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I.D. NO. ISSN: 0735-9381
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PROCESSED WORLD

Frontcover by Paul Mavrides

Back Cover by Doug Pray

MENU

ISSUE NUMBER 21

PW, *The Magazine That's Old Enough to Drink*
41 Sutter St. No. 1829
San Francisco, CA 94104

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PROCESSED WORLD is a project of the Bay Area Center for Art & Technology, a California non-profit corporation. BACAT's mailing address is 37 Clementina St., San Francisco, CA 94105. Phone: (415) 495-6823.

PROCESSED WORLD is indexed in the Alternative Press Index. All articles and stories reflect the views and fantasies of the author, and not necessarily those of other contributors or the Bay Area Center for Art & Technology. *P.W.* is collectively edited and produced. No one gets paid except the printer.

P.W. COLLECTIVE: Ana Logue, Zoe Noe, Emily Post-It, Sarkis Manouchian, Frog, Mars Mensch, R.L. Tripp, Sofia Furia, Primitivo Morales, Med-O, Louis Michaelson, Paulina Pandemonium, Dennis Hayes, M. Leger, Shelley Diamond, and others...

OTHER CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS & WRITERS: JRS, T.E., Doug Pray, D.S. Black, Paul Mavrides, William Brummer, Mark Beebe, R. Godollei, Andrea Kassof, Ken Brown, Anabel Manning, D. Minkler, Claude Ewell, Robert Thawley; Harvey Stein, J.G. Eccarius, Jay Blumenthal, Granny, Mike Wilkins, Fritz Hamilton, Owen Hill, Evelyn Posamentier, and many others...



Many people complain that they cannot see where their tax dollars are going, but such is not my fate. Whenever I am confused about being paid \$1250 per month when I'm told I make \$1650, I amble over to the 21st floor window of my Oakland office and sight the materiel expression: at anchor off Alameda Island, the grey leviathans of the Pacific fleet, the nuclear aircraft carriers *USS Nimitz* and *USS Carl Vinson*.

Sometimes I find myself wondering if the approximately one hundred dollars a month I pay for defense is worth the embellishment of a nuclear fleet on the view from my workplace. Partisans of the national security state remind me that this expenditure is not an aesthetic choice. Those ships are there to protect me from foreign enemies. I always find this argument amusing, since our nation hasn't officially been at war in my lifetime. Furthermore, all the peoples we've fought with unofficially—Vietnamese, Dominicans, Cambodians, Laotians—never struck me as the types to come sailing through the Golden Gate in a conquering Armada. We've always taken our problems to them. Rather than protecting against foreign enemies, military spending insists on creating new ones.

Military spending also insists on certain ways of living, at work and at home. This issue of *Processed World* looks at the civilian realities of life in a militarized society. Our aperture might be considered unorthodox, perhaps even narrow, since it includes nothing about military Keynesianism vs. the welfare-state, military economies in debt, life in the service, blaming it all on Reagan, etc. Instead we reveal the impact of even a "non-political" (as the non-elective government apparatus is fond of conceiving itself) military on the society it subordinates.

In particular, most of the articles deal with the weird mental contortions induced by authoritarian conditioning, which infests civilian life just as severely as it does the military. It takes on subtler forms: where an Ollie North is committed simply to unquestioning obedience to his superior officers, his fans are delighted both by his supposed loyalty, patriotism, sense of duty, and by his contemptuous bad-boy attitude toward wimpy civilian legislators. In more concentrated and drawn-out doses, this is the mixture that produces fascism. At present it reproduces the pseudo-democratic national-security states of the "Free World."

Our first article, **THE CLOISTERED WORKPLACE** by Dennis Hayes, examines the absurdities of the need-to-know policy, a security-inspired segmentation of labor in the arms contracting workplace. Looking at the top-down enforced ignorance from the bottom up, Hayes discovers a willing ignorance permeating nearly all military-related workplaces. From interviews with numerous contacts in Silicon Valley, the uncomfortable confidences of military electronics workers are implicitly revealed, as well as their complicity in maintaining ignorance.

People who work on military-related projects don't just go through mental contortions while on the job. They bring their secrets and repressions home with them. G.S. Williamson grew up in just such an environment: the hi-tech company town of Los Alamos, New Mexico, home of the Atom Bomb. His father was a nuclear physicist, his mother a computer worker, and his story is told in ironic detail in **MY NUCLEAR FAMILY**.

Many of us were too young to be an active part of the upheavals of the '60s, but most were steeped in '60s mass culture. Mike Wilkins' **THE SITCOM**



EXPLODING HEADS



VIETNAM takes a wry look at the sitcoms of the Vietnam era, as well as some of the hidden messages they convey. While his analysis is humorous, it also indicates a method of cultural dissection which gives real insight even while lampooning the extremes of pseudo-historical culture.

The militarism of post-World War II U.S. society was exported to the world through a variety of overt and covert channels. The 1976 coup in Argentina, supported by U.S.-dominated international institutions like the IMF, was one of several similar impositions of classic militarist/fascist models throughout Latin America during that decade. *PW* regular Ana Logue was a reporter at the Buenos Aires *Herald* during the military regime, and offers an illuminating anecdotal account of daily life in such a society. Her description of the army's "dirty war" against its internal opposition shows the military's most frequent role in most nations—defending the state not from outside invaders, but from the domestic population. William Brummer's **DEFENSE FARCE** on page 9 is the transcript of a conversation with two Afrikaner soldiers in the garrison state of South Africa.

Our militarized society is certainly not without its opponents, even in the boring '80s. The peace movement has ebbed and flowed in the media attention game, but has been a constant and probably growing presence at the grassroots. It has its own set of cultural expressions and priorities, and some of these come to light in **A WHITE ROSE IS A WHITE ROSE...** in which Med-O interviews Katya Komisaruk, the recently convicted saboteur of the Navy's Navstar Computer Center at Vandenberg Air Force Base in central California. Her case demonstrates one person's way of fighting a military less domestically-oriented and perhaps less immediately vicious than Argentina's, but one

capable of atrocities on a scale that would make Nazi Germany (the original White Rose's *bete noir*) look half-hearted.

Granny's **Psst, AMIGO...** takes us back south, this time to Mexico City for a Tale of Toil that provides an inside look at the Mexican media conglomerate Televisa, and the peculiar relationship between reality and media in a Third World power. The poetry pages, with a blue-light special on the works of Jay Blumenthal and Fritz Hamilton, give yet more quick takes on this militarized world in which "peace" means merely that the missiles have not yet left their silos. **GOOD SHOOTING** by Harvey Stein laughs at the gun/assassination culture of the contemporary U.S. This issue's fiction offering is J.G. Eccarius' **FAT WARS**, which investigates the dietetic consequences of superpower confrontation. All in all, this *PW* continues our rich tradition of laughing in the face of horror.

If you're a subscriber, and your mailing label has numbers 18, 19, 20 or 21 on the upper right, your subscription has lapsed! Please renew—your money is needed to keep this all-volunteer project going.

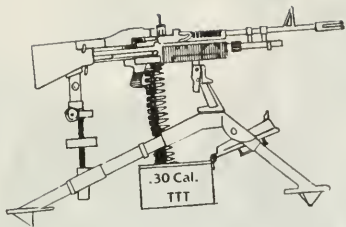
Our next issue will focus on one of the most interesting political discussions to emerge in a long time—bioregionalism, biotechnology and urban planning. Writers, poets, humorists, and graphic artists, now's your chance to join the fray!

Of course, we are always anxious for your comments, rebuttals, criticisms, and hope you will take the time to let us know what's on YOUR mind, since we already know what's on ours! Thanks to all who have sent us work!

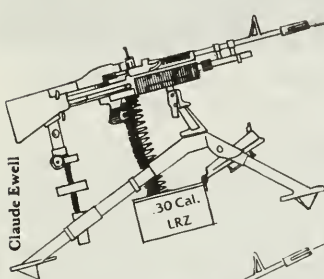
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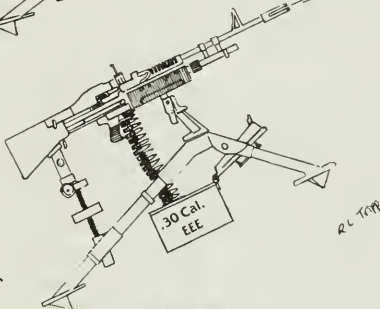
& P. Morales



Claude Ewell



by R.L. Tripp



TOO SLICK?

Dear Processed-worlders:

Processed World slick? Balderdash, I say! You want slick, go read *MS*. I used to read that 'zine religiously until the foul stink of yuppification became too much to bear. The final straw came when they ran a full-page ad for South Africa's DeBeers Diamond Mines ("Isn't it worth two months' salary!") right across from a reader's letter explaining how many women still can't crack the poverty level, even despite college degrees. Maybe the company that bought *MS* recently will straighten them out, but I'm not optimistic.

Why do certain readers consider PW too slick? Because its articles are well-researched and intelligently written, and frequently include interesting bits of trivia (shades of *USA Today*?). Because unlike a lot of "underground" publications you've included a generous dose of humor (many alternative mags are so depressing—I usually get a couple of good yucks from each issue of PW). A lot of alternative 'zines can't seem to pay much attention to eye appeal. Maybe it's for lack of bucks, lack of concern or fear of looking politically incorrect. PW looks right at home on a coffee table. That's good. That's how you get new readers interested in alternative politics.

Yours truly,
P.G.—Johnson City NY

IT'S NOT THE ATTITUDE

Dear PW:

I was really upset with Chaz Bufe's article *Poles 'n Holes* in PW #18. I was finally convinced by some friends to write you a letter explaining why I felt betrayed, and how hurtful that article was.

As a woman, and a sensitive human being, I have developed various defenses to protect myself in this crazy world. One of the first is to minimize exposure to toxicity. I try to eat as low on the food chain as I can, I read ingredients, I don't buy junk magazines, I don't own a TV set, I avoid department stores, I don't go into high crime areas alone at night. I just try to pay attention and use my brains about what I am exposing myself to.

So what's this got to do with Mr. Bufe? Well, one of the things I've learned is that the world is very complex, and there is a lot I don't know, and if I approach new ideas in a closed-off attitude, I lose much of the teachings that are there.

So I read magazines, articles, books, and attend films, lectures, etc. that are done by sincere people with an open mind, and I try to "feel," to really understand what is going on, what they are saying.

That is not the attitude I take when I read the daily paper, or watch a Hollywood film, or read *Time* magazine. I pay attention to those, too, but in a different way. Those are propaganda tools, consciously and deliberately used by the wealthy and powerful to influence and control the population.

So the point I am making is that I don't put PW in the second group, and so I very unwisely put it in the first group. I allowed myself to read that issue with my defenses down. And, I got hit right in the gut with all that horrible woman-hatred.

It was very painful, and I feel betrayed. I complained to the owner of the art store where I bought the issue, who seemed like a real person, and she convinced me to write to you. So I did. I wrote eight drafts of a letter that never got mailed. I find it very difficult to be up-front when there is a large power imbalance. And you have the power, and all I can do is decide to purchase your magazine or not.

So I went on, in the unmailed letter, about how most people are attracted to money and power, not just women. And about how lame, in general the old line is: the reason men buy pornography is because women won't put out. (It used to be "the reason men rape is because women won't put out.") But the letter kept rambling on, I couldn't get to the point, and eventually it just got to be too late.

So when your next issue came out, I was glad to see some of my points were made [in your letters section]. What is Mr. Bufe's response? He's glad. Instead of saying, "I'm sorry. I just didn't realize how mean-spirited I was. I don't need to make things any more difficult than they already are." He says he's glad.

In my first, unmailed letter, I suggested a symbol attached to any future articles that, in the name of liberalism, you feel obliged to publish, but are designed to hurt people. But I dunno. I don't know if I should put any energy into trying to make it better, because I don't know how your group, as a whole, feels. So I think I'll just vent, and see what happens in the next issue or so.

M.B.—Seattle, WA

Dear M.B., Let me start by saying that the decision to publish Chaz's article was not unanimous, and that you were not alone in "feeling" that something therein was amiss. Although I like some of the things Chaz had to say, and his experience was very evocatively recounted, I was puzzled by a number of his observations.

To my mind, the article contains one too many blanket statements, ignores the existence of a couple thousand years of forced economic dependency, and displays a real lack of sensitivity to the unique form of economic, psychological and emotional



oppression that women undergo raised in our consumer-oriented society. I find that many radical men have trouble emotionally understanding the additional burdens of having grown up female in capitalist America. I guess, guys, you hadda be there.

Despite these objections and others, the group decided to publish the article because it was interesting, and because a controversial position or even an arrogant tone generates debate, and that's a good thing. When people get hurt, they should get angry! We like it when readers get mad. Then PW functions as the forum it was intended to be.

Let me add that it is unwise to read any publication "with your defenses down" or avoid any that might be "hurtful." Critical analysis should be applied to all perspectives. No magazine should have "power" over any individual.

I also suggest that if you have a specific critique in the future, that you pick up your pen and articulate it. Self-expression is never an easy thing, but well worth the effort. Put your anger to good use rather than wallow in bad feelings. Good luck.

—michelle lp

BRIDGET GOES TO FOTOMAT

Dear PW,

No, money is not a problem and I didn't intend to ignore you forever. I was a bit disgruntled that you hadn't printed anything I sent you in quite a while, so that when subscription renewal time came around I wasn't too eager to send you more money only to read *only* other people's stuff.

I had, however, been planning to send you something else for several months now, along with a subscription renewal (give you another chance! HA.) But my enthusiasm for doing this was not very high as I got sidetracked into a number of more absorbing projects. Here it is now, belatedly:

I worked at a Fotomat store (a couple of them, actually) during the winter months of this year. If any other PW readers have ever worked at a Fotomat, they will ap-

preciate my feelings about the demeaningly Mickey Mouse policies of this nationwide corporation that tries to make all its sales personnel look and act like carbon copies of each other. It was because of the most objectionable of these policies that I quit after two-and-a-half months: their periodic practice of sending to the stores spies—euphemistically called "Mystery Shoppers"—posing as ordinary shoppers in order to check on the employees' performance.

I wrote a couple of nasty letters to the regional manager expressing my disapproval of this deceptive tactic, knowing of course that I had no power to change the situation. All I could do was announce my intention *not* to cooperate: I would deliberately *not* give the sales presentation to anyone I suspected of being a "shopper," and would purposely come up with lower sales figures until they promised not to send any of these creatures *my* way. This prompted an angry call from the Boss while I was right in the middle of a complicated transaction. I had to make her wait until I was finished, which no doubt angered her all the more. Then she launched into a condescending lecture where she explained that this was "standard retail policy," that all the big department stores did it, etc. I pointed out to her that just because it's widely practiced doesn't mean it's right: lying and deception are still wrong, no matter how "standard" they are, and I had no intention of making a fool of myself by dancing to these liars' tune in this demeaning way, and the incentive of the \$10 reward was just plain insulting.

She couldn't argue that lying was wrong, when I pinned it down that way, but that didn't change anything. She visited me at

the store not long afterward and served me with three written "Corrective Actions" for my "poor attitude," which I was expected to sign. Of course I refused. Once an employee gets four of these, they are automatically terminated; since I had only gotten three, I was allowed the dignity of quitting before being fired—she even let me pick the day. Thus I was allowed to slip out of the job gracefully, without having compromised my principles or my dignity, and with better job prospects on the horizon, so it wasn't too traumatic and didn't feel like a total defeat. I made my point and it was time to move on.

Life is going well for me here, and getting gradually better. I'm no longer living like a refugee for refusing to be an office slave. I'm slowly feeling my way toward more satisfying ways of surviving and utilizing my talents. I'll renew my subscription when I get the money order together.

Incidentally, I loved your "Sex Issue," particularly the kinky "Kelly Girl" story. I'm one of those raunchy people who thinks about sex every waking minute and does kinky things, too.

Love,

Bridget Reilly—Allston, MA

It's always good to hear from you, Bridget. It was also nice to get a legible (typed even!) submission—Queenie Biche

SEVEN NEW RULES

Dear PW:

After reading PW for more than three years, I want to declare myself and become a subscriber. No other publication I know of addresses the frustration and sadness I so often feel for the way our so-called civilization is turning out.

One suggestion for future issues: I'd like to see more articles spend more time exploring the alternatives. We know what we're against—but what are we for? Once we've aired all our complaints, what kind of world would we like to live in?

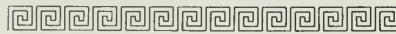
I especially like Summer Brenner's "Work Sickness at the Health Factory" (PW #20) for just that reason. Not only did she articulate the effects of working at Kaiser's Data Center in Walnut Creek, but she also gave us a glimpse of what she decided to do instead, the different employment setting she eventually chose. I'm not necessarily asking for how-to articles—I just want to know what everyone else is doing to keep from going crazy.

In the meantime, allow me to offer up my own "Seven Rules for Sane Living": *Stay well.* Good health is the foundation of quality living. *Avoid radio and television.* It's so easy to become an electronic media junkie. How can we even know what we're thinking, if someone else's words and images are perpetually running through our minds? *Don't buy stuff.* Keep it simple. Sociologists say that an increase in the availability of material things in a culture results in a perceived decrease in the amount of time people feel they have. Be-

sides, the more stuff you buy, the more hours you have to work to pay for it. *Ride with the guys in the white hats.* Profit is the prime directive for any business, but it's possible to find an employer whose professed aims at least are socially responsible. All else being equal, it's easier to stuff envelopes all day for a school or hospital than it is for a firm that designs arms or a gossip rag for yuppie lawyers. *Make time for nonemployment interests.* People who become ensnared in the 10-to-12-hour workday syndrome end up selling off their whole lives for the sake of business entities that don't notice the sacrifice being made and wouldn't care if they did notice. *Pay attention to your people.* You need your spouse, your children, your friends—and they need you—to stay human. Don't go it alone. Relationship is the antidote to this poisonous processed world. *Yuck it up.* Humorlessness is one of the most pernicious characteristics of the contemporary corporate environment. Laughter promotes wellness (as Norman Cousins demonstrated), permits perspective, and protects your humanity by making you a less convenient social tool. After all, whether you don't know what they're doing to you or whether you do know and it makes you so mad you can't see straight—either way, they've still got their hooks in you.

By the way, I like the larger, "slick" PW format, though it does make it harder to conceal what you're reading. But maybe that's good.

S.G.—Richmond, CA



DO NO LONGER

Say, Processed heathens, how the hell are ya these dayzzz, hmmmhm?

Here, at the core of the real U.S.S. of A. the procession is becoming very defined but no surprise save the inability of they who pretend 2 know better (i.e. the raison d'etat) until such as work station monitoring becomes a condition of one's job description ... say, i wonder if Nancy could pass the piss test, hmmmh?

As 4 the matter of various degrees of worker surveillance—well, what did you expect, ja? Certainly, az entrepreneurz, y'all can appreciate the mentality n' methodology. The question appears 2 be really a matter of example regarding one's resolve 2 be conscientiously something more substantial than a worker drone of the \$tatu\$ quo. The problem, however, of the urbane would be radicals remains the dilemma of all who would enjoy life 2 the full and attempt 2 escape the relationship of having it both ways... unfortunately, often at the expense of the "less developed" countries. Indeed, the member/citizenship requirement demands conformity, obedience, and (after all) allegiance...

Therefore the solution is rather not so much a matter of what 2 do az it iz a crucial matter of doing so no longer.

However! propoganda of the deed! Aside, the crux uv this matter kumz down 2 the matter ov objective and reason 4 being... that iz, unless yer bottom line is merely a genre ov entertainment in which case further publication (ov drone humor and symbolic rebellion) better serves management

POSKAART POST CARD

4-12-86
Dear PW folks:
As you may remember, I have itchy feet. Driving around, I've been little more than a spaceship traveler—glimping agony at a distance, before being chased away by the Defense Force, with their cordon sanitaire around the townships. Here I've found an urgency to life where there's a starkness to the problems of existence. The stakes are high, and ignorance a sinful bliss. Many whites continue with Pompeian indifference to the horror that is just outside their quiet suburbs, the monsters that are loose in their military-industrial complex; it is a crying tragedy.

I have seen into the eyes, felt the worries of my relatives—both English and Afrikaners—who sense the inevitable. Some prefer not to read the writing emblazoned on the wall of history; it spells the end to this cozy life of privilege, seductive despite the insecurities. This truly could be a Paradise, but for the fear and greed.



I will miss the terrifying beauty of the land, which has forged so much that is hard and strong, and rising, one hopes, to reinvent itself.

A strand of memory, even locks of hair connect me to this place with ancestral familiarity, a literal Vaderland; I have the calves and hairline of the clan.

SOUTH AFRICA: "A world of many Lands" Picturesque resorts, scenic grandeur, animal kingdoms, proud national characteristics...the pulsation of progress...and rustic charm.

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Best of all
from
S.G.

Processed World
41 Sutter Street, #1829
San Francisco, Calif.
U.S.A. 94104

Last night, on Spandau Kop, I was able to clear the dust and ice from my eyes; I saw that other insouciant visitor, the Comet, on its homeward elliptical path. My love, alas, can only go so far, flowering late as rain in the karroo.

and korporate authority—here there is not even the pretense of working 4 freedom (arbeit macht frei) az with 4mer socialist apparatz. Then again, if the counterpoint iz alternatives 2 lives of quiet desperation and degrees ov destruction (theze selvez or that indigenus/surplus population all made possibly by our complacency and cooperation) the issue (hopefully #22) must be regarding those modalities and necessary skills which would enable an otherwise institutionalized herd 2 actually experience autonomy.

Obiter Dicta—Folsom Prison, CA

Obiter—We hope you don't mind the cuts we made to your letter. We welcome further correspondence, but we don't have room to print more than a couple of pages.

—Reina Represa

THOUGHT CONTROL

Dear Gentlepersons:

I enjoyed your 20th issue on our health "care" system. As my daughter has an hereditary illness, I well appreciate some of the shortcomings of the American medical system(s).

Might I suggest a theme for an upcoming issue? How about thought control in America. YAWN. Yeah, I know it's not a new concept. But how about a new approach, e.g. a systems approach? Forget about intentions good or bad, government or private. Just explore the cultural/national characteristics that suppress those good old input/output relationships. That means trying to consider the whole ball of wax. Government censorship such as "classifying" materials so they can't reach the public domain, denying visas to controversial persons from other nations, an educational system that, for whatever reason, is oriented toward producing good little cogs for our industrial/high tech era rather than original thinkers who might be difficult to manage, a mass media that tends to avoid material that might offend the more powerful interest group, a culture that values conformity second only to wealth, an art world that precludes "political" art but does not preclude giving kudos to dissident artists from eastern bloc countries, corporate harassment and layoffs of social activists promoting unpopular causes... and put it all together. Can you or anyone do that?! As Solzhenitsyn wrote, "Without any censorship in the West, fashionable trends of thought and ideas are fastidiously separated from those that are not fashionable, and the latter without ever being forbidden, have little chance of finding their way into periodicals or books or being heard in colleges. Your scholars are free in the legal sense, but are hemmed in by prevailing fad... This gives birth to strong mass prejudices, to a blind-

ness which is perilous in our dynamic era." And, oh yes, be thankful that you live in one of the benign parts of this land, northern California.

L.P.—Sacramento, CA

SORRY FOR THE BOSS

Dear PW,

Here's a check to renew my subscription. I guess that makes three years of subscribing. What I like: the graphics and the more analytical articles which help us to understand current scenarios in terms of larger systems, corporate priorities and actions. These articles help me to "run the scenarios" and project accurately how the boss will behave, how the corporations will behave, and how the society/organism will behave. What I don't like, and you don't do so much anymore, is the whining approach: feeling sorry for oneself because the boss doesn't (1) take us seriously as human beings rather than lower life forms (2) give us what we need because it's right or because we need it or (3) take it personally when the boss misbehaves. Bosses are really just dumb people suffering from a terrible, rarely cured disease (Bossitis, it is a.k.a. authoritarianism) in which they are manipulated into believing that cooperation and workers' choice-making leads, not to demonstrably higher productivity, creativity, product leadership and ultimately profitability, but instead to the overthrowing of authority: this last of course may happen, but Bossitis has among its symptoms narrowing of the field of vision to eliminate certain possibilities while making artificial imperatives seem larger than life. It's a terrible disease and I feel sorry for those folks with their related health problems of heart disease, alcoholism, eating disorders, etc. My mom used to say

that if you're gonna keep somebody in the gutter, you got to get in there with 'em to keep them there, and health is the price some of these people pay, while believing they are happy. It ain't much of a life.

H.G.—Cambridge, MA

Alas, most of my bosses these days are well-fed and exercised yuppies who threaten to live forever—not the fat, alcoholic, chest-clutching patheticos you describe. I say, the sooner out of the way the better.

