

ANIMAL RIGHTS EXTREMISM IN THE USA AND UK

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Extremism and terrorism in the name of animal rights are phenomena predominantly present in Western democracies such as the United States of America and UK. In the past twenty years extremist and terrorist groups fighting for environmental and animal rights protection have caused, only in America, material damage at the amount of over 100 million dollars. In addition, they are responsible for arsons, bomb attacks, vandalism, harassment, kidnappings and many other forms of violence.

These new forms of extremism and terrorism were created in the `70s of the 20th century with the goal to protect animal rights. In order to understand their ideology and methodology of work it is necessary to make a distinction between the two related phenomena - animal welfare and animal rights. While proponents of animal welfare concept believe that people have to treat animals humanely, opposing any form of abuse, the idea of animal rights which nowadays forms a particular philosophic system, is actually against any kind of animal exploitation by humans. It is exactly in this idea that we find a seed of possible extremism in the name of animal rights protection. Behavior of activists who strive for radical realization of animal rights often turns into those forms of behavior we can qualify not only as extremism, but also terrorism.

Keywords: Terrorism, Extremism, Violence, Animal rights, Animal welfare.

Introduction

Extremism in the name of animal rights, known as AR extremism (Animal Rights Extremism), can be classified into eco-extremism subgroup, ie eco-terrorism, and by ideological provenance it belongs to the left-wing. State authorities of western countries are particularly worried by the noticeable intensive collaboration between AR extremists and other violent left-wing groups in the recent years. The idea of animal rights protection corresponds with the idea of human rights, therefore it is evident that with the reinforcement of the first, the second value is also reinforced, as witnessed by the increasing number of lawyers who deal with the issue of animal rights.

AR (*animal rights*) activists or *animalists*, under the term *animal protection* imply “activities (normative and practical), which a man undertakes to prevent cruelty toward animals, to better human treatment of animals, to reduce stress and effort of animals, and to place under control and monitoring the experimentation, that is the research, on animals” (Paunovic 2004: 157). A problem arises when, in case of need for animal protection human rights are violated, ie when violence as basic method of operating is being used. Due to exaggerated activism, animalists often stray into socially undesirable phenomena that can be qualified as terrorism and extremism.

Many groups for animal rights protection such as ALF (Animal Liberation Front) are characterised by relevant authorities as terrorist and can be classified into the corpus of domestic or *homegrown* terrorism. Sometimes, it is difficult to make a precise distinction between extremists and terrorists who fight for animal rights protection because they fluctuate independently from one form to another.

The essential value which members of ALF and their related groups uphold is a biocentric ethic approach in contrast to the anthropocentric, which in the center of living world places man and his needs. Biocentrism starts from the idea that all living beings are aware of pain and suffering and that, in these terms, man does not represent an exclusivity in the living world, therefore can not make decisions regarding other non-human beings. From this view derives the conclusion that animals are moral beings and as such they can have certain rights, therefore it is proposed that they are to be treated as subjects of rights, not as objects, as it was common in former practice. Some researchers consider that commitment to achievement of animal rights can be determined as „the protection of animals from suffering“ (Nussbaum 2006: 5).

Although the objective to which animalist strive is overall human, the problem arises when they start using violence as the main *modus operandi* which often leads to socially undesirable occurrences such as extremism and terrorism.

The Relationship of Man Towards Animals – Genesis of the Development

The idea of anthropocentrism which places a man in the center of the living world is present since the Christian – Judaic tradition, which is explicitly shown in the Bible. In the Old Testament it is clearly stated that God gave man the right to govern all nature for his own benefit, which is often subject of criticism by animalists.

When it comes to ancient Greece and their relationship to animals, we can speak of two groups of thinkers. The first group was formed by those who, like Aristotle, considered man the master of all nature, according to which his supremacy was confirmed, while the second group was made up of philosophers who, as in the case of Pythagoras, argued for animal rights.

The relationship of old Rome toward animals is best shown in gladiator games during which thousands of animals were killed¹. Not only Romans, but French also enjoyed games in which animals were killed, which is proved by twenty-six arenas this country owned from the 5th to the 8th century AC, in which animals were sacrificed.

