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Terrorism and the International Anarchist Movement of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

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02 Mar 2009

Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 32, 2009 — Issue 3. DOI:

10.1080/10576100802671009

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02 Mar 2009

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fect such stature for the same reason that law enforcement was unable to significantly limit their attacks.

The significance of these conclusions for modern day antiterrorist operations are likely tempered by technological changes, most significantly the advent of the Internet and its use as a medium for networking and propaganda. Nevertheless, the anarchist movement embodies certain characteristics, which in their resemblance to those of certain modern terrorist groups and *jihadist* groups in particular, are instructive in an understanding of terrorism today.

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Conclusion

In many respects, the anarchist movement was not, in fact, a terrorist movement in the widely accepted definition of the term. Its philosophers and instigators rarely enforced its ideas, which were rather adopted by renegade individuals acting out their various pathologies and aggressions toward society. The movement lacked unified leadership and a concrete mode of operation; even its views on the use of violence evolved and, on occasion, contradicted themselves. Rather, the anarchist philosophy, as set forth by elite individuals working in an international and highly organized network, inspired individual attacks that in concert created the illusion of a unified anarchist conspiracy.

This structure may have appealed to the anarchist theorists in the “bottom-up” nature of its challenge to the state. As Martin Miller points out, “It would have been the height of ideological contradiction to have admitted that an intellectual elite was responsible for these individual or mass acts of social protest.”⁵² Thus, the movement’s disjointed and spontaneous nature was, in fact, profoundly anarchist.

Nevertheless, anarchism is not alone in inspiring copy-cat and isolated terrorists to commit acts of violence; movements including international *jihadist* movements, white supremacy, and certain anti-corporate philosophies embody similar spontaneity and diffusion. Thus it appears that certain types of philosophies lend themselves to uncontrollable entropy. Such movements are inherently difficult, if not impossible, to control due to their nebulous and nearly invisible nature. However, this nature likely contributes to the ultimate ineffectiveness of such movements; it was socialism, with its rigid organizational emphasis, that ultimately enjoyed worldwide significance and influence. The anarchists could not af-

⁵² Miller, “The Intellectual Origins of Modern Terrorism in Europe,” p. 52.

Abstract

The international anarchist movement that developed in Europe and the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries inspired a series of assassinations and attempted assassinations of prominent world leaders. This movement was unique in the disconnection between its core theorists—many of whom either disapproved or had nuanced views of the use of violence—and the social outliers driven by psychological distress and poverty who often committed the terrorist acts. In this respect, the anarchist movement resembles some modern day terrorist movements and can offer suggestions as to their nature and likelihood of success.

Introduction

The anarchist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was destructive and effective in its propagandistic aims, while profoundly disorganized, unsystematic, and lacking in the objective coherence of the sort found in many other terrorist and revolutionary movements. Despite an intellectually sophisticated and well-argued philosophical literature, the anti-authoritative and ultimately fantastical theoretical character of anarchism—the desire for a stateless, lawless society with communal ownership of all means of production—led a variety of unsavory members of society, many of whom simply sought a purpose to put to their anger, to adopt the anarchist label and commit terrorist acts in its name. Thus, the defining actions of the “decade of the bomb” (roughly 1892–1902), including the assassinations of President McKinley of the United States, King Humbert of Italy, Empress Elizabeth of Austria, and many others were committed not by members of established organizations such as the Jura Federation or the International Anarchist Congress, but by individuals with little understanding of the intellectual niceties of the creed.

This article will argue that the international anarchist movement resembled modern nationalist and separatist terrorist groups in its approaches to violence and technology and in fact represents the coalescence of modern terrorism in these regards. At the same time, this movement embodied several elements that differ drastically from the majority of terrorist groups that have emerged in the last hundred years—namely post-colonial revolutionary and guerilla movements. These Elements grew out of an anarchism’s philosophical underpinnings and the framework set forth for the achievement of anarchist goals. These aspects created stratification between actual members of the movement and those who conducted terrorist acts; they also led acts to be perpetrated by actors with very different psychological characteristics than those who execute most modern terrorist attacks. Anarchism’s extreme end goals appeared to advocate nearly indiscriminate destruction (despite some anarchist theorists’ condemnation of such an approach), and thus often resembled nihilistic or “irrational terrorism” conducted without concrete political purpose for narrower, individual psychological reasons. For this reason, the cause attracted many with strong psychological or self-affirming needs who had little actual affiliation with the movement. In addition, the concept of “propaganda of the deed,” by which terrorist acts themselves embody the meaning of the movement and motivate others to take up arms by example, encouraged individuals unconnected to the formal movement to adopt anarchism as a justification for indiscriminate violence. The distinction between the actual members of the anarchist movement and those who perpetrated its most egregious acts as well as the “irrational” psychological nature of those acts does not characterize the majority of modern terrorist movements, nor does it appear in other nineteenth-century terrorist movements such as the Social Revolutionary movement in Russia and other insurgent and anti-authoritarian efforts.

