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# **the art of rebellion - martial traditions for anarchists**

**anarchist tactics and strategies of insurgency**

seaweed

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2011

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# Contents

1 . . . . .	5
Let's look at an example from one of the very first invasions. . . . .	6
The following are just a few examples of ways that anarchists could be, or already are, using martial tactics in present day struggles: . . . . .	12
2 . . . . .	15
Against war . . . . .	16
Against militarization . . . . .	18
Sun Tzu . . . . .	18
Our own parables . . . . .	19
Napoleon's campaigns . . . . .	20
The principles of war: . . . . .	22
Timeless truths . . . . .	22
Tactics and strategy . . . . .	26
Sieges . . . . .	26
Variables . . . . .	27

that he is rested enough to do the action, perhaps consider pairing him up with a stronger or more experienced participant, etc. If you expect to be confronted, who has the most training to stand firm, who is likely to flee?

**The Operational:** will the rain make it muddy and slow down the vehicles? Does everyone have the proper clothing? If the group will have to sit still and hide for a long period of time in uncomfortable circumstances, has everyone trained for this long enough? Variables and the reality of friction are essential last considerations to ponder before setting out to "battle".

ever, have alibis, don't use or carry any techno-devices to communicate, document or brainstorm, etc.

The group uses their knowledge of strategy, operations and tactics in making plans. They are conscious of some of the principles and truths of conflict: surprise, movement, economy of force, etc. But what we haven't looked at yet are the variables that typically come into play, (the concept of friction does take into account these influences to some extent).

Trevor Dupuy breaks down the variables into a few simple categories, although I've tweaked these somewhat. There are many that are sure to influence the outcome and smoothness of your action, so please make sure that variables are considered before pursuing your objective.

The variables are Environmental, Behavioral, and Operational. Under Environmental, we find primarily the weather and terrain, although I would include season, time of day and even lunar cycle as important. Secondly, we find Behavioral variables. These relate to the psychology and nature of the human participants. Morale, training, emotional well being, stability, drug and alcohol use, experience, etc. Finally, Operational includes vulnerability, mobility, fatigue and posture. It should be noted that we have easy influence over these and should take advantage of this fact.

**The Environmental:** It's cold and rainy. Will this affect the terrain enough to make any changes? Does the group need to make a fire, perhaps to burn the bridge? If so, can they make a fire in the rain? They were counting on the full moon to help, but the clouds will inhibit this, do they have a flashlight? Heavier clothing can slow down one's escape. The area is primarily a deciduous forest, so in spring there will be plenty of coverage from the leaves, but it's autumn, can they hide behind bare branches?

**The Behavioral:** if it is going to be a rainy and cold night and one of the group is inexperienced or weak, one might want to make sure that his backpack is checked for proper clothing,

## 1

Even those of us in what appear to be peaceful countries are deeply involved in a war. It is a social and a political war. It is a war of ideology versus freedom of thought. It is a war of industrialism against healthy environments. It is a war between the included and the excluded, between the individual and the constraints imposed by impersonal institutions.

The vast majority of the world's population consists of defeated peoples in this war. In fact, we are more than just defeated. We are kept: kept in fear, kept in awe, kept out of touch with each other and the earth that gives us life. It has been said that our chains are long and our cages big, yet we are still prisoners. Coercion is everywhere, including the necessity to sell our labor for a wage, forced obedience to laws, conscription in imperial armies, and compulsory moralities and schooling.

The occupying physical forces are essentially the police and the army. Over the centuries, we've internalized much of the values and ideas of the conquerors and have thus been assimilated into the ways of the obedient and the domesticated. But I'd like to explore our physical occupation, not the various skins that we must shed and the fears we must lose.

If people want to claim space, then they have to be prepared to fight and defend it. This space could be permanent (a liberated region or village) or temporary (squats, wilderness camps, legally and illegally built shelters or autonomous neighborhoods). It could be based in village or regional secessionist movements, access to land by popular movements or indigenous assertion over traditional territories.

Those of you familiar with the events in Kahnésatake, a Mohawk reserve outside of Montreal from which the cops were physically chased out of town a while ago, are aware of how successful an organized martial action can be. Canadian anarchists and other insubordinates have an incredible amount of insight and inspiration to glean from that event. People can

claim space if they get organized and aren't afraid to lose a few teeth.

With this in mind, perhaps a look at history generally will help us discover how others in our predicament have successfully organized themselves martially. There are countless examples of rebels organizing themselves and winning a few battles.

