

# Tales from the Planet

Fifth Estate Collective

1995

**1994 saw a new wave of activism** in support of imprisoned American Indian Movement activist Leonard Peltier including the following events: Leonard Peltier Freedom Weekend in Washington D.C. in June, a summer cross-country Walk for Justice, a twelve day "People's Fast for Justice" and an International Walk for Justice in Washington State and British Columbia in October.

Peltier was convicted of the death of two FBI agents during a 1975 shoot-out at the Pine Ridge Indian reservation in South Dakota even though the government admits it doesn't know who actually killed the agents.

The International Walk was part of Leonard Peltier Solidarity week which also included the picketing and leafleting of federal buildings throughout the U.S. In Detroit, pro-Peltier demonstrators were surprised to be counter-leafleted by members of the "FBI Agents Association." People who took a leaflet in support of Peltier also received a reduced copy of a full-page ad from the "off-duty" FBI agents which had appeared in, the Washington Post shortly after the Peltier Freedom Weekend in June. The ad featured a banner headline stating: "DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: LEONARD PELTIER MURDERED TWO FBI AGENTS. HE DESERVES NO CLEMENCY."

Passersby seemed surprised to receive opposing leaflets about someone they had never heard of, but this appeared to increase their interest in the case. Despite the fact that more than 25,000,000 people worldwide have called for Leonard Peltier's freedom, he has been behind bars nearly twenty years for a crime he did not commit.

Detroit activists are planning a Peltier Freedom Weekend, Thurs., Feb. 2 to Sun., Feb. 5, featuring poetry, bands, a bonfire, movies, including "Incident at Oglala," and a regional meeting of the Peltier Network on Feb. 4. Most events will be at the Cass Cafe, 4620 Cass Ave., Detroit; call 313/831-1400 for further information and a complete schedule.

**Spanish communist and ex-army general, Enrique Lister**, died in December at the age of 87. Often eulogized as an antifascist combat commander in the Spanish Civil War, he is best remembered by anarchists as a militarist and counterrevolutionary tyrant.

In 1936, anarchist, socialist, and communist militias were fighting on military frontiers scattered throughout the Iberian Peninsula to thwart an army putsch that had become a revolution and civil war. Though pursuing revolutionary social change far beyond the policies of the embattled leftist government, anarchists did fight for the Spanish Republic in military "columns." Anarchists deliberately marched out of step and refused to institute badges of rank or outward gestures of deference, such as the salute, to consciously subvert the traditional army authoritarian hierarchy.

Lister's communist Fifth Regiment, however, prided itself on such militarist trappings and quickly became an organizational mirror image of the fascist forces across the battle lines. Communists and right-wing socialists fostered a campaign to institute militarization in all Loyalist columns, and dispersed Fifth Regiment units as political cadre throughout the Republican armies to enforce this.

In May 1937 communists commenced open nazi-like attacks on their erstwhile allies, the anarchists; by June, anti-Stalinist socialists were included in the purge. The-coup d'etat, more important to the communists than fighting Franco, spread behind Republican lines even as Nationalist victories at the front mounted. Lister's role as a

communist photographic negative of the brutal fascist generals became even more obvious during this civil war within a civil war.

Now in command of an entire division, Lister spearheaded bloody counterrevolution in the stubbornly autonomous Aragon region, where the movement to collectivize rural villages had been widespread. Lister's troops undid successful social revolution in the countryside by terror, shooting scores of anarchists, suppressing the peasant collectives, and returning confiscated land to its former owners. Invoking an August decree from the now communist-controlled government in Madrid which declared, "Aragon has remained aloof from the centralizing tendency," Lister used brute force to shut down anarchist newspapers, seize and close offices of local antifascist committees, and imprison thousands of non-communist militants.

Such brutality left scars that even a communist agricultural minister, primarily concerned with production, was forced to admit. Destruction of the collectives, he later wrote, was "a very grave mistake, and produced tremendous disorganization in the countryside." Government forces "took them by assault, carrying away and dividing up the harvest and farm implements without respecting the collectives that had been formed without violence or pressure, that were prosperous, that were a model of organization...As a result, labor in the fields was suspended almost entirely, and a quarter of the land had not been prepared in time for sowing." So much for communist discipline being necessary to whip indolent and disorganized anarchists into line for the sake of the war effort.

