

Black Bloc Tactics Communiqué

A Communiqué on Tactics and Organization to the Black Bloc, from within
the Black Bloc

Anti-Racist Action, The Green Mountain Anarchist Collective



July 2001

Contents

Introductory Notes From The Second Amended Edition	3
Introductory Notes From The First Edition	3
Our Movement Grows	4
Anarchism and the Broader Movement	5
The Development of the Movement	5
Our Local Communities	5
At Demonstrations	5
The Necessity Of Increasing Our Tactical Abilities	6
Increased Organization Of Street Fighting Force: The Formation Of An Elected Tactical Facilitation Core	7
Individual Affinity Groups	8
Clusters	10
Reconnaissance and Communication	11
Reserves	12
Additional Security Precautions: Maps, Radios, IDs, Names, Etc.	15
Communiques	15
Anarchist Principles of Tactical Leadership	16
Physical Training In Between Actions	16
Pre-emptive Actions	17
Preparations For Increased State Repression	17
Development Of Our Social and Political Understandings	18
Conclusion	18

July 2001, From Somewhere in the Green Mountains & in The Midwest -This Document is directly applicable to the particularities of the Anarchist movement in North America. Any applications of the below analysis and tactical proposals to the particularities of the struggle in different regions, should entail a general modification of content in order to maintain an obvious and sufficient relevance.

Introductory Notes From The Second Amended Edition

The edition which you are currently holding is the product of extensive conversations between folk from within the ARA and GMAC. Through these conversations, consensus was reached regarding certain principles of revolutionary organization. Key changes were made to the sections proposing the use of reserves, affinity groups, the tactical facilitation core, as well as minor changes throughout the document. We feel these changes make for a stronger proposal. We, of course, welcome further discussion and amendments where necessary.

Introductory Notes From The First Edition

The following document is presented with the intention of furthering the basic effectiveness of our movement by advocating various tactical practices that we hope will be adopted by the Black Bloc as a whole. The inspiration for this work comes from our complete love for the creative ability/potential of humankind and our uncompromising dedication to social revolution. Portions of this work tend to take on a militaristic tone. This tone should not be misconstrued as a back door justification for arbitrary hierarchical models of organizing. Rather, the reality of our militant struggle necessitates the language used in order to most accurately depict our objective circumstances and the methods we must employ in order to come closer to victory. Here it should be pointed out that under no circumstances do we advocate any organizational model that in essence is not compatible with those utilized democratically by Anarchists and revolutionary workers as practiced during the Paris Commune (1871) and the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). In order to put this work together, we reflected on our own collective experiences as well as looked to history to learn what works within an anarchistic framework and what does not.

It is our intention here to present an accurate, yet brief, analysis of the present state of the movement generally, as well as the steps we (the Black Bloc) must take in order to further the cause. Also, the below proposals are directly intended for Black Bloc incorporation only. For any across the board Anarchist adaptation of the more militant proposals (such as found in the section Preparations For Increased State Repression) would lead to the weakening of the all-important above ground community organizing efforts. We view these efforts as primary to the general cause in that it is through them that the wider populace is brought over consciously to the Anarchist Left. Our struggle must be conducted at all levels. Lastly, we encourage you to read this work and discuss it within your collective and/or with other folk within the Black Bloc anarchist community. It is our hope that such collectives and interested people connected with the Black Bloc will sign their names (not necessarily their given names) to this and implement the tactical proposals suggested below. In the likely case that the below document is partially unacceptable to our community of struggle, it is our hope that such points of contention be discussed, debated

and amended as necessary in order to reach Black Bloc consensus. We here ask that the various Anarchist newspapers and periodicals open up their letter sections for this purpose.

-Green Mountain Anarchist Collective

-Anti-Racist Action

Our Movement Grows

During the course of the past year and a half (since the Battle of Seattle) we have been witnessing/participating in a maturity of the larger social protest movement as well as the smaller (yet growing) revolutionary Anarchist movement.

This is a result of eight basic reasons:

1 The experiential emptiness of intensified neo-capitalist commodification of pseudo-reality and its necessary results of mass alienation, anxiety and Boredom.

2 The continuing failure of the present system to alleviate material deprivation (poverty) amongst certain sectors of working class and poor.

3 Overt attempts by leading neo-capitalist powers to homogenize world economy/culture through elitist centralized organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization has triggered a populist backlash and motivated the usually dormant trade unions.

4 The reconciliation of previously splintered counterculture (urban “punk,” rural “hippy,” etc.) has allowed for a wider base from which shifts in popular social consciousness are disseminating.

5 Increased communications abilities throughout the populace have resulted in organizational/mobilization advances amongst the social protest and revolutionary Anarchist movements.

6 Experience gained by organizations throughout the last decade has vastly increased the practical ability of the movement as a whole.

7 The generational maturity of the children of the 60s and 70s has now come to full fruition. This is a fact that should not be overlooked as we intend to build on and further destroy where our mothers and fathers left off. And finally,

8 Police repression as experienced throughout the United States and Canada during the course of this last year and a half has had the result of radicalizing 10,000s of previously Liberal demonstrators from one coast to the other and back.

Anarchism and the Broader Movement

While the broader movement has affected some important practical and consciousness building victories, it is still too malleable and indecisive to put an uncritical trust in its visual organizations (as encapsulated in the Direct Action Network).