—Cretin Borgia

STUCK IN CAPE TOWN

Dear PW,

I'm not sure whether you lot at PW have decided to join the bubbly boycott bandwagon or not, but it nevertheless was a refreshing experience to discover PW (a few dusty, mislaid ones) in the corner of a notorious bookshop in Jo'burg. We haven't been raided for days, the owner said as I paid my hardly-worth-anything rands. I could only afford #16 and #18, the first being of particular interest because of the article on that radically chic apartheid-is-such-a-nice-dirty-word-to-say country, South Africa.

I am a critical Afrikaner who works as a translator/editor for a government institution because the hours are nice, the beach is real close, and also because there is no other work in Cape Town. I don't think the (white) minority has the right to subjugate the (black) majority, as they are doing at present. I also don't support the ANC because I don't believe a future ANC government has the right to slaughter a (white) minority, as they probably will do. In fact, I think South African organized politics is not worth thinking about. And if you do think, you get wires tied around your balls. Nice choice, eh?

CLOTHES MAKE MEN FACTORIES MAKE CLOTHES



BY Mark Beebe

I read the article on the security situation in SA (I presume the author did some field work here before he embarked on the article) and beneath the usual load of factual errors, generalizations and out-of-context sketching of scenarios (why can't foreign journalists ever get it right?) I found a fresh, thought-provoking theory of South Africa as the security laboratory of the world. Sort of let's see how far the South Africans can push their luck, just for our own future reference. It is a fact that the South African security systems, be it on the basis of technology or manpower, are among the most advanced in the world.

I also appreciate the fact that the author did not come up with PW's plan for a perfect post-apartheid SA. I have great respect for Americans in their own right, but have only one problem when they're not talking about America. The one half of the problem is that they always have solutions for the dilemmas of other people. The other half of the problem is that their solutions usually don't work or, worse still, work like a three legged horse. It didn't work in Vietnam. It is not working in South America. What makes you so sure that whatever you are planning for us in SA is going to work?

No one can blame young blacks for becoming restless. No one can blame whites for arming themselves in reaction to that. The blame should have been laid at someone's door forty years ago. And another thing, and this is an accusation brought against the rest of the world by the whole of Africa—when last was something positive said about this continent? War in Sudan and Namibia, famine in Ethiopia and massacres in Uganda and Mozambique make good TV fare. But a newly built school or a record crop isn't good for the ratings, is it? In fact, if I was an easily depressed South African I would have shot myself after reading PW's article, no matter how accurate or objective it was. Frankly, South Africans are tired of hearing about conflict and how bad things are in their country especially when young workers such as myself, who do not have the money to start over again in cozy Sydney or Toronto, know we are going to have to stick it out here and make the best of it.

Don't fool yourself with stuff like embargoes, boycotts and money for this or that

political organization to try and "assist the process." It does not work. Maybe you WANT to cause a Beirut here. Then right, go ahead. Maybe in twenty or thirty years' time it might happen. But maybe you would like to help avoid it. Read on. The great needs in South Africa to ensure a better future is Black education and community development, as well as job creation for everybody. You are not really supporting those ideals by boycotting. Will the American volunteer teachers in Soweto put up their hands? Thank you.

Thanks for slapping the face of hi-tech authority, spitting in the eye of magazine design and re-inventing journalism. I do, however, find the odd caustic and blubbery references to SA (not the SA government, not big business but SOUTH AFRICA) in satire and graphics just for the sake of spicing up someone's wet dream offensive, to say the least. How about being a little more specific, fellows? It's not that I'm a patriotic nut, but you do believe in the beginning God made California and on the second day created San Francisco, don't you? Well a little further on he created a place in the sun for me as well, and I care about it. I can't go anywhere else.

C.D. —Cape Town, South Africa

C.D.:

What a surprise to phone PW (not the Botha variety) and hear that a letter arrived from South Africa. Having hand-delivered Processed World to that 'notorious bookshop in Jo'burg,' as well as a few others, I wondered if such a radical, irreverent publication could survive beyond a fortnight. Apparently so. I'm glad it was found by a critical Afrikaner who not only found "South Africa: Laboratory of Repression" a refreshing and offensive article but wrote to tell us why.

"Ag man!" (Ack maan) Do all white South Africans suffer from the same bloody complex that the Whole-World-Is-Railed-Against-Them? True, S.A. has become everybody's favorite whipping post; a convenient scapegoat for the mass media and western politicians to look far, far away instead of in the mirror at the ugly face of racism and rule by violence. Here the 'S.A. problem' has been capitalized on by public figures who can't or won't combat the effective apartheid between Southside/Northside Chicago or East Oakland and San Francisco. Okay, the U.S. has a talent for disguising its own dirt. Still, don't you think apartheid is abominable and warrants worldwide confrontation? Conflict, racial struggle in particular, is the fundamental reality for S.A. Averting your eyes or wishing the press would report positive developments (and there are many) won't change this overarching character of daily life.

I just wish the rest of the world was as

critical of the U.S. as we are of S.A. Most Americans wallow in the opposite complex to South Africans: "We're-#1-and-the-world adores-us." America truly deserves that #1 rating when it comes to selling arms and drugs, exporting pollution and carcinogens, proliferating nuclear weapons, and destabilizing other governments. The lack of a broad-based resistance against all this is as horrific as the Vietnam war, depressing as organized politics in the '80s. One of the crucial obstacles to changing this, however, is overcoming the intense nationalism and xenophobia gripping the U.S. and other 'developed nations.'

I agree with you that international boycotts against S.A. are not the answer. I do believe that if it was actually possible to implement comprehensive sanctions then the 'Nats' would be forced to dismantle apartheid and this is probably the only nonviolent process. But given S.A.'s immense resources and the irreconcilable schisms between competing nation-states, global capital has and will continue to subvert whatever sanctions governments may impose. In fact, limited sanctions have increased profits for brokers poised to exploit the risky S.A. market. The arms embargo during the Carter administration reveals how 'principled' policy can result in gnarly, unintended consequences. The embargo forced S.A. to increase domestic weapons production so much that by the early '80s it became an arms exporter. Now is that progress?

I find your call for "community development and black education" bound by the same double-edged notion of progress. Sure, such improvements are desperately needed, particularly in the impoverished 'homelands.' But it is too much like reforming prisons by making them self-managed. The inmates can decide they will be served great meals, read stimulating books, even build a beautiful theatre, anything as long as the bars and guards remain.

No matter how many govt. projects or well-intentioned teachers try to improve life in the townships, the school of hard knocks black youth receive while in detention, at the workplace, or in the street is what fundamentally determines their quality of life. Their anger and desire to revolt will not be fixed by better schools or development. I know it's an old story but the only real solution is the complete transformation of S. African society which only starts by ending apartheid.

Many think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices,

Med-O

P.S. God didn't create S.F. on the second day. Really it was the Goddess of Sand Fleas and a small tribe of natives who were bohemian enough to stay only when the fleas weren't.



"Look—civilization!"

DEFENSE FARCE *hot under the helmet in South Africa*

by William Brummer

Human: Ja, we got those hippos. You know the Buffel? It's one of the vehicles we use. A troop carrier... an anti-land mine vehicle that's got a v-shaped chassis, so a blast only takes off a wheel. No one gets hurt.

duToit: What do you want to bet? I picked up a hitch-hiker—he had his whole bloody neck in plaster. He was a National Serviceman. I thought: this guy's in a sorry way. So I pulled up, loaded him in, and I said, "Hell, what happened to you, man? Were you hit by a bloody kung fu expert?" He said, "No, we were all travelling in this bloody troop carrier. Hit a landmine."

Human: Wasn't strapped on.
duToit: Nobody was hit by shrapnel. They've got armor plate glass this thick, OK, at the windows. That incredible shock, that boom—everybody's head hits the bloody roof, they crack skulls, they put necks out of joint.

Human: The police don't shoot people. When I go into Mamelodi, I've got a 9 mm. [pistol] here, I've got an R1 rifle here, I've got a Stupa rifle here, with handgrenades, anti-riot gas, and rubber bullets, 37 mm. gas pistol, and all that stuff. But you never shoot. Those stories of police just opening fire—crap! We've worked with the police. The people that they bury there—they're not strong people, they just go down into the ground.

When you go in there with armored vehicle, when you stop at a stop street, there are about 2-3 children, of this age [holds up

his hand to indicate a child about four and a half feet high], around you. The next moment, there are around 1-2 thousand around you. Now you must go and try to get through that; that's the worst thing of all. You're alone. That's where self-defense now starts.

We never so much as shoot people, never, never. What we do, is give them the gas. Enough gas, I can tell you that. Anti-riot tear gas. We never shoot them. OK, one or two rubber bullets just to scare them off.

But you see, this whole fight here has nothing to do with the police, or the army. We're just there to protect the willing and able people that still want to work, that still want to go to work and all that. We're just there to protect them from being killed and all that.

There's several people there—they got trained from ANC [African National Congress]—that's ANC people that's in there. We don't find them, we never fought them. It's just we—they start burning houses, then we just go and protect the people that's in the houses, or the people that's got nothing to do with the whole thing. That's all we do.

duToit: A black policeman has got a bloody death warrant on his head.

William Brummer: They're the ones being necklaced.

Human: They're not fighting because we got white skin, or he's got a black skin—that's got nothing to do with the whole thing. At Sonshanguve they've got a police station there. They've got single

quarters where the policemen stay, and they're all blacks—150 blacks—working in the police station. The police chief is also a black. He's a commandment, or colonel, or something. Then you get this Mapochpong, that black township. Around the headquarters, they got these Arab Allen fences, just an ordinary high fence you can't climb over.

duToit: It's eight foot high.

Human: They caught one of the policemen just outside the fence. They grabbed him, dragged him into town, tied a tire around his neck, around here [points to hips], and another one here [legs]. They lighted him.

All right, we were patrolling. We thought it was wood or something burning. The only way we could recognize that's a person that's burning was by his smell. That's the only thing. We thought it was just wood burning there.

The war is not between black and white. There's no such thing like apartheid. I don't know where they get that...

Human: On TV they make such a big fuss, but there's bugger all going on [in Mamelodi]. Nothing. I don't know why. We took some videotapes from the BBC to our headquarters, we show them there on the screen. [curses] I don't know where they get all that shit.

They show things there...they're bloody good at mixing the films,

the tapes. When you look at that film you never get to the story; they'll always put you in the wrong. Altered. We spent the whole day with them, we worked with them, stopped them from making shit and all that, the whole day—it's not so bad, like they show on TV. I don't know where they get that material. Honestly I don't know.

We complicate—we confiscated it the day before yesterday. Me and a Lieutenant confiscated six BBC videotapes. It's not the regular VHS and Beta tapes—quite a thick tape. We got hold of it, we arrested the hoax.

You should have checked the crap that was on that tape. Nyahh... [fumes inaudibly]



THE CLOISTERED WORKPLACE

The 4th of July Air Show at Moffet Field provides a festive interlude during which Silicon Valley shows off its least understood and most silently birthed offspring: high technology, military issue. The jet fighters, assault helicopters, and spy planes attract half a million spectators—the largest public gathering of the year.

Laden with computers and microchips, the military aircraft return to the Valley like prodigal sons. Estimates of the livelihoods that depend on military spending in the Valley run as high as 50%. The Valley's largest employers are prime military contractors. It is the hub for the \$55-\$60 billion military electronics industry, a development site for most missiles, a funnel for military artificial intelligence R&D, a design center for Star Wars programs and for the avionics aboard most combat aircraft and bombs.

Concerning its military preponderance, Silicon Valley is not so much boastful as resigned: without the military, the American electronics industry might never have been. In fact, there are signs of a timid but widespread resentment toward the military subsidy, which favors large corporations over the fabled entrepreneur, and which has made Silicon Valley an incubator of unwholesome technology.

Many people say they would rather not work for prime military contractors. Some refuse to. Stanford University students attend occasional protests at Lockheed Space and Missile company. A distinct minority, inactive politically in any conventional sense, display bumper stickers that proclaim "A World Beyond War"—the therapeutic message of a Palo Alto based national organization that advocates peaceful thinking as the path to world peace.

The noisy July 4th Air show, which ties up traffic and closes down commuting channels, provides a rare focus for these resentments. The rest of the year the military presence is camouflaged. Unseen, like the \$3 million underground bunker that is

equipped with computers and two weeks of provisions for 70 Santa Clara officials who hope "to keep the city running" after a nuclear holocaust. Or disguised, like the Lockheed engineers who periodically visit Valley grade schools to treat children to "Mr. Wizard" science shows—but who spend most of their time designing satellites and missiles for use in a nuclear holocaust.

The most enigmatic camouflage is that which keeps knowledge of military products from the producers themselves. It is woven from a decades-old tradition of workplace secrecy. At primary contractors, explicit policies forbid workers from knowing a product's final use. Instead, they are offered project nicknames, a technical language, and a narrow way of looking at work; these obscure military purpose and, in the process, probably undermine product quality. Less formal but comparable policies produce similar results at military subcontractors. As a result, a special ignorance structures life in the classified cubicles and shops of military electronics. Those who prepare the battlefields of the future need not dwell on the horrors of war to perform their work. The air show's family entertainment format caters to this sensibility: there are air strikes without casualties, exploding napalm bombs without burning flesh.

For those prone to troubled consciences, the secrecy is both functional and lonely. The prohibition of product application knowledge creates a "black box" productive culture in which work's purpose is ignored or forgotten. When programmers write "graphics display software" rather than missile performance reports, when rocket engineers hold back from discussing their work with friends, they shield themselves from responsibility for the horror their work makes possible. When fellow workers carry on like this, it imbues the workplace with odd loneliness. That which they share in common—work—creates that which they must avoid talking about—work's products.

"How much less lethal is writing an accounting program that enables the Air Force to operate more efficiently than making chips that will guide its bombs to their targets?"

The loneliness of military electronics workers often extends beyond their workplaces. During an interview, I asked a Lockheed Space and Missile Company project coordinator what he worked on. He replied that he could not be specific. He paused and then said "everybody knows that Lockheed makes missiles and spacecraft. It says that on the door. And I am not working on missiles." He then spoke of his wife, who also worked at Lockheed. Because each had a separate security clearance, however, they could not, and did not, talk to each other about their work. Sometime after the interview, husband and wife separated.

The military electronics worker's silence and isolation are redolent of the medieval monastery, its monks busy transcribing those works of antiquity deemed worthy by the papal censors. By accepting that certain questions are forbidden, even certain phrases unutterable, military electronics workers take vows of ignorance as well as of obedience. In exchange, they can imagine they have relinquished responsibility for their work to a higher authority. In the military electronics cloister, these imaginings are undeterred, and the silence is welcome.

The Forbidden Fruit

Behind a formica reception desk at a large microchip firm, a display case lists the day's special visitors:

WELCOME!
Litton Guidance
Hughes Aircraft
Lockheed
Raytheon

Inside, "applications engineers" help these and other customers design logic for military and business microchips. In its startup days, the firm did little military work. But a slumping civilian market led first to military subcontracting—designing chips for primary defense contractors—and then to classified work for the National Security Agency. One of the unclassified application engineers is Jeff, a Stanford E.E. graduate several months into his first electronics job.

The title "application engineer" is peculiar. For "security reasons," Jeff says, none can know their military customers' chip applications. This stricture does not impede their work. To design microchip logic for a Raytheon or Litton chip, Jeff need not know that it will store microcode for an on-board missile guidance system that may one day claim thousands of lives. "I don't know what it's used for, what system it's part of. . . usually only the company's name," Jeff says. Yet he is vaguely aware that Litton Guidance, Hughes Aircraft, Lockheed, and Raytheon are major military contractors. He

also has informal access to project-specific information at his workplace. Away from work, over pizza and beer, Jeff acknowledges that his company currently has six Lockheed contracts. From gossip among fellow engineers he has gleaned that some of the chips are destined for a radiation-detecting satellite device. I suggest that it may be connected to the Milstar project—Star Wars. "It's just a part to me," says Jeff.

For Jeff, the moral or political implications of his work, its probable contribution to space-based missiles, the question of whether it increases the likelihood of war, are *separate issues* from the

tasks he performs every day. This separation between work and work's product does not create tension for Jeff—nor is his aloofness exceptional. On such issues Jeff stands with most of the other applications engineers, steeped in a culture of collective avoidance that is officially encouraged by their employers and Pentagon sponsors.

Fred once worked as an auditor for an oil company but now works for Lockheed as a software programmer with a secret clearance. The security "doesn't bother" him: "Maybe I've just gotten used to it." Fred has grown accustomed to other things at Lockheed:



by Med-O

"I'm not thrilled with the application. What I do nicely separates itself from the application though, because what our graphics system produces is nothing different from what you might see in a magazine if they were plotting the gross national product year to year. So where my thinking goes every day, it's got nothing to do with those big nasty missiles."

Fred writes system-level code for a graphics package that displays data in a time/history plot. The software is not classified, but the data it handles will be. The data come from Trident missiles whose warheads are loaded with transducers and sensors that transmit in-flight performance records to Fred's software package. Aided by a work setting that divides programming assignments among fellow workers, his distance from the application is nearly infinite:

"It's very easy not to think about it [i.e., the missiles]... the finished product for me is when they can take data and put it on the screen. I get to see all of that. I don't see where that data comes from [i.e., the missiles]... my product is a very small piece of a large thing which includes submarines and all kinds of things [e.g., missiles]. But the thing that I directly work on, I feel like I see the whole thing. That may be kind of unusual."

At Qubix, a start-up company, laughter and enthusiastic chatter punctuate a programmers' meeting. Before a white board bearing cryptic symbols, a presentation of Qubix software unfolds. The talk is sophisticated, specific, but makes no mention of Qubix' first customer—or the customer's use for Qubix workstations.

When queried later on these topics, most Qubix workers acknowledge that the customer is General Dynamics. Asked if General Dynamics makes assault jets, airborne missile-and-gun systems, and cruise missiles, many plead ignorance. Their ignorance is hard to credit. At the time, front-page articles are breaking the story of General Dynamics' Pentagon scandal. Many of the articles describe General Dynamics' long line of military products. Uninformed or not, Qubix people are bothered by my entreaties. Their responses suggest that military products are unpopular topics of conversation.

The ethics of making war material constitute an unspoken dialogue among electronics workers. A widespread and informal *self-censorship* complements official boundaries on what workers can know, and this tends to preempt conversations. Of "big nasty missiles," Fred says he and his (approximately 70) fellow employees "don't talk much about that

kind of thing. I think the people around me tend to feel the same way. Like I say, I stay away from politics." The social silence sustains a contrived, if awkward, innocence. For example, Fred let on that he knew surprisingly little about Lockheed's operations. He wasn't sure what went on inside the Blue Cube (the U.S. military satellite command center adjacent to Lockheed Sunnyvale), or that Lockheed workers staffed the Blue Cube, only that "I presumed, just the way people talked, that more highly classified work went on there."

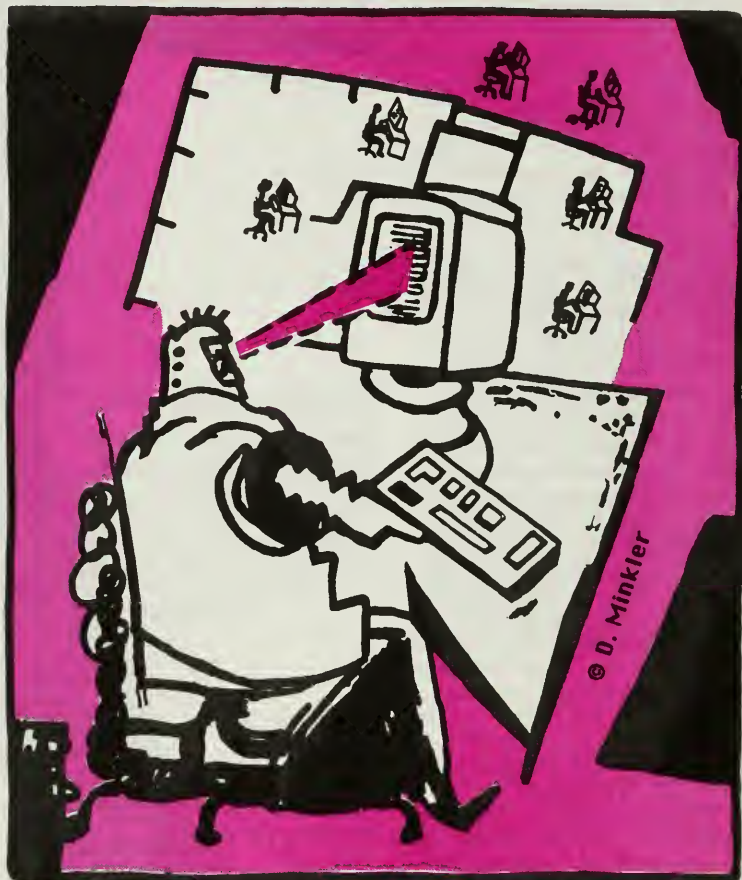
The Manhattanization of Military Electronics

The censorship, formal and informal, that pervades the contractor's workplace

is a legacy of the military's tutelage of microelectronics. The rationale is that the less workers know, the less capable they are of sharing secrets with hostile agents. The centerpiece of this worldview is the "need-to-know" policy adopted by virtually all primary military contractors performing classified work since World War II.

The need-to-know policy is adapted from the hallowed tradition of the military mission. In the military, the concern is not so much that access to privileged information may result in loss of life, but that it may compromise the mission. (This is the spirit of the wartime slogan, "loose lips sink ships," which reminded sailors and civilians to avoid discussing fleet destinations and embarkation dates

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by D. Minkler

that might reach enemy ears.) This policy implies that those who actually carry out the mission, i.e., the subordinates whose lives are at stake, are kept in the dark by their superiors until the last possible moment.

The arms industry's need-to-know policies are thus an intrusion of military convention in the workplace, a tradition already apparent in the *chain of command* and *line or staff* models for dividing workplace authority. We are reminded of this lineage by the policy's workplace debut in 1942 during work on the Manhattan Project—the code name for the United States government's atomic bomb development.

Then, as now, the need-to-know policy created an atmosphere approaching that of the Inquisition. The best possible workplace was one purged of all but the minimum amount of technical detail required to complete a project. Project managers denied workers knowledge of product research and fabrication processes that did not directly bear on their work tasks. Project information—especially regarding the project's destination and use—was strictly and hierarchically controlled. Of the 150,000 persons who worked on the Manhattan Project, perhaps a dozen were allowed a “comprehensive overview of the project's plans and objectives” (Davis, W.F. “The Pentagon and the Scientist”).

Four and a half decades later, a comparable minority of the workers who receive clearances are trusted with “comprehensive knowledge.” For the rest, classified status does not, as popularly imagined, confer access to privileged knowledge. Instead, it means working more or less blindly.

If the public rationale for the need-to-know policy is minimizing espionage, its practical effect on employees' daily lives is to stifle awareness and discourage discussion of the hostile technology they create. This custom dates from the policy's first civilian application. Manhattan Project electrical engineer Robert Odell recalls working on the top secret project in Oak Ridge, Tennessee that developed the radioactive material used in the first atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki:

“I was among those who thought we were developing a new kind of fuel. Others thought it must be an explosive. *You didn't ask questions*. . . . We were having a meeting in July of 1945 and one of the supervisors got a phone call in an adjoining room. It was from New Mexico. He came back with a big smile on his face and said, ‘It went off with a big bang.’ That was the first time it really hit me.” [emphasis added] (from a reminiscence

in the *Milwaukee Journal*, August 5, 1985).

Today, the Pentagon continues to insulate the classified workplace with the need-to-know policy. In its *Industrial Security Manual for Safeguarding Classified Information*, the government sheds this definition of a worker's need to know:

“...a determination made by the possessor of classified information that a prospective recipient, in the interest of national security, has a requirement for access to, knowledge of, or possession of the classified information in order to perform tasks or services essential to the fulfillment of a classified contract or program. . . .”

The policy is variously implemented. At most primary contractors, including Lockheed (Silicon Valley's largest), the security classifications, in descending order of privilege, are top secret, secret, and confidential. Workers who share a clearance status, e.g., top secret, are also often segregated by project-specific clearances. That means they cannot exchange work-related information or enter each other's project area unescorted. Improprieties are “security breaches” whose implications may transcend the wrath of management, perhaps tripping the alarm of “national security.”

What determines the level of clearance? Apparently, the Department of Defense (DOD) deems this question too sensitive to answer unequivocally lest the clearance title reveal the nature of a classified project. According to the *Safeguarding manual*, “top secret” refers to information or material “the unauthorized disclosure of which reasonably could be expected to cause *exceptionally grave damage* to the national security.” The disclosure of “secret” material could be expected to cause “*serious damage*,” while leaks of “confidential” information could be expected to cause mere “*damage*.” Elaboration as provided in the *DOD Manual*, is vague.