Official history is written by the conquerors. Their self-congratulatory folklore is that we (rebels) have always lost because the conquerors were superior (and thus had superior weapons). Most of us assume that this is true, so we might as well not even try a martial approach because we're sure to lose. But this isn't the case. In North American history for instance, the dishonest image of the technologically advanced Europeans overrunning primitive savages needs to be re-examined. All over this continent, the indigenous peoples rose up and used martial skills to repel the invasions. In most instances, at least initially, they had some success.

### **Let's look at an example from one of the very first invasions.**

In 1521, in what is now called Florida, the Calusa and Timucua defeated experienced conquistadors under Ponce de Leon and Hernandez de Cordoba. In fact, both of these conquerors died of wounds inflicted by the Calusa! For half a century the indigenous tribes repelled the Spanish in that region. The invasion by de Leon and de Cordoba was the fourth invasion by Spaniards repelled successfully by local tribes-people.

Throughout the invasions, there were numerous examples of success. In many instances, the indigenous successfully defended their territory for decades, some even succeeded for generations. Europeans would not have ultimately won without adopting some native technology and skills, even as the indigenous peoples also adapted European technology and tactics. In his excellent book, *Warpaths*, author Ian Steele

1992 to 1996, the city of Sarajevo was under siege during the Bosnian war. In fact, I've noticed that many of the most significant conflicts that occur tend to have siege qualities to them. If we look at Oka, Gustafsen Lake, MOVE, Caledonia, squat evictions, etc., we find sieges and siege techniques used by both sides.

"A siege is a military blockade of a city or fortress with the intent of conquering by force or attrition, often accompanied by an assault. A siege occurs when an attacker encounters a city or fortress that refuses to surrender and cannot be easily taken by a frontal assault. Sieges involve surrounding the target and blocking the reinforcement or escape of troops or provision of supplies (a tactic known as "investment"), typically coupled with attempts to reduce the fortifications by means of siege engines, artillery bombardment, mining (also known as sapping), or the use of deception or treachery to bypass defenses. Failing a military outcome, sieges can often be decided by starvation, thirst or disease, which can afflict both the attacker or defender.

Generally speaking, siege warfare is a form of low-intensity warfare (until an assault takes place) characterized in that at least one party holds a strong defense position, it is a highly static situation, the element of attrition is typically strong and there are plenty of opportunities for negotiations." 1

### **Variables**

Whenever considering an action it is important to reflect on what Clauswitz called "the variables representing the circumstances of combat." Let's look at an example:

A group of friends decides to destroy a couple of bridges in a nearby wilderness to prevent logging and other industrial activity.

The first step is to look at the many basic security considerations to follow: don't tell anyone outside the group anything

I think that what you can learn from these introductions and ideas, especially if followed up by your own study and practice, can be applied to all areas of conflict.

## Tactics and strategy

One important and useful exploration is the distinction between tactics and strategy.

Clausewitz believed that strategy belonged primarily to the realm of art, while tactics belonged primarily to the realm of science.

From a military point of view strategy is the planning and managing of the resources available in warfare. The military and political elite, i.e. those with national power to influence these matters, do this.

Just below strategy, the military uses the term operations when the direction of armies or large forces in military (usually combat) activities within a clearly defined theater is involved. Conceptually, operations lie between strategy and tactics when engaged in combat.

Tactics are the specific techniques used to achieve your strategic ends. They are influenced by local conditions, or you can say that context determines your choice. Tactics are the detailed maneuvers and offensives used to achieve the objectives of your strategy. They are often plans and moves that gain advantages in the short term, while strategy is the larger-scale framework of direction and control. **You can practice your tactics, but you must use intuition for your strategy.**

## Sieges

One might think that studying the techniques of sieges would only be of interest to hobbyists or scholars of medieval warfare, but this is not the case. Only quite recently, from

explains that: "Spanish crossbows had failed to compete with Amerindian longbows that were six to seven feet long, thick as a man's arm, and very accurate at two hundred yards. Although Spanish armor had been effective against most arrows encountered on three continents, these ... arrows penetrated six inches of wood and even Spanish breast-and back plates."

**Attack needs to be organically self-organized in a broad, horizontal, diverse way, and if it is based within entire communities, I think that it has a better chance of succeeding.** Regional and village-like secessionist movements might be expressions of this, but so too would occupy sites. Centralized authority cannot control a multitude of rebellious fronts: regions, villages, reserves, and neighborhoods, each with its own focus, its specific expression of anti-authoritarian self-organization. For all the criticism anarchists have heaped on the Zapatistas in Chiapas, I think we have more to learn from them than the other way around. Also, by collaborating with or at least acknowledging indigenous actions for autonomy and territory, we can be part of something much larger, something quite close to what many insurgent communitarians, radical ecologists, anarchists, and other rebels are aiming for.

