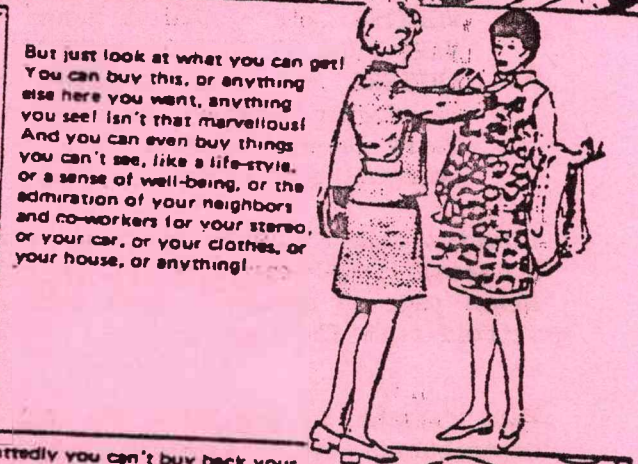
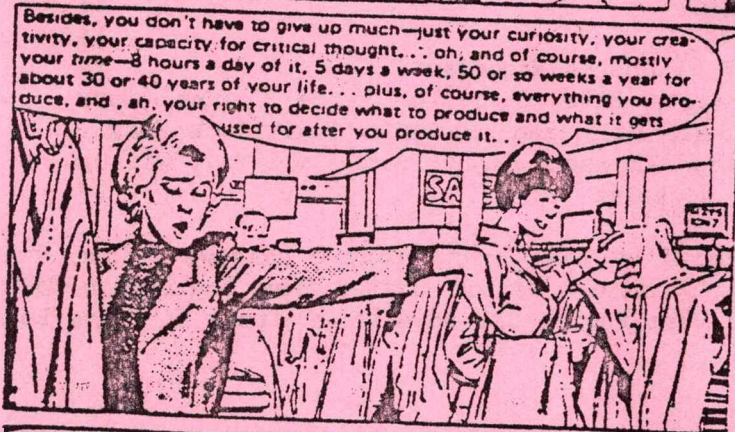
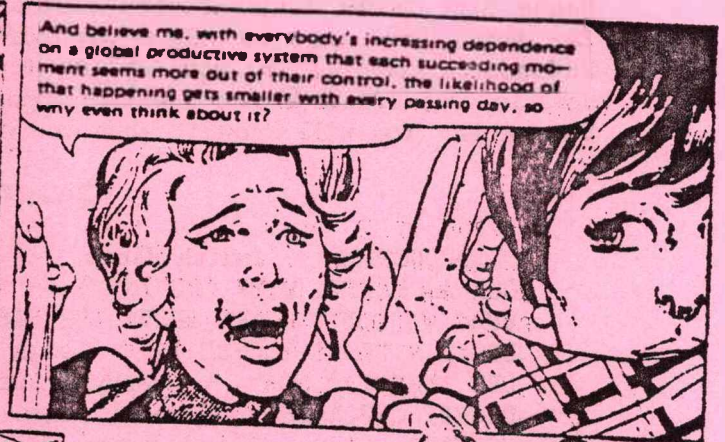


... AS WE JOIN MIDGE AND CINDY, CINDY HAS RELUCTANTLY AGREED TO CONSIDER JOINING THE WORKFORCE; READ ON...



Why not get together with some friends soon and say NO! Say no to the draft, or work, or religion, or authority figures, or school; say no to television, patriotism, political ideologies, any of the thousand and one ways in which this society keeps you from realizing your own needs and desires. You'll find the more you do it, the more you'll like it!

**JUST SAY "FUCK OFF."
YOU'LL GET
A LOT OF SATISFACTION.**

FUCK THE TORIES 4

As if you hadn't guessed....the Tri-Continental Fanzine Collective strikes again with its fourth spiffing issue. This one should have been edited by our North American partner, Terry Hughes, but was put together instead by the European ones, Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas; for further details, see Judith's introduction opposite. The next issue may be edited by our Australian members, Valma Brown and Leigh Edmonds, depending on whether or not they've moved house by then (for further details, see Judith's introduction opposite); alternatively, it may be edited by the Europeans. You will know it when you see it!

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Illustrations -- Cover unknown (supplied by Sam Vagar); page 3 unknown (taken from a Christian CND newsletter?); page 17 Peattie & Taylor (lifted from *The London Daily News*) page 19 unknown (taken from a West Region CND newsletter); page 21 Steve Bell (lifted from *The Guardian*).

This fanzine is available for all the usual reasons -- trade, letter of comment, contribution, etc. -- to either or both of the following addresses:

Valma Brown & Leigh Edmonds, P.O. Box 433, Civic Square, Canberra, ACT 2608, Australia

Judith Hanna & Joseph Nicholas, 22 Denbigh Street, Pimlico, London SW1V 2ER, United Kingdom

Finally, due to a certain lack of room on the last page of the letter column, we list here those who also sent us letters of comment but from whom we didn't quote: Brian Earl Brown, Peter Colley, Jim Darroch, Ahrvid Engholm, Annemarie van Ewyck, Susan Francis, Terry Garey, Mark Greener, Chuch Harris, Anders Holmstrom, Lucy Huntzinger, Stewart Jackson, Tim Jones, Jerry Kaufman, Andy Sawyer, Lucy Sussex, Pacal Thomas, Roger Weddall. Our thanks to them all.

SIZEWELL B



Britain doesn't need it!

NUCLEAR POWER

INTRODUCTION

Judith Hanna

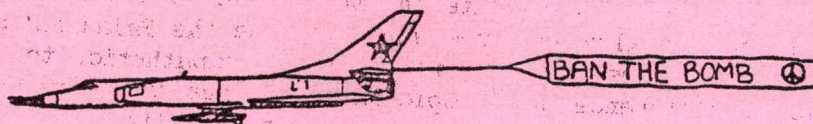
Fuck The Tories was conceived in the mezzanine coffee lounge of the Victoria Hotel during Aussiecon 2. It would be slim, tipping the scales at barely 20 pages per issue, easily digested during a single commuter journey; it would be frequent, 6 weeks between issues at first, maybe settling down to bimonthly in its second year. It would be a fearlessly crusading fannish fanzine proclaiming that ideological soundness can be fun.

Next thing you know the real world has caught up with us again and the Worldcon is a dim memory of Alexis Gilliland trying to brain Joseph with his Hugo, Marc Ortlieb being embarrassed in his penguin suit, Leigh incarcerated in a dungeon running off the *Free Pless*, and an endless Britain in 87 party every night. "Are we going to do *Fuck The Tories*? Or was it just one of those ideas that get kicked around during gaps in worldcons?" Comrade Hughes asked when we'd all returned home but before we were re-submerged in real life and all its pressures.

Fuck The Tories was never intended to be a cosy fanzine: we thought more in terms of a fanzine with "a bite like Norman Tebbit's that welcomes little fishes in with gently smiling jaws", a fanzine that spansk like Harvey Proctor (American translation: a fanzine with a kick like a mule). It would be a hybrid, alternating between a political approach to fanzines and a fannish approach to politics -- all -- intended to be taken with several grains of salt. Which taken metaphorically help prevent high blood pressure. We're amazed that so many have taken it so seriously: a demonstration of the dominance of form over content. That statistical mirage, the average fan, seems to be so unfamiliar with the language of politics, let alone left-wing politics, that he (sadly, the average fan is still mainly he) responds by stating his attitude to politics, and left wing politics at that, rather than to what we're writing about. We seem to have tapped a rich vein of paranoia and guilt. Has politics taken over from sex as the dread Unmentionable in polite society? Is that why we receive such po-faced lectures from people who think that if they pretend ideology and theory don't exist they'll go away?

Meanwhile, it's been a busy year for us all. Joseph continues to collaborate with the Thatcherite junta, oppressing the masses in DHSS Supplementary Benefit during the day but redeeming himself at evenings and weekends through anti-Thatcherite political activity. I now work in the world *Fuck The Tories* parodies, as one of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament's two Parliamentary lobbyists, dispensing briefings on the naughtiness of nuclear weapons and listening for gossip in the corridors of power and pomposity. Leigh and Valma, after a year made rough by nervous exhaustion, teeth, family illness and not winning GUFF, have freed themselves from writing Ministerial letters about airports and large-scale airfix kits and are getting ready to move house to either Ballarat or Perth (we don't know which, but assume mail will be redirected). Rumours that Mr Edmonds is seeking an as-new ornithopter site are unfounded. Terry continues to oppress the global economy as an employee of the IMF, and due to pressure of other things will be relinquishing his co-editorship (but we hope will produce occasional contributions for us). Our thanks for your work to date, Terry. We're sorry to see you go.

We're not sure how we'll be handling US distribution of future issues, although we can promise you that a major shake-out of the mailing list is imminent. If you want to be sure we'll keep on sending you *Fuck The Tories*, make sure you drop us a loc, send us your fanzine in trade, or offer us a contribution of some description (but making sure you don't send any of it to Terry's address). Okay?



4 COLLABORATING WITH THE ENEMY

Joseph Nicholas

New Year's Eve, 1986. A Wednesday, coming up to 4.00pm in the afternoon, with the dusk coming down outside and the parties due to start in a few hours' time. I am pasting up the last few bits of the January 1987 issue of *Ground Zero News*, the Pinlico CND Newsletter, when the telephone rings. A female voice I don't recognise asks to speak to Joseph Nicholas.

"Speaking," I say, in the cautious tone I use when social workers phone me at work to complain about my refusal of additional benefit for one of their clients. I wonder vaguely if this might not be one of those selfsame social workers, tracking me down at home because I happen to be taking a few days' holiday.

"Do you recall," she asks, "your letter about Palau in *The Guardian* in May?"

My interest in this telephone call soars. I think back across the various letters I've written to *The Guardian* during 1986 until I remember the one in question. A response to a review of Dennis O'Rourke's *Half-Life*, criticising the USA for its continuing abuse of the Pacific Trust Mandate granted by the United Nations and concentrating particularly on its attempts to persuade the Palauan islanders to overturn the nuclear-free clauses in their constitution that prevent it from constructing bases there. "Yes," I say, "I certainly do."

