

Letters to the Fifth Estate

Various Authors

1978

\$pliterates' Reality

To The Fifth Estate:

There you go again: the \$pliterates attacking TV! (See FE #292, June 19, 1978).

1. Literacy produced modern technology, including capitalism and industrialism. 1, 2, 3 = a, b, c; that's why men invented it.
 2. What about the "dehumanized aspects of the centralized \$pliteracy source: left brained publishers—depressed, repressed presses?
 3. What's wrong with 2-way communication? You \$pliterates have had it one-way for 4,000 years almost. Why so scared of decentralized global contact? Is touch too much for left-brains?
 4. What could be more "thought police" than being split apart at age three by \$pliteracy and from then on we must "think" like that!
 5. "Totally-monitored society"—everyone knows Orwell was talking about 1948. An urgent warning that these crimes were already done by \$pliterate mind-police: teachers?
 6. Glad you noticed "voting is phony"—sure is. Brought to you by the same macho pigs of Golden Greece who brought you Plato, Aristotle, the top 10%, male logic and Phoneyshun, phonetic, alphabettars—yeech!
 7. Print is centralizable; electricity won't, can't stay centralized. The \$pliterates will lose the control they had with \$pliterate hierarchies (this includes the stuffy old manstitution of manarchy).
 8. Where would the State be without \$pliteracy? Where was it before \$pliteracy?
- You have so much centralized control, you'll decide not to publish this (I've sent xeroxes to your friends) and if you do, you'll make fun of it or distort it or mis-print it. But that's your power—it's just more \$pliterate brainwash of you technocrats:
- More \$pliterate Than Thou.

Note: Our writer is at least partially correct—we bureaucratically decided to edit the original letter to half its length.

Israel OK

To The Fifth Estate:

Your article "Official Israeli Terrorism Continues" (FE #292, June 19, 1978) says that Sami Esmail was convicted by the Israelis "in a legal proceeding that could have come right out of Chile." The enclosed article from the *New York Times* of June 2, 1978, by Monroe H. Freedman and Alan M. Dershowitz gives plenty of reason to reject that statement altogether.

The FE may slip, in its article, from libertarianism to a) being an unwitting pawn in the Arab-Israeli power conflict, on the side of the Arabs; and b) into the encouragement of anti-Semitism. The FE can hardly claim that it sees no connection between the potential impact of the article and the hatred of Jews.

Arthur Efron, Editor
Paunch
Buffalo NY

E.B. Maple responds: Your willingness to cite two obviously pro-Zionist professors writing in a newspaper which has always given editorial support to Israel fails to impress me. We could argue endlessly about the treatment of Sami Esmail, but the fact remains that numerous independent commissions have charged Israel with gross violations of the rights of Arab prisoners. You cannot defend the existence of a racist theocracy by asserting, as does your enclosed article, that the "Israeli criminal justice system...is one of the most highly civilized and refined in the world," or by demonstrating the unworthiness of its political opponents. Israel and Zionism, with their long history of service to the machinations of British and U.S. imperialism, their racist suppression of the Palestinians, and Israel's key role in the capitalist system in the Middle East, should certainly bring nothing but condemnation from those interested in the idea of revolution.

Your tired charge that somehow criticism of Israel equates with anti-Semitism must be seen as just what it is—a dishonest attempt to deflect political criticism of Zionism. I find it almost contemptible to have to state to you that I and other members of this paper would use any means necessary to defend any persecuted minority from attack by racists or fascists. It is the witting pawns of Israel like yourself who present the real threat to Jews, for the continuing support of that nation places those living in the Middle East in as precarious a position as the Jews who faced the Holocaust. Anything less than support for region-wide revolution and the destruction of all nation states—Jew or Arab—is a policy of suicide for Jews.

Good news just received! MSU student Sami Esmail has been granted an early parole by the Israeli government Oct. 19 and will be deported back to the U.S.

Esmail, a U.S. citizen, served ten months of a 15 month sentence for membership in a Palestinian organization, was freed after Israel bent to international pressure to release him. The campaign included a recent letter to the Israelis signed by "60 prominent Americans including U.S. Rep. Bob Carr of Lansing" according to the Associated Press.

To Organize?

Dear People:

I agree with Jim Stodder (Letters, FE #293–294, August 21, 1978); we have to be more than a bunch of individuals unwilling to compromise. I believe individualism isn't feasible at this time because it boils down to being a segregationist. After capital has been dethroned individualism will have all the room in the world to flourish. For now I don't think it will hurt, (it might hurt a little, but it won't be fatal) to reduce ourselves to being part of something bigger.