Working to classified military specifications means that workers always have a ready excuse not to discuss the content of their work with their families or friends, or even among themselves. The atmosphere also discourages discussion of the military contractor's product line. For example, classified Lockheed machinists, plumbers, carpenters, and composite workers cannot openly acknowledge, even if they suspect, that they build missile parts. Companies instruct employees that shop talk off the shop floor is forbidden, or worse—grounds for clearance revocation, which may mean job loss (if the firm cannot or will not find unclassified work for the offender). A worker whose record bears the demerit of a clearance revocation is an unlikely job candidate for civilian or

military work, since the demerit creates a subversive aura that most employers find troubling.

Of course, there is scarcely a workplace in which work-related gripes and gossip can be stifled. This the classified workplace does not attempt. “You can let off steam,” the Lockheed project coordinator observes—as long as the steam has been purged of overt references to the work's military nature. But the military gag rule constricts the boundaries of acceptable, spontaneous discussion among most workers increasingly as the level of clearance moves from confidential to top secret. Among Lockheed programmers, the social implications of making missiles, not to mention the alternatives to doing so, are topics that fall outside the boundaries. “Like I say,” Fred reminds us, “I stay away from politics.”

The Forest from the Trees

How is it possible for workers to create classified products without knowing what the products actually do?

One answer, suggested by the Pentagon's perennial acquisition of badly designed and malfunctioning equipment, is that workers cannot produce blindly without compromising quality. To the extent that classified production can proceed, it does so through a highly evolved division of labor that transcends, and is often at odds with, capitalist efficiency.

Since Charles Dickens and Frederick Engels, the division of labor has been constantly reprimanded. These authors, and many since, decried the stunting of mind, body, and soul on the assembly lines of capitalism, and later, of socialism. The critiques varied, but not in their essentials: workers feel alienated from their subdivided and boring work tasks and disconnected from products they do not freely choose to create or cannot control. This was the inevitable consequence of organizing the labor process to maximize production.

To meet project deadlines and to reduce notorious cost overruns, military contractors also attempt to “rationalize” their workplaces to maximize efficiency—and profits. But national security introduces a competing principle around which to organize the labor process: secrecy. In practice, the need-to-know policy conspires with the division of labor to perform a special role: *obscuring a worker's contribution to hostile technology*. This highlights a modern category of alienation, the separation of work from its final purpose.

The politically motivated need-to-know policy could not be implemented without a division of labor. As in civilian

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electronics, numerous job tasks separate military products from the raw materials and concepts they incorporate. Most of the workers performing the in-between tasks needn't know each product's intended use, only its translation into technical specifications. For example, the narrow focus of Jeff's workday is on microchip circuitry—clusters of "on" and "off" switches, several of which would fit across the thickness of a sheet of paper—and whether they perform to special military specifications simulated in his company's design software. This makes possible Jeff's ignorance of the classified projects he contributes to. It follows that the Pentagon has a political stake in encouraging product ignorance—a stake it is not wasting any time claiming.

For decades, the Pentagon has issued specifications by which contractors classify, test, and deliver work. Now, it is coming much closer to dictating the way in which work itself is organized. The DOD is positioning itself to demand from computer system and software vendors a work environment that will likely deepen the gulf between job task and product use. The vehicle is *Ada*, the Pentagon's official computer language, and, upon examination, a Trojan Horse bearing a management policy.

As of summer 1984, all new weapons and other "mission critical" systems for the Pentagon must be written in the *Ada* programming language. As of January, 1986, all systems built for NATO bear a similar requirement. These decisions affect an estimated 400,000 computer

workers in the Pentagon's direct employ, and countless others in military contracting shops—eventually, anyone who sells software to the DOD and NATO. The goal, of course, is to reduce the large number of computer languages that currently run on the Pentagon's computers and those of its allies.

The message conveyed by the DOD and a growing number of boosters is that *Ada* is not just another programming language. "*Ada* was developed to not only allow, but to encourage the use of sound engineering discipline," observe two *Ada* consultants. There may not be much room for choice in this matter. Pentagon-approved *Ada* compilers (the devices that interpret and translate software instructions into a series of actions that computers perform) accept only those programs that can pass a battery of tests for "configuration management," "modularity," and much more. These tests "will force people to use structured techniques," according to a spokesperson whose company makes *Ada* compilers. Army Colonel Dick Stanley of the DOD's *Ada* Joint Program Office asserts that "it's virtually impossible" to write unstructured *Ada* programs.

Structured techniques imply breaking up the job of writing a software program into modules, groups of relatively simple, isolated, step-by-step job tasks. Managers and project leaders then assign modules to project team members, who work on them more or less simultaneously. Some programmers like this because it allows them to write ever more

sophisticated and complex programs.

Under various names, structured programming techniques have been adopted by civilian firms primarily as an attempt to introduce capitalist efficiency into the complex process of software engineering. But the principles of "scientific management" are not easily adapted to the management of scientists. Software engineering is an inherently creative process, resistant to the subdivision and routinization implied by such techniques. With bootcamp finesse, the *Ada* environment, according to an advocate, attempts to "enforce" structured techniques by changing the "programming environment."

Whether and how structured techniques improve software productivity is hotly debated. It's unlikely the Pentagon has overlooked the bonus such work methods will yield in the realm of security, however. By dividing and simplifying work, structured techniques may make complex programs easier to write and maintain, but they also tend to erect additional barriers between the programmer and his work's uncomfortable objective. This is so simply because structured programming does not compel programmers to acknowledge the program's purpose while they create it. Since programmers require less information about the application as a whole than about the internal requirements of the program's modules and submodules, managers also can use structured techniques to formalize a division of labor that is more conducive to the need-to-

know policy. The sinister implication is that workers can—unwittingly—create and refine weapons of deadly sophistication.

The imperative to divide and subdivide military labor has remarkably obscured the connections between firms as well as within them. One hundred fifty thousand subcontractors supply the Pentagon's approximately 20,000 prime contractors. The B-1 bomber, for example, is the work of 5,000 subcontractors located in every state except Alaska and Hawaii. Over 2,000 subcontractors participate in Lockheed's Trident missile program.

In the Valley, more than 500 firms receive primary military contracts in excess of \$10,000. However, hundreds more receive subcontracts from the primary contractors. Subcontractors sell chips, boards, cathode ray tubes, accounting programs, and so forth to other companies which, in turn, may sell to the Pentagon. This ripples the military connection, making it even more difficult to track.

When the subcontracting path to the Pentagon is several corporate layers deep, many employees simply don't know about the connection. For example, at Ramtek, a graphics display hardware company, only marketing, sales, management, and a handful of key employees seemed to know that a frame buffer device sold to another firm was destined ultimately for military service. Several Ramtek employees said they were happy that they didn't work on military projects.

The maze of military subcontracting suggests the futility awaiting workers who escape a military contractor to find "civilian" employment—only to discover there a subcontracting relationship to a military supplier.

Speak No Evil

Language is the most innocent accomplice to the military worker's ignorance.

Almost every workplace and occupation has its argot—technical language that serves as a shorthand for describing work problems and procedures. The advent of computers and microelectronics, however, envelops the workplace in language several times removed from reality. Whether the work involves observing whales or tracking missiles, computers flatten and homogenize it into a colorless world of files, records, fields, reports, updates, and processing. As a workplace tool, technical language has its place.

But where hostile technologies are designed and brought to life, the computer vernacular and its legion acronyms have the cumulative effect of putting social conscience to rest.

It's not difficult to imagine what sort of work goes on at a facility such as the Air Force Weapons Laboratory in New Mexico. But you would never know by reading the 138-page government document that lists weapons-lab descriptions.

What is required of the civilian computer workers at the laboratory? "A high degree of specialized senior systems software engineering knowledge and experience in scientific/technical ADP computer processing applications." What projects will employees work on? "Computer systems which use CDC's NOS/BE and NOS/VE operating systems and utility programs." But what do the systems really do? "These systems support a wide variety of technical R&D analysis functions and applications." The specializations might as well describe a marine biology lab or a Federal Reserve Bank.

Of course, those who hire on at the weapons lab would know, in varying degrees according to their clearance levels, that their work involves bomb and missile development. But the Air Force's language suggests that their daily work culture will not remind them of their work's purpose. The job descriptions—"system generation/installation," "system software maintenance," "documentation support task"—suggest nothing so concrete.

At Teledyne Microwave, workers make avionic subsystems for the HARM missile. A former worker describes how work is divided into project groups with titles such as the Switch/attenuator Team, the Multiplier Team, the IRM (Integrated Receiver Module) Qual (Quality) Team, and the IRM Production Team. Neither the project titles nor the ambiguous microchips and circuit boards that the teams turn out suggest their ultimate destination. As a result, workers are not confronted every day by the fact that HARM warheads employ 146 pounds of explosives to scatter 25,000 shrapnel fragments, each of which is preformed to inflict maximum damage.

Language need not be technical to mislead. Lockheed employment advertisements in military electronics magazines and news daily job classifieds sometimes conceal the military connection in plain language. "Our Palo Alto Research Lab offers you a stimulating

environment in a tranquil setting near Stanford University... [Lockheed] invites you to break away from established theories and venture out in new directions—creating new technologies that will take concepts and turn them into reality." "Reality" at the Palo Alto Research Lab is designing post-holocaust technology, such as the Pentagon's Milstar satellite program. But to prospective recruits, the ad language is a cue that work does not unfold in the morbid surroundings that Pentagon projects might otherwise imply.

Some contractors help rehearse their employees' social conversations. When friends and other outsiders casually ask "what do you work on?" primary contractor Watkins-Johnson, according to an ex-employee, admonishes its workers to utter two words: "electronic defense." Further elaboration is considered—potentially—a security breach. As it is, "electronic defense" is an impoverished characterization of the Watkins-Johnson line, which includes "electronic warfare suites" and radar components for battleship, land, and jet-launched missiles, including the HARM missile, whose primary role is offensive.

If a worker is not really making bombs and bombers, but instead constructing "projectiles" or testing "fuselage designs," then responsibility for the products of the worker's labor, too, is obscured. How much easier to motivate military programmers to perform "data path analysis" to time and speed "usage requirements"—especially if the "data path" conveys heat-seeking missile trajectories for "usage" by a jet squadron, none of which military "software engineers" will need to know to complete their work. As a deference to computer terminology emerges in the high-tech military industry, the "need-to-know" policy invades the domain of language. The jargon is a thicket that invites even curious programmers and engineers to lose sight of the implications of their work.

"A tool that can do anything..."

Doris is a production control expeditor at the Teledyne Microwave facility that makes HARM missile circuitry and avionics modules. She feels badly about her contribution to the missile project. "I want to be creative, in an artistic sense, instead of destructive." Doris says she would rather solder stained glass windows than expedite the soldering of war components, "But I can't get to it," she



laments, in reference to a discouraging labor market.

By contrast, Fred sees his job as creative and challenging. He is vaguely disturbed about the implications of his work, but remains uninspired about brighter prospects and resorts to the private ploys of resignation and fantasy:

"We're making these big nasty missiles, and everybody hopes they'll never be used. It just seems like they could build bridges, help people someplace else. . . It's not just the U.S., it's not just Russia, it's a whole mental attitude that goes on that—maybe I just ignore it. I've got no interest in taking anything of theirs. I live in comfortable apathy about a lot of that. It would be nicer if it was all gone."

More often, military electronics workers tend to dismiss their responsibility by noting the distance between their job tasks and those that are more directly linked to a hostile product. Michael, a utilities software programmer, worked on a log-in protocol for a computer system his company hoped to sell to the National Security Agency. (His company also sells computers to the Air Force.) According to Michael,

"I'm at ease a little bit 'cause I do know that I'm not putting the bomb together. My guess is that most people would not work directly for military applications, but would be comfortable working in an environment [in which]

they knew part of [their work] would end up in a military application—that they weren't *directly* fueling it. *That detachment is a sort of protection.*" [emphasis added]

Victor, a systems software programmer, finds refuge in the ambiguity of microelectronics technology. He insists that he "wouldn't work for a . . . company that does military work," but that working on "a tool that can do anything"—i.e., civilian or military tasks—is acceptable. "If you're making a sewing machine to sew parachutes or wedding dresses [or] if . . . you know you're . . . sewing parachutes, that's the difference."

"As long as I'm not working on weapons systems, that's fine with me," says Stanford computer science professor Thomas Binford. But Binford acknowledges that his research on stereo vision has direct relevance to cruise missile guidance systems. "If I chose not to do my favorite project because of that, I'd go to my second favorite project and I'd find the same thing. 'I'd keep going down the list and then I'd be left saying, 'What is there left for me to do?'"

Peter Hochschild, a Stanford computer science graduate student, is more to the point: "A lot of people here don't even think about the issue. They look for a research problem that's technically challenging and intellectually interesting, and *they divorce it from its applications.*" [emphasis added].

The reflections of Victor, Michael, and Professor Binford are no doubt earnest appraisals. Is writing missile-performance analysis software less damnable than using it to perfect the missile's flight? How much less lethal is writing an accounting program that enables the Air Force to operate more efficiently than making chips that will guide its bombs to their targets? If there are obvious, unambiguous answers to such questions, they are lost in the everyday culture of the military electronics worker. Perhaps the experience of military electronics work is essentially ambiguous.

Reckoning moral responsibility by measuring the distance between one's labor and the product is a legitimate inquiry, but only if one can hope to measure reliably. The division of labor in military electronics suggests the interdependency and responsibility of all workers but—and this is the paradox—encourages profound distance between worker and product. This psychological distance is protected and extended by the cloistering—the need-to-know policy—that mystifies the military product and censors the product's ghastly purpose from the producer's daily life. As a result, workers can, in addition to military electronics, manufacture a naïveté about the impact of their labors and, at least among obliging fellow workers, escape ridicule for their ill-gotten innocence. ■

— by Dennis Hayes

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by D. Hayes/Mcd-O

GOOD SHOOTING!

This man came up to me yesterday
on the
sidewalk downtown
and pulled out a
revolver
from under his coat
and without a word
shot me in the head
-ow!



and the bullet went in my ear and
wandered around inside my skull
checking out both left and right brains
destroying patterns

of both intuitive and rational thought
the sections dealing with
reading, music &
decisionmaking
gone--

then it turned its nose
south and
dived down my neck, just
missed my jugular by
one-eighth of an inch
and bounced off a couple of ribs
ching

chung
chung
it was still travelling
pretty fast and looking for a hole
to get back out

without causing much damage
it realized (bullets have brains too) that
most of the the holes were

back up in the head (too bad
the bellybutton had been
sealed off years ago)

so it hairpinned around and
up my esophagus
and just as I was saying "what the--?"
it p-popped out of my mouth
I saw it

coming out like a spitball
thunk! it lodged in a streetsign
saying
"NO PARKING ANYTIME"

and the man said

"Oh, I'm terribly sorry!
I'm terribly sorry!
I'm terribly sorry..."

but I thought you were the
President!

you see I work for a group of
concerned citizens

a non-profit assassination organization"

"That's quite alright

I understand completely" I said

"mistakes
are mistakes

and I agree with your politics 100%
really I do"

my ear was dripping a little blood

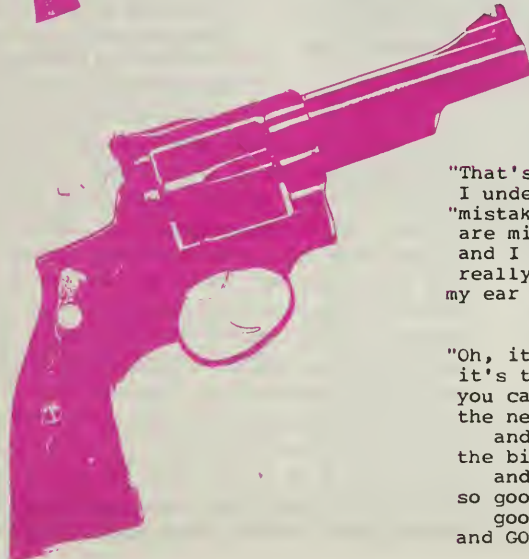
"Which way is his house?" he asked
cocking his gun again

"Oh, it's just down the block
it's the last one on the left

you can't miss it
the new paint job
and the tall flagpole

the big lawn
and the helicopter landing pad

so good luck
good luck
and GOOD SHOOTING!"



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Harvey Stein

A White Rose Is A White Rose Is A White Rose...



INTERVIEW WITH

KATYA KOMISARUK:

MILITARY SABOTEUR

“I had a very nice middle class Jewish American girlhood. I was definitely set up to be a Jewish American Princess . . .”

It was a surprising opening statement by someone whose actions led me to believe she was a hardcore guerrilla saboteur. I knew very little about Katya Komisaruk prior to this interview: only that she had secretly slipped into Vandenberg Air Force Base and had her way destroying a Navstar (Navigation System Time and Ranging) computer complex. This base on the California coast is notorious for its testing of intercontinental ballistic missiles targeted on the Marshall Islands. Given the military’s unquenchable fixation yet tenuous grasp on “advanced technology,” it’s no surprise these missiles have a proclivity to fall indiscriminately all over the Pacific Ocean. The Navstar system now supplements, and will eventually replace, current missile navigation systems that are 100 times less accurate but perfectly adequate for the strategy of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD). Navstar’s unprecedented accuracy makes a “surgical” first strike nuclear attack technically possible. That’s why Katya chose Navstar as the target for her own brand of direct action disarmament.

She named her sabotage of Navstar the **White Rose Action** after a group of dissident students in Nazi Germany who used the same name during their protests against the Third Reich; they were eventually caught and executed for their actions. Several times during the interview Katya pointed to parallels between Nazi Germany and the U.S. today: the climate of rampant militarism and nationalism, and a leader who effectively massages the media to parade simple, unworkable solutions to complex problems. In this way she felt compelled to draw attention to one way (of many) in which the U.S. is developing its own scenario for mass genocide.

“Coffee! Coffee”!! The image of management screaming about having coffee near a computer came to mind... But then I spotted a fire extinguisher...

During the early hours of June 2, 1987 Katya sneaked onto the Vandenberg base toting a tool bag containing crowbar, hammer, boltcutters, drill, and similar tools. She walked for an hour through the darkness before arriving undetected at the Navstar complex, went through the facility’s gates, and used a bicycle lock to secure them behind her. At the gate she left flowers, a box of Mrs. Fields’ cookies, and the following poem: **I have no gun / you must have lots / let’s not be hasty / no cheap shots / have a cookie and a nice day.** Regarding the cookies she quipped, “Well if nothing else, they would spend an extra ten minutes defusing the box of cookies before going any further.”

She painted the outside walls of the building with phrases from the Nuremberg principles. Since above every door was the sign **ELECTRONIC ALARM SYSTEM IN OPERATION**, she first decided to climb onto the radar dish atop the complex to make dents and holes in its surface. After this she broke into the building and, assuming she would be arrested within minutes, went to the large mainframe computer and spilled hundreds of its chips onto the floor. She then broke into a wild dance atop the chips to celebrate their transformation. Unable to crack one large computer cabinet, she emptied a fire extinguisher onto it and flipped the power switch, causing it to short-circuit into electronic purgatory. As a final act, she painted the mainframe with more messages related to the Nuremberg principles.

Despite nearly two hours of extensive equipment destruction she went completely undetected by the ‘advanced’ security system at the base. Reflecting on this lack of security in an interview by Richard Hindmarsh (published in the Australian magazine **Graffiti**) Katya noted: “The whole absurdity is

that we're relying on electronics and computer technology which is utterly fallible, consistently proved fallible---" This time the system's fallibility allowed Katya to walk off the base and hitchhike back to S.F. The next day she held a press conference and voluntarily surrendered to the FBI.

As the interview progressed, I was struck by similar incongruities in her life: During a stint as a corporate executive she advocated income sharing with her secretary, "who was a very intelligent woman and just as capable as I was"; while completing an MBA program she became so incensed with what she was taught that she started a series of direct actions against the corporate/military industry, resulting in 31 arrests in 5 years. This provided the point of departure for my questions.

So how did a good Jewish Princess get herself in such a fine mess? There you were an M.B.A. student, with a promising career as a corporate executive. No doubt most of your former colleagues now see you as a terrorist in the same league as Khadaffi. What happened?

Strangely, an important part involved deciding it was time to get serious and start a career. I was 21. You know, it was the time when most young Jewish women are told to marry a doctor or a lawyer or a CPA. I thought, well, instead I should just *be* one. I decided to go to business school at U.C. Berkeley. Within a month it hit me how incredibly corrupt the business world was. I'd lived in this complete fairyland up until then, where I didn't even read the paper: I just didn't have a clue. Suddenly I'm reading all these case studies, like Nestle's and the baby food scandal—literally hundreds of cases, one after another—and all the exercises were just appalling. There was nothing about taking care of the environment, the worker, the consumer. I began challenging my professors: "Who takes care of these things? Who monitors corporate responsibility?" They said, "Well, nobody really." It became clear to me that in the corporate world there is no way there is going to be any responsibility. All through business school the buzzphrase was "maximize profits and long term stability." In every class that was what they would say: in finance, in marketing, in the math classes, accounting. It was a constant refrain all through business school; it was almost like you were supposed to sing it.

There's no business like business school, I guess. It strikes me how wide the gap is between myth and fact in the M.B.A. propaganda. A more accurate corporate buzzphrase is "maximize profits for short term gains and

the hell with the future." Particularly with toxic chemical pollution, nuclear wastes, and other tools of destruction, doesn't the immediate environmental and social damage threaten the long term stability of everyone—including those diffuse entities called corporations?

Exactly. You know that was my specialty in business school: strategic planning. It simply isn't done in the U.S. We have a greedy, shortsighted, corporate military industry which completely controls U.S. defense policy—also most of the economy.

So are you saying you first made this connection while pursuing your M.B.A. degree at Berkeley?

Yes, it hit me a couple months into the program. My first response was to drop out. So I went to talk to my counselor, she can tell me what to do. I tell her all this angst that has just hit. She says, "Well dear, sometimes business school can be very competitive, and the business world in general is very competitive, and not all women can really cope with this amount of competition. I can understand a lot of women

have trouble with the math, and math is really hard here, so maybe you would be better in the English department." [Fake gagging reaction followed by laughter.] So after lines like this I turned on my heel and walked out, telling myself I can too do this . . . I can do this . . . I can do this . . . and I completely bypassed the whole problem I came in with. I don't know if the counselor did this on purpose or it was simply her own intolerance and stupidity. So I ended up plodding through another two years of business school hating every minute of it. I was doing this out of pride to show them mommy's feminism did its work. I wanted to prove I could do this business stuff. So I'm slogging on through business school, and every day and every week I'm hating it more because I was having to read and say and write and just spend countless hours learning how to maximize profits and long-term stability. Each week I was getting more and more polarized and feeling more and more strongly about environmental, political, and nuclear issues.

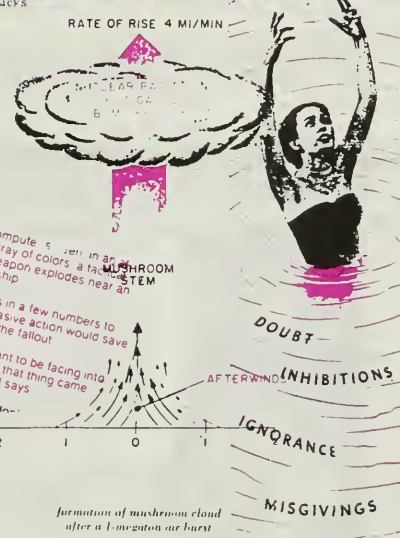
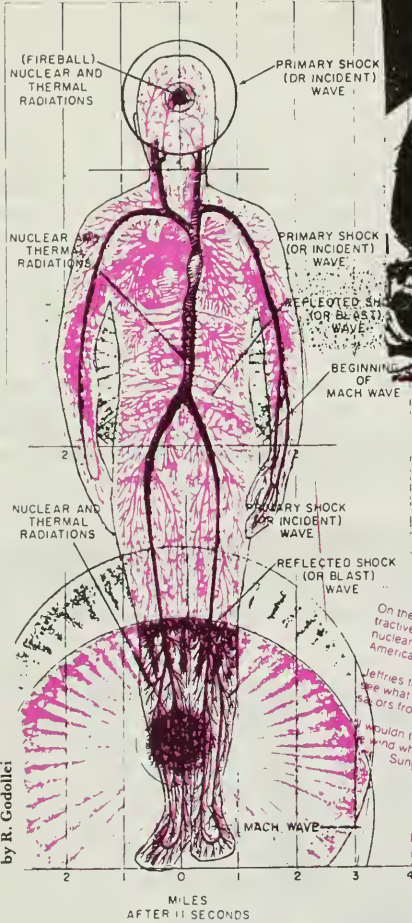
But given the coursework required by a full time MBA program, how



By Andrea Kasoff 1988

with nothing more to buy ever!

three stages in the development of a 1-megaton air burst



plaining affinity groups, direct action, nonviolence, and the legal system, and we do all these role plays and arrests and everything. I thought this is great; this is the answer, I'll get arrested—this is it. It was my first demonstration, my first arrest, and it was incredibly empowering.