Part of breaking out involves shedding all those ideological skins grafted onto us through schooling, the mass media, living in nuclear families, etc. But my involvement with rebels over the past 25 years tells me that most of us already know that this is important. What we don't seem to inventory is the means available to us to counter our physical occupation. After all, it is only by ridding ourselves of organized coercive authority that we will truly begin to have real opportunities to profoundly transform ourselves and to take back our lives. Can a local area succeed against this coercion and against the imperialism of the market? If so, what are some of the first steps?

Part of being an insurgent today could involve acquiring martial skills. Martial traditions include everything from

fighting techniques, fighting theory, group cohesion and earth knowledge, to skill with a weapon. This isn't a call to "armed struggle" but for inclusion of a neglected aspect of a more all-inclusive approach to rebellion. Most simple weapons are also useful tools and we should make use of them in that context, for instance by learning hunting skills, then bringing home some wild meat to share with friends so we can stop relying on dumpsters and food banks and jobs, as well as using them for self-defence or to chase away adversaries. The bonus is that our possession and familiarity with them could be extremely useful in a crisis situation or during a popular revolt.

The prisons are full. The factories and mines are full. A small class of people calls all the shots. A wave of extinction is denuding the planet, a tsunami caused by a system that is imposed from above. Entire populations are on anti-depressant and anti-anxiety pills.

We need to regroup and heal and make plans for re-appropriating our lives. Encouraging individuals and groups of rebellious people to get some training in survival and martial skills seems like common sense. These various individuals and groups would help create a new anti-authoritarian culture that includes a widespread acceptance of a martial component. Rhetoric and politeness have ruled us for too long. A more martial approach should be given an opportunity to contribute to attempts at creating new relationships grounded in imaginative, healthy cultures.

The support for martial skills could translate into anti-authoritarian militias and other semi-formal groupings that exist over time, or more fluid entities like the black bloc that manifest themselves spontaneously and informally when the need arises. Either way, the intention is that there are groups of individuals able and perhaps willing to help their neighbors, comrades, and friends claim space to express anger, resist the plundering of their habitat, and help various grassroots initia-

politicians, for instance, and you will less likely be thrown off by the "friction" and its effects.

Achieving surprise in a combative situation is extremely important. This is the fifth truth. Analysis of historical military confrontations has shown that surprise actually significantly increases the combat power of the side that achieves it. In fact, as mentioned in part one, surprise is the greatest of combat multipliers. As noted above, it is included in the US Army's list of the Principles of War.

T.S. Dupuy writes that offensive action is essential to positive combat results as his first truth. Defense and strength and surprise are important, but ultimate combat success involves offensive action. Even should a strategy of overall defensive posture be the plan, (for example successful local upheavals which are surrounded by hostile adversaries), offensive tactics and operations must be selectively employed for final victory.

While the purpose of this chapter is to encourage the study and practice of martial skills, the focus is on strategy and tactics generally and, when specifically "military", on ground combat. I have completely ignored air and naval theorists. Such thinkers do exist and any insurgency would have to deal with aspects of each.

Many, if not most, of state forces today use a combination of land and air combat. For instance high tech, high performance helicopters will often do reconnaissance that directs far away tanks, with extremely specific GPS coordinates, to their targets. Land Combat today is rarely unsupported by fixed wing aircraft, drones or helicopters. Thus we should more accurately speak of Air Land Battle in many instances.

As for Naval combat, these ideas can be applied effectively to deter and harass navies or to initiate very small scale naval combat, although we mustn't forget about the power and potential of a sailors mutiny.



you live, here and now, with the confidence that comes with knowing that should you manage to wrest even a small area from authority and the market, you have a good chance of holding onto it for a long time, perhaps long enough for other areas to accomplish the same, join you or open new fronts.

In fairness, however, the second truth must also be remembered: "an attacker willing to pay the price can always penetrate the strongest defenses."

Some military theorists have noticed that superior combat power always wins. This is the third truth of war. All other things being equal, fate smiles on the side with the greatest combat power. For this reason, it makes absolutely no sense for a minority of revolutionaries in North America to contemplate attempting an outright military contest against the police and army. The state's combat power is simply overwhelming, so it might be better to focus on making friends within the military and hoping for mutinies or at least treasonous acts (like providing gear or information to outsiders). In any event, destroying the imperialism of the market is not a military exercise. Martial skills are primarily helpful when occupying (or reoccupying, for Indigenous people) and/or defending territory, for building the confidence to initiate small battles and to act as a grounding influence for dreamers. There will be times, however, when the insurgents will have the superior combat power and this would be the time not to be afraid, but to push and succeed.

