



# RESURGENCE

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## Editorial Group

John Furnival, Graham Keen (Art Work), David Kuhrt (Poetry Editor), Brenda Jordan, Sybil Morrison, Peter Taunton, Roger Franklin.

Editor: John Papworth.

Business Manager: Jacob Garonzhki.

## Next Issue

Paul Goodman—'On being Powerless.'

Roger Franklin reviews Leopold Kohr's "The Breakdown of Nations"

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## This Issue

DAVE CUNLIFFE is a Blackburn poet who writes frequently for Resurgence. Soon after he had sent us his review of Last Exit to Brooklyn he was badly injured in a road accident. We are glad to report he is making a good recovery from a fractured skull and a broken wrist and that he hopes to be out of hospital shortly.

JOHN FURNIVAL is in his early thirties and teaches art at Corsham in the West Country. His work is winning rapidly increasing attention and in recent months has featured prominently, and sometimes exclusively in numerous galleries in different parts of Europe. (He currently has an exhibition in Cambridge) He is married, with three children, Eve, Jack and Harry, whose pictures are incorporated in the cover design.

ROYSTON GREEN, born in 1918, is a teacher who has worked and travelled a great deal in the Celtic countries, and speaks several Celtic languages; holds numerous offices in Mebyon Kernow and is a member of the Cornish Gorsedd of Bards—his bardic name is TREVESYK (countryman).

LEOPOLD KOHR's work is already well known to Resurgence readers. He is in his early fifties and his reputation as the initiator of a whole new field of studies in conceptual economics, on which he has worked for many years, is at last beginning to be acknowledged even in those hallowed academic spheres where a new idea is apt to be regarded as a grave breach of academic etiquette. He is the Professor of Economics at the University of Puerto Rico.

PAUL ROCHE was born in India, an Englishman who has lived for many years in America, where in 1965 he won the first Alice Fay di Castagnola Prize. His verse translations of Sophocles and Aeschylus have sold many hundreds of thousands in paperback in the States, and he has Plautus and Sappho volumes in preparation. He now lives with his American wife and four children in the heart of Berkshire.

JACK SAYERS is 27 and a teacher of maladjusted children in a state institution. He gained his initial experiences of this work in Rudolph Steiner schools here and in Germany.

PETER TOWN who designed the title heading to the cover of this issue was born in London in 1947 and educated at Holmewood House and the Blue Coat School (Liverpool). He has travelled widely in Europe and lived in Cyprus, South America and Israel—in Israel working for a time on a Kibbutz. He has a keen interest in Poetry and is himself an enthusiastic writer. Has exhibited at the Falmouth Festival, Better Books and the Indica Gallery. He is now studying graphic design at the Bath Academy of Art.

ANNE VOGEL says she was raised in a nice middle class home and became a socialist after observing the British ruling class in India and the conditions of British workers in the hungry thirties. In World War II joined British Section of IVth International which seemed to her the only people who opposed the war and had realistic programme for a peaceful world. After the bombing of Hiroshima became interested in direct action against nuclear weapons and gradually realised the need for radical nonviolent change in social structure.

# EDITORIAL

## An Arab Jewish Peace

The saddest news of the Arab Israel conflict came after the latest outburst of fighting had ceased, when the Israelis made it clear they were going to incorporate more Arab territory within their frontiers. This means the present cease-fire is no more than a lull and that a resumption of the war is inevitable.

The reasons that have led the Israelis step by step to this point are understandable, and no outsider, certainly no European, who fails to produce an alternative to a Jewish national home, where Jews can live in peace and security, and free from any form of racial persecution, far less the horrors which were done them scarcely a generation ago, can be the first to criticise them.

Nevertheless the world can no longer blink the fact that Israel was established at the price of the destruction of Palestine, which was the homeland of nearly a million Palestinian Arabs, most of whom fled from their homes, or were expelled by Jewish terrorist organisations, at the end of the British Mandate. The fact that this was done with so little protest from the outside world, or even concern, is a reflection of the moral corruption that modern methods of statecraft have brought about. Millions of people in the Russian Empire have been driven hundreds and sometimes thousands of miles from their homes under conditions of appalling hardship and brutality, millions have been liquidated, millions have been drafted for life sentences to arctic labour camps simply on the orders of Kremlin bureaucrats; one can point to similar forms of suffering by masses of Tibetan people, of millions more who died or were uprooted during the partition of the Indian Sub-Continent into rival nation states, of millions of Jews and non-Jews exterminated by the Nazis, of millions of Poles driven from their homes to make Russia larger, of millions of East Germans driven from theirs to make Poland larger; the list is seemingly endless and reads like a litany of lamentation for all the cruel folly that man is being conditioned to accept as a normal part of the contemporary world. Yet reason and conscience insist that the fate of the Arab refugees, however much they are used as pawns in the bitter conflicts between rival power groups, is a matter of humanitarian importance, and one for which a pressing concern must be maintained.

At this point it is tempting to fall in with the general run of liberal comment that assumes that once the refugees are allowed to return to Israel and given suitable compensation the main point of Arab bitterness will be dissipated. This is not so. The most disturbing aspect of Arab attitudes is the element of sheer unreasoning hatred that dominates them. There is no parallel anywhere in the world for this bitterness, not even the Nazis at the height of their infamy brought calls to destroy Germany and its people from enemy governments, no African group anywhere in the Continent is calling for the destruction of the white people of South Africa, and none of the oppressed minorities in the Russian Empire is calling for the destruction of the Russian people or for a holy war to destroy Russia. Why then should millions of impoverished Arab peasants, many of them knowing next to nothing

of Israel or its people, who live hundreds, perhaps thousands of miles from Israel's frontiers, feel a response to its existence at once so savage, so violent and so fanatical? How would the peoples of Europe react if the Arabs sought to occupy Albania? One has to go back to the crusades of medieval Europe to find a psychological parallel, and it is important to grasp that it is on this level that much of the problem actually exists. One may admire the spirit of Arab cohesion that informs this concern for the Palestine refugees, but one is bound to ask why is it that this cohesion is directed to essentially negative ends, and why it is that it fails to promote any positive goals.

And this, surely, is the most disquieting aspect of Arab concern. At no stage over the last twenty odd years has there been any precise formulation of Arab objectives towards Israel except the wholly negative one of simple destruction. Are we basically dealing here with any other issue than one of mere xenophobia? What possible basis for any kind of settlement can exist when one side of the dispute insists on refusing to recognise even the legal existence of the other, and maintains a barrage of frenzied hate against it and resorts to every device of propaganda and boycott to degenerate and subvert it?

In basic terms one group of hard-pressed human beings did enormous wrong to another in forcing it to flee its homeland in order to make it their own. There was a call on other humans in the rest of the world either to insist the refugees be allowed to return to their homeland with compensation, or to provide an alternative basis of settlement elsewhere. The world at large opted for the latter course, the Arab nations opted for the former, neither was strong enough to impose a solution. In consequence the Arab nations, in the guise of helping the refugees, have inflicted on them a life-sentence of homelessness, a fate rarely added to the sufferings of any considerable body of refugees anywhere.

Clearly the time has come for the Arabs to recognise that the Palestinian eggs can not now be unscrambled, and that some form of *modus vivendi* with Israel must be reached. The point is, on what basis?

### No Way Out

Is a peaceful accord possible at all between the Arab States and Israel? It seems almost certain that it is not. Israel has declared it will not give up its conquest of Jerusalem, it will not surrender its territorial gains, which it claims are strategically necessary to its defence, in Jordan and Syria, and that it will extend its frontiers in the Sinai desert. On the other hand the Arabs will almost certainly take this refusal as the signal for waging another generation of hostility, leading almost inevitably to another outbreak of war.

We are confronted here, in political terms, with the old problem of an irresistible force meeting an immovable object. What will happen is that the

Arabs will work for the day when they will again have some form of superior striking power, a day when they will be able to apply the Israeli lesson of the advantages of an overwhelming pre-emptive attack. On that day Israel's cities will lie in ruins and the Arabs will proceed to wreck their terrible vengeance.

Well before that day however, the Israelis will have made their own moves, they may well be atomic or thermonuclear ones, and it will be fortunate indeed if this time the rest of the world escapes involvement in a conflict which could write finis across the adventure of civilisation.

On the ordinary level of national state politics it would seem then there is no way out.

Are there any alternatives? One must dismiss the prospects of either the United Nations Organisation or any of the bigger countries creating a solution; the authority of U.N.O. is far too weak as a consequence of U.S. Aggression in Vietnam and from China's continued absence from its membership as a result of the perverse obduracy of the U.S.A. What form of peace is achieved will result from the actions of those on the spot and there is nothing to be gained by looking elsewhere.

At present the only significant departure from ordinary nationalist approaches to have been made has come from a joint declaration by the Israeli Socialist Organisation and the Palestinian front.\*

It was published just prior to the Israeli attack on Sinai and it must be accounted remarkable that any agreed statement between Jews and Arabs could have been issued at all at such a time. The declaration condemns the policies of Nasser as much as of Israel and declares the way ahead lies in the virtual abolition of Zionism and urges a non-Zionist Israel to "pursue a policy of merging the Israelis and Palestinians in a federal, non-nationalist, socialist state, wherein Jews and Arabs will enjoy full civil rights and cultural freedom". It then goes on to urge "This federal state will participate in the process of political and economic unification of the entire Middle East".

The trouble with this solution is that it is already half a century out of date; it sounds modern with its talk of socialism and unity (two things which are said to prevail in the Russian and Chinese Empires) possibly because the Arab countries are so backward, but it comes nowhere near to grappling with the real and pressing contemporary problem of power in the modern state.

If we are really going to project solutions that will endure, that will solve problems of poverty and overpopulation without at the same time making subtle and far reaching inroads into the integrity and humanity of people, and which reduces them to the kind of broiler house affluence that prevails in the West, then the problem of power must be squarely faced.

This the declaration fails to do; by talking in terms of socialism and unity on the basis of nation-state power it merely opens up the prospect that the Arab world may become another war-making power bloc, like the other great powers that dominate the world today. This is not an answer, it is simply the abandonment of any prospect of peace at all.

All modern experience in the West points to the need to tackle the problem at two levels, one in terms of small-scale political organisation, and the

other in terms of functional co-operation for specific, limited and extremely well defined purposes.

On the former level there is a need to think not in terms of monster states but in terms of small city states of no more than several hundred thousand people. Arabic art, whether in the field of architecture, sculpture, poetry, philosophy or mathematics, achieved its greatest heights in Persia when it was a host of small local states, an example with numerous historical parallels in other parts of the world. As Arnold Toynbee\* points out, this excellence in the arts occurred in the half millenium between the break up of the Abbasid Empire and the political reunification of Iran in the Sufairi Empire. Both Empires were monolithic despotisms under which art withered, as it continues to wither there today.

### Functional Co-operation

The task of creating or recreating such a radical political structure of city states in most of the Arab countries is not difficult, few of them have a population at present of more than two or three million anyway. The exception is Egypt, with its thirty million people and one of the highest birth rates in the world. For centuries Egypt has been governed from Cairo through its provinces or mudirias. It would seem the merest common sense that if Egypt is not again to suffer a prolonged phase of stagnation at the hands of its present increasingly corrupt military dictatorship, it should inject life and power into these provincial centres on an autonomous basis.

It may be objected that such small communities will not be economically viable. This is jargon, and like most forms of jargon, tends to be a substitute for clear thinking. The fact is that consumption standards for millions of Egyptians are so low they could scarcely be lower. Yet such economic surplus as they are able to produce goes to sustain a swollen and expensive bureaucracy, futile and extravagant forms of diplomatic representation around the world and a quite insensate millstone of military expenditure. It also sustains numerous forms of "development" projects, few of which come near to any positive fruition if only because the impetus for genuine development needs always to come from people themselves rather than from the presumption of remote administrators of their wealth.

On the other hand it is true that such communities will need to co-operate extensively with one another if they are to realise their economic potentialities. This sentence is not written *in vacuo* as it were, as so often it is written and understood in the West, where peoples and personalities are invaded at every turn by oligarchic groupings in the quest for profit and power in the guise of something euphemistically termed "economic progress". It is written in terms of what people themselves would reach out to do on the basis of their own self-government and decision-making.

This relates then to the second level, that of functional co-operation. There is no reason at all why the organisation of such things as railways and other public utilities, marketing boards, credit and banking institutions, indeed a vast range of activities where co-operation between such com-

munities is a functional requirement of their operation, should not be run *separately and distinctly* by their representatives.

Since the power of decision would stem from these local communities, who would always have the unquestioned right to withdraw from any body if they so choose, it would be possible to conduct government without the sustained hysterias, not to say paranoias which now dominate the scene. Such forms of co-operation, always separate and autonomous, could reach right across the Middle East, and in time to other parts of the world. The significance of national frontiers would not then be abolished by some heady totalitarian and top-heavy "United Nations" secretariat, they would become progressively less important as the present centres of power gave way to more fragmented and co-operative forms.

In the Middle East there are several reasons why this is a matter of urgency. Hostility towards Israel is forcing a tenuous form of unity on the Arab countries, but even with the survival of Israel it is doubtful if that unity will hold. It will break if only because Egypt is constantly seeking to dominate the other countries and to form alliances which will give it access to the rich revenues from their oil. The area is of course a key producer of this major wasting asset of the mechanised world, it also straddles one of the main waterways of the world—Suez.

The argument for putting the canal under UN control makes no sense unless it assumes that other nations are going to surrender their sovereignty over their waterways. On the other hand if it were controlled by a department of the Middle East Transport Commission, which in turn derived its authority from city state communities throughout the area, the poisonous sting of state nationalism would be drawn from its affairs and its revenues

could be freely used for transport improvements in every part of the region.

