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The Radical Animal Liberation Movement: Some Reflections on Its Future

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Introduction

The present contribution addresses two questions concerning the future of the radical animal liberation movement (RALM). I understand the RALM to be the part of the animal liberation movement (i.e., those activists) involved in direct actions, including sabotage and vandalism, the liberation of animals, arson, and home visits. Most RALM actions are claimed by the Animal Liberation Front, the Justice Department, the Animal Rights Militia, or the Revolutionary Cells Animal Liberation Brigade.

This article, which is an attempt at predicting the behavior of the movement regarding the level of violence it is likely to adopt and its possible future, addresses the two following questions: Can we expect, in the foreseeable future, an increase in RALM activists' level of violence; that is, will it resort to the killing of people? What are the possible factors that could play a role in the future of the RALM?

Even if social movements depend on local factors, which makes it difficult to make generalizations about movements operating worldwide, it seems that, because of its nature as a leaderless resistance movement, the RALM presents a unique opportunity for general analysis. Bearing this in mind, I introduce the concept of leaderless resistance to explain the nature of the RALM, and I use the economic term "franchising" to explain the movement's *modus operandi*.

This article consists of four parts. In part A, I present a brief history of the concept of leaderless resistance, as it is used by the far-right movement in the United States and in the eponymous article by white supremacist Louis Beam.

As the conceptual origins of leaderless resistance can be traced to the late nineteenth-century anarchist movement, I conduct a short assessment of that movement.

In part B, I show how the leaderless resistance concept is applied by a leader of the RALM and I also use the economic concept of franchising to explain the *modus operandi* of the RALM. Further, I reveal the controversy within the RALM concerning its nonharming policy. With regard to this controversy, my conclusion is that, although the possibility cannot be excluded and even though it is contrary to widely held opinion, the evolution of the movement toward the killing of people is not self-evident.

In part C, I focus on exogenous factors that have played a role in the RALM in recent years, and use them to assess the evolution of the level of violence.

In part D, I focus on some important factors that are likely to affect the future of the RALM: (1) the progression of the animal liberation cause in general, (2) the increased interest of the public in general environmental issues and climate change, and most importantly (3) the possible exploitation of public concern about the environment by the RALM.

A. A Short History of Leaderless Resistance¹

Leaderless resistance is defined by Jeffrey Kaplan as “a kind of lone-wolf operation in which an individual or a very small, highly cohesive group engage [*sic*] in acts of antistate violence independent of any movement, leader, or network of support. This violence may take the form of attacks on state institutions or operatives, or it may take the form of random targets of opportunity selected on the basis of their perceived vulnerability and their symbolic importance.”²

The Anarchist Movement and Leaderless Resistance

Even though the U.S. far right does not refer directly to the anarchist movement as a source of influence, I understand this influence as twofold: on the one hand, the concept of anarchism and its rejection of any form of authority—and therefore leadership—has a strong logical link to leaderless resistance, even if the two movements differ in their historical backgrounds. On the other hand, the actions by anarchists at the end of the nineteenth century—the assassination of public figures and politicians—can also be considered an early form

of “lone-wolf actions” as understood by Kaplan in his definition of leaderless resistance.

While acknowledging the difficulty of defining anarchism, we could also understand the following as the necessary characteristic of all anarchist movements: “the negation of the principle of authority under all its forms, the violent refusal of any constraint for the individual.”³ Benjamin R. Tucker, one of the most important American anarchists, provides a similar definition for anarchism: “the doctrine according to which all the affairs of men should be *managed by individuals or voluntary associations*, and that the State should be abolished.”⁴

The rejection of any authority also means the rejection of a leader or of leadership in general as an unnecessary and undesirable constraint on the individual. In this respect, anarchism shows similarities to leaderless resistance. However, it is important to underline the different circumstances of the emergence of each doctrine. The U.S. far right adopted the leaderless resistance model out of its own perception that the U.S. government might try to suppress the Patriot movement once and for all. Individual actions were therefore the only way of avoiding infiltration. Anarchism, however, resulted from different preconditions. The early controversy between Marx and Bakunin on the form of the revolution highlights the historical differences between the U.S. far right’s leaderless resistance and the anarchist doctrine. Whereas Marx pleaded in favor of a “dictatorship of the proletariat” in the form of a people’s state, Bakunin violently rejected any form of authority, which he considered as the essential principle of the state: “Every logical and sincere theory of the State is essentially founded on the principle of *authority*—that is to say on the eminently theological, metaphysical, and political idea that the masses, *always* incapable of governing themselves, must submit at all times to the benevolent yoke of a wisdom and a justice, which in one way or another, is imposed on them from above.”⁵

For Bakunin, the very problem of the state was the domination by a minority over the majority, domination that was unlikely to empower the masses. Bakunin thus pleaded for “complete liberty” and for the rejection of any form of authority.⁶ His theories, then, were not based on the fear that the government might eradicate the movement, but on rational reflection about the problems offered by Marxist theory.

