Urban Terror: The Case of Lone Wolf Peter Mangs

Mattias Gardell

To cite this article: Mattias Gardell (2018): Urban Terror: The Case of Lone Wolf Peter Mangs, Terrorism and Political Violence, DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2018.1444796

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2018.1444796

© 2018 Mattias Gardell. Published with license by Taylor & Francis.

Published online: 09 Apr 2018.

Article views: 142

View related articles

View Crossmark data
Urban Terror: The Case of Lone Wolf Peter Mangs

Mattias Gardell

Centre for Multidisciplinary Studies on Racism, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden

ABSTRACT

White racist serial killer Peter Mangs is the most politically conscious lone wolf terrorist Sweden has seen thus far. Adopting the tactics of Joseph Paul Franklin to the city of Malmö, Mangs committed at least three murders and twelve murder attempts between 2003 and 2010. Well-versed in white power literature and leaderless resistance tactics, Mangs aimed at “igniting a race war” by shooting Black, Muslim, and Roma citizens to amplify racialized tensions, grievances, and anxieties in the increasingly segregated city. Yet, Mangs is not included in any database of single-actor terrorism, as these depend on how a perpetrator or incident is defined by the police, the courts, and the media. In this case, Mangs’ political motives were ignored by everyone, except by people in the targeted communities and the white racist milieu. This fact highlights the importance of ethnographic methods to terrorism studies. Based on ten three-hour interviews with Mangs, an analysis of his own political writings, previously not known to the public, interviews with Mangs’ victims, their friends and relatives, and extensive fieldwork in Malmö among activists across the political spectrum, including people who hailed Mangs’ deeds as heroic, this essay explores the impact of urban lone wolf terrorism.

KEYWORDS

Lone wolf; political violence; racism; single-actor terrorism; ultranationalism

Operating under the radar of the police from 2003–2010, white racist serial killer Peter Mangs conducted what he termed a one man “low-intensive terror war against multiculturalism” in the southern Swedish city of Malmö by killing three and attempting to kill twelve more victims. Mangs chose his victims by their looks or names to represent specific categories of citizens he claimed had no right to live in the city he called his: Afro-Swedes, Muslims, Roma, and race traitors. Well-versed in white power literature and lone wolf tactics, Mangs aimed at “igniting the starting motor of a full-scale race war” by terrorizing Malmö’s non-white citizens to amplify tensions between various classes of people in the increasingly segregated city.

Mangs was by far the most effective and politically conscious lone wolf terrorist Sweden has seen thus far. Yet, his deeds are not included in any of the data sets of single-actor terrorism previously compiled by researchers, as their data conventionally depend on how a perpetrator and/or a deed is defined by police authorities, the courts, and the media in the particular countries included in the studies. Due to a number of converging reasons—soon to be discussed in detail—Mangs’ political motives were typically overlooked by everyone except by people in the targeted communities and the white racist/
ultranationalist milieu. This fact highlights the importance of ethnographic methods to terrorism studies. Based on ten three-hour interviews with Mangs, an analysis of his own political writings, interviews with Mangs’ victims, their friends and relatives, and extensive fieldwork in Malmö among activists across the political spectrum, including people who hailed Mangs’ deeds as heroic, this essay explores urban lone wolf terrorism in a detailed case study. Structured in five sections, proceeding from the descriptive to the analytical, the essay outlines Mangs’ biography and investigates his terror tactics, its impact, and Mangs’ political writings before drawing on the empirical findings to further our understanding of lone wolf terrorism.

**Black belt, funk bass, dental tech, and a gun**

Peter Mangs was 31 when he killed his first randomly selected victim in 2003. Six-foot tall and slender, with blue eyes, shortcut hair, and proper manners, Mangs passed as the ordinary Joe on the streets of Malmö or at the City Library, where he studied national socialist classics and conspiracy literature. He did not smoke or drink and kept in shape by bicycling and practicing taekwondo, eventually earning a black belt in the martial arts dojang where he served as webmaster and treasurer. A musician by training, who played custom-made bass guitar, Mangs studied nursing but worked as a dental technician, a profession befitting his pedantic personality. In 2009, six years into his racist killing campaign, he signed off to become a fulltime race warrior.

Born in 1972, Mangs grew up in the working-class area Lindängen in Malmö, with his seven years older sister, Nina, and his single mother, Vivi-Anne, who worked long hours as a waitress to support her family. Mangs had to care for himself, especially after Nina began doing drugs in her early teens. He didn’t mind, he says. That way, he could keep his room in pedantic [obsessively neat?] order. On rare occasions when Nina was home in-between rehab and the streets, he saw her as an intruder who ate his ice-cream and messed up his things. “My first territorial war was fought against her,” Mangs confided.³ He was 17 when he learned she died from an overdose. Years later, police and media speculated that Mangs’ killing spree was rooted in him seeking to avenge his sister by targeting criminals. However, to Mangs the Black, Muslim, and Roma people he shot were not criminals for breaking the Swedish law, but for being Black, Muslim, and Roma, and walking his streets, living in his city.⁴ Besides, all but one of his victims had no criminal record, and Mangs did not know who they were when he shot them. He found out only afterwards, by reading the news.

Lindängen was full of kids, and Mangs one in the crowd, remembered by his childhood friends as energetic and creative. He enjoyed reading and had good grades. In high school, he took German as a third language. His father, Rudolf, who owned a restaurant in western Sweden, and whom Peter only met during summer breaks, spoke German fluently. Mangs idolized his father, a Finland-Swede of middleclass background whose family fought the communists during the Finnish Civil War and the Second World War, when Finland was allied with national socialist (NS) Germany. Rudolf collected NS and World War II memorabilia, and used to tell Mangs stories about the anticommunist heroes who saved Finland from the red menace. To Rudolf, Swedes brought civilization and culture to the Finnish tribes. “Everything of value in Finland that is not from Sweden is from Germany,” Rudolf informed his son, elaborating on the difference between Aryan
and Mongol blood. Impressed, Mangs wanted to study German and immerse himself in German philosophy. Particularly Friedrich Nietzsche, who besides Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Himmler, and Oskar Dirlewanger was the German he really was captivated by.