A pause. "I wondered whether you were professionally involved with Palau, or just interested in it."

Is this person seeking further information, or trying to recruit me for something? I ask -- and am told that she is a journalist working for *The Sunday Times*, researching a piece on the issue.

Indecision clubs me over the ear. *The Sunday Times*? Should I really be talking to the lackey of such a turd as Rupert Murdoch?

I am a member of the Labour Party. I am active in my trade union. I consider myself a "soft" socialist: not driven entirely by ideology, and given to making certain pragmatic compromises when I think the overall cause will be thereby advanced; but I am definitely opposed to the attitudes and approaches espoused by Rupert Murdoch, whatever excuse may be erected to justify them. In the early seventies, after all, I used to read *The Times*; then, it was a genuine newspaper -- investigative, independent, non-aligned. But since Murdoch bought control of it and its Sunday stablemates, it has swung sharply to the right, to become little more than a propaganda broadsheet for the Tories. If it criticises the government at all, it is for not being libertarian enough; otherwise, it simply tells Margaret Thatcher whatever she wants to hear. It hates the Labour Party, it hates trade unions, it hates the peace movement, it hates women, it hates the unemployed. It is perfectly matched to the money-grabbing neo-fascist thugs who now dominate the Conservative Party. Why should I talk to any of its employees?

On the other hand, what's the point of preaching only to the converted? Writing letters to *The Guardian* is all very well -- I managed to get at least half-a-dozen published during the course of 1986 -- but they're read only by those who are already sympathetic to what I and all the other letter-writers have to say. The USA's abuse of its UN Trust Mandate in the Pacific is intolerable -- but to explain why only to those who already agree won't advance the Palauans' cause very far. Far better to speak to those who aren't already sympathetic, to make the effort to overcome their indifference and suspicion; only thus will new people be won to the cause, will a wider spectrum of public opinion be mobilised in its support.

At moments like this, in other words, ideology and pragmatism effectively coincide.

"Involved in Pacific issues generally," I say, sliding my way past the actual question I was asked. But I want to see where this conversation will end up.

"Oh." A pause. "Well, I wondered whether you knew what the outcome of the latest referendum was."

This is where all those accumulated press cuttings on nuclear issues start paying off. Shifting down through the stack of files, I turn up the one with the section on the Pacific. "Jane Dibblin filed a recent report from the Marshall Islands," I say as I flip pages, "which I think might have mentioned it in passing...although she was more concerned with the Marshallase suit for compensation for the 1950s' tests...."

A query in my ear as to what that might be about prompts me to elaborate -- with reference to *Half-Life's* documentation of the Bikini and Rongelap tests and their deliberate contamination of the islanders living downwind of them. "And quite apart from the effects on the people," I conclude, "there's the effects on the islands themselves. They've never been properly cleaned up, and until they are they won't be properly habitable again. After all, Greenpeace's *Rainbow Warrior* was in the South Pacific last year primarily to evacuate the Rongelapese to somewhere safer...."

At last I find the bit I want, and confirm that the USA has indeed lost the latest referendum. Hardly surprising, really, since no amount of financial inducements are ever likely to persuade over 75% of the people (the majority required to alter the constitution) to give up all access to their only deep-water harbour, allow a third of their main island to be sequestered for a jungle training base, have chemical weapons dumped on another, and be prepared to be evicted from anywhere else in the Palauan group on 60 days notice. Not too subtle, these Yanks, eh wot?

Perhaps sensing that I am not wholly sympathetic to the desire of the USA to remain in the Western Pacific, the journalist changes tack slightly and asks if I myself had sent letters of protest to either of the two addresses listed in my letter to *The Guardian*. "I didn't get any response from the House of Representatives' Committee on Pacific & Asian Affairs," I say, "but I did from the UN Colonisation Council. Apparently they treat every letter you send them as a representation from an interested party and turn it into an official submission. So I got a copy of my own letter back again, on official UN stationery, complete with a reference number."

The journalist sounds impressed. "What happened to it after that?"

"Oh, I was later sent a transcript of the Council hearing to which it was submitted, along with lots of other letters on the same subject; but that seemed to consist mainly of statements of position by the USA and the USSR."

"But did you get the impression from it that the USA was basically sympathetic to the wishes of the islanders?"

The obvious retort would have been that anyone who knew anything about the Pacific would know that the USA has never had the slightest interest in the wishes of the islanders, and would rather they all fucked off somewhere else so that their homes could be concreted over and turned into weapons platforms; but the question was so obviously loaded that it would have been better to remain silent than say that. Perhaps she was taking her revenge on me for being less than depressed about the USA's failure to win its seventh Palau referendum. So I chose the easy way out: if in doubt, waffle like a politician.

"I think both sides were essentially trying to present themselves as the best guardian of the islanders' interests, by stressing their good points and ignoring their bad; but that would be in line with their usual struggle for global position." I paused a moment, then surged on: "The Soviet Union will always look good when it comes to denouncing the USA, because it's never been directly involved in the

Pacific until very recently; and the USA will always look bad because of the way it's bent the terms of the UN Trust Mandate."

Perhaps not total waffle; it was true to the non-aligned perspective of the modern European peace movements, but slid disingenuously past a few points....

The journalist requests clarification of one of them -- how has the USA bent the terms of the UN Trust Mandate? Feeling back on safer ground, I explain that the terms under which the Mandate was granted require it to be wound up as a whole -- whereas the USA has instead broken the Micronesia area up into five separate mini-republics and tried to get each of them to sign their own Compacts of Free Association. Since no one Compact can come into force unless all five do so, there is endless scope for the USA to play each of the republics off against the others, constantly seeking "better" terms under each Compact -- meaning of course more nuclear weapons deployment by the USA.

I get the impression as I explain this that I am communicating something new to the journalist; that I am not only assisting her research but educating her as well. Will she thereby be awakened to the justness of the Palauans' cause, and will any of this new consciousness feed through into her article? I don't know. And I don't know what attitude the *The Sunday Times's* management would take towards it, either. But I'm reminded of Joan Smith's introduction to *Clouds Of Deceit*, her book about the British nuclear tests of the 1950s, in which she relates the increasing pressures put upon her by the paper's editors -- including outright censorship of anything she wrote about the peace and anti-nuclear movements -- until, for the sake of her journalistic integrity, she felt forced to resign.

This one clearly wasn't as sympathetic as Joan Smith. But even if her article is never published, talking to her may not have been a waste of time.

In issue 60 of *File 770*, Mike Glycer summarised the fan reaction to last year's *Challenger* explosion -- including Joseph's own piece in *Fuck The Tories 2*. Unsurprisingly, this was a piece of which he strongly disapproved, describing Joseph's remarks about the US Department of Defense's influence on the space shuttle programme as "deliberate distortion to achieve a propaganda aim". What he thought this aim might be the reader never discovered; instead, he contented himself with contrasting the wealth of information available about the US space programme with the dearth of that available about the Soviet Union's, and tried to shift us over into the pro-Soviet camp with the statement that "a true communist isn't going to criticise the Soviet Union anyway".

The problem with this statement is that "true communists" have been doing just that for at least the past thirty years. The Italian Communist Party, the PCI, first broke from the Moscow line in 1956, following Krushchev's secret speech to the 20th Party Congress denouncing Stalin and the invasion of Hungary later that year; and was followed after the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 by most of the other Western European communist parties, leaving only the increasingly isolated French Communist Party to plough the Stalinist furrow.

Presumably news of the existence of Eurocommunism and *New Left Review* has still to reach California. And on top of that, we aren't even communists.

Tricky stuff, this politics, eh, Mike?

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF! "The only honest answer is to state that, try as I might, I cannot recall anything whatsoever.... My answer therefore and the simple truth is: I don't remember." President Ronald Reagan, testifying before the Tower Commission on Irangate, 20 February 1987.

And who could this ex-president of the Screen Actors' Guild, testifying before a grand jury on 5 February 1962, possibly be? "I don't want to appear as though I am trying deliberately to be vague.... I am sure if I sat down with someone and started in, I could then recall the details -- I don't honestly recall.... I have tried to make plain why my memory could be so hazy on a great many things.... To tell you of my own memory, in my mind I can't tell you whether we did it or not."

At least he's learned to be more concise in the intervening 25 years!

WHAT WE DON'T LEARN ABOUT THE PAST

Jimmy Robertson

"We shall persuade mothers and nurses to tell our chosen stories to our children and so mould their minds and characters rather than their bodies." Plato.

In Scotland, Roman Catholic schools are funded by the state in the same way as non-catholic schools which, by default, become Protestant schools. Although I have no religion I, by dint of social norms, was a Proddy. The Moslems, Hindus and Jews didn't count in the scheme of things, so one was either protestant or catholic. Some protestants were Orangemen. The Orange Order is a sect dedicated to the overthrow of the Roman Catholic Church, which it sees as Satanic. This minority of the non-catholic majority has had an influence and power beyond its numbers and provides with its virulently anti-papist ideology a critique of Roman Catholicism which serves well to underpin the prejudices of the protestant majority. While non-catholic schools didn't shove the Orange view of history at you in its pure form it did lean that way. The Tudors did all right in Orange history: Henry VIII was something special but Elizabeth, due to her smiting the papas on the high seas, was the bees knees, a Virgin Goddess no less, with Mary Stuart an upstart. The Orange acceptance of the High Anglican theology always confused me, but the Reformation caused strange bedfellows and "my enemy's enemy is my friend" has always been a useful pragmatic approach. Catholic schools, on the other hand, had Mary, Queen of Scots as the cheated heroine and Elizabeth as the Great Whore. I remember being told by a catholic that Elizabeth was bald and barren cos her dad had syph and that was also why her brother died young. I was quite shocked at such a suggestion, I remember. Funny what kids say. The Royal House of Hanover was the other contentious issue: were they inbred lunatic krauts or the Saviours of Our Heritage, one still wonders. That there was a protestant past and a catholic past was confusion enough, but there was also an English past and a Scottish past. The Scottish past never appealed to me; it seemed like sour grapes but then, it was supposed to. After all, I was a lowlander and they didn't go in much for having History. No massacres or nothing, just peasants plodding away until the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, especially the Industrial Revolution. Lots of Scots mythology got made up to give uncultured Scotsman a bit of credibility in competing with his continental contemporaries. The nineteenth century gave us Kailyard Culture -- the tartan scot Hawkeye the Gnu beget Sir Harry Lauder, *Dr Finlay's Casebook* (Aye, Janet) and *The Sunday Post*. As an urban working class kid I found this romantic, rustic folkiness insulting, but it goes down a storm in some quarters, especially in ex-pat ghettos throughout the world. Scots tend to bugger off out of it and spend anguished, drunken Hogmanays wistfully reminiscing on the gloaming in Drumnadrochit and Grannie's Heilan Name.

