

PROCESSED WORLD 25

goes
on vacation...



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GET AWAY DAZE!!

PROCESSED WORLD 25

Summer/Fall 1990

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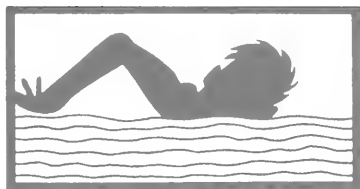
USA

MENU OF WEEK'S ACTIVITIES



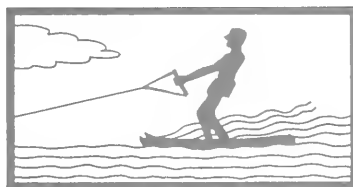
MONDAY

- 9 a.m. TALKING HEADS**
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FRONT MANUAL**
BLF, p. 23
- 12 noon: TO WORK 2 HOURS A DAY**
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FRIDAY

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Cornford, DeWitt, Hershey, King,
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- afternoon: FRONT COVER**
by JR Swanson
- BACK COVER**
by Igor Gasowski

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Indexed in Alternate Press Index.

TOUR OPERATORS, PW #25: Angela Bocage, Michael Botkin, Primitivo Morales, Frog, Clerk Kent, Green Fuschia, Chris Carlsson, Glenn Caley Bachmann, Club Med-O, JR Swanson, Chaz Bufe, D.S. Black, BeanHead, Emily Post-It and others . . .

FELLOW TRAVELERS: Jay Stone, Margot Pepper, Dennis Hayes, Igor Gasowski, Malgorzata G., Poly Polaroid, Jesse D., Adam Cornford, R.L. Tripp, JC Jr. & a host of others.

This "tour" reflects the ideas and fantasies of the specific authors and artists, and doesn't necessarily represent other contributors, editors, or BACAT.

PW is collectively produced & edited; only the printer gets paid.



Talking Heads



In East Germany a crowd tens of thousands strong besieged and ultimately stormed and trashed the headquarters of the Stasi secret police, destroying all of the records. In the USA, the former head of our secret police, George Bush, was elected president.

While peace threatens to break out in the rest of the world, the administration casts about anxiously for new enemies in new wars. With the tragic loss of the "Evil Empire," they must look for new bogies closer to home. Glued to their dramatizations and "real life" top shows, the viewing public waits for the criminals to be pointed out.

So the administration has declared War on Desire. Sex and Drugs are the current targets, given the attractive multiple mandate this War gives to intervene in Latin America, harass minorities, and to monitor the bloodstreams and sex lives of federal workers and citizens. But the targeted drugs and sex are less significant than the battle-

field: information.

Pleasure and its pursuit have always been viewed by repressive regimes as inherently radicalizing. If they can define all drug use and sex as "criminal" and dangerous to society, then they can pass off their need to monitor our bloodstreams and thought-patterns as benevolent protection instead of blatant repression.

The eighties saw a dramatic ideological reaction to the radicalism of the sixties and even the lukewarm liberalism of the seventies. It culminated with the implosion of communism which has swept away any lingering impact of the traditional (and increasingly irrelevant) left.

The War on Desire will be complicated by technological advances, but it is hard to say who will benefit most from them. Will advances in birth control techniques, like RU 486, empower women or make it easier to control them? Will the expansion of the information industry benefit the fringe—hackers looting government files—or the

Bureaucracy?

In many ways the onset of "personal" computing has undermined the official control of information. Hackers waltz through the files of the governments and the corporations. Computer bulletin boards and modems have created information networks completely outside officialdom. Recent draconian government action against hackers shows how seriously they take the threat.

Social control has always been primarily practiced by propaganda. Who cares what a few thousand personal computeroids think if the millions believe what survey-certified "credible" anchor-persons tell them is true? But as the mass media drifts off further and further in republican, religious, corporate fairyland, increasing numbers of people will find themselves experiencing information dualism. What we personally experience and learn from our friends and acquaintances simply doesn't jibe with the irrelevant but apparently unambiguous truths pandered by the Mass Media.

This period, when Official Reality becomes impossible for most people to believe, is historically an uncomfortable one for repressive regimes. In the "Communist" bloc they have fallen. In China and the USA they are increasingly resorting to crude force and censorship.

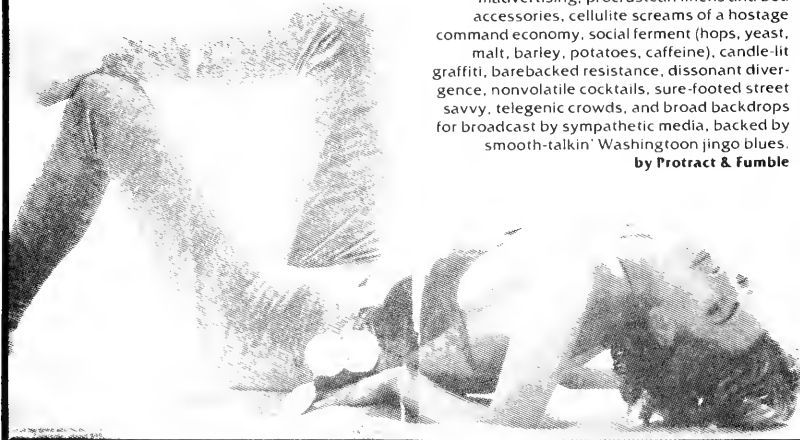
The War on Sex justifies the crusade against abortion rights and the refusal to teach sex education to prevent AIDS. The War on Drugs justifies aircraft carriers off the coast of Colombia, "military advisors" (remember them?) in Peru, and quasi-military occupation of communities of color in the USA. And both justify the "need" for the administration to keep lists, limit the rights of others, and keep its own business strictly secret.

Bush's history in "intelligence" was a non-issue in his election campaign, but his presidential behavior has been more than a touch paranoid. He's considered a "secret"

THE VELVEETA REVOLUTION

Ingredients: partially hydrogenated press releases, subliminal manipulation, liposuctional truth-in-advertising, procrustean linens and bed accessories, cellulite screams of a hostage command economy, social ferment (hops, yeast, malt, barley, potatoes, caffeine), candle-lit graffiti, barebacked resistance, dissonant divergence, nonvolatile cocktails, sure-footed street savvy, telegenic crowds, and broad backdrops for broadcast by sympathetic media, backed by smooth-talkin' Washington jingo blues.

by Protract & Fumble



GRAPHIC: PW Collective

president, and is known not to be above lying to maintain secrecy, even for just an extra day. He excels at doublespeak, for example labeling himself "the environmental president." On the basis of general style alone it's easy to see Bush as the likely mastermind of the Iran-Contra scam, most of all in the way he avoided the slightest taint of connection with it despite his official role.

While Reagan's "spin doctors" had their hands full just cleaning up his bloopers—as testified to by his plummeting reputation since he became dependent upon the services of a single commercial publicist—Bush is developing a machine of staggering proportions.

In addition to refusing to let anyone know about what it's doing, the administration is showing insatiable curiosity about the doings of the rest of us. The Wars "require" the federal apparatus to encroach on the elusive "right to privacy" more than at any time since the McCarthy era.

Pregnant teens, if they want an abortion, are increasingly being forced to get the permission of their biological parents. A host of legal and medical agencies insist they have the right to test people for AIDS—if necessary against their will, and perhaps to quarantine them as well. The federal government is insisting that all of its workers need to be drug tested and the courts, after ten years of Reaganistic packing, are backing them up.

And the mainstream media slavishly broadcasts the straight party-line, which even the party newspapers in ex-communist Europe aren't doing any more! The result is a view of the world so heavily processed that it bears little meaningful relationship to reality.

San Franciscans had an interesting taste of the fun-house mirror effect of the media in the aftermath of the Big Earthquake last October. The actual earthquake, although it caused billions of dollars in damage (mostly knocking down structures that probably wouldn't make it through the next really big one anyway), was really not very deadly. But the media version, which was what the world outside San Francisco experienced as the 'Quake, was a holocaust of raging fire, collapsing bridges, and "hundreds" of commuters crushed to death in the cars.

Initially, many San Franciscans believed this version, which they heard on transistor radios or by long-distance phone calls from horrified relatives watching dramatic footage on the evening news. For several days most people believed that "hundreds" had died, as the embarrassed media hesitated to reveal how badly they'd exaggerated the death toll in their lust for blood and ratings. Most people who experienced the actual earthquake now consider the national media's coverage of it a sham, but it remains the official version, enshrined in glossy magazine photos. The truth is so easily distorted just to produce flashy copy that it

is frightening to contemplate what deliberate propaganda is producing right now.

Processing is power. The revolution that tumbled the Marcos regime in the Philippines began when the 20 keypunchers of the national election results refused to fudge the counts. The ability of a regime to impose its version of reality is the cause, and the measure of its power.

China's government insists that there was no massacre in Tianamen Square. The fact that it can even say this testifies to its continued grasp on power—just as the open disbelief of this lie by the entire world, including most of the people of China, testifies to the weakness of that grasp.

In the USA—after China the last bastion of conservatism in the world—the war is heating up. Will the powers that be maintain their monopoly of processing, and keep the complacent masses quiet? Or will the facade rip as the gap between the blissfully ignorant haves and the increasingly miserable have-nots grows? The Bush administration is counting on a preemptive strike at desire, at sex and drugs, those venerable

corrosives to Authority.

But the dictators of China may yet be felled by the Fax. Here they can censor Robert Mapplethorpe's sadomasochistic images in Cincinnati, or the raunchy lyrics of 2 Live Crew in Florida and Texas, but the net result is predictably to promote rather than suppress the disturbing contents.

The nineties: TV will get more boring, and real life will get more interesting.

—Michael Botkin & the collective

In this issue *PW* flees the work-a-day world for greener pastures; we've gone on vacation! For some of us this has been literally true—masquerading as the Anti-Economy League several of our crew invaded Central & Eastern Europe—while for others the vacation has been a theoretical concept. We have accordingly dug into our singular & collective pasts to cast light on "anti-work."

Med-O reflects on a journey through Africa in "The Land of F," while William Brummer focuses on South Africa and its turbulent course in "Violence Processing." Chris Carlsson revisits Brazil (see also his

GENERAL SUBVERSIVE WARNING: Life in the West promotes severe numbness, passivity, banal culture, and brutal extremes of wealth and poverty. Greater personal liberty is accompanied by a growing disinclination to act as a free human being.

Попробуй Вест!
("Test the West")
Auch in der "BRD" erhältlich.

letter in issue #24) to explore other dimensions of the tourist and the toured. Glenn B.'s letters from Central Europe, and a Polish woman's reflections on life in the U.S. help round our view of mobility and culture.

Primitivo Morales takes a more abstract view of leisure time in his essay "Just Two Precious Weeks?!" and two related pieces on tourism and mass entertainment. The two book reviews cover old—but not dated—books that explore the possibilities of having more leisure time. Frog reviews a French publication from the '70s, *To Work Two Hours A Day*, which contains a trenchant analysis on work and the possibilities for its reduction. In his review of *The Right to be Lazy*, Primitivo shows that such ideas are certainly not unique to this century.

And lest you think we're all theory, we welcome the Billboard Liberation Front back. If you're looking for a few hints about what to do this summer (or winter) you might consider their "Manual" for billboard alteration. One of our friends, Art Tinnitus, has provided an accompanying essay on the prankster in modern society, and two unidentified conspirators tell their tales of urban propaganda.

Christopher Barnes' "This is My Life, Jonathan David" extends the exploration to the factory, while Adam Quest examines what would happen "If the Weather Channel Went Off the Air." The excellent poetry section includes John Soldo, Jim DeWitt, Janice King, Adam Cornford, Christopher Hershey and Richard Wilmarth. Josiah Leet takes us on a whirlwind tour of an exclusive club.

Our sense of (gallows) humor is untarnished, as Chaz Bufe's killer story, "The Hot One," vividly shows. Don Webb's "Occult Revival" reports on the rise of The Damnation Army in the Bowery. Peter Bates' "Micro Fictions" shed a stroboscopic light on modern life. We round out the issue with an excerpt from John Shirley's excellent cyber-punk trilogy, *A Song Called Youth*.

We apologize for not including the results of the art survey (see issue #24), but we got carried away with other material, and we had a number of interesting pieces arrive at the last moment (*Here And Now* from Scotland; the Institute for the Study of Neo-ism in Köln, Germany, etc.).

We'll be back before year's end (\$ allowing) with another issue. It will be back to work as we focus on non-profits, "hip capitalism" and other progressive aberrations. We had to leave a lot of good material on the shelf—we've got a running start on both material and money. Won't you join us?

We urgently solicit your writing, your art, your participation in our collective process(ed world).

Processed World, 41 Sutter St. #1829, San Francisco, CA 94104. Phone: (415) 626-2979. Fax: (415) 626-2685.

Letters



N.T.S., Prague

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS!

The following is an open letter from a 15 year old high school student in Lexington, KY. to her fellow students. Its public distribution was her last school activity. We thought it heartening if somewhat paranoid; it doesn't mean they're not out to get you.

"Do you know what the fascists are doing to our brain cells?"

If you read the tabloids, you are probably aware that the CIA is one of our leading drug importers, and that the government has been known to implant narcotics in major areas. It may come as a surprise, however, to learn that this is only the tip of the iceberg. Many more insidious menaces, seemingly harmless, have been placed in our society by high-ranking Republican officials, including government leaders and even the president of the United States!

One of these menaces is modern Top 40. Such music has proven to destroy brain cells and deaden emotions. Children of Republican leaders pressure their friends into buying recordings of mindless dance music and synthesized pop. The Republicans and their children popularize the music, thus affecting millions of unsuspecting people.

Television is another way to destroy brain cells. The government promotes TV programs that discourage thinking. Sometimes subliminal messages are put in advertisements. Because of the fascists, television has become extremely prevalent and influential.

The most subtle danger is compulsory public education. Although it seemingly is used to teach people and encourage thinking, it in fact does the opposite. It forces students to conform rather than think for themselves and live unconventionally. Public education also emphasizes memorizing and regurgitating information. The atmosphere in schools is not conducive to free thinking.

The fascists are doing this because they want to destroy people's thinking ability

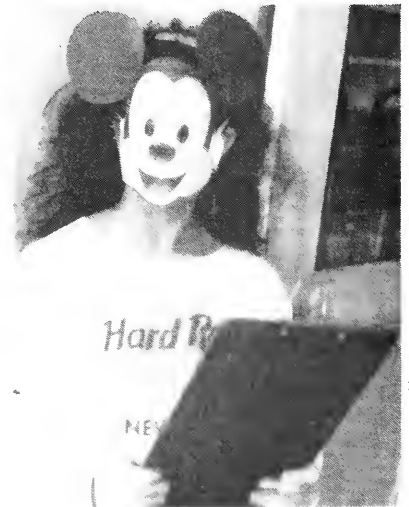
while the people are young. They intend to reinforce their own views and spread conservatism. Once this is accomplished, they will be able to slowly implement controls on people, who will not realize what is happening until we have a totalitarian nation.

This plot has been remarkably successful in the '70s, '80s, and early '90s. Although TV and compulsory education existed previously, the conservatives have recently intensified their efforts. George Bush has already begun the second stage of subtle restrictions of freedom!

To counteract this situation, we must first be aware of it. We must not succumb to the brain-numbing effects of this evil conspiracy. We must resist restrictions of freedom and infringements upon rights, as well as the dangers that have been implanted in our society. It is necessary to encourage alternative lifestyles. The only way to stop this abomination is to think, feel, and rebel. It is up to us.

—Rozebud

Hi! I'm from the **Senseless Bureau!** . . .



GRAPHIC: Zoe Noe

Dear People,

I was absolutely delighted with the choice and good taste of your presentation of Bert Meyers' poetry [in issue 24]. I realized that if my husband had seen such a magazine in his life-time, he would have chosen to submit poems to it and would have been proud to be published in it. Although he was a marvelous teacher of poetry and a number of his students have since distinguished themselves as poets, he found academia to be an unreal and uncomfortable milieu and would have much preferred remaining a craftsman in wood — a picture-framer and gilder — if new materials and sprays had not been too hazardous to his health. He respected the experience of work but bemoaned the straight jacket in which society kept the worker, snuffing out all his joy spontaneity and creativity. In his work as a poet: "...he still dreamed of a style / so clear it could wash a face, / or make a dry mouth sing." Not an ideal shared by most of his peers in the world of poetry: "But they laughed, having found / themselves more astonishing. / They would drive their minds, / prismatic, strange, each wrapped / in his own ecstatic wires, / over a cliff for language, / while he remained to raise / a few birds from a blank page."

Odette Meyers, Berkeley, CA.

Dear *Processed World*:

I started a new job, night shift word processing at a law firm, and to my surprise found an excerpt from *Processed World* up on the company refrigerator after I had been there a few days. It was the short article on credit card scamming that had been reproduced in the Utne Reader [from *PW* 23]. A handwritten note was attached to it: "This person has intelligence but no honesty, courage but no honor." Obviously the work of a lawyer.

Well, they say even fleas have fleas. This law firm is in the honorable and honest (if not courageous) occupation of representing insurance companies.

Many people don't realize that insurance companies have in many ways replaced banks as the ultimate parasites in our system. They sell fear, though they try to make it appear they are selling safety. They have accumulated immense amounts of capital over the ages, capital with which they now own a controlling interest in most major banks and industries. They would be highly profitable even if they did not make a profit on selling insurance policies, simply by their return on investments. They produce absolutely nothing of value.

In many cases we are compelled to buy their products. For instance, in California automobile owners must buy insurance according to state law, and banks require homeowners or anyone else who takes out a loan to buy various forms of insurance.

To add further injury to slavery, insurance companies do not like to pay off on their policies. They have two ways to do this: the most common one is to raise rates if they have to make a payoff, for instance when you have an auto accident. The second is to simply refuse to pay, which then often results in a court battle.

That is the kind of carrion this law firm lives off. Instead of simply paying a worker or other victim compensation for an injury, State Farm, Aetna, Prudential or whoever pays lawyers \$150-\$200 an hour to try to prove that the victim is faking pain or caused the accident on purpose in order to collect on the insurance.

It's amazing how much time the lawyers can waste on the cases, but then working at \$200 per hour is hard to resist. Even if the victim wins, there is the additional taxation of having to pay the victim's lawyer about 1/3 of the winnings.

Of course, from the lawyer's point of view they are hard working, honest, intelligent, productive people. Not like the person who is living on credit.

B.M. San Diego, CA.



Apologies to N.T.S., Prague

Dear *Processed World*,

This is great! I never knew there was a magazine for pissed-off workers until I saw your listing in the Whole Earth Signals Catalogue.

Urine tests, company propaganda, and overall degradation are only the tip of the iceberg of frozen concentrated corporate stupidity. It's rotten for everybody below the executive level (Well, stop the presses!). Let's look at the choices. White collar? Forget it. A tie ain't nothin' but a leash. Anybody can pick up the other end. Blue collar? It's worse. Suck up to the manager AND the union boss. Pink collar? Lucky you! Every customer is your boss, including the one without a receipt, who wants a refund NOW, godammit!

To be honest, I've pretty much lucked out in the job market. Even the shitty restaurant jobs have been entertaining or mercifully brief. But like a middle-class revolutionary who's got no qualms about leading uprisings in the name of the proletariat, I'll go on writing about corporate scams even though they don't affect me.

Speaking of corporate scams, here is my version of an employee counseling brochure. The Employee Assistance Program promotes "gatekeeper" plans to monitor employee recovery from drug addiction, alcoholism, and "emotional trauma." Sure, it's better than being fired, but now you're gonna help the company milk the insurance company for treatment of a "disease" (Pause for a moment to weep copiously). It's written in a corporate "voice," that of a Dutch uncle who "really knows the lingo." The pictures and questions are genuine; the answers are mine.

Anyway, here's my \$10 for the next 4 issues. If you want, you can print the brochure.

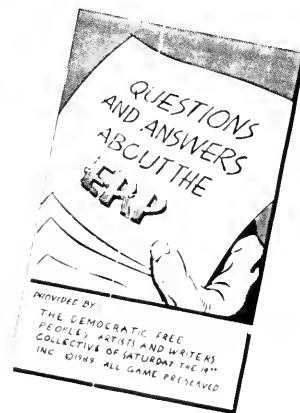
Rev. Carl X (The Black Humor Man)

People's Free Democratic World Ministries, Inc.

from the *Employee Resistance Program*:

What is an ERP?

The Employee Resistance Program is a support "network" of disgruntled employees like yourself. The ERP provides an outlet for the frustrations of everyday working life which, if allowed to build up, can break one's spirit or even trigger a psychotic episode.



How does the ERP work?

It begins spontaneously, when one employee has had his or her fill of the everyday "bullshit" he or she must submit to just to stay alive. First come petty acts of sabotage and theft of company resources and time (for example, this brochure was created at the workplace, on company time), and from there it escalates. Workers are encouraged to add personal touches to the ERP. Creativity is key. Many workers,

even without coordinating activities, can wreak major havoc, from which the company may never recover. Methods vary from one employee to the next, so no discernable pattern emerges to tip off corporate troubleshooters. This system is virtually foolproof.

Why is a program like this needed?

The ERP is needed to help victimized employees pass back to the employer the high psychic costs of enduring daily the organized degradation that is work. Corporation that fail to recognize this suffer from terminal rot and are destroyed by the ERP, out of mercy. Thus, the ERP benefits employee and employer alike.

Provided by the Democratic Free People's Artists and Writers Collective of Saturday the 14th, Inc., © 1989. All Game Preserved.

Processed World

Enclosed is my check for \$24.00 to renew my two year subscription to *Processed World*.

I am a long time reader, and have with interest and amazement watched the magazine's content stay at a high level of achievement. Your writing is "spotty eclectic" but your values come through clearly.

I read *PW* when it arrives, it stays on the table with other current "to read" stuff for a couple of weeks before it goes into storage. I read and look over *PW* cover to cover.

I read many magazines and publications, even *Vanity Fair* and *The New England Journal of Medicine*. However,

I don't own a television.

I don't own a microwave oven.

I don't own a dish washing machine.

I don't own a clothes washer.

I don't own a clothes dryer.

I don't own a garbage dispenser.

I don't own a VCR.

I don't own a doorbell.

I don't have electric heat.

I don't have gas heat.

I don't have a garage.

I don't owe for a car.

I don't have life insurance.

I own the farm.

I live in the past.

The processed world is where and what most of us choose to be. Out of desperation. Out of choice. We choose to do what we do. We do what we are told to do. We stay caught in the web of employment, are hirelings. We have vacant jobs and are watching our lives become more vacant. We don't want to have vacant lives. We buy and feed the things we use. We feed upon ourselves and feed those around us. We feed upon each other. A rather severe image; primordial, decayed fungi rotting, deliquescing, oozing smarmy melodies of contentment and disdain. The fulsome blues.

Extreme fixes come to the forefront: A platform of objectivity; 1) legalize all drugs 2) outlaw television

When you are in the midst of a national problem, the closeness of it covers and clouds the way in which we can look at it. Looking back we see the way in which the selling and controlling of the television technology dominated us; the manner, style and ways in which we lived. We became dependent upon it. We learned from it. We set our standards against it. The creation of a national consensus. We understood concepts via the national information source, were sold the way in which it is. What everyone else is thinking. We waited for and received the results. Holding in sway many people, day after day. Daily thousands pulled away, while thousands more joined.

Your magazine still makes me think, laugh, I never get outraged. You have yet to offend me, you can't. Now, what you write about, in other words, the facts of life, that is what offends me.

Your graphics, cartoons, visual statements, imagery, and all the photos, captions, and drawings is a real collective, a visually stimulating mish mash. My favorite part of the magazine. I would love to see the graphics that you would not print. You must have some doozies. Funny.

Billboard Liberation Front. If we only knew how.

I can't think of much more to tell you. I cannot stand a reader pre-coded response survey because I never know how to condense and rationalize a canned response. I want to say more.

T.A., Oregon

EXCERPTS FROM EUROPE

Mosel River region, W. Germany 8-10-89

Before I left San Francisco last month, several people were asking me, "Why are you going to Europe in the fall?" as if I'm crazy or something. I'd just tell them that it feels like the right time to go, or else mention how I wish to avoid the onslaught of American tourists, though being near a U.S. Air Force base is annoying as hell when those planes roar overhead about once every hour.

Autumn is a wonderful time to be here—the many trees are turning color, and grape picking season is in full swing. Yesterday I was walking in the town and an older man invited me inside his ancient wine cellar and siphoned me off a glass. It was about the best tasting stuff I'd ever had, and even the fact that we could barely speak a word to each other didn't take away from its magic.

W. Berlin 14-11-89

I'm in Berlin, and everything in the carnival-like atmosphere by the Wall seems to confirm that heady sense of being right in the center of the universe. So many bright lights and television cameras; I wonder are they just following a story, or are they helping to create it just by being here?

18-11-89

I finally made it to the other side of the Wall yesterday. I'd planned to get there sometime in the afternoon, but the line-up at Checkpoint Charlie was so thick that it was dark before I actually got into the city. Wandered around searching for a suitable cafe in and around what's purported to be the East Bloc's most fashionable shopping district. I was curious to see if there was

anything resembling the circus atmosphere on the west side of the Brandenburg Gate, but the contrast could not be more stark—the whole place cordoned off by police, and pervaded by a tense, ghostly quiet with only a few scattered onlookers. I wandered the streets, thinking how unusually quiet it was for a Friday night, when I suddenly encountered a large demonstration. I joined the crowd, and though I understood little of the words, I liked one particular banner picturing a can of Coca-Cola, asking, "Is This All?" The timing was particularly apt, for many East German activists are already beginning to fear that their revolutionary movement is being diluted by the appeal of consumer items from the west.

As the rally ended, I was invited to a party by some folks who told me it was the



N.T.S., Prague



PHOTO: Glenn Caley Bachmann

DDR's first-ever big student demonstration where students had gathered from all over the country. Some of them had come all the way from Rostock to be here. The party was very joyous and simple; sort of like an urban barn dance. I feel a kinship and respect for the East Germans who choose to stay rather than flee. At least 3 different people offered me a place to stay, but alas, my day visa required me to be back in West Berlin by midnight.

Prague 26-11-89

I rolled into Prague yesterday evening; alone with a language that offered me no clues. On the platform, while wondering how to get situated, I saw a pair with big backpacks speaking what sounded like English! They were a couple of Australians looking just as confused as I felt, so we teamed up and found accommodations together.

Jubilant pandemonium has surrounded us from the moment the subway sped us to Wenceslas Square. Every subway wall, and many a store window is practically wallpapered with typewritten manifestos, petitions, homemade posters and political cartoons, stickers, tricolor flags; and such a profusion of candles and flowers that practically every corner is a shrine. It's hard to believe we're in a subway station. I wish I could understand Czech! Most of the manifestos are dated, and though I can't read them there's still this obvious sense that things are moving so fast that if something is more than 2 days old it's pretty much ancient history. This is the spontaneous free press, and a plethora of posters are announcing tomorrow's General Strike (*Generální Stavka*) from noon to two.

Ascending into Wenceslas Square, we gawked at the enormity and fervor of a chanting crowd surrounding the monument. Somebody clued us in that this wasn't the big demonstration; the big one had taken place hours earlier. Later, during dinner at a pub (with a psychic waiter who kept slamming full mugs of beer on our

table before we'd think to open our mouths), the next table was erupting between about 8 shitfaced guys still delirious over Jakes' resignation the previous day. A while later most of them attached themselves to our table, boisterous and eager to try out their English on us. And that's how we found out where the next day's demonstration was.

28-11-89

Yesterday was the General Strike. At noon, the whole long promenade in Wenceslas Square was jammed so thick with people that you could hardly move. And it wasn't just the students; I got the overwhelming sensation that the whole city of Prague was right there. I was particularly moved by how many old people were present, who never thought they'd see a day like this! Remarkable to be in such a mass of people, where nearly every face has the look of having changed so dramatically in just one week.

