

Bits of the World in Brief

Fifth Estate Collective

1987

The people at Back Room Anarchist Books in Minneapolis have announced a continental anarchist gathering to be held June 18–22 in that city. After the success of the May Day/Haymarket events in Chicago last year, most of our appetites have been whetted for closer and more frequent communication within the anti-authoritarian movement. The tentative agenda includes workshops, several actions, a banquet and a party.

This might be a good place to begin examining who we are or even if the term “we” is appropriate. So far, much of what has constituted activity within our milieu has been predominately within the realm of publishing (leaflets, zines, newspapers). This is an important step in critical thinking and identity building, but at some point it will be necessary to confront the empire as anti-authoritarians. That is, independent from the flawed political activity of social democrats, religionists and leninists who now dominate such activity as the anti-war, anti-intervention and labor struggles.

The planning group needs donations to cover expenses. For that and more information, write: Back Room Anarchist Books, 2 East 27th St., Mpls. MN 55408.

Good news of sorts has been issued by Les Amis de Robert et Tomek, the support group for imprisoned Polish activists Robert Chechlacz and Tomasz Lupanow. The two were convicted for killing a militiaman who they were trying to disarm just after the 1982 crackdown in Poland (see last issue, FE #324, Fall, 1986). For reasons not made clear, Robert was granted a reduction in his sentence by ten years and Tomek by four. This could mean that Robert will be free by Spring and Tomasz in four years. The Paris-based support group will continue to provide financial aid to the two as long as they remain political victims of the Polish state. Write Les Amis, B.P. 4, 93301, Aubervilliers Cedex, France.

Last Autumn, protests were stepped up against the Narita airport outside of Tokyo, Japan, where local farmers and radicals have been fighting the facility for the last twenty years.

In October, some 3,000 people, most wearing helmets and covering their faces with masks and towels, met in a sweet potato patch to affirm their resistance against the airport and particularly against planned construction of new runways. Fearing rocket attacks and bombings like those that have occurred over the last several years, Japanese police organized a large show of force, putting tens of thousands of cops on patrol at road checkpoints in Tokyo and in the areas surrounding the airport.

Resistance against the airport has continued since land was confiscated by the government in the mid-1960s for construction. The airport battle became the focus of anti-statist protest in Japan throughout the '60s and '70s; over the years several thousands of people have been injured and seven killed in confrontations over the construction. Two months before its official opening in 1978, the control tower was attacked and occupied by airport opponents who destroyed equipment.

In late 1985, thousands of protesters attacked the facility, using home-made bombs, rockets and Molotov cocktails to shut it down. Bombs in two cars exploded near the control tower while helmeted demonstrators armed with steel pipes and wooden pipes and wooden poles battled cops, burning buildings and cars and smashing windows.

Holdouts against the planned expansion of the airport have vowed to never compromise with the authorities. One opponent explained why they would eventually defeat the government, arguing that “just like the Americans in Vietnam, the Japanese government will learn that it cannot impose its will on the people and destroy the land.”

Right-wing, religious hustler Jerry Falwell and his misnamed Moral Majority group took quite a beating last year. His organization of zealots turned out to be held in such low esteem by most Americans that it was decided that a name change and low profile was necessary to keep the heat off of him. In addition, the Rev. suffered a financial loss of close to \$1 million in phone fees after an unrelated coalition of punks, anarchists and gays launched the “Falwell Game,” which consisted of repeatedly calling a toll-free “Prayer Line” with phony pledges and receiving thousands of bibles and Jesus tie-taks in return.

After Falwell was forced to discontinue his free phones, it was thought for a while that the Game was over, but we have just received notice that there is a new toll-free number and the Rev. is just waiting for your pledges. So, if any of you rascals out there feel guilty about abusing Jerry’s generosity, you can call him at 1-800-368-3801 with a pledge or a message.

Strong cultural images which wield social power during one epoch often lose their power in the succeeding era and remain only as a historic curio. Take the classic Uncle Sam recruitment poster—Sam, beady-eyed and intense beneath a garishly adorned hat, demanding almost angrily, saying, “I want You for the U.S. Army.” Such overblown patriotic images evoke little response today except in the most demented Rambo fan, but that doesn’t mean that Uncle doesn’t still want the minds and bodies of young people.

