

Criminals & anarchists

Fifth Estate Collective

1984

During Autumn NATO maneuvers in West Germany, thousands of people demonstrated at U.S. military bases, and hundreds were arrested. U.S. military commanders protested, calling on the West German government to crack down on “anarchists and criminals” who have damaged military vehicles, cut fences, sprayed paint and thrown stones at soldiers.

Perhaps the demonstrators were responding to more than the maneuvers, but also to President Reagan’s little “slip of the tongue” last summer, when he announced—“off the record”—as if practicing for that anticipated Day of Judgment: “My fellow Americans: I’m pleased to tell you today that I’ve signed legislation that will outlaw Russia forever. We begin bombing in five minutes.” (Later, when questioned about his joke which made light of the deaths of millions of people while suggesting his favorite fantasy, he quipped, “Isn’t it funny, if the press had kept their mouths shut, no one would have known I said it.”)

World War III Law

It was interesting that Reagan had put his joke in legalistic terms—he signed a law which called for the bombing mission and the commencement of World War Three. No anarchy or formal criminality here: just the everyday, mundane operation of the state—law and slaughter.

Yet need we repeat the obvious that the rulers dispense with even a semblance of legality when they deem it necessary? A case in point is the murderous terror campaign of the U.S. financed, trained and coordinated “contras” against not only the Sandinista government but against the whole of Nicaraguan society. Bombings, assassinations, torture, indiscriminate murder and mutilation are all part of the daily work of these “freedom fighters.” And when Nicaraguan authorities express their intention to counterattack, the U.S. government makes even greater threats of direct intervention—a probability which looms larger every day.

Under the “normal” conditions of war and war preparations as are taking place in Germany, law serves the criminality of the Imperial Authority, and petty acts of sabotage and resistance—damaging vehicles, cutting fences and throwing stones, must be suppressed at all costs. But under the extraordinary conditions that exist in Central America, as in all “undeclared wars” and counterinsurgency, the criminality of mercenaries, murder-manuals, and brutal terror operations, all serve the rule of imperial law.

We propose to restore meaning to these contrary terms. Let the law serve law; as for criminality, where the law of empire rules, let criminality serve freedom. We look forward to the day when the soldiers sent as cannon fodder to the outposts of the Empire, and the workers who manufacture and ship the supplies for wars declared and undeclared, will take seriously the advice of the CIA manuals on sabotage and break enough tools, damage enough vehicles, and commit enough acts of criminal resistance to stop the war machine in its tracks.

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Fifth Estate #318, Fall, 1984

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