In late September, while outgunned Republican forces in the trenches continued to suffer reversals, Lister's division was far in the rear mounting a tank and artillery assault against the anarchist CNT-FAI Defense Committee in Aragon, finally crushing armed resistance to "the centralizing tendency." Historian of the war, Burnett Bolloten, has suggested that "the hatreds and resentments generated by the break-up of the collectives and by the repression that followed were never wholly dispelled. Nor was the resultant disillusionment that sapped the spirit of the anarcho-syndicalist forces on the Aragon front ever entirely removed, a disillusionment that no doubt contributed to the collapse of that front a few months later." Lister and his fellow authoritarian and militarist monsters contributed much more to losing the war than winning it, despite proliferation of communist myths after the fascist triumph of the romantic "good fight" they had put up.

In the Republic's final days, Lister warned his soldiers, "If anyone loses an inch of ground, he must retake it at the head of his men or be executed." Contrary to this bluster, Lister fled to France with a small group of political and military leaders on one of the last planes out, leaving tens of thousands of defeated troops to face the victors' wrath.

**Dec. 4 marked the date 25 years ago** that 21-year-old Black Panther Party leader, Fred Hampton, was killed in his bed at 4:30 am by a fusillade of gunfire from Illinois state agents and the Chicago police. Hampton, who had been drugged into unconsciousness prior to the raid by an FBI provocateur, was one of dozens of black revolutionaries murdered by police and government agencies during that era.

Immediately following the slaying, Mumia Abu-Jamal, a young black journalist, traveled to Chicago to report the story for a Philadelphia paper.

**Today, Mumia sits on Pennsylvania's death row** after a 1982 conviction for killing a Philadelphia police officer, despite evidence proving his innocence and an incredible pattern of police and judicial abuse. Mumia's death sentence may be close to being carried out after the election in November of Thomas Ridge, a pro-death penalty Republican as governor.

Noelle Hanrahan, of Equal Justice USA, a human rights group, says her organization expects Ridge to sign dozens, if not a hundred death warrants in 1995, and feels, "Mumia will be near the top of the list."

Mumia is one of 171 inmates on the state's death row with 61% of them being black. The presiding judge in Mumia's case, Albert Sabo (known as the "Hanging Judge of Pennsylvania") has sentenced more people to death (31) than any magistrate in the country with all but two being African-American.

At his 1982 trial, Mumia faced a jury of 11 whites and one black after the prosecution excluded 11 of 16 potential black jurors without cause although Philadelphia is 40% black. The defense was allotted a mere \$150 to investigate a murder case with over 125 witnesses and Mumia was forced to accept a court appointed lawyer who was later disbarred.

Conditions in Huntington State Prison's death row where Mumia and the other condemned await their fate are harsh. They spend 22 hours a day in one-man cells where meals and all other activity are done in solitary. The

8-foot by 10-foot cells contain a cot, a sink, and a toilet. Abu-Jamal told the Yale Law Review in 1991, "It is essentially like living in your bathroom all day long, all night long."

At Mumia's 1982 Philadelphia trial, at the sentencing phase, Judge Sabo allowed the prosecution to tell the jury the defendant would never face execution since he would have "appeal after appeal." Now, with all of his appeals exhausted, Mumia faces the death penalty as an imminent reality.

Equal Justice USA (P.O. Box 5206, Hyattsville MD 20782) asks that letters of protest be sent to Gov. Thomas Ridge, Main Capitol Bldg., Rm., 225, Harrisburg PA 17120.

**Jim Squatter, a founder of Seeds of Peace**, a group which provided basic food and water support at demonstrations and encampments, suffered a diving accident in Belize in December which left him paralyzed.

Jim is recovering in Florida and needs to hear from friends and those who remember the great work the Seeds group provided at actions such as the attempts to reclaim the Nevada test site. He has trouble reading, so please send tapes including recorded books. He would also appreciate letters and zines. Write him c/o Jim Blair, Bayfront Medical Center, 701 6<sup>th</sup> St., S., St. Petersburg FL 33701.

**Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney**, who were the target of a car bomb attack on the eve of the Earth First! 1990 Redwood Summer campaign, recently discovered dramatic information regarding the role of the FBI.

Bari and Cherney are continuing a federal suit against the government and cops which allows access to official information. They learned that a month before the bomb exploded in their car, the FBI held a "Bomb Investigators' Training Course" in near-by Eureka. During the week-long training session, instructors blew up cars with pipe bombs and practiced responding.

The head instructor was FBI agent Frank Doyle, who along with other agents and Oakland cops who had been at the school, arrived at the bomb scene to collect evidence. "It was Doyle who concocted the lie that the bomb was located where we should have seen it," Bari said. "This lie was used as the justification for arresting Darryl and me for transporting the bomb."

Contributions are urgently needed and can be sent to Redwood Summer Justice Project, PO BX 14720, Santa Rosa CA 95402.

# fifth Estate

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