Many significant philosophers dealt with the relation of man toward animals. Many of their views were quite advanced for the time they lived in, and some had a predictive view on animal rights, like Leonardo da Vinci who claimed that the time will come when people will look at a killing of an animal as a homicide (Singer 2006).

In the middle ages Thomas Aquinas considered cruelty to animals can bring to cruelty to other men, while Descartes pointed that animals were sort of machines, not living beings, because they had no soul. For Descartes only man possessed a soul, which distinguished him from nature and made him a special being. Since, according to him, animals were merely machines, they were incapable of having any feeling, including pain and pleasure. Francis Bacon stated that even animals have souls but only in the form of *anima sensibilis*. Jeremy Bentham led by utilitarian principle wrote that man's aim of labour is achieving profit, not only for individual but for the society as a whole. He considered the possibility of animal suffering and stressed that animals should have their rights (Edwin 1939).

In the 20th century Hans Jonas, as a representative of so called "philosophical biology" pointed that animals, unlike plants, are characterized by the following: "motility, perception and emotion" (Jonas 2001: 99). Jonas believed that Aristotle was the first to write about philosophical biology, but unlike him, he advocated for so called biocentric principle in which center is life in general, and not for the anthropocentric in which man is the most significant being.

¹ During Trajan's reign when Romania was conquered, thousands of animals were killed during 123 days of celebration.

The first movements dealing with the issue of animal protection incurred in Great Britain and USA in the 17th century. Likewise, the first Law against cruel treatment of animals was passed thanks to the Puritans in year 1641 in Massachusetts under the title of *The Body of Liberties*. This Law contained one hundred liberty principles, and the twentysecond liberty forbade animal abuse and included criminal prosecution. The first organized society for preventing animal abuse incurred in Great Britain in 19th century under the name of *The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals*. Besides Puritans, Quackers intensively fought for protection of animals, amongst who George Fox is of especial significance (Ryder 2000).

Violent fighting methods can be noticed as early as in 1800, when a youth organization called *The Band of Mercy* destroyed property of those institutes which used animals for experimental purposes (Liddick 2006).

Regardless the fact that the idea of protecting animals appeared relatively early in enlightened individuals and groups, the greatest unmatched influence in this sphere is achieved by works of Peter Singer and Tom Regan in the 20th century. The importance of these two philosophers is that they set up the former marginal social issue of animal rights protection to be a political issue. While Singer papers indicate the human obligation to care about animal rights, Tomas Regan takes one step further and concludes that animals deserve to be treated equally as men. Otherwise, Regan held that these rights are primarily related to mammals and vertebrates².

Man`s relationship with animals can also be, at great extent, predetermined by religious affiliation. While Christianity started from the anthropocentric principle that man is the master of nature, including animals, Buddhism and other eastern religions believe that there is a soul in each living being and that it can be reincarnated from one form into another, depending on moral behaviour during its` lifetime. From the Buddhist point of view, the main reason for killing and abusing is a bad karmic connection between animal and man. The Hindu, simmlar to Buddhists, believe in the immortality of the soul and variability of body through reincarnation. Religious Hindu are normally vegetarins. Considering they believe in reincarnation, the aim is to attain the Moksha or the unification with Brahma (the Creator). Thereby, the reincarnation can be prolonged at a longer period of time and last for hundreds of years in different life forms, therefore it is not allowed to kill animals. This rule is especially applied to cows, which are treated in India as the sacred animal. The Islam considers animal killing is allowed if there is need for food, clothes, footwear, pest extermination or some other justifiable reason. In case animal killing happens for pure sport motives or a hobby, then by Islam it is a taboo. Rules for killing animals can best be seen in Quran from surah *Al-Baqarh* and 173 verse which says that forbidden is the carcass, the blood and the flesh of swine, and that which is slaughtered in someone else's name, and not in the name of Allah.

The need for animal protection found its` hardest stronghold in anglo-saxon culture, but today it gains increase in importance even in skandinavian countries. It is particularly interesting that the issue of animal rights protection has risen to a level of the political problem because it often leaves political consequences and is politically motivated. Movements fighting for animal rights are most developed in western countries due to the fact that this issue can only be solved in those communities that firstly achieved the satisfactory level of human rights protection.

