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978-1-107-03405-1 - The Battle against Anarchist Terrorism: An International History, 1878–1934

Richard Bach Jensen

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The Battle against Anarchist Terrorism

This is the first global history of the secret diplomatic and police campaign that was waged against anarchist terrorism from 1878 to the 1920s. Anarchist terrorism was at that time the dominant form of terrorism and for many continued to be synonymous with terrorism as late as the 1930s. Ranging from Europe and the Americas to the Middle East and Asia, Richard Bach Jensen explores how anarchist terrorism emerged as a global phenomenon during the first great era of economic and social globalization at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries and reveals why some nations were so much more successful in combating this new threat than others. He shows how the challenge of dealing with this new form of terrorism led to the fundamental modernization of policing in many countries and also discusses its impact on criminology and international law.

RICHARD BACH JENSEN is Professor of History at the Louisiana Scholars' College at Northwestern State University. He is a recognized authority on the repression of anarchist terrorism and has published widely in the field. His previous publications include *Liberty and Order: The Theory and Practice of Italian Public Security Policy, 1848 to the Crisis of the 1890s* (1991).

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UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press,
New York

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107034051

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First published 2014

Printed in the United Kingdom by CPI Group Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Jensen, Richard Bach.

The battle against anarchist terrorism : an international history, 1878–1934 /
Richard Bach Jensen.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-03405-1 (hardback)

1. Anarchism–History. 2. Terrorism–History. 3. Political
violence–History. I. Title.

HX828.J46 2014

363.32509'041–dc23

2013028562

ISBN 978-1-107-03405-1 Hardback

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Dedicated to my father, James Helge Jensen, and to
the memory of my mother, Ruth Bach Jensen

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Abbreviations

ACS	Archivo centrale dello Stato, Rome
Adm.Reg.	Administrative Registratur (Haus- Hof- and Staatarchiv, Vienna)
b.	Busta (document file)
bd.	Band (volume)
BDIL	British Digest of International Law, ed. Clive Parry. Part 6: The Individual in International Law (London, 1965)
BDFA	British Documents on Foreign Affairs
BPA	Bundespolizeiarchiv, Vienna, Austria
c.	carton
CIR	Conférence internationale de Rome pour la défense sociale contre les anarchistes: 24 Novembre-21 Décembre 1898. Confidential. Rome. Imprimerie du ministère des affaires étrangères, 1899 (the secret official record of the 1898 Rome Anti-Anarchist Conference).
CPC	casellario politico centrale (central political file or registry)
DDF	Documents diplomatiques français, 1871–1914
DDI	I documenti diplomatici italiani
DDS	Documents diplomatiques suisse
DGPS	General Directorate of Public Security, interior ministry of Italy
Eur. Gen.	Europa Generalia
f.	fascicolo (folder)
FO	Foreign Office or Foreign Office papers, Public Record Office [the National Archives], London
GCSAP	German Central State Archive, Potsdam, Germany
GCSAM	Deutsches Zentrales Staatsarchiv, formerly in Merseburg, now in Berlin-Dahlem, Germany

GFO	German Foreign Office (records filmed at Whaddon Hall, Bucks, December 1958)
HHStA	Haus- Hof- and Staatarchiv, Vienna
HO	Home Office or Home Office papers, Public Record Office [the National Archives], London
IB	Informationsbüro (Haus- Hof- and Staatarchiv, Vienna)
IFM	Italian foreign ministry archive, Rome
JDIP	Journal du droit international privé
k.	Karton (document carton)
l.	legajo (file)
LC	Library of Congress
M.plen	Ministro plenipotentiaro
NA	National Archives, College Park, Maryland, United States
nr.	Number
OP	Orden Público (public order)
PI	Polizia internazionale record group at the Italian foreign ministry archive
PRO	Public Record Office, London; since 2003, combined with the National Archives (United Kingdom).
PS	Pubblica sicurezza. Public security
Rap.dip.USA	I fondi archivistici...delle Rappresentanze Diplomatiche Italiane negli USA
SFM	Spanish foreign ministry, Archivo Histórico, Madrid
SP	Staarsarchive Potsdam: Brandenburgischen Landeshauptarchive, Orangerie, Potsdam
UR	ufficio riservato (private office)

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Foreword

I first became intrigued with Richard Bach Jensen's work when *Terrorism and Political Violence* published a fascinating article by him in the spring of 2001. In that article he discussed Theodore Roosevelt's efforts to launch an international crusade to eliminate anarchist terrorism after President McKinley's assassination in September 1901. Six months after the article appeared, and a century after Roosevelt's crusade began, a second one was launched when President George W. Bush in response to 9/11 declared a "war (that) would not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated."