There is no less urgent, though perhaps less apparent, need for similar action towards the region's oil. To date this has been exploited with reckless abandon. The need now is for restraint and conservation, for present use and for the future. There are few experts who would care to predict with any confidence that current reserves of oil can continue to satiate the seemingly infinite thirst of the mechanised nations for very much longer. In a matter of a decade or so it is quite possible we shall see the beginnings of an oil famine as reserves run out, which is likely to leave the Arab world high and dry in more senses than one. A democratically based regional board for natural resources which would be responsible for the remaining oil reserves is thus an urgent necessity if the Arab world is not to run into the most calamitous misfortunes in the not too distant future.

It will be seen that in the course of this discussion the bitter acerbities of Arab/Israeli feuding have tended to receive less attention. If the peoples of the area would concentrate on their real problems, rather than those thrown up by dangerously antiquated forms of nation state government, this surely is how it would work out in practice.

However little immediate prospect there is of action on these lines, they are put forward as a realistic basis for a long term solution to a problem that his inflamed passions for nearly half a century, and which have twice in the past decade created the prospect of world war. Within such a framework both Arab and Jew can find security and peace, and a way of ending the appalling poverty that for centuries has held large areas in bondage and without falling into the trap of sterile authoritarian affluence that has ensnared the technologically advanced countries.

## COMMENT

### DRUGS

tructive to the personality, addiction is much more quickly acquired and correspondingly more difficult to cure.

There must be very few drugs, if any, able to satisfy fully the craving that induces people to use them. Hence, in broad terms, the use of any drug, however mild and soporific, tends to be a prelude to the social acceptance of a stronger one, and in this sense all drugs are linked by a common chain of human need of varying degrees of urgency which has its origins in innocence and its end in total personal destruction. Individuals do, of course, have very dynamic defence mechanisms here. The compulsive tea drinker may look askance at the beer swallower who in turn may regard the drinking of neat spirits as morally reprehensible and so on. Advertising, often itself a drug, has helped to make other drugs, especially alcohol and tobacco socially acceptable, and the general historical trend towards the everyday acceptance of stronger drugs is unmistakable.

On this view the efforts of moralists or the law makers to establish barriers against some drugs is unrealistic. (Where today is that quaint victim of the advertising agencies The Band of Hope, with

\*Published by the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, 3 and 4 Shavers Place, London, S.W.1, price threepence.

\*P.93 *Change and Habit*, Arnold J. Toynbee, O.U.P. 1966.

its moral propaganda against 'intoxicating beverages'?). Much more realistic is to ask what it is that creates a need in millions of people for drugs at all, and why in the modern era compulsive mass addiction is moving steadily towards increasingly grosser forms.

Few people care to pose such questions for they know, somehow they know, the answers point unmistakably to the appalling falsities that are embedded in the heart of most of the assumptions that now prevail about the ordinary functioning of modern mass societies. Far-seeing people have argued, as for example in varying accents Ruskin, Blake, William Morris and Tawney argued, that considerations of beauty and truth, of moral values and relationships cannot be ignored or subjugated to a form of social organisation centering principally on the yen of bankers, and factory owners armed with machinery, for mere acquisitiveness, without exacting a terrible price in human happiness. They, and many more gifted voices, were at one in declaring that under such conditions sooner or later something fundamental in our situation would break and that such folly could only result in disaster. Thermonuclear weapons, the crisis in the socially irresponsible proliferation of human numbers now upon us, the less noticed but none the less portentous crisis implicit in the wholesale debasement of the earth's fertility created by the substitution of farming for chemically armed soil exploitation, (a process which will inevitably result in a reduction in the quantity of our harvests as it now reduces their quality), these, and other factors, including the cumulative deterioration of life implicit in mass urbanisation, show that their insight was right and that the conventional wisdom which ignores them, is wrong. The drug scene is yet another.

There are many signs that the excesses of the age of technique, and the inroads it made on the human psyche, were made tolerable because the societies that first produced the industrial revolution were themselves the fruits of a long period of what might be termed sociological capital accumulation. During centuries of relative social stability men acquired traditions, values, social mores, attitudes of tolerance and compassion, inner reserves of moral courage and commitment which enabled them to withstand the immediate ravages to their situation and their society which undisciplined technique so freely and so tragically made. But as generation succeeded generation the capacity to resist inevitably became diminished, psychic reserves were consumed at a faster rate, and it is now evident in our own time that much of that sociological capital, accumulated slowly over the centuries, is becoming exhausted. The real answer to the drug scene, as to so much else, is to rebuild the kind of small human orientated communities which gave us such great riches of all kinds in the past. Rebuild communities where men can order their own lives in freedom and where once again they can know the dignity, not to say the joy, of being creators; creators do not feel driven to destroy themselves.

#### HOW MUCH EFFORT IS PEACE WORTH?

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## NO!

At what stage do we discover that some forms of progress, if indeed they are that, are just not worth the candle? At what stage do we conclude that the presumption of bureaucrats and experts has gone far enough, and call a halt? For thousands of people in Essex who are likely to be adversely affected by the decision to build a vast new international airport at Stansted, that stage has evidently been reached now.

It is unfortunate that the people of Essex should choose to oppose this decision on the narrow and not unselfish grounds that there is a more suitable site elsewhere, for in this overcrowded island it is unlikely that a project of this size can be sited anywhere within reach of the capital without causing trouble and what is called, with rather quaint didacticism, 'loss of amenity'—to a considerable number of people.

#### Priorities

There is first the question of whether a new airport is required at all. There are plans afoot to build a channel tunnel, there are others on the drawing board to build hover liners which will do the transatlantic run in two days. The feasibility of hovertrains travelling at two- or three-hundred miles an hour has been accepted by the British Government and an official research project for these is now under way. Since such trains will bring the centre of most of the European capitals within four or six hours' comfortable rail journey from London, will anybody be flying around Europe in a few years at all, except for the hell of it? It can also be asserted that two days at sea is the minimum preparation anyone requires to enter what Bernard Shaw once described as 'The political madhouse of America'. But even assuming that progress demands that five hundred commercial travellers at a time need to troop aboard 'jumbo' jets in order to make New York in three or four hours, is there anybody at all doing any homework on the social costs involved here? Is this gain in speed really worth the loss of so much fertile farmland, the destruction of several villages, the displacement of thousands of people, and the din and racket involved in flying daily and repeatedly through the sound barrier which will be imposed on millions of densely packed urban residents who are, heaven knows, already subjected to far too many stresses and strains of nerve racking proportions already?

But even these considerations are minor ones besides the issue of liberty. At some point governments have to be made to see that even the mere fact of an election does not give them a prescript to ride rough-shod over the wishes of local people on countless issues in the name of the majority, a majority that is generally acquiescent or indifferent to any major political decision. The government has been right to raise the issue of a third airport, but if the people of Essex made it clear, as they have, that they don't want it, the government was free to hawk the proposal around until it found one county that did want it. If, as is likely, it found that nobody wanted it at all, it should have abandoned it, and if anyone felt disposed to talk about what we would miss in terms of progress he should have been reminded that it is people's wishes that

determine the shape and pace of a civilisation and that to fly in the face of those wishes is merely an abuse of technique which increases the trend to totalitarianism, a result which reflects no criteria of progress at all.

The Stansted issue is a more glaring instance than most of the extent to which the onrush of technology, far from being a product of the democratic process, is being used to destroy it. No doubt political people will argue that the Stansted decision was taken in the national interest. This is mere twaddle. A nation is not a person and hence it can have no 'interests,' whatever brainwashed victims of contemporary forms of idolatry may assert to the contrary. It is people who have interests and if democracy has any kind of meaning it is people who should decide how their interests are best served.

#### Common Cause

It is on this basic question of principle that the Stansted issue ought to be fought, for the same assumptions are being used to make ever increasing inroads into people's freedom at many points. One may ally to Stansted the compulsory medication of people by dosing drinking water with minute additions of rat poison, or the compulsory amalgamation of many local police forces now being pushed through by the Home Secretary against strong local opposition, the power now being given to the police to make 'anticipatory arrests' if they think an offence is going to be committed (a power which will doubtless be used to good effect when peace demonstrations are in progress), the substitution, in defiance of overwhelming antagonism to the change, of names of local telephone exchanges for anonymous numbers, the pressures to push Britain into Europe, the steady and highly unpopular closing down of local hospitals, and, of course, the vast and largely secret build-up of arms and equipment for total genocidal wars.

Stansted is a symbol of authoritarian presumption and people's powerlessness. As such it is an issue that is directly related to the struggle for peace. It is inevitable, given the nature and direction of the state power machine, that its workings should operate to the detriment of citizens' lives at many points besides that of directly making war. It is for the peace movement to make common cause with the people of Essex on this and to press home the deeper moral of their struggle. The window stickers of the Stansted campaign features a large 'NO'. The language of emphatic negation to governmental presumption is not least of the lessons the resurgent forces of democracy need to take to heart. In this instance the common front between the peace movement and the Essex people has a more obvious basis, since the government makes no effort to conceal the fact that the main reason for choosing Stansted arises from its reluctance to close down the military firing range on the alternative site at Shoeburyness. The conflict between the ordinary interests of civilian existence and the presumed needs of the military machine has rarely been made so explicit in peace time. The forces for peace should not hesitate to press home the lesson.

## PUBLICATIONS

Editors of journals wishing to appear in this column are invited to send details to Resurgence, 22 Nevcrn Road, London, S.W.5, England.

**VOLUNTARY ACTION** (Formerly AVARD) Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development. Gives a useful and detailed picture of development work on gandhian lines in India. Available from Housmans, 3/- post free.

**THE PACIFIST** The monthly journal of the Peace Pledge Union. Price 1/- from P.P.U., 6 Endsleigh Street, W.C.1.

**NEW DEPARTURES** International Review of literature and the arts. Editor Michael Horovitz, 29 Colville Terrace, London, W.11.

**LIBERATION** Monthly. Editor, Dave Dellinger, £2 p.a. from Housmans, 5 Caledonian Road, N.1.

**WAR RESISTANCE** Quarterly of the W.R.I. Price 1/6. 88 Park Avenue, Enfield, Middlesex.

**THE ANGLO-WELSH REVIEW** 8s. 6d. (\$1.50c) a yr; (80c) singles; 2 a yr; fiction, poetry, articles, art, reviews, criticism. Poetry competitions and anthologies regularly—details (stamped envelope, please) from Dock Leaves, Croft Terrace, Pembroke Dock, S. Wales.

**EAST VILLAGE OTHER** Newspaper with everything. 20c. or 1/6 fortnightly. 147 Ave. A., New York, NY 10009

**SANITY** Formerly the newspaper of Canadian C.N.D., Sanity is now the leading independent peace magazine of Canada. Published ten times yearly. Annual subscription \$3.50 (Air mail \$5.50) from 3837 St. Lawrence Boulevard, Montreal, Canada.

**SMOKY HILL REVIEW 1** Poetry, fiction, reviews. Ed. Robert Day, Fort Hays, Kansas State College, Hays, Kansas 6701. \$1.000

**THE SCHOOL OF LIVING** promotes decentralist answers, elimination of basic economic monopolies, and land-based family and community living. Published bi-monthly A way Out—\$4.00 a year; (32 page journal) and The Green Revolution, monthly newspaper, \$3.00 a year.

**Go Ahead and Live!** counsel on decentralist living. \$4.00 book. Organised in 1936. Lanes End Homestead, Brookville, Ohio, U.S.A. 45309; Heathcote Community, Freeland, Maryland, U.S.A. 25103.

**BB Bks** thrice yearly book issues at cheap sub. rate, which includes the PM Newsletter. Seer poetry, psycho-experimental works etc. First-print limited editions. 10/6 for three postpaid. Available, **Deep Within This Book** . . . poems, mindplays, filmplays, peace therapy workings by Dave Cunliffe. Out in August, **A Song Of The Great Peace**, poetry/prose fragment guide/trip thru, before, beyond the mind by Tina Morris. Sereeches Publications, 11 Clematis St., Blackburn Lancs.

**NEW CORNWALL** Postal Subscriptions 8/-, Editors:—Richard and Ann Jenkin, 'An Gernyk', Leedstown, Hayle, Cornwall, G.B.

**NEWS & VIEWS** Journal of the Lancaster Peace Research Centre, Editor: Robin Jenkins—10/- per year from, 7 Common Garden St., Lancaster.

**WIN** Peace and Freedom through Non Violent Action. The monthly journal of U.S. Peace Activists. Price 25 cents (about two bob) from CNVA 5 Beekman St., Room 1033, New York, N.Y. 10038, U.S.A.

**UNDERGROUND** New Youth Peace Magazine. News, Poetry, Comment, Views, etc. Price 6d. copy (Monthly) or 4/- per dozen (+postage). Available from 14 Tib Lane, Manchester 2., or Tony Everington, 494 Woolwich Road, London, S.E.14. Contributions to Tony Hetherington, 47 Teilo Street, Liverpool 8.

**THE LIBERTARIAN** A Common Wealth Publication. Four times a year. Price 1/- from W. J. Taylor, Scamps Court, Pilton St., Barnstaple.

**SOIL ASSOCIATION NEWS** Short practice articles on farming and gardening together with news for those who care about food and are worried about chemical cultivation. Available monthly from The Soil Association, New Bells Farm, Haughley, Stowmarket, Suffolk, price 1/-.

**RESISTANCE** Journal of Birmingham Committee of 100. Monthly 1/-, Editor Peter Neville, 12 South Grove, Erdington, Birmingham 23. **R.S.G. (Resistance Shall Grow)** Journal of London Committee of 100. Price 1/- monthly. Editor Douglas Kepper, 13 Godwin Street, London, N.4.