The fourth truth of combat is what Clausewitz referred to as "friction in war". During any combat operation, most activities are hindered by mistakes, the dispersal effects of firepower, disruptions

caused by confusion and fear in a potentially lethal environment, etc. Practicing in the safety of your local wilderness or in a camp or dojo, is just not the same as the real thing. The pace especially suffers and therefore allowances must be made during the planning stages for this friction. Keep this truth in mind when planning to disrupt a gathering of economists or

tives to fight back through the practice of martial approaches. When a squat is about to be evicted or a wilderness camp burned by authorities, for instance, they might show up to give moral and physical support with their training and ability to act strongly as a group. Whether groups form or not, by being inclusive and encouraging as many friends, neighbors, and comrades as possible to explore martial ways, a stronger, more resilient and threatening anti-authoritarian culture will be given the opportunity to emerge.

Canadian rebels can take advantage of the relative freedom and openness of our society and get these skills and tools before the chains shorten and the cages shrink. The reaction to the September 11th events in the US proved just how quickly an open society will bring in draconian laws to protect the elite, the system they depend on and the values that allow such a system to exist in the first place.

We are all occupied peoples. The occupation is partly maintained militarily and our response should therefore be, in part at least, a fighting one. But I don't want a warrior-like ethic to be the central aspect of my community. I want the wisdom of the elders, the spontaneity, playfulness and brutal honesty of the children, and the careful chiding and questioning of the pacifists to also be essential aspects of my resistance, otherwise we'll end up with martial societies rather than societies with martial skills. I'm not suggesting the acceptance of a fighting elite, but an anti-authoritarian culture that values martial skills and tactics generally. Training in self-defence, widespread use and knowledge of weaponry, popular study of conflict and confrontation, general encouragement of fighting back and standing up, etc. might all be central.

The trained fighters I want to encourage are motivated by a concern and caring for others in their community. They aren't based in small sanctimonious cliques. However, they care about others because they care about themselves, about their immediate experience as individual, unwilling conscripts of

authoritarian civilization. I want to encourage the rising up of a combative spirit, in the best sense of the fighting spirit of North America's indigenous warriors. Our fighter exists to claim space for herself and others. In this newly freed up space we can have the opportunity for genuine experiments in living.

Part of preparing ourselves for revolt should include the study of military history, the principles and ways of warfare, mostly because our adversaries are well schooled in it, but also because these offer insights and principles valuable to anti-authoritarian rebels as well. Many of us are familiar with some of the classics: Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, Musashi's *Book of Five Rings*, Che Gueverra's writings, Mao's musings, and analysis and the works of Clausewitz for instance. But these are only some of the works, many from an authoritarian or vanguardist perspective, and clearly inadequate for an emerging martial culture wanting to resist or to claim and defend space.

We could also look at the history of anarchists, like the Makhnovchina or the Durruti Column, for instance: how they got started, how they were organized, as well as at some of their specific battles and how these were won or lost. We can learn from the mistakes of countless past attempts.

Anti-authoritarian rebels don't have an elitist leadership and aren't centrally organized. Federations of independent camps could be encouraged, but these alliances should be fragile agreements. Ultimately, it is in not becoming too formally linked that we will succeed in permanently breaking the existence of political monopolies and large-scale infrastructures that tend toward congealing into authoritarian organizations. The notion here is to be a small part in helping create a world of free individuals, of healthy ecological environments where self-organized groups of free humans can live.

This new focus of rebellious people on the history of the military response to social conflict would obviously be well com-

will notice that the truths of combat often coincide with the basic principles of war elaborated on earlier.

The first and most important truth is that **"defense is the stronger form of combat"**. This is a quote from Clausewitz, but he was not the first to make this realization. All things being equal, it would seem that the side with the defensive posture will likely succeed. And a defender with well placed and well protected forces, even with less weaponry or less experience or fewer people, can still have an enormous advantage. The practice here would be to dig in, make fortifications, don't yield for as long as possible, and your opponent will surely take heavy losses, and may even retreat.

