

Tales from the Planet

Fifth Estate Collective

1994

In our last issue George Bradford reported there are some five thousand pieces of junk floating around in space, including several nuclear reactors that will eventually fall back to earth. (See “Biosphere 2: The Future of the Planet?” FE #343, Fall-Winter, 1993.)

Alas, the situation is even worse. The broken solar panel thrown overboard by space shuttle astronauts working on the Hubble telescope last December actually became another of at least 7,300 pieces of junk out there bigger than a softball.

Such objects pose a serious threat to the shuttle missions, but that doesn't keep crews from continuing to create their own cosmic throwaway society. Last June, pilots of the space shuttle Endeavor had to maneuver to avoid hitting a 28-year-old spent Soviet rocket—the fourth time in two years shuttle pilots have had to take evasive action to avoid space trash. (Who knows, maybe America will get to see a shuttle incinerate itself on TV as it hits the Hubble solar panel they discarded.)

Most of the junk is rocket fragments, but there are also dead satellites, spent rocket bodies, paint chips, even frozen drops of urine, flushed in orbit, that melt within a few days. Don Kessler, a senior scientist at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, stated there could be twice as many objects as the above number, which came from the U.S. Space Command. Kessler reported there are some 420,000 objects in orbit bigger than a marble.

Maybe there is a connection in all this to the University of Arizona and the Vatican's plans to build a powerful telescope on Mt. Graham in Arizona, destroying sacred Apache lands and a unique ecological area in the process. Vatican spokesmen have claimed they're looking for life out there. Maybe they want to find expendable (Fifth World?) “space janitors” from other planets to do the dirty work of cleaning up the toxic mess their ilk has already left floating in the wake of its modern Ninas, Pintas and Santa Marias.

Not only is religion a lie, but many of its adherents are liars as well. This doesn't just fit right-wing types like Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, but the ordinary churchgoer, or, should we say non-church-goer as well. The December 1993 *American Sociological Review*, released findings which show that more than 50% of those who responded to a Gallup Poll stating they attended religious services regularly weren't telling the truth.

Although 35.8% told the Gallup organization they attended church regularly, only 19.6% actually showed up. The *Review of Religious Research* reports membership in most major denominations is declining with figures ranging from a 10% loss by the Catholic Church to 18% by Protestants.

The real question about this good news is why such a small minority exerts so much influence over the lives and culture of the United States. The skygoddess are so tightly organized and have such access to politicians and others in the power circles, they can force their warped agenda in many areas from prayers at football games to anti-abortion legislation, and even to stating on U.S. currency we trust their sky god.

While respecting people's right to believe any damn fool thing they want, more of an effort should be made to keep these God pests out of ordinary people's business.

Thanks to *Freethought Today*, PO BOX 750, Madison WI 53701, for the above information and for their continuing fight against intrusive, bigoted religionists.

In Russia, where everything is at a level of catastrophe, 75 years of officially ordained atheism is quickly eroding. Although church attendance is a lowly 8%, one in three Russians now say they are affiliated with the tsarist era Orthodox Church. Although confidence in politicians is understandably negligible, Church leaders enjoy the support of 75% of the people polled.

Death Row journalist, Mumia AbuJamal, has exhausted his direct appeals and could have his execution warrant signed at any time by Pennsylvania's pro-death penalty, anti-abortion governor.

Mumia was released last year from seven years in disciplinary custody for refusing to cut his dreadlocks, but is still locked down 22 hours a day. However, he is now allowed two 10-minute phone calls a month and access to media as a result of the sustained campaign on his behalf. The barrage of phone calls and letters have had an effect.

Mumia, a former Black Panther and MOVE supporter, has been on death row since 1982 after being convicted in a farcical trial for the death of a Philadelphia cop.

Letters of protest demanding Mumia's death sentence be revoked should be sent to Gov. Robert Casey, Main Capitol Bldg., Rm. 225, Harrisburg PA 17120. Contact Equal Justice/USA, P.O. Box 5206, Hyattsville MD 20782 to assist in Mumia's defense.

Ed Mead, the longest held white political prisoner in the U.S., was paroled in October 1993 from the notorious Walla Walla (Washington) state prison. Ed served 18 years for his activities with the George Jackson Brigade which carried out a series of bombing attacks in the mid-1970s as support for various Native American, labor and prisoner struggles in the Northwest.

The average time served for the crimes Ed was convicted of is five years, but the political nature of his activities and his organizing in prison for prisoner rights and justice insured his long stay by vindictive prison authorities.

Ed organized Men Against Sexism to stop prisoner rapes and helped establish support groups for prisoners. He energetically published the *Red Dragon*, the *Marion Times* and for the past several years, the *Prison News Service*, all while behind bars.

Although still maintaining leftist politics, he frequently wrote letters to anarchist publications including this one.

He is currently with his family near Seattle and can be reached c/o OCC, 3543 18th St., BX 30, San Francisco CA 94110.

Thanks to *Freedom Talk*, published by a coalition of San Francisco Bay Area political prisoner support groups, for the last two stories. They can be reached at the above address for OCC. The newsletter is free to prisoners; those on the outside should make a contribution.

America's Somalia adventure ended with a whimper not a bang, but the toll on the people whose land was invaded was horrendous. The Dec. 8, 1993 *New York Times* reports Somali war casualties were 10,000, mostly civilians resulting from U.S. free-fire policies in Mogadishu. The cost to the U.S. was a bruised imperial ego, almost 200 casualties, including 26 killed, and a \$1 billion dollar price tag from this Bush/Clinton fiasco.

What started as a bullshit humanitarian effort wound up as it usually does—with the imperial troops mowing down unarmed men and women. And, as in Iraq, the big, bad dictator is still in power after the slaughter. Gen. Aidid remains Somalia's most powerful politician.

FBI files recently released to Earth First! activists Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney revealed a new layer of civil rights abuses in the 1990 car bombing case. Police reports and photos obtained earlier from the Oakland, Calif. police show the FBI lied and falsified evidence to justify arresting Bari and Cherney for the bombing which destroyed their car and left Bari permanently disabled. The 5,000 newly released pages also show, rather than investigating the bombing, the FBI used the case as an excuse to conduct a sweeping campaign of surveillance of environmentalists.

This included FBI searches of letters-to-the-editor files of nine Northern California newspapers and confiscation of letters written by environmentalists. The FBI interviewed small town police from timber country, timber company management, and Wise Use Movement anti-ecologists, asking them to submit information about environmentalists.

Nationally, the FBI obtained telephone records of 14 EF! activists and compiled a list of 634 out-of-state phone calls they made. This list was sent to FBI field offices requesting information on each number called, including name, address, description, place of employment, criminal record, and political associations.

The FBI files also show no legitimate search for the bomber was ever conducted. The files confirm earlier revelations that the FBI lied about the location of the bomb in the car and falsified evidence about matching nails from the bomb. The FBI also avoided investigating leads implicating timber companies and police in the campaign of threats and harassment surrounding the bombing.

The two bomb victims have filed a lawsuit against the FBI and Oakland police charging them with false arrest and civil rights violations. For information contact: EF!, 106 W. Standley, Ukiah CA 95482.

fifth Estate

Fifth Estate Collective
Tales from the Planet
1994

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/344-summer-1994/tales-from-the-planet>
Fifth Estate #344, Summer, 1994

fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net