Those politicians who support compulsory state servitude to the military have been deterred recently by public opposition to reinstating the hated draft laws and have been trying to bring it in the back door’ through some form of a compulsory universal “national service.” This plan, which would require either military service or participation in a civilian social welfare project is not the brainchild of Reaganite war hawks, but rather of such Democrats as Sen. Sam Nunn, Chairman of the Senate Armed Service Committee and presidential hopeful, ex-Senator Gary Hart. With the Reagan administration in a state of terminal collapse, it falls to the other section of the ruling class to prepare the country for war.

The very term “national service” is purposely couched in terms reminiscent of the Peace Corps carrying a pseudo-altruism meant to disguise its real purpose of bringing back conscription. While most Pentagon officials continue to favor the volunteer Army, which in recent years has provided them with a sufficient number of “qualified” recruits while not risking the political fall-out reinstating the draft would cause, many of them realize that as the % of young people in the population decreases, they might be denied the cannon fodder they need in the future.

As it stands now, military quotas are filled primarily because of the “poverty draft”—enlistment caused by depression level under- and unemployment of youth in general and minority youth in particular—it forces youth into the military, not for the patriotic values once held by many for defense of the nation, but rather as sort of a post-grad job training corps where it is hoped a civilian related skill will be learned allowing them to earn a higher wage than they could expect at the local MacDonald’s.

In the case of many young people the economy is so bad that it has left them literally no option other than volunteering. A letter which appeared in Detroit’s December 19 Jam Rag is not untypical. A new recruit who signed



GIs have a long history of refusing to be cannonfodder for the empire. In this late 1960s photo from Navy Times Are Changing, published at the Great Lakes Naval base near Chicago, active duty GIs from Ft. Polk, La. are shown demonstrating against the U.S. slaughter in Vietnam. Resistance in the Armed Forces during the Vietnam era is a heavily suppressed story with its implications having serious consequences for future imperial adventures abroad. DON'T REGISTER! DON'T FIGHT!

himself “The Fiend” writes: “I was jobless, homeless, severely in debt and ready to try anything,” but he adds, “What a fucking mistake!”

Future of the Warrior

The future of the human warrior in the Empire’s battle plans may be in doubt as military analysts see an increasing reliance on robotics, drones, artificial intelligence-directed armaments as the wave of the future. A recent *Omni* magazine said, “unlike battlefields of the past, victory depends on the capabilities of robots rather than on human courage. On the battlefield of the 21st century, war—like so many other experiences of life—has been relegated to automatons.” Still, unless future wars are going to be directed like video games with no casualties and with the winner being determined by the highest score of “kills,” future military adventures will necessitate real flesh, and blood soldiers willing to die for U.S. investments abroad.

As it stands now, the official line of the U.S. Selective Service System (SS) is that there are approximately 12 million draft-age eligible men which represents 98.7% of the estimated potential for that category. However, a recently published “Resistance News” says these “figures actually reflect a totally misleading interpretation of the compliance statistics.” Their reading of the figures comes closer to a 81% compliance rate when lack of proper address considerations are taken into account. This still leaves a large enough pool to staff the armed forces in a period of expanded military activity, but erodes the myth of the “fairness” of the draft. It means that approximately 380,000 men would not be eligible for the draft because of SS Act violations.

Facts and figures aside, every nation state needs young men who are willing to kill people who aren’t their enemies for people who aren’t their friends as draft resister Paul Jacobs has said. At this point active resistance to draft registration is low, but it remains a factor. With a wounded, but certainly not defeated Reagan still at the helm of state, his record \$312 billion war budget means these questions will not remain academic or philosophical ones for long. Napoleon is quoted to have said, “The only thing that cannot be done with a bayonet is to sit upon it,” meaning the weapons of war are to be used. The fight against imperial war means refusing to register and refusing to fight!

If you have already registered but now have second thoughts about it, The Committee Against Registration and the Draft (CARD), 731 State Street, Madison WI 53703, is continuing its un-registration campaign. The National Resistance Committee, publishers of Resistance News, remains the best source of information on world-wide draft refusal. Their address is Box 42488, San Francisco, CA 94142.

