

## **Eco-Terrorism: Snowball Effect or Flash in the Pan?**

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### ABSTRACT

We have seen that the last month, have indicated a movement towards action by fundamentalists of the animal cause. Traditional low-intensity actions, the proliferation of acts of vandalism, information-based attacks, and the use of improvised explosive devices all show the disturbing trend towards high-intensity action.

These are violent and spectacular tendencies, which led the FBI to place these small groups on their list of terrorist organizations.

*Keywords:* EcoTerrorism, USA, Canada, France, Red Brigades, ALF, ELF, EcoGuerilla

## **Eco-Terrorismo: ¿Efecto de bola de nieve o flor de un día?**

### RESUMEN

Hemos visto que el mes pasado se ha indicado un movimiento hacia la acción de los fundamentalistas de causas animalistas. Las acciones tradicionales de baja intensidad, la proliferación de actos de vandalismo, los ataques basados en información y el uso de dispositivos explosivos improvisados muestran una tendencia perturbadora hacia la acción de alta intensidad.

Estas son tendencias violentas y espectaculares, lo que llevó al FBI a colocar a estos pequeños grupos en su lista de organizaciones terroristas.

*Palabras clave:* eco-terrorismo, EE. UU., Canadá, Francia, Brigadas Rojas, ALF, ELF, EcoGuerilla

# 生态恐怖主义：愈演愈烈还是昙花一现？

## 摘要

上个月出现了以保护动物为宗旨的原教旨主义者所发起的一项运动。传统的低强度行动、破坏公务行为的扩散、传递信息的袭击、以及使用临时制作的爆炸性设备，这些都表明：扰乱秩序的趋势朝着高强度行动发展。这些充满暴力且引人注目的趋势，导致了FBI将这些小团体列入恐怖主义机构名单。

关键词：生态恐怖主义，美国，加拿大，法国，红色旅，动物解放阵线，地球解放阵线，EcoGuerilla（生态游击队）

## 1 - Nearly Forty Years After Its Dramatic Beginnings, Eco-Terrorism Has Lost Its Glory

In the end (however long it may take), this form of terrorism—militant activism, terrorist cause, and terrorist threat—will disappear. Generally, repression of such forms of terrorism is pointless; it is more often the case that the source of discontent is exhausted, the breeding ground becomes infertile, and everyone simply tires of whatever it was that had impassioned souls and aroused fervor. In about 1968-69, during a talk at the sociology department of a university in northern Italy, the revolutionary speaker was given an enthusiastic reception when referring to the well-known Italian terrorist group called Red Brigades. Ten years later, the same speaker was met with the awkward silence of students who were tired of a decade of Stalin-style rantings, and of tedious “Strategic Management Resolutions” that were as long and unrewarding as a day of fasting.

This is why the clear-sighted analyst must firmly believe in the collapse of the terrorist enterprise (or guerrilla group) when advising officials to be as light-handed as possible in their modes of repression, since otherwise they risk stirring up the embers of a dying fire, inflaming the situation and making it far worse than it ever was.

A forgotten example serves to illustrate this point. Everyone is familiar with the 1916 Easter Uprising of about 1500 Irish nationalist volunteers, and the short-sighted British repression that crushed it.<sup>1</sup> For six days, the volunteer rebels

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1 Fintan O’Toole, “The Easter Rising: Powerful and Useless,” in *The New York Review of Books*, September 29, 2016, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2016/09/29/the-easter-rising-powerful-and-useless/> (accessed August 30, 2018).

occupied various public buildings in Dublin. There were 485 deaths in total, with half of them civilians and 40 children. Then the 15 Irish nationalist leaders were shot or hanged. The repression was absolute, but for the Crown it was completely counterproductive. These events of course became well-known not only in Ireland, but throughout the far reaches of the British Empire.

In the port of Chittagong in Bengal on April 18, 1930, 64 activists of the Bengali Nationalist Party Jugantar launched an uprising in the name of the Indian Republican Army (IRA), controlling the city for four days before being crushed and fleeing into the nearby forests. Their leader, Surya Sen, was hanged in 1934. There was not a Christian among them, but the heroic sacrifice of the Dublin volunteers had ignited soldiers of the Bengali version of the IRA who considered the Indian independence movement to be too pacifist and non-violent.

Such is the outcome of a poorly managed and rash repression, and the result of neglecting Mao Tse-tung's theorem that "A single spark can start a prairie fire." Let us return to our ecologically-inspired terrorism, which for a number of years now seems to have taken the form of strategic threat, especially where businesses are concerned.