A similar, later controversy that highlights this point was that between Errico Malatesta and the Dielo Trouda (Workers’ Cause) concerning the concept of the anarchist platform. The Workers’ Cause—a group of exiled Russian anarchists who had witnessed the 1917 revolution but were dissatisfied with the

establishment of the Bolshevik dictatorship—wrote *The Platform* in 1926. It was a kind of organizational guideline for the movement, based on the inability of the anarchist movement to assert itself in the Soviet Union.

In this text, the Workers' Cause explicitly rejected individual acts:

The practice of acting on one's personal responsibility should be decisively condemned and rejected in the ranks of the anarchist movement . . . The executive organ of the general anarchist movement, the Anarchist Union, taking a firm line against the tactic of irresponsible individualism, introduces in its ranks the principle of collective responsibility: the entire Union will be responsible for the political and revolutionary activity of each member; in the same way, each member will be responsible for the political and revolutionary activity of the Union as a whole.⁷

But again, as in the case of Bakunin's rejection of Marx's state, a form of authority (as offered by the Workers' Cause) was rejected by Malatesta in his 1927 response:

In my view, an anarchist organisation must be founded on a very different basis from the one proposed by those Russian comrades. Full autonomy, full independence and therefore full responsibility of individuals and groups; free accord between those who believe it useful to unite in cooperating for a common aim; moral duty to see through commitments undertaken and to do nothing that would contradict the accepted programme. It is on these bases that the practical structures and the right tools to give life to the organisation should be built and designed.⁸

Even though Malatesta spoke against the Anarchist Union, he did not exclude the possibility of collaboration among anarchists, but only on a voluntary basis. In retrospect, Malatesta's 1927 thoughts on the nature of an anarchist organization could be considered as a description of the deeds of his anarchist predecessors in the 1890s.

The Anarchist Conspiracy

In 1901, U.S. President William McKinley was assassinated by an anarchist. One year later, U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt called for a "worldwide crusade to exterminate terrorism anywhere"⁹ (a call not dissimilar to George

W. Bush's call for "a global war on terrorism"). The wave of anarchist assassinations in the 1890s in Europe—whose victims included French President Sadi Carnot killed in 1894 by Italian anarchist Sante Caserio, Spain's Prime Minister Antonio Canovas killed in 1897 by anarchist Michele Angiolillo, Empress Elisabeth of Austria killed in 1898 by anarchist Luigi Lucheni, and Italy's King Umberto killed in 1900 by anarchist Gaetano Brecci—led many people to fear an international anarchist conspiracy more organized than it really was.

As historian of terrorism Walter Laqueur remarks, "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."¹⁰ This conclusion is shared by scholar Hubac-Occhinpinti: "Anarchist terrorism in the nineteenth century . . . is an individual terrorism that did not benefit, or at least benefited very little, from logistical means (funds, training). There was no network capable of 'working out' a strategy of terror at a national or international level."¹¹

The deeds of the anarchists perfectly match the definition of leaderless resistance understood as "a kind of lone-wolf operation in which an individual . . . engages in acts of anti-state violence independent of any movement, leader or network of support" and can therefore be viewed as precursors to the leaderless resistance as practiced and theorized by U.S. far-right thinkers.

Leaderless Resistance and the Far-Right Movement

■ **LEADERLESS RESISTANCE IN PRACTICE.** Although leaderless resistance was conceptualized by Louis Beam in 1992, its practical roots can be found much earlier in the writings of Joseph Tommasi, the founder of the American National Socialist Liberation Front (NSLF). In the 1960s, the national socialist movement in the United States was very much influenced by the theory of mass action, which favored the utilization of "propaganda and legal demonstrations in order to build a 'revolutionary majority.'"¹² Tommasi believed that the creation of a revolutionary national socialist majority was impossible in the United States but that a "blow could be struck against the hated state, provided that the determined revolutionary was prepared to act resolutely and alone."¹³

Sharing Tommasi's analysis on the paralysis of the national socialist movement and his conclusions, Karl Hand and David Rust—two NSLF members—engaged in what could be called "pathetic outbursts of pointless violence"¹⁴ and subsequently ended up in prison.

