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Not Our Comrades

ITS Attacks on Anarchists

Scott Campbell

August 30, 2017

In May of this year, the eco-extremist group Individualists Tending Toward the Wild (ITS) issued a statement claiming responsibility for the murder of two hikers in the State of Mexico and the femicide of Lesvy Rivera at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) in Mexico City, providing as justification for these acts their belief that “every human being merits extinction.” In response, I wrote “There’s Nothing Anarchist About Eco-Fascism: A Condemnation of ITS” for *It’s Going Down*, denouncing both ITS and the U.S.-based anarchist platforms that disseminate and promote the group’s activities.

While by no means the first anarchist condemnation of ITS, it did garner a bit of attention, facilitated in part by the responses of ITS and its supporters, which we will turn to in a moment. Shortly thereafter, strong critiques emerged from other quarters, in particular from insurrectionary anarchists such as L from the UK, Eat from Indonesia, and a joint statement from former members of Anonymous Anarchist Action, Conspiracy of Cells of Fire, the Mariano Sánchez Añón Insurrectional Cell and others in Mexico.

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usa.anarchistlibraries.net

Taken together, these statements offer a robust distancing of ITS from anarchists and anarchist practice across varying tendencies. None were written in the hope of actually changing the behavior of ITS but to unequivocally clarify the distinction between anarchism and ITS. Indeed, since May, ITS has continued on its terroristic path. Most notably, the ITS franchise in Chile claims to have twice placed bombs on Transantiago public buses (one, two). In doing so, they follow in the steps of ITS in Mexico who claimed to have placed a bomb on public buses in Mexico City last October and November and ITS in Brazil who in January claimed to have placed a shrapnel-filled bomb at a crowded bus station in Brasilia. Indeed, the favorite tactic of ITS these days appears to be putting bombs in public areas in the hopes that they explode and maim or kill as many random people (or “hyper-civilized sheep” in their words) as possible.

While indiscriminately blowing up civilians based on a twisted, authoritarian ideology places ITS in league with ISIS, al-Qaeda, and the State, of particular concern to anarchists should be the special vehemence ITS reserves for us and the threat it poses to anarchists. With tiresome predictability, ITS goes on and on about how wrong and bad anarchists are. (Undoubtedly this article will receive such a reply.) At times it is not clear who ITS hates more – all of civilization or just us. But in an odd twist, alongside the relentless defamations, ITS also spends a notable amount of energy attempting to recuperate selected anarchist history into their eco-extremist ideology, in particular the few attacks by anarchists in which several civilians were killed in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Like a spurned lover, ITS cannot accept that anarchism is just not that into it. So it adopts a defensive position of projected hatred, all the while continually reaching out to anarchism as if to pleadingly say, “See what a few of you did over 100 years ago? You’re just like us. We should be together, even though I hate you.” Yet in its anarchist revisionism, ITS fails to grasp

it on their website. (It was later removed after numerous individuals pointed out that an anarchist site reposting death threats against anarchists was rather outrageous.) Most recently, this same grouping published *Black Seed*, a journal being distributed nationally that in part seeks to incorporate eco-extremism, including ITS, into green anarchism. A second edition of the eco-extremist journal *Atassa* is set to be published around year’s end, presumably again by Little Black Cart.

This is pointed out not with the expectation that these individuals and projects will stop supporting ITS. Rather, it is so anarchists are aware of those in our circles who are providing legitimacy and cover for a group whose sole purpose is to murder people and who have a history of targeting anarchists in particular. ITS has proclaimed itself an enemy to anarchists. Its words and deeds reaffirm that. Why, then, should our enemies be welcome or tolerated in our spaces?

rected against anarchist individuals and projects, but no one felt comfortable going on the record.

In case their reprehensible actions, along with threatening and attempting to kill anarchists, is not enough of a reason for anarchist disassociation from ITS, there is another cause for anarchist concern. ITS proudly proclaims it has never been caught, even though “Interpol has already collected all the information that it could from the Internet about our Mafia.” Yet is that true? If ITS is placing bombs on buses in three countries then why the subdued reaction from the State to an international terrorist movement? The English-language spokesperson for ITS calls himself Abe Cabrera. Abe is an unknown figure among radicals yet has been welcomed into some circles because of his advocacy of eco-extremism. He is open about where he lives, yet remains unmolested by the state. This is odd if Interpol is involved and when compared to the treatment members of the ELF press office received for the less-egregious acts they reported on. I am certainly not advocating that the state target him and to attempt to answer why he hasn’t been would be pure speculation. But as with many of ITS’ own claims, things do not add up.

Despite all of the above, the disturbing fact remains that various anarchists and anarchist projects in the U.S. continue to provide a platform to ITS. In relaying that fact to both social and insurrectionary anarchists in Mexico, they responded with bewilderment, anger and disappointment that a group that is bombing and threatening them is being propped up in the U.S. by some anarchists. This again speaks to the privilege these U.S.-based anarchists enjoy in treating ITS as an intellectual exercise while comrades in Mexico are under attack by them. Since May, these platforms have posted a slew of articles and podcasts about ITS and personally attacking anarchists who criticize ITS. In response to the ITS statement threatening to kill me, one prominent anarchist in this vein wrote, “OMG this shit is so hysterical. Wow.” And then promptly reposted

that even in the rare anarchist action which resulted in the loss of civilian life, it has never been anarchist praxis to kill people for the sake of killing people.