In the evening I was fortunate to walk into a place called *Laterna Magicka* (Magic Lantern Theater), where the *Obcanske Forum* (Civic Forum) holds its daily English-translated press conference, which was just convening. Even though it was packed, I had no trouble getting in. (I told them I left my press pass in Berlin.) It was amazing to see some of the questions these Western journalists ask: "*What will you do if the government rejects your demands?*" As if anything in these circumstances can possibly be figured out that far in advance! After the press conference, I wandered around, and was drawn by chance to a banner-covered building. The door was open, so I climbed the stairs and went inside. Many of the art galleries and theaters that are on strike are now being used as headquarters and workshops for the Movement. This was one of those places—it seemed to be a clearinghouse for the underground press, a makeshift yet efficient operation. I particularly loved all the slightly incongruous elements; a vaulted ceiling with a delicate fresco on it that's 200 years old, a computer in the next room, along with a fleet of manual typewriters, including a couple of those black "iron horse" varieties from the 1920s.

Everybody here puts in such long days (and nights)! When I showed up last night, they thought I was a journalist wanting to interview them, and they were apologetic that they were finally ending their work day just as I showed up. But actually it was perfect, for they were just beginning to party and unwind.

"Sorry we can't help you, but would you like a beer?" said one.

"Prague is such a beautiful city; you should come back and visit sometime when we're not busy having a revolution!" said another.

Vienna 10-12-89

This is the first weekend that Czechs are

permitted to travel more freely, so of course Vienna is literally swarming with them, although personally I don't know why any of them would want to leave Czechoslovakia at such an exciting time as this.

What a comedown it is to go straight from Prague, where the streets are filled with young people demanding freedom, to Vienna where the streets are filled with middle-aged matrons in full-fur coats out doing their Xmas shopping!

Even the architecture is different—in Prague centrum the buildings seem to be built on a human scale, whereas here the buildings are so much more imposing, like they're designed to make you feel small, less sure of yourself (even if they're roughly similar architectural styles from similar periods). Even the statues in Prague seem so much more alive and sensual—here they just seem to be made of stone.

I would have stayed in Prague longer but I only had a transit visa this time, and I did stretch it; stayed an extra day or so beyond what I was supposed to, and they did look at me kind of funny at the border, and made a cursory glance through my pack, but they didn't ask me any questions.

It was interesting this week to note some visual changes in Prague after a week and a half away; the store windows and subways are still just as plastered with posters and all kinds of stuff, but more of them are printed now, and look a little slicker, not as homemade. The gallery space now has a name, N.T.S. (roughly, an acronym for "Independent Press Center"). They now have 2 computers instead of one, and also a huge photocopy machine which is constantly in use.

Most inspiring is to see and feel the sensual splendor of that ancient city, and realizing that this is now that moment when the people themselves are coming alive enough to match the splendor of the city. Sometimes I think that I live just to see Prague again.

—Glenn Caley Bachmann



PHOTO: Glenn Caley Bachmann

JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF "F"

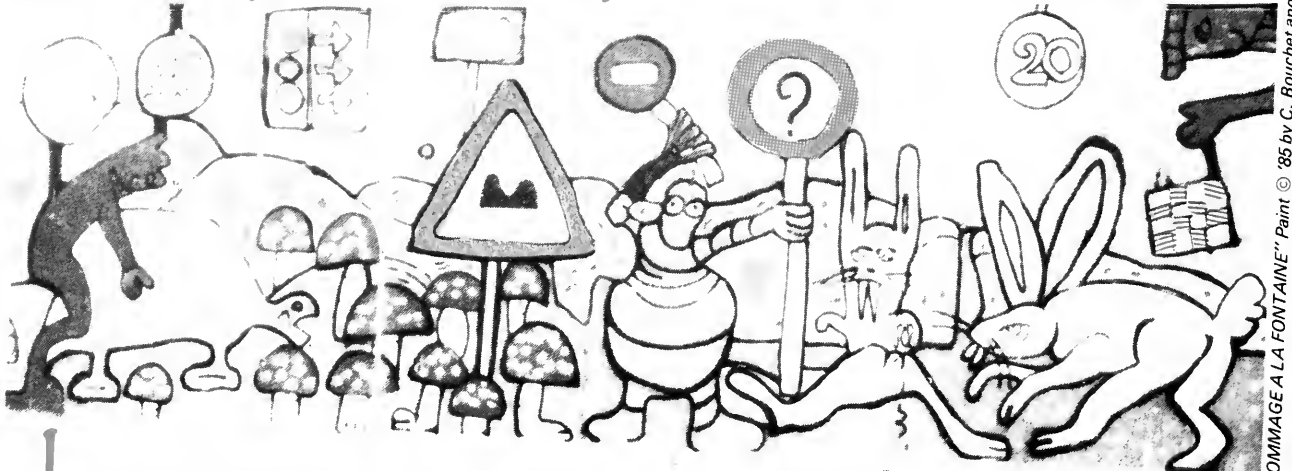


Photo from BERLIN WALL ART by Michael Nungesser & Heinz J. Kuzdas

"HOMMAGE A LA FONTAINE" Paint © '85 by C. Bouchet and Noir

I've become obsessed with the F-word these days. Like every healthy, sentient creature I want to be Fed fully and frequently. Indeed, without F there could be no life. And everyone truly alive strongly identifies with the pursuit of F in all its peculiar forms the world over. But an awful disease is killing our desire to F and be Fed. AIDS is clearly one manifestation but not the disease itself. The disease is really the fear of F and our willingness to settle for something less than the complete, oceanic, full body F we all deserve.

I've always been an outspoken advocate of free-love including the freedom to (sometimes) be love-free. Now everyone seems to laugh nostalgic at that and misuse the F-word so that it means the opposite of what it should. I say it's high time to get the F-word out of the closet and proclaim loudly and passionately: "FREE me! Yes, FREE me baby, FREE me good! FREE me, over and over again!!"

I know this sounds full of acne and adolescence, but I'm seriously concerned how the word freedom has been fucked with. It has been seriously victimized in a pattern of continuous abuse. In preparing for a trip to Eastern Europe in April, 1990, every second word one hears is "free" markets or "free" elections. What an absolutely vulgar, retrograde use of language; what an absurd vicious joke. Please tell me one thing that is free in the capitalist marketplace. Toilets used to be but even that costs now. Has any U.S. senatorial campaign been waged for less than \$1 million in the last two decades? This kind of free-dom is precisely that—dumb—just another word for "fuck you sucker."

It's curious, but I stumbled upon this thorny doublespeak around freedom through reflection on one of my most valued personal freedoms. Something unavailable to probably 90% of the world's population. That is the freedom to travel to distant

places and different cultures. This desire to visit an exotic people distinct from your own culture is a particularly American (Western) phenomenon. Foremost, we have financial/political opportunities very few have. But it is more than that, we also have a singular cultural flexibility and ambiguity. During a year stay in Africa, I'll never forget how "Wye" Katende, a seventeen year old Ugandan living in a remote village in the foothills of the Ruwenzori mountains, innocently questioned the notion of freedom through travel: "Mr. Mike, why did you come *here*? You are so far from your home. You must cry at night for your family."

For better or worse, family and other ties do not bind us, especially the traveling types, as strongly as elsewhere. This was strikingly expressed by a young Masai cattleherder I became friends with in Tanzania. By using Swahili we could converse fairly well, and one day I asked him if he would like to travel. He let me know he would never consider traveling any further than he could walk with his cattle. He then asked me who was taking care of my cattle back home. When I replied I had no cattle he was incredulous. This was unimaginable. Since I was an American he probably imagined I had dozens. At first, he thought I was joking, he really didn't believe my story. When I convinced him it was the truth, he started *crying* he felt so sorry for me.

I've always put great effort into finding ways to avoid being the casual tourist who blitzes the local highlights while replicating the lifestyle of home. I try to fit in *and* be up front that I'm an American visitor. I've often made my trips "working holidays," partly for the money but mostly as the best way to gain real contact in people's everyday life. Getting a job certainly immerses you in the fray instead of the role of culture vulture scavenging on local prime rib. But working is impractical many times and undesirable in

most places. Sometimes I have posed as a student, once as an anthropologist, and both seemed to open doors that would otherwise be closed.

Over the years I've moved away from the "working holiday" approach toward the "political holiday." We're not talkin' work brigades to Nicaragua here—which are long on work and short on holiday. By "political holiday" I mean partly a vacation and partly an opportunity to observe and participate in a time of radical social change. For me this includes learning about customs and social interests that aren't (overtly) political as well as the radical culture in contention with the powers-that-be. The latter has usually been my primary interest. This means *mostly* watching what's shaking down; it's also important to exercise a critical eye and express your own opinions rather than just following the "correct" revolutionary party or mass movement.

This has some qualifications, however. During a 6 month stay in South Africa in 1988 just after their second state of emergency (the inversion, "emergency of the state" is the more accurate phrase) I quite willingly chose to work uncritically with the ANC. I even temporarily became an Anglican missionary, despite 32 years of devout anti-Christianity, since working with their material aid programs (food, health care, education) was the only way I could gain access to the townships. While I was (and am) critical of the ANC, such criticisms made no sense within the context of ruthless state repression. This is the usual problem; it is only *after* a resistance movement has toppled the existing regime that there is a space to make useful criticisms. For this is the true point of departure in which real differences between oppositional groups concretely emerges.

I've been taken to task for being that

too-critical-radical-from-afar more than once. The usual banter "How can you as an American, from a position of privilege, not support the call by the homegrown opposition? They know the situation best—if you don't uncritically support them you are aiding their oppressors." There is some truth to this criticism about being too critical. I am (globally, though not nationally) privileged by the very fact I can choose to travel to such places and situations. I am also neither directly a victim nor a natural outgrowth of resistance there. Indeed, it is tremendous fortune to be an internationalist, not just theoretically, but practically, by directly experiencing social ruptures and change the world over. This is precisely why a "privileged" outsider might have a fresh, useful view regarding what's coming down.

This will be tested in a few days when I leave for a two month stay in Eastern Europe. Besides simply appreciating and learning from the different people and cultures I am (and will be) disturbed about simply replacing authoritarian communism with an equally (but less transparent, more diffuse) authoritarian capitalism. As I tell friends and acquaintances, my desire to warn Eastern Europeans about the sham of free markets, free elections and capitalism in general, many let me know this is incorrect/inappropriate. For instance, "They have materially/politically suffered for so long they just want to make life better—(they) want the good things of the West and wrong for you to tell them that desire is wrong." (There is nothing wrong with the desire for a better, materially richer life. What is wrong is believing the false promises that western capitalism actually fulfills these desires.)

This complaint goes hand in glove with another common criticism: "Well if you're really so damn radical stay home and help change the U.S. After all, it is your turf and truly the world's worst enemy." True enough. I'd be deceiving myself if I didn't acknowledge my initial attraction to Eastern Europe was the speed and quality of change there is a helluva lot more inspiring than the bleak vortex of social change in America. Even though I was born and continue to reside in the U.S., I've never identified with being *an American* but rather a world citizen first.

Admittedly, the U.S. plays a dominant role in world aggression and deserves special attention from radicals. So I definitely do a lot to try to change the planetary work/war machine here—after all, this is where I live most of the time. But I feel no special duty to entrench myself exclusively in the American theater. This seems to be a peculiar kind of nationalism, just as twisted and bigoted as the religious, ethnic, or statist varieties—if you believe you must completely tidy up your own cave before stepping out into the light of the world. It is one half of a common guilt trip for radicals. Either stay home or martyr yourself in some type of work brigade. Both are based on heaps of guilt,

work and sacrifice. Not exactly the stuff real freedom is made from.

The flip side of this, one felt by the vast majority of Americans, simply says: "Have a good time! Forget all that political shit. Just relax. Get a nice tan. And by the way, bub, you might come back and entertain us with an exotic slide show of natives spearing colored fish in a pristine coral reef." Besides the goldfish bowl syndrome (you are the goldfish looking out of the bowl at the surrounding world, while the locals gather round to stare in, and each inhabits an environment the other can't breathe in) I find it exceedingly alienating and boring to be isolated from the political forces at hand. I am looking for full enjoyment *and* radical deployment.

This trip to Eastern Europe will be my second "political holiday." I've never planned a trip so much as this one. Two other *PIW*'ers and I sent letters and copies of *PIW* to scores of independent radical groups and individuals throughout Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. We have also made our own personal Anti-Business cards for each language to make ties with indigenous corporate insultants. We also made similarly confrontational T-shirts to give away while there; boxes of stuff have been shipped ahead.

One fruit of all this planning has been the response received even before leaving. A radical from Szczecin, Poland, not only extended a warm invitation ("We could arrange meetings for you with greens, trade unions, anarchists...") but also apprised us of what to expect: "I don't know how much you know about Poland, but let me warn you that even among so-called radicals or alternatives you can find strange minds." Concerning popular Polish attitudes to the west and western leaders, he warns that most people see George Bush and Margaret Thatcher as "great politicians," explaining that "the slogan 'Enemy of my enemy is my friend' suits very well here." I also got a sense of the ennui people must feel there when he quipped, "So do not wait, friends, because *we* are waiting."

We too are waiting but in a different way. In the U.S., it's not only history but the present that's a nightmare we have yet to awaken from. The speed and degree of recent changes in Eastern Europe is inconceivable here today. There is little fire, much fear and stability. A few on the margins try to startle the sleepy inmates. So while *we* wait, there is time to share and learn from each other's struggles. This we do not have to wait for.

— Club Med-O



GRAPHIC: Club Med-o & G.C.B

Violence Processing: Fighting Words and South Africa

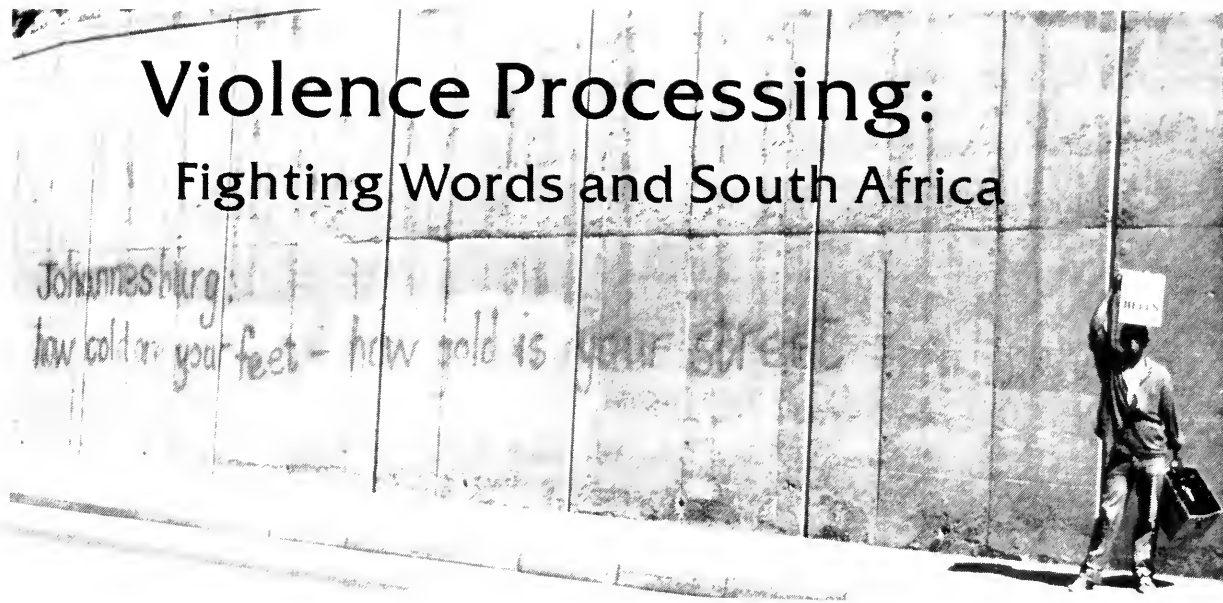


PHOTO: William Brummer

*What makes you suddenly so interested in South Africa?
Does the stench of our corpses start to bother you?*

— Siphso Sepamla

South Africa is once again on the tube, in the flashbulb afterburn of Nelson Mandela's release from jail after twenty-seven years out of the public eye. He walked through the gates of Victor Verster Prison in early February. During his last year of captivity, he was a "faceless man with a fax machine," negotiating the shots with the lameduck though ironfisted government as they prepared for "talks about talks."

Mandela came to light in the edenic wine country near Paarl. It was a short drive to Cape Town, where in a speech he reaffirmed his dedication to the principles for which he had been sentenced to life imprisonment. A few days later, a quick flight north took him home to Soweto, a couple dozen kilometers from Johannesburg. At one to two million people (precise figures, due to the exigencies of apartheid, are impossible to produce), Soweto is the most populous urban area in Southern Africa, an acronymic concentration city—SouthWest TOWnship.

It has been a long haul, but the struggle isn't over yet. In an historic moment, the ANC held its first talks with the government in May. The genie of change, once loosed, is awfully hard to coax back into the bottle.

The African National Congress (ANC), established in 1912, is Africa's oldest liberation movement. With Namibia attaining independence in March, South Africa will be last on the continent to shake off the racist vestiges of colonialism, palefaced minority rule.

The dry white "season of violence" is supposed to be over, according to President F.W. de Klerk's surprisingly conciliatory speech opening Parliament in Cape Town, on February 2nd of this year. Yet "unrest" continues, as the tortured skein of apartheid is riven by its own contradictions. War is being fought in Natal against a riveting green backdrop, in and around the Valley of the Thousand Hills, outside Pietermaritzburg. The United Democratic Front (UDF), a coalition aligned with the ANC, is in conflict with Inkatha, a chauvinistic Zulu tribal organization. Thousands have been

killed in the crossfire in the last three years.

The bantustans, or so-called independent homelands are convulsed by coups (in Transkei, Ciskei, and now Venda); four of the six main homeland leaders refuse to meet with de Klerk. These homelands were a costly mistake, a segregationist effort to create cheap labor reserves on an unmatched scale. 17 million people, out of the total South African population of 30 million people live in the homelands—3 1/2 million are there as the result of forced relocations.

Nowhere else has a government sought to denationalize its racial majority—stripping them of South African citizenship—then renationalizing them along forced tribal lines. Ultimately, they are going to have to be reincorporated with South Africa, in bizarre contrast to the independence movements of the Baltic states and the myriad popular fronts emerging in the southern Soviet republics, seeking deannexation.

Some are quick to paint de Klerk, the white President (representing South Africa's National Party), a reformist à la Gorbachev. While there may not be much risk of de Klerkomania sweeping the world, it would be well to take "Pretoriastroika" with a word of caution from de Tocqueville: *The most dangerous time for a bad government is when it starts to reform itself.*

Mandela has journeyed to Lusaka, Zambia, where he was appointed Deputy President of the exiled African National Congress. This is a short-term position, from which he can soon be expected to become President of "the new South Africa."

His release marks a southern symmetry with the freeing of Vaclav Havel, whose accession to President of Czechoslovakia shows what a short walk it can be from prison to leadership.

And, just as impressive, is the well of *humankindness* which marks a new, more benign style of leadership. Neither Havel nor Mandela show bitterness towards their erstwhile captors. "An eye for an eye and the nation is blind," says one Civic Forum slogan—a pithy and persuasive argument opposing vengeance against the ousted morally bankrupt Czechoslovak Communist authorities.

Nelson Mandela has shown himself to be a rare and self-effacing man of great subtlety, patience and power. He is very much in contrast with the whites, particularly the ruling tribe. In stereotypical fashion, many of the older Afrikaners rail at length about their many grievances, enmities that can be dated generations, if not centuries:

“Remember that Queen Victoria? A bigger mass murderer than Adolf Hitler!” says Frank de Klerk, an elderly legal clerk living in Pretoria. In many ways, he is a classic example of the *verkrampte* (hard-line) Afrikaner. He speaks with a thick, almost German, Transvaal accent that rolls his rrrs.

“My grandfather fought in 14 kaffir wars,” he continued. My aunt and cousin both winced, having heard this spleen ad nauseam. “And I can tell you, before I’m ruled by a black, I’ll shoot every bloody black bastard in sight.”

In 1900, three of the de Klerk family farms were burned by the British. (de Klerk is a common Boer name; Frank is not directly related to the current President, F.W.) Afrikaner women and children—mostly of the rebel Boer republics, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State—were put in concentration camps, where 26,000 died. Relatively few—7,000—of the Boer fighters died, while British casualties numbered about 22,000. Through force of Empire, and “a bumper crop of burnt farms,”² Britain eventually wore the Boer guerrillas down, and peace was negotiated.

After “a century of wrong” at the hands of the British, many of the Boer *bittereinders* wanted to fight to the absolute end. As Frank de Klerk made clear to me over dinner—at least for those who could remember oppression when they were on the receiving end—there can be no overestimating the depths of Afrikaner rage. I listened, for that is why I went to South Africa: to hear South Africans talk about what possesses them, as they grope their way to the end of a nationalist nightmare.

*And as you see at night, far in the Bay
reflections of the stars and city lamps,
so in the dark depths of our people sway
images of the concentration camps.*³

It was more than just a holiday in Pretoria. Partly I went because of an irresistible need to step beyond the narrow confines of my life as an information worker. From 8 to 5, I work cloistered in the desert groves of academe, a *sanctum sanctorum*, the very rarefied atmosphere of a special collections library.

Books were part of my displacement, for it was *reading* that took me beyond the pettiness of narrow nationalism. I plundered the collections for a sense of history, to fill out the outlines of what I knew from the all-pervasive media web. To ease the infernal pain that convulsed those early days of estrangement from the Love of My Life, I turned to the videocool inner climes of TV, with all its basic peripherals—at least that is how I got through the first hellish days and nights alone. The tube punched a hole through distance—an amazing if illusory form of armchair travel.

One can only trek so far in a reading room, or as a couch potato. After a while, even trips to the kitchen get old, to say nothing of Richard Attenborough, or, however well-intentioned, Public Television. After six months of heavy tubal stimulation, it was time to broaden other horizons.

The South African Question had a particularly strong resonance. There were personal motivations that made this an especially important point for departure. When my wife abandoned our marriage with the clichéd seven years’ itch, there wasn’t much left to moor me except dread routine. Our breakup was due I’m sure in part to my native stubbornness, a self-defeating obstinacy that I could easily relate to my paternalistic Afrikaner family background.

My father left South Africa in the early fifties. After working many years in the Copper Belt (Zambia), he emigrated to pursue his education with a doctorate at McGill University in Montreal. His peripatetic career has involved exploration of the largely untapped mineral wealth of Canada.

Without understanding why, I’ve always felt a strong identification with him, though we have not always been the best of friends. One of my chief parental imperatives was to attain bilingualism in French and English, but Afrikaans remained a secret language my father used in moments of rare mellowness or intimacy. It wasn’t till I was nearing teens that I even realized he spoke with an accent. My own feet are itchy to match his. After a decade in the U.S., I still feel far from “home”—wherever that is.

As the “no fault” divorce shunted its way through the legal bureaucracy of the state of California, I was rarin’ to go... *somewhere*.

Obstacles abound to our understanding of what goes on in the world today,

from the realignments of *Mittel-* and *Osteuropa*, to the liberation of Southern Africa. As long as South Africa can give good tube, it has the guaranteed G spot in our circuit of consciousness. The sight of Mandela free is certainly one of the great images of our day, although fifteen minutes of fame cannot begin to cover this story.

People Power and the Velvet Revolution were more than just flickers on the cave wall, they took us to a new level of broadcast, a tube beyond its traditional role as electronic phenothiazine. It’s no longer “news from nowhere” that we see—from the American shores, it appears that history *is* happening... elsewhere. Reactions were none too encouraging when I announced to my Berkeley colleagues that I was going to South Africa.

“But you’re not *supposed* to go there.”

“Better take a bulletproof vest.”

Family was no more supportive. My father couldn’t understand why I’d bother; he wasn’t close to his many relatives there, and was a bit uneasy about my meeting them, or perhaps concerned at what they might think meeting me. My brother viewed this plan as further proof of my death wish: “They’ll *kill* you —” meaning, I suppose, that I could be a tempting target for whatever transgressions I might commit on this existential errand.

I was willing to risk it. What did I have to lose? I’d never been one to toe a party line, and was not noted for political correctness—it would be a *pleasure* to commit this sin of a mission. Although I believed in divestment and sanctions, I also thought information was essential to a peaceful transition.

It was my first vacation in many years. I looked at it, strangely, as a liberation to get away from my job, even if that meant going to a garrison state to search for myself in a distant fatherland.

Beyond the romance of embarking on this *telemachiad*, South Africa drew me in a way I associated with the Spanish Civil War of the Thirties, or, I suppose, the internationalism of the *sandalista* brigades of the Eighties trooping down to Nicaragua to work in the coffee fields and take flak from the contras. These new crusades are by nature revolutionary, to offset the imperialist adventures Westerners are better known for.

People with antiapartheid inclinations were expected to show their credentials by jumping on the boycott bandwagon. I agree that performers should not play Sun City, but when Paul Simon brought

out *Graceland*, I was delighted by the fruitful and ear-opening collaboration.

It saddened me to see a man like Conor Cruise O'Brien—someone I don't necessarily agree with—shouted down by angry demonstrators when he gave a series of guest lectures at the University of Cape Town in 1986. They protested his breaking the boycott...yet in the case of an academic and educator, is it right to limit the free flow of ideas? Isn't the banning of *people* and *ideas* a sanction employed by the South African government?

The same inflexible dogmatism is evident on the right, as exemplified by the Afrikaner Resistance Movement leader Eugene Terre-Blanche. The AWB (Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging) is infamous for the swastika-like emblem on its flag, often seen at rallies, of the three interlocking sevens, reputed to be a millenarian solution to the 666 Beast of the Apocalypse. Terre-Blanche and his *boerjes* tarred and feathered the historian, Floors van Jaarsveld during a 1979 speech at the University of South Africa in Pretoria. An example was made of this professor because he questioned the Afrikaans version of manifest destiny, the divinity of their Day of the Covenant.

A former policeman and bodyguard to Prime Minister John Vorster, Terre Blanche (the "White Earth") has been charged at various times for having arms caches, illegal possession of weapons and ammunition. To date, he and his followers have never had worse than their wrists slapped. This may soon change, as the AWB and conservative whites are increasing their militance in reaction to the release of Mandela, and the government's meeting with the ANC. The Conservative Party leader Andries Treurnicht recently called for "a third freedom struggle"—a thinly-veiled call to arms—at a rally of 50,000 right-wing whites in Pretoria.

In the sacred history of the tribe, the Boers made a pact with God—if He gave the Voortrekkers victory against Dingaan's Zulu *impis* at Ncome River, in 1838, they would forever mark that as the Day of the Covenant. In Afrikaner history, it is referred to as the Battle of Blood River, and it demonstrated God's recognition and support for the justice of their cause.

One essential feature of Afrikaner civil tradition is for men to go on commando. Breyten Breytenbach, the renegade Afrikaner poet and painter, writes of

*"this mythical concept in modern-day White South African awareness... Not so modern after all. The history of the Afrikaner has been one of borders, of the enemy lurking just over the horizon, of buffer states used against the world wanting to take over the lands their ancestors conquered. They were proud of their periods on the border, of the hunts they participated in."*⁴

In recent years, particularly under de Klerk's pugnacious predecessor, P.W. Botha, these hunts have gone far beyond South Africa's borders, "the rogue elephant of Southern Africa."⁵ Yet Botha was regarded as a moderate! The *verkrampste* (hardliners) were actually concerned that South Africa might be afflicted by a "psychosis of peace"⁶ in the early eighties.

Newspeak—the deliberate simplification of vocabulary and linguistic complexity as a means of limiting crimes in thought and speech—is alive and well, both at home and abroad. Words can be made to betray their meanings without having to pass through Room 101 of 1984. "Words tossed around as if/denied location by the wind/...that stalk our lives like policemen" runs a poem by Siphso Sepamla.

The U.S. Pentagon is a prime purveyor of such malignant wordage, with "permanent prehostility" (peace), "lethal aid" for supplying proxie forces with weapons, "violence processing" (combat), and best of all, the "Peacekeeper" (MX) Missile. In Eastern Europe, people did not wait in line, they joined "socialist waiting collectives."⁷

While we may identify the violence of apartheid with forced relocations, peaceful marchers being gassed, or fired upon by soldiers in casspirs (not the friendly ghost, but armored personnel carriers), there are many more subtle and insidious components to that "Frankenstein-Madison Avenue cauldron of wordsmithing."⁸

For a time the government had its Bantu Administration Department, which was responsible for administering townships and the homelands. It was responsible for forced relocations, but underwent a name-change when bureaucrats realized that its acronym was not contributing to its effectiveness. It became the Ministry of Cooperation of Development.