As revolutionary Anarchists we must continue to support and encourage its participatory and directly democratic currents while steering it away from its unconscious tendencies towards spectacular abstraction and Liberal capitulation. We must continue to do this through the dissemination of revolutionary Anarchist theory as well as by DIRECT example, both of the kind on the streets, in community organizing efforts and in regards to our lifestyles. This must continue to be a priority both at demonstrations as well as within the particularities of our local communities.

In this capacity we must be vigilant not to limit our dialectical interactions with the movement itself. In a word, we must continue to reach out to the yet included masses. For it is only through their direct participation that the present system of oppression will be forever disintegrated and thrown into the wastebasket of history.

The Development of the Movement

For all of the above reasons, this past year and a half has been marked as a progressive stepping-stone towards the continuing resurgence of the revolutionary Anarchist movement. This in spite of certain painful setbacks such as the demise of the Love and Rage organization. The objective historical situation, as well as our newfound practical abilities, has resulted in us moving two steps forward for every step back. However, before we become full of conceit, let it be said that we have many, many dangerous steps to traverse before we reach the end of this epic.

Our Local Communities

It is in our specific communities that we (Black Bloc and Anarchists generally) are able to push the evolutionary Anarchist movement forward through diligent and relevant community organizing throughout the ranks of the disenfranchised. Here we must continue to do this by forming workers' cooperatives, community centers, newspapers, the creation of Anarchist art as well as by direct political action whenever possible. At the large demonstrations we are able to push our movement forward by the organizing and subsequent action of our Black Bloc.

At Demonstrations

It is by virtue of the uncompromising militancy of this (our) Bloc that Liberal demonstrations are transformed into insurrectionary happenings. By physically defending ourselves against State (police) attacks, we add a serious dimension to an otherwise timid movement. By effectively defending non-violent protesters against the assaults of the police (such as at the A16 action in DC) we demonstrate the extra-symbolic power of the people while increasing the relative effectiveness of the overall action. By attacking and destroying Capitalist private property (such as in the Battle of Seattle) we go beyond rhetoric and actually inflict real material damage

upon the urban out-posts of the oppressive and totally uninteresting commodified empire of the new Capitalists. By our method we transform indecisiveness and restraint into REAL action.

Those upper middle class Pacifists who clamor that we are wrong by virtue of our demonstrated principles should be reminded that the only legitimate goal of mass demonstrations is to effect relevant social and revolutionary change for the benefit of the working class, poor, and de-classed peoples. It is not, nor never should ever be, to be arrested and brutally beaten for the sake of some vain association with Gandhi or Martin Luther King Jr. Furthermore, let us all reflect upon the fact that India today is presently in shambles due to continued Capitalist exploitation, and the American blacks are still treated as second-class citizens by the State apparatus and plutocracy alike. These are travesties that only a genuine and victorious international revolutionary Anarchist movement, utilizing both violent and non-violent methods, will be able to fully rectify.

It is in this very real context that we fight. We will not, nor should we, compromise our hatred or love any more than we will compromise our goal of complete social revolution, Anarchy, and the dream of all of humanity unshackled from the chains which are both seen and unseen.

We make no apologies.

The Necessity Of Increasing Our Tactical Abilities

However, the forces of the State (specifically the FBI and police) have been studying us for some time. Hence it is absolutely necessary that we further develop our tactical understanding and practical street abilities if we are to maintain, in fact increase, our militant capabilities.

In this regard there are some basic steps that we must take in order to meet this challenge:

- 1 Increased organization of street fighting force;
- 2 Regular physical training in between actions;
- 3 Facilitation of pre-emptive strikes;
- 4 Preparation for eventuality of intensified State oppression and the shifting of the movement of social protest into that of direct social revolution;
- 5 Increased internal social and political education between actions and development of theory.

At the present time, the mobilization of our forces is done in such haphazard manner that our ability to combat well-trained and disciplined State forces is limited. In fact it is only by virtue of our revolutionary dedication and iron constitutions that we have been able to combat these forces with the level of relative success that we thus far have. They (the forces of the State) fight out of hatred of diversity and free expression and for a paycheck. We fight out of hatred of oppression and love, and simply because it is the just thing to do.

However, as the agents of the State modify their present tactics, based on their direct experiences and vast intelligence reports from Seattle to Quebec City, they can be expected to achieve a further level of effective superiority over us in the near future. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that we begin to reorganize ourselves in such a way as to again bring certain advantages to our side.

Increased Organization Of Street Fighting Force: The Formation Of An Elected Tactical Facilitation Core

Our experiences over the course of the last year and a half have taught us a lot regarding the actual and potential effectiveness of Black Blocs during large demonstrations. A16 demonstrated the effectiveness of a large Bloc when used in tight conjunction with non-violent, direct action oriented contingents. It showed us how the combined tactics of physical self-defense (from the Bloc) and non-violent lockdowns can, at this historical juncture, result in effective occupation of large sections of the city-scape. J20 showed how a tightly knit Bloc, lined with defensive banners around its perimeters, can help foster confidence and act as a more substantial deterrent to targeted police arrests. A20 showed how even a relatively small Bloc (as on Saturday, the 21st) can become a substantial fighting force when the physical and mental commitment is there. However, our experiences have also illustrated certain shortcomings that we thus far are yet to overcome. Specifically our lack of a democratic tactical command structure has hindered our abilities to act with more punctuating speed and tactical ferociousness. In certain circumstances this failure has resulted in us becoming bogged down in indecisiveness (specifically regarding movement), and hence has put us in danger as well as led to arrests (i.e. on the Monday of the A16 action). Therefore, we contend that we need to develop a democratic tactical command structure that heightens our mobility while simultaneously not compromising our Anarchist principles.