Helpful in understanding this behavior is the matter of ITS’ ideological (or theological) fragility. Though they have been around for six years, those six years have been marked by frequently shifting and inconsistent rationales, beliefs and analyses put forward by the group for what they do and why. They have now sought resolution to their existential incoherence by resorting to the basest of premises: “kill ‘em all.” This oppositional posture creates a Manichean world without nuance and therefore requires no explication or nuance on their part. By proclaiming all to be the enemy, they provide themselves an impenetrable refuge from all critique and also any need for internal consistency. Yet by existing as purely in opposition to everything, with nothing but disdain for all aspirational proposals, they reduce themselves to mere activists. Their actions seek to change nothing, they are symbolic and done simply to make themselves feel better. They are like a graffiti artist who goes out to put their tag on as many walls as possible then goes home, pats themselves on the back and sends out a communique. The tragic part, of course, is that the ITS brand of futile activism involves killing and wounding people.

By creating an ideology against anarchism and also shielding their actions from critique by stating that they believe that they will never change anything, ITS can come across as both inventive and reactionary at the same time. The small anarchist following ITS generates is also telling, insofar as they are people who are *already* hostile to social struggle and see ITS as developing a critique of currents within anarchism they also wish to attack. In short, while ITS is an instrument we are told to “have a conversation with” and “ask questions about,” in reality ITS is simply a means to an end for those who desire to wage a ‘culture war’ within anarchism. They help normalize and popularize ITS while still holding it at arms-length as

a way to divorce themselves from any responsibility. This is something ITS wants just as much as do the people who make money selling their communiques and use ITS to build up their personalities as podcasters and journal publishers. Meanwhile, the very group these anarchists use to reap social capital from threatens to kill us and attempts to blow up our friends and spaces.

That anarchists would want nothing to do with this is unsurprising. It is therefore predictable that as the anarchist rejection of ITS has become more strident, the reaction of ITS has reached new levels of unhinged vitriol. In November of last year, they issued a statement complaining of “censorship” from Noblogs after the site dropped their page. In March, after Chilean insurrectionary anarchist prisoner Joaquín García criticized ITS, it mocked him and called for an attack on “that senile hippy Zerzan” in the same breath. The article I wrote in May apparently touched a nerve and ITS responded with the only tools at its disposal – anger and violence – by threatening to kill me.

Mr. Campbell, you should value your life more. You’re addressing some dangerous people who have killed people indiscriminately for over six years. We are still free, and they have not been able to catch us. How are you so sure that we don’t know the place in Mexico where you “vacation” and we won’t show up as we tend to do? You should chill out because in a country where killing journalists is very common, it’s not a good idea that you go about everywhere with your camera, or you’ll end up like your colleague Bradley Will. Remember him? Only this time the bullets won’t be coming from PRI goons.

For good measure, in the same statement they also throw in some homophobia, referring to myself and others as “fucking faggots,” and some sexism in denouncing the “pussy mother-fucker sons of Contrainfo.”

After more anarchist condemnations of ITS came out, they responded with another statement going after insurrectionary

anarchists in Mexico along with snitchjacketing the main individual behind the anarchist library and social center Biblioteca Social Reconstruir. It being an ITS statement, of course there is again a fair amount of homophobia and sexism contained within. However, in this case it also clarified an incident that occurred last year at OkupaChe, the occupied Che Guevara Auditorium on the campus of UNAM.

OkupaChe is an autonomous space for a variety of collectives and individuals that for years has been under threat and attacks from the police and university administration. On December 14, after a growing push for the eviction of the okupa, there was to be a large student assembly with OkupaChe as the first item on the agenda. At some point during the night before the assembly, an explosive device was left outside the doorway of the auditorium. It was described as a package made up of flammable material and nails, powerful enough to have started a fire and wounded people at the space as well as passers-by. Initially thought to be part of the push to evict OkupaChe, in March an ITS group mentioned “an annoying device that we left in the mousetrap called che.” In the more recent statement, ITS elaborates further, regurgitating without irony the government’s talking points about the space:

[D]id you know that one of our groups placed a bomb at the “Che Squat”? That was done mainly because they were defaming us and we shit on those anarcho-rock star ex-con politicians and drug addicts who hang out there, because the auditorium is supposedly so legendary: a symbol of “autonomy” and the “combative” student movement of the ‘90’s.

So along with their tirades and death threats against individual anarchists, one can see that they have actually attempted to kill or injure anarchists en masse and cause damage to anarchist spaces. In preparation for this article, I reached out to anarchists in Mexico to attempt to document other ITS threats. They indicated that numerous threats from ITS have been di-