

FIGHTING THE STATE'S ATTACKS

A Statement from Prairie Fire Organizing Committee

On Saturday, November 19, 1977, a leader of Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, Clayton Van Lydegraf, was arrested by the Federal government in Houston, Texas. Judith Bissell, Leslie Mullen, Michael Justesen and Marc Perry, four other comrades in solidarity with anti-imperialist politics, were also arrested at the same time. They are all being charged with conspiracy and possession of an explosive device and firearms. The three men are currently being held in L.A. County Jail. The women are at Sybil Brand Correctional Institute for Women. Four of the comrades are being held on \$500,000 bail each and Judith Bissell is being held on \$750,000.

Prairie Fire believes that this series of arrests is an attack on anti-imperialist politics. It is one part of a growing number of State attempts to wipe out rising political movement at this time. As an organization dedicated to international solidarity, women's liberation and anti-imperialism, Prairie Fire's existence poses a threat to the State.

The primary targets of violent US state repression are the national liberation movements—their organizations and leaders. White people who take a militant stand on the side of national liberation struggles also become targets of state repression.

The current world situation shapes the strategy of the imperialist state. US imperialism is on the defensive worldwide due to the victories of national liberation struggles in Indochina, Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau. People's war moves towards victory in Zimbabwe. Armed struggle rages in Namibia, South Africa, Palestine and Nicaragua. Every defeat of US colonialism and neo-colonialism worldwide has monumental repercussions on the world system of imperialism.

Within the current borders of the US, the past ten years have also marked decisive growth of national liberation struggles. The battles at Wounded Knee and Attica, the armed struggle of the FALN are some examples of the growing movements of Black, Native American, Puerto Rican, and Chicano/Mexicano peoples for national liberation, struggles taking place in communities, schools and on the streets. Within the US borders and around the world, national liberation struggles are leading the defeat of the entire system of imperialism.

From this defensive position, the US state and ruling class develops new offensive strategies to contain and smash national liberation. The State applies policies of neo-colonialism on the one hand and genocidal repression on the other to achieve its aims. Within the US, the prison system is a major form of violence directed against national liberation struggles. US prisons are filled with political prisoners and prisoners of war from oppressed nations: revolutionary leaders like Lolita Lebron and her three comrades; Assata Shakur; Geronimo Pratt; Sundiata Acoli; and Leonard Peltier.

In addition to the prison system, the state attempts to smash revolutionary movements through the development and use of massive counterintelligence programs such as COINTELPRO. This FBI counterintelligence program is ultimately responsible for the murders of many national liberation leaders

like Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Mark Clark, Fred Hampton, Anna Mae Aquash and over 100 AIM activists, as well as the hundreds of Native Americans since Wounded Knee and many other Black revolutionaries. The FBI/COINTELPRO are responsible for the frame-up and imprisonment of countless leaders of national liberation movements: the RNA 11; the BLA POW's; Leonard Peltier; Skyhorse/Mohawk; etc. As well, much evidence is coming to light of COINTELPRO activity to disrupt and divide revolutionary movements among oppressed nations by the most shabby and fraudulent means conceivable. COINTELPRO has been used most harshly against the white left when white people begin to struggle in solidarity with oppressed nations. But the main use of COINTELPRO against white comrades has been to harass and disrupt, while the strategy for oppressed nation comrades has gone as far as murder. COINTELPRO continues today under different names. The struggle and campaign to expose COINTELPRO must be supported.

The extensive use of witch-hunting grand juries to remove Puerto Rican and Latino leaders from their communities and movements is a new form in the State's program to contain these movements. Nine comrades are currently in jail for refusing to talk to the grand jury about the FALN. The state's desperate efforts to violently suppress national liberation movements in this country are evidence that these movements really are gaining power and strength.

Oppressed peoples all over the world understand that revolutionary armed struggle is necessary to defeat the armed might of imperialism. To oppose this winning strategy, the imperialists try to portray the freedom fighters of Zimbabwe as murderers of nuns and kidnappers of schoolchildren in order to win support for "moderate elements" in Rhodesia. The imperialists decide that the PLO has no place in deciding the future of Palestine since they are "terrorists" and plane hijackers. The FALN is labeled "terrorist" and FBI agents circulate through Chicago's Puerto Rican community spreading lies about the FALN. The Red Army Faction, otherwise known as the Baader-Meinhoff, are murdered in their prison cells by the West German government and then the government "covers up" these murders by painting the Baader-Meinhoff members as "isolated" and "suicidal fanatics," even though after the deaths of these revolutionaries people all over Europe demonstrated support for these so-called terrorists.