Despite Tommasi's pioneering work on leaderless resistance, the concept did not gain popularity until the beginning of the 1990s with the publication of Louis Beam's article, "Leaderless Resistance."¹⁵

For the far-right movement, Beam's article was published at a crucial moment: in 1992, the family of Randy Weaver, a Christian Identity adherent, was killed in a shootout with federal agents. One year later, another shootout with federal agents at Waco, Texas, ended in the death of all members of the Branch Davidians. Those events touched a nerve in far-right circles: in their interpretation, those shootouts demonstrated the power of government infiltration in the far right and were considered a sign of the government's intent to suppress the Patriot movement. Thus, leaderless resistance was seen as a "matter of survival in the face of a government now determined to eradicate the righteous remnant of the patriot community once and for all."¹⁶

■ LOUIS BEAM'S "LEADERLESS RESISTANCE." According to Beam, the concept of leaderless resistance had already been proposed in 1962 by a former intelligence officer, Colonel Ulius Louis Amoss, as an organizational structure for resisting an overthrow of the United States by Communist forces. In Beam's words, "the concept of Leaderless Resistance is nothing less than a fundamental departure in theories of organization. The orthodox scheme of organization is diagrammatically represented by the pyramid." Obsessed with the possibility that the government might infiltrate the Patriot movement, Beam noted, "This scheme of organization, the pyramid, is however, not only useless, but extremely dangerous for the participants when it is utilized in a resistance movement against state tyranny . . . In a pyramid type of organization, an infiltrator can destroy anything which is beneath his level of infiltration and often those above him as well."

As a solution, Beam proposed a cell organization without central control or direction—leaderless resistance: "Utilizing the Leaderless Resistance concept, all individuals and groups operate independently of each other, and never report to a central headquarters or a single leader for direction or instruction." Considering the importance of cells, Beam adds, "It goes almost without saying that Leaderless Resistance leads to very small or even one man cells of resistance." However, given the lack of a hierarchical organization in his proposed leaderless resistance model, Beam had to explain how such a movement would function in terms of formation, information, and the organization of actions: "The answer to this question is that participants in a program of Leaderless Resistance through phantom cells or individual action must know exactly what they are doing, and how to do it. It becomes the responsibility of the individual

to acquire the necessary skills and information as to what is to be done. This is by no means as impractical as it appears, because it is certainly true that in any movement, all persons involved have the same general outlook, are acquainted with the same philosophy, and generally react to given situations in similar ways.”

This last point is essential for leaderless resistance movements: the sharing of the same general outlook or philosophy by members of a resistance movement is decisive, not only for the determination of their actions, but more importantly for the identity and the cohesion of the movement as a whole. In other words, because of the lack of leadership and a hierarchy, it is the “same general outlook and philosophy” that give leaderless resistance movements their identities.

B. The RALM As a Leaderless Resistance Movement

Robin Webb's Reflections

Although leaderless resistance referred to a form of organization in the writings of Beam and Tommasi, the concept also had a strategic meaning: Tommasi conceived of it as a solution to the impracticability of (the theory of) mass action. Beam—confronted with what he considered to be attempts by the government to put a definite end to the Patriot movement—conceived of leaderless resistance as the only way for the movement to secure its future.

It has been noted that differentiating between leaderless resistance actions and impulsive, opportunistic acts can be fraught with difficulty.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the concept has also been considered by some commentators as tactical in nature, referring solely to an organizational form. For example, Simson L. Garfinkel understands it as applying “specifically to groups that employ cells and that lack bidirectional vertical command links—that is, groups without leaders.”¹⁸ Considered thus, the concept is useful in attempts to explain the *modus operandi* of various movements such as Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty and the Earth Liberation Front.