The English past was The Empire and the Scots cut a doughty figure as wild valiant warriors on the Edges of Civilisation. (*Carry On Up The Khyber* does a wonderful demolition job on this notion.) A complete load of bollocks, of course, and this got rejected out of hand. Which brings us to the Capitalist past and the Proletarian past. My home environment, as they say, was a mixture of catholic and protestant educations but primarily it was Red. The only history I felt anything for was the hisory of those who were offered the freedom to work for wages or starve. The Empire was about stealing from peoples by force of arms to provide cheap labour and raw materials, the Evil loose in the world was the appropriation of surplus value, Capitalism was Doomed. My grandmother was born in 1901, was a communist at 15. She was aware of the Russian Revolution as it happened, she thought "This is it", experienced "Red Clydeside" first-hand, the General Strike, The Great Depression and the Rise of Fascism, two major wars, the 1945 Labour Government, the affluent Tory 50s and 60s, Labour and Tory Social Democracy, and just before she popped her clogs she saw Margaret Thatcher re-elected. From doped fabric to ceramic heatshields: everything changes, everything remains the same. Twentieth century history was

therefore hotly debated at home and I had missed the glamorous bits. The bits I was involved in debating as they happened, like Czechoslovakia, the Moon landing, Rhodesian UDI, etc., were as nothing compared to concentration camps, purges, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, China and Israel. My father served with the army in Palestine due to the fact that he'd done two years in the glasshouse during the war and they didn't count against the term he'd joined up for. My uncle, who served in Italy, and I used to argue over the American use of the atomic bomb against Japan. He had no doubts at all that it was totally justified at the time given the nature of the Japanese conduct of their end of the conflict. Not that they would have asked him, though, he would add. Take Churchill, for example. My gran detested him; he had no redeeming features as far as she was concerned and when he died it wasn't soon enough for her. Her animosity went back to the General Strike and Churchill's conduct during the 20s and no amount of pleading that his war leadership worked wonders with nothing much would mitigate his past in her eyes. His anti-Soviet attitudes were never a plus either, and the way he turned our Russian Comrades back into the Red Menace turned her stomach when she knew that without the Soviet people's sacrifice Hitler would have pissed all over Europe. Honour, who needs it. On the other hand, lovers of Democracy hold that while we were at it we should have set about the Soviets, we had the bomb, after all, and it was a moral duty to free the brave Russian peoples from the cruel totalitarian godless tyrant of Communism. An opportunity lost for the forces of Freedom.

We are all products of the past, and the past lives in the choices we make in analysing the present and the prospects for the future.

Far too often, hindsight passes as history and, because of its 20/20 nature, confuses a complicated process with an inevitable progress. It leads to the fostering of a notion that history exists objectively when it is actually created from the viewpoint of the observer complete with whatever prejudice and level of information they have. There is in history, like most things, very little truth but truth itself is a dodgy concept at best and isn't very important to history anyway. Objectivity is a shield from behind which things are put in their place. It absolves actors from consequences. It seems to be a necessary evil, if that doesn't strike too moral a tone. The Jihad and the Party Line justify nothing in the end because they tie us closer to god instead of freeing us to be alone together. We choose the lies that suit us best at the time and that's okay, but we should learn to drop them too.

We started with a quote from a dead philosopher so let's end with (a longer) one:

"Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language." Karl Marx.

John Street, editor of the "Diary" column in *Tribune* ("Labour's Independent Weekly") recently reported that he had "had the good fortune to be sent an English-language copy of the pamphlet *The Sole Truth And The Only Solution*, published by the Workers' Party of Ethiopia" which was, he said, "directed against the supporters of the guerilla movements which control large parts of the province of Eritrea".

He continued: "The pamphlet contains dire warnings about the consequences of continued opposition to the central government. What I am sure will turn the tide for the Ethiopian Workers' Party is the ultimate threat: 'Think carefully, if you side up with anti-people elements for useless aims and thereby condemn your kith and kin to misery and death -- you will be crushed by the united elbow of the people.'"

BOOKS WITHOUT FOOTNOTES

Leigh Edmonds

Going to university has spoiled me, for reading anyhow. Once, I could hardly see the point of all those footnotes in books which thought themselves to be intellectual; these days I think that books without footnotes are dumb.

Footnotes are addictive. Earlier this year Valma and I were travelling to Adelaide and happened to spend the night in a motel in Wagga Wagga. Looking for some excitement, I found a Gideon's Bible in a drawer and thought I'd read a bit of it to see what all the fuss was about. I opened it at page one, at "Genesis", and found that it was one of those new rewrites without the verses they had when I was a kid. All the text was run together to create paragraphs in the style that is more common these days, but it wasn't totally unreadable.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth²" it said. That's interesting, I thought, I wonder where they got that information? I went looking for the note the "2" obviously referred to; it wasn't a footnote since there wasn't any tiny print at the foot of the page, so I thought it must refer to endnotes and hunted around for the end of the chapter. But when I found it there were no notes there. Well, I thought, these days it's quite common to put the endnotes at the end of the book, just before the index; so I looked. No index either. How can you use a book without an index. I looked again to see if I could find the footnotes or endnotes in places I'd missed before, but there were none. "Silly book," I said. "Pretends to have footnotes and then doesn't deliver." I put it back in its drawer and we went out to get something to eat, ending up at a place called Montezuma's Revenge, which is recommended, even in Wagga Wagga. While we were eating I realised what had happened.

One book I read recently is something like a bible, and it's light on footnotes too. It is *The Essential Left*, edited by David McLellan for Allen & Unwin's Counterpoint series, and is attractive because it collects together some of the basic ideas of socialist and Marxist thought. There are five items, each with a mercifully brief introduction. They are "The Manifesto of The Communist Party" by Marx and Engels; "Value, Price And Profit" by Marx; "Socialism: Utopian And Scientific" by Engels; "The State And Revolution" by Lenin; and "On Contradiction" by Mao Tse-Tong.

The one everybody will be most familiar with is the Marx and Engels classic which is often called just "The Communist Manifesto". You'll probably have heard of it before, but if you haven't read it you haven't lived. I'd be the last to claim that the Manifesto's theory is watertight, but as an historical document it is a marvellous exposition of a well-developed social theory expressed in simple but often emotional terms. That it has been proved wrong in some ways should concern only those who seek to debunk Marxism by any means at their disposal -- the same way that people seek to debunk SF by reference only to its flaws -- or the dedicated Marxist who treats every word of the Master as holy writ.

One of the great things about this book is that it demonstrates how fluid and dynamic the theories of the left can be: they change, grow and develop to meet the current need. As part of the social sciences they differ from the natural sciences in that they deal directly with the immense complexity and variety of human society while the natural sciences try to explain the natural world by reducing it to a set of rigid descriptions. Unfortunately, during the past couple of centuries the natural sciences have been so dominant that social theorists have felt forced to tie their wagon to them to gain any credibility. This led to them adopting a similar inflexibility as the natural sciences -- which is implied in the term "scientific socialism". These days, some in the natural sciences are starting to wonder how concrete their reality really is. And if God does indeed play dice in the physical world we should expect her to do the same in human society as well.

The hope that historic imperatives can be made into a kind of hard science marches through much socialist analysis. This leads to contradictions between theorists which are, I think, only important if we insist that there is only one valid way of explaining how socialist and communist societies may develop -- a point clearly discussed in Mao's article. But if we look upon the authors collected here as fellow searchers after an explanation of how society works, then *The Essential Left* is a very interesting, intelligent and entertaining book. If someone thinks they're smart and broad-minded enough to have the Bible, the Koran and the I-Ching on their shelves, they should include it too.

Books without footnotes are sometimes okay if they are important and meaningful, but I really do have doubts about books which not only lack them but also include all kinds of graphic devices to make the text easier to swallow -- *Capitalism For Beginners* and *Socialism For Beginners*, for example (both published by Writers & Readers). The idea here is to give readers a quick and dirty introduction to the topic, and provide them with just enough information about it not to make fools of themselves if they're invited to any yuppie parties. How embarrassing, after all, to be completely ignorant of the worth and value of the thoughts of Milton Friedman -- "wasn't he that British comedian with the boggle eyes?" will get you struck off most (but not all) invitation lists.

I read *Capitalism For Beginners*, by Robert Lekachman, first. Even from my biased position I could see that it was a bit bent and that its author really didn't think much of that particular economic system. I should have realised that as soon as I saw the title: no one who's sympathetic to the capitalist cause would use That Word these days because of the way their opponents have made it a bad word all round. If the book had been titled something like *Wealth Creation For Beginners*, the author might have been inclined a bit more to the right -- and I might not have read it.

The book is not too disagreeably written, managed to say a few nice things about capitalism, and contained just enough cynicism to match my biases. The author and the artist also did well to conclude with a conversation between Keynes and Marx about the trouble with monetarism: there is a fairly obvious message there where the limp little figure of Keynes is dominated by the huge and glowering edifice of Marx. From this we can draw our own conclusions.

