

ANTIFA:

AMERICA'S NEW BROWN SHIRTS

By John Perazzo

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A few days before the January 20, 2017 inauguration of President Donald J. Trump, James O'Keefe's investigative journalism organization, *Project Veritas*, released undercover video footage exposing a group of hard-left, self-described "anarchists," "anti-capitalists," and "anti-fascists" who – in an effort to undermine Trump's election and strike back at the "Nazis" they said had sent him to the White House – were plotting to disrupt the inaugural festivities with a massive protest dubbed "DisruptJ20." The conspirators planned to create a series of "clusterf**k blockades" throughout the capital; shut down the Washington, DC Metro lines by chaining the trains to other physical structures; inject nauseating butyric acid into the vent shafts of the National Press Club;

and physically assault Trump backers with well-placed, debilitating punches to the throat.

Only some of these actions materialized on inauguration day, but Washington was a scene of chaos, as well organized rioters dressed entirely in black, their faces covered with black masks and scarves, staged a host of violent and destructive actions. As one of them subsequently told *The Washington Post*, the violence “was purposeful in its symbolism” – meaning, for instance, that “vandalism at a Starbucks shop and a Bank of America branch were executed as attacks on capitalism and corporate greed.” By the time the disturbances were over, some 231 people had been arrested.

Approximately two weeks later, on February 1, 2017, these figures in black

disturbed the peace again, violently shutting down a scheduled talk at UC Berkeley by gay conservative Milo Yiannopoulos, who was slated to call for an end to the “sanctuary campus” policies that have long shielded illegal-alien students at universities from federal immigration authorities. Several hundred of the radical protesters, swimming in a sea of more conventional demonstrators, turned the Berkeley campus into a war zone. Hurling rocks and Molotov cocktails, they shattered the windows of the student union center where Yiannopoulos had been expected to speak; they did \$100,000 worth of damage to a construction site where a new student dormitory was being built; and they violently attacked bystanders, three of whom had to be hospitalized.

Then, on April 15, 2017, violent riots broke out once more during a pro-free-speech rally held by Trump

supporters in Berkeley. Waving the red flag of communism and the black flag of anarchy and carrying a variety of weapons ranging from brass knuckles to stun guns and knives, the masked rioters, calling themselves the “Black Bloc” for the black hoodies and masks they wore, waded into the crowd. Police made 21 arrests. Eleven people were sent to the hospital.

Welcome to “Antifa” (the name is a shortened version of “anti-fascist”), the hard left shock troops fomenting a new civil war in America. It is the political version of a flash mob, with no centralized leadership or structure, but with a clear ideology. The website of a New York-based Antifa chapter, one of several that have recently sprung up across the country, states: “Antifa combines radical left-wing and anarchist politics, revulsion at racists,

sexists, homophobes, anti-Semites, and Islamophobes, with the international anti-fascist culture of taking the streets and physically confronting white supremacy.”

Antifa has been present in chaotic demonstrations from Minneapolis to New Orleans, a violent vanguard hunting down conservative “fascists”. While they dress in black, members of Antifa, with their masks and their taste for violent intimidation, resemble nothing so much as the Brown Shirts who paved the way for Hitler in Germany. Seeking to transform protest to street fighting, members of Antifa may hide their identity, but they are, say those who have closely watched the rapid rise of the group, the new and frightening face of radical leftism in America.

Background

While America was getting its first glimpse of Antifa, Europeans were well acquainted with the movement.

On April 22, 2017, hordes of black-garbed protesters in Cologne, Germany tried to shut down a political convention held by Alternative for Germany, a political party opposing the mass influx of migrants from war-torn, terrorism-infested nations. Over one thousand German Antifa evaded police to smash windows, vandalize cars, and start multiple fires, while hurling smoke bombs at officers who tried to control them.

The following day, activists rioted in Paris when they (mistakenly) thought that Marine Le Pen, a critic of Islamism and an advocate of strict

border controls, was leading former Socialist Party member Emmanuel Macron, who supported an open-door policy for immigrants and refugees from Muslim countries, in the first round of the French presidential election. And a few days after that, violent radicals – many donning black garments, hoods, and masks – disrupted May Day marches in cities all across Europe.

The roots of today's Antifa can be traced back to 1980s Germany, where its members adopted the name of the communist paramilitary groups that had battled the Nazis in street-fighting half-a-century earlier. The longtime Industrial Workers of the World's General Defense Committee organizer Kieran Knutson explains that at that time, disaffected young leftists who claimed to be anti-racists formed a network to fight for the rights of squatters and other "victims of capitalism." With the fall of

communism, the movement languished until recently when it caught fire, in part, as a result of the growing anti-globalization movement. Knutson says that “the several thousand veterans of this movement are still out there.” Indeed there are active Antifa cells in a number of nations across the globe, most notably Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, France, and now, with the election of Donald Trump, especially in the U.S.