It all started with activism against industrial real estate in the American West (the Pacific Northwest) which is little known globally, except in a few northern European countries.<sup>2</sup> An already-misanthropic ("there are too many humans on earth") radical ecological minority group flared up against the attack of "human civilization" on the wilderness. They believed they had to employ activism and sabotage to fight the devastation of nature by brutal American capitalism. The project gained sympathy in rural areas of the American West. Edward Abbey's 1975 novel, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, set the tone for activism: in the 80s and 90s, "wrench gangs" practiced direct action—cutting power lines, harassing loggers, slashing tires, flooding construction sites. The activists camped out in threatened trees, chained themselves to bulldozers, and so on.

The Earth First! movement was founded in 1979 by ultra-green Dave Foreman, who wrote the sabotage manual, *Ecodefense*. And so life went on for eco-activists, from sabotage to activist demonstrations, until September 2001. At that point, everything changed: after 9/11 and George Bush Junior's *Patriot Act* in the climate of paranoia that struck America, any form of sabotage became a terrorist act, punishable by a minimum of ten years' imprisonment. Since then, eco-activism has renounced terrorism and even sabotage. Overlooked by the rest of the world, outside the major urban centers a post-hippie and anarchist periphery still exists: a nomadic fringe group of adults hanging on to their childhoods; marginal individuals who love trees; squatters, and so on. Now and again, they take part in local elections or

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2 Rachel Monroe, "Monkeywrench," *Oxford American*, August 31, 2016, accessed August 30, 2018, <https://www.oxfordamerican.org/item/951-monkeywrench>; Susan Zakin, *Coyotes and Town Dogs: Earth First! And the Environmental Movement* (New York: Penguin, 1995).

engage in legal battles (“paper wrenching”) or cause a stir on the internet. Earth First! is now just a folklore, a set of songs, a subculture enlivened with the odd bit of drama. It may be all of these things, but it is no longer a terrorist threat.

## **2 - 1993-2009: Three Criminologist Texts on Eco-Terrorism**

### ***a) Eco-Terrorism: A Real Threat, but Forgotten (in France)***<sup>3</sup>

**W**hat could be more of a contradiction than a “green” and a terrorist? Nevertheless, a radical, extremist, fanatical minority exists in the environmental fringes, particularly in North America and the northern European countries, and has already committed some highly professional attacks. The ideology adopted by these eco-terrorists was invented by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess. In his view, humanity, in its blind craze for reproduction and consumption, is destroying the living entity that is the earth, along with its ecosystem, its biomass, its landscapes, its hydrographic networks, and so on. Extreme devotees of Naess sacralize, or even deify, the biosphere; they believe that it belongs to a higher order than this devastating mob that is mankind. Ultimately, these fanatics profess, and write, that acts of violence alone can prevent the domination of *homo technologicus* over nature and reduce the human species to a manageable size once more, allowing it to live in harmony with nature.

This is an avant-garde of marginalized semi-intellectuals, making promises about a better world somewhere in the future to entice those who have got lost in a disintegrating society: here are all the signs of the ideological machinery that is behind all forms of totalitarianism.

It should also be noted that a number of European terrorist groups have also tried their hand at eco-terrorism. Between 1978 and 1981, ETA conducted a long campaign of bombings and murders, which led to the abandoning of the construction of a nuclear power station near Bilbao.

In February 1980, Prima Linea, an Italian armed revolutionary group of the 70s and 80s, assassinated Enrico Paoletti near Milan. This chemical engineer was the director of the Icmesa factory in Seveso. On July 7, 1976, in a famous ecological disaster, a cloud of dioxin had spread across the valley, poisoning hundreds of women and children and killing tens of thousands of animals. But these attempts to rescue the environment by terrorists did not prevent the development of the eco-radical trend.

#### **• A Motley Scene**

**The enlightened:** these individuals are the first components of the eco-radical trend. Although this group is not particularly dangerous, they nevertheless manage

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<sup>3</sup> Words taken from Xavier Raufer, *Superpuissances du crime: Enquête sur le narcoterrorisme* (Paris: Plon, 1993).

to create a climate of angst and trouble in the margins of the ecology scene; occasionally even igniting panic, capable of pushing unstable individuals into committing dangerous acts. It is in this outer circle of the radical ecology scene that all sorts of paranoid individuals take refuge, individuals who see huge conspiracies and universal plots unfold before their very eyes. They devote themselves to trying to convince the rest of suffering humanity that we are being deceived about everything.

**The apocalyptic:** this group imagines that our world is a pyramid of coffins. The tip of this pyramid is made up of the coffins of the small number of ecologists who have fallen during the “eco-wars.” One level below are the hundreds of coffins of massacred tribesmen who have been driven from their lands by exploiters. One level down again, the thousands of coffins of the victims of floods and landslides caused by the savagery of the forestry industry. The next layer is made up of the coffins of tens of thousands of innocent people poisoned by chemicals, pollution, toxic waste, nuclear radiation, fires, and industrial explosions.

