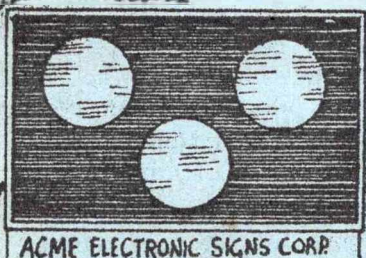
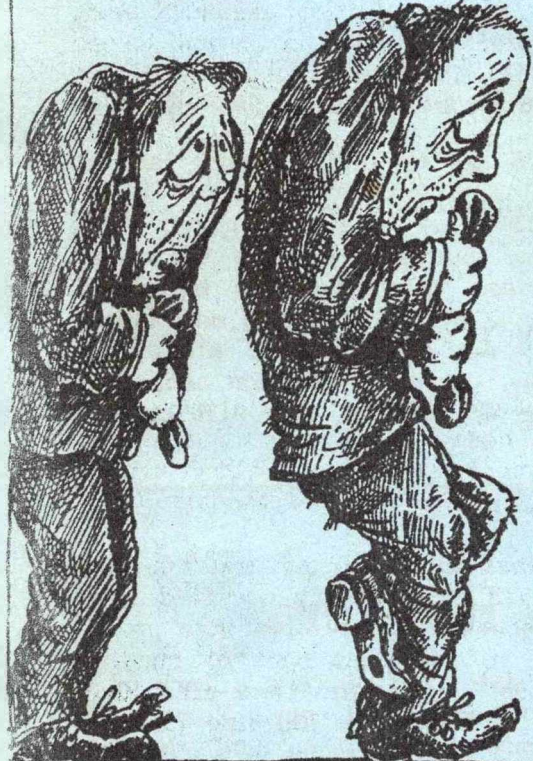
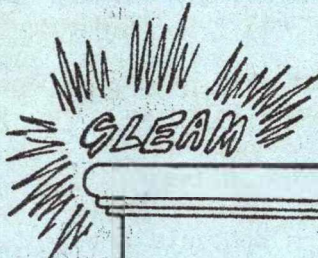


IN THE BRIGHT NEW TOMORROW OF MRS THATCHER'S BRITAIN,
PAWN BROKERS, TOO, HAVE MOVED WITH THE TIMES...

BR 222222222222



A PORSCHE, A FILOFAX,
A CANCELLED AMERICAN
EXPRESS CARD AND A
CONVERTED WAREHOUSE
IN DOCKLANDS? I'LL
GIVE YOU 24 QUID.
NEXT!



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FUCK THE TORIES 8

This is *Fuck The Tories* 8, edited and published by Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas, dated February 1990, and containing quite a lot of words, not all of them different, arranged in various orders. It is no longer a production of the great and glorious 22 Danbigh Street People's Revolutionary Collective, for reasons you will discover herein. Instead, it is now produced by the 5A Frinton Road Historiographical and Avian Nutrition Co-operative, at 5A Frinton Road, Stamford Hill, London N15 6NH, United Kingdom. (This, as if you hadn't guessed, is a Change Of Address. Enter it in your records *now*.) In order to minimise our guilt for the massacre of trees, this fanzine is printed (as have been all past issues) on recycled paper, and the mailing list is subject to stringent discipline. (Appropriate advertisements are being placed in selected telephone kiosks even now.) So if you find something that interests you in this issue, do let us know. Thanks go once again to Vince Clarke for the electros, to Rob Hansen for the duplication, and to Michael Palin's computer called Wanda for the spiffing titles. This fanzine supports

Roman Orszanski for GUFF

and you are encouraged to do likewise. A GUFF ballot is enclosed with this issue; use it!

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LETTER COLUMN -- edited by Judith Hanna, featuring letters from Colin Greenland, Ian Bambro, Mark Manning, Alexis Gilliland, Martyn Taylor, Harry Warner, Sue Thomason, Mog Decarnin	page 21

The filler items at the bottom of this page and page 6 are by Judith Hanna; that at the bottom of page 20 is by Joseph Nicholas. The illustrations on pages 6, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17 and 20 are by Judith Hanna; that on page 23 is by Alexis Gilliland; while those on the cover and pages 9 and 28 were lifted from the usual sources (in order: *The Guardian*, *SCANN* (*South Coast Against Nuclear Navies*) *Newsletter*, and *WWF News*. Apart from these three, the entire contents are copyright by Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas on behalf of the original contributors, to whom are returned all rights (including those to the jigsaw, T-shirt, coffee mug, toy, cartoon animation and, like, absolutely *everything* (no shit), man). The next issue is due, er, and will contain promised articles by Moshe Feder and Mark Manning, *won't it?*

The Truth About Sun Readers

Do you know anyone who admits to actually buying *The Sun*? Perhaps it's a mark of a sheltered lifestyle that no one I know would be caught dead with a copy. But almost everyone sneaks glances at what their neighbours on the Tube may be reading, particularly if it is something like *The Sun* or *Sunday Sport* or *News of the World*.

One day, when I boarded a tube train, I glanced at what my neighbour was reading. Which was page three of *The Sun*, the page (as Poms will know) mostly occupied by a photo of a young lady wearing a simper and big boobs and nothing else worth mentioning. Fairly uninteresting, I thought, checking to see what sort of reading matter I had stuffed into my bag. See one pair of boobs, you've seen them all. What is it that makes men so fascinated by mammary tissue? Then, in a blinding flash, I realised what had never occurred to Freud.

It's because they can't grow bosoms themselves. That's why men are so obsessed with them. *Breast envy!*

BATTERY FARM

YOUR BEAN

SPROUTS

JUDITH HANNA

I used to grow bean sprouts in a jam jar with no lid: sprinkle on a thin layer of mung beans or brown lentils or alfalfa seeds, swirl water round daily and drain it out through the back of an ordinary kitchen strainer. Then I worked out that a small flat pyrex casserole dish with a glass lid gave more growing space with its wider base area. Both methods worked fine, yielding a quantity of usable bean sprouts. True, my home-grown sprouts looked feeble and undernourished, spindly little Oliver Twists compared to the plump plastic-packed sprouts I saw in supermarkets. I put the difference down to unnatural additives used by agribusiness, or maybe some special light and fertiliser combination.

Later, I bought a "bean sprouter kit" from a health food shop, a medium rise multilayer construction of three perforated trays with a green plastic drip-catcher at the bottom. The instructions were to spread the perforated trays with a thin layer of sprouting seeds, then pour a quarter cup of water into the top tray once or twice daily. No noticeable difference in ease of use or quality of sprouts resulting, but we could grow three stories of sprouts instead of just one — if we thought we could get through eating that many, which we wouldn't.

Then we found our new flat, and started getting ready to move. "Right," I said to the inch or so of mung bean seeds in the bottom of their store jar, "let's use you all up, and that's one less jar to move." Poured the sprouts in a recklessly thick layer into the sprouter, gave them some water, bunged the jar in the bottle bank box, and left them to it for a couple of days. And when I next looked, they were a packed scrum of rigger-buggers of sprouts, muscular and bull-necked and bursting with rude vigour. How different from the usual delicately reared feeble little things.

Apparently bean sprouts enjoy being battery-farmed. Seems that, unlike chickens, or human beings, they don't like being given lots of lebensraum. Perhaps being packed together helps retain water to the benefit of all, preventing it dripping through out of reach to the bottom drip-catcher tray. I recall from basic science that plant respiration, just like animal respiration, breathes out water vapour, each bean bathing its neighbours in a nice moist microclimate. So, dear reader, to grow healthy happy beansprouts, remember that they don't want breathing space or room to move and pack 'em tight.

Meanwhile, in our new flat we are revelling in extra lebensraum. In Pimlico we had two rooms above a newsagent's. Until we started looking at potential new flats, I thought our Denbigh Street digs the battery cage accommodation. One front room looking out over the street, with Joseph's desk beside one window, my desk in front of the other window, and bookshelves around the walls. One bedroom, with our bed and several bookshelves. We shared a tiny bathroom and good-sized kitchen with the (wet Tory) chap in the bedsit on the first floor. It was all very compact, and I regularly complained about being cramped. "I need a room of my own," I told Joseph whenever he nagged me to tidy up. He reminded me that we were a long way from the sweeping Australian plains, and that Britain was a small, densely populated island. I thought our place very mean-sized, not enough room to swing a kitten in. But compared to

other flats we looked at, our rooms were spacious. In other flats you couldn't have swung a mouse, or even a cockroach. They clearly weren't intended for people whose lifestyles include space-wasting luxuries like bookshelves and desks.

"Why did we want to move, after seven years in Denbigh Street?" people have been asking. It wasn't the lack of space, though I regularly complained about it — that was balanced by location. Affordable, though shabby, places within walking distance of the West End, Trafalgar Square, Buckingham Palace and Westminster Abbey are vanishingly rare and not to be given up lightly. Nor were we evicted, as *Thyme* suggested. But we had some suspicion that the chap to whom we were paying our very cheap rent wasn't actually entitled to sub-let, had been silly enough to let his head landlords know of our occupancy, so they were winding up the machinery of due process....so rather than hang on for legal hassles, we started looking about for new accommodation. Besides, the area around Victoria is the most polluted in London, and I was having breathing difficulties. And I'd always complained that we needed more space. I wanted a room of my own, and a garden.

Ten days before we flew off for our Samarkand holiday we found this place. The ground floor of a (1920s or 1930s, I think) terrace house, ten minutes walk from Seven Sisters station on the Victoria line. A reasonable sized front room and two bedrooms so I could have one for my st(udy). A tiny kitchen (white and red) and a tiny bathroom (avocado green). And a back yard. It not only fitted all our bookcases but left space for another: duly ordered, varnished and assembled by Joseph and now filled with books from the boxes in the hall cupboard and helicopter model kits.

It is, I can report, very comfortable to have a room of my own, with a door I can shut against Joseph's invasive neatness. No wonder I used to complain about not having one. I take it for granted now as the only way to live.

Other things I now take for granted are having central heating and a washing machine. Joseph used to take the laundry to a laundromat; these days he has epic battles with our own machine, which has developed such endearing idiosyncracies as needing a piece of packaging tape to keep its door shut because the catch has gone, now and then staying filled up with soapy water while the spin dry cycle is running, and leaving greasy marks on white sweaters. I see why Mum was always so dubious about automatic washing machines.

The Pimlico place was heated by electric appliances: a fan heater in the bedroom, another in the kitchen until Joseph kicked it to death when it started playing up, and in the living room a big electric fire with a warm air convector setting. No heating at all in the bathroom. No heat in the morning until Joseph leapt out of bed and turned it on. At Frinton Road we arrive home from work to a warm house, and wake up in the morning to a warm house. This means that instead of huddling in the blankets until prised out, I managed to maintain my get-up-early-and-write regime until Xmas, instead of abandoning it as soon as the dark cold season set in. New Year's Resolution One: keep up the early morning writing regime more consistently this year.

We seem to have found a pretty energy-efficient flat, perhaps something to do with the fact that our landlord is German. His instructions, to turn the central heating on in autumn and leave it running at a constant background warmth until spring were in line with *Environment Now's* "Green Home" advice that this is better than using a timer: prevents condensation, and eliminates the energy demand of re-heating rooms that have become damp. Most of the windows are double-glazed, with a strip of louvres which can be opened at the top for fresh air. When we first looked at the windows, at the end of the long hot summer, my first reaction was: "We'll stifle! How awful not being able to open the windows!" Then I reminded myself that warm days were not typical of British weather. Besides, we can always open the back door for fresh air and sit out in our new garden.

Features I'm not taking for granted, but revelling in are two: the automatic oven, and the railway line at the bottom of the garden. The oven has this clever system that

lets you set its temperature, tell it how long you want it to cook for, and when you want it to turn off. So you pop in a casserole or roast in the morning, then go blithely off to work or Xmas shopping or for a healthy scenic ramble to, say, Hampstead Heath, and when you get back and open the door, you're welcomed by the warm aroma of dinner ready. Certainly beats trying to think what to cook when you come back tired out at the end of the day.