So this began literally scores of large, public demonstrations for you as a peace activist. You've said your experience with mass civil disobedience has consistently been empowering. Why then did you organize the White Rose action as an isolated, individual act?

Partly, because to do this type of sabotage action as a group requires about a year's worth of meetings and retreats. Now, I do respect the need for meetings, and in fact some meetings can be very good. They may be few and far between, but it is possible to have great meetings. They are a really important way for us to have participatory democracy.

In this case, I just didn't feel up for it. I also felt it would be a lot easier to sneak into a military facility as one person rather than a group. As it turned out, I could have gone in with a troop of girl scouts trailing crumbs.

You must have been completely shocked to have your way with the Navstar nerve center without the slightest interruption.

I imagined I would have three minutes in which to destroy things before being caught. The entire time I was doing it, I thought: they are coming, they are at the gate, they will be here any second. Every minute I had to work was a complete surprise. I had no idea I would be able to walk away from it.

What made you stop?

I was exhausted! There was really nothing left to do.

You mean you destroyed every piece of equipment in the Navstar facility?

All gone . . . Bye-bye . . . No more! The computer system I trashed was in five wardrobe-size cabinets and I used my crowbar to haul out all the chips. I piled them on the floor, jumped up and down and did a dance over them. There was one cabinet I couldn't get into and I thought—"Coffee! Coffee!" The image of management screaming about having coffee near a computer came to mind. Since that wasn't possible, I thought I should go to the bathroom and fill a wastebasket full of water and pour it on the thing. But then I spotted a fire extinguisher . . . There were four fire extinguishers on the wall. I picked them up, pulled the pins and squirted all this electronic equipment and threw the switch

much time did you actually have for political activism?

I didn't have any time! But I also didn't have any guidance because I had no friends who were political—at all. Certainly not in the business school program, I'll tell you that. Nobody I knew was even close to being an activist. I had friends who might have circulated petitions, but that's it. By the end of the MBA program in June of 1982, I was feeling so conflicted with what I was studying and writing and what I was privately thinking that finally I decided I just had to do something. I was walking along the street and I saw this poster on a telephone pole describing a protest at Livermore Weapons Lab. You know I had never thought about actually demonstrating, but I saw this poster and I thought "That's it, I will go to a protest." What I had in my mind were scenes from television in the early '70s—I imagined

huge milling crowds of people chanting and screaming, bricks being thrown, and tear gas and dogs, and this whole chaotic maelstrom. I was very worried about being teargassed. I thought "this really sounds crazy," but I was sure *this is how you do these things, is it not?*

These things?

[Laughter] Yes! *These things.* You know, I wanted to do this the classical way—do it right [more laughter]. So at the bottom of the poster it said that to participate, you had to go to nonviolence training. I had no idea what this was, and I thought this must be some religious mumbo-jumbo. However, probably they arranged car pools at these things and I had no way to get to Livermore otherwise. They told me to come wearing loose clothing. I get there and after about a half hour it suddenly becomes clear that this was well-planned civil disobedience. The trainers are ex-

on. It sizzled and popped and shorted everything. My advice to someone planning a similar sort of thing: fire extinguishers are perfect, and they are bound to be right at hand. You need to use the water-type extinguisher. It's necessary to have everything turned off while you are soaking the computer. Get it soaked and then turn it on, preferably from a distance so you aren't hit by the arcing electricity. Rubber gloves and shoes are also a good idea.

Very effective. Was part of your preparation for this action to learn the techniques of 'computer irrigation'?

No, it was serendipity. It was easy; fire extinguishers are meant for carrying around and squirting things. Why not computers?

I'd like to look at the issue of secrecy in doing sabotage. PW receives lots of accounts from people who engage in clandestine sabotage at their workplace. It is relatively easy, you don't have to go to a lot of meetings, you don't have to be organized with a large number of people, and you can still gum up the works. In the White Rose action you decided to do an individualized act from which you could have walked away unnoticed. Why were you willing to be arrested for it, indeed turn yourself over to the police?

Not getting caught is crucial to an awful lot of work that gets done. I've

done plenty of clandestine actions, probably as many as I have public ones. I am as happy with them as I am with the White Rose action. Had I realized the lousy level of security at Vandenberg I might have felt differently.

It's just that in this time of my life I wanted to do something public. Had I done this type of thing and not gone public, no-one would now be hearing about Navstar. It is a crucial issue that I wanted to raise both to the general public and the antinuclear movement.

But there is certainly a lot of clandestine sabotage that goes on. People just can't advertise sabotage, and by that very fact we don't hear about it. We know for instance there was a fair amount of sabotage going on at the Diablo nuclear power plant while they were building it. Lines half cut through, things deliberately built wrong, jammed, messed up.

This addresses a criticism of sabotage PW has received: that often sabotage is misdirected angst which comes back as more work for the worker and marshals the forces of paranoia, justifying drug testing, increased surveillance, tight security systems, and even worse. In the case of Diablo, the plant was still put into operation, a much greater public threat.

The best sabotage, of course, is less than perceptible. Sabotage is a nasty word, but it can be real effective in certain situations. There are many different

kinds: the most typical is 'inventory shrinkage' (the euphemism used by the business world for employee theft) in which it must be secretive. Other sabotage actions, such as what Earth First!-types do, must necessarily be public. For instance, with tree spiking [see "Chainsaw & CRTs Do Not a Forest Make," PW #15] it is incumbent upon the saboteur to get the word out. Since the goal is to stop the removal of trees, tree-spiking is bloody useless unless you inform lumber companies that it has been done.

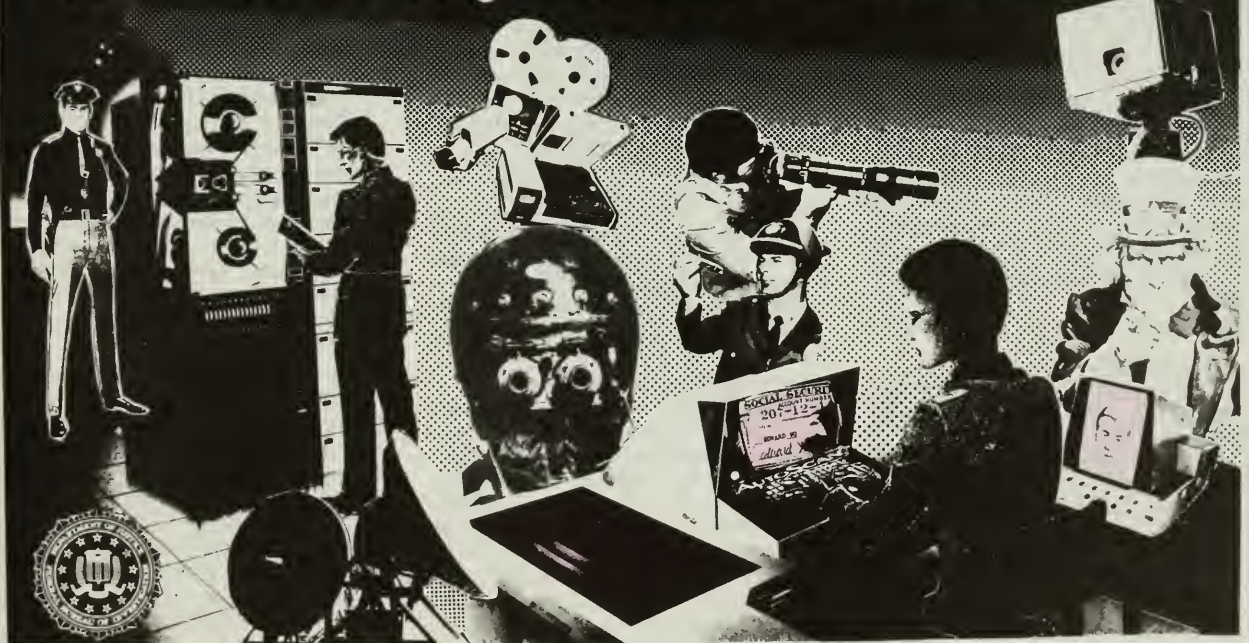
But what I did was a very different kind of action. I assumed I would be arrested very quickly. I had not carried it out in a way which would have allowed me to go undetected. My fingerprints were everywhere. . .

Why didn't you wear gloves?

There is a lot more to escaping detection than wearing gloves. There is a very good book about this called *Without A Trace*. It explains all the police tracing techniques: fingerprints, voiceprints, fiber analysis. . . There are hundreds of ways they can trace you. It is very sophisticated. But if you read that book thoroughly, I'm sure you could plan and execute the kind of action I did without getting caught.

In issue #10 of PW, an interview with a group of French saboteurs calling themselves Clodo, describes how

"We don't love you. but we know you."



by Zoe Noe

their actions were clandestine and highly publicized. One way they both effectively disarmed and drew attention to the tools of war was to blow up large computer facilities and leave communiques explaining that corporation's relationship to the war economy. The public definitely heard about that!

=====
That's the greatest tragedy of all: to brainwash yourself. You have to always remember that the struggle isn't the day-to-day struggle to get petty privileges from assholes in uniforms.
=====

I definitely disagree with blowing things up, at least in this country, and I'd say in Europe as well. Now, it is very different in Central America, where strict adherence to nonviolence would be a joke. But bombs and arson are uncontrollable, and the very best of intentions often don't work out.

What I did, I did with my two hands, and I had complete control over what happened. I don't think if somebody had seen me destroying that Navstar equipment, they would have been terrified that their own person was in danger. *The reason I left the flowers, poem and cookies at the gate was because I was afraid that the guards would respond to an alarm—that there might be these soldiers dashing in with their automatic weapons, and it would be like Kent State, where young mindfucked men who had been through boot camp and had a lot of brainwashing were suddenly faced with an emergency and did what they were trained to do—which was pull the trigger.* I didn't want to be the target. I thought one way to get around that would be to have them come across the flowers, poem, and cookies first: anything to distract them and make them stop and think for a few minutes before they went swarming in there.

I do believe very much in nonviolence.

In every instance?

I don't feel willing to prescribe for other people what their form of resistance should be. I know that for me, for what I want to do here and now, nonviolence makes the most sense. I wouldn't prescribe nonviolence for an activist in El Salvador—that's absurd. But in the U.S. I don't believe violence is the best way to create social change.

Sometimes in the U.S. the level of

violent confrontation can be similar to El Salvador. In the '60s the Black Panthers demonstrated how fighting back (sometimes violently) can be essential for escaping the role of the powerless victim. And this really helped empower the black community. It wasn't only about arming yourself for defense against police violence, although that was important, but also developing alternative community organizations for mutual aid: health clinics, food conspiracies, street schools, and such. So for me the question of violence or nonviolence varies with the situation. Violent confrontation certainly doesn't make much sense at a military base or a police station. Very rarely does it make any sense for me (except as self-defense) in overcoming my own oppression. But don't you think there are other contexts even here in the U.S., such as combatting the activities of the Ku Klux Klan, where violence may be necessary?

The thing is, nonviolence doesn't always work. For instance, should the Jews in Nazi Germany have strictly adhered to nonviolent actions? They were nonviolent in essence up to the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto—and that was, I guess, too little too late.

It gets real tricky. It's hard to know if nonviolence is for sure the best mode for society in general and social change in particular. If there was one thing that Berkman and Goldman learned in their long lives, it was that social change which happens precipitously (because of something like an assassination) isn't going to be that much slower organic process which also involves changing minds. Usually, in a violent revolution, those who end up in power are those who are best at being violent, not the ones who have the best social or political talents.

I know I'm not ready at this stage in my life to have blood on my hands.

Many in the peace movement see nonviolence as a philosophy of life rather than a political tactic that can change depending upon the circumstances. A significant number of these people also believe property destruction is an act of violence that should never be used. Obviously, you don't.

If my neighbor was experimenting with germ warfare in his basement and had a bunch of petri dishes full of interesting devices, I would feel more than entitled to say "This is a danger to me, to the community, and to this maniac" and to deprive him of that property. He might scream, "Those are my petri dishes and my viruses." In the same way, the U.S. government is playing around with nu-

clear weapons that are a danger to me, my friends and loved ones, and I don't think they are entitled to play with them. *Anything so dangerous that it can kill everybody should not be owned by anybody.*

The argument around property destruction is often put in these terms: if we cut the fence around a military base, nuclear plant, et cetera, the surrounding community won't understand or will be offended. I think that is a problem, but I also think the community will be more offended if they all get blown up.

One has to change one's standards and ties from community to community, especially in a cosmopolitan community, people are pretty jaded about protesters sitting in their road and blocking traffic. They may even feel it is very idealistic and vaguely reminiscent of the '60s. In this case, for civil disobedience not to be co-opted it is sometimes necessary to escalate to some version of controlled property destruction.

You mentioned you have been arrested over thirty times, mostly doing civil disobedience at large public protests. What you did at Vandenberg was, of course, quite different. Was this a response to the current limitations of mass CD? How predictable it's become? How thoroughly orchestrated it is by both the police and organizers?

It is a ballet of cooptation, right?

Is it even that artistic? A prison march might be a more accurate description. The actions have become so predictable, especially those stale confrontations where the authorities establish a line that is illegal to cross, protesters cross it and assume some form of stasis, and the police herd them away like cattle to be processed.

I feel that no mass CD can ever be discounted. As with Rosa Parks, the march on Washington, the Vietnam War protests, often you cannot effectively calculate the outcome of your actions. Sure, I have been dissatisfied with CD actions. But it seems that for all of us who are jaded there are a lot more people for whom it is as meaningful as any act could be.

For me the experience of mass CD is similar to LSD. The first time—WOW! It was an intense, transformative experience to feel the power, that tremendous solidarity when large numbers of people collectively rebel against authority. Incredibly empowering. So I see it as important for people who have never tasted anything like that before. But once you get acquainted with the system of po-

lice-jail-courts, and with how affinity groups within a large participatory decision-making process can, within certain limits, engender resistance against that system, what is the value of repeating the same old script?

If nothing else there is the self-empowering aspect of saying for once: "I don't have to follow the rules; I don't need to cower in front of authority." For those that feel the thrill is gone, there is organizing the first CD in a rural town. I remember helping with a CD action in Brattleboro, Vermont. Only three locals were willing to get arrested, but it was a very significant event. A debate over the function of the town's main employer raged for over a year. It was front-page news in the local papers, big photos, everyone talked about it. So what seemed like a trivial, K-Mart type of action turned out to be very significant.

I would never do CD without feeling it was worthwhile. If the type of political activity you are doing has become boring or tepid, you should do something else.

The White Rose action was hardly tepid. Yet like CD, getting arrested was essential in your strategy to publicize the odious nature of Navstar. You fully expected to be apprehended within minutes of starting the sabotage. Since that didn't happen did you consider turning yourself over to Vandenberg security right then?

No, although I've recovered somewhat from being a Jewish American Princess—my nails were ruined! I was utterly sweaty and disheveled, and the thing I most wanted was a shower ... and breakfast. I knew if I called security at that point, they would just want to interrogate me through the night. I certainly didn't like the idea of being interrogated by military officers all night—much less going without a shower.

Yet the next day you turned yourself over to the authorities. Isn't it a bit schizo to plan to get arrested on purpose?

I feel the effect of what I did was maximized by a lot of publicity and especially, regarding the public at large, the flavor it gets by me turning myself in. It reaches some people who wouldn't otherwise listen if they didn't perceive that somebody felt seriously enough to risk getting locked up for 20 years. They may think: "Oh, the poor girl, such a nice young thing. She is going to be old by the time she gets out. She must have really believed in this. I wonder what it was she cared about so much." And then maybe they listen. And they won't hear without a virgin sacrifice [laughs] like me. It's a pity ...

ARGHH!! Isn't that merely misplaced masochism?

In a calculated way.

So you're a politically correct, calculated masochist?

I'd prefer you didn't use that particular line, however good it looks. The point I wanted to make is that people could do this type of action in a secular fashion. It's certainly very much part of the Christian tradition for people to suffer for their beliefs. It's often highly regarded as religiously correct to defy secular authority for the sake of following God's law. But this is seldom done on a philosophically secular basis.

You mean defying governmental law for your personal set of morals?

My personal set of ethics reflect certain international ethics as exemplified by the Nuremberg principles. This can go round and round, but obviously I thought my actions would have beneficial effects on me as well as on whoever it affected in the public at large. The whole issue with any kind of direct action is what you are going to do with it.

You face up to ten years in prison for what you did—was it worth it?

Absolutely.

by Robert Thawley



You seem undaunted about doing time in prison. Aren't you afraid of the brutality and harassment you might receive? Or do you think you can largely avoid that?

Until I start looking for trouble. Then I'm sure I will be able to find it. For instance, I can't see any reason to work. I know that prison authorities feel that there is an important economic and rehabilitative effect to working. But the day I work for 11 cents an hour...

It must feel very strange to be articulating your future life in prison. Here you are now planning and thinking about it ...

Thinking about it? ... *I dream about it!* It will definitely have a pronounced effect on my life until I get out, and then some. I'm not naive about what I'm facing, and the fears I have are grounded in experience.

You said you have been arrested 31 times for your protest activities. How many times did you end up in jail or prison?

Probably a dozen. I have been in one prison and a lot of jails. The jails are a lot worse.

For short periods of time or longer?

I was in one hell-hole in Los Angeles for a month, where prisoners were constantly baited, beaten, and abused by the guards.

Since you know to some extent what you are in for, what is your strategy for psychic and emotional survival?

Reading and writing, especially corresponding with my friends. I've always wanted to write a book; I think maybe I'll write a utopian novel. But it will be corresponding with friends that will give me the reality check I need. If I were to accept the standards of the oppressor, the guards of the institution, if I tried to get with the program, it would be fatal to my integrity and my sense of worth. There is tremendous pressure to capitulate, to say and act the way they want you to. It eventually becomes a form of self-brainwashing. *That's the greatest tragedy of all: to brainwash yourself. You have to always remember that the struggle isn't the day-to-day struggle to get petty privileges from assholes in uniforms.*

That applies equally well to those of us outside the institutional prisons.

The key is keeping a lifeline with your community. Community is where my identity comes from. It doesn't have to be physically present; as long as I'm in communication with my community I'll be okay. In prison my lifeline will be my correspondence. That's what will keep me sane.

—by Medo

On November 16, shortly after this interview, Katya was found guilty on charges of destruction of government property by an L.A. Federal court. The judge would not allow a defense based on international law and the Nuremberg principles. On January 11, Katya was sentenced to 5 years in jail. Those who wish to contact her should write c/o White Rose Defense Collective, 1716 Felton, SF, CA. 94134.

First there was *Platoon*. Then came an entire crop of "realistic" films about Vietnam, including Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*, Francis Ford Coppola's *Gardens of Stone*, *Hamburger Hill*, *Hanoi Hilton*, and *84 Charlie Mopic*. They were all important, their publicists said, because in telling the Vietnam story the way it really was, they served to educate a whole generation too young to remember the war firsthand. But if you look at the television messages about Vietnam that these films had to compete with, you realize that in this regard, *Platoon* and the rest were outnumbered and outgunned.

Daily lessons about the war are taught to kids in the afternoons, after school and before dinner, by reruns of shows produced during the Vietnam years. TV reruns from that era (1964-1974), particularly situation comedies, are still broadcast nearly every day. What they tell viewers about the war is very different from what *Platoon* says. The sitcom Vietnam was just and noble, free of dissension and full of moral purpose.

For example, this era produced the most preternaturally honest TV character of all time. He was the personification of innocent, gentle decency.

This combination of characteristics was the comic linchpin in many of his episodes. He was, it seemed at times, almost too conscientious.

The character was Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C., and for five years, from 1964 to 1969, Gomer was trained at Camp Henderson (probably Camp Pendleton in real life) in Southern California. Trained for what? To go to Vietnam. Honest, sweet-natured Gomer was planning to go to 'Nam to kill Commies. Gomer had fitful bouts of moral trepidation over whether or not to tell his girlfriend, LuAnne, that she couldn't sing (even though she couldn't) because it might hurt her feelings. But he never batted an eyelash about lobbing mortar fire into enemy villages. The argument that Gomer was drafted and was in the military only as a law-abiding citizen doesn't wash, because Gomer *reenlisted*. He *wanted* to be there.

Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C. is still presented in hundreds of TV markets daily. If he's not in your area now, he'll rotate in soon enough.

But Gomer is far from alone in his worldview. Move now from the most honest man in Rerunville, to its most patient, caring, and wise Dad-figure, Steven Douglas, of *My Three Sons* (1960-1972). A more trustworthy person you will not find. And what does Steve Douglas do for a living? He is an aerospace engineer who designs warplanes.

Whenever you see Douglas in his office, smoking his pipe and looking down at his slide rule, on the wall behind him are pictures of fighters and

bombers. The show's first location was the midwestern suburb of Bryant Park; in 1968, it moved to Southern California. We can assume from this that Steve works for McDonnell-Douglas Aircraft, with its corporate offices split between St. Louis and Long Beach. Maybe he is even related to one of the company's founders, last-namesake Donald Douglas. (Adding credence to this theory is the fact that McDonnell Douglas was created by a merger of McDonnell with Douglas Aircraft Company in 1967. The resultant shakeup meant lots of employees had to move between St. Louis and Long Beach.)

Perhaps Steven is working on civil aircraft? Not likely, considering all those trips to Washington he has to make, as well as his military "friends" who are quickly brought in when stepson Ernie sees a UFO.

Steve's three sons and their assorted girlfriends and wives, all supposedly members of the hippie generation (after all, sons Robbie and Chip play in groovy rock bands), never even peacefully question Dad on his profession, let alone argue with him. Robbie joins his Dad's company after college graduation.

When you watch those shows today, you get the feeling that sixties kids thought it A-OK to design warplanes.



VIETNAM

each about the war

The memories of hippiedom and protests fade with time like tie-dyed jeans, while *My Three Sons* continues loud and clear and in color.

And speaking of Robbie-Douglas, there is a thread common to most young sitcom draft-age males of the time. This includes guys like Greg Brady (*The Brady Bunch*, 1969-74), Craig Carter (played by Desi Arnaz, Jr. on *Here's Lucy*, 1968-1974) and Keith Partridge (*The Partridge Family*, 1970-1974). As each boy becomes a man, there is an episode in which the lure of real-life adventure and money from a job (be it real-estate agent or pop singer) causes the kid to drop out of college, or to seriously consider not going to college after high school. The parents are naturally concerned.

"Your father and I planned on college for you, Greg. You know how valuable an education is." Invariably, the boy suffers a comic setback, and finally agrees that college is indeed the right way to advance oneself.

At no time, however, does a parent use what was the best reason to stay in school during that time. "Quit school and you'll get drafted, Greg. You'll be sent to Vietnam, and end up bleeding to death in an anonymous rice paddy with incurable syphilis and insects crawling all over your muddy body. Now you march yourself off to college, young man, and stay there until it's safe."

Perhaps being drafted wasn't so bad, today's TV watchers think, since it didn't even enter into the minds of

these young "1-A's" when they were quitting school. They come to the conclusion that maybe Robbie and Greg *wanted* to be drafted. After all, look at the great time had by the roustabouts on *McHale's Navy* (1962-66). True, it was a different war, but the action took place in the same theater of battle. Some of PT-73's naughty old haunts were probably still open for business during Vietnam.

And even if the VC capture you, could the Hanoi Hilton be that much worse than Stalag 13 (*Hogan's Heroes*, 1965-71)? A prison is a prison, right?

Finally, can there be any doubt about the underlying message of *I Dream of Jeannie* (1965-70)? Captain (later Major) Tony Nelson of the Air Force finds an incredibly powerful but unpredictable Genie on a deserted island in the South Pacific. Once in his possession, Jeannie the Genie is forever getting him into trouble. As a result, the base psychiatrist, Dr. Bellows, thinks Nelson is crazy.

Jeannie symbolizes the way our country perceived nuclear weapons at the time: powerful, mercurial, magical, always causing one problem or another, privy to the military—but at the same time sexy, lovable, irresistible. On what island does Nelson find her? Bikini, perhaps? Remember that in the fifties, the wonders of Atomic Power were explained with the help of "The Atomic Genie." Nelson and Jeannie eventually marry. (Compare our embodiment of the nuclear phantom with Japan's, the horrible monster Godzilla. It's easy to see who dropped the bomb and who it got dropped on.) To top it off, do you recall that Barbara Eden, as Jeannie,

could not show her belly button. *The* button? Show us the sexy side of nuclear arms (and legs), but don't remind us about the button. After all, other TV women could show their navels—female aliens on *Star Trek*, for instance.

