

# Tales From The Planet

Fifth Estate Collective

1995

**Proving our contentions a few issues ago** that, “all money is fake,” a ring of Iranian and Syrian high tech counterfeiters have been printing \$100 bills at a clip faster than the government. The quality of these bills is so good that for a while they were honored by the Federal Reserve when submitted for collection.

The counterfeiters may have produced as much as \$1 billion in “superbills” while the government only cranked out \$300 million worth. There currently is a proposed statute in the U.S. Congress calling for elimination of the \$100 bill, the favorite note of drug dealers and other “off-the-books” business people.

The fear in Treasury Department circles is that the entire integrity of the U.S. money system could be eroded if the circulation of the fake money becomes too widespread. They suspect a plot to undermine the U.S. economy by the Iranian government, while domestic right-wingers suspect a different sort of plot by Washington to withdraw traditional currency and replace it with more easily traceable money.

**How, of all sports, has golf taken on such international popularity?** People are just mad about the game and golfers abroad are willing to pay extraordinary green fees in land-precious countries such as Japan.

The booming economies of Asia have created the fastest growing market for the golf industry and countries like Malaysia and Thailand are rushing to build new courses.

This delights land speculators, but horrifies environmentalists who have seen pristine wilderness chopped down to provide chemical-laden greens for wealthy golfers. Sreela Kolndai, of Friends of the Earth Malaysia and a founder of the Global Anti-Golf Movement, also points to thousands of farmers being thrown off their ancestral lands to create courses.

The building frenzy has even spread to Vietnam, China and the Indian subcontinent. Private courses have been built in Thailand’s national parks and wildlife sanctuaries with the blessing of the country’s military and police, sparing them any environmental review.

In Indonesia, the country’s best courses are owned by members of the ruling Suharto family. Environmentalists and farmers have been roughed up by the police for daring to protest golf course construction.

In Thailand, rice farmers were forced to give up a second crop due to a drought, while golf courses drained government reservoirs under the protection of high-ranking police and military officials.



A demo in London: photo / Alec Smart

**No Big Surprise Dept.: Nuclear Division.** Documents obtained recently from the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico show U.S. military officials chose to carry out above ground atomic testing in the 1950s near populated areas of Nevada even though they knew radioactive fall-out would hit towns close to the blast site.

The tests doused the cities of Las Vegas, Alamo, Caliente, and Amargosa Valley, causing high rates of cancer. The documents show the military debated extensively about the safety of the tests, but ultimately bureaucratic expediency won out.

The blasts originally scheduled for the isolated (“isolated,” if you’re not an Inuit) Alaskan island of Amchitka were rejected because the cloud of fall-out would have been difficult to track. At the Nevada tests, jeeps followed the clouds, recording their intensity. At first, the Army planned to evacuate civilians from the surrounding area, but decided not to “because they feared creating a public panic.” Only a mindset of submission to authority, which allows belief in anything the government says at a given historical moment, can explain people who swallow official explanations. It almost assures that when the truth comes out in ten years or fifty, what the critics charged at the time is almost always shown to be true.

Part II: Ivan Selin, chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), resigned in March to go into business building gas burning electric power plants in Asia. Although the U.S. is stuck with over 100 nuke plants, the good news is that Selin predicts no more will be licensed. “The country is awash in electricity,” he said after announcing his resignation.

**In other nukes news,** Ukraine and a group of Western corporations have agreed to shut down the remaining Chernobyl nuclear reactors and replace the facility with a thermal energy plant (which will probably create an ecological disaster of a different dimension).

Chernobyl’s fourth reactor exploded and burned in 1986, causing, according to official statistics, the deaths of 5,700 people who battled the blaze and thousands more who died from radiation poisoning. An additional 3.7 million people were affected in some way. Anti-nuclear activists put both figures, particularly the latter, much higher.

In the U.S., two Republican House Committee chairmen have proposed scrapping efforts to create a permanent high-level nuclear waste dump at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. The government has already spent almost \$2 billion doing geological feasibility studies over the last 40 years, even though the site is within an earthquake zone and buildings there have suffered damage from past tremors.

This will not deter on-line nuclear facilities from continuing to produce electricity which creates tons of deadly radioactive waste. Facilities such as the accident-prone Detroit-area Fermi 2 nuclear reactor is now running at 85% capacity, creating wastes which will have to be stored for up to 500,000 years.

**Although the following event happened a while ago,** we received the news only recently. Blitz, a squatted, youth culture house in Oslo, Norway, was attacked by a powerful bomb last August. Although the explosion did extensive damage to the structure, none of the seven people guarding the dwelling from fascist attack were injured.

For twelve years, Blitz has been the center of militant anti-fascist actions. The residents suspect Anti-AntiFa, a violent neo-nazi group, with which Blitz has had ongoing physical confrontations during the preceding year.

Just previous to the explosion, gunshots were fired into the house in an attempt to drive the residents outside. Fortunately, the bomb hit barbed-wire barricades and landed outside; had it detonated inside, casualties certainly would have occurred.

Blitz received massive support and solidarity from 60 different organizations, unions, and political parties and a demonstration of 2,000 persons denounced the fascist outrage. For more information or their English language publications, contact them at Blitz Infogruppe, Pilestredet 30 c, 0164 Oslo, Norway.

**Anarcho-Syndicalism calls for** the demo-administration of the means of production by workers in a given industry. This sounds good on the face of it, but the perspective rarely challenges the fundamental precepts of industrialism and would wind up with a similar mechanical world only administered slightly more fairly. Also, as the modern world cranks along, much of what would be controlled by workers councils (actually more to do after the work day is completed) has become increasingly absurd.

A case in point: what would advocates of producer control do with fellow workers in the industry which makes a Fruit Hammock (“Let your fruit relax in a hammock,” says the K-Mart ad) or those producing Oak Banana Hangers (“An artful way to store bananas”)?

**Underground Press Conference**, Aug. 18- 20. All invited. Mary Kuntz Press, POB 476617, Chicago IL 60647; 312/486-0685.

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