It is the railway line at the end of the garden that has most dramatically expanded our *lebensraum*. The garden itself is quite small. I would have called it "very small", but according to the British Ornithological Trust Garden Birds Survey form, "very small" is just window boxes or a hanging bird-table -- which would mean that our window sills at Denbigh Street counted as a very small garden. The local bird life that used them was sparrows and pigeons, one of which uprooted my bonsai blue pine seedling. A couple of times I saw a blue tit in the back garden two storeys below our kitchen window. Most of the local wildlife was the parade of tourists, football fans, and people walking along the street below our front windows.

When we arrived here at Frinton Road in October, the garden was a jungle, completely overgrown. We recognised the large round leaves at the top of ten foot tall branches as the stuff we looked down on in the back garden at Denbigh Street. Well, make a start by tackling the corner I can get at, I told myself. So I got a hacksaw from the toolbox and attacked the nearest tree trunk, which surrendered without a struggle. It turned out to be not solid wood but a sappy, bamboo-like stem. The jungle turned out to be a mass of leaves springing from relatively few, easily breakable stems. Almost no undergrowth, partly because the leaves blocked out light, partly because most of the yard was concreted over. There'll be another battle with it in the spring when the stubborn root masses start sending up new shoots.

When I described our jungle, lots of people said, "Oh, I know that stuff, it's a real menace," but none of them actually knew its name. Someone recommended pouring boiling water onto stubborn roots and weeds as an alternative to chemical warfare in the garden, which I shall try. I browsed through the gardening shelves of several bookstores and found complete neglect of the subject of garden weeds. I had heard of "ground elder" as the name of a dreaded British weed, so I wondered if we might have that. Then a friend who was doing a botany course mentioned that ground elder was an *Umbellifera*, which this certainly wasn't. However, we did have some clumps of parsley-like weeds pushing up through cracks in the concrete, so perhaps these might be the dreaded ground elder? Perusal of several of Joseph's mother's gardening books over Christmas suggested that the leaves of our anonymous *Umbelliferae* were more finely divided than those illustrated for ground elder. Perhaps it's cow parsley we've got, which seems harmless enough. Moreover, one of Mutti's books described a weed that sounds just like our jungle: Japanese knotweed, originally introduced as an ornamental garden plant.

It is, I admit, a species of nature, but not the sort of nature I want to encourage. "Let a hundred flowers bloom," as Chairman Mao said: this plant doesn't. Its mass of leaves blocked the light so thoroughly there was almost no growth beneath. Clearly a totalitarian of the plant world, and thus ideologically as well as ecologically unsound.

We were left with a jungle size pile of stems and leaves, which we piled on top of the dead stalks left from the last time someone had hacked down the garden. Give 'em a couple of weeks to dry out and we can burn off the rubbish for Guy Fawkes Day, I thought. The British weather proved unco-operative, and wet everything. This is no climate for pyromaniacs. In the end it took three bonfires over three weekends, burning off all our and Julie upstairs' accumulated newspapers and three bottles of methylated spirits to reduce the pile to ash and fragments that could be dug into the soil bed. We now had a small damp rectangle of dirt and concrete, some 15 foot square, which given a bit of help come spring might grow into a garden.

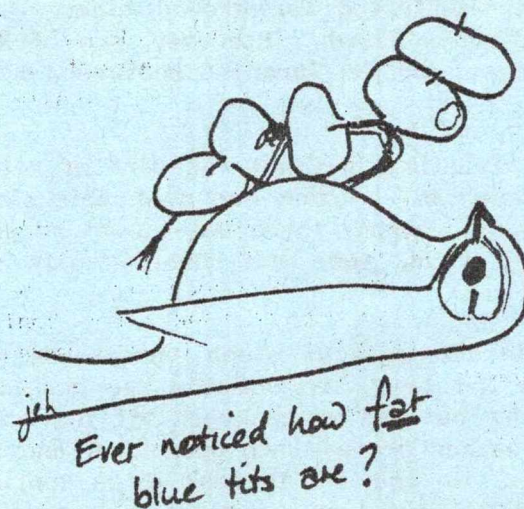
The digging exercise turned up quite a few bulbs starting to shoot, which was encouraging. Since our garden is almost entirely shaded by walls all around and damp

with drainage from the railway embankment, I'd wondered whether bulbs might just rot in the ground. So I replaced the old bulbs, and added some new daffodils, tulips and crocuses. And that was it for gardening, until spring. All my seed packets say I shouldn't start planting them until February. Avoiding peat composts, of course, to save what's left of Caithness's Flow country.

What I could do was put out bird feedery. Because the great lifestyle-expanding feature of the railway line at the end of the garden is not so much that it is environmentally sound transport which we must ride some day to Hertford East, Cambridge, Cheshunt and Enfield, but that it's a bird habitat. The sides of its embankment are overgrown with brambles, buddleia and other bushes amongst which I've so far spotted a wren or possibly two, three robins, three blue tits, up to twenty sparrows, and I think I saw a dunnock the other day.

So I fixed up a hanging tray to swing from the clothes line that runs from the bedroom window to a tall bare (London plane?) tree on the embankment side of the garden wall, and started scattering crumbs every morning. That brought a dozen or so sparrows to the crumbs, but they ignored the hanging tray. I consulted several bird books, made strings of peanuts and hung them off the branches of the spindly bare sapling (another London plane?) in the garden. The blue tits were onto them almost at once, later joined by a great tit. I shooed away two neighbourhood cats who seemed to be tucking into the bird crumbs, and were no doubt anticipating tucking into the birds. Bits of excess fat from roast pork were strung on wire and hung from the line, and the tits and robins liked those too. We wandered into a pet shop and bought a "bird pudding" of seeds and nuts embedded in a suet ball, and a hanging seed feeder device and hung those from the line. Half of the bird pudding has been pecked away by the tits and robin, but they're all neglecting the seed-feeder.

The window in front of my desk here looks out over the garden and bird cafeteria, the brick wall at the end of it, and the railway embankment beyond. As I sit and word-process, I keep my eye on my own little patch of British ecology. Ah, now is that a chaffinch? Another entry for the bird census. Certainly beats watching a jar full of bean sprouts grow. But keeping an eye out for the cocked-tail silhouette of the tiny wren flitting among bare branches against the skyline, or a pot-bellied blue tit hanging upside down pecking at a peanut string, or waiting for a robin to dive in from its perch for a quick beakful from the bird pudding, all these fascinating distractions do interfere with concentration on writing.



ISN'T IT FUNNY....how, when women don't laugh at jokes about dumb blondes, mothers-in-law, female politicians and so on, it just shows they don't have a sense of humour; and when women do laugh at men, it proves how strident and man-hating these humourless feminists are?

I FLAP ERGO SUM

(FRIGHTENING, ISN'T IT?)

LEIGH EDMONDS

At last it can be told, the story of courageous and unprecedented innovations in the world of aerospace technology which have been taking place behind the now-slightly-rusty "Iron Curtain". These developments, which could well change the face of modern warfare, are so radical that when people first learn about them they are inclined to laugh. But isn't that how so many of the world's truly innovative thinkers have been greeted?

The previously unsung genius who has done so much to change our thinking about the military uses of aerospace technology is Ivan Ilych Flapperov, the only son of high-ranking party official parents living in Moscow. It is said that he lacks any formal engineering or managerial qualifications but his favoured position, his magnetic and flamboyant personality, and his intimate knowledge of the personal proclivities of the wives of certain politburo members had earned him the distinction of his own aviation design bureau by the age of twenty-five. Some take this as clear indication of Flapperov's genius and innovative style, while critics, pointing to the fact that the Flapperov offices and factory are located in northern Siberia, draw a different conclusion.

Like many of the world's truly inventive men -- Watt, Edison, Bell, and the man who invented "Monopoly" -- Flapperov saw a problem and decided to solve it. His problem was that there were already a number of highly successful aviation design bureaux in Russia, such as Mikoyan, Sukhoi, Tupolev and Yakovlev, making perfectly good aeroplanes. There he was with a design bureau all of his own; offices filled with engineers, draftsmen, stress analysts, party cardes, tea ladies and the like, and nothing for them to do. For a while he thought of reinventing the dirigible but found that the factory he had been provided with was not big enough. Then he thought about autogiros, but they seemed to be out of fashion. Luckily for Flapperov, he was on a fact-finding mission to Tahiti when he stumbled upon an international seminar organised by Orrite Ornithopter Production Systems to discuss future trends in ornithopter design. As usual, the attendance was select, small and tax deductible, and Flapperov happened to overhear the opening session of the seminar because he was sitting at the next table to us beside the pool.

What followed has been a most fruitful co-operative design venture between east and west. We have provided the know-how and he has provided the test facilities and the hard currency for more international seminars at remote and exclusive venues. In terms of hardware, the Flapperov design bureau has been responsible for a range of stealth ornithopters that were so secret the KGB only found out about them from its usually reliable source inside the CIA. Although these ornithopters have contributed significantly to advances in aerospace technology and the reduction of the OOPS debt burden, they are not the radical innovation in military design that I wish to describe in the rest of this article.

In a twist of logic which is so revolutionary it defies logical explanation, Flapperov asked himself, "If there is an advantage in making ornithopters as invisible as possible over the battlefield, might there not also be an advantage in making other ornithopters as visible as possible?" After another three bottles of vodka Flapperov's powers of reasoning had developed to such a state that he had conceived of the whole VeHIVisFLO (Very High Visibility Flying Object) in all but its most technical details. Starting with the image of the German Stuka dive bombers that had been fitted with special sirens to tell their targets they were coming and so cause demoralising fear among the enemy, Flapperov devised a large and aggressive-looking

aircraft, seemingly unstoppable, flying directly at the enemy in a way calculated to cause the maximum fear and demoralisation. He reasoned that the ornithopter was the ideal vehicle for this mode of psychological attack, since its wings could be specially constructed so that they would remind the enemy of a large bird of prey.

Over the following two weeks, in the special rest home where his parents had sent him to dry out, Flapperov refined his design. There were no real technical problems in building a big, noisy and highly visible ornithopter because those in fact are the general strengths of that whole family of aircraft. Flapperov decided to enhance those features, and to save weight, by deleting the wing joints' oiling mechanisms so that the wings squeaked as they moved. He also decided to use another design feature of the ornithopter, its tendency to beat its wings on the ground, by fitting tin rubbish bin lids to the wing tips and by encouraging the pilots to fly as close the ground as possible. This meant that the attacking ornithopters would not only make the usual wild whooshing sounds as they approached, but would squeak and clang uncontrollably as well. Flapperov calculated that a mere section of five of his VeHiVisF10 ornithopters could produce as much noise as a Def Leppard concert. He further figured that it was impossible to imagine what a full squadron of twenty of these machines could do, and with only twice the musical content of Def Leppard.

The technical problem which did seem to present some difficulties was how to make this new ornithopter almost impossible to shoot down. It could be heavily armoured, but that would make it expensive, complex and too heavy. Flapperov decided, instead, to design the machine around large lightweight components which would allow most bullets, shells and missiles to pass through the wings and body without hitting major parts or doing major damage. The problem there was that things like fuel and engines tend to get damaged by enemy ammunition, but he had seen the solution to that in his first bout of inspiration. The power source for the ornithopter would be outside the aircraft, being sent to it along electricity cables from ground-based vehicles to small but powerful motors that activated the wings. This had the advantage of lowering the weight and therefore the cost of the VeHiVisF10, making it easier to produce. Although some might see the dependence on ground-based power supplies as a disadvantage, Flapperov decided that a speed across the ground of about forty miles an hour was all that was required, since he wanted to give the enemy time to see his ornithopters coming.

This left the only vulnerable component in the whole design as the pilot. Here Flapperov decided to install a triple-redundancy system by providing three different pilots' seats in different parts of the ornithopter so that if one or two pilots did succumb to enemy fire another could take over the task of flying the machine.

