

Inuit form common front

The 100,000 people who inhabit the earth's northernmost regions are discovering they have a lot more in common than just their harsh and isolated homelands. They are scattered in tiny settlements across three continents, yet they share a common language and culture, and increasingly, they face a common threat to their traditional communalist and nomadic way of life.

Oil, gas and other mineral development is fast coming to the lands above the Arctic Circle, and the Inuit (Eskimo) peoples of Canada, Alaska, Greenland and the Soviet Union are finding themselves confronted with a critical dilemma—they must adopt western-style political strategies or face extinction as an unique and self-sufficient race.

The Inuit have now started reaching out to each other across the Pole. For the first time in their history, they have gathered together in a supra-national assembly to develop a common front against the white colonial regimes.

Their first meeting, held in June in Barrow, Alaska, 347 miles above the Arctic Circle, focused on the one key issue



that is central to the survival of the Inuit—their guaranteed access to a substantial and unspoiled land base.

The Inuit are pressing a number of aboriginal land claims, based on the fact they have occupied their homelands since before history was written. To date, they have achieved some official recognition for their claims,

mainly because of their willingness to stop "progress" with lawsuits and other political action.

Like other colonized races, the Inuit have had to make

some accommodation to the settlement way-of-life (snowmobiles instead of dog teams, etc.) yet most continue to depend on hunting and trapping for food and other

necessities. Because of the harsh climate and terrain, they must roam in extended family groupings over vast expanses—up to 22,000 square miles for one hunter in search of caribou—so the presence of pipelines, mines or other intrusions has a seriously upsetting effect.

The Barrow meeting, which, coincidentally, was held just a week before the start-up of the trans-Alaska oil pipeline from Prudhoe Bay on the Arctic coast, brought together 300 representatives of Inuit national groups in Alaska, Canada, and Greenland. Attempts were made to contact Inuits in Siberia, but the Soviet authorities prevented it.

generated from east of the Mississippi.

To plug into the process for determining SRAF's future course, or just to learn more about the organization, contact Bruce Allen, c/o Totally Eclipsed, Box 223, Jordan Station, Ont. LOR 1S0; or Erna Gold, c/o Free-space, 339 Lafayette St., New York, N.Y. 10012.

The week-long meeting, dubbed the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, passed a number of resolutions calling for, among other things, the demilitarization of the polar regions, environmental protection, improvements in health and other social ser-

vices, unfettered Inuit hunting rights and unrestricted movement of Inuit people across their homelands.

As one of the conference organizers said in summary: "The opportunity is here for the creation of what some people are beginning to call the Inuit nation."

The delegates established a steering committee to chart the future course over the next several months, and this undoubtedly will include creation of an international common-front organization to press the campaign. The new group will be severely hampered, however, by the indifference and even hostility of the colonial regimes, and by the very uneven political development and levels of consciousness of the various national groupings.

In Alaska, for instance, the 20,000 Inuits, along with the Aleuts and Indians, reached a settlement with the government five years ago under which they gave up all their claims over the vast region in return for cash settlements amounting to a few thousand dollars each and some land grants. A similar agreement was reached between the Inuit and Indian people of northern Quebec and the Quebec government. In both cases, the native people really didn't have much choice: massive development projects were going in anyway (in Alaska the pipeline, in James Bay a hydroelectric project), and they had to take what they could get.

However, the Quebec government seems now to have bitten off more than it can chew with its announcement that newly-emigrated Inuit and Indians must send their children to French-language schools. The move

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SRAF CONFERENCE

Anarchists take new tack

By Earl Averill

North America's largest explicitly anarchist organization wants to run up the black flag and see who salutes.

An "anarchist-communist tendency" is developing within the Social Revolutionary Anarchist Federation (SRAF) in an attempt to rally individuals and local SRAF groupings to a more coherent and class-conscious orientation.

Members of the new tendency have taken a strong stand that SRAF must continue to grow in an organic and decentralized manner, but they are at pains to counter those individualistic and "anarcho-capitalist" elements that view SRAF mainly as a debating society.

The new tendency came out into the open at SRAF's third annual continental conference, held in late August at a campground in rural Wisconsin. More than 100 anarchists from the U.S. and Canada were present, and they received draft copies of a statement of Anarchist-Communist Principles put forward by the Resurgence group in Evanston, Ill., with the help of Totally Eclipsed, Jordan Station, Ont.

The five-page statement presents an anarchist critique of the State and poses a federalist vision of a "network of voluntary alliances embracing the totality of social life (production, consumption, health, culture, recreation, etc.) in which all groups and organizations reap the benefits of unity while still exercising their autonomy within their own spheres and expanding the range of their freedom."