Philosophical-Ethical Principles of Animalists

There are two ethical grounds determining man`s relationship to animals:

1. **Anthropocentric** - which is a subject of criticism by animalists because it considers man superior to all other living beings.

² With such "discrimination" Regan deliberately singled out particular species creating additional confusion in the field of animal rights, logically rising the question of what makes one animal more privileged than another if every living creature experiences pain and suffering?

2. **Biocentric** – which starts from the fact that all living beings are aware of suffering and pain and that man, in this matter, does not represent an exclusivity in the living world, therefore can not make decisions for other non-human beings.

Biocentric ethical approach considers animals to be moral beings, like man, therefore should be looked upon not as objects but subjects of rights. Furthermore, biocentrism considers places like zoos, farms, circuses and so on to represent "dungeons" for animals and consequently should be "liberated".

In several occasions science tried to prove that animals, same as humans, have emotions, of which Charles Darwin wrote in the past. He believed that animals, like humans, react identically to fear: "*Of all emotions, fear notoriously is the most apt to induce trembling; but so do occasionally great anger and joy*" (Darwin 2009: 207). According to Darwin, strong emotions in monkeys can cause redness in face, same as in man, and some animals are capable of crying.

Research published in the scientific magazine *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* showed that even octopuses (*Enteroctopus dofleini*), which were subject to experimentation, were able to recognize people who studied and fed them for weeks because they had different reactions at each one of them, thus indicating the existence of primitive forms of intelligence and emotions (Anderson, et al. 2010).

Until the '70s of the 20th century the predominant attitude was that of the animal welfare, which later gave way to animal rights ideas which affected the substitution of anthropocentric with biocentric principle. Biocentrism corresponds with vegan lifestyle which completely excludes any form of exploitation of animals. Vegans do not eat meat, milk, honey, eggs and products, do not wear leather, feathers, fur, wool or silk and criticize multinational Chemical Concerns and pharmaceutical companies for animal abuse. Their attitudes colored with strong emotions are often unacceptable for the rest of the society: "Zoos are torture chambers for animals, where they are kept away from their natural environment, confined worse than prisoners in prisons, under inhumane conditions! Most of them, apart from serious health problems also suffer from terrible psychological disorders"³.

Biocentrism is in line with the eco-feminist philosophical and ethical principles by which members of male sex are condemned for discriminating women and subordinating the whole nature. Some authors, such as Marc Bekoff, believe that Western civilization is a typical example of chauvinistic-discriminating civilization, so it is logical that they very easily developed phenomena such as racism, sexism and animal exploitation (Bekoff 2010). Some eco-feminists oppose meat consumption. The fact is, throughout history only "man of power" had the opportunity to consume meat while women, like second-class citizens, rarely used meat in their diet. "Man of power consumed meat from the begging of time" (Adams 2004), said Carol Adams.

We conclude that the problem of exploitation of animals is moving in two main directions, which are not mutually exclusive, "in ethical / legal, to fight for respect of animal rights, and in ontological and moral, to fight against exploitation of animals in the production of food (meat)" (Janović 2009: 46).

Extremism and Terrorism in the Name of Protecting Animal Rights

When it comes to relationship between extremism and terrorism, we can conclude the following: although all terrorism is extremism at the same time, vice versa is not true. Not all extremism grows into a more complex form of violence, which is terrorism.

Terrorism is always a political phenomenon and represents a complex form of violence which can appear in different forms. One of the most encompassing definition of terrorism which survived and endured the test of time was established in the '80s of the 20th century by Dragan Simeunović: "As a multi-dimensional phenomenon the modern terrorism can theoretically be most generally defined as: a complex form of organized group, and rarely individual or institutional political violence, marked not only by frightening brachialy physical and psychological, but also by sophisticated and technological

³<http://www.veganim.com/>, Accessed 25 June 2013.

methods of political struggle which usually occurs during the political and economic crisis, and rarely in times of economic and political stability of a society, systematically trying to accomplish "big goals" in morbidly spectacular fashion, and inappropriately given conditions, primarily the social situation and the historical possibilities of those who practice it as a political strategy" (Simeunovic 2009: 78).