In regard to this, we propose that the present use of elected affinity group spokespeople be expanded to that of acute tactical facilitator (a-tacs). The role of this person should be to help facilitate the organized movement of their immediate section as recommended by the general tactical facilitation core (*to be discussed below). In addition, each affinity group should also elect an alternate in case the first is incapacitated due to injury or arrest.

Following the general meeting of the Black Bloc, at which the broad plans for the day's action should have already been discussed, debated and then decided upon based on consensus, all such elected a-tacs should meet in private (such privacy here is recommended as a security precaution). At this meeting a general tactical facilitation core (g-tacs) should be elected, again by consensus. These g-tacs should act as the facilitators of Bloc movement in such a way as it complies with the general plan of action as defined at the prior open meeting. The identity of the g-tacs will be made discreetly known to all trusted affinity group members through their elected spokes/a-tacs as befitting following the conclusion of the closed spokespeople's meeting. Any affinity group which has had their a-tac elected to the tactical facilitation core should elect a new a-tac.

In cases in which the Bloc is expected to be large and to march en masse, affinity groups should be made responsible for specific positions within the Bloc; specifically the front, right side, left side and rear (this should be done at the general open meeting). This would essentially create four main perimeter clusters within the Bloc. (Note: the use of clusters is further discussed below.) In turn the elected g-tacs should number 12 persons. These persons should emanate out of the perimeter clusters, which they will be responsible for (this will be further discussed below). These twelve should be further divided into four groups of three. In turn these three should be positioned as such:

- 1 A person at the specific perimeter cluster, which they will be directly responsible for (front, rear, left or right);

2 A person near the middle of the Bloc where they will be together with the representatives of the other perimeter clusters;

3 A person to act as a runner between their perimeter cluster g-tac and the g-tac group in the middle.

In general, all time sensitive decisions specifically regarding movement should be recommended by the consensus of the central g-tac core based on information emanating from the specific perimeter tacs, and reliable reconnaissance information.

In addition, these g-tacs should also entail certain role-specific support persons in order that they are able to function efficiently and safely. Hence, all g-tacs stationed at the perimeters should be equipped with two persons from their affinity group or otherwise, one of which should be responsible for maintaining radio communication with reconnaissance teams and/or other important constituents. The other should be present in order to watch the tac's back. We must be aware of the fact that these folk will quickly be identified by the forces of the State, and therefore will likely be singled out for arrest. Likewise, the central g-tac core should also be equipped with a few persons on radio, and a few persons concerning themselves with security.

Also, the specific roles of the various g-tacs, be it runner, perimeter person or core group, should be rotated as the day's action ensues. Again, such a rotation is to limit any developing trend aimed at a psychological tendency towards authoritarianism amongst the central g-tac core. And again, it should be reminded that the function of these folk would primarily have to do with Bloc movement (i.e. which road to take, which way to go at an intersection). They will not be playing the role of generals or abstract leaders in any way.

Here it is important to stress several things. First, we do not advocate the creating of a permanent officer clique. These elected positions should only last as long as the action at hand. If the action lasts more than a single day, then it would be good to elect new tacs for the different days. Also, their positions should be revocable by the general whole at any time.

Lastly, the influence which they shall wield will not be beyond the role of facilitators of a general plan adopted to the general meeting of the Black Bloc. Any steps they may attempt to take beyond these perimeters would be grounds for dismissal. And of course, we are not advocating the formalization of any authoritarian army structure. It must be made clear that all participants in the Bloc innately reserve the right to disobey tac suggestions as well as to desert. In this the adoption of such a structure would be consistent with Anarchist principles of organization. The Anarchist militias recognized the need for such structure during the Spanish Civil War and so should we.

Individual Affinity Groups

Affinity groups, generally numbering between 3 and 10 persons, should organize themselves in ways in which they see fit to reach their goals in the specific action at hand. Determining the focus of your affinity group in relevance to the specific action allows for the creation of a specialized affinity group.

Within these affinity groups, it is suggested that there be one person who carries a skeletal assortment of first aid equipment (saline solution, vinegar, lemon peels, water in a squirt bottle, rescue remedy). Furthermore, it would seem a very sound suggestion that every person involved

in the Black Bloc take a basic first aid course, or have general knowledge of protest-related first aid practices. Like physical training, being trained in first aid would heighten our overall combat abilities.

It should be decided if the affinity group must use a radio/cell during the action. Radio/cell use may be needed in certain affinity groups, but by no means is it necessary to overflow the streets with unneeded communication devices. Communication can in turn be lost by the trampling of channels and untrained use. More radios will never be the answer to organization and information, but the strategic placing and use of these devices will forever enable our effectiveness. Roles of the other persons in the affinity group, in addition to the aforementioned role of the medic and possible use of a radio/cell operator, depend upon the type of affinity group (function) . The affinity group should solely decide this themselves.