**TALKING POINTS** Cyclostyled sheets of news, views and details of projected peace action from Peter Cadogan, National Secretary, Committee of 100, 5 Acton Way, Cambridge. No charge for this, Peter will add you to his mailing list for free but of course he won't refuse your donation.

## Critical Size

*What is the critical size of a political unit? In this essay<sup>1</sup> Professor Kohr, with a lucidity and wit Resurgence readers will have come to expect, postulates the kind of criteria we should use and stresses the dangers of a failure to do so. His approach constitutes a direct challenge to many of our prevailing political assumptions and stamps him as one of the outstandingly original and creative political thinkers of our time. Much of what he has to say will doubtless cause discomfort in precisely those areas of our thinking where the assumptions he challenges are most securely lodged, but Professor Kohr is a new kind of revolutionary, concerned not to promote the class struggle or the fortunes of some new political messiah, but to end war, and nobody who shares his concern can afford to neglect the profound implications of his ideas.—Ed.*

A year or so ago, Puerto Rico proclaimed a road safety day. It was backed by government, police, civic organisations, newspapers and clergymen. The result: the same number of accidents by noon that was registered on the corresponding date a year earlier by nightfall. Had the warnings against reckless driving fallen on deaf ears? By no means. All it proved was that, once a car-driving society has reached *critical size*, traffic accidents are no longer the result of recklessness but of the size of society. This is why they are predictable by statisticians whose material is not the nature but the number of men. Warning or no warning, caution or no caution, reckless or not, a given population of drivers will by statistical law produce a given number of casualties.

This being the case, accidents in societies which have reached *critical size* can obviously not be reduced by road safety days or appeals to reason. What is needed is the reduction of the society of car drivers to sub-critical size, that is the proportions at which the numbers of cars become so few that they cease to enroll themselves into orderly statistical patterns. Only then are accidents the result of personal factors, and reducible by caution or appeals to reason.

This does not mean that roads require a reduction in the actual number of cars using them. The same effect can be achieved through a reduction in speed limits. This is not because lower speeds

produce greater caution, but because by physical law a change in the velocity of movement has the same quantitative effect as a change in the number of moving particles. More people moving at reduced speed represent therefore the same mass as fewer people moving at increased speed. Hence the emergency exits in theatres whose use is unnecessary as long as people move at ordinary pace, but must be held ready to cope with the volume increasing effect of people moving at an accelerated pace as under the impact of panic.<sup>2</sup>

What applies to road accidents applies also to crime. At *critical* social size, it is not so much the criminal disposition of man that causes violations of the law as the size of the group. This is why statisticians are able to be accurate with their figures of crime as with those of accidents, and can tell us that during the next 30 days, Chicago, for example, will experience about 1,000 burglaries, 500 robberies, 30 attacks on women, 15 murders. Yet, Chicago is not inhabited by worse people than other cities. In fact, were its 1,545 monthly criminals living in communities by themselves, not only would their crimes be so few that they could not be predicted; most of the criminals would be engaged in wholly conventional professions, earning their living as teachers, lawyers, businessmen, college presidents, or priests. But a population the size of Chicago's will produce exactly the aforementioned figure of crime.<sup>3</sup> As a result, in societies

it would not alter the fact that the number of crimes *within* a given community would still be proportionate to its social or effective size. In other words, similarly sized cities located in societies as different as Sweden and Katanga may reflect different crime rates if compared across the boundary. One might then indeed need two crime "thermometers" if one were to measure the respective social size bringing forth corresponding quantities of similar criminal actions in both, though even in this case the concept of *effective* rather than numerical size may furnish a common denominator. However this does not seem to alter the primary fact that, beyond a given growth, social urban size becomes itself the chief criminal in all societies, progressively becoming worse with every additional growth.—The following figures, taken from the *Municipal Yearbook, 1951*, give a clear picture of this sinister progression in the variously sized police forces required by variously sized towns. North Plainfield, N.J., with a population of 12,760, needed a police force of 15; Plainfield, N.J., with 42,212 inhabitants: 78; Elisabeth, N.J., with 112,675: 275; Buffalo, N.Y., with 577,394: 1,398; Chicago with 3,606,439: 7,518; and New York City, with 7,835,099: 19,521. During the same time, all of the Principality of Liechtenstein, with a numerical population of that of North Plainfield but *effectively* perhaps half its size in view of its low density and low velocity, needed a police force of 7 men.

<sup>1</sup>Taken from Professor Kohr's new book 'The Overdeveloped Nations'. Although this important book has been published in both German and Spanish, it has yet to secure an English publisher.

<sup>2</sup>For this reason, any problem caused by the existence of an excessive number of moving particles can be solved in two ways: Quantitatively, through the reduction of particles, and qualitatively, through the reduction of the speed of movement. Most problems of modern overpopulation could thus be solved by the reduction of the velocity with which people move, rather than by emigration of the conquest of new Lebensraum. Vice versa, many generals having only small armies at their disposal, made up the deficiency by moving them around at so fast a pace that, like a single immense army, they seemed to be everywhere at the same time. This was the whole mystery of the military success of men such as Alexander, Hannibal, Napoleon or Hitler. Theirs was not a strategy or numbers but of speed (Blitzkrieg) which produced physically the same mass effect as greater numbers.

<sup>3</sup>It would make little difference if its inhabitants were all hymn-singing members of the Salvation Army. What might be affected to an insignificant degree by the particular cultural, religious, social, or national texture of a community is the point at which the various crimes begin to erupt in statistically predictable numbers. But

having reached a given—*critical*—size, education or appeals to conscience are not more effective in the solution of crime conditions than of accident problems. What is again required is the reduction of a community to sub-critical size, a size at which crimes are not the product of numbers but of personal disposition, and where warning, appeals, or training might therefore be effective.

The proposition was well illustrated during the Korean prison rebellions. Ascribing them at first to the recalcitrant disposition of communists, emissaries up to the rank of general went into the camps to talk sense. The only sense they conveyed to the inmates was the idea that generals make good hostages. But finally it dawned on the policy-makers that the real cause of trouble was not the incorrigible nature of communists but the size of prisoner compounds which, at critical magnitudes, leads to rebellion on sheer physical grounds, irrespective of the nationality ideology, or disposition of inmates. So instead of sending further emissaries, they solved the problem by breaking up the compounds into units of such small size that only a madman would have thought of rebellion.

The same principle applies to man's ideologies. When a crowd of New Yorkers not so long ago invited a suicide candidate clinging for hours to a window-sill high on a skyscraper to "make it snappy", one might have been inclined to attribute this monstrous sentiment to the brutalized outlook of insensitive citydwellers. Yet, the first ones to arrive on the scene displayed quite a different attitude. They were terror-struck, and they prayed. But as their number changed, so changed their outlook. The pangs of individual conscience were insensibly drowned in the throb of social excitement. Tragedy turned into spectacle, terror into thrill, and the prayer to desist into the clamour to perform. Only when the spectators dispersed did they return to prayer, not as a result of their better selves but as a result of the transformation of a critical into a sub-critical mass whose tenuous nature makes it impossible for an individual to hide from himself. This indicates that, contrary to current theory, atrocity-loving ideologies in general, such as fascism or nazism, seem again not so much to result from bad leadership, evil education, or metropolitan callousness as from *critical* social size.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A very similar point, attributing a change in concepts of morality in Khrushchev to achievement of critical *power* (which in turn rests on critical *size*) as a result of the successful testing of a second-generation ballistic missile is made by Joseph Alsop (*Guardian*, August 12, 1961). "Again and again," he writes. "... Khrushchev has betrayed an almost immature pride and delight in his fearful military hardware. A high-school boy with a new rifle or a new motorboat would respond in the same way. Add to this another Khrushchev peculiarity revealed in his more recent meetings with Westerners: his odd way of declaring that it would be 'irrational,' 'wrong,' and even downright 'immoral' for him to refrain at this time from trying to arrange matters at Berlin to suit himself. This curious Khrushchev conviction that 'morality' compelled him to make a grab for Berlin raises an obvious question. Why did no 'morality' compel him to begin threatening Berlin in 1954 or 1955, or 1957. The answer, of course, is to be found in the curve of Soviet weapon development. "In other words: in the main determinant of political morality—critical power, critical size. "One of the most brilliant British historians," Alsop continues, "... suggests that Adolph Hitler held the same view of the 'moral' meaning of the balance of power. For this reason, the historian argued, Hitler sincerely regarded the wretched Neville Chamberlain as the true aggressor in 1939."

And so it is with a mass ideology such as collectivism which many are inclined to attribute to the philosophic conviction that the immense aggregate of its strength makes society so superior that there can be no doubt about its position or preeminence in relation to the weak individual person. However, we are not born with this conviction. It becomes compelling only when society reaches that dangerous *critical* volume at which its physical bulk begins to exude such strength that the individual becomes indeed a particle of minor rank. Unable to assert himself under these conditions, he can then just as well rationalize his degradation by becoming a collectivist not only in fact but also in spirit. This is why the United States with her enormous social mass is, in spite of her individualist heritage, well on the road to becoming second only to the Soviet Union in the collectivist glorification of her society. If statesmen want to preserve a country's individualism, they will therefore get nowhere with indoctrination, which is itself a collectivist principle. Once more, they will succeed only if they reduce society to sub-critical size, a size at which social power is simply so minimised that the individual feels neither oppressed nor impressed by it. But as in the case of traffic problems, this again does not involve the reduction of the actual number of the population. A mere reduction of its speed of movement will have the same effect. And this can be achieved through lessening national compactness by much less drastic means such as administrative, economic, and cultural decentralization which diminish the speed of movement by diminishing the motive of movement.

### Overlooked

What applies to accidents, crime, and ideologies, applies also to economic complexities such as declining living standards or the ravages of modern business cycles. Most theorists ascribe the latter to the nature of an economic system such as uncontrolled free-enterprise capitalism, suggesting as a cure the switchover to a controlled system such as socialism or administered capitalism. Yet what is generally overlooked in the absence of an appropriate theory, controlled systems may suffer as much from consumer good shortages or cyclical upheavals as uncontrolled systems. Though it should have been theoretically impossible, communist Russia experienced in the 1930's all the economic disruptions usually identified with capitalist depressions: factories that could not work, output that could not be shipped, goods that could not be distributed. And in spite of the worker's co-ownership of the means of production, the individual worker even in socialist countries has yet to see the day on which his wage will approximate to the full value of his labour.

The reason is again the same. At *critical size*, the survival requirements of society begin to increase at a faster rate than its productivity. As a result, an ever increasing proportion of goods which were previously available for raising personal living standards must now be diverted to social use. Moreover fluctuations, which at sub-critical size were capitalist in nature and could therefore be eliminated through government control, re-enter the stage at critical size as sheer physical phenomena, taking their amplitude like waves in the water not from nature but from the size of the body through which they transmit themselves.

They are a consequence of the inner instability of the overgrown. This being the case, they can obviously not be eliminated through new controls. Again, only reduction of social size can restore stability and manageable conditions. This may seem reactionary. But this is what Krushchev did in 1957 when he stunned the world, after experimenting for 40 years with the policy of *One Country-One Factory*, by dismantling the monolithic unity of Soviet Russia into no fewer than 105 semi-autonomous economic districts the very moment when much of the rest of Europe, lacking the Russian experience, concluded an agreement for economic unification.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, what applies to so many other social complexities, applies also to the world's most tragic problem: war. During World War II and to this day, aggression has been attributed to German militarism. That is why we dismembered Germany. To bad leaders. That is why we hanged the war criminals. To bad ideologies. That is why we believed in re-education. To disunity. That is why we created the United Nations. To capitalist imperialism. That is why many believe in socialism. Yet, instead of creating peace, we merely discovered that war is made by the peace lovers, the re-educated, the united, the democrats, the socialists, as readily as by the militarists, the barbarians, the disunited, the dictators, the capitalists.

But the paradox resolves itself again if we attribute war to the acquisition of *critical size*, the mysterious social volume at which it breaks out spontaneously irrespective of the ideology, religion, leadership, culture, or the economic system of the countries involved. It explains why Franco and Tito, one a fascist and one a communist whom even the Russians find obnoxious, surpass each other in the pursuit of peaceful policies. They lack critical power. And it explains why peace-loving Nehru, on the other hand, rolled up a record of aggression that had no match since the defeat of the Axis dictators. In his few years of power, he made two wars, on Hyderabad and Kashmir, threatened a third, against Pakistan, pushed the French, ousted the Portuguese, and intervened imperialistically in Nepal whose government he changed and whose soldiers he recruited as eagerly for his armies as the British had done before him. Only in the face of China and Russia did he practice peace, not because he did not believe in force but because in relation to these giants, India's social size is not critical, that is to say it does not convey to her leaders the impression that they could wage war with impunity. Which means that once more the problem can be solved only through a reduction of the social size of potential aggressors to sub-critical dimensions which insure peace not through love or goodwill, but the physical inability to wage war—a much safer proposition.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>True, he afterwards reduced the number to 17 regions (1961), but in these he strengthened, not weakened, the theme of decentralization.