When it comes to terrorism in the name of protecting animal rights it represents a relatively new phenomenon that began to develop in parallel with radical ideas about animal rights in the '70s of the 20th century. According to the FBI, two kinds of terrorism can be distinguished: international and domestic, that is *homegrown* terrorism (Simeunovic 2013). Terrorists who commit violence in the name of protecting animal rights can be classified into domestic eco-terrorists. FBI data show that since the year 1976 until today the ALF (Animal Liberation Front), ELF (Earth Liberation Front) and other related organizations committed 1100 criminal offences with material damage exceeding 110 million dollars.

In case we are led by the terrorism classification formed by Dragan Simeunović (Simeunovic, 2009: 83) we see that extremism in the name of protecting animal rights can be classified, according to the programme orientation, in **left-wing terrorism**. The Left is famous for always protecting rights of minorities which are deprived of their rights or threatened, such as national, sexual, religious groups etc. (in this case it refers to animals as endangered species). Furthermore, the left-wing always strives for justice which is, in case of these terrorists, marked as "justice for animals", and finally, the struggle against inequality is one more characteristic which classifies these terrorists into left-wing.

According to means, terrorism in the name of animal rights protection is often classic, while according to methods it can be classic (conventional terrorism) and cyber-terrorism. Especially the latter kind (cyber-terrorism and extremism), together with the use of modern means of communication such as the Internet, is getting more and more intensified. It is a so-called "Black propaganda" that is being used by terrorists (more often by extremists) for the mobilization and radicalization of potential members. The possibility of anonymous activity with the help of internet, the immediacy and velocity of communication are just some of the segments that favor the action of terrorists and extremists.

According to the type of actor-subject, terrorism in the name of animal rights protection can be individual or terrorism of organizations and illegal groups⁴. Actions of terrorists who fight for animal rights are often individual which coincides with their idea of a "lone wolf". The idea of "leaderless resistance" is also present. Except for the individual terrorism, animalists sometimes act in groups, performing terrorist attacks.

Precisely due to their principles of action, which imply individual action without communication with other members of animal protection movement, fighting these terrorists is extremely difficult.

Nowadays, terrorist groups that fight for animal rights are spread throughout the world. The FBI classified some animalists, such as ALF activists, as a so-called domestic or "homegrown" terrorism of the left-wing orientation. The FBI identified "domestic terrorist groups" and made a five member classification which is applicable even today. Those are the following groups (Ronczkowski 2004: 28).

1. *White leftists*
2. *Right-wing extremists*
3. *Leftists of Puerto Rican origins*
4. *Black militants*
5. *Jewish extremists.*

Somewhat later, this classification was modified, so that the „domestic“ terrorists comprised following groups: „white racists, black racists, militia groups, right-wing extremists, left-wing extremists, extremists in the name of protecting animal rights and environment“ (Jonas 2001: 378). We can see that extremists fighting for animal rights gradually separated themselves from the left-wing organizations, which indicates that they have developed their own particular ideology which is still, from the axiological perspective, closest to the left-wing ideas.

⁴ So far there is no record of institutional terrorism, such as state

It is hard to say when animalists are terrorists and when extremists. If we determine extremism as behavior at the limit of the permissible with tendency of crossing that limit, we shall see that animalists often cross every permissible limit transforming themselves very often into terrorists. Perhaps, it would probably be better to say that here we speak of extremists who, from time to time, perform a few terrorist acts. Unlike the terrorist act, although the most intensive segment of terrorism, terrorist activity implies much more activities starting from the preparation, organization, financing etc. (Simeunovic 2013).

Basic operation methods of AR extremists and terrorists are methods of "direct action" with use of violence. Based on the violence forms that are used, we can set aside physical and psychological violence, which implies arsons and planting bombs (their speciality is "letter bombs"), threats, kidnapping, harassment, vandalism, violent release of animals...

