

Tales from the Planet

Fifth Estate Collective

1990

While nonviolent action in China and Central Europe last year grabbed headlines around the globe, North American media seems to have all but forgotten the ongoing nonviolent direct action campaign for a nuclear-free future. Yet in 1989, nearly 5,500 arrests for anti-nuclear protest in the US and Canada—more than any other previous year—were reported in *The Nuclear Resister* newsletter.

“Reports of the death of the anti-nuclear movement were greatly exaggerated in the second half of the 1980s,” notes Felice Cohen-Joppa, co-editor of the *NR*. “The numbers testify to the vitality of a nonviolent movement that in the 1980s recorded at least 37,000 arrests in North America.”

The latest statistics, compiled annually by the *NR*, reveal that of 5,500 anti-nuclear arrests, 5,010 were made in the US, and nearly 500 in Canada, during almost 150 protests at more than 70 nuclear power and weapons plants, test sites, along transportation routes and at military bases, government offices and proposed nuclear waste dumps. As a result, at least 90 people have served or are serving from two weeks to 17 years in prison, while hundreds more served lesser sentences.

In the next year, a major challenge facing anti-nuclear activists will be to expose the illusion of a diminished nuclear threat. Image-makers in the Bush administration will strive to finally silence nuclear critics by offering “cosmetic disarmament,” in the form of an “arms reduction” treaty to eliminate up to half of the strategic nuclear arsenal.

Yet the weapons most likely to be disarmed under the terms of a potential treaty—the land-based force of 1,000 Minuteman nuclear missiles in silos throughout the heartland of the US—are in fact the least threatening.

While offering to sacrifice silo-based missiles to public demand for nuclear weapons cuts, the Pentagon has clearly stated its intent to continue production of the more modern, less vulnerable weapons which are suitable to first-strike strategies; weapons such as Trident submarines, air-and sea-launched cruise missiles, the Stealth bomber and mobile, land-based missiles (the MX rail-garrison and/or Midgetman).

These statistics for anti-nuclear civil disobedience are compiled each January by the *NR*, and are available on request from: PO Box 43383, Tucson, AZ 85733.

In 1918, as the Bolshevik terror in the Soviet Union grew in intensity, many Russian anarchists fled to the Ukraine in search of safety. Here, they set up the *Nabat* (Alarm) confederation, originating in Kharkov, but soon spreading to Kiev, Odessa and throughout the region.

It published a paper of the same name and continued to issue bitter attacks on the Soviet dictatorship and actively supported the partisan army of the anarchist Nestor Makhno. The paper was raided in 1920 by the Bolshevik secret police, the Cheka and imprisoned many of its militants, including Voline and Aaron Baron, which resulted in the crushing of the movement.

After 70 years *Nabat* is again being published in Kharkov by a group affiliated to the KAS (Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists). The many years of communist oppression cannot destroy a people’s wish for freedom nor the means by which it will be attained.

—from *Black Flag*

On the morning of December 9, 1989, Italian police carried out numerous raids on the homes of anarchists in various towns throughout Italy (Milan, Turin, Rome, Massa and Catania), particularly those involved in producing the papers *ProvocAzione* and *Anarchismo*.

A large part of what was seized in Milan was for publication in the next issue of *ProvocAzione* but the police took the paper's list of subscribers, personal correspondence, pamphlets and Italian and foreign anarchist papers.

Members of Milan editorial group stated, "we will naturally continue to publish everything that has become an object of inquiry and intimidation by the police. None of us will turn back from the struggle."

Copies of both suppressed periodicals are available from Elephant Editions, BM Elephant, London WC1N 3XX.

Last July, the Without Borders (WOB) Anarchist Conference was held in San Francisco [see "Anarchy in San Francisco," FE #333, Winter, 1990]. Several thousand participants attended the six-day event which was a celebration of anarchist culture, history and (anti)politics. People contributed generously toward funding the activity to the point where there was a surplus of \$4,900 left after expenses.

The WOB Finishing Group stated in a letter to us, "In the spirit of mutual aid and a world without borders, we are dividing the money among a number of groups." These include six bookstores, over twenty publications (including the Fifth Estate), and a number of ongoing projects and upcoming conferences. Recipients were world-wide from North America to Scotland to Greece to Israel to India and Hong Kong, as well as other locations.

\$1,500 went to the 1991 Americas Anarchist Conference in Mexico about which we have no other information. WOB may be contacted c/o 1369 Haight Street, San Francisco CA 94117, or call (415) 864-4674.

The accusation that they are "anarchists" is being used as an excuse for torturing dissident members of the African National Congress (ANC) according to a report in an article which appeared in the April 26, 1990 *Le Monde Libertaire*, the weekly journal of the French Anarchist Federation.

The article cites information from seven ex-ANC members now living in Kenya who say they were tortured following a failed revolt in "Umkhonto We Sizue," the armed wing of the ANC. The seven were "attached to trees," the article says, "whipped, and then shut inside iron containers which were exposed to the sun. Some were even burned with melted plastic."

"In the space of several years," the article continues, "60 militants of the ANC who were on poor terms with corrupt leaders have perished while they were being tortured. In light of such a scandal, a spokesperson for the accused organization has acknowledged, without a hint of remorse, that "some 'anarchists' who were accused of treason, rebellion and of killing officers" have in effect been imprisoned in ANC camps which were set up in the countries bordering South Africa between 1984 and 1988. Torture, according to the statement above, is justifiable when 'anarchists' are undergoing it."

There are presently 200 to 300 dissident imprisoned ANC members, the article says.

—MW, Montreal

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