Above all, there was music. Mangs got his first electric bass guitar when he was 14, practicing all day and night music by Level 42, Prince, and Thin Lizzy. He studied jazz, Dixie, musicals, funk, and soul at a music gymnasium, then at a music college. Mangs was electrified by Jaco Pastorius, the master of fretless bass whose innovative style and bass chords made him fly. He built his own basses, experimenting with fretless and semi-fretless models. In the early 1990s, Mangs joined the trendy funk scene in Malmö, went vegetarian, kept his hair long, pierced his tongue, and sported leather clothes and white-colored eye lenses, Prodigy style. “He was a genius with a volcano inside,” recalled Svante Lodén, singer in the legendary Afro-Funk band Agurk Players that featured Mangs on bass. “Peter was perfectionist and punk. He wanted all the Kung Fu in playing music and then explode with it.” The fact that a white racist serial killer excels in playing Afro-Funk may appear contradictory, much like white racists enjoying falafel and kebab. However, to Mangs, and like-minded persons, Black music and Arab food may well be imported, but not the people who invented them.

In 1996, Mangs decided to boost his career as bass guitarist and instrument designer by crossing the Atlantic. Some years earlier, his father Rudolf had moved to Boca Raton, Florida. A staunch nationalist, sympathetic to Franco and Pinochet, Rudolf loathed Sweden’s social democracy with its redistribution of wealth from, in Rudolf’s vocabulary, the deserving to the undeserving. “I have never been happier than the day [Swedish prime minister Olof] Palme was killed,” Rudolf confided, when he cordially invited me to stay in his house, using Peter’s old room, adorned with his collection of knives with swastikas, iron crosses, and the German eagle. Rudolf appreciated that his son came to live with him. He loved Peter, even though he never told him so, and valued the chance to set him straight. Peter looked appallingly bohemian, Rudolf recalled. Long hair, vegetarian, “listening to nigger music, even said he played in one of them nigger bands.” That didn’t last long. “He taught me orderliness,” Peter said. “Military drills. The value of discipline. The German way.” A lifetime member of the National Rifle Association, Rudolf introduced his son to Florida’s gun shows, and the flourishing militia scene of South Florida. “Peter was really interested in this movement,” Rudolf recalled, “which deals with conspiracy theories, the militias, and patriots.” Not the least was Peter intrigued with Turner Diaries, the famed race-war novel by white power ideologue William Pierce, leader of the National Alliance, which he found circulating the milieu. Peter “was absolutely mesmerized by Turner Diaries,” Rudolf said. “He gave it to me, tried to make me read it. Hardly talked about anything else.”

Peter stayed in Florida for three years, in vain trying to make his way. He sold some basses, but the market was brand-sensitive. He recorded a CD with his own music. That didn’t sell either. Disenchanted with the land of opportunities, he returned to Malmö in 1999. His American years were not all in vain, he says. His encounter with the militia milieu, white power literature, and the “sovereign citizen” concept made a lasting impression. He did not have to accept that nonwhites lived in his city only because the traitorous government allowed them to, even granting them citizenship. If racial aliens settled in his territory where white culture should abide, he had the right and duty to kill to reinstall
order. “That’s what the Second Amendment is all about. The right to defend your territory, to defend your freedom, to kill in service of higher law.”

Mangs found an apartment in Almgården, a predominantly white majority-Swedish working-class housing complex on the outskirts of Malmö, located across the highway from Rosengård, a predominantly nonwhite minority-Swedish working-class housing complex. Almgården is the city stronghold of ultranationalist activity. In the 2014 election to the European parliament, the ultranationalist Sweden Democrats (SD) gained more than 40 percent of the vote in Almgården. In the 2002 election, when Mangs had settled, SD gained less than 1 percent nationwide, but 10 percent in Almgården. In the 2006 elections, every fourth voter in Almgården voted SD. In the 2010 elections, some months prior to Mangs’ arrest, every third voter in Almgården voted Sweden Democrats. Mangs appreciated his neighbors. His hunting grounds lay elsewhere.

**Terror tactics: the Franklin model**

Mangs systematically prepared his race war. While training taekwondo and practicing with his licensed Unique .22 and Glock 19, he studied history and political philosophy, national socialism, occult fascism, Odinism, anti-Semitism, and conspiracy literature. In 2001, he began gathering his thoughts in a work he referred to as *The German Philosophy*, the content of which will be detailed under a separate heading. Included in Mangs’ syllabus too, was leaderless resistance tactics, with its separation of the overt political leadership and the formally unaffiliated armed underground of autonomous cells and lone actors. As they will be under surveillance, the leadership should spread knowledge and information, but stay within the confines of the law, and leave it open to militants out there to engage the racial enemies as they see fit, without acting on direct order from any external leader or organization.

Exploring his predecessors, Mangs was particularly impressed with Joseph Paul Franklin, the white racist serial killer to whom Pierce dedicated his race-war novel *Hunter*: “the Lone Hunter, who saw his duty as a White man and did what a responsible son of his race must do.” Once a member of the Ku Klux Klan and the National Socialist White People’s Party, Franklin left the organized white racist scene which he found dysfunctional, and went underground “on a holy war against evildoers: interracial couples, blacks, and Jews” as “executioner, the judge, and the jury.” Between 1977 and 1980, Franklin crisscrossed the U.S., assassinating an estimated 22 individuals before getting caught, specializing in slaying white women who “defiled their race” by dating black men. “That was all part of a plan to start a race war,” Franklin said, by creating “enough tensions that eventually blacks and whites … would be going at it.”