As far as AR extremists' goals are concerned we can single out short-term and long-term goals. In the short run these extremists aim to inflict damage to companies that participate in killing and abuse of animals. In addition, they aim to intimidate all those people who in their opinion abuse animals, which implies both physical and psychological violence against them. The long-term goal is to end all animal suffering and forbid various companies to gain profit from animals.

Since they are well organized, AR extremists take into account the media propaganda which they achieve with the help of numerous web-sites and journals such as *No Compromise*, *Earth First!*, *Bite Back Magazine*, etc.

"Enemies" of AR extremists are: fast food restaurants, animal farms, experimental laboratories, pharmaceutical and cosmetic companies, fur factories etc. Besides these, extremists also attack leading figures of the above mentioned companies and enterprises and their close family members.

In May 2011, AR extremists sent a letter-bomb to researchers, Edythe London and Joaquin Fuster, from the University of California UCLA. Fortunately, after the action of police authorities this operation of extremists has been thwarted. In February 2008, six masked animal rights activists were the first to have crashed the birthday party of a UCSC scientist's daughter, when her husband was shot⁵. This was not the only event that alarmed the American public. "Animal Rights Militia" in 1994 threatened to kill 10 scientists if AR activist Barry Horne, who was sentenced to 18 years in prison for bomb attacks on stores causing 3 million pounds damage, were to die during his hunger strike.

According to Europol finds, violence in the name of animal rights protection is growing, what is a justifiable reason for concern⁶. What is noticeable is that this kind of extremists create additional difficulties for both animals and humans because their violent actions among other things include destruction and burning of assets of certain companies, zoos and farms, threatening even lives of animals. The additional problem is that growing solidarity and cooperation is noticed between these groups, joined by more and more anarchists.

Europol classifies terrorism in the name of animal rights protection as a form of individual terrorism, however violent animalists' activism in certain moments is called extremism also. Based on Europol 2011 report it is difficult to estimate the exact number of extremists attacks, due to the fact that only most violent ones are registered. In 2011 in EU countries 262 AR activists attacks have been reported by pharmaceutical companies⁷. Apart from the existing targets, AR extremists started attacking airports involved in transporting animals, what classifies them as terrorists.

⁵http://www.adl.org/main_Extremism/university_of_california_animal_rights_extremism.htm?Multi_page_sections=sHeading_2, Accessed 29 September, 2013.

⁶<https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/press/joint-forces-against-violent-animal-rights-extremists-1023>, Accessed 29 September, 2013.

⁷https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:GpAP7zJl0xMJ:www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/europoltsat.pdf+te+sat+2012&hl=sr&gl=rs&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESjS_4b4FW4IT-jast0zX9uQKTUV5fNozFhdBckfpKbJcGjMIx9zRaUFXAUHCmay4HiYD9-QH8SZB4rrZxNe8JpNYpjoNI-R6s4htiP7Vpk-utRRIm6EWI_lsulDJl0PLpgk-b_d&sig=AHIEtbT2ULp8JJGv2SQ212feP8BsHV77Zw,. Accessed 28 September, 2012.

It is noticeable the increase of violence intensity in AR extremists as well as a higher degree of collaboration with other pro anarchically oriented groups what corresponds with numerous social and anti globalization protests. It is considered that future targets of potential extremists and terrorists fighting for animal rights will be all those scientific institution dealing with research in fields of genetics and nano-technology.

The most famous groups using different forms of violence to fight for animal rights are ALF (Animal Liberation Front), SHAC (Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty), ELF (The Earth Liberation Front etc. The predecessor of ALF organization is tied with the early `60s group *Hunt Saboteurs Association* which protested in England against fox hunts by blocking roads and confusing hound dogs by spraying chemicals which disabled them to chase vixen.

Ronie Lee, the creator of this organization, collaborated with members of ethno-separatist terrorist group IRA in prison at the beginning of the `70s. Considering that ALF destroyed not only the property of their proclaimed „enemies“, but also started planting bombs under cars of some persons who, according to ALF criteria, endangered animal rights, *Scotland Yard* included ALF into terrorist organisations, equalizing it with IRA and PLO. John Thackrah (Thackrah 2003) even identifies ALF members with urban guerrilla, which is unacceptable because for one organization to be profiled as guerrilla several criteria need to be meet. First of all guerrillas keep a specific portion of territory under control, secondly, they carry weapons in public and have the support of the population, which is certainly not the case with ALF activists.