The statement proposes that members undertake the publication of educational materials and form discussion and study groups to push the principles within and without SRAF. As well, members would coordinate their efforts in rank-and-file workers' caucuses, alternative mutual-aid groups, in the feminist movement, and in international solidarity work (e.g., for the CNT).

The tendency has been publishing *Self-Management Newsletter* as its organ of communications. It's expected that two other SRAF publications, the *SRAF Bulletin* (shorn of some of its personalized polemics) and *Black Star* will also help get the word out.

No Take Over

So far, plans are quite vague as to how this tendency would operate in practice, although members insist there is no intention of "taking over" SRAF. Local SRAF groups would still be autonomous, and each would decide whether and in what manner to raise the SRAF banner in their local organizing.

The draft statement sparked lively discussion at the conference, and all the participants went home to consider possible revisions. Local and regional meetings are being held this fall, with a Nov. 20 deadline for written critiques and suggestions to be mailed to either of the two staging points for collection.

The revised version of the statement is scheduled to be mailed to everyone on the SRAF mailing list by Dec. 1.

The emergence of the new tendency marks the most significant step in the

evolution of SRAF since its inception as a campus-based group in Southern California in the late 1960's. SRAF has no leadership or coordinating body, and all tasks are handled through individual or local group initiative.

The Federation now includes 30 chapters and about 1,000 people throughout North America. Most of the energy of late has been

INTERNATIONAL PRISON FAMILY

Hapotoc: "Playing to win"

HAPOTOC International Family (Help a Prisoner and Outlaw Torture Organizing Committee) is no ordinary prisoners' aid organization. It's an explicitly anarchist group aiming to eradicate the social conditions which give rise to crime, violence, prisons, police forces, armies and dictatorships of all kinds.

Unlike Amnesty International, which aids only non-violent prisoners of conscience, the Amsterdam-based HAPOTOC works on behalf of any prisoner, no matter what the "crime" may have been, with no distinction made between political and economic offenses. The reason: crime and prisons were born when State/class society was born, and they can only be overcome when State/class society is given its final push into the dustbin of history.

HAPOTOC attempts to win people to anarchism by getting them involved initially in individual cases, by encouraging them to correspond with or about selected prisoners. This involves them in the prisoners'

struggle, and exposes the true face of the State, which is normally hidden from view. Prisoners involved with the organization are encouraged to work on behalf of other prisoners, thus developing solidarity.

Membership in HAPOTOC is informal; there are no rolls kept, but there are special sub-groups:

ICAT (International Crusade Against Torture), Box 22523, Fazantenhof, Bijlmermeer, Amsterdam, Netherlands, deals specifically with cases of torture, behaviour modification, and the death sentence. This is a struggle which that needs to be built up so that it can become an emergency wing capable of acting very quickly.

Another sub-grouping, ICAP (International Crusade Against Prisons), Box 27087, 1002-AB, Amsterdam, Netherlands, deals with prison conditions, life imprisonment cases, and prison slave labour.

HAPOTOC began when

Michael Tobin, currently based in Amsterdam, was arrested in England for issuing a leaflet calling on British soldiers to desert. He pointed out that the soldiers were only workers with uniforms on, and should join with the Irish workers to fight against the fascists in Britain as well as in Ireland. Tobin's defense committee finally forced Amnesty International to take his case after they had initially refused. After his release, Tobin worked on other cases with AI, but soon discovered an overly cozy relationship between some elements in the group and the British government.

This confirmed the need for a new transnational prisoner organization. So HAPOTOC was formed in September 1974, with a manifesto published in the summer of 1975. At this time they had a few score prisoners—almost all inside for "criminal" reasons. Then in October they got an urgent appeal on behalf of Marie and Noel Murray, imprisoned for their beliefs by the Irish republican govern-

ment, and helped launch an international support campaign.

But the vast majority of HAPOTOC's work is not with name prisoners. Much of it is money and time consuming — writing letters, photocopying documents, making contact with prisoners and support people and sending them money and stamps.

As their message to new readers of *Rebel*, their English-language newsletter, states, "HAPOTOC adopts a positive attitude to struggle. We are not interested in skulking in corners or in becoming martyrs. For we are playing to win. We think it is time that the criminal rulers of States were made to rule in corners. We think it is time that their sick social system was buried in the pits of history."

HAPOTOC needs donations and individuals to support their campaigns and to become involved with prisoners. Write to them at Box 10638, Amsterdam, Netherlands.