<sup>2</sup>A more recent example was provided by the then representative of the United Nations in Katanga, Dr. Conor O'Brian who, not unlike Hitler, promised friendship and peace to the local government, but unleashed ferocious street battles in Elisabethville the moment he thought he had amassed critical power. When he realised his error of appraisal, he promptly rediscovered his

## Five Concepts

The foregoing, sketching in rough outlines some of the most pressing of our contemporary problems, try to give form and content to the following five concepts that seem vital to our understanding of causes.

a. The concept of *social size* or, as it might also be called, the *effective size* of society. This is in contrast to the *physical size* of society which is based on population number. Social size, on the other hand, rests not on one but on four factors: the number, density, administrative integration, and velocity of the population. For a danger society is *in effect* a larger society than one of equal population but lower density. It produces more energy. For the same reason, a more integrated society is *effectively* a larger society than a less integrated one; and a faster society larger than a slower one. Thus, while the physical size of Great Britain is very much smaller than that of India, her social size, reflected in her status as a big power, is very much larger due to the magnifying effect of her greater administrative integration and technologically generated velocity of population. However, considering that the internal pressures of numerically larger societies are bound to produce in due course first greater density, then greater integration, and finally greater velocity, the numerically largest will ultimately also be the effectively largest society, making the concepts of physical or population size identical with effective or social size. But before this stage is reached, the historically important concept is social size, not physical size.

b. The concept of *critical social size*. This may be defined as the size of society in which problems are caused by proportions rather than any institutional or human shortcoming, in the same sense as at critical height breathing difficulties set in as a result of sheer altitude rather than individually defective lungs; or as at critical accumulation uranium explodes as a result of its sheer mass rather than any change in the character of its particles.

c. The *variability* of the concept of critical social size depending on the nature of the problem concerned. Related to war critical size may be said to exist when the leaders of a nation have reason to assume that their country's power has become stronger than that of any possible opposing power. Related to pickpocketing, knifing, massacres, it materialises when crowds become so big that they outgrow the controlling power of the variously large police forces necessary to prevent these occurrences. Related to business cycles, it sets in when market areas begin to outgrow the vision of governments charged to alleviate the amplitude of their fluctuations. In the case of economic systems, when social overgrowth begins to curtail the freedom of choice, etc.

love of peace, resigned, and got married. Even the angelic United Nations, committed to peace, will attack when they think they can get away with it. This explains also the behaviour of China during the Cuban crisis when, with Russia and America being locked in their eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation, she promptly invaded the fraternal territory of Nehru rather than of hostile Chiang Kai-Shek, feeling critically larger in the face of the declared neutralist who stood alone, but not in the face of the declared foe who was backed by the power of the United States.

d. The necessity, resulting from the foregoing of solving problems due to excessive social size not through the currently fashionable methods of integration and unification which, by increasing social size, magnify the problems along with it, but through the break-up of critical into sub-critical or optimum societies in which problems are brought back to the scale at which ordinary mortals can once more effectively deal with them with the limited talent at men's disposal.

e. The concept of critical social size as an essential tool of historic interpretation and as the primary modern cause of historic action.

This does not mean that there are not also other forces influencing historic development such as powerful ideas, man's will, leadership, accident, or Marx's famous mode of production. There are. But they exercise a significant role only in societies of sub-critical or optimum dimensions. In societies of critical size such as the world's contemporary dominant power, however, only social size seems to count as a *primary force*, and the only thing man can do if he wants to escape its levelling intellectual and physical consequences, and resume once more effective directions of his destiny is to do all politically what Khrushchev did to the vastness of the Soviet Union economically—dismember them.

## Objections

There are numerous objections to this size interpretation of history and is seemingly anachronistic conclusion suggesting an Augustinian pluralist small-state rather than a unitarian world. It is called *simplicist*. But which theory worth its name is not? The Providential interpretation assigns all historic events to the will of God. The great-man interpretation: to great men. The idealistic interpretation: to ideas. Marx: to the mode of production. Freud: to sex. Jung: to Angst. I: to the size of society. Only those playing it safe, or unable to deduce complicated structures from simple beginnings, would hold this against it. Professor Edward Teller, the master mind behind the hydrogen bomb, confessed recently that physicists are still baffled by the mystery of the atomic nucleus. The only thing he knew for certain, he said, was that when it will ultimately be revealed, it will turn out to be very simple. And Confucius told an admiring student: "I know only one thing. But this permeates everything."

It is called *materialist*. But do we not live in a material universe? God, not Karl Marx, has made it that way. To consider His creation meaningless in the interpretation of human processes seems more blasphemous than the Marxian interpretation which may deny God. But at least it accepts

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the meaningfulness of His design which cannot always be said of its detractors. And what about Churchill who, when pleading for the reconstruction of the House of Commons in its oblong form, warned that "we shape our buildings, but our buildings shape us?" Making British democracy dependent on the shape of a crowded debating place rather than on more flattering elements such as tradition or good sense, is this not also materialism? But does it make Churchill a Marxist or an Atheist?

It is called *determinist*. Even if it were, has determinism been outlawed by the academies? But is it? True, it pictures certain of man's ideas, ideologies, behaviour patterns, mode of production, social institutions, and actions as nothing but reflex phenomena to *critical social size*, just as a doctor pictures the ideas, emotions, and actions of a drunk as but reflexes to *critical* quantities of liquor. A person may always feel amorous after two martinis. But no alcoholic determinism compels him to drink two martinis. Similarly a society will always feel aggressive at critical size. But no historic determinisms compels it to grow to proportions at which its actions are not will but size determined. Far from being determinist, the implications of the size theory hands back to man the *ego* of which the pagan force of excessive social size threatens to divest him.

It is called *reactionary*. Suggesting, as it logically must, a return to a life within smaller or what is the same thing, slower communities, is this more reactionary than a housewife's suggestion to return to a smaller house where she will find the same problems but on a smaller scale? And where, instead of having to work 15 hurried hours a day to keep the family enterprise going, 3 leisurely hours may be enough, releasing her time for enriching other pursuits? As long as countries were of reactionary small size, they had profligate prices. But what did these cost the citizen compared to the frugal dictators and prestige satellites of great powers? In their cities you could meet Aristotle, Shakespeare, Newton, Goethe, Dante, Botticelli, Mozart. In the cities of the progressive great nations of our day, who can afford hydrogen bombs but hardly an opera, huge universities but hardly a scholar, you seem to meet only one man, the average man, of whom Ortega y Gasset wrote that he is "to history what sea level is to geography." Still, a small-state world may be reactionary. So, I presume, was Khrushchev's initial economic division of the Soviet Union into 105 sub-critical regions.

Finally, the division or at least the decentralization of great powers, which the size theory requires not because it would be without problems, but as a prerequisite to a social existence that is sound because problems would once more be brought back to manageable proportions, is said to be *impractical*. Is it really? Yet social division has been practiced as the principal device of every great organizer from the ancient Persians to the modern Germans, from Rose whose motto was *Divide and Rule*, not *Unite and Rule*, to the Vatican which has extended its way across the world in the form of a finely spun network of small bishoprics rather than a few unmanageable subpapacies; from Great Britain which divided her nations into countries, to France which divided her duchies into departments. Is it really more impracticable than the plan to sail a ship through space? Or the vision of our statesmen who cannot divide a village but fancy giving us eternal peace?

# REVIEW

## Beyond the Outsider

By Colin Wilson. Pan Books, 1966, 5/- . The Politics of Experience by Ronald Laing, Penguin Original 1967, 4/6.

'Beyond the Outsider' is the final volume of the Outsider Cycle: in it Colin Wilson sums up ten years of research on the problems of the 5% of intellectuals in our society who don't 'fit in'. He believes that they are a new evolutionary development towards a higher form. Like amphibians, the first fish to colonise the dry earth, they flap uncomfortably on the beaches and tend to be sucked back into the sea of animal existence along with the majority of the race. They are disgusted with the futility of this existence but are unable to make the sustained efforts necessary for life on a higher level. This is because they are suffering from a feeling of despair, expressed in modern art and literature, notably the 'nausée' of Sartre and the disgusted silences of Beckett's tramps.

He believes that this despair stems from the 'scientific' way of looking at the world which was initiated by Descartes (philosopher and mathematician 1596-1650)—seeing the world as a collection of machines in which life is a purposeless accident. At the time of Descartes, despair was escaped through dualism—a theory that the soul or psyche is separable and independent of the body. Descartes, who was a devout catholic, did not himself promulgate this heresy, but it fitted in with Protestant theories, and catholics, apparently, managed somehow to avoid seeing its contradictions. But the seeds of despair had been sown and fruited about a century later.

'Our culture is permeated with a nihilism, a defeatism, that is generally agreed to be the outcome of the rise of science, it is aggravated by the sense of insignificance that is bound to be felt by most individuals in a highly mechanised civilisation. . . . Man, as described by science, is passive, a product of a process of mechanical evolution, a blind will to live conditioned by natural selection. . . . It is not due to some particular discovery, like Darwinian evolution or the revelations of geology, but to the basic attitude of science, which is not interested in purposes but in causes. . . . all religion depends on man's feeling that he is a creature and the universe has a purpose that goes beyond his understanding. Science has destroyed all possible basis for religion in our civilisation' (p. 126).

## Free Will and Causation

An important aspect of the problem is the apparent contradiction between free will and the scientific laws of cause and effect; but, Colin Wilson points out, human beings have an extra dimension which is not subject to mechanical determinism (postulated by materialist philosophers of the XIXth century).

'It is necessary to bear in mind the distinction between inorganic material, biological material and human material. . . . these can be compared respect-

ively to a straight line, a plane and a cube. . . . The peculiar attribute of human material is its third dimension of freedom—even though, as already observed, this dimension is 'incomplete'. . . . although the physical world is able to cause (man) pain and inconvenience, it has no comparable power to make him happy, to produce a sense of fulfilment. This produces a split in motive. . . . The position is strange and uncomfortable, for unless the mental component possesses great power—the kind of power that can be given only by deep conviction—it is no genuine counterweight stimuli—physical pleasures—have lost the absoluteness that they possess for animals. In the ages of religion, this kind of deep conviction was possible; to-day this is no longer true. . . . It would seem that man's mind without the support of religion, is incapable of raising its sense of purpose like a cathedral spire.' (p. 203).

But if the 'mechanistic' science of the 18th and nineteenth centuries took away man's conviction of purpose and significance, twentieth century biology has given it back; the trouble seems to be that we have not yet caught up, we are still suffering from the hangover of XIXth century mechanism. Man is important because he is at the growing point of the evolutionary process of matter from simple to more complex forms—he cites the biologist Julian Huxley and the palaeontologist Teilhard de Chardin; in man the evolutionary purpose inherent in matter is becoming conscious; all we need to do is to find it in ourselves—to make it fully conscious; this will give us the incentive for self improvement that we need and restore our faith in our own significance and in the meaning of the universe.

## The Solution: A New Language of Subjective Experience

How is this to be done? Colin Wilson's solution is the hardest part of the book for ordinary people not well read in philosophy to understand; it is based on his interpretations of the writings of philosophers during the last two centuries, including Hegel, Hume, Whitehead, Heidegger, Sartre and Husserl. His solution is 'extential phenomenology'; which seems to be a kind of psycho-analysis which requires the invention of a new language for expressing subjective experiences which, up to now, because of the limitations of language, have been inexpressible, and therefore incommunicable and also difficult for the individual concerned either to understand or to remember.

This would be more convincing if he had at least made a start on phenomenological analysis and the invention of the language in order to demonstrate how it would work. But I doubt very much if it could be the kind of universal panacea that he imagines; certain subjective experiences which have never been expressed verbally—those associated with music and with mystical experience, have been going on for hundreds of years and are fairly common among human beings of many ages and cultures—if they were capable of verbal expression one would have thought that suitable linguistic terms would have been invented by now.

Apart from this, I believe that some of his premises are false or insufficient. For instance, the strange contradiction between his theory that science has made religious belief impossible and the fact that he uses the writings of a catholic priest, Teilhard de Chardin, as evidence for his theory of the innate evolutionary urge. I think his theories about the effects of science in general on attitudes to life have not been worked out—he just accepts current superficial views without question. It is very doubtful, in fact, whether scientific theories have been in any way directly responsible for feelings of pessimism and despair. It is just as likely that the popular idea of the universe is based on man's experience of his own social system just as in the religion of ancient Babylon the cosmogony was modelled on the Babylonian state. The idea that life is an ephemeral mould growing on the surface of a small lump of rock moving in a void in which vast suns hurtle at enormous speeds, derives its raw materials from astronomy, but it is less a true picture of the universe than an expression of the subjective feeling of a person as an atom in a technological society in which he is alone and exposed to strong and dangerous forces over which he has no control. I think Colin Wilson would have got a truer vision of reality if he had learned more from his own experience in society and relied less on philosophical writings; the following extract is from one of his books "Man without a Shadow" published in 1963 (not part of the 'Outsider Cycle').

## The Social Pathology of Work

"In the days when I worked in an office this quality of meaning was exactly what was missing from my days. . . . after six months in that office I had got so used to the ritualistic half-life that I fell into a kind of emotional paralysis, an emotional counterpart of sexual impotence; music ceased to move me; I could still think, but no real feelings or intuitions drove my thoughts. . . . I feel all the time that vital purpose has become muffled in our civilisation. If only we knew exactly what we were doing, exactly where we're going. I hated the office job because I knew that the purposes to which I devoted my day were mean and trivial; knowing the limited nature of the purpose, the vitality in me refused to respond."

What he wrote about his office applies equally to practically any factory, mine or work-place. Work which ought to be a means of finding and expressing oneself creatively in working with others for communal purposes has become degraded by our system of production to a devitalising process which separates us from one another and from our own selves.

Production for profit rather than for human need, and the control of the economy by a privileged minority is fundamental to the modern feeling of cynicism and lack of meaning not only in the 5% of outsiders, but in the whole population. But 'outsiders,' i.e. the writers and artists investigated in the 'Outsider Cycle' are doubly alienated by their alienation from the masses due to the loss of a universally accepted religious ideology which formerly bound all strata of society in a common transcendental purpose. The nineteenth century humanists believed that science, used in the interests of human progress, would fill the gap left by the loss of a supernatural religion; but obviously this cannot occur in a social system such as ours which has no common purpose, but is motivated by individual greed and lust for power.