America’s Antifa has bloomed in large part because mainstream media outlets have refrained from inquiring into how radical and revolutionary its objectives and practices are, instead seeing it as an alliance of “idealists” who differ from other progressives only in the fact that they are “in a hurry.” The *Los Angeles Times* accepted Antifa’s basic premise when it published a piece calling it an “anti-fascist movement,” as did the

New York *Daily News* when it referred to Antifa as an “anti-fascist collective.”

Other publications have applauded Antifa for functioning as the spearpoint of anti-Trumpism. For example, an April 2017 *Esquire* magazine article lauded the movement’s “anti-fascist” vigilantes for crashing pro-Trump demonstrations where a “significant ... presence” of “white supremacist, alt-right, anti-Semitic and neo-Nazi groups ... intersect with the president’s broader support base.” A January 2017 piece in *The Nation* celebrated Antifa activists as kindred spirits to those who had fought the Klu Klux Klan and organized slave revolts. And the Southern Poverty Law Center, an organization that routinely likens conservatives to racists and fascists, reports that Antifa activists bravely “confront neo-Nazis and racist skinheads in the street.”

Oddly, it is a leftist organization, Occupy.com, that has been most critical and most realistic in its analysis of Antifa, which it rightly sees as making the work of a “real” progressive harder: “Through their wanton destruction and rioting, as well as unbridled enthusiasm for vandalism and violence, Antifa and their black bloc tactics are in many ways an outright gift to those who advocate for a police state.... Awash in 20th century Marxist doctrine, the presence of Antifa, and the left’s tolerance of them within their ranks, stands as a rejection of the civil enlightenment values liberals and progressives once stood for, and a slow embrace of the authoritarian orthodoxy which throughout the 20th century so often gave the left its bad name to begin with.”

It Takes One To Know One

Accepting Antifa's description of itself, the press has not bothered to inquire into the nature of the "fascism" the group claims to fight. In fact, its target is really nothing more or than conservatism, which it labels as "fascism" in an abuse of language almost as brazen as the left's brazen seizure of "liberal" to define its nature and agenda. Under the heading "What Is Fascism?" on the website of Refuse Fascism, an organization closely affiliated with the Antifa movement, there is no definition of the term, but rather the claim that President Trump is "the Fascist in Chief," and that he and his "fascist regime" have poisoned America's political atmosphere with their "fascist government and worldview."

In his 2007 book *Liberal Fascism*, author Jonah Goldberg might have had

Antifa in mind when he observed that “fascist” has evolved into a one-size-fits-all smear that is essentially the equivalent of “heretic,” a term “branding an individual worthy of excommunication from the body politic.” As Goldberg elaborates, “calling ... conservatives fascists is simply what right-thinking, sophisticated people *do*.” But now Antifa doesn’t merely call conservatives “fascists,” it applies this label as an excuse to attack them.

Notwithstanding its ceaseless denunciations of “fascism,” members of the Antifa movement themselves routinely exhibit the type of brutal, intolerant, totalitarian mindset that is typically associated with fascism. When they participate in street demonstrations, they employ the aforementioned tactic they call “black bloc,” whereby they dress entirely in black and cover their faces with black masks or scarves, so

as to make it nearly impossible for victims, witnesses, or law-enforcement personnel to identify who committed an act of vandalism, arson, theft, or assault. As the Antifa website CrimethInc explains, “when everyone in a group looks the same, it is difficult for the police or others to tell who did what.”

Black bloc tactics, according to the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective’s “Black Bloc Papers,” are founded on the premise that “private property—and capitalism, by extension—is intrinsically violent and repressive and cannot be reformed or mitigated.” Lamenting “all the violence committed in the name of private property rights,” this document charges that “corporate private property” in particular “is itself infinitely more violent than any action taken against it.” By this logic, the destruction of a storefront window can be redefined as creating “a vent to let some fresh air into

the oppressive atmosphere of a retail outlet.”

Another key organizing tactic of Antifa/black bloc demonstrators is known as “the stop light method,” where the various actors are assigned different color designations: Red, Yellow, and Green. These colors indicate the types of activities in which they are prepared to engage. “Reds” are those people who are willing to break the law and risk arrest. (As the *Los Angeles Times* reports, these agitators typically “keep their faces covered with bandannas” and “attach themselves to peaceful protests” before they eventually “break out and start shattering windows and attacking cars.”) “Yellows” do not engage in violence or illegality, but pledge to help the criminal Reds hide in their midst and thereby keep them from being apprehended by the police. “Greens” are generally not involved in any tactical planning

or risky behavior, but they contribute to the cause by providing additional foot soldiers that swell the presence of the Antifa. *National Review*'s David French explains: "The rioters break people and destroy things, then melt back into a crowd that often quickly and purposefully closes behind them. They're typically cheered wildly ... and often treated as heroes by the rest of the mob."

The stop light method is supplemented by a practice that Antifa calls "swarming," whereby Yellows surround the victim of a crime (like vandalism, theft, or assault) committed by Reds, so as to block his or her view of the perpetrators. The Yellows further distract the victim by screaming and by holding placards up in front of his or her face, to help give the attackers more time to flee and blend into the crowd.