The implications for counterterrorism of a movement lacking in concrete political aims or advocating aims that are so abstract and

ist workers unions, vehemently opposed the war and regarded it as an imperial effort to entrench state power.⁴⁸

On the other hand, anarchists almost universally celebrated the Russian Revolution of 1917, which initially appeared to embody many anarchist characteristics. Kropotkin returned to Russia in hopes of assisting the new government in initiating further changes to Russian society, but the hopes for any anarchist influence in the new Russia were dashed by the Bolshevik seizure of power in October of that year.⁴⁹ While anarchists inside Russia were sidelined, those outside the country were split as many adherents moved over to the communist side. The impressive nature of the Russian Revolution convinced many anarchists that communism, rather than anarchism, was the wave of the future.⁵⁰

Anarchism survived predominantly in the labor movement, where certain non-communist unions continued to abide by and encourage its tenets. The strike replaced the assassination or bombing as the primary means of asserting control against the state, and the late anarchists, most notably French theorist Georges Sorel, set forth doctrines of insurrection that revolved around labor violence and protest rather than murder.⁵¹ The anarcho-syndicalist movement in Spain created its own party and army (POUM) during the Spanish Civil War of 1936–1939, and other such movements have gained power in Nigeria, Argentina, Sweden, and other countries around the world. A short-lived anarchist movement under Nestor Makhno also thrived in Ukraine in the early 1920s.

⁴⁸ Roger N. Baldwin, “The Story of Kropotkin’s Life,” in Roger N. Baldwin, ed., *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Writings* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2002), p. 26.

⁴⁹ Peter Kropotkin, “Letter to Georg Brandes,” in Daniel Guerin, ed., *No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005), pp. 326–328.

⁵⁰ Laqueur, *A History of Terrorism*, p. 42.

⁵¹ Miller, “The Intellectual Origins of Modern Terrorism in Europe,” p. 55.

authorities and local police relating to anarchist groups;⁴⁵ most anarchist activities in the United States were undertaken by European immigrants, many of whom (including Johann Most and Emma Goldman) were deported under the Anarchist Exclusion Act of 1918.⁴⁶

Counterterrorist measures do not appear to have significant effect on the success of the anarchist movement, as attacks continued (particularly in Russia) until the fateful assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914, which set off a chain of events that led to the outbreak of the First World War. As the Great War got underway, terrorism fell to the wayside and Europe fell into chaos; by the time the war ended, the anarchist movement had become so strongly associated and intertwined with the labor movement that it ceased to exist as an independent entity outside small pockets of extremists.⁴⁷

The Russian Revolution and the International Labor Movement

During the course of the First World War, the various anarchist leaders' views on the conflict created further splits in the movement as it existed within the official anarchist organizations (the views of individual anarchist assassins and others on the war are unknown). Peter Kropotkin's support of the Allied cause due to his fear of German militarism in particular divided the anarchist camp, as the majority of anarchist groups, and particularly the syndical-

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Miller, "The Intellectual Origins of Modern Terrorism in Europe," p. 50.

⁴⁷ Miller, "The Intellectual Origins of Modern Terrorism in Europe," p. 57.

unachievable as to lend themselves to "irrational terrorism" were profound for governments in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, the eventual manifestation of the latent discontent into which the anarchist cause appeared to have tapped in the international labor movement indicates that in the right circumstances, a generalized international insurgency such as the one that occurred at the turn of the last century will take a necessarily moderated form in which the discontented masses can take a more direct and productive role in addressing their particular grievances.

Parameters of the Current Study

Because the anarchist movement stretches from the early nineteenth century through today and has appeared in dozens of countries and within several movements (many in which anarchistic goals were of secondary importance), the focus of this study is necessarily narrowed. It will specifically address the development of anarchism as a political idea and the somewhat convoluted evolution of that school of thought into a fragmented, transnational terrorist movement, concluding with the outbreak of the First World War but dying down for the most part by the early 1900s. It will focus on Western European and American anarchism (the latter conducted predominantly by European immigrants) as opposed to the myriad of movements in Russia, which were inextricably linked to the Russian civil war and therefore require in depth, Russia-specific analysis. Nevertheless, important Russian figures and events will be addressed as necessary.

The Intellectual Roots and Development of Anarchism

The doctrine of anarchism evolved from the intellectual developments of the enlightenment and the French Revolution in the con-

text of a Europe drastically altered by the Industrial Revolution. Roughly defined as a political ethic in opposition to all forms of state power, anarchist theorists drew from a similar Hegelian concept of progress as Marx and Engels did when they declared in *The Communist Manifesto* that the logical end of human society would be the dissolution of the capitalist order as affected through the international class struggle (the creation and empowerment of a new class of bourgeois capitalists during the Industrial Revolution caused these theories to take on a particularly economic character). Anarchist theorists took the Marxist progression of history one step further, envisioning the final state as one not only without class distinction but without all forms of political power, where all citizens were their own masters engaged only in willing cooperation. Anarchist theorist Mikhail Bakunin, in reaction to the proposed Marxist system of governance by the few (at least until a reasonably socialist state had been established), explained, “State signifies domination, and all domination implies subjection of the masses, and as a result, their exploitation to the advantage of some governing minority.”¹ In addition, anarchist thinkers emphasized the role of the individual in the evolution of history, rather than the Marxist emphasis on organizations.

In this approach, it is easy to discern echoes of the ethos behind the French Revolution. For example, the writings of French revolutionary and theorist Maximilien Robespierre display ideas that inspired the later advent of anarchism. “What is the end of our revolution?” he writes four years before the French Revolution, “The tranquil enjoyment of liberty and equality; the reign of that eternal justice, the laws of which are graven, not on marble or stone, but in the hearts of men, even in the heart of the slave who has forgot-

¹ Mikhail Bakunin, “The Excommunication of the Hague: Letter to the Brussels Newspaper *La Liberté*,” in Daniel Guerin, ed., *No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005), pp. 189–197, at p. 191.

dous publicity they received—very much in contrast to illegal propaganda and organizational work which had no visible effect.⁴²

This further supports this article’s prior contention that the actors instigating terrorist attacks were often simply emulating publicized attacks, rather than plotting concentrated or deliberate efforts to protect or promote the anarchist cause.