What is needed at the present time is not so much a new language for expressing experience,

but a true understanding of our experiences expressed in the language we already have; and a true picture of the world, undistorted by constant propaganda of a privileged minority who control a good deal of our indirect experience of the world via education and the mass media.

## The Mystification of Experience

Our social system is founded on lies, as firmly as it ever was on coal and iron; but in order to make it work the lies are camouflaged as facts. Marx called this 'capitalist mystification'. The process begins in infancy; its techniques within the family have been laid bare by Ronald Laing in previous books including 'The Self and Others', 'The Divided Self', 'Madness and the Family' (in collaboration with Esterton). In 'The Politics of Experience' he extends his observations into the fields of politics and education. What he writes on education—the violence done to children in the name of love—is very true: I am less happy about his extrapolation of clinical pathology in politics—I think he draws his conclusions from a too narrow base of fact. He analyses group loyalties resulting from our experience of other people's experience of us; and their obverse, group hates and resulting stereotypes of people outside our group—e.g. Jews, foreigners, etc. This chapter 'Us and Them' concludes:

"There is a race against time. It is just possible that a further transformation is possible if men can come to experience themselves as 'one of Us'. If, even on the basis of the crassest self-interest, we can realise that We and Them must be transcended in the totality of the human race, if we in destroying them are not to destroy us all. . . . Shall we realise that We and Them are shadows of each other? We are Them to Them as they are Them to Us. When will the veil be lifted? . . . etc."

But it is not irrational fears of outsiders that cause war, this is one factor among many others which make it possible for governments to manipulate public opinion in the interests of the ruling minorities.

## 'Schizophrenia' as a Healing Process Religion and Psychedelic Drugs

Laing's idea on this subject are very important because they are a violent challenge to orthodox old fashioned psychiatry (which is the basis of modern national health service methods of treatment) and also because of their relevance to the controversy on psychedelics. He believes that some 'schizophrenic' breakdowns are, in fact, spontaneous processes of healing:

'Madness need not be all breakdown. It may also be break-through. It is potentially liberation and renewal as well as enslavement and existential death.'

If the patient pulls through, he will be cured of the 'insanity' which he and everyone around him previously thought of as 'normal'; through a process involving 'ego-loss' he will find his real self (which Jung equated with Christ). Laing describes such 'madmen' as hierophants of the sacred. He elaborates this under the heading "Transcendental Experience" on page 115:

"Our time has been distinguished, more than by anything else, by a drive to control the external world, and by an almost total forgetfulness of the internal world. . . . imagination, dreams, phantasies, trances, the realities of contemplative and meditative states, realities that modern man, for the most part, has not the slightest awareness of. . . . nowhere in the Bible is there any argument about the existence

of gods, demons, angels. People did not first 'believe in' God; they experienced his Presence, . . . But between us and It there is a veil which is more like fifty feet of solid concrete . . . we have to blast our way through the solid wall, even at the risk of chaos, madness and death."

I think that Laing is quite right in attacking the old fashioned view of schizophrenia or other psychosis as a disease of the brain which can be 'cured' by drugs or physical treatments or, if not cured, can be institutionalised and thus rendered harmless to the community; and in his own idea of therapy through communication and understanding by the therapist and others in contact with the patient; and there is a lot of truth in the theory of the origin of schizophrenia in the family as a result of irrational behaviour towards the patient by other members of the family, especially the mother.

But I think what he writes about experiences of the 'sacred' in dreams, phantasies, trances, etc., could lead to dangerous misconceptions. The people in the Old Testament were a religious community; faith in gods, angels and spirits was not in the first place due to their individual experiences; they were brought up to believe in the supernatural and to expect such experiences. And their interpretation of the experiences and actions arising from them were socially controlled. Both then and now there is a vast difference between true religious experience and the delusions of the insane—although at times it may not be immediately apparent. The Catholic Church judges the validity of mystical experiences by the subsequent effect on the person's behaviour—if he becomes more active in his love for others as a result of such experience, it is held to be valid; and this is a good criterion, because the more a person becomes integrated the more he is able to communicate and co-operate with other people. Man is a social animal; in order to develop humanly he needs to be integrated into a community. The dilemma of modern man is the lack of community, his atomisation into individual units, and the false uniformity imposed by the modern technological state—against which, in order to be human, he has to rebel. This must include rejection of the false ideologies of the technological mass media. This leads to total distrust of all theories which cannot be verified by one's personal experience. Laing writes

'We do not need theories so much as the experience that is the source of the theory. We are not satisfied with faith, in the sense of an implausible hypothesis irrationally held: we demand to experience the evidence.' (page 15).

This total scepticism is a source of strength, but also of weakness. It works only as long as one is dealing with things which one can know by personal experience. But how much of reality can be known in this way? And one cannot just exclude the rest—in order to know what to do in our small part of the world we have to have a knowledge of the whole—this can be built up by conscious selection or it can be unconsciously absorbed; if it is built up consciously we have to have criteria for our selection, for separating the true from the false. This can't be done without some kind of theoretical framework on which to base our judgments. Theory is really the results of past experience—we are human because we remember what has happened in the past and can pass on this memory to future generations.

## RESURGENCE AFFAIRS

First a very big 'thank you' to the many readers who were prompt with their subscription renewals, and especially to those who added something for our funds, who sent names of friends to receive a sample copy of *Resurgence* and to those who entered subscriptions for their friends. This latter form of help is particularly valuable for it frequently applies to people overseas and is helping to get *Resurgence* known around the world.

Most readers are probably aware that the price of *Resurgence* does not even cover the cost of printing, and this takes no account of our secretarial and editorial expenses, which are provided for the most part free. It would be quite a modest achievement if we could increase our readership to a break-even point on printing costs, and if we could notch up our first thousand subscribers it would take us beyond this.

This assumes that our other expenses do not increase in any way, but this is not an easy assumption to make. We wanted very much to improve our cover, for example, make it visually exciting, as the jargon goes; but making a block is much more expensive than playing around with a few quotes or titles of articles, as we discovered in using Dom Sylvester's design for our last issue. We wondered when the printer's bill came if we should go back to the usual lettering, but when we saw John Furnival's design we have used for our present cover we realised we just could not be less excellent than what was offered to us so generously. We hope you like the cover and we hope, too, it helps you to push the journal with your friends.

Eighteen shillings for one year's subscription is reputed to sound a lot of money, but as the man on the doorstep would say, this is little more than 4d. per week, which in turn is far less than many people spend on smoking per day.

Talking with John Roddam, a staunch supporter and author of 'The Changing Mind', who was in London recently, I mentioned how badly we needed an advertising campaign to let people know what we were trying to do. "A thousand pounds," I said grandly, "Would put us firmly on the map".

"But that's peanuts," he replied. "There must be any number of people, or peace organisations who could give such a sum today and not notice it."

Perhaps there are, but we have not discovered them yet, or they us, so meanwhile we slog on grateful that the growing band of readers we do have value our efforts and give us what help they can.

Meanwhile our obligations to our printer continue, as does the need for hard cash to meet them . . .

THE EDITOR.

## PREMONITIONS

(For an expectant mother)

The past has concertina'd not into our years  
but days, and even now  
it bears all Egypt, Greece, Crusades  
and Empires down, ineluctably re-born  
upon this crest of time until the seas fall  
headlong and souls assemble numberless as sand  
upon the nether shore.

The past has concertina'd not into our years  
but days, and even now  
we lie impressed with Egypt.  
Isis my love, unite the myriad fragments  
of the day's dissention! Osiris  
dismembered into passing time must work  
exiled for the day's duration to redeem the time.  
And now, as night's consummation moves us  
souls assemble numberless as sand  
upon the nether shore.

The past has concertina'd not into our years  
but days, and now in Arcadia  
inscribes your fullness  
slender like an Attic vase, intense with love,  
How well informed Greece was with God  
until a mind, broader than the known world  
took Alexander out of Macedon. Weep Athens  
who fathered imperious democracy upon the  
world!  
Restore the soul's exiled aristocracy  
and let die discrepancy  
for we are sick to death of war.

The past has concertina'd not into our years  
but days, and even now  
nothing suggests the advent of innocence;  
the dissolution of our Empire  
leaves us heirs only to earth  
and England. But pressaged into this world  
by love generations still come  
and on the threshold our child trembles  
in the seventh month past recall  
and we tremble  
as souls assemble numberless as sand  
upon the nether shore.

Jack Sayers



# Mebyon Kernow

## The National Movement of Cornwall

Many people only became aware of the existence of a national movement in Cornwall when a Mebyon Kernow candidate won a seat in the recent county council elections. Despite the scorn, not unmixed with some degree of disquiet, with which this victory was greeted by the main political parties, it is evident that Mebyon Kernow is part of a new seeking by modern man in the mechanised world for firmer and deeper roots to sustain him against its challenge to his humanity. We are clearly going to hear a great deal more of such groupings and Resurgence is privileged to be the first national journal in England to provide a platform for a leading Mebyon Kernow spokesman.

Cornwall originated separately from England, and her history though mingled with English history, is the history of a Celtic people. Today her survival as a Celtic country, with a precarious economy and an English administration increasingly centralised outside her territory, is now totally menaced. The foundation of Mebyon Kernow in 1951 was reasonably foreseeable, especially as other — though different — nationalist bodies already existed in other Celtic countries. Its aim may be summarised as the promotion of a prosperous Cornwall on an identifiable basis, a basis which envisaged political concessions from England.

Mebyon Kernow invented no conscious political philosophy but, as with all empirical organisations, one can play the game of discerning implications. Clearly it required the reorganisation of the United Kingdom, (not the dissolution or lessening of it), on the lines which were already conceded in the cases of Man and the Channel Islands: confident of Cornishness and its Celtic origin, it rejected anglicisation, far though that had gone. It saw that the small size of Cornwall required reliance on association with other Celtic countries as its natural helpers, without prejudice to the methods of struggle it considered proper to itself; on this basis it joined the Celtic League in 1962 and associated Cornwall's claim with the Celtic claims presented by the League to the United Nations at the end of 1965. Mebyon Kernow has always seen nations as unique values irrespective of their size and has been international in its support of legitimate national interests; for many years it has belonged to the Federation of European Minorities.

Organisationally, there has been a devoted few over most of the time from the date of foundation and the whole membership has met generally in Truro to conduct business on the basis of customary democratic procedure with Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer as officers. Mebyon Kernow works wholly by constitutional means and has never discussed any other methods. It holds these as proper to the views of the Cornish people but

does not presume to prescribe for other deprived nations. Over the last three years the continuing difficulties of Cornwall and constancy of Mebyon Kernow in her interests has led to a considerable growth of membership and branches have been organised. The regulation of relations between the branches and the Executive Committee brought about the careful consideration of a constitution from June to September of 1966 and its adoption at a conference in the subsequent October.

The English influence has put an Englishman inside every Cornishman; without destroying the Cornish character (so far), although the English influence has made it difficult to be a Cornishman without inhibition. The Cornishman usually conceals his nature and the Englishman smiles indulgently. Mebyon Kernow, was an act of defiance for which anglicisation called into play its full range of irrelevancy, ridicule, misrepresentation, and slander. From the beginning came out the parrot cries: "They want Home Rule," "They want to blow up the bridge," "Passports will be shown at the Tamar," Nevertheless, Mebyon Kernow is not anti-English, even whilst it is against anglicism in the wrong place: it holds that one defers to one's host in another house and that Cornwall was ever a host and is now an unwilling one. It is now possible to discuss seriously in public the idea of a government in Cornwall.

Mebyon Kernow presented its views on local broadcasting to the Pilkington Commission; it has sustained public interest in mining and fishing; and it has promoted the preservation of parts of Cornwall (without becoming a preservation society). The language bards of Gorsedd Kernow have generally belonged to Mebyon Kernow, suggesting that language in Cornwall has to do with nation, but Mebyon Kernow is not a language society. Taking advantage of the Robbins Committee and the claim which Cornwall might present to it to possess a university, Mebyon Kernow started a campaign which achieved unity from one end of Cornwall to the other and created a sentiment which may yet be strong enough to succeed during the next decade. Mebyon Kernow, confronted with the recession of railways, the inadequacy of roads, the oblivion of many ports, and the slightness of her air connections, projected the Cornwall Transport Committee which, over four years, has held seven public meetings, obtained considerable local government response, and established the idea of the integration of transport in Cornwall. Mebyon Kernow successfully put forward candidates for election as councillors in the last three years at Falmouth, Penryn, and Padstow. Mebyon Kernow is at present putting forward a programme, limited to points which have separately had wide acceptance already in Cornwall, as an alternative to the adoption of proposals to accommodate the London

## Quotes

"We shall soon be producing too much of some crops, of which coffee is a notable example. The long-term market prospects for other major crops are not bright either. It is grain, meat, milk and vegetables that the world needs to stave off starvation, not coffee and tea."

TOM MBOYA

*Kenya Digest.*  
25th May, 1967.

"... Nothing perhaps demonstrates more clearly the character and quality of a people than the way they spend their leisure. There could, then be no more convincing evidence of the intellectual stature of the average Greek citizen than the character and quality of the plays that were staged in his theatres. We know from them how thoroughly the ideal of self-consciousness had permeated all the ranks of Athenian society. To reflect for a moment upon the Roman arena and the Greek theatre and hold them balanced in the mind's eye is to set the comparative value of these two civilizations in perfect focus."