Scrutinizing Franklin’s tactics, Mangs observed that Franklin evaded the police by changing states, guns, and modus operandi, at times disguised as a nonwhite man, biking between his parkway hideouts and his getaway car, and only slaying people he did not know, in cities where he was unknown. Mangs applied the Franklin Model to the city of Malmö by shooting people with whom he had no prior relation, choosing his victims by their names or looks, altering city quarters, guns and modus operandi, using a bicycle as a getaway vehicle, sometimes cruising the city at night disguised as an “immigrant” with dark tan, brown eye lenses. “The plan was to expand the operation throughout Sweden,” Mangs said. “Hit at various locations, distract the police investigation. Get more mobile
phones. Tell mom that I was in Stockholm, when in reality I was in Gothenburg. It was frustrating that it didn’t happen,” that he got caught beforehand.¹⁹

Mangs’ adoption of the Franklin Model sheds new light on the murder of Trez West Persson, his only white victim. A young adult woman of 20 years, Trez was assassinated execution style, with three shots from close range, late at night, October 9, 2009, while sitting in a car with Swedish-Albanian Xhafer Dani, parked on a dark parkway near a community church. Both the police and media speculated that Xhafer, who survived shots in his head and chest, was the intended target. Not so, Mangs confided. He had long dreamt of “doing a JPF [Joseph Paul Franklin] thing,” punishing a white woman who betrayed her race. It was a “territorial conflict. If a woman chooses a man from an alien tribe, who moreover is here [in Malmö], which is something that I don’t think he’s entitled to,” then she represents a “threat, and that’s why I popped [her]. For that reason.”²⁰

Trez was Mangs’ third known murder victim. His first murders were committed in June and July of 2003. Both victims, Kooros Effatian (65) and Firas al-Shariah (23), were randomly selected for their names, indicating a background in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. When mapping areas with nonwhite residents, Mangs memorized nameplates in the doorways of suitably located apartment buildings. Both killings went the same way. Early in the morning, Mangs waited behind the iron door to the stairways at a floor chosen because all residents had names he identified as non-Swedish, and simply took the first person who went out of his apartment. Hence, “it was not personal.” Mangs hoped their “relatives would appreciate that.” He had nothing against their husband, father, son, brother. He was not interested in them, only in their death. “This was war. In wars, people die. I’m sorry, but that’s the rule of the game.”²¹

Changing his modus operandi, Mangs committed a series of murder attempts over the coming years, pausing between his shootings at irregular intervals. In the fall of 2009, and throughout 2010, Mangs stepped up his terror war, shooting a series of people in clusters. In October 2009, he shot Trez and Xhafer in the parked car, and shot at Dimitru Falcaru and Andreea Edu through an apartment window. Around New Year, he shot at Adriana Rosa in her apartment, and sought to kill imam Edmir Smajlaj in the Islamic Center. In March of 2010, Mangs shot at people through the windows of two apartments, and tried to kill Jalal Omar and Ahmed al-Hamid with several shots as they sat in a car, waiting for a friend. Around midsummer, Mangs tried to kill three Afro-Swedes on their way to a dance hall, shot a weight-lifter, Ali Hussein, in the back through a gym studio window, put a bullet in Bilal Bingöl who sat in his car at a minimarket parking lot, and tried to kill an Afro-Swede walking through a park. In July, he shot at three Roma women baking cakes with their children, raised his Glock and shot through the kitchen window. The bullet barely missed the baby the first woman held in her arms, passed through the loins of the second, and pierced the arm of the third. Two days later, he sought to kill Yaser Yazdanpanah, a tailor working in his ground floor atelier.²²
By then, the police had finally deducted a pattern, connecting the series of murders, murder attempts, and shootings with each other, and publicly announced the theory that they may have been committed by a lone assassin out to kill nonwhite people. Reporters from all over Europe flew in to follow the manhunt. Residents in the city quarters hit by the killer formed vigilante groups guarding their communities. As reports of nonwhite patrols out to catch the white racist assassin reached the public, fear spread in the white racist/ultranationalist milieu. “Now, I am really scared.” “These gangs are lethal danger.” As “whites may be endangered,” ultranationalists called for military intervention, and enclosing nonwhite areas behind a fortified wall.23 Fear and suspicion rose. Mangs felt immensely powerful. He had single-handedly moved the city to the brink, he thought, hoping that a final spark would ignite a full-scale race war.

**Raising terror**

This section investigates the impact of Mangs' low-intensive terror tactics. His murder campaign coincided with the gradual neoliberal restructuring of the Swedish model that had been initiated in 1991. The rapid surge of income inequality between 1990 and 2010 was the largest among all OECD countries, and Sweden transformed into one of the most segregated societies in the region.24 The basis of segregation is class, but as class distinction co-varies with structural discrimination on the basis of racialized ethnicity, religion, and culture, class distinctions increasingly acquired a visual dimension, readily observable in the segregated urban areas of rich and poor. So too in Malmö, a compact former industrial city with 300,000 residents. Once the cradle of the Swedish “people’s-home” model, Malmö transformed into one of Sweden’s most segregated cities, with record levels of child poverty and income inequality.25 Transforming social realities contributed to rising tensions. White ultranationalists pointed to visible minorities as signs of the betrayal of the political class, envisioning a restored people’s-home for ethnic Swedes only. Nonwhite citizens pointed to the discrepancies between their experience of racial discrimination, and the official narrative of Sweden as the world’s most equal country where racism does not exist, except as a personalized feature of the intolerant few.

Mangs sought to increase the level of antagonism and uncertainties, using violence to stir things up. Mangs said he played the city like a kapellmeister conducts his orchestra, with the police, media, mainstream politicians, ultranationalists, and targeted communities playing their part at his command.26 He was the city manager, clearing urban space from polluting agents, spreading fear among the unwanted.27 He consciously targeted everyday life. By killing or trying to kill people when they were at home, at work, commuting, working out, stopping for fast food, or out dancing, he communicated a message to Black, Muslim, and Roma residents that they were out of place and couldn’t feel safe anywhere, anytime. Mangs aimed his guns at what he termed the “worthless life,” in his own way coming close to Agamben’s analysis of homo sacer as a life that could be killed with impunity.28 “Nobody died,” Mangs insisted, “as no one of any value died.”29