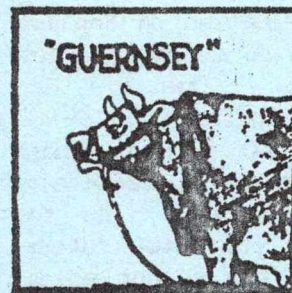
The prototype VeHiVisF10 flew (if that's the word I'm looking for) about two years ago at a secret test site hidden away from all snooping eyes except the occasional passing US spy satellite. Because of the size of this ornithopter it was soon well known to Western military sources and given the NATO reporting code of "Flasher". Apparently ground observers who have seen these test flights have been overawed by the sight and sound of one of these large, lumbering, bat-shaped things pounding its way across the tundra, making noises like a Chinese steel works at full steam, with flashes of full voltage electricity arcing from the tin lids on to the wing tips to the ground due to leaks in the electrical system. (These electrical faults were unintended, but when the effect of great sparks of electric energy between the ornithopter and the ground, and the sound of their humming and crackling was experienced, this flaw was incorporated into the design as a permanent feature.) The overall effect of noise and chaos is so startling that apparently one of the prototypes had a malfunction and crashed to the ground with its wings still flapping, and it was twenty minutes before anybody realised that there was something wrong with it. Added to this is the noise of the support vehicles, all eight of them, built onto the hulls of old tanks, with diesel motors chugging, electric power generators churning and tracks clanking so that if nothing else it is impossible for anybody to hear themselves think within a mile of a VeHiVisF10 in full flight.

Supporters of this new concept in battlefield tactics say that the VeHiVisF10 has a

place in the field even though it is not armed, beyond the ability to attack its enemies psychologically or bash them to death with its rubbish bin lid wing tips. The theory is that ground troops will not be able to ignore these large noisy machines when they appear, and consequently more highly armed and efficient aircraft and ground forces will be able to take full advantage of the distraction caused by the VeHiVisF10. Critics of this military innovation tend to point out that when a number of these ornithopters were sent on test to Afghanistan the main reaction of the Islamic rebels was to fall about laughing a lot. Not dismayed, supporters of the concept claim this too is a vindication of the diversionary tactical value of the VeHiVisF10 on the battlefield.

Although not fully convinced of the VeHiVisF10 concept, Western military planners are watching developments closely. We at OOPS are working on a high-tech version of the basic Russian design. While similar in many ways, we have decided to take full advantage of the networks of high voltage electricity transmission lines which run across the potential battlefields of Europe. This means that instead of being restricted by the lumbering speed of support ground vehicles, our HiVisAtOs (High Visibility Attack Ornithopters) will be able to move anywhere in Europe where there are power lines simply by tossing a connecting line from the ornithopter up to the overhead power lines. In addition, our HiVisAtOs will be much more spectacular because they will be operating at much higher power levels and the display of jagged arcs of electric power between the overhead lines and the ornithopters, and between them and the ground, should look like nothing more than a mediaeval god come to exact retribution from startled enemy troops, urging them into a hasty and disorganised rout.

Because HiVisAtO is a hard phrase to promote we have invented the name "Frighter" for our product. To create a market for it, we are about to embark upon a high publicity sales tour of the Western and Non-Aligned world, whether or not they have extensive electric transmission power line networks -- we can provide those, too, for a cost. We will, of course, be staying at the best hotels, experiencing the exotic and sensual delights of distant lands, and spending the Department of Overseas Trade's promotional money with reckless efficiency. Even if foreign military men are not impressed with our product, we're sure the Department of Trade will get a fright when it sees the bill.



SNAPSHOTS OF THE SOVIETS

JOSEPH NICHOLAS

GIANT STATUES OF LENIN ABSOLUTELY EVERYWHERE

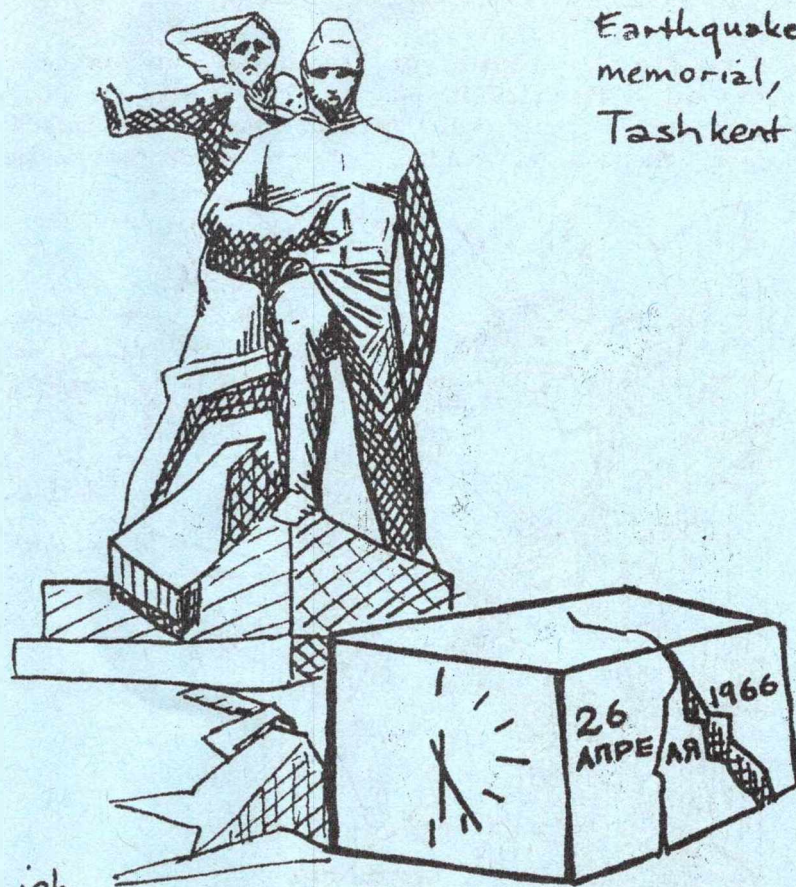
Wherever you go in the Soviet Union, you'll find a statue of V. I. Lenin in exhortatory pose, gazing out across some plaza at or near the supposed centre of the city. Or town, or village -- even the little village in the Pamirs in which we stopped for a bowl of tea on our way back to Dushanbe had a dusty life-size bronze in the dusty village square (actually a slightly wider part of the single street), in front of what looked like the local party headquarters. (Or even the local museum of Leninist thought.) Indeed, these statues were so ubiquitous that by the end of our two-week tour Judith and I were joking about V. I. Lenin, the ultimate travel writer. Wherever you went, you found that he'd been there first. Even places he never actually visited when he was alive.

Although we expected Lenin to be accorded some prominence, and knew that his embalmed body lies in a red and black marble mausoleum in Moscow's Red Square, we were unprepared for the extent of the personality cult that has grown up around him. The cult is all the more odd given his own opposition to such things during his lifetime; but of course once you're dead you have no control over what your successors get up to. And if Stalin wanted to present himself as Lenin's natural heir (which he did), then he had first to glorify Lenin....a glorification which carries on today, permeating every facet of Soviet society. Waiting in Dushanbe airport for our flight to Samarkand (in a gloriously rattletrap twin turboprop Antonov AN-24), I picked up a selection of English language booklets published by Novosti Press Agency, the latest in an endless series churned out for the purposes of propagandising the foreign masses. One of these addressed itself to *Lenin And The Problem Of Compromise In Politics, 1920-1924* -- the years of the New Economic Policy following the Russian Civil War, in which the farmland and factories that had been brought under state control immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution were returned to the peasants and workers. The text of this booklet was choked with quotations from Lenin and with footnotes referring to yet more quotations from his collected works. Why? Because, the author solemnly informed us, it is impossible to understand Lenin without constant reference to his original thoughts. Suggest in response that this is akin to religious adulation, and it would be vehemently denied. Yet the object of a form of worship is just what Lenin has become.

Yet the real point of the booklet was not to rake over some old debate about the NEP. (After all, why should a foreign reader care much about the problems of compromise with which Lenin was then faced?) One had to examine the sub-text, to map the booklet against contemporary developments -- and realise that *perestroika* and *khosrashchyot* were also compromises with the Leninist doctrines on which the Soviet state is founded. The booklet was thus a heavily-coded attempt to answer the conservative critics of Gorbachev's programmes by locating those programmes in a Leninist context. Or, in other words: nothing can be allowed to stand alone; everything has to be justified by reference to The Words Of The Founder.

That this sort of thing bores the bum off the majority of the Soviet people was

indirectly confirmed by our guides, all of whom were remarkably open in their criticisms of their country. "The *glasnost* guides", we called them, obviously seizing their moment to get said all the things they'd been bottling up hitherto before another possible Brezhnevite permafrost descended once again. Our city guide in Tashkent was particularly cutting here. "When the rouble becomes convertible," she said, "we'll have even more economic problems than we do now" -- although this didn't seem to worry her a bit. "Spend your money in our *Beriozka* shops," she urged us, "We want your hard currency, not your roubles." Later, she took us to see the statue marking the epicentre of the earthquake of 1966, which had levelled everything. As we piled off the coach, she



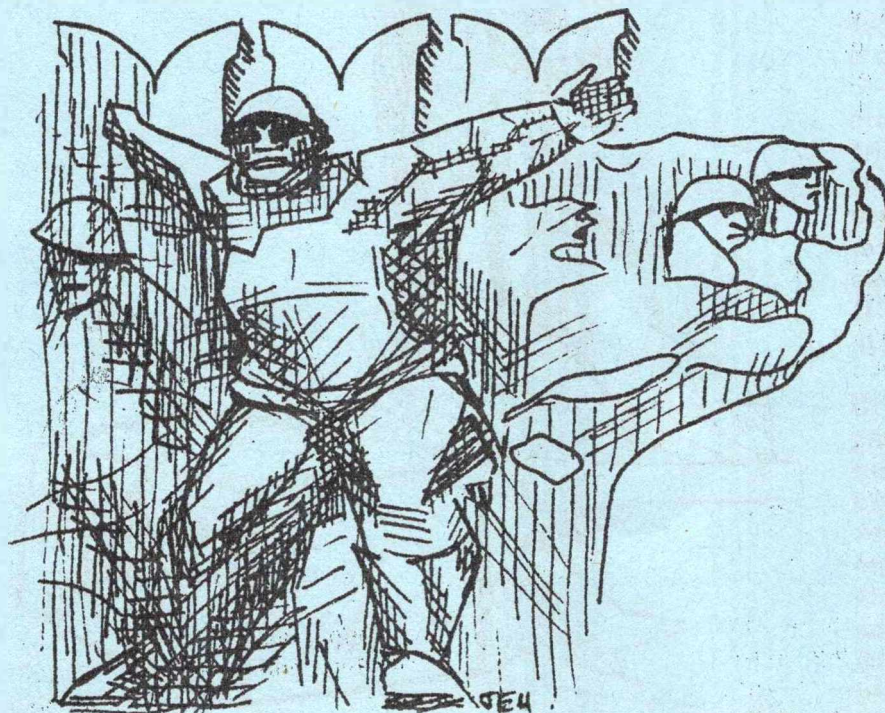
Earthquake
memorial,
Tashkent

began unloading the statistics of the destruction -- so many houses demolished, so many people killed and injured, so many tons of cement required to rebuild....blah, drone, there's obviously something in the Soviet soul that responds to this barrage of big numbers. Then, "the day after the earthquake Leonid Brezhnev came here and promised to rebuild the city as beautiful as it was before." She paused, then added: "And this was probably the last promise he ever kept." Dropped jaws and laughter all round. Perhaps part of the joke was that Tashkent is not a beautiful city at all, but a collection of tower blocks.

Even more cutting was our city guide in Leningrad, who in earlier years might well have been executed as a counter-revolutionary. "There's the Lenin Library," she said as our coach sped past on the way to somewhere else. "Of course, not many people go there now." Expressions of surprise from our tour group. "There's the cruiser *Aurora* on the opposite bank of the Neva," she said later, just before the road dipped and the ship disappeared from view -- and if we hadn't already known that the blank shot it fired had been the signal for the storming of the Winter Palace on 24 October 1917 we'd have been none the wiser, since she didn't say. Indeed, our Leningrad city guide was quite dismissive of the Revolution and the leading role of the Communist Party. "Leningrad has a population of six million," she told us, "and the Communist Party here has a membership of 60,000." One percent -- or no leading role at all, was the unspoken corollary. At one point, she speculated openly about the possibility of restoring the old, pre-Revolutionary names. Did this mean that she wanted Leningrad renamed St Petersburg? Yes. Indeed, she was a fan of Peter the Great. But did she want the Tears back as well? We never managed to ask.

In Moscow, we saw the changing of the guard at the Lenin Mausoleum -- the extraordinary goose-stepping, the rifles balanced vertically on the palms of the hands; a moment not to be missed. Unfortunately, we never went inside the Mausoleum to view the body: the queue was too long and our time was too short. Now, it seems, we may never be able to: the Mausoleum was closed for essential maintenance work late in 1989, and it's rumoured that it may never re-open. What will they do with Gorbachev's body, once he's dead and unable to influence his successors?