JOHN RODDAM

*The Changing Mind, Jonathan Cape, 1966.*

"Sarvodaya does not mean good government or majority rule, it means freedom from government, it means decentralization of power. We want to do away with government by politicians and replace it by a government of the people, based on love, compassion and equality."

VINOBA BHAVE

### Mebyon Kernow—continued

overspill. Many councils see this latter as a panacea, and their views are backed up by a variety of trading interests. Mebyon Kernow has just circulated a pamphlet on the education of the Cornish child and it has an economic survey in preparation; it has joined the general protest against the amalgamation of the police administration with that of Devon, Exeter and Plymouth; it has protested against the proposed reduction of Cornish parliamentary constituencies; and in its evidence to the Royal Commission on local government, it pressed the case for retaining Cornwall as a basic unit.

No-one in Mebyon Kernow can refute the charge that the Society still needs to gain a lot of political

experience. The new members have to learn that joining is not an end but a beginning; they have to learn that the fulfilment of enthusiasm is in education, vigilance, and unremitting hard work, and that without education they will be weak when they need to stand firm because England will readily make them feel involved in a betrayal. Without vigilance they will be confronted by new situations in which what they have gained they will lose; without unremitting hard work they will not make opportunities and they will be insufficiently organised to take those which occur. However, for those who do not know Cornwall, the existence of Mebyon Kernow at all must appear something of a miracle.

# Correspondence

## All Wrong

I would like to disagree with certain points you make in your Open Letter to Arnold Wesker—points which seem to me central to the political philosophy of 'Resurgence'.

You say 'that in the past it has always been small-scale communities, the Greek City States, and the city states of Renaissance Europe for example, which have given the artist the freest and most fertile rein and so added so much lustre and wonder to the human record . . .' But in fact the city states to which you refer (presumably in this context particularly Athens, Florence and Venice, as these were the chief intellectual and artistic centres) were *not* small-scale. In relation to the population of the known world, and the speed of communications, these were *large* communities. They were also commercial and industrial centres; they were aggressive and imperialist powers; they were places in which there was an accumulation of capital, surplus wealth, a desire for individual and social ostentation. It seems to me dishonest to ignore their true economic and political nature—which was obviously crucial in determining their culture and in differentiating them from so many other, and dull, petty kingdoms—and imply that somehow it was their smallness per se (measured by irrelevant present day standards) that lead to their artistic success. In other words, in advocating *their* size as being best for a community (suggesting, I take it, that the artistic success was a sign of social health) you ignore what the true contributory qualities really were. You somehow neglect the fact that artistic success was most marked in city states that were the metropolitan centres of their time.

You then go on to say 'it has always been the mass-suborning and centralized governments that have provided our Caesars and Hitlers . . . and our mammoth wars of destructive conquest . . .' But what about Venice, which you have claimed as a small-scale community, and whose artistic success you've commended? She was well-known for her secret police, her brutal prisons, executions, tortures, informers, as well as for her wars of destructive conquest (1204 for instance).

You continue 'Art cannot flourish in a degenerate social order,' but again your generalization doesn't hold up. If any social order could be called degenerate surely Nineteenth Century Russia could—yet it produced several of the greatest of all writers. Seventeenth Century Spain produced Velazquez, one of the greatest and most seminal of all European painters. Then what about France at the time of Dreyfus? Obviously the relationship between artistic and intellectual life and the social order is not as simple as you are making out—and it is futile to try to draw conclusions as though it were.

You then say, as though you have proved your case, 'the evidence points overwhelmingly to the fact that social health stems from small-scale communities dominated by men rather than mass aggregates dominated by machines'. But what evidence? You haven't produced any. This con-

clusion is merely an assertion. And I would have thought that in fact historical and anthropological evidence would not have substantiated it. (I don't mean, of course, the evidence would favour 'mass aggregates dominated by machines'. I don't know what this refers to. It seems to be related to an obscurantist attitude to science and technology which is another central element in the political philosophy of Resurgence which—like the advocacy of small-scale communities—seems to me to have no convincing justification).

NICHOLAS PARSONS.

70 Carleton Road, London, N.7.

## Commendation

. . . Resurgence is really excellent, I believe the ideas for which it stands, will meet with increasing acceptance.

DONALD J. STEWART.

Heatherlea, 30 Goathill Road,  
Stornaway, Isle of Lewis.

## Starved

. . . Both my husband and I are teachers in a state primary school and are very interested in education. We feel that it is a most important factor in developing in human beings the interest, concern and sense of responsibility which could lead to change in the social, political and economic life of the world of the kind advocated in your magazine. We would like to see articles concerned with education in *Resurgence*. This field does not seem to be taken seriously enough by the government or even by a large number of people involved in education itself.

The problem really is to recognise the enormous influence education has on children, hence to realize the teacher's responsibility. It is known that the early years of a child's life are of particular importance in determining his later attitudes. Perhaps it is not so readily accepted that the personalities of the teachers and the whole mood of school life have as great an effect as the actual subject matter being taught and learnt. For example, whether the teacher's attitude to life is that of detached interest, reverence and concern, boredom or even frivolous, it may well affect the children strongly.

Most of the many new and stimulating ideas on education seem to us to be concerned primarily with intellectual learning and how it is to be 'programmed'. The development of the subtler qualities of sensitivity, imagination and love seem to be left more to chance and the individual teacher. Yet from our own experience, this is the level on which many young children today seem to be starved. Parents provide toys in plenty and children are on the whole well cared for physically, but family life often seems to be lacking in warmth. At least that

seems the only way of explaining the presence in our classes of very insecure and emotionally deprived children from apparently good, certainly materially good, homes. These are matters which perhaps call for our thought and concern, if we are interested in the future of small groups of responsible and mature human beings as a new basis for political and economic life. What one could call the 'moral' elements of education should not be forgotten, simply because they require a long-term approach and the results are not measurable statistically and financially.

MRS. SYLVIA MEHTA.

Old Library,  
2 Causeway,  
Bicester.

## Unintended . . .

I agree with you entirely when you say that peace research which concerns itself with the psychology of aggression is really besides the point when it comes to shedding light on the modern war problem. However, it would be unfair to assume that peace research implies such an approach. It is very tempting to analyse human behaviour—especially reprehensible behaviour—in terms of so-called animal instincts and whilst books like Konrad Lorenz' *On Agression* might be relevant to the animal kingdom, any generalisations to human behaviour are not just misleading but also dangerous. As you say, the origins of modern warfare are to be found in highly abstract assumptions about the organisation of society, not in reducing everything to underlying aggressive motives in the individual. One of the objects of peace research is to discover some of the unintended consequences of the organisations that we live with.

ROBIN JENKINS.

Peace Research Centre,  
7 Common Garden Street,  
Lancaster.  
4th June, 1967.

## A Beginning

Your editorial on *New Roads to Peace* illustrates that high degree of profound thought which the peace movement so greatly needs. I hope that you and your contributors will continue to explore the problem of war and peace at this depth.

It seems to me that you have made a beginning towards a solid theoretical and philosophical peace platform. By all means, keep it up.

My own feeling regarding current peace research is that it has lacked balance between empirical and theoretical research. If we can establish a better orientation in theory, our empirical research will have a better chance for a high order of peace relevance.

I am most happy to see you call attention to the need of inspecting the assumptions, both among the scientific and the political workers. I feel that

there are many more assumptions which need to be ferretted out and inspected, some to be challenged and some to be supported.

THEO. F. LENZ,  
Director.

Peace Research Laboratory,  
5937 Enright Avenue,  
St. Louis 12,  
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# Porton Notebook

We arrived in the Guildhall Market Square in an uncommon blaze of sunshine to find the open-air meeting already in progress. A local councillor stood in the side car of a motor cycle talking about how much money it cost to run Porton and how the money could be better spent on clinics and hospitals rather than on research into horrible diseases for weapons of war.

There is no gainsaying the apparent strength of this argument, it is often repeated in peace propaganda, and yet it is curiously ineffective. It's as though people are expected to reply: "Ah yes, we need a new baby clinic down our way, where can I join the Committee of 100?" Probably people are unimpressed simply because they know that however the money is spent it won't be spent on the basis of any decision that they have been able to make.

Salisbury's Guildhall Square is one of the most remarkable examples of urban planning I know. It is large as such squares go, large enough to hold a fair-sized weekly market, but not so large as to destroy a sense of intimacy as one goes about it. The houses and shops surrounding it lend a deceptive air of casual Englishness to the scene; they look individualistic and higgledy-piggledy, as though they somehow found themselves there one at a time any old how. But the roofline expresses a surprising uniformity, as though the builders were working to some preconceived but individually expressed limitations to help keep things all of a piece as it were. The result is exquisite, and beautifully balanced by the pleasing bulk of the Guildhall and, diagonally across, the classic simplicity of the Corn Exchange.

On the Guildhall steps an assortment of scruffily dressed youngsters lounged about. Few of them were more than twenty and few looked as though they cared a damn about anything. They looked bored, sullen and supercilious, wearing their long hair, their wispy beards, their youth and good looks as they wore their frequently tattered and grimy clothes, with a curious mixture of market-place wariness and an almost royal disdain.

But again, there was a deceptiveness lurking here. These youngsters were in Salisbury's market square for just about the most serious business on earth. Nine miles up the road is the Government's main centre for germ warfare research. Put like that it sounds a conventional and even harmless sort of place, such is the peculiar anodyne quality words can have in relation to the utmost horror the human mind can conceive. It really means the British Government has made a policy decision (when? where? how?) to be in a state of keyed preparedness to infect millions of people with bubonic plague, or chronic and fatal forms of nerve and muscular convulsion, or venereal diseases, or varying forms of blindness, deafness, insanity or neurosis.

It is tempting to call these things 'beastly', but what beast would perfect them? It is tempting to call them inhuman, but who other than a human

would work on them? And what beast would remain so apparently insensitive and unconcerned to such acute dangers to his kind, and which his own kind had created, other than man?

Stripped of all extraneous considerations the stark fact is, these youngsters care, care deeply and acutely enough to travel the breadth of the country, with hardly a bean in their pockets, and content to sleep on concrete floors in broken down halls in order to register their concern and their protest. Meanwhile, millions go about their lawful occasions oblivious or morally indifferent to what is being done in their name.

As the Councillor spoke some girl-guide mistresses emerged from an event in the Guildhall. Neat, starched, blue cotton frocks, black pudding-basin hats, clean, black stockings and black well-polished shoes, sanitary and rather pre-considered smiles. These emissaries of an England that is rapidly cantering over the hill into oblivion confronted our girls sitting or lying on the steps in the sun; girls wearing frayed jeans, dark sweaters and long uncombed hair who at first sight looked as if they had abandoned all the traditional feminine graces; and yet somehow one felt they had acquired another quality, one that was finer and infinitely more incorruptible than all the others put together, a poise and command before a welter of decadent power and money-lust that left them serene and somehow untouched. The two Englands gazed at each other across a chasm of non-communication and I wondered how many of the small uniformed girls I could see through the windows would, in a year or two, be with the jeans and sweaters of ours outside.

Richard, the indefatigable organiser, gave me the microphone and I spoke about the evil of Porton, using the moral argument and sticking to it. I do not like open-air speaking, I prefer to talk with people rather than at them, and on public occasions like this one has to simplify arguments to a point where one comes near to distorting them. The crowd went on with its shopping, and the open space before the microphone remained fairly empty, and such listeners as we had tended to stand on a perimeter about twenty yards away. A few police officers stood even further off and their demeanour suggested they knew our score and that the situation was well in hand.

This meeting was actually a Porton 'teach in', at which it was hoped to involve any pro-establishment boys coming forward to give their views. None did, although a number of volunteers came forward to air views of varying, and sometimes remote degrees of relevancy to our theme.

Probably the best speech came from Steve, a young Oxford student. "I'm a biology student actually, and I'm really worried about Porton and I think you should know about it . . ." and he gave a succinct, lucid and engrossing account of what precisely the research people were doing. The only explicit reaction to this came from a stallholder who pleaded with us to turn down the vol-

ume of the loudspeaker. "I agree with you about Vietnam and all that," she said heavily, "but we've got our living to earn and your noise is driving away our customers." Unknowingly she epitomised our problem, the problem of all those who seek to arouse concern for peace. How do we begin to bridge that terrifying gulf between the appalling dangers confronting us and the ordinary limitations of most people's mental horizons? How do we relate the catastrophic actualities of life that the age of technique has helped to create to the immediate pocket-and-stomach realities which preoccupy most people to the exclusion of almost anything that does not add to their creature comforts?

Richard obligingly turned the volume down until we began to receive complaints that people on the fringe could not hear a word, when he raised it again, not only to enable people to hear, but to restore some unity to our meeting which had begun to disintegrate as our supporters began to start discussions of their own with people who drifted over to us. It occurred to me later that we might be missing out on something here. Instead of a continuous succession of platform speeches, why not intersperse the speeches with twenty minute breaks whilst supporters go round the crowd leafletting and getting involved in arguments? This gives everybody something to do and makes our own supporters active participants in the scene instead of being mainly passive. Anyway, although we mistakenly tended to view these arguments as an interruption to the meeting, they went on all the time here and there, and when we finally broke up for the day there were small bundles of people scattered about, gathered around voluble, deep breathing and finger counting advocates pleading the cause.

A group of us went to a nearby café, and after chips with very nearly everything we decided to do some loud-speaker work and leafletting from Peter's van to encourage support for the protest march to Porton the following day. This work demands more care and planning than we gave it. We raced from one part of the city to another when we might have done better say, to stick to one housing estate, or to have visited a few youth clubs. Afterwards we stood about in a pub chewing the fat and trying to make our case to a couple of soldiers dressed in careful non-Carnaby Street civilian clothes. Said one of them aggressively: "Do you know what I'd do if I met one of those pacifists? I'd punch his bloody nose . . . I don't mean you blokes though, you're the decent type of pacifist . . ."