As investigative journalist Jason Kessler explains, “The effect [of swarming] is to create an immediate feeling of confusion and disorientation in the victim.”

Yet another Antifa technique is “deplatforming” – i.e., depriving conservatives (“fascists”) of a speaking platform, by drowning them out with bullhorns, airhorns, and group chants, or shutting down their events with “human walls” that block anyone from attending.

Antifa also encourages and practices “doxxing,” the use of cyber attacks to first ascertain the Internet identity of an opponent, and to then access and make public his or her valuable personal data. Some of those digitally hounded by Antifa members have been forced virtually to seek new identities.

CampusReform.org has written that the Facebook page of a South Carolina group called Upstate Antifa “is replete with endorsements of political violence and property destruction in the name of fighting ‘fascism’.” Upstate Antifa has also promoted violence via posters bearing slogans like: “Fighting fascism is a social duty, not an antisocial crime,” and “Fascism is not to be debated. It is to be smashed.” Such incitements to use violence are taught and encouraged, in part, through pro-Antifa publications like *Repress This*, *The Invention of the White Race*, *Our Enemies in Blue*, and *Whatever You Do, Don't Talk to the Police*.

Funding

Because Antifa is a decentralized movement consisting of many loosely affiliated groups as well as individuals

acting on a freelance basis, it is difficult to trace the sources of its funding. Whatever money the movement may receive from charitable foundations or high-profile financiers ultimately makes its way to Antifa by way of an indirect, circuitous path. This is because few philanthropies or big-name funders want to risk tarnishing their own reputations by openly supporting hordes of violent radicals. As Jason Kessler writes in GotNews.com: “It’s instructive to show how money from globalist billionaires like George Soros and Tom Steyer trickle down to the Antifa foot soldiers in many major demonstrations. Soros and Steyer donate to Media Matters, a left-wing group that operated Hillary Clinton’s notorious online propaganda arm Correct the Record. Media Matters in turn funds [Antifa-affiliated] groups like ANSWER.... This is typical of the way [the] top-down, billionaire-funder-to-terrorist-foot-soldier hierarchy works,

with several degrees of separation and plausible deniability.”

One organization that *can* be definitively identified as a funder of the Antifa movement is the Alliance For Global Justice (AGJ), which serves as the fiscal sponsor of Refuse Fascism, a constituent organization of the movement. Bankrolled by left-wing philanthropies like George Soros’s Open Society Institute and the Tides Foundation, AGJ is a self-described “anti-capitalist,” “anti-imperialist,” tax-exempt charity whose mission is to train young activists to build a “unified grassroots movement” capable of creating “a socially, ecologically and economically just world” that offers “alternatives” to the “domination of governments, global financial institutions, and multinational corporations which denigrate the world’s peoples and devastate ecosystems.” By

AGJ's reckoning, it is government's duty to satisfy "the right of people to shelter, sufficient food, medical care, education, employment, [and] leisure," and to dismantle societal "structures that distribute wealth in ways that deny anyone those basic rights." Also central to AGJ's worldview is the belief that "group rights [are] equal to or superior to the rights of individuals articulated by 18th Century European men."

Fiercely opposed to the "militarization" of the U.S.-Mexico border, AGJ has been particularly outspoken on the issue of illegal immigration—opposition to which is, according to Antifa, one of the key elements of the American fascism that must be violently confronted. "The borderlands," says the Alliance, "like most of this continent, is primarily a site of displacement and genocide

of indigenous people” dating back to the 1840s, when “the U.S. nation state [took] half of México’s land by military force.” It is logical that it would back a street fighting force ready to act on these principles.

Conclusion

The foot soldiers of the Antifa movement function as a special-operations unit of the modern Communist Left. Antifa’s propensity for violence makes its mere threat to show up for an event—as in the case of Ann Coulter’s scheduled April 27, 2017 speech at Berkeley—grounds for cancelling it. Thus, the movement has become the most extreme threat against free speech, particularly on college campuses, in America.

Utterly rejecting any notion of

a free and open exchange of ideas, Antifa views anyone who holds a political perspective contrary to its hardcore radical view of America as a contaminated society, as The Enemy that must be crushed by any means necessary. Antifa is thus a real-time confirmation of the dangerously fraternal relationship between fascism and communism noted by Jonah Goldberg and other observers. “Fascism, properly understood,” Goldberg points out, “is not a phenomenon of the right at all. Instead, it is, and always has been, a phenomenon of the left. This fact ... is obscured in our time by the equally mistaken belief that fascism and communism are opposites. In reality, they are closely related, historical competitors for the same constituents, seeking to dominate and control the same social space....”

So it is for Antifa: neo-communists

who are at the same time fascist anti-fascists. Understanding this apparent paradox-and combatting the agenda of a movement willing to engage in civil war against those it regards as “deplorable” -is an increasingly urgent requirement for American politics in the near future.

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