Below this are the millions of coffins of those who die of hunger because of a devastating agricultural system that causes desertification and erosion. Finally, at the bottom of the pyramid are the tens of millions of coffins of those who die from drinking polluted water. These fanatics claim that industrial capitalism is guilty every year of the erection of such a pyramid of corpses, each ten times greater than the Great Pyramid of Giza. Every day, according to them, eco-victims are more numerous than those of Hiroshima. What can be done to force the authors of this daily genocide to make reparation? Eco-guerilla warfare is their answer.

### **The Eco-Terrorists**

The terrorist trend within radical ecology was not born yesterday; as early as 1980, three large whaling ships were destroyed by the use of commando techniques:

- 6 February: at 6.17am, in the port of Lisbon, the Portuguese whaler “Sierra” is hit by a violent explosion and sinks soon after. This was a professional job, involving the use of an advanced magnetic mine, deployed by combat swimmers.
- 27 April: at 2pm, at the entrance of the Spanish port of Vigo in the estuary of Pontevedro, there was a double attack of an identical nature, involving submarine commando, mines etc. Two Spanish whalers, “Ibsa I” and “Ibsa II,” are sent to the bottom.

In both cases, radical ecologists had given a warning: these fishing vessels did not respect international rules for the protection of cetaceans. Since they were behaving just like pirates, they were to be treated just like pirates.

Throughout the 1980s, similar acts, of a more or less serious or spectacular nature, were witnessed across the world, from the icescapes of Greenland to the rainforests of the Amazon.

“**Animal lib**”—1976 saw the publication of the first issue of *The Liberator*: newsletter of the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), an anarchist splinter group of the Hunt Saboteurs Association (HSA). In 1981, the ALF claimed to have caused damages to the sum of €3 million (\$3.5 million) since its foundation. These were minor acts, however, and were not reported by the media. The first spectacular “direct action” took place in 1982. That year, the ALF sent letter bombs to politicians and scientists who supported vivisection, and one of these exploded at 10 Downing Street, injuring an employee.

Since then, the ALF has been conducting campaigns of sabotage, fire, or attack on animal testing laboratories or the homes of scientists and technicians, sometimes causing millions of euros in damages. In November 1984, the ALF started to contaminate food as a form of activism. Millions of chocolate bars were withdrawn from sale as a result of their threats.

In 1986, a specialized branch of the ALF, the “Vegetarian Avengers,” attacked the meat industry in London, Birmingham, Cardiff, Croydon, Liverpool, and Sheffield, with bombs causing an enormous amount of damage. The British authorities reacted harshly. This was the end of any form of indulgence towards what had been seen as more or less innocent antics. Between 1987 and 1990, several leading figures of the ALF, including Ronnie Lee, Cliff Goodman and Ian Oxley, were sentenced to up to 10 years in prison. In 1988, an incendiary bomb campaign targeted the fur industry in five cities across the country. In Plymouth, in particular, a department store was destroyed.

In 1989, Scotland Yard’s worst fear became reality. Impressed by the tenacity of the ALF, the IRA supplied their “munitions specialists” with serious equipment. That year, a building at the University of Bristol was destroyed using Semtex, a sophisticated plastic explosive of which the IRA possessed several tons. In 1990, the ALF placed incendiaries under the cars of two British scientists, who miraculously escaped death when these detonated. In 1991, the ALF smashed thousands of shop windows belonging to butchers and pharmacies and so on, and burnt down or sabotaged laboratories and meat processing sites. In November 1991, 5 million bottles of a fizzy drink were withdrawn from sale following a new threat of poisoning.

The ALF gained followers in Canada, where a branch appeared in 1981. Since then, the Canadian ALF has been responsible for multiple actions involving arson, breaking and entering, or theft. As in Britain, it initially attacked the fur, meat, and fish industries.

The ALF has been active in the United States from 1982. Since then, its activists have carried out hundreds of attacks, some of a serious nature even though they did not claim any victims: the burning down of a university veterinary laboratory in the city of Davis, California, in April 1987; setting fire to a building of the University of Arizona, in Tucson in April 1989; and, in July of the following

year, the vandalism of premises of the University of Texas Health Sciences Center in Lubbock.

As for continental Europe, the ALF has only really been active in the Netherlands. In France, a branch of the ALF carried out some minor actions between 1984 and 1989: they released chickens, rabbits, frogs, and monkeys that were being “held captive” in laboratories; set fire to some butcher’s vehicles, and so on. The groups known as “Brigades vertes” (the Green Brigade) and “Groupe Arche de Noé” (Noah’s Ark Group) made only brief appearances before disbanding.