In Alma Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan,, we were taken to see the memorial to the twenty-eight Panfilovist Guards from the city who had fought in the defence of Moscow during the Great Patriotic War. "We cannot retreat," said their political officer, "Moscow is behind us" -- words emblazoned on the main plinth of the



memorial. The twenty-eight soldiers had then fought all day against a battalion of fifteen German tanks; by nightfall they had destroyed the lot, but only three of them were still alive. Everyone in our tour group was impressed by their heroism, but some were rather dubious about the "changing of the guard" ceremony that we then witnessed: the guards were fourteen-year-old schoolboys and schoolgirls dressed in the uniforms of the Komosomol and the Young Pioneers. Was this not political indoctrination, pure and simple? "Yes," I said as we walked back to the coach, "but the only difference between this

"ВЕЛИКА РОССИЯ А ОТСТУПАТЬ НЕКУДА. ПОЗАДИ МОСКВА"

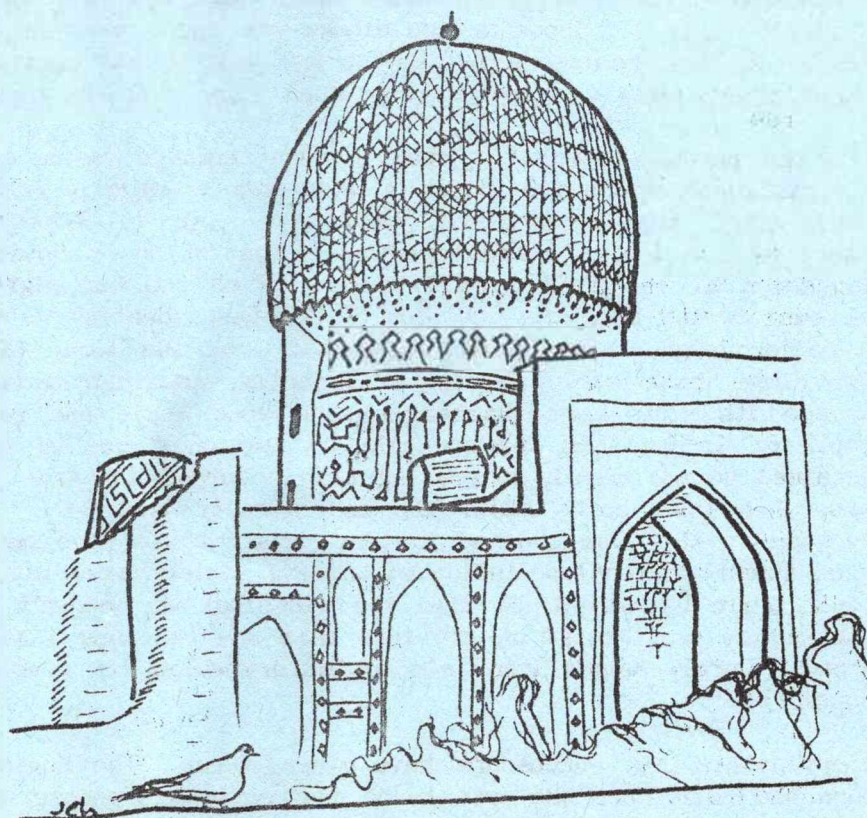
and the Boy Scouts is that it's overt rather than covert, which might make it easier to later throw off the conditioning." My interlocutor agreed that I had a point, and we switched to arguing about alternative outcomes to the Second World War -- for instance, if Hitler had won the Battle of Britain (by continuing to bomb the RAF's airfields for another week or so instead of switching the attack to London, thus gaining control of the skies and being able to mount a successful invasion) would he then have been in a better position to attack the Soviet Union? "Once he'd begun to fight on two fronts," I said, "his defeat was inevitable." "I'm not sure he'd have been able to conquer the Soviet Union even if he had knocked out Britain," was the response, "simply because of the size of the country." Thus the great what-ifs of history; endless arguments about the past.

Two-thirds of the way through the flight to Dushanbe the next day, we had to divert to Leninabad because a dust-storm had enveloped the city. We thus spent the entire day at Leninabad airport, ensconced in what we subsequently calculated was the suite reserved for aircrew and senior Party members. Lena, the Intourist guide travelling with our tour group, told us that Leninabad had originally been named Pudjkent, and was notable for being the easternmost point reached by Alexander the Great during his conquest of the Persians in 330BC; from here he had turned south, to conquer the Indus valley as well. "What an idiot," I said, "if he'd kept going east he'd have run into the Chinese and probably beaten them too." Why, someone wanted to know. (Lena had gone to arrange lunch for us -- Aeroflot being the sole carrier and seeing no need to pamper its passengers this way.) "Because China was then in its Warring States period; no one had overall control, and he'd have been able to play each ruler off against the others." And open the Silk Road to the west hundreds of years earlier, changing the course of global history entirely....

Presumably such speculations would be classed as bourgeois, and violate the so-called "iron laws of history" discovered by Karl Marx -- not just because the past is fixed, but because past events could not have happened any other way. Marx would therefore

be silent on the question of whether, when in the late fourteenth century Tamurlane chose Samarkand as the capital of the Mongol Empire founded by Genghis Khan, he removed its nomadic *raison d'etre* and made inevitable the subsequent decline and extinction of Mongol rule -- a question which animated some of us as we stood photographing his mausoleum, the blue-domed Gur Emir, in Samarkand two days later.

"This guy killed nineteen million people," we reminded ourselves, "and here we are, staring at his grave. Would we do the same for Adolf Hitler?" The answer is that we probably would: the more people you kill, the more you are remembered by history. Take Tamurlane's grandson Ulug Bek, who encouraged learning and the arts, built many madrasahs in both Bukhara and Samarkand (including the magnificent Registan which seems to appear on all the tourist posters) and founded an astronomical observatory outside the city which catalogued 1018 stars with astonishing accuracy. "The Samarkand school of astronomers had immense influence on contemporary Moslem and Arab science,"



Gur Emir, Samarkand

says our 1985 *Fodor's Guide*. "For hundreds of years, eastern and western astronomers made use of the star charts of this scholarly prince." You've never heard of him? That's because he didn't kill anyone -- he was wise and tolerant, and for this reason was eventually murdered by his less tolerant ministers. Tamurlane, by contrast, died of plain old age; and the scale of his slaughter was nothing compared to that of Genghis, who virtually destroyed the then-emerging Russian nation and whose armies once got as far as the borders of Poland. We saw one example of his destruction, just outside Samarkand: the mound of Afrasiab, the ancient city of which Samarkand was once a suburb. Four hundred thousand people lived there when his horde arrived in 1220; when he left a few days later, three-quarters of them were dead and the town had been burnt to the ground. Excavations have been too piecemeal to uncover much of it, but in the small museum nearby we saw some of the pottery and tools that have already been recovered, some dating back to the city's founding around 600BC. There was also a badly damaged fresco, dating from the seventh or eighth century AD, which revealed the extent of Afrasiab's cultural contacts and the role it played in the overland trade of the time. The scene was of ambassadors to the court of the city's ruler; their styles of dress showed them to have come from as far as Korea, India and Byzantium. The faces of each had been obliterated by pre-Genghis Islamic conquerors in line with Islam's prohibition on depictions of human and other living creatures; that any of it had then survived the Mongol flames was simply amazing.

Which raises the intriguing question: what will the future make of the things we leave behind us, and the things we've done? Or will they even bother?

THE PARTY AND THE MASSES TOILING IN HARMONY

In Tashkent, we went to the opera -- not necessarily because we liked opera, but because apart from drinking in the hard currency bar of the Intourist hotels in which

we were staying there wasn't much else to do in the evenings. (And I belong to the school which thinks that opera is what you sing because it's too silly to say.) Of course, we couldn't understand a word of it; and in addition the story had been adapted from an old Uzbek folk tale which would never have been told in operatic form in the first place. In other words, a complete clash of cultural styles -- and if members of our tour group hadn't been there the audience would have numbered only in single figures. Those native Uzbeks who had come were perhaps at the same loose end as us, or maybe even related to members of the cast; else why would they have bothered with what was obviously such an alien cultural form?

Thus the perennial argument about popular culture versus high culture: one gets the critical kudos, while the other is what people actually enjoy. Strolling back to the hotel after the performance (with a couple of stops on Central Asia's only underground metro), I remembered some remarks by a Soviet participant in a panel discussion at the 1988 Annual Conference of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The subject had been the question of European identity -- what it is and how it may be rediscovered -- and I had suggested from the floor that one of the reasons it might have been corrupted by an imported, American-derived culture was precisely because its blue jeans, hamburgers and rock music had rather more to say to the people of Europe than the so-called "traditional" one of ballet, opera and painting, perceived as not merely alienating and irrelevant but also responsible for two world wars, and thus both culturally and morally bankrupt. The Soviet participant's response to this was couched in terms which could have been used by Deng Xiao Ping to denounce spiritual pollution of Chinese society: rock music is noisy and degrading, people must be taught to like the classics, why doesn't anyone write poetry like Pushkin....so reactionary in its tone that any response I might have made died in my throat. Surely Marx's iron laws of history allow for revolutions in culture as well as politics?

Unfortunately, his successors have other ideas. The Soviet state has decreed that opera and ballet are the arts to be desired by the people; therefore that is what the people get. They can't even stay home and watch television, because that (whenever we saw it) seemed to show nothing but classical music concerts (and once -- about as populist as it ever got -- a ballroom dancing contest and a Jane Fonda-type morning work-out to non-disco music). Reading? Well, there are lots of Party newspapers and theoretical journals....all the book-printing allocations are decided centrally, so anything halfway decent sells out the moment it appears in the shops, leaving the shelves bare but for works by Marx, Engels, Lenin and sundry ideologues and Party theoreticians to which people quite understandably do not look for relaxation. (One side-effect of these allocations is that large numbers of Russian-language books are dumped in the shops in Soviet Central Asia, where the local population naturally prefers books in their own language. Lena would rush off to a bookshop every chance she got, to stock up on stuff for herself, her daughter, and her friends back in Moscow.) Civil society as we recognise it in the west simply does not exist; instead, the Soviet Union has Lenin's "Nationalities Policy", which supposedly allows the nation's different ethnic groups to pursue their own individual art and culture within the context of a greater political and social integration, but in practice seems to have resulted in their complete fossilisation. In Dushanbe, for example, we witnessed some typical tourist fodder, a "folk-cultural evening" of traditional Tadzhik dance and music. It was very colourful; but the dancers wore, not bare feet or sandals, western-style high heel shoes. It was about as authentic as Uzbek opera.

In Moscow, closer to Europe and the forbidden rock rhythms that pound out from London and Berlin, heavy metal music is all the rage and the *metallisti*, their followers, are regularly denounced in the Soviet press for hooliganism and anti-social behaviour. This, according to Lena, involves gatherings of large numbers of motorcyclists at certain places on the Moscow ring-road on a Saturday evening to roar about a bit and show off their new leather jackets, then ride out to one of the airports for a cup of coffee and a snack because they're the only places in or around the city that are open during the night. "Sounds pretty harmless to me," I said, making a tactical decision not to let on that I think heavy metal is crap. The two retired lady school teachers from Sunderland who were then sharing the breakfast

table with Lena, Judith and I had never heard of heavy metal anyway. "And in Moscow," said Lena, "you'd be taken for a *metallisti* as well." What? Apparently my ponytail and ear-rings, unsurprisingly uncommon in the Soviet Union, signalled that I was a hard case who shouldn't be trifled with. I was flattered -- especially as it was Judith who wore the leather jacket. The two retired schoolteachers, on the other hand, practically fell off their chairs with laughter.

But, *pace* the reactionary Soviet panellist at the 1988 CND Conference, Soviet citizens do still pay attention to the classics. On our tour of Moscow, we passed the statue of Pushkin, the famous Russian romantic poet, and Lena drew attention to the fresh flowers left on the steps around his plinth. This, she said, is an old Russian tradition which young people still follow today. It looked odd. Laying flowers at the foot of a statue? On the other hand, how reasonable would our cultural traditions look to someone from (say) Ouagadougou, or Palikpapan? Would they prefer opera, or rock music?