After the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, and through the seventies, South Africa became a model police state, with a powerful secret police (BOSS—Bureau of State Security) operating around the world...and at home.

In the late seventies, South Africa

experienced a quiet military coup when the Minister of Defense, P.W. Botha, became Prime Minister. He retained the Defense Minister portfolio until he was able to install his handpicked head of the Defense Force, General Magnus Malan, as the new Defense Minister.

Together, these two "securocrats" dominated South African politics for the next decade. They presided over a tremendous build-up of the military—today South Africa is one of the top ten arms exporters in the world—and adopted the concept of the "total strategy" for a long term counterinsurgency. This "triumvirate of 'totality': total strategy, total onslaught, total involvement" were the keywords of this era.⁹ The totalitarian blueprint for the militarization of society was conducted with characteristic, even absurd attention to detail. It included a "Leisure Time Utilization Unit" to promote "spiritual defensibility" in the ranks.¹⁰

The "total strategy" of P.W. Botha and his protégé General Malan can at last be found on the same ashheap as trickle-down Reaganomics, and lately, Stalinism. As details of their dirty tricks come to light, F.W. de Klerk has, with visible reluctance, been compelled to launch an investigation of the innocuous-sounding "Civil Cooperation Bureau." This unit, operated by the military, was a death squad.

In any situation of social or political polarity, debate is all too susceptible to *reductio ad absurdum*. Ideas become slogans, some inspirational ("An injury to one is an injury to all" or "Strike a woman, you have struck a rock"), some unrealistic and



PHOTO: D.S. Black

self-defeating (“No education before liberation”), and some virulently racist (“Sit die kalfir op sy plek” = “Put the nigger in his place”).

To move freely across the lines, or to more easily slip through the strictures of cant is one of the virtues of being an outsider. Travel is a way to remain outside.

As a writer, another kind of outsider, I went to hear how writers and poets sustained themselves in life under Emergency conditions. The timing of my visit was nestled in the brief period between the '85/'86 Emergency, and the June '86 Emergency (which continues to this day in Natal province).

Much has happened to the people I spoke with: at least two have gone into exile; some were detained; others have had their organizations banned—the UDF and the End Conscription Campaign are only now able to resurface after Botha and the Minister of Law and Order, Adriaan Vlok, clamped down on them earlier in the Emergency.

As censorship has been applied to the arts, black writers have borne the brunt of bannings and persecution. Beginning in the fifties, with Bantu Education, teachers and writers (e.g. Ezekiel Mphahlele), journalists (Nat Nakasa) and so many others have had to flee “the beloved land.” Musicians and singers (Hugh Masakela, Miriam Makeba), poets (Dennis Brutus, Arthur Nortje, Wally Serote) have continued this flight through the sixties after Sharpeville, the seventies with Soweto, and in the eighties’ semi-permanent Emergency.

Simply putting distance between themselves and the casspirs, hippos, banning, detention, and Robben Island is not always enough. Exile has its own dangers:

Life abroad lacks the challenge that faces us in South Africa. After a lifetime of illegal living in the Republic's shebeens, the exiles are suddenly called upon to become respectable law-abiding citizens. Not a law to break in sight. I have broken too many—regulations to change so easily. Even if I did change, I would miss the experience of illegal living.

wrote Nat Nakasa. He, Arthur Nortje and Ingrid Jonker are writers who committed suicide in exile. Wally Serote narrowly escaped assassination in the South Africa Defense Force's 1986 raid on Gaborone, Botswana.

Whites, of course, have an entirely different tolerance of conditions in an abnormal society. One of my relatives said, with a certain smugness, “I am as opportunistic as any white person in this

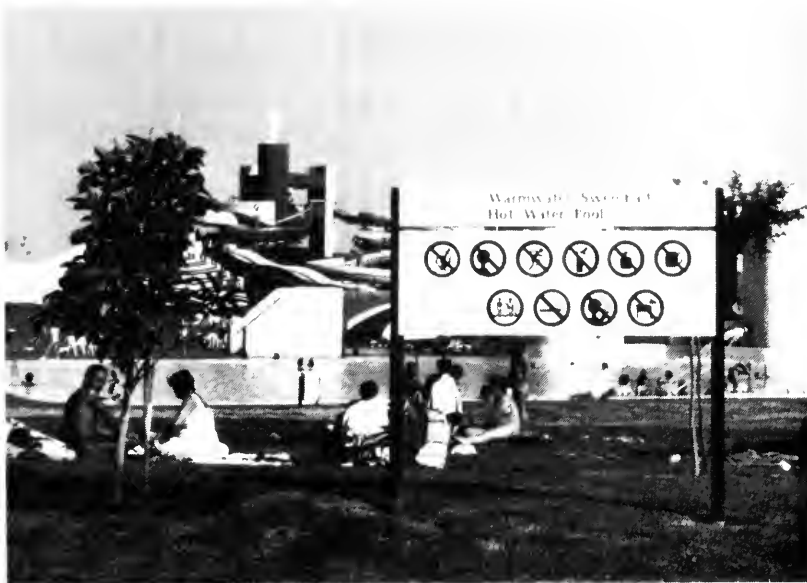


PHOTO: William Brummer

country; while it lasts, I enjoy it.” Heart disease, suicide, and alcoholism are three of the greatest dangers facing whites in South Africa.

Mike Kirkwood, an editor at Ravan Press, put it another way:

... [The] writer who is living in an insulated white suburb, backed up by very good video resources, television, all the literature he can read, good food, continental cuisine, fresh french bread every morning, doesn't have to see a black person if he doesn't want to. He goes shopping in the most elaborate malls all tucked underground like bunkers—even that writer, who can be totally insulated from the political reality of South Africa, is aware that that very experience is a deeply political one. It's almost impossible for him to keep out of mind the fact that the existence he is leading is dependent on the flames in the township.

At the time—April 1986—Ravan was situated in a dilapidated old house in the Berea district of Johannesburg. Berea and Hillbrow are adjoining residential neighborhoods with valleys of hi-rises running through them. These “grey areas” were often referred to with shudders by my relatives, for they are now home to tens of thousands of blacks illegally living in parts of town reserved for whites. Ravan is one of the more progressive imprints in South Africa; its writers include J.M. Coetzee and Njabulo Ndebele.

The office I visited was firebombed a few years later. Although a considerable amount of stock was lost, Ravan endures as a publishing entity, issuing books and periodicals like *Work In Progress* and *Staffrider*.

Mike was one of the chief editors, and

had been the firm's director since 1977. Since the State of Emergency was reimposed following my visit, he has left the country, moving to England.

MK: You will find in South Africa numerous pockets of communication, which are very full inside that particular pocket. In other words, lots of dialects—not simply in a language sense, but in terms of idiom, in terms of a way people have of understanding each other. For instance, if you were to go around Berea, and talk to guys who live on the roof tops for a long time, you would find that they have an amazing pattern of communication.

Let me give you an example. I wake up late in the night in my block of flats, which is just over here. I hear a guy whistling—this is two o'clock in the morning. He is whistling in the most incredible way, the way guys whistle cattle, but it clearly has a pattern to it. After a while, you hear a door opening somewhere, a gruff voice calling out in Zulu: “Hi. We're over here. Come this way.” What this guy's been doing is a bit like Richard the Lionhearted and his troubadour, singing outside the castle walls. He's identified his own boys, which is the word that people use.

PW: And he doesn't know necessarily which building they'll be on, but if they hear the noise he makes—

MK: Right, somebody's going to come running, and he's going to find his way. He might have come from miles and miles, from a distant part of the country—a rural boy new to the city. He's using his cattle whistle as a way of finding his home-boy connections.

That's one example. Their whole world is very well-knit. It's a sort of

support structure, one of the things that turns the whole “blacks are victims in South Africa” cliché upside down, because people are not just victims; they do find ways to support each other in an oppressive situation. There you have quite a tight knit pocket of communication. I’d suggest that South Africa, as a country, is relatively richer in pockets like that, which are not accessible.

If you put a tape recorder in front of those guys, they’d probably beat you up—they’d assume you were from the State, and that you were trying to get them to commit a felony of some kind, they’d wonder what they hell you were doing.

PW: However well ordered a society you have, there are always going to be these cracks, and subcultures. In this case, it is literally the *supra* culture.

MK: I think that’s really an interesting point, because I think that’s true. We’re talking about a different level now, and for me the thing goes back to the theme of storytelling, really. What you’re talking about when you talk about subcultures developing in the cracks of a media-penetrated, media-inundated society is something similar to storytelling, but at a whole new level of development.

In other words, I’m inclined to take a phrase like “the global village” quite seriously, in the sense that one is talking about a new possibility of communication between tightly knit groups of people, but at a whole new level. I don’t think one should just skip the levels.

Those guys on the roof tops—it’s going to take them quite a lot of time, quite a lot of community organization, political organization, before they can plug into some sort of world network of communication, and talk to *Processed World*, to you guys in San Francisco, or a group somewhere else in the world. . . .

If one is black, however, the possibilities are fewer. Another writer, Siphos Sepamla (author of the novel *Ride the Whirlwind*, and numerous books of poetry) spoke with me about prospects for change.

SS: I’m the last person to say “Revolution is the answer.” Because I’m *for* life, rather than destroying life. I’m scared of violence, because I think it’s anti-human to be violent.

But, you see, I’m fairly all right. I look at the person who’s not in a similar position to me, and I wonder what are the chances of that person improving his lot? The answer is that they’re very small. Some people—I think this is the majority—are caught up in a situation where some of them wish they were never born. If they’d had a choice, they would have said to God, “Please, I don’t want to go and live down there. I’d rather be where I am,” in whatever form that is.

When you look at the situation in the

country—not at the black man, like me, who is able to sit with you, and talk your language—it is that man who is not able to articulate what’s inside him. And you know he lives a pain, which he cannot bring out, and that is killing him. This bottling up—it’s a pity, because it’s going to kill him in the end. What then was the purpose in bringing him to Earth? To work for mere wages, to live under poor conditions? . . .

I visited Siphos in Johannesburg, at Fuba, an art studio/exhibit space where he worked as an educator, and senior administrator.

SS: There are very few people who buy books by black writers; you have to be known to be bought. A new writer will not find it easy to enter the market.

PW: Where would their energies be going if they’re creative, but feel too disillusioned to write or publish? Would they write for the desk drawer, do you think; are they self-publishing, *samizdat* type work; do they channel the energy into political action, or is it bottled up?

SS: I think most of our feelings are bottled up. There is no way we could do what the Russians are doing with *samizdat* because the South African security system is very efficient—sooner or later they would catch up with anyone doing that kind of thing.

I don’t think many blacks would write stuff that they put away. It may be happening with whites, but I don’t think blacks would do that. Our writing is immediate—we address ourselves to immediate issues, and we want to be published immediately.

PW: How would you hope the writer affects the world?

SS: I hope to God that more and more people would read the works I’ve written, but then there are so many things working against the tradition of writing and reading in this country. As a result, we don’t have many people who read our works. Unfortunately, it is true that most of the readers are white, so we’re caught up in a very ironic situation because although we claim we are not writing for Whitey, we find that Whitey is the one who reads our works.

The Group Areas Act just consolidated what was there already. I grew up before the time of apartheid, but apartheid was in full swing even then—I grew up in a location that was miles from town. I don’t think it is correct to blame apartheid for that kind of thing [divisions between black and white writers]; apartheid merely made it worse. Also, I suppose apartheid exposed the fallacy of a friendship that was in fact one-sided, because whites always expected us to go to them. Very few came to where we lived, even when the law was silent about that.

There’s no running away from it. The

South Africa situation is like somebody sitting on a powder keg. . . .

Apparently contradicting his earlier assertion, Siphos gave a different forecast for change:

SS: I think revolution is our only solution. You know the whites are so entrenched, man, because. . . what are people talking about? They can’t be talking of *Western values*, because there are no Western values in this country. People are merely concerned about their material possessions, and I don’t think anyone can expect whites to give up anything, because for us to rise they’ve got to halt the development of the growth of white people.

PW: When majority rule is attained, do you see a rapprochement between the hard lines that are now drawn in the dust?

SS: Unavoidable. I think we live by natural laws, rather than laws made by man. The laws made by man, somewhere along the line, they break down. Apartheid was so rigid many years back, but the natural way of life has broken it down. The realities, economics, whatever, have broken apartheid down.

PW: You think it will break down the Afrikaners’ intransigence?

SS: I think so. I’ve found it very interesting that among the Afrikaners, some of these chaps that I’ve heard express so-called liberal ideas are people that I know have traveled a great deal. As more and more of them get money, and move around, and find that there are black people outside who are having white women, who are moving in all circles of life, they must come back here and ask themselves, “What’s so bad about what I saw out there?” And they will fall in line. I don’t think they like being condemned by the world like they are being condemned right now. It takes some time for the majority to reach that point. That is what we are playing for.

I think what is happening in this



GRAPHIC: Henry de Leeuw

country is that the black people have now set the pace for how things have to move. Even if the white man is changing, those changes are invisible, because the people who are calling the tune are not the white people any more; they are the black people. To be acceptable, the white people will have to be in line with the pace set by the blacks. But change? Unavoidable.

PW: But they will get swept up in that pace?

SS: If they don't, they will get crushed under...

Many models are invoked in discussions of South Africa—the violence and unrest suggest the specter of a Lebanon. The real white nightmare is revolution.

The poet James Matthews, who lives in Athlone, outside Cape Town, told me of the hopelessness that was taking hold among the younger generation: "We can accommodate any violence. Now we come back again to the existentialism of the young. That is why our kids don't worry, they say, 'Fuck, I don't care if I don't come home today.'"

Proposed solutions include a federation of cantons, on a Swiss model, as a means of protecting whites from black domination. Even more far-fetched are the secessionary white movements, like the extremist AWB, or the Friends of Oranje, whose ideas of a white homeland (a *Boerestaat* comprised, naturally, of the best and richest land) are no more tenable than the fragmentary black homelands Bophuthatswana or Ciskei.

While de Klerk and his predecessor P.W. Botha have done much to dismantle "petty apartheid" with repeals of the Separate Amenities Act, Mixed Marriages and Immorality Acts, and the passbook laws, "grand apartheid" remains substantially intact. People continue to be classified by race (Population Registration Act) and in theory have their places of residence, the government services available to them, and their employment opportunities determined by this classification.

Apartheid ("separateness") was given its name by the National Party, elected in 1948. As Siphon mentioned, the "colour bar" was nothing new. By 1936, 87% of the land was reserved for white settlement and development. The rest, largely inhospitable, was set aside for what was then 67% of the population—now more than 75% of South Africans are black. Under the Group Areas Act, blacks are viewed as "temporary sojourners" in the white areas, tolerated *only to the extent they are needed to work in the mines, on the farms, and in the pantries of white society.*

One dearly-held belief among the whites is that the blacks can't rule themselves, they are still savages: "You can take 'em out of the bush, but you can't take the jungle out of their hearts." Or, as National Party MP Glenn Babb put it: "There is a survival ethic in South Africa which is important, because we have stood on the Limpopo and looked north and seen that Africa has not worked in the way in which we would like justice to work."

The whites call this bogey the *swart gevaar*, or black danger. More proof that the "kaffirs" are unable to govern themselves, let alone take the reins of the whites' jealously guarded first world society.

Because of the bold lines drawn reserving property and capital for the "civilized" whites—apartheid is an unusually cruel, if transparent mechanism to assure economic as well as racial hegemony for a privileged few—South Africa lends itself readily to a Marxist analysis, with blacks the working class. While this form of racial capitalism may have been effective up to a point, it cannot be maintained. For the economy

to grow, apartheid must go, as it limits the education and placement of a skilled workforce. With the added stress of sanctions, and the drying-up of investment, the economy has slowed while the population and unemployment have soared.

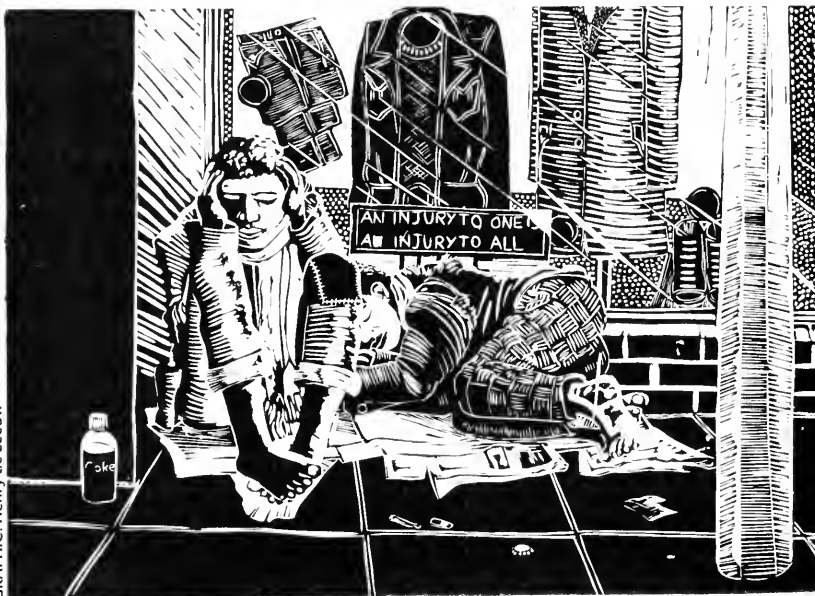
Ampie Coetzee, a professor of Afrikaans at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1986 (now at the University of the Western Cape), commented on this phenomenon: "That's the strangest thing about South Africa: apartheid has actually strengthened capitalism. It has made a definite class distinction between the worker and the bourgeois. The worker is the black man, and we whites are the bourgeois. And the worker is keeping this country going.

"On the one hand, that's the strength of apartheid, but it could also be the weakness. When trade unions become more and more mobilized—that's where I think eventually we will probably see big changes. COSATU" was only formed this year.

"That's very, very powerful. That's where this South African brand of capitalism could actually be broken—by



GRAPHIC: Henry de Leeuw



the workers. Because the workers are all oppressed, and racially oppressed. They have ample motivation; it's just a case of mobilization."

Schools have long been crucibles of resistance. They have been viewed by the black youth with understandable wariness. Bantu Education, promulgated in the fifties by the future Prime Minister, H.F. Verwoerd, was training for enslavement. It was a policy of deliberately limiting blacks to roles as the wood hewers and mine-fodder for white society. Verwoerd was quite blunt in his views: "...[The] native child must be taught subjects which will enable him to work with and among his own people; therefore there is no use misleading him by showing him the green pastures of European society, in which he is not allowed to graze. Bantu Education should not be used to create imitation whites."

Through subtle and not-so subtle conditioning, the students were indoctrinated with a view of a world in which they had precisely defined functions, with opportunities circumscribed by "job reservation" of skilled positions for whites, a much-lower pay scale for blacks, commutes which could last 6 hours or more, and other impossible conditions. After the Soweto uprising of 1976, there followed a period of tense calm, but then school strikes flared around the country in 1980, as the crisis in education deepened.

One writer, Jaki Seroke, of Skotaville

Press told me about some of the difficulties he had to deal with as a writer and editor.

PW: You are involved in a writers' union? Which one is it?

JS: It's called the African Writers Association. It's not a union in the popular sense. It's an association of people who come together as writers, some as beginner writers.

PW: Do you discuss works in progress?

JS: Yes, we discuss works in progress. It's a loose association. Skotaville Publishing was formed by the association. We'll be publishing really topical books. Some will be political, and so on, but on the literary side, we don't want to be seen to be pushing writers who have not necessarily grasped the art of writing. The association has consciously been trying to influence Skotaville to exercise literary merit on each case. We don't want to publish a play because it will have a sociological interest.

PW: ...or because it's topical...

JS: Not that we say art for art's sake, but the craft of writing has to be done properly. There are drawbacks on that level. The influence of Bantu Education in the past thirty years has destroyed a lot of things here. The writers who are established or who could write properly are the writers of the fifties, because they never underwent that educational process. That's why most of our writers are in prison or the ones inside the country are not doing much.

PW: Why would you say the ones in the country are silent, what silences them?

JS: Basically, it was repression. A lot of our people are in prison...

One of the greatest weapons against tyranny, apart from sabotage and insurrection, is for people to live and work together *as they wish*, without regard for insane decrees handed down by the state. It is by this means that grey areas like Hillbrow in Johannesburg wear down the teeth of apartheid. Where law is unenforceable, it falls into disrepute, and is rendered ultimately irrelevant.

The Group Areas Act, the legislation that underpins the bantustans and townships by tribal division, may be the last pillar of apartheid to fall; already it is beginning to totter through resistance in the homelands (coups and armed insurrections) and people, black and white, increasingly ignoring it in the once white cities.

After centuries of wrong, apartheid is withering away. Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Reverend Allan Boesak are right to ask to see its corpse. A death blow may still be needed, although the armed struggle waged by the military wing of the ANC—Umkhonto we Sizwe—has never been, and probably never will be capable of engaging the South Africa Defense Force decisively.

The linguistic battlefield is where the future of South Africa may ultimately be decided. The Afrikaners attained power owing in large part to the development of their own language as a separate and distinct voice in Africa. They succeeded in unifying a white tribal power base, and used it to divide the country.

SACHED, the South African Committee on Higher Education, is another organization which has struggled to counter the intellectual deprivations of Bantu Education. One of its directors, Neville Alexander, views culture as a process, and language policy as a baseline on which to develop a new national consensus. Encouraging the use of English by the black majority (usually as a second or third language) assumes a critical importance, ironically, in the interests of decolonization. It serves to unify a people split across many language lines, and provides access to the world at large. "[The acquisition of English] represents... a form of capital accumulation. But this is a very special kind of capital since it is an instrument of communication and not one of production. It is nevertheless this instrument, and generally this instrument alone, which makes possible the organization of the entire modern sector of production and distribution of goods. In other words, the more English you

know... the more likely you are to get a well-paying job, the more likely you are to accumulate capital, to gain economic power and thus political power."¹²

The transition of South Africa from garrison state to majority rule will not be as swift as the opening up of Eastern Europe—to follow it requires more sustained attention than we can hope for from a week on *Nightline*. The turmoil of apartheid has been clicking the counter towards critical mass, an ever intensifying revolution of rising expectations, with urgency written large on the world stage since Sharpeville, 1960.

The reforms announced at the beginning of 1990 are motivated in large part by the desperate economic situation, due both to internal factors and international pressure. As Sipho Sepamla pointed out, whites are going to have to surrender some of the privileges accorded them by color to arrive at a deeper security. Men like my Uncle Frank de Klerk will have to compete on equal terms with people he might consider his racial inferiors. The Broederbond tradition of *baantjies vir boeties* (jobs for friends) has led to half of all employable Afrikaners working in some capacity for the State. Job reservation will have to end, followed by an affirmative action to correct labor and property inequities, the "redistribution of wealth" which whites dread, but increasingly accept as inevitable.

After four years of harsh Emergency Rule, some press restrictions have been lifted; media workers such as Zwelake Sisulu (editor of the *New Nation*) has been released from lengthy detention

—in time for the innumerable photo opportunities afforded by the returning exiles, as African National Congress leaders have whisked through Jan Smuts Airport in Johannesburg en route to the "talks about talks" in Cape Town.

Western media have to a large degree complied with restrictions imposed during the Emergency, which is why little was heard about South Africa in the mainstream press from 1986 through 1989. Even worse, news reports in both the American and British media too often blandly repeat the language of the South African Bureau of Information, apparent in the expression "black on black violence." That stock phrase has shades of the *swart gevaar*, along with the tribal sleight of hand by which the ruling National Party has used a trick of apartheid to divide and rule on lines of its own devising. "It's just more faction fighting, showing these uncivilized blacks aren't fit to rule" is the message implicit in such terminology.

So we navigate across a slipstream mediascape littered by Knowledge McNuggets, warped by the sudden combustion of televised blipverts, and a media necklaced either by state control, or the self-censorship of monopolistic corporate ownership. It is a strain just to keep track of all the bright and dark threads on this world skein, if we are to tie up some of the loose ends before the millennium.

As 1989 segued into the nineties, it reached the point where there was a Country of the Week, or in the last weeks of the year, several countries had to vie for world attention: Panama

under siege by a U.S. surgical sledge hammer, while Romania fought to drive a stake through the heart of its "Vampire" leader, Nicolae Ceausescu ("that Genius of the Carpathians"), after decades of hemophilic Stalinist rule.

Some day I will return to South Africa. For all its strangeness, it had a familiarity which was almost supernatural, and I suppose, highly personal. My hope in writing on this subject has been to show that the issues are not duochromatic, just black and white, and that resolution lies in the struggle to free captive hearts and minds with human decency, and new channels of communication.

As apartheid crumbles, South African society will be remade in the wake of protean change. This story has staying power, with special relevance to Americans. It represents one of the great unanswered questions of this century: how does a rich and powerful elite, with centuries of inbred intolerance, and a defiant isolationism, accept or adapt to parity with its neighbors? Can centuries of bloody-minded determination to call all the shots be reasoned into reality? For South African whites, the answer to these questions will decide their future in Africa.

A new page is turning on South Africa. When Mandela steps through the pearly gates of Pretoria, and takes the nation's capitol with him, the people will finally come together after centuries of struggle.

— by William Brummer



This is the South African Defense Force monument on top of Klapper Kop overlooking Pretoria. The plaques bear the names of SADF dead. Photography was prohibited at this site.

- 1) Comedian Pieter-Dirk Uys, quoted in *The New York Times*, 30 Jan. 1990
- 2) Pakenham, Thomas. *The Boer War*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979.
- 3) Opperman, D.J. "Camera."
- 4) Breytenbach, Breyten. *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1983 p.52
- 5) Crocker, Chester A. *South Africa's defense posture: coping with vulnerability*. Beverly Hills: Published for the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University [by] Sage Publications, c1981. (Washington papers: 84) (Sage policy paper)
- 6) Grundy, Kenneth W. *The Militarization of South African Politics*. Bloomington, IN : Indiana University Press, 1986. p.58
- 7) *The New York Times*, 12 Sept. 1989
- 8) *The New York Times*, 28 Sept. 1985
- 9) Frankel, Philip. *Pretoria's Praetorians: civil-military relations in South Africa*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire], New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984. p.54
- 10) Frankel, p. 96
- 11) Congress of South African Trade Unions
- 12) Alexander, Neville. "Language Policy and National Unity" in *Language Projects' Review*, v.4:3 (Nov. 1989).

THE FIRST HAND LOOK

and other perceptual problems . . .



PHOTO: James Carman

We toured the *favelas* (slums) built on stilts over the Amazon as it surged by Belém's million inhabitants at the river's cavernous mouth. Winding down narrow passageways six feet above foul-smelling mud, garbage and river water, we were greeted with friendly curiosity. Among the wooden shacks and extreme poverty we found the occasional antennae and color TV* visible in the middle of a living room.

We encountered in this silt-town a 5-year-old's birthday party, with a 3-foot tall cake and 2 dozen formally clad young partiers waiting to cut loose under a plethora of Catholic icons. We were encouraged to shoot the scene with our video camera, during which everyone was very quiet and serious. Awed by the camera, a great deference fell over the party, making its recording a thoroughly empty effort. But its "emptiness" was my problem since their quiet wasn't less "real" than boisterously ignoring our presence would have been. Maybe their reaction was *more* interesting . . .

Right around 3 p.m. the equatorial rains would fall in torrents. The city of Belém is full of mango trees planted over a century ago, and the street of the house in which we stayed was thick with *Mangueiras*. Every day, about 2:30 or so, young boys would begin appearing up and down the street, clad only in shorts. Sometimes they clustered under a tree and threw old

shoes or rocks up in the hope of knocking down a ripe mango. Then the rains would start and within minutes dozens of mangos were pelting the area below. The boys, armed with emptied garbage bags that they'd rinsed out in the rushing curbside stream of dirty black water, scrambled to stuff their bags and shorts full of mangos. What a sight! Six and seven-year-old boys with 15 good sized mangos stuffed into their tiny shorts and clutched in their little arms, hobbling along trying to prevent them from falling and being snatched up by latecomers.