Types of specialized affinity groups include, but are not limited to, a front line (defensive), offensive, reconnaissance, property related, medic, support, noise, and pre-emptive.

A front line affinity group would contain shields and/or heavy body armor. This type of affinity group would potentially oversee the formation of the front line. They would motivate and call for other shields from within the Bloc, in aiding the formation of a solid line. This affinity group would provide a rally point to help provide the Bloc position. They would not be a part of a charge line, but instead hold as a point to retreat back to if the charge proves faulty. In addition, this affinity group is at the correct position to oversee the building of barricades.

An offensive affinity group should be highly mobile and enthusiastic. These affinity groups should be prepared for confrontation. The offensive affinity group can also come prepared to fill specialized tactical needs. Creativity is encouraged. The definition of this group will be left at this.

A reconnaissance affinity group operates outside of the Bloc, gathering information. Communication is held closely with the larger Bloc, keeping them informed of police movements and numbers. When State weaknesses are detected, this affinity group should inform the Bloc of opportunities for advancement.

The Bloc should have their own medic affinity group. For optimal coverage, medic groups could split to cover all sides of the Bloc as a whole. Having our own medics does not mean that they help only Black Bloc members, but ensures their movement with the Bloc.

Property-related affinity groups also exist in our movement. The roles of these people should not be known to anyone who is not in that specific affinity group. In relation, information on affinity groups who form for pre-emptive strikes against the State should also be held from the Bloc. Any information on the plans or existence of these two groups will only weaken their security.

There are also support affinity group roles. One idea is an affinity group dedicated to dealing with panic situations. This group would number no more than a few groups per cluster/side (the use of clusters is explained below).

There could also be a supply and networking affinity group responsible for carrying food, water, and handing out communiques to neighborhood people and non-Black Bloc protesters. The carrying of water also has a dual purpose of use for eye washing if necessary.

A noise affinity group is useful in keeping enthusiasm and drive in tiring situations. The sound of music can create sudden drives of energy and joy within the Bloc where none exists, and can send a contradicting message of power to the enemy in battle. Creativity is also encouraged in this area; i.e. Black Bloc bagpipe players would bring immense courage and enthusiasm to many,

as does radical cheerleading to others. We should continue to embrace, and forever elaborate, on this humanistic approach to battle through music and cheer. For this is in our favor, and the State is forever unlikely to employ such an emotional tactic.

Clusters

An affinity group should strive to be a part of a cluster of 5-10 diverse affinity groups. Each cluster should have its own flag to serve as a rally point. These flags, distinguishable by different patterns or colors, would be used as markers. The purpose of these markers is to serve as a point of retreat, or simply as a visual aid if a person(s) is severed from an affinity group. Each cluster should be able to function as its own entity. To facilitate this, affinity groups should strive towards communication prior to attendance at the action.

Clusters naturally form based on trust relationships between diverse individuals and collectives, and should continue by these means. This being said, the general meeting of the Black Bloc should still be used as an opportunity for practical networking; such as what specialized affinity groups are needed to complete the offense, defense, and support of a cluster, enabling the cluster a fully functioning body. When a pre-organized cluster decides that it is lacking in certain of these categories, and when that cluster feels comfortable incorporating a relevant at-large affinity group into their fold, then by all means they should do so. Here, the more balanced and self-contained we can make the various clusters the better. And, the more affinity groups are connected with larger functioning clusters, the more effective and secure the overall action will be.

Each cluster should take responsibility for certain aspects of the Black Bloc as an entity. The basic options for a cluster to choose from should be 1.) perimeter clusters, 2.) at-large clusters and 3) reserve clusters (*reserve clusters are discussed below in the section titled 'reserves'). The organization of the clusters into the above roles should be done at the general meeting of the Black Bloc, before the spokes/a-tac meeting.

The Black Bloc as a physical entity in motion should be defined by the formations of four perimeter clusters. One taking its position at the front, another at the rear, and the other two on the right and left. As mentioned above, each of these four perimeter clusters should be equipped with a distinct flag, so as to provide an obvious rallying point.

These perimeter clusters must take responsibility for maintaining a tight line of security around all edges of the Bloc as a whole. Specifically, they should concern themselves with the section which they are directly situated (front, rear, left, right).

It is also desirable that the various defensive and offensive affinity groups and persons of each perimeter cluster work in organized conjunction with each other during times of need. For example, if the Bloc finds it necessary to retreat from a given position, all persons from within the effected perimeter cluster and all noncluster/at-large cluster folks carrying defensive equipment such as shields should maintain a position in the rear, facing the enemy, in order to cover the retreat from rubber bullets, bean bags, etc. Likewise, during offensive maneuvers, all persons equipped with the relevant offensive gear should place themselves in the front, as should a limited number of shield bearers in order to limit the effectiveness of the enemy baton. When necessary, relevant reinforcements from the other perimeter clusters should be prepared to move into the fray. However, this should only be done when absolutely necessary in that it is always

desirable to maintain a strong defensive perimeter around the Bloc as a whole. This is all common sense of course.

At-large clusters should maintain positions within the space created by the formations of the four perimeter clusters. They should act according to their own direction, yet be prepared to reinforce the perimeter clusters, if attacked. Also, a major task for the at-large clusters should be the organization of charging lines prepared to go over and through police/military defensive positions when and if desirable and/or necessary.