OK, so maybe that's stretching it a bit. Maybe more than a bit. As with conspiracy theories, it's easy to get carried away.

The truthfulness of the new Vietnam films is to be admired. But the point should be well taken by now. Don't say that these new movies, viewed by maybe 15 million people for two hours over a period of about three months, will educate a whole country about what *really* happened. Not when television's mendacious messages about the period are still being fed to the populace in a steady stream, especially to the young. No batch of one-shot deals, no matter how truthful and well hyped, can do that.

by Mike Wilkins



MY NUCLEAR FAMILY: Growing Up in Los Alamos, N.M.

There's a state in this country that is a mystery to those outside its borders. Most U.S. citizens don't know whether or not it is a state. Mexican cops have been known to become distinctly agitated at its mention, as if treason were involved. Impoverished, living off tourists and other crawling creatures, New Mexico is often childish in its pretensions to independence.

The federal government owns some 10% of the state in the form of wilderness, military bases, monuments, forest lands—and a modern company town that looks like a cross between an army base and a university. Anglo, wealthy, and cosmopolitan, the town carries the state's contradictions to a feverish level: a pinnacle of western science and technology isolated in desolate mountains. It's a thoroughly modern world tinged with signs of the past: Indian ruins, brass plaques, museums. Its people, civilized and polite, may go down in history as mass murderers.

Los Alamos is located in the Jemez (pronounced *hay-mess*) mountains in northern New Mexico, rising more than six thousand feet above the Rio Grande. Pajarito Mesa, at some seven thousand feet above sea level, is cold and snowy in the winter, hot and dry in the summer. The small canyons have seasonal streams; the occasional permanent brooks support ferns and deciduous trees, including the cottonwoods from which Los Alamos takes its name. This withered landscape's browns and parched greens contrast sharply with a deep blue sky. Many people, accustomed to greener places, find it disturbing, even frightening, in its emptiness and arid silence.

The first inhabitants, ancestors of the modern Pueblo Indians, left only silent ruins and bits of pottery and stone. The Spanish never settled in these mesas, preferring the more fertile river area, and the next permanent dwellers were the anglo small farmers in the 1870s. Around the turn of the century a small boarding school was founded, con-

nected to Santa Fe by a tenuous road hacked out of the mesa. But it wasn't until WWII that Los Alamos developed its schizoid aspects, both brilliant and deadly dark. First the army took over the area and created a munitions range. Then came fences, guard posts, housing, and labs; a relocation camp for Japanese-Americans in Santa Fe was relocated, and by mid-July of 1945, the components of the world's first nuclear weapon were in the school's old icehouse. At dawn on July 23, 1945, the gaunt hills of the Oscura mountains were lit with a flash so bright that a blind girl many miles away asked her parents what the flash was. The Atomic Age had begun.

Los Alamos never lapsed into its pre-war lassitude. Within a few years the thermonuclear bomb had been created, and it was then that my father arrived. An astronomer from Toronto's David Dunlop Observatory, a Ph.D. student with the University of Chicago's Nobel prize-winning astrophysicist Chandrasekhara, my father came to Los Alamos to work in "T (for Theoretical Physics) Division," a group that was responsible for the development of newer and more useful nuclear weapons.

We lived in company housing, although stores were privately owned. People who lived there were usually waved past the guard post on the outskirts of town, but outsiders were issued a temporary pass after the guards had called ahead and verified that they were expected. In places the only barrier was the natural world, often supplemented by high fences topped with barbed wire. We were about an hour's drive from Santa Fe, which at some twenty thousand people seemed a large city to me, and Albuquerque, an hour further, which was an unbelievably huge metropolis. This physical isolation was reflected by our own time zone, because we had daylight savings time in order to "keep up" with Washington. Whenever we left town we had to set our watches back.

Cocktail parties would be filled with people who couldn't talk about the one thing that they had in common—work. This atmosphere shrouded the city from its perimeter inward: in workplaces, inside families, and in people's minds.



At locations dictated by geography and wartime requirements there were yet more secure complexes surrounded by stout fences and armed guards. Close by the small man-made lake there was a series of low, olive-drab temporary or "T" buildings that housed the first labs and the monstrous computers. Nearer the end of the mesa was DP Site, the long buildings in which plutonium was refined. A beautiful bridge spanned a canyon, itself the home of a reactor and tunnels into the cliffs for nuclear weapons storage, beyond which lay the new buildings that housed the physicists and mathematicians. Beyond the burial ground (for radioactive garbage, not people) was "S-Site," where the all-important explosives were milled and shaped. In distant canyons ingenious dwarves engaged in yet more arcane crafts. It was as if a giant had scattered random pieces of military bases and chemical factories over the rugged canyons and Indian ruins. The sites, like the work done there, were usually both visible and inaccessible.

The isolation undoubtedly drove some away, but the rest found other compensations: extreme dedication to work, enjoyment of the wilderness, study of the local anthropology. My father was interested in rocks and minerals, collected local artifacts (Kachina dolls, etc.), attended the open Indian dances, worked on his old Packard with his scientist buddies, and read voraciously. We would often take hikes, ignoring government signs, to explore ruins and caves. The best places were known by friends who lived on Bathtub Row (so named because the old school buildings were originally the only ones with bathtubs). There were familiar local sights, such as the director of the lab, Norris Bradbury, driving his immaculate Model T to work. There were good libraries, a radio station, churches, amateur performance groups. For those who stayed it was a very comfortable and safe environment, pleasantly elite and highly secure.

We lived in Western Area, a housing

tract of one-story houses, mostly of the same design, set at slightly different angles to the street and painted in one of a few basic shades. The lawns made it look more like a normal suburb, in contrast to the city's concrete, barbed wire, and government color schemes. When the plumbing broke or the roof leaked, we called Zia, the government company that hired maintenance.

My horizons were bounded physically by two canyons, and organizationally by the AEC and LASL (the Atomic Energy Commission and the Los Alamos

Scientific Laboratory). In fact, the city has only one employer, The University of California, which has two subsidiaries: the professionals and the scientific elite (physicists, mathematicians, chemists, and so on) worked for LASL, while the people who did the grunt work, maintenance, and repairs all worked for Zia. Those people were often (surprise!) Hispanic or Indian. The salary levels determined where you lived: an efficiency, an apartment, a duplex, a single family dwelling, or privately built housing. The divisions on our playgrounds reflected who our parents worked for.

Government was omnipresent—on the sides of cars and trucks, on signs and on paper. In the Atomic City, as its boosters like to call it, all government things were labeled or designated. I thought that all places had this sort of relentless *nomenklatura* — STRUCTURAL DESIGNATION TA-1130—MAN HOLE COVER"; a small rectangular white sign with neat black letters. All signs were standardized—ominous warnings (either red and black on white or the warmly familiar black and yellow trefoils) or outright prohibitions. My favorite sign prohibited not only trespassing but also cameras, recording devices, binoculars, firearms, and crossbows. The fences themselves were a code we could read: the tall chainlink fences with a "Y" of barbed wire at the top were no-go zones, while the four-strand barbed-wire fences were just the government's way of announcing its friendly presence. The signs that said (in red on white):

DANGER! EXPLOSIVES!
¡PELIGRO! ¡EXPLOSIVOS!

were not to be trifled with. Some of them lay between Barranca Mesa (which became a fairly upscale housing area) and Rodeo Mesa; most of them were miles outside of town.

The hazards were both as hidden and as distant as the sites themselves, but inevitably the military and civilian worlds overlapped. A schoolmate of mine lost a few limbs to a relic of a simp-



ler form of war. Someone had found an old bazooka shell in a remote range and had dropped it off a cliff a few times. It didn't explode, and thinking that it was a dud, he took it home. His kid found it in a closet and took it out to show friends. It was dropped on the sidewalk, and the detonation tore the arms and legs off of several children and killed a little tyke who was riding his brand-new birthday bicycle past the house.

The town's unique product was so common as to become normal. The only way I can remember its sinister aspect bothering me was in a recurring dream I had when I was about six years old. In it I am floating in outer space. Dimly seen against the stars are floating things, which I thought of at the time as resembling "tractor parts." They are drifting together in small clumps, and when two unknown pieces meet everything will end. I'm unable to stop any but a very few. I would awaken in panic, unable even to scream. These dreams faded away harmlessly in a year or so.

The nuclear world was mostly invisible to us—remember the fish's opinion on water? We used to play, like kids everywhere, in places where we weren't allowed to go. We stole lead bricks from behind the medical physics building near our houses and mailed them to Time/Life Books. We teased the monkeys in the outdoor cages and prowled around the tech sites on our bicycles. We had encounters with patrols more than once, usually ending politely, but occasionally with the Guardians of Security trying to scare us (at least part of my hatred for cops comes from these goons). We found a way into a site that was being decommissioned and had great fun in the old basements. We found some stray hotbox gloves—heavy insulated rubber gloves as long as your arm which are normally sealed at the armpits into the walls of the "hot boxes" used for work on toxic chemicals and metals. I hope these gloves had no lingering contaminants, because we sure had a great time chasing each other with them.

Most of our search for entertainment, though, was of a traditional, non-dangerous sort, such as falling down cliffs and getting stuck in caves and the like. A lot of us, at least the males, were dedicated to pyrotechnics and flight, often with terrible consequences. One of my pals, DJ, was goofing around with gasoline and burned himself really badly. I blew off my father's eyebrows while making hydrogen gas for balloons. The Lab's surplus shop, which sold everything from old electronics to metal shavings and once-used glassware for twenty-

five cents a pound, was a major source of entertainment.

In later years we discovered drugs. My friend DJ overdosed on belladonna when we were about 10 and I never saw him again. The city has long had a notorious drug "problem" among its youth, which mirrors the alcoholism among its adults. The wife of one of the directors was a substitute teacher and a horrible alcoholic, embarrassing us with her simple tests (which she accused us of cheating on) and her incoherent singing in music class. Both of my parents were alcoholics, my father almost losing his clearance before he quit drinking with the aid of the Lab's alcoholism program. It may be that the isolation contributes to it, but it's also a sign of stress—the employees can't talk about their work, can't really question it, and can't escape from it.

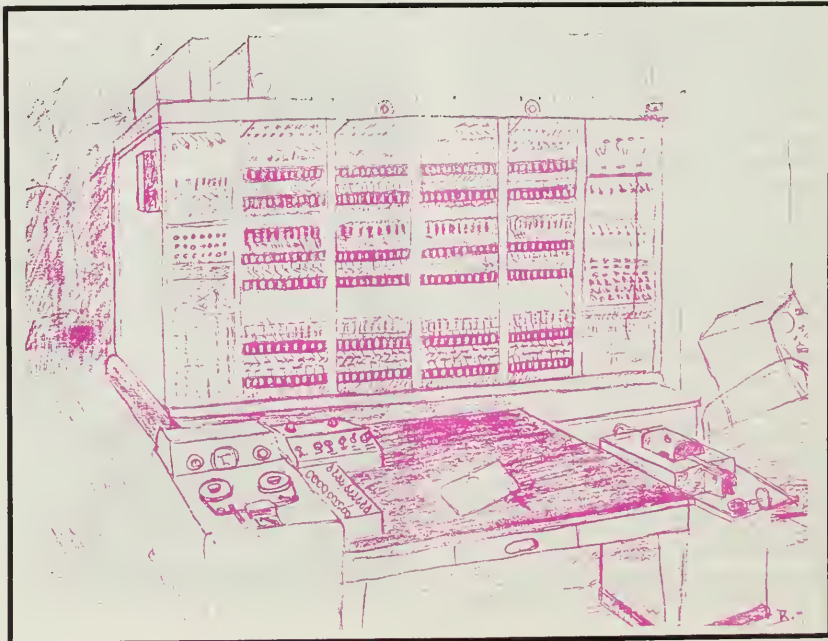
The deadliest dangers within the labs are secreted away, approachable by only the select few. For the families of these few, the dangers are distant. I rarely got to visit my parents' offices. When I was very young, the guards would allow my parents to take me into the building where my mother worked. It was about 1957, in one of the old military T-buildings near Ashley's Pond, that I first saw a computer. It was an entire wall of dials and lights in an overheated, funny-smelling room, which was filled with the clicking of thousands of circuits opening and closing. The computer was one of the first digital computers, probably MANIAC (for Multiple Algorithmic Numeric Integrator And Calculator).

Once I erased an entire chalkboard of apparently useful information, and I don't recall ever being allowed back in.

Both my parents had what is known as "Q-Clearance," meaning that they were cleared for access to information tagged "Top-Secret" and below. Although there are some special categories that are more restricted ("ROYAL" in the Carter administration, or various NSA classifications), the Q-Clearance is the highest level. These people all undergo periodic checks, and the files include their relatives; my FBI file (with footprints) was started at birth.

The security is strict, humorless, occasionally absurd. Years after I left, when I subscribed to a left-wing rag at college, a local FBI agent approached my father, wanting to know if he was aware of this; my father told the guy to get out of his office. The security regulations may not stop espionage, but they certainly stunt conversation. My father couldn't discuss his work (weapons physics) with my mother (who worked in the Central Computing Facility). Cocktail parties would be filled with people who couldn't talk about the one thing that they had in common—work. This atmosphere shrouded the city from its perimeter inward: in workplaces, inside families, and in people's minds.

The lab took precautions to maintain the Ph.D.s in excellent physical, if not mental, health. The safety record at Los Alamos is good, but when playing with materials like plutonium, a single mistake can be memorable; Sloatin Street in Los Alamos is named after one such. Sloatin,



Early computer in Los Alamos, probably MANIAC or MADCAP—by R.E. Williamson 05/28/53

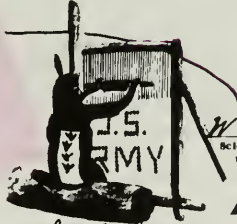
1956

Greetings

Know Ye:
We the Undersigned do hereby certify that

RALPH E. WILLIAMSON
Participated in

OPERATION REDWING



R. Hall Stanton
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
Commander

W. Ogle
Scientific Director

W. L. ...
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
Chief of Staff

J. H. ...
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
Deputy for Navy

John C. ...
Major General, U.S. Army
Deputy for Army

R. ...
Brigadier General, USAF
Deputy for Air

Certificate of Participation in "REDWING" Pacific test

a physicist, was demonstrating a "critical assembly" to a group of visitors back in the 1950s. The process, nicknamed "tickling the dragon," amounts to playing with three variously shaped pieces of plutonium, bringing them slowly together to observe conditions immediately before critical mass. Sloatin was trying to end the demonstration when something went wrong. He ordered the visitors from the room; then he took a huge wrench, broke open the lead-glass-and-oil hot box, smashed the sphere of plutonium inside, and spread the pieces apart by hand. He took thirteen days to die of radiation poisoning, conscious for most of it. His case was talked about, although that may be because he had not been authorized to give the demonstration. In general, however, the workers of Los Alamos are better protected than the poor bastards in the military who they test the things on, or the people at the Savannah River Plant that produces plutonium for warheads.

There were also political dangers. The fate of the lab's founder, Oppenheimer,

was a warning to all. He had been blackballed in the McCarthy period, losing his clearance in 1954. Other people occasionally vanished; having lost their clearances, they were as unemployable as a labor agitator in any company town. Although Oppenheimer was eventually rehabilitated (the scientific community had never been impressed by the charges against him), the threat was obvious: Don't let there be even a hint of disloyalty. The purge had ruined his life, and the rehabilitation was not much use to him. The city tore out a perfectly functional one-block-long street and put in a 6-lane road that was christened Oppenheimer Drive. Most who lost their clearance were not so lucky.

After the city was opened to the public, despite a vote by the populace to keep it closed, many employees moved off the Hill. Some went to the new "suburbs" of White Rock and Pajarito Acres, others to the Valley: Pojuaque, Tesuque, Espanola or Santa Fe. The Indians lived in the local pueblos—Jemez, Santa Domingo, San Ildefonso, or Cochiti. The

still close-knit community was slowly opening up to the world, but it remained inwardly focused: employees' spouses were often hired in various capacities, which later led to charges of nepotism and racism.

At one time, the lab had an "Open House" policy. Every four years, workers' families were permitted to tour most of the tech areas. My father was allowed to bring me into the inner sanctum of his personal office, but only after he had taken all the documents in his office (the calendar, the type ribbons, the memo pad, the contents of the double safe) and locked them in the main vault downstairs. The offices were mostly like his—uncomfortable and somewhat antiquated, with a desk, a couple of chairs, a few prints on the walls, and an open safe. The windows were covered with venetian blinds. These were not his idea, he claimed, but that of some fearful security agent who envisioned Russian spies climbing one of the pine trees on the slope a few miles away and peering through binoculars in the hope of getting

What's In A Name?

They had to invent a whole new vocabulary: shots, tech areas, sites, letter codes, and so on. The first weapons group at Los Alamos was "G-Group," G for Gadget. Why, you wonder, is a bomb called a device—is it an attempt to avoid facing the reality of the thing? Not at all, we're told. The difference between a device and a bomb isn't in yield or size, but rather in the amount of yellow electrician's tape on it. Bombs are an "off-the-shelf" package, complete and self-contained (except for fuses). Devices, however, always have things that have been forgotten that must be added at the last moment.

Another example of official vocabulary in action may be found in the case of an Army sergeant. He was processing a vat of radioactive liquid waste, when, in the language of the lab, he "achieved a subcritical geometry" and experienced an "excursion": that is, enough fissionable material had somehow swirled together in the tank to release a burst of high-energy particles, which half-cooked him on the spot. The sergeant died the next day of acute radiation poisoning.

Even in the early days, security tended to take on a slightly unreal atmosphere.

There is a story told (which may not be true but is part of Los Alamos folklore) about the first shot. The bomb's radioactive core had already been sent to Trinity, but the delicate and all-important "lenses" of explosive (that slap the radioactive material together) had to be moved as well. After much discussion it was concluded that a convoy was too visible, and so it was decided to send the stuff down in the trunk of a plain passenger car with several other cars as guards. They set off in good order; all went well until somewhere south of Albuquerque, when a sheriff spotted the car and, with siren and lights going full tilt, flagged it down and forced it over. As he got out of his car he found himself looking down the barrels of several weapons. Nervously he explained that he had just wanted to tell the driver that his car had no license plate. He was placed under armed guard and taken to the test range, where he was warned to remain silent about it and released. It was never clear to the project members if the lack of a license plate was an oversight, or if it was done to avoid having the car traced back to its owner.

—G.S.W.

a glimpse of the paperwork. My mother had a partitioned cubicle overlooking a large room filled with the humming giants that were the core of the lab—the computers.

Open House also included (via remote camera) the chambers where the critical assemblies were used, and we were shown the SCRAM emergency systems. We were allowed into Ancho Canyon to see the buried quonset hut filled with electronic instruments; they fired the resident ordnance (I think a 150mm self-propelled cannon) and demonstrated the uncanny speed of their photo machines. We were taken to see the health sciences buildings, which had far more mice than the city had people, along with hundreds of dogs and monkeys. Everywhere, except for relatives' offices, we were carefully chaperoned; guards, dour-faced and armed, blocked off doors and corridors. With the budget cuts of the '60s the Open House was discontinued.

I returned in 1971 with a high-school science class. We again toured the medical physics buildings and this time were introduced to a friendly beagle who had been repeatedly irradiated in a canister-like device, absorbing many times the lethal level of radiation. We were also

taken to the Meson Physics Facility, a linear accelerator then under construction. One area was off limits to us, being dedicated to neutron research. We went to Project Sherwood, located in a deceptively small-looking annex that juts out from one of the wings of the administration building. This is the home of one of Los Alamos' oldest projects—the search for controlled nuclear fusion. We also visited another old friend, one that had made an enormous impression when I first saw it as a child: the Omega Water Reactor. Looking down through the deep pool that blocks the radiation and cools the pile, I saw at the bottom a honeycomb pattern of fuel rods and moderator rods, illuminated with an unearthly blue glow (known as the Cherenkov Effect) caused by the scattering of particles in the water.

For scientists, the work in Los Alamos is not limited to the local labs. My father visited Sandia Labs in Albuquerque and frequently traveled to the Livermore Labs in California, Los Alamos' sister facility, for conferences and work sessions. In the early sixties he went regularly to Britain to work on their weapons program for weeks at a time. Before the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. signed the Test Ban Treaty in 1963, he was also a regu-

lar visitor to the Nevada test range and to Eniwetok. The postcards and occasional gifts from the distant places captured my imagination; I was fascinated by the piece of Trinitite he gave me—the glass-like substance formed when the heat of a nuclear weapon fuses the silicon in sand.

He wouldn't talk about what he did in Britain, but was slightly more forthcoming about the Pacific. One story illustrated the security mentality there. He had been working on the shot tower, calibrating some instruments on the "device," when nature called. He climbed down and told the army guard at the gate not to let anyone disturb the tower. Moments later, the guard was writing him up for a security infraction: He had left the site in the custody of a person not authorized to have custody (i.e. the guard). Although an infraction is a serious matter, and my father took his oaths seriously, he was really pissed at this doublethink. He stormed into the project office waving the infraction over his head and threatening to resign "*RIGHT NOW!*" Given his seniority, and the trouble of transporting him back to the U.S., the security chief tore up the infraction.

My father mistrusted the secrecy, once asking me, "Do you think that physics or math is different on the other side of the border? Do you think the Russians are any less competent at math?" He felt that 90% of the staff he dealt with could be declassified without imperiling any legitimate national security interest, and that most of the secrecy was a bureaucratic dodge, or laziness, or one-upmanship. In fact, it could even be damaging. A short-cut he had developed in some statistical procedure saved hundreds of hours. But it was a couple of years before his group told Livermore about it, and he felt that nobody outside of the labs will ever see it, despite its applications in other fields. Part of the delay in telling Livermore might also spring from the long-standing rivalry between the two labs.

Those of us who grew up in such families tended, as a game, to try to penetrate the walls of secrecy. I would talk with my father about his work, trying to pose slanted or revealing questions. He might answer obliquely, or, if the question was too direct, he would simply give a polite non-answer. If pressed, his response was a simple "I can't answer that." Recently I went to a talk by former CIA analyst Ralph McGee, who used precisely the same words in the same tone. His questioner obviously didn't understand the ground

rules, and rephrased the question, forcing McGee to state explicitly that he couldn't answer that question in any form because of security restrictions. In Los Alamos it was considered bad form to push someone, even a parent, hard enough to get that sort of response.

Despite the elaborate security (fences, guards, numbered copies, badges, and so forth) the code words and euphemisms, the inhabitants of this unique village were not ignorant of what they did. The machinists, computer techs, secretaries, and the like may not have "the big picture," but the physicists and mathematicians in the weapons groups, as well as the administration types, saw it well enough. They, probably more than anyone else, know what nuclear weapons can do. The original scientists were very concerned about the role of the bomb, discussing it in political terms, not just technical ones. The questions raised were often profoundly disturbing to them. The later scientists saw themselves as distinct from the military on one hand, and from the policy makers on the other. They rationalized that they were not responsible for the final decisions. My father made an illuminating reference to this view of the lab's position when he said of the Pentagon, "Don't confuse us with those bastards."

There is an inherent schizophrenia in this position. My father pointed out that the various directors of the lab (Oppenheimer, Norris Bradbury and Harold Agnew) would say, in effect, "Nuclear weapons are one of the greatest threats to the planet today. A solution must be found or we will perish." Then, without a perceptible shifting of mental gears, they would add, "It is our mission here at the lab to develop the best and most useful weapons." From one side of the mouth speaks the humanist, and from the other the company man.

Another example of this contradiction was my father's fondness for Bertolt Brecht, particularly his play *Galileo*, which examines the scientist's relationship to the state. *Galileo* was written when Brecht heard about the splitting of the atom. This pattern is not unusual in Los Alamos: an intellectual openness counterbalanced by a deeply ingrained conformity to the ideology of the day.

My father explained that when he had first come to the labs, and earlier when he did some very mysterious work at Princeton, there had been a different feeling about patriotism. Nuclear weapons were (to them) unquestionably necessary in the face of an "obvious threat" from a powerful and "aggressive" Soviet Union. He was also aware that almost

every major escalation in the arms race had been initiated by the U.S. (the fission bomb, the fusion bomb, delivery systems such as submarines, MIRVs, etc.). It is this "peaceful coexistence" of contradictory beliefs that is at the core of this state of mind.

There were no "Atomic City Burgers" at Los Alamos, not much glorification of the bomb or loud patriotism. Although, or perhaps because, these people worked with radiation in all its forms, there was not much mythology about it, and certainly not an unquestioning acceptance. My father, for instance, was against commercial nuclear power, feeling that a safe plant could perhaps be built, but that there was no credible plan to deal with the amazing amounts of waste. Burial was absurd, he said, if nothing else because the government can't plan rationally for five years, let alone for five thousand. This characterizes the denizens of Los Alamos: they are not jingoes, and they don't want to see the bombs used (Teller, at least in those days, was seen as something of a freak).