Disturbingly, the reactions to his attacks long seemed to confirm this view. Let me illustrate. June 13, 2003, Mangs jumped out of his hiding, Glock in hand, and stood eye-to-eye with Kooros Effatian, a retired customs officer who spent his days reciting poetry, playing custom-made backgammon, volunteering in a community church, and writing a Salman Rushdie-inspired novel that was situated in his childhood’s Iran.30 Mangs did not
know any of this, nor was he interested. To him, the old man was Muslim, and today he should die. Kooros loathed Islam. That’s why he fled the Islamic Republic. Mangs did not know that either, nor did he ask. He forced Kooros inside, and secured the apartment. Mangs took the old man’s keys, wallet, credit card, and pin code, placed him on the living room sofa, and shot him in the chest. The bullet passed through Kooros’ heart, perforating his right lung. He died from drowning in his own blood, his heart punctured. Mangs laid the man down on the sofa, covered his body with a carpet, cushions from the balcony furniture, and put socks and underwear on top, like a bizarre installation. A few days later, the police entered at the request of Kooros’ daughter as her father never returned her calls. Struck by the weird sight, the female officers thought they had encountered a crime scene and called their male superiors, who did not notice anything abnormal. The old man had most likely got sick, vomited blood, and collapsed on the sofa, with the carpet, cushions, and clothing falling over him. The doctor on duty made a quick inspection, wrote a death certificate, and rushed to the next call. Of course, at the autopsy a few days later, the pathologist discovered that Kooros had been shot to death and called the police who came for his bullet-ridden clothing. Kiarash, who is Kooros’ son, asked me, “Do you think they would have been that negligent had it been a retired customs officer born in Sweden, and not Iran?”

Six weeks later, July 28, 2003, Mangs decided he had to get back on the horse. A few blocks down from Kooros, 23-year-old Firas headed out the door to his job at Swedish Match. That day he would buy tickets to Madrid for a ten-day vacation, before entering the engineer program at Malmö University. His little brother had just graduated from high school, and Firas no longer had to support his mother, who had been single since his father was killed in Iraq and the family fled the country. Firas was young and strong, and Mangs panicked. The shot went through Firas’ head, slamming into the apartment door. The police treated the cases separately. Two murders, 9 mm bullets, a few blocks from each other, same floor. Two victims without criminal history, but born abroad, in the MENA region. The investigation was soon deprioritized. The landlord never changed the apartment door, letting Firas’ mother and brother walk in and out of their apartment door marked with the hole from the bullet that killed their son and brother.

Mangs knew the police routine. Following a murder or attempted murder, the detectives would map the victim’s relations (family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, business contacts) and activities (work, political engagement, religious affiliations). Shooting a Black, Muslim, or Roma in a stigmatized area with nonwhite residents would, Mangs concluded, cause the police to investigate other Black, Muslim, and Roma persons in the community, thereby distributing the trauma further. Furthermore, Mangs correctly predicted that shooting and killing nonwhite people in Malmö would fuel media speculation linking the deed to gang violence, black on black crime, drugs, and immigrant criminality, which would cast the blame on the victim and his sort, thereby magnifying the desired terror effect of the deed.

Let me illustrate with one of the murder attempts that investigation authorities excluded due to insufficient technical evidence. Kamal Masri was a young adult man of 16 years, born and raised in Sweden to parents from Lebanon, who played football in the Swedish Junior Premier League. Biking to football practice on the drizzly eve of November 28, 2006, Kamal crossed paths with Mangs, who was out scouting for victims with his Unique .22 ready in a custom-made bag that hung on the right-hand side of his
bicycle’s handlebars. Mangs acted swiftly. Four shots from behind. Kamal fell to the ground, and Mangs put the fifth bullet in the youngster’s head. Miraculously, Kamal survived. Now, Kamal’s two sisters are important to Sweden’s public culture: one a columnist and cultural radio producer, the other a theatre director and filmmaker. None of this mattered when their brother was almost shot to death. “We did not get any support,” said Manal, one of the sisters. “On the contrary. All looked askance at us. The media too. Kamal became an immigrant. He is born in Sweden, and Sweden is his only home. That was shocking. We are all well-educated, have good jobs, talk Swedish perfectly, all that is required, and we thought that we were so integrated, and, suddenly, we all became immigrants, and the shooting happened amongst immigrants, and, it was like, who cares?”

“The police suspect there is some kind of [criminal] showdown behind,” *Dagens Nyheter* reported while Kamal hovered between life and death. The “probable motive is revenge,” the district prosecutor said. According to the police “this was not an act of madness,” *Sydsvenskan* confirmed. “The shooters were out for the sixteen-year-old, and no one else. A retaliation.” “The boy, himself, holds the key to the mystery,” the crime investigation leader assured. “It was not a coincidence that he was attacked.” He was the suspect in the assassination attempt on him!” Manal exclaimed. “He became a suspect. We, as a family, became suspected.” Fairouz, Kamal’s mother, fled her country for the second time in her life, taking Kamal to Beirut. At the time, south Beirut was in ruins after the Summer War of 2006, and the Swedish foreign ministry warned Swedes against visiting Lebanon. Yet, Fairouz saw Beirut as safer for her son than his native city, Malmö.

Mangs understood that this kind of media coverage would fuel ultranationalist demands to restore law and order by policing immigrant communities. “Multicultural crime” became key to successive Sweden Democrats (SD) election campaigns. Branding Malmö “Sweden’s Chicago,” a “multicultural nightmare,” with “no-go zones,” SD raised populist demands of militarized police presence, ethnic profiling, enforced deportation, and curfews in minority-Swedish areas. “The violence in Malmö escalates in tandem with gang expansion,” SD ideologue Ted Ekeroth laid down as Mangs’ shooting spree intensified during the election campaign of 2010. “Gangs as in immigrant gangs, that is.”

Ultranationalist social media produced a flood of fake news on crime and immigration in Malmö, that eventually would go international, making Malmö a centerpiece of alternative right propaganda, used as a warning of what the Western world would descend into unless the “PC regime” is toppled.

Of course, the alleged link between crime and immigration is contrafactual. There are no “no-go zones” in Sweden. In fact, violent crime rates declined during the 1990s and 2000s. Murder and manslaughter dropped from a high of 108 per year in the early 1990s to 83 in the early 2010s. Violent assault declined from roughly 3000 to 2500. Property crime dropped by 25 percent. In Malmö, crime rates reached record low levels, a fact reflected in surveys measuring exposure to crime, and feelings of insecurity. The percentage of people in Malmö who do not feel safe when outdoors alone late at night in their own neighborhood decreased from 25 to 19 between 1998 and 2012, and the percentage worrying about being exposed to crime declined by 20 percent. During the same time period, the population in Sweden increased from 8.5 to 9.7 million. Malmö grew to 300,000 residents. Many, though not all, of these new Swedes and Malmöers, were born
abroad. Hence, if there was a link between crime and immigration, there would be more truth to the proposition that increasing immigration leads to decreasing crime rates. Of course, SD campaigns do not depend on empirical fact. Rather, key to its communication is its affective dimension. The image of Malmö as a crime-ridden multicultural nightmare was clearly more attractive to their voters than dry crime statistics.