MAKING THE DESERTS BLOOM

Flying back from Tashkent to Leningrad, we passed over the northern shores of the Aral Sea -- or at least the place where the northern shores had once been, because the largest inland body of fresh water in the world has now shrunk to about half its former size (which even western atlases fail to acknowledge). Nikita Krushchev is to blame: it was his "virgin lands" programme of the late 1950s -- a plan to transform the deserts of Uzbekistan and southern Kazakhstan into verdant prairies which would make the Soviet Union agriculturally self-sufficient -- that sent the Party activists forth to dam the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, divert their flow into leaky irrigation systems, and eventually produce huge quantities of high-quality cotton. But the ecological price has been horrendous: from the air -- from 25,000 feet in an Ilyushin IL-86 jetliner with The Stone Roses playing on your personal stereo headphones and the Aeroflot stewardesses serving you cheese and pickled fish -- you can actually see the cliffs the water used to lap, the sloping stretches of cracked mud that used to form the seabed; and you know without having to be told that the climate of the surrounding area has been affected as well. Droughts, once unknown, are now commonplace. Instead of rain, the steppes experience dust storms which deposit up to seventy-five tonnes of saline soil particles contaminated with pesticides and other chemicals. Towns which once thrived on the fish they caught have seen the sea retreat by up to twenty miles in the past twelve years, leaving the hulks of their boats aground in a desert. Some estimates of the shrinkage of the Aral Sea claim that if water continues to be siphoned from the rivers that feed it at the present rate then it will disappear altogether early in the next century. Belatedly, the Soviet authorities -- having compounded Krushchev's original error by seeking to ignore it for the past thirty years -- are now attempting to halt the damage; but the fear is that this is all it will do, and that the degradation will not be reversed but merely stabilised at its present level. Thus does the Soviet state's response to environmental damage mirror that of the capitalist west: treating only the worst symptoms rather than acknowledging the causes, so as not to undermine their core ideologies of progress by exploitation and domination of nature.

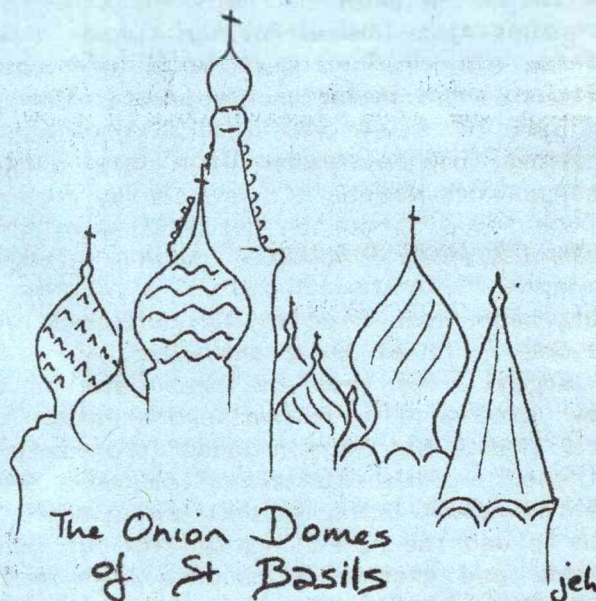
But if environmental problems are and have been rife, at least it's now all right to acknowledge them, to suggest -- just as we now do in the capitalist west -- that not everything is wonderful with the economic systems we claim have made us free. We knew that in Soviet Central Asia we'd have to boil the drinking water to kill the bacteria to which our stomachs were not adapted; but we then discovered that we'd have to do the same in Leningrad as well. "They say the water is safe," said our city-guide, "but I even boil the water I feed my dog." In Alma Ata, our tour group took the cable car to the summit of Mount Kok-Tyubeh, where the Intourist brochure promised us "a spectacular panoramic view of the entire city" -- but what we got was a glimpse of those bits of the city nearest the cable car terminus below and a spectacular panoramic view of a layer of gungy brown smog extending to the horizon. Mere minutes beforehand we'd been at ground level, breathing the stuff.... In Moscow, we were taken up to the Lenin Hills to the south-west of the city, below the scarp of which the River Moskva cuts a slow, broad swathe that until the Revolution

confined the built-up area to its flood plain. From here, it was said, you can see out over the entire city -- or at least as far as the glittering domes of the Kremlin's cathedrals. But it was all we could do to pick out the walls of the Novodevichy Convent, a mere mile or so away; the rest was haze, smog and air pollution. Until very recently, we were told, heavy industrial plant had been sited in the built-up area, pumping out their stack-loads of nitrous oxides and God knows what else. In the centre of the city! Where the diesel fumes were so thick that we could taste them. Jesus Christ, what had that done to the buildings? And people's health? And, and....

The historic buildings in Moscow and Leningrad were notable for the pastel shading of their exterior paintwork. This was, we were told, typical of the Russian Baroque style. Reds, blues, greens, yellows (more common than any other): soothing on the eye, nicely varied. Get closer, however, and the reason for the pastel shading became evident -- dirt. A thin layer of grime overlay everything. Were it scrubbed off, and the paintwork restored, the buildings would no doubt glow as they had when the Tsars last used them.

Elsewhere, historic buildings are being restored. In Samarkand, the gigantic Bibi-Khanim Mosque is being reconstructed as it

was in Tamurlane's time, despite the theory that even before it was completed its walls had been cracked by an earth tremor (and its architect then thrown to his death from the top -- although romantic legend has him executed because, returning from a campaign, Tamurlane realised from the demeanour of his wife that the architect had stolen a kiss as the price for completing the building). Our city-guide seemed proud of this restoration work, but I have my doubts -- by reconstructing something as it once was you're attempting to reverse history and so pretend that change and decay never took place. I prefer preservation: for keeping old buildings as they are now, and then explaining how they got that way. (Judith disagrees: would we allow Westminster Abbey to decay thus, rather than cleaning it and restoring its acid rain-eroded gargoyles? Why condemn others to live with their national monuments in ruins, she asks, and deny their right to the glories of their past? An argument that will obviously continue....) The Aral Sea? Well, that's different. Without water, the cities of Soviet Central Asia couldn't exist in the first place. Does this make me awkward and contradictory? Of course. Aren't you?

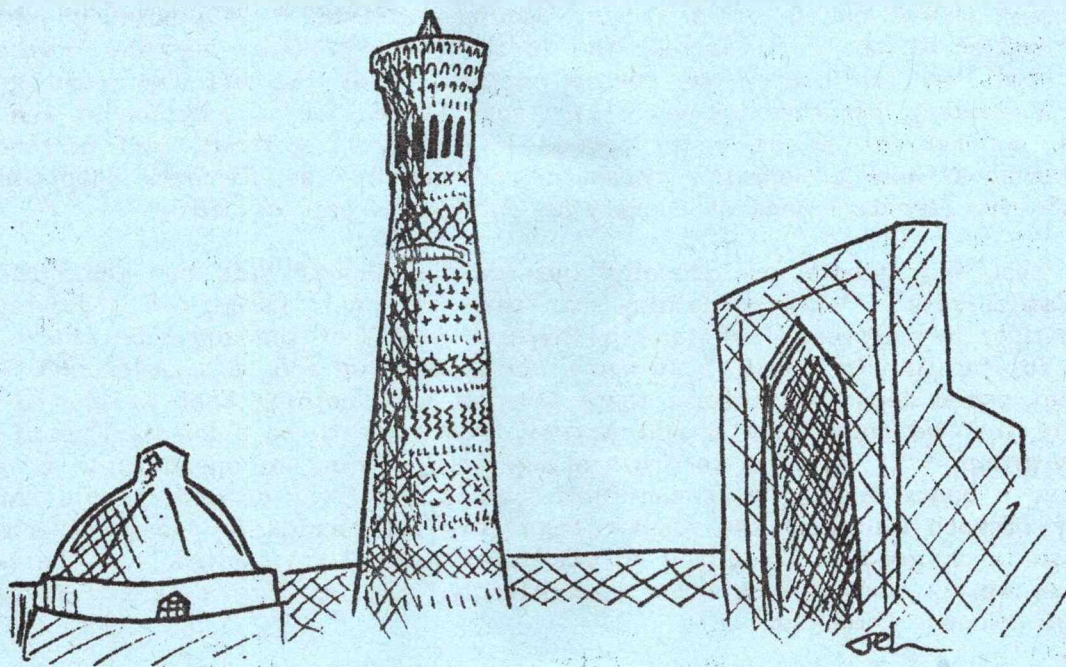


TOURISM IS BAD FOR THE TEETH

Samarkand, everyone in our tour group agreed, was the city we had really come to see, bewitched by the paeans of the centuries and more recent photographs of its blue-tiled cupolas and madrasahs. "Better one look than a hundred stories" is the old saying, and we could easily have stayed for longer than we did. It was, simply, marvellous. But eighty kilometres west lay the even older city of Bukhara, reached by a coach journey across a corner of the Uzbek steppes -- a journey which occupied most of an afternoon and took us past fields of cotton being harvested by women in brightly-printed scarves and skirts, flocks of black sheep and shaggy goats being herded by men on donkeys, and at one point even a line of camels plodding along the side of the road (presumably of their own volition, since no human herder was visible). We stopped for afternoon tea at a roadside house where a little (literally) old lady had obviously been expecting us. Good manners, Lena told us, required that we finish all the cakes, give hearty thanks, and pay not with money but in kind -- small things like ballpoint pens, chewing gum, bars of chocolate, pairs of tights.... We had all come prepared, we all had caches of "trade goods" in our luggage for encounters such as this; and duly produced them. "Spaseebah!" we said, smiling

broadly, "bolshoyi spaseebah!"

We arrived in Bukhara in late afternoon. Our hotel room, on the tenth floor, looked out over a cracked and weed-grown concrete plaza rimmed with heroic statues and squat office blocks (which a postcard in the hotel lobby hopefully labelled "the centre of the city") towards the real centre just beyond: the cluster of old buildings that we had come to see. Judith and I set out towards it, threading our way through narrow, unpaved dirt streets, past houses of baked mud plastered over frames of wood and straw from whose roofs sprouted a jumble of telephone wires, TV aerials and mains electrical connections. Suddenly, it felt less like the Soviet Union, an advanced industrial nation, and more like the Third World of a hundred documentary clichés. We pressed on, exhilarated by the contrasts, to emerge in the heart of the old city. Where Samarkand had faced its madrasahs with blue tiles of a glaze used nowhere else in Central Asia, Bukhara specialised in textured brick patterns which now glowed an intense golden-fawn in the light of the setting sun. Rounding one corner, we were confronted by the ninety-metre tall Kalyan Minar, built as a lighthouse to guide caravans across the desert but as late as the 1890s used as a platform from which to hurl convicted criminals. The square around it was empty: a



Trading cupob, minaret, madrasah —
Bukhara

perfect photographic opportunity. Yet as I framed the shot I realised that, appearing from nowhere and running furiously towards us, was a gaggle of young boys and girls. "Chewing-ga!" they cried. "Pen-cil! Bon-bon! Hello!" They followed us down the street, dancing around, demanding presents, yet always backing out of shot when we raised our cameras -- not because they didn't want their pictures taken, but because they knew what western tourists were mostly interested in. This was particularly evident the following day, on our official walking tour of the city, when we stopped at a *beriozka* shop which also doubled as a cafe and I bought a can of Seven-Up: from then on I had a posse of small boys urgently gesturing for the can and pressing close for a chance to take it from me -- yet who, as before, always fell silent and backed away when I indicated that I wanted to photograph one of the buildings. Eventually, of course, I gave them the can. Whooping with triumph, they ran off and never came back. Perhaps they collect them, for display on their equivalent of a mantelpiece. "Collected from an English tourist with a ponytail, September 1989", or somesuch. "Tourism is certainly bad for their teeth," remarked Judith at a later encounter, scattering a few Mars mini-bars at the outstretched hands. Indeed!

(Later, we encountered a child's funeral procession: a line of men taking it in turns

to carry a small white-wrapped bundle. It looked about the size and weight of a large bunch of flowers.)