(... 1997): At the end of April 1996, a bomb attack caused extensive damage to the Lüneburg-Dannenberg railway line (in northwest Germany). Two days later, the rail network was sabotaged (with the cutting of signal systems cables) at two points, near Hanover and Göttingen. These attacks by the “Kollektiv Gorleben” confirm the existence of “cells of ecologists who have resorted to direct action to ‘save the planet.’”<sup>4</sup>

In North America, the arrest of Theodore Kaczynski, originator of about twenty parcel bombs in fifteen years—three of which were fatal—revealed that the “Unabomber” was connected to the eco-terrorist movement. The names of his two most recent victims (in December 1994 and April 1995) had appeared on a list of “enemies of nature and virgin forests,”<sup>5</sup> published in an underground eco-terrorist magazine called *Live Wild or Die!* and reproduced in the February-March 1994 issue of the apocalyptic ecological journal *Earth First!*. Kaczynski himself had taken part in an Earth First! conference organized at the University of Montana in 1994.

In the United States and Canada, other fanatical nature lovers had already tried to poison water reservoirs and building ventilation systems. Activists belonging to similar underground micro-groups, ready to do anything to “open the eyes” of global public opinion, were caught in their attempts to “surround” nuclear power stations, oil rigs, or fuel storage areas.<sup>6</sup>

### ***b) Extract from Entreprises: les 13 pièges du chaos mondial (Enterprises: The 13 Pitfalls of Global Chaos)*** <sup>7</sup>

Protection of the environment or animals: nowadays, societies for the protection of the environment or animal rights all have extremist or even terrorist factions.

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4 Xavier Raufer, “New World Disorders, New Terrorisms: New Threats for Europe and the Western World,” in *The Future of Terrorism*, ed. John Horgan and Max Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2013), 34-35.

5 Alain Bauer and Xavier Raufer, “New Criminal and Terrorist Threats: News from the Ground,” in *Terrorism Early Warning. 10 Years of Achievement in Fighting Terrorism and Crime*, ed. John P. Sullivan and Alain Bauer (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, 2008), 16.

6 Xavier Raufer, “New World Disorders,” 35.

7 Xavier Raufer, *Entreprises: les 13 pièges du chaos mondial* (Paris: Presses-Universitaires de France, 2000).

Clandestine transnational organizations have thus formed to use violence to protect “Gaia” (planet Earth, believed by these fanatics to be a living entity) and “our sisters and brothers, the animals.”

In spite of their eco-friendly babble (describing, for example, animals living in zoos as “prisoners of war” and kennels as “concentration camps”), these eco-terrorists no longer amuse the police or security services in the Western world. Bombings, burglaries, death threats and arson—all supported by serious discipline, compartmentalized networks, clandestine “hideouts,” highly developed propaganda, bank accounts in tax havens, secret codes, websites, and sophisticated pyrotechnics manuals: this is the profile of the British Animal Liberation Front (ALF), which has more than 200 activists or “eco-warriors.” And the ALF is not alone: they are joined in the playground of terrorism by the Earth Liberation Front (ELF), the Swedish Veganer group, and the French Milice des Droits des Animaux (Animal Rights Militia).

In the Anglo-Saxon countries where they first appeared,<sup>8</sup> eco-terrorists have been rolling out their bomb campaigns, arson attacks, and letter bombs for the past decade. Their targets are the pharmaceutical laboratories and pharmacies (guilty of “animal torture”), kennels and wool producers (“cruelty to animals”), abattoirs and butchers (“assassination”), insemination clinics (“violation of nature”), and so on.

But the eco-terrorists target the living too: in Britain, 10 scientists—“executioners” according to the ALF—have been “sentenced to death” for “inflicting animal abuse worthy of the Nazis.” The first serious act of violence took place in October 1999, when a masked British ALF commando kidnapped an investigative journalist who had for some time been investigating “ecowarriors” for an English television channel. The journalist was horribly tortured and branded on his back with 15cm-high letters “ALF,” before being abandoned in a ditch, bound hand and foot.

The ALF and ELF have also warned major global groups: if they “violate nature,” exploit the suffering of animals (captive or wild) or are guilty of any “ecological disaster,” they will be attacked. They see the big companies as “multinational devils” that they must fight. And, if necessary, they will join forces to do so, since the eco-terrorist movement is now coordinating its activities on an international scale: in November 1999, activists of the Belgian ALF released all the mink from a breeding farm in the Antwerp area, in an act of solidarity with John Clayton, an eco-warrior of the British ALF, who had been detained in Belgium awaiting extradition to London.

To date, eco-terrorist attacks have taken several forms:

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<sup>8</sup> The first major operation of the Animal Liberation Front in the United States was the arson attack on the premises of the University of California at Davis, causing damaged estimated at FF 30 million (\$5.3 million) (*N.B. FF = French francs*).