In September, 2010, the Sweden Democrats were elected to parliament. For the first time in Swedish history, a party with national socialist roots made a breakthrough in national elections. Mangs celebrated in his own way. He had received a new laser sight for his Glock, and went out manhunting. At the city hospital, he saw a group of Roma outside the emergency entrance. Hiding across the street, Mangs fired at a distance of 25 meters and disappeared into the night. From the news he learned that the bullet scored a three-centimeter rip on top of the man’s head. An inch too high, Mangs thought, and adjusted his laser sight.

In the Black, Roma, and Muslim communities, suspicion grew that there was a white racist, or group of racists, out there, killing people looking like themselves. According to widespread rumor, the assassin(s) were police officers or assisted by the police. Many nonwhite residents left the blinds down at home and office, took precaution when walking the streets, avoided public transportation, and kept their children indoors. Eventually, police investigators connected the dots. At a press conference on October 22, 2010, investigators announced they suspected that one man was behind all the shootings, warning that “foreign looking” people should not be out after sunset. Of course, that announcement further alienated Mangs’ targeted communities. What does a foreigner look like? Can you be Black, Muslim, Roma—and Swedish? Obviously, Mangs did not think so. By casting their warning in those terms, the police reproduced the message Mangs’ exclusionary violence sent to the targeted communities: you are not part of this nation. However, users of white racist social media celebrated. Finally, a white man that had had enough.

As the police concentrated their efforts to catch the killer, Malmö became a “City of Horror,” at least to its nonwhite residents. White politicians tried to persuade citizens to go on with their daily lives, provoking angry comments from black activists pointing out that the killer did not target whites. The government responded by sending the minister of integration to Malmö, as if a white racist killer targeting Black, Muslim, and Roma people was a problem of integration. “They don’t take our lives seriously,” said Malcolm Momodou Jallow of the Pan African Movement for Justice. “Had it been a man of Middle Eastern background running around shooting to kill white people, he had been labelled a terrorist. The prime minister and the minister of justice had come directly. The minister of integration? What did this tell us? That our lives are not worth as much as white peoples’ lives. Believe me: had it been the other way around, the reaction would have been totally different.”

The German philosophy

When he was finally caught on November 6, 2010, Mangs showed no remorse. During the trial, he demonstrated his contempt for the court under the pretenses of not listening to
the proceedings, putting fingers in his ears, attending to his clothing, or reading books. By his acting, he intended to teach potential race warriors how to behave if arrested: do not cooperate with the enemy, show no guilt, and do not acknowledge the jurisdiction of the System you have waged war upon.

To many reporters, already inclined to see the white serial killer in terms of individual pathology, Mangs’ actions reinforced their image of him. The first Mangs trial coincided with the Breivik trial, where mental health issues long overshadowed Breivik’s political motives, with mental health experts debating whether Breivik suffered from paranoid schizophrenia or personality disorder. In Mangs’ case, forensic psychiatrists determined his “deeds were planned, not an expression of disorganized, psychotic thinking.” However, as Mangs’ political writings—*The German Philosophy*—surprisingly was excluded from the investigation protocol, prosecutors could not even substantiate their charge that Mangs was guilty of hate crime. Hence, the political motive, the very key to his terror war, was left aside.

Why were Mangs’ political writings excluded? “Of course, we sensed there was some driving force there,” a detective chief inspector said, “but it was the prosecutors’ call and they didn’t let the political overshadow the technical.” Besides, they deemed Mangs’ text “opaque.” To some extent, the document I found in an unmarked folder in Mangs’ computer is obscure. Modelled on Nietzsche’s *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, *The German Philosophy* is a series of aphorisms and meditations with hidden references, each bestowed with a title and arranged alphabetically. Like Nietzsche, Mangs abstains from discussing the intellectual work preceding his interventions. “I never go through the dull experience of explaining the basic structure that my philosophy is based upon.”

Purportedly “based on the collective effort of the German gene-pool” to understand the meaning of existence, *The German Philosophy* is cast as the continuation of the works of Martin Luther, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Adolf Hitler. However, the thoughts of Luther figure only implicitly in its anti-Semitism, and Nietzsche’s influence mainly transpires in its mobilization of particular concepts, which owes more to Nietzsche’s iconic standing in white power culture than an intellectual engagement with his philosophy. Incorporating Nietzschean concepts that are more or less digested (e.g., master-slave morality, herd morality, beyond good and evil, and Übermensch), seems part of the white power activists’ general curricula.

Mangs oscillates between first-person and third-person, where he appears as *The Author*, emphasizing that his contribution does not spring from academic effort. “The author has never studied any theory, he is basically studying his own nature and the strife of his genes.” True wisdom springs from the collective unconscious of the Aryan race, inherent to its racial soul. “I don’t study much, I listen inwards for the whispers of the ‘Deutsche Volk-Seele’.” This figure of thought is in line with the Ariosophic tradition of occult National Socialism, and Wotansvolk, an Odinist think-tank out of St. Maries, Idaho, which Mangs came across through the Swedish Heathen Front, and the writings of Magnus Söderman, a national socialist intellectual who regularly translates American material into Swedish (including *Turner Diaries* and *Hunter*) and runs the influential fascist podcast, *Motgift.* Much like Carl Gustav Jung’s musing on Hitler as “the mouth-piece of the Gods of old,” and national socialism as the resurfacing of psychic forces deeply embedded in the Aryan collective unconscious, Mangs argues that “Nazism is the return to Wotan.” Despite the imposition of estranging Christianity, Wotan will be alive
as long as there are Norsemen in the North. “The laws of the physical universe have not changed, it is still survival of the fittest and the weak will die,” Mangs wrote. “It is highly ineffective to live according to unnatural Christian rules and this is the reason for the problems in our time.” The (emerging) “New Viking will fight, kill and die for his survival and he doesn’t need an excuse that is an illusion. He strives to be an animal, physically, and at the same time an evolving spirit.”57 In the project to unfetter the force of Wotan, Mangs saw himself as a forerunner, a self-realized Nietzschean superman whose nature is key to racial survival.58 “Kindness … will be the death of the Aryan race,” whereas “extreme brutality” is imperative. “I don’t have the same limitations and inhibitions that the surrounding individuals have, therefore I could be the one that defines the future of our identity.”59