Understood as a tactical concept, leaderless resistance can also help explain the structure of the RALM. The relationship between leaderless resistance and the RALM is not only heuristic and contingent, but is in fact an essential feature of the movement, as has been shown by the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) press officer for England, Robin Webb: “Anyone, so long as they follow at least a vegetarian—but preferably vegan—lifestyle, can go out and undertake

an action that falls within those policies and claim it as the Animal Liberation Front. *There is no hierarchy; there are no leaders . . .* That is why the A.L.F. cannot be smashed, it cannot be effectively infiltrated, it cannot be stopped. You, each and every one of you: you are the A.L.F.”¹⁹ In describing the organization of the ALF, Webb singles out the lack of a central command: “Anyone undertaking an action to save animals or damaging the property of those who mishandle them . . . may claim responsibility on the Internet in the name of the A.L.F. . . . *The Irish Republican Army (IRA) also works with autonomous cells but has an identifiable central command. This is not the case for the ALF.*”²⁰

In his analysis, Beam noted the centrality of the sharing of the “same general outlook” and the existence of a common philosophy in leaderless resistance movements. This sharing also plays a central role in the RALM. As Webb puts it, anyone can claim an ALF action, provided he or she respects the policies of the movement:

It may be reasonably argued that one is only a member of the A.L.F. whilst actually undertaking an A.L.F. action. There is no membership list of elite compassionate commandos. *The A.L.F. has had, and retains, an unchanging triad of policies.* One, to rescue individual animals from suffering or potential suffering then place them in good, permanent homes or, where appropriate, release them into their natural environment. Two, to damage or destroy property and equipment associated with animal abuse . . . The third policy is to take every reasonable precaution not to harm or endanger life, either human or non-human. *Anyone . . . can go out and undertake an action that falls within those policies and claim it as the Animal Liberation Front.*²¹

As I have already observed in the discussion of Beam’s article, in traditional organizations with a pyramidal leadership structure, it is the leadership and the hierarchy that give an organization its identity and establish its guidelines. This is not the case for leaderless resistance movements. In such movements, a common general outlook and a common philosophy are decisive and necessary for the determination of actions and for the very existence of the movement. Thus, the importance of the guidelines—or policies, as Webb calls them—is decisive: respecting them gives the group its cohesion and its identity, and determines the course of its actions.

The relationship between an activist and the leaderless resistance movement in whose name he or she acts can be described in terms of franchising (understood as an economic term). A “franchise” can be defined as “a special type of agreement whereby one undertaking (the franchisor) grants to the other

(the franchisee) . . . the right to exploit a package of industrial or intellectual property rights (franchise) for the purposes of producing and/or marketing specified types of goods and/or services.”²² In the case of an action undertaken by ALF activists, we can observe such a relation, though not in economic terms—the franchisee does not work for economic profit. The owner of the franchise (the ALF) grants the franchisee (the activist) the option of claiming an action under the ALF banner (the franchise), granted that the franchisee respects the provisions of the franchise contract (the ALF policies).

By combining the concept of leaderless resistance and the economic concept of franchising, we can conclude that the policies of the ALF play an essential role not only in identifying ALF actions, but also in maintaining cohesion of the ALF as a movement. ALF policies take on the role of the (absent) leadership structure (traditionally hierarchical) by providing the movement with an identity. Without those policies or provisions, it would be impossible to identify actions carried out by the ALF or to identify the movement as a movement.

***The Justice Department, the Animal Rights Militia, and the Revolutionary Cells
Animal Liberation Brigade***

Robin Webb’s analysis focuses on the ALF. However, I would argue that the relationship between the ALF and its policies also applies to the RALM in general. Thus, the RALM should be understood as including actions undertaken in the name of the Justice Department (JD), the Animal Rights Militia (ARM), and the Revolutionary Cells Animal Liberation Brigade (RCALB), all of which are usually considered to be more radical than the ALF. As the JD, the ARM, and the RCALB violate the fundamental third rule of “[taking] every reasonable precaution not to endanger or harm life, either human or non-human,” are not their actions a good counter-example of the stated relationship between the RALM and animal liberation policies in general?

This example highlights the question of the significance of the ALF’s third policy to the RALM. However, it does not question the necessary relationship between the RALM and the principles (or provisions) *in general*. In other words, even if activists claim their actions in the name of the JD, the ARM, or the RCALB, this does not mean that they fail to follow certain principles: Just because they fail to follow one particular rule of action doesn’t mean they reject all rules of action.