An example: a group of friends has spent the last several years building a wilderness camp as a place to hunt and fish from, to go and gather medicines and food, to escape from capitalist civilization, in short, to practice green ways. Somehow a group of "opponents" (forestry officials or whatever) has not only discovered the camp, but has decided to "remove the squatters." These officials are intent on evicting the camp dwellers. Luckily, one of the camp occupants was doing a regular peripheral sweep and spotted the officials on their way up. She returns to camp and warns everyone. Because the camp dwellers have studied and practiced martial skills, they don't just panic and abandon their camp and its valuables. Rather they are confident from the knowledge that because they have the defensive posture they enjoy many advantages and will put these advantages to maximum use by combining them with other skills they have acquired through collective study and practice. In all likelihood, the officials will soon give up and return home or retreat to seek reinforcements, giving the rebels a chance to hold onto their position long enough to gather their stuff, avoid arrest or injury and hopefully escape to another camp.

The defensive posture is the strongest, so it makes absolute sense to focus on where one can have an impact, namely where

## **The principles of war:**

Mass Objective – Offensive Surprise Security Economy of force Movement Unity of command Simplicity Mass – Bring decisive force to bear at critical times and places. Objective – Define a decisive and attainable objective for every military operation. Offensive – Seize, retain, and exploit the initiative. Surprise – Strike the enemy at a time and/or place and in a manner for which he is unprepared. Security – Never permit the enemy to acquire an unexpected advantage. Economy of Force – Allocate minimum essential combat power to secondary efforts. Movement/maneuver – Place the enemy in a position of disadvantage through the flexible application of combat power. Unity of Command – For every objective, there must be a unified effort. Simplicity – Prepare clear, uncomplicated plans. Complex plans are more likely to be misunderstood or to fall-apart as soon as something goes wrong.

All apply to organized anti-authoritarian rebellion. We should also keep in mind that these are the guiding principles of literally every military organization in the world.

## **Timeless truths**

The timeless truths of combat, while having been derived from a careful study of centuries, even millennia, of human history, can (with a little imagination) be applied to social struggles as well. These truths seem to apply in all combative situations, regardless of changes in the technology of conflicts. Keep in mind that these principles and truths are not necessarily intended to be used in direct military battles against state forces, although they could be used in this way. They can also be used in fighting against gentrification, protecting your autonomous space from being destroyed or its valuables taken, to stop developments, to occupy or reoccupy land, etc. And you

plimented by also including the struggles of indigenous and other insurgent groups. In this respect, we could also look at the Metis rebellion around the Red River Valley and the Society of the Masterless Men in Newfoundland, for instance. We'd benefit as well from a study of the battles of war leaders like Crazy Horse, Tecumseh, Chief Joseph, Pontiac, and Geronimo, as well as events like John Brown's attempted seizure of the armory at Harper's Ferry, and countless other examples.

A study of the military attempts of anti-authoritarian and indigenous rebels that focuses on specific battles and the strategies that either won or lost the fight, can lead to many useful insights into the art of revolt. A look at the Potawatomi, for instance, who lived according to open and free principles, and who struggled to survive while caught up in the conflicts between the French and English colonial powers, reveals secrets of successful warfare. Here is just one example: in the spring of 1755, British Major General Braddock led a large army of colonial militia and regular troops from Virginia to destroy French forts on the Ohio River. His guide and adviser was a young colonel, George Washington.

Here's a description of what transpired from James Clifton's book *The Potawatomi*:

“On June 8 the British were approaching Fort Duquesne in western Pennsylvania, site of present day Pittsburgh. Seeing that the British were camped and on the alert, the Potawatomi war leaders persuaded the French not to attack. Instead, they planned to attack the British troops the next day while they were on the move, stretched out in mile-long files along a narrow, forest-shrouded trail. Their surprise attack was a complete success. Colonel Washington tried to...counterattack in Indian style...but was defeated.

They suffered nearly 1000 dead and wounded out of 1500 on the trail that morning. They abandoned most of their equipment and supplies... Braddock was mortally wounded. Washington barely escaped with his life. He learned a life-saving

military lesson from this disaster, one that he would regularly give as advice to his own generals when sending them against British and Indian forces: 'Beware of surprise!'"

In military theory, surprise is one of the most potent weapons available. We should keep in mind that a study of historical combat shows that surprise increases the combat power of fighting forces. Surprise, combat effectiveness, defensive postures, these are all multipliers that can help. Shouldn't this knowledge be generally available and understood among anti-authoritarians?