In recent years, young people in Poland have been organizing themselves to resist forced military conscription and militarism. In the forefront of this struggle are two organizations: Freedom and Peace and the Movement for an Alternative society (Polish initials—RSA).

The RSA is a militant anarchist movement based in Gdansk, with a large following among that city’s working class youth, particularly those who are into punk and other forms of counter-culture. Freedom and Peace is an anti-militarist movement which opposes the arms race, environmental destruction and state repression.

Both organizations advocate the tactic of returning army service booklets which is an act comparable to returning your draft card in the U.S. during the Vietnam era. Many young Poles, risking imprisonment, have sent their booklets back to the Polish Ministry of Defense as a way of saying they will not become unwilling defenders of the repressive state. Two members of the outlawed Independent Student Union were sentenced to 2-1/2 years in prison in 1984 and since that time many others have refused induction or to take the Polish Armed Forces oath. The oath requires a pledge of loyalty not only to the Polish government, but also to “fraternal armies,” i.e., the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact countries.

FE Note: We received the above information through Neither East Nor West (339 Lafayette St., Room 202, NY NY 10012) which, recognizing the desire of both Polish groups for international contacts, has issued a lengthy appeal which will be sent to the RSA.

However, the signatories to the appeal contained such a hodgepodge of leftists, unionists, syndicalists and anarchists that we declined on that basis alone to join in the endorsement. Also, we have never felt comfortable

signing other people's statements, in this case one which is self-described as "a bit wordy, showy and pretentious." We plan to contact the RSA on our own with a statement of support and solidarity.

In the northern part of Michigan's lower peninsula, eagles are battling over airspace with fighter jets on practice runs to and from Grayling Air National Guard Base. Environmentalists are trying to persuade the Guard to move their flight paths away from eagle nesting sites in Cheboygan County in an effort to save this endangered species.

The environmental groups assumed that the bird's reputation as the symbol of America and patriotism would be a strong bargaining point with the military. But not so. Air Force officials insist that losing a few families of eagles is a small price to pay to train pilots to "defend" this country.

Noisy jets from Selfridge Air Force Base and from bases at Niagara Falls and Toledo continue to fly across the Pigeon River Country State Forest at the low altitude of 500 feet on their way in and out of the Grayling air strip. Clearly, many people and all kinds of wildlife are being pestered by this aerial invasion.

Moving the flight paths might save some of the eagles, but will inevitably result in the invasion of other creatures' tranquility and airspace. Invoking patriotism is a useless diversion, a fruitless tactic, and an insult to all beings living in or dreaming of the wild. Even if successful, it could only be a temporary solution to a mere fragment of an immense problem.

Stop the maneuvers altogether! Ground all the planes! Stop violating the little bit of remaining wilderness with the war games of your death machines!

About 100 U.S. tanks were damaged by sabotage in a U.S. Army base in Luxembourg. The anti-militarist direct action probably occurred in late December of last year. Saboteurs damaged electrical and optical equipment on the M-60 tanks. Some officials said the damage was caused by negligence on the part of U.S. soldiers while others blamed the approximately 200 Luxembourger civilian employees at the base. The camp, some ten miles south of the capital, is part of the N.A.T.O. system.

In apparent contradiction to the old Yiddish proverb, beggars can be choosers. In China today, tens of thousands of panhandlers are choosing not to be part of the bureaucratic state socialism which exists there. Although the official propaganda recently sounds more like a page from Success magazine than Karl Marx (urging the Chinese to "Get Rich!" and reminding them that "Time is Money"!), beggars have reappeared in the major cities. The official magazine (they're all official!) Wen Hui says they are "false paupers"—young people who are described much like the hippies of the 1960s.

The magazine says many of the beggars are runaways, school dropouts or truants, martial arts students or religious zealots. Wen Hui says ominously that "their existence must be eliminated," but their very presence combined with the more overt revolt of students in recent months means that all is not well for China's rulers.

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Fifth Estate #325, Spring, 1987

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