Towards this goal, it may prove desirable to utilize tactics previously practiced by (among others) German black blocs. Namely that the interior of the Bloc be organized by straight lines (from right to left), each line being one or two affinity groups. In turn, affinity groups forming an at-large cluster should consciously position themselves in successive lines. Such lines make for tighter internal security, while clearly allowing for the Bloc to conduct sustained and successive charges against the enemy if and when such an action becomes necessary.

Property related affinity groups, be they connected with an at-large cluster, or independent, should be allowed free access in and out of the body of the Bloc by the relevant perimeter clusters as necessary.

The organization, or rather ability to call for the practice of such above discussed maneuvers, should often be expected to emanate from the g-tacs as manifest through the cooperation of affinity groups. For it will be the g-tacs who are generally most informed about the overall combat situation, and positioning of the Bloc. This is a tactical practice that the g-tacs should be prepared to responsibly facilitate.

All and all, the further incorporation of the above cluster model can be expected to result in ourselves achieving a higher level of immediate situational tactical ability than we currently possess. In addition, the demonstration of such abilities can be expected to frighten and demoralize the enemy.

Reconnaissance and Communication

It is necessary that the Bloc contains a sophisticated system of combat reconnaissance and communications. Reconnaissance should be conducted by pairs and/or affinity groups on bicycles equipped with radios and/or cell phones. In turn, the general tactical facilitation core should also be in possession of radios and/or cell phones. Throughout the action, reconnaissance teams should be scouting out all possible avenues of Bloc travel and consistently be reporting back to the g-tacs. This way, the mobilization of the Bloc will be able to be conducted with a reasonable level of educated decisiveness.

Other elements of the reconnaissance folk should be operating in action zones not immediately in the vicinity of the Bloc. The purpose of these is to keep the Bloc informed on the general situation of the broader action, and in turn, be able to notify the g-tacs of potential hot spots where Bloc presence is required.

Individual affinity groups who are in possession of radios should be informed as to the channels on which such communications will occur. This way the Bloc as a whole will be generally informed in regards to the broader situation.

Also, non-Black Bloc affinity groups involved in acts of civil disobedience should also be informed as to the channels of radio operation as well as the numbers of the relevant cell phones, so as to allow them the ability to call in for assistance when and where necessary.

Finally, as alluded to above, persons directly involved in reconnaissance should be expected to emanate out of the various clusters. However, a more desirable method would be for a whole affinity group to converge on the action prepared to act as a specialized cell in and of itself. Preferably this group would reside in the city in which the action is taking place, in that such persons would be in a better position to scout such already known urban terrain. In addition, those who choose to act in a communications role need to have radio skills. Various codes and channels to use should be discussed only with other Bloc members who hold radios. There are several tactics which can be used when doing communications. Each cluster should arrive to the action with methods for communicating internally.

Reserves

Historically many battles have been won by the situational deployment of reserves as a tactical force. This tactic has traditionally been practiced and proven successful by the United States military and police departments. The use of a reserve force is not currently a tactic adopted by the North American Black Bloc. It is important that we consider this tactic as one that could potentially enable us to better combat the brawn of the State.

The State has always had the advantage over us when it comes to brute force. Their ability to use reserves, bringing in busses full of fresh, new, geared up soldiers, will always be a threat to us. We, on the other hand, spend hours/days fighting with the same gear and little, if any, relief from our strains. In all fairness, we must study the military tactics employed by State forces and adopt those elements which are relevant, effective, and consistent with our beliefs as Anarchists.

The potential use of Black Bloc reserves could prove empowering for several reasons. One being that the use of reserves has historically proven to be successful. Second, imagine the psychological effects this somewhat sophisticated tactic would hold over minds of the State. Both these points being said, this does not mean that reserves should always be used when a Black Bloc has presence at an action, it is only to say that such possibilities can be discussed during the general meetings of the Bloc. Deciding whether reserves will be used should occur in planning, before the acute manifestation of the action at hand.

When a reserve force is organized at an action, they can be used when the larger Bloc is surrounded by police. In this circumstance, the reserves are called in to fight a police line from the other side, resulting in the police being surrounded by the Bloc as a whole. In addition, reserves can be used to hold a location for the larger Bloc to later use as a destination for retreat. Sending in a smaller number of reserves could also be ideal for added force to push through a police line or barricade.

The U.S. Army holds one third of their people back as use for reserves. This is an ideal number for a fighting force that can make a strong push when an optimal battle point is reached. With this in mind, when the Black Bloc reaches over one thousand, it would be desirable to hold 300 or so in reserve. This number should change with proportion. If the Bloc reaches two thousand, numbers held in reserve should reach about 600. If the Bloc is less than one thousand, no reserve

should be posted. With such small numbers, a reserve force would only result in the general weakening of the Bloc when we need all able bodies for immediate release on the streets.

There are pros and cons for our Bloc to discover when and if there is a decision to use a reserve force. These must be recognized, and therefore it is important that options be discussed. Cityscape (i.e. are the roads narrow or wide?), Bloc/police size, and the situation of the action on hand (are large portions of the city occupied by non-violent lockdowns or are police/national guard free to roam the urban terrain?) must be weighed. This should all occur at the general meetings of the Bloc. The details of forming a reserve, if any, and means of communication should be discussed after the election of the g-tacs at the spokes/a-tac meeting. Following the election, such sensitive information can be worked out at a g-tac meeting where only those with an immediate interest are present.