One aspect of the countermeasures against anarchist terrorism that warrants particular attention in today’s context is the debate within the United States over whether to censor anarchist literature and/or punish intellectuals who promoted anarchist ideas. Many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century observers vehemently defended the right of free speech for anarchist figures, despite the violence being perpetrated in clear reaction to their publications and fame: “We must not attempt, as the Mother of States has already attempted to do, in panic, to go back on the principles of free speech. Whatever the dangers of this freedom, the dangers of its repression are vastly greater. History has concluded this point.”⁴³ Such a response is significant when considering the time of its writing—only three months after the assassination of the President of the United States—and demonstrates significant liberalism and respect for the First Amendment rights of individuals espousing anti-state views.

Despite certain liberals’ attempts to protect the free speech of anarchists, President Theodore Roosevelt and other government figures set out to limit the publication of anarchist ideas,⁴⁴ an effort that they strengthened following an attempt on the life of the Chicago chief of police in 1908. The first decade of the twentieth century also saw increased cooperation between the immigration

⁴² Laqueur, *A History of Terrorism*, p. 33.

⁴³ “Anarchism,” *The Arena* (1889–1909), p. 3.

⁴⁴ “CAG Law is Proposed.” *The Washington Post*; 5 March 1908; ProQuest Historical Newspapers. *The Washington Post* (1877–1990), p. 3.

that the military and police patrols in Barcelona be increased for the purpose of clearing out anarchists and revolutionaries of all kinds, *whether actors or theorists*. (Emphasis added)⁴⁰

In another piece in the same newspaper, columnist Francis Joseph demonstrated an understanding of the tactic of “propaganda of the deed,” with its clear implication of the difficulty of enacting counterterrorist measures. Of Empress Elizabeth’s assassin, Joseph writes, “He says he was not impelled by misery to kill the Empress, as such a course would have been idiotic, but he committed the deed in order that such crimes, following one upon the other, might cause all who impoverish the populace to tremble and shiver.”⁴¹

The anarchist approach to violence, which justifies terrorist acts by painting them as reactions to state violence, would indicate that any attempts to repress the movement by the state would generate further attacks. However, there is little evidence to indicate that the counterterrorist measures enacted by the European and American governments invoked any direct response from anarchists. Walter Laqueur describes the reaction of terrorist groups to the repressive measures of the 1880s in Russia:

To some extent this swing towards terrorism was engendered by the mass arrests, the savage sentences and the executions which continued all the time. But perhaps even more important a factor was the belief that terrorist operations were far more effective in promoting the revolution, if only because of the tremen-

⁴⁰ “In Eropean Capitals.” [sic.] *The Washington Post* (1877–1954); 12 December 1893; ProQuest Historical Newspapers. *The Washington Post* (1877–1990), p. 10.

⁴¹ Francis Joseph, “Gloats Over His Deed,” *The Washington Post*; 13 September 1898; ProQuest Historical Newspapers. *The Washington Post* (1877–1990), p. 4.

ten them, and in that of the tyrant who disowns them.”² Similar motives lay behind the failed revolution of 1848, in which thousands revolted against the European powers in an effort to reclaim the ideals of 1789.³ Anarchism’s early theorists drew on 1789 and 1848 as examples of the potential inherent in a widespread revolt against the bourgeois regime.⁴

These intellectual currents converged in and coincided with the spread of modern manifestations of nationalism and democracy, two ideologies that would define Western political thought until the present day. Both came to Europe by way of the Napoleonic Wars, through which a “democratic” France demonstrated the power wielded by an army made up of a liberated populace inspired by national pride.⁵ Anarchism and communism both aspired to meet the subsequent demands of European populations for a voice in their system of government and the political structures by which their countries—over which they now felt some nationalistic ownership—were organized. Walter Laqueur describes modern terrorism as having emerged from the combination of nationalism and democracy, a process that, as argued later, coincided and commingled with the advent of anarchism.

All the grievances had existed well before: minorities had been oppressed, nations had been denied independence, autocratic government had been the rule. But as the ideas of the enlightenment spread

² Maximilien Robespierre, “On the Principles of Political Morality, February 1794,” available at www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1794robspierre.html (accessed 19 December 2006)

³ Lewis Namier, *1848: The Revolution of the Intellectuals* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1964.)

⁴ See Peter Kropotkin, *The Great French Revolution, 1789–1793* (New York, NY: Vanguard Printings, 1927); and, Mikhail Bakunin, “The Revolution of 1848, as Seen by Bakunin,” in Daniel Guerin, ed., *No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005), pp. 129–131.

⁵ Miller, “The Intellectual Origins of Modern Terrorism in Europe,” p. 31.

and as the appeal of nationalism became increasingly powerful, conditions that had been accepted for centuries became intolerable.⁶

Anarchist theorists, although not advocating democracy in its most well-known form, did attempt to redress the injustices of the old regime by empowering populations and individuals; in fact, their ideas can be seen as individualist democracy carried to the most extreme extent.

Most histories of anarchist thought ascribe the first robust expression of anarchism to French theorist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, a sociologist born to peasant farmers in 1809. Proudhon actively participated in the 1848 revolution after initially responding with contempt to the popular uprising.⁷ He based this contempt on the same disdain for incomplete revolution that would characterize his and his anarchist successors' writings on socialism and other forms of civil unrest that did not demand the total disengagement of all forms of power. In his seminal essay, "Property is Theft," published in 1840, Proudhon set forth the premise that would underlie much of later anarchist theory.