The past ten years have also marked the growth of progressive and anti-imperialist movement among white people, particularly white women. The women's liberation movement has exposed and challenged the function of women's oppression and male supremacy as a major pillar of the imperialist system. In this period of imperialist crisis, white working class women have been targeted by Carter and the state because enforcing the system of male supremacy and containing women's revolutionary potential is materially necessary for imperialism. The threat which the State sees in the women's movement was clearly defined in the State's strategy for the International Women's Year Convention. IWY was a large scale state effort to coopt the women's movement under the guise of state sponsorship for building women's liberation. Backed up by right-wing forces such as Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum and the KKK, the state's plan was to enlist white women against Third World women, to set up radical feminists and lesbians as the enemies of all women. But thousands of women, led by caucuses of Third World women and of lesbians, gave tremendous affirmation and support on an unprecedented level for the rights of Third World women, reproductive freedom, and lesbian and gay liberation. At the same time they defeated the state's cooptive plan to set up a state Department of Women. Instead of deflecting the progressive potential of women, the IWY Convention opened up a new stage of women's movement and laid the basis for strengthening anti-imperialist movement and solidarity among masses of women.

As the women's movement has become a stronger anti-imperialist force, it too has become a target for violent state repression. COINTELPRO agents have also infiltrated the women's movement. Grand juries have been used to try to intimidate women, especially lesbians, from developing a militant, anti-imperialist stand against the state.

The state has always tried to quickly crush any moves among white people toward militant solidarity with national liberation. This is essential to enforcing the system of white supremacy and national oppression. From John Brown to Marilyn Buck, Susan Saxe, Emily and Bill Harris, Joe Remiro and Russell Little, white people who have taken militant stands on the side of national liberation have suffered the consequences.

It is only in this context that we can understand the recent arrest of Clayton Van Lydegraf, a leader of PFOC, and of Judith Bissell, Leslie Mullin, Michael Justesen and Marc Perry. These arrests are an effort to smash revolutionary leadership and organization within the oppressor nation and the growth of anti-imperialist politics and movement. They come at a time when the contradictions of the imperialist system are heightening for the white working class and in particular for white working class women, a time when Prairie Fire as an organization is strengthening its commitment and capacity to act in solidarity with national liberation, to build women's leadership and movement, and to expose opportunist politics and practice within the white left. Prison solidarity work and the recent formation of the August 21st Coalition; defense of political prisoners and prisoners of war such as Assata Shakur, Skyhorse/Mohawk, Graham and Allen, and Dessie Woods; and solidarity with the national liberation struggles of Africa, Puerto Rico, the Black liberation movement and the Native struggle for sovereignty and self-determination have been major focuses of PFOC's organizational work. The Gay Freedom Day March, including activities developed in response to the wave of anti-gay attacks, and the IWY conference held recently in Texas are areas of struggle that PFOC has participated in because of our commitment to fight male supremacy and build the women's and gay liberation movements. In our work we have fought for the necessity of fighting white and male supremacy. We have taken clear public stands on the importance of revolutionary armed struggle and the need for white people to take responsibility to act in solidarity with the armed struggles of oppressed nations.

This last point is particularly important in light of the recent state attack on PFOC. It comes at a time when imperialism worldwide is escalating its media and propaganda campaign to label all revolutionary armed struggle as "terrorism" and to drive a wedge between national liberation fighters and their people and supporters. At this critical time, when revolutionaries must unite to expose and defeat that state's attacks on revolutionary movements, opportunist forces like the Guardian join in the state-led chorus singing condemnations of "terrorism." The Guardian's attacks on armed struggle go hand in hand with their denial of the existence of oppressed nations inside the imperialist borders of the US. By wiping out a 400-year-old history of mass and armed struggle by Blacks and Native Americans, and nearly a century of armed struggle by Chicanos, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans against US imperialism, the Guardian conveniently exceptionalizes the white working class and left in the US to erase the oppressor nation's responsibility to engage in armed struggle.