Civil defense, very much in style in those days, also came in for some criticism. The horrible joke of the "shelters" was explained to me at an early age. The reason for having us hide under the school desks I figured out by myself: it was to keep us under control, with the added benefit of letting us die in a humiliating position. Los Alamos once had a practice evacuation that was planned and announced for months in advance. Certain roads were designated as one-way, signs were set up, maps mailed. When the glorious Saturday came, half the citizens followed the evacuation plans when the sirens began to howl and the other half didn't. There was a tremendous traffic jam that took hours to unsnarl.

Los Alamos is a coldly cerebral com-

munity when at work, and my parents at least were that way at home as well. My peers and I grew up as miniature adults: verbally sophisticated, reasonable and outwardly oriented. I didn't know many families that were close; my friends were quite as remote from their parents as I was from mine. Perhaps warmth and love are corroded by the town's moral tension, secrecy, unemotional routines, and relentless intellectualism. My half-sister, who visited occasionally, said that as a child I was extremely "clingy." (This came back to her when she read a *Time* article about a Los Alamos girl who was asked what she would be if she could be anything in the world; she replied that she wanted to be a teddy bear, so that she would always be hugged.) Not a very warm community, but one that undoubtedly produces a lot of academically proficient kids determined to win acceptance.

Although there were some very religious people there, I was raised by determined agnostics. We attended services at the Unitarian church (a converted army barracks), which were more of a social event than a religious one. Despite my father's antireligious background (a product of his strict Christian upbringing in Tulsa) he developed an interest in Buddhism. With Paul Stein, the local genius, he learned to read Tibetan. He had a substantial collection of books and Tibetan artifacts; there was a prayer wheel on his desk and demon masks looked down on him as he worked. As I grew older I wondered where this interest came from . . . Some sort of hangover from Oppenheimer at Trinity? Latent brain damage? The mystery of distant places? An attempt to inject spirit into this most unspiritual world?

The morality of the weapons research was not openly discussed, as everyone understood why it was done. The labs



were a self-contained world, filled with people of similar backgrounds and ideas, who had grown up at a time and place when you just didn't question your country. Such issues (which weren't really questions but curiosities) were secondary. There were probably some who questioned the work, but for the most part it was taken as a postulate. Strange contradictions abounded—praise for peace combined with hostility to the Test Ban Treaty. One man who worked at the lab was a total vegetarian—no milk, no leather, nothing. Others were merely antisocial and eccentric, such as one mathematician who disliked his office and had a janitor clear out a broom closet and install his desk, lamp, and chair in it. My father knew him for twenty years and only occasionally got a “Hi, Ralph” out of him.

When the outside world brought its concerns to the lab, it was usually received politely. In one demonstration in the late '70s, a peace group had gotten permission to stage a rally in the administration parking lot. Several of the physicists in my father's group talked to the demonstrators through a high fence. They disagreed with the demonstrators, but felt that they had a right to protest (just as the workers had a right to work). The protestors planted a small tree in the dirt of the parking lot as a memento of peace. The next day the security people dug up the tree, prompting my father to make sarcastic remarks about unauthorized trees and being “bugged.” The Los Alamos city council actually considered a Freeze resolution a few years ago, but narrowly failed to pass it.

Los Alamos has some strong appeals for those who like mathematical games and technical toys. They are seduced by the dance of equations—a very elegant world, quantifiable, controlled, and self-contained. To them, the final application is less important than the development, the pursuit of knowledge. Los Alamos is one of the few places where they are able to work in such fields as solar physics (not only do they get paid, but they get to be patriots). Only the very best solar physicists land jobs in universities; the rest end up at various government and private labs. As my father explained once, the hydrogen bomb is really just like the sun, except of a somewhat shorter duration. (I reminded him that it was also a little bit closer to the Earth.)

As the years went on, my father became increasingly disaffected with the lab and with the country as a whole. He felt the labs were becoming more self-serving, and were now less a tool to carry out policy than active advocates of certain policies and strategies. The name of the labs changed from the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory to the Los Alamos National Laboratories, reflecting a different set of requirements. Specifically, the focus changed from roughly half military to more like 70% military. The new people there were also different. When my father semi-retired in 1981, he had been there for thirty years; the next longest anyone else in his group had been there was seven years. He came to feel quite alienated from these colleagues, the technically polished short-timers who wouldn't be at the lab for life. They didn't ask the same questions, either

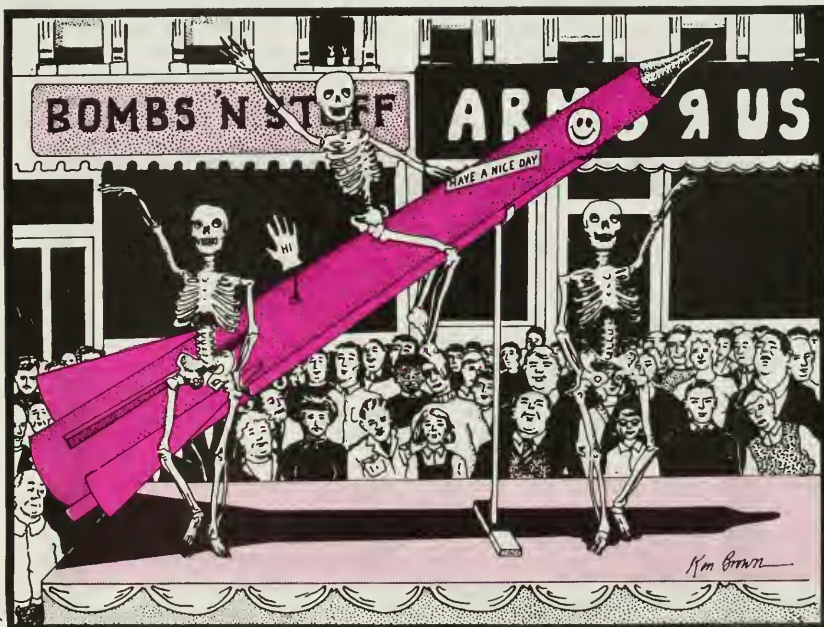
practical or moral. Those who had been adults when the bomb arrived had to think about it in hard terms; those who had grown up with it accepted it fatalistically. The company news magazine, *The Atom*, which he took to referring to as “Pravda,” had had a question-and-answer column, which had at least some questions that were germane (though somewhat fewer answers). As time went on, there were fewer and fewer questions, and even fewer answers.

The lab was not his only source of dissatisfaction. Both he and my mother, once Goldwater Republicans, turned against the Vietnam war (but voted for Nixon twice!). My father hated to see the environment destroyed, and was appalled at Watergate. The overthrow of Allende in 1973 in Chile was a crime that my father as a “democrat”—a partisan of peaceful electoral change—could not forgive. Shortly before he died, he signed a petition against U.S. aid to El Salvador.

The factors that led to his disenchantment were not obvious. Although I may have played a part, it was a change (or a perceived change) in his beloved institutions that made him begin to question the system. He had always been analytically inclined, and irrational policy (such as ICBM defense systems) irritated him. It wasn't somebody explaining what nuclear weapons could do or lecturing him on his lack of morality that brought changes, but rather the system he believed in revealing itself as hypocritical and empty.

For me it is all long past, and I know only a few retired people at Los Alamos. When I went to get my father's possessions from his office at the time of his death in 1982, I met his group leader, Dave, who talked about my father. Ralph, said Dave, could tell you that somebody had tried something years before and why it hadn't worked; he was superb at math and statistics, and was generally a good guy, well liked by them all. I gave them his yard-long slide rule, the German books on differential equations (published by the Custodian of Alien Property in WWII because of national need). I left with bittersweet recollections of those days, and some small mementos, such as a yellow button proclaiming that “Uncle Stan Is Always Right” (a mysterious reference to Stan Ulam, a famous mathematician). There are some certificates for participation at various shots, photographs, a few Indian relics—and ambivalent memories of a kind man who designed thermonuclear weapons. 🧑

—by G. S. Williamson



FAT WARS



Mac Jimson was barely paying attention to the television when he saw the first of the commercials. He considered whether to get a snack during the commercial break or whether to simply turn off the TV. A half dozen other ideas were running through his neurons, of course, but he was not conscious of them.

A belly dancer, plump sensual shakings of exaggerated female softness, was being appreciated in the commercial by a slightly less plump, casually inert, handsome man holding a beer. The woman finished her dance by collapsing into the man's arms and the camera zoomed in on his beer as he set it aside; the announcer intoned "Spuds, the full beer for the full life."

Mac was slightly aroused by the T & A display of the commercial, noted that it was against his anti-chauvinist principles, that he hated being manipulated through his testicles, and that it was the sexiest thing he had seen on TV for some time. He was quickly brought back to norm by an ad for Crazy Eddie's mid-summer Christmas gigantic blowout sale: He blacked out the TV and moved towards the refrigerator.

He had already put in an eight hour day for the law firm of Riddles, Wilscams, and Walkingsham summarizing information from commercial documents so that brain dead lawyers could understand it. Now he was scheduled to do his real work: keeping the NFL (No Free Lunch) network informed of whatever its members needed to know. But that made for a long day and a mushy mind, so he inventoried his refrigerator and then ate a few green, seedless grapes.

Fortunately the new issue of "Military Review" had come in that day. It never ceased to please him that he could get the official strategy magazine of the officer corps of the US army delivered to his home. At one point he had tried to get peace movement organizations to subscribe to it so they too would know what was going on, but they univer-

sally refused, not wanting to support the military, nor being particularly concerned with facts beyond counting warheads. This month's articles included typical ones such as "Airland Battle: Winning on the European Front," "Motivating Soldiers Over 200 Rads," and "The TOW7 Missile, Will it Work on the Battlefield?" The only unusual one was called: "Is Lean Really Mean in a Fighting Machine?" which advocated feeding the troops more so they would have caloric reserves to burn if supplies ran short in the new, highly mobile battlefield.

Next he read a number of articles that NFL members had sent him, some by U.S. mail and some by modem. They covered the gamut of science, politics, economics and culture. He filed all of them; most he summarized for NFL, and a couple he decided should be sent out in their entirety. His final

chore for the evening was putting in an hour analysing the political implications of the economic situation in the continent of Azania, which in turn was being affected by the unrest in the Republic of Azania.

The next Sunday as he browsed through the *New York Times* he noticed an article in the magazine section titled "The New Full Figure in Fashion." The models were almost as skinny as ever, but now larger breasts and more curves around the

torso were said to be coming back into style.

It was much less radical than the Spuds belly dancer, but it might be more influential in the long run. Personally, he had never been attracted to overly skinny women; more important, it was clearly an indication of top level planning. The *Times*, Budmiller, and the Army were in theory quite distinct organizations. It was not likely to be an accident that all three were, within a week of each other, advocating putting on a layer of fat for winter.

He dialed up Eliot. An answering machine blasted out a trumpet call to battle with people laughing in the background, followed by chimes, animal sounds, and Benny Goodman played simultaneously, and

"Isn't it horrible?" she said. "All those years of dieting, and now they are trying to fatten people up again. I don't think women will stand for it. On TV the women will grow fat breasts, but the rest of us will just get wider asses and lard stomachs. I hate to think how disgusting men are going to look."

finally the tone. "Answer the phone you lazy commie dupe" screamed Mac, but there was no answer, so he left his name and number.

The next day Mac's phone rang around 7 p.m. It was Eliot.

"Hey, Mac, what's up?"

"Not much. People at work are driving me crazy. There's a party Thursday at Rick's, but I probably won't go. Where've you been?"

"Some congressman's aide wanted to know what the US military was doing with all that money the budget says is for fifth generation military computers, and of course the only people who know that are SU intelligence. They of course were not just going to give me the information, so it required some creative doing on my part. Sometimes I wish these congressmen would mind their own business, but then again they are paying customers."

Despite some misgivings Eliot agreed to look into the fat matter. Eliot's parents had made a fortune as aggressive corporate lawyers; the same personality programs that made them successful

caused Eliot to hate them and reject their values and attitudes. Being of a curious and ingenious bent he had eventually set himself up as an information consultant, the paralegal's friend, buying and selling corporate secrets. Thus he could watch the world, and, at critical nexuses, attempt to bend it to his liking.

This was not, however, a matter where his paralegal contacts would be of use. Fortunately he knew a secretary at the National Council of Advertisers. Since corpos and top level bureaucrats aren't about to do their own typing, there are always people lower down who are willing to pass the word along, either for the public good or for money.

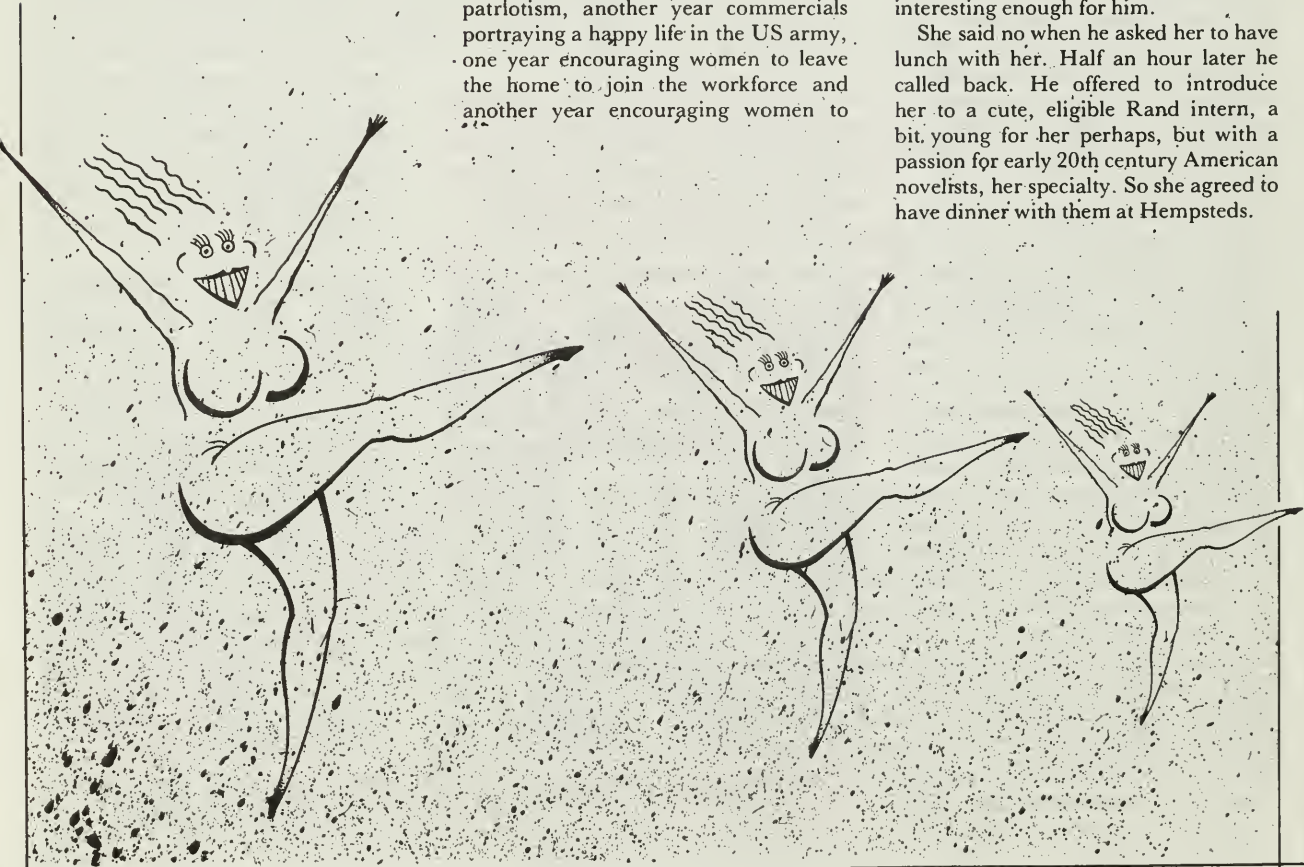
Since only government agencies and large corporations could afford to buy large amounts of advertisement, and since they could always be counted on to keep the rich rich; the workers working and the SU looking bad, it was only natural that they democratically coordinate efforts to keep TV, radio, and newspaper programming in the public interest. One year this might mean patriotism, another year commercials portraying a happy life in the US army, one year encouraging women to leave the home to join the workforce and another year encouraging women to

leave the workforce to have babies. To carry out this function the NCA had a permanent staff, but real decisions were made by a board that consisted of politically astute corporate board members and bureaucrats; it met regularly four times a year to set policy.

Regina Redgrave was not sworn to secrecy; it had never occurred to anyone that she should be. While the NCA did not advertise its recommendations, it did not try to hide them. The same class of people, in fact often the same people, controlled the NCA that controlled the assorted news media. Occasionally a smaller dissident publication might explain the role of the NCA to its extremely limited readership, but generally no one cared.

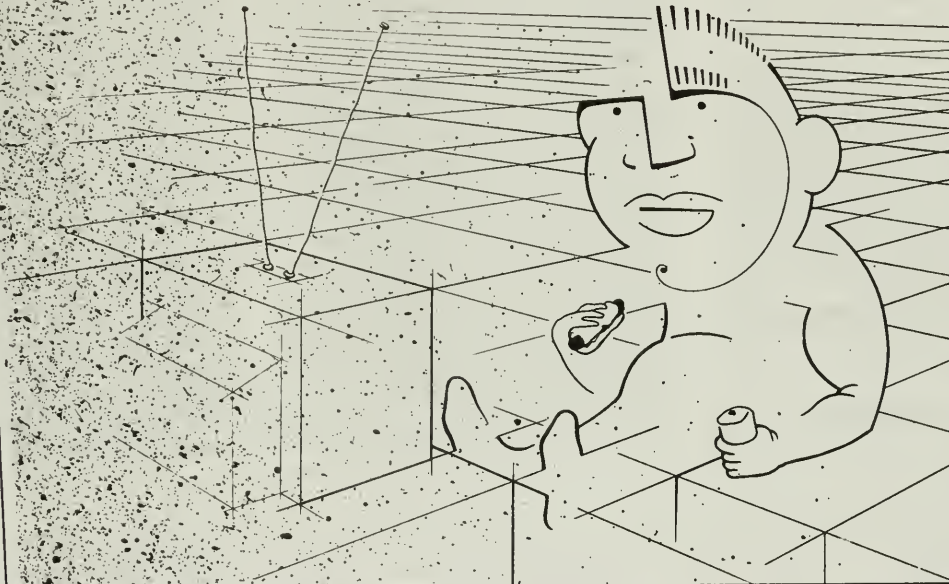
Regina was irritated when Eliot called, partly because she had more work to do than normal, but mostly because he had not called in a long time. Regina had a masters degree in English; her most salable skill was her typing speed. She liked intellectual company and felt, correctly, that Eliot did not think she was interesting enough for him.

She said no when he asked her to have lunch with her. Half an hour later he called back. He offered to introduce her to a cute, eligible Rand intern, a bit young for her perhaps, but with a passion for early 20th century American novelists, her specialty. So she agreed to have dinner with them at Hempsted.



Graphic by JRS

Graphic by JRS



It was not difficult to get Regina into a conversation once she got over his tricking her. He mainly let her talk. Eventually she turned to complaining about her work. At the apropros moment he made a joke about helping to fatten up the nation.

"Isn't it horrible?" she said. "All those years of dieting and now they are trying to fatten people up again. I don't think women will stand for it. On TV the women will grow fat breasts, but the rest of us will just get wider asses and lard stomachs. I hate to think how disgusting men are going to look."

"I'm surprised. Medical costs are a big problem in America these days, and thin is healthy. I suppose they can lie with statistics if they are that determined to fatten us up."

"They've solved that problem," said Regina, who paused to laugh. "We are to eat starchy, low cholesterol calories and fish oil. McBurger has ads coming out soon for their new fish sandwiches, fried in ocean fish oil instead of lard, and scientifically proven to help reduce cholesterol."

"I just don't understand why anyone would want to put us through this."

"Neither do I," said Regina.

Eliot asked her to the movies, certain she would refuse, but she accepted; such is the way of the world.

When he got Eliot's report Mac decided he could not follow it up himself right away. He was under pressure to work overtime at Riddles, Wilsams and had several other projects going. In addition he had, as the psychologists say, habituated to the new pattern: while he still noted each new commercial ad that encouraged people to fatten up, he did not have any driving desire to find out why the rulers of the US desired this. Probably it was because the economy was in a downswing and this campaign would require a higher rate of consumption.

Nevertheless, he sent a report out to all NFL members. Many of them had already noted the phenomenon themselves, including Athena Dematrio. Her parents had emigrated from one of the client states of the SU, which they hated. As far as Athena could tell there was not much difference between the two superstates. Her parents, former black marketeers, had spent time in prison; in the US this made them heroes and they were given good jobs and were

patriots. Of course, if they had behaved towards the US the same way they behaved towards the SU they would be in prison here or in a ghetto. Athena considered herself above the US-SU rivalry, had joined international peace organizations while in college, and was blacklisted from the PhD. programs that were worth entering. Hence she had ended up with a useless MA and worked for a pittance at a small medical research company; like him she made money on the side doing odd projects. This allowed her to finance her own studies of the physical mechanics of consciousness.

She had other interests, however, one of which was having a long life. She had seen one editorial on the detrimental effects of being underweight on health and particularly on the health of infants in her local newspaper, but it was hardly convincing. Her own personal observation was that there were plenty of skinny women on the street, and undernourished children and mothers in the ghettos, but that despite decades of diets most US clones were in no danger of being too thin. She figured that given the rather unnatural condition of having

unlimited food available, the natural tendency would be to fatten up.

When she had a chance she sat down at her employer's FLEXIS terminal to do a computerized literature search.

She typed in: "Select (fat or diet?) and surviv?"

Moments later the computer answered: "Set 1. (fat? or diet?) and surviv? 317 ref."

She decided the key article was not likely to have been written more than four years earlier, so she limited Set 1 to that date range, saw the number of references cut down to 63, printed them out, and skimmed down them:

1. *Absence of L-Factor and Survival of D-Malignant Rats*
2. *Frequency Distribution of Myocardial Infarction in Post*
3. *Janitor Falls Five Stories, Claims Saved by UFO*
4. *Survival of Black Mutant Moths Linked to Transposable*

5. *Hundreds of Deer Die of Starvation in Mesa Range*

6. *Disadvantages of US Popular Culture in Surviving...*

Athena did not bother to read the rest of the list; she typed in a request for more information on reference 6.

The computer obliged with a printout: "837364785746

Disadvantages of US Popular Culture in Surviving Nuclear Winter; A Comparison with the Soviet Union, with Recommendations
IN: *Important Documents from Private Research Organizations in Government and the Social Sciences* (June 1986, Vol. 31, p.24).

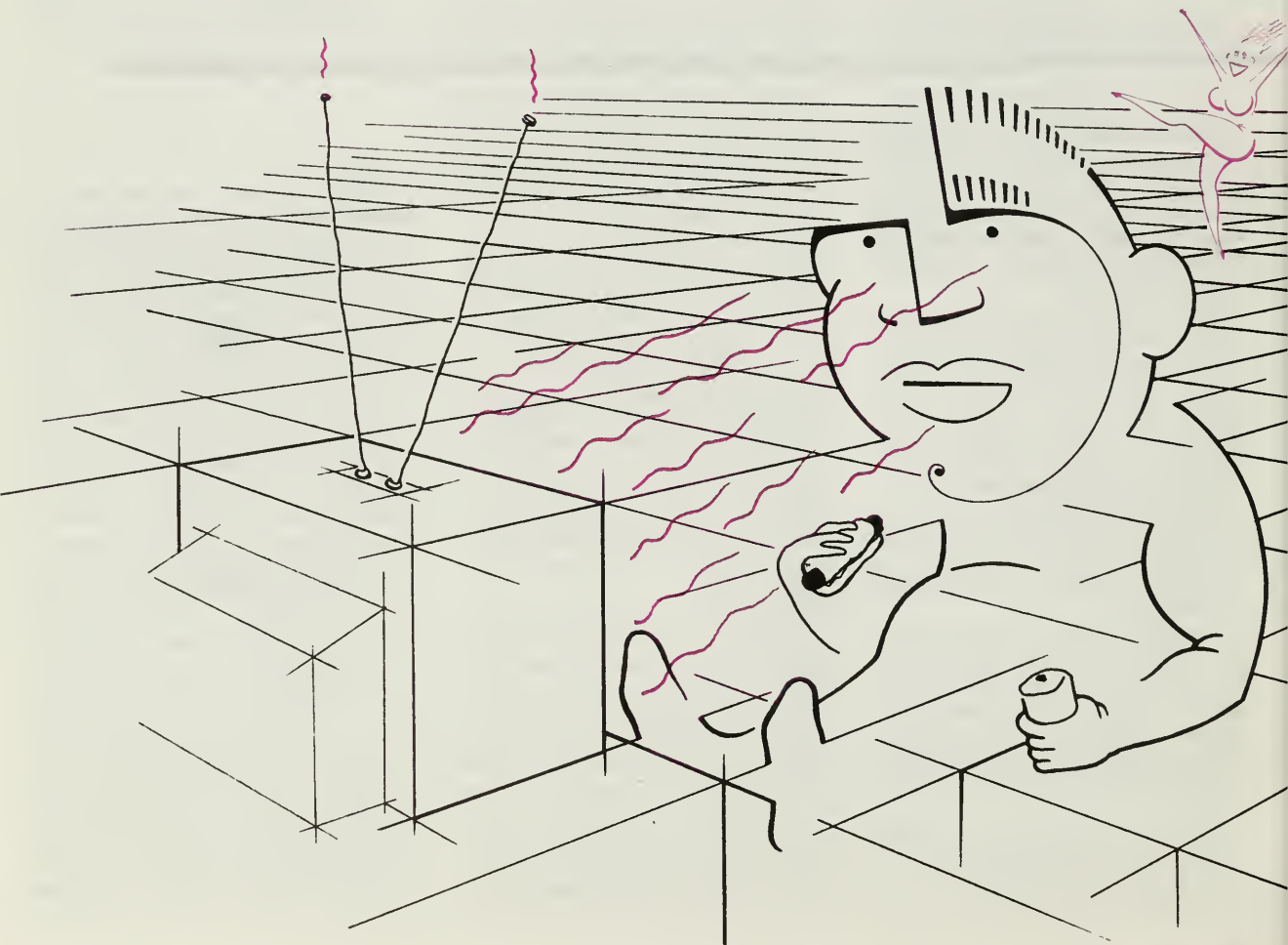
AUTHOR: Eric Nurdlinger. 37 pages.