Having knocked off that book in a couple of hours, I reckoned to crown the evening by digesting *Socialism For Beginners*, by Anna Paczuska, as well. It followed the same format as its companion, but covered (from my point of view) a much worthier topic. But I didn't enjoy it as much as the other book -- that told me just as much as I wanted to know about capitalism, while this one was shallow and simplistic. It set out to equate socialism with the struggles through the ages of the masses to overthrow upper class control, which meant we got a headlong race through a thousand or so years of peasant revolts and the like in a handful of pages before we got to the guts of the thing; and at the end there was a nod in the direction of all the current liberation movements, thus making sure that no one missed out.

University may have spoiled me because it forced me to read up on some of the things that appear in this book, and as a result hundred-word histories of great movements and events seem totally inadequate to the job. Perhaps if I'd done economics I'd have been just as annoyed by the potted versions of the thought of the great economists in *Capitalism For Beginners* as I was by some of the stuff in this book. All the same, I did learn a few things I didn't know before. And of course if I'm ever lucky enough to find myself at one of those dreadful yuppie parties there are now two topics on which I can glibly converse.

I can also talk fairly intelligently about Karl Marx and Lenin because there are *Beginners* books about them too. The authors of these books were quite sympathetic and interesting, and somehow they managed not to wax too lyrical about the lives and works of their subjects. There is in fact a whole library of *Beginners* books on a whole range of subjects (even one about Ronald Reagan). If I were to read them

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all I would no doubt be impregnable at any party -- "Einstein's theory? Oh yes, what Bert was really on about was...." Besides, the books actually look pretty good on the shelf and are very professionally produced no matter what you or I might think about their individual contents. The advantage of all the graphic devices in them is not so much to dress up the text and make it easier to understand but to give you a sense of achievement when you hold the book up end-on to see how far you've got and how far you have to go.

There are many SF books that look pretty good on the shelf and don't have any footnotes either, but some of them are fairly questionable. I realise that it is not very easy to write a novel about a post-holocaust world which wraps up religion and the probabilities of universes which come out of quantum mechanics as well, but if an author is going to attempt such a feat he has to be very good. If his name happens to be Philip K. Dick it might come out quite well, although even that author mangled this kind of thing from time to time. But if you are Graham Dunstan Martin and *Time Slip* (Orion) is your second novel, there are likely to be a few problems. Martin manages to avoid disaster by not going too far down the Dick track, and instead produces a fairly gentle observation of what life in a closed society after the shock of a nuclear war might be like, people with some interesting and pleasant people.

That's the good part. If he'd stuck to that the book might have been safer and more enjoyable, but he invented a new religion to toss into that society and the two parts don't fit comfortably -- not only in style but also in the shape of the story, when the new religion seems to sweep everything before it. The author might have thought that the idea behind it was an overpowering one, but he didn't convince me of it. This is perhaps a problem with being a new writer: you lack the experience necessary to make your readers believe in your weighty or complex ideas. Perhaps, with experience, writers either decide not to bother with such difficult problems as Martin sets himself, or make them look so easy that we don't notice what they're doing.

Religion, like class struggle, is something that SF writers have rarely been very good with. It's a fairly subjective thing, and though there are plenty of outward trappings to it the motive power for belief is usually internal. SF writers are notoriously bad at dealing with people's internal workings, so most of them quite rightly steer away from the subject altogether. Perhaps they feel the same way about class relations too, assuming they acknowledge such things. It does not seem popular to write about people being ground under oppression, unless it is an alien invasion and the valiant earth freedom fighters manage to throw off the invader's yoke. Unlike genuine oppression, that makes for good action-adventure which no doubt sells like hot cakes, even in Third World countries where the books stuff up the balance of payments even more.

Do you sometimes feel that too many SF writers have spent too much time reading SF or literature and not enough reading social science books with plenty of footnotes?

The Beat is a monthly rock music magazine that you can pick up in The HMV Shop (one of the UK's discount record store chains, for those who've never heard of it). It normally costs 50p, but if you buy more than £10-worth of records you can get it for free. We imagine that the British members of our faithful readership will have seen at least one copy during the past twelve months.

Non-British readers, however, may be interested to learn that this same magazine once published a variety of popularity charts nominated by its readers -- favourite album, favourite single, favourite sports personality, and similarly obvious and tedious categories. Of more interest were the more cutre ones -- favourite newspaper, favourite TV advert, favourite film, favourite non-human star.

The latter category is normally reserved for cartoon characters and Japanese rubber monsters. "Normally", because the November 1986 issue's poll results -- the last before the poll was discontinued -- indicated that the magazine's fifth favourite non-human star was Margaret Thatcher.

LET THEM EAT SOAP

Sherry Francis

It's all very simple. The world is divided into six primary mythic systems -- the Western/American, the Oriental, the African, the South American, the Eastern European and the Middle Eastern. On the upside, inheritors of the first two systems are broad-minded, rational and humane because that's what their myths have taught them to be. On the downside, the latter four myth-systems produce some nasty individuals indeed. If you find this analysis suspect or feeble, it's because you are a duped beneficiary of the first myth-system, which prizes tolerance and has too indulgent an attitude towards the Other. Your weakness is your culture's strength.

Bewildered? You ought not to be, you've heard this theory before, but I bet you've never heard it from the lips of author and physicist David Brin, winner of the Hugo and feted hero of the SF lumpenliterati. When I attended a recent lecture given by Brin, he made use of this theory to predict a "New Renaissance", an event that fills him with twinkly-eyed optimism. You might wonder what optimism has to do with so grim an analysis, one which judges people in large parts of the globe -- especially those sections where people's skins are as shady as their beliefs -- to be so wholly defective. Not genetically defective, mind you; Brin is a sociobiologist only in the last instance. One suspects that he is a scientist only in the last instance as well, because he uses scattered anecdotes to buttress his arguments. To support mythological determinism, he quotes the late Danny Kaye, a US comedian who stated that children from all countries laugh at the same jokes and stunts. After age eight or ten, however, kids' response to clowning and slapstick is no longer uniform. Apply Brin's theory to explain this divergence and you have Latino kids, poisoned by machismo, howling at a Punch and Judy show, while American kids grimly demand equal time for Judy's views.

You've heard Brin's theory before in common-sense discussions of Why They Are Different -- the explanations offered operate solely on the level of ideas. When I was in college, the prevailing explanation of black poverty was a matriarchal family structure. Reform that structure along the lines of a male breadwinner model and presto! those darker types would be out there taking just as big a bite of the American pie as whitey. Forget the size of the pie. Forget the fat diners at the head of the slow-moving queue. Forget any factor, economic or legal, which could not be used to blame the victim for his own misery. An analysis which operates on the level of ideas or myths alone is convenient.

What is new in Brin's analysis is the reason he parades it under the banner of a "New Renaissance". American marketing strategy has at its disposal advanced communications technologies. The evil Brand X myth-systems, which have given us macho Latinos, gory Libyans and feudal apparatchiks in the USSR will one day be reformed by the export of Brand Yank or possibly the Oriental variety. The better features of the Yankee brand can be seen in TV sitcoms, where tolerance is prized and authority figures get the big *nyah-nyah*. Brin says the Filipinos have secured a democratic government because of the export of American values through global televising of sitcoms like *Soap*. Quite how this might have happened in a country where less than five in every one hundred inhabitants has a radio or telephone, I am not sure.

I agree with Brin: the popular mood of twentieth century America is often suspicious of authority. But this suspicion is not expressed towards the structures that hold figures of authority firmly in place, but to the figures themselves. Though Hawkeye and Trapper of *N&A&S&H* may take the piss out of their commanding officer and black butler Benson may swipe at his masters, the format of the sitcom is not a school for social change. What sitcoms provide to the hypothetical viewer, feeling a bit suspicious of authority as he changes the channel, is an activity, passive and ineffectual, through which he can express his doubts. Normally, an individual uses

whatever means are available to express his discontent or his longing for change. In our culture, the most accessible means is identification with a sitcom hero like Hawkeye or "The Fonz". The viewer who styles himself as the kind of guy who doesn't take orders picks a programme to suit his self-image, one that come complete with a range of products. His next rebellious act will be the purchase of a particular kind of jeans, perhaps, or a kinky pair of sunshades. He is unlikely to organise a union.

Throughout Brin's lecture, if that's not too pompous a word to describe the promulgation of Californian social theory, Brin shifted ground as quick as any sidewinder. When I mentioned that I, a native Texan and proud of it, found only the reverse of the tolerance that Brin extolled at such length, he ignored me. Why did the Bolshevik revolution happen when it did, I persisted, if myths determine history yet pre- and post-Soviet myths are similar? "There was a lot of pain" was the brief answer before Brin quickly moved on to attack some other sacred cow he presumed a leftist would cherish. By this time it was apparent that Brin's constant use of the word "shamanism" to dismiss ideologies not his own was mere envy. SF writers, he concluded, were makers of new myths, craftsmen with the skill to shape the future. One has to give him credit for his far-reaching delusions; to be a chief mythmaker in a new renaissance that will rule the world must confer a feeling of grandeur. Or if the world won't be ruled on the terms America has to offer, let them eat *Soap*.

DESERT CUPCAKES (When Fems Flung To Be Film-Makers)

Gwyneth Jones

When I heard there was a new big success film by a right-on woman director, featuring strong women characters and stunning desert scenery, of course I rushed to my local ABC: hoping to discover at last what lesbians do in bed. I got plenty of that at any rate, in decorously explicit soft-focus. The flesh tones are quite lovely....(murmured het men in the audience coolly. It was a rare treat -- acres of sexy calendar shots and all perfectly ideologically sound, pure and non-sexist). And for this, I sighed, about an hour into the scene, I am supposed to be grateful. Ah well. It was cheaper than the paperback.