The similarities and differences between these two dramatic events were so striking that I thought that many would be deeply interested in exploring the history of terrorism, to see what could be learned to help us understand the contemporary situation and future possibilities better. However, although 9/11 did stimulate an extraordinary number of popular and academic accounts of contemporary terrorism, very little work on the history of the phenomena appeared. This negligence reflected a common view deeply embedded in our culture and was expressed conspicuously a number of times. When the Soviet Union collapsed, most existing terrorist groups that were part of a terrorism wave that had emerged in the 1960s disappeared; the US stopped funding terrorism research and reduced security and counterterrorism efforts, assuming that without the Soviet Union, terrorism could no longer be significant.¹

A large portion of the academic world seems to understand terrorism in the same way. In 1933, for example, when anarchist terrorism had virtually disappeared, an article on the subject in the first edition of the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* concluded that soon only antiquarians would find the subject interesting, because modern technology made it impossible for small groups to be serious elements in our political world where only classes and masses mattered! Were the editors of the second

¹ Aiding Islamic forces against the Soviets in Afghanistan also helped the US believe it would not be the target of Islamic terror as it had been in the 1980s.

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edition of the *Encyclopedia* (1968) impressed by their predecessors' "wisdom"? Whatever their reason, they did not explain their decision to exclude the subject, even though in the period between the two editions a number of states were established partly by terrorist campaigns, for example, Israel, Cyprus, and Algeria. Perhaps the editors thought that since events occurred in Western colonial empires that no longer existed, terrorism would vanish too! The editors also missed the fact that a few years before they published the new edition a number of New Left terrorist groups began to emerge. They were not alone in ignoring these facts. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1968 omitted terrorism too, although earlier editions published important classic articles on the subject.

It is not easy to understand why we keep making the same mistake when terrorist activity seems to diminish greatly, but our misconceptions may be linked to the fact that we know so little about the history of modern terrorism, a history characterized by a series of waves that emerge suddenly and then recede after reaching a certain high point. Since we tend to focus on one period only, it seems "obvious" that the activity is linked solely to a particular political context and will disappear when that context is altered.

Tracing the origin and process of modern non-state terror should help us understand our contemporary scene better.² A number of uprisings broke out in the capital cities of many European states throughout the first seventy-one years of the nineteenth century, aiming to achieve one or more of the French Revolution's various promises. The major mechanism for insurrection was the "mob" and, as the century developed, mobs became more internationalized, attracting recruits from other European states. But mob efforts failed and produced increasingly bloody aftermaths. Revolutionaries in the 1880s were stimulated to produce a new form of violence, one that would be less bloody! Small underground groups began employing the bomb, a new weapon the invention of dynamite made easy to use effectively and which has remained the terrorist's principal weapon ever since. Terrorism spread throughout Europe quickly and became a global phenomenon reaching every continent except Antarctica – the unpopulated one. Most groups had strong anarchist inclinations but some had important nationalist ingredients, and the wave persisted for a generation.

² See my "Before the Bombs There were the Mobs: American Experiences with Terror," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20:2 (2008) and "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," in *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy*, ed. Audrey Kurth Cronin and James M. Ludes. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004, 43–76.

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Critical changes in communication pattern provided the publicity those small groups needed for their violent acts, which they described as “propaganda of the deed.” The transatlantic cable telegraph enabled the new daily newspapers with mass circulations to report events throughout the world in a day. Mass rail transportation networks were available enabling extensive emigrations from poor countries to others, creating diaspora communities very interested in the politics in both their old and new homes. The technological circumstances essential for small groups to become so important grew more favorable over time, encouraging similar sized groups with their own political objectives to become terrorists in different eras.

As the title of Professor Jensen’s book indicates, his principal concern is the analysis of the various international and domestic counterterror campaigns organized to cope with the first modern, or anarchist, wave. He has been working on the subject since 1981, and this volume provides the most complete and authoritative study of government campaigns available, partly attributable to the author’s ability to read five languages, which gave him access to many government documents. Many documents had been kept secret; others were unknown because they were unpublished and/or not previously consulted.

The global character of anarchism made it essential for states to develop policies of cooperation. But the differences between states over other political issues created difficulties that were only partially overcome. Bilateral efforts were more effective than multilateral ones. Police cooperation was easier to sustain: sometimes police officials went abroad to train foreign forces. Still, not all states had appropriate police forces, and the frequent presence of foreign forces in many states could create problems.

Terrorism transformed the police. To deal with mobs, uniformed police forces were first established and worked well. Now police had to take their uniforms off to become invisible and infiltrate groups at home and abroad to get information before terrorist acts were committed. The ability of terrorists to move easily meant that centralization was mandatory, a process some states opposed.

The importance of gaining information before acts of terror occurred created difficult new political problems. Torture, which had been banished in European states, became common again and martial courts often replaced civilian ones. Infiltrators employed as *agents provocateurs* made the police responsible for many important terrorist deeds, which might not have occurred otherwise, embarrassing governments and creating rage among some elements of the public.