**The following are just a few examples of ways that anarchists could be, or already are, using martial tactics in present day struggles:**

*Opening new fronts in solidarity with other rebels engaged in a confrontation or action*

*Encouraging defection within enemy ranks*

*Avoiding capture*

*Blockades*

*Unarresting a comrade*

*Spying to gather information on the enemies' plans*

*Interrupting the enemies' means of communication*

*Raids on enemy stores of food and weapons*

*Physical battles that expand territory*

*Freeing captives from enemy prisons*

*Destruction of enemy arsenals*

*Destruction of enemy wealth*

*Secret codes and other means of communication*

*Creating clandestine camps in which to hide friendly fugitives*

*Fleeing to areas outside the enemies' control.*

*Increasing the ability to fight as groups*

Like all strategies involving territory and occupation, the defeated have myriad choices in terms of how they live out their

Much later, in Europe during Napoleon's reign, and in fact inspired by his successful campaigns, Carl Von Clausewitz (1780-1831) wrote "On War". This is the only text that compares in importance and originality to Sun Tzu's. As pointed out, many treatises on various aspects of war and military approaches had been written after Sun Tzu, but Clausewitz was the first to introduce a philosophical perspective on it and he did so thoroughly. His contributions are enormous. I won't attempt to summarize his ideas, but will mention some of the areas that he explored and some of the terms that he used.

Clausewitz wrote about the essential unpredictability of war, explored the asymmetrical relationship between attack and defense, came up with the useful concepts of "fog" and "friction" in war and emphasized that there must be a culminating point of an offensive. Commentators also remind us that he used a dialectical method to present his ideas, making them sometimes difficult to understand. If you are truly interested in military theory, then Clausewitz is a must-read. It would be difficult for any writer on these topics to claim to not have been influenced by him.

Clausewitz had a contemporary, Antoine Henri Jomini, who was also largely stimulated by Napoleon's campaigns to search for a theory or a collection of laws on war. He is worth investigation for a fuller understanding of the development of the theory of combat.

Finally there is JFC Fuller, one of the greatest military thinkers of the 20th century. He is nearly as important as Clausewitz, if only because his influence is also widespread, but his ambition was not as great. The Principles of War, as they have been known for nearly a century, were first codified by him. The US Army's list of the principles of war, found in one of their basic field manuals, is almost identical to the list first compiled by Fuller. Let's have a brief look at these.

tainly true where I live. For many reasons, mobility, lack of kinship ties, etc., we are a dispersed group of people. Yet, it is important, from the perspective of the art of rebellion, to at times concentrate one's forces, especially on a vital point of an opponent. Naturally those in control of the repressive apparatus are aware of such things and have planned

and trained accordingly. Riot control techniques, for instance, are an example of this. So rather than remaining inactive out of fear of losing a direct confrontation as a group and thus remaining defeated, we can find ways to act as a group without appearing to be a group. Remember Sun Tzu: "subtle, subtle, they become formless." We can concentrate our forces, we just can't let our enemy know that we are doing so until it is too late. Black blocs often come close to achieving this.

Every potential rebel exists in different circumstances, regardless of the fact that we all live within various prisons of capitalist civilization. Therefore it is up to you to decide if it is best for an in-the-street, prolonged, collective confrontation at a counter summit all dressed in black, for instance, or whether it is wiser to avoid uniforms, appear to be unconnected individuals, and coordinate an action that occurs quickly, following which the participants melt away. The latter would be an example of acting as a group without appearing to be a group.

## **Napoleon's campaigns**

Since Sun Tzu there have been innumerable treatises and theoretical works on war. For instance, in the 1st century AD Sextus Julius Frontanus wrote a book called "On Military Affairs." Byzantium produced both Strategikon by Mauricius and the Tactica by Leo the Wise. There are many such books, but I believe that overall they have little benefit for our purposes although a historian or a scholar could find much value there.

lives. But the choices are more limited if we can agree on what our aims are, on what success is and on what constitutes an acceptable quality of life. Were the Warsaw Ghetto inhabitants who rose up against their Nazi tormentors ethically reprehensible for killing? Should they have continued to accept daily humiliation, suffering, violence and death? Yet at the time, there were those among them who argued against the uprising on various grounds, including moral ones.

Oftentimes, it isn't a question of who was more successful, but agreeing on what success is. In the case of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, those who participated felt that victory was standing up to their oppressors and risking death rather than continuing to live in Nazi hell. For others, success was measured simply by staying alive at all costs, even if that meant being a traitor or accepting defeat. For others still, victory was measured by being morally superior, by never adopting the means and ways of the enemy, even if that meant suffering or death.