Desert Hearts is billed as feminist film. What it is is a tale of Forbidden Love. Vivien Bell goes to Reno for a divorce. Young Cay Rivvers, "a confirmed lesbian", falls in love with her. Vivien is at first appalled, at length seduced, and finally everybody has to agree this is true romance. In its depiction of a lesbian relationship this is a travesty of Jane Rule's novel *Desert Of The Heart* -- the original "property". Naturally the director had to make changes, but what is depressing is the kind of change Donna Deitch has made. An example will suffice: in the book the two women *look alike*. They can be taken for mother and daughter. This is no accident. It is a clear statement about the nature of feminism and lesbianism both. Each lover recognises herself in the other....after struggling to accept a world that is not "like", is not natural, to either. In *Desert Hearts* a sex-bomb brunette in cut-off jeans seduces a prim fair naive maiden-aunt. That's the whole tone -- two people with nothing in common but lust: a safe Hollywood cliché hardly deranged at all by a touch of mini-series "taboo-breaking".

But why, you want to know, is this woman ranting on about lesby sex in a decent political pamphlet? We don't watch films like that. What is a mini-series? Is the term pejorative? Patience, I have my reasons. And if you're really not interested in the politics of popular culture I can only answer: Well, you ought to be. *Desert Of The Heart* (the novel) is not a tale of forbidden love. It is a tale of love being forbidden all right, or at least hard to come by. The third character in this

passionate triangle (entirely expunged by Donna Deitch) is yet another freak -- sometimes going by the name of Western Capitalism. The story isn't set in Reno just for the sake of a colourful backdrop.

"...theirs was the purest activity of civilised man. They had transcended the need for a product. They could maintain and advance life with machines that made nothing but money.... This desert town was man's own miracle of pure purposelessness...."

It kills people, this freak. It maims them and shrivels them up. The two lovers in Jane Rule's book look on. They can do nothing, they can only watch and not judge: they are part of casino capitalism themselves....

No, thought the film-maker, this is *too much*. Can't ask the punters to buy all this heavy political stuff. Can't threaten my investors....I'll keep the lesbians, that's the best I can do. But she didn't even manage that. She only kept the money.

The ironic thing is that people are getting bums on seats with some very surprising material nowadays. There is a window open for "alternative" films at the ABC. But here the chance was lost. Popular culture was not transformed, it was simply imitated at its worst -- with a few right-on twitches. And *Desperately Seeking Susan* retains its title as the most uncompromising feminist film to hit the big box office.

PLAY ONLY WHAT YOU CAN AFFORD

REMEMBER IF YOU PLAY LONG ENOUGH YOU'LL LOSE

"Her mind was playing games much more dangerous than any Frank's club could offer. If she could accept this place as a microcosm, no better and no worse than any other, simply representative, she could as easily rationalise the last vestige of her private morality into meaninglessness."

If *Desert Hearts* is playing at a cinema near you -- stay home and watch *Dallas*.

However, I did like the bit when they all get in the car and put on their sunglasses....

WORKING LATE

Judith Hanna

Working late this evening, a committee meeting that ended some minutes past nine o'clock. Walk out into street, no-one else leaving at same time. Either already gone while I was tidying up papers, or still smoffing in corners inside. Walk to end of street. While summer lasted, daylight lasted to the end of these meetings, but now it's quite dark by this time of night. Peer down usual shortcut to Tube: a well-lighted, fairly broad street that runs between warehouses and parking lots then turns a corner into another broad well-lighted street that also runs between warehouses and parking lots. Quiet, deserted streets. With dark narrow deserted streets opening off them. "Asking for it" territory.

Easier to walk the long way around than to put on the armour of tension, the scanning ahead, signalling *I'm tough, keep off. I am not a victim*. Not paranoia, sensible caution. Just a short block of deserted street, with dark doorways opening off it. I fan my keys between my knuckles into a knuckle-duster. Just in case. Reach the safety of the main road.

In the daytime, its constant stream of traffic is nasty noisy smelly, to be avoided. At night it's a public presence that promises safety from attack. Walk along past

the police station, the pub next door to it which used to be our regular; us subversives and the local constabulary sharing the same watering hole, what a laugh. Until one of our blokes was threatened by a guy with a knife, a local NF heavy. We don't use that pub any more; not so much because Jimmy was attacked in it, as because after he was attacked the landlord tried to throw Jimmy out as a trouble-maker. The rest of us walked out, ignoring the landlord's cries of "You lot don't have to go, just him!" and we haven't been back. Now we drink at the Yuppie Arms, the other side of City Road.

No, it's not a particularly tough area. Between the fringe of the City and trendy Islington. The other way from the office is Council estates where people live. This side is light industrial, small computer firms, importers, distributors of various commodities, a few campaigning organisations like us, second-hand office furniture shops and a few sandwich bars. Lots of middle-class, white-collar workers during the day. But hardly anyone about after office hours.

Round the corner again, onto City Road. A few other pedestrians. A couple, man and woman, walking their two dogs. A black guy appears around a bus shelter, his girl friend catches him up. Relax, no threat. Woman neutralises man, makes him safe, a human being, not a predator.

Attack may be unlikely here. But a stream of cars doesn't fend off verbal hassling. Getting near the Tube station, more people around. Most of them men, walking on their own. Well, why shouldn't they -- surely walking on your own at night is a simple enough thing to do? Surely standing leaning against a wall is no big deal. So why is walking past a man, when you're a woman walking on your own, such a tense choreography? The long-distance sizing up: is he a threat? is he drunk? is he taking any notice of my approach? do I need to take evasive action -- the far side of the pavement? off into the road? right across the road? Tonight, none of them are drunk, none of them call out, nor even look particularly at me.

Here's the Tube station: no drunks or crazies on the way down; on the platform one guy sitting at the bottom of the stairs with his head in his hands, as if he's either falling asleep or trying not to spew up. I move down the platform, to where the other women are standing. Some half a dozen of us, in our ones and twos. Separate, but close together. One of them is from the office, we chat, post mortem the meeting. I leap off at King's Cross, tackle the course to the Victoria Line at my usual commuter trot. Note in passing that someone's given the cinema poster advertising Stallone's *The Cobra* a speech balloon, "I am an asshole". Stallone's muscle-bound vigilante is the problem, not any sort of solution.

Only about five people waiting here. The woman up toward the middle of the platform, about where I'd usually stand, looks like a crazy, a caricature of a witch. She's haranguing a middle-aged man in a suit. It's the way she's holding her head that gives her away, I decide, even though I can't hear a word of her tirade. None of the normal nervous withdrawing, no worries about drawing attention to herself. You can see she's yelling at him, never pausing for a reply or response, he's trying to be polite, to quieten her down, not to make a fuss or be rude or draw attention to himself. It's not just women who get hassled in Tube stations late at night.

I stop well away from the witch, a few yards along from the other woman on the platform. Don't really look at her, that would be intrusion. Not the done thing, not in London. But another female presence is company, reinforcement in a hostile environment. The train comes, carriage nearly empty. She and I don't sit near each other. Nobody sits near in an empty carriage unless they know each other. But she and I don't sit at opposite ends of the carriage, just on opposite sides of the doors. I gaze fascinated at an exotic creature sitting at the opposite end of the carriage in purple and blue, head half shaved, half flowing plumage, wearing blue and purple goggles and a peacock coloured cloak. Wow!

More women get in at Euston -- one sits opposite me, two friends sit one seat away

from me. At Warren Street a black woman boards, sits in the empty seat between us. Suddenly, it's a women's corner. She's come in, not by the near door but one further along and crossed past empty seats to the densest concentration of women. Oh, of course there's no overt acknowledgement, no meeting of eyes, no smiles, no talk. Just oblique glances, when the other isn't looking directly at you. But I feel a group consciousness rising, a feeling that we women sitting together are keeping each other safe, that we know it and value the others' company.

Next stop, a man sits down next to the women opposite me. She crosses her legs, shifts her hips and arm away from that seat, into a tense constricted posture. He settles himself, spreading his knees and his elbows, claiming as much space he can expand into. He's not a big man, nor fat. A boy, early twenties, confident, kinda macho, not worried about casual contact. What is there to worry about? She's a pretty girl next to him, with frozen expression, pulled as far away from him as Tube seats allow.

The rest of us, when we glance up from the magazines and books we aren't really reading, stare at his feet, or at the far end of the carriage. Suddenly it's not safe to glance casually about us, we're not in command of that space, there's a man there. If you look in his direction, at him, he could take it as a contact. He could be staring at you. If you give him the chance to catch your eye, he might use it to smile at you, the sort of smile that says: you are of The Sex. I think his feet begin to twist uncomfortably. Maybe the stares directed at them, ignoring him, avoiding the space he has occupied, somehow make him feel that these women do not welcome his appreciative glances. It is no longer a cosy relaxed little corner.

Thank goodness, the train doesn't terminate at Victoria, I can ride on to Pimlico. Victoria is a bit closer to home. But desperate people hang out around Victoria - drunks, homeless, beggars. There's the guy, probably about our age, bearded, wears a tracksuit bottom, grey jumper and joggers, who Joseph thinks is just a nasty drunk but I think is crazy, who kicked me outside our local Oxfam store one bright morning while I was doing the shopping, and who often follows women in the evening, shouting at them, grabbing at them, I've even seen him spitting at one woman. There was the guy who jumped at Joseph and me on the way back from the Tun a year or so ago, shouting "Give me money." There are staggering drunks along the road outside the station, skinheads larking about, football fans singing along the street. Men look at you, muttering as you pass. Are those steps behind someone following you? It's not a relaxing walk.

The walk home from Pimlico is pleasanter. Pimlico is where the Yuppies go home to at night, to their restored Edwardian maisonettes. I've never been hassled on the way home from Pimlico, not by the kids lounging outside the closed shops nor the men on their way home from the three pubs I pass. Because it's a neighbourhood sort of area where nice people live, people cushioned by money.

Nearly home, just have to negotiate the ten feet of dark passage that sets our doorway back from the street. No dossier huddled between the rubbish bin and the doorway. Safe inside.

If I come home to an empty house, there's still a lurking fear -- what if someone's broken in, waiting upstairs? And I've just locked myself in with them? Silly, of course. After all, the statistics show that most of the attacks, rapes and murders of women are committed by the men they live with, fathers, lovers, husbands. Not by strangers.