Yes, all men hold and repeat that equality of circumstance is the same thing as equality of right: that property and theft are synonymous terms; that all social pre-eminence, awarded or, more properly, usurped on the pretext of superior talent and service, is iniquity and banditry; all men, I say, bear witness

⁶ Walter Laqueur, *A History of Terrorism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2006), p. 11.

⁷ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, "A Self Portrait," in Daniel Guerin, ed., *No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005), p. 43.

the Empress of Austria, and the various attempts on the life of Bismarck, the European governments agreed to cooperate in order to reduce the anarchist threat to European leaders.³⁷ In Germany in the 1860s, Bismarck dissolved the Reichstag following a series of assassinations undertaken by both anarchists and Social Democrats and brought in a new council of conservatives who banned the distribution of socialist and anarchist literature.³⁸ Although major counterterrorist measures in the rest of Europe got underway following the Paris Commune in 1871, it was not until the Rome Conference of 1898 that the death penalty was universally applied to any European convicted of an attempted or actual assassination. The St. Petersburg Protocol followed the pronouncements of the Rome Conference in 1904 and set forth the premise for intergovernmental cooperation to combat terrorist acts.³⁹

Throughout the period, European governments used secret agents and *agents provocateurs* to identify and prosecute anarchists. These measures rarely distinguished between anarchist theorists and those who carried out actual anarchist attacks, despite the apparent understanding of such a distinction in the press as shown earlier. However, it appears that contemporary observers understood the shortcomings of repressive methods and the likelihood of their leading to increased attacks. Quoting the German newspaper, *Tageblatt*, *The Washington Post* described counterterrorist measures in familiar terms to those who follow modern efforts at stemming terrorist attacks:

The *Tageblatt* says: 'Experience shows that the most severe punishment does not deter from crime such men as anarchists. On the contrary, punishment seems only to incite fresh crime.' Orders were given

³⁷ "To Crush Anarchism." *The Washington Post* (1877-1954); 1 July 1894; ProQuest Historical Newspapers. *The Washington Post* (1877-1990) p. 1.

³⁸ Miller, "The Intellectual Origins of Modern Terrorism in Europe," p. 40-41.

³⁹ Miller, "The Intellectual Origins of Modern Terrorism in Europe," p. 56.

and clearly show the divisions between these assassins and most modern terrorists. A description of the motivations behind modern terrorism from political analyst Bruce Hoffman drives home the exceptional nature of the anarchist assassins in its divergence from the descriptions of those assassins usually set forth today: “Contrary to both popular belief and media depiction, most terrorism is neither crazed nor capricious. Rather, terrorist attacks are generally both premeditated and carefully planned ... the terrorist act is specifically designed to communicate a message.”³⁶

The distinctions between modern terrorists and the anarchist terrorists of the 1890s do not imply that aspects of the psychological character of the anarchist assassins are not present in modern terrorists. In fact, it could be argued that these characteristics—a desire for significance and notoriety, a need to demonstrate power and feel acceptance and membership in a like-minded group—are present in almost everyone who undertakes terrorist acts. The difference in the case of the anarchist attacks of the 1890s is that these characteristics were unaccompanied by any concrete theoretical understanding of the cause for which they fought. Almost none of the assassins mentioned earlier had any direct contact with the anarchist establishment, and thus their acts can be seen as individual outbursts merely justified by a proclaimed but insubstantial adherence to anarchism.

Efforts at Counterterrorism

While the labor uprisings in the United States met resistance in the form of private police forces, efforts to eradicate the anarchist threat of assassination in Europe emerged from the highest echelons of the political establishment; thus, counterterrorism was guided and executed by the very targets of terrorist attacks. Following the assassinations of the King of Spain, the King of Italy,

³⁶ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, p. 229.

to these truths in their souls: it is simply a matter of making them cognizant of them.⁸

This premise made him one of the first theorists to speak out against the state domination inherent in the theories of socialism that were also emerging at the time.

Despite these theoretical gaps between anarchism and socialism, in Proudhon’s time, this division had not yet solidified in organizational terms. In fact, in the year after his death, 1866, many Proudhonists (also known as “Mutualists”) attended the first meeting of the First International Workingmen’s Association along with the European socialists and communist theorist Karl Marx. This uneasy alliance did not last long; by the early 1870s, Marx had gained power over most of the International and was leading it in an authoritarian direction that was unacceptable to the anarchists.⁹

Mikhail Bakunin, a Russian nobleman born in 1814, carried the anarchist torch in the International following Proudhon’s death. Despite differences in opinion over the use of violence to affect revolution that will be explored later in this article, Bakunin agreed with and expanded Proudhon’s distrust of and disdain for the Marxists’ and socialists’ attempts to conduct a revolution in order to establish what he saw as a new form of Statism. In 1872, at the First International’s congress in The Hague, Marx and his followers expelled the Bakuninists, marking the final split between the Marxists and the anarchists. Bakunin responded to the expulsion in a letter to the Brussels newspaper, *La Liberté*:

To allege that a group of individuals, even should they be the most intelligent and most well-meaning of indi-

⁸ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, “Property is Theft,” in Daniel Guerin, ed., *No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005), pp. 48–55, at p. 51.