The ALF's Third Policy

To reiterate: “The third policy is to take every reasonable precaution not to harm or endanger life, either human or non-human.” There are two ways that RALM operatives interpret the third policy. The first, which can be considered a strong interpretation, claims that actions not respecting the ALF’s third policy cannot, by definition, qualify as RALM actions. For example, in a 2005 CBS *60 Minutes* interview, an anonymous ALF activist declared, “If a human being is injured, it cannot be an ALF or ELF action. By virtue of the guidelines, it’s not an ALF action.”²³ This interpretation is probably still shared by most activists (ALF and otherwise).

The other interpretation, which might be considered a weak interpretation, is picked up by Robin Webb: “And if someone wishes to act as the Animal Rights Militia or the Justice Department? Simply put, the third policy of the A.L.F. no longer applies.”²⁴ In other words, actions claimed by the JD, the ARM, or the RCALB do not require the observation of the ALF’s third policy, but they are still RALM actions. There is sufficient evidence of violations of the ALF’s third clause by the JD and the ARM, who have been known to use tactics like posting razor blades (“reportedly poison tipped”) through the mail, the use of arson, the physical harassment of vivisectionists, and the publication of hit lists.²⁵

The internal dissent arising within the radical animal liberation movement from these two different interpretations has also been observed in a discussion by Jerry Vlasak, the North American Animal Liberation press officer, published in the journal *No Compromise*. In a CBS interview, Vlasak declared that the killing of people who conduct animal experiments might be justified.²⁶ Vlasak was then strongly attacked by the editorial board of *No Compromise*, who wondered whether Vlasak could speak for the Animal Liberation Front, which avoids violence in general.²⁷ Moreover, *No Compromise* asked Vlasak not to comment again on the ALF and on other groups who publicly reject violence.

Considering the importance of policies and guidelines for leaderless resistance movements and the internal controversy in the RALM movement about whether or not the ALF’s third policy should be observed, it is difficult to ascertain definitively whether the incidence of violence and of human deaths is likely to increase in the future. For argument’s sake, let us suppose that the recent mail bombing campaign in England (seven mail bombs injured nine people between 18 January and 7 February 2007) was actually authored by the RALM (the actual author was not known at the time of redaction). Could this represent substantial evidence of an increase in violence and in

human casualties by the RALM? Probably not, due to the nature of the devices used during this campaign. This view is held by Assistant Chief Constable Anton Setchell, in charge of the British National Coordinator for Domestic Extremism, who said at a press conference, “The letter bombs did not contain ‘conventional explosives,’ but were made up of pyrotechnic material designed to shock or cause only minor injury.”²⁸ A reporter from the Scottish *Sunday Herald* also noted, “The home-made and simplistic nature of the letter bombs would also seem to indicate that the aim is to create mass panic rather than mass killings.”²⁹ In other words, if the RALM had actually been behind the bomb campaign, and had actually radicalized to the point of wanting to kill people, they would have chosen other means.

“Animal Rights, Terror Tactics”

An article published by BBC News in August 2000 tried to predict the possible evolution of the RALM and its future level of violence. This article is noteworthy in that it appears to reflect the opinions of a large section of the public as well as many experts. The future will be bleak, it said: “While these extremists have indulged in potentially deadly attacks for many years, the police fear that their campaign is moving towards full-blown ‘urban terrorism.’” The article also reported the fears of a senior police officer concerning “an escalation in terror tactics.” At the end of the article, a former soldier who claimed to have trained Justice Department activists declared: “They’ve got guns from the former Yugoslavia. And they’d use them.”³⁰

As shown above, predicting the future of the RALM as “full-blown urban terrorism” that includes human death is not as straightforward as the article suggests. Even if the article correctly reports violations of the ALF’s third policy, it does not consider the importance of guidelines for leaderless resistance movements. What’s more, it does not take into account the fact that the ALF’s third policy is highly disputed within the RALM, and that it is interpreted differently by different groups.

It should also be noted that, even if recent developments in England are believed to sustain the predictions made in the article, some technical considerations about the size of the devices used in the attacks refute this view. Even if we cannot exclude the possibility, it is not self-evident that the RALM will kill people in the future.

In summary, I suggest that we need to take a closer look at the exogenous, or external, factors that could play a role in the rise of the level of violence.

By “exogenous factors,” I mean the attitudes toward extreme violence—in particular, toward the killing of people—held by activists involved in other leaderless resistance movements who collaborate with radical animal activists working in the field. I shall focus here on the collaboration between RALM activists and activists of the radical earth liberation movement (RELM). Attitudes toward extreme violence (the killing of people) held and acted upon by RELM activists might be helpful in assessing the future level of violence practiced by RALM activists. In the following section, I present those attitudes, after first describing the relationship between the RALM and the RELM.