Yet the peculiar contrast that we noticed between the people of Central Asia and those of Moscow and Leningrad was that the former seemed much happier and healthier. Perhaps it's the sunnier climate, or perhaps it's a more extensive diet (the range of fruit and vegetables available in the markets we visited made the idea of shortages look ridiculous; but as Lena pointed out, it was the state distribution system that primarily created them). Perhaps it's their different culture; perhaps it's just because they're further from the overdeveloped west and thus -- because less exposed to them -- less attracted to western goods. Except, of course, for the children who dog the tourist groups and who must know they hail from a consumerist paradise beyond mere avarice to describe.... The black market souvenir sellers in Leningrad are certainly more hard-nosed: our coach had barely drawn up next to the bridge leading to the landward gate of the Peter and Paul Fortress before they had emerged from the trees by the side of the road and lined up outside both the front and rear doors. "Change money?" they asked as we turned down their badges and lacquer boxes; but since we were then in the last few days of the trip our main aim was to get rid of the black market roubles we'd already acquired elsewhere -- a point of which the souvenir seller at the stall outside the former Stock Exchange was well aware. Her T-shirts retailed for twenty-two roubles apiece -- at the official exchange rate, £22. If necessary, her sidekick would sell you the roubles in question at ten to the pound -- but not, of course, offer pounds for roubles. Without hard currency, how could they ever buy a Japanese cassette recorder at the *Beriozka* shop, or drive across the frontier to Poland or Hungary to purchase a pair of jeans?

"I don't know why people are queueing outside the shops," said our Leningrad city-guide dismissively. "There's nothing for them to buy. Perhaps a consignment of Italian shirts has arrived." (Later, she hypothesised that the queue outside a cinema must be for "an American film". It was.) In Moscow, we took a walk around GUM, the government-owned department store; there was not only nothing that we wanted to buy but little that we could have bought anyway. "I'd hate to be a Russian," said one of our tour group. "It must be so frustrating, with nothing to spend their money on." We noticed a queue snaking back and forth across the floor of GUM, people shuffling patiently forward clutching the plastic bags they all carried for unexpected moments like these, when goods arrived and it was first come, first served. At the head of the queue, women elbowed each other determinedly, jostling for space at the counter. The prize? Powder compacts.

There is very definitely a sense -- sometimes expressed with a certain amount of pride, and often commanding a good deal of respect from the western tourist -- that by sheer force of will the Communist Party has hauled the Soviet Union out of its Tsarist backwardness (feudalism was not formally abolished until 1905) into something approximating the 1930s or possibly the 1940s. This is certainly true of Bukhara, which until its liberation following the Russian Civil War had no water or sewerage system; just one hundred-odd pools scattered through the city which were used for everything: drinking, bathing, defecating, laundry and feeding the animals. Disease was rampant, and the average life-expectancy was thirty-two. Then, in 1927, Party activists arrived, closed all but four of the pools and laid proper mains drainage. The life expectancy of the citizens of Bukhara promptly doubled. Any suggestion that the Communist Party has not been their benefactor is simply derisory. But now the Soviet people would like to advance to the 1960s, or perhaps even the 1980s -- not because they think that socialism has failed or that the free market is wonderful, but simply because they want the good life now rather than watch it be continually postponed. Yet with the arms race now almost over and economic reconstruction a priority, that leap forward may be upon them. My own, rather radical, guess is that as the United States slowly founders beneath the weight of its federal deficit and the accumulated economic errors of its military-industrial bureaucracy, the Soviet Union is set for a boom as the accelerating detente of the 1990s provokes a scramble by western multinational corporations to participate in the development of the vast mineral wealth of Siberia (a process the greenhouse effect will assist by gradually raising the temperature of the region from the unbearable to the merely unpleasant).

This was a speculation I brought up on a couple of occasions during the trip; it was met, not surprisingly, with a certain amount of disbelief. "It's possible," people said, "but...." And in the closing months of 1989 the last Communist rulers of Eastern Europe were swept away by mass popular uprisings, thus proving that utopian-seeming speculations are not without foundation after all.

OUR ITINERARY

We travelled with Intourist, the Soviet state tourist agency, to Moscow, Alma Ata, Dushanbe, Samarkand (with a side trip to Shakrizab), Bukhara, Tashkent, and Leningrad (with an afternoon stop-over in Moscow) -- all in a fortnight in late September. The price was £880 per person, inclusive of everything -- hotels, flights, portorage, meals, and one free sightseeing tour in each city. Additional tours were paid for in hard currency. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, and recommend the trip to everyone.

Written 7-9 January 1990

LIBERTY & THE PARTY

JUDITH HANNA

Some readers may have noticed, in Tube stations or maybe even in glossy magazines, the "Join the Party" advertisements run before Christmas by Liberty's of London, that temple of taste and William Morris-esque fabric prints. I found them thought-provoking, on several levels of irony. A black and white photo of a young female Pioneer gazes unsmilingly forth; her rifle has been transformed to a bright red-patterned broolly, a red Liberty's scarf shows at the neck of her greatcoat. The image leaves no doubt that "the Party" we are adjured to join is as much that based around Leninist thought and based in the onion-domes as it is the frivolous sort for which you dress up for with a view to downing plonk and a spot of chatting up.

Clearly dreamed up when cuddly Comrade Mischa's *perestroika* was riding high in the popularity polls, the jolly exhortation struck a sour note during the weeks when disaffected masses were pouring out of the GDR for the consumerist glitz of the West while Honecker dug his heels in against the Neues Forum and popular demonstrations. Headlines proclaimed condemnation of "the Party" as a drab machine, controlled by a miserable crew of right party-poopers, which can't get even basic necessities into the shops, let alone the bright shiny broollies and scarves one goes to Liberty's to "just look" through. Not a timely advertising effort. The nub of the irony, though, is the co-option of Communism ("the Party") to promote consumerism, its antithesis. That is, of course, deliberate, the sub-text of the message.

The posters stayed up while democracy spread like an epidemic through Eastern Europe. I suspect they came down, to be replaced by January sales posters, just about the time the Romanians were expelling their "anti-Christ".

It was a clever poster, to which events gave more point than the advertisers could have expected. I read three messages they'd put in:

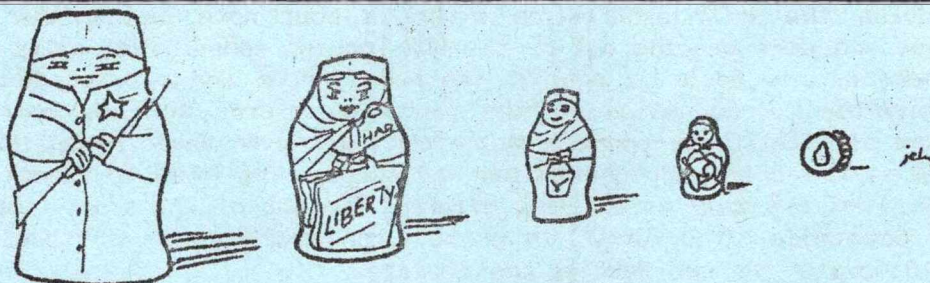
- 1) The world is changing: the East is where it's happening -- "the Liberty's woman", aware of politics, likes the new detente. "Communism" isn't a bogeyman, but a topical in-joke, in the image of Gorby and Raisa. Target: *The Guardian* or *Independent* reading designer socialist? Not aimed at the Torygraph reader.
- 2) Here it is coming on winter, and you can actually buy winter clothes at Liberty's. This may sound obvious, but remember the way that swimsuit adverts appear in February, immediately after the post-Christmas sales, and winter coats come in after the July sales.
- 3) Buy style and colour from Liberty's. In fact, buying from us shows you are

politically right-on and aware, as well as stylish. As come-ons go, this one has a certain progressive edge to it.

You are not, I hypothesise, supposed to remember the blank windows of Russian shops with nothing to buy, the long queues along the pavement which show where a shop has (or it's rumoured that it will have when it opens) goods inside. And if you do, what contrast are you supposed to draw with the barrage of ads that line the Underground, the streets, magazines and newspapers? Or with the streets full of shops selling everything you don't really need in a bewildering variety of colours and sizes and styles? Everything except what you're really looking for, it always seems when I go shopping. But you buy more than you planned to, just because it caught your eye, and seemed a bargain at the time. Mother, save us from temptation. But sending us to live in a Poland of empty shops and day-long queues would be more salvation than I had in mind.

As you may have gathered, we visited the Soviet Union a couple of months ago, and the blank empty shops were what most struck us about people's ordinary lives. Our Intourist guides, all very *glasnost*, seemed to be making the most of the new freedom to speak their own views rather than a party line. They made no bones about their environmental worries -- you can taste the diesel in city air -- nor about their feelings that change was too slow and that more reforms were needed urgently. But what they most talked about was the frustration of not being able to buy what you needed, let alone what you wanted.

Officially, basic goods are cheap: food, books, shoes, etc.. But official stocks are scarce, so you can't actually buy them at that price -- unless you're very lucky. The centrally planned economy is, for the average consumer, a cynical fiction which gives rise to cynical jokes. To actually get the goods you want, you will probably have to go to the black market, which means paying the often very high prices set by real demand. A market economy, in fact. Co-operative enterprises outside the official system, though now allowed, are harassed by all sorts of regulations. Russia is far from joining the consumerist spend, spend, spend, party, party, party however much its people might long to join in. An ad campaign using "the Party" to promote a spending party smacks of black humour.



All Power To The, Er...

Amongst the groupuscules that swarm and multiply on the furthest reaches of the British Left is the New Communist Party, a breakaway Stalinist sect from a breakaway Stalinist sect. It will probably not surprise you to learn that in these days of *perestroika* and *glasnost* such parties are having great difficulty sustaining their ideological drive -- a struggle not assisted by their inability to acknowledge that the Soviet Union can ever be other than absolutely correct in absolutely everything. Indeed, nothing is permitted to be unless it has first been given the imprimatur of the General Secretary of the CPSU.

Thus, we learn, the New Communist Party's explanation for the recent events in Eastern Europe: they were all the responsibility of the Soviet Communist Party, which set in train the process of revolution and renewal when it first elected Mikhail Gorbachev as its leader. Thus the masses of Czechoslovakia and Rumania were acting not for themselves but simply carrying out the Soviet Communist Party's plans for the reconstruction of their political life.

Is it worth actually refuting this drivel, or are you all laughing too hard?

LETTER COLUMN

Edited by JUDITH HANNA, in consultation with JOSEPH NICHOLAS

First of all, a note to those who accused us of leaving the number off the previous issue: please see the colophon, line three. For those of you who (like me) lack crystal clear recall, that was the issue with Tom Cardy's "cereal killers" cover, which Harry Warner welcomed as "a change from the old joke about Bastard Rice Krispies: they have snap and crackle but no pop"; you know it? But I hadn't heard it before...

A couple of people expressed a flattering disappointment that there was nothing by me in the issue. That is other than the editing work of putting together the letter column and typing up outside contributions. (Ian Bambro, for instance, commented "Judith's behaviour is very odd. I thought Georgette Heyer was a kind of fabric like crepe de chine or Hessian so why is she reading the furnishings?") Less flatteringly, this apparently led several reviewers -- not all of them male, Eve Harvey -- to credit Joseph as the sole editor. Up against the wall, wobbly bits! (But at least Eve did review it (In Critical Wave 14: most of the spate of fanzine review columns since we mailed it out simply ignored Fuck The Tories 7. Poot!))

Almost everyone who wrote back commented on Joseph's long article on "the heritage industry", none more enthusiastically than Colin Greenland:

FORWARD INTO THE PAST

Colin Greenland
2A Ortygia House
Lower Road
Harrow HA2 ODA

"Forward Into The Past is superb. Exemplary cultural criticism and political analysis. A sort of street level (lane-level?) Marxist deconstruction without jargon! I've no idea how much of the argument would have been familiar to me if I'd read all (or any) of these studies of history, but since I haven't, and since you're so candid about your debt to them, I'll give Joseph the credit.

"I have to disagree with him about that bit of the Nottingham Castle museum, though. For all its laudable populist, social-historical purpose, it's a prime example of the 'heritage centre' process, even though what's processed there is not so much what we've inherited as what we've forgotten. All the dressed dummies and designer displays and electric revolving photomontages and high-tech audio-visual aids get between me and the point of the thing, which is to convey how people once lived, and how that has changed.

"Sure, I enjoyed the Jorvik Centre in York with its taped Magnus Magnusson guide and bumper-car ride around a Disneyland Viking settlement full of figures, stuffed animals, piped sounds and smells -- but what I was enjoying was the virtuosity of modern technology. So was everyone else, I bet. The medium is the message.