None of us can be the individuals we'd really like to be when we have to report to our position in the wage labor system anyway. I'd say organization is necessary, with the FE and similar projects as our centralization the way Radio Alice was for the movement in Bologna. A paper like the FE is so much more effective than Radio Alice was in Italy because I doubt that Radio Alice received any feedback from the people they were trying to reach. One thing for sure, we're going to have to learn to walk before we run.

Also, the material put out by the Marquis de Sade Brigade (See FE #292, June 19, 1978 & #293–294, August 21, 1978) is fine and dandy, but I don't see anything revolutionary about their name. In fact, I'd say their name is

counter-revolutionary because instead of promoting what could be, it perpetuates what is. They might as well call themselves The Nuclear Nazis or The Rape All Army.

Everything is something!

With Love,

Mark Farris

Monroe

Note: Thanks for your confidence in us, Mark, but do you really think any organization can be trusted with your life or any media with accurately reporting your reality?

Ah, Praise!

Dear Comrades in the Struggle for the Unknown Ism:

Please sign me up for your tabloid once again. As the great Giosue Carducci said, "Sepulchered in the depths a tiny forest laughs..." I find it ever so stimulating to read and re-read your clearly written essays.

As the great Grazia Deledda said, "That man was not a priest, he was the Devil's brother come to earth!" The many quotes you sprinkle throughout your articles, like ketchup on bad french fries, really help me to understand, as the great Jose Echegary said, "The world in general, if it would mind its own business instead of tearing and rending reputations by the movement of its tongue and the sign of its hand."

I am also quite heartened to note that you do not urge the overthrow of the other ism by use of political cliché and self-serving petty vandalism. As the great Giorgos Seferis said, "Give me your hands, give me your hands, give me your hands."

Perhaps the element of greatest satisfaction is your continual display of deeply felt humility; your continual apologies for not publishing on time. As the great Mikhail Sholokhov said, "As he dozed off under the measured, soothing creek, Gregor remembered: 'Why tomorrow Piotra goes off to the camp. Darla will be left with the baby...We'll have to do the moving without him.'"

Another exciting aspect of the Fifth Estate is the continuous display of superb graphics. As the great Henryk Sienkiewicz said, "At dawn' Niger, the farmer arrived from Coriola. For precaution's sake he had left his four slaves—trusty men from Britain—in a tavern in the Suburra, together with mules and a litter."

My only complaint about your paper is the inclusion of the overly long and obfuscatory letters from your readership. As the great Carl Spitteler said, "And thereupon he set himself to bury the lion in a corner of the garden." Thank you for indulging in this my noble effort and enclosed is enough for my next subscription and to send a few of you to a local tavern.

Gus

Seattle

Will The Real ACF...

Dear Fifth Estate:

We note with some alarm your mention of the Anarchist-Communist Federation and their convention (see Free Readers' Ads, FE #293–294, August 21, 1978).

The Anarchist-Communist Federation of North America was founded on May 19 & 20 at a meeting held in Ann Arbor Michigan, and its most recent conference was August 26–27 in St. Catharines, Ontario. The ACF is composed of some dozen local organizations in the U.S. and Canada, and believes, among other things, in a conception of society that harmoniously unites as far as possible individual self-interest and social well-being, and that the principal barriers to a free society are the institutions of property and the State.

While reserving comment on the "other ACF" and the convention in Arkansas, we note that the next convention of the Anarchist Communist Federation of North America will not be held until April 1979, and will not be in Arkansas.

More information about the ACF, its principles, organizations, etc. can be gotten from the Southeast Michigan affiliate at: 42 South Summit, Ypsilanti, Mich. 48197 or the ACF external correspondence group: Prairie Anarchist League, Box 2076 Station A, Champaign, Ill. 61820.

In Struggle,

Christine Willis, David Smash

The Pope A Dope?

Dear Fifth Estaters:

As a young Catholic, I must take exception to your recent (FE #293–294, August 21, 1978) vicious attack on the late Pope Paul VI and on the Catholic religion.

In your blind hatred against matters religious, you have done a great man an injustice. The Pope may be a “shrivelled little rodent in a kimono” to you but to a great many people, Catholics and non-Catholics all over the world, he was a brave, conscientious individual who was never afraid to speak out against the evil and oppressive policies conducted by evil and I would think that people like yourselves, who profess to be striving for dignity and freedom for the individual, would have words of praise for a man who spent his adult life as a spokesman for the oppressed, the tyrannized, and the beaten-down. He never stopped talking about the plights of the poor and the weak all over the world being victimized by their repressive governments.