⁹ James Guillaume, “Bakunin, as Seen by Guillaume,” in Daniel Guerin, ed., *No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005), p. 134.

viduals, will have the capacity to perform as the brains, the soul, the directing, unifying will of the revolutionary movement and the economic organization of the world's proletariat, is such an affront to common sense and historical experience, that one wonders, in amazement, how a fellow as intelligent as Mr. Marx could have come up with it.¹⁰

Although Bakunin and his contemporaries did advocate the use of organizations in order to overcome the capitalist state (they disagreed vehemently with the "individualist anarchy" of German Max Stirner and American Benjamin Tucker), the Bakuninist vision of liberated organizations—only willing association and membership, group leadership and democracy—strongly diverged from the socialist organizations envisioned and later created by the Marxists.¹¹

The Jura Federation (also known as the Anarchist St. Imier International), one of several anarchist organizations within the First International, became the dominant anarchist organization following the split of the First International in 1872. Based in the Jura mountain range in Switzerland, this federation's core membership consisted of watchmakers; within this forum, anarchists such as Peter Kropotkin, James Guillaume, Errico Malatesta, and Bakunin himself debated the use of violence to achieve social revolution.¹²

Views on Violence and Terrorism

The acceptance and even encouragement of the use of violence as a means to achieve social revolution emerged in anarchism with Mikhail Bakunin, in opposition to Proudhon's "evolutionary" view

¹⁰ Bakunin, "The Excommunication of the Hague," p. 190.

¹¹ Mikhail Bakunin, "Whom Am I?" in Daniel Guerin, ed., *No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005), pp. 147–149.

¹² Miller, "The Intellectual Origins of Modern Terrorism in Europe," p. 42.

Goldman; nevertheless, it allows for mental incapacity or simple suggestibility as likely causes for the man's misdeeds. Such an approach resembles descriptions of nihilistic or "irrational terrorism," in which men and women with little to live for and a strong psychological need for notoriety and/or identity perpetrate crimes or terrorist acts in order to project themselves and their complaints onto the outside world, demonstrating to society that they possess power and significance. Given these terrorists' lack of connection to any organized anarchist conspiracies and the unlikelihood of a highly evolved theoretical understanding of, for example, the nuanced sociological theories of Peter Kropotkin or Mikhail Bakunin, such categorizations are likely quite accurate.

Other observers, while recognizing the "irrational" element of such attacks, were far less sympathetic to the perpetrators' needs for recognition. In response to the death of Empress Elizabeth in 1898, Mark Twain wrote of the assassin:

He is at the bottom of the human ladder, as the accepted estimates of degree and value go: a soiled and patched young loafer, without gifts, without talents, without education, without morals, without character, without any born charm or any acquired one that wins or beguiles or attracts; without a single grace of mind or heart or hand that any tramp or prostitute could envy him; an unfaithful private in the ranks, an incompetent stone-cutter, an inefficient lackey; in a word, a mangy, offensive, empty, unwashed, vulgar, gross, mephitic, timid, sneaking, human polecat.³⁵

Twain's description more strongly resembles one of a common criminal; such a comparison may not be far off in terms of the psychological motivations of the assassins of "the decade of the bomb,"

³⁵ Mark Twain, "A Memorable Assassination," available at <http://users.telerama.com/~joseph/memass.html> (accessed 10 December 2006).

refuse any fine-spun distinctions between the learned Russian savant, Prince Kropotkin and the Nihilist who threw the bomb that killed Alexander II. *Philosophic anarchism ... makes no appeal to force.* (Emphasis added)³²

Most replies to the gruesome attacks against European and U.S. leaders focus on the individual psychology of the perpetrators—an approach that reveals the strong differences between the anarchist movement, at least in its manifestations in assassination and violence, and contemporary terrorist movements of the sort that have followed over the last one hundred years. Anarchist assassins tended to be seen as disgruntled, poverty-stricken, and crazy, their actions having less to do with any philosophical creed than with a bloodthirsty desire for importance, notoriety, and significance.³³ Commentary and debates over the character and motivation of figures like Leon Czolgosz (McKinley’s assassin) and Luigi Lucheni (Empress Elizabeth’s assassin) often resembled a variation of Emma Goldman’s reasoning that, rather than diabolical anarchists fired by a complex plot to take over the world, these assassins were merely unstable and caught up in revolutionary rhetoric. In the same 1902 *Arena* article quoted earlier, the editor pleads,

Look at the face of the poor wretch who has murdered our President, and you see the mental stuff out of which assassins are made under the teachings of revolutionary anarchism. Through such men, semi-insane ideas work out an insane propaganda of the deed.³⁴

This account focuses less on the societal ills that may have led to the assassin’s easy acceptance of anarchist creeds than that of Ms.

³² “Anarchism.” *The Arena* (1889–1909); January 1902; XXVII (1); APS Online, p. 3.

³³ “Anarchism and Notoriety,” *The New York Times*. May 25, 1901.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

that revolution would spread peacefully and naturally. Bakunin and his somewhat bloodthirsty compatriot Sergei Nechaev drew from the experiences of the Social Revolutionary movement in Russia to conclude that not only was violence permissible in achieving social change, but it was in fact desirable in its ability to embody an act of creative destruction. Through violence and terror, these theorists argued, the anarchist movement would both destroy the state and come into being as an actual entity competent to create a new form of society in its own image.¹³ (Interestingly, this form of creative violence also caught on in Marxist circles where, despite a theoretical preference for evolutionary change, adherents often fell back on terrorist tactics as a way to precipitate it.)

Such enthusiasm for violent means complemented the wave of terrorist attacks underway in Europe in the 1850s and 1860s. Inspired in part by the work of Karl Heinzen, whose 1848 essay “Murder” argued the moral permissibility of violence in the political context, assassins such as Felice Orsini and Emil Hoedel made several attempts on the lives of Napoleon III, Wilhelm I, and, in 1866, German Chancellor Bismarck. Although these attacks were hardly, if at all, affiliated with anarchism, the atmosphere of terror and a general awareness of political assassination as a tactic contributed to the anarchist turn toward acceptance of such methods in the 1860 and 1870s.¹⁴

Bakunin’s death in 1876 coincided with the elucidation of a violent creed by anarchist theorists in the tactic of the “propaganda of the deed.” So coined by French journalist Paul Brousse in his 1877 articles, this doctrine advocated the use of violence in order to both draw attention to the injustices in society and to inspire others to commit terrorist acts against governments and symbols of capitalist power by invoking the state to use repressive tactics against the

¹³ Philip Pomper, “Russian Revolutionary Terrorism,” in Martha Crenshaw, ed., *Terrorism in Context* (University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2005), p. 67.