"This particular view of the past may not be so ideologically heinous, but it predetermines the available viewpoints pretty thoroughly, and to the detriment of what I value in old-fashioned museums: direct stimulus of historical imagination. Fragments are always more evocative than totalised 're-creations'. Give me a careful selection of well-labelled exhibits in a glass case any day. I'll fill in the contexts in my own mind. I'm hardly the typical or target visitor, though, am I?"

Let us never underestimate the transforming power of "presentation", as Ian Bambro comments:

Ian Bambro
Ivy Cottage
Ivy Road
Gosforth
Newcastle on Tyne
NE3 1DB

"I was another whose history lessons at school emphasised kings and battles with just a smattering of serfs and villeins. Two nicely apposite quotes come to mind: a character somewhere in David Edding's *Belgarian* saga says something about the local lord gathering up peasants for soldiers as he wanted to storm a castle and 'needed someone to help with the dying'; a poem by Christopher Logue points out (amongst other things) that we are told Napoleon conquered Europe and asks, 'Had he not even a cook to help him?' At least a few people are looking at history from below rather than above.

"I wonder how close to the truth one can ever hope to get in historical matters.

Perhaps all you can do is to recognise immediately that every account is biased in one way or another and that even original sources give a partial and incomplete picture. Having done that you can at least try to make allowances and offset the more obvious bits of misdirection and special pleading. What is actually happening, of course, runs quite counter to this. Like shopping, eating, drinking and other mundane activities, the family outing for a walk or a museum visit seems to have become more a matter of exposure to a highly orchestrated exercise in marketing something other than the simple and ostensible object.

"Beamish Open Air Museum near Durham is a fine example of the history-as-not-very-damaging-entertainment approach. As well as the elements of the Country House myth there is much attention to a version of 'how ordinary people lived' complete with re-creations of cosy Victorian miners' cottages, trams and mock-ups of dentists' surgeries, apothecaries' shops and village stores inviting nostalgia and cries of 'How quaint!' It's A Day Out For All The Family, all right, but it presents it as a concrete certainty -- in a picture frame behind glass, so to speak -- and does little or nothing to invite serious questions whether or not there might be more to it than that and if so what it might tell people about themselves now. Does this kind of museum just represent a change in historical fashion, I wonder, or does it reflect a turning aside by large chunks of the populace from situations in which they feel increasingly helpless, in favour of comfortable escapism -- of which the seemingly endless demand for domestic drama and minor emotional crises at a safe distance in soap opera and crap non-newspapers is another example?"

It's not just a matter of "even original sources" giving a "partial and incomplete picture". The closer and more involved the source, the more likely they are to have taken sides, and to be trying in their account to justify their own actions; their propaganda and memoirs will be the original source material for their side of the story. The historians' role is to compare and contrast the multiplicity of competing versions of what really happened and what was intended to happen (and what wasn't intended to happen but turned out to be an unfortunate side-effect), and come out with some sort of balanced account of what it all meant in the long run.

Ian also considers other aspects of marketing and presentation, with Joseph's "Short Rant" on wine wankery as his starting point:

WINE WANKERY

Ian Bambro "I reckon you're a bit hard on wankers, a sterile though relatively harmless pastime compared to, say, fathering unwanted children or forcing one's attention on any convenient aperture. But I digress. I think there is a serious point to be made about this kind of bull-shitting about wine and, thinking of this article as a continuation of Judith's previous comments on suggested menus for sophisticated little dinner parties (and with a small detour back to your reference to the two adolescents with the feelthy picture book), I draw your attention to the pornography of such magazines as *A La Carta*. Is it not striking that the two appetites are served side by side in newsagents by an array of glossy magazines displaying tempting morsels in full-colour spreads, with just the same inherent element of fantasy, with just the same emphasis on immediate visual attraction above all else, and (arking back to my comments on the marketing of history) with a high degree of professional polish in the presentation? Is it not disturbing that we see now so much emphasis on the studied selling of superficially tempting sweeties of all kinds? I raise this not as an argument against pornography as such, which I think is a different issue, but as a worry about the growing presentation of everything -- so insidious, so routinely untruthful, so habitually dishonest as to pass almost unnoticed, so widespread as to create an ecology in which appearance is everything and substance is somehow made to seem irrelevant. The artfully lit and photographed centrefold with improbable breasts, the terrine or truffled marmosets with quince vinegar sorbet, the latest Ferrari, government policies and bottles of 'amusing little wine' with imaginative labels all have this quality of overblown fantasy about them, rooted in a philosophy -- which all too often seems borne out -- that if you make a thing appear attractive enough people will not pause to reflect whether it is really what they want, whether it is suitable for their needs, whether it even much resembles what it pretends to be. Not, at least, until after you've got their money."

Absolutely. And who could forget Margaret Thatcher's excuse after the Tories' abysmal Euro-election results last June: "It was a failure not of policies but of presentation." Mark Manning and Pascal Thomas both called Joseph to book for, as Pascal put it, "insulting the fine and subtle art of oenologie". Mark Manning seemed to infer from Joseph's article some antipathy to drinking wine. Not at all: if we too weren't in the habit of enjoying a bottle of wine with our evening meal, we wouldn't have come across the wine catalogue that aroused Joseph's ridicule. His rant was purely directed at the extravagances of wine-speak, which Mark (sort of) defends:

Mark Manning 1400 E Mercer #19 Seattle Washington 98112 "Some -- admittedly, not most -- of the wine talk you quote means something. Even terms like 'rough', 'hot', or 'charming' describe consensual reality instead of the distributor's desire to move 40,000 cases annually. 'Rough' signifies that the wine has tannin, a good thing if you're willing to store the bottle until the tannin transmutes into interesting aromatic chemicals. 'Hot' means that the first thing you smell from the wine is the alcohol. 'Charming' means that, while your glass of plonk is pleasant enough, you'd never write home about it because it's relatively weak in certain chemical components. Of course, most of the phrases you've picked out are merely ad language. But I'm intrigued by what this language promises."

Defending with faint excuses, methinks, insufficient to secure an acquittal in this court. Let us return to the politics of presentation, and vice versa:

DANCING IN THE DARK

Alexis Gilliland 4030 8th Street S Arlington Virginia 22204 "Pondering our essentially frivolous antics in Panama (editorial note: this was written in October 1989, before the invasion) led me to wonder if there might not be some underlying cause. It is not too strong to say that the US has become dependably frivolous in just about everything that matters. A religious person might say: 'Whom the gods would destroy, they first make silly.' Us political scientist types look elsewhere. A theory is offered, as much in the hope that it will annoy as anything.

"Television. No, no. Start with nuclear weapons. Point one is that the cost of using them far, far exceeds any political advantage that might be gained thereby. Point two is that the US Armed Forces are heavily dependent on using nuclear weapons in any serious conflict. It is not unreasonable to imagine that our leaders, civilian and military, understand both points perfectly. From which it follows that foreign policy must be conducted to avoid any serious conflict. A habit of thought is established, forming the new paradigm for governing the USA: avoid anything serious. After eight years in Reagan's shadow, Bush demonstrates his theoretical mastery by selecting Dan Quayle as a running mate.

"Other examples abound. Dealing with the deficit by pretending that it doesn't exist. Building the B-2 bomber at half a billion apiece. Reactivating the Iowa Class battleships. Letting go of oversight on the Savings & Loans in the name of deregulation. Leveraged buyouts for more than the company is worth. The list goes on and on.

"For how long? Until something happens to make us face up to reality, I suspect. Friday (Friday the 13th with a full moon as close to earth as it ever gets) the market went down 190 points, the biggest drop since 1987, Black Monday, when it went down 508 after dropping 104 points the preceding Friday. The current bull market, otherwise known as the Aging Bull, was entering its eighth year, after shaking off the 1987 drop as a mere market correction. It carried Ronnie to glory, that eight year bull market, but it doesn't look like it's going to do the same for George. Is the jig really up? Stay tuned."



Operation Just Cause has since reinforced Alexis's points about the essential frivolity of US foreign policy -- send in 20,000 GIs to take out a man who, as everyone knows, the CIA have been funding for years as part of their drug-running operations, and then using a barrage of bad rock music to force him to give himself up. The world waits to see whether Noriega will be allowed to give evidence -- widely expected to implicate Bush -- in court, and if not, what sort of trade-off will be arranged, and how it will be explained away. Death in custody would be too convenient to be plausible.

But the trouble with this frivolity of US foreign policy, whether it's deliberate or cock-up or a combination of both, is that it has serious consequences for others. An estimated two thousand deaths in Panama, tens of thousands more in El Salvador or Guatemala where the US is propping up rule by death squad because it's coloured right-wing, unquestioning support for "anti-communist" thugs like Daby Doc Duvalier, Ferdinand Marcos and P. W. Botha (although at the same time it's a measure of the responsiveness of US democratic structures that Congress was able to impose economic sanctions against South Africa over the objections of the then President; something that would never happen here). Or in Cambodia, where the US recognises the so-called "Democratic Coalition" dominated by Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge, despite their record of atrocities, and refuses aid to the actual Phnom Penh government simply by way of spite against Vietnam, which supports it. Or indeed, refusal of reconstruction aid to Vietnam, badly needed to repair the war damage inflicted by US forces, presumably to get back at it for having seen off the US might. Make an example of it, pour encourager les autres, Nicaragua and Cuba take note. Not that we'd give any higher rating to British foreign policy, which follows poodle-fashion that set in Washington.

AIRSTRIP ONE THEME PARK

Martyn Taylor
14 Natal Road
Cambridge
CB1 3NS

"Of course, the theory is that you don't need a theme park in the UK because the whole country is a theme park. Quite how that squares with our status as Airstrip One I can't say. Mind you, given the pathetic fixation with all things pertaining to World War Two, perhaps the aim is to turn us into an Airstrip

One Theme Park. So far as I am concerned, Peter Gabriel summed it all up in a few words -- *Selling England By The Pound*. Which brings us on to the the last verse, 'Digesting England By The Pound'. If this country cannot feed itself without intensive agriculture (as David Bell asserted in the letter column), how come vast tracts of some of the best farmland in the country are being sold off around here for non-agricultural use, which means the building of bijou executive houses? What about the whole countries put to cultivation of bloody oilseed rape? Not to mention the European Community grain stores hereabouts. Coming from a country area originally, my opinion is that farmers in general know all about the number of pennies in a pound and even less about economics than the Chancellor."

Martyn wrote before Nigel Lawson's tempestuous resignation from responsibility for selling England by the (falling) pound. The mania to privatise everything is perhaps the most frivolous aspect of British policy: look out for British Royalty PLC, that unrivalled presenter of theme park Olde Englande, hold your breath for British Air PLC, which will bill the consumer for the extra costs involved in meeting EC air quality standards. And what of those who find they can't afford to breathe? A radical solution to the presentational problems of unemployment figures, beggars in the streets, dole bludgers and the rest of the undeserving poor.... Let's keep the country safe for those who can afford it! Now, back to the heritage question.

PRESERVED IN FORMALIN

Harry Warner Jr
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown
Maryland 21740

"I share many of your opinions about those who overdo the commendable project of preserving some of the national heritage or do it in the wrong way. Fifteen miles south of Hagerstown is Antietam Battlefield, site of the most awful one-day battle, in terms of dead and wounded, in the American Civil War. The land where the fighting occurred is owned by the federal government as a part of the National Park Service or protected by covenants that prevent unseemly development. But now some historians are attempting to prevent any form of development that will

be visible from any part of the actual battlefield. This has upset residents of Sharpsburg, the town that was caught in the middle of the battle, who can't get good cable television because of objections to an antenna tower in their area, and farmers whose land is shrunk in value because it can't be sold for commercial purposes. Meanwhile, the federally owned and controlled land is peppered with paved highways, monuments, a huge observation tower, a large visitors' centre, hundreds of signs, and miscellanea that weren't there at the time of the battle.

"My own home will probably be part of a National Historic District within a few months, simply because this part of Hagerstown happens to consist of architecturally compatible houses mostly built in the first years of this century with very few later intrusions and the City of Hagerstown wants it to be recognised as a rare unspoiled example of how things looked at the start of this century. It won't bother me if the designation is approved because it won't have any effect on how I clutter up the invisible interior and I have no interest in making the sort of exterior alterations that would be forbidden. But I don't think that this neighbourhood is nearly as unusual in the United States as city authorities claim it is, and it has been spoiled by such things as ugly exterior staircases built after large homes were chopped up into apartments and the city's policy of chopping down fine old trees as soon as they begin to interfere with telephone and power lines, instead of simply trimming them occasionally."