In a world torn by violence and threatened by the shadow of The Bomb, his was a voice of sanity, gently pleading for peace, brotherhood and equality for all. These are points your raging diatribe neglected to mention.

As for the blasphemously gleeful finale to the article, let me just say that my prayer for you is that your heart is some day cleansed of this hatred and that you learn peaceful tolerance for divergent beliefs. Also, that you learn responsible, reasoned journalism.

Mr. Carmen Minchella

Royal Oak

Note: Pope Paul’s whinings about peace and plenty impressed us no more than when identical ones come from the mouths of creatures like Carter, Brezhnev, or Hua—they are standard pap for politicians. Rather than taking politicians and religious fakers at their word, it makes much more sense to look at their activity, and once one merely glances at the sordid history of the papacy, with its tradition of intrigue, political deals, payoffs, murders, and conspiracies, our barbs become almost redundant.

The Church has always supported any variety of oppressive government as long as the State in question was willing to grant it recognition. Catholicism became an enthusiastic booster of the slave-based Roman Empire once the Emperor was willing to stop persecuting the early Christians; during the Middle Ages, the Church was the lynch-pin of feudalism, being at once the largest land holder and the sanctifier of the ghastly social relationships of that period. In the modern epoch, Pope after Pope has declared the Church against social revolution and ordained private property as holy—this all the while sitting atop a multi-billion dollar financial empire.

In Italian politics the Pope’s role has been equally reactionary. With the establishment of the modern Italian state in 1870, the Vatican considered itself a prisoner in protest against the confiscation of its extensive landholdings—until Mussolini seized power, whereupon the reigning Pope quick made a covenant with the fascist government which continues in effect today.

Pope Paul VI was an energetic supporter of the dinosaur politics of the ruling Christian Democrat party and vigorously opposed the laws which gave Italian women the right to get divorced and to have abortions.

But worst of all, Paul, as the representative of the Church, presides over the most horrible of notions—that human beings are inherently evil or sinful, and that the desire for a full sexual life is a base emotion.

The purveyors of this vile rot are worthy only of our contempt and your advocacy of tolerance and moderation toward its chief spokesman only speaks to your submission to this pernicious idea. We despise anyone who assaults our humanness and our only regret is that we lack the ability to be even more vicious and insulting.

Need Armed Groups

Dear FE:

This is in regards to Claudio Albertani's article in FE #293-294, August 21, 1978. What he seems to be saying is that armed activities are ineffective because they cause the state to bring repression down on the heads of those he says constitute "the real movement."

People involved in a social revolutionary movement act in many different ways and on many different levels—both "legal" and illegal, public and clandestine.

So far as armed struggle goes, there are two kinds of people who engage in it—those who wish to seize control of other people's lives and those who wish to seize control over their own. Because some people, like the Red Brigades, are essentially maoist oriented, vanguardist type outfits who wish to seize state power in the workers' name, is no reason to condemn groups of social revolutionaries who engage in armed activities designed to educate others as well as to aid eventually in seizing control over their own lives.

Also, it is ridiculous to blame the illegal revolutionaries for bringing down repression on the heads of the "legal" revolutionaries. Whenever the state senses some threat from within the ranks of the people whose lives it dominates, it is going to bring the stick of repression down. And it doesn't matter whether the threat is public or clandestine.

It is also natural to expect the state to use the threatening activities of one group as an excuse to attack others. But it is not the first group that is to be blamed for the state's attacks on the others. It is the state that is to blame. And repression is the state's natural reaction to revolutionary activities. Therefore, the "legal" revolutionaries have no right to condemn the illegal revolutionaries for bringing down repression on them.

So far as groups being "trapped specializing in armed struggle," I would agree that the activities of clandestine groups ought not be limited to Military operations alone (the possibilities of clandestine operations are practically limitless—use your imaginations!), but at the same time, groups who intend to engage in armed activities must go through a certain amount of training, both tactical and technical, and contrary to what some persons would have us believe, it's not quite as simplistic as learning how to bake a cake.

And they must develop an attitude that strives toward professionalism in their work if they are to keep it up and stay alive for very long. Those that take an amateurish (i.e., cakebaking) attitude usually end up getting barbecued by the state's armed goons (SWAT pigs, carabinieri, etc.). Thus a certain degree of specialization is necessary.

The soc.-rev. groups that choose to operate in an armed and clandestine fashion are just as much a part of "the movement" as are those who operate "legally," and as such deserve our aid and support. (Just as the clandestine groups ought to aid the above-ground movement with offers of refuge, money, etc.) To do less is to sow divisiveness amongst an already much too divided movement and is detrimental to building a strong, united one.

