I wonder, in the light of the millions of dollars spent monitoring such groups since the 1980s, which led to the incarceration of a number of environmental vandals but none intending violence against living things, whether such resources would be better spent elsewhere.

Raising such questions does not mean that there is no potential for violence in these groups. I will conclude, therefore, with a brief

statement of how I see the relative potential for violence, and the likely character of it to the extent it is likely to be found, among the three types of groups that Ackerman discussed (and conflated) in his paper. Each of these deserve separate treatment and greater attention than I can provide presently.

Radical Environmentalists (Including the Earth Liberation Front)

Their wholistic, ecocentric worldview is theoretically amenable to the deployment of WMD. Humanity at large, or elite sectors of it, could be targeted as pathogens and violent self-defense could be viewed as a natural and appropriate response. There are many variables, however, that work against such a conclusion or the deployment of tactics based on it. These include the reverence for life ethic that animates such movements, which places a high burden of proof on those who would kill, and a critique of hubris, which makes it difficult to believe that humans could deploy WMD in a way that could be containable and not damage more than benefit ecosystems. I do not think it is likely that apart from psycho-pathology we will find such activists concluding that WMD deployment is morally permissible, or feasible in a way that would be morally permissible and cause-advancing.

Animal Liberationists (Including the Animal Liberation Front)

The individualistic ethics of animal liberationists, which provides a basis for labeling the killing of non-human, sentient animals as murder, and for equating vivisection with torture, provides a logic that can justify violence as a means to prevent such wrongs. There are fewer variables to counter such justification than in the case of radical environmentalists. This is, I believe, why there are a number of cases where animal liberationists appear to be willing to assault and even kill those they consider torturers/murderers. The logic is akin to that motivating the assassins of abortion doctors. There are many other variables, however, including affective ones, which work against the use of such tactics. The compassion that leads to animal welfare concerns, for example, is a character trait. It is not easily erased or ignored even when these activists are angry over the cruelty they perceive. (The same is true in the case of the anti-abortion movement, which may help to account for why there are so few killings of abortion doctors, even though they are viewed as murderers.) Animal liberationist ideology is, I think, unlikely to justify the deployment of WMD, in part because the individualistic ethics presumes the

protection of innocent individuals, including innocent individual humans, who would be, presumably, harmed by WMDs, which have an indiscriminate nature.

Anarchism and Green Anarchism

The freedom-focused anarchist movement, which considers hierarchy in general and nation-states in particular to be the enemy, provides an ideological infrastructure that is sometimes used to justify violence, especially against rulers and their agents. Anarcho-primitivists may be the ones most likely to engage in arson and other tactics that they hope will accelerate the decline, or overturning, of a rapacious, totalitarian, industrial civilization. Often for them, environmental concern is secondary to the quest for freedom, as they understand it. There may be, therefore, fewer scruples against tactics that may involve 'collateral damage' to the environment. Long discussions with some such activists indicate to me that some of them could indeed turn to intentional violence if they were to conclude that the 'revolutionary moment' had arrived. This could involve a means-/ends rationality to justify the targeting of their adversaries and even, for the most extreme among them, the rationalization of killing innocents as a necessary means. There are, however, many within these movements who are committed pacifists and are known to resist the violent provocateurs sometimes in their midst. This suggests that, in some cases at least, there would be obstacles within these groups to overcome were participants in them to consider, advocate, or seek to develop the ideological and technological capacity to instigate mass death.

While I think the anarchist movement provides more fertile ground for violent tactics than those who identify chiefly with radical environmentalism or animal liberationism, I do not think there is much evidence to expect more than more of the same from these groups, namely, sporadic arson and small-scale (non-lethal) violence in street battles with the police, who they view as the repressive agents of globalization and the corporate-nation-state hydra, promoting the extension of market capitalism into every last corner of the planet.

NOTES

1. Bron Taylor, 'Religion, Violence, and Radical Environmentalism: From Earth First! to the Unabomber to the Earth Liberation Front', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 10/4 (1998), pp. 10-42.

2. Bron Taylor, 'Diggers, Wolfs, Ents, Elves and Expanding Universes: Bricolage, Religion, and Violence from Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front to the Antiglobalization Resistance' in Jeffrey Kaplan and Helene Lööw (eds.), *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalization* (Lanham, Maryland: Altamira/Rowman and Littlefield 2002) pp. 26-74.
3. Colin Campbell, 'The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization' in Kaplan and Lööw (note 2) pp. 12-25. The articles in this volume by its editors provide additional, valuable discussions about the prospects for violence emerging from radical environmental and animal liberationist subcultures.
4. Bron Taylor (ed.), *Ecological Resistance Movements: The Global Emergence of Radical and Popular Environmentalism* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press 1995).

MY REPLY TO PERLSTEIN AND TAYLOR

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Gary Ackerman, the author of "Beyond Arson? A Threat Assessment of the Earth Liberation Front" (*Terrorism and Political Violence*, 15(4)), replies to the critiques of his article by Gary Perlstien and Bron Taylor. The reply addresses several points raised in the critiques, including issues of bias and the applicability of the methodology of threat assessments to radical environmentalist groups. It also places the threat assessment in a broader historical context, comparing the evolution of the Earth Liberation Front to that of several other radical groups.

Both Gary Perlstien and Bron Taylor have weighed in on my threat assessment of the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and I thank the editors for allowing me to respond to their comments. I will first address Perlstien's remarks, which center on the hortatory effects of ideological support for radical environmentalists within certain academic and urban sectors. The activities of the ELF and other radical environmentalists have elicited a variety of responses, particularly within academia, ranging from the vituperative to the blantly apologetic. While both types of response could shape the behavior of the ELF, I do not believe this influence affects the ELF's behavior as greatly as, say, links with other extremist groups or pressure from law enforcement. I therefore endeavored to focus on the primary behavioral determinants without obfuscating my analysis by becoming embroiled in the highly politicized debate within academic circles. As for Perlstien's comments on the relative capabilities of local versus federal law enforcement, I place more faith in the abilities of local authorities to deal with the minor cases of property damage.

I reserve the bulk of my response for Bron Taylor's commentary, since it raises several points and directly questions key elements of my analysis. Although Taylor presents them in a single strand, I can identify two core arguments within his critique. First, there is the serious charge that my conclusions are "simply concocted, invented phantoms", based on a biased analysis I have constructed to serve counteractivist interests. Second, he raises the broader question of