¹⁴ Miller, “The Intellectual Origins of Modern Terrorism in Europe,” p. 43.

population. The concept was inspired by a combination of the Paris Commune, a spontaneous uprising against the French government in 1871, as well as Bakunin and Nechaev's writings (in particular, their infamous essay, *Catechism of a Revolutionist*¹⁵) and the 1877 Benevento uprising undertaken by Italian anarchists Errico Malatesta and Carlo Cafieri against the Italian government.¹⁶ German anarchist Johann Most set forth one of the most extreme and influential theories of anarchist violence, stating that almost any action was justified by the cause of social revolution. "The anarchists prepare for social revolution and use every means—speech, writing, or deed, whichever is more to the point—to accelerate revolutionary development."¹⁷

Both anarchism and terrorism underwent significant evolution in terms of attitudes toward and justification of violence during this period; Most's and Nechaev's positions on the use of political violence were some of the first manifestations of the modern terrorist ethic. Although the idea of political assassination had been around for centuries, these thinkers ushered in an era in which not only violence toward the head of state or the state itself was justified by the social cause, but violence toward any affiliate of the state and, in its later manifestation, civilians who, while unassociated with the government, were guilty simply by failing to join up with the revolution. In his essay, "The Intellectual Origins of Modern Terrorism in Europe," Martin A. Miller describes this progression:

... the expansion of the field of objects for assassination to include officials serving the tyrant was of greater importance. It was this shift that created the *limited*

¹⁵ Sergei Nechaev and Mikhail Bakunin, "Catechism of a Revolutionist," available at <http://www.uoregon.edu/~kimball/Nqv.catechism.thm.htm> (accessed 11 December 2006).

¹⁶ Miller, "The Intellectual Origins of Modern Terrorism in Europe," p. 42.

¹⁷ Johann Most, "Anarchist Communism." (1889), available at www.dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bright/most/anarcom.html (accessed 11 December 2006).

insisted on assigning to the anarchist movement an overarching coherence and organization that it certainly did not possess. The editor, in his opening note to the October 1901 issue of the journal, *The Open Court*, addresses the anarchist movement as a cohesive philosophical viewpoint, including in it the assassin that killed President McKinley a month before the journal's publication.

The anarchist's notion of liberty is license, his ideal of progress is the destruction and ruin of his betters, his propaganda consists in preaching hatred and spreading terrorism, the methods he commends are felony and murder. Should his ideas gain foothold in the minds of our people, it would not lead us onward to a higher civilization, but back to barbarism, to a state of society in which the hand of every one is against that of every other and war is the general rule.³¹

Nevertheless, such conflation of violent acts committed by those claiming to be anarchists and the philosophical anarchism represented by theorists like Kropotkin and Emma Goldman were the exception rather than the rule among contemporary observers. In fact, only three months after the assassination of President McKinley, an essay in the journal *Arena* painstakingly describes the differences between "philosophical" and "revolutionary" anarchism and draws attention to the danger of confusing the two:

The foremost statesman of the Democratic Party in New York State is reported to have contemptuously declared that 'no fine-spun distinctions are to be drawn between philosophic anarchism and revolutionary anarchism.' This is as though we were to

³¹ "Anarchism." The Editor. *The Open Court, a Quarterly Magazine [Devoted to the Science of Religion]*, October 1901; 15, 545; APS Online, p. 579.

taught to men and so long as they will be told that it is good to kill for what one believes to be beneficial for mankind.²⁹

His reaction echoes Emma Goldman's aforementioned sentiment that virtually any violence perpetrated against figures of power and authority could be justified by the violence that such figures inflict on members of society and particularly the working classes.

Despite anarchist leaders' identification with and sympathy for what were basically social pariahs, the assassins' lack of affiliation with organized anarchism indicated the fragmented nature of the anarchist movement and the inaccuracy of reports in the press and in later accounts that a vast underground movement was organizing to take down the states of Europe. Walter Laqueur, in his book, *The History of Terrorism*, describes this disorganization in straightforward terms.

But inasmuch as the assassins were anarchists—and quite a few were not—they all acted on their own initiative without the knowledge and support of the groups to which they belonged. It was conveniently forgotten at the time that there had been a long tradition of regicide, and attempted regicide, in Europe and that there had been countless attempts to kill Napoleon and Napoleon III. ... There were, to summarize, no systematic terrorist campaigns in Central and Western Europe ...³⁰

Laqueur's approach almost a century later was lost on certain contemporary observers, who, rather than recognize the profoundly individual nature of all but very few of these attacks,

²⁹ P. A. Kropotkin, *Selected Readings on Anarchism and Revolution*, edited by Martin A. Miller (Boston: MIT Press Classic, 1969), p. 23.