- Cyber-guerilla activity by “hackers” who are sympathetic towards eco-terrorists, and who target websites belonging to those they condemn as the “enemies of nature”; they threaten cyber-terrorism if the parties concerned continue in their ways.
- Contamination of food products. In December 1998, an Italian ALF cell put rat poison in a number of Christmas pannetone cakes made by Motta and Alemagna (subsidiaries of Nestlé) in Florence and Bologna. Ensuing public panic forced Nestlé (accused by the terrorists of animal testing) to withdraw 5 million cakes produced by these two brands.<sup>9</sup> Total cost of the poisoning: FF 170 million<sup>10</sup> (\$30 million).
- Attacks. In 1996 and 1998, in the Canadian province of Alberta, 160 eco-terrorist attacks (some using high-explosive bombs) targeted oil and forestry companies active in drilling or timber felling in the area. The charge: “ransacking the forest” and “pollution.” Alberta Energy lost more than FF 8 million (\$1.4 million) due to attacks on its derricks.
- Fires. In January 1997, 7 trucks carrying frozen chickens were set on fire in Brackley (England). And in Belgium, between July and October 1998, there were 47 cases of arson mainly on Quick and McDonald fast-food restaurants, including 10 in the Antwerp district, but also on trucks belonging to the meat industry. The Belgian ALF has also clearly advocated “economic sabotage” against those who “cause suffering to animals”; the attacks themselves have been claimed by a highly visible group, “CIA-McDo” (Collective for Information and Action against Mac-Domination).
- Armed attacks. In April 1999, an ALF commando broke into a building at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, released 116 animals, ransacked 12 laboratories, and stole documents and archived items; damages amounted to FF 20 million (\$3.6 million).

In May 1999, the attacks resumed: a refrigerated truck containing poultry was set on fire in Antwerp (by the ALF); there were two shootings at a McDonald’s in the Antwerp region.

These eco-terrorist activities should not be dismissed lightly:

- In the United States and Canada, other fanatical nature lovers had already tried to poison water reservoirs and building ventilation systems. Also, in North America, activists associated with apocalyptic ecological micro-groups were caught “surrounding” nuclear power stations, oil rigs, or fuel storage areas.

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<sup>9</sup> In 1997, 10 million “Pannetones” were sold in Italy.

<sup>10</sup> FF = French francs

- These “enlightened” individuals are easily manipulated. In the name of economic war, the special services of a state—or better still, a private security company—may incite an eco-radical group to target a troublesome company, or its managers, on the pretext of “protecting nature.”

A new variant of the eco-terrorist trend, the Veganers, appeared around the middle of the 90s at the University of Umeå (in the north of Sweden, known for its radical leftism), and are now expanding throughout Scandinavia. They represent the extremist faction of the vegetarian movement: the Veganers are strictly herbivorous, do not wear any clothes of animal origin, and reject the use of alcohol and drugs. The Säpo (Swedish security forces) are extremely interested in these young and slightly hysterical puritans because they have committed over 300 attacks a year since 1997, including setting fire to abattoir trucks or restaurants, vandalizing laboratories, and so on, and currently seem to be moving towards “cyber-guerrilla warfare” (hacking or sabotage of servers, etc.).

The most recent development has been the ability of eco-activists who find themselves drawn towards eco-terrorism to form alliances with groups with similar motivations. In London, for example, in June 1999, an “anti-capitalist” coalition, bringing together various cells of an anarchist, “autonomous,” and anti-nuclear leaning, along with supporters of the ALF, eco-activists, and “hackers,” launched a twofold demonstration:

- On the ground, under the slogan of “reclaim the streets”
- Online. In this latter format, on June 18, 1999, electronic “attacks” targeted the City of London and especially the Stock Exchange and two banks, Barclays and Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC). In the course of five hours, 10,000 attacks identified as coming from Germany, Canada, Great Britain, but also Israel and Indonesia, targeted 20 companies in London (including those mentioned above).<sup>11</sup>

Scotland Yard directed an operation against this combined street-info-sphere movement as of the spring of 1998.

It should be noted that public sensitivity towards environmental issues—as well as a fear of violent reactions from eco-activists—have pushed the big auditing companies to create offices or departments devoted to scrutinizing and evaluating the environmental policies of their major customers, and carrying out “ecological audits.”<sup>12</sup> Examples include Ernst & Young Environmental Services Group or KPMG Sustainability Advisory Services. In 2002, the global annual turnover of these entities was in excess of FF 200 million (\$36 million).

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11 See Jon Ungoed-Thomas and Maeve Sheehan, “Riot Organizers Prepare to Launch Cyberwar on City,” *Sunday Times*, August 15, 1999.

12 See Thomas K. Grose, “Called to account,” *Time*, July 19, 1999.

There is now a need for continuous contact—preferably an early warning system—between those responsible for a company’s security and specialized police officers. Companies must take the initiative to establish regular contact with police experts, who do not always think to sound the alarm—and who, as state employees, do not always fully understand the priorities of an industrial, financial, or commercial group (in terms of image, clientele, etc.).

Given that this is an emotionally loaded domain, within which operate individuals who can be immature and may be dangerous if put under pressure, it is also very important to maintain a dialogue with advocates of the environment from the legal field. This helps to discredit extremists and gives a company a positive image in the eyes of those who are sensitive to environmental issues.

