

Times have changed but protest tactics haven't

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America's Police State - When Did Dissent Become a Crime?

Almost a DECADE ago it became extremely obvious that the 'man' had plans!

"Dead and wounded dissidents, if identifiable, must be removed immediately by the police ... When being reported, dissident and own casualties are categorised merely as dead or wounded. To inhibit propaganda exploitation by the dissidents the cause of the casualties (for example, 'shot') is not reported. A follow-up operation should be carried out to maintain the momentum of the dispersing crowd." -- **Section S543 of the ADF Manual**



Dale Mills, independent Oz journalist, wrote a [piece](#) on the new oppressive measures in January 2005. It covered new militarised strategies for crowd control -- and O my, hasn't it all come to pass with a vengeance!

After protesters were completely contained/smothered by an overwhelming police presence during the APEC summit held in Sydney some years back, it became clear that Mills' report was not understated, as extreme as that information was at the time.

Today overwhelming and oppressive police tactics have become the norm at every major event that could attract protesters. However, protesters have learned little it seems while the State pursues evermore (totalitarian) oppressive strategies.

It should now be extremely clear to all activists everywhere that they have failed to keep pace with tactics used against them and have FAILED to INNOVATE or ADAPT to changing circumstances; and as we all should know, those who fail to adapt in radically different environments are doomed to extinction!

Traditional forms of protest activity are no longer effective as is abundantly clear today. Gathering en masse in specified locations in order to make it easier for police to herd and contain protesters is ridiculous -- as is asking permission -- unless, of course, it is a diversionary tactic -- to protest from oppressive police State authorities.

All protest actions to be undertaken should be planned in detail in advance; actions should be

decentralised for maximum effect, police should be forced to attend as many 'spontaneous eruptions' in as many locations as possible; police should never be given the opportunity to assemble in one location in force.

All actions, whatever form they take, should be dramatic and send a strong clear message to the public -- in that regard historically effective tactics employed by the 'Weather Underground' of the 60's may be useful today.

Highly mobile command cells which incorporate all available means of (untraceable) mass communication are a must.

Strike where regulators least expect it, after all, protest activity is just a means of communication, never lose sight of that fact -- it is not necessary for the entire group to congregate in one specific location to be easily trounced on by fascist State regulators. Create as many different diversions as possible prior to any planned major action -- need I go on?

It is time to review current ineffective tactics/strategies and adjust to the times. Remember police forces are trained to work in concert/groups and that is their weakness they cannot cope with radical, unpredictable events -- so why make it easy for the sadistic morons? Sitting passively in a group and allowing police to pepper spray or abuse you at will is a less than sane strategy, be advised.

Successful labour protests of the 20's, 30's and 50's offer some interesting lessons, however, the most successful and effective protests in the modern era were the highly political student and activist protests of the 60's; learn from the tactics of the most successful groups, the 'Weather Underground' stands out among them. Volumes of material are freely available in the public domain and on the Internet today so there are no excuses for failure.

Remain focused, dedicated and highly innovative/creative if you wish to succeed. Good luck!

The following sub-textually DEFEATIST report from Alternet misses the point entirely:

America's Police State on Steroids

by Arun Gupta

CHARLOTTE, N.C. -- In cities hosting large gatherings such as the national political conventions or international summits, we've come to expect a massive militarized police presence, even as the ranks of protesters thin. But what happens to all of the new high-tech cop toys and newly passed ordinances once conventioners leave town? They stay.

I was at the alternative journalist flophouse in Charlotte on Sept. 4, the first day of the Democratic National Convention, when I received word of kettled protesters a few blocks away. I had just met FireDogLake reporter Kevin Gosztola, and after forming a mutual admiration society, we raced outside.

We hoofed past siren-flashing police cars blocking side streets, hiking alongside an empty roadway. Walls of blue loomed ahead. Our hands went to our sides and drew cameras. As we neared a broad intersection, protesters appeared behind a double line of police using bicycles as barricades. The entire intersection was encircled by hundreds of ground troops, motorcycle cops, commanders, surveillance units and vehicles. Media flitted along the perimeter and uncertainty coursed through observers. Why had hundreds of police barricaded the protesters, were they going to sweep them

up, would violence break out?