Not too many cities have free food falling into the streets every day at 3 p.m.! But too many do share Brazil's astronomical rates of malnutrition and infant mortality, which plague its "developed" cities as much as the country's infamous northeast. Amazonians, over seven million in "urban" environments, typically live in squalid conditions.

Throughout a bizarre trip on the mud-stricken Transamazonian Highway, we were treated to the raucous presence of a small video brigade of Stalinist youth associated with the

* Brazil has several national, privately-owned TV networks—the market is dominated by Brazil's own media giant, TV Globo, the plaint voice of authority through several military and civilian regimes. At any given time 65% of Brazil's millions of TVs are tuned to TV Globo.

Communist Party of Brazil. From the moment we boarded the bus they bombarded us and the other passengers with pro-Albania chants, party songs, macho posturing, and even out-of-key Beatles tunes! They had all the qualities of a teenage clique out for a fun camping trip, but with the political rhetoric laid on thick. Occasionally we would overhear one berating another about what Bukharin's position was in 1926, or some equally vital historical point. Later, at the Indian gathering we were all headed to in Altamira, one young man of this group turned out to be the son of an assassinated Communist city councilman. He gave a speech that was notable for his 1968 Maoist militant oratorical style and the way his voice took on a gruff, barking sound.

* * *

"Journeys, those magic caskets full of dreamlike promises, will never again yield up their treasures untarnished. . . what else can the so-called escapism of traveling do than confront us with the more unfortunate aspects of our history?"—The first thing we see as we travel around the world is our own filth, thrown into the face of mankind."

—Claude Levi-Strauss,
Tristes Tropiques, 1955

Cannibalism proves to be an apt metaphor for how culture percolates from the center to the periphery. My partner, my child and I went to Brazil in part because it was a big, vibrant place, full of political drama, but also full of cultural dynamism and sensuality sorely lacking in our U.S. lives. But for the first month or so, wherever we went we were besieged by some variant of mid-80s' eurodisco or U.S. pop music. It was surprising, confusing, finally depressing. It wasn't until we went to Bahia and later to Fortaleza and Belém in the north that we got away from the banal, repetitive music of the center and found the rhythms and depth we'd been *expecting*.

But what programming have we absorbed to form these expectations? How do we *know* what it is we're looking for? Perhaps this is the reverse of the cannibalism promoted by U.S. culture's presence in other societies. We have a clear idea of what we want: the unfamiliar but fun, the safe but thrilling encounter with the Other. Aren't our vacation fantasies someone else's job description?

We went to a Rap/Funk show in Sao Paulo featuring Brazilian rappers. I assumed Brazilians would be able to get funky with the best of 'em but lo and

behold, this was the stiffest and least funky Funk I'd ever heard (of course, I did grow up in Oakland, a veritable funk/rap capital). I absolutely detested this pale imitation of black U.S. music. It turned out that all musical genres are practiced in Brazil, including punk, rap, thrash, heavy metal, and all modern sounds, but why did it all sound so fake except the music that I knew beforehand to be "authentic" Brazilian? A punk band called the Titãs actually sounds exactly like dozens of bands I used to pogo to in the late '70s, a sound I still enjoy. But the Titãs are an exception since usually the cannibalized sounds didn't ring true.

* * *

Every tourist destination has its "special" place where it is said to be really remote and beautiful, unspoiled but ready for a visit. Such a place is Trancoso, a somewhat developed coastal village at the end of a 30-km sand road from the better known tourist mecca Porto Seguro on the southern Bahian coast. But this place, too, had been "cannibalized." We got there and found a town that consisted of a central square surrounded by little wooden shacks which masqueraded as restaurants in the evenings. After dinner they passed around the honor of hosting the evening's hot lambada discoteque. In the surrounding area the streets were marked out and private plots housed either a home or a small hotel for the numerous Europeans and Argentinians and wealthy Brazilians who jammed the town during the magnificent January summer.

The three of us found a place in an extremely muggy loft where we could stay above the dining/kitchen area for about \$12 a night. It was owned by a 35-ish wiry German who had married a Brazilian woman. He was gradually building small cabins throughout his land, and also rented hammocks to backpackers, fantasies of a thriving "Hippie Hilton" undoubtedly the carrot on the end of his stick.

During the days we would walk two kilometers down to the fantastic beach and plant ourselves under a palm tree to provide a bit of shade against the blistering sunshine. Throughout the day vendors of every imaginable description made their way up and down the beach, often with wheelbarrows full of ice chests laden with beer, popsicles, cokes, etc., while local hippies sold handcrafts and small sandwiches. Ancient fishermen offered coconuts from the back of

their mules, hacking one open for you on the spot, pulling out a gleaming plastic straw and plunking it down into the sweet innards, for about 20 cents. The consumers of this cornucopia of beach treats were the wealthy tourists from around Brazil and the world. (In the evenings, Trancoso became something of a free drug zone, with coke and pot openly sold in the main square.)

At the end of the day, the beach was littered with hundreds of cans and bottles, coconut shells and plastic refuse. Human feces and toilet paper floated in the water just offshore, and could often be carefully stepped over on the beach, too. As our days in paradise rolled by, the ecological time bomb before our eyes, which we contributed to by our presence, ticked on inexorably. Trancoso-as-Paradise can't last for more than another five or so years. No sewer system was under construction or even planned. Garbage collection? Who would do that? Where would they take it? Easier to chuck it down a nearby ravine once every few months, or burn it. And where else would one drain the primitive toilet systems but into the nearest running water? So what if it runs right into the beach that everyone comes thousands of miles to enjoy! Have a *Caipirinha!* (the ubiquitous national drink—serious fire water!)

* * *

Whatever your intentions or specific origins and attitudes at home in the U.S., when you arrive in a 3rd World country you are in the upper class by virtue of having traveled outside of your own country on vacation, clutching U.S. dollars. The presence of our then 4-year-old daughter won instant friendship many times, as Brazilians love children, although the class differences were perhaps emphasized by our large, healthy blonde daughter. She was as big as 7 and 8 year old children in some of the neighborhoods we visited. On the other hand, her presence underlined our status as visible targets.

People continually warned us to watch out for our child (implying that she might be kidnapped at any time!), not to wear watches or jewelry in public, and not to leave valuables in our hotel rooms or the hotel safes, either. We managed to avoid violent assaults. We never lost our luggage. But we did escape a couple of hairy situations.

One night we had gone to an ocean-side neighborhood called Rio Vermelho in the city of Salvador to see a celebration/film screening on the side of a

church along the central north-south traffic route. It was sponsored by a local environmental group which had successfully contested the construction of a shopping mall on a nearby lot for over 3 years and was declaring a partial victory. They also demanded the cleaning and opening of the nearby beach to the public. The majority of the 40 or so attendees sitting in the parking lot for the free movies were homeless boys with their sweaters and scraps of cardboard — they were puzzled by the *avant garde*, surrealistic Brazilian films, but found a resonant tale in the story of a serial murderer caught after killing a dozen homeless boys in the interior.

As we bussed home a couple of hours later, our bus stopped in standstill traffic. Far ahead we could see a large crowd in the street. As it drew near, we could see the crowd was dancing around a large flatbed truck with a band playing on top—later these scenes became familiar as the *Trios Eletricos* wound through the city's Carnival-packed streets. As our bus slowly drew alongside the crowd dancing directly in front of the Trio, the dancing youth began using the bus as a drum. As their pounding reached a deafening crescendo, suddenly the window adjacent to my partner Caitlin shattered, spraying broken glass all over her and our daughter, opening dozens of superficial wounds. All the passengers leaped to the aisle in the middle of the bus, and there we stood for another 15 frightening minutes waiting for the danger to pass. There was no escape—outside the bus was the frenzied mob, inside we were sitting ducks. But nothing else happened and eventually we made it home.

Another time, during the 3 day bank holiday imposed when the “New Cruzado” was proclaimed in January 1989 (only to be superceded in March 1990 by the “New Cruzeiro”), we greedily pursued the best exchange rate we'd heard of yet from a guy in the street. We knew it was too high, but our anticipated good fortune was quickly reversed when our money changers hustled us into a labyrinthian alley and snatched our \$100 and just as quickly dashed away. Justice seemed to be served, even at the time, but it *was* galling to have been had so easily.

Also, as “low-budget tourists” handling our relative wealth was *work*: going to the *Cambista*, paying bills everywhere, hiding our money, passports, video equipment, etc. The risk of a rip-off was an underlying concern during many

days of the vacation and often constrained our “free time.”

* * *

I find it strangely ambiguous to be a traveling U.S. citizen. Since I am sharply critical of all U.S. politicians and government actions, I always emphasize that I am only American by twist of fate, and don't identify with U.S. interests. In spite of such alienation, I benefit from my status by the value of my money, my health, my ability to travel freely, and if things go wrong, the likelihood that at least I can *purchase* better treatment in jails, hospitals, or wherever I might end up.

We sought out people involved in various social movements, trying to bridge the gap our advantages created. People were generally willing, even eager to explain their lives to us, which in turn gave us a sense of responsibility to share their stories when we returned home.

In fact, some of our Brazilian friends seemed to have great expectations of us, which we are finding difficult to live up to now that we are back home. One woman who lived on the edge of a favela (slum) in the Zona Sul of Sao Paulo was very excited to be interviewed by us on video and looked forward to receiving a tape to show her friends and colleagues. Unfortunately, we've been unable to contact her since we got home, and we can't tell why, whether it's the postal service there, here, or she moved, or we have the wrong address, or what.

* * *

Language is a basic obstacle to every foreign odyssey. I've followed the same pattern with several languages (French, Spanish, Danish, and now Portuguese): I become newspaper literate in about a month or so, and after 3 or 4 months I can understand a good 60-99% of what goes on around me, depending on accents and all that. But in no case have I mastered self-expression. To be honest, I've never come close! Somehow my language aptitude is acute up to the point of speech, then it balances talent with sheer ineptitude and neurosis.

Experience itself conspires to make speaking a recurrent trauma. A typical case in point: one day, about a month into the journey, we were in Rio de Janeiro, it was late afternoon and we stopped in a small supermarket. Caitlin was fed up with doing all the talking (she

is a wizard at adapting to new languages) and left me in line at the checkout stand to complete what should have been an utterly routine transaction. But what we didn't know and I was about to find out, was that you couldn't buy the bottles of beer on the shelf unless you brought with you already empty bottles in exchange. When the sales clerk tried to explain this to me, I failed to understand at all and fumbled for my ID, assuming she was asking me to prove I was old enough to buy alcohol. *We weren't communicating!* The line of people behind me was growing and discontent was becoming audible. I ran outside the store and yelled a block down to Caitlin to please come back and solve the problem, which she did, but what a discouragement! Just when I had started to feel some meager confidence that I could get along, too!

At that moment, complete alienation is inescapable. I am surrounded by a society in which I cannot function, even rudimentarily. Is this the final revenge of superficial experience, of traipsing in for a “little looksee” without getting my hands dirty, my ideas too compromised, inevitably remaining an observer?

When I left for Brazil I thought my trip would be something more than merely finding a nice beach to lay on, or a new body to exchange fluids with—this trip was different... or, as I thought when I had horrible moments of lost confusion, was it?

We pursued encounters and discussion with like-minded political activists, and tried to consolidate personal links across artificial and repressive national boundaries. To some extent we pulled that off. But the assumptions that fueled us were often thrown into doubt along the way.

For example, we found ourselves trying to interpret activists from Brazil's Green Party (PV) within the framework of U.S. ecological politics. It was hard not to compare their ideas to the then-current split between social- and deep-ecologists at home, even though that division wasn't particularly important to the Brazilian political scene. In fact, Alfredo Sirkis, the Green Party city councilman from Rio de Janeiro, claimed that his party encompassed both tendencies quite peacefully.

He went on to comment on the divergent factions in U.S. eco-politics: On the New England-based social ecologists: “I told them they were ‘Leninist -Anarchists.’ They had saved the worst things about Leninism and thrown away

the good things.” On the California-based deep ecologists: “They were living on a different planet, called California, and had no link with the rest of humanity, not even the rest of humanity living in the U.S.”

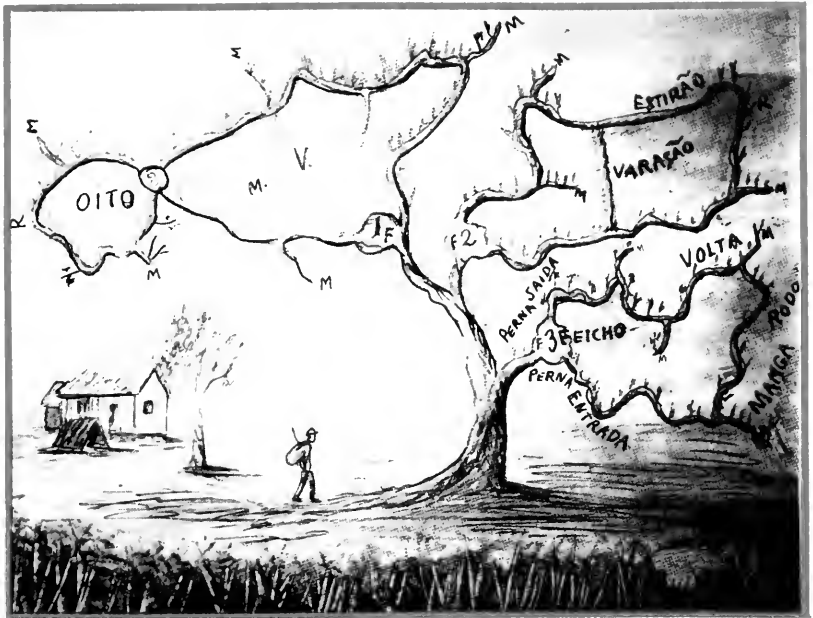
Later we found other ecologists who were careful to keep their distance from the PV. Trying to understand the Green Party as a variation of a Greenpeace or an anti-nuclear alliance only moved us further from understanding what an ecological political party means in the Brazilian context. Given their marginal status after the recent national elections, and their close relationship to the Workers’ Party, it’s even less clear what they represent as an independent political party.

On the other hand, Brazil doesn’t exist in a vacuum and the rise of ecological political groups there is directly related to and influenced by the growth of similar movements in Europe and the U.S. So drawing such connections is inevitable, and not totally without foundation, even if it tends to demote the specifically Brazilian context in which they exist.

Similarly, our encounters with the Workers Party (PT) was invariably framed by our own experiences and philosophical predispositions in “ultra-left” libertarian politics in our lives at home. Should we interpret the PT as a classical social-democratic formation? As a Leninist party? As a grand coalition of left forces in Brazil? Was the electoral strategy as bankrupt as it is in the U.S.? Or should all these categories be thrown out in light of the cataclysmic changes in the East bloc, and because the PT grew out of highly democratic mass movements with roots in many different Brazilian communities?

And how to interpret the Catholic Church, which is split in half in Brazil between the traditional oligarchy-supporting right wing bishops and the broad movement of base communities organized by the overtly left-wing Liberation Theologists? I have been hostile toward Catholicism for as long as I’ve known much about it, but again and again people we met in urban slums, in rural areas, in different movements, explained how they had been drawn in by a young priest, often Italian or Spanish.

The current leader of the PT’s city council “bancada” (their group of seats) in Sao Paulo, Joao Castro de Alves, described to us how he had been a simple metalworker and a fanatic sports



GRAPHIC: Helio Melo, a painter living in Rio Branco, Acre, Brazil.

fan in the late '70s when he was invited to a “Pastoral Operaria” meeting (Christian workers). When a major strike wave engulfed the industrial area around Sao Paulo in 1979, he found himself deeply involved, and soon he was fired. His involvement with the Christian worker group provided the network of social support that allowed he and his family to survive the next couple of years of unemployment (there are no unemployment benefits to speak of in Brazil). And it also gave him the possibility to get involved with the founding of the Workers Party in 1980, which ultimately led him to his current position.

* * *

I would like to go back and live in Brazil someday, perhaps for a year or two. The more time has passed since I was there, the more I have come to realize how difficult it is to truly grasp another society’s reality. My own cultural baggage was so heavy, my predispositions, responsibilities, and faculties so influenced my experience that it’s almost problematic to distinguish the “facts” or the “truth” about Brazil as I present them, from my own life experience as passed through a 4-month prism of Brazil.

... “I have only two possibilities: either I can be like some traveler of the olden days, who was faced with a stupendous spectacle, all, or almost all, of which eluded him, or worse still, filled him with scorn and disgust; or I can be a

modern traveler, chasing after the vestiges of a vanished reality. I lose on both counts, and more seriously than may at first appear, for, while I complain of being able to glimpse no more than the shadow of the past, I may be insensitive to reality as it is taking shape at this very moment, since I have not reached the stage of development at which I would be capable of perceiving it. A few hundred years hence, in this same place, another traveler, as despairing as myself, will mourn the disappearance of what I might have seen, but failed to see. I am subject to a double infirmity: all that I perceive offends me, and I constantly reproach myself for not seeing as much as I should.”

— Claude Levi-Strauss,
Tristes Tropiques, 1955

Me, too!

On the other hand, in spite of these rather negative conclusions about the possibilities of truly connecting to another culture, going to Brazil was a fantastic experience. The human condition is sufficiently universal that we made personal friendships that may last for years. The communication and cross-pollination that accompanies such a visit has an inestimable value for our own lives, but also, modestly, for the future of humanity. We can be sure that we don’t know how sweeping, global social change will happen. The grains of sand that our travels contribute to the dunes of world history may seem necessarily small and insignificant, but we’ll never know what our exchanges finally lead to until many years from now. Everything starts somewhere!

— Chris Carlsson

BILLBOARD LIBERATION FRONT

Pranks R Us

Everything is at the mercy of the prankster. The prankster operates in a deliberately grey area where art, politics, and performance are in too rare alliance. Instead of waging an all-out assault on the Castle, the prankster slips through the gates wearing a fool's outfit, or nondescript duds, like the new "King of Absurdistan," Vaclav Havel, or that Delta Force of insurgent advertising, the Billboard Liberation Front.

In issue #24, the BLF's distinguished corporate history was briefly described—one of the highlights being their PAVE ALASKA campaign. This time we present their How-to-do-it manual for liberating billboards on the Demand Economy of the "free market" system. Others recount missions possible for the serious, graphic business at hand—to reveal the terror of our ways here in the subliminal city.

Tension, dissension, and apprehension have begun!

The prankster undermines confidence and security in everyday belief systems, sabotages the official reality by moving objects, letters, words, using chemicals, solvents, adhesives to manipulate media in such a way as to bring into sharp relief the true agenda hidden between the lines, the clenched fists of closed captioned commentary for the being-impaired. TV implodes another logic bomb behind the eyes, propaganda floods the system—the newspaper's ink smile fades on the time-shifting crowd which now wavers at the why of it all.

Freedom is terror

said Sartre. The prankster's actions may be viewed as an aesthetic experience, or a borderline mock terrorist attack. Last spring saw a rash of prank terrorism here in the Bay Area.

In May, a few dozen seemingly authentic

high explosive devices appeared around San Francisco, requiring the attention of police bomb squad technicians. The Great Highway was temporarily closed until puzzled authorities determined that these half pound packages of TNT were in fact filled with plaster of Paris.

Subsequent investigation revealed that these fake bombs were removed from the Survival Research Laboratories show *Illusions of Shameless Abundance Generating into an Uninterrupted Sequence of Hostile Encounters*, where they were supposed to have been showered on the audience. The show came to a premature end when the SRL stage crew exhausted their last aerosol breath of fire retardant, and a stack of burning pianos came crashing down, disabling one of the lead performers, a motorized gila monster. Through another malfunction, the bomb canisters were scattered over an empty part of the parking lot, but were quickly snapped up by exiting members of the audience, pranksters all, who took the performance from beneath the freeway into the streets and beyond.

A few weeks later, the Ollie North roadshow rolled into town. The gig was at the Circle Star Theater, and a shredding party was assembled the night before by the San Francisco Cacophony Society. Although security was tight, their revelry and champagne mirth under police surveillance, they enjoyed themselves to the max, not with a bang, but a *queep*

The next day, bomb squad technicians removed suspicious-looking devices glued to the side of the Circle Star Theater. Circuit boards that turned out to be circuit boards attached to (and at) no charge!

Only Santa Claus can save you from poverty!

Are these two unrelated incendiary hoaxes the same as crying "Theater!" in a crowded fire? Do they reflect a new militance in art that further breaks down walls, from Berlin to those morgues of

culture, museums?!

In 1980, Pink Floyd posed a question that epitomized the post-Freudian, Cold War culture: **Mother should I build a wall?** On the eve of the nineties, the walls came down, and it wasn't Sampson straining at the pillars of community, but the Davids with their slingshot messages, barbs of truth, who brought down the has-been Goliaths of Stasi, Husak, Zomos, and with a few bullets, much blood, and the Army, Securitate.

In Poland, groups like "those crazies in Gdansk," the Movement for an Alternative Society, espouse a philosophy which can be summed up as "it is forbidden to forbid." Actions or happenings by the Orange Alternative, Freedom and Peace, and other activist organizations aimed "to treat the political system as a work of art." They called it Socialist Surrealism, and used it to create a street culture so corrosive to the pieties of statist society, that the overthrow of same assumed an ironic inevitability.

How can even the most determined-to-conform citizen keep a straight face when confronted by thousands of people engaging in open-air dada, chanting Stalinist hymns at the monkey house of a zoo, or staging mock urban warfare with buckets of water, shouting "Freedom and water!" Tapes of ousted Communist leader Ladislav Adamec addressing a Party Congress have for months played in Civic Forum video galleries and cafes across Czechoslovakia, convulsing people as the most riotous comedy in years.

The political machine is in an advanced state of decay. Is this the long awaited withering away of the state? It has become such a self-satirizing system that people brave water cannons and purple dye to jeer at it in the streets. When any innocent bystander can get caught up and become part of the picture, vulnerable to art attack, the political volatility and possibilities for razing consciousness are primed and ready to go.

The spraycan is a start—it may have eaten away one side of the Wall, though it took the flight of refugees voting with their feet to give the final blow.

Who says "it ain't right to write"? Write on!

— Art Tinnitus

The Billboard Liberation Front has been successfully improving outdoor advertising since 1977.

We hope you find the following primer useful and comprehensive. We have detailed methods for alterations ranging from the smaller, easily accessible boards, to the massive, more difficult ones on freeways.

In most instances, it should not be

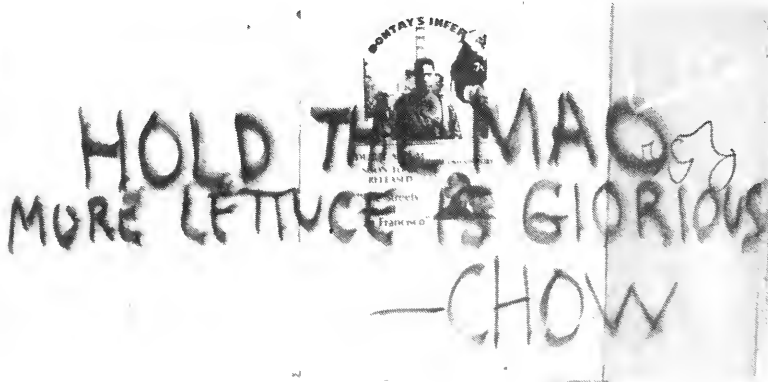


PHOTO: D.S. Black

MANUAL

necessary to use the elaborate—even obsessive precautions that the BLF has resorted to for an individual or group to get their message across. A can of spray paint, a blithe spirit, and a balmy night are all you really need.

There are many different reasons for wishing to alter or in other ways improve an existing advertisement. In this primer we avoid ideology and stick to practical information only.

* * *

1) Choosing A Board

Once you have identified a billboard message you wish to improve, you may want to see if there are multiple locations with the same advertisement. You should determine which ones give your message optimum visibility. A board on the central freeway will obviously give you more exposure than one on an obscure side street. You must then weigh the location/visibility factor with other crucial variables such as physical accessibility, potential escape routes, volume of foot and vehicular traffic during optimum alteration hours, etc.

In choosing a board, keep in mind that the most effective alterations are often the simplest. If you can totally change the meaning of an advert by changing one or two letters, you'll save a lot of time and trouble. Some ads lend themselves to parody by the inclusion of a small image or symbol in the appropriate place (a skull, radiation symbol, happy face, swastika, vibrator, etc.). On other boards, the addition of a cartoon "thought bubble" or a "speech balloon" for one of the characters might be all that is needed.

2) Preparation

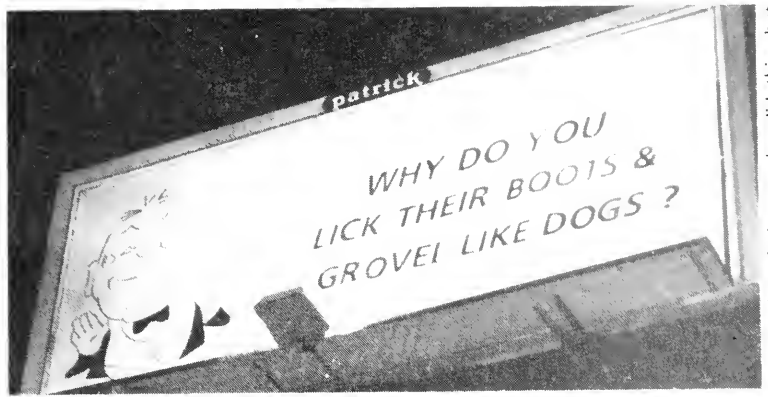
a) Accessibility

How do you get up on the board? Will you need your own ladder to reach the bottom of the board's ladder? Can you climb the support structure? Is the board on a building rooftop, and if so, can it be reached from within the building, from a fire escape, or perhaps from an adjoining building? If you need ladders to work the board, occasionally they may be found on platforms on or behind the board, or on adjacent boards or rooftops.

b) Practicality

How big are the letters and/or images you would like to change? How close to the platform at the bottom of the board is your work area?

On larger boards you can rig from above and hang over the face to reach points that are too high to reach from below. We don't recommend this method unless you have some climbing and rigging experience. When hanging in one position your work area is very limited laterally. Your ability to leave the scene quickly diminishes propor-



The BLF doesn't know who did this, but they'd like to buy the perpetrators a 6-pack.

tionately to how convoluted your position has become. Placing huge words or images is much more difficult.

c) Security

After choosing your board, be sure to inspect it during day and night. Take note of all activities in the area. Who is about at 2:00 a.m.? How visible is your work area, both in front of and behind the board? How visible will you be while scaling the support structure? Keep in mind you will make noise; are there any apartment or office windows nearby? Is anyone home? Walk lightly if you're on a rooftop; who knows who you're walking over.

What is the visibility to passing cars on surface streets and freeways? What can you see from your work position on the board? Even though it is very difficult to see a figure on a dark board at night, it is not impossible. Any point you have line of sight vision with is a point you can be seen from.

How close is your board to the nearest

police station or Highway Patrol headquarters? What is their patrol pattern in the area? Average response time to Joe Citizen's call? You can get an idea by staking out the area and observing. Is it quiet at night or is there a lot of foot traffic? When the bars let out, will this provide cover—i.e. drunks keeping the cops busy, or will it increase the likelihood of detection by passersby? Do they care? If you are definitely spotted, it may pay to have your ground people check them out rather than just hoping they don't call the cops. Do not let them connect you with a vehicle. Have your ground person(s) pretend to be chance passersby and find out what the observer thinks. We've been spotted at work a number of times and most people were amused. You'll find that most people, including officials, don't look up unless given a reason to do so.

Go up on the board prior to your hit. Get a feel for being there and moving around on the structure at night. Bring a camera

Aim High

Once upon a time there were 5 tree planters from a cooperative who, having worked very hard, took a vacation in Seattle. They saw a billboard which had a very phallic jet aircraft torquing across the sign with the caption "Aim High." So they did.

