

# Anarchy in the Streets of San Francisco

Fifth Estate Collective  
Blueberry

1985

On November 6<sup>th</sup>, the night of the presidential election, San Francisco's amorphous and semi-marginal anti-authoritarian "community" called for a funeral march to mourn for freedom, the dead of the next war, and to hope for the death of imperialism and the system that keeps it alive.

At about 6:30 pm 150 people walked between City Hall and the Democratic Party's San Francisco headquarters; we also went by polling places and imitated sheep, finally ending up at the Republican Party's victory celebration. At 8:00 we set up a soup kitchen across the street to dramatize the immense gap which separates the ruling class from the rest of us.

Besides this symbolic aspect of our protest, it also provided a free meal for some really needy people (who had to walk over a mile from the "bad part of town" to get to where the bourgeoisie was celebrating). The food came from a squatters' free food distribution program (they get bulk produce and bring it around to various places in the city; all the squats have been severely repressed in the past month, however, and no new ones have as yet opened).

After we ate, the Republicans began arriving and were greeted with such topical chants as "Hitler was elected" and "Reagan squats the White House, we sleep in the streets." A group from the Revolutionary Communist Party tried to get the crowd to chant their official slogans (especially toward the media), but most people ignored them; those who didn't, heckled. When they burned an American flag (the RCP's latest nostalgic ritual) we heckled them with "Burn all flags" and "No borders; no nations."

Some people shouted for them to burn a red flag; a squatter burned a black flag to show them our humor and good faith. More shouts for a red flag followed and finally a member of the RCP youth group (who dress like punks, the better to infiltrate "rebel youth") acquiesced to peer pressure (as all good authoritarians do) and set his red flag ablaze (the poor guy will probably be purged). The crowd loved it, but one guy in the RCP got really angry that someone had dared to burn the flag of his dreams (what's the difference between him and the good patriot?).

People eventually got tired of trying to out-shout the RCP and were unhappy and uncomfortable with the heavy police presence (nearly 200), so we left as soon as we loaded up the left-over food and the tables.

Two nights later U.S. Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, showed up at a ruling class hotel and was greeted by over 1,000 protesters from a wide variety of organizations and ideologies. The official sponsors and the most numerous group present was CISPES (Committee

In Solidarity with the People of El Salvador), a bourgeois liberal group which supplied monitors (demonstrators who act as unofficial police), bullhorns, and the officially-approved slogans like "CIA out of Nicaragua" and "No Pasaran" (to which we anarchists responded "No Monitors").

Eventually, after some give-and-take in the middle area of the protests, a bunch of anarcho-pacifists and some RCP types went out in the middle of the street for a snake dance. With this action, the undercover cops, who had followed the anti-authoritarians throughout the demonstration, and the Tactical Squad (on dirt bikes) ambushed them, beating and dragging them to the sidewalk. TV cameras converged on the arrest site and, as they were filming the brutal activities of the cops, the TV crews got their lights smashed.

A small-scale scandal has erupted concerning the media and the police and how they relate to one another. The TV news people are bitching about the unnecessary property damage and the police are claiming that there is an “agreement” with the TV. people that lights would not be shone into officers’ eyes during nighttime arrests.

Concerning the whining media, I want to know where the cameras were as the cops went through the crowd picking out vocal demonstrators for arrest by six or seven undercover cops; where were the cameras when one of our friends was being repeatedly kicked in the groin by six undercover cops because his jacket had “Millions of Dead Cops” (a local punk band) written on it?

The result of this action is a rethinking of the masochistic tendencies among the pacifist element, and a re-evaluation of the media’s role in our politics. Also, ways of isolating the RCP from us are being studied (this is desired because the RCP revel in provoking the cops into violence which is directed at all protesters).

Meanwhile, a class action suit against the city and county of San Francisco is still in the organizational phase. We’re suing them for repressing free speech during the Democratic National Convention. Funds are desperately needed; make checks and money orders payable to Gary Marcus and send them (with questions and for updates) to Defense, Box 40400, San Francisco CA 94140.

## **FE Comment**

While we cannot help but be encouraged by the development of an autonomous, radical community which is involved in the type of actions reported above, the decision to participate in a legal action by anarchists seems unfortunate at best. Mustn’t it appear as highly contradictory to those trying to understand libertarian principles that those who want to destroy the state would attempt to utilize one section of its repressive apparatus against another?

All of the experiences we’ve had with the legal system have been disasters. From defending the *Fifth Estate* against criminal charges to being part of a suit against the local police red squads (started before our tenure on the paper), each incident has strengthened our belief in the absolute inability of the system to provide “justice,” even on its own terms. And, it’s not a question always of winning. Even when you “win” as we did in our criminal case (see FE August 1975) or in the civil suit against the cops (see FE throughout 1976), the amount of time, mental energy, money and contact with the legal bureaucracy just makes it not worth it.

Blueberry responded in a subsequent letter that the reasons for being part of the suit which, incidentally, was not initiated by them, were two-fold: 1) to expose the SF cops whose excessively vicious actions in recent months have been roundly applauded in the media; and 2) as a way to provide funds for their attorney who has been handling all of their criminal cases thus far without fee. The lawyer, we were informed, is asking for \$2,500 and a percentage of the damages for taking on the civil suit

Our response: the correct image of the cops won’t be exposed through a law suit which could drag on endlessly (the Michigan red squad suit has been in court for ten years and is continuing). It would seem that the exposure of the cops is already in motion judging from what we have seen in the many leaflets and magazines coming out of the San Francisco area. As to the second reason, it is hard to imagine too many people willing to contribute money to pay a lawyer’s salary when there are so many other libertarian projects and political victims which so desperately need funds: Nobody paid the demonstrators for their time, why should he get paid? To be honest, in all of our memory of the civil rights and anti-war movements of the ’60’s not one attorney comes to mind who asked to be financially compensated for their legal work.

In some ways, we feel badly about taking up so much space with a criticism of what is not a very significant part of the activities which have been going on in San Francisco. Still, our belief that strong adherence to libertarian principles should be maintained and that the mistakes of a previous generation should not be repeated in the present, make these remarks necessary. Further comments are welcome.

# fifth Estate

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