The Danger Stalking the Streets to hunt down Loose Women, is he a bogeyman to scare us into staying at home with a soap opera and our knitting? Is that why The Scum and its ilk splash the Yorkshire Ripper so lavishly over its front pages, warning "Women, stay at home!" (where The Fox can break in and Get You if you're alone). Sub-text: you need A Man to protect you. You find yourself sitting in a Tube carriage at rush hour lined with respectable men in suits salivating over identical

3" Bold Headlines: "RAPE TERROR: latest juicy details!" Their avidity is as threatening as a dark alleyway. But wife-murder, wife-bashing, incest, child abuse are quiet statistics too common to be news.

As everyone knows, it's permissiveness and women's lib that threaten The Family. It's Victorian values like hypocrisy and male dominance that keep it together. And keep women in the home where they belong.

Or is it because we women have been so thoroughly conditioned not to venture out alone, especially at night, that keeps the street statistics so much lower than those for male violence against women in the home?



"Rudiments of political awareness discovered in our country's Chaos Death Bloodbath Games Magazine!" reports Dave Langford, forwarding the following *White Dwarf* review of a role-playing game entitled *The Revised Recon*:

"Once upon a time there was a game called *Recon*. It was offensive rubbish in which players could recreate lots of American lies about how they won the Vietnam War. Luckily, it was badly produced and had poor distribution, so few people were ever exposed to it. Unluckily, Palladium have now revised and re-released it in a snappy new edition. Luckily, the game system is as scrappy and as unwieldy as ever. Unluckily, some people may well realise that the sections on military hardware and equipment are probably the best in any contemporary role-playing game. Luckily, I hope people have more sense than to touch this with a barge pole. Unluckily, I'm not too sure they have."

Almost makes you feel proud to be British, doesn't it?

"You may not like the (fanzine) reviews you once wrote," says Irwin Hirsh in reply to a letter by Joseph Nicholas published in *Sikander* 13, "but I think you still believe there is something worthwhile in criticising fanzines." Part of his evidence for what he thinks Joseph believes is "Leigh Edmonds's column in *Fuck The Tories*", for the publication of which he holds Joseph responsible. The fact that Leigh is one of this fanzine's co-editors evidently evaded Irwin's scrutiny, his ideas about what Joseph believes presumably taking such precedence over what Joseph actually does believe that they managed to obscure everything else. Eh, Irwin?



WAHF-FULL OF NUCLEAR DECEPTION

Joseph Nicholas

Those who've followed the arguments in the letter column of Jack Herman's *WAHF-Full* over the past two or three years will know that many of them have revolved around the subject of nuclear power. Not what it is, of course, but whether it's safe, whether it's economical, whether it's necessary.

I contend that it's none of them, and whenever I've involved myself in the ongoing debate have said so. Mostly, however (and when not dealing with the issues of nuclear waste and the civil liberties implications of nuclear power), I've been concerned with the links between nuclear power and nuclear weapons: links that are by now well-known and well-documented, that have been discussed at length in many books and magazines, but that it seems the nuclear power industry itself is too embarrassed to admit to. Perhaps because it knows that if it does its endlessly optimistic promises of limitless cheap clean energy will be exposed as the cover-up for weapons manufacture they actually are.

As, perhaps, Jack Herman also knows. Whenever the matter of these links has been raised, and he has been invited to reconsider his favourable view of nuclear power in their light, he has been at pains to deny them. Not to answer them, or to refute them by producing counter-evidence of his own, but just to deny them -- to state point-blank that the links don't exist, that they're the invention of anti-nuclear propagandists, that he doesn't believe the evidence anyway...and presumably hope that if he doesn't say anything more about it, no one else will either.

Or that, if they do, he can always edit them so they appear not to.

In a letter in *WAHF-Full* 17, published in September 1986, I took issue with Jack's claim in the previous issue that a country could simply import the fissile material it required for weapons manufacture without going to the trouble of reprocessing the uranium that it had first enriched in its nuclear reactors. There is, I pointed out, such a thing as the Non-Proliferation Treaty, intended specifically to monitor and control such trade; so that while it's possible to import and export such industrial basics as oil, coal and steel without restrictions the import and export of plutonium and tritium is supposed to be subject to tight international licencing.

"What's this," thunders Jack in response, "Joseph Nicholas showing a little credulity? Believing such safeguards work?"

The reader would never suspect that this editorial interjection in fact replaces a paragraph of mine which dealt specifically with the failings of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and detailed several instances in which it had not only not worked but in which material produced in civil reactors had been diverted for expressly military purposes. In the remainder of his editorial interjection Jack even manages to outline a few such instances of his own -- in addition to the one about stolen US plutonium ending up in the Israeli weapons programme he borrows from the suppressed paragraph and quotes back at me as though he'd thought of it himself.

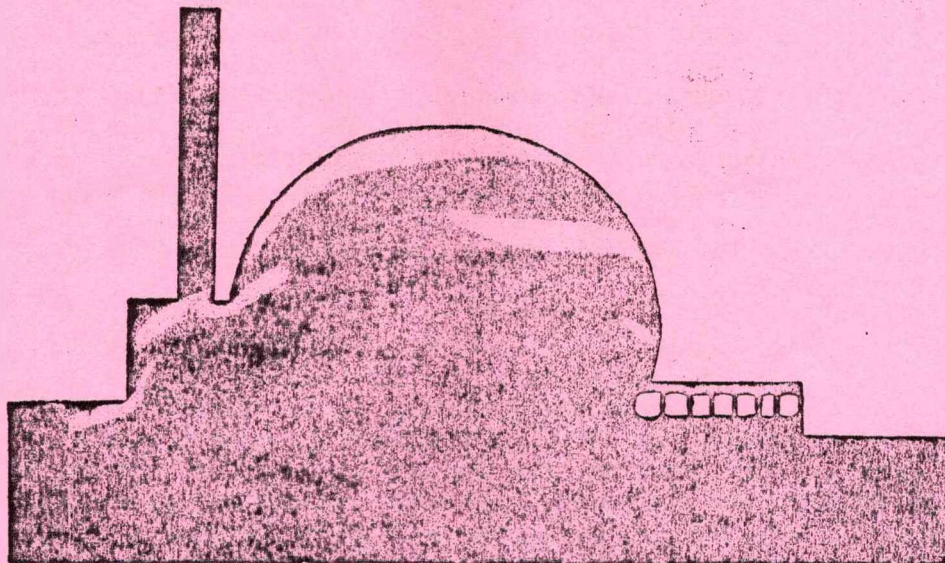
Quite apart from the fact that this attempt to ridicule me for an alleged belief in international safeguards (a belief which I never actually professed) instead demolishes Jack's own denials of the links between nuclear power and nuclear weapons, this incident is instructive for two reasons. Firstly because of what it says about Jack Herman; and secondly because of what it says about the nuclear power industry.

In his student days, apparently, Jack used to march in demonstrations against the mining and export of Australian uranium and, thus, Australia's part in the fuel cycle that led to the manufacture of nuclear weapons. Clearly, he has since become

something of a convert to the nuclear cause -- and, like any convert to any new faith, he espouses it absolutely and unquestioningly. Indeed, he can do no other: for were the current article of faith not strong enough to have overcome previous doubts he would never have been converted to it to begin with. So for this reason if nothing else, nuclear power must, for him, remain entirely uncontaminated with nuclear weapons, and all suggestions that the two are connected be steadfastly denied -- because to admit otherwise would destroy the foundations of his belief.

This may sound too extreme a view to attribute to one individual. But it is a view common throughout the nuclear industry: a faith in the science, a pride in its efficacy, a total refusal to consider any alternative view. To study the history of the nuclear industry is to study a catalogue of self-deception, arrogance, complacency, mendacity, contempt for public accountability and paranoid secrecy that is virtually unparalleled; to study a profession which labels any criticism from any source as hostile -- and therefore to be suppressed. We've all heard of Karen Silkwood, of course; but hers is only the most visible name on the long list of those who've been hounded out of their jobs or had their research grants terminated because they dared voice criticisms of the so-called safe atom. And those were critics operating from within the industry, who it can intimidate relatively easily -- when it encounters criticism from outside, it overreacts even more. To name one personal example: when I attended a conference on the health effects of low-level radiation at Barrow-in-Furness in June 1986, I saw pinned to the conference noticeboard a letter from British Nuclear Fuels (owner and operator of the Sellafield reprocessing plant) declining an invitation to participate because they thought they would become the victims of "an anti-nuclear talking shop" and demanding, as a precondition of any acceptance, the right to vet the conference delegates!

It's really not surprising that, along with his conversion to the cause of nuclear power, Jack Herman should have picked up some of the nuclear power industry's own image of itself -- complete with its denials that it can ever be less than perfect. But in view of his oft-repeated commitment to argument unsullied by sentiment and based entirely on logic and reason, it's surprising that when discussing the nuclear industry in his fanzine he feels a need to do as it does -- to censor opinions critical of it and resort to outbursts of the emotionalism he otherwise condemns.



SHUT ME DOWN
OR I'LL MELT DOWN...

LETTERS

Edited by Joseph Nicholas

All together now: long letter columns are boring (although this one is not exactly short, coff coff). So those given to writing us five-page letters of comment on every issue are simply wasting their time; we can't cope with something that long. Although you don't have to be quite as short as this:



Contextual evidence -- the photograph on the other side of the card -- indicates that the hand which wrote this may have belonged to Helen McNabb. But someone who was genuinely shocked by the title of this publication is:

Terry Jeeves
230 Bannerdale Road
Sheffield
South Yorks S11 9FE

"I feel *Fuck The Tories* is rather wasted on me. Firstly, I vote Conservative and have a morbid dread of the Militant Left -- here in Sheffield I have experienced their insidious 1984 tactics and want nothing to do with them.