All rebels who want to overthrow the present social order in favor of a more just and imaginative one need to ask themselves not only what is acceptable radical behavior, but what are acceptable conditions of living. Standing up to the bullies who run things and asserting some territoriality within which we can learn to live in harmony with each other and the world around us seem reasonable to me, while waiting for objective conditions to be right or other such Marxian concepts seem unacceptable. To confront the institutions that maintain our servitude and misery we need to listen to the hot-headed, impatient, and courageous fighters as much as we do to the cautious, negotiating, and compromising peacemakers. It's about context, not morality, the forces of history, or universally applicable strategies.

We are all damaged people who need to heal and not just fight. We partly do this with others with whom we share affinities and openness for intimacy. We also need to analyze civiliza-

tion (or domination generally) and share our insights through debates, pamphlets, publications and discussion. And we need to help create communities and/or cultures of resistance by contributing to the various projects that fellow rebels are involved in. Yet personal healing, propaganda, and putting our energy into community projects, no matter how worthy, still don't confront the military occupation we are presently living under. Even attempts at re-wilding are vain if we don't push for a generalized, effective, long-term push against militarily-protected centralized authority.

History is not only the story of imperial civilizations targeting and conquering others, it is also a chronicle of the resistance to that conquest. I have allies and kin that extend back millennia. They have won countless battles. There has been successful resistance in every area and every era. In order to honor these ancestors we need to give them thanks and keep up the fight.

In military theory, it is said that for the conqueror to really succeed, the losing population must accept defeat. Otherwise, the conquerors only win after every single person has been killed, which isn't normally in the conquerors interest because they need slaves and soldiers, etc. A very large part of our population unfortunately has accepted defeat. So, I want to repeat that sharing our unique world-views and critiques and creating community are as essential as acquiring martial skills. A martial component is simply one part. But we also must remember that a small band of rebels can accomplish a lot, even succeeding in leading relatively free lives away from capitalist civilization.

In Ireland, in the early nineteen hundreds, small local militias, with not even enough rifles to go around, succeeded in thwarting the designs of one of the most powerful empires on the planet for decades. They were successful partly because they used many martial skills, from spying to engagement in actual battles but also because they had widespread support.

others, and aim to be on equal footing with your opponents, at least in theoretical knowledge.

The Art of War is widely available, but I thought I'd share some of my favorite quotes from one of the translations:

Those skilled in warfare establish positions that make them invincible and do not miss opportunities to attack the enemy. Generally, in battle, use the common to engage the enemy and the uncommon to gain victory. Those skilled at uncommon maneuvers are as endless as the heavens and earth, and as inexhaustible as the rivers and seas. To be certain to take what you attack, attack where the enemy cannot defend. To be certain of safety when defending, defend where the enemy cannot attack. Subtle! Subtle! They become formless. Mysterious! Mysterious! They become soundless.

In armed struggle, the difficulty is turning the circuitous into the direct, and turning adversity into advantage. Therefore, if you make the enemy's route circuitous and bait him with advantages, though you start out behind him, you will arrive before him.

## **Our own parables**

One of the ways that I understand Sun Tzu is through the use of the genre in which he expressed himself. While there is no reason to reinvent useful philosophies of combat and conflict, we can pass on new parables, ones that grow out of our own experience and insights. For instance, based on some of the discussions that friends and I have been having, new ideas have begun to emerge which might be helpful to others. The notion here is that we can all contribute to philosophical meditations on revolt, based on our own study and experience. This sharing might help our projects and attempts and make each of us more worthy opponents of the megamachine.

I think that it is safe to say that anarchist insurgents are a small minority within almost every given population; it is cer-

## **Against militarization**

Integrating the arts of rebellion into our self-organizing doesn't imply an iota of hierarchical structure of arrogant superiors and obedient ranks. Obviously we don't want to militarize rebellion. The hope is that potential insurgents will develop a richer vocabulary and experience around conflict. There is for instance an enormous difference between attacking, invading and fighting or between claiming and occupying. We can explore these and many other differences and concepts. Training camps, places where radical theory, survival skills and martial arts are learned and shared, could be useful. Having these types of abilities could be helpful, even lifesaving. Luckily, it isn't necessary to reinvent combative skills, because there are timeless truths and principles that apply to all combat.