People went onto the board, measured and got color samples. They pasted red painted letters onto white butcher paper, got squeegees and other gear, and one evening rush hour they posted a person at one end of the freeway bridge next to the board, and another near an on-ramp in the opposite direction; all armed with walkie-talkies. The others wheat-pasted the paper onto the sign.

Most observers were amused; the others were much more emphatic, even hostile. One father-son team got out and demanded that the crew "COME DOWN HERE RIGHT NOW!!!" The young vandals explained that they just had a job to do and ignored these "Love it or Leave It" types.

The traffic flow soon compelled the all-american duo to leave; indeed, it was so heavy that even with immediate warning — had cellular phones been invented — the cops would have taken minutes to arrive.

Within 15 minutes the sign was "corrected" and our heroes departed, leaving their spattered overalls and equipment in a friend's boat, which was anchored in one of the city's canals. To celebrate they sought out a local bar, whose tinted windows turned out to have a commanding view of the scene of the crime. As they entered it was clear that virtually everyone had watched them; they were fingered ... and the room broke into cheers.

They had relaxed for perhaps 20 minutes when the police arrived like gangbusters, looking for people to assist them in their inquiries. As nobody had seen a thing, the cops left.

By noon the board had been recovered with the same sign. It looked great ... until the next winter rain, when the added letters ghosted through the wet paper: next to "Aim High" were the words "Blow Up The Pentagon!"

—a good cover for doing anything you're not supposed to: "Gee, officer, I'm a night photographer, and there's a great shot of the Bay Bridge from up there..."

Check out your escape routes. Can you cross over rooftops and leave by a fire escape across the block? etc. etc.

d) Illumination

Most boards are brightly lit by floodlights of some type. Most large boards are shut off some time between 11:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m. by a time clock control somewhere on or near the board. Smaller boards frequently are controlled by photo-electric cells or conventional time-clocks, also somewhere on the board. If you find the photo-electric cell, you can turn the lights on the board off by taping a small flashlight directly into the cell's "eye." This fools the unit into thinking it is sunrise—the time the light are supposed to turn off.

As noted, most larger boards are controlled by time-clocks. These can be found in the control panels at the base of the supports structure and/or behind the actual board itself. These panels are often locked (particularly those at the structure's base). Unless you are familiar with energized electrical circuitry and devices of this type we caution you to wait until the clock shuts itself off at midnight or so. Many of these boards run 277V or 220 volts, and could cook you well-done.

3) Graphic Layout:

Lettering & Image Design

a) Scale

If you are changing only a small area (one letter, a small symbol, etc.) you probably do not need to go to any elaborate lengths to match or design your "overlay" (we'll use this term to describe the finished image/lettering you'll be applying to the board). Just take actual

measurements or tracings directly off the board.

If, however, you intend to create overlays of great size and/or number of letters and you want the finished image to look as much as possible like the advertisers themselves had made it, you should plan on more elaborate preparation.

Find a position roughly level with the board and in direct line with it looking square on (200 to 1000 or so feet away). Photograph the board from this position and make a tracing from a large print of this photo. Using measurements you have taken on the board (height, width, letter height, etc.), you can create a scale drawing of your intended alteration. From this, it is possible to determine how large your overlays will need to be and what spacing will be required between letters.

b) Color Match

There are two basic ways to match the background and/or colors of the lettering or image area.

1) On painted or paper boards you can usually carve a small (1" x 1") sample directly off the board. This does not always work on older painted boards which have many thick layers of paint.

2) Most large paint stores carry small book paint samplers. It is possible to get a pretty close match from these samplers. We suggest sticking to solid colors and relatively simple designs for the maximum visual impact.

c) Letter Style

If you wish to match a letter style exactly, pick up a book of different letter types from a graphic arts supply. Use this in conjunction with tracings of existing letters to create the complete range of lettering needed for your alteration. You can convincingly fake letters that aren't on the board by finding a closely matching letter style in the book and using tracings of existing letters as a guide for drawing the new letters.

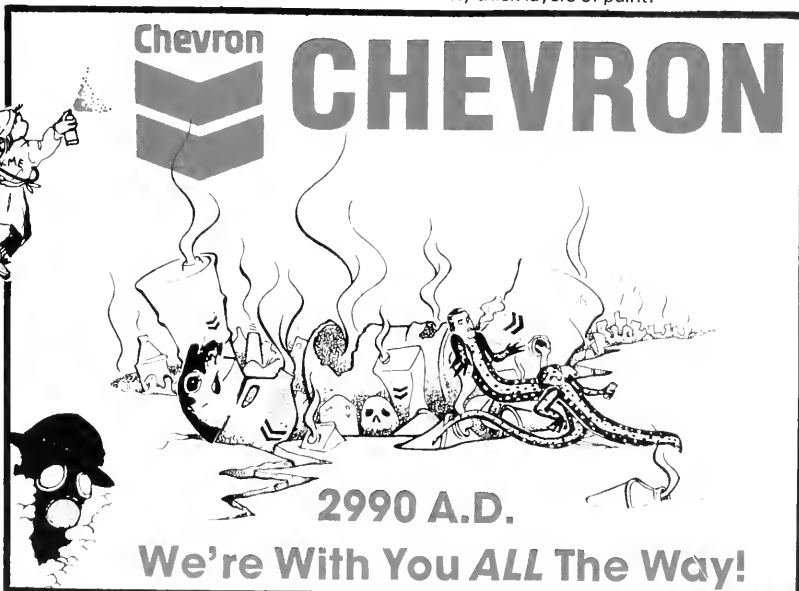
d) Application

We recommend not using overlays much larger than 4'x3'. If your message is larger, you should section it and butt the sections together for the finished image. It gets very windy on boards and large paste-overs are difficult to apply. Some nights there is condensation on the boards, and the areas to be covered need to be wiped down. Use heavy pattern paper for overlays and gloss lacquer paint. The lacquer paint suffuses the paper, making it super-tough, water resistant and difficult to tear. For making overlays, roller coat the background and spray paint the lettering through cardboard cut-out templates of the letters. For extremely large images or panels, use large pieces of painted canvas. The canvas should be fairly heavy to avoid being ripped to shreds by the winds that buffet most billboards. Glue and staple spanner 1"x4" boards the entire horizontal length and bottom line of the canvas. The canvas will then roll up like a carpet for transportation and can be unrolled over the top of the board and lowered into place by ropes.

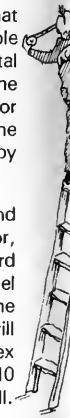
You can either tie the four corners and middle (top and bottom) very securely, or, if you can access the face of the board either by ladder or rope, attach the panel by screwing the 1"x4" spanners to the board behind. A good battery powered drill is needed for this. We recommend hex head "Tek" sheet metal screws, #8 or #10 size. Use a hex head driver bit for your drill.



GRAPHIC: BLF



GRAPHIC: FW Collective



GRAPHIC: A

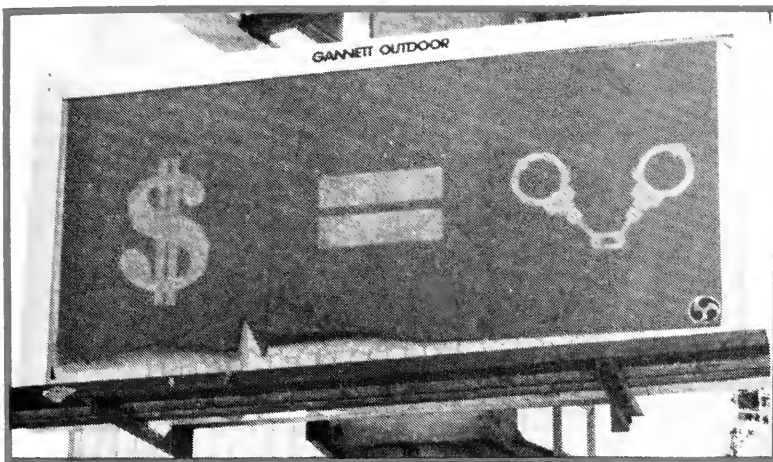


PHOTO: D. S. Black

These screws work well on either wood backboards or sheet metal.

To level overlay panels on the board, measure up from the bottom (or down from the top) of the board to bottom line of where it needs to be in order to cover the existing copy. Make small marks at the outermost left and right-hand points. Using a chalk snap line with two people, snap a horizontal line between these two points. This line is your marker for placing your overlay(s).

Although there are many types of adhesive which could be used, we recommend

rubber cement. Rubber cement is easily removable (but if properly applied will stay up indefinitely) and does not damage or permanently mark the board's surface. This becomes crucial if, after your apprehension, the authorities and property owners start assessing money lost due to property damage.

Application of rubber cement on large overlays is tricky. You need to evenly coat both the back-side of the paste-over and the surface of the board that is to be covered. Allow 1-2 minutes drying time before applying the paper to the board.

To apply the cement use full sized (10") house paint rollers and a 5 gallon plastic bucket. Have one person coat the back of the paste-overs while another coats the board's surface.

Both people will be needed to affix the coated paste-over to the finished board surface.

4) The Hit

Once you've completed all the preparation and are ready for the actual hit, there are many things which can be done to minimize the risk of apprehension.

a) Personnel

Have the smallest number of people possible on the board. Three is about optimum; two for the actual work, and one lookout/communications person. You will probably require additional spotting teams on the ground (see below).

b) Communications

For work on larger boards where you will be exposed for great lengths of time, we recommend hand-held communication devices (CB units or FM band walkie-talkies) if you have access to them.

Have one or two cars positioned at crucial intersections within sight of the board. The ground unit(s) should monitor oncoming traffic and maintain radio contact with the lookout on the board. (Note: do not use the popular CB or FM channels; there are many others to choose from. A verbal code is

We Also Do Boards

Our story begins long, long ago . . . even the statute of limitations has run out . . .

I've never been at my best at 3:30 in the morning; being acutely nervous doesn't help the experience. In the predawn darkness our voices are muffled as we wake and drink some coffee, some alcohol: Slivovitz. We leave silently, carrying anonymous black knapsacks, dressed in dark colors, wearing felony shoes (sneakers), get into our vehicles and depart.

At the prearranged area we park out of sight of each other, retrieve our sacks and bundles (rolls of paper, painting rollers with long handles, what are those — mops?) and walk calmly to the board. It's one we've hit before so we know access and visibility. Hopefully the watch teams are in place in each direction. We won't know until we all get home — or we are warned of an approaching cop by a blinking flashlight.

The board is low, so one person will work on the ground. The nimblest climbs up; first, then the heaviest. Mops are passed up, a bucket appears, and plastic bottles (here now, what's this? starch?) are emptied. On the ground the rolls are unfurled and wetted lightly with a mop, while above another wets the paper of the billboard the same way. The awkward sheet is handed up, maneuvered into

position, pressed down, then rolled firmly. The process is repeated for another large piece, then for two small ones.

We are interrupted by happy cries from the street — skateboarders! One of them calls his friend over — unable to believe his eyes. His friend misses us at first, then focuses. They ask what we're doing, and I tersely explain "We're correcting this billboard." They watch for a minute before heading down University Ave. We rapidly finish our work and collect our tools. The ground person has already vanished around the corner when we dismount and walk away calmly, pausing for a moment to admire our handiwork. A sign which used to advertise a condominium village in Richmond with the slogan "Once a Great Notion / Now a Great Life" now reads "Once a Great Nation / Now a Great Li e." A banner with 20 inch letters reading "US Out of North America" covers the real advertiser's name. (Let us not get into a debate about whether it has ever been all that great; we went for the cuteness.)

We corrected about a dozen boards in about a year. We were inspired by another group in Berkeley which was altering Selective Service registration boards ("It's Quick / It's Easy / It's the Law / Men turning 18 must register at the Post

Office"). They had substituted — perfectly — the word "Deadly" for "the Law." Our first attempt was not as polished: we replaced the third line with ours, which read "It's a Trap for Assholes." We specialized in these signs, our alterations including "It's the Pig's Law" and "Men turning 18 must register at the morgue." We also hit other targets of opportunity.

We used rolls of colored artist's paper from various stores; originally we tried spray-painting but gave it up as too much work and too expensive. We made letters with the appropriate color of paper and applied them with white glue. The actual application to the board was done with ordinary laundry starch. It only works on paper or cardboard signs, but it is cheap and easy to obtain.

We regarded this as training for more adventurous endeavors. We had read "Traces" — a manual useful for those who perform actions which they do not want to be caught doing — emphasizing the use of untraceable, ordinary items, and lots of caution about pieces of the perpetrator remaining on the crime-scene, and vice-versa.)

We were indifferent to the ease of removal — we figured that the workers who did so would be paid anyway. One afternoon I saw a worker replacing an SS board that we had hit; we worked furiously, made calls, assembled the team, and

continued on next page



a good idea since others do have access to the channels you will be using.)

It is crucial that your ground crew do not lounge around outside their vehicle(s) or in any other way make it obvious that they are hanging around a likely desolate area late at night for no apparent reason. A passing patrol car will notice them much sooner than they would ever notice you on the board. Keep a low profile.

c) Escape

If you've done your homework, you'll know the terrain surrounding the board quite well. In the event of detection, prepare a number of alternate routes out of

the area, and a rendezvous point with the ground support crew. If a patrol is approaching and you are in a difficult spot for quickly ditching and hiding (hanging on a rope in the middle of the board, for instance), it may be better simply to stay still until they pass. Movement is more likely to catch the casual eye. Once on the ground, if pursuit is imminent, hiding may be the safest bet. If you've covered the terrain carefully, you'll be aware of any good hiding spots. Keep in mind that if the police do a thorough search (doubtful, but not impossible), they will use high-powered spot lights and flashlights on foot.

Stashed clothing in your hiding spot may

had a newer — better — version up by 4:00 the next morning. Fast service!

We never went onto a board in advance; a certain feeling that it wasn't all that necessary and that it exposed you unduly. In fact, some LAGgards (Livermore Action Group — an anti-nuke group) were caught measuring on a board and charged with trespassing. Needless to say, they also became some of the "usual suspects" for any billboard operations in the area. We worked with photos and visual inspections on foot, as we were mostly hitting small boards in urban areas. Freeways are a different matter.

Most of our work was "corrections" and small alterations. We learned the hard way that what the BLF says about small pieces of paper is not just a good idea; it's a law of nature. We only tried to take over a whole board once. A dozen of us were involved — tremendous racket, lots of work, big failure. If we had scouted first we would have known that this beast was enameled metal. Our staple-guns and starch were ineffectual. At least we got the size right. They closed off the access after our attempt. Ah well. Wish we'd had the BLF's manual then.

Unwilling to limit ourselves to existing "authorized" locations, we also hung banners—large ones. Both were initiated by others; we merely provided "technical

assistance." One, strung across the last overpass before the toll plazas on the SF-Oakland Bay Bridge, was in honor of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Imitating a movie marquee it read "LEBANON — Featuring: A Casket of Thousands / A US-Israel Production." It went up at 6:30 a.m.; CalTrans crews took this cotton sheet & rope creation down in less than an hour, but not before countless people saw it. The other was done in support of a LAG blockade, and was a light paper/balsa sign that read simply "US Navy Supports the Livermore Blockade." Intrepid climbers were dropped off on Treasure Island (a US Navy & Coast Guard property) at about 6:15 a.m. They climbed up and hung the banner above the tunnel for west-bound traffic. We had several cars, each making a quick automotive stop — with excuses ready — on the lower deck (east bound) periodically until the party was retrieved (or captured). The sign was quickly removed, but at least one AM radio DJ reported it, wondering idly if the Navy knew about it. A cautionary note here — we were VERY careful about these — if your sign comes down on traffic it will be very counterproductive. Make sure the sign can be removed safely.

You want to be careful with stencils; one of us applied anti-nuke slogans to the labels of cans going to a local "national

prove useful. A business suit, perhaps, or rumpled and vomit encrusted leisure wear. Be creative.

5) Daytime Hits

We don't recommend this method for most high boards on or near freeways and major roads. It works well for doing smaller boards lower to the ground where the alteration is relatively quick and simple. If you do choose to work in the light, wear coveralls (company name on the back?), painters' hats, and work quickly. Keep an eye out for parked or passing vehicles bearing the billboard company or advertiser's name. Each board has the company emblem bottom center on it. If you're on a Sleaze Co. board and a Sleaze Co. truck pulls up, you're probably in trouble. It is unlikely that the workers will try to physically detain you (try bribery, if necessary), but they will probably call the cops.

POSTSCRIPT

If anyone reading this primer finds it of any use in their own advertising endeavors, we at the BLF will consider it successful.

We believe roadside advertising enhancement is a pastime more individuals should engage in. It's not that difficult to do smaller, low-to-the-ground boards. A quick hit-and-run on such a board will not require all of the elaborate preparations and precautions we have detailed.

The more "real" messages we have on the freeways and streets, the better.

— R.O. Thornhill

BLF Education Officer

security" company. His boss called him in and told him that he had just finished reassuring the place's head of security that the person who had done it was fired (the FBI proved that the paint was applied before the labels were put on the cans). Fortunately for him, his boss had lied.

So, what's the point? Get out there and have fun; spread the good word! Sometimes it's disheartening — you'll find that lots of people never look at billboards, and some people who do don't see what it really says. But such methods represent alternate communications that subvert commercial and social space.

Hope to see your writing on the wall, real soon, everywhere!

And remember — Be careful; Be funny; Be Audacious!

— Unos de Nosotros



MICROFICTIONS

An Ancient Dilemma

Jim slipped on his son's toy slime and passed through a time portal. When he regained his balance, he was standing on the deck, sailing a barge through the strait of ancient Messina, approaching Scylla and Charybdis.

"Captain," said the mate, "what now? Either we're dinner for the beast or we perish in the maelstrom!"

Thoughts of flesh tearing, bones crushing, and death by choking. "Don't know," replied Jim. "Maybe there's a third option. Let's drop anchor! Now when I say three, everybody chortle!" They stopped the ship and guffawed at the frustrated monsters until the Age of Mythology passed.

Friday, July 3, 4:45

Jim ran into Cheryl on the company elevator. When she mentioned the weather, he thought, should I bring up global warming? Start a meaningful discourse? Before he could speak, the elevator got stuck near the sixteenth floor. When they tried dialing for help, the elevator jeered, "Fools, that won't work. I am not letting you out. So give up."

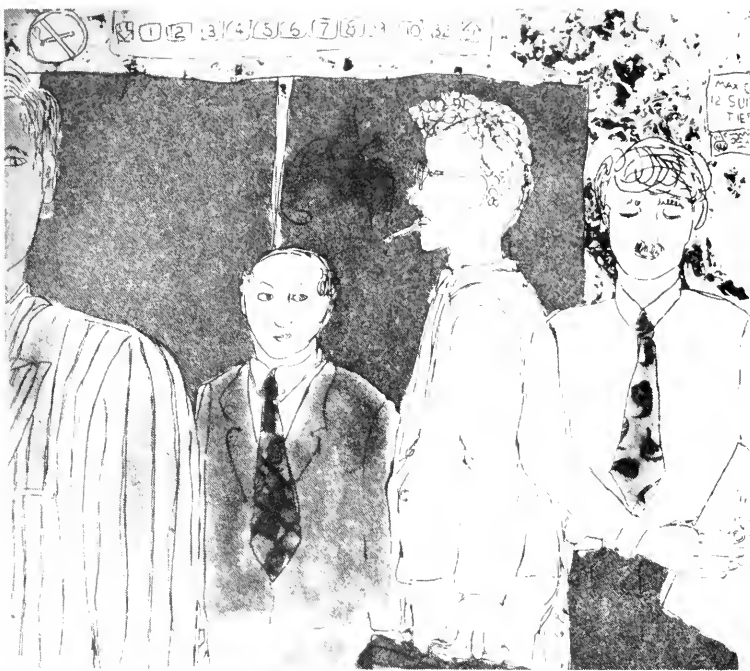
Said Jim, "You can't hold us, we've got work to do!"

"Pah!" laughed the elevator, "Your new job is amusing me."

"C'mon," said Cheryl, "It's a three-day weekend!"

"Don't make me laugh. I've held people through *Christmas*."

Jim looked into Cheryl's sassy eyes, and for the first time noticed they were curb-stone gray. "What the hell," he said. "It's 90 outside, cool as a supermarket here. Let's get comfortable at company expense." Soon as they lay down on the plush carpet, the doors opened.



GRAPHIC: K. AOKI

Uncertifiable

Depressed by recent unexplained events, Jim went to a psychiatrist. He told her about the time subluxations, the evil elevator, and the Famous Dead, but added that he'd always managed to cope.

"These may be delusions," she said. She asked him the color of his nightmares, the color of his office walls. He couldn't say. Then she asked him if there were round stamps, magenta fruits, or rubber houses and if not, why not. He gave terse replies.

After a long and expensive session, she said she'd let him know her diagnosis. The next day she called. "Mr. Walker, good news! I've detected *no* delusions in your psychological profile, none whatsoever. Feel better now?"

"Yes," he said. "Yes, thank you." As soon as he hung up, she appeared on his computer screen in pixilated color. Before he could turn it off, she stepped out.

— Peter Bates

PLEASE, WON'T YOU SUPPORT OUR APPEAL?

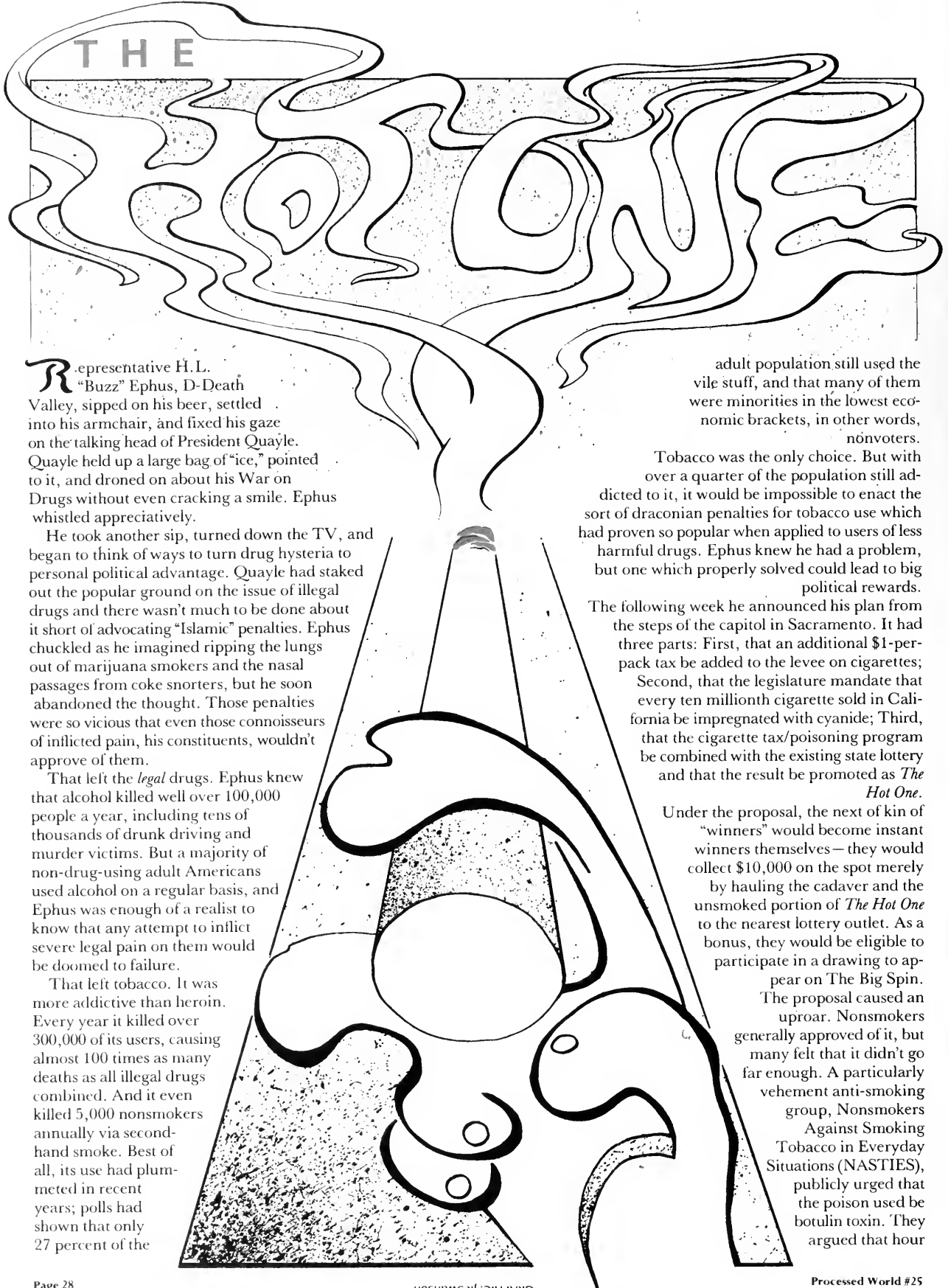
MALLS for EASTERN EUROPE

Act now! Over 100 million new consumers are still languishing on quaint cobblestone streets and in weather-befouled, obsolete shopping districts. A **strategic first-strike installation** of our best mall technology (deployed via AmEx credit missile) can modernize these benighted Old World suburbs. Hundreds of large buildings recently abandoned are awaiting our conversion program! Help assure the victory of the American Way! Send your donations to **Miles of Malls, 1 Ave. of the Americas, NY, NY 10001**



GRAPHIC: PW Collective

THE



Representative H.L. “Buzz” Ephus, D-Death Valley, sipped on his beer, settled into his armchair, and fixed his gaze on the talking head of President Quayle. Quayle held up a large bag of “ice,” pointed to it, and droned on about his War on Drugs without even cracking a smile. Ephus whistled appreciatively.

He took another sip, turned down the TV, and began to think of ways to turn drug hysteria to personal political advantage. Quayle had staked out the popular ground on the issue of illegal drugs and there wasn’t much to be done about it short of advocating “Islamic” penalties. Ephus chuckled as he imagined ripping the lungs out of marijuana smokers and the nasal passages from coke snorters, but he soon abandoned the thought. Those penalties were so vicious that even those connoisseurs of inflicted pain, his constituents, wouldn’t approve of them.

That left the *legal* drugs. Ephus knew that alcohol killed well over 100,000 people a year, including tens of thousands of drunk driving and murder victims. But a majority of non-drug-using adult Americans used alcohol on a regular basis, and Ephus was enough of a realist to know that any attempt to inflict severe legal pain on them would be doomed to failure.

That left tobacco. It was more addictive than heroin. Every year it killed over 300,000 of its users, causing almost 100 times as many deaths as all illegal drugs combined. And it even killed 5,000 nonsmokers annually via second-hand smoke. Best of all, its use had plummeted in recent years; polls had shown that only 27 percent of the

adult population still used the vile stuff, and that many of them were minorities in the lowest economic brackets, in other words, nonvoters.

Tobacco was the only choice. But with over a quarter of the population still addicted to it, it would be impossible to enact the sort of draconian penalties for tobacco use which had proven so popular when applied to users of less harmful drugs. Ephus knew he had a problem, but one which properly solved could lead to big political rewards.

The following week he announced his plan from the steps of the capitol in Sacramento. It had three parts: First, that an additional \$1-per-pack tax be added to the levee on cigarettes; Second, that the legislature mandate that every ten millionth cigarette sold in California be impregnated with cyanide; Third, that the cigarette tax/poisoning program be combined with the existing state lottery and that the result be promoted as *The Hot One*.

Under the proposal, the next of kin of “winners” would become instant winners themselves — they would collect \$10,000 on the spot merely by hauling the cadaver and the unsmoked portion of *The Hot One* to the nearest lottery outlet. As a bonus, they would be eligible to participate in a drawing to appear on *The Big Spin*.

The proposal caused an uproar. Nonsmokers generally approved of it, but many felt that it didn’t go far enough. A particularly vehement anti-smoking group, Nonsmokers

Against Smoking Tobacco in Everyday Situations (NASTIES), publicly urged that the poison used be botulin toxin. They argued that hour



upon hour of retching, agonizing pain, and hallucinations followed by death would be a fair payback for the misery, discomfort, and disease caused by second-hand smoke.