"That's my baby," Athena said aloud, and proceeded to print out the full text of the article. This was expensive, but she had a deal with the bookkeeper so that the bill would go to a big corporate client hidden within a larger research bill.

Given the title, the text was not much

of a surprise. The populace of the SU was typically 27 pounds more overweight than the population of the US. This would give them several advantages over people in the US in the aftermath of nuclear war. Their own fat was a fuel that would be free of radiation, allowing them to go for several weeks longer than their rivals without having to intake large quantities of contaminated foods. Since large amounts of radiation dissipate in the first few weeks, this could be a major factor in survival. People could survive relatively long periods of time on slightly contaminated foods. In addition, with the temperature drop that would take place relatively quickly after dust clouds black out the sun, the fat would serve as insulation. It even had reserves of vitamin D that would help keep them healthy until the sun came back.

She decided she could wait until the next day to see if there were other articles



that referred back to Nurdlinger's. She went home, digested the article down to a few hundred words, and sent it out by modem to Mac.

A magnetic disk absorbed the ones and zeroes that could make sense only to humans of that time and culture; Mac was watching TV. It was a science fiction thriller of the old type about people fighting off giant ants and lizards after a nuclear war.

Mac remembered the Spuds in his hand and took a swig as three young models breasty and baby faced brought his attention back to the screen. They were just selling cars.

Eventually he dragged himself up and checked the incoming mail. He was pleased to see the input from Athena because it proved he had been right and ended with a personal message that he had not been out her way awhile. He sent out the rest of the message to NFL and sat back to consider the future.

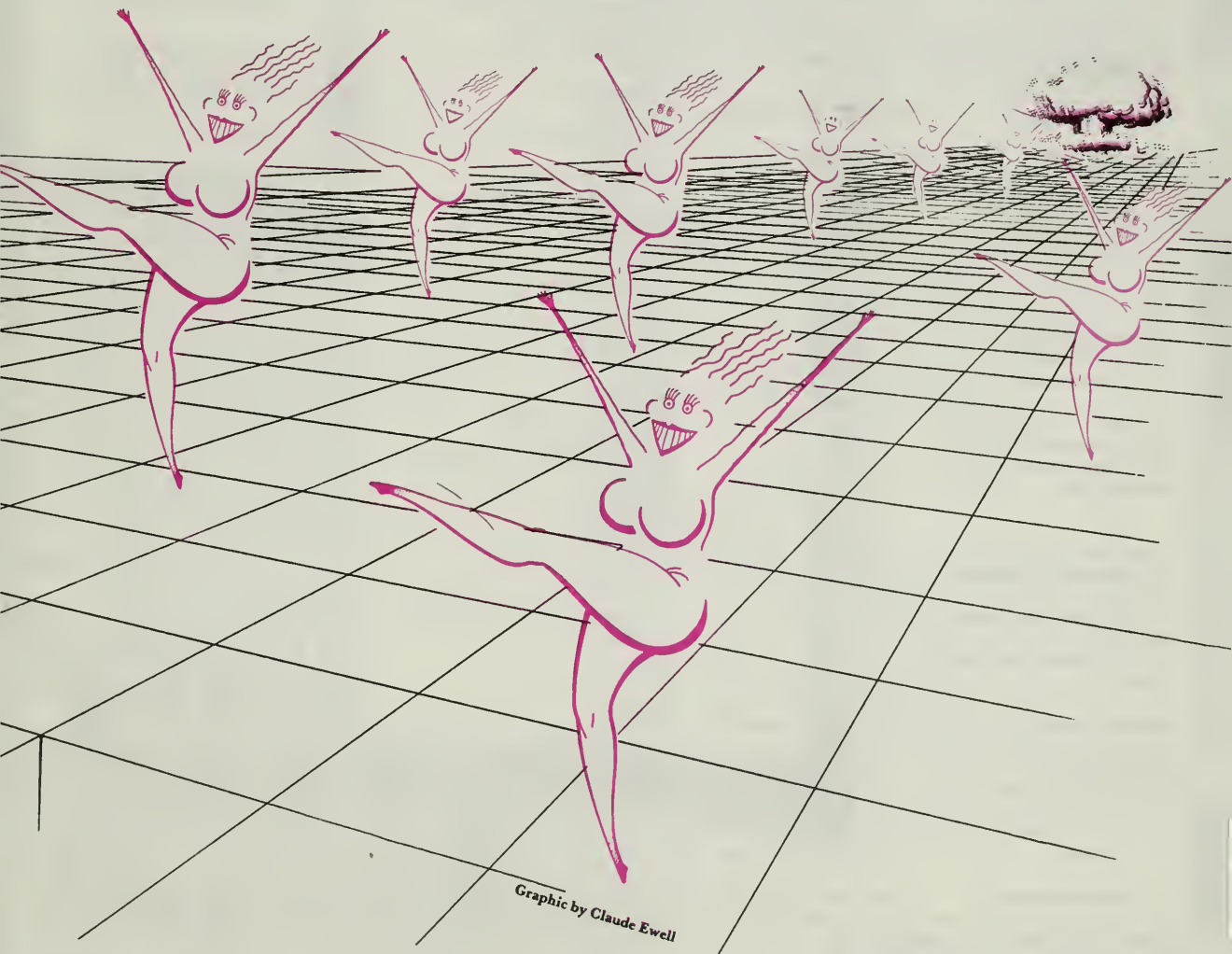
He knew there was little that distinguished government planning against the eventuality of nuclear war and government planning for nuclear war. It was inevitable, but the question he wanted answered was when? He had already visited a country that he thought might be relatively untouched by the war and made arrangements to live there. He had a computer program that cancelled an airline reservation to it every day and booked a new one three weeks in the future.

If people had been willing to revolt, he would have revolted with them. But it had all happened so gradually, it had never quite been worth resisting for most people. It was easy enough to believe that it could not happen. How long would it take for people to get fat? Was that what they were waiting for, or perhaps the next generation of missiles or anti-missile weapons or incidents between their client states?

The lights went out and all his equipment died. EMP? He hit himself in the head, regretting not having got out earlier. It took him a couple of minutes to remember where the flashlight was and find it, each moment expecting sudden vaporization. Since he was already in the basement he decided to check the fuse box before taking more extreme measures.

The fuse to his basement had tripped. He decided he would leave the country a few days after getting his next paycheck, but in the back of his mind he knew it was not likely. It did not seem dangerous enough, not yet. He took a swig of his beer, sat down, and drained the can. He looked down. For the first time in years he had an obvious beer belly. He was getting fat.

— by J.G. Eccarius



UNEMPLOYED AT ALAMEDA BEACH!

(for Phoebe)

Sitting
unemployed at
Alameda Beach knowing
everything is
all right/through

my moments of hysteria that say
everything is terrible &
Phoebe will throw me
out of the house &

abandon
me to live in the
streets because
it's against her morals to
pay more than half
the bills &
better the bomb divest
the earth of San Francisco then
I should fall into
debt to my loved

one/&
then there's little
Phoebe beside me on
the beach being
more hysterical than

I/knowing
that I will throw myself
into the bed of the
first rich woman/as if
my darlings ever

got off welfare
/or
I'm running off to
work in Alaska &
she'll die without

me/but
still a sounder alternative
by far than lending me a
bloody cent.

&
with all this support for
my impecunious bones
it makes
the beautiful Bay before
me with its
glorious swimmers, sails &
gulls
&
the faded hills of

the Peninsula &
San Francisco way off on
the far shore
a bit
less splendid.

by Fritz Hamilton

DOORWAYS

Writing
a poem in the
doorway at
16th & Guerrero when

some
people living in this
bldg might not like me
sitting
in this doorway at

16th & Guerrero &
would like me & my
poem to move away from

their doorway but
they don't realize I'm
the doorway type
sleeping

in them when I get
tired
living
in them when I have

no other place to live &
of course writing in
them because
I'm comfortable in doorways

especially
when people tell me to
get the hell away from
their doorway because

that makes me feel like
shit which
makes me feel at
home

by Fritz Hamilton

3 FOR BRIAN WILSON

1.
all the new nazis
have gone to the beach
in their Bavarian woodies
so I breathe a sigh turn on
the tv and she offers me
a Diet Coke says don't worry
baby

2.
all I want to do is dance
with you said the MBA
to girlfriend #2
at a gathering of tan
falangists
and those little hairs
on her perfect middle
got all prickly

3.
it's alright you know
it's never winter here
unless you will it to be

and they sang songs to
the sky and to the dirty sea
until the bitter bitter end

by Owen Hill

EASTBOUND FROM MECCA

We are being moved up to the front.
Some soldiers board in Summit.
They are young, no more than 17 or 18.
They sit together, not saying very much
while reading their *Wall Street Journals*
and back issues of *Fortune*.
They have no idea of what the fighting will be like.
They are the lucky ones.
Short Hills, Pomfret Loop, Vicuna—
more soldiers get on.
They do not say much, either,
although they are older and have already gone to war—
if not this one, then the one before,
or the one before that.

As we cross the meadows
our train is strafed by a Stuka.
The man next to me, silent until now, screams
when his face is torn apart by the flying glass.
There are more screams as we dive for cover.
Our only anti-aircraft gun misses everything.
The plane, having had enough fun, veers off
toward the New York skyline, leaving us
to limp into Hoboken.

Someone up ahead is barking orders.
I hear my name.
I heal the wounded as best as I can.
The station is bone quiet.
I get off, get into formation,
and go to work.

by Jay A. Blumenthal

WHICH FLOOR, WHICH SUITE OF OFFICES?

there is always
someone named linda in accounts payable
or joe in the mailroom or sue
in personnel; someone is always
squinting to repair some eyeliner in the women's
restrooms on the first floor.
occasionally, all elevators work.
in some buildings
there's an elevator man who seems
to remember a good many names.
it's that personal touch, she noted, glancing
down at her fingernails.
no. it's not necessarily true
that most secretaries have long, blood-inducing
fingernails. but there's always some out-of-place
clerk, who, with slightly oily hair, flips through
a pile of invoices as anonymously as anyone
sent over by any of the temp agencies but
when you glance again you see
she's wearing an earphone
that's attached
to a small, transistor radio.
she talks to no one. she is never asked back
when the supervisor calls upon
the agency
for temporary help.
i notice the desk is vacant.
otherwise nothing's missing from
this city.

by Evelyn Posamentier

THE STRAIGHT MAN

I'm tired of feeding good lines to the witless,
but there are no replacements.
Glen Ford has turned down the part,
Elliott Gould says no.
Zeppo Marx is busy—dead, I think,
I told my father, but he said
he was too old for screwball comedy;
besides, he doesn't look like me.

It went on like that: Abe the accountant,
Sosnick, Lovelace, my friends
from the chess club—all with
their reasons for being someone else.

I'm stuck.
No one liked the hours, the travel.
Poetry least of all.

I offered my life around.
The extras liked my wife, which
made me feel good—up to a point,
but I lacked star quality.
("Not even me on a temporary basis?")

I said I couldn't run forever.
I spoke of possibilities, renewal, things
beyond documentation, other parts, the real stage,
my secret dream—creating software that generates
infinite Cary Grant movies.

But still there were no takers, not here,
2000 feet above Wall Street, where
jokes are confused with laughter.

by Jay A. Blumenthal

WORK, FAMILY, AND COUNTRY: Life in a Terrorist State

In Buenos Aires in 1977, we drank a cheap red wine that came in a five-liter jug resting in a grey plastic basket. This wine was called Montonero, which refers to a band of guerrillas who fought for Argentina's independence from Spain. In the 1970's the name Montonero was adopted by leftist revolutionaries who claimed to be supporters of Peron and who were being hunted down by the military government. So it was that one got a little thrill in the grocery store by asking for a bottle of subversion.

One night, deep into the wine, as a party was winding down, I got into an impassioned argument with my closest friend. She said that civil liberties and individual rights belonged to a political stage that can be outgrown. I insisted that these rights and liberties were ends in themselves. We cried as we recognized how deep the political chasm was between us. When political dissent is punishable by death, as it was in Argentina from 1976 to 1983, ideological differences are not trivial. We both considered ourselves of the left, but here we were sharing a psychic fox-hole and thinking that we would be enemies in some future revolutionary struggle.

In 1977, at the height of the government's reign of terror, the director of an English language academy, a bright, middle-aged Argentine woman who considered herself middle-of-the-road echoed the popular opinion of her milieu and blamed "cafe intellectuals" for creating the atmosphere that led to left wing violence and the military coup. But the violence on the left—the kidnappings of multinational executives for huge ransoms and attacks on government installations—was quite mild compared to the reaction. The "war against subversion" was merely an excuse for the military, acting on behalf of various economic and political interests, to take power.

In the same year, an engineer at Texas Instruments Argentina told me that the kidnappings of U.S. managers had been a boon for the native man-

agers who replace them. By 1978, however, Texas Instruments judged the situation secure enough to send in a North American, who spoke no Spanish, to act as personnel manager.

I first came to Argentina in October 1974. Isabel Peron, Juan Peron's widow, was president and the mood was manic. Peronism is a nationalistic movement that pretends to unite naturally antagonistic elements, namely, workers and capitalists. To support it requires a suspension of disbelief. (The first time I saw Isabel giving a speech on TV, I thought I was witnessing a historic moment—a head of state having a nervous breakdown in front of the camera. But my friends explained that she always screamed when she addressed the nation.) The fact that the government had survived the death of Juan Peron, a master politician, a few months earlier also contributed to the giddiness. But the center was still holding. The official rate of exchange was 10 pesos to the dollar, the black market rate was 20 to the dollar. And it stayed at that rate for several months. (Ten years later the exchange rate was over one million to the dollar. In 1985, the inflation rate was more than 1,000 percent a year.)

Prices were strictly controlled and changed every few weeks. When I went to a linen shop to buy sheets and towels, the clerk

would have to calculate the price from an arcane list. There were shortages of basic necessities like toilet paper, white sugar, and cooking oil, because shopkeepers were hoarding. I soon learned, however, to ask for what I did not see on the shelves. Toilet paper might not be displayed on a grocer's shelf, but it was likely that he kept a supply under the counter for regular customers. During 24-hour general strikes, shops would be shuttered but the doors in the metal gates would be open.

Generally, it was felt that Argentina was such a rich country, generously endowed with natural resources, high agricultural production, and a strong industrial base, that problems of distribution would

. . . Subway billboards showed a picture of a child looking up to his benevolent father juxtaposed with the image of a worker looking up to his boss, and a notice in a police station warned parents of the dangers of allowing their unmarried, adult children to live away from home with friends.



eventually be solved. "At least we've never had hunger in this country," was an often-heard expression of apology and pride. Hunger did not become noticeable until 1980, when for the first time in memory beggars appeared on the streets of Buenos Aires. In 1985, the *New York Times* reported: "The standard of living in Argentina has greatly dropped since the 1940's and humanitarian groups estimate that 35 percent of Argentine children suffer from malnutrition."

In 1974 and 1975, workers could still vacation at seaside hotels owned by their unions, and even though a housing shortage resulted in "villas de miseria" where families lived in hovels, there was no visible hunger or malnutrition. The high employment rate was a matter of national pride often touted in the press. Everyone I knew had a job. Having a regular job was very important then, as virtually every occupation from factory worker to bank clerk to musician to journalist had a trade union that provided enormous benefits—including complete health and dental care and inexpensive holiday resorts. These benefits were financed by the employers' tax contribution to the social welfare fund.

During the period immediately preceding the military coup, downtown newsstands sold Che Guevara banners alongside soccer pennants. Marxist books were prominently displayed next to horoscopes. At the same time, people were being arrested as suspected subversives. The police reports in the newspapers would state that on raiding the premises certain incriminating books were found. These books were sold openly in bookstores.

I had come to Argentina from Spain, where the cult of Franco was observed by having his image widely diffused in public buildings, on postage stamps, and on coins. But this did not prepare me for Peronist iconography. Let us just say

that Peronism is to Francoism as the tango is to the minuet. Idealized portraits of Isabel and Juan Peron, drawn in the style of cheap religious paintings appeared on huge, garish posters and billboards everywhere you looked, the message being that they were the spiritual, as well as the political, parents of the nation. My favorite showed a holy trinity with Juan and Eva Peron in heaven as two points in a triangle shining their light on Isabel as if she were their daughter, if not the messiah.

The other side of this quasi-comical cult was the influence that Jose Lopez Rega, Juan Peron's former bodyguard and an astrologer who had published several books on magic, had over the president. He was one of the leaders of the gang of right wing murderers and terrorists known as the Argentine Anti-Communist Association (AAA). Later there were also reports of secret prisons being established in labor union buildings at this time. Meanwhile the peso was slipping, inflation increasing, and bombs attributed to the Montoneros (who had started life as left-wing Peronists) or the Trotskyite ERP (People's Revolutionary Army) were exploding in government buildings at night. There were also guerrilla activities in the western province of Tucuman. By October 1975, when I left Argentina, the country was waiting for a military coup.

According to a report published in a mass-circulation Argentine magazine in 1980, Isabel, knowing there was a coup in the works, asked the military to join her government and offered it key ministerial posts. The military snubbed her offer and bided its time. The long-awaited coup finally took place in March 1976. The first thing I noticed when I returned to Buenos Aires in February of 1977 was the change in attire. February is midsummer in Argentina, and Buenos Aires is hot and humid. During the

Peronist administration, which purported to be a working-class government, men walked around the business district in shirt sleeves; coats and ties were rare. Now, however, even in the heat, men were in full business regalia. Gone too were the beards and long hair previously favored by many young men. Inflation was worse than ever, and the atmosphere was somber.

Argentines are used to military governments almost in the way that we are used to Democrats and Republicans sharing the White House. But this one was radically different. For the first time, Argentina suffered rule by terror. Approximately 20,000 people disappeared under the military junta, most in 1976 and 1977. To disappear, in this context, meant that uniformed or plainclothed "security" agents or their lackeys came to your house, school, or place of work, or grabbed you out of a cafe in broad daylight, and you were never heard of again. In many cases, the disappeared were tortured before they were killed. Some were injected with curare before they were dropped from planes over the



Atlantic. Others were buried in mass graves with their hands cut off so they could not be identified by their fingerprints.

The population of Argentina is about 28 million. The equivalent number of disappeared in the United States would be roughly 200,000 people. Everybody I met in Buenos Aires knew at least one person, at least remotely, who had disappeared. If it were not a friend or relative, it was a neighbor or a neighbor's friend or relative. Most people wanted to believe that the disappeared person had done something to deserve their fate, because nobody wanted to say, "It could have been me." If a psychotherapist was disappeared, as many were, people said she must have had subversives as clients. If a social worker disappeared, people said he must have been organizing poor people. In any case, the message was clear: watch who you associate with, don't make friends with strangers or participate in cultural activities that may lead to unsafe social intercourse. Soldiers with rifles and fixed bayonets were everywhere. They stood guard in front of government buildings or might suddenly appear in combat position on a tranquil residential street. Since there was never any street fighting in Buenos Aires, it was obvious that the army's strategy was to intimidate civilians. A soldier could ask you to show your identity papers at any time.

Some of my friends were afraid to go to downtown cafes at night, lest they be arrested. This was not because they were politically involved, but because they were artists and feared their eyes or posture would betray them as enemies of the state. The government took the position that "intellectual subversion" was more of a threat than armed revolt. The police had quotas to fill of suspects who could be held incommunicado for 48 hours while a security check was made. One night, the police simply arrested everyone at a popular discotheque.

The Pan American Highway is the main thoroughfare out of Buenos Aires. In 1978, I traveled this highway by bus every day to commute to my job. Each morning, I and thousands of other commuters were treated to the sight of soldiers perched on an overpass with their rifles pointed at the cars passing below. This is what it is like to live in a country occupied by its own armed forces with the support of international banks and the local oligarchy.

Still, in private conversation most of my friends were very outspoken in their opposition to the regime. The only exceptions were members of illegal organi-

zations. One night I gave a party in which there was a heated discussion of the virtues of Peronism versus a Marxist-Leninist state. A guest, arriving late, heard our voices from the hallway and went home without entering. "You can't just talk like that; you don't know who the neighbors are," he explained later. From that and other clues, I realized that he was in a different position from us mere talkers. (I have noticed a similar phenomenon in the United States: when the conversation turns to drugs, dealers and growers clam up unless they know everyone present.)



Fear becomes a habit, as I discovered during a brief visit back to New York in 1978. I was standing in a long line in front of a shoe store that was going out of business, when all of a sudden the conversation between two men ahead of me erupted into a loud argument. One of the men yelled something about the U.S. being a racist, imperialist society. I looked around anxiously; some people smiled absently, nobody was at all disturbed. It took me a few minutes to realize that the man had broken no law, that his life was not in danger.

The military did not pretend to be governing by popular consent. Eighty percent of the population had voted Peronist in the previous election, and the military was then the sworn enemy of Peronism. (By the time of the 1983 elections it was backing the Peronist party, as was the Reagan administration, over the center-left Radical party which won the election.) Its propaganda and posters on the theme of Work, Family, and Country were eerily reminiscent of Nazi Germany. Another theme was the importance of obedience to authority: subway billboards showed a picture of a child looking up to his benevolent father juxtaposed with the image of a worker looking up to his boss, and a notice in a police station warned parents of the dangers of allowing their unmarried, adult children to live away from home with friends.

Most people hated the government. They hated it because the standard of living kept falling, inflation was over 100% most years, businesses and banks were failing, and there were no legal avenues of protest. Even the anti-Semitic, xenophobic right was unhappy—they, after all, supported protectionism for local industry. The government, propped up by foreign loans from American banks, pursued the principle of free trade, i.e. the dumping of foreign, often obsolete, merchandise on the local market at prices way below those for locally produced goods. This led to numerous factory closings and a high rate of unemployment. Coincidentally, Jose Martinez de Hoz, the Minister of the Economy from 1976 to 1983, who oversaw the de-industrialization of the country, had worked for John D. Rockefeller III before the coup. As a token of support for his disastrous economic policy, Rockefeller's Chase Manhattan Bank chose Argentina as the site of its international board of directors' meeting in 1980.

The military was also on extremely friendly terms with the Soviet Union, which became Argentina's largest trading partner after the Carter grain embargo. Russian films were shown in the downtown cinemas, the Moscow Circus came every summer, and the Moscow Circus on Ice came in the winter. South Africa, however, was the military's favorite ally. It considered Argentina and South Africa as the bulwarks of Western Civilization, a civilization that had become decadent in the countries of its origin in the northern hemisphere.

As a foreigner, and as an English teacher and journalist, I took the opportunity to discuss the political situation with everyone I met. Except for people

on the left, the most common posture was defensive. In 1979, a Jewish business woman just returned from Europe repeated the government's charge that reports of human rights violations were part of a Montonero propaganda campaign orchestrated in Paris. In 1980, a police captain of mixed Indian and Spanish descent told me that Latin Americans are not as civilized as North Americans and have to be treated more brutally. An insurance agent said Argentina would be ready for democracy when it could elect a man like Reagan as president. A secret report by a Jewish agency which I translated into English in 1979 claimed that Jews had not been singled out for arrests and disappearances, while lamenting the fact that the Jewish community did not have closer ties with the government because, traditionally, Jews had not chosen careers in the armed forces. But the saddest response, which came from many lips, was "A country gets the government it deserves." These were the words Juan Peron used when

he was in exile in Spain.