Afterwards an argument in the van about a possible demo inside the Cathedral at morning service. Inspired by reports of American peaceniks who had organised their own 'Napalm Sunday', I wanted two of us to sit at the front and at a given moment to slowly walk out down the aisle displaying posters declaring "Thou Shalt not Kill Is Not A Misprint". But the feeling was against it. "Leave it to the Christians," said Howard, so we did.

We broke up and I set off to look for my billet. I had been offered floorspace at Richard's house, but I lost my way. At 12.30 all the orange-coloured street lights suddenly went out and I found myself on a dead concrete ring-road with a sign which talked about Southampton. I took a side turning and made for some lights. A notice told me to report to the welfare officer and I knocked at a door. I tried other doors in the grounds with a

similar lack of response. Finally I pushed one open. The air was warm, antiseptic and slightly foetid. I tiptoed down the lighted corridor and found myself opposite the open door of a room in which there was an old man lying in bed with a curiously distorted face, but he was only sleeping with his mouth yawning open.

A private house further up the road produced an elderly gent who opened his glass front door after shining a torch over me for a bit. He sedately took a key from his waistcoat pocket and proceeded to undo four locks, and by the time he finished his directions, I felt I had the entire city plan of Salisbury committed to memory.

At about 1.30 I found my address and Dave, who works for *Peace News*, admitted me. Inside the sitting room two figures were already sleeping, a young man in bathing trunks was sitting in a yoga position, and Dave was deep in a detective novel. I took some rubber cushions from the sofa and lay on them after wrapping myself in a blanket. This was luxury, most of our group were sleeping on the concrete floor of a draughty, dusty and derelict-looking hall by a railway bridge.

About 150 of us set off from the market square for the march to Porton, and after we reached the outskirts I returned to the city, intending to catch up later. I did a one-man poll of such people as I met with questions about our demo and the existence of Porton and was gratified to find how much support we had. On an impulse I went into the Cathedral, but afterwards I was sorry. The established church in England looks more imposing from a distance than under scrutiny. This glorious building had attracted a congregation so small it was packed into the choir stalls and many of its members appeared to be church stipendiaries. The service wheezed and mumbled its way to a close in a stupefying daze of tedium. At one stage the choir-boys filed out and there followed a lengthy pause and it dawned on me that somebody had been preaching a sermon. I don't know what I missed, and the comatose expressions on people's faces prompted me to wonder, uncharitably, if it would have mattered if everybody else had filed out too.

I had passed the time with a fantasy in which the Bishop of Salisbury and all his clerics had joined our protest and brought their congregations with them. Perhaps this is not so fantastical as it sounds. In many people today there is a deep hunger, a craving, for precisely the kind of moral lead, the sense of certainty and community on leading moral questions, that the churches once seemed to give. In joining the rat race for power and place, the Church has bound itself to a complex of forces which are for the most part destructive, amoral and irrational, and it has in consequence not only blinded itself to the imperatives of its own message, in many leading respects it has betrayed them.

Yet man does not live by intellectual cognition alone. He has powerful psychic roots which are embedded deeply in the myths and fables of his past. In some way the church, despite its alliance with reactionary social forces, despite its thirty-nine articles and its other forms of nonsense, expressed what those roots were thrusting up and, by the beauty of its language, its music, its buildings and its rituals, has helped powerfully to nourish them. Today it is stultifying them. If the Church today would take up the cause of peace as its own, and instead of talking about sin and death, begin to talk earnestly about peace, life and love, it might

begin to win a few souls even if it had to lose a few stipends.

At Porton we hung coloured balloons on the wire fence, and even in that damnable rain, which did not let up once while we were there, they looked gay and alive, a surprisingly simple and effective affirmation of our intent. Then we split up, some of us going in cars and vans to the gate of the animal research centre. Over 190,000 animals a year are killed here. Progress, not to say Wilsonian socialism and the brotherhood of man, is an expensive doctrine. There was the usual array of police, soldiers and military vehicles behind the gate. We threw some balloons across and the wind carried them away. Somebody apologised for only bringing balloons, saying they had intended to bring flowers for them. The soldiers looked at each other incredulously and a trifle uncertainly. We made some speeches on the loud speaker, and then we all ran to line up along the wire fence. This was action, now the soldiers were on familiar territory and knew what to do, they ran over to the fence and took up prepared positions of their own. Then Peter announced we would have a five-minute silent vigil. The scene was one to savour. A row of tense, hard-breathing soldiers ranged along one side of a fence and all ready for a belt-up; on the other a long line of peaceniks concerned simply to stage a confrontation to emphasise the moral squalour of the establishment the soldiers were guarding. As we fell silent, so, too did the soldiers. Suddenly one realised they were nervous and un-

comfortable. For the first time, perhaps, they were under scrutiny, not for unpolished boots or buttons, or a neglected shave, but for what they were and what they believed. When we made a friendly farewell speech and went away I had the sense of involvement in one of the most meaningful acts against war in which I had ever participated.

Back to the main road and the rest of the group, some of whom had crossed the fence and attempted an 'invasion'. They had been surrounded by soldiers and escorted back. All very polite, except one soldier had suddenly assaulted a young man, punching him hard in the face without warning and then kicking him in the stomach when he fell.

They said the press people refused to photograph the victim, whose face was bleeding, and I asked a photographer why. He said they had plenty of photographs and asked what else people expected to happen if they trespassed on military property. I asked him what else *he* expected to happen if the people in Porton continued their horrible research; he gave a gesture of despair and walked away, shielding his camera with his coat from the pelting rain.

Then it was talk of coaches and car lifts. Two hundred or so young people dispersed and made for home, leaving a few brightly coloured, rain flecked balloons fluttering on a wire fence in the wind as a token of their hopes and dreams that the love of life may yet prevail over the undoubted death wish that holds the world increasingly in thrall.

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Dave Cunliffe

### Last Exit to Brooklyn

By Hubert Selby jnr. Published by Calder & Boyars at 30s.

It is not the function of honest journalism to invent its 'facts' or to distort, dilute, censor, or deliberately misrepresent the information at its disposal. The literary reporter does not create, but reflects as accurately as possible, what is happening, externally and internally, in that specific area, culture, or environment, he chooses to involve and concern himself with. He is not actively or morally responsible for the inadequacies, failings and crimes of the individuals and societies he so depicts. Nor can he be justly blamed for any slenderness of talent, lack of craft, inaccurate interpretation, or any such personal limitations. That is, he can, and should, be faulted, criticised and challenged with all of this but is no more deserving of condemnation than the inept, confused, but genuinely conscientious and careful reader.

Hubert Selby Jr. is such a literary reporter and it is an ironic compliment to his artistic and journalistic competence that on the strength of his first published work, *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, he is personally maligned, savagely and internationally libelled as a 'degenerate', and his English publishers, Calder and Boyars, prosecuted and persecuted. The articulated justifications of his vast army of accusers and detractors are considerably diverse. The accumulated totality effect of these attacks, the individually contradictory, is to focus *Last Exit*, and thus its author, into a sacrificial scapegoat role. Selby's 'crime' is his honesty of vision and its unerring testimony upon the printed page, for it is not the general truth of his communication, but his right to express and reveal it, which is presently on trial. It is the stated contention of these would-be censors that to shed light upon, to expose, the sick, regressive and destructive qualities of Man is itself harmful. They feel the repression of such knowledge to be essential, inasmuch as they believe it is the only way to ensure evil's eventual elimination. To ignore, they think, is to contain and defeat, and to give even condemnatory publicity is to encourage continuation by imitation. There is some merit in this argument but it is that of a partial truth and, as such, hardly stands up to rational analysis. These primitive and destructive qualities, we are asked to pretend don't exist, are neither historical curiosities nor the contemporary prerogatives of isolated nations, races or individuals. They are inherent, evolutionary, characteristic, residing, dormant or awake, within us all. They will not go away by our simply ignoring them, or be dismissed by induced aversion. They must be transcended by being recognised, isolated, understood and transformed.

It is an abuse of review space to use it as a

## REVIEW

platform for theories and ideas not relevant to the work under discussion. It is equally not the business of critics to burden the serious reader with accounts of hysterical public reactions to, and irrational notions about, a book, before he has had a chance to read it. Nonetheless, the preceding is, I think, justified in its intention to clarify and simplify the position and help eliminate any prior prejudices, or misconceptions, about *Last Exit*. It is pertinent in that it echoes pre-publication statements, and sentiments, by Selby himself.

Selby intended, and partly achieved, no more or less than an imaginative, straightforward, statement of facts and left "each individual reader to supply his own historical criterion for what he thinks the world should be." He is not an avant-garde writer, in the true sense of that much abused and misused phrase. His work does not create its own actuality but rather mirrors and reflects what is already there, and thus Selby is the observer, rather than creator, of all his book contains. His role is that of the spectator who involves himself as a medium, mouthpiece or transmitter, between the activity and the word, which he fashions in the language of its characters so the book becomes a symbolic extension of the very activity which gives it breath, impetus, direction and shapes its tongue. It functions as an active, rather than passive, entity in which its author does not overtly interfere or intrude. The potential success of this technique, if properly applied and executed, and depending on the measure of the author's ability, is that it reduces, to its lowest effect, the barriers between action and page. It is not just about, but almost becomes that which it describes.

In 1960, when *Last Exit* was in manuscript form and called *Landsend*, Walter Lowenfels, the veteran American poet and critic, commented, in a letter to Selby, that reading this unrevised version of the book was "like examining microbes in a microscopic universe." He went on to say that, "To me, your writing at its best shares some of the characteristics of the Madison Avenue plumbing crowd that you hate. Instead of promoting supreme flushing gadgets, you flash supreme technical polish, reflect the minutest syllables of your people's speech. But you go no deeper into their hearts than the human engineers who study the buy-and-sell angles. It's the surface glittering and garbage you gave us. And if you re-write *Landsend*, your reporting will be even better. The unreality of your reportage is that you are doing it in 1960—with a pre-Newtonian lens." Selby respected Lowenfels and bore his criticisms in mind when he re-wrote the book and moulded it into its final, published, draft, but he didn't change it very much and its basic structure remained unaltered.

*Last Exit* is basically concerned with violence, albeit in many forms, and thus its author's attitude

towards violence, and towards his characters who lived the violence which spawned the book, is of paramount importance. Admittedly, the central question is just how much of the author's attitude pervades, or is manifested in, his book. This is a most valid point in a book in which the author does not intend to moralise, and generally refrains from doing so, but allows its inhabitants, and their actions, speak for themselves and presumes the reader capable of forming relevant conclusions of his own. Nonetheless, unscholarly and careless critics have mistakenly judged, presumably on the basis of a prejudiced or sloppy reading, Selby's attitudes and intentions. And it is reasonable to presuppose the existence of similar prejudice, and thus prejudgement, in many potential readers. On this reasoning, I feel it essential to detail Selby's personal attitudes at the time he was making final revisions to his book.

### The Only Way

In a letter reply to Lowenfells, Selby defined what was then his position and motivations. It is a statement that deserves quoting at some length. "Love is a verb, a very active verb. If not it is just a word like cellardoor, windowsill, etc., very pretty but meaningless with regard to people. My use of violence does not come from a misanthropic mind, but one that is filled, and at times, obsessed with the need for and of love. Simple pure love. And love could be possible between all men all peoples if we could simply do away with our own deeply imbedded (unconscious if you like) violence that we deny exists and, therefore, direct against others and/or ourselves. It is this violence and betrayal of the human being that we could all be, if we would simply admit existence of this violence and then, of course, understand it for what it is; understand its source, etiology; understand that we all have this within us and must do something to direct it out of existence. This is the only way this can be benign and, of course, the only way to make people aware of this is to blow it up as much as possible; light it with neon, powdered magnesium, but not red ribbons and flowers . . . it is this violence that I am trying to transpose into the physical, which it always does in actuality, one way or another. I would like to make it so manifest that no matter how much the reader is upset, disgusted; no matter how much he may curse me for an idiot, for a writer of filth, that he will not be able to deny what has happened inside of him while and after reading it . . . what he feels will be real, no matter how repulsed he may be. And perhaps the reader will understand that control of the body and the mind are contingent . . . each of the people in the stories lost control and died . . ."

A well argued case and noble aspirations, and the sociological and literary value of *Last Exit* is entirely dependent upon the degree of success in which they have been transcribed into the words and pages of that work.

Selby could not hope to fully succeed, with this book, on the basis of his expressed intentions, for it is two-dimensional in a multi-dimensional universe. It is partial rather than total view and, as such, distorted. Its finely focused lens, through which it painstakingly observes with heroic intensity and unwavering concentration, one aspect of inner human consciousness and its outer manifestations and effects, is both its strength and weakness. It ignores the greater, more creative, visionary wis-

dom of the seer-poet and even the wider complexities, and many levels, of external reality itself. Selby concerns himself solely with the destructive tendencies and activities of a significant proportion of defeated human beings alive today. He deals totally, and uncompromisingly, with the worst qualities of such ignorant and abused people living empty, wasted ugly lives. *Last Exit* probes and illuminates this chosen aspect in great depth and with much insight. It is a finely distilled communication presenting the terrible and shameful essence of brutality and selfishness. Its historical prospective is Selby's personal conception of fictionalised but representative inhabitants of Brooklyn in 1960, but its actual and symbolic revelations and their implications are not confined, outmoded or dated. Its concentrated value is as an almost perfect and extremely serviceable, because informative, component part within its proper context, which is the totality of universal knowledge and understanding. As such, it is not complete in itself, but requires, as Selby stressed, active participation on the part of its readers. That is, the reader must bring to his study of such a book a tolerance, understanding, compassion and vision of his own. Selby does no more than provide the information. It is the reader job to consider the facts of work out on the basis of this data some possible solutions and try to apply them. As critic Gilbert Sorrentino puts it, "A great moralist, but in the stories themselves, he says nothing."