Ephus acknowledged the merits of their suggestion, but argued that it would make his proposal unworkable. Botulin toxin would require several hours to take effect, by which time *The Hot One* would have been discarded. He argued that this would destroy the integrity of the system, as the heirs of any clown who picked the wrong can of vichyssoise could haul their dear departed to the nearest lottery outlet and claim \$10,000 rightfully belonging to smokers.

The anti-smokers remained unconvinced until Ephus played his trump card: "Look, if cyanide is used, the next time you're in a restaurant and some jerk pulls out a pack of cigarettes, you'll know there's a chance that the clown will be face down in the lettuce and thousand island within seconds. If botulin is used, *that won't happen.*"

That they bought; and the botulin suggestion was immediately withdrawn.

Smokers were initially edgy about Ephus' proposal, but they warmed to the idea after he explained, "You know, the average smoker smokes about a pack a day. That works out to 7,300 cigarettes a year. At that rate you'd have to smoke for 1400 years before hitting *The Hot One!* Hell, your chances of getting eaten by *hogs* are higher than that!"

After Ephus explained the minimal risk to smokers, popular opposition to *The Hot One* melted away. Male smokers quickly realized that a little additional danger would

enhance their already macho image, and Ephus' bill was promptly enacted into law.

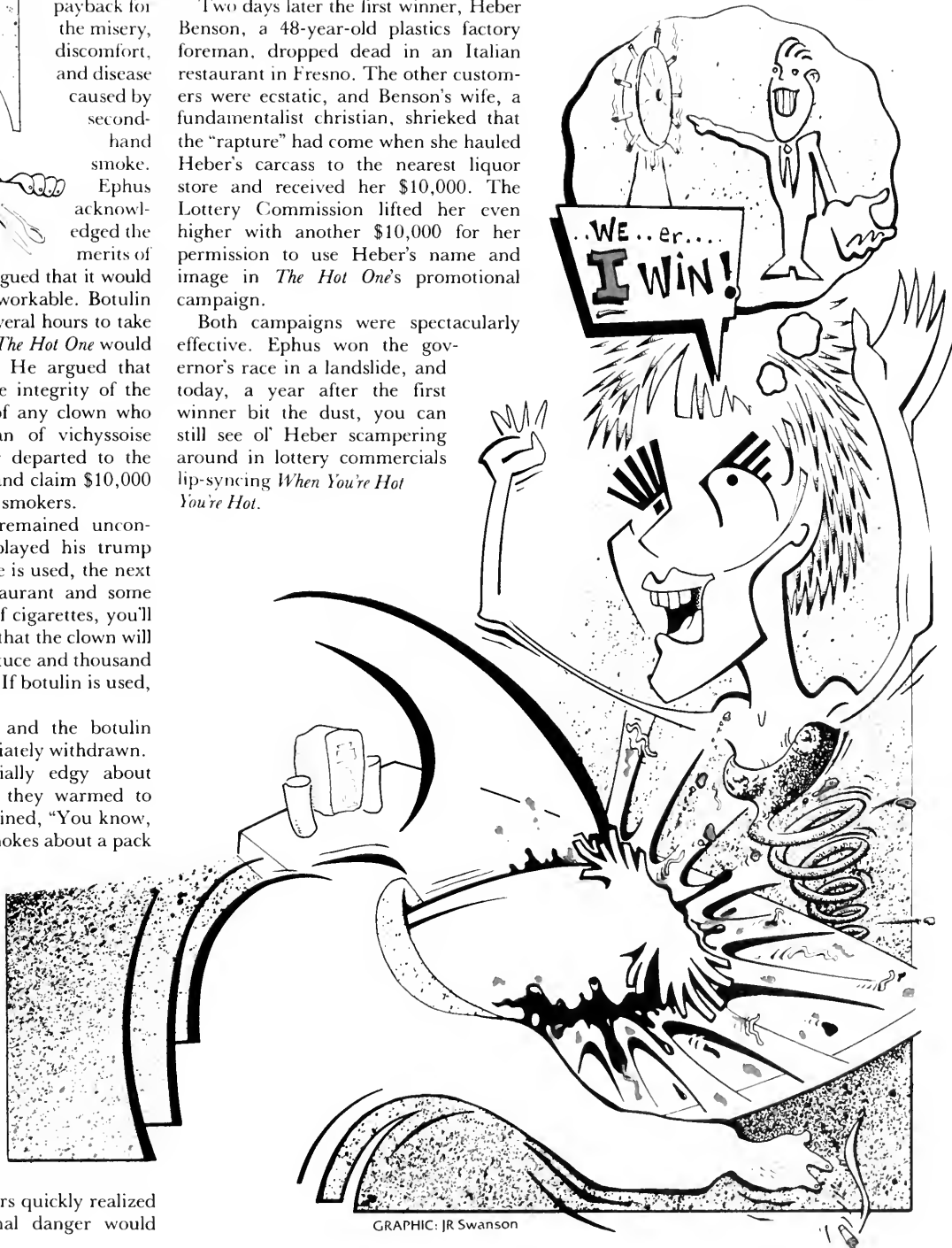
Within a week Ephus announced his candidacy for governor, lotto fever hit the smoking public, and the day that the first *Hot Ones* went on sale there were lines at cigarette counters all over the state.

Two days later the first winner, Heber Benson, a 48-year-old plastics factory foreman, dropped dead in an Italian restaurant in Fresno. The other customers were ecstatic, and Benson's wife, a fundamentalist christian, shrieked that the "rapture" had come when she hauled Heber's carcass to the nearest liquor store and received her \$10,000. The Lottery Commission lifted her even higher with another \$10,000 for her permission to use Heber's name and image in *The Hot One's* promotional campaign.

Both campaigns were spectacularly effective. Ephus won the governor's race in a landslide, and today, a year after the first winner bit the dust, you can still see ol' Heber scampering around in lottery commercials lip-syncing *When You're Hot You're Hot.*

Lottery earnings and disbursements to schools have doubled—the schools now receive *two* dollars per student per year—and even the surgeon general's notice on cigarette packs has a kinder and gentler tone: "Warning: If you purchased this pack of cigarettes, *you may already be a winner.*"

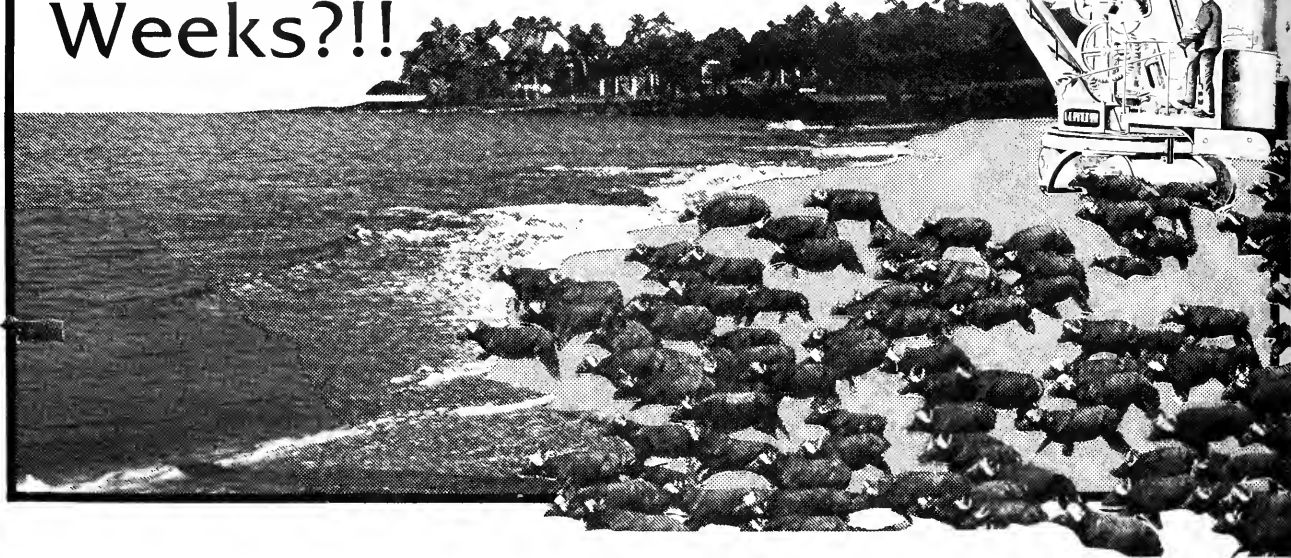
—by Chaz Bufe



GRAPHIC: JR Swanson

Just Two Precious Weeks?!!

GRAPHIC: PW Collective



A recent advertisement for US Air tells us that foreign workers (German, French, Australian) all enjoy paid vacations of a month or more. It concludes “In the US we get just two precious weeks. [pause / cut to diver over pool] GO FOR IT!” It is at once a nakedly revealing portrait of our overwork and a paean to our personal toughness.

With few exceptions, people don't enjoy work. Not only is it compulsory, often in a boring and predictable environment over which we have little or no control, suffering major outrages and minor threats, exercising no personal creativity, but the JOB keeps encroaching on *our own time!* While the work week lengthens with growing commutes and time spent preparing for work, the job extends into leisure space/time—perhaps more accurately labeled “autonomous” time, since it is seldom exclusively dedicated to “leisure.” The phone, the home computer and the fax—all becoming more mobile and powerful—are changing our society's definition of leisure time. Nor is it enough to show up for work, bright eyed and bushy tailed—or at least awake—one must now conform to company policy and drug law at night and on the weekend.

As other reviews in this issue indicate, the reduction of work time is not only desirable, it is feasible—dare we say *necessary*.

Recently, in a break with the 40 hour straitjacket, the (West) German Metalworkers Union signed contracts for a 35 hour work week, which at least suggests that it is possible to reduce the work week. But increasing autonomous time is not a *goal*; it is a *means* to a fuller life.

The common phrase “free time” is precisely analytical, rather than flippant and vague. The core of the experience is time spent at one's own desire. Anything else may be satisfying for a while—for some people it may always be

gratifying—but it runs the risk of becoming a sham, of being just another role one plays. Of course we humans are wondrously inventive, and so the appropriation of time and its multiple utilization is never a simplistic matter. What is one person's drudgery, avoided or minimized by gadgets or hired persons, is another person's joy. I like cooking and eating; my disposal of time (and money) will be dictated by a different requirement: far from minimizing it, I want to intensify the experience.

Satisfaction in autonomous time is strangely elusive. Free time is not fun, instead it can be threatening. As “Paris-Cheques,” a data processor in a bank puts it in *Travailler Deux Heures Par Jour* (see page 44): “The women at work tell me: ‘But what would you do with an extra free day? I don't even know how to go to the movies alone!’ As far as they're concerned, if I am not either at home or at work I'm obviously cruising the street. . . . You have coffee, next to you is someone who feels like having a conversation, *who perhaps had a cool experience* and it stops there. That's life. Or listening to some guy play jazz in the street: that's pleasure. They [the women] have lost even pleasure. You deny yourself joy and after work you get drunk or run away towards who knows what, eventually to die . . .”

We have so little practice in using autonomous time in creative ways that it would be surprising if most people *were* capable of unfettered enjoyment—schools, the crucible of team sports, conformity and obedience, work to dissolve creativity and personality, resulting in Homo Obedientius, a creature capable of performing menial jobs under supervision. For many (North) Americans, leisure time is equivalent with the hypnotism of TV and mass sports, tinged with the drudgery of household tasks.

In reality, "free" time serves to divide and pacify workers even as it buys them off. The money economy permeates off-work life as thoroughly as it controls work-life. At the same time that it has extended itself to the farthest reaches of the planet by means of pesky tourists and ubiquitous radio waves, it has moved ever more relentlessly into diverse spheres of domestic life. The "Phone Sex" industry is a colonization of the world of fantasy. Activities which used to partake but little of the realm of commodities are now informed by entrepreneurial concerns.

The ironically named "Leisure Industry" is big business indeed; the U.S. Department of Commerce estimated that in 1987 the U.S. spent some 570 billion dollars on leisure—about 18% of all personal expenditures. Hardly surprising, as in this society the realization of every human need is reduced to a way to make money.

Beyond the profit motive there are even more insidious uses of leisure—take, for example, an early example of industrial psychology. Workers in a factory were divided into two groups, one of which was given a 15 minute break during the day. Not surprisingly, they were *more* productive than the other group, even though they worked fewer minutes. After the experiment the company, with typical ingenuity, ended the break...and the workers who had received it remained more productive than the other group! Aha! A science of control is born. If so small a thing as a few minutes break entirely surrounded by work can be a powerful motivator we might deduce that paid vacations are an even more enticing carrot.

Beyond the subtle manipulations of identity and aspiration there is an enforced "individualism." What were once collective activities become private—and passive—acts. In music, for example, we rarely create music; rather the "boom-box" is used to demand public attention, to assert existence, while a portable stereo and headphones allow us to exclude the world with our music. Many uses of autonomous time serve to separate people and confuse them about the world.

We—the consumers of this leisure time, the temporarily free—see things differently. For us this time is not just a reward or a way to be exploited. It is the locus of our personalities and hopes, as well as our own reproduction; not just sex, but also cooking and cleaning and health maintenance and all those other

necessary tasks that can't be done at work. To the extent that culture is produced outside of the corporate realm it is created and supported by this free time; garage bands and writers and artists and singers all help to both create and preserve popular culture.

There are many ways of looking at free time on the micro-level; perhaps as many as there are people. How do we define its boundaries? I arbitrarily imposed some order by borrowing a division used by business, which yielded 12 broad categories: *Entertainment*, including music, movies, games (except sports) etc.; *Sports & fitness*; *Culture and the Arts*; *Reading*; *Self-education*; *"The Second Job,"* including hobbies that cross into the commercial sphere, financial investments, etc.; *Home improvements* and *"Do it yourself"* projects, etc.; *Cooking &/or Eating*; *Shopping*; *Vacation & Travel*; *Family & Friends*; and *Beliefs & Values*, which covers philanthropic, charitable, religious and political activities (this magazine, for instance). To this list I would add *Automobiles*, including all those improvements & frills on cars, as well as "cruising" in all its forms; *Pets*; *Fantasy*; and *Crime*, such as joy riding, petty burglary, drugs, etc. Informal

notes on one of these exercises—vacations—accompany this article as a sidebar.

The difficulty categorizing this time reveals a central aspect of leisure time—it serves many uses at once. In autonomous activity we can discern a denser usage of time: while some cook, for instance, alone and in silence, most people "utilize" their now-occupied leisure by adding to it on "another channel." The radio may be on, providing at least an ersatz human interaction (the talk show), music or a story, sports and games, etc. Friends or family may participate either by working or simply "hanging out" and talking. These social contacts are more prevalent in societies that are characterized by larger family groups and more extensive social networks.

Attitudes towards "women's work"—often highly productive—are also affecting the definitions of work and leisure. House work and child care is necessary to the maintenance of the home, indeed, of life itself, yet it is unpaid and often not recognized as "real work."

This "free time" is not merely an expression of consumption; it can be a (re)assertion of creativity, personal enjoyment and worth, and our sense of play. It is the alter ego of our Clark Kent work life.

The attempts at personal enjoyment and the human will to create fight against control and conformity. We day-dream on the job and take breaks to reassert some control over the workplace (or at least to side-step it for a while), we form friendships to ameliorate the isolation and inhuman environments. Making fun of the boss, or of stupid rules, helps us maintain sanity as well as undermining authority. Time-theft is one of the most common and direct ways of reasserting personal control at work: reading and writing, practicing waste-basket basketball, etc. Sabotage and theft represent not just personal gain but also ways of reasserting one's self; of restoring some much needed excitement and risk to life. We might also remember that the Luddites broke frames not simply to protest speed-ups and layoffs, but also in rage at the degraded quality of the product: the need for competence, as opposed to waste, is a very strong motivator.

As businesses increase pressure on executives and managers, who increasingly have no real job security, they too join the stampede to identify themselves



with their leisure time activities. While for some leisure is just another arena in which the personality displays itself for others it is increasingly the reason for being.

Autonomy—or leisure, or recreation, by whatever name—is as productive as “real work”—usually more so. This is the seed of recreating the way we work; rather than wage-labor one can envision a different form based on this sense of autonomous activity. Autonomous time is intense, creative, social. As less time is spent at paid labor more may be spent at creative work. Not only does mechanization yield greater productivity during those hours at work; the time freed for other activities may be more fully used—the person will be less exhausted and preoccupied.

Leisure time—autonomy, free time, my time—is multifaceted. It serves as a way of expanding the money economy and commodity relations as well as intensifying their hold. It is the essence of how we, as people, reproduce ourselves and our culture. It is both a shield against the tyrannies of work and a sword that can help end that tyranny.

— Primitivo Morales

Thanks to Thorstein Veblen, Dennis Hayes, William Danner of Leisure Trends, and the PW collective; the errors and lacunae are mine.

VACATION!

“Some day I’m going to walk up to a white woman with a baby in her grocery cart and cry, ‘What a darling little white child! Is he a full-blood? May I take his picture? Could you stand over by the Wonder Bread, please—my Hopi friends will just die when they see this!’”

— Cynthia M. Dagnal-Myron,
a Hopi woman¹

* * * *

The Vacation is no mere scrap of time wedged between onerous tasks; it is the oasis at the end of work. The standard two weeks, barely enough to decompress from habit, is so stretched and filled that it is frequently found to be exhausting: “I need a vacation to recover from my vacation!”

Vacations are often solitary, shared by the smallest social groupings: family, occasionally a few friends. This is only partly because of cost; it also reflects the importance of “getting away” for those who feel trapped at work or home. The ability to cast off

A NINE-CANDLE EVENING

“bred of disdain, this foundling nuance . . .”

It is as though some initiate
stumbled awkward inlike
here to address this vitriol,
a venom sulk, like embarrassment.

Wet behind the years
maturation threw one for a loop;
some damp history years
for saturation, a soaking simple dupe.

Tea in this cup
like some bedside opera glass
a brewing, magnified touch
steeped in a bungling upper class.

Rather sweaty palms might betray
this hesitant novice yet to speak;
until spoken to he awaits the fray
of conversation fearing his voice too meek.

How tedious the Governor’s breezy prattle
ever artful his lesser minions contrive
a shred of attention in this weasels’ battle
to advance one’s own opinion is to survive.

It has been said that there is nothing
quite like utter, dread silence
to make even the strongest of men shrink;
but a particular quietude was soon evident.

A welcome lull thus becalms the gale,
the novice clears his anxious throat;
but suddenly he bursts forth, a bolder wind in his sails
and barks from his trousers a vaporous boast.

In that instant the dour note had struck
there followed a damning soundless moment
as the entire starched still-life became stuck
in the vortex of this nasty gaseous omen.

The mortified youth weighed the remote chance
of outright escape or a brisk walk
against the probability that his yet smouldering pants
may have caused this painful lapse of talk.

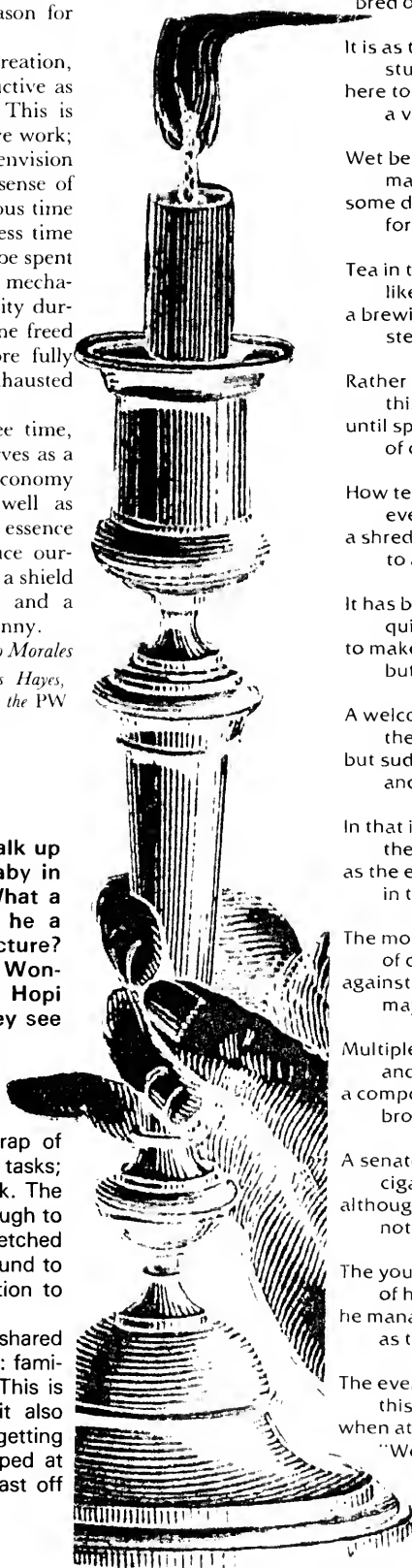
Multiple mega-eons seemed to elapse
and the eolian stench by then was withering;
a composureless call for a match
brought about the spectacle of many men fidgeting.

A senator was first with the tinder remedy
cigars were awkwardly re-lit without delay;
although these proceedings bore no small levity
not a soul had as yet even a syllable to say.

The young innocent trembling under the weight
of his stiff upper-lip finally braved the quiet;
he managed to look straight upon this muted array
as though ’twas not he who caused such foul riot.

The ever-genteel assembly prepared to ignore
this obvious guilt and resume their idle chatting;
when at last he spoke and demurely implored
“Well . . . rather decent weather we’re having? . . .”

Josiah R. Leet



the standard roles, duties and surroundings is the core of the experience. The false good cheer of the tour group, both guide and charges, is not to be mistaken for any genuine social contact. Transience and shallowness mark most such encounters with one's fellow tourists, and they are in far closer proximity—more understandable—than those who inhabit the landscape through which the tourist journeys.

By dress, money, mobility and behavior the tourist distinguishes itself. Norms of behavior from home are discarded, or at least modified, while none of the "quaint" indigenous customs are respected, let alone adopted. The sight of the tourist calmly walking uninvited into people's houses and ceremonial centers is common: such behavior would not be considered appropriate at home, wherever that may be.

The tourist pays out of the pocket for the often unpleasant treatment meted out to him/her. The cost of the infrastructure is often paid by government bodies of one sort or another (airports, roads, electricity, etc.). Private capital creates enormous islands—a mobile and cushioned gulag—dedicated to separating visitors from their money. There are many "resort-destinations," which are often literal fortresses in the midst of intense poverty. Even the wealthy North American landscape is dotted with facilities catering exclusively to those outside the community, ranging from small tourist malls and parks to whole cities such as Las Vegas and Atlantic City. The consequences of this for the people in the area are rarely given more than lip service; they are expected to be grateful for the jobs. The hidden costs: sewage and garbage, traffic, etc. are borne entirely by "the locals."

Examples of environmental despoliation are found around the globe. In a recent issue of *Appen Features*² there were articles illustrating environmental damage from resorts & tourists in Palawan (a unique island in the Philippines), the Antarctic. In China, the government's proclivity for giving pandas as political gifts—in this case to a Taiwan zoo—threatens the survival of these endangered animals by shrinking the available gene pool. Antarctica is threatened by commercial package tours (in addition to problems with scientific stations), which bring about 3,000 visitors to the continent



PHOTO: David Green

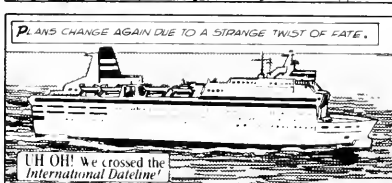
yearly; they do not dispose of non-biodegradable waste in compliance with treaties covering the Antarctic. The Institute of Political Ecology of Chile now advocates the suspension of such commercial tours "because this land of eternal ice and snow is being dangerously contaminated."

The damages of the tourist industry go beyond the obvious ones of ecological contamination and forcing people into a servant relationship. The effects are magnified in cultural (or anthropological) and "green" tourism because of their attraction to those areas that are the least "spoiled." The tourist despoils what it most values. Sometimes deliberately (insisting on "western" accommodations) and sometimes unintentionally (as when government and private planners treat the indigenous people as objects of a development plan). There are hidden problems, as Peter Goering³ shows: "The tourist economy is centered around Leh [a small Indian city near the Chinese and Pakistani borders], and very little of the economic benefit of tourism accrues to the more than 90 percent of Ladakhis who live outside of

this area. Within Leh the handful of Ladakhis who own large hotels benefit disproportionately. ... The problem goes beyond an uneven distribution of the benefits, however. Those not participating can become economically worse off simply by continuing to live as they always have. The reciprocal relations of mutual aid are broken down by the extension of the monetary economy, and tourists' demands for scarce resources drive up the price of local goods.

"For example, in the past villagers commonly shared pack animals in informal exchange relations. Now, during the tourist season, animals are no longer available to a neighbor in need: they are frequently off in the hills carrying tourists' luggage."

Social problems such as theft are increased by the disparaging—and painful—comparison that is made with foreign cultures: it comes to be valued by at least some of the young as better than their parents' culture, which is often seen as ignorant, backwards, the object of amusement by sophisticated people; indeed, the customs the tourists come to see are perceived as the



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leisure of the fabulously wealthy: the Club Med type vacation where one escapes from the sordid reality of work and the daily exchange of money, and where one has plenty of people to boss around while doing nothing useful. Time is the major constraint; money is secondary.

Tourists are usually passive: they aren't themselves a part of the surroundings, and are shown objects and spectacles devoid of any meaningful content. Given the pack-like nature of many tourist activities, as well as the ubiquitous telephone, escaping from the "rat race" becomes impossible: they bring it with them. Organized leisure is the rule of the day: the only choices are already determined, and are almost always reassuringly familiar. Impelled by the need to have a good time—fast—in a narrow social space, the tourist leaves unsatisfied: ready for more, but not at the same place.

Escape from responsibility and everyday drudgery is guaranteed: the ultimate promise remains a mirage.

— P. M.

- 1) Cultural Survival Quarterly #14 (1). CS, 11 Divinity Ave., Cambridge, MA 02138
- 2) Appen Features, Asia-Pacific People's Environment Network, releases 37/38, 38/39, and 1/90. Contact: c/o Sahabat Alam Malaysia, 43, Salween Road, Penang Malaysia.
- 3) Cultural Survival Quarterly 14(1), pg 20.

GRAPHIC: Chris Carlsson

cause of backwardness. Emulation of the "rich" outside world further opens the village to the dollar, as well as exacerbating environmental problems. The village, disunited and increasingly out of step with a now damaged environment, often changes even more, and not for the better. Carried far enough this becomes a dissolution so complete it scares away even the tourists; the area survives in a ghastly imitation of foreign life. The Club Med's slogan, "The Antidote for Civilization," is cruelly ironic.

Of course, the objects of attention become damaged as well—whether we speak of objects such as Lascaux's frescoes, or of peoples' practices

which are driven underground or altered (for instance, performing seasonal rituals at the wrong time of year for the tourists). Often tourists are presented with empty rituals, which they mistake for reality, and villages "contaminated" by foreign elements, which they reject as being unrealistic (i.e. not like the pictures & descriptions).

The vacation is a token of both leisure and wealth: the more money you've got, the farther you can go from everyday life. Tastes differ; some prefer the pristine (but not for long) mountain fastness, others tour the Antarctic or swim with whales, etc. Some prefer to emulate the apparent



GRAPHIC: Zoe Noc



Reflections of an Immigrant

cared for one another more. Friends would drop by without calling. Here, telephone has ironically become the main means of communication. I couldn't help noticing most so called friends I happened to make during the first few years were superficially polite—a very British quality—but frightened to get close with other human beings, eager to retreat into shells they lived in. They were self-sufficient, used to early independence. After all, they never had much of a childhood and usually worked through their best teenage years. What a wonderful preparation for demands of today's maddening world! What about having a quiet teenagehood, deprived of such serious responsibilities they (biologically) were not ready for anyway? I read somewhere that, by a caprice of Mother Nature, a human being doesn't really become ready for life until late twenties, and from the moment of his birth until that time, he lives in a sort of a social womb, where he learns the most important things in his life. Well, if that's true, then this country has been producing some emotionally, culturally and spiritually impoverished individuals that, in turn, treat their kids in the same way, by getting rid of the responsibility of having them at home as early as possible. Maybe I am prejudiced, after all I come from a country with a highly developed cult of child. Here, it seems, only rich kids can afford what every human being is entitled to: time to grow up at a natural pace, without extra stress. It is no wonder that nobody here takes time any more to smell the flowers and just relax. Well, not quite. I have met here a few people who have actually developed their spiritual and emotional lives.