It turned out the protesters were conducting an impromptu street blockade, preventing delegate buses from proceeding on their appointed route. The police moved to funnel the protesters into an isolated grass field lined with metal fencing, the “free-speech prison.” It was devoid of life, save for CODEPINK’s Medea Benjamin on a loudspeaker demanding: “Free Bradley Manning,” and “We don’t want a war with Iran.” A dozen anarchists approached the cage and broke into the “Hokey Pokey,” sticking their left arms in and singing, “You do the hokey-pokey and kiss your rights goodbye, that’s what it’s all about.”

It was a replay of the final night in Tampa, Fla., at the Republican National Convention. There, perhaps 150 protesters also blocked an intersection, delaying delegates exiting the convention after Mitt Romney’s acceptance speech. Nearly 400 police penned in the protest, and at every intersection visible, up to two blocks away, squads of police waited in reserve. A crew of seven Guardian Angels had deputized themselves as back-ups in case the police were overwhelmed, their tee shirts and bodies having seen better days.

Police-to-Protester Radio Incalculably Wide

Protests in Tampa and Charlotte have been surrounded by media, swarmed by police and enveloped in surveillance. Perhaps because of the military-like mobilization, arrests have been rare and police in both cities have not prevented unpermitted marches, though they have been tightly managed. There were only two reported arrests [3] in Tampa, and activists who dropped banners and locked down at a coal-fired power plant were not arrested.

On Tuesday, Sept. 4, ten undocumented immigrants were hauled off after staging a nonviolent civil disobedience action. Police also nabbed three protesters, including one for wearing a mask and another for allegedly crossing a police line [4] – something I did multiple times without incident. Of course, I was wearing a suit, and the protesters were a bit scruffier, lending weight to activists’ contention that police single them out based on their appearance.

I moved on to a Planned Parenthood rally taking place nearby. I talked my way through the first layer of Secret Service despite lacking credentials. The crowd was a pink haze of tee shirts bearing the slogan, “2012 Yes We Plan,” with the zero replaced by a circular package of birth-control pills. With the branded tees, pink signs declaring “Women are watching and we’re voting Obama,” and canned speeches for Obama, it had all the spontaneity of a corporate rock concert, as soothing to the Democratic Party machine as a river of pink Pepto-Bismol. Unlike the feral anarchists outside, the pro-choice troops inside the Democratic fold were free of a suffocating police presence.

Drones, “less-lethal” weapons and anti-dissent laws

The feds gave \$50 million each to Tampa and Charlotte for security for the conventions, and it showed in the police mobilization and shiny new equipment ranging from bicycles and “less lethal weapons” to communications gear and medieval-style armor for cops and horses. Given the fact that protesters amounted only to a few hundred, it’s suspicious that thousands of police needed to be deployed -- more than were in evidence for massive protests in Washington, D.C. against the Iraq War a decade ago.

The biggest impact of militarized policing is not at the conventions themselves, but in the long term. The two political conventions coincide with the Summer Olympics. The international games proved to be a handy way to push out the poor from city centers by constructing stadiums and Olympic

villages that are repurposed for tourism, consumption and high-end housing. Similarly, conventions and summits like NATO, G8, the RNC and DNC are part of the trend of intensifying the policing of poor and dissidents.

In some cases the convention policing leads to a more aggressive posture. In Denver, which hosted the 2008 DNC, 200 police in riot gear [5] used their toys on Occupy Denver last October, attacking [6] them with rubber pellets, mace, batons and pepper spray. In Chicago [7], new laws passed to stifle dissent at NATO protests there in May were made permanent, as were laws passed in Charlotte [8] for the DNC. (The Tampa laws had a sunset clause.)

The covert side of policing summits and conventions is more disturbing. Tactics like infiltration, spying and provocateurs sometimes come to light when raids of activist spaces, pre-emptive arrests and contrived terrorist plots are sprung and the victims snared. Other elements remain covert.