According to The German Philosophy, there are two parallel universes, the physical and the spiritual, each with its distinct rationality. They are not conflicting or ranked in terms of higher and lower, but should be kept separate as inflows from one to the other cause disturbances. The physical universe is governed by nature’s laws, genetic programming, and struggle for survival, where distinct life forms fight each other. In the spiritual universe, there are eternal ideas, and forms, in (Mangs’ interpretation of) the Platonic sense. These may appear in the physical world but should be rejected by the common man who should trust his instincts. For instance, to hate the alien whose existence threatens the German gene pool is a natural reaction that feeds the killer instinct necessary to protect the race. The ordinary white man who acts on this instinct may feel guilt. Only the Aryan superman kills the nonwhite intruder without hate and feels no remorse. The Jews, who are the white race’s most gifted foe, like all life forms seek to secure their existence. As they cannot challenge the white race openly, they turn to deceit. By seizing ideas and concepts belonging to the spiritual universe—sin, guilt, morals, good, evil—Jews have constructed a System to ensnare the white man, to estrange him from his instincts and nature’s laws. Historically, this System was known as “religion,” but today appears in secularized version as “democracy, equality, and human rights.”60

Much like Comte Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, Mangs views conflict between the races as the prime mover of history. “Give war a chance!”61 The genocidal battle between the races will ennoble the strongest elements who will give birth to evermore advanced species. “Blood is the smell of evolution.”62 With the colonial expansion, the Aryan race exterminated or subjugated the nonwhite races, and laid the foundation for the affluent Global North. “I will never speak out against ethnic cleansing simply because I know that I live well because my European forefathers exterminated millions of natives,” Mangs wrote. “I support ethnic cleansing.”63

The inherent features of each race are determined by blood and soil, genes and habitat. The epic battle is between the white and nonwhite races. The latter is subdivided in lower races (gorillas, Africans, indigenous peoples) and higher (Muslims, Jews), with an intermediary level (Russians, Asians). The white race is subdivided in distinct subunits marked by religion (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant) and ethnicities (e.g., Greek, Italian, German), representing different stages of refinement.64 At the apex of mankind is the übermensch, the Aryan elite that in itself contains the seed for the next evolutionary leap: the achievement of divinity. “If you don’t bend before a higher power there is only one option left—you are that higher power. Hitler was definitely a God, because he did not bend for anyone or anything.” Hence, the “new man,” the superman, “has discovered his own Godliness.”65
“Tomorrow will be the day of the Übermensch,” Mangs laid down, adding, “I am Übermensch.”

According to The German Philosophy, the Jews are the only nonwhite race intelligent enough to pose a serious threat to the evolving Aryan super-race. Mangs' thinking on Jews reflects the standards of modern antisemitism. Jews allegedly control governments, banking, media, entertainment industry, and education, throughout the West (and much of the rest), and are behind socialism, capitalism, liberalism, immigration, and Christianity. A Jew is like a “slice of meat infested with maggots, you are programmed to shun it. Physical laws tell you that it could kill you and you should immediately gas and burn it.”

Realizing that they are dead the minute white folk come in contact with their programming, Jews created the three “systems of illusion—religion, socialism, psychoanalysis” as protective shields. All three systems stress white guilt (for the white man’s sins, superiority, natural desires) that the Jews offer to ease if whites behave in prescribed ways (pray for absolution, abstain from the right of their might, go into therapy). “Aggression has the programmed purpose of ‘will to power’, guilt is a non-programmed illusion,” Mangs asserts. “If you want to remove guilt you must kill the guilty, [who] invented the concept.”

While inherently superior, whites are not predestined to win the ongoing racial war. On the contrary, the Jews have opened the gates of the West to immigration and multiculturalism, which has brought the white world to the brink of extinction. “Cultural integration and holocaust are the same thing for blond people. Death is death, either way.” The “invaders” are “armed with non-Aryan genes. They need no guns.”

The heel of Achilles is the white woman who fails her race by dating nonwhite men. “She spreads her legs for a monkey, and she believes in what she’s doing. What feels right to her, is totally ruled by coincidence. She is not aware of it, but Übermensch is aware of what dictates the free will of a given individual. If the monkey hadn’t been here in Europe, she wouldn’t have been with him.” Females are “retarded,” Mangs laments, as evidenced by feminism and women clinging to “their abortion-right in a nation with a decreasing nativity.” Thus, the white race is at a precarious stage. Racial aliens occupy its territory, white women fail their men and race, and white men have lost contact with their warrior instinct. The responsibility to secure racial survival rests on the Aryan elite, the few self-realized supermen out there, to act with exemplary resolution: “To exterminate any number of people to save the young elite must be a split-second, no doubt-decision.”

“Violence solves all problems, if you hit hard enough.”

Understanding lone wolf terrorism

Ultranationalist political violence in Sweden is rising. According to the Global Terrorism Database, there were 54 terror incidents between 2000 and 2015. The number varied between zero and three until 2014, when six incidents occurred. In 2015, the number skyrocketed with 36 incidents. The majority were arson attacks against mosques and homes for refugees. The surge of violence was encouraged by ultranationalist political leaders. For instance, in a speech widely distributed online, Sweden Democrat (SD) ideologue and Member of Parliament Kent Ekeroth addressed an audience of Sweden Democrats and National Socialists in Trelleborg, October 17. Arguing that Sweden will “cease to exist as a nation” if the “invasion” of asylum-seekers is not halted, Ekeroth
claimed that Swedes “have a long fuse, but will explode when it has burned down. And we will show them: it will explode now. We have no time to spare. You are the vanguard we need to take our country back!” 77 A few hours later, a residence for refugees was set ablaze. Five days later, Anton Lundin Pettersson, a young adult man inspired by Breivik, SD’s party leader Jimmie Åkesson, and ultranationalist vlogger Marcus Follin (The Golden One), and who “liked” SD’s online campaign to seal the nation’s boarders, entered an elementary school in Trollhättan and killed three randomly selected nonwhites with a sword. 78 Of course, Ekeroth cannot be held accountable for these deeds or how his call to action would be interpreted, but that is the point of leaderless resistance tactics. When Sweden sealed its borders on November 24, 2015, ultranationalist activists concluded that “terror works,” 79 and stepped up their activities. In 2016, a mosque in Borås was set aflame by a lone perpetrator, 80 and 92 homes for refugees were targeted, the majority by unidentified assailants. 81