A trend as common in Latin America as military coups is the military ceding power back to civilian rule once it has done so much economic harm that it no longer wants to take responsibility for governing. This happened in Peru and Brazil, and it also happened in Argentina. The military fell in 1983, the victim of a sordid campaign in the Falklands Islands. It fought the war badly and corruptly. Like a bully suddenly exposed as a coward and a fraud, it lost its hold over the nation.

So it is that the ruling Radical party government of Raul Alfonsin is strapped with a 53 billion dollar foreign debt and triple-digit inflation. Considering the by-now chronic economic crisis the country faces, many question the wisdom of paying back the debt. At the very least, they argue there should be a ceiling on debt payments as there is now in Peru, under the socialist government of Alan Garcia. The most vociferous critics of debt repayment at the current

rate are the Peronists who scored a startling comeback in last September's by-elections by winning the governorships of 16 of the country's 22 provinces. The day after the elections, the stock market fell and the price of the dollar rose on the black market. (Presumably, the day that workers vote for longer hours and less pay the stock market will rise and the price of gold will fall.)

The presidents of two of the three military juntas that ruled the country between 1976 and 1983, along with another member of the first junta, are now serving life terms for their role in the murders and tortures. But the thousands of soldiers, policemen and hired thugs who did the actual murdering and torturing have not been, and will not be, prosecuted. Nor have the bankers and businessmen who profited from the foreign loans that supported the military dictatorship.

— by Ana Logue

Ana Logue was a reporter on the Buenos Aires Herald from 1979 to 1981.

L I V E W A R E B Y M₂

GENERAL SEIDWEINDER AND HIS FISCAL WATCHDOG, ZIGFRIED, ARE AT LOCKSTEP AEROSPACE ON A SHOPPING SPREE!
WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO SEE IS NO ORDINARY DEATH STAR, GENTLEMEN. **MILSTAR®** DOES IT ALL!

*clock_intervals
compIter_output
synonymy_file
terminal*

IMAGINE A MILITARY COMPUTER GARRISON THE SIZE OF CAPITOL HILL, ORBITING AT 2200 MILES AND COVERED WITH RADIATION-HARDENED ZIRCONIUM MESH...

UPGRADABLE WITH FIRST-STRIKE ^{UH}FIRST-RATE HOMING INTERCEPTORS TO MAKE A BANG ANYWHERE YOU WANT. E.M.P.-PROOF, NATURALLY.

AND... IT PUTS TOP COMMAND ON LINE TO FIVE BALLISTIC MISSILE FLEETS. OPTIONAL C₃ FEATURES INCLUDE ^{YSEF}INSTANT ^{YSEF}...

LOCKSTEP'S RAISED THE COST CEILING TO 12 BILLION, BOSS. IT COULD MEAN A SUBCOMMITTEE.

MILSTAR'S DISCRETE JAMMING FEATURES REAL-TIME SCANS OF ALL MAJOR SPORTS SCORES...

WHY NOT?
UH, BOSS...

EHM-GENERAL, SIR, I THINK...

WHAT IS IT, ZIGFRIED?

FIX IT.

YES-IS THE AUDITOR-GENERAL FREE FOR DUCK-HUNTING THIS WEEKEND?

MY HEART FEELS LIKE AN ALLIGATOR.

Psst, AMIGO: Wanna Buy Some Pulque, Some Huaraches?

At the Mexico City airport half a dozen taxi drivers swarm around me: "Hotel, hotel?" I choose a thin-haired older man, out of deference to his age, I suppose. He will soon be beyond the age when he can hustle in this way, and then what will he do? So I choose him, thinking that in doing so I might be contributing, albeit infinitesimally, to his old-age security. A typical absurd reflex of gringo charity. It must have been the long flight. "Take me right downtown," I tell him. "To the Havana."

"No way. Havana's tumbled down. The earthquake."

"Yeah? Well, take me to another one like it in that area."

"Impossible. All downtown's gone." His hands make a smooth razing motion.

I know this is a lie. The 1985 earthquake was bad, but not *that* bad. I know for a fact, though, that several of the ritziest downtown hotels really got it: the Del Prado, for instance. Ironic that the fancy places suffered so, while many more wretched buildings were left standing. I fantasize on another irony: that the bizarre force of the quake might somehow have exposed the spot where Diego Rivera wrote "God doesn't exist" on his great Del Prado lobby mural (which was left standing); a mural that the authorities kept completely veiled for years until Rivera, tired of the battle, finally agreed to paint over the offending words.

"But I know of a very good hotel not far from here," he says rapidly as he flies around a corner. "A very good hotel, neither *rascuache* [itchy, as in bedbug] nor expensive."

"Oh, all right." You old fart. I'm too tired to argue with him.

He bolts into the hotel with my bags in his hand and makes sure everyone at the front desk sees that it is he who has brought me. That way he can be sure to collect his "commission." The room costs about twice what it's worth, and I imagine a goodly

percentage of this will go straight to the cabbie's pocket. So much for charity. (I give him a generous tip anyway, out of pride; now more than ever in Mexico, pride is the only thing people have left, and it is an infectious emotion. So rather than bitch and remonstrate, as I might in New York, I adopt an attitude of so-called "Latin dignity" and pretend that money means nothing to me.)

Money, however, is the reason I'm down here. I know it won't be much, even though my joint bosses are the most powerful in Mexico. One of them is the Mexican government itself; or more specifically, some polity within the Secretariat of Public Education. The other boss is the most powerful company in Mexico: Televisa, the television near-monopoly. The project they have hired me for is still not altogether clear to me. Perhaps it is not altogether

clear to them either; the fog surrounding the interactions of private and public capital in Mexico is so opaque that the principal players sometimes seem confused even among themselves.

The hotel is comfortable enough, but hideous in a horror house kind of way. Dark red plush seems to be the fabric of choice for its curtains and upholstery; jagged chandeliers hang menacingly from the ceiling (especially worrisome to the

quake-conscious); and in the dimly-lit restaurant the next morning they are showing *Jaws* on a giant screen VCR, maimed limbs and vivid splashes of blood to go with one's breakfast, while at the bar five rumples men and a long-limbed woman in ghastly make-up sip garishly-colored drinks and boisterously carry on with last night's binge. I make it my first task to get back to the good old Havana (it is still standing, just as I suspected), with its three pleasant concierges and its wholesome odor of chicken broth.

I'm settled in at the Havana, and now it's off to work. I find only standing room in the elevated metro car that lurches down Avenida Tlalpan. In

Televisa, I now discover, is a colossal media octopus with virtual monopoly on Mexican television. . . The values it hopes to communicate are clear enough: consumerism, anti-communism, the superiority of Caucasian culture.



by Mars Mensch

my pocket is a slip of paper with an address provided me in a hush-hush kind of way by some folks in a downtown Televisa office building. Why the secrecy? I wonder. Just part of the general hype, I guess. Makes everyone feel more important.

Everyone on the metro car gawks at me. I am taller and much fairer than they. They think that I am a stranger in a strange land. I am, and I'm not; the sidestreets that greet me as I get off are both alien and familiar: I have not been on them since I was ten. Throughout most of my elementary school years I rode the school bus through these streets, gazing dazedly out at the fortresslike walls of volcanic *tezontle* rock and at the maids dutifully washing the sidewalks with soapy water and brooms made of branches. Occasionally the tedium of the journey would be broken by some major or minor horror: a rebozo-clad Indian woman carrying a stack of tortillas on her head, run down in silence by a speeding car that left her lying in a phenomenal pool of blood; a gang of cudgel-toting students on the prowl for school buses and students that had dared to defy (as we of the American School always did) the general student strike; or simply a gaggle of

military school kids, heads depravedly shaved, making obscene gestures to us from a street corner.

Such events did not subtract from the fact that this neighborhood—Coyoacán—was (and is) one of the city's most chic. It is home to many established artists and intellectuals, who thrill to its history as an independent township within the larger Aztec city-state, or as the place where Trotsky lived and died, or as the location of Diego Rivera's and Frida Kahlo's studios.

Speaking of studios, I notice the address in my pocket is that of a "studio." It could not be otherwise, I think; in Coyoacán, any wretched office space would have to be a "studio."

The "studio" is a discreet, low slung house converted to offices. In front of it stand three plainclothes guards, each with a big .45 tucked behind his polyester jacket. One of the guards is stupid, another dour, and the third, Reyes, has a military correctness contrasted by the most exaggerated low-barrio accent I have ever heard. As they question me suspiciously about my motive for being here, I can hear a background hum of a dozen word processors, overlain by the whoosh of a photocopying machine.

Abruptly the sounds stop. "¡Hijos de

tus MADRES!" cries an enraged voice from within the building, followed by the sound of a fist slamming plastic. Other voices sound relieved, rising gradually into general jollity. Each windowsill soon becomes a perch for a perspiring office worker.

Apparently the electricity has gone out. Later I learn that this normally happens only in the evening—and virtually every evening—when the circuits become overloaded. The enraged voice has come from a worker who, having failed to have his work memoried, has lost his whole morning's labor. He came in extra early today; he'll have to work extra late tonight.

The guards are unfazed by the problem. They continue, all three of them, to search for my name on a list; apparently they have confused my Anglo middle name with my paternal surname. Plainly they do not consider the lights going out a preliminary to a terrorist attack. In fact, Reyes is the only one of the three who mentions "terrorists" or who seems to take the "terrorist threat" seriously at all.

"With all the gringos working here, any ayatollah could come and . . ." He makes a dramatic bomb-hurling gesture.

The dour one looks bored. "Better he

said: any Mexican could come in and snatch a gringa."

The stupid one giggles inanely.

In truth, most of the employees here are themselves Mexican. They, and not the foreigners, are the nuts and bolts of the organization. Their wages are low and their hours long; at any hour of the day or night they can be found here, slaving away at their word processors. Late-night hours have the advantage of a less marked sweat-shop atmosphere; in the daytime it is so hot and crowded that upon entering the building, I feel nauseated. As the lights flicker back on and the machines begin to hum again, a blonde, middle-aged woman with an unlikely patrician name and mannerisms to match locates me. She's the boss here, contracted by Televisa for this part of the project. Some say she's Lithuanian-Mexican; others claim she's North American. Her English, in any case, is impeccable.

"I assume you know something about AMIGO," she says briskly.

What I know about it is about as muddled as the name for which the AMIGO acronym stands: Access Information Mexico for Global Output. My best bet is that it's some sort of data bank. All I really know is that I'm supposed to do some writing translations. So just give me the stuff, lady.

She does. A whole stack of it. It touches on all topics Mexican: history, natural resources, current political issues. Most of it is written in the turgid prose of Hispanic academe. My mission: to deflate this heap into the pithy phrasing of contemporary American journales. The final step is to translate this English version *back* into Spanish. Okay, well, whatever. I like the challenge, I've internalized it already, it feels like a big fart waiting to be released.

"Not folksy," she warns. "Just readable."

So far so good. I've managed to get my hands on a small manual typewriter and am sitting outside under the shade of a *capulin* tree.

An Englishman sees me and takes pity. "There's a spare machine inside, sir. Have you ever used a word processor? We use WordStar. It's easy."

"Ah, no. No thanks. I like the slap of the keys, if you know what I mean." I myself am not sure what I mean, but there's a cool breeze out here and anyway, no, I don't know how to use a word processor. Am unfriendly towards them. An accomplice at *Processed World*, a certain Morales, once accused me of being a "neo-Luddite," which is surely something of an exaggeration. But why, I wonder, do the worst writers I know invariably have the fanciest word processors?

I plow through the first few articles and turn them in. They come back almost immediately, brought by a big, worried looking man from California (the blonde woman's concubine, say the *malas lenguas* of the joint).

"Um," he says. "Um, there's some parts in here that aren't quite right. Let's see. When you speak here of a 'pall of pollution over Mexico City,' that's not really the kind of impression we're trying to give."

"Even though it's the first impression you get of the place?"

"Right," he says, chuckling nervously. "And this one about the sea turtles. Just mention that the government is doing its best to protect them. You know, something a little more upbeat. We're trying to do something pretty positive here at AMIGO. Something kind of perky. And this one about Pancho Villa. I'll agree that it's kind of a tricky one. To Americans he's a bandit, to the Mexicans he's a hero of the Revolution. But we'll just try to do it so it doesn't offend too many people on either side."

Ahaa. I see. I've got to *honey* my hack-work. Hmmm, maybe I should have found out a little more about AMIGO before I took this job. In particular, maybe I should have found out a little more about the company directly in charge of it: Televisa.

Televisa, I now discover, is a colossal media octopus with a virtual monopoly on Mexican television as well as ownership of a slew of film and recording studios, publishing houses, movie theaters, and radio stations. It broadcasts over 400 hours a week of television, more than any other broadcasting company in the world. Though its profits are a close secret, the values it hopes to communicate are clear enough: consumerism, anti-communism, the superiority of Caucasian culture. Even the *Wall Street Journal* has to admit that "Televisa functions as the nation's effective ministry of culture, education and truth."

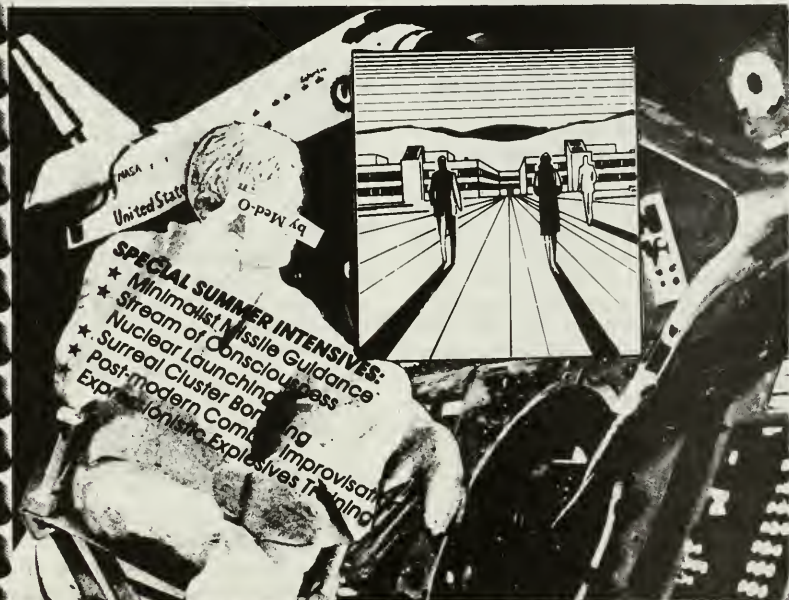
Televisa's influence is not limited to Mexico. It exports up to 30,000 hours of programming a year to South America and the U.S. Its U.S. affiliate Univisión reaches over three million North American households with its execrable soap operas (such as *The Rich Also Weep*, tailored to make the poor feel better about their lot) and conservative newscasts (invariably hostile to Cuba and the Central American liberation movements).

And where does the AMIGO project come in, I wonder? Well, it's like this: ever since the oil bust of the early 80's, Mexico has been searching for a way to cushion the collapse of its economy. One obvious choice was the old fallback,

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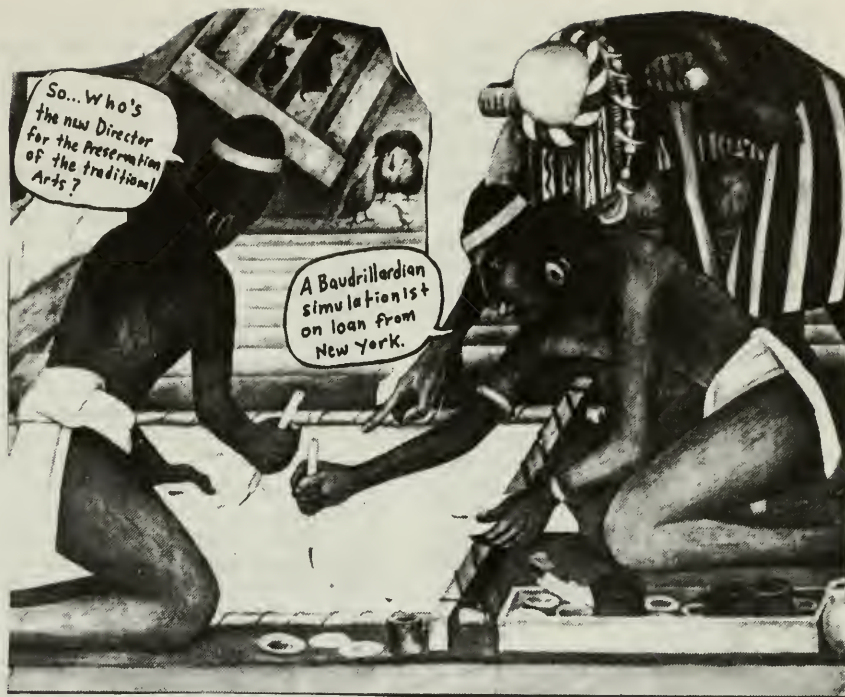
tourism. What was needed, the government decided, was a kind of clearing-house for information about the country: not information directly for tourists, but rather for writers and journalists who write about Mexico. Televisa was handed the assignment, and the company came up with AMIGO.

The final AMIGO product is housed in the International Press Center, a brand-new building in the swank Polanco district. I decide that night that before I go back to Coyoacán to do any more "translating," I should check this "Press Center" out. The building is an impressive piece of architecture featuring a soaring, light-filled atrium. Ersatz Indian pots, stelae, and stone carvings are strategically placed throughout its interior. It pullulates with young employees in electric-blue jackets, who hustle visitors between sterile rooms in which computerized accounts of Mexican non-history and current un-reality are presented. What you are supposed to do in these rooms is enter a code number on the terminal—the code for Pancho Villa, say—and on the big screen appears the bloodless "translation" plus accompanying graphics.

On leaving the Press Center, I see the real story of Mexico squatting on the pavement outside: an entire family of Indian beggars: a mother, a father and two little barefoot girls in braids. The mother and father stare at my huarache sandals, which are just like theirs. They whisper, "Huaraches, Huaraches!" In Mexico City, only gringos and Indians wear huaraches. They whisper a few more words to each other in a hushed, consonant-rich language I do not understand. I say good morning and they beam. "Where are you from?" I ask.

"Tlaxcala," the man says. (The little girls are afraid, but the woman looks at me with a meek curiosity). Was the language I heard them speaking Náhuatl? "Yes. Yes!" he replies, but I get the feeling he is only trying to be agreeable. In relating to the white man, these Indians have long ago given up on trying to be anything other than agreeable.

The AMIGO project lionizes Indians. The "brother Indian" and his ways are part of Mexico's "great patrimony." Now, to find out all about these particular Indians, all I would have to do is turn around and go back into the Press Center and enter "Tlaxcala" on one of the computers. After all, you can't really believe anything the Indians themselves tell you, can you? The computer will tell you everything you need to know about the lore and languages and colorful customs of the people of Tlaxcala.



by Mars Mensch

It will also conveniently forget to inform you that Tlaxcala is one of the country's poorest states, and that people like the family outside flee by the thousands every year to a better life begging on the streets of Mexico City.

My pocketbook demands that I be cynical about the whole thing and report promptly back to work. Anyway, I rationalize, AMIGO is essentially harmless, since any journalist worth his salt is going to see right through it. Still, it's pretty sickening. It's a major white elephant: well over \$100,000 is being laid out for the translations alone, and the cost of the entire project ascends into the millions. That's a lot of money to throw away in a place like Mexico.

I'm back now at the "studio," but I can't bring myself to go to work. Instead I linger at the gate, shooting the shit with the guards. Reyes has brought a jug of pulque with him today (pulque is the fermented sap of the succulent maguey plant). He's facing a 24-hour shift (the guards each earn \$80 a month) and has to have something to pass the time. Reyes lives in the tough barrio of Tepito ("where they'll steal your underwear without lowering your pants"); he says the pulque he gets there is "very, very fresh." We try it. It is tangy and good—almost effervescent. In another day or two it will begin to get rancid and turn into "buzzard broth," Reyes says.

Reyes was in the Mexican army for

seven years. He has brought his scrapbook with him, and shows us photographs from those days. In one he is standing over a row of prostrate bodies, his assault rifle trained on them.

"What, did you shoot all these folks?" I ask, startled.

"Naw. They're under arrest." And he shouts, "¡Detenidos!," and points an imaginary rifle at the ground.

"They're marijuana growers," he explains after this dramatic illustration of arrest procedure. "We arrested them as a favor to the gringos. We burned their fields. But we kept the best parts for ourselves. The very tips of the plants."

"Is that all you did in the army? Raid marijuana fields?"

"Mostly. I was stationed in Guerrero. Guerrero is a dangerous place. The people there are nervous and hot-tempered, like all people from the hotlands. Sometimes we were sent out to hunt for Lucio Cabañas. He was a *guerrillo*. A communist. Finally we got him. That was in 1974. I think it was in 1974." Reyes left the army in disaffection a few years ago.

"It was all bullshit," he says. "Pendejadas. Burning *mota* for the gringos. Chasing Lucio Cabañas. My heroes are Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata. Cabañas was not so different from them, ¿no?"

"I shudder to think what AMIGO might write about Lucio Cabañas. (As it happens, they ignore him altogether.)

Then I suddenly remember I am supposed to be at my table, revising my piece about Pancho Villa. But on second thought, I think I am already too drunk. We drink some more. Reyes has lost all concern about trying to keep the jug discrete. He promises to bring some good *mota* the next time. I believe he has forgotten about the terrorists.

I stagger back to the metro, thinking I would enjoy writing the piece on pulque. But I think it's already been done; I believe I saw it listed on the printout. I wonder who did it. Probably someone who has never tried the stuff. Some *criollo* from a private school who considers it, as most do, a low-class, loathsome beverage. One of these upper-class intellectuals who show up every so often at the studio, the kind who give plenty of lip service to Mexico and the "autochthonously Mexican," and who can maybe even rattle off the names of some of the 400 pulque gods of antiquity but who prefer to toast their Televisa bosses with American whiskey.

Well, I can see I've got an attitude. My masters can see it too; and they have begun to take notice of my absenteeism. They try the carrot: would I be happier moving to another hotel, one closer to the studio? The company will

pick up the tab. I decline. Out of curiosity, though, I check out the hotel. Just as I thought, it's like the one the cabbie took me to: garish, and full of hideous *nouveau-riche* types, all teeth and jewelry. I suspect Televisa owns the hotel.

Thrashing around in my bed at the Havana, watching Televisa's Channel 2 (incessant ads for Fud, pronounced "food," a spam-like processed meat product), I ask myself: if Reyes can quit the army, why can't I quit Televisa?

Okay, I quit. But for now I'm having trouble collecting my paycheck for the work I've done. The man with whom I must deal is a weasly bureaucrat ("pale and long as a badwater tapeworm" as Reyes describes him) who must always be addressed as "Licenciado," the title conferred upon lawyers. Quite probably he is a thief and a *corrupto*, and that is what I finally suggest to him: "So how do you plan to spend my money, Lic.?"

His underlings have overheard the remark. The Lic. is furious. He must show everyone that what this gringo wants is mere petty cash to him, so he digs into his pocket, pulls out a wad, and counts, slapping each bill into my hand: "Ten thousand, sixty thousand, one hundred ten . . ." Am I humiliated? Sure, but who isn't? The struggle for the peso

is constant and always humiliating.

What do the unemployed do in Mexico City? They go to the movies a lot. They're cheap enough, and there are many exploitation features appropriate for the frustrated: *Women's Prison*, *Savage Women*, *Rats of the City*, *Strange Perversions*, *Attack in Tijuana*. The posters are very bloody. I think I can do without these flicks. I'm not yet the hard-core unemployed, and after all, I'm a privileged gringo and can always go back to gringolandia. So I decide to take a walk. I head up the Paseo de la Reforma ("Mexico City's Champs Elysees," AMIGO calls it) toward the colonial palaces where the rich live. I skirt the edge of Polanco. I am looking up at the International Press Center building when I hear those familiar whispery, conspiratorial voices: "Huaraches, huaraches!" I peer into the penumbra of an empty, earthquake-damaged building and there, sitting around the ashes of an extinct campfire, I see the Indian family, the man grinning his wide grin. Again the perverse thought occurs to me: to turn away from them without a word and, like a good amigo, go around the block to the Press Center and enter "Huaraches" on the terminal. ♣

— by Granny

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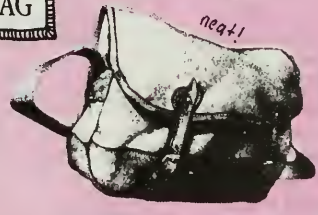
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