Speculation was rife if drones would be employed during the RNC. A Tampa police spokeswoman denied [9] that any of the “60 local, state or federal agencies involved in the security operation of the Republican National Convention will utilize air or ground drones.” But a private company, United Drones, was adamant that it would be flying drones for an unnamed private party during the convention. The morning after the RNC ended, as I drove into Tampa across the Howard Frankland Bridge with a legal observer, we spotted a low-flying aircraft. It looked like a large model aircraft with no obvious cockpit to hold a pilot, but was moving much faster than highway traffic.

Militarized and pre-emptive policing

Alex S. Vitale, associate professor in sociology at Brooklyn College and author of *City of Disorder* [10] and numerous reports on protest policing [7], told AlterNet that he pinpoints the “intense changes” in policing to the 1999 World Trade Organization Ministerial in Seattle that was disrupted by nonviolent protests. (The much-reported window-breaking by self-described anarchists took place after and away from the much larger nonviolent actions.) But there is no across-the-board standard, he cautions. “Policing is more militarized or pre-emptive in depending on the department,” he says.

“[P]olicing in the U.S. is very decentralized,” Vitale explains, and “the handling of protests is left to the local police.” At the 2000 RNC in Philadelphia, says Vitale, there was a “heavy police response, pre-emptive arrests, mass arrests, holding people on exorbitant bail.”

In New York at the 2004 RNC, the police response was “pre-emptive,” as Vitale describes it, complete with “mass arrests, infiltration and surveillance.” In 2000 at the DNC in Los Angeles, the ACLU lambasted the LAPD for creating “an orchestrated police riot [11]” after shooting tear gas and rubber bullets into a crowd at a rally for which organizers held a permit. Vitale says there was a “more militarized response” at the 2008 RNC in St. Paul.

Thus, the decision to give protests some breathing room in Tampa and Charlotte is notable because of past convention experiences, as well as the police attacks on Occupy camps in the last year. That may explain the absence of outright police aggression. Given the highly scripted nature of the conventions, 16,000 journalists looking for a story, and the prominence of Occupy Wall Street, chaos on the streets could have bumped the canned convention speeches from the top headline.

Vitale says: “Local officials want to minimize the level of dissent because to them, it’s all a very high-risk endeavor. They don’t want to get caught with the protests interrupting the events in any way.”

The danger of speaking out: 'Jesus, it's a war zone.'

I mention to Vitale that the Occupy Movement succeeded in part because it was theater: People acted out a new society in public. The flip side was the theater of the police response -- from the military-style assault on Occupy Oakland to the stormtrooper gear of Portland's police to the cinematic staging of thousands of New York police sealing the financial district the night of May Day.

Vitale agrees there is an element of spectacle. He says the militarization of policing "communicates a symbolic message to participants and public that speaking out is dangerous and must be treated as a violent threat. The use of body armor and vehicles is almost never warranted. It communicates a message of fear and violence."

That spectacle was on full display in Tampa and Charlotte. The day after Hurricane Isaac swiped Tampa, I wandered through the security zone, perhaps a quarter mile around the convention's outer security perimeter. Stopping at a Salvation Army truck for some cold water, the only other civilian was a sun-crisped local. Appearing dazed, he gestured to the empty streets, speaking to no one in particular, "It's a military zone. Jesus. It's a war zone."

Squads of camouflage-clad cops marched by; pelotons of bicycle police cruised streets; posses of horse-mounted police stood at the ready; heavy-duty golf carts crammed with law-enforcement personnel zipped by; platoons of riot police shadowed protesters; two-man teams on overpasses scanned areas below with binoculars, Secret Service in bulletproof vests secured checkpoints; assault boats plied the water; choppers circled above.

While there is federal involvement in policing conventions says Vitale, "I've always resisted the notion that we can explain the intensification of policing as a result of federal intervention. The military, fed law enforcement and local law enforcement have all become less tolerant of dissent. They are all experimenting with new techniques and technologies to aggressively contain the dissent. They are all learning from each other."