Opportunist political stands like those of the Guardian which defer armed struggle indefinitely and denounce those who act now as terrorists **collaborate with the state!** Because Prairie Fire has rejected such politics we are the State's enemies and it will continue its efforts to destroy us.

Our comrades are facing charges of conspiracy and possession of explosive devices and firearms—charges which have historically been used by the state in its efforts to smash political organization and movement, usually within oppressed nations. The real conspiracy at issue is the state's conspiracy against anti-imperialist politics and our organization. As recent front page news stories and FBI documents show, this bust was a result of an elaborate FBI conspiracy dating back many years which involve Attorney General Griffin Bell and Assistant US Attorney Paul Flynn as well as many undercover agents. One of these agents was a member of Prairie Fire for over two years.

The name this pig went by in the Bay Area was Phil Gamache. His real name, we now learn, is Richard Gianotti. During the year and a half of intense two-line struggle inside PFOC, "Phil Gamache" carefully feigned support for revolutionary politics and for Clayton Van Lydegraf who was leading the struggle for these politics. The FBI clearly understood which side of the two line struggle represented the real threat to the state. They feigned support for anti-imperialism in order to destroy it.

Their strategy also responded to the growing strength of women's liberation and leadership in the organization. This "Phil" gave careful lip service to women's liberation and carried out support tasks like childcare to cover himself. His clearest weakness when he was in the organization was his passivity and lack of clear struggle for anti-imperialist politics. He was confronted about his passivity but due to our liberalism the struggle against this form of white and male supremacy wasn't pushed far enough. He left PFOC in February '77 supposedly because of family responsibilities. A pig like this, who lives and works with revolutionaries and gets to know them on a daily basis only to stab them in the back, is the lowest form of life—scum.

The fact that this pig was able to work like this among us is also a sign of our political vulnerability and weakness. We have a pressing responsibility to understand the political basis for this vulnerability and change it. We are presently examining this history and compiling information on this pig which we will publish in order to help arm the movement against the operation of such pigs in the future.

The use of undercover pigs to destroy revolutionary movement is one of the most deadly weapons in the State's arsenal. Countless Native American leaders, like Skyhorse and Mohawk who are now on trial for murder in Los Angeles, have been framed or murdered on account of the activity of FBI pigs like Doug Durham. The Black movement has suffered heavy setbacks as a result of agent infiltration.

We must learn from every new exposure of pig activity in order to better identify and rout them from our midst. The state has all of its technology to use against people's movement but it is not invincible. The people's defense must be the strengthening of anti-imperialist politics and solidarity. The state uses the white supremacy, male supremacy and opportunism among us to split our movement apart. Only by taking on the struggle against white and male supremacy more decisively can we build a movement which can withstand state infiltration and attack.

The state wants to use this bust to tear Prairie Fire apart, to destroy support for anti-imperialist politics, to make people turn their backs on revolution because the stakes are too high. It has continued its strategy of falsification and frameup with the printing of front page lying news stories which claimed to give the "real facts" of the case even before the comrades were arraigned.

Our own strategy is to turn the tables on the state and to use this bust to help consolidate anti-imperialist politics and movement. We intend to redouble our efforts and commitment to international solidarity and the struggle of all political prisoners and POWs, to fight fiercely for women's leadership and movement in the face of male supremacist attacks, and to work for the defeat of opportunist, collaborationist lines on armed struggle within the left. We are committed to building a strategy against COINTELPRO that is in solidarity with the campaigns being carried out by Black and other oppressed nation organizations. We intend to fight to free our comrades!

We also see the absolute necessity to look self-critically at our political history and practice at this time. Comrades from other organizations and movements have struggled with us to understand this responsibility. When a bust like this occurs we must look at our internal weaknesses and contradictions as a factor which contributes to the state's ability to move successfully against us. While affirming the correct and revolutionary parts of our line and history, we must analyze and expose our errors which are rooted in white and male supremacy and begin to rectify them in order to move forward. This is a serious responsibility we have to the national liberation and women's liberation movements and to the anti-imperialist left. We are committed to opening up this area of struggle more concretely in the near future.

Peoples worldwide are winning the struggle to defeat imperialism. **Victory is certain. Venceremos!**

PRAIRIE FIRE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE
P. O. BOX 40614, STATION C
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94110