Another distinct and disturbing phenomenon can be observed in the American suburbs. Those people actually feed their children with some very backwards ideas full of prejudice and conservatism. When I first came to this country, I lived among them. I ended up believing that all Americans were like that. Until I moved to San Francisco, of course. There I was lucky to be a part of things that actually matter, and fed my brain with new ideas. Of course, I haven't forgotten my past experience, and still keep wondering why education is the last on the list of priorities in this country, and why does it have to have a price tag? That is, why people study mostly for the grade, not the knowledge, if they study at all? Specialization pushed to extreme is maybe the key to immediate success, but ultimately it defeats the purpose of our lives on this planet. Aren't we here

to fully experience, enjoy, compare and reflect? To be happy rather than miserable? I saw once a French engineer solve a complicated problem by analytically recreating the entire process—a thing that's virtually impossible to do for American engineers. Their minds had been trained not to see the whole spectrum, but a small portion of it. Get it? People who specialize too much will never know what's real or what they are missing. It's very frightening as we are talking here about the most developed country in the world! Today's America is very disappointing. Only a small group of people is enlightened enough to see what's actually happening. I guess it all starts when people learn how to recognize certain values. It all begins at home, then school. People here are not in touch with their roots, in universal sense, they are not in touch with their basic selves. They surely won't find balance by implementing new computer solutions to their reality, instead of realizing they basically don't need that. Just like they can do without all that stuff they are made to believe they need to survive. Who on earth needs all those cars and microwave ovens? Who needs three layers of packaging for one little thing? Why do people feel this urge to succeed? The tempo of living in America and the stress is certainly beyond anything I have ever seen.

Why do I stay if I am so negative? Well, first of all, I am just passing by. I've always believed my place was somewhere quiet, like Canada, or inspirational, like Europe. Secondly, I wasn't always negative, in fact, at first, I was fascinated. Following the rules, I went broke by buying a new car, got myself in debt—all this glitz, you know. Then, I started missing my old values, so I took time to reflect. I studied art and read a lot of wonderful stuff the minority in this country tries to communicate to the rest. When I finally got ready to look around, I saw things the way they really were. I still believe this world can be changed. There are some people who care enough. And I want to contribute. In the country where most people don't like their lives, yet function with incredible efficiency, putting up with stress that's killing them, some radical change is needed. What the hell do they need the incredible structures they are locked in for? Life is complicated as it is. There is time and place for everything in most other places in the world, except here. Even in West Germany (the most square headed country in the world) they take a month of vacation every year, and their productivity level stays the same. Amazing, isn't it?

Well, I have given you a piece of my mind. As terrible as it sounds, this is what I really think. I am actually glad I was able to be an observer, and hope you don't take all this too hard, providing that chauvinism doesn't impair your sense of reality.

—Malgorzata G.

The Right To Be Lazy

"... You have to have Mr. Novak unemployed, unhappy, sleepless, going crazy, and then happy to take a job on a road or elsewhere."

—Rita Klimova, new Czech ambassador to U.S.
quoted by Rob Waters, June 1990 Mother Jones

"Far better were it to scatter pestilence and to poison the springs than to erect a capitalist factory in the midst of a rural population. Introduce factory work, and farewell joy, health and liberty; farewell to all that makes life beautiful and worth living."

The French constitution contains a phrase about the "Right to work." Unlike its US cousin, this phrase didn't mean overtly anti-union/syndicalist laws; it simply states that workers demanded work. But was it really the workers demanding work, or was it the new owners of France requiring workers?

One hundred years after the French revolution a demand was put forward by the workers of North America for a 40 hour work week, in contrast to then common 10-13 hour days, 6 days a week. The infamous Haymarket Massacre and May Day were indirect results of this struggle; the reduction in work took a bit longer: in the US it wasn't obtained until during or just after WW II.

In the '90s a lot of people look enviously at the 40 hour work-week; the rats may have won the race but the rest of us are still frantically galloping. Even so common a source as the Gallup poll indicates that the work week has increased from 40.6 hours in 1973 to 46.9 hours in 1988. Even the "progressives" issue calls for "full employment." Is there no alternative?

Karl Marx's son-in-law, Paul Lafargue, could perhaps be called a man ahead of his time. I say perhaps because it may more properly be said that no person is ahead of their own time; it's just that most people are well behind their own. This was brought home when the *PW* collective was sent a book, a new edition of an 1880 tract called "The Right to Be Lazy," by Monsieur Paul Lafargue. Stick with me while I retrace

ancient history.

M. Lafargue, born in Santiago Cuba on January 15, 1842, was the son of a mulatto woman—Virginia—who had fled Haiti, and of Abraham Armagnac—a conservative landowner from Bordeaux. He was expelled from a university in Paris along with other students for insulting church and state in 1865. He soon became a member of the Proudhonist French section of the first international (IWMA). He studied medicine in England, graduating in 1868, and then practicing in London for a while. On April 2, 1868 he married Karl Marx's daughter, Laura. He was in Paris when the Franco-Prussian war started. When the Paris Commune was declared he went to Paris, but returned to the provinces to campaign on behalf of the Commune. After the fall of the Commune he was smuggled into Spain, arrested on August 11, 1871, and was held for 10 days. He was released before a secret society was able to initiate a plot to free him, and went to work in Spain as a member of the First International (IWMA); he was by then allied with Engels against Bakunin. In 1880 he was back in France, writing for a socialist weekly called *L'Egalité*. This is when he wrote "The Right to Be Lazy." It was printed as a book in 1883 while he was in jail on political charges.

He starts by denouncing "A strange delusion" that possesses the working classes: "... the love of work, the furious passion for work, pushed even to the exhaustion of the vital force of the individual and his progeny. Instead of opposing this mental aberration, the priests, the economists and moralists have cast a sacred halo over work."

The thinking that underlies these conditions was not at all new, even then. He cites a 1770 pamphlet, published anonymously in London under the title



PHOTO: James Carman

"An Essay on Trade and Commerce."

Part of it reads "the factory population of England had taken into its head the fixed idea that... Englishmen... have by right of birth the privilege of being freer and more independent than the laborers of any country in Europa. This idea may have its usefulness for soldiers, since it stimulates their valor, but the less the factory workers are imbued with it the better for themselves and the state. Laborers ought never to look upon themselves as independent of their superiors. It is extremely dangerous to encourage such infatuations in a commercial state like ours, where perhaps seven-eighths of the population have little or no property. The cure will not be complete until our industrial laborers are contented to work for six days for the same sum which they now earn in four." He goes on to propose imprisoning the poor in work-houses, which should be "houses of terror, where they should work fourteen hours a day in such a fashion that when meal time was deducted there should remain twelve hours of work..." Ever wonder where Maggie Thatcher & Co. get their ideas?

Lafargue goes on to describe the many wonders of industrial work and the many blessings that it brings on the workers, among them bitter poverty and an early death. He quotes several of his contemporaries about the grim conditions prevailing in Europe at the time — 12 and 14 hour days for men, women and children, poor food, polluted air, long commutes (by foot), etc.

He drives home the contrast with the idyllic promises of the ideologues of work, among them a Rev. Mr. Townshend of the Anglican Church: "Work, always work, to create your prosperity..." Referring to the legal imposition of work the good cleric continues: "[it] gives too much trouble, requires too

much violence and makes too much noise. Hunger, on the contrary, is not only a pressure which is peaceful, silent and incessant, but as it is the most natural motive for work and industry, it also provokes to the most powerful efforts."

Yet the reality was that workers were never given more than a fragment of what they produced—merely enough for a brute survival, while the vast productivity of industry was consumed by a very narrow minority. Indeed, the rich could not dispose of all the surplus, which, claims M. Lafargue, led to the cyclical crises of capitalism. There is too much food while workers starve, and so it has to be burned. There is too much cloth even as people wear tattered rags, etc. And, of course, the slump in "demand" would require less production, and the consequent unemployment of multitudes of workers. This is a direct result of the tremendous productivity of "modern" industry.

He gives an example of conditions in one industry. Says he "A good working-woman makes with her needles only five meshes a minute, while certain circular knitting machines make 30,000 in the same time. Every minute of the machine is thus equivalent to a hundred hours of the workingwomen's labor... What is true for the knitting industry is more or less true for all industries... But what do we see? In proportion as the machine is improved and performs man's work with an ever improving rapidity and exactness, the laborer, instead of prolonging his former rest times, redoubles his ardor, as if he wished to rival the machine." He clearly despises the rich for promulgating this philosophy—for requiring it, even—but he also hurls epithets at the working class for having embraced it whole-heartedly, for having acquiesced in their own enslavement; "this double madness of the laborers killing themselves with over-production and vege-ting in abstinence."

He attacks the concept of progress as well, saying "our epoch has been called the century of work. It is in fact the century of pain, misery and corruption. And all the while the philosophers, the bourgeois economists... all have intoned nauseating songs in honor of the god Progress, the eldest son of Work. Listen to them and you would think that happiness was soon to reign over the earth, that its coming was already perceived." As one of his examples he cites the old regime (before the French revolution) as having guaranteed, by the laws of the Church, 90 rest days; 52

Sundays and 38 holidays during which it was strictly forbidden to work. He cites this as one of the great crimes of Catholicism (in the eyes of the bourgeoisie) and a major cause of the apparent irreligiosity in the commercial bourgeoisie who "emancipated the workers from the yoke of the church in order the better to subjugate them under the yoke of work." He gives many cases from feudal and pre-capitalist Europe to support the idea that the machines have not brought us leisure. He does point out that the reductions in work that had been attempted up to then—in England where there was a reduction in the work day to 10 hours a day from 12—it was accompanied by increased productivity!

In one passage, again curiously relevant to today, he says "Our epoch will be called the 'Age of Adulteration' just as the first epochs of humanity received the names of 'The Age of Stone,' 'The Age of Bronze,'..." Examples, such as treating silk with salt to weaken it, remind us that the deliberate cheapening of goods is not a modern idea. Lafargue sarcastically extolls the inventiveness of these capitalists.

He ends with a chapter—"New Songs to New Music"—in which he sketches a society based on laziness. Far from calling for abolishing the capitalist class—and other non-productive parasites (generals, free and married prostitutes, etc.)—he says "if they swear they wish to live as perfect vagabonds in spite of the general mania for work, they should be pensioned and should receive every morning at the city hall a five dollar gold piece." Satirical, but with an element of utter seriousness beneath it all—what happens when *everybody*, not just a few, are allowed to consume fully of what is produced, are allowed a life of full leisure?

In his introduction to the book, Joseph Jablonski points out that many generations of radicals have lost sight of M. Lafargue's visionary society of leisure, continuously echoing the cry for "more jobs." "Authentically revolutionary theory," he continues, "was kept alive by the various currents of the extreme Left: Wobblies, anarchists, 'ultra-Left Marxists, Wilhelm Reich, the Frankfurt School, and the surrealists. In the 1960s the Black insurrections, wild-cat strikes, the 'New Left,' the women's liberation movement and the 'counter-culture' brought this hidden revolutionary tradition... to the fore. In more recent years younger radicals have found in the even more hidden tradition of wilderness (or ecological) radicalism

—of Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Robert Marshall, Aldo Leopold—a crucial complement to their social radicalism, and a challenge to the naive optimism of most Marxists and anarchists (Lafargue included) regarding the emancipatory character of technology."

This is an excellent book and for the most part it doesn't show its age. The style of M. Lafargue's writing is somewhat dated—elaborate metaphors, heavy use of the vocative, a certain hyperbole—but the material here is as important as ever, and not only for the ideas of leisure.

M. Lafargue was also an organizer. As Fred Thompson puts it (pg 91): "... his reputation is mainly that of a popularizer of Marxism; party builder he became, too—and insisted that the party serve immediate and long-run needs of the workers... and yet [he was also] a champion of socialist unity... M. Lafargue aimed to build a movement in which there was scope for those of his fellow rebels with whom he disagreed." This book goes a ways towards revealing a man whom most historians have ignored, or slighted.

The book itself has a long printing history. It was translated into English by Charles H. Kerr in 1907, and has been reprinted many times by, among others, the IWW as well as the Socialist Party during the days of Eugene Debs and Emma Goldman. Its most recent printing was by the Chicago anarchist group Solidarity Publications in 1969. It has now been reprinted by the Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, of Chicago (1989). It has the full text of M. Lafargue's piece (60 pages), an introduction by Joseph Jablonski and an essay about the man and his times by Fred Thompson. This is an excellent book—as history, as analysis, as rhetoric. It has its problems—left as a solution for the reader—but it belongs on YOUR bookshelf.

—P. Morales



GRAPHIC: Valter

PERSISTENCE

8:05 K bus pulses in the terminal
under a web of girders relieved
in soot and pigeonshit

where dappled roseate fog is gliding in
A five-year black boychild lies
deeper than dream

on the front bench seat, head entrusted
to small open hand
The driver, muscle backed

in her green uniform sweater
leans over him — to take him?
no, tucks with tender precision

a red toy into his pocket. This
after such endless theft of song
She turns to the windshield rose-nimbus

seats herself, guns engine, takes us
out onto the roaring bridge How can we
not persist?

Adam Cornford



PHOTO: James Carman

HUNTER

Irresistably, he wants to catch that bird
the hunter in him is easily tapped
he squats down close to quarry
and is it not also that he wants to breathe
in the mystery of the little bird
rather than possess that small form
the tiniest of scarlet tanager
with his red earmuffs and rectangular
red form above his breast, his
protection from aggressors
that brilliant red striping
which will mesmerize an attacker
create a state of awe and attraction
in her What a cute bird, I
say and it sidles away as the boy
is now looking at me and broken
is the magnetism between him
and this smallest creature
he, myself and the tanager
are all city guys, our experience
is almost a success ending
mostly in indifference with the
bird out of sight and the recognition
between the boy and myself quickly
stilled in the necessity of city life
to turn elsewhere

Janice King

IF THE WEATHER CHANNEL WENT OFF THE AIR

buildings would collapse
cities would be swallowed by the earth
life as we know it would cease to exist,
a harrowing thought
that makes each performance
an inferno of urgency.

Adam Quest

THE RADIATORS

A dry pen in a dry brain:
an ageing man in an aged house.
The radiators work diligently
to make offense of this
winter season.
The pipes clang and start
as they stage their egos
in whistles through
the falling day.

I work at sleep
to ease the pain
of a seascape mind.
The foam on shore
is the night's residue.

Though I do not write,
I dream
and wake to the fragments
of my internal history:
a labyrinth of labyrinths
I have chosen.

After months of silence,
the sentence of my psyche,
I write to get the click
of my inner thermostat
to raise the heat
of a pen turning paper
into steam.

John J. Soldo

DID I TELL YOU I USED TO WORK FOR A VAMPIRE?

Did I tell you I used to work for a vampire?

Typing, phones,
light bookkeeping.
The usual.

Most jobs
when they pat you on the back,
they're just feeling out
where to slide in the knife.

I thought at least this'll be different,
more up front.

It was all right.

Lousy hours.
Had to work holidays.
And the vampire had weird friends.
But he dressed well,
with a certain Old World charm.
Didn't tell a lot of stupid jokes.
But I had to tell him about Secretary's Day.

He was a lot like my other bosses.

Although once
I asked him for a night off
and the look he gave me
was definitely
from beyond the grave.

Christopher Hershey

THIS IS MY LIFE, JONATHAN DAVID

If I had time, I would tell you
What my wrists feel like that no longer bow
To the hinge of my arm, sometimes drop things,
Unannounced, barely nod to the pneumatic gun
Torquing bolts into nuts every fifty-five seconds;
Show you those wrists singed under gloves
And forearms dingy with burns;
Show how my fingers sponge oil
From oxheads and only come clean after
Long lay-offs; show you my body
As it sways to the rhythm of the spring-suspended
Spotgun, a pendulum keeping pace with my
Automatic fingers glued to my palm
After six hours of sleep
And snap when I pry them up.

Son, if you'd ask, I'd lift my shirt,
Show you the paths welding sparks take down
My neck, my back, on their way to burn holes
In my jockey waistbands and how I stand there,
Absorb their fire, car after car
For seven hours and fourteen minutes,
Five days a week; I would show you
Smokestrains lining my nostrils
And legs that spring into the plant
Like struts but do an old man's shuffle
Out at three; ask you to watch my supervisor
Watching me weld, how he takes my gun
And demonstrates with one car
What I should do with four-hundred twenty-nine
While saying "I can do it; you can do it, right?"
Show you my robot nod;

I would tell you about the editorials
And about my friends that argue about autoworkers
Overpaid with 'cradle-to-grave' security,
My family that reads what I learn,
Show my unemployment card collection,
Tell you what it's like
Building the Car of the Year
Nobody wants;
Tell you I'm more than the handsome face
Slid between seconds of timeclock sensors
But my time has run out.

Christopher R. Barnes

FOG

showing out-of-focus gray
over the water
posing as a painting that
doesn't admit to much but is just
"done this way"

blurred-out loss of line
is purposed to preserve illusions
and being an
all-around-presence thing
rates right up there
artistic as anything past
hovering, totally unretouched . . .

Jim DeWitt

CHANGE

i met a poet
who was trying
to sell
his fashionable
string tie
for a shot
of whiskey
one night
after i had
been waiting
tables in a
small bistro
where all the
customers come
in at once
& having a pocketful of tips
i obliged & bought
him a well drink
at the bar next door
& as he pulled off his tie
he talked of dante
& the recurring questions
of existence
& as i put the tie
in my pocket
i thought i might
feel differently about
the answers in the morning

Richard Wilmarth

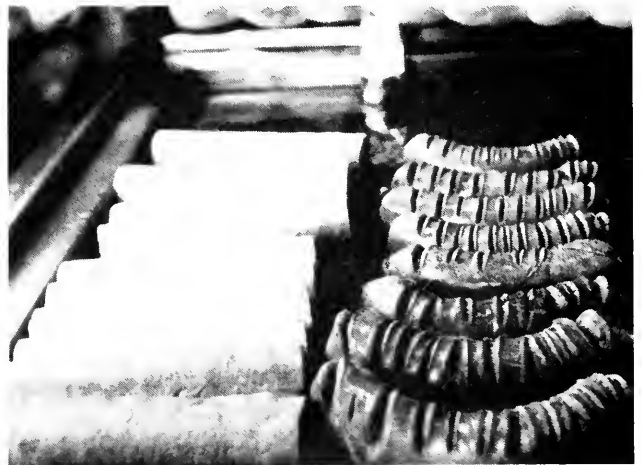
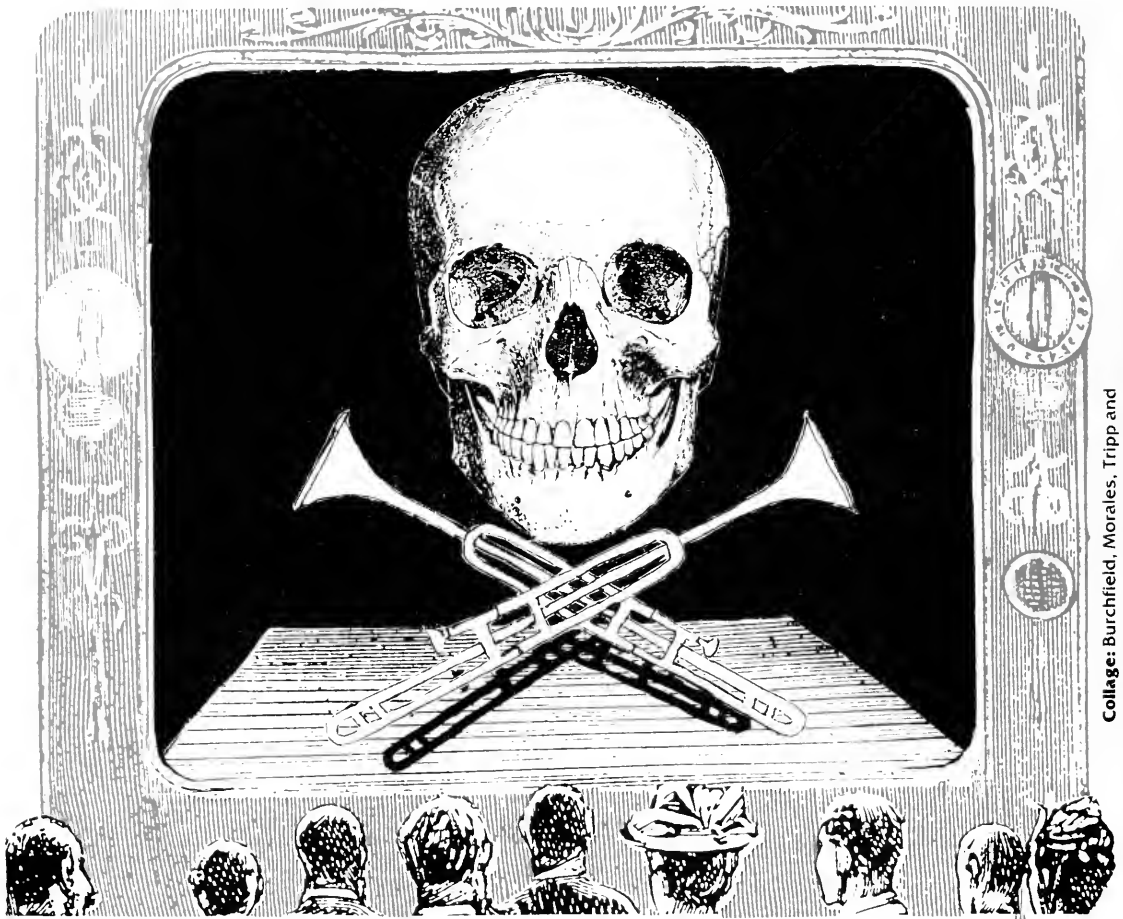


PHOTO: James Carman

THE MOON

Uta was describing her restlessness. How she just wants to take a trip and go anywhere. Especially anywhere far. To Paris. To Amsterdam. To the DDR. To San Francisco. To Mexico. "I think I'd really like to go to the moon!", she said, then without pausing, she said, "The moon is going to be full this weekend," and at first I thought she meant that it was going to be full of people who all wanted to get away for the weekend and go someplace far.

Glenn Caley Bachmann



Collage: Burchfield, Morales, Tripp and Claude Ewell

The Occult Revival

It began as a joke.

Phillip Kaufman had played the trombone on Bleeker Street for years. In the Seventies and early eighties the place bloomed with a few clubs and restaurants. Now that the bloom has withered, it has returned to what it always has been—angry graffiti and swirling newspapers which had served as someone's blankets the night before. The smarter mobile beggars and all of the musicians save for Phillip moved ten blocks east to Ambrose Avenue. I don't know if Blake was right about the entire universe in a grain of sand, but you can have an entire world in ten blocks. Phillip stayed in front of the Green Dragon, the only bar with any clientele. He slid his trombone out every night for pennies and dimes. People reserved their quarters for the jukebox on the premises.

One night he shows up with a faded orange Arrow shirt and black corduroy pants and a black beret. And he puts the beret on the curb and a sign by the beret

reading "Damnation Army Please Give." So folks ask him, "if you in the army, what rank are you?" "I'm a private but I aim high." "How many folks you damned?" "So far just one. Myself. I damned myself but if I can get a few more bucks I'll damn some more folk." It was a cold night and people felt sorry for a crazy man in a thin shirt and Phillip drew in sixty dollars.

He left with the closing time crowd "I've got to give the Boss His cut." So he counted out six dollars and tossed the money into a storm drain. Bill the wino crawled out of the shadows and tried to get at the money, and Bill said there weren't no money no more. It had disappeared like.

But that don't mean nothing.

Phillip was there the next night. Some folks allowed as how his playing was better but he walked away with only fifty dollars—five dollars to the Boss. Phillip drew about the same every night which was bad news for the Green

Dragon. He was drawing from the same crowd every night so it was always fifty-sixty dollars out of the till. After four nights, which is to say on Thursday, Susan, the Green Dragon's owner/barkeep, called the police.

The police came on Friday at 6:00 just as the Green Dragon's night was starting. Unfortunately a film crew from KHLV came also. One of the patrons must've called in the story; although, it's hard to imagine any of them being enfranchised enough to handle calling a news station. The cops asked Phillip to move. He said it was a public sidewalk. The cops told him to put away the sign. He said they were violating his First Amendment rights of religious expression. The cops asked if this was a legitimate religion, and if so, why hadn't they heard of it. He pulled a sheet of paper from his shirt pocket, unfolding the paper three times to typewriter-size. It bore two columns in a gothic type with its margins festooned with inverted

pentacles, goat's heads and snakes. While the lead cop studied this (and KHLV filmed), Phillip said if the cops didn't know about his religion—well, he wasn't responsible for their ignorance—and he offered to damn them on the spot. This proved too much for one of the junior cops who shoved Phillip off the curb and onto the cold asphalt. All of this made the ten o'clock news and early Saturday morning an ACLU lawyer called on Phillip in jail. Phillip got sprung and declined to sue the police department because "some folks can't handle damnation when it first comes to call."

He was back in front of the Green Dragon Monday night. A guy pulled up in a cream-in-coffee colored Nissan pickup truck. He had a beat-up piano in the back. He walked up to Phillip and took out his own gothic-print paper. Phillip studied it for a moment, and then the two had a confab. Jazz piano and slide trombone are a shaky combination, but the pair had a great audience due to media coverage. They took in two hundred and forty dollars. Susan relented. All these *new* people came in for a drink (or just to get warm and bought a drink as space rental). She hired two barmaids from the crowd to go outside and take people's orders.

The next day Susan told Phillip the Damnation Army could play on the inside of the Green Dragon. Phillip said no but thanks kindly. There's plenty of damnation available in cheap bars, but some folks find salvation there too. It wouldn't do to send out mixed signals. The IRS showed up in the form of a little man in a gray suit. The IRS said it was tired of people making up these pseudo-religions to avoid paying taxes. Phillip pulled out his paper and handed it to the IRS and said theirs was a real religion. The IRS stared at the paper and turned it over and over in his hands. Frankly he couldn't make heads or tails of it. The IRS desperately needed new contact lenses. The IRS drove away in his Hyundai and a tambourine man bicycled up. The tambourine man also had a paper. So there was a trio.

The *Sentinel* and the *Chronicle* sent reporters to cover the Damnation Army. They printed lots of junk to fill out their articles—satanic graffiti seen in downtown areas, white slavers in shopping malls, heavy metal music. The last reference was pure nonsense. The Damnation Army mainly played jazz standards including "That Old Black

Magic," "Devil Moon," and "I'm Heading for the Last Round-up." Several ministers, two priests, and a rabbi came to the next night's performance looking for something to denounce. They didn't find anything they could clearly denounce; although one of the priests was disturbed by a jack-o-lantern on top of the piano. It was more than a month to Halloween, and the priest knew what jack-o-lanterns really signified. The absence of the denounceable didn't stop one Pentecostal minister from sermonizing. He began preaching between sets and Phillip said, "Your intentions may be well and good but I don't come play my 'bone in your church." And a couple of burly men picked the minister up ever so gently and deposited him several blocks away. The crowd wondered if *these* men had their marching orders from Satan.

The Damnation Army was condemned from many pulpits next Sunday. And strong-eyed youths, knights of Christianity all, hid in the Monday night shadows waiting for two o'clock. The Green Dragon closed at two and the Damnation Army (in its only seeming tie to commercialism) stopped playing then. The crowd walked or stumbled to their cars. The Army was counting the night's proceeds. The knights ran at them hurling bricks and stones and such other detritus as could be found in the vacant lots of Bleeker Street. Two lads

had removed a plate glass from an abandoned store front and ran with it between them like brackets []. They were going to smash it on these men who challenged their ideas, but they tripped on the uneven sidewalk. One was pretty cut up. The other was dead. The Damnation Army also suffered—bruises all, Phillip a cut on his right hand, the pickup lost all its glass (including headlights), the jack-o-lantern was smashed. This too made the papers and the extent of the destruction embarrassed some of the ministers who had caused it. Others remained steadfast.

