

Detroit Seen

Fifth Estate Collective

Thanks to those of you who so promptly answered your subscription renewal letters we sent out after the last issue. Thanks, also, for sending along your comments on the paper; it's always good to get your feelings about our effort, even if it's sometimes critical. And a special appreciation to those who contributed money beyond the price of their subscription. If you haven't mailed your renewal letter back yet and intend to, please don't make us have to spend more money on postage; it could much better be spent elsewhere. Also, this is your last opportunity to subscribe at the old rate of \$4.

Thank you as well to our Italian comrades in Florida who raised a goodly sum for the world libertarian press at several picnics this winter and who sent us a portion of it. Using their activity as an example, the *Fifth Estate* sponsored a benefit concert at the end of January for some of the same publications and raised \$300.00 which was split thusly: *Fifth Estate*, \$75; *Work & Pay*, San Francisco, \$25; *Rivista Anarchia*, Milano, Italy, \$25; *L'Internazionale*, Genova, Italy, \$25; *Black Flag/Anarchist Black Cross*, London, \$50; Ann Arbor Anarchist Print Co-op, Ann Arbor, Michigan, \$40; *Open Road*, Vancouver, B.C., \$25; and Protest and Survive, Detroit anti-nuke group, \$35. We hope our successful event, modeled after the tireless efforts of the Italian comrades, will spur others to undertake similar events in their own areas. And please be advised, this is not intended to get you raising funds for us in particular; there are numerous publications, political prisoners, anti-nuke efforts or best of all, your own project, that need funding.

Times are tough in the Motor City, where it's a depression, not a recession, and you can see it in the knots of men standing aimlessly on the street corners, in the uncollected trash blowing around the streets and in the unfilled potholes on the almost undrivable streets. Things are starting to break down. The petty crimes begin to grow—more break-ins, purse snatchings, a woman even had her groceries pulled from her arms. There's a prevailing desperation, which stretches from the lily-white suburbs to the devastated inner-city that knows the auto industry is not going to have a "come-back"—that recession may be our permanent economy. That tens of thousands of once waged auto workers are marked for permanent unemployment and poverty unless they take President Reagan's advice and "vote with their feet." That heartless bastard; only the whites have even a chance to do that. Mainly folks will just stay here and be poor remembering the "good old days" when they could complain about the speed-ups, the lousy foremen and the terrible working conditions. Now it's just "General Hospital" on the tube every afternoon and a trip around the neighborhood to see if anyone else has got work—usually they don't.

Apparently even the cops can sense the climate. When a plainclothes officer was shot to death at the end of February by three unemployed youth the normal cop hysteria was conspicuously absent—replaced by an uncharacteristic sadness and understanding of the problem. A homicide inspector lamented, "What a waste. The suspects were taking food. This was an economic crime." The three men, all in their late teens, were piling up a cache of Cheerios, Twinkies, donuts, hot chocolate, Tang, light bulbs and chocolate bars to take back to a commune they shared with several other friends. Police said that the only employed member of the household worked as an attendant at a gas station.

The cop who fell defending someone else's property was said to have modeled himself after Clint Eastwood in "Magnum Force," carried a .44 mag himself, and had a history of shooting suspects. This time his bullet-proof vest failed him. More victims in the battle for the crumbs.

More economic crime: As of April 1, all children under the age of four are required by Michigan law to be belted into a child car seat. This may seem fine to those of us who cringe every time we see a car roaring along with a toddler leaning on the dashboard just waiting to become a flying projectile, but this turns out to be yet another burden on the poor. The kiddie car seats cost between \$35 and \$75 so if you have a number of small children and little money, you apparently have the choice of leaving the family at home or watching out for the flashing beanies...

Poor E. Dale Lee, the now ex-editor of Wayne State university's campus paper, who had a penchant for racist and amateurish journalism, got bounced from his job for "obscurity." Lee apparently got a hold of FE #307, November 19, 1981 excoriating him for his reactionary views, and saw something he really liked, for a few days later he ran a banner headline in the school paper shouting "FUCK AUTHORITY"—this from a self-proclaimed lover of the FBI! Lee's liberal detractors on the school's publication committee seized upon this as an excuse to dump him from the paper and left E. mumbling about how he had made a mistake in printing it and that he had read it in a "leftist newspaper." No excuses; good-bye, E.

Rock Against Racism? Well, not always. The fifteen Nazi punks who were chased off the streets of Ann Arbor March 27 by a crowd of 2,000 were sporting shields plastered with swastikas, but also bearing stickers printed by rock station WRIF reading "Kick Ass." The slogan obviously referred to the music, but the Downriver pre-psychotic teenagers had something else in mind. Lucky for them that the Ann Arborites who had them cornered showed them mercy and didn't take their advice.

After writing our diatribe against trotskyism ("Hail Red Army Nerve Gas: Trotskyism as Psychopathology," FE #307, November 19, 1981), using the Spartacist League (SL) as an example of the article's subtitle, we hardly expected such a direct confirmation of our contentions as appeared in their response (see *Workers* [sic] *Vanguard* [sic], Jan. 22, 1982, "See You at Kronstadt: Detroit's *Fifth Estate* Smear").