## **Sun Tzu**

Sun Tzu is actually an honorific title given to Su-n Wu (c. 544 BC – 496 BC), the author of *The Art of War*. There is some debate about the original title of this famous text, which some of you may be interested in because it seems that the author intended to suggest martial arts, rather than war. In any case, Sun Tzu looked at both the philosophy of conflict as well as the conduct of military operations, especially maneuvers and combat, making his writings as they stand useful to anarchist rebels. *The Art of War* is an important text and should be widely read by potential insurgents. This isn't to say that Sun Tzu was an anarchist, rather that his writings are poetic and open ended enough to be used by just about anybody interested in being victorious in "combat" or "conflict". This means that many, many people have read them, including your adversaries. Therefore to succeed, study this text, among

The fighters could melt back into the population. Disadvantaged fighters need widespread support to win. With this in mind, it's helpful when rebels stay put in one region and make strong bonds with the land and the inhabitants there. Perhaps, over time, the embers of authentic communities with martial skills will begin to glow and maybe these seemingly isolated embers will one day gather themselves into small local fires. And hopefully, you'll be a rebel around one of those fires.

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I hope that I can stimulate some interest not in the outrage and tragedy that is conventional war, but in the art of revolt. The principles of the art of rebellion might apply in regional secession, guerilla warfare or insurgency. They might apply among a group of friends doing their best to confront the imperialism of the market within their potential territory or their neighborhood. They might allow a stunted, humiliated individual to find dignity and achieve small successes along her life path, rather than resignation.

While conflict, even armed conflict, is as natural as a rainy day in the Pacific Northwest, war or large-scale invasions in the interest of an elite or ideology, violent brutality as a continuation of politics, seems to only begin with urban civilization. I have read about the exploits of Hannibal, Alexander the Great, Caesar, Napoleon and so on. There is much to learn from them, but little to be inspired by. Theirs is the story of wretched masses impoverished by the scale and insanity of the conflicts in their lands, of obedient soldiers dutifully following the orders of their superiors. It is the story of plunder and rape and pillage, of senseless slaughter and bloodshed.

## Against war

War generally has little to do with real courage and more to do with a superficial heroism based primarily in self-preservation, although one does find examples of extraordinary bravery and solidarity, a humanity that asserts itself in the midst of the inhumane. Calls to class war, from one point of view, represent an ignorance of the realities of war or an example of a general lack of vocabulary among radicals who want to overthrow the present order. These calls are often a shallow romanticism, frequently the privilege of those who live in peace.

I am interested in the re-awakening and celebration of the fighting spirit. The call is not for war, but an end to war through revolution. Tecumseh, Pontiac, Zapata, Makhno, Gabriel Dumont, Crazy Horse, Durruti, the uncontrollables everywhere, these are my "heroes." I'm sure you have friends, neighbors or acquaintances who have the fighting spirit, who stand up to the bullies around them, who aren't afraid to speak their mind, who give support to rebellious practices, be it through attitudes or actions. This is the spirit that should be acknowledged and encouraged, especially when it coincides with anarchic desires.

Martial skills are useful for everyone, including those who simply want to irritate, to vandalize, to commit small low level attacks designed to make public their hatred of the institutions and managers of this culture. And a clandestine group of friends that creates beauty by destructive means or that spreads subversion using playful methods, can also benefit from and help inform the martial approaches I am advocating.

Many rebels are anxious to explore the possibilities that successful resistance might offer. And outside of these milieus, there are others whose communities or friends are threatened and haven't the skills to act on their desires. Can we challenge the institutions that rule our lives without losing? Ongoing eco-

logical catastrophes cascading into a potential collapse make the situation urgent. Institutions of domination are global, but this doesn't mean that to overcome this planetary regime local confrontations and occupations are futile. Perhaps the megamonster can be torn apart limb by limb. Low intensity insurgency based primarily on unconventional warfare techniques is one possible avenue to pursue.

I am not promoting a resistance dominated by a sea of humorless "revolutionaries". Rather these insurgencies would be primarily based among groups of friends, in geographical or genuine communities. This usually implies some degree of a mutually beneficial and trusting relationship between the actual fighters and the folks around them. Presently there seems to be widespread interest among anarchists in exploring a variety of martial arts. There is also interest in destructive actions, occupations of shelters and of food producing land bases, in survival and wilderness skills, etc. The urgency brought on by the shredding of the green world has helped create a rebel milieu anxious to fight for a future.

And this era has also helped rebels back into our bodies. There will always be philosophers; incisive people who can easily juggle ideas, but hopefully we will now begin to honor those with sensual wisdom among us as well: more women, the indigenous traditionalists, those with survival skills and earth knowledge, even so called rednecks, rural outlaws with whom we could be building bridges. A more rounded approach seems necessary if we are going to succeed in our desires for healthy communities and individuals. So perhaps once our philosophizing is complimented by an equal degree of pursuit of sensual knowledge, including martial skills, a more significant threat will begin to emerge. And the more that we integrate these abilities into our ideas the more confident and healthy we will be and the more likely will we begin to see opportunities that we were previously blind to.