C. Collaboration between the RALM and the RELM

The Intermingling of the ALF and the ELF

I understand the RELM to be that part, or those activists, of the earth liberation movement that is involved in direct actions, including sabotage, vandalism, and arson.

In recent years, observers have monitored an increasing intermingling of the ALF and the Earth Liberation Front (ELF). For example, a cell called the Family claimed responsibility for 17 attacks across Oregon, Wyoming, Washington, and California under the banner of the ALF and the ELF. The Family is responsible for a \$12-million arson attack in Vail, Colorado, and for the destruction of the University of Washington’s horticulture center. A similar collaboration between the RALM and the RELM has also been observed in Switzerland: In January 2003, activists fighting for the animal liberation cause and the earth liberation cause claimed a joint action against pharmaceutical company Novartis in the capital city, Berne.³¹

David Foreman, founder of Earth First!, has also pointed to the intermingling of the ecology movement and the animal rights movement: “We wanted to use the science of ecology to guide us . . . The current group of people I don’t consider conservationists, but part of the international anarchist animal-rights movement.”³²

In the same vein, David Olivier, founder of the *Cahiers anti-spécistes*, one of the most important French publications against speciesism, notes a convergence between the animal liberation and the earth liberation philosophies: “The most radical among the militants and the movements in favor of animals did not assimilate the idea of equality among animals, but the founding principles of

environmental ethics. The leaders of the ALF talk currently about humans as an evil species whose population must be reduced drastically.”³³

Deep Ecology and the RELM

There are many similarities between the RALM and the RELM: both are leaderless resistance movements, and both have a set of guidelines giving them and the actions their identity. The importance of the RELM guidelines must be underlined: according to these guidelines, the RELM observes the same principles of nonviolence against people as the RALM does.³⁴ However, despite this seemingly strong case against the use of violence, some parts of the intellectual and ideological roots of the RELM, which reside in the philosophy of deep ecology, seem to sustain the opposite view. Contrary to the situation in the RALM, the controversy within the RELM does not concern the interpretation of a policy but arises from tensions between the guidelines and the philosophical roots of the movement.

As French philosopher Luc Ferry suggests,³⁵ the philosophy of deep ecology seeks to redefine and extend the social contract between humans to include nonhuman subjects like nature and the environment. The animal liberation movement and deep ecology share the common feature of contesting anthropocentrism. However, the animal liberation movement tries to extend the social contract and the responsibilities we have toward sentient beings (beings capable of feeling pain and pleasure), whereas the deep ecology movement tries to extend the contract further to nonsentient beings like mountains, islands,³⁶ and rocks.³⁷ Thus, French philosopher Michel Serres, for example, writes about a new social contract in which the “law of mastery and possession,” which “amounts to parasitism,” is replaced by a “law of symbiosis,” in which nature becomes “a new legal subject.”³⁸

Serres’s new contract radically challenges the role and place of humankind in the world: whereas the animal liberation movement seeks to reform the social contract by enlarging it to include other sentient beings, the deep ecology philosophy suggests a revolution that is, in some interpretations, much more hostile to humankind. For example, one of the founders of deep ecology philosophy, Arne Ness, notes in his manifesto: “The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease in the human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease.” Moreover, at the end of his manifesto, Naess adds: “Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary

changes.”³⁹ Leading figures of deep ecology offer several solutions to achieve this “substantial decrease in the human population.” For example, William Aiken suggests implicitly that we should trigger such a decrease,⁴⁰ whereas Antoine Waechter, a former member of the Green movement, suggests that we “stem at the source the overproduction of children in the third world.”⁴¹

We can conclude that some philosophical roots of the RELM are much more hostile to human beings and certainly do not exclude the harming or killing of people. Therefore, as in the RALM, there is certainly controversy within the RELM with regard to the policy of not harming people. However, that controversy does not concern the practical interpretation of RELM activists on the ground as the controversy within the RALM does, but is of a philosophical and ideological nature. Therefore, it is difficult to predict the extent to which the external RELM ideology affects the level of violence of the RALM.