Keeping away all but militants and fanatics: "making money off orange jumpsuits"

In the security state, democracy has withered. In Tampa during the Republican National Convention, what was known as the "free speech zone" was a portable stage on a crumbling road slicing through barren brownfields. The Westboro Baptist Church [12] - the "God hates fags" gang that pickets the funerals of dead U.S. soldiers based on the logic that they were killed as divine retribution for believing "it's OK to be gay" - entered the zone one afternoon. As a handful toted flamboyant posters of hate, more than 100 police took up position.

A minute after I chanced upon them, a hundred or so anarchists marched on the scene chanting, "We're here, we're queer, we're anarchists, we're going to fuck you up!" Dozens of reporters and cameraman stalked the edges like lions hunting antelopes. As the protesters encircled the Westboro crew, mixing insults with pleas for tolerance, 100 riot police pounded the street as they rounded the corner. More police poured in from every direction and a helicopter swooped in.

Despite the tension, no violence occurred. Vermin Supreme [13], the performance activist who sports an upside-down boot affixed to his head, gently dissuaded the police from breaking heads by pointing out over a bullhorn that there was no need for aggression against peaceful protests. The anarchists had made their point and went on their way. But the city of Tampa had also made its point. In the militarized convention space, the only groups exercising the right to dissent are left-wing militants and right-wing fanatics.

There is a strategy to this. Vitale says, "We are producing urban spaces in many cities that are hostile to dissent. The summits accentuate that by adding in a layer of barricades and intensive policing." The purpose of the intensive policing, he argues, is to insulate the rich and powerful who attend the conventions "from the rabble." He adds: "Dictators have been doing this sort of thing for generations."

I asked Vitale if these conventions are pop-up police states. He countered, "I've been to police states, and you get shot if you demonstrate, not spend a night in jail."

That's true -- for most Americans. But at a rally against voter suppression in Tampa, Life Malcolm, a member of the Black People's Advancement and Defense Organization, described his hometown.

"Tampa is a police state," Malcolm said. "Twenty four hours a day, seven days a week we are under constant surveillance. We see the police on every street corner, in their cars, on their bicycles, or on foot patrol in our communities. All night long their helicopters are whirling overhead when we are trying to read with our children, put them to bed or be romantic with our mates. The police beat us up, scare us, lock us up, harass us. You can't even walk down the street being black, drive down the street being black."

As a consequence, said Malcolm, "In our neighborhoods nobody comes outside. Everybody is boarded up in the house because they are afraid to come outside the house and be caught by the police like some kind of animal. In the state of Florida, they used to make their money off oranges, now they make their money off people in orange jumpsuits."

Long after the media and politicians are gone, dozens of local and state police agencies will be back at work, showered with new weapons, technology and laws to contain troublemakers and undesirables. No matter who wins in November, the march toward a police state will continue unabated.

Links:

[1] <http://www.alternet.org>

[2] <http://www.alternet.org/authors/arun-gupta-0>

[3] <http://www.tampabay.com/blogs/the-buzz-florida-politics/content/tampa-city-officials-recap-rnc-numbers>

[4] <http://www.crimeincharlotte.com/>

[5] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4PeNJro-f0&feature=player_embedded

[6] <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2011/10/29/1031388/-Occupy-Denver-Rubber-Bullets-Batons-Pepper-s-pray-Updated-20-arrested-multiple-injured>

[7] <http://chicago-nato-report.weebly.com/>

[8] <http://dissenter.firedoglake.com/2012/09/02/charlotte-making-it-possible-your-rights-are-suppressed/>

[9] <http://www2.tbo.com/news/republican-national-convention/2012/aug/24/2/agencies-drones-wont-fly-at-rnc-ar-473514/>

[10] <http://www.amazon.com/City-Disorder-Campaign-Transformed-Politics/dp/0814788173>

[11] <http://www.aclu-sc.org/aclu-condemns-police-response-to-d2k-rally/>

[12] <http://www.godhatesfags.com/>

[13] <http://www.verminsupreme.com/>

[14] <http://www.alternet.org/tags/police-state-0>

[15] <http://www.alternet.org/tags/democratic-national-convention>

[16] <http://www.alternet.org/tags/republican-national-convention>

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