

MOVE Background

Fifth Estate Collective

1978

It's difficult for a newspaper to admit ignorance, but in the MOVE situation in Philadelphia—we admit it. After MOVE's shoot-out with the police in that city on Aug. 8 to protect their home (see "Police Attack MOVE," FE #293–294, August 21, 1978), stories about the group, which dotted the major newsweeklies ever since Mayor Frank Rizzo began a blockade of the MOVE dwelling earlier in the year, have disappeared. We spoke to a friend in Philadelphia who sent us a great deal of background material, but confessed that he, like most of the rest of us, didn't know what had developed with the legal charges facing the arrested MOVE members or whether there are any defense preparations being made. MOVE seems to be a very bizarre group which traces its origins to the anti-technology, pro-revolutionary writings of a man known to his followers as John Africa. The integrated group began living in an area adjacent to a University district, but soon developed a reputation for hostility to their neighbors with many claiming they had been threatened with violence by members of the group. When Rizzo moved into the picture with his blockade, the issue exploded into a citywide radical vs. pig issues MOVE suddenly experiencing support from many civil rights groups. Internally, the MOVE group seems to make a good critique of modern capitalism, but its almost religious adulation of the word of John Africa and other authoritarian trappings has made most of the left as well as local libertarians back away from any active defense of MOVE. At this point, it would seem foolish for us (given our lack of information on the subject) to make any pronouncement on the matter. We would appreciate hearing from anyone with greater access to the situation to inform us and our readers about developments.



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