In the first two sections, I have focused on the nature of the RALM as a leaderless resistance movement and have shown that, because of internal controversy within the movement regarding the interpretation of the policy of not harming people, an assessment of the possibility of a future increase of violence is fraught with difficulties. I have also focused on the possible role played by exogenous factors and have shown that, because of similar controversy at the ideological level in the RELM, it is also difficult to assess the contribution of the RELM’s ideology to the level of violence of the RALM.

In the last part of this article, I focus on factors that are likely to play a role in the future of the RALM movement.

D. The Future of the RALM

Several factors are likely to play an important role in the RALM’s future. First, the progression of the animal rights issue in general, and more specifically at the political level, has been observed in several countries. Even if it is unlikely that the political advancement of animal rights will benefit the RALM directly, it will very likely have an impact on public awareness of the animal liberation issue and could therefore provide the RALM with a certain, if limited, legitimacy.

Another decisive factor is the increased interest of the public in general environmental and climate change issues that has followed the publication

of the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in February 2007. More important is the possible exploitation of the IPCC report by the RALM to gain more public support for the animal liberation movement. In the following section, I show how the RALM might link its activities with the climate change issue to gain public support.

The Progression of Animal Rights Groups into the Political Arena

In recent months, there has been a significant progression of animal rights groups into the political arena in various countries, in particular in the Netherlands, Britain, the United States, and Switzerland.

■ **THE NETHERLANDS AND BRITAIN.** For the first time in history, on 22 November 2006, the citizens of the Netherlands elected two members of the Party for Animals into the national Parliament.⁴² Founded in 2002, in only four years, the party was able to establish Marianne Thieme and Esther Ouwehand as the first animal rights defenders in the Dutch Parliament.⁴³ In the wake of that historical victory in the Netherlands, a similar party, Animals Count, was founded in Britain a few weeks later. Animals Count seeks an “end [to] live transports to Europe and a total ban on hunting.”⁴⁴ The party plans to contest assembly elections in Wales, before trying to win electorates in Scotland and England.⁴⁵

The success of the Party for Animals and the creation of Animals Count seem to have triggered a chain reaction: The group SPEAK, which has been fighting for several months against the construction of an animal experiment laboratory at Oxford University, announced the creation of a political wing called SPEAK Political.⁴⁶ In an announcement, SPEAK Political stated its goals as follows: “We intend to stand against incumbent MP’s who are outspokenly anti-animal (such as Dr Evan Harris) as well as Labour MP’s with small majorities. We do not intend to stand in every area, but in specific targeted seats where there is an issue of animal welfare.”⁴⁷

This advancement of the political animal rights movement is occurring not only in Britain and the Netherlands; in recent months, the issue has become an increasingly powerful force in U.S. elections, thanks to the role played by the Humane Society Legislative Fund.

■ **UNITED STATES.** The Humane Society Legislative Fund (HSLF),⁴⁸ considered one of the most important forces in the animal rights movement in the United

States, arose from the merger of three animal rights organizations, the Humane Society, the Doris Day Animal League, and the Fund for Animals.⁴⁹ The HSLF had several successes during the 2006 Congressional elections, both in the House of Representatives and in the Senate. For example, during the four weeks preceding those elections, more than \$200,000 was spent on fighting the reelection of Republican candidates Richard Pombo and Heather Wilson into the House of Representatives.⁵⁰ HSLF invested more than \$146,000 on fighting the reelection of Richard Pombo, accusing him of “blocking a legislation to promote animal welfare.”⁵¹ Even if it is difficult to quantify the impact of the HSLF, it certainly played a role in Pombo’s defeat by 9,000 votes. HSLF also played a role in the non-reelection of Republican Senator Conrad Burns, defeated by Democratic candidate John Tester by 3,000 votes. Burns strongly opposed a legislation to stop the slaughter of American horses for human consumption.⁵²

The HSLF also had an important impact on the Maryland gubernatorial elections, where it supported Democratic candidate Martin O’Malley against then-Governor Robert Ehrlich. Ehrlich was defeated by 6 percent of the votes (O’Malley won 53 percent of votes). In the meantime, the recognition of the increasing influence of animal rights groups has been growing in the American capital. As Jeffrey Birnbaum of the *Washington Post* put it: “Many people may consider the Humane Society of the United States a pussycat. But with 10 million donors and a \$120 million budget, it is becoming a tiger among Washington’s interest groups.”⁵³