### All Too Human

*Last Exit* is not pretty or encouraging. It is a more or less accurate depiction and this realisation makes it even more depressing. The greatest temptation is to evade the issue, to fail to perceive or admit that in varying degree it applies to, is ultimately about, all of us. This tends to lead many of its readers into the trap of equating Selby with the action, identifying the book's extreme depravity as fundamentally a grotesque product of its author's imagination. Leslie Woolf Hedley talks about Selby getting "this alleged novel out of his system," dismisses *Last Exit* as "as much a medical problem as a cultural one" and concludes that it is "not reality but an invalid nightmare peepshow for insects." Joan Isserman took the same view when she wrote that "it is only out of a bestial self that *Last Exit to Brooklyn* could have been spewed up. It is a depraved, anti-human, evil book." This is an understandable view, coming as it does from gentle, cultured, sensitive, unworldly, polite, intellectuals, but it is blinkered and escapist and therefore hardly merits serious consideration. The truth is, it is an all too human book. Savagery, and lack of respect for human dignity and life by governments and individuals is not a thing of the past. For anyone who reads books or newspapers, who is aware of Vietnam, what happens daily in his own country and others, will know that we have a long way yet to travel on the evolutionary path before we can talk honestly of a civilised humanity.

Technically, *Last Exit* is a masterpiece. There is nothing original in absolute concentration on one theme to the virtual exclusion of all others. Nor is there anything stylistically revolutionary in speaking in the language, argot and rhythm of those under literary observation. It is simply that Selby has succeeded to a remarkable extent where most writers have miserably failed. Sorrentino considers Selby "The best prose writer of our time" and says his "work becomes, finally, a towering struc-

## The Metaphysics of Failure

Perhaps it is best to think of your life and yourself  
as a disaster

Always, because that is what it is by definition

Almost: we are so far off completion. . . .

A disaster, but not so insidious

As thinking your life and self a personal success

And you the master,

As if there *were* perfection.

There is after all no completeness

In what we want to fashion as abiding cities,

Thinking always ideally of our own uniqueness.

Better to know that we have botched our work of  
art completely.

And that we are all bankrupt individually and equal

—Ridiculously—

Before the eternal possibilities.

**Paul Roche**

This poem is taken from his volume "All Things Considered", published by Duckworth.

ture, a new thing that was never there before, you are brought into a fantastic world that exists right here, but it took Selby to show it to you." This is a workable evaluation. We are in danger today of shutting off our minds to the more unpleasant realities around us. It is one of the functions of the all-seeing creative writer, to remind us if necessary shock us out of our partly self-induced delusions and unrealistic complacency. Selby and *Last Exit* do just this.

*Last Exit* is a collection of 'stories' and a separate concluding passage with a continuity of theme and an essential unity of direction.

### Living Prototypes

*Another Day Another Dollar* concerns itself with the vicious, animalistic activities of a group of young, hip, hoodlums. Their savage behaviour is typical of the dispossessed, illiterate, frustrated, drifting, reject victims of slum environments everywhere. Aimlessly idling away their sad empty lives around the counter of "the Greeks, a beatup all-night diner near the Brooklyn Army Base." Playing the jukebox, walking the streets, arguing about cars, clothes, lays, combing their hair, playfully pawing and shoveing, like self-conscious adolescents, and finally slugging each other for the sheer hell of it. Having fun, beating up a rebel soldier. "They formed a circle and kicked. He tried to roll over on his stomach and cover his face with his arms, but as he got to his side he was kicked in the groin and stomped on the ear and he screamed, cried, started pleading then just cried as a foot cracked his mouth . . . and a hard kick in the ribs turned him slightly and he tried to raise himself on one knee and someone took a short step forward and kicked him in the solarplexus and he fell on his side, his knees up, arms folded across his abdomen, gasping for air and the blood in his mouth gurgled as he tried to scream, rolled down his chin then spumed forth as he vomited violently and someone stomped his face into the pool of vomit and the blood whirled slightly in arcs and a few bubbles gurgled in the puke as he panted and gasped and their shoes thudded into the shit-eatin'-bastards kidneys and ribs and he groaned and his head rolled in the puke breaking the arching patterns of blood as a kick broke his nose then coughed and retched as his gasping sucked some of the vomit back in his mouth and he cried and tried to yell but it was muffled by the pool as the guys yells and Freddy kicked him in the temple and the yellow-bastards eyes rolled back and his head lolled for a moment and he passed out and his head splashed and thumped to the ground." That, in all its sickening horror, is truly how it is and the living prototypes of these lost young men continue to overflow our jails or strut, festooned with decorative rewards, acquired for like action, but with society's approval, on officially condoned battlefields.

*The Queen Is Dead* is centrally about love, and its correlative violence (that is violence related to unrealised love), and the entire human gamut of positive and negative emotions. It is peripherally, albeit descriptively, obsessed with the frustrated, unthinking, love of Georgette, a hip pseudo-intellectual queer, for Vinnie, an unsophisticated, neanderthalic, small-time hoodlum. Georgette, so awash with love that, whilst he was in jail, she stayed permanently stoned with her girl friends. When he was out, she strutted, proudly, in drag (makeup, panties, padded bra, gown, high heels,

wig, menstrual napkin). Abused by Vinnie, Johns, and her puritanical brother. Comforted, and sustained, by a long suffering, doting mother and her own sad delusions of intellectual and esthetic superiority over all the non-gay, "especially women." A desperate, escapist, paranoid state of mind in which all heterosexuals are square and perverted and where the most effective putdown is to call a 'straight' man or woman, a "dirty fairy." Vinnie, who got his fleeting kicks from refusing, cruelly teasing, rejecting and constantly enjoying her ego swelling, public attention and overtures. "The glory of having known someone killed by the police during a stickup was the greatest event of his life and a memory he cherished as would an ageing invalid at the end of a dissapointing life, a winning touchdown made at the end of the final game of the season."

The gang at the Greeks amused themselves by throwing a knife at Georgette, which eventually sticks in her leg. Terrified, almost fainting from fear, pain and anger, she endures the laughter and taunts of the mob, until Vinnie pours iodine into the wound. Later, after various humiliations at the hands of her brother, she flees to a girlfriend's flat where "her subjects petitioned the Queen to summon forth her dashing husband and his rough trade friends." The other queens are types but not exaggerations. They are real, believable, if naturally artificial and affected people, from Camille, the sentimental small town virgin, to Miss Lee, the post-Hollywood pinup beauty. As if in parody of the most stupid and indulgent species of animal, they systematically stupify their minds with a nauseating mixture of benzedrine, marijuana, gin, coffee, tobacco, whisky and morphine. The queens, excited, fearful, expectant, nervous, elated and posturing. The hardmen, awed, sickly, curious and intoxicated. There are many dimensions of physical activity, and their fluid interactions of casualty, enacted simultaneously, anticipate and lead up to an inevitable orgiastic climax.

### Even the Sick

There are three important and significant symbolic passages which can be cited, meaningfully, in isolation. A woman, in the agony of labour and wet with her own blood and urine, is cruelly dragged out of the room, because if she was to have her baby there it would bring them down, curb their pleasure, terminate the party, and "ruin a perfectly delightful evening." Georgette inspires and triumphs and, for fleeting magic moments, holds the hardmen and queens entranced in the beauty of her inspired reading, "and she was no longer merely reading a poem but she was the poem and every word was coming from her soul." Vinnie was "honestly moved by Georgette's reading but even with the bennie stimulating his imagination it was impossible for him to get beyond the weirdness and the kick . . . and the guys mumbled and smiled and Vinnie struggled with the softness he felt, trying honestly, for a second, to understand it, then let it slide." After Vinnie had accompanied Miss Lee to the bedroom to help Harry, and then himself, lay her, Georgette gives him a blowjob and is aware of a familiar smell and taste. Later, swimming with doubts, jealousy and wishful love fantasy, she cries inwardly and desperately, "no NO! O God no!!! Vinnie loves me. He loves me. It Wasn't. Shit." Selby's book is uncompromisingly about real flesh and blood people and he constantly reminds the reader that even, and sometimes particularly, the

sick have glimpses of the heights, depths, joys and sorrows of existence.

*And Baby Makes Three* is very short but extremely complex. Using a wedding as a focus point, or base, to explore the vegetable poor. It makes an unbiased and unsentimental picture and thus vivid, compelling, quietly horrifying and unemotionally compassionate.

*Tralala* "was 15 the first time she was laid. There was no real passion. Just diversion. She hung out in the Greeks with the other neighbourhood kids. Nothing to do. Sit and talk. Listen to the jukebox. Drink Coffee. Bum cigarettes. Everything a drag. She said yes. In the park, 3 or 4 couples finding their own tree and grass. Actually she didn't say yes. She said nothing. Tony and Vinnie or whoever it was just continued." She predictably progresses, rather regresses, thru casual prostitution, mugging, alcoholism, to whoreing for drinks, "just drinking then pulling off her clothes and spreading her legs and drifting off to sleep or a drunken stupour with the first lunge." She finally dies during a mammoth gang bang, "lying naked covered with blood, urine and semen and a small blot forming on the seat between her legs as blood seeped from her crotch . . . and Fred looking through the rear window and Jack pounding his leg and roaring with laughter." This is not the fantasy, masturbatory, sadism of James Bond pornography. Someone who gets slugged on the head, in real life, probably dies or suffers brain damage or is crippled for life. The focus point of *Tralala* isn't a symbolic wet dream but a depressingly realistic dead girl.

### Sugar Daddy

*Strike* is the story of Harry, a repressed homosexual who discovers his true nature, is liberated and then degraded. Harry is instinctively nauseated and disgusted by his wife, particularly her sexual demands, and consumed by a violent hatred for his employers. He is a fanatical shop steward, hated in turn by the bosses, tolerated as useful, if something of an occasional embarrassment, by the union leaders, and regarded as personally objectionable by both.

He precipitates a strike, which is anticipated and prepared for by the employers, who intend to use it as a negotiation strength to try to get rid of arch- nuisance Harry. Placed in charge of the picket-line, and given an open expense account, he gradually succumbs to his collective hangups and begins to cheat on the union. Treating the hardmen from the Greeks to union beer, he is brought into contact with an active and flirtatious homosexual and realises his own true sexual identity. His unlimited expense account enables Harry to function as sugar daddy to a string of Queens, until the company are awarded a vital government contract, expediently meet total union conditions and demands, and Harry is just a hardup working man, a wage slave without an expense book, again. Dropped by the essentially mercenary inverts, he drunkenly tries to forcibly suck off a young boy and is booted by his, supposedly self-righteous and outraged, hoodlum friends from the Greeks.

*Landsend* functions as coda and is as vast in scope as the complete work. Its action centres on a Housing Project, the new slums of the American, and increasingly the British, poor. "We want this Project to be a safe and clean place to live. It is up

to you to keep it this way." The reality is human excrement in the lift and much nervous tension, and barely suppressed hostility and violence, the disintegration of family life and social relationships, engendered by forced proximity and thus lack of adequate personal privacy. Selby probes the rough fabric, and weave a fluid tapestry, of and from a group of victims of contemporary technology, in their everyday stunted lives. Their simmering inarticulate resentment, their useless but costly acquisitions, manifested and gained, selfishly and unthinkingly, at each others expense and to the ultimate degradation and unhappiness of all. The deprived children and their defeated parents. The squalor of it (the normality of that squalor) shames us all.

### A Warning

Senseless but numerous acts of physical and mental violence, aggression against basic human rights and dignity, essential for all but enjoyed by few, are portrayed in profusion. The most searing, terrifying and memorable is Selby's description of a group of gossiping women, excitedly watching a child crawling on a high ledge. Police rescue the child and the women are "annoyed that it was all over and that the kid didn't fall." This in all its almost unspeakable implications, is what *Last Exit* is about and why such a book had to be written at this moment in time. Before dismissing this as an eccentric notion, ponder about daily public reactions to, and obsession with, lurid newspaper treatment of natural disasters, sadistic murders and military slaughters. Watch the faces of onlookers at some minor accident, all of them, and then go back to Selby's women and crawling child.

*Last Exit* is a warning. It is a document shorn of glamour. It is the most utterly repulsive, the most discouraging, the most honest, depiction of the human condition; the most stark and disturbing novel, I have ever read. Selby paints the picture so black that it is tempting, if one accepts his view in substantial part, to opt out of all constructive activity in sheer despair. Selby is personally out of patience with, and cynical of, his characters. They have "lost control and died." If, however, he did not feel them somehow capable of resurrection he could not, conceivably, have bothered to write such a book. *Last Exit* woke me up to disagreeable facts and reminded me that the brotherhood of Man should be an active reality, not merely a theoretical and utopian belief or fantasy. *Last Exit* is better read than talked about and then it is far better acted upon.

\*Notes: Published in *American Dialog* May-June 1965: — Walter Lowenfels letter to Selby, page 34. Hubert Selby Jr's. letter reply to Lowenfels, page 35 and 36. Leslie Woolf Hedley's *A View*, pages 36 and 37. Joan Isserman's *A Letter On The Selby Letters*, page 38.

Published in *The Floating Bear* 30:— Gilbert Sorrentino's *Prose Of Our Time*.