### ***c) Animal Protection Terrorism: Protest and Economic Threat***<sup>13</sup>

Total pacifism is an immoral philosophy: violence is the only language some of these people [ ... ] understand. This may be a hard home truth for the pacifist ideologues of the movement to understand [ ... ] [whose] pre-occupation with “non-violence” has a lot to do with [their] middle-class origins ...<sup>14</sup>

—Ronnie Lee, *founding member of the ALF*  
*Sentenced in 1986 to 10 years in prison*

The protection of animals is fundamentally a popular cause. Barely anyone remains insensitive or indifferent to it; few fail to embrace its general principles. Behind these theories, however, lies an extremist and radical ideology in the name of animal protection; a criminal trend whose motives and modes of action take the form of aggressive activism. For its followers, the use of violence becomes perfectly legitimate, since the future of the planet is at stake. “Eco-terrorism” is thus expanding and thriving.

In September 2009, an explosive device was found at the headquarters of pharmaceutical giant Novartis in Guadalajara, Mexico. In March 2008, 5 explosive devices sparked fires that ravaged a residential area under construction in Seattle, causing several million dollars worth of damage (claimed by the ELF). In December 2007, the home of a furrier from Bordeaux was covered in graffiti, his phone numbers were published on the internet, and the door of his garage burned by the ALF. These cases illustrate the methods used by extremist proponents of

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13 Text written at the end of 2009 for the *Notes et Etudes* (Notes and Studies) of the DRMCC (Département de recherche sur les menaces criminelles contemporaines, or French Department of Research for Contemporary Criminal Threats), by Julien Dufour, police commissioner and criminologist at the DRMCC, and Stéphane Quéré, criminologist at the DRMCC.

14 Cited in George McKay, “DiY Culture: Notes towards an Intro,” in *DiY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain*, ed. George McKay (London: Verso, 1998), 17-18.

the animal cause. Born in the 70s in the English-speaking world, these groups (in particular the ALF, the ELF, or the ARM—Animal Rights Militia) follow a doctrine known as anti-speciesism, which advocates an absence of difference between species and equality between “human animals” and “non-humans.”

Claiming affiliation with the struggles of the anti-racist and feminist movements, this doctrine gradually gained popularity, initially in English-speaking countries and more recently in the Latin countries of the world. Anti-speciesists are essentially activists who adopt a certain lifestyle: a vegan diet (no meat, no fish, no eggs, no dairy products, no honey), a rejection of clothing made of leather or wool and of medicines or cosmetics tested on animals. But some of these anti-speciesist groups use any means, including illegal ones, to fight “animal exterminators,” whom they compare to the Nazis, and to attempt to make their activities as economically unprofitable as possible.

The ELF, meantime, advocates the “Gaia hypothesis” (which sees the Earth as a living being), thus justifying acts of “legitimate defense” to protect the planet from human aggression, including for example the development of real estate or logging.

## **Attacking Images: Lobbying Campaigns**

**L**egally organized anti-speciesist lobbying relies mainly on PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals). Founded in 1980 in the United States, and with offices in the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, France, and India, this society boasts more than one million members. It has an annual budget of \$30 million. PETA takes action against foie gras, animal participation in shows, animal testing, the fur industry, industrial breeding farms, milk production, and more. These activities take the usual form: media campaigns (“Got beer? It’s Official: Beer Is Better for You Than Milk”), petitions, “happenings” (supported by celebrity personalities) or demonstrations. However, some people describe PETA as a “political branch” of the ALF. More targeted actions are organized, alongside those led by more violent radical groups.

This can be seen in the case of SHAC (Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty) whose purpose was to denounce Huntingdon Life Science (HLS), a company specializing in animal testing. SHAC organized demonstrations, not only in front of HLS headquarters but also against companies or people related to them: employees, customers, suppliers, as well as banks, insurance companies and even dairy companies used by their employees ...

SHAC was thus engaged in an intelligence operation that led to a variety of activities: from demonstrations or petitions to the violent activities carried out by the ALF, as well as telephone harassment and spamming.<sup>15</sup> In December 2008,

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15 In March 2009, a “virtual sit-in” (a denial-of-service attack) hit the websites of HLS, its accountants,

seven British ALF activists were convicted of a six-year campaign against HLS suppliers: hoax bomb alarms, deliveries of toilet paper that had supposedly been HIV-contaminated, threatening letters, a defamation campaign (with accusations of pedophilia), graffiti on homes and vehicles ...

This conviction was one of the results of the “Achilles” operation carried out in 2005 in the United Kingdom, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The 7 activists (including 3 co-founders of SHAC) received sentences of between 4 and 11 years in prison. A similar campaign, known as SPEAK, targeted the construction of a new science laboratory at Oxford University, meaning that the building site had to be placed under close police scrutiny. Increased security and delays had already cost the University hundreds of thousands of euros. In February 2009, the leader of SPEAK was sentenced to 10 years in prison for arson.