Robert Howard
Royal Oak

Going For It

The following arrived at the Fifth Estate office, but was directed to the two people listed who are unknown to us. Wonder if they received something for the FE?

Dear Edith and Freddy,

So I said to Alice, is today your anniversary? Well, she said slowly, cocking her head to one side, It depends on what you mean by that. I didn't really know. So it was dropped there and a stony silence ensued. Shit, how was a

person to know that it wasn't the proper question at the right time? That question precluded sleep, even with the window open and a soggy spring breeze coming in. The misty rain made the cars out on the street swish by. The sound was trying to tell me something about myself, my life. For the life of me I couldn't figure out what I had to do with the internal combustion engine put on four wheels doing 10–20 miles over the speed limit out on the street.

Unable to sleep, I got up and walked down to the bus station, thinking I'd get a soda and candybar and sit in the row of plastic chairs bolted to an iron stand to the floor. The stupid machine was out of coke and the taste of 7-Up only made me madder. Of all places in the whole fucking world, they probably sell more coke in bus stations and they don't even keep the machines stocked. Slumped in the third chair from the end, sipping a rotten drink, I started thinking about things. Like the bubble gums wadded up underneath the chair I was sitting on, all the different mouths that had been employed chewing the stuff, that maybe all this chewed up gum could be used as window putty, that maybe government funds could get a pilot project going. Who the hell knows, they've done worse.

The second arm on the big clock slowly crawls around its circle. It's late and the station is deserted except for the cop stopping in for coffee and bullshitting with the woman behind the ticket counter. The whole scene is pretty depressing. The station's air is cooped up, stale cigarette smoke hanging, the lady behind the counter hates cops, the cop hates himself, and I've got to get up early to go to work. It's nothing I look forward to either, driving to work picking the sleep out of my eyes, anticipating watching a trillion bottles passing on The conveyor in front of me while I'm supposed to catch the flaws, the mars, the distortions, deformities. Only when the boss hangs around do I actually do it otherwise it's fantasy time to the tune of humming belts, clinking glass all sending my mind on trips elsewhere, Jamaica, Italy, Spain, places where life isn't easy, but intense. Jimmy Cliff hums in my ear all day sitting here in Limbo and the bottles start dancing along. I don't care if someone gets prune juice out of an imperfect bottle. Hell, I don't care if the bottles have holes in them. We lack variety in our lives anyway and no surprise is sheer boredom.

I got gum stuck under my fingernail from picking at the lumps under my chair. I'm looking at my hands and I'm struck by the absurdity of their uselessness in my everyday life at work and after. I shift gears in the car with them, pick one brand of soda instead of another off the supermarket shelf, flip the TV channels without a choice to make. We really don't have any choices to make. Every accepted Act is an empty affirmation of spectacular society doing its best to fill the vacuum of our collective lives with cotton candy, a lot of volume, nauseatingly sweet, filling every little space and crack that develops.

I've been sitting for half an hour and the 7-Up had gotten warm and flat. The cop and ticket-seller have been glancing my way for the last couple minutes. They lower their voices and a second later the cop comes my way, propping up his face in the right way for the approach. "Can I help you?" he pushes out as he nears. Sure, take your gun and blow your brains out asshole, I'm thinking.

I pretend I'm waiting for the next bus, which is going to Fort Lauderdale. I pretend pretty well by going—and buying a ticket, one way. only \$7.34 left in my pocket. Get on the bus sniffing the diesel smell: settling back into the gentle motor-throb near the back. The glass factory will be mildly surprised by my no-show in the morning, I've been regular for three years now. It'll only be a mild irritant for them, another zombie will be found to take my place before the morning is out.

I'm still not initiating anything, just going with the flow, not resisting. Maybe I'll start waking up on the ride down, feel like returning, get thawed out. Maybe I'll knock off a supermarket or get desperate and blow something the fuck up. Maybe life will get possible again, Live Free or Die, as the convict made license plates say on the cars convicts drive around.

Waking up,
Billy the Kid

New Visuals

To the FE:

Several of us did this billboard in the Mission District in (San Francisco this summer. We had a lot of fun dressed up like workpeople and did it in the daytime. The first place we tried to do it, the owner of the bar underneath the billboard was very cooperative when we told him we were hired to change it!

Looking at billboards and imagining transformations, both before and since we did, has loosened some of the power of the visual environment for me. Hoping to do it again. and to see what others have done in this vein.

Interesting that this lasted for three weeks before it was covered over with a different ad. Also, a couple of days after we put our strip on it, some people graffitied it. They took the opening to write all over it—about drugs.

Melen Luan
Philadelphia



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