The growing threat from lone wolf terrorists is reflected in the Swedish Security Service 2016 yearbook assessment that a “terrorist attack in Sweden in the coming year would probably be carried out by a lone perpetrator.” More surprising, however, is to learn that the Security Service believes that an “eventual lone-acting perpetrator most likely will be inspired by al-Qaida or the Islamic State”; an assessment substantiated with reference to Taimour Abdulwahab who in 2010 detonated a homemade bomb strapped around his body in downtown Stockholm, with the probable intent to kill more people than himself. The Security Service does acknowledge the existence of lone wolves motivated by “general xenophobia” but locates such cases in “other countries”—with references to Breivik and Thomas Mair—as if Peter Mangs, Anton Lundin Pettersson, and the series of attacks against mosques and homes for refugees never happened. 82 Unfortunately, the Security Service was right in assessing the threat from IS-inspired lone wolves, as evidenced by Rakhmat Akilov who killed five pedestrians with a stolen truck in Stockholm, April 7, 2017. Unfortunately, the Security Service was wrong to underestimate the threat from ultranationalist lone wolves, as evidenced by the three National Socialists who in July 2017 were convicted for a bombing campaign against homes for refugees and a trade union office in Gothenburg, 83 and the single perpetrator who, on Walpurgis Night, set a mosque ablaze in the Stockholm suburb of Järfälla. Of course, April 7 was bloodier. However, ultranationalist violence is lethal too: politically motivated Swedish ultranationalists have killed at least twenty people since the millennium. 84

The tendency to take the threat from potential Salafi-inspired lone wolves more seriously than the threat emanating from the ultranationalist milieu has consequences. While most Salafi extremists apprehended before a threat becomes an act results from intelligence-led investigations, potential ultranationalist lone wolves caught in time are exposed by chance. 85 It also affects how the courts and media handle the cases. If the perpetrator is Salafi the case is more likely to be tried and reported as terrorism than if he is national socialist. Compare, for instance, two recent cases. In January 2016, 20-year-old Aydin Sevigin was arrested for preparing a portable pressure cooker bomb from instructions downloaded from Inspire and the Islamic State’s How to Survive in the West. When arrested, he had been monitored for six months, since Sevigin’s secular Kurdish/Azari family alerted the police. Moreover, Sevigin’s father had personally forced him to throw away his equipment. Sevigin was sentenced to five years for terrorism preparations, in a case widely reported as terrorism by Swedish media. 86 In July, 2015, police by chance
found 550 kilos of dynamite, an Adolf Hitler altar, race war novels, national socialist literature and white power propaganda, in a house-search following a routine stop of a car they suspected carried moonshine. In this case too, the suspect’s family knew of his political sympathies and desires to “become greater than Breivik,” but found no reason to alarm the police. On the contrary, the suspect’s mother—who represented the Sweden Democrats in the local municipal council—was apprehended when trying to hide a bag of detonator caps from the police. The national socialist dynamite case was not tried in accordance with terrorism laws, received minor media coverage, and was not reported as terrorism preparations. The prime suspect was sentenced to probation for carelessly endangering the public.87

The bias in reporting, understanding, and handling terrorism in general, and lone wolf terrorism in particular, is not unique to Sweden. The most comprehensive study of lone wolf terrorism thus far, the Countering Lone-Actor Terrorism (CLAT) project, found the task of collecting media reportage on attacks in the 30 European countries covered between 2000–2014 hampered by a similar bias. “In many cases, the research teams found limited media coverage of potential right-wing extremism plots and attacks, with far greater public attention focused on religiously inspired incidents.”88 This tendency partly explains why Peter Mangs was not included in the CLAT database of lone wolf terrorism. In gathering their material, CLAT researchers used the Global Terrorism Database to find possible cases; these were then investigated through news reporting, followed by internet searches in English and local languages, and, finally, by consulting in-country terrorism experts.89 None of these methods led the CLAT-team to find the white racist lone wolf terrorist Peter Mangs.

While the CLAT database is incomplete, involved researchers nonetheless produced important findings of relevance also to the situation in Sweden. It found that three out of four lone wolves either were “right-wing extremists,” i.e., ultranationalists, or “religiously inspired,” i.e., violent Salafi extremists. Despite the fact that the threat comes from both milieus, the CLAT researchers concluded “that intelligence machinery may currently be more finely attuned to detecting religiously inspired lone-actor terrorists by comparison to their right-wing counterparts.”90 The largest category of “right-wing extremists” was uncovered by chance, while most interventions against Salafi-inspired extremists were intelligence-led. While proportions may differ, these conclusions hold true also for Sweden. Another key finding was that “lone-actor terrorists have often announced their intent to commit a terrorist act; they are not as invisible as is sometimes assumed.”91 Many revealed themselves by changing behavior in a way that indicated that they had become more extreme, and/or leaked what they were planning to family, friends, or online, i.e., they failed to follow the rules of the lone wolf, which would have allowed them to travel under the radar. This seems to be the case also with Swedish lone wolves, as evidenced by the cases of Aydin Sevigin and the national socialist dynamiters.