There was no Tuesday night performance, but the Damnation Army was back on Wednesday. The crowd surrounded them protecting them from angry missiles that never came. A national news team got some pictures and everybody struggled to get into them. One sour note: a drunk, a Green Dragon regular who could never do without the crowds, told a reporter that he'd never known that a nigger (meaning Phillip) could get a black eye.

There was some talk in town that Mr. and Mrs. Chase, the parents of the dead boy, might sue the Damnation Army as contributing to the death of their son, but it was only talk.

An enterprising fellow rented a storefront a block from the Green Dragon. He put in bookshelves and filled the



GRAPHIC: K. AOKI

shelves with paperback occult and UFO books, skull candles, Tarot card decks, quartz crystals from Arkansas, and bottles of come-to-me oil. He put in fluorescent lights and an open 24 HRS sign. He put out an awning with the shop's name, Ye Damnation Book Shoppe. Phillip strolled in the next morning and told him to change the name of the shop. Phillip said, "All you're selling is junk. You got papers? You don't got no Authority. I'm selling the real Damnation and if you want Damnation you come to me, and if any of your clients want Damnation they can come to me, and if they want damn fine music they can come to me too." Phillip left and there was a smell of brimstone to the air. And the next day the sign read Blue Goat Bookstore New and Used, and it attracted the usual collection of neurotics and near-mystics such stores attract.

Susan had the Green Dragon's sign repainted and the tacky dark paneling torn out.

Phillip refused interviews with *60 Minutes* and a chance to appear on *Geraldo*. "Shucks," he said, "I'm just a 'bone player," and he pulled out his by now somewhat worn paper by way of explanation. And the studio recruiters studied it hoping for an address so they could interview the brains of the operation.

There was no address.

Friday night, Bessie Mae, an overweight brunette from a closed-down go-go club, arrived. She had her own paper. When night fell she climbed on

top of the piano and began a strip tease. This was widely condemned from the pulpits. Several ministers prevailed upon the police to put an end to this and likewise the illegal practice of serving drinks out of doors. The police arrived about eight, Sergeant Cabanis and Officer Bulhon. Bessie had finished her first act and was in the Green Dragon trying to warm up. It's hard to strip in forty-degree weather, but you've got to do what you've got to do. The police read a cease and desist order to Phillip Kaufman, and Phillip said (1) He wasn't the one doing the stripping, and (2) He'd advise Bessie Mae to cease and desist if they could show him a law against a woman taking her clothes off atop a piano, which rested in a glassless Nissan pickup truck in front of a Bleeker Street dive. And the cops said they'd be back later this evening to arrest Bessie Mae if Bessie Mae was still stripping.

The cops drove off, and it came to pass that they were involved in a high-speed auto chase, and they drove their car into a concrete bridge support.

But that don't mean nothing.

After another week they had their first convert. A wimpy-looking guy with a blond beard and thinning hair stepped up between sets. "I want damnation," he said. Phillip leaned over with his trombone in one hand—leaned real close so they could smell what each other had for dinner. Then Phillip said "Are you sure, brother? Are you ready to disbelieve? Are you ready to renounce God and all his works?" Everyone saw this guy was scared. Scared to say yes, scared to back

down. So he said "Yes," all thin and high. And Phillip said "Well brother give me your address and I'll handle all the paperwork." The guy wrote something on a index card and everybody watched him all night. They was afraid that the worn-out asphalt of Bleeker Street would open up and swallow him.

There was a lot of talk in town the next day. The *Chronicle* ran a piece on a man who claimed to be finding the Satanic tithes in the city's drain system. Phillip challenged the man to show up at a D.A. meeting, and of course the guy never did.

The first convert showed up downtown in front of the biggest bank in town. He put an old flaking teflon pot on the sidewalk. He'd written in Magic Marker on the side "Give to the Damnation Army." He wore a devil costume and rang a bell. Three types of people put money in his pot: people who were amused, people who were afraid not to give, and people who give to every street charity so they won't have to look the solicitor in the eye. Some folks commented on the bell—when they were well away. Massive verdigrised brass cast in arcane sigils and forgotten, forbidden words.

There were more converts in the next few days. Soon almost every important street corner had its bell ringer. Phillip made a rare statement to the press, "The Damnation Army is growing. Soon it will be a big thing. Soon it will be in your town. When it is, I'm sure you'll know what to do."

— Don Webb

(For Stephen and Nancy)

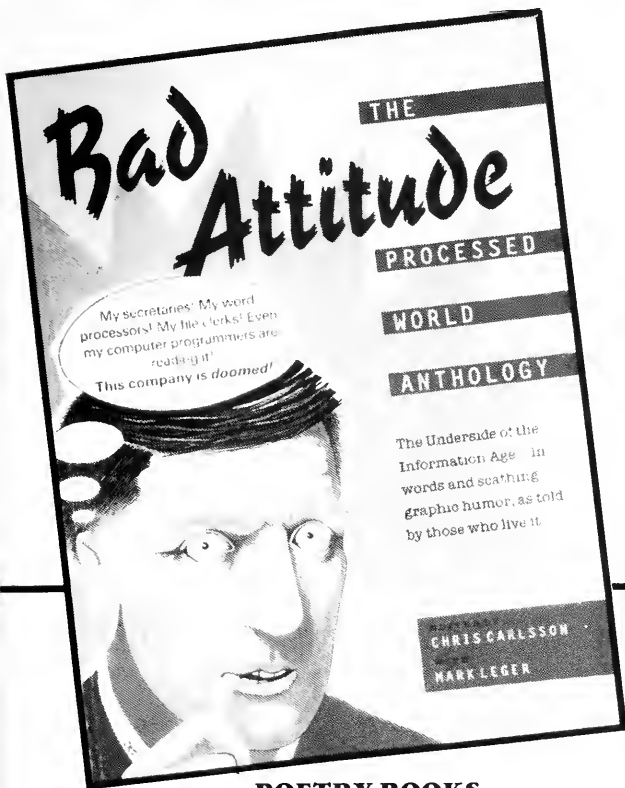


GRAPHIC: Angelia Bocage

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Travailler Deux Heures Par Jour

"The question I am raising is why this life goes on — what purpose it serves, and who wants it to continue, and why. I am not taking the merely rebellious, faineant [lazy] attitude. I am considering the social significance of a plongeur's life. --- Essentially, a 'smart' hotel is a place where a hundred people toil like devils in order that two hundred may pay through the nose for things they do not really want. If the nonsense were cut out of hotels and restaurants, and the work done with simple efficiency, plongeurs might work six or eight hours a day instead of ten or fifteen."

— Down and Out In Paris and London
by George Orwell (1933)

two hours a day would be sufficient to maintain current French lifestyles.

Where is Progress?

"I looked at the French economy during two periods of 40 years each: 1896-1936, and 1936-1976. During the first period productivity (i.e. production per head per hour) increased by a factor of 3. During the same period, worktime was divided by a factor of 1.4. During the second period, productivity augmented even more than in the first: it was multiplied by 3 or 4, but the length of the workday did not significantly change." He provides this visual aid:

	1896	1936	1976
Weekly Salaried hrs	56	40	42
Productivity (production per person per hour)	1	3	10

Writing goes against the grain: it is *Work*. Reading is pleasure: I am a reader. This book is in French, but it is so important that I had to take up my pen. We spend too much of our short lives at work, or commuting and preparing for it, so I make it my task to tell you about *Travailler*.

Published in 1977, it is the effort of a collective named Adret, which means the sunny side of a mountain, just as does the "Yang" of "Yin and Yang" fame. The first half is comprised of five tales of toil from all walks of worklife: "3/8," "Paris-Cheques," a longshoreman, a secretary and a metal worker/locksmith who started work at the age of 14 in 1928. I read these tales in one happy sitting. Their insights echo my own twenty years of toil.

"Liberate the Schedules!" is the title of the second part of the book. It presents arguments in favor of a utopian society based on individuals; it analyzes attitudes towards "tied work" as opposed to "free work" (tied to your job or free to work at home?). Its author is a theoretical physicist who decided to drop out: "It all stemmed from a single question: What was the meaning of my scientific activities which led me obstinately to pursue the exploration of increasingly distant worlds, when the 'real' problems, those affecting the evolution of humanity, remained outside the walls of the scientific institution, despite their urgency?"

Shaken by "defections" in scientific circles, L.V. ceased to believe in his job. He quit to start on social research. His background gives him a tremendous ease with numbers, and he went through a ton of statistics (INSEE, the French National Statistics Institute, for example), double checking as he went, to dig out the numbers. His calculations show that

So what happens with all this production? A good example is given from a story out of "Le Monde" (P.M. Dontrelant, 11-4-1975): "The destruction of 100,000 tons (eur) of apples, straight from the tree to the waste dump." Farmers, paid to destroy their crops line up with truckloads, paid for wasting a billion apples by the E.E.C.'s FEOGA (Fond European Agricole). It reminds one of *The Grapes of Wrath* and its gasolined oranges and starving Okies.

The issue is WASTE, one recognized in the U.S., certainly not new, yet more vital than ever. Time is wasted also. L.V. has a chapter on the subject ("A Time of Waste, a Waste of Time"), and guess what? Its primary concern is the waste occasioned by cars: "*Time Lost to Speed*: When you look at the hours a car can save you and the hours you spend paying for it, you start yearning for the days of walking and bicycling. A worker owning a car spends for its purchase, upkeep, repairs and insurance, some 375 hours or about 2 months of work on the average."

But L.V. doesn't want to deprive you of your car. He proposes reducing the number of hours needed to pay for it by building *sensible* cars—made to last, easy to fix by yourself, simple and environmentally-minded. He also promotes a decentralized organization: the return to living and working within a walkable or busable distance.

I disagree with his car scheme entirely. Looking at the total cost of this mode of transportation, humanity will pollute its environment beyond repair, to the point of extinction.

But how many are willing to consider public transportation as an alternative

manage it." Or as the longshoreman puts it: "Me, I'm, all for mechanization; I swear I'd rather have a machine do my job, otherwise at night ... I'm dead with fatigue."

Work and pleasure are intertwined—good sex equals a good workout doesn't it? So does gardening, cooking, carpentry, hacking, and a long list of other "useful" activities.

To return to the issue at hand—reducing the hours that it takes to utilize machinery—L.V. makes the same argument about small appliances. Instead of units welded shut, which cannot be fixed, he imagines the possibility of

which constitutes one of the most alienating parts of the industrial system."

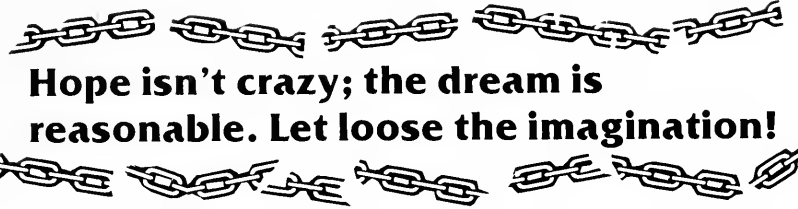
There is no doubt that economics is a complex subject few of us are ready and able to tackle. Nor is economics the sole element: "After all, it is evident that the principal obstacle to reduced work hours is mostly political. Of what use is all the reasoning in the world if you lack the desire for a different life and the will to fight for it?"

Sadly, most people seem trapped in the belief that nothing can change because a) it has always been that way; b) they are powerless individually; c) they need their cars to go to work and their VCRs to unwind from a tough job. Yet rare are those individuals that do not despise and vilify their jobs. The workaholics of our society are mostly self-serving entrepreneurs, madmen with no *life* outside of work and who demand long hours from their employees. L.V. has a four pronged attack to achieve the reduction of work: "1) reduce production; 2) augment productivity; 3) transform a part of 'tied work' into 'free work'; 4) augment the number of people engaged in 'tied' work."

L.V. knows it is heresy to ask for a reduction of production. Most of us believe the wealth of our countries depends on it. Let's watch the switch of military production in the U.S. in the 1990s. It is a prime example of overproduction to no particular end. Deemed essential to national security—read institutional survival—by the military, its continuation is rendered unworkable by economic realities.

L.V. proposes that the reduction of production be accomplished in three ways: a) redistributing revenues; b) diminishing waste; c) increasing the lifespan of products.

He makes a detailed economic study based on published documents used by the very economists employed by the French government to support its claim



Hope isn't crazy; the dream is reasonable. Let loose the imagination!

to cars? Imagine the resources wasted in individual cars applied to diversified "public" transportation modes (including free fleets of bikes in cities and "rental-private" vehicles to get to otherwise inaccessible places). We would need only a fraction of what the private auto industry consumes and people would not spend more than 2 months a year earning the choice to go places at their will. The time saved could be spent traveling.

No cars, well-organized, subsidized and far-reaching free public transportation, neighborhoods, trees, old people, the end of hierarchy, the beginning of an economy based on the needs of the people, equal sharing of resources including ourselves: that's what I want.

Take care of the big five—shelter, food, clothing, education and medical care first. With two hours of daily work you have time to do whatever you want: tend a garden, tell tales and play games with the kids, build your own house, have a sex life and get enough sleep to stay healthy.

As an illustration, in the tales of toil, the worker "3/8" describes how, because of a shifting schedule, night becomes day and family ceases to exist. This is his comment on sexuality: "Let's not talk about it; it's complete misery because one is pooped. I talked to fellow workers, they said working 48 hours a week in 3/8 [meaning their work schedule changes from day shift to swing to graveyard with no control] they can't get it up or else 'like dogs when you can

neighborhood workshops where people share mechanical knowledge, spare parts are available for decades, instructions are clearly written and sketched. People take pride in saving their cuisinart from certain death, and avoiding pollution of the landscape and waste of natural resources, by changing its rotor belt and ensuring another 7 years of faultless operation.

The same can be said of clothing, and the manufacture of more complex products such as electronic gizmos, motorcycles, etc. Standardization of tools and design, simplicity of involvement of the individual (You want a TV? Build it! Help do the programming, too!), and participation in neighborhood projects are all possibilities. He also suggests mechanization of the processes that make the individual parts, suggesting robotization of the most painful jobs: "Thus we would be able to eliminate the majority of assembly line work ...



GRAPHIC: Angela Bocage



to political relevancy. His conclusion is that French production can be divided by a factor of 1.7 (a return to 1965 levels) without altering the standard of living.

He proposes three ways of augmenting productivity. First, use automation to the max. The history of the Industrial Age is that of mechanization and increased productive capacity. Second, maximize the time freed by the use of machines. He cites studies made in several countries that show that each hour of reduction in worktime boosts productivity by 5%. This is not the same thing as maximizing mechanization. As the dockers puts it: "What seems important is to not empty schedule reduction from its context of struggle. If the reduction of worktime is not obtained without a struggle that prefigures a society of the future that we want, it's empty, empty as a balloon."

Third, everyone who wants to work will be able to. Everyone has something to share. With a "required" workday of 2 hours, handicapped people, students, mothers, older people and all the various groups that societies are made of would have no trouble contributing fully to both "tied" and free work. It also means a reassessment of the meanings of work and creativity, usefulness and ethics.

So a partial answer is mechanization and guaranteed pay for unemployed human labor. "We fought for mechanization to avoid hand labor. It was hard because the union always proposed raises or a reduction of the tonnage handled daily to earn full pay. There were many of us saying: 'The beef is not with raises, it's with automation.'"

The answer of the unions to this demand for automation is to bemoan the loss of employment. Here is the repartee of the dockers of St. Nazaire: "We told them: 'If today, there are 20 of us working on a boat, they must pay 20; and if 2 are enough, so much the better,

we don't care—they still have to pay 20.'..." In the case of a boat full of toxics, the end result is that if you fight successfully through the unions—who get a middleman's cut out of it—you get just as poisoned as before but with a danger duty pay. Hope your widow likes it.

To return to the analysis of L.V.: "When you look closely at all the numbers which I cited, you sometimes get the feeling that with a bit of good sense and good will, what appears insane today could be brought back to reason. But, to repaint our world in the colors of utopia, I had to eliminate profit, which is its engine, and centralist authoritarianism, which defends it. I was able, for this demonstration, to use the magic of thought to transport myself (prudently) to 'another' world. One that thought alone isn't enough to create.

"Capitalism is truly here, ready to defend itself. The absurdities and injustices we recognize are not the result of mistakes or bungling: they are necessary to its survival."

"And Now? ... " closes the book, with a vision of a 21 hour work week with a 30% hike in pay as a concrete demand for the present. Consumer boycotts work up to a certain extent: "Subjected to a strong enough pressure, the dominant class would give way on demands which eat up its profits but don't really threaten its survival in the short run. In themselves these demands are acceptable by the system and can be called *reformist*."

"What can be *revolutionary*, less easy to recuperate is the possible use of free time. "More of us could take advantage of this time, not to feed the leisure industry but to take charge of ourselves outside the mercantile structure..."

"Locksmith," for example, is interested by collectivity, the neighborhood: "Then for 10 years I was a member of the popular family movement. It was a workers' organization wishing to ac-

complish for working class families, workers outside of work, and consumers, what the unions had accomplished in the work environment: to take your own destiny in hand. It was a fascinating life, we did great stuff. For example, cultivation in common. There were 10 of us, we talked of this communal truck garden project, called a meeting. Perhaps a 150 people showed up. We talked about our plans: to get the right to cultivate certain lands through city hall and then take charge ourselves, workers, together, to cultivate them, turn over the dirt, plant and harvest. They were workers, most of them had never done this. At the meeting, people asked 'Who will do this and this?' 'Well, it's you, it's all of us together.' Well, then people said 'but it's crazy.' After an entire afternoon of discussion a few accepted."

They got 52 acres and allotted them to the neighborhoods closest to the scattered tracts and organized work parties to take care of the tasks. The success of the project was helped by the times: it was WW II, food was scarce, unemployment was high, commerce was disrupted. Yet "Locksmith" ran into the problem of having to motivate people, a task which we know to be difficult at *Processed World*.

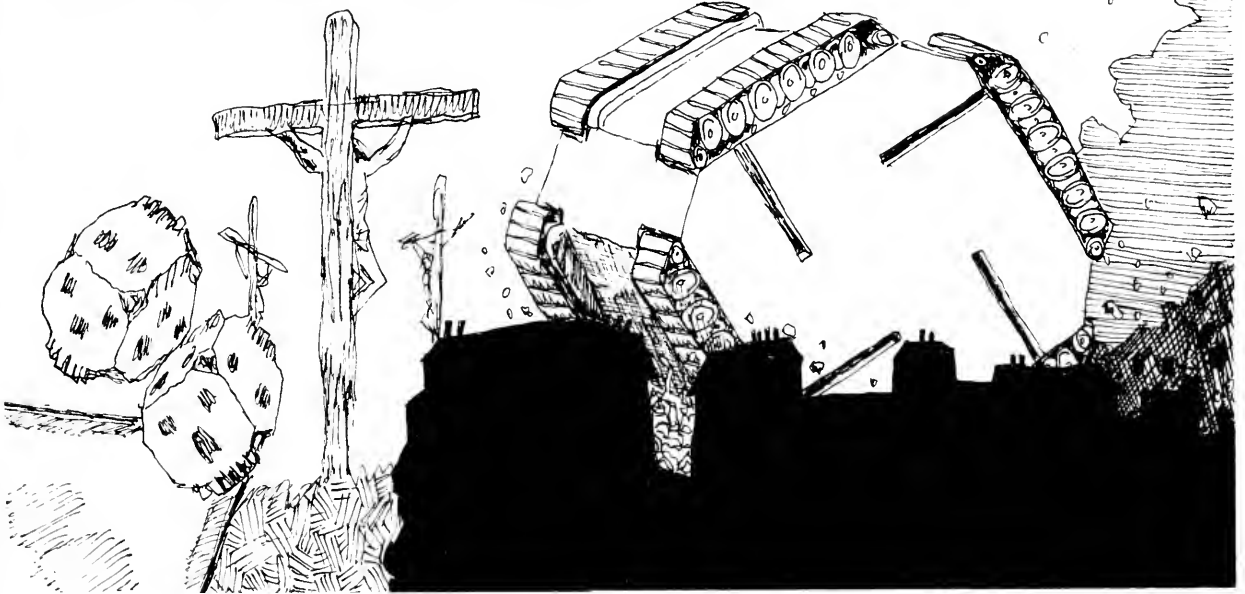
"But what's really terrible in work organization is: why don't people think anymore? Why don't they take responsibilities anymore? Because everything is predigested, even the simplest things. Very often workers know more than managers, still they don't have the right [to express their opinion,] there is no place where they can express their intelligence, they are used to having no responsibility. It's frightening to see how work organization doesn't take account of people and their intelligence. So intelligence not used to being employed becomes lazy. There are people who end up not taking interest in anything because their intelligence is never called upon."

L.V. sounds an appropriate note on which to end this: "This free time is also the time to simply take a breath, to live and dream, to find oneself, to return to the source of what makes us desire a different tomorrow. Technical argumentation is there to prove it: Hope isn't crazy; the dream is reasonable. Let loose the imagination, let us realize utopia!"

— Reviewed/Translated by Frog

The address of Adret (1977) is: Adret, 11 route Neuve, Gometz-le-Chatel, 91400, France

Six Kinds of Darkness



It is not without precedent that we reprint fiction (e.g. "Kareendi's Story"). In this instance, we present an excerpt from the just published final installment of John Shirley's *A Song Called Youth* trilogy (Warner/Questar). What is unusual is that in this case we do so with the author's permission, nay: encouragement.

In "Eclipse," the start of the trilogy, Europe has been devastated by a NATO-Soviet war triggered by the KGB hardliners after a Central Committee coup ends the *Glasnost* era. To maintain security NATO has brought in a private security firm, The Second Alliance, to police its turf. The SA is in fact part of an extreme right-wing plot led by a charismatic preacher, "Smiling" Rick Crandall. The cabal believes that Hitler lacked efficiency and stability: their plans are at least as cruel.

In a raid on one of the concentration camps—designated "Processing Centers"—the New Resistance, a loose alliance of many disparate groups, finds prisoners: "Every one of them had been bound in the stuff, tied together, squeezed in so tightly there was barely room to move or breathe. Torrence recognized the hard but prehensile gray plastic as sparks shot

from the clippers, severing it. Restrain-O-Lite, it was called. Used by British cops to hold large numbers of prisoners after a riot; the stuff absorbed static electricity and gave it off when you moved...about a fourth of them had died in the restraints; were hanging there, rotting. Some had rotted free, slipped to the floor. The others were starved, bruised, cold, bleeding from the shackle cuts, drained of dignity."

At the end of the first book a rocker, Rickenharp, has taken the top of the Arc de Triomphe. Playing a wildly amplified guitar and singing rebellion, accompanied by the staccato of assault rifles and the basso percussion of mortar, he taunts the SA. They destroy the Arc, its environs, and its occupants, with a *Jaegermaut*—an enormous swastika-like metal wheel.

By the end of "Eclipse Penumbra" the score has been evened somewhat; the space colony at L5 has been taken by the *technicki*—the workers, and the SA has suffered losses, especially in North America, but it still has the upper hand in Europe. In the third act, "Eclipse Corona," we meet Jerome-X, musician and video-hacker (a la "Captain Midnight") as he prepares for a "show" in London.

"We backstage, now. Gimme a kiss." She crushed him to her, and he gave in. She broke it off herself, looking him in the eye, almost nose to nose. "You know de protocols?"

"I know the UNIX protocols. I know the systems call code to log on as a superuser. I know how to evoke the debug function. If they haven't changed the debug function."

"Dey probable haven't, 'cause dey use a rented system. High security, but rented. If they have changed it, fuck 'em, we'll log off and dey won't be able to trace it to an aug chip. I think de back door is still open on dis system—"

"Where'd you get it from?"

"De anarchist underground. Plateau subsystem bulletin board."

"Some of those Wolves'll give you fake codes just to get their rivals in trouble."

"Dese ain't Plateau Wolves, these are Plateau Rads. About de only people I met on the Plateau I trust. Dey got a guy used to be a hacker for SAISC till he found out what dey were into. He knows de system's back gates."

"The anarchist underground cooperates with the NR? You'd think they'd say fuck off. The NR wants to establish the old European republics. That's not very anarchist."

"Anarchists hate de Fascists worse den de Social Democrats, worse eben den de

Republicists. Dey scared, like ever'body else out in de cold, boy. . . ."

[later, out in the crowd . . .]

They ordered vodka martinis and sat hunched together between two groups of sweating, almost-naked men giggling over cocaine fizzes. Advertisements blinked up the cocktail straws; taped music groaned like a machine about to break down. On the walls, videotpaintings recreating scenes from medieval paintings of the Crucifixion and Resurrection flickered through sequence in doleful chiaroscuro; occasionally the images of Christ alternated with other figures, paintings by Paul Mavrides and other icons from the erstwhile post-acid

House era; Timothy Leary ascending into heaven, riding a floppy disk like a flying saucer; William Burroughs and Laurie Anderson waltzing through a concentration camp while starveling camp victims played Strauss on orchestral instruments; Kotzwinkle shooting skull-shaped dice with William Gibson; Bob Black and the minimono star Calais chained to Stephen Hawking's wheelchair; the American guru Da Free John with an arm growing from his forehead, arm wrestling with an arm growing from the forehead of Rick Crandall; Robert Heinlein goose-stepping with Adolf Hitler and Le Pen; Rickenharp falling into the rubble of the collapsing Arc de Triomphe; Ivan Stang adding twentieth-century paper money to the flames under the stake on which a grinning J.R. "Bob" Dobbs is being burned alive; David Bowie eaten cannibalistically by a demonic horde of twenty-first century pop stars; Buddha making love to Mrs. Bester, the President of the United States.

And back to the dead but numinous body of the scourged Christ, his head in Mary Magdalene's lap. . . .

[and now the show begins . . .]

He was into the system. Jerome felt it before he saw it. He was *in*.

The computing work was done by the left brain — and the camouflage by the right brain. The right brain was singing. Singing the chorus to "Six Kinds of Darkness," while the other part of his mind worked with the chip. The right lobe singing

*Six kind of darkness, spilling down
over me
Six kinds of darkness, sticky with
energy—*

The left lobe hacking
London UNET: ID#4547q339.
Superuser: WATSON.

The left lobe of his brain working with the chip, which emitted a signal, interfaced with a powerful microcomputer hidden among the micalike layers of chips in the midi of Bone's synthesizer; Jerome-X seeing the Herald on the hallucinatory LCD screen of his mind's eye:

London UNET, ID #, date, assumed "superuser" name.

Scanning, at the root, for the branch of the system he needed.

Scanning for: Second Alliance International Security

Corporation: Intelligence Security subdirectory . . .

Watching from the audience, Patrick Barrabas remarked (and was unheard in the glare) that Jerome-X had a funny, contortionistic way of dancing as he sang. His eyes squeezed shut, his hands waving as if over typewriter keyboards. . . . Not playing the "air guitar," but typing on the air keyboard. . . .

Jerome *was* typing the commands out. Using a technique Bettina had taught him to implement more complex commands; seeing through his aug chip by radio trans to a powerful mainframe. Typing physically on a mental keyboard.

The chip fed him tactile illusions and read out his responses through its contact with parietal lobe, reading the input from the proprioceptive sensors — sensory nerve terminals — in the muscles, and kinesthetic sensors — tactile nerves — in the fingers; Jerome's movements translated into cybernetic commands.

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GRAPHIC: Chris Carlsson

His rapport with the aug chip essentially creating a mental data-glove, a data-glove that materialized only in the "virtual reality" holography of consciousness.

As Jerome sang,

*Darkness of the Arctic
Six months into the night
Darkness of the eclipse
forgetting of all light
Six kinds of darkness
Six I cannot tell—*

Finding his way through the darkness in the forest of data. Taking cuttings. Taking information. Planting something of his own . . .

— John Shirley

DON'T GET CAUGHT WITH NOTHING *DECENT* TO READ IN YOUR BATHROOM!

This was inspired by a poster I saw in Prague, featuring Rude Prevo, the official organ of the Czech Communist Party treated in a similar fashion. — G.C.B.

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GRAPHIC: Glenn Calley Bachmann

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