

Piece Now

Fifth Estate Collective

1970

The following article was taken from "A Handbook for Radicals; Revolutionaries and Easy Riders" published by the International Liberation School. It is available for fifty cents and is an invaluable guide to small arms weaponry. Send to: People's Office, 1925 Grove St., Berkeley CA.

America has a long tradition of vigilante paramilitary violence. Usually it has been directed against blacks and Third World people, poor whites and dissident political groups.

In the last several years some of us have come under this type of vigilante attack because of our politics and our life styles. People have been killed in movement offices in Texas, New York, and Detroit. A radical professor was almost knifed to death in his office by an assailant. And, the Easy Rider situation is all too true in many parts of the country.

While such cases of paramilitary right wing violence have not happened in extremely large numbers, they have occurred often enough to make it worthwhile to acquire some familiarity with firearms.

In many situations it is possible to defend yourself successfully. While the legal system is biased against us, nevertheless the law is very much stacked in favor of self-defense. For example, if an intruder enters your house with "harmful intent" you are within your legal rights to kill him.

Possession of a gun and knowledge of how to use it is sometimes a deterrent in itself. Many people still view hippies and white movement youth as pacifists who don't fight back and can be beaten and attacked with impunity. They must be made to realize that flower children can grow thorns.

In many parts of the country the paramilitary right wing is not very active. Almost everywhere, the main physical threat has come from the pigs. In most situations involving confrontations with pig forces armed self-defense has not been feasible, since oppression has come primarily through the courts.

If the pigs come to the door to arrest you, most people will go along, since armed self defense in this case might mean death, or a much higher level of oppression in the ensuing court case. If the assailant at your door happens to be an agent of the state, all your legal rights of self defense vanish, and if you employ armed self defense you will be tried for murder or attempted murder.

But, as the system becomes more repressive, the pigs begin to go beyond their "normal" role of arresting people who are then dealt with through the courts, and instead, begin to function as executioners in the streets. Their attack is direct and physical, and their goal in many cases is to kill. Under these conditions armed self defense becomes necessary.

When the stakes are increased, the risks of armed self defense are preferable to submission that means death.

Black and Third World people have, through their history in this country, been subject to this sort of direct, fascistic, physical attack by police. Many instances, from Robert F. Williams in 1961 to the L.A. Panthers just recently, attest to the fact that armed self defense can be carried out successfully. It seems clear that if Robert Williams had not had a gun, he would have been lynched by whites; if the L.A. Panthers had meekly surrendered at 5 a.m., at least some of them would have been executed on the spot. One of the outcomes, of course, is exile or repression in the courts, but it must be understood that death in the streets is the alternative.

Even more important than survival, perhaps, is the fact that these instances of successful defense have made a tremendous political impact in the black community—demonstrating the possibility of resistance and defense.

This type of fascist police attack with intent to kill has been very rare against whites, but as the contradictions of our society grow more acute, we can expect more of this against whites, and the same lessons apply.

Some people say that guns in the movement are bullshit, because “no one is ready to use them,” so that it becomes just one more case of movement rhetoric outstripping reality, making people see us as fraudulent.

It is true that there is a lot of talk about guns, armed self defense, armed revolution, etc., in the radical movement, with very little practice along these lines. But this does not mean that we should disavow or ignore the question of guns; rather we should become familiar with them and develop realistic attitudes about their use.

Too many people have a sort of death trip approach to guns—they assume that if you acquire a gun, and aren't bullshitting around, then you should prove your convictions via a suicidal shoot-out in the streets. This is a misconception—self-defense and guns can be one part of revolutionary violence, a more serious movement that develops many means of struggle and resistance.

We should also become adept at other forms of self defense, such as karate, judo, etc., which allow a person to defend himself in street confrontations, and we should acquire medical knowledge as well.

In the short run many of us have options available—we don't have to participate in a radical movement, take risks, get arrested, etc. Many of us, especially whites, can back off, and not feel the repression. But in the slightly longer run, this is impossible.

Those around the world who are engaged in armed struggle against the U.S. Leviathan will surely grow and be victorious, and inexorably we will all be drawn in—either as “part of the solution or part of the problem.” If we sympathize with this worldwide struggle, and consider their fight to be our fight, then we should begin now to relate to the tools of worldwide liberation.

fifth Estate

Fifth Estate Collective
Piece Now
1970

<https://www.fiftheestate.org/archive/96-january-8-21-1970/piece-now>
Fifth Estate #96, January 8-21, 1970

[fiftheestate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://www.fiftheestate.org)