³⁰ Laqueur, *A History of Terrorism*, pp. 14–15.

terrorism of the nineteenth century. ... A century later, the further expansion of the acts of intimidation and violence to include members of society would establish the *terrorism without boundaries* of our time. (Emphasis in original)¹⁸

Thus, the shift toward additional and previously non-political targets of violence by anarchist thinkers marked a milestone in the evolution of terrorism as a political tactic and foreshadowed later understandings of terrorism as, contradictorily, a more humane alternative to the bloodshed that would accompany an actual armed revolution. Many twentieth-century terrorist movements, including some international *jihadist* movements, cite the violence inflicted on the civilians that the movement intends to defend by an offending authority (usually a government or its military branch) as justification for the targeting of civilians affiliated with the offending nation or group. Widespread attacks on Western civilians by affiliates of *jihadist* groups demonstrate a wholesale acceptance of such reasoning—largely forged by anarchist thinkers—by many members of Islamic terrorist movements.

The propaganda of the deed emerged as an official position of the anarchist leadership during the 1881 International Anarchist Congress in London. Figures who had previously expressed ambivalence toward the use of violence, including Russian anarchist theorist Peter Kropotkin, accepted armed insurrection as an acceptable method of promoting social change. Born into Moscow nobility and inspired by the liberation of the Russian serfs in 1861, Kropotkin encouraged violence as not only a method of inflicting harm on the state, but as an encouraging and validating mechanism for the underclasses to realize their role and objectives. In his 1880 pamphlet, "The Spirit of Revolt," he opines, "... it is through *action*

¹⁸ Martin A. Miller, "The Intellectual Origins of Modern Terrorism in Europe," in Martha Crenshaw, ed., *Terrorism in Context* (University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2005), pp. 27–62, at p. 31.

that minorities succeed in awakening that feeling of independence and that spirit of audacity without which no revolution can come to a head.”¹⁹ Later generations of terrorists and revolutionaries, and particularly radical theorist Franz Fanon of Martinique in his 1961 classic, *Wretched of the Earth*, would echo this approach to violence as a redemptive and necessary act.

In the Jura Federation, Kropotkin conspired and theorized along with a new generation of anarchists from across Europe. Eliséé Réclus, Emile Henri, and Errico Malatesta represented the few formal members of anarchist organizations that actually undertook terrorist acts (albeit not very successful ones). Working in underground cells in cities across Europe, these intellectuals helped to plan and/or eagerly observed several attacks including Francois-Claudius Ravachol’s various bombings in Paris (which would lead the French government to execute him in 1892 to calls of “Long Live Anarchy!”) and Henri’s bombing of a Paris café, after which he issued a detailed statement as to his motivations. This statement, from which he read at his trial in 1894, laid bare the anarchist sentiment toward “innocent” victims:

Anarchists do not spare bourgeois women and children, because the wives and children of those they love are not spared either. Are not those children innocent victims who, in the slums, die slowly of anaemia because bread is scarce at home; of those women who grow pale in your workshops and wear themselves out to earn forty sous a day. ... At least have the courage of your crimes, gentlemen of the bourgeoisie, and agree that our reprisals are fully legitimate!²⁰

¹⁹ Peter Kropotkin, “The Spirit of Revolt,” in Roger N. Baldwin, ed., *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Writings* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2002), p. 39.

²⁰ As quoted in James Joll, *The Anarchists* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 118–119.

More so than group uprisings or labor conflicts, a string of high-profile and shocking assassinations predominantly aimed toward heads of state characterized the proceeding “decade of the bomb.” Copy-cat and unaffiliated terrorists committed these violent acts and thus created a feared and largely exaggerated international conspiracy in the minds of observers across Europe and the United States. These attacks differed from previously mentioned incidents that were actually committed by members of formal anarchist organizations. The 1881 assassination of Tsar Alexander II of Russia by several self-described anarchists marked the first high-profile assassination undertaken by relatively unknown individuals.

Beginning in the 1890s, such attacks increased at a staggering pace, with the assassination of President Carnot of France by on 24 June 1894 by Italian anarchist Sante Jeronimo Caserio, the 1897 assassination of the Premier of Spain Antonio Canovas del Castillo by anarchist Michel Angiolillo, the 1898 assassination of Empress Elizabeth of Austria, the 1900 assassination of Umberto I, King Humbert of Italy by anarchist Gaetano Bresci, and the assassination of President McKinley of the United States by Polish immigrant Leon Czolgosz in 1901. Most of these marked the final success in a series of attempts on the lives of those figures.

Despite the majority of the perpetrators of these attacks’ self-identification as anarchists, few if any were actually affiliated with the anarchist movement. This fact did not prevent many anarchist leaders from taking up their cause. For example, rather than characterize the assassination of Empress Elizabeth of Austria as an outburst of indiscriminate violence of the sort he discouraged (see earlier discussion of Kropotkin’s attitude toward violence), Kropotkin took pity on such lost but noble criminals.

Individuals are not to blame; they are driven mad by horrible conditions. Such a man was Luccheni, the assassin [of Empress Elizabeth]. ... [These acts will go on] so long as contempt for human life shall be

ing doctrine for social revolt was a long procession of violent uprisings and assassinations undertaken by individuals unconnected to the movement itself but who nevertheless identified with its basic principles and described themselves as anarchists. Labor disputes evolved into anarchist revolts of a sort, most notably in the years following the Paris Commune of 1871. In 1886, a violent conflict between anarchist unionists and the private “Pinkerton” police force in Chicago, known as the Haymarket Affair, inspired an ongoing debate in the United States concerning the significance of the anarchist movement. The brutality of the police reaction evoked some sympathy on the part of American observers; in the 12 November 1893 edition of *The Washington Post*, the editorial editor argued, “The people of the United States would yet make reparation for the hanging of the Chicago anarchists, who were martyrs in a great cause.”²⁷ Less laudatory reactions exhibited a somewhat nuanced and thus not entirely discounting understanding of the differences between anarchism and socialism.