■ SWITZERLAND. Though not as effective as the Humane Society Legislative Fund in the United States, the Swiss association Centro di Documentazione Animalista CDA (Center for Animal Documentation), founded in 1993 in Lugano (in the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland), has also been very active in recent months in promoting animal rights issues, for example, with regard to bans on fur and on vivisection. At a political level, the association created the Osservatorio Politico per gli Animali (OPA, Political Monitoring for Animals),⁵⁴ which seeks to:

- Help animal-friendly voters make decisions in the 2006 regional elections (the executive Council of State and the legislative Council). In this regard, a 15-point proposal form was sent to candidates, whose answers were then evaluated,⁵⁵ and the OPA established a classification of the best⁵⁶ and worst⁵⁷ candidates. The OPA suggests, for example, that a small zoo in the Lugano region be turned into a shelter for liberated animals; the appointment of a

cantonal lawyer for animals; a ban on hunting; and a campaign to promote vegetarianism.

- Offer a follow-up of the candidates on animal-related issues, once they have been elected. In the future, the OPA is also aiming to monitor and analyze animal rights issues on the national level.
- Help establish animal-friendly legislation in Switzerland.

Together with the Party for Animals in the Netherlands, Animals Count and SPEAK Political in Britain, and the Humane Society Legislative Fund in the United States, the Osservatorio Politico per gli Animali represents a new way of promoting animal rights issues in the political arena.

Climate Change and the Animal Liberation Issue

The publication of the report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on 2 February 2007 has triggered widespread public concern about climate change and global warming. For example, a Eurobarometer opinion poll published on 5 March 2007 revealed that “Half of EU citizens are very much concerned about the effects of climate change and global warming, while a further 37 percent say that they are to some degree concerned about the issue.”⁵⁸ The German presidency of the European Union put climate change at the top of the EU’s political agenda,⁵⁹ and during the Spring European Council, the leaders set the target of cutting the EU’s greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent by 2020.⁶⁰

Even before the publication of the IPCC report, a survey conducted by Fox News on 30–31 January 2007 revealed that 82 percent of Americans believe that global warming is happening, and 41 percent think that humans are responsible for it.⁶¹ After the publication of the IPCC report, former Vice President Al Gore testified in Congress that he had received 500,000 letters “asking Congress to take action to stop global warming.”⁶²

Considering the interest of the public in environmental issues, it is not beyond the bounds of imagination that RALM activists may try to gain support by linking their actions to climate change and global warming, as has been observed in the past with joint ALF–ELF actions. RALM activists have two options to link their actions to climate change and global warming: by claiming their actions under a common RALM–RELM banner (as already observed in the past), or by increasingly targeting an indirect source of pollution, such as the meat industry.

The impact of livestock on the environment is the subject of a study commissioned by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization in 2006 entitled *Livestock's Long Shadow*.⁶³ This report shows that globally, livestock produces 18 percent of greenhouse gas emissions. Livestock also produces 37 percent of methane worldwide, which has a far more serious impact on global warming than carbon dioxide.⁶⁴ By targeting butcher shops, abattoirs, and farmers (who are indirectly responsible for climate change in that they produce meat from livestock raised for human consumption), RALM activists could therefore claim to contribute to the struggle against global warming. It will be interesting to observe whether there is an increase in actions perpetrated by RALM against meat producers under the banner of climate change.

Conclusion

In this article, I sought answers to two important questions regarding the development of the RALM: what might be its future level of violence, and what factors could play a role in its future development. Contrary to the widely held view that the RALM might increase its level of violence by perpetrating human killings, I have argued that this cannot be conclusively proven because of the very nature of the RALM as a leaderless resistance movement, and because of the controversy within the movement about whether or not harming people is justified. For the sake of argument, I have assumed that the RALM was behind the January–February 2007 bombing campaign in England and that this could prove an escalation in violence by the RALM. However, as I have shown, the technology used in the attacks defies any such claim.

I have also considered the ideological stance of another leaderless resistance movement, the RELM, on the policy of killing people; because of opposing positions in the ELF guidelines and in the deep ecology philosophy, the RELM contribution to the RALM policy of not harming humans also could not be proven.

I also took into account those factors that are likely to play a role in the RALM's future, namely, an increased interest by the public in climate change issues and the advancement of the animal rights cause to the political arena. Undoubtedly, these factors could lead to an increase of RALM actions in the future.

NOTES

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13. Kaplan, "Leaderless Resistance," 82.
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