"Secondly, I am in favour of disposing of *all* weapons, not just nuclear bombs, but having served 5½ years with the RAF during the last conflict and seen what happens to countries which have fewer or weaker weapons, I want no part in any unilateral disarmament. The bully doesn't go away if you show him empty hands.

"I also object to the title of your fanzine as both immature and obnoxious. Whilst I have nothing but loathing for the Militant Left, I would not dream of using a similar title against them."

Well, we knew you were a Tory (in thought if not in party affiliation); we knew you wouldn't like what we had to say; we knew you were likely to get shirty about the actual title....but it's nevertheless disappointing to encounter a letter so full of unexamined right-wing prejudices. "The bully doesn't go away if you show him empty hands" might sound pretty good to you but as an argument against independent British nuclear disarmament its terminology and imagery are quite facile. You're surely old enough to have learned the historical lesson that no arms race has ever ended in anything other than war; but all you want, apparently, is more and better weapons with which to cow the playground bullies. Is this really the intellectual level from which you view international relations?

Never mind these comments about something called "the Militant Left" which you claim to have experienced at first hand in Sheffield. Subsidised public transport, employee participation, equal opportunities schemes, paid maternity leave: these

hallmarks of "municipal socialism" are to be deplored? Only in the imaginations of those who derive their entire information about the left in Britain and politics in general from such virulently pro-Thatcherite newspapers as The Daily Mail.

Here's someone else who couldn't quite work out what was going on:

Margaret Hall
5 Maes yr Odyn
Dolgellau
Gwynedd LL40 1UT

"I am growing more and more irritated by the middle class pretensions of your contributors, and Chris Bailey's article brought my irritation to the boiling point. There is nothing degrading about doing manual work. If Mrs Nason is paid a fair hourly rate, then she is a worker, not a servant. Why is Chris worried about employing a worker? Is he not a worker himself?"

"Chris complains about Mrs Nason's competence. If she can't do what is required, then why doesn't he get someone who can? Again, if he's paying a proper rate, then he can expect a proper job done. And why didn't he explain about the table and the beeswax? (Though if there was any doubt before, the insistence on such finicky treatment of the furniture confirms that Chris is not only middle class but wealthy enough to afford expensive tables with decent surfaces.) "And then, after being so scathing about Mrs Nason's efforts, Chris has the nerve to feel smug and self-satisfied about providing her with a few hours work."

There was more, but I can't bring myself to type it all out -- it would only embarrass its author further. God Almighty, Margaret, can't you recognised irony and exaggeration when it stands up and bites you in the bum?

Apparently not. In a second letter, she had this to say:

"Irony? I saw no irony. I read the article again, and I still saw no irony. Would you have published it if Mrs Nason had been black? And if you had, would you have been surprised if a black fan had angrily complained about a patronising racist attitude? I presume not, so why are you surprised that a person of working class origins complains that the article is patronising about the working class?"

I'm glad you're so certain of our class origins, Margaret. And so equally certain of Mrs Nason's skin colour -- isn't your assumption that she's white rather racist?

Arthur Thomson
17 Brockham House
Brockham Drive
London SW2 3RU

"Tell Chris Bailey in far-off Egnep to take heart. I too have known the dire effects of the application of Jif by unskilled hands. He must change to Flash immediately. Using Flash will get rid of the dreaded white crust in a matter of days, the only problem being that it leaves a dull grey film in its place. But then who's perfect?"

"I stand aghast and flabbered at being clobbered by all these out of town wobbly bits on my gentle tongue-in-cheek joshing of Judith, Avedon and Pam during an intimate group chat at a con. Woe woe woe....hell hath no fury like a....I protest, why some of my best friends are...."

EE...

Steve Bell



Vince Clarke
16 Wendover Way
Welling
Kent DA16 2BN

"Leigh Edmonds had some cogent things to say on the gap between the 'magnificent illusion' and the 'educational but (sometimes) dull', or as some might say the Trufan and the Sercon; it was disappointing that he didn't achieve a true synthesis and come up with a description of a serious-minded humorous gestalt. Is it remotely possible that the monolithic political approach can't cope with the butterfly playing of fandom? But I enjoyed Judith's adventure with The Mouse: nice writing. (Pity there wasn't a grain mountain handy where it was released. We might then have had rafts of mice, which might have compelled someone to Do Something.) I found the third issue more interesting than previous issues; you're finding a neat combination of humour and right -- sorry, left-mindedness. But what's this about it not being your intention to level society? I thought that was the *idea*."

Gary Deindorfer
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Trenton
New Jersey 08618
USA

"I should be thankful that your *samizdat* magazine exists as an alternative to the Establishment media in the three countries of its publication, mediocre though I consider it. But I'm amused at how Judith is able to politicise a mouse, and how Jay Kinney pushes all your buttons and kisses your arses, thereby gaining your wholehearted

approval."

On the contrary: Jay Kinney's comments were entirely ironic, and our response to him was determined accordingly. Here's someone else who disagrees with you:

Walt Willis
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Donaghadee
Northern Ireland
BT21 OPD

"I noticed that in *Fulp* 3 Gary Deindorfer deplored what he called your 'ambiguity'. I'd like to record a contrary vote. This 'ambiguity' is to me a welcome signal that the editors have retained their sense of humour and that any levity on one's part will not be met by an outbreak of priggish ranting. Without this, *Fuck The Tories* would be

much more difficult to comment on."

A vote of confidence that it would be churlish not to thank. Nevertheless, it's perhaps time for some clarification of our political position. Not least because of the number of people who seem to have been led astray by the phrase "ideologically correct", and thereby to have assumed that our occasional resorts to left-wing rhetoric indicate a genuine identification of our beliefs with those of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky -- and, further, that we are unable to understand the world except as it is perceived through the frame their ideas provide.

Not so. We are socialists, yes; but we are far from dogmatic about our socialism. We are familiar with the work of Marx and Engels, Lenin and Gramsci -- even of Keynes and Locke -- and have absorbed many of their ideas; but does the fact that we have read Capital make us slaves to its every word? A logic which claims as much is indeed strange. Yet this is precisely what innumerable readers have accused us of, all of them presumably taking the phrase "ideologically correct" at face value and completely failing to examine the context in which it is embedded.

(Most of them, curiously enough, are American and Australian; the British and Europeans seem far more tolerant. Of course, the former two groups could argue that the latter pair are personally acquainted with us and thus make appropriate allowances -- but this argument would fail on the grounds that very few British and European readers are personally acquainted with the US and Australian editors.)

The message, therefore, is: stop looking for the frame. An interest in politics does not necessarily make for a dour and dogmatic outlook, and it is certainly not one to which any of us subscribe.

Mike Christie
38 Gloucester Road
Acton
London W3 8PD

"I felt, when I read Joseph's piece about the guy 'shaking with rage', that he was either exaggerating or that the bloke was an exception, an oddity. Within a couple of days I was forced to change my mind, by an equally astonishing display of inane anger.

"I was sitting in a pub, talking to some acquaintances, when it came out in conversation that I was a socialist. Immediately, the guy opposite me, who had in trance-like immobility for the previous three-quarters of an hour, was stung to speech.

"I'm a member of the working class, right?" he yelled. I looked at him in less than total comprehension. 'I'm unemployed, right?' Huh? 'I've got an incurable disease of the ears, and I haven't worked for four years!' Poor chap. But these premises were not aimless! They led him irresistibly to his syllogistic conclusion: 'I hate the bloody socialists! I don't want your compassion! If the Labour Party wins the next election they'll never hold another election again!' All accompanied by the (previously thought to be imaginary) flying spittle, pounding fist, and quivering cheeks.

"What can you do with people who groan with pleasure when the government shits on them? After a short pause to lose my temper, I moved to another table."

Richard Faulder
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Yanco
New South Wales 2703
Australia

"Obviously I didn't make myself clear enough, and Leigh couldn't see the underlying assumptions of what I was saying. Basically, such things as social classes do not have any absolute definition, the way the speed of light the speed of light has an absolute value in Einsteinian space. They are arbitrary divisions of society, and hence both the definitions and the limits of each class, and the perceived nature of 'class struggle', are drawn according to the sociological convenience or ideological inclinations of whoever's constructing the definitions. Large numbers of people have subsequently come to believe that they belong to one social class or another. So there seems little point in my reading, as Leigh suggests, 'some class theory and see(ing) what it says about class struggle' since no two authors can be relied upon to agree with each other. Rather, since the editors have set the agenda by raising the expressions, they have an obligation to define them so that we know where we stand. Making statements without defining the terms, then scorning the critics because the latter have apparently used different definitions may be a clever debating technique, but no conscientious adjudicator would allow it."

Just as no conscientious adjudicator would allow you to get away with sweeping dismissals of a subject about which you admit you haven't read a word. How on earth do you expect to convincingly refute those who've been here before you?

Even if we allow your point that social classes are relative rather than absolute, it doesn't demolish the essential class nature of society: the hierarchical division of the human infrastructure of capitalism into relations of production, as elaborated by Marx, and later expanded into non-economistic forms by such sociologists as Weber and Durkheim. To suggest that because some of these people may disagree with each other they're not worth reading is simply absurd.

"To claim that my political position includes 'fairly conservative ideas about the glory of progress' illustrates the extent to which you allow your understanding of others to be bottled in by your own ideological predispositions. There is no glory associated with progress. Certainly I support scientific research, but this is because I believe that in order to fully understand ourselves we must understand the universe around us. Far from linking this with 'the development of monopoly capital', I am opposed to the development of monopoly capital. Since any future economy must be one in which there is zero growth, in line with zero population growth, it seems to me that the best economic units under such circumstances would be small 'businesses' owned by those who operate them. The capitalists with whom I feel at home either do not employ 'workers', or run small businesses in which they take the welfare of their employees into consideration because this is in the best interests of all concerned."

Co-operatives, in other words. But your suggestion that capitalism of any kind can co-exist with a zero-growth economy is bizarre -- by definition, capitalism is a system of exploitation which depends upon the generation of ever-increasing returns in order to sustain its appetite for expansion. Zero-growth capitalism, as you call

it, wouldn't be capitalism at all.