Anarchism and socialism have a common ideal, i.e., that of establishing a just division of the proceeds of labor. ... Anarchism wants to abolish tyranny and establish liberty. It proposes to do so by dissolving order and law. Socialism wants to destroy monopoly and establish equality. Their methods lead to an entire abolition of liberty and to an introduction of tyranny which would presumably prove worse than the worst monopolies.²⁸

Despite such efforts to understand the theories behind anarchist activity, public response to such outbursts in the United States and Europe displayed mostly fear and contempt.

²⁷ “The Foes of Society,” *The Washington Post* (1877–1954); 12 November 1893; ProQuest Historical Newspapers. *The Washington Post* (1877–1990), p. 3.

²⁸ “Anarchism and Socialism,” *The Open Court, a Quarterly Magazine [Devoted to the Science of Religion]*, 16 February 1888; 1, 26; APS Online, p. 754.

Réclus and Malatesta also set forth arguments blaming the violent acts perpetrated by anarchist terrorists on the violence perpetrated by the state.²¹

A profound distaste for bloodshed, particularly on the part of innocent victims, nevertheless tempered many anarchists’ acceptance of violence as a means of revolution. Kropotkin held ambiguous and often contradictory views toward violence, arguing against the use of brute violence as the main technique and guiding force of any revolution. Although sanctioning violence in appropriate situations, Kropotkin outlines in his 1892 essay “Revolutionary Studies” the need to accompany such violence with revolutionary ideas that can adequately organize a society after the fall of the government and the bourgeoisie:

The public prosecutor, the death-cart filled with victims, the guillotine, soon inspire disgust. It is soon perceived that this terror prepares what it should prepare—Dictatorship—and the guillotine is abandoned. ... In order to conquer, something more than guillotines are required. It is the revolutionary idea, the truly wide revolutionary conception, which reduces its enemies to impotence by paralyzing all the instruments by which they have governed hitherto. Very sad would be the future of the revolution if it could only triumph by terror.²²

Despite this ambivalence toward terror in general and distaste toward the use of indiscriminate force, Kropotkin and others al-

²¹ Errico Malatesta, “Anarchy,” in Daniel Guerin, ed., *No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005), pp. 355–364. Réclus’ views are discussed in Miller, “The Intellectual Origins of Modern Terrorism in Europe,” p. 50.

²² Peter Kropotkin, “Revolutionary Studies,” *Commonweal*. London: 1892, available at http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/ANARCHIST_ARCHIVES/kropotkin/revstudies.html (accessed 19 December 2006).

lowed for and even insisted on the use of violence when guided by carefully considered and above all just and coherent conceptions of the model of society it aimed to instate.²³

Anarchist theorists, including Kropotkin, also conceded that unfocused violence, although undesirable and, when used as the main tool of effecting revolution, quite ineffective, emerged from the violence and ills of the state and thus could be blamed on the unjust nature of society rather than any misdeed on the part of the individual perpetrator. Emma Goldman, a Lithuanian émigré living in the United States, declared in her 1917 essay, “The Psychology of Physical Violence”:

The ignorant mass looks upon the man who makes a violent protest against our social and economic iniquities as upon a wild beast, a cruel, heartless monster, whose joy it is to destroy life and bathe in blood; or at best, as upon an irresponsible lunatic. Yet nothing is further from the truth ... it is their super-sensitiveness to the wrong and injustice surrounding them which compels them to pay the toll of our social crimes.²⁴

In romanticizing the terrorist as the only fighter truly willing to take on society’s evils, Goldman falls into a long line of theorists, authors, and artists who, while admitting the possible pitfalls of indiscriminate violence, sympathized and even respected those driven to it by suffering and oppression.

Note on Technology

It is difficult to separate the history of anarchism from the concurrent development and widespread distribution of dynamite and

²³ Laqueur, *A History of Terrorism*, p. 50.

²⁴ Emma Goldman, “The Psychology of Political Violence,” available at www.womenshistory.about.com/library/etext/bl_eg_an3_psychology_political_violence.htm (accessed 11 December 2006).

other easily constructed explosive devices. Dynamite, invented by Swedish industrialist Alfred Nobel (of Nobel Prize fame) in 1866, was an inexpensive weapon that decentralized the state’s monopoly on force and allowed a wide spectrum of anti-state actors (including socialists and other non-anarchist groups) to act out their protests and dissatisfactions. The anarchists and Russian social revolutionaries embraced new technology with particular zeal; following the failure of the 1848 revolutions, “Murder” author Karl Heinzen began offering financial incentives to anarchists and other chemists to invent technology suited to the task of overthrowing the state.²⁵

The technology used by the anarchist of the time—small bombs and explosive devices—lent itself to particular types of attacks. The tactic of assassination, particularly of heads of state and other symbolic figures (the Empress of Austria, for example), was both well-suited to the technology available to anarchist terrorists and in line with the anarchists’ general philosophy, which, of course, advocated for the abolishment of all forms of state and political power. This correspondence of technique, philosophy, and action resembles that set forth by Bruce Hoffman in his chapter “The Modern Terrorist Mindset”: “The tactics and targets of various terrorist movements, as well as the weapons they favor, are therefore ineluctably shaped by a group’s ideology, its internal organizational dynamics, and the personalities of its key members, as well as a variety of internal and external stimuli.”²⁶

“The Decade of the Bomb”

Coinciding with the organizational development and theoretical elucidation of anarchism as a robust political theory and motivat-

²⁵ Laqueur, *A History of Terrorism*, p. 27.

²⁶ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 229.