## **From Information as a Weapon to Radical Action**

“CIBA vision and Novartis must be made to feel the pain of the animals they kill.” This press release, published on the website Bite Back in August 2007, was used by the ARM (the Animal Rights Militia, considered more radical than the ALF) to claim that they had poisoned 85 bottles of contact lens solution produced by Novartis, a pharmaceutical company that they believed to be guilty of being a customer of HLS. As a result, tens of thousands of bottles of these solutions were withdrawn in France and Great Britain. As a consequence, the company was damaged both financially and in terms of image, yet no contamination was found. Information provides the line of attack, whilst economics is the weapon.

In today’s globalized and competitive sectors, the damage caused by consumer disinformation can be daunting. This method had already proven itself on the other side of the Atlantic as well as in Italy, where the announcement in 1998 by the local ALF that they had poisoned Christmas panettone led the manufacturer, a subsidiary of the Nestlé group, to withdraw its products from sale. The aim is to attack the company: damaging their reputation and causing financial loss are the two features of “*écotage*,” or economic sabotage.

The illegal activities traditionally carried out by groups claiming to be part of the ALF in France are mainly acts of intimidation and vandalism (breaking windows or putting graffiti on them, vandalizing vehicles or gluing locks), targeting circuses, the bullfighting world, pet shops, fishing and hunting businesses, the fur industry, and industries related to the consumption of animals (butchers, foie gras) or cosmetics industries. The Body Shop chain has been targeted since 2006, as it was bought by L’Oréal, who were accused of using animal testing.

A number of stores were graffitied; one example read “Body Shop = L’Oreal = Vivisection = Torture.” These events proved costly for the victims, not because of

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and Bayer (pharmaceutical group, HLS customer).

their severity but because of their frequency. In 2007, 45 actions against 94 targets were carried out nationally: this was the most “active” year for French anti-speciesist activists.<sup>16</sup> From time to time, more radical actions are carried out against a target that would seem to be more clearly linked to the cause: animal experimentation. Research laboratories, both public and private, are the first to be targeted by operations to “liberate” animals. French national institutions CNRS (Centre national de la recherche scientifique),<sup>17</sup> INSERM (Institut national de la santé et de la recherche médicale)<sup>18</sup> as well as private institutions have in turn been targeted in recent years, causing financial and intangible losses through the destruction or theft of research results.

The growing commitment of the activist cells has led to an increase in the intensity of the actions carried out. From graffiti to fires; from fires to attacks. The threats have become more specific in France in the last two years, both in terms of the intensity of activity and the targets being chosen, namely actors directly involved in the chain of scientific research. The April 2007 arson attack on Tecniplast in the Lyon region is the first example. The company was chosen as a target because it was accused of selling cages and pet supplies to HLS. The attack was claimed by the ALF. Material damages were serious—nearly €400,000, not to mention collateral damage to the company’s public image. In November 2007, incendiary devices were set off in a store near Tours called “Cuir Center” (a leather goods store), also causing significant damage.

A third example was a bomb attack near Lyon on June 29, 2008, on the Charles River laboratory, which employed 350 employees specializing in breeding laboratory animals. This case demonstrated a level of sophistication that had not previously been seen. An improvised explosive device was used, consisting of a gas bottle and an ignition device. This was an elaborate device, unlike traditional incendiary devices, and caused significant material damage. The letters “ALF” were once again found at the scene. The accusation was very specific: “Explosive devices have been used against [ ... ] the largest breeding center for animals who are destined to die under the scalpel. In this concentration camp, countless rabbits and mice are incinerated every day after being tortured for months. [ ... ] We are not finished with you.” As part of the investigation in November 2008, several members of two anti-speciesist groups based in the Lyon region were arrested and had their homes raided by the French police.

Although no death has been caused so far, terrorist activity is now being aimed at human as well as material targets. The English-speaking countries led the way in this respect. As early as 1990 in the London area, the ALF deployed im-

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16 In 2008, 17 actions in France were claimed on the "Bite Back" website and 15 in the first 9 months of 2009.

17 French National Centre for Scientific Research

18 French National Institute of Health and Medical Research

provided explosive devices against a researcher and a vet. Explosives were placed under their vehicles; both escaped but a child was injured. Other cases have seen the mailing of razor blades or parcel bombs. In France, as early as 1985, the explosion of a parcel received by a breeder of lab animals in the Sarthe area injured a policeman.

In Bordeaux in December 2006, a fur trader discovered his vehicle damaged, his tires flat, and the walls of his home covered in graffiti one morning. The graffiti read “Murderer, killer.” In Paris in January 2007, an executive of pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline received a “home visit,” which resulted in material damage. The home of Air France executives were also threatened; the company was accused of transporting lab animals. SHAC members have been known to follow children of pharmaceutical company managers to show them pictures of animals undergoing vivisection. To date, physical attacks are still rare in France. Nevertheless, arguments for the validity of attacks on people are now being put forward. A new show of strength cannot be excluded, as recent evidence goes to show.

