

Bits of the World in Brief

Fifth Estate Collective

On September 27, 1983, during a demonstration protesting the visit of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Ken Deyarmond, a Toronto activist, was pushed from behind toward Thatcher. He was tackled by a cop, thrown to the sidewalk, handcuffed, and charged with “threatening assault on an internationally protected person.” Charges were also added for assault on police and for possession of marijuana. Ken is the first person in Canada to be charged with the crime of threatening a foreign “dignitary” and scheduled to stand trial for it Sept. 25 in Toronto. He was convicted on the pot charge and sentenced to probation although he states categorically that he does not smoke it and certainly would have brought none to a well policed demonstration. Ken has been active in environmental, women’s issues, anti-racist and anti-imperialist politics for a long while in Toronto. He has been an active supporter and friend of the Vancouver Five and is a member of the anti-prison magazine, Bulldozer. The assault charges (Thatcher and the cops) are based on police statements which range from contradictory to inflammatory to outright lies. Ken had this to say about the situation: “(The charges) stem from my mobilizing opposition to the new security spy agency (in Canada). Furthermore, the charges are an attempt to intimidate people from developing more militant politics against racism, sexism and imperialism.” Support is urgently requested for Ken’s defense. Letters of support and much needed financial donations may be sent to Ken Deyarmond Defense Committee, Box 6326, Station “A”, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Squatters in Amsterdam were evicted from the massive Wyers Buildings in late February. The buildings had been squatted for two years and transformed from a derelict factory complex to apartments, workshops, art galleries, cafes and concert halls. During the mass eviction, the 3,000 police met no initial resistance to the removal of 1,500 squatters who had packed up their belongings for use in future squats. Imprisoned squatters trashed the buses they were put into and sporadic street fighting ensued. Public sentiment was clearly on the side of the squatters, and even the mayor shed tears on TV for the end of the best known squat in Europe. In the evening, 10,000 people demonstrated in support of the squatters; led by 2 black flags, they marched across Amsterdam. A smaller group marched directly on the blockaded squat area, smashing up the palace, hotels, banks and businesses. In spite of the eviction, the squatters consider the overall situation a victory and predict an upsurge in the squatters’ movement.

Whether the leaders on the dais are wearing business suits or uniforms, you can be sure that when push comes to shove, the pushing and shoving will not be done by the businessmen but by the uniformed soldiers, who, after all, went to military academies to learn exactly that.

A recent occurrence in Spain may serve as a striking example. In the village of Abena, province of Huesca, the mayor and a resident were recently put up against the wall and shot by a firing squad using blanks during military maneuvers in the area. “It was like the Civil War,” a towns-person told the Spanish social-democratic daily, El Pais. “I hadn’t had such a ion since that time.”

The wife of the mayor told reporters, “They did it very seriously. They issued an edict for the entire town, and we gathered in the plaza. We didn’t expect any of this, since no one had told us anything. Then the soldiers asked for Jose Galindo [the mayor] and Generoso Ara, who were put against the wall. Fortunately, the bullets were blanks.”

Six days later, a radio station in a nearby town which had reported the simulated firing squad incident, was attacked by unknown assailants, who did a couple of thousand dollars damage. "We do not want to think that it was the military," said a worker at the radio station. But where military sabre-rattling against the socialist government, Basque nationalist guerrilla activities and "lawlessness" is a regular occurrence, such a guess may not be far from the mark.

In the U.S., military arrogance is just as obvious, not only in the pork-barrel corruption with "defense" industries which has gotten so much attention lately, but in the open refusal of the military men to allow any interference into their domain. In mid-June, for example, Lt. General Bernard E. Trainor declared "limited war" with the Soviets "an almost inevitable probability." And Vice Admiral James A. Lyons made it clear what the uniforms think of civilian checks on their power, calling the limp War Powers Act, which gives the civilian Congress some say in War-making and war-declaring, "insidious" and an "impediment" against such possible actions as "drawing the line" against Cuba. The generals have a very clear definition of what the pushing and shoving means, whether they say so openly or not. No democratic amenities ever stop them when they decide to get on with it, only a taste—distinctively leaden—of their own medicine.

The Maliseet Indian community of Perth, New Brunswick, Canada (across the border from the state of Maine), continues an on-going struggle for their fishing and hunting rights guaranteed them in a series of treaties with the governments of England and Canada. Victims of the encroachment of European peoples, the Maliseet have suffered through the Scalp Bounties of the 1600s and 1700s; the ravaging diseases of the white man; and the tyrannical legislation designed to eliminate them as an independent people. With devotion to their natural ways and the bounty of salmon and other foods provided by Mother Earth, they have managed to survive the genocidal ways of the conquering race. Now, beset by corruption in their tribal government which is the most insidious method of governments to eliminate native peoples, they were informed by the Federal Fisheries Department that they could no longer fish their territorial waters. The government offers no alternatives to the Maliseet for the loss of their food supply. The 700 tribal members and their Chief have had to go beyond the hand-out of food and government assistance. They have come up with a detailed and self-sufficient plan for renewal of the independent Maliseet Nation. The plan includes a salmon farm, construction of buildings and a school, erection of a solar greenhouse, planting and expansion schedules and much more'. The Maliseet do not want, need or solicit government aid...they are going directly to the people, to individuals. The Survival Network Information Center has a 74-page booklet of articles, press releases and information on the Maliseet struggles. Send \$6.00 plus 10% postage to: P.O. Box 52282, New Orleans, LA 70152. For more information, or to offer assistance, contact: Juanita Perley, The Maliseet Nation Fisherman's Committee, R.R. 3, Box 50, Perth, New Brunswick, EOJ IVO Canada.

A decision has been made on the fate of the Bridgman Dunes. The state of Michigan and the present owners of the property have come to an agreement which would preserve the major portion of the 9,000 to 14,000 year old dunes. The state will acquire 220 acres of the dunes as soon as it finds the money, and the Unimin Corporation, which presently owns the dunes, will be permitted to mine 4.4 million tons of sand from a 45 acre area of the south-east corner of the property. Mining will continue there for no more than 10 years. If generalized mining of the area had been permitted to continue, the dunes would have been destroyed within 20 years; now it looks as if most of the area will be preserved. But of course the demand for sand to mold those car engines won't disappear, and they'll get that sand from somewhere. They'll target inland dunes, for they certainly won't stop mining.

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