This meeting should establish the location of the inactive reserves, as well as radio/cell communication procedures. This reserve force should maintain radio/cell communication with the body of the Bloc by communicating with the g-tacs. Decision to mobilize should be placed in the hands of the g-tacs. Note that the g-tacs receive their information on the seriousness of combat and the need for reserves from cells of the larger Bloc. The g-tac's decision to mobilize a number of inactive reserves is given when groups within the larger Bloc call for backup. Relying on this is important in order to consider the many needs of the active members of the Black Bloc.

Deployment (where and how many) of the reserves should be left to the g-tacs. Specifics of how to meet this deployment through which streets to take, etc., should be left to the affected affinity groups. When speed becomes an issue, the elected a-tacs within the effected affinity groups should be prepared to make educated suggestions (which those affected are free to adopt or not). The exact location of the reserve forces should not be revealed to the Bloc as a whole. The only people who should be informed of their exact location should be the g-tacs. It is also suggested that location of the reserves are formally decided upon at the last moments, when the position is soon to be held. This is necessary in that the common knowledge of their location would be expected to result in this information leaking into police hands through common infiltration techniques. In turn, this knowledge would almost certainly result in the State (police) attacking our isolated forces.

All reserve forces should be divided into reserve clusters of roughly fifty persons each and be strategically placed around the action zone. Reserve clusters of fifty would be desirable in that such a number is small enough to maintain optimal mobility and non-visibility (to the searching eyes of the State), while being large enough to maintain a minimum of self-contained fighting ability. Such a reserve cluster would be large enough to fight their way through a regular police line if necessary (one row deep 24 across or two rows deep/12 across each), to reunite, when called for, with the larger Bloc. Dividing these forces into such smaller, more manageable reserve clusters, allows for them to be called in as needed. It essentially skips the step taken to divide numbers of the reserved Bloc, and allows for greater security in the event that reserve locations are discovered by the State (where it is possible that one cluster is uncovered by the State, it is unlikely that all will be).

As alluded to above, it is not always necessary when reserves are needed, to call all of their existing numbers. The further division of these reserves into smaller clusters allows them to be called in based on geographic proximity and/or required force, and will result in optimal mobility.

When a relatively large number of reserves are called in, say three clusters of fifty, they could converge on the acute scene of battle from several directions. When properly utilized, such tac-

tics could be expected to confuse and stifle the State's comprehension of the developing combat situation. It is also conceivable that such tactics could be coordinated so as such enemy forces are effectively flanked, thereby forcing the enemy into retreat, or routing them entirely.

When the reserve force is inactive, a low profile must be maintained. They should keep a distance that places them away from acute attack, while being close enough so that the police cannot easily break their reemerging with the rest of the Bloc. The distance the reserve clusters fall back from the larger Bloc could be just a few city blocks, but nonetheless should be decided by the reserves clusters themselves, with g-tac input.

Lettering of the reserve clusters would be beneficial for g-tacs to better manage the location of these reserves. For example, reserve cluster B resides on the East side of the larger Black Bloc, and the g-tacs know this. The g-tacs are then able to call for reserve cluster B, (simply by referring to 'cluster B') without giving an extraneous amount of directions and information over the radio/cell, therefore resulting in less information for the State to get their hands on. We should assume always that there are infiltrators leeching around us, and the word 'reserves' should never be used when communicating in public.

Prior to the reemerging with the Black Bloc, combat with the State should be avoided by these reserves, unless in self-defense, or unavoidable. Maintaining a low profile is vital. It is desirable that the reserves de-Bloc and become 'regular.' Black Bloc clothing should be worn underneath 'regular' clothing. This enables the reserves to blend in better and become less distinguishable as members of the Black Bloc to police helicopters and informants of the State. When they are called for by the g-tacs, the reserve cluster(s) should remove their 'regular' clothing to reveal their true colors underneath. The 'regular' clothing could be discarded and thrown away. Keeping a change of clothing on your person for later use is, of course, a personal decision. However, anything which is not of absolute necessity, should not be carried.

The absolute condition necessary for reserve effectiveness is deployment speed. Without this, they may be prevented from reemerging with the larger Bloc and/or fail to reach the scene of acute action at a time when their force can swing the immediate struggle in our favor. For this purpose the reserves should be organized as a sort of light infantry. They should possess only the minimum of riot gear to refrain from their being weighted down. This means that they should eliminate gear which would obstruct quick lightweight movement, such as helmets, shields, heavy body armor, or large backpacks. They should be equipped only with gas masks or vinegar-soaked bandannas, and a minimum of offensive gear (as individuals and affinity groups see necessary). The only exception to this should be the medics, who should carry a skeleton assortment of related equipment. It would be ideal if all reserves were equipped with bicycles so that the greatest level of mobility could be reached. Such bicycles can be used for offense and defense, and must be discardable. However, in the absence of such bikes, reserve clusters should be composed of affinity groups/individuals who are in good cardiovascular shape. These forces must be prepared to run up to a mile at full speed, and then immediately engage in battle. This is something to keep in mind when such forces are being initially organized.