July 27, 2009 certainly serves to illustrate the rather unorthodox methods employed by activists of these radical movements. The funeral urn of Ursula, mother of Daniel Vasella, the Swiss CEO of Novartis, was disinterred and stolen from a cemetery in Switzerland. Inscriptions on the grave read: “Drop HLS now.” This was a most serious and symbolic event, with clear motivation, and recalls an earlier case: a similar event took place in 2004 in the English county of Staffordshire, as part of a campaign to “Save the Newchurch Guinea Pigs” (SNGP).

A British family of guinea pig breeders who had been a supplier of HLS had also been the victim of a desecration, with the activists stealing the body of Gladys Hammond, the owner’s mother-in-law, and refusing to return it until the farm ceased its activities. The demand made by the movement on Bite Back website triumphed on January 20, 2006: the body was returned as Darley Oaks farm was finally closed down.

The scope of these serious acts is above all symbolic. They also provide an opportunity for small groups of activists to attract the attention they lack, and to show how determined they are. “We will continue until you sever connections with Huntingdon Life Sciences. We will attack you as much as possible in your private life [ ... ] We will destroy your life.” Such was the online statement made by the Austrian branch of the MFAH (Militant Forces Against Huntingdon Life Sciences) after further abuses had been committed against and for the attention of Daniel Vasella. On August 3, 2009, a week after the desecration, but this time in the Austrian Tyrol, his holiday chalet was burned down. Targeted and concerted actions were thus carried out in two separate countries and one week apart.

This is a clear case of intimidation, confirmed by the online statement made by a spokesperson for the ALF stating that the “only regret [is] that Mr. Vasella

was not present in the home when it burned down.”<sup>19</sup> Added to this methodology, aimed at both fueling individual fears and economically damaging the targeted companies, the non-pyramidal structure of the organization—with its operational but decentralized and autonomous small groups—continues to make it difficult to control or foresee activities. We cannot rule out direct action from any group aligning itself with the discourse of animal liberation; such action may not simply be an act of intimidation, but direct attack on the physical safety of any target chosen as a symbol of the struggle.

The rhetoric is clear, as we were reminded last August by a member of SHAC in the UK: “The human being is just one animal amongst other animals. History shows that his superiority lies in his manner of destroying his peers or his environment. Moreover, he is in no way essential to the equilibrium of the biosphere. If bacteria were to disappear from the surface of the Earth, all terrestrial life would be threatened. If human beings disappeared, that would not be the case. In what way are they therefore superior?”

### **Is There a Concrete Answer to the Eco-Terrorist Threat?**

**W**e have seen that the last few months, both abroad and in France, have indicated a movement towards action by fundamentalists of the animal cause. Traditional low-intensity actions, the proliferation of acts of vandalism, information-based attacks, and the use of improvised explosive devices all show the disturbing trend towards high-intensity action. The operational cells of the ALF movement in France are showing the first signs of a transition from noisy protest to violence, already familiar in the English-speaking world. This constitutes an increase in activist intensity that is no longer simply interested in using symbolic means to incite public debate, but in the efficiency of direct action.

These are violent and spectacular tendencies, which led the FBI to place these small groups on their list of terrorist organizations. In the UK, a coordination unit has been set up, largely to combat extremists from the animal rights cause: this is the National Extremism Tactical Coordination Unit.<sup>20</sup> The Dutch intelligence services (AIVD) published a report on the topic in April 2009.<sup>21</sup> It identifies three organizations acting as a screen for the ALF: the Coalition against Vivisection (under the Dutch acronym of ADC), Respect for Animals (RVD), and the Dutch branch of SHAC.

In France, however, such radical violence is currently the domain of a small number of radical activists, close to anti-capitalist circles. Nevertheless, they most

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19 <https://speakingofresearch.com/2009/08/11/animal-liberation-front-strike-in-the-us/>, accessed August 29, 2018.

20 [www.netcu.org.uk](http://www.netcu.org.uk), accessed August 30, 2018.

21 <https://www.aivd.nl/@117838/item-117838>



certainly wield a power that demands that the industries concerned take full measure of the threat. Companies and scientific research institutions are the primary targets of eco-terrorism, targets whose capacity to cope with the terrorist threat is commensurate with their size and distance from the structures of public powers. The need for adapted, and therefore costly, security infrastructures, rising insurance premiums, attacks on people, tangible and intangible losses, negative publicity ... these are the areas that the private sector and the scientific world can no longer afford to ignore.

It would be a mistake to underestimate the intelligence and determination of organizations capable of infiltrating companies long term in order to implement attacks or sabotage. Proper policies for the management of the eco-terrorist threat are required.