

Tales from the Planet

Fifth Estate Collective

Kent State Murders Memorialized

Kent State University (KSU) announced that on May 4, 1999, the Ohio college parking lot where Sandra Scheuer, Jeffrey Miller, Allison Krause, and Bill Schroeder were shot to death by the Ohio National Guard on May 4, 1970, will be closed to traffic and a full memorial created. The deaths occurred during a campus demonstration when troops fired armor-piercing ammunition at unarmed student anti-war protesters. The 67-shot barrage also wounded nine youths.

The decision comes after 28 years of struggle to close the lot completely. During this year's annual May 4 commemoration, Ron Kovic, the paralyzed anti-war veteran featured in the film "Born on the Fourth of July," led about 300 people on a march to the KSU's president's office, where they presented letters from the parents of the murdered students.

In the 1970s, KSU attempted to literally bury history, when it built a gymnasium, on part of the site, despite massive protests which saw police brutality, and hundreds of arrests. Kent State resisted any kind of memorial at all until the mid-1980s, when it agreed to erect a "mini-memorial." As an alternative to KSU's half-hearted tribute, people gather each year on May 4 at Kent State as a living memorial to the victims (as well as to the two students shot at Jackson State University in Mississippi, on May 14, 1970).

[Web Archive Note: see also Remembering Kent State: "People Aren't Ready to Let May 4th Die," FE #323, Summer, 1986.]

U.S. Terrorism In Iran Remembered

Amidst all the media blather regarding so-called Islamic terrorism, a not-so-distant memory of American state terrorism went unnoticed here. July 3 marked ten years since the *USS Vincennes* shot down an Iran Air passenger plane, killing 290 of its passengers and crew. Relatives of those who died recently gathered 12 miles off the coast of Bandar Abbas, Iran to toss flowers on the spot where their loved ones perished.

Accompanied by the obnoxious presence of the Iranian national anthem and the Iranian Navy, the families chanted "Marg Bar Amrika" (Death to America). A 13-year-old girl read a poem dedicated to her father who died there.

The Bandar Abbas to Dubai flight was on its way to Saudi Arabia for the annual Hajj, a muslim pilgrimage. Despite the fact that the plane was rising away from the Vincennes, a maneuver never taken by an attacking jet, it was shot down, supposedly mistaken for being an F-14.

Although compensation was paid to most of the families of the victims by the U.S. government, the Vincennes commander received a Congressional medal of Honor, and Ronald Reagan declared the tragedy "a proper defensive action." To date, no formal apology has been issued. The question remaining was the same as that on t-shirts worn by the Iranian children at the memorial which read, "For What Reason Were They Killed?"

Speaking of Ten Year Anniversaries

The Mojahedin-e Khalq, the armed faction of the Iranian National Council of Resistance, assassinated Asadollah Lajevardi in his flower shop on August 23. The killing coincided with the tenth anniversary of the massacre at Evin prison outside of Teheran, where over 10,000 political prisoners of varying ideologies were murdered over a period of several months.

Lajevardi, former chief warden of Evin, was killed along with his brother and bodyguard in his flower shop in Teheran. The assassin was a 17-year old whose father was among those killed in Evin. Following the assassination, numerous ex-political prisoners from Evin were rearrested after festive demonstrations celebrating his death.

The communiqué released by the Mojahedin described some of the crimes attributed to Lajevardi including rape, torture, torturing prisoners in front of loved ones, as well as other horrors attributed by groups like the Committee of March 8 and the Movement of Militant Women that include rape of Virgins, cutting breasts off, and tossing grenades in the midst of prisoners.

The same imperialist powers labeling Iran a “rogue state” kept silent when the massacre occurred issued denunciations following what they branded an act of “terrorism.” This incident comes almost 20 years after an atrocity committed by the Mojahedin where they burned down a movie theater in Abadan, killing hundreds, and then claimed the Shah was responsible.

Bread and Puppet Festival Halted

The Bread and Puppet Theater has canceled its annual festival held at its headquarters in Glover, Vermont following the murder of a man at this year’s events. The group is known for their use of evocative, giant puppets during their 40-year history of participation in anti-war and social justice issues. They have been an inspiration to a generation of similar projects such as San Francisco’s Art and Revolution.

The Domestic Resurrection Circus and Pageant, which presents magical outdoor performances, began attracting increasingly larger and rowdier crowds which were inconsistent with the event’s peaceful purpose.

The troupe apologized to their neighbors and promised supporters they would remain in Glover, but feature smaller theater events in the coming summers.

Peltier Denied Parole Again

AIM activist and long time political prisoner Leonard Peltier was again denied parole on May 4. The parole board announced it had rejected Peltier’s request for release just hours after the parole hearing.

Peltier was falsely convicted—for the deaths of two FBI agents during a government assault on the Pine Ridge, North Dakota reservation in 1975.

Peltier reported that board members made statements like, “The government can’t prove who is responsible for the agents’ death, but someone has to pay,” and “We spoke with one of the agent’s wives and she wants you to die in here. You will not receive another parole hearing until 2008.” None of Peltier’s lawyers was allowed to speak at the hearing.

This comes at a time when Leonard’s health has deteriorated. The problem stems from two unsuccessful jaw surgeries and radiation doses that have made things worse. He can’t open his mouth to eat, and prison authorities refuse to put his meals in a blender. He is also unable to open his mouth to receive urgently needed care for two abscessed teeth, putting him in danger of fatal septicemia, an infection spreading through the blood stream to vital organs such as the heart.

The Northwest Leonard Peltier Support Network has set up an Anti-Racist Emergency Network (AREAN) in order to respond to attacks by racist anti-tribal groups such as Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise and Protect Americans Rights and Resources. To get on the mailing list or for more information, contact NWLPSN, 5201 Capital Blvd., Ste. 119, Olympia, WA 98501.

SF Mayor Gets His Just Dessert

Liberal San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown caught a couple of pies in the face November 7, courtesy of the Biotic Baking Brigade. They were protesting the “skyrocketing level of evictions” in the city to make way for gentrification. The group charged Brown with “collusion with big business, landlords and developers to perform an economic cleansing of San Francisco.”

Unlike most pied targets, Brown, his face splattered with cherry and pumpkin goop, threw a punch at his attacker. Three men and a woman were taken into custody and charged with a felony count of conspiring to assault a public official. Fortunately for Brown, he was wearing sweats at the time rather than his usual attire of costly Brioni suits.

Brown joined a list of recently pied targets including Microsoft chair, Bill Gates, right-wing economist, Milton Friedman, designer Oscar de la Renta, and the president of Monsanto Chemical.

Las Vegas Anti-Racists Murdered

Over the Fourth of July weekend, Lin “Spit” Newborn and Dan Shersty, two anti-fascist skinhead activists with Anti-Racist Action-Las Vegas (ARA), were shot execution-style. Their bodies were found 150 yards apart from each other in a desert area used as a target practice site by local neo-Nazis. They were last seen alive with two women, believed to be covert fascists, who lured them to their deaths. Police charged local nazi activist John Edward Butler with the killings after ballistics reports showed his gun was the murder weapon.

Spit is survived by his two-year-old son for whom a trust fund has been set up. Contributions or condolences can be sent to Anti-Racist Action-Las Vegas, P.O. Box 29057, Las Vegas NV 89126-3057.

Call the Los Angeles Anarchist Black Cross chapter at 213-769-5309.

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