When and where this reserve is utilized correctly with speed and strength, it can be expected to cause surprise and demoralization among the ranks of the enemy. The very fact that we demonstrate these fairly sophisticated maneuvers can be expected to result in the enemy questioning their personal security and apparent tactical superiority. It is just such objective and subjective shifts and developments at the acute scene of conflict that can and will lend itself to the swinging of fighting momentum to our side. Of course, this positive development can and will only be

sustained if the Bloc holds fast in the face of the increased police ferociousness and brutality in the conflict at hand. This situation should be expected to occur in direct relation to police feeling that they are in real danger due to our utilization of serious tactics. Here, one should recall that all animals are most dangerous when they are backed in a corner and sense their own demise.

Additional Security Precautions: Maps, Radios, IDs, Names, Etc.

While it is sensible that all affinity groups (all persons for that matter) have a detailed map of the area of operation, it has been proven that such maps must absolutely be marked only in code. During the R2k action in Philly, at least two Black Bloc individuals were arrested in a pre-emptive strike approximately forty-five minutes after a Black Bloc meeting (at which they were in attendance) and an hour and a half prior to the demonstration proper. On their persons were maps of the downtown equipped with panned-in locations of the various Black Bloc emergency convergence sites as well as areas where the Bloc intended to focus their activity as well as locations where they planned on marching in order to accumulate material for barricade construction when and if the day's developments demanded.

These maps were not encrypted, and therefore, by detaining, searching and subsequently recovering these maps from these individuals the police achieved the advantage of knowing the intended movement of the Bloc before it happened. It is impossible to know exactly what effect this intelligence had on the day's events (as it is also difficult to surmise whether or not the police had informants at the prior meeting as some have maintained), but regardless, this mishap represented a major slip in security. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that from now on all such maps be encrypted so as to avoid this slip up.

In addition, all radio communication should be conducted with the use of preplanned codes and frequencies where and whenever possible. All such codes and frequencies should be made known to all parties who have a legitimate interest in maintaining radio communication with us.

Also, it should go without saying that nobody, under any circumstances, should carry any form of ID or personal contact information. If you get arrested with this information it will only be used to fuck you.

Lastly, do not refer to yourself or others you know by your real full name while in the vicinity of the action. The less we make public our actual identities the better off we are regarding possible legal action and State harassment.

Communiques

It is important that all Black Bloc actions be followed with a comprehensive communique, which is whenever possible composed by a large representative volunteer committee from the various affinity groups. This communique should discuss the action in terms of why it occurred, why specific conflicts/tactics developed and how this immediate struggle is connected with the broader Anarchist movement towards a liberated and creative world.

To achieve this, a post action meeting should be arranged at a secure location. The details of when and where it will be held should be decided upon at the pre-action meeting of elected a-tacs/spokespeople (after all other issues are resolved) or at the general pre-action meeting of the entire Black Bloc (also after all other issues are resolved).

Such communiques are important in regards to reaching out to the broader populace, as well as in debunking the demonization of our activities as can be expected to emanate out of the corporate press (and also often from the Liberal Left and orthodox/conservative Communist press).

In addition to a post-action communique, it is also important that separate communiques be composed prior to the action and distributed during the action. These should also discuss the reasons why we take to the (our) streets the way we do as well as address the broader social issues which brought us to the action at hand. The individual affinity groups should facilitate these. In turn the affinity groups and/or relevant support persons/support affinity groups should take the responsibility of distributing them during the action to the public and the Left-independent media as they see fit. All such communiques should be signed with the name of the responsible affinity group or individual as to maintain accountability. All anonymous statements must be assumed to emanate out of the bowels of State, with the purpose of discrediting us.

Anarchist Principles of Tactical Leadership

The idea of setting up such a democratic chain of command is not to diminish the free spontaneity of the Bloc, but is simply to increase the general mobility and fighting ability of the Black Bloc during time of need.

The primary functions of the above discussed general tactical facilitation core (g-tacs) will simply be to guide the direction of Bloc movement and the ability to call for the deployment of reserve clusters. In regards to the former, this would minimize regrettable time consuming debates as to “which way to go at various intersections.” The more we can avoid such time-consuming indecisiveness the better, as such slowdowns carry with them the potential to put the whole Bloc in danger of police surrounding and subsequent immobilization. And given the forces of the State’s advantage in weaponry, immobilization is akin to defeat. Such was the case during the A16 action on Monday, where shortly thereafter the tail end of the Bloc (who was then immersed with non-Bloc elements) was cordoned off by police and subsequently arrested.

In regards to the latter, such ability to call in reserves at relevant times could be the difference between immediate victory or defeat. And in this case it is necessary to place this ability in the hands of the elected g-tacs in order to guard against any misuse brought on by agent provocateurs, and/or to prevent general time-consuming tactical debates which the heat of direct conflict does not allow for.

With this proposed organizational model, a relatively small Black Bloc (containing no reserves) numbering roughly 200 would have the effectiveness of twice that number in regards to our present abilities. And likewise, a larger Bloc numbering 700, with a reserve force of 300, would dramatically gain in tactical ability.

Physical Training In Between Actions

In between actions it is of vast importance that we increase our physical abilities through the practice of regular exercise, muscle building and self-defense training. At present, the Black Bloc is considerably lacking in certain of these compartments. This is true to the point where individuals who possess muscle tone are sometimes distrusted as potential police agents.