According to the version of leaderless resistance Mangs followed, the lone warrior should stay under the radar of the police by upholding a set of rules. He should a) not be member of an ultranationalist organization or communicate his political thoughts openly; b) plan, finance, and execute his activities in solitude; c) only target people unknown to him; d) only operate in places where he is unknown; e) change modus operandi, weapon, and area of operation in irregular patterns; and, f) not allow himself to be carried away by the attention his deeds will receive by taking credit for them.92 In reality, this set of rules
proved hard to follow. While Mangs was never a member of an ultranationalist organization, he did subscribe to the National Socialist paper *Nationell Idag*, and frequently leaked his views on ultranationalist social media platforms, using different usernames.\(^{93}\) He enlisted help from his father to buy race war equipment, including extra pipes for his Glock and laser sights.\(^{94}\) While Mangs only killed people he had no prior relations to, he committed his two first murders in Lindängen, where he had grown up, and found it hard to expand his race war to cities he did not know. He never implemented his plans to operate in Gothenburg and Stockholm. He did visit Copenhagen carrying his concealed Glock, but never felt safe enough to kill. Malmö he knew like his own pockets. While he tried to alternate between different modes of operation, he followed a pattern that was possible for the profiling experts to discern when they were finally set on the case, and the second known murder was almost a copy of the first. Had the police synchronized their investigations and freed themselves from racialized conceptions of the usual suspects, it would have been possible to track down this lone wolf at an earlier stage.

The rule of the lone wolf that Mangs found the hardest to follow was the last: to abstain from taking credit. Mangs saw himself as a hero. Besides ultranationalist literature, an important source of inspiration were American films, portraying the armed avenger who cleans the streets from lowlifes, *Death Wish*, *Bourne Identity*, *Taxi Driver*, *White Man Falling*. However, the movies’ lone hero has the audience as witness. The lone jihadi performs before the eyes of God. Mangs had no audience, and did not believe in a power higher than his own ego and nature’s laws. Hence, he was troubled by a philosophical question akin to the classic thought experiment: If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound? If no one knew that something happened, had it happened? Is he a hero if there are no witnesses? He had to tell, had to take credit. A few days after his first murder, he called his father and told him everything. Rudolf listened attentively, but was all too practical. He had not underestimated the police? Was he sure nobody had seen him? Mangs regularly updated his father on his accomplishments, but only got hands-on questions. It was only afterwards that Rudolf praised his son as a “forerunner” who would “one day stand statue.”\(^{95}\) Mangs realized he needed another witness. He first informed a childhood friend who shared his disdain for Black, Muslim, and Roma people, and enjoyed the acclaim he got during their recurrent conversations.\(^{96}\) A few years later, he involved another friend with hardcore national socialist sympathies, whom he regularly told of his heroic deeds.\(^{97}\) Eventually, both friends would cooperate with the police when Mangs was arrested.

Much like Mangs, a substantial proportion of the right-wing perpetrators identified in the CLAT database were hostile to non-European immigrants to Europe and motivated by anti-Muslim convictions, often rooted in notions of white supremacy.\(^{98}\) As white racist violence has intensified across the West, it seems essential that police and intelligence agencies take the threat from the ultranationalist milieu more seriously. This includes developing their competence to analyze “obscure” fascist texts and recognize leakage emanating from lone actors operating according to the leaderless resistance tactics. Lone wolves may never be that many. “But it does not take that many,” Mangs said. “Look at the panic I produced, and I was but a single man. A handful like me in each country, and the system will collapse.”\(^{99}\)
Notes

1. For a thorough study of Peter Mangs, see Mattias Gardell, *Raskrigaren* [The Race Warrior] (Stockholm: Leopard, 2015).
17. Of these, Franklin was only convicted of seven murders.
18. Franklin, cited in Ayton, *Dark Soul of the South* (see note 16), 33.
22. Gardell, *Raskrigaren* (see note 1).

31. Rättsmedicinsk obduktionsrapport, 2003–06-17 00:00 diarienr 1200-K75748-03.

32. Pre-Trial Investigation Protocol dnr 1200-K75748-03.


34. Pre-Trial Investigation Protocol dnr 1200-K97076-03; Peter Mangs, interview Saltvik, December 8, 2013; June 17, 2014; Rudolf Mangs, interview, Boca Raton, February 2, 2015; Gardell, *Raskrigaren* (see note 1).


44. Malcolm Momodu Jallow, Interview, Malmö, May 12, 2013.


47. David Sjöman, interview, Police HQ, Helsingborg, April 17, 2013.


49. Peter Mangs, “German Philosophy” (GP).

50. Peter Mangs, “German Philosophy” (GP).


52. For Wotansvolk, see Gardell, *Gods of the Blood* (see note 14).

56. Peter Mangs, “Region” (GP).
58. Peter Mangs “After” (GP).
59. Peter Mangs, “Blue Eyes” (GP).
61. Peter Mangs, “Neanderthals” (GP).
63. Peter Mangs “Confess” (GP).
64. Peter Mangs “Different Levels,” “Better,” “German Philosophy,” “Swedes and Spaniards” (GP).
69. Peter Mangs, “Weak” (GP).
70. Peter Mangs, “Holocaust” (GP).
71. Peter Mangs, “They” (GP).
73. Peter Mangs, “Education,” “Male-Female,” “Feminine” (GP).
74. Peter Mangs “Supermensch” (GP).
75. Peter Mangs, “Ultraviolence” (GP).
79. Per Svensk and Björn Berg (not their real names), Interview, Stockholm November 29.
80. Investigation Protocol, 5000-K63413-16.
85. Gardell in Dahlberg-Grundberg, Gardell, and Lööw, Den ensamme terroristen? (see note 78).
89. Ibid., 4; Clare Ellis et al., “‘Leakage’ and Interaction with Authorities” (CLAT Series no. 4, Analysis Paper, RUSI, 2016); Sebastien Feve and Kelsey Bjornsgaard, “Database Workshop” (CLAT Series no. 3, RUSI, 2016).

93. Pre-Trial Investigation Protocol dnr 1200-K163215-09; Peter Mangs, Interview, Saltvik, June 17, 2014.


**Notes on contributor**

Mattias Gardell is a Nathan Söderblom Professor in Comparative Religion, and Director of Research at the *Centre for the Multidisciplinary Studies of Racism* at Uppsala University, Sweden. His research has explored the intersections of religion, politics, and racism within a variety of empirical fields, including black religious nationalism, white religious racism, white power culture, occult fascism, political Islam, human bombs, torture history, Islamophobia, white racist serial killers, and lone wolf terrorism. His extensive publications include nine research monographs, and more than a hundred articles, essays, and anthology chapters.