Here in Britain, the Department of Transport is proposing to build a motorway through Naseby battlefield, site of one of the key battles in the Second English Civil War. A major attraction of the battlefield from their point of view is that to protect it from development, no commercial use is allowed, so it has no negative development value. This means that, for the Department of Transport, it is valued as free public land, and therefore represents the cheapest route, i.e. the "best" cost-benefit option. The same applies (as John Adams points out in a report published by Friends of the Earth) to sites zoned as Areas of Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, local parks and green spaces.

Then there are the current proposals by English Heritage (the government-funded body responsible for the upkeep of publicly-owned monuments, castles and other historic sites) to re-landscape the grounds of Marble Hill House in Twickenham, West London, which would mean (in the words of an article in The Guardian for 11 November 1989) "putting the park's clock back from its present state of strolling and sporting amenity to what it was quite probably like in the mid-eighteenth century". To replace, in other words, 66 acres of rolling sward, trees, paths and small copses with formal hedges, avenues and flower-beds -- and then not only prevent local people walking around them but charge a fee just to look at it. Innumerable protests and petitions -- including a meeting chaired by the local Tory MP, a neanderthal noted for his antipathy to public access to anything but who came out against the proposals -- have so far failed to sway English Heritage. A letter in the following Saturday's The Guardian reported a similar English Heritage scheme to remake the grounds of Chiswick House, again denying public access in favour of "an orgy of eighteenth century reconstruction". As the writer asked, "What kind of sterile historicism is this?"

Sue Thomason notes one of the results of restricted public access -- the damage caused by intensive use of the most popular of the relatively few rambling and climbing areas of this country that the public are allowed to wander over:

GALA UNDERFOOT

Sue Thomason 111 Albemarle Road York YO2 1 EP

"I've never been to Silbury and Avebury, and would like to. The thing that really worries me about pagan pilgrimage to worship at stone circles and other ancient, presumed-religious sites is the danger that the symbol will eclipse the reality. It is certain that our society needs to re-value our relationships with the rest of the biosphere. At the moment, we're clearly cancerous with respect to our host body. But if the earth is sacred, then the earth is sacred, including my scabby concrete backyard filled with catshit and a few struggling hardy shallow-rooting plants. And my backyard is as good a place (or better) in which to focus as an earth-healer as any other place.

"I had a waking-dream (reverie? vision?) in which the mythological network of

'old straight tracks' now usually referred to as ley lines were actually the courses of disused railways, now mostly used as cycle tracks or 'green corridors' for commuting wildlife. Interesting plant communities spreading along the well-drained ballast.

"I'm not so much interested myself in saving the pearl-bordered fritillary as in creating and maintaining a good diversity of stable, well-balanced communities and habitats. As you say yourself, almost none of the British landscape is 'natural'. Even (say) the Black Cuillin of Skye, which look like the mountains of the moon, have had vast quantities of loose rock shifted off them by walkers and climbers. The Great Stone Shoot coming off Sgurr Alasdair isn't a runnable scree any more: the runners have trundled all the small loose stones down to the bottom of the shoot. Popular climbs can be followed without a guidebook by looking for nail-scratches and the polish that rock acquires after the passage of many boots."

The vision of the thousand miles or more of old railway lines which Beeching closed down as a network of mystic ley-lines, now green rather than shining silver, is appealing. Did you have in mind when you wrote the work being done by Sustrans, an organisation which is converting many such lines into cycle tracks? But not so appealing as the vision of a network of disused motorways and trunk roads becoming part railway lines, part cycle and walking tracks, with plenty of room for wildlife alongside. Did you know that a mile of average motorway (dual three-lane) occupies some 26 acres? And that it requires 250,000 tonnes of aggregate -- for which the Mendips and other hill landscapes are being eaten away by quarries. Mog Decarnin's response similarly picked up the nature conservation aspect of heritage

Mog Decarnin (address withheld by request) "The difference between rural destruction now and then is not simply in its speed, but in its extent. Hedgerows make a refuge for creatures that would previously have lived in natural woodlands or similar. The point nowadays is that we are destroying not just more but the last of the habitats; moreover it is not just a question of saving species of living things that most of us manage to do without in day-to-day life anyway, or saving pretty countryside, but literally saving our own skins. There seems to be some mystical and inexplicable connection between cutting down the last oxygen-producing forests and not having any air to breathe.

"Thing is, though -- people are different. For some of us, there really is a deep soul-tie with natural growing things; for others, growing things are obstacles or hassles to be removed, and neither side will ever comprehend why the other side does what it does. I know that when I watch some man kill and destroy for no good reason he's more alien to me than any BEM I ever read of, because he's supposed to be human (and maybe because men tend to be In Charge Of The Yard in the US, I've only seen men exhibit this tendency.)"

In his introduction to the recent new edition of his Gaia: A New Look At Life On Earth (which I sent off to my brother for his birthday and so cannot look up), James Lovelock notes a similar dichotomy. He finds that those who've grown up or worked in the countryside or are keen gardeners quickly grasp the concept of Gaia -- it meshes with their experience of nature as an interdependent system which reacts to compensate for small changes and contain damage, but which can be unexpectedly tipped into flood, erosion, etc., by unwise meddling. They experience nature as like an organism, an encompassing neighbour, and have little trouble expanding the scale to the global. But the majority of people today are town-dwellers, for whom "Nature" is just a theoretical abstraction, and a pretty picture. His "Gaia" metaphor is a way of pulling together the evidence for a global biosphere that functions not as a simply mechanical assemblage of atmospheric gases, tides and species, but behaves in a homeostatic way akin to the physiology of a living creature.

Mog continues with this analysis of a chance phrase from our response to Cy Chauvin's loc:

WOBBLY BITS

Mog Decarnin "Ten years of Thatcherism have seen local government systematically emasculated.' 'Emasculated' -- I love that word. It proves so unarguably that all power is male. There is no word for the

corresponding female state. 'Effeminate' is, surprise surprise, not an equivalent term meaning loss of female power, but a word meaning, again, loss of male power... I amuse myself from time to time trying to think of words that mean (to the general reader) someone powerful and good and female. Can you think of any? And terms that apply exclusively to males and are unequivocally recognised as negative are really scarcer than hens' teeth, in American English at least -- if you don't count the ones that (a) rely on a man's mother's unchastity or (b) intend to imply the man is like a woman. It is virtually impossible, in other words, to insult a man without first insulting a woman.

"Of course, there has always been a fanatic protectiveness of the image of the father (one is tempted to say Great White Father), which derives from fear of the father -- who can't be criticised because he is likely to knock your block off, in simple. What we see there is simply a diffuse cultural version of the concentration camp syndrome, coping with fear by reorganising reality to provide a benevolent authority figure. I suspect this is indeed the, or at least an, origin of all filial love, and why that love may actually increase in some abused children. Like most defences, if carried too far it converts to madness; the denial of male responsibility by many men definitely teeters on that brink.

"A friend of mine who wrote a book on American racism addressed every other conceivable issue but the possibility that white adult men might perhaps be somewhat to blame for all this. He simply could not bring himself to look at that angle, undoubtedly as part of his fear of and hopeless love for his own father. He was quite willing to look at white women's role, as well as black women's and black men's. It's rather like Chip Delany's famous account of setting out to write a porno book with encounters between all possible pairs of characters, and finding out only after multiple re-readings that he had entirely omitted encounters between any pair of women. Probably the most famous individual case of this is Freud's decision to disbelieve the accounts of child molestation because he could not accept the prevalence of it he was finding. So he and his followers arbitrarily decided (handily disposing of accounts of incestuous rape with the theory that all little girls want sex with their fathers and 'therefore' hallucinate such sex) that really only one case of incest occurs per million population; which totally spurious belief held sway well into the 1960s!"

"Emasculated" was Joseph's comment; would Judith have used the word? Hard to say, but I suspect not in its abstract, desexualised sense -- I'd be more likely to use it with castratory intent. Further to Freud and the denial of male responsibility, in December 1989 New Statesman & Society reviewed a book documenting a spate of briefly notorious, then forgotten child abuse scandals in Vienna during the closing months of 1899. I quote from Boyd Tonkin's review of Larry Wolff's Postcards From The End Of The World: An Investigation Into the Mind Of Fin-De-Siecle Vienna:

"In November 1899 Freud published The Interpretation of Dreams. Two years earlier, he had suppressed his own 'seduction theory' in favour of the view that women patients fantasised memories of sexual abuse by close male relatives. Later, he would insist on children's fantasies of physical assault. As 1899 ended, he scoured the press in vain for reviews of the book that erected the Oedipus complex. It would have taken a heroic spell of repression not to notice the front-page evidence of the real injury done by parents to their children. The father of psychoanalysis was up to it. 'Only Freud could have saved the child abuse cases from oblivion by writing about them,' Wolff suggests. 'And Freud remained silent.' At this pivot of his career, recognition of children's victimisation would have clipped the wings of the fledgling Oedipal theory."

Readers may ask, yawning: 'But surely no-one takes Freud that seriously these days?' One lunchtime in January I popped down to the Institute of Contemporary Arts for a lunchtime "Conversation": Marina Warner interviewing Maureen Duffy on the latter's recently re-issued The Erotic World of Faery. Duffy blandly asserted that "Peter Pan flying is the erect penis", while Tinkerbell, shut away in a jar, "is the jealous female pudenda". Not represents, not may be interpreted as, but "is". More seriously, in the context noted above, she asserted that fairytales are basically about little girls' desire for their fathers. That's a conclusion which requires wilful misreading: as most commentators note, the father in fairy-tales tends to be either absent or weak (think of Cinderella or Hansel And Gretel; the heroine ends up not reunited with a father, but marrying a nice type of young prince. There are, it's

True, stories where the heroine's father is a wicked giant who gets his head cut off by the hero, which might be read as indicating some sort of Oedipal jealousy: in those stories it's Jack The Lad who is the central figure, not the lady.

But now clap your hands if you believe in short lettercolumns.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM

Letters and cards came from *Andy Andruschak*, *William Bains*, *Terry Broome* (who mentioned the *June Tabor Newsletter*, available from 129 Upton Rd, Ibidston, Birkenhead L43 7QE; subscriptions are £1.50 per year), *Steve Brown* ("The Pixies are the only band worth listening to right now, so please tell everyone to discard the rest of their record collection"), and *Ken Cheslin* (who reveals himself as a fellow reader of that excellent periodical, *Current Archaeology*).

And from *Tony Chester*, *Michael Cobley*, *Peter Colley* (who confessed to being an "unrepentant townie" and suggested that London's history was easier to gloss over than Manchester's: I think you underrate the glossers, Peter), *Peter Darby* (with insights on student politics too long to quote), *Joan Hanke-Woods*, *Matthias Hoffman*, *Tim Jones* ("These must be exciting times to be living in Europe"), *Dave Langford* ("Special commendations to you and Mike Glicksohn for bringing the Dan Quayle quote to the British public: as they said in the Goon Show, 'Mathematics? I speak it like a native'"), *Terry Moran Jnr*, *Mark Nelson*, *Berni Phillips* ("I may even write up how Dan Quayle came to my workplace -- what's the male equivalent of bimbo?").

Plus *David Redd*, *Jimmy Robertson* (at Cretcorp (Euro)"), who sent a nifty cassette "Programmed with you in mind", for which our thanks), *Stu Shiffman* ("Andi is working on a possible FTT article -- "How I Learned To Crochet In The Slammer"), *Cyril Simsa* (on the economics of the facsimile *Domesday Book*), *Milt Stevens* (who sent us a notice of fafiation -- there is something unconvincing about having enough energy to announce deliberate fafiation instead of simply sinking beneath a tide of too many other things to do, not enough time, money and all the other usual excuses), *Alan Sullivan* and *David Thayer* ("My favourite unrelated cartoon is of a GI telling a farmer in Vietnam that in the US they shot rice out of cannons. The cliché is that an army marches on its stomach, which probably explains why war turns so many.")

If undelivered, please return to:
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