Our characterization of them as bloodthirsty totalitarians dreaming of the day they can eliminate their rivals and anyone else who disagrees with them is no more evident than in their headline. Just as the SL members dance witch-like chanting "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan," so do they hail earlier mass murders perpetrated by the same apparatus—the Soviet government—then at the isolated fortress of Kronstadt. The story of the heroic resistance by the revolutionary workers and sailors of Kronstadt in opposition to the Bolshevik counter-revolution in 1921 has been told many times, and Trotsky's lie, concocted to justify their extermination is believed only by the party faithful.

There is the element of pathology so close to the surface in increasing doses within the SL, that they have become the paradigm of the leftist political gang: tough, swaggering, declassed sons and daughters of the middle class, working at being workers, seeming to all the world more like Trotsky's description of the fascists—"the crazed hordes of the petty bourgeoisie"—than their alternative. Throughout the article come the threats of violence—and it is to violence that the SL turns more and more frequently. Be it a report of El Salvador demonstrations in New York and Washington, or an anti-nazi rally in Ann Arbor, the SL paper is filled with accounts of its battles with the "opportunists" of the other sectlets much in the style of the Weathermen or worse, Lyndon LaRouche's Labor Committees. Perhaps it is a natural consequence of years of party life where membership remains excruciatingly and obviously small, with a faster turnover than a MacDonalds. It's a situation ripe for political nuts and police provocateurs, for those who dream of violence and those who engineer it.

Perhaps our only mistake was to single out the SL for special criticism for we don't have anything better to say about any of the rest of the alphabet soup drooling to take up the reins of power under their party. Any number of them put on a more congenial and democratic front, but perhaps we owe it to the SL for the honesty that the others lack. The SL at least carries its program openly—the police shall rule!—where the others keep their admiration for their particular favorite mass murderer, be it Stalin, Trotsky or Mao, or whoever, hidden behind democratic platitudes.

It was extremely curious to us that the Sparts ignored virtually every indictment of the crimes of Trotsky and his epigones and instead centered on one sentence for their innuendoes and threats against us (they end the article by

warning us to “retreat” or “get into real trouble”). They focused instead on our claim—mainly used for our tongue-in-cheek title—that the Soviets were using poison gases in Afghanistan.

They apparently don’t believe the charges that the Soviet army is gassing Afghani tribesmen, and from what we have heard subsequently, it does appear that many of the claims are at best shaky. Nevertheless, if much of the evidence for Soviet use of gas in Afghanistan turned out to be U.S. State Department ballyhoo, it certainly was not beyond the realm of the possible (and we still would not lay money down that they haven’t used it). After all, as David H. Morrissey reported in the February 1982 issue of *The Progressive* magazine, “The Soviets, who like the Americans captured tons of German nerve gas at the end of the war with Hitler, have integrated chemical warfare into their military strategy. Soviet troops reportedly train on battlefields contaminated by live nerve and blister gases. According to intelligence reports, several Soviet soldiers die each year in accidents during such training.” He also writes that the Soviet chemical warfare capability may be “the greatest in the world by some accounts.” U.S. intelligence reports estimate that the Soviet stockpile is somewhere near 30,000 tons, and that the Soviet chemical corps numbers some 70,000 troops. Now perhaps the U.S. imperialists are lying and the figures are only half as great as they claim. But only a fool or a petty gangster jockeying for the Soviet “franchise” would argue that it isn’t there or that the stalinist dictators would hesitate to use it.

But why such shock and umbrage on the part of these small-time stalinists out of power? They don’t mind napalm and anti-personnel bombs and the indiscriminate helicopter raids on villages; it’s a Vietnam-style war and these creeps are supporting it. Their whole hysterical call for “defense of the Soviet Union” goes beyond its quaint reminiscence of the ‘thirties. It is a part of the current drive toward war. The tiny sect supports one side in the inter-imperialist rivalry in the same way that a good American patriot supports “his” side. Their shrill and degrading defense of the gulag-state is only another falsetto note in the exterminist chorus of the approaching slaughter.

Still, we prefer to be accurate in our claims and don’t mind making retractions when they are in order. So perhaps an apology is called for: instead of “Hail Red Army Nerve Gas,” a more appropriate slogan might be “Defend Red Army Nerve Gas,” since they must believe that “defense of the socialist motherland” begins with the defense of its nerve gas...

Credit Where Credit is Due Dept.: Over the last few issues we’ve neglected to give proper recognition to several of those who have provided us with valuable articles and graphics. “Gift Exchange & The Imagination,” the long essay which appeared in FE #3j08, Jan. 19, 1982, was written by Lewis Hyde and first appeared in the *Kenyon Review*, Kenyon College, Gambier, OH 43022. In the same issue, on page nine, the two-cartoon panel was from “Griffith Observatory” by Bill Griffith available from Rip-Off Press, Box 14158, San Francisco, CA 94114. In the same issue, the address of Be Free was incorrect; it should be: P.O. Box 11311, Eugene, OR 97440. In the Nov. 19, 1981 issue (307) M. Kasper was responsible for the graphic/story on page three and on the back page, “Smokey the Bear Sutra,” was reprinted from a 1969 edition of the *Fifth Estate*. The poem appeared then anonymously, but we had reason to believe at the time it was the work of poet Gary Snyder; the artwork was by Detroit illustrator Carl Lungren.

Bad news: our offices were burglarized late in May after a renovation crew removed a security screen from our window. Approximately \$400 in endorsed checks was taken which means they are not cashable, but still puts us out the money. We have sent letters advising some people who sent us money, but if you don’t receive back a canceled check, please contact us.



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Fifth Estate #309, June 19, 1982

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