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Media coverage provoked crucial issues. It frequently mischaracterized the threat by describing virtually every act of violence as anarchist even when other motives and political agendas were involved. It continually exaggerated the threat, a process that both contributed to the spectacular growth of newspapers and made the public tolerate government overreactions and misdeeds. Governments often tried to link particular opposition parties falsely to anarchist activity.

Jensen compares the different responses of seven states in Europe and the Americas including their labor and immigration reforms to explain state successes and failures. Hopefully this illuminating study of counterterrorism will inspire comparative efforts in subsequent terrorism waves to see what governments learned or failed to learn. It is worth pointing out that second or anti-colonial wave terrorists abandoned the assassination of prominent persons – previously the principal target – and restrained their global activities; decisions that helped contribute to the first terrorist successes.

Remember why Clausewitz, the founder of the science of war, was so obsessed with history! “Examples from history,” he said, “make everything clear, and furnish the best description of proof in the empirical sciences. This applies with more force to the Art of War than to any other.” I would add that what is true for war is true for terrorism also.

David C. Rapoport,
Professor Emeritus, Founding Editor
Terrorism and Political Violence

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Preface

Reading Barbara Tuchman's *The Proud Tower* in the 1970s, I was intrigued by her brief mention of the International Anti-Anarchist Conference of Rome. Little was known about this highly secret diplomatic conference whose minutes had allegedly been burned in December 1898 to preserve its secrecy. It became my obsession to find these minutes as well as more about an event that had been omitted from historical accounts. In 1981, I published the first scholarly article on the conference and subsequently began the research that led to the present work. Regretfully, due to space limitations, I have had to cut one entire chapter from this book devoted to national, bilateral, and regional anti-anarchist policing, 1900–1914. I hope to publish material from this chapter at a later date.

It is customary to thank all the people who have assisted the author in one way or another in the research and writing of this book. I particularly wish to thank Ann Larabee, Michigan State University, and Mary Gibson, John Jay College, CUNY, who read the entire manuscript and offered many excellent suggestions. David Rapoport, Professor Emeritus at UCLA and Founding Editor of the journal *Terrorism and Political Violence*, has continuously supported my work on the history of anarchist terrorism, for which I am profoundly grateful. The same could be said of John Thayer, my former adviser at the University of Minnesota, who has supported me in all of my historical work over the years, insisted I learn German, and encouraged me to apply for my first Fulbright Fellowship (to Italy), which I would never have done otherwise. Much of my research was conducted with the support of the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, which administers the Fulbright program. Besides the CIES, I would like to thank the American people, whose taxpayer dollars support it, for the extraordinary opportunities that two Fulbright Fellowships afforded me. This book is an attempt to repay that debt. I also received grants from IREX, the American Philosophical Society, the University of Minnesota, Skidmore College, and Northwestern State University that at various points allowed me to continue my

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research. I must also thank Jacqueline Hawkins and her predecessors at Northwestern State's interlibrary loan office and many librarians at the other institutions where I have taught. Sonny Carter assisted me in scanning images for the book's illustrations. The personnel at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato were unfailingly helpful, as was Stefania Ruggeri and other archivists at the Italian foreign ministry archive in Rome. I also owe a debt of gratitude to the staffs of the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in Vienna, the Bundespolizeiarchiv in Vienna, various archives in Germany, the Public Record Office in London, the foreign ministry and national archives in Madrid, the Archive of Antonio Maura in Madrid, the Archivo General de la Nación in Buenos Aires, the Library of Congress, and the National Archives, College Park, Maryland. Ambassador Allende Salazar was extraordinarily kind in making his ancestor's papers available to me before they were deposited at the foreign ministry archive in Madrid. Prof. Ingo Materna, Humbolt University, was very helpful and kind when I did research in East Germany in 1988. Eric Rauchway generously shared some of his unpublished research with me, as did John C. G. Röhl. Sadeem El Nahhas provided editorial assistance. Barbara Akin, Frank Schicketanz, Ken Berri, Christine Ferrell, Viviane Winteroy, Lisa Wolff, Francesco Tamburini, and Nathalie Kasselis all helped me with language questions and, in some cases, translations from German, French, Spanish, Dutch, and Italian. I assume responsibility for any errors. For their excellent critical comments and suggestions, I am extremely grateful to the editors and their assistants, both in-house and out of house, at Cambridge University Press. No one could ask for a better press with which to work. Finally I wish to express my appreciation for Janina Darling's support and friendship over the years since we first met in Rome in 1974. There are probably many others I should be thanking as well; I apologize for any unintentional oversights. This book is dedicated to my father, James H. Jensen, and to the memory of my mother, Ruth Bach Jensen. Expressing my full gratitude to them would require an additional preface unto itself.