Since they are aware that their work is illegal and that they are committing criminal acts, ALF members have list of advice posted at their web site regarding safety policy they are supposed to lead. One of these advice deal with choosing a collaborator: “Never work with drug users or people who drink too much. Aside from unnecessarily risking arrest, such people are often unstable and typically prove a security risk”⁸. It is forbidden to talk about past actions especially to newly arrived members, as well as creating mass groups for actions. ALF operates on the principle of cells formed by small number of people, often by individuals. At their web site ALF points out that there is a possibility that for the performed activities members may be sentenced between five and ten years to prison, and those who are not ready for this type of risk are not wanted.

ALF is not a hierarchical organization because it works on the principle of cells and so-called *resistance without leader (leaderless resistance)*. This idea brings them closer to some extreme right-wing organizations, for example our *Nacionalni stroj* (National order), which in its constitution emphasizes *leaderless resistance* as a fundamental principle of the organization. ALF receives special support from international organizations that are against dissecting animals (*anti-vivisection*).

On several occasion ALF activists have attacked McDonalds restaurants of which the most famous attack was in Tucson in 2001, causing half a million dollar damage⁹. Similar attack happened in 2003 in California (Chico) when ALF activists sprayed red (which by them symbolizes blood of killed animals) the McDonald wall writing: “Meat is murder“.

Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC) is an extremist organization originating from Great Britain soil and is motivated by ideology and tactics of ALF. Created in 1998 first as a campaign against killing of animals for experimental purposes, it later grew into a real organization. The biggest target of this organization is a company HLS (Huntingdon Life Sciences), which deals with nutritive, veterinary and biochemical research. It is known that many business partners ended cooperation with HLS Company for security reasons due to AR extremists’ actions. Attacks targeted company managers to whom car bombs were planted repeatedly, while their family members were victims of systematic harassment.

Based on previous analyses of violence exercised by activists fighting for animal rights we can conclude that it is primarily extremism which can, from time to time, turn into terrorism. Accordingly, the definition of AR extremism would be:

⁸ <http://www.animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/Activist%20Tips/Security/CellSecurity.htm>, Accessed 28 September, 2012.

⁹ http://www.adl.org/learn/ext_us/ecoterrorism.asp#EarthFirst!Journal, Accessed 18 September, 2013.

Animal rights extremism (AR extremism) is an act of violence, long-lasting violent activity or threat of violence that is directed against those individuals and institutions which exploit animals for personal or social benefits.

Here the emphasis is placed on the "exploitation of animals" because exploitation according to extremists includes not only animal abuse and inhuman attitude towards them such as, for example, negligence, but also gaining any benefit from animals, like the use of milk, wool, labor, etc. Such interpretation of animal rights is dangerous because it is a fertile ground for the development of extremism and terrorism.

Conclusion

The idea of *animal welfare*, which implies the humane treatment of animals and excludes their neglecting, is the ethical principle that has long been well established in a civilized society. Today, those who fight for animal welfare are popularly called the *welfareists* (according to the expression *animal welfare*).

The problem arises when the idea of animal welfare is substituted with the idea of animal rights. It implies the view that animals like man have their will, that they feel pain and suffering, and therefore should be treated as subjects, not objects of law. These activists consider immoral the use of animals for the benefit of man, which represents a good base for the development of extremism and terrorism. In the desire to help animals AR extremists forget one thing, and that is that animals unlike humans have no *ratio*, therefore the will they mention is a questionable ethical category.

Regardless of the fact that the goal these activists strive for is undeniably human, the problem is in methods which implicate different forms of violence, including the most complex ones, such as terrorism. At that moment, the modern society comes to an absurd situation, and that is the struggle for the realization of animal rights is achieved by violating human rights because it is using violence as a basic *modus operandi*.

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