"As for you knowing where you stand, this seems to me a total delusion. Every staple, every item of food you buy, comes from the capitalist system, and the money you use to pay for these goes back to the capitalist system. I'm reminded of an argument of the radical left of a number of years ago which held that our system renders its opponents ineffective by allowing them to criticise it as loudly as they like while ensuring that no one listens to them by making the majority too comfortable with the status quo. To all five of you, thank you for helping to perpetuate an outmoded system."

To respond to your first two sentences: we know where we stand because we are aware of our position in and relation to the capitalist system -- we wish to change it, but at the same time we're aware that the mass of the people must also desire change for it to happen. To respond to your last two sentences: you're confusing two entirely separate purposes, two entirely separate audiences. This is a fanzine, not a manifesto. Or did you have some other idea of what we're about?

Jack Herman
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Australia

"Leigh's application of classical Marxist theory to the problem of possible future space habitats demonstrates the inapplicability of the theory to many contemporary phenomena. While he may be right in his assumption that modern capitalism needs new markets, he is wrong in his suggestion that space is the only way they can go. It would be far cheaper and more profitable to develop new

markets in the areas currently not susceptible to market penetration -- like the socialist world.

"He is simplistic when he sees the shuttle as just a way to funnel money from the people to the monopolists. Firstly, all money raised by government is eventually fed back to capitalists, whether as wages spent by employees or as monies spent on goods. Secondly, the monopoly capitalists themselves want the system changed to eliminate the government's role in the marketplace, and the space programme would probably be a victim of the economic purists. Thirdly, he ignores the benefits that have flowed from the space programme, primarily to the capitalists but additionally to humanity as a whole -- it's estimated that the US programme has cost about 2¢ in the federal tax dollar and has returned about \$4 in new technological knowledge for every dollar invested. Leigh's analysis that 'the short term goal' is the flow of money from people to capitalist via government ignores the flowing back of returns to the people in the form of the developments.

"But Leigh's biggest problem with the application of traditional Marxism to new areas is seen in his vision of 'sweatshops in space'. It is doubtful if there will be room for an unskilled working class in space -- certainly not of the sort that emerged in England in the wake of the agrarian and industrial revolutions. The 'working class' of the space population is likely to be what Marcuse called 'an intellectual working class'. It seems likely that the intellectual workers of space will be in possession and the capitalists will be earthbound, and conditions thus won't reach those Leigh asserts. A contrary vision, based not on outmoded analytical tools but on observation of the integration of the intellectual class into the class structure of capitalism, suggests that workers' conditions in space will be much better than those of the factories Karl Marx knew."

Leigh himself replies: It seems to me that there is some point in hoping that capitalism won't export its problems into space, and that space will be a clean sheet upon which humanity will write. But I'm not so optimistic. I don't think I'm lacking in imagination to see some kind of sweatshops in space, and think it's Jack's lack to believe that they won't exist. One reason is that transport costs will be a significant factor for any reasonably-scaled exploitation of space, and there's no point establishing large production facilities there if you don't have a population close at hand to sell to. They may be skilled, but then in comparison with English peasants of the Middle Ages most factory workers at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution were also skilled. It's a question of relativities, which

Jack seems to ignore.

In the shorter term, we might look to space as a source of rather expensive raw materials (sort of a Pilbara in orbit), but I wonder if there are any profits to be made from that alone, and I wonder if space fans want to see the upper realms inhabited only by temporary construction and transport workers. Space is a desert as far as humanity is concerned, and if we're going to go there on a permanent basis and allow people to live worthwhile lives there we can't rely on capitalist exploitation of labour and resources. Co-operative effort for humanistic goals seems a much better way.

Richard Brandt
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Texas 79912
USA

"There are still plenty of people in the world who shovel manure, or pound on metal, or scabble in the dirt for a living. Equating working class shit of yesteryear with the paperwork of today bespeaks the blinkered naivete of white collar workers whose habitual conception of labourers does not extend beyond their office-mates.

"The problem is not that so many people with nice clean jobs don't think they're shovelling dung. The problem is that so many people with nice clean jobs don't worry about the literal dung as long as there are people taking care of the literal shovelling of it. Exacerbated by the fact that the great mass of people are comfortable with the notion that someone higher up is relieving them of any responsibility for worrying about the state of the world -- never mind that their government is dumping radioactive fallout on them or putting out of work the farmers that supply the greasy chips they'd rather have."

We agree completely. But you seem to be mistaking Leigh's specific reply to Richard Faulder for a general statement of principle. We're well aware that for much if not most of the world's population back-breaking toil of the kind you describe is the only means of survival, and would not seek to suggest otherwise. All we ask is that others also look beyond their nice clean jobs to consider the world about them -- and the reasons why so much of the world's population is so deprived. Those wondering where to start finding out could always try a subscription to the development magazine *New Internationalist* (£11.70 a year from 120 Lavender Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3HP; Can\$25 from 511 King Street West, Toronto, Ontario M5V 9Z9; US\$25 from P.O. Box 255, Lewiston, NY 14092; A\$28 from P.O. Box 82, Fitzroy, Victoria 3065; NZ\$30 from P.O. Box 1905, Christchurch, Aotearoa).

Alexis Gilliland
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USA

"So we come back to rehashing the *Challenger* disaster, with remarks which seem consistent with the 'Ad astra non aspera' motto derived from the cover. Indulging his penchant for skiffy socialism, Comrade L. Edmonds fondly imagines a recapitulation of 1830s Manchester out in the L-5 colonies, and comes to the theoretically astounding conclusion that the failure of the US government to colonise space 'would lead... perhaps to the vindication of Marx's original theories'. The basic problem with those original theories was that they had no understanding of capitalism's inherent flexibility. Which means that Marx and Engels were wrong in 1848, are wrong now, and if any of their predictions come true it will be dumb luck, not vindication."

The basic problem with your argument is the way it forgets that Marxist theory comes in two parts: the descriptive and the prescriptive. That the latter has been proved incorrect in many respects does not also automatically invalidate the former. In any case, if you're going to argue that because Marx has been proved wrong by later developments then you'll also have to argue -- unsubstantiated assertions about capitalism's "inherent flexibility" aside -- that because Keynes proved Adam Smith wrong capitalist ideas are equally invalid. And if you're not prepared to do that, then where's your consistency?

"And, of course, we have Comrade J. Nicholas discussing his encounter with one of those people who give radicalism a bad name. Interesting article. The comment hook here is 'Soviet threat', suggesting that the Soviet Union (that jailhouse of nations) does not in fact constitute a threat. I was recently involved in a

discussion with John Brunner in *Science Fiction Review*, and John -- who as you know is very strong for nuclear disarmament -- also believes that the Soviets are not a threat. So much so, in fact, that when I asked 'If the US was wrong to be in Vietnam, why is it right for the USSR to be in Afghanistan?' he tried justify Soviet policy there. Fucking amazing. All I wanted was for him to measure the US and the USSR with the same yardstick, which he wouldn't do.

"Which brings us back to *Fuck The Tories 3*. You people are for nuclear disarmament and against Star Wars, but how do you feel about the seven-year Soviet imperialist expansionist racist genocide in Afghanistan? A theoretically correct answer would be appreciated, if you can find one. A subsidiary question is what other military technologies would you like to expunge from human knowledge? Bacteriological warfare and the various nerve gases are obvious candidates, but how about smokeless powder while we're at it? The automatic weapons which smokeless powder made possible did a lot to make the masses obsolete."

Indeed -- but this is an argument which confuses disarmament with disinvention, and seeks to suggest that because the latter isn't possible the former is therefore also unachievable. This is self-evidently silly. We haven't forgotten how to make slaves of people and exterminate them in gas chambers -- but we have agreed that these are things we should no longer do (at least in the developed world). And it is perfectly possible to justify the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, in the sense of explaining the reasons for it, without also endorsing it -- a crucial distinction which you seem to have ignored. I haven't read your exchange with John Brunner in *Science Fiction Review*, but I'll bet his history of Afghanistan commenced some time before the magic date of 29 December 1979 -- events prior to which so-called "conservative scholarship" is notably unwilling to consider.

What's so depressing about your letter, however, is its stubbornly bipolar view of the world: a blinkered refusal to acknowledge that there is life outside the confines of the global superpower confrontation, and to pretend that if you oppose one then you must necessarily be a supporter of the other. Rubbish -- like it or not, there is such a thing as non-alignment (which the historical evidence indicates post-war US governments have had some trouble distinguishing from Soviet communism), and even neutrality, from which it is possible to engage in even-handed criticism of both superpowers and follow a path independent of either. As does much of the Third World; as do the European peace movements. This you appear not even to be aware of -- and resort instead to the easy Cold War simplicities of such knee-jerk phrases as "that jailhouse of nations" and "imperialist expansionist racist genocide", a species of paranoid abuse which does not so much enhance understanding as block it completely.

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"Russell Parker's review of *Half-Life* reminded me of what the celebrated new biography of Frank Sinatra is like. I kept wondering why none of the fifty or so references to United States imperialism was specific enough to describe when and where the USA has imperialised another country since the Spanish-American War, and was shocked to find someone advocating a James Blish spin-off after all the terrible things we've been told about him after he was dead and incapable of setting the record straight."

Don't get the Frank Sinatra and James Blish references at all. But to address your complaint that Parker didn't come up with any specific instances of imperialism: I think you're forgetting that this is something which can be carried on by other than purely military means -- such as political, economic, social and cultural, which tend to operate by rather more insidious and gradualist methods. You don't have to conquer someone else's territory by force of arms to impose your economic priorities and social values on them (although it helps if you do: the history of US military involvement in Central America in the 1920s provides several instructive examples). And let's not forget the quasi-military role of the CIA in sustaining and extending US global hegemony since 1945; for a good populist account, see William Blum's recent *The CIA: A Forgotten History* (Zed Press, 57 Caledonian Road, London N1 9BU and 171 First Avenue, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey 07716).