The fact is, if we are going to defend ourselves against the forces of the State, we should take our physical conditioning at least as seriously as our enemy does, and preferably more seriously. The reactionary police and military are aware of the importance of this in regards to their own effectiveness, and so should we.

Pre-emptive Actions

The forces of the State are regularly known to take pre-emptive measures against demonstrators prior to their actions. They regularly infiltrate us and make arrests before any general demonstration or acts of civil disobedience begin. They also start their tactical mobilization long before the sun comes up prior to the demonstrations on any particular day. In order to neutralize this advantage, limited elements presently engaged in Black Bloc actions should independently take countermeasures. Here sabotage of police (and when necessary, National Guard) equipment is our best bet.

If one of the primary advantages of the forces of the State is their mechanized mobility, then we should strike out against these repressive tools by effective, clandestine means.

Separate affinity groups under their own direction should voluntarily coordinate such actions. These groups should number very few in relation to the broader Bloc, and should not take part in any subsequent above ground actions thereafter during the day's events. In addition, the intent and identity of these groups should obviously remain absolutely secret to the Bloc as a whole.

There can be no chain of command between them and the rest. They must operate completely on their own, voluntarily, and by structural models of their choosing (as long as they are consistent with Anarchist principles of organization). Such clandestine activity, if performed effectively, holds the possibility of considerably disrupting the abilities of the enemy, and therefore can substantially place new advantages with the Black Bloc.

Preparations For Increased State Repression

The stronger our movement becomes, the more likely it will be that the State will more thoroughly criminalize Anarchism, specifically of the Black Bloc variety. As we speak, we must assume that the FBI has already compiled a dossier on many of us. We must also assume that many of our local Anarchist organizations and collectives are already being watched and that infiltrators are working on penetrating our ranks; in certain cases we have no doubt that they already have.

In addition, as our movement progresses into more serious phases, we must anticipate a much more violent State reaction against us. This clearly occurred in the late 60s and we must fully understand that it will happen again. This tendency is already developing a clear trajectory. The shooting of three demonstrators at the Gothenburg protests, and the killing of Carlo in Genoa illustrates this as an undeniable fact.

As committed revolutionaries of practical mind, we must prepare for eventualities. This is no game. In such we must form clandestine networks wherein we can maintain the ability to exist as an underground fighting force if and when the circumstances demand. Such an underground force must entail, among other things, access to alternative identification, known and trusted safe houses, friends in strategic positions, access to materials of necessary subsistence (i.e. food,

medicine, etc.), an underground means of communication, ways to pass unseen through international borders and the know-how to continue our militant activities underground.

The fact of the matter is, when our above-ground activities draw the response of police shotgun blasts, the mass long term incarceration of our militants, or when it all becomes a socially acceptable farce within the blanket of the spectacle, then we must be prepared to meet the challenges of the State by other means; still militant and concrete, yet underground.

Furthermore, it must be understood that when extreme crisis situations occur, the kind which would force us underground, there will not be the time to organize the basic means of such an existence. Likewise, when the greater social breakdown of the presently dominant system occurs, there will not be time to organize a solid popular fighting force. Therefore, we must prepare now for that which we recognize as an inevitable outcome of our revolutionary activities.

We must and will attack the leviathan head on, then from the shadows, and then again face-to-face. The only result can be social revolution.

Here we would like to remind you that firearms are still legal, as of print, and easily attainable in the United States.

Development Of Our Social and Political Understandings

Lastly, we must practice self-discipline in regards to our continuing practical and theoretical studies of social and political ideas during the times in between actions. For the Anarchist movement, as stated by Bakunin, is driven by “the instinct to rebel,” but it is also done so by the conscious emergence of a revolutionary people. The folk who make up the Black Bloc should be examples not just of Anarchist fighting courage, but also of Anarchist awareness. We should study the histories of the Paris Commune, Revolutionary Ukraine, Kronstadt, Spain, as well as the Paris revolt of ‘68. In addition we should read the writings of Bakunin, Kropotkin, Mahkno, Emma Goldman, Meltzer, Guy Debord, and Bookchin to name but a few.

In a word, we must expand our relevant understandings in order to completely transcend the oppressive indoctrination that the State has perpetuated on us since the time of our birth. We must exercise our capacity for understanding in order to realize our creative consciousness. And finally, we must strive to further develop Anarchist theory in directions directly relevant to the contemporary modes of neo-Capitalism; namely that of radical commodification and consumerism.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this communique is put forward with the intent to spark the constructive development of our revolutionary abilities. It is not meant to be authoritative as much as it is intended to facilitate a positive internal dialogue. However, it is our hope that at least some of the above suggestions are seriously debated and then adopted by our fellow Black Bloc Anarchists.

We encourage you to replicate and distribute this communique however you choose (as long as it is not done for Capitalist profit).

In Solidarity,

-The Green Mountain Anarchist Collective

-Anti-Racist Action

No Rights Reserved.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Anti-Racist Action, The Green Mountain Anarchist Collective
Black Bloc Tactics Communiqué
A Communiqué on Tactics and Organization to the Black Bloc, from within the Black Bloc
July 2001

Retrieved on January 7, 2013 from <http://www.sheffieldmayday.ukf.net/articles/blackbloc.htm>

theanarchistlibrary.org